
Study Group - *Madhyamakavatanama*

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

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དབུ་མ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བ་བཞུགས་པོ།

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Please generate a virtuous motivation as usual.

3.5.1.2.2.1.5.3. Refuting objections to this explanation

The **Realists** say to the **Prasangika**, 'According to you the continuity of the chariot is severed because the chariot is not findable when looked for in the seven ways'. In the **Prasangika** system there is no such fault, which is stated in this verse.

It is of course not established in seven ways

Within suchness or the world.

Without investigation in accordance with the mere world

It is labelled in dependence on its parts

Mirror:

Take the subject '*it*, the chariot' - it follows it doesn't have to be non-existent even though it is not found when looked for in the seven ways - because even though *it is of course not established* either *within suchness or* within *the conventional world* when looked for *in the seven ways, it is labelled in dependence on its parts in accordance with mere nominal worldly existence without investigation* of reason and meaning.

In the **Realist's** world-view the continuity of the chariot is severed if it is not found in the seven ways. Because they assert an intrinsically existing chariot they would expect the chariot to be findable in any one of those ways, and if the chariot were to be findable in any one of those seven ways then the chariot would indeed be intrinsically existent.

However, because the chariot cannot be found in any of the seven ways one actually arrives at the unfindability of the chariot, which is emptiness. In the **Prasangika** system, even though the chariot is not findable in any of the seven ways, it is labelled in dependence on its parts.

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

This outline refers to the mere nominal existence of the parts of the chariot. It transfers the understanding that the chariot is only labelled in dependence on its parts to the parts themselves, saying that the parts themselves are also only merely labelled.

That itself has components, it has parts,

The chariot is an agent, migrators are told.

The people are established as users.

Don't lose the illusory that is worldly convention.

In the Middle Way philosophy not only is the chariot merely labelled on its parts, but when we take the chariot as the basis of characteristics then we find that it has many parts. All of those parts are merely labelled in

dependence on their basis as well.

In the **Prasangika** system it is possible to say that the chariot is an agent in dependence of the usage of its parts and the people are established as users in dependence on the usage of the chariot and so forth. Why? Because the chariot is merely labelled in dependence upon its parts, and because neither the parts, nor any combination of them, are the chariot.

From the **Realist's** point of view it is not possible to posit a chariot once it has been refuted as existing in any of the seven ways. If one follows the **Realist's** reasoning then one arrives at consequences such as the chariot not actually existing in dependence on its parts, the chariot not being an agent in dependence on the usage of its parts, and so forth.

In order to understand this logic you have to remember the consequences that arise from intrinsic existence. If something were to exist intrinsically then faults would arise. Consequently negating intrinsic existence actually becomes a meditation on cause and effect. Likewise thinking about cause and effect makes one remember emptiness, and remembering emptiness really makes one think about cause and effect, because one has to think about negating an intrinsic, or totally independent, existence.

Mirror:

Chandrakirti refutes the **Realists** saying, '*Don't lose the illusory that is worldly convention*, such as the chariot and so forth, because each individual part of the chariot isn't the chariot and neither is its collection of parts, and you don't accept any other chariot'.

This point is not too difficult to understand. The **Realists** find it difficult to posit a chariot that is unfindable in the seven ways. That is why it says 'you don't accept any other chariot'. Because the **Realists** don't accept any other chariot apart from a chariot that is findable in one of the seven ways, then refuting the chariot as findable in any of the seven ways creates a problem for them. If this is so, they say, then the continuity of chariot becomes non-existent, and then it becomes really irrelevant to say, "ride the chariot" or "buy the chariot" and so forth.

That is why **Chandrakirti** says to the **Realists**, 'Don't lose the illusory that is worldly convention'. Even though not findable in any the seven ways the chariot still exists nominally in a way that is different from the seven ways. When one performs this analysis then one can get the feeling that there is a nominally existing merely labelled chariot that exists differently from the seven possibilities.

In the **Prasangika** system the chariot is posited as existing in accordance with the worldly way. It is referred to as existence in accordance with the worldly way because worldly beings don't usually analyse and investigate their existence. The way the chariot is posited is called the worldly way, because the chariot is posited without analysis or investigation.

However, for the **Realists** that is not satisfactory. They say it has to be findable at the time of analysis and investigation and that is where they run into problems. On one hand it is not findable in any of the seven ways,

but then on the other hand they are not able to accept that there is a nominal way of existing, different from the seven possibilities.

3.5.1.2.2.1.6. The self being posited in such a way has the quality of easily abandoning extreme ideas

This has five sub-outlines:

3.5.1.2.2.1.6.1. Actual

3.5.1.2.2.1.6.2. Refuting objections

3.5.1.2.2.1.6.3. Linking the labels and meaning of the chariot and the self

3.5.1.2.2.1.6.4. Showing other qualities of accepting a self that is imputed dependently

3.5.1.2.2.1.6.5. Identifying the self that is the basis of bondage and liberation

3.5.1.2.2.1.6.1. Actual

The chariot is unfindable in the seven ways and is instead merely labelled in dependence on its parts. What is the purpose of understanding this manner of the existence of the chariot?

*That non-existent in seven ways, whichever way
It is stated to exist, yogis don't find its existence.
Through it one becomes easily introduced to
suchness, hence
Here its existence should be asserted in such a
way.*

The chariot is posited without investigation and analysis. Understanding that the chariot exists in such a way has a purpose, because on the one hand it makes it easy for the yogi to be introduced to suchness, and on the other hand it also establishes the illusory existence of the chariot as valid.

If the chariot were to exist inherently then it would have to be found at the time of looking for the imputed meaning in the seven ways. That it is not findable in any of these seven ways refutes the inherently existing chariot and implicitly establishes the actually existing chariot.

The way one has to go about this is to firstly contemplate very well the meaning of the object of negation. Here we had the quote from the *400 Stanzas* by Aryadeva, which dealt with identifying the object of negation, and we also had the quote from *Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* by Shantideva, which said that without coming into contact with the object of negation one will not be able to realise emptiness.

First one has to identify the object of negation, and then one goes through the analytical process of looking for the object of negation in the seven ways, through which one arrives at the unfindability of the chariot.

One should not arrive at a nihilistic view just because the chariot is not findable in the seven ways. Rather one should understand that even though the chariot is not findable in any of the seven ways it still exists in a different way. However, if one doesn't go through the first step of identifying the object of negation, then the rest of the analysis will lose its effect.

One has to be able to distinguish between inherent existence and existence. If one is clear about this distinction when refuting inherent existence, then establishing nominal existence doesn't become a problem.

However if one gets stuck on the non-existence of the object then it becomes difficult to establish nominal existence.

What is the inherently existing self?

Student: The inherent existence of self.

There is no such thing as inherent existence?

Student: It exists without being posited by awareness.

How would you posit something that is not posited by awareness?

Student: It is the object of negation.

That is the subtle object of negation? Geshe-la was asking whether or not inherent existence exists?

Student: No.

Why?

Student: Because it is not your object of awareness.

If you want to state it in that way then you should say because it is not the object of valid cognition.

Is the inherently existent person not the object of the self-grasping person?

Student: It's not the focal object.

Is it an object of self-grasping or not?

Student: Yes

You assert that it doesn't exist because it isn't an object of awareness. The answer was not phrased carefully enough, because that implicitly means that if it is an object of mind then it has to exist. That leads onto the question, 'Well then, does the inherently person exist, because it is an object of mind, because it is an object of self-grasping of person?'. What is your reply?

Student: I agree with that.

That is how debate works, somebody makes an invalid or a false or an incorrect statement. Then immediately you see the logical consequences, and you return a logical consequence, pointing out the fault.

That is the way you should meditate on emptiness. First identify the object of negation and then look for it in the seven ways. That's not just being able to count the seven points off on your fingers, but actually sitting down and meditating on them. Then by going through the process you arrive at the logical conclusion of emptiness.

How is the way of apprehending the object of the wisdom realising selflessness the opposite to the way that self-grasping apprehends its object? This is a very important point to consider, because then you will be able to understand how the wisdom realising emptiness is able to become the antidote to all mental afflictions.

Student: The self-grasping projects the object that exists inherently, so the wisdom that realises the absence of that is the direct opposite.

You have to relate it to one object so that the wisdom's way of apprehending becomes the counter-positive to self-grasping in relation to the one focal object.

On the one hand we have the grasping at the inherent existence of person, where the apprehended object is the

inherently existing person, and on the other hand we have the wisdom that realises the absence of the inherently existent person. When the object of the grasping at the inherently existent person is analysed then one finds that its object is non-existent. In such a way one can see that the grasping at the inherent existence of person is not supported by fact, logic and reason, while the wisdom realising the absence of inherent existence of the person is supported by fact, logic and reason.

One should realise this phenomenon in one's own mind, realising how the wisdom realising selflessness can counteract the grasping at the inherently existent self. In such a way one is able to counteract the mental afflictions.

You have to identify the object of negation within your own continuum and relate to your own being. When you have identified the object of negation you keep that very deeply in your mind, and then you perform the analysis.

Is there a difference in subtlety between the selflessness of person and the selflessness of phenomena?

Students: No.

Why?

Student: They both have the same aspect of realising the lack of inherent existence.

The reason is because there is not really an object of negation. If there were to be a difference in subtlety between the two selflessness then there would have to be two different objects of negation. The two selflessnesses would have to be posited from the point of view of a different object of negation, as is done, for example, in the Svatantrika School. In the Prasangika this is not done.

Is there a difference regarding the grade of difficulty with which the selflessness of phenomena and the selflessness of person are realised?

Student: Yes. You realise the selflessness of person first and then the selflessness of phenomena.

In accordance with that thesis then shouldn't *Introduction to the Middle Way* explain the selflessness of person first and then the selflessness of phenomena afterwards?

Student: The self of person is labelled on the aggregates and because we apprehend the aggregates as being inherently existent, we then experience the self of person.

The sequence in *Introduction to the Middle Way* is taught relative to the sequence of the generation of the two self-grasping.

What is the definition of the person?

Student: That which is imputed by the mind upon the aggregates.

The chariot is also labelled in dependence on the aggregates.

Student: The chariot is not a person.

The definition of the person is the **'I that is labelled in dependence on any of the five aggregates that become its basis of imputation'**. It says on 'any' of the five aggregates, because in the formless realm there is no form aggregate.

What are the five aggregates?

Students: Form, Feeling, Recognition, Compositional Factors, and Consciousness.

What is the reason for listing form first?

Student: Because it is coarse.

That is one of the explanations of why the form aggregate is listed first, but it isn't the reason I was looking for. The aggregate that we first become aware of is the form aggregate, and then through contact with the form aggregate we generate the feeling. First one sees form. Then relative to pleasant form one experiences the feeling of happiness, and relative to unpleasant form one experiences the feeling of suffering, and this then leads to distorted recognition. Then that mistaken recognition induces attachment or anger, which then induces the afflicted primary consciousness.

This is quite a useful model to contemplate and it has quite a lot to think about. Initially one has the perception of form and then, relative to whether that is pleasant form or unpleasant form, one generates a happy or unhappy feeling, which leads to distorted recognition, which induces attachment or anger. Anger and attachment are only examples, as there can be many other afflictions that can be induced from distorted recognition. These afflictions then induce an afflicted primary consciousness.

In general all compounded phenomena are contained within the five aggregates. There is a difference between talking about the five aggregates in general and the five aggregates that are the basis of imputation.

Student: Geshe Doga said that form comes first. What about sound? When I hear a sound I have feelings.

Sound and so forth are all contained in the form aggregate. We have visible form, sound, smell, taste and tactile sensations. If one wants to define it more clearly then one would have to say that visible form is the form source, so there is a difference between form in general and form source.

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Edited Version

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