
Study Group - *Madhyamakavataranama*

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དབུ་མ་ལ་འདུག་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བ་བཞུགས་པོ།

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Generate the virtuous motivation of bodhicitta, thinking, 'I have to attain enlightenment in order to accomplish the welfare of all sentient beings and for that purpose I am now going to listen to this profound teaching, and then I am going to put it into practice. To that end I am going to view self-grasping as the enemy, recognising that self-grasping doesn't have the slightest benefits, but only disadvantages for myself and others'. As long as one doesn't view self-grasping as the enemy and doesn't overcome it, one will not be able to achieve the aim of attaining enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings.

Chandrakirti has done likewise, viewing self-grasping as nothing but an enemy. If we follow Chandrakirti's example then we cannot go wrong because Chandrakirti is a valid being, and if we follow his example then we too will become a valid being. One should view oneself as a student of Chandrakirti thinking, 'I am going to be a good student of Chandrakirti in this life and in all future lives', making prayers in that regard.

The sequence we went through is that initially a self that is of different entity from the aggregates, as asserted by the different non-Buddhist schools, was refuted. After having refuted a self that is of a different entity from the aggregates, then Chandrakirti moved on to refute a self that is the aggregates, which is posited by certain Buddhist schools. Their view is that either the aggregates in general are the self or that the five aggregates are the self, or that the aggregate of primary consciousness is the self.

3.5.1.2.2.1.2.1.1.2. The Refutation Of Those Assertions

*If the aggregates are the self then,
Since they are many, the self becomes many.*

Mirror:

If the aggregates are the self then it follows that the self becomes many - because the self and the aggregates are one and they, the aggregates, are many.

The Sammitiya-Vaibashika don't actually accept that the self and the aggregates are one. What they do accept is that the self and the aggregates are of intrinsically one nature. They posit an intrinsically existing self, they posit intrinsically existing aggregates, they posit that the self and the aggregates are of one nature, and they posit that the self and the aggregates are intrinsically of one nature.

1. If two things are intrinsically of one nature, then they have to be one, and that's how one arrives at this consequence that there are many selves because there are

many aggregates. If the aggregates and the self were one, then since there are many aggregates there would have to be many selves. The key point that determines this consequence is that the self and the aggregates are intrinsically of one nature.

2. The same reasoning can also be applied to the assertion that the aggregate of primary consciousness is the self, because within the aggregate of primary consciousness we have six types of primary consciousness. The reasoning is the same - as there are many types of primary consciousness it follows that there would also have to be many selves.

The next two reasonings are,

*The self becomes substantial, and looking at it,
Since engaging substance, doesn't become distorted.*

3. As we have said, in the **Prasangika** system there is no phenomenon that is a substantial existent. They say that if it exists then it is necessarily an imputed existent. In the **lower tenets** we have both phenomena that are substantial existents and phenomena that are imputed existents. They say that the 'I' is an imputed existent and the aggregates are a substantial existent. If the self and the aggregates were one then we would have the consequence that since the aggregates are the self and since they are a substantial existent, then it would follow that the 'I' is also a substantial existent.

4. If the self were to be a substantial existent then viewing a self that is a substantial existent wouldn't be distorted. Rather, it would actually be an accurate observation.

How this reasoning helps us to realise the selflessness of person is because an inherently existing self is the subtle object of negation. If we refute that the aggregate of primary consciousness (an example for the self) is of inherently one nature with the self we refute the subtle object of negation. The reasoning that we employ is that there would have to be many selves because there are many aggregates. If the self exists inherently and the aggregates exist inherently, and the self is inherently of one nature with the aggregates, then they have to be indistinguishable one. If they were completely one, then we would get the mistake that since there are many aggregates there would have to be many selves. By refuting that there are many selves one refutes the inherently existent self.

5. Thinking about the implications of being inherently one or different, and then refuting the self as being inherently of one nature with the aggregates, will definitely become a way to negate inherent existence. Those implications are also important for the following reasons.

When passing beyond sorrow the self definitely gets cut off

When passing beyond sorrow, the self definitely gets cut off. Why? Because at that time the aggregates get cut off and the aggregates are the self. So again there is the same reasoning that self is intrinsically of one nature with the aggregates, and therefore when the aggregates are cut off, then the self also has to be cut off. The Vaibashika tenets, including the Sammitiya-Vaibashika,

assert that at the time of passing beyond sorrow without remainder, the aggregates are actually cut off. So there is the view that the person who attains nirvana without remainder will not take rebirth any more, because if one has to take rebirth it would have to be done through the power of karma and afflictions.

6. The next reasoning is,

*One moment before passing beyond sorrow
Generation and disintegration....*

If the self and the aggregates were to be intrinsically of one nature, then one moment before passing beyond sorrow there would be intrinsic generation and disintegration. Of course, there is disintegration and generation before passing into nirvana - the self is generated, the self disintegrates, the aggregates generate and disintegrate. However, if the self and the aggregates were of intrinsically one nature the consequence is that there would be intrinsic generation and disintegration before passing into nirvana. However, there is no intrinsic generation and disintegration.

7. ... *Because no agent, no fruit.*

Others will experience that accumulated by another.

Mirror:

It follows that karma has *no* relation to its *fruit* - *because* there is *no* self that can function as the *agent*.

The aggregates and the self are momentary. This means that they are changing moment by moment. According to the Sammitiya-Vaibashika view and to the **Realist** view in general, the process of momentary changing is an intrinsic process of changing - it changes out of its own nature from one entity into the next. That's where the **Prasangika** see the problem. They say there cannot be a change from one moment to the next out of its own entity, because that would mean that those early and later moments of self, for example, would be totally unrelated. As such, the karma that is created by the earlier moments of self could not be experienced by the later moments of self, and we would arrive at the fault that the karmic potential would just dissipate by itself without result.

If they were intrinsically generated and disintegrated, then the earlier moments of self and the later moments of self would become totally unrelated. Since the later moments of self are completely unrelated to the earlier moments, they could not experience the karmic effects of the karma created by the earlier moments of self. Because of this we would have the mistake that karma would just dissipate by itself without effect. That is one mistake.

As I have mentioned before, when we think about past and future lives, we establish their existence by using the reasoning that the earlier and later moments of self lack intrinsic existence. Therefore they can have a relationship, and therefore there can be a continuity of self. If the early and later moments of self existed out of their own nature, then they would have to be totally unrelated and there could be no continuity of self. Then there could be no past and future lives. It would become impossible for the later moments of self to remember what the earlier moments of self experienced and what

they did, and it would become impossible for the later moments of self to experience the karmic effects created by the earlier moments of self.

9. If the Realists asserted that the later moments of self experience the karmic effects created by the earlier moments of self, despite the earlier and later moments of self being generated out of their own nature, then that would be the equivalent to saying that the karma that is created by one person could then be experienced by a completely different person.

Summary of the faults concerning karma

In summary we have three distinctive faults posited.

1. If the earlier and later moments of self were generated out of their own nature, then the later moments of self would be completely unrelated to the previous life.

2. The karma that is created by the earlier moments of self would lose its potential, so even though the karma is created, there would be no effect.

3. If, despite all the things said above, one says that the karma created by the earlier moments of self is experienced by the later moments of self, then we would get the fault of karma that is created by one person could then be experienced by a complete different person.

You know that the karma that is created by one individual has to be experienced by the same individual. We don't have the situation where the fruits of the karma created by one person are then experienced by another - that's not how it works. The karma that is created by one person also has to be experienced by that person, which can only come about if the earlier and later moments of the person form one continuum, which can only come about if they don't exist from their own side. By relating the selflessness of person to cause and effect in this way, one's understanding will become more profound. The karma created by an earlier moment of the self can only be experienced by the later moment of the self if those earlier and later moments of self form a continuity, and they can only form a continuity if they don't exist from their own side. If they exist from their own side then we get the fault that karma that is created by one person can be experienced by a completely different person.

3.5.1.2.2.1.2.1.2. Refuting attempts at damage control by the Realists

*If, 'There is not fault if existing as continuum in suchness',
The faults of a continuum were pointed out during the
earlier investigation.*

*Therefore the aggregates and the mind are unsuitable as
self.*

Mirror:

The Realists say, 'Even though the earlier and later moments are different from each other out of their own nature, because they *exist as* one *continuum in suchness there is no fault*'.

That is their attempt at damage control.

Then Chandrakirti says, 'This is invalid. *The faults of something inherently different forming a continuum were pointed out earlier*'

You remember the different discussions we had about

intrinsic earlier and later moments forming a continuum, and how that was not possible because intrinsic earlier and later moments are totally unrelated. This was the focus of the debates relating to two people called Jampa and Nyerbai. That is something that has been discussed in great detail.

Chandrakirti says here that the Realists argument is invalid, and that the reasons have all been pointed out earlier.

It follows that *the aggregates and the mind are unsuitable* to be the *self* because if they were then there would be the faults of meeting karma not created, and the karma created dissipating.

Regarding those different assertions of the aggregates being the self and the mental aggregate being the self, we have already heard that the focal object of the 'I'-grasping is the mere 'I'. If we analyse our way of thinking, then we will find that this innate thought thinking 'I' does not arise in relation to the aggregates, and does not arise in relation to the mental aggregate. It only arises in relation to the mere 'I'. The focal object of the innate mind thinking 'I' has to be the mere 'I'. It doesn't arise in relation to anything else, and this mere 'I' then cannot be found at the time of analysis, it cannot withstand analysis. Reflecting in this way will also be conducive for one's understanding. The focal object of this innate awareness thinking, 'I' cannot withstand analysis, and the more one looks for it, the more it seems to be unfindable. This of course is also related to their appearance to our mind. To our mind the appearance of the focal object of mere 'I' is mixed with the object of negation, the intrinsic 'I'.

3.5.1.2.2.1.2.2. Offering proof showing that the assertion is invalid

The assertion referred to in this heading is that the self is inherently of one nature with the aggregates. This outline offers proof showing that this assertion is invalid. If the self were inherently of one nature with the aggregates, then it would have to be one with the aggregates. So by showing that the self is not one with the aggregates, one refutes that the self is inherently of one nature with the aggregates.

Because the worlds not having an end etc.

Take the subject 'the aggregates' it follows they aren't the self, because if the aggregates were the self, then the self and the worlds would have an end and so forth, which they don't have.

This relates to the *fourteen unpredicted views* by the Buddha. They are given this name simply because the Buddha did not explain them. For example, the definition of non-virtuous karma is *being predicted by the Buddha and abiding within the family of having a black karmic effect*. The definition of virtuous karma is *being predicted by the Buddha and abiding within the family of having a white karmic effect*. What we refer to as neutral karma is literally unpredicted karma. In this context unpredicted means to be neither virtuous nor non-virtuous. But in the context of the *fourteen unpredicted views* unpredicted means that the Buddha didn't say anything with regard to those fourteen views and not that they can't be non-virtuous. The reason he

didn't answer when asked those question was because they were asked either on the assumption that a self of person existed, or the questioner wasn't ready to receive the answer from the point of view of a merely labelled self.

The fourteen unpredicted views are:

- 1-4. *The worlds have an end, they have no end, they have both, they have neither.*
- 5-8. *The worlds are permanent, impermanent, both or neither.*
- 9-12. *A tathagata exists after death, doesn't exist after death, both or neither.*
13. *The body and the life force are truly existent one*
14. *They are truly existent different.*

Why didn't the Buddha answer those questions? The **first reason** is because a non-Buddhist was asking the question from the point of view of the self of person. Where is the relationship between the worlds and the self of person? It is that the worlds are that which the self of person engages. The self of person is the object of negation, which non-Buddhists propound as existent, and the worlds are that which is engaged by the self of person. Since the self of person is non-existent, the worlds are not really that which is engaged by the self of person. Therefore it is not a relevant question. The question is based on a non-existent, so that's why the Buddha didn't answer it. This reasoning relates to all fourteen questions.

The **second reason** the Buddha did not give an answer even from the point of view of the illusory merely labelled 'I' is because the questioner was not a suitable vessel for it to be explained.

The non-Buddhist tenet called the Carvaka, which does not accept past lives and future lives, holds the view that the worlds do have an end. The Samkya, which we also discussed before, believe that there are future lives. They hold the view that the worlds don't have an end. But in all those cases, because the question is based on the belief in this self of person, the Buddha didn't answer.

3.5.1.2.2.1.2.3. Showing other proof contradicting those asserting the aggregates to be the self

Here those asserting the aggregates to be the self will be refuted from the point of view of the path. Previously they were refuted from the point of view of the basis, where what was analysed was the basis. Now what will be analysed is the path.

When your yogis see selflessness

Phenomena definitely become non-existent.

Because of that, at this time, when abandoning the permanent self

Your mind or aggregates are not the self.

Your yogis, by seeing selflessness

Don't realise the suchness of form and so forth,

And because of engaging forms etc. upon focus, attachment etc.

Is generated. There is no realisation of their identity.

Mirror:

Chandrakirti states, 'According to *you*, Sammitiya-Vaibashika it follows that *when yogis see selflessness* directly, the *phenomena* of the aggregates

definitely become non-existent - because the aggregates are the self.

The reason given is that the aggregates are the self. Here, because the aggregates are the intrinsically existing self, and because when realising selflessness directly while on the path of seeing one sees directly the absence of the intrinsically existent self, then logically one should also see the absence of the aggregates. Therefore, if the aggregates were the intrinsic self then the aggregates should become as non-existent as the intrinsic self.

Chandrakirti says to the Sammitiya-Vaibashika, 'According to your point of view a yogi who realises selflessness directly should realise the absence of the aggregates, because according to you the aggregates are the inherently existent self'. Of course the absence of an inherently existent self is something that the Prasangika accept, but it is not something that the **Vaibhashikas** accept. That is the real point of saying that 'They realise the absence of the aggregates because they realise the absence of the inherently existent self.

To this, the Sammitiya Vaibhashika reply, 'There is no fault because when the yogis realise the absence of a permanent, single, independent self.

The Sammitiya-Vaibashika say 'The yogi doesn't realise the absence of a nominal self, the yogi only realises the absence of a permanent, solitary, independent self, and therefore your fault is non-existent'. According to the Vaibashika, when the yogi realises selflessness he only realises the absence of a permanent, solitary, independent self. He doesn't realise the absence of the self that is the basis for a cause and effect.

The **Prasangika** say that when the yogi realises selflessness, then he actually realises the absence of the Vaibashika's nominal self that is the basis of cause and effect. Why? Because the nominal self that is asserted as the basis for cause and effect by the Vaibashika is asserted to be findable at the time of analysis.

The **Vaibashika** say that the nominal self that is the basis for karmic cause and effect is findable at the time of analysis, and that it is not negated by the wisdom realising selflessness on the path of seeing. But the **Prasangika** say, 'On the path of the path of seeing the yogi realises the absence of the nominal self that is the basis of cause and effect as asserted by you. Why? Because your nominal self is findable at the time of analysis, but anything that is asserted as findable at the time of analysis is realised to be non-existent by the path of seeing. The actual nominal self is unfindable at the time of analysis'. This is a subtle point made by Lama Tsong Khapa in his explanation.

Here the opponent is not satisfied with a self that cannot be found at the time of analysis. They think that there has to be something more to the self. Therefore they say the self has to be findable at the time of analysis. But findability at the time of analysis and inherent existence and intrinsic existence are the same according to the Prasangika, and are therefore the object of negation. That's why the Prasangika say the path of seeing realises the absence of anything that is findable at the time of analysis and therefore it also realises the absence of self

that is findable at the time of analysis.

One thing to understand is that the grasping at a permanent solitary independent self is a purely intellectual grasping, not an innate grasping. That is an important point to understand. Even though the Sammitiya-Vaibashika realise the absence of a permanent solitary independent self, they still seem to have this notion that there is a self that is a substantial existent in one way or another. When they say that the path of seeing realises the absence of a permanent, solitary, independent self, that's their object of negation and they don't go any deeper. There is lots of debate about this particular view of the Sammitiya-Vaibashika.

One has to meditate on these different things and not just of say, 'That's something the Vaibashika don't accept', or 'That's something that the Vaibashika accept'. One has to meditate for oneself, refuting the inherently existent 'I'. Think about it. If the 'I' were to be inherently one with the aggregates, then it would have to be really completely one, and then that would lead to the fault of there having to be many 'I's', and since there are not many 'I's' then the 'I' cannot be inherently one with the aggregates and so forth. It has to be related to one's understanding.

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Edited Version

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