
Study Group - *Madhyamakavataranama*

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

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Please generate a virtuous motivation.

Having established that the self does not exist inherently we now go on to establish that 'that which is mine' does not exist inherently. In order to realise that the 'I' does not exist inherently one can use the syllogism 'take the subject "self" - it follows that it does not exist inherently - because it is a dependant arising, e.g. like the reflection of form'. Having realising this syllogism one can transfer that understanding to the body very easily. Once one has understood that the self does not exist inherently, then one can transfer that understanding to all other objects.

In his *Four-Hundred Verses* Aryadeva makes a statement to the effect that if one sees one then one sees all, and that the emptiness of one is the emptiness of all. Sometimes, by misunderstanding this statement, people make the assertion that by seeing the emptiness of one object one sees the emptiness of all objects, or they conclude that the emptiness of one object is the emptiness of all objects. But that is not exactly what is meant here. What is meant is that after having seen the emptiness of one object, one then can easily realise the emptiness of another object by merely transferring the focus of one's mind to the other object. Through one's strong prior habituation with meditating on emptiness one doesn't need to apply a new extensive logical analysis.

This statement of Aryadeva's doesn't mean that the emptiness of the vase is the emptiness of the pillar, or that one realises the emptiness of the vase when one realises the emptiness of the pillar. What it means is that if, for example, one realises the selflessness of person in dependence on the syllogism 'take the subject "the self" - it lacks true existence - because it is dependant arising - e.g. like the reflection of form', and then hears the reason of dependent arising in the syllogism, 'take the subject "vase" - it follows that it lacks true existence - because it is a dependant arising', one will immediately be able to realise that the vase also lacks true existence. That is the meaning of this quote by Aryadeva.

We have already been through the stages of refuting both 'I' and 'mine' as existing inherently. Having established that neither the 'I' or the 'mine' are findable in the seven ways, yet still exist nominally, one then applies the same logic to other phenomena.

3.5.1.2.3. The way of refuting inherent existence of both self and 'mine'

This heading has three sub-outlines.

3.5.1.2.3.1. Relating it to phenomena such as vases, cloth etc.

3.5.1.2.3.2. Relating it to cause and effect

3.5.1.2.3.3. Refuting objections to that

3.5.1.2.3.1. Relating it to phenomena such as vases, cloth etc.

Here it shows that other phenomena such as vases and cloth are the same as 'I' and 'mine' in that they are not findable in the seven ways, but still exist nominally.

Phenomena such as vases, woollen and coarse materials, forests,

Rosaries, trees, houses, chariots, guesthouses and so forth, and

Those named likewise by these beings through whatever. Realise them!

Because the Mighty Able One doesn't debate with the world.

Parts, features, attachment, definition, wood and so forth,

Meanings such as possessor of features or parts, the attached, examples, fire etc.

When they are analysed with the chariot's logic they don't exist in seven ways,

What isn't that exists according to worldly convention.

How one has to look at this is that all the phenomena that are listed here are not posited upon investigation and analysis, but are posited without investigation and analysis. Here it is encouraging one to realise that all those objects are established without investigation, because the Buddha doesn't debate with the world, but accepts whatever exists in the world.

Mirror:

How are these phenomena named by beings?

Take the subject 'the part-*possessor* vase, and clay, its *part*; *that having features*, the vase, and its *features* such as a fire motif, pure blue colour etc.; *the* sentient being *attached* to the object and *attachment*, the craving for the attractive object; the *example* vase and 'round-bellied', its *definition*; burning *fire* and the *wood* that is being burnt; and so forth' - ...

With respect to the vase being the part-possessor and the clay being the part, of course we can also say here that, for example, the bottom of the vase is also a part of the vase or that the atoms of the vase that possess the eight substances are also a part of the vase and so forth.

Blue colour here can refer to the actual colour blue, 'pure blue colour etc.', but it can also refer to the feature of the vase of holding water, - if the vase holds water then it becomes sort of bluish in colour.

The meaning that one has to take here is that the part-possessor and the part exist in dependence on each other, and that therefore they cannot exist independently from their own side. If something exists independently from its own side then it cannot exist relative to something else. Since the part and the part-possessor only exist relative to each other they cannot exist from their own side.

Then we have the sentient being who is attached to the object, and the attachment, which is craving for the attractive object. If ordinary individuals perceive an attractive object, then they generate attachment for that object. So the attachment is generated relative to the

attractive object. Here again there is this interdependence - the attachment being generated relative to the attractive object. Therefore the attachment cannot exist from its own side. The person who has attachment, and the attachment also exist relative to each other, and therefore neither can exist from their own side.

The attached person and the attachment also exist interdependently - the person who is attached exists relative to the attachment and doesn't exist from his or her own side. If the attachment were to exist from its own side then the person would have to be attached all the time.

Then we have the example of 'vase and "round-bellied"'. Here the definiendum is vase and the definition is 'round-bellied' The definiendum and the definition exist relative to each other.

Then there is the example of burning fire and the wood that is being burnt, which again exist relative to each other. The 'so forth' refers to all similar objects that have this mutual interdependence. None of those phenomena should be investigated with logic analysing suchness.

Mirror:

...they should not be investigated with logic analysing suchness - because like the name 'chariot', their imputed meaning *doesn't exist when analysed in the seven ways* and *what isn't that* [what is not found] *exists according to worldly convention*.

All of those objects exist according to worldly convention, and are not posited in relation to analysis and investigation. The worldly way of positing objects is without investigation and analysis, and the Buddha doesn't have any argument with the worldly way of positing objects, but the world has plenty of argument with the Buddha's way of explaining existence.

The worldly way of positing objects is to posit them without investigation and analysis regarding their ultimate nature. Positing them with investigation and analysis is contrary to the worldly way of positing objects. We have explained this before.

3.5.1.2.3.2. Relating it to cause and effect

If the cause generates the generated, then it is a cause.

If no effect is generated it will be causeless, it won't exist.

Because the effect will generate if it has a cause

Tell me which will be from what, what will be before which?

Cause and effect have this mutual interdependency. They exist relative to each other and hence they have to lack inherent existence. Of course, if they were to exist inherently then they could not exist relative to each other.

Mirror:

Take the subject 'both cause and effect' - they exist in dependence upon each other - *because the effect will generate if it has a cause*, and *if an effect is generated through generation by a cause*, then *that generator is a cause*, and *if no effect is born this generation doesn't exist and it*, the effect, *becomes causeless*.

If cause and effect are inherently existent then *tell me which effect will be generated from what cause* and out of these two, cause and effect, *what will be established before which?*

Since the effect is generated from a cause and since a cause generates an effect, cause and effect are mutually interdependent. They exist relative to each other, and therefore they lack inherent existence.

What we can understand under **cause** is that it is *that which generates an effect*. If the cause is that which generates an effect then the effect relies upon the cause, or that which generates the effect. Should the cause not generate an effect then the effect would become causeless. The **effect** is *that which is generated from the cause*. So we can understand their interdependence and interrelationship.

This whole argument deals with the principle that **cause and effect** are possible because of the lack of inherent existence. Generally, what we classify as a cause is *that which generates*, and what does the cause generate? It generates an effect. Should the cause not generate an effect, then the effect would become causeless, and would not become *'that which has been generated by the cause'*. I think it is possible to see the interconnectedness between cause and effect, which is possible because both the cause and effect don't exist from their own side, but rely upon each other, exist relative to each other.

If cause and effect are inherently existent then *tell me which effect will be generated from what cause* and out of these two, cause and effect, *what will be established before which?*

If they were to exist inherently then which precedes which? Does the cause precede the effect or does the effect precede the cause, and which type of effect will be generated from what type of cause?

Mirror:

Should cause and effect exist inherently the cause couldn't be preceding the effect because the effect would have to be established at the time of the cause. Likewise the effect couldn't exist earlier because it would become causeless.

Should cause and effect exist inherently the cause couldn't precede the effect because the effect would have to be established at the time of the cause. Likewise, if it exists inherently, the effect couldn't exist before the cause because the effect would become causeless.

If your cause generates an effect upon contact, since at that time

They are of one potential, the generator and effect stop being different;

If different then this cause becomes not different from the non-cause.

Having abandoned these two, no other idea will come into existence.

This next verse is asking the Realists, 'If cause and effect exists inherently, does the cause generate the effect upon contact or is the effect generated without having made contact the cause'. This is an important point to understand should this debate ever arise.

Mirror:

In the first case it follows that *at that time generator and effect stop being different entities* - because *they are of one potential*.

If the inherently existent cause and the inherently existent effect have contact then they stop being different entities, because they are of one potential.

Mirror:

If it is the second case, then it follows that *this cause becomes not different from the non-causes* - because it is inherently *different* from the effect.

If the inherently existent effect is generated from the inherently existent cause without contact then the inherently existent cause is not different from a non-cause, because it is inherently different from the effect. You just have to apply the logic we have already talked about.

Mirror:

Take the subject 'cause' - it follows it doesn't inherently generate an effect - because it neither generates upon contact with the effect nor without contact, and *having abandoned these two, no other idea will come into existence* as well.

The cause does not inherently generate the effect because it does not generate it inherently upon contact, and it does not generate it inherently without contact. Since there is no other possibility there is simply no inherent generation at all.

Your cause doesn't generate an effect. That's why that called effect

Doesn't exist. Lacking effect, cause becomes without cause, it is also non-existent.

Because these two are like an illusion I don't receive any fault

And the phenomena of the world do exist as well.

Mirror:

Take the subject '*that called effect*' - it *doesn't exist* inherently - *because your cause doesn't* inherently *generate an effect*. Take the subject '*cause*' - it follows it *becomes without* a reason to be posited as *cause* - because of *lacking* generation of an *effect*. This *also is non-existent* because it is established as cause.

Take the subject 'Madhyamaka' - *I don't receive a fault* from investigating whether cause and effect have contact or not, and *the phenomena of the world do exist as well* - *because these two*, cause and effect, *are like an illusion*, existing nominally and not out of their own nature.

If cause and effect were inherently existent then the effect would have to exist at the time of the cause, and the cause would have to exist at the time of the effect. The effect would not actually be able to have a cause, and likewise the cause would not be able to have an effect and so forth. But if cause and effect don't exist inherently then all those faults don't apply, and there is no necessity to investigate whether they have contact or not.

3.5.1.2.3.3. Refuting objections to that

3.5.1.2.3.3.1. The objection

'Does this refutation refute upon contact with the refuted

Or does it without contact?', is asked. Doesn't this fault also apply to you?

When you express this and demolish only your own point

Then you are unable to refute with your refutation.

Here the Realists take exception to the analysis of cause and effect being generated upon contact or not, saying, 'Actually that is a fault that applies to you the Prasangika, not to me. In actuality cause and effect don't meet, as the cause is generated first and the effect is generated subsequently to the cause'.

In reality they don't meet, but this analysis can be applied to the belief of inherent existence. Here the Realists take exception to that, and say to the Prasangika, 'Actually you have that fault and not I'.

Mirror:

The Realists object saying, 'This fault of cause and effect meeting or not meeting applies to you. For example, *does this refutation refute upon contact with the refuted or does it without contact?*

We have already said that the Realists assert cause and effect to exist inherently and that the Prasangika refute cause and effect as existing inherently. The Prasangika have already stated many syllogisms refuting that cause and effect exist inherently and those syllogisms are what are referred to here as 'refutation'. What is being refuted is the Realist's point of view of inherent cause and effect. Here the Realists very cleverly say to the Prasangika, 'We can just turn your reasoning around. Does your refutation of inherent cause and effect refute inherent cause-and-effect upon meeting with inherent cause and effect, with that which is to be refuted, or does it refute inherent cause-and-effect without contact.

'If it refutes upon contact, then since they are of one potential, what does the refuting?'

They say the exactly same thing. If the syllogism makes contact with that which is refuted then they become of one potential - so what does the refuting? If the refutation occurs without contact between the syllogism and that which is refuted, then it should refute all that it doesn't have contact with. Having abandoned these two, no other idea will come into existence, i.e. there is no third possibility. No alternative is possible. They either refute upon contact or they refute without contact.

The Realists have just turned the reasoning around.

Mirror:

'When you express this invalid refutation and demolish only your own point, then you are unable to refute that to be refuted with your refutation'

Because of illogically denying all phenomena with a fake

Refutation that has the same consequence for one's own words

*You aren't of the holy beings' belief.
Lacking your own point you are also a
questionable refuter.*

Mirror:

Further, take the subject 'Madhyamaka' - *you aren't of the holy beings' belief - because of illogically denying the existence of all phenomena with a fake refutation that has the same consequence also for one's own words* as meant for the opponent.

The Realist says, 'Actually, even though this argument of yours is directed at me, it backfires on you. Your own argument demolishes your own point of view'. You are not of 'holy beings belief' means that you don't hold the view of the Buddha and Nagarjuna, because you deny the existence of all phenomena, as you have fallen into the extreme of nihilism. Your fake refutation has the same consequence for your own words as for the opponent. You are also a questionable refuter - because you lack your own point and only refute the other's position'. That is what this is basically saying, 'All you do is argue with others, but you don't really have your own point of view'.

3.5.1.2.3.3.2. The answer

This has four sub-outlines.

3.5.1.2.3.3.2.1. How one's own refutation and affirmation is valid

3.5.1.2.3.3.2.2. The reason why the others consequence isn't the same

3.5.1.2.3.3.2.3. The lack of inherent existence can be established while its opposite cant be established

3.5.1.2.3.3.2.4 The way of coming to understand the rest of refutations not mentioned here

3.5.1.2.3.3.2.1. How one's own refutation and affirmation is valid

This heading has two sub-outlines.

3.5.1.2.3.3.2.1.1. The way of refuting the other's position

3.5.1.2.3.3.2.1.2. The way of establishing one's own position

3.5.1.2.3.3.2.1.1. The way of refuting the other's position

Does the refutation refute without contact with that refuted

Or does it upon contact'? These faults already expressed

Definitely apply to those here having the position, but

With me, not having this position, these consequences are impossible.

Mirror:

Take the subject 'Madhyamaka' - *the consequences 'does the refutation refute without contact with that refuted or does it upon contact', are impossible* with them - because *these faults definitely apply here to those having the position* asserting inherent existence, *but* I don't *have this position* asserting inherent existence.

'These consequence only apply to the people who hold the belief of inherent existent cause and effect, but since I don't hold that belief these consequences don't apply to me.

'That is how my argument and your argument are

dissimilar. My argument is aimed at your belief in inherent existence, while your argument cannot really be aimed at my belief in inherent existence, because I don't hold that belief. It is an argument that is only valid for someone who holds the belief of inherent existence'.

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Edited Version

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