
Study Group - *Madhyamakavataranama*

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Please generate the proper motivation for listening to the teachings thinking, 'I have to attain complete enlightenment in order to be able to accomplish the welfare of all sentient beings and in order to do so, I am now going to listen to this teaching. Then I'm going to practise it'.

3.5.1.1.2.1. Actual (cont.)

Last time we reached verse 108 of the root text, which says,

*Since the falling hairs etc., that become objects
Of those having eye-defects etc., aren't generated,
For the moment I shall debate only those, then,
Subsequently those following eye-defects of
ignorance.*

These four lines are an answer to a debate by the **Realists**, who say that if functionalities don't exist as such, i.e. intrinsically, then they would also become completely non-existent nominally, like the mule's foal. Therefore they absolutely have to exist intrinsically. From the Realists' point of view, if phenomena don't exist ultimately, or if phenomena don't exist inherently, then they don't have the ability to exist nominally, and in such a way they become like a mule's foal. We have already talked about the Realists' assertion that if something exists it has to be the object of either a direct perception, or a conceptual thought that is respectively unmistakable with regard to the inherently existent appearing object, or the inherently existent determined object.

Ordinarily, the term '**Realist**' refers to a proponent asserting true existence. Technically, the **Svatantrika-Madhyamakas** don't fall into that category because on the one hand they deny true existence, but on the other hand they assert inherent existence. Because they assert inherent existence they are here included in the category of Realists.

In verse 108 **Chandrakirti** advises the Svatantrika-Madhyamaka to first debate those who have eye defects and so forth, and who, as a result, have various kinds of distorted appearances.

He says, 'According to you the falling hairs and so forth that appear to people with eye-defects and so forth, are the same as a mule's foal. How does it come about then that one can see the falling hairs but not a mule's foal? Firstly talk to people who have various defects, and who experience distorted appearances because of those defects. Then later you can subsequently debate the eye defects of ignorance. Why? Because the falling hairs and

so forth that are the objects of those with eye defects are the same in not being generated as inherent existence. That is the object of those with the defect of ignorance.'

Here Chandrakirti says, 'Well then, take the falling hairs that appear to someone with an eye defect. It follows that they are also the same as the mule's foal, as they don't exist inherently or nominally. If they are the same as the mule's foal, and you ask somebody who has such an eye defect whether a mule's foal appears to them, then the answer is no. Falling hairs appear to their mind, but not a mule's foal. Therefore the question arises as to whether falling hairs and a mule's foal are really the same'.

From the **Realist** point of view, existence and inherent existence are the same and go hand in hand. Then **Chandrakirti** says to the Realist, 'Not only should you question this person with an eye defect, but also, ultimately, you really have to investigate your own mind. You have to debate with your own mind the way your mind apprehends things.

*If dreams and towns of smell eaters, the water of
the mirage,
Magic and reflections etc. are seen as unborn,
Even though they are matched in being totally
non-existent
Why is it like that for you, which is invalid.*

The **Realists** say that all the things listed in the first two lines are like a mule's foal, as they are all seen as unborn.

Mirror:

...then it follows it is fitting to argue that it *is invalid* that *for you* the dream house and family etc. *are* visible while the mule's foal isn't.

Even though the dream house, the family and towns of smell eaters, the water of the mirage and so forth, are all things that don't really exist, they do appear to the mind. So it is also suitable that we should be able to see a mule's foal, because the mule's foal is the same as all those phenomena in not being generated inherently and in not existing nominally.

*Though it isn't born in this way in suchness
It isn't like the mule's foal,
An object not seen by worldly beings.
Therefore this statement is inaccurate.*

Chandrakirti is saying, 'Even though something might not be generated inherently it isn't necessarily like a mule's foal - an object not seen by worldly beings. Something can be seen by worldly beings even though not being generated inherently, therefore your statement is inaccurate. Even though they don't exist inherently various reflections appear in a big and clear mirror. After analysing this more coarse phenomena, then you can move on to the more subtle ones'.

3.5.1.1.2.2. Summary

*The mule's foal doesn't have generation by its
nature
In suchness or in the world.
Likewise, all these functionalities
Aren't generated naturally in the world or
suchness.*

Basically, the position of the **Realists** is that forms and so forth exist inherently, because they are the object of nominal valid cognition. This consequence that they would exist inherently because they exist nominally, is an argument that is not accepted by the **Prasangika**. 'The mule's foal doesn't have generation by its nature in suchness or in the world', the Prasangika say, 'so similarly all functionalities also aren't generated naturally in the world or suchness'.

***Like that therefore, the Teacher taught that all dharmas
Are pacified from the beginning, lack generation
And have passed naturally beyond sorrow.
Therefore generation never exists.***

For that reason the Teacher taught that all dharmas are pacified from the beginning, lack generation and have passed naturally beyond sorrow.

From the *Cloud of Jewels Sutra*, 'When the wheel of Dharma is turned, pacified from the beginning and not generated, having gone naturally beyond sorrow, you, Protector - that's how you show phenomena.'

This verse shows how the Buddha taught that all dharmas are pacified from the beginning and so forth. When it says that they are pacified from the beginning, it means that the inherent existence is not just pacified to the transcendental wisdom realising emptiness, but that the phenomena were never inherently existent. The lack of inherent existence is not something that is just pacified by the transcendental wisdom, but it is something that has been pacified since the beginning, something that has never existed.

***Vases etc. don't exist in suchness and
Exist according to worldly convention.
Since all functionalities are like that
It doesn't follow they are like the mule's foal.***

Although phenomena don't exist in suchness, they aren't like a mule's foal, because phenomena exist conventionally. The Vaibashikas say that ultimate existence is something that cannot be divided, while those objects that can be divided form what is called conventionally illusory existence.

Here phenomena have a conventional illusory existence without having an ultimate existence.

3.5.1.1.3. Way of eliminating extreme view through dependent generation

***Since functionalities aren't born from
No cause, the cause of Ishvara etc.,
Self, other or both;
Therefore they are generated interdependently.***

Functionalities are not born from no cause, they are not generated by Ishvara and so forth, they are not generated from self, they are not generated from other, and they are not generated from both. Therefore they are generated interdependently. To the question, 'If the sprout is not generated from no cause, is not generated from both, is not generated from other, is not generated from both, is not generated by Ishvara and so forth, is it still valid to say that the sprout is generated from the seeds?', the

answer is yes.

Mirror:

Take the subject 'functionalities' - they are generated independence upon causes and conditions - because they are generated and not born from no cause, the cause of Ishvara etc., self, other or both.

So then what is the need to establish phenomena as being generated interdependently. In the lower tenets dependent origination is only understood in the context of cause and effect but here it is also applied to permanent phenomena. As we have said, if phenomena are not generated from self, other, etc. then what is the need to establish them as being generated interdependently?

***Since functionalities are generated interdependently
These ideas can't bear analysis.
Therefore, by this very reason of dependent arising
The spider web of all bad views is cut.***

Mirror:

By this very reason of dependent arising the spider web of all bad views is cut, since these ideas can't bear the analysis of the realisation that functionalities are generated interdependently.

The 'web of all bad views is cut' refers to the extreme views such as the view of eternalism and the nihilistic view. On the one hand phenomena are viewed as inherently existent, and from an inherently existent cause an inherently existent effect exists. On the other hand, there is the thought that phenomena are totally non-existent, and that no effect arises from any cause.

The two extremes are inherent existence and complete non-existence. The two extreme views are the grasping at those two extremes: the extreme of no effect, being generated from a cause and so forth.

***Thoughts arise when functionalities exist, but
How functionalities don't exist has been thoroughly examined.
Without functionalities they don't arise, for example
Like the non-existence of fire without wood.***

Mirror:

Without true grasping at functionalities they, the extreme thoughts, don't arise. Extreme thoughts arise when true grasping of functionalities exists, but how functionalities don't exist truly has been thoroughly examined, for example like the non-existence of fire without wood.

3.5.1.1.4. Identifying the fruit of becoming empowered in reasoning

***Ordinary individuals are bound by thoughts,
Yogis without thought become liberated.
Whatever reversal of the thoughts there is
Is taught by the sages as the fruit of investigation.
In the treatises it doesn't teach suchness
Because of attachment to analysis and debate,
But for the purpose of liberation.***

Mirror:

In the treatises analysis of suchness isn't done because of attachment to debate, but they teach suchness for the purpose of liberation. Ordinary individuals are bound by extreme thoughts; yogis without distorted thoughts become liberated. Whatever reversal of extreme thoughts there is, is taught by the sages as the fruit of investigation of suchness as taught in the treatises.

Those sages and experts who realise emptiness through investigation will be liberated from the two extreme views. The sages who've become experts in emptiness and arya beings will receive the fruit, but ordinary beings who cling to existence will just continue to stay in cyclic existence, as it says in the lines,

***Ordinary individuals are bound by thoughts,
Yogis without thought become liberated***

Ordinary individuals are bound by extreme thoughts, but those who have unmistakably understood emptiness, the yogis and arya beings, become liberated. Therefore the fruit of having reversed all the extreme and distorted thoughts is as explained by the aryas in the Madhyamaka treatises.

Ordinary individuals are bound by their extreme thoughts, yogis without true grasping become liberated from extreme thoughts. Whatever reversal of extreme thoughts there is, is taught by the sages as the fruit of investigation.

The treatises do not present suchness out of attachment to analysis and debate but for the purpose of liberation. They don't teach emptiness just to give the students something to debate about - the reason the treatises teach emptiness is for the purpose of liberation. Emptiness was taught in order to lead sentient beings to liberation from samsara and not just for the purpose of debate.

***In case other texts are destroyed
If suchness is presented, there is no fault.***

These lines represent the **Prasangika** refuting the Svatantrikas saying, 'The treatises were composed in order to debate with others, and that's exactly what you have been doing all the time - you've been debating and refuting us'. The Prasangikas say, 'If your text is being refuted, there is no fault because your point of view was simply the weaker one. Your point of view disappears in the bright light of my reasoning'. Chandrakirti says, 'It's not my fault, it's simply the fault of your view, because when a light is switched on the darkness disappears. Likewise, your view disappears in the light of the Prasangika reasoning.

'For example if one burns firewood in order to heat up the tea kettle, then the ashes will naturally appear. Making the ashes was not the objective, which was to heat up the tea kettle, but the ashes appear anyway. Likewise my objective here was really not to compete with your system, but somehow your system dissipated in the light of valid reasoning. That is something that just happened'. Chandrakirti says that he actually was doing all this reasoning in order to eliminate the suffering of

samsara of the opponent, not in order to compete with the other person's text. If the viewpoint of the other person's text is somehow burnt in the light of wisdom, then that might just be simply because it is a wrong view.

***Attachment to one's own view, and similarly
Agitation towards the view of others are mere
thoughts.***

***Therefore, analysis that has abandoned
attachment***

And anger becomes quickly liberated.

This verse shows why one shouldn't have attachment to one's own view and aversion to the view of others. If the teachings were done simply from the point of view of debate, then attachment to your own point of view, and aversion to the point of view of others is generated, and that poses an obstruction to the attainment of liberation. Such attachment and aversion is a samsaric path, which has to be given up in order to attain liberation.

Nagarjuna showed his teachings to his students only for the purpose of helping them to attain liberation, and not to generate attachment to one's own point of view and aversion to the point of view of others. Only by abandoning a generation of attachment to one's own point of view and aversion to the point of view of others, will one attain liberation. So Nagarjuna taught his disciples about emptiness in order for them to meditate on emptiness, and not for other reasons.

As it says in the *King of Concentration Sutra*, if one generates attachment about one point of view, and then generate aversion to hearing something else, then one is conceited because of pride. One will subsequently fall down through the force of pride, and experience many sufferings.

In the outline Establishing the Selflessness of Phenomena there were two sub-outlines, one for compounded phenomena and one for non-compounded phenomena. However because non-compounded phenomena come up again and again they are not explained separately here.

If one doesn't practice equanimity, becomes attached to the self and generates aversion for others, if one doesn't practice having an awareness of equal outlook, abandoning attachment to self and aversion to others, then through one's meditation on the different tenets one actually will just bind oneself more and more to cyclic existence. In his kindness Lama Tsong Khapa gave us this advice: if one is not careful in one's meditation on the tenets and generates attachment to one's own view and aversion to the views of others, then one will only bind oneself further to cyclic existence.

It's important to be very familiar with the presentation of the object of negation according to the Svatantrika and the Prasangika points of view. It is important to ascertain the different levels of the object of negation and it is also important to know the benefits of emptiness and the benefits that arise from emptiness being shown to a suitable disciple. These benefits are listed very clearly in the *Introduction to the Middle Way*, which describes the lack of generation from the four extremes. The different

subjects include the refutation of generation from self, generation from other etc. etc., and the different views of the Mind Only such as the lack of existent into external existence, the self knower and the universal mind foundation are refuted. One should understand all this well.

You should be aware that all these topics are present in the sixth chapter. Of the six perfections, the sixth chapter shows the sixth perfection - the perfection of wisdom. It is important that you meditate on it again and again, so that you become familiar with it. In particular, the object of negation is very important, because one wants to be able to meditate on emptiness.

The next outline is the establishing the selflessness of person.

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