
Study Group - *Madhyamakavatanama*

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དབུ་མ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བ་བཞུགས་པོ།

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As usual generate a virtuous motivation for the teaching thinking, 'I have to attain enlightenment in order to accomplish the welfare of all sentient beings and towards that end I'm now going to listen to this profound teaching. Then I'm going to put it into practice'.

3.5.1.2.2.1.2.3. Showing further proof contradicting those asserting the aggregates to be the self (cont)

This heading derives from the assertion that the aggregates are the self. After having gone through various proofs showing that the aggregates are not the self, additional different proof is offered in these two verses,

*When your yogis see selflessness
Phenomena definitely become non-existent.
Because of that, at the time of abandoning the
permanent self
Neither your mind nor aggregates are the self.*

Regarding the first two lines Chandrakirti states,

Mirror:

'Sammitiya Vaibhashika, according to *you* it follows that *when yogis see selflessness* directly, the *phenomena* of the aggregates *definitely become non-existent* - because the aggregates are the self'.

The point of this consequence is that if, as the Sammitiya Vaibhashika assert, the aggregates exist intrinsically, and the aggregates are the self, then the consequence arises that a yogi who is in non-dual meditative equipoise on selflessness would realise the absence of the aggregates. Why? Because such a yogi realises the absence of the intrinsically existing self, and since the aggregates are asserted to be the self and are also asserted to exist intrinsically, then it would follow that a yogi who realises that there is no intrinsically existing self would then realise the absence of the said aggregates.

The Sammitiya Vaibhashika assert the aggregates to be the self and they assert the aggregates to exist intrinsically. Therefore a yogi who realises selflessness directly should realise the absence of both these aggregates and this self. Why? Because such a yogi realises the absence of intrinsic existence and the absence of an intrinsically existing self.

The Sammitiya Vaibhashika reply to that, saying that the problem of realising the absence of the aggregates does not arise, because what a yogi on the path of seeing realises to be non-existent is the absence of a permanent, partless and independent self. The Sammitiya Vaibhashika hold the view that selflessness refers to the absence of the permanent, partless independent self. They assert an intrinsically existing self and the final

selflessness according to their view is the absence of a permanent, partless independent self. According to them that's what a yogi on the path of seeing realises, and such a yogi wouldn't have to realise the absence of the aggregates.

To this Chandrakirti responds,

Mirror:

'It follows that neither your aggregates nor your mind are the self - because when *abandoning the permanent self at the time of* directly seeing selflessness one sees it to be non-existent.

This relates to the second two lines,

*Because of that, at this time when abandoning the permanent self,
Neither your mind nor aggregates are the self.*

So Chandrakirti says that it follows that neither your aggregates nor mind are the self. The reason why it says '*neither mind nor aggregates*' is because there are these different views within the Sammitiya Vaibhashika. Some assert all five aggregates to be the self, and some just assert the aggregate of primary consciousness to be the self. It follows that both of those views are untenable. Why? Because the self that is asserted by the Sammitiya Vaibhashika is unfindable. The Sammitiya Vaibhashika assert the self as something that can be found at the time of analysis. But since there is no self to be found at the time of analysis; i.e. when abandoning the permanent self at the time of realising selflessness directly, then it follows that neither the mind nor the aggregates can be the self.

The Sammitiya Vaibhashika don't posit a distinction between the self that is the basis for cause and effect, and the self that is the object of negation.

*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:

'It also follows that according to *you, yogis by seeing selflessness don't realise the suchness of forms and so forth* - because at that time they only see the non-existence of a permanent, partless, independent self.

What this is saying is, 'Your type of yogi does not see the final mode of abiding of phenomena, because they only see the lack of a permanent, partless independent self'.

'Further, take the subject "beings wishing to complete the realisation of emptiness" - it follows they will still *generate attachment etc. - because of engaging forms and so forth upon focusing* on them as existing truly, and because of not having the *realisation of* the way of being, the *identity*, of forms etc.',

The way of being means the final identity of forms and so forth. One can also relate this to arhats and so forth. 'According to you it follows that because they don't have the realisation of the real final identity, arhats and beings wishing to complete the realisation of emptiness will still generate attachment and the other afflictions since they

engage forms etc. upon focussing on them as existing truly.

Basically what this is saying is that the level of realisation of selflessness according to the Sammitiya Vaibhashika is not enough to get rid of the mental afflictions. For that one needs to refute an intrinsically existing self. Here are many terms that all refer to the same thing: intrinsically existing self, inherently existent self, self existing from its own side, self existing out of its own nature, out of its own identity, self that has a quintessential nature and so forth. One needs to realise the absence of such a self in order to be able to overcome the mental afflictions and this is not possible just by realising the absence of a permanent, single independent self. Here one should also contemplate the nature of the object of negation, the nature of one's own distorted perception, and how deep one really needs to go in order to be able to overcome one's afflictions.

The verse is saying that as long as one asserts that the aggregates possess a quintessential nature, the afflictions cannot be abandoned. Rather, exactly the opposite happens – more afflictions will be generated. So you arrive at an arhat who generates afflictions.

We can relate this not only to the Sammitiya Vaibhashika, but also to our own personal situation. One arrives at the conclusion that because one is in a situation where the view of the transitory collections strongly arises occasionally and there is a strong belief in the intrinsic nature of the aggregates and so forth, the afflictions are not something that will be abandoned, but will only be generated further and further. As long as one has these types of distorted views there is no chance of abandoning the afflictions. Rather, one will just generate more and more of them.

One should arrive at the position that the afflictions in general, and in particular the ignorance grasping at intrinsic existence are the enemies which have to be overcome and got rid of.

So what needs to be done is to conclude that it is essential to realise emptiness, because as long as one has those views there's no chance of abandoning the afflictions.

3.5.1.2.2.1.2.4. Explaining the intent behind teaching that the aggregates are the self

This is subdivided into five subdivisions.

3.5.1.2.2.1.2.4.1. Explaining the meaning of teaching that all self-views are only views of the aggregates

3.5.1.2.2.1.2.4.2. Explaining the mere collection of the aggregates not to be the self

3.5.1.2.2.1.2.4.3. The shape of the collection of aggregates isn't the self

3.5.1.2.2.1.2.4.4. Showing other reasons contradicting the assertion that the mere collection of the aggregates is the self

3.5.1.2.2.1.2.4.5. The Buddha taught that the self is labelled in dependence on the six spheres etc.

3.5.1.2.2.1.2.4.1. Explaining the meaning of teaching that all self-views are only views of the aggregates

This outline has three subdivisions.

3.5.1.2.2.1.2.4.1.1. Showing the scriptural reference to be the refuting kind

3.5.1.2.2.1.2.4.1.2. Even though the scripture is classified as affirming it doesn't show the aggregates to be the self

3.5.1.2.2.1.2.4.1.3. Refuting attempts at damage control by the Sammitiya Vaibhashika

3.5.1.2.2.1.2.4.1.1. Showing the scriptural reference to be the refuting kind

This outline refers to the sutra that teaches that the aggregates are the self. It shows that this sutra is actually a sutra that refutes, rather than being an affirming sutra. It is actually a sutra that was taught in order to refute something.

The first two lines state the assertion of the Realists.

*If one asserts the aggregates to be the self
Because the teacher said 'the aggregates are the self,'*

There are statements in the sutras where the Buddha said that the aggregates are the self. If one asserts that because of those statements the aggregates are self then this, of course, has to be refuted, which happens in the next six lines,

*This is to refute a self apart from the aggregates,
Because in other sutras it states 'form isn't self' etc.*

*That neither form nor feeling is the self, recognition
Also isn't the self, compositional factors aren't and
Neither is consciousness, is taught in other sutras.*

Therefore

I don't accept that the brief teaching says 'aggregates are self'.

Here the Sammitiya Vaibhashika reply to the Prasangika saying, 'All your clever and baseless reasoning can't really harm my position, because my position is based on valid scriptural sources'.

They say, 'The aggregates are posited as the self, because the Buddha said the aggregates are the self. So even though you are trying to contradict my point of view with all your clever reasons regarding selflessness and so forth, I have a valid scriptural quotation on my side, because the Buddha said that the aggregates are the self.'

What the Buddha said is,

*'Oh Bhikkhu, whatever practitioner of virtue or
whatever Brahmin, their gaze perfectly following,
thinking "self", their gaze follows perfectly the
five aggregates alone'.*

We have mentioned this quote before. The gaze, the view that thinks self, always focuses on the five aggregates alone. This is the position of the Sammitiya Vaibhashika, which is now going to be refuted.

The statement 'their gaze follows perfectly the five aggregates alone', is to refute a self that is of a different nature from the aggregates. It does not show the aggregates to be the self, because it is taught in other sutras that form and so forth isn't the self.

This statement that when they think 'I' or 'self', their gaze follows the five aggregates alone, does not show that the five aggregates are the self. What it does show is that

there is no self that is of a different nature from the aggregates. The reason is because it is taught in other sutras that form and so forth are not the self.

Chandrakirti says,

'I don't accept that the brief teaching saying, 'Oh Buddha, whatever practitioner etc.' says that the aggregates are the self, because in other sutras it is taught that neither form, nor feeling is the self, that recognition also isn't the self, that compositional factors aren't and neither is consciousness.'

This statement, 'their gaze follows perfectly the five aggregates alone' shows that the focus of the transitory view is the five aggregates alone, and not a self that is of a different entity from the five aggregates. Showing that the focus of the transitory view is the five aggregates alone implicitly shows that the self is merely labelled on the collection of the five aggregates. Here, by explicitly refuting that the focus of the transitory view is a self that is of a different entity from the five aggregates, and by saying the focus is the five aggregates alone, it implicitly shows that the self is labelled on the collection of the five aggregates.

The definition of the self as an 'I' that is labelled on any of the five aggregates, comes from this sutra that establishing the five aggregates alone as the focal object of the transitory view.

3.5.1.2.2.1.2.4.1.2. Even though the scripture is classified as affirming it doesn't show the aggregates to be the self

When saying 'the aggregates are self' the collection of The aggregates is it, not the nature of the aggregates. Not the protector, not the subduer or witness. Because of not existing it isn't the collection.

Mirror:

The Sammitiya Vaibhashika say, 'Even though showing the aggregates to be the self, the scripture "Oh Bhikkhu, whatever practitioner of virtue etc.", doesn't show the nature of each of the aggregates to be the self. *When saying, "the aggregates are the self", it shows the collection of the aggregates to be the self.* When we say the trees are the forest we mean that the collection of the trees is the forest and not that the individual nature of each tree is the forest. I assert the collection of the aggregates to be the self'.

The first two lines of the root text express a clarification of their position by the Sammitiya Vaibhashika. They say that when it is said that the aggregates are the self, what it means is that the collection of the aggregates is the self, and not the individual nature of the aggregates. Similarly, they say, when we say that the trees are the forest we don't mean that each individual entity of the trees is the forest, but we refer to the whole collection of the trees as the forest. Likewise when we say that the aggregates are the self we don't refer to the individual nature of each of the aggregates as the self, but we refer to the collection of the aggregates as being the self.

The Sammitiya Vaibhashika say, 'Saying the aggregates are the self, shows the collection of the aggregates to be the self. It is similar to when we say the trees are the forest

and so forth. That's my assertion - I assert that the collection of the aggregates is the self'.

To this clarification by the Sammitiya Vaibhashika Chandrakirti replies,

Mirror:

Take the subject '*the mere collection of the aggregates*' - *it isn't* the self - because it is *not the protector* and *not the subduer or witness*

The protector, subduer or witness refers to the statements in the sutra that we have previously mentioned, 'Oneself is one's protector, oneself is one's subduer, the self is also that which bears witness to what is right and what is wrong.

Oneself has to be the witness for what is right and what is wrong. It has to be oneself who verifies what is right and what is wrong. There will be many other voices trying to tell one what is right and what is wrong but one should not really listen to those voices. One has to verify for oneself what is right and what is wrong. So the self has to be able to fulfil those three functions - it has to be the protector, the subduer, and the witness - and the collection of the five aggregates is none of those three things. That's why the collection of the five aggregates is not the self.

Why are the aggregates not the protector, the witness or the subduer? Because they don't exist substantially. This relates back to the argument in the Prasangika system that everything exists only imputedly. They say that there is nothing that is substantially established, because if something were to be substantially established it would exist completely independently. Therefore, since the aggregates don't exist substantially they cannot be an independent self. Here 'existing substantially' refers to the self existing independently.

3.5.1.2.2.1.2.4.1.3. Refuting attempts at damage control by the Sammitiya Vaibhashika

At that time its parts, abiding as a collection, Become the very chariot. Chariot and self are same.

This is the refutation of the attempts at damage control by the Sammitiya Vaibhashika. The damage control that the Sammitiya Vaibhashika try to exert is not mentioned in the root text explicitly.

Mirror:

The Sammitiya Vaibhashika assert, 'There is no problem with being a protector, subduer and witness, because the action of protecting is endowed with a collection. There is a pervasion, because the collection and that possessing the collection are of one nature'.

The Sammitiya Vaibhashika say that there's no problem with saying that the collection of the aggregates are the protector, because the action of protecting is endowed with the collection, and the collection and that possessing the collection are of one nature.

Mirror:

Chandrakirti replies, 'That is incorrect. It is sometimes unsuitable to apply the word "self" to the collection of the aggregates and sometimes to that endowed with that collection of aggregates.

‘Further, it follows that *at the time* of asserting the collection of the aggregates to be the self, the *collection* of the chariot’s *parts*, *abiding* in one place, *become the very chariot* -’

If you say that the collection of the aggregates is the self, then the collection of all the parts of the chariot lying there in one heap should also be the chariot. Or, if you have all the parts of a table lying there in front of you then that should be also the table. Why?

‘because the *chariot and the self are the same* in being posited relative to their parts.’

The self and the chariot are both posited in the same way relative to their parts, and therefore if you say that the collection of the aggregates are the self then the collection of the chariot’s parts also becomes the chariot. Therefore, if you have that collection lying there then it should be the chariot.

In relation to this *Mirror* says,

‘From a sutra, “Similarly to expressing ‘chariot’ in dependence upon the collection of parts, we talk about illusory sentient beings in dependence upon the aggregates”.’

This shows how everything exists imputedly.

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Edited Version

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