

Study Group - "Buddhist Tenets"

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

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As usual, please try to establish the bodhicitta motivation.

8.5. Method of Asserting Object Possessors (cont)

Last week we started with the section on object possessors, and we said that an incontrovertible knower was the definition of valid cogniser.

This has a twofold division into direct valid cogniser and inferential valid cogniser.

Direct valid cogniser has a threefold division into sense direct valid cogniser, mental direct valid cogniser and yogic direct valid cogniser. Last time we stopped at the definition of yogic direct valid cogniser.

Yogic Direct Valid Cogniser

The definition of a yogic direct valid cogniser was given on 16 October. It is quite similar to the definition posited in the lower tenets. It includes 'the uncommon empowering condition is the union of calm abiding and special insight'. This tenet and the lower tenets are the same in that both say that yogic direct valid cognisers realise any of the two, coarse and subtle selflessness.

The difference is that, according to the Prasangika point of view, a yogic direct valid cogniser doesn't have to be an unmistakable consciousness. That is because the Prasangika posit a yogic direct valid cogniser in the continuum of ordinary beings, and all awarenesses in the continuum of an ordinary being are mistaken awarenesses. So therefore there is a common base here between a mistaken awareness and direct yogic cogniser.

It is important to understand that those yogic valid cognisers in the continuum of an ordinary being do not directly realise subtle selflessness. What they do realise directly is subtle impermanence or coarse selflessness, and therefore they are direct cognisers. However because they are awarenesses in the continuum of an ordinary being, they don't realise subtle selflessness or emptiness directly. The yogic valid cogniser in the continuum of an ordinary being only realises subtle impermanence, and the emptiness of the person being a self-sufficient substantially existent.

They say that a yogic direct valid cogniser is a direct perception but is not what we call a direct perceptible¹. The point is that the Tibetan words for direct perceptible and direct perception is the same, and that is how this subtle point comes about. A yogic direct cogniser is not a direct perceptible, because a direct perceptible and manifest phenomena are synonymous, and a yogic direct cogniser is not a manifest phenomenon - it is hidden phenomenon.

We said before that the difference between manifest phenomena and hidden phenomena is that if, when it is first realised, an ordinary being can realise the phenomenon through his experience without depending upon reason, then it is a manifest phenomenon. If an ordinary being, when first understanding an object, has to do so in dependence upon reason, then it is hidden phenomenon.

For example, a vase is a manifest phenomenon, but the emptiness of the vase is a hidden phenomenon. We can understand the vase just by looking at it. To understand the emptiness of the vase, we first have to depend upon valid reason. So the vase is what we call a manifest phenomenon, or a direct perceptible.

Furthermore there is no pervasion that if it is a subsequent cogniser then it cannot be a valid cogniser. The second moment of an inferential cogniser is a direct valid cogniser. The reason is that the second moment of inferential cogniser is not generated directly from a reason. If you ask, "Is it not dependent upon a reason?" then we say, "No, the second moment of inferential cogniser is generated in dependence upon a reason, but it is not generated directly from a reason."

Inferential Cogniser

The definition of an *inferential cogniser* is a **knower that is incontrovertible with regard to a object of comprehension being hidden with regards to it, and is generated directly from its base, a valid reason.**

In the definition of inferential cogniser we have to say 'a knower which is incontrovertible with regards to a object of comprehension being hidden with regards to it'. Here we say that if a phenomenon becomes a hidden phenomenon with regard to a particular awareness, then there is no pervasion that it is necessarily a hidden phenomenon. For example, the fire on the smoky mountain path is generally not a hidden phenomenon, but it is a hidden phenomenon for the person who understands that a fire is on the smoky mountain path, in dependence upon the reason that there is smoke. To that person's mind the fire on the smoky mountain path becomes a hidden phenomenon. Generally, however, it is not a hidden phenomenon.

Inferential valid cogniser has a fourfold division:

1. Inferential cogniser through fact
2. Inferential cogniser through renown
3. Inferential cogniser through example
4. Inferential cogniser through belief

The **inferential cogniser through belief** is also called scriptural valid cogniser, because it is generated in relation to realising that a certain scripture or quote is incontrovertible with regard to its subject.

Here a new kind of inferential cogniser is introduced - the inferential cogniser which is generated from an example. This does not mean that this inferential cogniser is not generated in dependence upon reason. As we mentioned before, one part of the definition of an inferential cogniser is that it is generated directly from its base, which is a valid reason. This definition also applies to this valid cogniser - the inferential cogniser through example.

This valid cogniser of **inference through example** is one that we generate when we think for ourself about a certain topic, without having necessarily been given a consequence or a valid reason by another debater. Rather, we generate it by thinking of a valid reason by ourself, by use of examples. The valid inferential cogniser being generated from example is actually a valid cogniser of the first category, a valid inferential cogniser being generated through fact.

Mistaken Awareness

The text says that if it is a valid cogniser, then there is no pervasion that it is unmistakable with regard to its determined object. For example, the inferential cogniser realising impermanent sound is a mistaken awareness with regard to impermanent sound.

¹ The Tibetan word for direct perception is also used for direct perceptible, and that is how this subtle point comes about.

The inferential cogniser realising impermanent sound is mistaken with regard to impermanent sound because, even though impermanent sound does not inherently exist, it appears to that inferential cogniser as inherently existent. Therefore we say that that this inferential cogniser is mistaken with regard to sound.

In this tenet all awarenesses in the continuum of ordinary beings will always be mistaken awarenesses. In fact, all awarenesses in the continuum of sentient beings, apart from the non-conceptual transcendental wisdom realising emptiness directly, will all be mistaken awarenesses. That is because they are all tainted by the karmic potential of true grasping.

Realising the Object of Comprehension

Then the text goes on further to say, that "If it is consciousness there is a pervasion that it realises its object of comprehension".

This is an uncommon tenet of the Prasangika. If it is a consciousness there is a pervasion that it realises its object of comprehension. The meaning is that if it is consciousness it realises or it is incontrovertible with regard to its appearance. We don't say that if it is consciousness then it is incontrovertible with regard to its apprehended object, or with regard to its main object of comprehension. Here 'realising' means being incontrovertible. So all consciousnesses are incontrovertible with regard to the appearance of the object of comprehension, but they are not incontrovertible with regard to their main object of comprehension, or the apprehended object.

For example, the conceptual thought grasping at the horns of a rabbit will be incontrovertible with regard to its appearance. So the conceptual thought grasping at the horns of a rabbit is incontrovertible with regard to its object of comprehension, which is the appearance of the object. It is not incontrovertible with regard to its *main* object of comprehension, which is the apprehended object. The reason is that if the consciousness were not incontrovertible with regard to the appearance of the object, then it could not induce the ascertaining awareness that follows later.

As it says in the text, "The meaning generality of permanent sound is the object of comprehension of the grasping at permanent sound. The grasping at permanent sound is incontrovertible with regard to its object of comprehension, the appearing object that is the meaning generality of permanent sound. However is not incontrovertible with regard to the apprehended object that is permanent sound.

Did you digest all that? (*laughter*)

Subsequent Cognisers

Is there a common base between a conceptual thought and a direct valid cogniser?

The second moment of the mind apprehending blue.....

That's not a conceptual thought. The second moment of the consciousness apprehending blue is a direct perception, isn't it? Also the second moment of the eye consciousness apprehending blue is still an eye consciousness, so it is still a direct perception and not conceptual thought. It is what we call a non-conceptual direct perception.

According to the lower tenets the second moment of the eye consciousness apprehending blue is no longer a valid cogniser - it is only a subsequent cogniser. According to the lower tenets there is no common base between a valid cogniser and a subsequent cogniser.

Here, in the Prasangika system, there is a common base between a subsequent cogniser and a valid cogniser. The

second moment of the eye consciousness apprehending blue is a subsequent cogniser, and is also a direct valid cogniser. So the first moment of an inferential cogniser is a valid cogniser, but is not a direct valid cogniser. It is an inferential valid cogniser. The second moment of an inferential cogniser is, however, a direct valid cogniser. The reason is that it is a valid cogniser, and it is a direct valid cogniser because it is not generated directly from a valid reason.

Whether or not something is a direct valid cogniser depends on whether or not that awareness is generated directly from a valid reason. If it is generated directly from a valid reason, then it is not a direct valid cogniser, but an inferential cogniser. Once it is no longer generated from a reason then it becomes a direct valid cogniser.

According to the lower tenets, a subsequent cogniser has a twofold division into direct and inferential. Here we don't have that twofold division. Here subsequent cognisers are always direct valid cognisers. We have conceptual valid cognisers and non-conceptual valid cognisers, but subsequent cognisers will always be direct valid cognisers.

Think about it for some time. Think about it as we explained it. Subsequent cognisers have a twofold division into conceptual subsequent cognisers and non-conceptual subsequent cognisers. Here in Prasangika system all subsequent cognisers have to be direct valid cognisers.

In their definition of a valid cogniser, the difference between the Prasangika and all the lower tenets stems from their different interpretation of the Sanskrit word '*ra*' that has the two meanings of *primary* and *valid*.

As we said before, according to the lower tenets a literal translation would be 'primary'. Whereas the literal translation according to the Prasangika, is 'valid'. The Sanskrit word for valid cogniser is *pramana*. The syllable '*ra*' has these two possible meanings. One meaning is 'primary', and the other meaning is 'valid'.

All the lower tenets have taken the first meaning. They take the *ra* in *prama* to be 'primary'. Therefore for them, what we call a valid cogniser is always a primary cogniser. Actually a more literal translation would be just 'primary cogniser'. The Prasangika system takes the second meaning. They say the *ra* means 'valid', so therefore the word *prama* is translated as valid cogniser. I have explained this many times before.

Now we can go to the sixth section, the positing of selflessness.

8.6. Method of Asserting Selflessness

8.6.1. *The emptiness of the person being a self-supporting substantially existent is the coarse selflessness of a person.*

According to the lower tenets this selflessness was the subtle selflessness of a person but according to the Prasangika the emptiness of the person being a self-sufficient substantially existent is the coarse selflessness of person.

8.6.2. *The emptiness of true existence of the person is the subtle selflessness of the person.*

According to the Svatantrika Madhyamika tenet the emptiness of true existence of the person was the subtle selflessness of phenomena, whereas according to the Prasangika, the emptiness of the person is subtle selflessness of the person.

8.6.3. *The emptiness of the coarse accumulation of partless particles and its valid cogniser being of different substance is the coarse selflessness of phenomena.*

According to the Mind Only point of view this is subtle

selflessness, but here it is the coarse selflessness of phenomena.

8.6.4. *The emptiness of true existence of the basis of imputation, the aggregates, is the subtle selflessness of phenomena.*

As has been mentioned many times before, **the two selflessnesses of person and phenomena are categorised on the basis of emptiness.** So the two selflessnesses are categorised by way of the basis of emptiness, and not by way of the object of negation. The absence of the object of negation, true existence, on the basis of person is the subtle selflessness of the person. The absence or the negation of the object of negation, true existence, on the basis of the aggregates and so forth, is the subtle selflessness of phenomena.

According to the lower tenets the two selflessness, the selflessness of the person and the selflessness of phenomena, are also different from the point of view of subtlety. There, the selflessness of phenomena is subtler than the selflessness of person. Here the two selflessness are not differentiated from the point of view of the object of negation. There is no difference in regard to subtlety between the two kinds of selflessness. The selflessness of phenomena and selflessness of person have the same subtlety, and there is no difference with regard to the object of negation, which we have to refute in order to realise those two kinds of selflessness.

To the Prasangika, **the selflessness of person and phenomena have no difference in terms of subtlety.** There is a difference, however, in terms of the difficulty with which they can be realised. Selflessness of person is realised more easily than selflessness of phenomena. In fact the Prasangika say that there is a sequence of realising selflessness of person first, followed by the selflessness of phenomena. They say this because the object of negation of phenomena refers to the truly existent aggregates, which are being engaged by the 'I'. So to realise that what is being engaged ('mine') is empty of true existence, we have to first realise that the engager ('I') is empty of true existence. To realise that 'mine' is empty we first have to realise that 'I' is empty.

The two kinds of true grasping are differentiated in terms of their object, not in terms of their mode of grasping or apprehension. Grasping at true existence, taking the person as the focal object is subtle grasping. So grasping at the basis of imputation, the person, as being truly existent, is subtle grasping at person. Taking the basis of imputation, the aggregates, as the focal object is subtle grasping at phenomena. So taking the basis of imputation, the aggregates, as being truly existent base is subtle grasping at phenomena.

View of Transitory Collections

It is important to know the difference between grasping at the self of person and the view of transitory collections. The view of the transitory collection is necessarily the grasping at the self of person. However grasping at a self of person is not necessarily the view of the transitory collection.

The view of transitory collection is **the grasping at truly existent 'I', after having focused on 'I' and 'mine' in ones own continuum.** Taking the 'I' and 'mine' as the focal object, and grasping at the 'I' is the view of transitory collection. The 'mine' is not the things that are mine. Grasping at mine is grasping at I. According to the lower tenets, the view of transitory collection is grasping at 'I' as a substantial self-existent, after focussing on 'I' and 'mine'. So the view of

transitory collection is based on focussing on the 'I' in one's own continuum. It is grasping at the self of person. Grasping at another person being truly existent is the grasping at self of person, but it is not the view of transitory collection. The view of transitory collection is having focussed on 'I' and 'mine' in one's own continuum, and grasping that the 'I' is truly existent.

The Importance of Putting it into Practice

This is important to contemplate, since the view of the transitory collection is the root of cyclic existence. By grasping at the 'I' and 'mine' as truly existent many mental sufferings arise. This is an important point to contemplate and consider. If we analyse how our problems and delusions arise, we will see they come from grasping at the 'I' as truly existent. To do this we need to investigate the way mental difficulties and delusions arise in the mind. So if we look for them externally we won't see them. If we look inside, however, then we can see that our problems arise from grasping at truly existent 'I and mine'.

To understand this we have to investigate the psychological generation of the various mental states in our own mind. If we look for the faults of our problems outside, then we will not understand how the root of cyclic existence is the grasping at the 'I' as being truly existent. For that we have to look within our own mind. If we are able to do that, then we will definitely be able to ascertain that the grasping at the 'I' as being truly existent is the root from which all the other delusions spring.

By investigating our own mind, we will find how the various delusions and the disturbing emotional states are generated from the grasping at the 'I' as being truly existent. At certain times in our life, there is a very strong grasping at the truly existent 'I' generated in the mental continuum. Then even though we might not have realised emptiness, it is important to try not to fall under the control of that self-grasping. If we do fall under its control, then strong attachment and anger are generated, which we would also find very difficult to bear.

So it is very important from the very beginning to try not to fall under the control of that self-grasping. If one doesn't practice like that now, while we have all the material conditions necessary for practice, together with a clear and sharp mind, then when will we ever do it? Now, when all the causes and conditions have come together, is the time to try to oppose true-grasping. Of course if you don't do it then that is something different, but now is the time.

The meditation evenings begin next month. I told Denis that you should meditate on calm abiding. That is because if you have attained calm abiding, then it is very easy to meditate on whatever you want, and the mind is very relaxed and happy. You can meditate on calm abiding using the teachings which I gave as part of the Lam Rim. You just have to look up the various methods, and go through what you have to abandon, and what you have to practise - the five abandonments, eight antidotes and so forth.

You have to look up what has to be done before the meditation, what has to be done during the meditation, what has to be done after the meditation and so forth. This is important to understand. There are many people who say they sit meditating for long hours, but they are actually not quite sure what has to be done during the meditation. It is important to be very clear about what the conducive conditions for meditation are, what helps meditation, and how meditation is actually practised and so forth.

Since Buddhism is quite new in Australia then in a way you

are the first batch of people who are learning how to meditate. It is very important for you to get it right, right from the beginning. If you don't do that, then later on the whole continuum will be deluded.

I have a question about coarse selflessness of phenomena and partless particles. The definition of coarse selflessness of phenomena was said to be the same as the definition of the selflessness of phenomena in the Cittamatrīn view. How can this be when the Cittamatrīn don't assert partless particles?

The Mind Only don't accept partless particles and coarse collection of partless particles. Neither does the Prasāngika school accept a coarse collection of partless particles. As I mentioned before the Prasāngika school accepts outer existence, but they don't accept coarse collection of partless particles. The school that accepts the coarse collection of partless particles is the Sautrāntika school. Because the Prasāngika don't accept a coarse collection of partless particles, they say that the coarse collection of partless particles and its valid cogniser are empty of being of different substance.

The Cittamatrīn school doesn't assert partless particles and asserts that phenomena arise simultaneously with the mind as the ripening of karmic seeds. The Prasāngika definition relates to objects as collections of partless particles, which is different from the Cittamatrīn view. So do the Prasāngika have a different view of the way in which phenomena arise in the mind?

No that is not correct. The Prasāngika don't accept that outer meaning and its valid cogniser are generated simultaneously from one karmic imprint. However they do assert outer existence. Outer existence is basically *that which is not contained within the continuum of the person*. They say that if you do not accept outer existence, then first of all that would be contrary to various quotes in scriptures, which say that outer existence exists. It would also be contrary to worldly convention, according to which, outer existence exists. However the meaning of outer existence is *that which is not contained within the continuity of the five aggregates*.

The Prasāngika don't accept that outer phenomena and the consciousness apprehending them are generated simultaneously from the one mental imprint. They say that the apprehended phenomena are, of course, dependent on the substance of consciousness. Both schools are the same, but the Mind Only School then says that one part of the substance of the consciousness can be found on the object, and one is the object-possessor.

The Prasāngika don't say this. Nor do they say that the object is independent of consciousness. What appears to the consciousness is dependent on the substance of consciousness, but they don't say there is a karmic imprint, part of which becomes the object, and part of which becomes consciousness. That is what the Mind Only school asserts.

With regard to non-compounded space, since non-compounded space doesn't have any substance, the Mind Only school says that you cannot talk about non-compounded space being of one substance with its valid cogniser. So then you talk about the appearance of non-compounded space being of one substance,

So what else do you have?

Could you teach on the Diamond Cutter sutra? This is a request.

I recite the Diamond Cutter sutra on a daily basis. It's all about emptiness.

It seems that Geshe Michael Roach teaches the *Diamond Cutter sutra* in relation to business ethics. I don't know about that, but maybe he mistakes the 'diamond' to be an

actual diamond; he is in the jewel business.

The *Diamond Cutter sutra* was taught in Srāvastī. There were 2500 bhikṣus. In the morning, the Buddha got up and went on his begging round. After he returned from the begging round, he washed his hands and face and then he sat down in meditation. Then all the monks did three circumambulations of the Buddha, and then three prostrations, and then sat down.

Then Subhūti got up and did three prostrations to the Buddha. There's a special way of putting on the *choga* for requesting the Buddha, so he put it over the shoulder in that way, then knelt down on his right knee, with the hands folded, and then made his request to the Buddha. There is much more after that. (*laughter*)

I have actually memorised most of the sutra. After that, then basically the whole sutra is about emptiness in the form of a dialogue between Subhūti and the Buddha. At the end it mentions how the four groups of disciples then rejoiced in the Buddha's teachings and so forth. The four groups of disciples are sometimes called the four entourages, they are the male and female ordained, and male and female lay disciples. At the end they meditated, expressing their joy in the Buddha's teachings, and said that they accepted exactly what the Buddha had said, in the way he taught it.

If, when we recite a sutra, the Buddha actually appears very clearly to our mind, then that can be also very beneficial. In connection with the *Diamond Cutter sutra* there is also a certain practice to reverse obstacles. Also, if you have the *Diamond Cutter sutra* on you, then you will not be harmed by weapons. For example, people will not be able to cut you with knives. There are also a few, not many, just a few commentaries on the *Diamond Cutter sutra* which I haven't read.

There's no need to be so fixated on the *Diamond Cutter sutra*. Everything about emptiness is there in the *Heart sutra*. Of course, if you have a particular empathy with that lineage then that is fine with me. If you go to take teachings from Geshe Michael Roach or from somebody else, that's also fine with me.

There are 60 pages in the *Diamond Cutter sutra* so we wouldn't finish it in one year. At the end, there is this quote where it says that compounded phenomena are like the stars, the candlelight, a flash of lightning and so forth. Even just to teach on that would take me many months.

The important point is one's own practice. By practising the Dharma one will be able to develop some potential within one's own mind. One won't develop potential in one's own mind just by listening to somebody saying something. As Dharmarakṣita mentioned at the end of *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*, "even though there are many profound teachings found in the Tantric teachings of the Buddha, for me the most beneficial are the mind-transformation teachings".

It is important to recite the *Heart sutra* well. It is beneficial for everybody. It is called *Heart sutra* because it is the heart of wisdom. The *Heart Sutra* belongs to the heart or the essence of the wisdom sutras. The *Diamond Cutter sutra* falls into the category of the wisdom sutras. So the *Diamond Cutter sutra* is a Perfection of Wisdom sutra. In the same way as the essence or centre of the physical body is the physical heart, so the *Heart sutra* is the essence of the Perfection of Wisdom sutras. That's why it's called the *Heart sutra*.

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