



their own side, is a really profound understanding that helps to reduce delusions such as attachment and anger. Thus we really need to become familiar with this understanding. Whenever we have a strong delusion such as anger or attachment, it is good for us to analyse how the object appears to us—its qualities of beauty or its negative attributes and faults. If it is an object of anger or attachment, how does it appear to us? It appears as if it exists from its own side, and because it appears so vividly as existing truly from its own side, we feel a strong emotion of either attachment to an appealing object, or anger towards a repulsive or unappealing object. If one considers how the very object does not exist from its own side, then the strong negative emotions of attachment and anger, in relation to that object, can definitely be reduced.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama emphasised this point in one of his recent teachings. He said that scientists are actually proving that things do not exist from their own side. His Holiness went on to explain how one scientist working in the area of psychology found that when one becomes intensely angry with an object, only about five to ten percent of the anger was evoked by the negative attributes of the object, while the other ninety percent came from one's own mind and attitudes. His Holiness said that scientists are now proving that when we see the negative attributes of something that is mostly a projection of our own mind, rather than existing from the object's side. So we can say that the Prasangika view that things do not exist entirely from their own side, has been scientifically verified.

His Holiness went on to explain that we can definitely train our mind to understand that strong attachment or anger towards an object is based upon a false perception, and that by overcoming such a misconception we can definitely reduce anger, attachment and so forth. You will recall this from the teachings you have heard. It is indeed an important point that we need to keep in mind.

Another point to keep in mind is that (as mentioned in the teachings) even though a bodhisattva may perceive a beautiful and appealing object, such as a beautiful person, their wisdom prevents any attachment from arising in their mind. As the teachings explain, not even a fraction of attachment arises in the bodhisattva's mind due to the wisdom realising emptiness. This is in contrast to how we relate to an appealing or beautiful object. When we see a beautiful object, what do we experience? Do we experience strong attachment? If we experience strong attachment then that is because we lack the wisdom. So developing wisdom is crucial if we are to overcome a negative mind.

#### 2.2.2.1.2.1. Refuting an inherently existent person through a fivefold analysis

We first need to understand the misconception we have that apprehends a person existing inherently or from their own side. That is the misconception that we need to overcome and refute. The method of refutation is explained in the outline itself: refuting an inherently existent person through a fivefold analysis. So the fivefold reasoning serves as a means to refute inherent existence of persons.

82. *The aggregates are not the self, they are not in it,  
It is not in them, without them it is not,  
It is not mixed with the aggregates like fire  
and fuel.  
Therefore how could the self exist?*

As Gyaltsab Je explains in his commentary:

Furthermore, when analysed through the five-fold analysis, the self cannot be found to be one with the aggregates.

The commentary explains how the person does not exist from its own side, in and of itself. Yet again, I remind you to beware of misinterpreting this to refer to negating the actual self of a person. This is something that you need to recall every time you come across the presentation of selflessness in the teachings. There is the conventional self of a person, which does exist, and the self of a person that is to be negated, which is an inherently existent self of a person. One must be careful to maintain that distinction and not confuse the two.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

If the aggregates and the self were one, the following faults would incur:

If the self existed inherently with the aggregates, then it would have to be either one with the aggregates or separate from them. It could not exist in any other way. Therefore the logic one needs to understand is that if the self were to exist inherently based on something, then it has to exist either inherently as one with or different from that thing. There is no other way for it to exist.

As mentioned earlier the object of refutation is an inherently existent self, a self that exists in and of itself without depending on anything else. Such a self of a person does not exist.

Then Gyaltsab Je further expands on the contradictions implicit in an inherent self:

The self would have to be impermanent; there would have to be many selves; it would not be possible to remember past rebirths and so forth.

The first fault is that *the self would have to be impermanent*. Again, we must be careful not to confuse the type of self being referred to here. Of course, a conventional self of a person exists and is impermanent, so that is not what is being negated. Here, the self to be negated is an inherently existent self. So, if the inherently existent self were actually one with the aggregates then since the aggregates are impermanent, that would mean that the inherently existent self would also have to be impermanent, which is an absurdity.

The second fault is that *there would be many selves*. If the self and the aggregates were to be inherently one, then just as there are five aggregates, there would have to be five selves. Alternatively, because there are six elements, there would have to be six selves, which is another absurdity. There cannot be five or six different individuals within the one entity of a person.

The commentary then introduces an analogy:

The self does not depend on the aggregates, in the same way as an object placed on a table depends on the table.

If an object is placed on a table, then the object is dependent on the existence of a table. Without a table you couldn't have an object on a table. But if you separate them, they become separate entities, which do not depend on each other. The self and the aggregates are not like that—you cannot separate the self from the aggregates and have two separate entities.

With respect to the self and the aggregates Gyaltsab Je further explains:

Nor do the aggregates depend on the self ; if that was the case, then that would have to be perceived [by a valid mind] but it is not. The self is not perceived [by a valid mind] as a single entity completely unrelated to the aggregates ; if it did the fault of perceiving a self which does not possess any aggregates would occur.

This explains that even though the self and the aggregates have been refuted as being a dependent (the self) and being depended upon (the aggregates), if one were to conclude that the self is a completely separate entity, that would be a fault as well. It would imply that the self can exist in its own right without having any relationship at all with the five aggregates. Thus, a person that is a single entity and completely separate from the five aggregates cannot be perceived.

As the commentary further explains:

The self and the aggregates are not inexpressibly and inseparably mixed together like fire and a log either, where it is not possible to distinguish between its own and another entity, because all things are pervaded with an entity of being itself [one] or another [different].

Having refuted the earlier absurdities, if one were to then conclude that the aggregates and the self were inseparably one, then that would also be an absurdity! In the analogy given here, the log is the fuel for the fire. Another example is the inseparable oneness of water and milk when they are mixed together. After you pour water into the milk you cannot separate the water from the milk. They become inseparably one, and you cannot say 'this is the water part' or 'this is the milky part' because they are completely mixed together. Similarly, with fire and the piece of wood that serves as its fuel, when the log is on fire you cannot distinguish a separate log from the fire. You cannot say 'this is the log and that is the fire', because when they are burning they are the one entity. These analogies illustrate how the aggregates and the self are not inseparably one and indistinguishable.

Gyaltsab Je concludes by stating:

Thus, how could the self be inherently existent? It is not, for when analysed through the five-fold analysis it can not be found to be so.

In conclusion, the self could not possibly be inherently existent. If it were to be, then you would have to find it when you searched for it. However, when analysed with the five-fold analysis one has to conclude that an inherently existent self cannot be found at all. So *how could the self be inherently existent?* refers to the self that is the object of negation, which is the inherently existent self, and not the conventional self that does exist. That is what we need to understand.

## 2.2.2.2. SELFLESSNESS OF OTHER PHENOMENA

This section is has two main sub-divisions:

2.2.2.2.1. Refuting an inherently existent form aggregate

2.2.2.2.2. Applying the refutation to the remaining aggregates

In the past I have extensively explained what selflessness of other phenomena means. It is good to relate the explanation of the selflessness of other phenomena to the selflessness of person. Understanding the selflessness of other phenomena is based on examining how such a self would exist if it was to be inherently existent. If there was an inherently existent self of other phenomena, how would that self exist? It is by the process of refuting an inherently existent self of

phenomena, that we understand the selflessness of phenomena other than the person.

As is regularly mentioned in the teachings, it is good for us to be able to immediately relate to the meaning of 'selflessness of other phenomena' when we first hear the term. Then when 'self of other phenomena' is presented, you will understand what the term means. Self of other phenomena is something to be negated, but what does 'self of other phenomena' actually mean?' If there was an inherently existent self of the aggregates for example, how would they have to exist?

2.2.2.2.1. Refuting an inherently existent form aggregate

This section has four sub-divisions:

2.2.2.2.1.1. Refuting inherently existent dependent arising [elements]

2.2.2.2.1.2. Refuting inherent existence of evolutes [or derivatives] of the elements

2.2.2.2.1.3. Applying the refutation to other phenomena

2.2.2.2.1.4. Refuting inherently existent space

### 2.2.2.2.1.1. Refuting inherently existent dependent arising [elements]

This heading is further sub-divided into four:

2.2.2.2.1.1.1. They are not established as one or many

2.2.2.2.1.1.2. Therefore the elements are not inherently existent

2.2.2.2.1.1.3. Absence of inherent existence of composites

2.2.2.2.1.1.4. Refuting proof for inherent existence

2.2.2.2.1.1.1. *They are not established as one or many*

This sub-division relates to the elements not being established as one or many. If the elements were to be inherently existent, then they would have to be inherently existent as either one or as many. The verse that relates to this first sub-division is:

83. *The three elements are not earth, they are not in it,  
It is not in them, without them it is not,  
Since this also applies to each.  
The elements like the self, are false.*

Regarding the meaning of the verse, Gyaltsab Je explains:

The three elements are not one with earth, because there would be the fault of the earth element possessing the defining characteristics of the other three elements.

This refers to the refutation of the four elements as being an inherently existent one. If the four elements were to be an inherently existent one, then they would have to be inseparably one with each other. For example, if the four elements were an inherently existent one, then the elements of wind, water and fire would have to be one with the earth element. If that was so, the fault would be that the earth element would possess the defining characteristics of the other three elements. Thus the defining characteristics of wind (light and motility) water (wet and cohesion) and fire (hot and burning) would also have to apply to the earth element as well. But clearly, the earth element is not hot and burning or light and it does not possess motility. That is how the absurdity of the elements being one is explained.

Gyaltsab's commentary then further explains:

Also the defining characteristics themselves would become distorted. The three elements do not depend on earth and earth does not depend on them. However without the three, earth cannot abide on its own.

Having refuted the elements as being an inherently existent one, the alternative—that they are inherently existent separate or different—is now refuted.

The commentary then concludes with this syllogism:

Take the subject, the elements—like the self they are also false—because when analysed through the fourfold analysis, they cannot be found [to exist inherently].

Just as an inherently existent self was established as being false, so too the four-fold analysis shows that the elements (such as the water element) cannot be found to exist inherently. Thus they are also false.

2.2.2.2.1.1.2. *Therefore the elements are not inherently existent*

The verse that relates to this is:

84. *Earth, water, fire and wind  
Individually do not inherently exist.  
When any three are absent, an individual one  
does not exist  
When one is absent, the three also do not exist.*

In his commentary Gyalsab Je explains the meaning of the verse: in this way:

Thus, the elements do not exist inherently, because each of them does not exist from its own side. That is because when any three of the four elements—earth, water, fire and wind—are absent, the individual element doesn't exist, and when one is absent then the other three cannot exist as well.

The lack of inherent existence of the elements is presented through the co-relationship of the four elements. If the elements were to exist inherently, then each would have to exist from its own side without depending on anything else. That in turn implies that each of the elements would not depend on the other elements and that each would thus exist in and of itself, from its own side, without relating to the other elements. But that is not possible. Whenever there is one element, the other elements also exist. They cannot be completely separated from each other, i.e. they cannot exist from their own side without relating to the others. These points are actually quite easy to follow.

2.2.2.2.1.1.3. *Absence of inherent existence of composites*

This is further sub-divided into three:

2.2.2.2.1.1.3.1. *Contradiction of inherent existence and dependence of composites*

2.2.2.2.1.1.3.2. *Refuting an answer to that*

2.2.2.2.1.1.3.3. *Dispelling further debate*

2.2.2.2.1.1.3.1. *Contradiction of inherent existence and dependence of composites*

Here an inherently existent composite is negated by explaining how it depends on other factors. If there was an inherently existing composite then it would have to exist without relating to or depending on anything else. The absurdity of negates an inherently existent composite.

The relevant verse is:

85. *If when three are absent, an individual one does  
not exist  
And if when one is absent, the three also do not  
exist,  
Then each itself does not exist.  
How could a composite be produced?*

As Gyalsab Je states in his commentary:

The individual elements do not exist inherently, because if three of the elements are absent then any one individual element cannot exist on its own...

This similar to what presented earlier. Individual elements do not exist inherently because if three of the elements are absent, then the remaining element could not exist on its own. If they were inherently existent, then they could not depend on or relate to the other elements. If one element were to exist on its own, it would do so without the other elements being present. However that is not the case. Gyalsab's commentary continues:

... and if one—like the fire element—is absent then all other three can't exist; therefore how can the combination of all four elements contribute to the production of an inherent composite, they cannot; because each one doesn't exist from its own side.

One needs to understand the logic being used here. As the four elements cannot exist inherently, there is no possibility that a composite of the four elements could exist inherently, because a 'composite' is a conglomerate of the four elements. If each individual element lacks inherent existence, then naturally the composite of the four elements also has to lack inherent existence. The composite of the four elements lacks inherent existence by default, because each individual element of the composite lacks inherent existence. That is the logic that is used.

2.2.2.2.1.1.3.2. *Refuting an answer to that*

The relevant verse is:

86 *Otherwise, if each itself exists,  
Why without fuel is there no fire?  
Likewise why is there no water, wind, or earth  
Without motility, obstructiveness or cohesion?*

This verse is an answer to an opponent of the earlier presentation. If that opponent says 'each of them exists from its own side and therefore a composite does exist from its own side' the commentary explains that the response is:

If you [an opponent to our system] say that because each of the four individual elements exists from their own side, there must be an inherently existent composite;

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