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## Study Group - *Madhyamakavatanama*

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As usual, generate the thought of enlightenment as a virtuous motivation for listening to the teachings. Think, 'I have attained enlightenment for the welfare for all sentient beings and in order to do so, I am now going to listen to this profound teaching, and then I am going to put it into practice as much as possible'. Try to generate this thought very strongly.

### 3.5.1.2.2.1.5.2. An extensive explanation of the two remaining cases not explained before (cont.)

Previously the assertion that the mere collection of the aggregates is the self was refuted. If you remember, at one point the Realists said that the mere collection of the aggregates is the self because it is stated as such in a sutra where it says, 'The five aggregates are the self'. However, we said that this sutra was taught for a particular purpose, and the meaning was that the self is labelled in dependence on the five aggregates. That was one reason why the collection of the five aggregates are not the self.

Then the assertion by the Realists that the shape of the aggregates is the self was also refuted. **Chandrakirti** pointed out that shape has to be form, and that since the **Realists** themselves assert mind to be part of the person, the person can't be shape. He said to them, 'If you were to assert the person to only be form, then one could talk about shape being the person'. 'But', said Chandrakirti, 'You don't accept that the person is only form, so therefore positing shape as the person does not fly'.

### 3.5.1.2.2.1.5.2.1.2. Refuting the assertion that the shape is the chariot

In *Mirror* this heading is divided from the point of view of three questions, while other texts give three sub-divisions.

First there are two fundamental questions. If the shape of the parts is the chariot, is

- the shape of each individual part the chariot or
- the shape of the collection of the parts the chariot?

The first question is then further sub-divided into two questions.

- Are the shapes of the earlier unassembled parts and the shapes of the assembled parts the same,
- or is the chariot the shapes of the individual assembled parts, but without the characteristics of the earlier shapes of the unassembled parts?

This gives us three questions:

1. Is the chariot the shapes of the individual assembled parts, with no difference between the shapes of the earlier

unassembled parts and the shapes of the assembled parts?

2. Is the chariot the shapes of the individual assembled parts, but they lack some characteristic of the shapes of the earlier unassembled parts?

3. Is the chariot the shape of the assembly of parts?

**1. Refuting that the chariot is the shapes of the individual assembled parts, with no difference between the shapes of the earlier unassembled parts and the shapes of the assembled parts.**

*You, just as the shapes of the individual parts existed before,*

*It is exactly the same once the chariot is realised -*

*The chariot does not exist,*

*Just as when they were separate.*

The **Realists** are saying that the individual shapes of the assembled parts are the chariot. They accept that when those individual parts just lie scattered on the ground, then at that time the shapes of the individual parts are not the chariot. 'But', say the Realists, 'When they are assembled the individual shapes of the parts are the chariot'.

**Chandrakirti** says that this argument doesn't work because there is not really any change in the individual shape of the parts. 'Since there is no change in the individual shapes of the parts from when they are not assembled to when they're assembled, and since you accept that there is no chariot when the parts are not assembled, then logically there also can't be any chariot once they are assembled'.

**2. Refuting that the chariot is the shapes of the individual assembled parts, but they lack some characteristic of the shapes of the earlier unassembled parts.**

This next possibility is that the individual shapes of the individual parts can be the chariot, because they lack a characteristic that the unassembled parts had. Another way of saying this is that there is something special to them now that they are assembled. The individual shapes of the individual parts are slightly different from when they were in an unassembled state, and that's why they can be the chariot.

The answer to this point lies in the following verse:

*If now, at the very time of the chariot,*

*The wheels and so forth had a different shape,*

*It would become perceptible, which it isn't.*

*Therefore the mere shape isn't the chariot.*

'Once all the parts have been assembled there is no perceptible change in the shape of the wheels and so forth, compared to before when they were unassembled. Therefore this second argument of yours also doesn't work.'

**3. Refuting that the chariot is the shape of the assembly of parts**

The other possibility is that the shape of the collection of the parts is the chariot, that the shape of the assembled parts as a whole is the chariot. The **Realists** say that through the assembly of the parts a specific shape is generated, which is the chariot. The Realists therefore

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assert that the special shape of the assembled parts is the chariot.

This is refuted in the following verse:

***Because your collection does not exist  
Shape does not on the collection of parts.  
And in dependence upon what is absolutely not,  
Look, how could shape become like that here?***

The chariot is an example for that imputed, which is the person, and the parts of the chariot are the example for the basis of imputation, which are the aggregates. This should make the chariot that which is imputed on the basis of imputation of its parts.

Here the refutation actually just points out a contradiction in the **Realist's** own assertion. They say that in order for the person to be an imputed existent labelled on the aggregates, the aggregates have to be a substantial existent. But at the same time they assert that the collection of the parts of the chariot, which is the example for the aggregates, is an imputed existent. This is the contradiction.

Transferring the logic of the meaning to the example means that in order for the chariot to be labelled on the parts of the chariot, the parts of the chariot would have to be also a substantial existent. The logic is the same and the example should be concordant with the meaning. However, this is where one arrives at a contradiction within the Realist's own view. According to the Realist's view, the collection of the parts of the chariot is an imputed existent.

Therefore **Chandrakirti** says that the mere shape of the parts cannot be the chariot that is labelled in dependence upon the parts of the chariot, because the parts of the chariot are not a substantial existent but an imputed existent.

*Mirror:*

***Here***, when the opponent need a substantial existent as the basis for an imputedly existent, ***how could shape become*** an imputed existent ***in dependence upon*** a collection of parts that are ***absolutely not*** substantially ***existent?*** Shape does not exist as an imputed existent supported by ***the collection of parts - because your collection*** is a substantial existent and hence ***does not exist.*** Pervasion accepted.

Chandrakirti points out to the Realists that 'it is unsuitable to give the mere shape of the chariot as an example for the person, because that would make the mere shape of the chariot an imputed existent. For the mere shape of the chariot to be an imputed existent, the parts of the chariot would have to be a substantial existent. He says to them, 'According to your own position, the mere parts of the chariot are actually an imputed existent. So you arrive at the contradiction within your own position, having one imputed existent – the mere shape of the chariot - existing in dependence upon another imputed existent - the mere parts of the chariot.'

### 3.5.1.2.2.1.5.2.2. Transferring this logic to other objects

*Mirror:*

'What if an imputedly existent shape is labelled in dependence upon an imputedly existent collection? Then the fault that you just posited does not exist'.

Here the **Realists** very quickly adapted their point of view. You can see here by the change in the Realist's position how, without probably being quite aware of it themselves, they have actually adopted the Prasangika point of view.

***In accordance with your position on this,  
You should understand that all  
Forms of effects having a non-true nature  
Are generated in dependence on non-true causes.***

That's why **Chandrakirti** then says, 'In accordance with this new position of yours, you should also understand that in dependence on non-true causes all non-true effects are generated.

For example, the sprout that is generated from the seed, or the karma that is generated from ignorance and so forth, have a non-true aspect in accordance with the non-true aspect of the cause. Understand that all results that lack true existence are generated from causes that lack true existence'.

The refutation of the mere collection of the parts of the chariot as being the chariot also has an additional purpose.

*Mirror:*

...the statement '***awareness of vase is*** generated ***with regard*** to the ***forms etc.*** of vase, the collection of the eight particles ***abiding like that*** to be ***simply invalid.***

***Through this it is simply invalid to say 'awareness of vase'  
Relative to forms etc. that abide like that.***

The **Realists** say that the awareness of vase is generated relative to the collection of the particles of the vase. In Buddhist philosophy one talks about a particle of eight-fold substance. The assertion is that each particle possesses the four elements and four sources. Here, of the five sources - visible forms, sounds, smells, taste and tactile sensations - we eliminate sounds, which leaves us with visible forms, smells, taste and tactile sensations. Hence, particle of eight-fold substance.

The vase obviously possesses many, many particles of this eight-fold substance. The Realists say that the collection of these particles of eight-fold substance is the vase. Why? Because the awareness of vase is generated 'with regard to the forms etc.' of vase. 'Forms' refers to these particles of eight-fold substances. The Realists say the awareness of vase is generated with regard to this collection of particles, and that's why this particular collection of particles is the vase.

The additional reason for refuting that the mere collection of the parts is the chariot is to also refute that the mere collection of particles is the vase, or the chariot and so forth. Therefore the statement that the awareness of vase is generated with regard to this collection of particles is

actually an invalid statement.

*Because of lacking generation form etc. also don't exist,  
And for that reason they are also unsuitable to be shape.*

The particles of eight-fold substance and the eight-fold substances are not a substantial existent because they are not generated intrinsically. Why are they not generated intrinsically? Because they are devoid of the four extreme generations – they are not generated from self, other, both or no cause.

**Chandrakirti** says to the Realists, 'The mere collection of the particles of eight-fold substance is not the vase. Also the shape of the collection of those particles cannot be the vase, because there is no basis of imputation for vase, as the basis does not exist substantially'.

We have to be very clear about the object of negation in order to understand all of these points, otherwise the seven-fold analysis of Chandrakirti will not make much sense. It becomes very difficult to posit the chariot if one eliminates the mere collection of the parts as the chariot. The merely labelled chariot can fulfil the function of the chariot on the mere collection of the parts of the chariot. This becomes very difficult to understand because once the collection of the parts has been eliminated as the chariot, then, it becomes very difficult to posit the chariot in any other way.

The collection of the parts is refuted as the chariot and the shape of the collection of the parts is refuted as the chariot and so forth. If one doesn't understand the Prasangika point of view very well it becomes very difficult to posit the chariot at all. So one has to find a way of positing something that is able to fulfil the function of the chariot, and which is labelled in dependence on the parts of the chariot.

One needs to analyse the opposing views of the Realists and the Prasangika. The **Realists** say that in order for the chariot to exist, it has to exist intrinsically. By this they mean that it has to be findable at the time of analysis and investigation, and that only if it is findable at the time of analysis and investigation, then the chariot can exist while The **Prasangika** presentation is exactly the opposite. The Prasangika view is that something can only exist if it is not findable at the time of analysis and investigation. Therefore there is no intrinsically existing chariot to be found in the collection of the parts, or each of the individual parts and so forth.

The **Realists** say that things exist intrinsically because they are findable at the time of analysis and investigation. The **Prasangika** obviously refute that something is findable at the time of analysis and investigation. One has to gain some understanding by contemplating those points. One can of course just say the words in accordance with the different presentations, but one has to relate it to one's experience. You have to think about how the person is unfindable in the seven ways, yet how there is still a person who is nominally existing and who can fulfil the functions of a person.

When we say that the person is not findable in any of the seven ways, what are those seven ways?

*Students: The self is not intrinsically different from the aggregates. The self is not intrinsically the same as the aggregates. The self is not intrinsically endowed with the aggregates. The aggregates are not intrinsically the basis for the self and the self is not an intrinsic dependant on the aggregates. The collection of the aggregates is not the self. The shape of the aggregates is not the self.*

If it is the self-grasping at person, is there pervasion that it is the transitory view?

*Student: No. The self-grasping at the person in someone else's continuum.*

But why is it not the transitory view?

*Student: The transitory view is the self-grasping at the person contained within in our own continuum.*

There are many ways something can be contained within the continuum. Your hand is contained in your continuum? So what are you saying? Are you saying that your hand could also be the object of the transitory view?

*Student: No. That would be an example of a grasping at phenomena.*

Why is grasping at the self in another person's continuum self-grasping at person, but not the transitory view.

*Student: I'm not sure. It may be that the transitory view has to be the root of our own cyclic existence and the grasping of the self of another person isn't the root of cyclic existence.*

Actually, the root of cyclic existence is the grasping at the self of phenomena i.e. the grasping at the aggregates as being inherently existent. When we look at the sequence of the generation of the two types of grasping, then first the self-grasping at phenomena is generated, and then the self-grasping at person is generated.

In *Introduction to the Middle Way*, the sequence of the generation of the two types of self-grasping is presented in exactly the opposite way to the way that two types of selflessness are realised. The way they are generated is that the self-grasping at person is generated on the basis of the self-grasping at phenomena. So the self-grasping at phenomena is there first, and then the self-grasping at person. However, the selflessness of person is realised first, and then the selflessness of phenomena is realised second.

As Nagarjuna said,

For as long as there is grasping at the aggregates,  
There will also be a grasping at 'I'.

We have explained those two lines very clearly before.

We have already posited the focal object of the transitory view, so we have to just think about what the focal object of the transitory view is. You have to think about the definition of the transitory view – then it becomes very obvious. What is that definition?

*Students: An afflicted wisdom that, having focussed on the 'I' or 'mine' within one's own continuum, grasps at the 'I' as inherently existent.*

In the definition it very clearly identifies the 'I' and 'mine' in one's own continuum as the focal object. We also said that the mere 'mine' itself is the focal object here and not an example of what is mine, such as the eyes and so forth.

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The word 'I' is contained within the word the 'mine'. So when we focus at 'mine' one also focuses implicitly on 'I'.

What is the definition of a person?

*Student: That which possesses mind.*

So that which possesses mind is a person?

*Student: Yes.*

So Buddha doesn't possess mind?

*Student: Not a contaminated one.*

You have already posited that which is endowed with mind as the definition of a person, so the question arises. Take the subject 'Buddha' – is it a person?

*Student: No.*

Is the subject 'Buddha' not endowed with mind?

*Student: No.*

Then does the subject 'Buddha' not have the qualities of knowledge, compassion and power?

*Student: Yes*

Since 'Buddha' is endowed with knowledge, then of course it has mind and compassion also. So what are you saying? Are you saying that 'Buddha' is a person?

*Student: Yes.*

Isn't Buddha permanent?

*Student: Yes*

Then take the subject 'Buddha' – it follows it is not a person because it is permanent. That fits perfectly well with your own presentation because you already previously asserted that the person is permanent [laughter]

There is no Buddhist tenet holder who says that a person is permanent.

The four seals of Buddhism state very clearly:

- All compounded phenomena are impermanent
- Anything contaminated is misery
- All phenomena are empty and selfless
- Nirvana is peace.

These are called the four white seals of Buddhism. They are the sign that distinguishes Buddhist tenet holders from a non-Buddhist tenet holder. If one is a Buddhist tenet holder, then one has to accept those four views. Similarly, what distinguishes an Australian citizen from citizens from other countries is the Australian passport.

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*Edited Version*

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