
Study Group - *Madhyamakavatanama*

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

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Generate a virtuous motivation for the teaching - the motivation of bodhicitta. The motivation one generates shouldn't be an entity different from one's mind, but one's mind should become of one nature with bodhicitta. That means generating the motivation whole-heartedly.

3.5.1.2.2.1.4. Refuting a person that is a substantial existent and that can't be described as being that itself or other (cont)

Here 'that itself' refers to the aggregates and 'other' refers to something of different nature from the aggregates.

3.5.1.2.2.1.4.1. Stating the assertion

An opponent asserts a person, a substantial existent, not describable

As that itself or other, permanent, impermanent and so forth;

Asserted as a knowledge object of the six primary consciousnesses

Is also asserted as the basis of 'I'-grasping.

The **Sammitiya Vaibhashika** assert a person who is on the one hand a substantial existent, and on the other hand cannot be described as being intrinsically one with or different from the aggregates. It also cannot be described as being permanent or impermanent and so forth. This person is also asserted as an object of knowledge of the six primary consciousnesses.

The six primary consciousnesses are generated in dependence upon becoming aware of the six external sources, which are the six categories of objects of the six senses. Through the six primary consciousnesses becoming aware of the six sources, the person also comes to be known.

That's why it is said that this person who on the one hand is a substantial existent that cannot be described is an object of knowledge of the six primary consciousnesses. This person is also asserted as the basis of 'I'-grasping.

Last time, we said that the six primary consciousnesses are asserted as an instance of this indescribable person. This was a mistake. This indescribable person is asserted to be the object of knowledge of the six primary consciousnesses and is also asserted as the basis of 'I'-grasping.

To sum it up, the **Sammitiya Vaibhashika** assert a self that is a substantial existent that cannot be described as being intrinsically one with the aggregates; that cannot be described as being intrinsically different from the aggregates; that is the creator of karma; that experiences the different results of karma; that circles in cyclic existence and is that which will attain nirvana and liberation at the time of going beyond sorrow. Because it

is understood in dependence on the six primary consciousnesses, it is asserted to be the object of knowledge of the six primary consciousnesses, and it is also the focal object of innate 'I'-grasping.

All these points have to be contemplated carefully. You have to understand that on the one hand the **Sammitiya Vaibhashika** assert the self to be a substantial existent, and in that they differ from the other schools. The other schools such as the **Mind Only** and so forth assert the focal object of the innate 'I'-grasping, the mere 'I', to be an imputed existent. But the **Sammitiya Vaibhashika** say that this mere 'I' that is the focal object of the innate 'I'-grasping is a substantial existent. This is the characteristic that will be refuted in the next verse.

Lower tenets such as the **Svatantrika-Madhyamaka** and the **Mind Only** say that the person is an imputed existent that is labelled on the basis of imputation - the aggregates (which are a substantial existent). This is something that the **Prasangika** have an argument with. The **Prasangika** say that if that which is imputed is an imputed existent, then the basis of imputation cannot be a substantial existent. The **Prasangika** don't accept that discrepancy. They say that if that which is imputed is an imputed existent then the basis of imputation also has to be an imputed existent.

3.5.1.2.2.1.4.2. Refuting the assertion

This verse refutes the self as being a substantial existent.

Because mind isn't understood to be undecribable from the body

Existing phenomena aren't realised as undecribable.

Should some selves be established as phenomena - Phenomena established like mind don't become undecribable.

Here the subject is in the third line.

Take the subject 'some selves that are established as a substantial existent phenomena' - it follows that they are not undecribable - because they are like consciousness, which is also a substantial existent and not undecribable.

Chandrakirti posits a consequence arising from two contradicting views the **Sammitiya Vaibhashika** hold. It follows that consciousness should also be undecribable, because it is a substantial existent. However, consciousness can be described as being of one nature with itself and of different nature from the form aggregate. Apart from those two possibilities consciousness cannot exist in any other way.

The **Sammitiya Vaibhashika** say the self is a substantial existent because it cannot be described as being of intrinsically one nature with the aggregates or being intrinsically different from the aggregates. For them a feature of being a substantial existent is that it cannot be described as being one with, or different from something else.

The reasoning that **Chandrakirti** applies here basically tells the **Sammitiya Vaibhashika**, "There is a contradiction in your own presentation because you assert that consciousness is a substantial existent, and at the same time as it says in the first line, "mind is not understood to be undecribable from the body". Mind can be described as being of one nature with itself and mind can be

described as being something different from the body. At the same time you say that mind is a substantial existent, so therefore according to you there is a contradiction in what you assert. According to you, since mind is a substantial existent, it should also be not able to be described as being different from the body and being of one nature with itself. But since mind is understood to be able to be described as apart from the body, then substantial existent phenomena in general should be understood to be undecidable. Should there be some selves that are established as a substantial existent phenomena, then it follows that, like mind, they don't become undecidable as being one with itself or being different from something else.'

This next verse establishes the self as an imputed existent.

*Since the entity of your vase, not established as
phenomenon,
Is undecidable from form and so forth,
Any self that is undecidable from the aggregates
Should not be realised as established self-existent.*

This is done through the example of the phenomenon of vase, which is accepted by the Sammitiya Vaibhashika as an imputed existent. On the one hand the **Sammitiya Vaibhashika** assert that the person is a substantial existent and on the other hand they say that the vase is an imputed existent, but they use the same reason in both cases. By their own logic the Sammitiya Vaibhashika say that the person is a substantial existent, because it can not be described as being intrinsically one with its aggregates or intrinsically different from the aggregates. They use the same reasoning to prove that the vase is an imputed existent. They say the vase is an imputed existent because it is cannot be described as being intrinsically one with its parts, or intrinsically different from its parts. **Chandrakirti** points out this contradiction in their own argument and says, 'According to the logic that you apply to the phenomenon "vase", then the phenomenon self should also be an imputed existent.

'The identity not established as your vase phenomenon is the identity of a substantial existent. So according to you Sammitiya Vaibhashika, the identity of the vase is not established as a substantial existent. Why? Because the vase cannot be described as being of one nature with its parts, or of a different nature from its parts and so forth.

'If that reasoning were accurate, then likewise any self, which according to you can not be described as being of one nature with itself or being of different nature from the aggregates and so forth, would also have to be an imputed existent. It should not be asserted as a substantial self-existent, because the reasoning is exactly the same. Therefore, do not realise the self as an inherently existent phenomenon that exists out of its own nature. Why? Because it is an imputed existent'.

Take the subject 'self' - it is not a substantial existent - because it is neither one substantial existent nor a multiple substantial existent. If something were to be a substantial existent, then it would either have to be a single substantial existent, or it would have to be a multiple substantial existent. There are only those two possibilities, and since the self is neither one nor the other, then it cannot be a substantial existent.

*Since your consciousness is not asserted as something
other
From its own self; and is asserted as a phenomenon
Different from form etc.; and these two aspects are seen
on phenomena,
Self is non-existent because of lacking functioning
phenomena.*

Here 'your consciousness' means the consciousness according to the Sammitiya Vaibhashika presentation, which is not asserted as something other from its own self. Consciousness is not asserted as being different from its own nature, and consciousness is asserted as a phenomenon that is of a different nature from form and so forth. If something exists it can only exist in those two ways - being of one nature with itself and being of a different nature from something else. There is no third possibility, and therefore the self does not exist as a substantial existent because it is neither a single substantially-existent functioning phenomenon, nor it is a multiple substantially-existent phenomenon. This is the reasoning of one and many. Something has to be either one, or it has to be many, it has to be one with or different from. There is no third possibility.

Summary

We have now gone through a variety of reasonings that refuted the collection of the aggregates as being the self, that refuted the self as being established from the side of the collection of the aggregates, that refuted the self as being established from the side of each individual aggregate, or as the shape of the form aggregate and so forth. These various types of reasonings implicitly lead up to a point. After refuting all these options of what the self is not, then what is left is that the self being merely imputed.

If the self is not established from the side of the collection of the aggregates, if the self is not established from the side of each individual aggregate, then in the end how does the self really exist? It is merely labelled on the aggregates. This shows that the aggregates are a valid basis for the self. If something is imputed on an invalid basis, then after refuting the imputed meaning nothing new is established. But here, by having looked for the imputed meaning and refuted these various possibilities, an imputed self is implicitly established, which is the person who creates karma, experiences the effects and so forth. This is a sign that the aggregates are a valid basis for the imputation of the self.

3.5.1.2.2.1.5. Presentation of how the self is merely labelled in dependence upon the aggregates, together with an example

There are five sub-outlines.

3.5.1.2.2.1.5.1. Showing the self to be similar to the chariot in being labelled dependently while being free from the seven extremes

3.5.1.2.2.1.5.2. An extensive explanation of the two remaining cases not explained before

3.5.1.2.2.1.5.3. Refuting objections to this explanation

3.5.1.2.2.1.5.4. Showing also that other nominal meanings of the label are established

3.5.1.2.2.1.5.1. Showing the self to be similar to the chariot in being labelled dependently while being free from the seven extremes

By refuting that the focal object of the innate 'I'-grasping is a substantial existent, one implicitly establishes it as an imputed existent.

Therefore the basis of 'I'-grasping isn't a phenomenon, Not different from the aggregates, not the nature of the aggregates, Aggregates aren't the basis, it isn't endowed with them, It is established in dependence on the aggregates. Likewise, the chariot isn't asserted apart from its parts It isn't not apart, it also isn't endowed with those, Not on the parts, the parts not on it, Not the mere accumulation, not the shape.

Mirror:

Take the subject '*the basis of I'-grasping, the self*' - it *isn't* an imputed existing *phenomenon* - because when investigated with logic, it doesn't exist substantially.

Take the subject '*this self*' - *it is established in dependence on the aggregates* - because this self *isn't* a *different* entity *from the aggregates, the nature of the aggregates* are *not* the self, *aggregates* and this self *aren't basis* and dependent out of their own nature, *it isn't endowed with* the aggregates out of its own nature and the label 'self' is seen as unattainable (unfindable).

The 'I' that is the focal object of the transitory view does not exist inherently, because it is not found when looked for in the seven ways. It follows that it is unfindable when looked for in these seven ways:

1. It is not inherently different from the aggregates that are its basis of imputation;
2. It is not of inherently one nature with these aggregates.
3. It is also not inherently dependent on the aggregates.
4. It is not inherently the basis for the aggregates.

The self and the aggregates are basis and dependent. The self, the person, is the dependent and the aggregates are the basis. So the person is not an intrinsic dependent on the aggregates and the aggregates are not an intrinsic basis for the self.

5. The self is not intrinsically endowed with the aggregates.
6. The mere accumulation of the basis of imputation, the aggregates, is not the self.
7. The shape of the basis of imputation, the aggregates, is also not the self.

The first five of the seven points are mentioned in *Root Wisdom*, while Chandrakirti added the sixth and seventh points. The reason he added those two points is because as we have seen, at one point some of the Realists came up with the idea that the collection of the aggregates is the self. After the aggregates in general and then the individual aggregates being the self have been refuted, then they came up with this idea that the mere collection of the aggregates is the self. In order to refute that view,

Chandrakirti added the sixth point. They also come up with the idea that the special shape of the aggregates is the self and in order to refute that then Chandrakirti added the seventh point.

Chandrakirti says that that the seven-fold reasoning is easier to comprehend if one applies it to the example of the chariot.

In terms of the chariot:

1. The chariot is not of an intrinsically different nature from its parts.
2. The chariot is not intrinsically one with its parts.
3. The chariot is not intrinsically endowed with the parts.
4. The chariot does not intrinsically depend on its parts.
5. The parts are not intrinsically the basis for the chariot.
6. The mere collection of the parts is not the chariot.
7. The shape of the parts is not the chariot.

If you consider these seven points, you will realise that we have already been through all of them.

1. We refuted a self that was intrinsically different from the aggregates.
2. We refuted a self that was intrinsically one with the aggregates.
3. We refuted the self as being intrinsically endowed with the aggregates.
4. We refuted the self as the intrinsic dependent.
5. We refuted the aggregates as the intrinsic base.
6. We refuted the mere collection of the aggregates as the self
7. We refuted the shape of the aggregates as the self.

Applying this to personal practice

Selflessness of person

One needs to apply this reasoning to one's meditation.

Consider the subject 'the self' - it lacks inherent existence - because it is not found when looked for in the seven ways.

Then one can go through the **seven-fold analysis**.

If the self were to exist inherently, then the inherent self would have to be either of one nature with the aggregates or it would have to be of a different nature from the aggregates. One can then meditate on the faults that would follow in each of those cases.

- If the self were to be intrinsically one with the aggregates, what type of faults would occur?
- If the self were to be of an intrinsically different nature from the aggregates, what type of faults would occur?
- If the self were to intrinsically possess the aggregates, what type of faults would occur and so forth.

and so on through the seven points. Maybe with the analysis of the shape not being the self it's not even necessary to relate it to the specific object of negation. One can do the meditation just with the 'mere self' by itself. By arriving at the point where the self is not

findable in those seven ways, one arrives at the logical conclusion that the self does not exist inherently. That is the goal and the culmination of that analysis.

Selflessness of phenomena

Likewise with meditating on the selflessness of phenomena.

Consider the subject 'sprout' - it is not generated inherently - because it is not generated in any of the four extreme ways - it is not generated from self, it is not generated from other, it is not generated from both and it is not generated from no cause. In such a way one arrives at the lack of intrinsic generation of the sprout.

Even though the selflessness of non-compounded phenomena was not explained explicitly, it is easily understood after one has understood the selflessness of compounded phenomena. By meditating in such a way, Nagarjuna and Chandrakirti realised selflessness and if we do likewise, then we too can realise selflessness.

Initially one has to contemplate **the characteristics of inherent existence**, how something would exist if it were to be an inherently existent. Then, after one has contemplated the nature of the object of negation one then applies the analysis. One should sequentially go through the object of negation according to the different schools. What is the object of negation according to the Mind Only, what is the object of negation according to the Svatantrika-Madhyamaka and so forth.

One has to go through each of the seven points and then contemplate the faults that would arise in each case. For example, if the self were to be **intrinsically different from the aggregates**, then it would become a completely different entity, meaning that we could apprehend the self without apprehending the aggregates first. We already know that it cannot be apprehended without the aggregates being apprehended, which refutes the self as being a totally unrelated entity to the aggregates.

If the self is not intrinsically different from the aggregates, then the next question is, 'Is it **intrinsically one with the aggregates**?'. Here, we also have a variety of faults that arise such as many selves, intrinsic generation and disintegration before nirvana and so forth. Here the fault would be that one person would have many selves. In general if we have a group of one hundred people, then there are of course one hundred selves, so just the existence of many selves in general is not a fault. The fault is that one self, one person, would actually have to be many people,

Then there are the faults of being **intrinsically endowed with the aggregates** and so forth. By going through all these points one by one, then the mere collection of the aggregates being the self is refuted. There is also quotation from the sutra saying that the mere collection of the aggregates is not the self, but it is imputed on the aggregates.

We also went through the faults of the **self and the aggregates being intrinsically dependent and basis**. This seven-point analysis includes the reasoning of one and many - if something exists inherently, it has to be either inherently one or inherently many. If something exists nominally, it has to be either one or many, and there is no

third possibility. It can be only single or a multiple; there is no third possibility. Likewise, if something exists inherently, it has to be inherently one or inherently multiple. If one refutes those two possibilities, then one refutes inherent existence. Then there are also faults of something inherent being generated from an inherent cause, which we went through in quite some detail.

One can also reflect that **the self does not exist out of the nature of the five aggregates**, but is imputed on the five aggregates. Nor does it exist **independently from the five aggregates**. To the self-grasping mind the self appears to exist independently from the aggregates. Reflecting how the self is merely labelled on the aggregates counteracts the perception of a self that exists independently of the aggregates. When we do the meditation on selflessness, we also have to understand the way the self-grasping is harmed by our meditation. Reflecting on the dependence of the self on the aggregates counteracts the perception of the self as being something that exists independently from the aggregates.

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