

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤོང་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

25 October 2016

As usual, let us spend some time in our meditation practice.
(*pause for meditation*)

It is good to generate the bodhicitta attitude, the most positive motivation for receiving the teachings. Spending ample time generating such a state of mind with the sole wish to benefit other sentient beings is most essential.

2.2.2.3. ADVISING THAT IT IS SUITABLE FOR THOSE WISHING FOR LIBERATION TO MEDITATE ON EMPTINESS (CONT.)

Summary of the meaning

Argument: One should not meditate on emptiness as one is afraid of emptiness.

It is good to relate this to the eighteen root downfalls of the bodhisattva vows, which were covered during the *Six Session Guru Yoga* teaching. One of the root downfalls is to teach emptiness to an unsuitable vessel. The significant point here is that there have been cases where, when emptiness is presented, even bodhisattvas who are proponents of the Mind Only school, generate fear, lose faith and fall into the Hinayana path because of their very strong grasping at the notion of inherent existence and a truly existent self. When the lack of an inherently existent self is presented to them, this causes a great shock to their mind, to the point where they lose faith in the Mahayana teachings. In this way they can give up the Mahayana path and enter a Lower Vehicle path such as the hearer's path. If this is true even for those who have already become a bodhisattva, then we need to understand that it is even more crucial to be very careful when presenting these teachings to ordinary beings, who have not yet gained much understanding of the Dharma.

For example, hearers who are proponents of the Sautrantika and Vaibhashika lower Buddhist schools have very strong grasping at a truly and inherently existent self. Thus, presenting them with the correct view of emptiness – that there is no truly and inherently existent self – can cause great fear to arise in their mind. This is why their objection is presented here: *one should not meditate on emptiness as one is afraid of emptiness*. On this note, we need to understand that we need to be mindful not to present emptiness, and indeed even other aspects of the teachings, to those who are not really ready to hear certain points. That is because this can generate more doubts in their mind and possibly lead them to lose faith in the Buddha's teachings. We need to be very mindful of this because, rather than helping, it can turn them off the Dharma.

I have personal experience of people not being really ready to accept certain aspects of the teachings, even certain points from the lower scopes. So we need to be really mindful when presenting Dharma, making sure that it does not cause people's minds to become more disturbed. When there is very strong grasping at something it is very hard for them to give it up right away.

I have witnessed occasions where individuals are not willing to reconcile after having some conflict with one another. This

can occur even amongst close relatives, such as siblings, where they have reached a point of seeing each other as enemies. At that stage even with a good intention, when I try to give them suggestions to make amends and think about the other's wellbeing, I notice that it immediately instills a strong negative reaction. It seems that they have made up their mind that they cannot possibly get along with the other person.

So in this example, even with a suggestion to try to see things from a different perspective and make amends with someone, you can see that when their mind is not ready they totally reject the idea, and they cannot accept it. And it seems to aggravate them even more. This is why one needs to be mindful. In last Wednesday night's teaching I also addressed this point saying that it is good to take initiative to look at oneself and try to analyse one's mind. One needs to try and come to the point where one can accept that anger is a problem for oneself. Then there is a chance to make a transformation. Saying 'you are an angry person' will not help and can be the wrong approach.

Someone had asked the question 'how can I help someone see their afflictions as being harmful to themselves?' My approach is that you have to be very careful and take a skilful approach as you can aggravate them even further. For example, in a family situation with siblings or relatives one does not get along with, I have suggested that even if you want to make a connection with the other, if that other is still very strongly holding onto something against you, then trying to communicate with them may not work right away, and it might just aggravate them further. So what I have suggested is on some occasions, such as Christmas or birthdays, to make a nice gesture of sending a small gift through someone else. You do not have to say much, just send a gift. Next time send another gift again, then gradually they may be able to change their attitude towards you. Then later when you express your interest in having some communication with them, they may feel quite ready and think, 'OK, it would be good to reconnect again.'

The main point is that one needs to be mindful when dealing with others who have difficult, strong grasping at certain feelings or emotions, as it can be very hard to let go. For some individuals we need to be very mindful that even when presenting our suggestions with good intentions, it can aggravate them further, and be more destructive for the mind. Many of you are now in a position of presenting the Dharma to others. So you need to be mindful that just because you have the understanding and knowledge of the Dharma, it does not mean that this validates you to present it to others regardless of whether they are ready to accept it or not. So we have to be very mindful of these points.

The argument as presented in the commentary is *One should not meditate on emptiness as one is afraid of emptiness*.

Then the verse reads:

55 *If one generates fear
Of the phenomena generating suffering
Then why generate fear of emptiness,
Which pacifies suffering?*

The commentary explains the verse as follows:

Answer: If it is suitable to be afraid and to generate fear of the functionality of true-grasping, which acts as the main cause for the sufferings of cyclic existence, then how can one be afraid of the wisdom realising emptiness, which pacifies the sufferings of cyclic existence? It is inappropriate to be afraid of it, as it is that which eliminates all fears.

The commentary explains the nature of the opponents' fear of emptiness: *If it is suitable to be afraid and to generate fear of the functionality of true-grasping, which acts as the main cause for the sufferings of cyclic existence.* Here, while the proponents of the lower schools do not accept true grasping as a cause of suffering, their acceptance of self-grasping as the root cause of cyclic existence is being further extended here. As presented by the Prasangikas, grasping at true existence is the root ignorance that is the cause of cyclic existence. It states here that both agree that one needs to be free from the suffering of cyclic existence, and both agree that to overcome this suffering one needs to overcome the root cause. So based on this mutual agreement the verse presents a way to consider that if grasping at true existence is the main cause of suffering, and since you and I both want to be free from the suffering of cyclic existence, *then how can one be afraid of the wisdom realising emptiness which pacifies the suffering of cyclic existence?*

So the Prasangika put forth this argument: since you want to overcome the suffering of cyclic existence, and since the wisdom realising emptiness is the ultimate antidote for overcoming the root cause of suffering in cyclic existence – which is the ignorance of grasping at true existence – it is inappropriate to be afraid of it as it is that which eliminates all fears of suffering. This is quite straightforward so you should be able to understand it.

In summary, the main point is that one need to rightly be afraid of that which causes all the suffering of cyclic existence, which is grasping at true existence. So that is what one should be afraid of. One should not be afraid of the cause for eliminating that root cause of cyclic existence, which is the wisdom realising emptiness. So basically what is being presented with the next verse is if one has grasping at true existence, that is what generates fear, but if one does not have grasping at true existence then there is no reason to have any fear. That is the point.

The next verse presents this as follows:

56. *If some self existed
And one becomes afraid of any object,
Since there is no self at all
Who is the one afraid?*

The commentary explains the meaning:

If some inherently existent self were to exist then it is suitable to generate fear from any suitable object due to the grasping at that self, but as there is no inherently existing self in the slightest, who is the person that is afraid? If you were to reverse the awareness thinking of inherent existence within and contemplate, then by fully comprehending selflessness you will become liberated from all fears.

As the commentary explains, *if any inherent self were to exist then it would be suitable to generate fear.* As also presented in *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, in order to identify the false grasping at the self, one can reflect on it at a time when this self-grasping is most apparent, such as when one has very strong fear in one's mind. On an occasion where one thinks that something terrible is about to happen to oneself and one generates strong fear, there is a very strong sense of an 'I' or 'me', which does not depend on anything else. If one investigates and looks at how that 'I' appears to the mind, at that point one would notice that the 'I' appears as an independently and self-sufficiently existent self. It appears as a very solid entity, existing in and of itself, from its own side and is not dependent on anything else. Grasping at such an appearance of 'I' is what is known as grasping at a self.

When one analyses whether this 'I' exists as it appears, one comes to realise that such an 'I', which seems to truly exist in and of itself and not depending on anything else, in fact does not exist at all. When one has a strong fear, this is when the self - that in fact does not exist - becomes apparent to one's mind. I have presented other examples previously such as when one has a strong opinionated mind e.g. when one says, 'I cannot accept this'; when someone suggests something and you have a very strong opinion in your mind you will say, 'No, I cannot accept this'.

At that moment, when one says one cannot accept this, that referent 'I' that one says cannot accept this is actually the 'I' that appears to one's mind as a truly existent 'I'. Grasping at this 'I' is grasping at a false self – an 'I' that does not actually exist – and further enhances that strong sense of an independent 'I', and thus self-grasping.

When one understands that such an 'I', which does not even exist to begin with, is the object of negation, then the fear associated with that 'I' being in danger will not be present, because one will know that this 'I' does not exist.

What is being presented here is a counter argument to the opponents' argument that meditating on emptiness generates fear: 'Where is that self that is fearful of meditating on emptiness? You say that you generate fear when you meditate on emptiness, but where is that 'I' that you say is afraid?'

This is a counter argument to the point 'I am afraid of emptiness'. It says 'Where is this self that you say is afraid?' The self you propose is an inherently existent self, so if this self were to exist then it might be feasible to generate fear in any situation due to grasping by the self. But since that self that you posit is an inherently existent self that does not actually exist, then there is no self (as you posit) that can possibly experience fear.

The lower schools posit an inherently existent self, which is actually the object of negation according to the Prasangika. If, rather than generating fear in relation to the self, one realises that such an inherently existent self does not exist, then that understanding becomes the optimum means to overcome all fears. That is why the commentary mentions that *as there is no inherently existing self in the slightest, who is the person that is afraid?* This implies that there is no need to be afraid when one comes to that understanding. It further emphasises that if one were to reverse the thought of grasping at an inherently existent self and look within, then one can contemplate whether such a self exists or not. Through this investigation, by looking within, one will be fully able to comprehend selflessness and become liberated from all fears. This is the optimum means to overcome all fears.

In simple terms, the self that the proponents of the two lower schools assert is an inherently existent self, and according to the Prasangika, such an inherently existent self does not exist. What is being pointed out to proponents of the lower schools is that the only reason they generate fear is precisely because they are grasping at a self that does not even exist to begin with. So when you realise that the very self that you grasp at – the one you are claiming you are afraid of – does not even exist, then having negated the object of negation (i.e. the inherently existent self) you will gain the profound understanding of selflessness, which is the optimum means to overcome all fears and all suffering. That is the point.

The following points are profound, so it is important to read through them slowly and carefully.

2.3. Explaining extensively the reasoning that established emptiness¹

This consists of two subtopics:

2.3.1. Explaining extensively the reasoning that establishes the selflessness of person

2.3.2. Explaining extensively the reasoning that establishes the selflessness of phenomena

2.3.1 Explaining extensively the reasoning that establishes the selflessness of person

This has three sub-divisions:

2.3.1.1. Refuting the determined object of innate self-grasping

2.3.1.2 Refuting the intellectually acquired self

2.3.1.3 Refuting objections to the refutation

As explained, the selflessness of person is when the lack of inherent existence is understood on the basis of an individual person. When one understands the lack of inherent existence based on other phenomena, meaning all other phenomena that are not the individual self, then this is referred to as the selflessness of phenomena. As presented earlier, in terms of grossness and subtlety, there is no difference between selflessness of person and phenomena. So the distinction of the two is made on the basis of imputation.

A debating point is: isn't a person also a phenomena, and hence the selflessness of person is actually the selflessness of phenomena? The answer is that within the two categories of persons and phenomena, the reference 'selflessness of person' is made in relation to persons. But in general, of course, all persons are also phenomena.

2.3.2.1 REFUTING THE DETERMINED OBJECT OF THE INNATE SELF-GRASPING

This passage in the commentary quite meticulously presents the explanation of innate self-grasping.

Regarding the difference between the innate true-grasping and the intellectually acquired true-grasping; innate true-grasping is the true-grasping that everybody has, irrespective of whether the mind has been influenced by tenets or not. It is generated through its own power with regards to the person or the aggregates. It grasps at natural existence and at inherent existence independently of an analysis with reasoning.

The term 'innate true grasping' refers to grasping regardless of whether one adheres to a certain tenet or not, or whether one has gained some intellectual understanding or not. All beings, naturally and spontaneously, have innate true grasping.

The commentary highlights:

It is generated through its own power with regard to the person or the aggregates.

This means that whether focusing on individual persons or any other phenomena, the grasping that arises spontaneously and naturally is what is called innate true grasping.

For intellectually acquired true grasping the commentary explains:

Intellectually acquired true-grasping is true-grasping that, in dependence on an analysis with reasons, thinks it is valid that objects exist truly and that 'that objects exist truly'.

Intellectually acquired true grasping comes about as a consequence of analysis using reasoning, when one comes to a wrong conclusion that self and other phenomena exist truly.

The key point about innate true grasping is that it spontaneously and naturally arises in all ordinary beings, regardless of whether they've analysed phenomena or not. However intellectually acquired true grasping is that which arises in those who are proponents of certain tenets. This is why the root cause of samsara or cyclic existence is said to be innate true grasping. If it was intellectually acquired true grasping then only the proponents of certain tenets would have the root cause of samsara, and the rest would not have the root cause of samsara. That would be absurd, as only those who have intellectually-acquired true grasping would be creating the karma to be born in cyclic existence.

These are actually significant points to understand.

The commentary further explains:

In the category of self-grasping at person, there is also an innate grasping at a self-sufficient substantial existent,

This is the lower school proponents' explanation of self-grasping.

... and the grasping at the person as the lord and at the aggregates as the servant, which can only be intellectually acquired.

The grasping at the person as the lord and the aggregates as the servant can only be grasping in the category of intellectually acquired grasping. In the earlier presentation of an innate grasping at a self-sufficient substantial existent, one needs to understand that this is coarse self-grasping, not the subtle or actual self-grasping according to the Prasangika.

The commentary continues:

Likewise, also the grasping at partless particles and partless moments of time can only be intellectually acquired grasping at the self of phenomena.

Again this is coarse grasping at phenomena, not subtle grasping.

Next the commentary presents a summary of the main points Gyaltsab Je has mentioned:

In short, the two types of innate true-grasping are generated through their natural power, independently of analysis. Any other types of true-grasping are intellectually acquired.

The determined object of the earlier is the main object of negation, and the negation of the latter should be understood as part of the negation of the earlier.

The point here is that the determined object of innate self-grasping is the main object of negation, and that, as mentioned earlier, is because the determined object of innate self-grasping is the root cause of samsara. That becomes the main object of negation, whereas *the negation of the latter* i.e. intellectually-acquired self-grasping, *should be understood as part of the negation of the earlier.* In attempting to refute innate self-grasping one would then be able to negate intellectually-acquired self-grasping. The opponent presents this argument:

Argument: If one asserts that a refutation of the teeth, nails and so forth as being the self is for the purpose

¹ This heading was introduced on 12 July 2016.

of liberation from cyclic existence, then that would be unsuitable, as sentient beings, while grasping at them as mine, do not grasp at them as 'I'.

A significant argument being presented here is that the root cause of samsara is grasping at the self, not at the parts of the self, such as teeth, other organs etc. These are not the self, so there is no point in overcoming grasping at the parts of oneself, as these don't serve as the root cause of samsara. So, they are saying that while one needs to overcome the grasping at self, the parts are not the self.

The commentary explains the answer to this with the following explanation:

Answer: Since this is synonymous with the teachings that form and so forth are not the self, ...

This is from another teaching where it says that form and so forth are not the self. It comes down to the same meaning.

The commentary continues:

... out of [the two] focus and aspect, of the innate transitory view, it is the focus that is the mere self-isolates of the mere 'I' and 'mine' that are the basis of karmic cause and effect. The innate transitory view grasps at them as inherent 'I' and 'mine'...

What is being presented here is the view of the transitory collections, which grasps at one's own 'I' and 'mine' as being inherently existent. *The definition of the view of the transitory collection is an afflicted wisdom that focuses on the 'I' and 'mine' in the continuum of an individual person and grasps at them as inherently existent 'I'.* So with the transitory view it is the general isolate of 'I' and 'mine' that is being focused on, not the specific aspects of 'mine'. Here we need to understand the distinction between the innate self-grasping that is the transitory view, and general grasping at a person. The transitory view relates to an individual who focuses on their own individual 'I' and 'mine' as holding them as being inherently existent. Holding onto another individual's self and grasping that as being inherently existent is not the transitory view. It is self-grasping but it is not the transitory view.

I will explain more specifically the focus that is the mere isolates of 'I' and 'mine'. When we refer to the parts which make up oneself e.g. 'head', we don't say randomly 'head' or 'nose' in relation to oneself, we refer to them as 'mine'. We say 'my head', 'my eyes', 'my ears,' 'my nose' in relation to the five sense faculties. We attribute the term 'mine' although it is part of oneself. So what is being specifically presented here is that when presenting innate self-grasping in relation to the transitory view, it is presented as an isolate. Grasping at that strong sense of one's own 'I' and 'mine' as being inherently existent is known as the view of transitory collections.

To emphasise the point, the innate transitory view grasps at one's own 'I' and 'mine' as inherently existent. While there is seemingly a distinction here, what we need to understand is that the grasping at 'mine' is actually part of grasping at 'I', it is not distinct. The grasping at 'mine' - my head, nose, and so forth - is actually grasping at the 'I'. The view of the innate transitory collection is grasping at the inherently existing 'I', so even when we say 'mine', that is part of the 'I'. Therefore it has to be posited as grasping at the 'I'. The significant point presented next in the commentary says:

If the 'I' existed inherently, then amongst the examples for the 'I', such as the collection of the aggregates or its continuum, its parts or division, or

something of a different entity from the aggregates, should be established as the example of the 'I'. The point here is that this is not the case.

This means that if there were an inherently existent 'I' then it would have to be found amongst the parts that make up the 'I', as mentioned here; either the collection of the aggregates or its continuum, its parts or its divisions. If it is not found there, or in some different entity from the aggregates, then there is no other way to establish an inherently existent 'I'; either in relation to the aggregates, the whole of it, or the continuum of it, or the parts or the division of it, or something separate from the aggregates. If an inherently-existent 'I' did exist, then it could only be found in these ways.

As a way to get an understanding of the differentiation between innate self-grasping and intellectually acquired self-grasping it would be good to go over the text again, and also try to read other sources to complement it. With innate self-grasping there is the view of the transitory collection. What is that? Within that there are two aspects: grasping at an inherently existent 'I' based on an individual person and there is grasping at an inherently existent 'mine'. Grasping at either of these two becomes the view of the transitory collection. These are points that are good to understand.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke.

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Edited Version*

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Homework**Answers**

Block: 3 Week: 11 (25/10/2016) Assigned: 1/11/2016

1. Explain verse 55.

55 *If one generates fear
Of the phenomena generating suffering
Then why generate fear of emptiness,
Which pacifies suffering?*

So the Prasangika put forth this argument: since you want to overcome the suffering of cyclic existence, and since the wisdom realising emptiness is the ultimate antidote for overcoming the root cause of suffering in cyclic existence – which is the ignorance of grasping at true existence – it is inappropriate to be afraid of it as it is that which eliminates all fears of suffering. This is quite straightforward so you should be able to understand it.

In summary the main point is that one need to rightly be afraid of that which causes all the suffering of cyclic existence, which is grasping at true existence. So that is what one should be afraid of. One should not be afraid of the cause for eliminating that root cause of cyclic existence, which is the wisdom realising emptiness. So basically what is being presented with the next verse is if one has grasping at true existence that is what generates fear, but if one does not have grasping at true existence then there is no reason to have any fear. That is the point.

2. Explain verse 56.

56. *If some self existed
And one becomes afraid of any object,
Since there is no self at all
Who is the one afraid?*

In simple terms, the self that the proponents of the two lower schools assert is an inherently existent self, and according to the Prasangika such an inherently existent self does not exist. What is being pointed out to proponents of the lower schools is that the only reason they generate fear is precisely because they are grasping at a self that does not even exist to begin with. So when you realise that the very self that you grasp at – the one you are claiming you are afraid of – does not even exist, then having negated the object of negation (i.e. the inherently existent self) you will gain the profound understanding of selflessness, which is the optimum means to overcome all fears and all suffering. That is the point.

3.a) Explain innate self grasping.

This passage in the commentary quite meticulously presents the explanation of innate self-grasping.

Regarding the difference between the innate true-grasping and the intellectually acquired true-grasping; innate true-grasping is the true-grasping that everybody has, irrespective of whether the mind has been influenced by tenets or not. It is generated through its own power with regards to the person or the aggregates. It grasps at natural existence and at inherent existence independently of an analysis with reasoning.

The term 'innate true grasping' refers to grasping regardless of whether one adheres to a certain tenet or not, or whether one has gained some intellectual understanding or not. All beings, naturally and spontaneously, have innate true grasping.

The commentary highlights:

It is generated through its own power with regard to the person or the aggregates.

This means that whether focusing on individual persons or any other phenomena, the grasping that arises spontaneously and naturally is what is called innate true grasping.

b) Explain intellectually acquired true grasping

For intellectually acquired true grasping the commentary explains:

Intellectually acquired true-grasping is true-grasping that, in dependence on an analysis with reasons, thinks it is valid that objects exist truly and that 'that objects exist truly'.

Intellectually acquired true grasping comes about as a consequence of analysis using reasoning, when one comes to a wrong conclusion that self and other phenomena exist truly.

The key point about innate true grasping is that it spontaneously and naturally arises in all ordinary beings, regardless of whether they've analysed phenomena or not. However intellectually acquired true grasping is that which arises in those who are proponents of certain tenets. This is why the root cause of samsara or cyclic existence is said to be innate true grasping. If it was intellectually acquired true grasping then only the proponents of certain tenets would have the root cause of samsara, and the rest would not have the root cause of samsara. That would be absurd, as only those who have intellectually-acquired true grasping would be creating the karma to be born in cyclic existence.

These are actually significant points to understand.

4. Give the definition of the transitory collection along with an explanation.

The commentary continues:

...out of [the two] focus and aspect, of the innate transitory view, it is the focus that is the mere self-isolates of the mere 'I' and 'mine' that are the basis of karmic cause and effect. The innate transitory view grasps at them as inherent 'I' and 'mine'...

What is being presented here is the view of the transitory collections, which grasps at one's own 'I' and 'mine' as being inherently existent. ***The definition of the view of the transitory collection is an afflicted wisdom that focuses on the 'I' and 'mine' in the continuum of an individual person and grasps at them as inherently existent 'I'.*** So with the transitory view it is the general isolate of 'I' and 'mine' that is being focused on, not the specific aspects of 'mine'. Here we need to understand the distinction between the innate self-grasping that is the transitory view, and general grasping at a person. The transitory view relates to an individual who focuses on their own individual 'I' and 'mine' as holding them as being inherently existent. Holding onto another individual's self and grasping that as being inherently existent is not the transitory view. It is self-grasping but it is not the transitory view.

I will explain more specifically the focus that is the mere isolates of 'I' and 'mine'. When we refer to the parts which make up oneself e.g. 'head', we don't say randomly 'head' or 'nose' in relation to oneself we refer to them as 'mine'. We say 'my head' 'my eyes' 'my ears' 'my nose' in relation to the five sense faculties. We attribute the term 'mine' although it is part of oneself. So what is being specifically presented here is that when presenting innate self-grasping in relation to the transitory view, it is presented as an isolate. Grasping at that strong sense of one's own 'I' and 'mine' as being inherently existent is known as the view of transitory collections.

To emphasise the point, the innate transitory view grasps at one's own 'I' and 'mine' as inherently existent. While there is seemingly a distinction here, what we need to understand is that the grasping at 'mine' is actually part of grasping at 'I' it is not distinct. The grasping at 'mine' – my head, nose, and so forth – is actually grasping at the 'I'. The view of the innate transitory collection is grasping at the inherently existing 'I', so even when we say 'mine' that is part of the 'I'. Therefore it has to be posited as grasping at the 'I'.

The significant point presented next in the commentary says:

if the 'I' existed inherently, then amongst the examples for the 'I', such as the collection of the aggregates or its continuum, its parts or division, or something of a different entity from the aggregates, should be established as the example of the 'I'. The point here is that this is not the case.

This means that if there were an inherently existent 'I' then it would have to be found amongst the parts that make up the 'I' are as mentioned here, either the collection of the aggregates or its continuum, its parts or its divisions. If it is not found there, or in some different entity from the aggregates, then there is no other way to establish an inherently existent 'I' either in relation to the aggregates, the whole of it, or the continuum of it, or the parts or the division of it, or something separate from the aggregates. If an inherently-existent 'I' did exist, then it could only be found in these ways.

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

1 November 2016

As usual let us spend some time in our meditation practice.

Now, based on a good and clear bodhicitta motivation we can set our motivation for receiving the teachings.

2.3.1.1. REFUTING THE DETERMINED OBJECT OF INNATE SELF-GRASPING

Last session we went through the preliminary explanation in the commentary, which meticulously presented important points that we really need to become acquainted with so that we develop a good understanding of them.

Now we come to the actual verses in the root text that present points showing us how to identify innate self-grasping.

It is important that those who are new to these explanations do not misinterpret what 'selflessness' means. What is being negated is not the self, because the person does exist; what is being negated is an inherently existent self of a person.

The terms 'self', 'person', and 'I' are synonymous. While the Tibetan term *ki wu* refers particularly to a human being, the term *gang sak* – translated here as person – is a more generic term that refers to all beings. So a person, the self and 'I' definitely do exist.

When the teachings present the lack of self of a person, one needs to understand this in the context of the basic Buddhist view that is held by all Buddhist schools, known as the **four seals** of Buddhism. When one has a good understanding of these four seals then one gains an understanding of selflessness.

The four seals of Buddhism are:

- ∞ All compounded phenomena are impermanent
- ∞ All contaminated phenomena are in the nature of suffering
- ∞ All phenomena are empty and selfless
- ∞ Nirvana is peace

All compounded phenomena are impermanent: Most of you are already aware of this point. 'Compounded phenomena' refers to functional and produced things, which by their very nature are changing moment by moment. Thus, because they are momentary, all compounded phenomena are impermanent.

All contaminated phenomena are in the nature of suffering: This is very true, as the samsaric environment and the beings abiding within it are a constant source of suffering and dissatisfaction.

All phenomena are empty and selfless: The selflessness in the context of the view of the four seals is the selflessness of a person that is empty of being permanent, single or partless and independent, and this is accepted by all Buddhist schools of tenets. This is the gross selflessness of a person. This view is contrary to the self that is asserted by the non-Buddhist schools. As the text will present, the non-Buddhist schools posit a self that is **permanent**, because they say that the self does not change from moment to moment. It is **singular** as it does not depend on different parts for its

existence, and it is **independent**, because it does not depend on causes and conditions.

For all Buddhist schools a self that is permanent, singular or partless and independent, as posited by the non-Buddhist schools, does not actually exist. Therefore such as self is an object of negation. The lack of a permanent, singular and independent person is the 'selflessness of person' – albeit a gross selflessness of person. So understanding the four seals is essential if we are to understand the selflessness that is accepted by all Buddhist schools of tenets.

From the higher school perspective this selflessness is considered to be 'coarse selflessness'. However, at our level it is important to begin with gaining a good understanding of the selflessness as presented in the four seals. Without a good understanding of the selflessness of a person at this basic level then there is no possibility of gaining an understanding of the more profound 'subtle selflessness' of person and other phenomena.

We need to incorporate our understanding of selflessness in relation to ourselves. It is quite clear that **we are not a permanent entity** as we can all see the obvious physical and mental changes we go through. Therefore we cannot possibly be a permanent entity.

Furthermore **we are not a singular entity**, because we know that we are dependent on the many parts that make up who we are. We are dependent on our physical aggregates or our body, as well as our mind, for without our body and mind we could not possibly be called a person. Therefore we are clearly not **singular** or **partless**.

Finally **we could not possibly be independent of causes and conditions** because we clearly depend on many causes and conditions for our existence, in particular the influence of karma. More specifically, our experience of happiness and suffering is dependent on causes and conditions: virtue is the cause of happy experiences and non-virtue is the cause of suffering.

This covers many profound aspects of the teachings. Having a good understanding of this encompasses a good understanding of the cause and effect of karma, as well as the existence of our past and future lives. Because our happiness is dependent on causes and conditions, we also come to understand the need to accumulate merit. We all want to experience happiness and joy, so we need to accumulate the appropriate causes, which are virtue and merit.

So we can see that when we relate this view of selflessness to our own experience, it becomes really tenable. Just saying, 'Oh, I do not accept the non-Buddhist view of a permanent, singular and independent self, because as a Buddhist I am not supposed to believe in that', would be a very superficial way of relating to this presentation. Rather, when we relate it to our own experiences, then we will gain a deeper understanding of what selflessness really means.

If we can begin to really pay attention to what seems simple and practical, then we can derive more profound understanding that will help our practice. We claim to be Buddhists, so it is important to understand what being a Buddhist really means, which basically falls into two main aspects – **right conduct** and **right view**. As presented in the teachings, a Buddhist's conduct is one that **abstains from violence**, and the Buddhist view is accepting the **view of selflessness**, as presented earlier. This explanation of the view is presented in the tenets. Of course, when His Holiness the Dalai Lama presents the Buddhist view he

relates it to **interdependent origination**, which is a higher level of understanding the view. However, on the basic general level, the tenets present the view of selflessness.

The proper understanding of selflessness is derived from the presentation of the four seals of Buddhism, as it is the basic level of selflessness that is asserted by all Buddhist schools. There are other interpretations that posit as the view presented in the four seals as a higher level of selflessness such as a person being devoid of self-sufficient and substantial existence, however this is not tenable. Another example of selflessness is that posited by the Prasangika, which is a person being empty of an inherently existent self.

However, one needs to understand that the higher and more profound levels of selflessness are based on the earlier understanding of selflessness. As explained in the teachings, the presentations of selflessness range from the coarse - asserted by the lower schools and presented in the four seals - up to the subtlest level of selflessness, as asserted by the **Prasangika**. Each depends on an understanding of the previous presentation.

The **Vaibhashika** point of view is that a person is empty or devoid of being a permanent, singular and independent self, although one of the Vaibhashika sub-schools called the *nes-ma bu-pa* or Vasiputriya do not accept that as being selflessness.

Having a good understanding of that level of selflessness helps to develop a better understanding of selflessness as presented by the **Sautrantika**, which is that a person is empty of being self-sufficient and substantially existent. This brings us closer to the understanding of selflessness as presented by the **Mind Only** school, which is that the person is empty of an external existence.

For the **Svatantrika-Madhyamika** school, the view of selflessness of person is that the person is empty of true existence. That in turn leads up to the view of the **Prasangika-Madhyamika** school, which is that the person is empty of inherent existence. So one needs to understand how these views are presented in a consecutive way leading up to the higher levels of understanding.

There are some who say that the view of selflessness presented in the four seals has to be the selflessness asserted by the higher schools. But that couldn't be the case, because the question would then arise as to whether the lower Buddhist schools, which don't have understanding of the higher and more subtle views of selflessness, are Buddhists or not? Or perhaps they are Buddhist only by conduct but not by view, as they lack the correct view of selflessness. That would be an absurdity because the specific demarcation that distinguishes a Buddhist from a non-Buddhist is based on whether one accepts the view of selflessness or not. In fact we need to be careful ourselves, as we might easily fall into the category of being a Buddhist by conduct but not in view if we still hold onto views that are not in accordance with the view of selflessness. So we need to be very mindful of these points.

It is safe to assume that all of you have a basic understanding of selflessness, so there might not be much danger of holding on to a wrong view here. However, it is really important that you further enhance the correct understanding of selflessness and emptiness, especially if you assume yourself to be a practitioner of tantra. Every tantric sadhana begins with the passage 'all phenomena become empty; from within the sphere of emptiness ...' So without an understanding of emptiness one cannot possibly

assume that one is practising tantra accurately. The understanding of emptiness in tantra is as presented in the perfection vehicle.

It is possible for a tantric practitioner to have an understanding of emptiness as presented by the Mind Only, or the view of emptiness as presented by the Svatantrika-Middle Way, not to mention the highest Buddhist school of Prasangika. However, in tantra the understanding of emptiness cannot be based on any of the lower schools' views of selflessness. That is definite.

The main point for those who have received tantric initiation is that you will breach one of your four root vows if you do not remember emptiness. So we need to pay attention to developing a correct understanding of emptiness, as remembering it on a regular basis is part of our commitment. Without a correct understanding of emptiness then there is no possible way to really remember emptiness, but with a proper understanding it is a matter of bringing that understanding to mind. We are working towards developing a more profound understanding of emptiness. That is what it means to remember emptiness at our level.

You will recall His Holiness' recent teachings where, prior to giving the initiation, he referred to the importance of generating bodhicitta with the practice of tantra. He used passages from the *Commentary on Bodhicitta* and went into quite a lot of detail in explaining the importance of generating bodhicitta based on the teachings. So both bodhicitta and emptiness are essential for understanding the practice of tantra.

What is being presented in the following verses of the root text and the commentary is, in summary, the lack of an inherently existent self.

If an inherently existent self were to exist, then it has be findable upon the aggregates that make up a person. Therefore, the first section of this part of the text negates the view of a self or a person as existing within the aggregates of the body.

First the text negates the view of those who assert the physical aggregates as an example of a person. Then it negates the view of those who posit the consciousness as the example of a person.

The Prasangika present the person as a mere label imputed upon the psychophysical aggregates. Thus the example of person is a mere label imputed upon the aggregates, and say that if you search within the psychophysical aggregates you will never find a person there. Thus a person is a mere label imputed upon the aggregates.

Again, it is good to reflect on this at a personal level. When we relate to ourselves, we automatically identify ourselves as 'I' or 'me', but we need to investigate further: Where is this 'I' or 'me' that I hold onto so strongly? Is it upon my aggregates? If it is upon my aggregates, then in which part of my aggregates is that 'I'? Am I able to find the 'I' upon any of my aggregates or anywhere else? When we investigate each and every part of our own body in this way, we will come to the conclusion that there is no 'I' to be found anywhere. We can't find the 'I'. This goes to show that none of our physical parts in themselves could possibly be 'I'.

The lower schools come to their conclusion about the 'I' based on this kind of investigation. The Prasangika, on the other hand, posit the 'I' as a mere imputation upon the aggregates. Thus, in order to posit the 'I' there is no need for investigation. That will be presented later on. This is really the distinguishing point: when the lower schools posit the

'I', they do so by investigating where the 'I' might be found, whereas the Prasangika posit the 'I' without having to do any investigation.

With that basic explanation the verses and the explanations of them should be quite clear.

57. *The teeth, hair and nails are not the self;
The self is not the bones or blood,
Not the nasal mucus or phlegm,
And also not lymph or pus.*
58. *The self is not the fat or sweat,
And neither the lungs nor liver are the self.
The other inner organs are also not the self,
The self is not faeces or urine.*
59. *The flesh and skin are not the self,
The heat and air are not the self,
The holes are not the self, and certainly the
Six primary consciousnesses are not the self.*

The commentary explains:

Refuting parts of the aggregates as examples for the 'I': The teeth and nails are not the self, the bones or blood are not the self, and neither is the nasal mucus or phlegm because the self is established as merely labelled on these. Also, because of the earlier reason, lymph or pus are not examples of the 'I', and neither are the sweat or fat examples of the self. And neither the lungs nor the liver are examples of the self, and also the other inner organs such as the intestines and so forth are not examples of the self. The self is neither faeces nor urine and also the flesh or skin are not the self, as the self is established as merely labelled on them. The heat and air are not the self, and understand that also the holes of the body and so forth are not the self.

This is quite clear. Then the commentary further explains:

If the meaning of this is summarised: The Realists belonging to our side grasp at the aggregates as an example for the person, and non-Buddhists accept a self that is of different entity from the aggregates; the self being like the master and the aggregates like the servant.

What is shown here is synonymous with the refutation of the six spheres as the person in the *Garland of the Middle Way*. 'The holes are not the self' refutes the sphere of space as the person.

Thus it is also unsuitable to hold any of the collection of the aggregates, or its continuum, its parts or divisions, or something that is of a different entity from the aggregates, to be an example for the person even nominally, and also, anything of different entity from them cannot be posited as the person because the person is established as being merely labelled in dependence on these.

I don't need to spend too much time on this explanation, as I presented it in the teachings on the Middle Way. This verse is a presentation of refuting aggregates and so forth as being the self.

When the commentary states, *If the meaning of this is summarised: The Realists belonging to our side* refers to the Vaibhashika who hold the aggregates as an example of the person. When the Vaibhashika search for an example of a person, they conclude that a person cannot be found anywhere else but within the five aggregates; i.e. the physical aggregate, the aggregate of feeling, the aggregate of discrimination, the aggregate of compositional factor and the aggregate of consciousness. The Vaibhashika posit the

person within this collection of the five aggregates. So according to the Vaibhashika, the five aggregates are an example of a person.

The *non-Buddhists accept a self that is of different entity from the aggregates; the self being like the master and the aggregates like the servant*. Another way of explaining this is with the example of a load and the carrier, in which the load and the person carrying the load are of different entities: the self is like the load, and the aggregates are like the person carrying the load, so with this example they posit the self as a different entity to the aggregates. Thus the self is posited as being completely separate from the aggregates.

What is shown here is synonymous with the refutation of the six spheres as the person in Garland of the Middle Way. We covered this in the teachings on *Precious Garland*, which says that because a person is a combination of the six spheres it cannot be truly or inherently existent.¹ The presentation can be summarised with the following syllogisms. Take the subject 'a person': it lacks inherent or true existence – because it is posited upon the six spheres; and the six spheres lack inherent existence – because the six spheres individually are dependent on many other causes and conditions for their existence.

As posited by the higher Prasangika school, the person is a nominal existent rather than substantial existent. Here, nominal existent means that it is merely nominated, or labelled upon the six spheres, and that there is no substantial existence from its own side. Thus nominal existence means that it is merely labelled by the mind.

Thus *it is also unsuitable to hold any of the collection of the aggregates, or its continuum, its parts or divisions, or something that is of a different entity from the aggregates, to be an example for the person even nominally*. This means that even conventionally the example of a person cannot be posited upon any of its parts.

Then, lest one comes to the wrong conclusion that since the aggregates and the continuity of these aggregates and parts and divisions of aggregates are not the self, they must be a separate entity, the words *anything of different entity from them cannot be posited as the person* are added. This is *because the person is established as being merely labelled in dependence on the aggregates*.

This is the point. The person is asserted to be a nominally existent because it is not any of the aggregates. Neither is the person a different entity from the aggregates, because it is imputed or labelled upon the aggregates.

Having refuted what a person is not, the following argument from a lower Buddhist school is presented.

Argument: But then there is nothing that can be posited as the person.

So, what they are saying is, 'if what we posit as a person is not a person, then what is there left to be posited as a person?' The commentary provides this answer.

Answer: Are you not satisfied in positing Devadatta or Yajjadatta [as persons] without analysis?

For if you posit an inherently existent person as the object labelled when saying 'person', then you will fall into the extremes of nihilism or eternalism. Understand that not even one atom of such a self exists.

¹ See teaching of 31 August 2010.

Although Devadatta and Yajjadatta are cited, any modern name can be used. In response to the argument, 'Is it not suitable just to posit an individual as a person without the analysis?' indicates that the Prasangka system presents the nominal person without analysis. It is said that the Prasangka presentation is very much in accordance with the worldly convention. When we call out someone's name or want to point out someone, we don't go through a whole analysis of where they are, and which part of them is them. We just point them out, saying, 'There is the person you want'.

What is being presented here is how *a person is posited without analysis*. Thus, an example of a person is that which is labelled upon that combination of the aggregates. As the commentary states, *if you posit an inherently existent person as the object labelled when saying 'person' then you will fall into the extremes of nihilism or eternalism*.

An example of a person is that which is suitable to posit as a person because of their function. For example, when we ask 'Where is Damien?' people point to his body and say, 'There is Damien'. If we were to go through a thorough analysis to look for Damien, then there is the danger of coming to the wrong conclusion, 'Oh, I cannot find Damien, so Damien must not exist'. That would be falling into the extreme of nihilism!

That which is suitable to function as Damien is who Damien is. Based on what we see of Damien; i.e. his bodily movements, mannerisms and functionality is what we posit as Damien. We don't go through a thorough analysis of determining where Damien is when we posit Damien, do we? If we were actually to do an analysis of where Damien is then we might say, OK, is Damien's head Damien? No. Is Damien's body Damien? His hands and arms? No. We might easily then come to the wrong conclusion that Damien cannot be found anywhere, therefore Damien does not really exist. If Damien can't be found anywhere, then Margie might get really worried!

In preparation for our following sessions it will be good to read some of the commentary texts. You all have access to the transcripts of the teachings that I have presented, as well as your notes. It is best if you have taken good notes and kept them in your memory. But we have all the transcripts of the teachings on the *Precious Garland*, the teachings on the *Madhyamakavatara*, and the teachings on the *Four Hundred Verses*, which all cover this topic.

So it is good to refer to these texts as a way to get a more comprehensive understanding of this presentation. It is my regular practice to have quite a few books around me. I pick up different books at different times and read different passages from them. It is good to refresh one's memory and gain a deeper understanding of these topics.

Merely reading a text will help to settle down a very hyperactive and unruly mind. It is good to understand that one has access to these methods to help calm down and subdue the mind.

For the manifestation of different negative states of mind such as strong anger, refer to the teachings on the antidotes for overcoming anger, such as developing patience and so forth. Through reading those passages one will be reminded of the way to apply the antidotes for overcoming anger. Then the mind will settle down and you will be calmer. Likewise, when strong attachment arises, refer to the passages on how to apply the antidote for overcoming attachment. There are many different sources - you can refer to passages from the *Abhidharma* as well. These are useful

ways to overcome strong attachment, jealousy or pride and other negative states of mind. When one refers to these methods and techniques and reflects on them, it will help to settle the mind down.

We cannot blame those who do not have any understanding of or access to any explanations on how to apply the antidote for delusions, such as intense anger. They have nothing to help them to appease their mind. They are completely enslaved to that mind of rage and anger, carrying weapons and running towards what they perceive as their enemy in order to kill them, because they have no understanding of the ways to overcome the delusions in their mind. So we just have to feel compassion for such people, and not blame them for resorting to such strategies.

But if we, who do have an understanding and access to resources explaining the antidotes for overcoming such negative state of mind, don't do anything about applying the antidotes and just give in to our negative emotions and states of mind, then that would be more than a pity. What could be more disgraceful than knowing there are methods to overcome delusions, but then not apply them?

As I have explained previously, we need to understand the subtle differences between the different delusions and their derivatives. When anger is prolonged for a long time then it turns into belligerence, to the point where one could pick up any weapon as a way to intentionally harm what one perceives as being the cause of one's distress. As I have explained previously, belligerence is only directed at an animate object. While anger is listed as one of the six root divisions, belligerence is listed as a secondary delusion, but being a secondary delusion doesn't necessarily mean that it is less significant.

We see those who, out of frustration and anger, kick their own car. I really pity them. How can kicking the car help them? They just feel so angry, and out of their rage they either hit the car, or hurt themselves further, and some even intentionally engage in self-harm. This is a really pitiful situation.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke.

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Homework**Answers**

Block: 3 Week: 12 (1/11/2016) Assigned: 8/11/2016

1. What are the four seals of Buddhism. Give an explanation of each.

When the teachings present the lack of self of a person, one needs to understand this in the context of the basic Buddhist view that is held by all Buddhist schools, known as the **four seals** of Buddhism. When one has a good understanding of these four seals then one gains an understanding of selflessness.

The four seals of Buddhism are:

- All compounded phenomena are impermanent
- All contaminated phenomena are in nature of suffering
- All phenomena are empty and selfless
- Nirvana is peace

All compounded phenomena are impermanent: Most of you are already aware of this point. 'Compounded phenomena' refers to functional and produced things, which by their very nature are changing moment by moment. Thus, because they are momentary all compounded phenomena are impermanent.

All contaminated phenomena are in the nature of suffering: This is very true, as the samsaric environment and the beings abiding within it are a constant source of suffering and dissatisfaction.

All phenomena are empty and selfless: The selflessness in the context of the view of the four seals is the selflessness of a person which is empty of being permanent, single or partless and independent, and this is accepted by all Buddhist schools of tenets. This is the gross selflessness of a person. This view is contrary to the self that is asserted by the non-Buddhist schools. As the text will present, the non-Buddhist schools posit a self that is **permanent**, because they say that the self does not change from moment to moment. It is **singular** as it does not depend on different parts for its existence, and it is **independent**, because it does not depend on causes and conditions.

For all Buddhist schools a self that is permanent, singular or partless and independent, as posited by the non-Buddhist schools, does not actually exist. Therefore such a self is an object of negation. The lack of a permanent, singular and independent person is the 'selflessness of person' – albeit a gross selflessness of person. So understanding the four seals is essential if we are to understand the selflessness that is accepted by all Buddhist schools of tenets.

From the higher school perspective this selflessness is considered to be 'coarse selflessness'. However, at our level it is important to begin with gaining a good understanding of the selflessness as presented in the four seals. Without a good understanding of the selflessness of a person at this basic level then there is no possibility of gaining an understanding of the more profound 'subtle selflessness' of person and other phenomena.

We need to incorporate our understanding of selflessness in relation to ourselves. It is quite clear that **we are not a permanent entity**. As we can all see the obvious physical and mental changes we go through. Therefore we cannot possibly be a permanent entity.

Furthermore **we are not a singular entity**, because we know that we are depended on the many parts that make up who we are. We are depended on our physical aggregate or our body, as well as our mind, for without our body and mind we could not possibly be called a person. Therefore we are clearly not **singular** or **partless**.

Finally **we could not possibly be independent of causes and conditions** because we clearly depend on many causes and conditions for our existence, in particular the influence of karma. More specifically our experience of happiness and suffering is dependent on causes and conditions: virtue is the cause of happy experiences and non-virtue is the cause of suffering.

2. Give the view of selflessness according to the five different schools of tenets.

The **Vaibhashika** point of view is that a person is empty or devoid of being a permanent, singular and independent self, although one of the Vaibhashika sub-schools called the *nes-ma bu-pa* or Vasiputriya do not accept that as being selflessness.

Having a good understanding of that level of selflessness helps to develop a better understanding of selflessness as presented by the **Sautrantika**, which is that a person is empty of being self-sufficient and substantially existent. This brings us closer to understanding of selflessness as presented by the **Mind Only** school, which is that the person is empty of an external existence.

For the **Svatantrika-Madhyamika** school, the view of selflessness of person is that the person is empty of true existence. That in turn leads up to view of the **Prasangika-Madhyamika** school, which is that the person is empty of inherent existence. So one needs to understand how these views are presented in a consecutive way leading up to the higher levels of understanding.

3.a) What do the Vaibhashika hold as an example of a person?

When the commentary states, *If the meaning of this is summarised: The Realists belonging to our side refers to the Vaibhashika who hold the aggregates as an example of the person.* When the Vaibhashika search for an example of a person, they conclude that a person cannot be found anywhere else but within the five aggregates i.e. the physical aggregate, the aggregate of feeling, the aggregate of discrimination, the aggregate of compositional factor and the aggregate of consciousness. The Vaibhashika posit the person within this collection of the five aggregates. So according to the Vaibhashika, the five aggregates are an example of a person.

b) What do the non-Buddhists hold as an example of a self?

The non-Buddhists accept a self that is of different entity from the aggregates; the self being like the master and the aggregates like the servant. Another way of explaining this is with the example of a load and the carrier, in which the load and the person carrying the load are of different entities: the self is like the load, and the aggregates are like the person carrying the load, so with this example they posit the self as a different entity to the aggregates. Thus the self is posited as being completely separate from the aggregates.

4. What is shown here is synonymous with the refutation of the six spheres as the person in Garland of the Middle Way. We covered this in the teachings on Precious Garland, which says that because a person is a combination of the six spheres it cannot be truly or inherently existent. Give the two syllogisms relating to this.

What is shown here is synonymous with the refutation of the six spheres as the person in Garland of the Middle Way. We covered this in the teachings on Precious Garland, which says that because a person is a combination of the six spheres it cannot be truly or inherently existent.¹ The presentation can be summarised with the following syllogisms. Take the subject 'a person': it lacks inherent or true existence – because it is posited upon the six spheres; and the six spheres lack inherent existence – because the six spheres individually are depended on many other causes and conditions for their existence.

5. What does nominal existence mean?

As posited by the higher Prasangika school the person is a nominal existent rather than substantial existent. Here, nominal existent means that it is merely nominated, or labelled upon the six spheres, and that there is no substantial existence from its own side. Thus nominal existence means that it is merely labelled by the mind

This is the point. The person is asserted to be a nominally existent because it is not any of the aggregates. Neither is the person a different entity from the aggregates, because it is imputed or labelled upon the aggregates.

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་རྒྱུད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བརྒྱལ་མོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

8 November 2016

As usual let us spend some time in our meditation practice.

[Meditation]

Now, based on a bodhicitta motivation and attitude, we generate the motivation for receiving the teachings as usual.

2.3.1.2. REFUTING THE INTELLECTUALLY ACQUIRED SELF

This is subdivided into two:

2.3.1.2.1. Refuting the self asserted to be consciousness by the Enumerators

2.3.1.2.2. Refuting the self asserted to be matter by the Particularists

2.3.1.2.1. Refuting the self asserted to be consciousness by the Enumerators

The self that is being refuted here is the self that is asserted by the non-Buddhist Samkhyas or Enumerators¹, which is a mere consciousness.

The commentary begins with:

Although there are infinite kinds of substantially established types of self asserted by non-Buddhists, as they are all either asserted to be matter or consciousness, they can be subsumed into either matter or consciousness by refuting these two, one is able to refute all others, two are refuted here.

It is quite clear that all *types of self* that are posited by *non-Buddhists can be subsumed into either matter or consciousness*. So by refuting these two views i.e. the self as either being matter or consciousness, one is effectively refuting all other non-Buddhist views of the self.

This section of the text is sub-divided into two:

2.3.1.2.1.1. The actual refutation

2.3.1.2.1.2. Refuting the reply

2.3.1.2.1.1. The actual refutation

First there is a presentation of how the Enumerators posit the self:

The Enumerators posit exactly twenty-five types of objects of knowledge, out of which twenty-four, including the great principle are matter, and the twenty-fifth is a consciousness, a knower, experience, or the self endowed with mind.

We don't need to go into all the categories now.² What one needs to understand is that the *twenty-fifth is consciousness*, and that this is what is being asserted here as the self. For the Enumerators there are no other aspects to a person besides the consciousness; basically the self is a mere consciousness.

The commentary further explains:

The great principle knows how to produce expressions but does not know how to use them, ...

The Enumerators assert that *the great principle* is the cause while the expressions are the effects. Furthermore, the great principle *knows how to produce expressions but does not know how to use them*,

... and the person, which is referred to as the knowing consciousness, knows how to use objects but does not know how to produce them.

The Enumerators assert that the person or self has five qualities, which are that it engages – in happiness, suffering and so forth; it is a permanent functionality; it is not the creator; it lacks qualities; and it lacks action. So, they assert these five qualities to be the attributes of the self or person.

As further explained in the commentary:

... This person is asserted to be a permanent functionality.

The specific assertion here is that *the person is a permanent functionality*, which is contrary to the Buddhist assertion of permanence as non-functional and non-produced phenomena.

At the time of using the object, to that called 'awareness' and 'the great' appear outwardly the five mere objects of sound and so forth, and inwardly appears the person, ...

As explained here, the mere person *appears inwardly*, while *outwardly* the person engages in the *five sense objects* such as *sound and so forth*.

As explained further:

Cyclic existence is asserted to come about through the awareness grasping at that used and the user as one.

The Enumerators assert that the user (i.e. the self) and what is being used (i.e. the five sense objects) are actually separate. So, sentient beings circle in cyclic existence because of the misconception that sees objects and object possessor as one.

There are more detailed explanations of the assertion of the Samkhyas in *Precious Garland of Tenets*. Nagarjuna's *Precious Garland of Advice*³ also has a summary of these explanations, and I also taught it when we did the *Madhyamakavatara* or Middle Way teaching⁴. So I do not need to explain it in detail here.

The commentary also states:

I will not explain it here in detail, but you should understand their presentation from other sources, because it appears that through misinterpretation there are many assertions that the school of the Enumerators are the view of Highest Yoga Tantra.

As an introduction to the verse, the commentary then states:

Although there are four possibilities with regard to sound and consciousness being permanent or not, the Enumerators posit both as permanent.

The *four possibilities with regard to sound and consciousness being permanent* means that there are some - such as the Enumerators - who posit that both sound and

¹ These two terms are used interchangeably in this transcript.

² These can be found in the teachings of 31 May 2005.

³ See teaching of 6 July 2010.

⁴ See teachings of 22 April 2003, and 29 April 2003.

consciousness are permanent, and others who posit them as being impermanent.

For the **Enumerators**, consciousness is a mere awareness, whereas in our own system, consciousness includes mind and mental factors, as well as many other aspects of the mind. The Enumerators assert that this consciousness, or this mere awareness, is the person, which doesn't have any other aspects. They also assert that both consciousness and sound are permanent.

Madhyamika: If sound and consciousness were permanent then it would have to be the case that the consciousness constantly perceives sound; there would be no occasions when there's no perception of sound. If there are any instances where there is sometimes an awareness of sound and sometimes not, then it would be impossible to say that sound is permanent. If the consciousness were permanent, then whatever is perceived or apprehended would have to be constantly apprehended. This is the main point.

As adherents to a system of tenets, we assert that the person is impermanent. However as ordinary beings we instinctively grasp at the person as being permanent, don't we? We actually hold the notion that the self is permanent. So when the person is refuted as being permanent, we need to try to apply that understanding at a personal level, as a way to gain a real sense of what is being refuted. For this, we need to first acknowledge our own instinctive grasping at the permanence of the person.

It is not sufficient to just dismiss the view of the Enumerators by saying "oh, it's quite absurd that they assert that the person is permanent!" In fact, the core of their position in asserting that a person is permanent is because they cannot possibly see how it would otherwise be possible for a person to migrate from one life to the next. From a conventional point of view then, they seem to have a valid reason for asserting the self as being permanent, which we can relate to from our own false perceptions. In fact that is exactly how we perceive a person. We consider that the person we see today is the same person we saw yesterday. We may reason, if the person we saw yesterday doesn't exist today, then how could they be here now? And how could the person we see today actually continue to exist tomorrow? With that way of thinking it is easy to assume that the person or self is permanent.

The Prasangika system asserts that while a person is impermanent, its continuum migrates from past lives to this life and from this life to future lives. In Christianity there is no belief in reincarnation, is there? They don't believe in future lives, yet they believe in a soul which is permanent. So, if the soul is permanent but it doesn't reincarnate, then at the time of death where does it go? As Buddhists we believe that the self is impermanent, yet it reincarnates and continues to migrate to a future existence.

Some non-Buddhist schools of thought do not believe that there's a continuity of the self. They hold the view that at the time of death, the self simply ceases to exist. These non-Buddhist schools adhere to the notion that the self and the aggregates are actually of the same substance. Therefore when the aggregates disintegrate, the self

(which is dependent on the aggregates) also disintegrates. The example they give is of drawings on a wall. When the wall collapses the drawings naturally collapse as well, and so therefore the drawings cease to exist. Likewise, according to these schools, when the body disintegrates, the self or the soul also disintegrates and ceases to exist.

Does the person of yesterday exist today or not? Conventionally we would have to say that they do exist. What we have to understand here is that although we might easily say, "the correct view is to assert the person as being impermanent", we need to also understand how the continuum of the person continues to exist. So, while the person or the self is impermanent, it doesn't contradict the continuum of the person as existing continuously. What comes from yesterday exists today and goes on to tomorrow all the way into many future lives, and that is the continuum of the person. So when we hear comments that someone hasn't changed much over the years, we are actually referring to the continuum of that person, which is a similitude of the person that existed in the past.

Next comes the verse from the root text:

60. *If the consciousness of sound were permanent
One would apprehend sound all the time.
If there is no object of knowledge, then what is known
To say it is such a consciousness?*

Here the commentary explains:

If the knowledge consciousness person who engages the five mere objects of sound and so forth is a permanent functionality, then it follows that the knowledge consciousness person has sound as its apprehended object at all times, when sound exists and when sound does not exist – because it is a permanent entity that has made sound its object and apprehends it.

This thesis is unsuitable to be accepted – because if there is no object of knowledge, then what would be the known object in order for the consciousness to be the object-possessor of such and such an object? It would be unsuitable to say such a thing.

As explained here, the **Enumerators** or Samkhya assert that *the knowledge consciousness person engages the five mere sense objects of sound and so forth, which are permanent functionalities.*

Madhyamika: If they were a permanent functionality then it follows that *the knowledge consciousness person has sound as its apprehended object at all times.* As mentioned earlier, they would have to be apprehending sound at all times. What kind of object possessor would it be if there was no object to be apprehended, or perceived? If it is an object possessor then because you Enumerators assert it as being permanent, it will perceive that object at all times.

Can there be a consciousness that does not perceive an object? The point is that if it is a consciousness, it has to be an object possessor. The very function of a consciousness is to perceive objects. Without an object, how can it be an object possessor? The very term 'object possessor' means that if it is a consciousness it has to perceive objects, whatever the object may be.

In the teachings three types of object possessors are presented: person, consciousness and sound. The very term object possessor means that it has to engage with an object. So from the Buddhist point of view we need to understand that if it is consciousness, it necessarily has to perceive an object.

The next verse reads:

61. *If it is consciousness without that known,
Then it follows that also wood is
consciousness.
Therefore one has to say that without
proximity of
The object of knowledge, consciousness does
not exist.*

The argument of the **Enumerators** is:

Argument: The reason is not established because even if there is no sound, there is the permanent consciousness that apprehends it.

To this the **Madhyamikas** say:

Answer: It follows that even wood becomes consciousness because it is permitted to accept consciousness without object of knowledge.

Hence, it is confirmed that without the proximity of the object of knowledge of sound or the like, one has to say there is no consciousness. As there is no way to posit consciousness if there is no object of knowledge, you would have to accept there is no time when the person does not apprehend sound.

The **Samkhya** assert that *the reason is not established because even if there is no sound, there is the permanent consciousness that apprehends it.*

The **Madhyamika** answer, as explained in the verse, is that *it follows that even wood becomes consciousness.* If one can posit a consciousness that does not apprehend sound, or indeed apprehend any particular object, then even a piece of wood could be considered as consciousness. That is because you Samkhya are saying that *it is permitted to accept consciousness without object of knowledge.* Hence, it is confirmed that *without the proximity of the object of knowledge of sound or the like, one has to say there is no consciousness.* There is no way to posit consciousness if there is no object of knowledge.

The conclusion reached by the Madhyamikas is that according to your assertions *you would have to accept that there is no time when the person does not apprehend sound.* The absurdity of the Enumerator's view is that the person constantly apprehends sound.

2.3.1.2.1.2. Refuting the reply

The **Enumerators** present this reply:

Enumerator: The consequence that there would be a consciousness without objects of knowledge is not tenable.

The consequence that there would be a consciousness without objects of knowledge is not tenable. Next the following verse is presented:

62. *If, 'they know form',
Why do they not hear anything at this time?
If, 'because there is no proximity to sound,'
Then there is also no consciousness of it.*

The **Enumerators** reason that:

Because at the time when sound does not exist, this permanent person is conscious of form by taking it as the object of apprehension.

Then the **Madhyamika** refute that by saying:

Madhyamaka: Take the subject 'the being' – at the time of apprehending form by taking it as the object, why does it also not hear sound? It follows it should – because it is a permanent entity that engages the mere five objects without discrimination.

The **Enumerators** reason that *when sound does not exist, the permanent person is conscious of form, and takes it as the object of apprehension.*

The **Madhyamika** present their refutation in the form of the following syllogism. *Take the subject 'the being': at the time of apprehending form by taking it as the object, does it not also hear sound? – it follows that it does.*

The reason is that according to you Enumerators it is *a permanent entity that engages the mere five objects without discrimination.* So the Prasangika are saying "You're saying that the person is permanent and it also engages with the five objects equally.

The **Enumerators** then present this argument:

Enumerator: Because it does not abide close to sound at the time of being conscious of form, it is not conscious of sound at that time.

The **Madhyamikas** reply to that saying:

Madhyamika: When the object of sound does not exist, then the consciousness that is its object-possessor also does not exist. If you accept this, then the thesis of a permanent pervasive person is lost.

This explanation is quite clear.

Then the next verse is presented:

63. *How could that in the nature of the
apprehension of sound
Become the apprehension of form?
Although one is labelled as father and son
This is not absolute.*

The **Madhyamika** response is:

Further, it follows that which is in the nature of a consciousness apprehending sound does not become a consciousness apprehending form – because their aspects are mutually exclusive.

Then the **Enumerators** say:

Enumerator: One person can be presented as father and son from two different points of view. Similarly, from the points of view of expression and nature the expression of sound does not exist at the time of the apprehension of form, but the nature of sound exists because form and sound are of one nature. Therefore one can also posit the object-possessor of sound at that time.

In the verse the **Madhyamikas** have explained that the aspect of *apprehending sound* and the aspect of *apprehending form* are mutually exclusive.

To that the **Enumerators** reply that *one person can be presented as father and son from two different points of view. Similarly, from the points of view of expression and nature, the expression of sound does not exist at the time of the apprehension of form.* So they say that the expression of sound does not exist at the time of the apprehension of

form, but the nature of sound exists because form and sound are of one nature. *Therefore one can also posit the object-possessor of sound at the same time.*

The **Madhyamika's** response is:

Madhyamaka: It follows the example does not fit the meaning [of the example of the father and son] – because although one person is labelled father and son from two different points of view, that person does not exist ultimately in either. Yet you accept these natures to be ultimately established.

Then the next two lines of verse are presented:

64ab. *Thus, courage and particles
As well as darkness are neither father nor son.*

The commentary explains:

You accept that the equilibrium of courage, particles and darkness is the great principle, nature and ultimate truth. Regarding this, the very nature at the occasion of the son is not the nature at the occasion of not being the son, i.e., the father, because the Enumerators state,

The supreme nature of qualities
Does not become something visible.
That which becomes visible
Is without any essence like an illusion.

The nature is accepted as something that does not become visible, and the directly visible father and son and the like are accepted as illusory. From this point of view, the very father becomes the son, and the very son becomes the father because both their natures are one.

Having quoted from their own source, the **Madhyamikas** are saying *you accept that the equilibrium of courage, particles and darkness is the great principle.*

For the **Enumerators** the 'great principle' is the equilibrium of courage i.e. happiness; *particles* i.e. equanimity; and *darkness* i.e. suffering. When these three are in a state of equilibrium, then that is the *principle or nature*, which is an *ultimate truth*. Therefore, for the Enumerators *the very nature of the occasion of the son is not the nature of the occasion of not being the son or the father.* They cannot be the one entity at the same time.

The Enumerators quote from a text, saying that *the supreme nature of qualities does not become something visible; that which becomes visible is without any essence like an illusion.* They are saying that the supreme nature of qualities is not visible, and that what is visible is like an illusion. That which can be seen by the eyes is actually an illusion. They say *that nature is accepted as something that does not become visible, and the directly visible father and son and the like are accepted as illusory.*

The **Madhyamika** respond that *from this the point of view, the very father becomes the son, and the very son becomes the father, because both their natures are one.* This is the absurdity of your system. If that is the case:

Then, because the natures of the father and the son are accepted as one, it is also impossible to posit individual occasions in dependence on the basis.

So it is not possible to refer to *individual occasions in dependence on the basis.*

The next lines from the root text are:

64cd. *It is not seen as possessing
The nature of apprehending sound.*

65ab. *If it is seen in a different guise*

Like an actor, then it is not permanent.

The explanation in the commentary reads:

If the apprehension of sound is seen in the different manifestation of the apprehension of form, just like an actor who puts on a new costume upon having abandoned the earlier costume, then it follows that the consciousness knowledge is not a permanent functionality because it takes on a different mode upon abandoning another one.

According to the **Samkhyas**, *the apprehension of sound is seen in the different manifestations of the apprehension of form, just like an actor who puts on a new costume upon having abandoned the earlier costume.*

The **Samkhyas** assert that there is only one consciousness. When engaging through the eyes the consciousness will see forms; when engaging through the ears the consciousness will hear sounds; when engaging through the nose the consciousness will smell odours; and the same with taste and so forth. So there is only one consciousness but function through the five senses. There are no separate consciousnesses that apprehend the different sense objects. One analogy is that it is like a person in a house who looks out through the different windows of the house.

The **Madhyamika** assert that there are different consciousnesses that perceive the different sense objects. Thus, there are the five sense consciousnesses plus the mental consciousness.

As mentioned earlier, the **Samkhya** assert that there is only one consciousness. They use the analogy of an actor who changes their costume in accordance with whatever role they have to play.

The **Madhyamika** refutation is that *it follows that the consciousness knowledge is not a permanent functionality, because it takes on a different mode upon abandoning another one.* How can you Samkhya assert that the consciousness is a permanent functionality if it changes its mode of apprehension, as you say, just like an actor changes their costume? You say that each time the consciousness perceives a different object it changes to that particular perception. So if there is a change occurring, then it goes against your assertion that it is permanent.

The next two lines of verse read:

65cd. *In case, 'the different guise is one
With it,' that is without precedent.*

Basically this is saying, such a thing has never been known before. Then the **Enumerators** say:

Enumerator: Because the apprehension of form, which is a different mode from the apprehension of sound, is of one nature with the apprehension of sound, there is no mistake.

Basically, according to the Enumerators there's no fault.

To this the **Madhyamika** say:

Madhyamaka: This one nature is without any earlier precedent because it only abides individually.

Further: It follows it is unsuitable to accept the later mode as said earlier mode itself – because the later one is one without any past. As it states in the *Great Commentary*:

If this very one is this very one at the time of later generation, then this one is without a past because they are accepted as mutually exclusive ones.

The *Great Commentary* says that *If this very one is at the time of later generation, then this one is without a past because they are accepted as mutually exclusive.* You are saying what was in the past is the same as now, yet you have also said that they are mutually exclusive. This absurdity is quite easy to understand.

The first two lines of the next verse read:

*66ab. If, 'The different mode is not true,'
It is its own nature I say.*

In reply the **Enumerators** begin by stating:

Enumerator: There is no fault because what appears in another mode is not true in the way it appears.

Then the **Madhyamikas** state:

Madhyamaka: It follows that you should, yet cannot, say that it is the singular true nature of that consciousness – because you accept that whatever mode appears, is not true in the way it appears.

Again this is quite clear. The **Enumerator's** assertion is that *there is no fault, because what appears in another mode is not true in the way it appears.*

The refutation presented by the **Madhyamika** is that *it follows that you should, yet you cannot, say that it is the singular true nature of that consciousness – because you accept that whatever mode appears is not true in the way that it appears.*

*66cd. If you say, 'only consciousness', according
To this it follows that all beings are one.*

*67ab. Also the animate and inanimate
Become one because of their shared existence.*

Thus the **Enumerators** say:

Enumerator: Only the continuum of the knowledge consciousness person exists truly.

Then the **Madhyamikas** response to that is:

Madhyamaka: In this case, it follows that all people of different continua become one – because all people are accepted as partless permanent pervading entities.

It follows that also the animate knowledge consciousness and the inanimate matter and principle become one – because they are the same in existing as partless permanent pervading entities. Or, one relates it to the answer that their mere existing nature is true.

Again, this is a clear presentation. In response the **Madhyamaka** are saying that *in this case, it follows that all people of different continua become one, which is an absurdity, because all people are accepted as partless permanent pervading entities.* Then it follows that also the animate knowledge consciousness and the inanimate matter and principle become one as well, because they are the same in existing as partless permanent pervading entities according to you Samkhyas. That is the absurdity being presented here.

The next two lines of the verse read:

*67cd. When the particulars are distorted
Then what could be their shared basis?*

Then the commentary explains:

Consider: When the different particulars of expression are distorted falsities, then it follows that their

concordant basis, the primary principle, which exists truly, also does not exist – because the expressions are false.

According to the **Enumerators** *the primary principle exists truly, yet according to them, their expressions are false.*

Madhyamaka: *The primary principle, which exists truly, also does not exist because the expressions are false.* So the absurdity is how could something that is true produce something that is false?

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke.

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Edited Version*

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Homework**Answers**

Block: 3 Week: 13 (8/11/2016) Assigned: 15/11/2016

1. The Enumerators assert that the person or self has five qualities, which are that it engages - in happiness, suffering and so forth; it is a permanent functionality; it is not the creator; it lacks qualities; and it lacks action. So, they assert these five qualities to be the attributes of the self or person.

How does cyclic existence come about according to the Enumerators?

The Enumerators assert that the person or self has five qualities, which are that it engages - in happiness, suffering and so forth; it is a permanent functionality; it is not the creator; it lacks qualities; and it lacks action. So, they assert these five qualities to be the attributes of the self or person.

As further explained in the commentary:

...This person is asserted to be a permanent functionality.

The specific assertion here is that *the person is a permanent functionality*, which is contrary to the Buddhist assertion of permanence as non-functional and non-produced phenomena.

At the time of using the object, to that called 'awareness' and 'the great' appear outwardly the five mere objects of sound and so forth, and inwardly appears the person, ...

As explained here, the mere person *appears inwardly*, while *outwardly* the person engages in the *five sense objects* such as *sound and so forth*.

As explained further:

Cyclic existence is asserted to come about through the awareness grasping at that used and the user as one.

The Enumerators assert that the user (i.e. the self) and what is being used (i.e. the five sense objects) are actually separate. So, sentient beings circle in cyclic existence because of the misconception that sees objects and object possessor as one.

2. The Enumerators assert that this consciousness, or this mere awareness, is the person, which doesn't have any other aspects. They also assert that both consciousness and sound are permanent.

Give the madhyamika refutation to these assertions?

For the Enumerators, consciousness is a mere awareness, whereas in our own system, consciousness includes mind and mental factors, as well as many other aspects of the mind. The Enumerators assert that this consciousness, or this mere awareness, is the person, which doesn't have any other aspects. They also assert that both consciousness and sound are permanent.

Madhyamika: If sound and consciousness were permanent then it would have to be the case that the consciousness constantly perceives sound; there would be no occasions when there's no perception of sound. If there are any instances where there is sometimes an awareness of sound and sometimes not, then it would be impossible to say that sound is permanent. If the consciousness were permanent, then whatever is perceived or apprehended would have to be constantly apprehended. This is the main point.

3. With which way of thinking, is it easy to assume that the person or self is permanent?

It is not sufficient to just dismiss the view of the Enumerators by saying “oh, it’s quite absurd that they assert that the person is permanent!” In fact, the core of their position in asserting that a person is permanent is because they cannot possibly see how it would otherwise be possible for a person to migrate from one life to the next. From a conventional point of view, then, they seem to have a valid reason for asserting the self as being permanent, which we can relate to from our own false perceptions. In fact that is exactly how we perceive a person. We consider that the person we see today is the same person we saw yesterday. We may reason, if the person we saw yesterday doesn’t exist today, then how could they be here now? And how could the person we see today actually continue to exist tomorrow? With that way of thinking, it is easy to assume that the person or self is permanent.

4. Does the person of yesterday exist today or not?

Does the person of yesterday exist today or not? Conventionally we would have to say that they do exist. What we have to understand here is that although we might easily say, “the correct view is to assert the person as being impermanent”, we need to also understand how the continuum of the person continues to exist. So, while the person or the self is impermanent, it doesn’t contradict the continuum of the person as existing continuously. What comes from yesterday exists today and goes on to tomorrow all the way into many future lives, and that is the continuum of the person. So when we hear comments that someone hasn’t changed much over the years, we are actually referring to the continuum of that person, which is a similitude of the person that existed in the past.

5 a). The Samkhyas assert that there is only one consciousness. How does it work?

The **Samkhyas** assert that there is only one consciousness. When engaging through the eyes the consciousness will see forms; when engaging through ears the consciousness will hear sounds; when engaging through the nose the consciousness will smell odours; and the same with taste and so forth. So there is only one consciousness but function through the five senses. There are no separate consciousnesses that apprehend the different sense objects. One analogy is that it is like a person in a house who looks out through the different windows of the house.

b). What do the Madhyamika assert in relation to consciousness?

The **Madhyamika** assert that there are different consciousnesses that perceive the different sense objects. Thus, there are the five sense consciousnesses plus the mental consciousness.

As mentioned earlier, the **Samkhya** assert that there is only one consciousness. They use the analogy of an actor who changes their costume in accordance to whatever role they have to play.

The **Madhyamika** refutation is that *it follows that the consciousness knowledge is not a permanent functionality, because it takes on a different mode upon abandoning another one.* How can you Samkhya assert that the consciousness is a permanent functionality if it changes its mode of apprehension, as you say, just like an actor changes their costume? You say that each time the consciousness perceives a different object it changes to that particular perception. So if there is a change occurring, then it goes against your assertion that it is permanent.

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

15 November 2016

Based on the motivation we generated during the refuge and bodhicitta prayers, we can now engage in our regular meditation practice. [meditation]

With the generation of the bodhicitta motivation, we can now engage in the teachings. The meditation preceding our motivation is a way to help strengthen our motivation. The purpose of generating the motivation is to dispel any improper intentions in our mind, and basically to help subdue the mind. The stronger the positive state of mind we generate, the more likely it is we will be able to benefit others. Then, in turn, the more we benefit others, the more it will help us increase our good qualities and get rid of our negativities, thus bringing us closer to enlightenment.

If we wish to become enlightened, we need to consider practical ways by which we can proceed to get closer to enlightenment. Benefiting others and shunning actions that will harm them is a practical means of getting closer to enlightenment. So, while we're aiming for the long-term goal of enlightenment, in the meantime, on a practical level, we'll be able to contribute to the well-being of ourselves and others.

I'm relating this specifically in relation to a recent practice that some older students have been doing, and where others contributed, which is the fire puja. I've heard it went very well, and that people really helped each other. I see this as a good sign that the intention of helping each other has improved.

On the other hand, if someone is going through some difficulty, or an incident occurs involving someone, then instead of looking for ways to ease that situation, there might be occasions when others add more to the story and elaborate on the incident, or continue to talk about it, or spread rumours, etc. That is something which I consider to be like poison; that's definitely of no use, no benefit, at all.

If the person experiencing the difficulty gets to hear those comments about them, that is going to put them off coming here. They would not want to come to a centre like that, where they feel people are judging them, or talking about them, or spreading rumours about them. They would not want to come here. This is how we, as a centre, begin to close our doors to some people.

For that particular individual, who had an interest to come here initially and then stopped coming because of some incident like that, it would have harmed their ability to progress. For the centre also, even losing one person from coming to the centre, is a loss. If fewer people come to the centre, naturally it weakens the strength of the centre. For a centre to grow, it needs more people coming regularly.

We may think it's only one individual, but in fact those who have a connection with that individual would also be put off coming to the centre. When I was up in Chenrezig, I used to mention that we should not underestimate the gravity of not caring for even one person, because when that one person is

disappointed, it could prevent many others from coming as well.

What I am reminding you about, particularly those who have particular roles in the centre, is that it's very important to be mindful not to cause this kind of rift with people. In effect, it is a reminder for all of us to remember to try to put into practice Shantideva's incredible, practical advice. Shantideva has very effectively presented many methods and techniques, so whenever we have difficulties, we need to remember Shantideva's advice, and try to put it into practice.

One of our members who used to come regularly to the Centre, Susan, is not well now. As many of you will know, she is having difficulty with her breathing. I heard that some of the older students have taken the initiative to help out and go and visit and help in whatever way. When I heard that, I was very pleased, I feel that that is a very good sign of caring for each other.

When I hear about others caring in this way for those in need of help, it makes me feel good that a positive outcome of the Dharma is taking effect, through them giving such practical help and benefit. From my side, I've now reached an age where it's hard for me to go and do service in this way, but if there's others who can do this, it is good to maintain such service to others; I feel that there's a good legacy occurring here.

However, there have been many who have commented that my advice and the teachings that I present are helpful for others. So, I guess this is one way I'm contributing to helping others!

When I was at the Drolkar Centre last Sunday, there were a few who came up to me afterwards to thank me and made comments about how they were very touched and really enjoyed the teachings. Some even made comments later, saying how moved and touched they were seeing us having lunch together joyfully - laughing and in good spirit; apparently some were moved to tears. This shows that they had felt the good connection amongst the people there.

It's good for you to also consider that I am not just using words for the sake of sounding good, or making a lot of noise with no effect, as there are in fact those who feel the benefit. I'm just reassuring you that there is some benefit from what I share in the teachings.

2.3.1.2. Refuting the intellectually acquired self

2.3.1.2.2. Refuting the self asserted to be matter by the Particularists

In the earlier section, we covered the Samkhya's or Enumerators' views. This next section deals with the Particularists.

The verse relating to this is:

68. *The inanimate is also not the self
Because it is inanimate, like a vase.
Then if, 'because it is endowed with
consciousness
It is conscious,' it follows not knowing is
eliminated.*

The commentary reads:

The self posited as matter without mind by the Naiyayika and Particularists is also not the self since it is inanimate, e.g., like a vase.

The Particularists say that:

Particularists: Although the self itself is matter, it possesses mind by way of compounded relation, and therefore one posits it as knowing objects.

The **Madhyamikas'** answer to that is:

Madhyamika: It follows the phenomenon of the self truly not previously knowing objects is then eliminated – because it knows objects through the power of subsequent other phenomena.

What is being presented is quite clear. We've also covered some of these points earlier. The main point is that the **Particularists** don't assert the self as being consciousness; for them the self is the aggregates. Therefore, they posit the self to be matter, rather than consciousness.

Their assertion of the self as matter is actually refuted by the **Madhyamikas** in the very opening line of the commentary, where it says: *the self posited as matter without mind by the Naiyayika and Particularists is also not a self* – in other words, what the **Particularists** posit to be a self is in fact not really a self – *because it is inanimate* – meaning that it doesn't have a mind. The example given is *like a vase* – so, the **Madhyamikas** are saying that this self that you posit is in fact no different to other objects of matter, such as a vase. Because the self you posit lacks a mind, it cannot be asserted as a person.

The **Particularists** respond by saying, *although the self itself is matter, it possesses a mind by way of compounded relation*. Basically, this means that, although the self is matter, because of its inter-relationship with other factors it comes to have a mind, and therefore, they posit the self to knowing objects. So, in dependence on 'other', the self will have a consciousness – and know objects. They also agree that a person or self has to be an object possessor and thus know objects.

The **Madhyamikas** then refute that assertion by saying, *it follows the phenomenon of the self truly not previously knowing objects is then eliminated – because it knows objects through the power of subsequent other phenomena*. In other words, what the **Particularists** posit as a self, which is matter and not consciousness, does not know objects previously; only by coming into relationship with something else does it come to know objects. Prior to that, the self does not know the object.

While the **Particularists** posit the self as matter, they also posit it as being permanent. So, the **Madhyamikas** say that if, due to coming into contact with other factors, the self becomes an object possessor that knows things, then it has basically changed from the earlier self – that is, the self prior to coming into contact with other factors.

We can see the meticulous logic that the **Madhyamika** uses here to refute the **Particularists'** assertions. We should study these methods of logic, basically refuting and making counter arguments to the earlier positions and so forth. Such logic is meticulous. It is good for us to relate to this as a way of enhancing our own reasoning and logic.

Because people resort to arguments in many situations, one may as well learn the skills to present a logical argument. Especially when two people live together it seems that they end up having many arguments, so perhaps it's good to know how to carry out the arguments well, using logic. If you have previously learned how to use logic, you might even win an argument with your partner! (*laughter*)

The next verse is:

69. *If there is nothing that becomes the self,
How does the mind affect it?
Thus, devoid of consciousness and action,
Space has been made the self.*

The commentary explains:

If one accepts that the self does not even have the slightest change, then how does the mind affect the self so that the self knows objects? It follows the self is not affected – because it is accepted that the self is not changeable.

After this the commentary presents a summary:

Summary: Because the self is accepted as lacking consciousness and action, one has effectively accepted space to be self, which makes it pointless to accept – as such a self cannot act in any beneficial or harmful manner.

When the commentary states *if one accepts that the self does not even have the slightest change ...*, it is referring to the assertion of the **Particularists** that the self is permanent. So they are effectively accepting that the self does not have the slightest change. The contradiction presented here by the **Madhyamika** is, how then does the mind affect the self so that the self knows objects? The **Particularists** assert that, while the self is matter, it is when it comes into contact with a consciousness that it knows objects. The **Madhyamikas** are asking, how is it possible for that change to occur if the self is permanent? How can the self later become an object possessor, when in fact you accept the self to be unchangeable?

The **Madhyamikas'** reasoning is then presented further: *... it follows the self is not affected, because it is accepted that the self is not changeable*. Thus, the contradiction of the **Particularists'** assertion is presented.

From the **Prasangika Madhyamika** point of view – which we would claim is the point of view we adhere to – in relation to the self as knowing objects, although we would not say that the self is consciousness, we can still infer that the person knows things. Even from the normal conventional point of view, we would say that a person knows things, and that is because a person possesses a mind.

Some lower schools assert the self as being consciousness, but from the **Prasangika Madhyamika** point of view, the self is neither consciousness nor matter. While the self itself is not consciousness, it doesn't contradict that the self knows things. This is a significant point that we need to understand.

The summary of the **Madhyamika** argument is quite clear. It says that *because the self is accepted as lacking consciousness and action, the Particularists have effectively accepted space to be self*. If a self can be posited as lacking consciousness and not doing any action, that basically fits the criteria of empty space. So, you could effectively say that space is the self.

If that were the case, it is *pointless to accept such a self because it cannot act in any beneficial or harmful manner*. What the **Madhyamikas** are pointing out here is the contradiction that, if you were to posit a self that does not have any benefit or harm whatsoever, what is the point of even being a self? How can such a self even exist?

2.3.1.3. REFUTING OBJECTIONS TO THE REFUTATION

These are subdivided into two:

2.3.1.3.1. Refuting the objection that karmic cause and effect become invalid

2.3.1.3.2 Refuting the objection that meditation on compassion becomes invalid

With these particular non-Buddhist schools, we can see that they do believe in karma, because the objections they present here are that: "According to you Prasangika Madhyamikas, karmic cause and effect becomes invalid". This indicates that these schools do adhere to the notion of karmic cause and effect, as well as meditation on compassion, and so they value the need to meditate on compassion.

2.3.1.3.1. Refuting the objection that karmic cause and effect become invalid

This is divided into two:

2.3.1.3.1.1. Objection

2.3.1.3.1.2. Answer

2.3.1.3.1.1. Objection

The verse reads:

70. *If it is said, 'In case the self does not exist,
Then karmic cause and effect relationships are
invalid.
If one disintegrates upon creating karma,
Whose karma does it become?'*

From the commentary:

Argument: If the non-existence of the self, which becomes the basis for all bondage and liberation, is taken as momentary generation and disintegration of all functionalities, then virtuous and non-virtuous karmas and the relation to their results are invalid. If the person disintegrates in the next moment upon having created virtuous or non-virtuous karma, then whose karmic creation does it subsequently become? At the time of experiencing the result, the creator of the karma does not exist. If you say however according to our view the person is permanent [...].¹

Here the non-Buddhist **Particularist** schools are presenting a meticulously argued objection to the Prasangika Madhyamika. They say that the self in their system is a permanent self and begin their objection by saying, *if the non-existence of the self, which becomes or is the basis for all bondage and liberation ...* Here we can see that they have a concept of bondage and liberation, just as we have in the Buddhist system. Indeed, the Particularists assert that the self or person is the basis of bondage to cyclic existence, or being in samsara, and so becoming liberated is actually dependent on the self. So in that sense, the self is the basis of liberation.

The **Particularists'** objection to the Prasangika point of view continues: *... then virtuous and non-virtuous karmas and the relation to their results are invalid. If the person disintegrates in the next moment upon having created virtuous or non-virtuous karma, then whose karmic creation does it subsequently become? At the time of experiencing the result, the creator of the karma does not exist.*

In other words, if you, the Prasangika, say that the self doesn't exist, then who is it that actually creates the karma?

It is undeniable that the consequence of a karmic effect is experienced by the same person who created it. However,

the Particularists argue that, because the person who creates the karma is the one who experiences the effect later, this invalidates the Prasangika view, which asserts a self as being impermanent. If the self were impermanent and disintegrated from moment to moment, say the Particularists, who is the person experiencing the karmic effects created earlier?

We need to understand that, from the point of view of the Prasangika system and indeed all Buddhist schools, after the first moment in which a person creates karma, in the next moment that earlier moment will have disintegrated. The next moment after the karma is created, the action of the karma has ceased or disintegrated, but what does remain is the seed or imprint of the karma created earlier. The imprint is thus left on the continuum of the person's consciousness. As the continuum is carried forward, and when that seed later matures, one experiences the result of the karma.

Therefore, we need to understand that the reason why the Particularists feel they must assert the person as permanent is because, according to them, if the person were impermanent then, when the person who creates the karma disintegrates, that person will not experience the effects of the karma that was created earlier. Because to them it is the same person, and that is why they feel there is no alternative other than to accept the person as permanent.

2.3.1.3.1.2. Answer

The first verse and a half is presented first:

71. *The bases of action and result are different,
And although the creator self does not exist,
Since this is the same for both of us,
Isn't this debate here pointless?*

72ab. *It is impossible to see what you say,
That the cause is endowed with the result.*

The commentary explains:

Since it is established for both of us that the persons who are the basis at the causal time of creating the action, and at the resultant time of experiencing the result are of different substance, and that at the time of experiencing the result the self who created the karma does not exist, isn't your debate here at this time of explaining the relationship between karmic cause and effect pointless? You also accept that at the causal time of creating the karma the experience of the result is not there, and that at the time of experiencing the result, the creator of the karma is not there. If this becomes a fault, then it also applies to you. Additionally, your observation that the one endowed with the cause at the time of creating the cause is endowed with the experience of the result, this observation is impossible.

In presenting the answer here, the Madhyamikas say: *since it is established for both of us that the persons who are the basis at the causal time of creating the action, and at the resultant time of experiencing the result are of different substance ...* In other words, they would also assert that the person that experienced the result of the karma is different to the one who created it, in so far that they are of different substances.

The Madhyamikas continue: *... and that at the time of experiencing the result the self who created the karma does not exist, isn't your debate here at this time of explaining the relationship between karmic cause and effect pointless? You also accept that at the causal time of creating the karma the experience of the result is not there, and that at the time of experiencing the result, the creator of the karma is not there. If this becomes a fault,*

¹ Note: the [...] denotes the commentary's continuity with verses 71-74, the answers to the Particularists' argument

then it also applies to you. Additionally, your observation that the one endowed with the cause at the time of creating the cause is endowed with the experience of the result, this observation is impossible.

The **Particularists** then ask the question of the Prasangika Madhyamika:

Particularists: How is it then in your school?

Basically, they are asking, how do you assert the person that experiences both karmic cause and result?

The next two lines from the verse are:

*72cd. In dependence on one continuum,
We refer to agent and engager.*

The **Madhyamika** response is:

Madhyamika: In dependence on one continuum of aggregates we refer to the agent who creates the karma and the engager of the result. That called a continuum is the taker, which possesses parts, possessing that taken, the parts of the earlier, intermediate and later moments. In brief, it is valid to say this person creates karma, as well as experiences karma, but nobody can posit a cause and effect to be simultaneous.

As presented here, the **Madhyamika** school is saying that, *in dependence on one continuum of aggregates we refer to the agent who creates the karma and the engager of the result*. The continuum particularly refers to the continuum of the consciousness that goes from one life to the next. Within the aggregates, it is basically the consciousness that continues from one life to the next. Therefore, the creator of karma in this life is said to be the continuum of the same consciousness in the next life that experiences the result. That is how we posit a person who experiences the karmic consequences – a continuum of consciousness.

What is presented next is quite clear: *That called a continuum is the taker, which possesses parts, possessing that taken, the parts of the earlier, intermediate and later moments*. Here, the **Madhyamika** is positing the continuum as that which includes the earlier parts, the middle parts, and the later parts. That which possesses all of these is what they call a continuum.

The commentary continues, *in brief, it is valid to say this person creates karma, as well as experiences karma*. Here, *it is valid* means that, based on the continuum of the person, it is tenable or valid to posit that it is the same person who creates the karma, and also experiences the results or consequences of the karma. The Madhyamikas continue, *but nobody can posit a cause and effect to be simultaneous*. What is being emphasised here is that while the Madhyamikas assert that it is the continuum of a consciousness that experiences the effects of karma, the creation of karma and the resultant experience cannot be at the same time, as it is not possible for a cause and effect to be simultaneous.

It is important for us to get a good understanding of this point, because often we think that we experience an immediate effect, simultaneous with an action, and that whatever we do brings an immediate result.

The remaining two verses are presented are:

*73. The past and future minds
Are not the self because they do not exist.
Then, if the generated mind is the self
Because it disintegrates, again there is no self.*

*74. For example, like the banana tree,
When taken apart nothing is there.*

*Similarly, when looking with analysis
Also the self is not absolute.*

The commentary then presents the meaning:

The past and future minds are not the self or exist as self because they disintegrate and do not generate and therefore do not exist as self. Then, if the generated present mind were the self, as it disintegrates in the next moment, again the self asserted by you does not exist. For example, when the banana tree is separated into its parts, there is nothing there that exists inherently. Likewise, if one searches with logical analysis whether something is established inherently or not, then also the self does not exist in an absolute manner, because such a self is harmed by the reasoning that establishes the selflessness of a person that is explained below.

What the **Madhyamika** is presenting here is again quite clear: *the past and future minds are not the self or exist as self because they disintegrate and do not generate and therefore do not exist as self*. We can all accept that, if something happened in the past, then the very fact that it happened previously means that it doesn't exist right now. And the very fact that something is yet to come in the future, means that it doesn't exist now, so therefore it cannot exist inherently and permanently.

Having refuted the Particularists' assertion of the past mind as being a self and the future mind as being a self, the Madhyamika continue that, *if the generated present mind were the self... – that is, if you were to assert the present mind is the self, then that also is invalid*. The commentary explains, *if the generated present mind were the self, as it disintegrates in the next moment, again the self asserted by you does not exist*. So the mind of the past has been refuted as being the self, the mind to be generated in the future is refuted as the self, and even the present mind is also refuted as the self.

If you were to investigate in this way, you will not find an inherently existent self. Here, the Madhyamikas present the example of a banana tree, which is made up of different layers. If you were to peel off each layer to try to find the essence of the banana tree, you would actually discover that there is no such real, solid core to be found. Using that as an example, the commentary says that likewise, when one searches using logical analysis to find whether something is established inherently or not, the self, too, does not exist in the same way. If you were to investigate and analyse whether an inherently existent self exists, you could not possibly find such a self.

The commentary also mentions here that, *because such a self is harmed by the reasoning that establishes the selflessness of a person that is explained below*. In other words, when the logical reasoning of selflessness is presented, that will establish that there is no such inherently existent self.

2.3.1.3.2 Refuting the objection that meditation on compassion becomes invalid

75. If it is said, 'If there is no sentient being,

The **Realists** first present their objection:

Realist: If there is absolutely no inherently existing person, then, as there is no focal object for compassion, for whom should one practise meditation on compassion?

The Madhyamika answers:

Madhyamika: Although there is no inherently existing person, it follows there is no such fault that the focal object of compassion is non-existent – because that nominally existing sentient being, labelled by mental confusion, which is accepted for the purpose of achieving the result of liberation, is valid to be the focal object of compassion.

If one relates the ‘labelled by mental confusion’ to the true-grasping at person and phenomena then, since they label the person as truly existent and one refutes that it exists the way it is labelled, the sentient being is not refuted. By having refuted this, the sentient being is established as existing only in mere name, as an imputed existent.

Further, if one relates the mental confusion merely to ignorance, then the sentient being that becomes labelled by it exists as the focal object of compassion.

Here, where it says that *if there is absolutely no inherently existing person*, this objection will not relate to the lower Buddhist schools – the Vaibhashika, the Sautrantika, the Cittamatra or Mind Only, and the Svatantrika Madhyamika Middle Way school. All of these accept an inherently existent person.

The **Realists’** objection to the Prasangika’s earlier argument is that, *if there is absolutely no inherently existing person, then, as there is no focal object for compassion, for whom should one practise meditation on compassion?* This implies that for them, if a person does not exist inherently, then a person could not possibly exist at all. They’re arguing that if, according to the Prasangika Madhyamika, a person doesn’t exist, then who is the object of compassion?

The **Madhyamikas** say, *although there is no inherently existing person, it follows there is no such fault that the focal object of compassion is non-existent*. The reasoning follows, *because that nominally existing sentient being, labelled by mental confusion, which is accepted for the purpose of achieving the result of liberation, is valid to be the focal object of compassion*.

The explanation here is that, when mental confusion or ignorance labels the person as being truly or inherently existent, that is what is called the misconception of true grasping at the person, or grasping at an inherently existent person. When phenomena are apprehended as truly or inherently existent, that is labelled as true grasping at phenomena. That is how the apprehension of grasping at an inherently existent person or phenomena comes about.

As the person and phenomena are labelled wrongly by mental confusion in this way, when the inherently existent person is eliminated, the person itself isn’t eliminated – the nominally existent person remains.

The commentary continues, *since they label*, meaning the mental confusion labelling the person as truly existent, *one refutes that it exists in the way that it is labelled by the mental confusion*. When that inherent existence is refuted, the sentient being is however not eliminated.

How, then, is a sentient being labelled? Having refuted the truly or inherently existent person, *the sentient being is established as existing only in mere name, as an imputed existent*. This is according to the **Prasangika**. In other words, the person is what is referred to as an ‘imputed existent’, meaning it exists merely by label, or by imputation. It does not exist from its own side, but is merely labelled; it exists by mere name, or imputation.

So, the person is merely labelled upon the basis of imputation, which is the aggregates, and thus exists and functions based on that imputation or label on the aggregates. That is how it exists – not existing from the side of the aggregates, but as a label on the aggregates. That is why a person is referred to as an imputed existence.

The next verse reads:

76. *Without sentient beings whose result is it?
True, but even though, it is posited from mental
confusion.
For the purpose of pacifying suffering
Do not stop the resultant mental confusion.*

The commentary explains:

Realists: If there is no sentient being then, because the meditation on compassion loses its result, the buddha resulting from the meditation on compassion is the attainment of which person?

Madhyamika: Although it is true that these causes and effects do not exist truly, it is not contradictory to meditate on compassion that arises from nominal confusion about phenomena.

For the purpose of pacifying the sufferings of sentient beings one should not stop the non-afflictive mental confusion at the time of the subsequent attainment of having attained the resultant buddha. One cannot stop it adventitiously, and although one does not stop it, if one relates this branch of the method for attaining complete enlightenment to the delusion regarding suchness, then it is a delusion of true existence.

One can relate it to the compassion of merely focusing on sentient beings that have not been characterised as lacking true existence, and to the compassion focusing on phenomena, being explained as becoming the cause of enlightenment.

Otherwise the meaning² is that nominalities such as the focusing on only mind by those not realising suchness is not something to be abandoned.

The **Realists’** objection here is, *if there is no sentient being ...*, which, of course, is not what the Prasangika is saying at all. The **Prasangika** say that there is no inherently existent sentient being, but they do not take that as being the non-existence of sentient beings. The **Realists**, however, object that, *because the meditation on compassion loses its result, the buddha resulting from the meditation on compassion is the attainment of which person?* This is a rhetorical question.

The **Madhyamikas** present their answer by saying that *although it is true that these causes and effects do not exist truly, it is not contradictory to meditate on compassion that arises from nominal confusion about phenomena*. Further, *for the purpose of pacifying the sufferings of sentient beings one should not stop the non-afflictive mental confusion at the time of the subsequent attainment of having attained the resultant buddha*.

These are actually very meticulous explanations. If we pay attention to this, it actually relates to our situation, so it is a significant point to understand. While one has not yet completely overcome the misapprehension, or misconception of true existence, by merely focusing on sentient beings, one can still generate compassion. This is the point.

As it mentioned here, *one cannot stop it adventitiously, and although one does not stop it, if one relates this branch of the method for attaining complete enlightenment to the delusion regarding*

² ... of the third and fourth line of verse 76 is ...

suchness, then it is a delusion of true existence. While one has not yet overcome the misconception of grasping at true existence or inherent existence, it is still necessary to develop compassion towards sentient beings. There are three levels of generating compassion: one merely focuses on sentient beings; the next focuses on sentient beings seeing them with the characteristic of being impermanent; and the third focuses on sentient beings seeing them with the characteristic of being empty of inherent existence, i.e. lacking a truly or inherently existent self.

The commentary explains, *one can relate it to the compassion of merely focusing on sentient beings that have not been characterised as lacking true existence, and to the compassion focusing on phenomena, being explained as becoming the cause of enlightenment.* The compassion focusing on phenomena is that which sees sentient beings with the characteristic of them being impermanent.

So, while one has not yet overcome the misapprehension of grasping at truly existent or inherently existent sentient beings, one can still generate compassion for sentient beings by focusing on them merely as sentient beings, or focusing on them as impermanent phenomena.

The commentary further says, *otherwise the meaning is that nominalities such as the focusing on only mind by those not realising suchness is not something to be abandoned.*

The next verse is:

77. *Pride is the cause of suffering,
Which increases due to delusion regarding the
self.
If, 'This cannot be reversed,'
The meditation on selflessness is superior.*

Realist: Why was the mental confusion including the object refuted earlier?

Madhyamika: As was shown earlier in the statement, 'It becomes the cause for cyclic existence', the pride that becomes the cause for cyclic existence, i.e. afflictive ignorance, fabricated the self, and the sufferings of cyclic existence increase. There is no contradiction that the pride needs to be stopped, and can be stopped.

The next argument is:

Argument: There is no stopping of true-grasping aside from stopping this kind of mental confusion, and it cannot be stopped. Although one stops it once, because it arises again, similar to the circling aggregates, it cannot be eliminated completely.

Madhyamika: It is not impossible to abandon true-grasping. It is distorted with regard to the mode of abiding of functionalities, and hence it is very weak and inferior, and the meditation on selflessness is superior compared to it. Because it realises the mode of abiding of functionalities faultlessly, the other can be eliminated from the root.

So, the **Realists** ask, *why was the mental confusion including the object refuted earlier?* And the **Madhyamikas** reply by saying, *as was shown earlier in the statement, because 'It becomes the cause for cyclic existence', the pride that becomes the cause for cyclic existence, i.e. afflictive ignorance fabricates the existence of the self, and thus the sufferings of cyclic existence increase. There is no contradiction as this pride needs to be stopped, and can be stopped.*

After the Madhyamikas explain why mental confusion including the object was refuted earlier, the **non-Buddhist Realists** present the next argument that, *there is no stopping of true-grasping aside from stopping this kind of mental confusion, and it cannot be stopped. Although one stops it once, because it*

arises again, similar to the circling aggregates, it cannot be eliminated completely, so this is their argument.

The **Madhyamikas** answer, *it is not impossible to abandon true-grasping, and the reason follows: It is distorted with regards to the mode of abiding of functionalities, and hence it is very weak and inferior, and the meditation on selflessness is superior compared to it.*

I've presented this reasoning in more detail in previous teachings. For those of you who can recall them and can refer to the teachings, it will be quite clear.

As the **Madhyamikas** concisely mention here, *it is distorted with regard to the mode of abiding of functionalities.* So, true-grasping is distorted in relation to the actual mode of things, of functionalities, because it is based on falsity and distortion, *hence it is very weak and inferior. The meditation on selflessness is superior compared to it.* Thus, because the meditation on selflessness is superior, it has the ability to completely destroy true-grasping. The commentary concludes, *because it realises the mode of abiding of functionalities faultlessly, the other can be eliminated from the root.*

2.3.2. Explaining extensively the reasoning that establishes the selflessness of phenomena

We can leave that for our next session.

It is good to read the text slowly, and then revisit it again. Based on the teachings we've received, we can actually get a good understanding. When we refer to one text and get a good understanding of that, one can relate to other texts. That will also help us to get good understanding.

When we begin to understand and grasp the meaning of the texts we read, we will then begin to really enjoy the text. We will reach a point where we don't want to put the text down, but continue reading it. Without a textbook around, one would feel lonely!

Not only will we be able to derive the meaning while reading the text, even after we put the textbook down, we will still be thinking about certain points, reflecting on the meaning and getting more understanding and insight from the passages we have read.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke.

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Edited Version
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Homework

Block: 3 Week: 14 (15/11/2016) Assigned: 22/11/2016

1. How do the Particularists assert the self and how do the Madyamika refute their assertion?

2. In other words, if you, the Prasangika, say that the self doesn't exist, then who is it that actually creates the karma? Give the Prasangika and indeed all Buddhist school's point of view on how one experiences karma.

3. The Particularists then ask the question of the Prasangika Madhyamika:

Particularists: How is it then in your school?

Basically, they are asking, how do you assert the person that experiences both karmic cause and result? Give the Madhyamika response.

4. Explain Verses 73. and verse 74:

73. *The past and future minds
Are not the self because they do not exist.
Then, if the generated mind is the self
Because it disintegrates, again there is no self.*
74. *For example, like the banana tree,
When taken apart nothing is there.
Similarly, when looking with analysis
Also the self is not absolute.*

5. The **Realists'** objection to the Prasangika's earlier argument is that, *if there is absolutely no inherently existing person, then, as there is no focal object for compassion, for whom should one practise meditation on compassion?* This implies that for them, if a person does not exist inherently, then a person could not possibly exist at all.

'The Realists are arguing that if, according to the Prasangika Madhyamika, a person doesn't exist, then who is the object of compassion? '

When the inherently existing person is eliminated is the person itself eliminated?

6. **What are the three levels of generating compassion for sentient beings?**

7. The non-Buddhist Realists present the next argument that, *there is no stopping of true-grasping aside from stopping this kind of mental confusion, and it cannot be stopped. Although one stops it once, because it arises again, similar to the circling aggregates, it cannot be eliminated completely, so this is their argument.*

Give the Madyamika's answer.

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ལྷན་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤོང་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

22 November 2016

As usual, let's spend some time in meditation.

[Meditation]

Now based on a bodhicitta motivation, we can generate the motivation for receiving the teachings.

2.3.2. Explaining extensively the reasoning that establishes the selflessness of phenomena

Earlier, the selflessness of persons was established with various reasons. Now what is being established is the selflessness of phenomena. To get a good understanding of the explanation of the selflessness of persons and phenomena, consider it from this perspective: if there were to be a self of a person, how would it exist? Think, why is the person empty of an inherently existent self? Likewise with phenomena, if there were to be an inherently existent self or phenomena, how would it exist? Why are phenomena empty of existing inherently? One needs to first clearly understand what is being refuted in order to understand what is being established.

Explaining the selflessness of phenomena has three subdivisions:

2.3.2.1. Explaining the selflessness of phenomena by way of the four close placements by mindfulness

2.3.2.2. Refuting the argument that the two truths would be invalid

2.3.2.3. Stating the reasons that establish selflessness

2.3.2.1. EXPLAINING THE SELFLESSNESS OF PHENOMENA BY WAY OF THE FOUR CLOSE PLACEMENTS BY MINDFULNESS

This is subdivided into four, which are the four placements that I have explained previously:

2.3.2.1.1. Meditating on the close placement by mindfulness on the body

2.3.2.1.2. The close placement by mindfulness on feelings

2.3.2.1.3. The close placement of mindfulness on the mind

2.3.2.1.4. The close placement by mindfulness on phenomena

2.3.2.1.1. Meditating on the close placement by mindfulness on the body.

Meditating on the close placement by mindfulness on the body in general would relate to, for example, meditating on the impure nature of the body. However here it specifically relates to meditating on the selflessness of the body.

This is subdivided into four categories:

2.3.2.1.1.1 Comprehending that the body which possesses parts lacks inherent existence

2.3.2.1.1.2 Comprehending that the parts lack inherent existence

2.3.2.1.1.3 Thus, attachment to the dream-like body lacking inherent existence is unsuitable

2.3.2.1.1.4 This also establishes the person as lacking inherent existence

The earlier reasoning of the selflessness of person also applies here as well. The reasoning why the person was established as lacking a self is that if there were to be a self of a person then it would have to be findable on the basis of imputation, i.e. the aggregates. Similarly, if the body were to exist inherently, then it would also have to be findable on the basis of the imputation of the body, which are the parts and collections of what makes up the body. The same logic applies for both the self of person and the body.

The specific explanation here relates to the assertion made by the Mind Only and Svatantrika Madhyamika school, in which they say, when investigated, an inherently person is found upon basis of imputation. Likewise an inherently existent body can be found on the basis of its imputation. That is how the Mind Only and the Svatantrika Middle Way School actually establish an inherently existent self of a person and the aggregates/body. Here, according to the Prasangika, what is refuted is an inherently existent person and body; neither can be found as existing inherently when searched for on the basis their imputation.

The key point to understand here is that what cannot be found is an inherently existent body. This is then established as the emptiness of the body. This is not to be confused with investigating the body and not finding the body itself; the lack of a body is not the emptiness of the body. But investigating the misconception of an inherently existent body, and not finding it is established as the emptiness of the body.

Thus, according to the Prasangika, the reason an inherently existent person and body does not exist is because if it were to exist, the physical aggregates would have to exist without depending on causes and conditions and any of its parts. Therefore the ability for something to exist that does not depend on either its causes and conditions, or its parts, is the proof that it does not exist inherently. While the lower schools would not accept that things exist without depending on causes and conditions at all, they do establish that things exist inherently, from their own side.

The Prasangika assert that the lack of true existence, inherent existence, and the lack of autonomous independent existence all come to the same point. That is, if they were to exist independently or inherently or autonomously, they would have to exist without depending on causes and conditions or any of its parts. Functional things are dependent on causes and conditions, whereas non-compounded phenomena, for example space, depend on its directional parts. This is how the lack of inherent existence is established, because all phenomena depend on either their causes and conditions or their parts.

In simple terms, the Prasangika are saying to the Mind Only and Svatantrika: you say that having investigated you can find an inherently existent person and aggregates, however we say that this cannot be found.

After investigating, if the person or aggregate is found to exist without depending on either its causes, conditions or parts, then we would accept that there is an inherently existent person and body, but that is simply not possible.

2.3.2.1.1.1 Comprehending that the body which possesses the parts lacks inherent existence

The commentary explains:

It follows the body does not exist inherently - because if it existed inherently, then an example of the body should be findable in the individual limbs of the body, in the collection of the accumulated parts or as a different entity from these, but it is not found.

Argument: The collection of all the accumulated parts is the body. What doubt is there about this?

Madhyamaka: Because one labels the body in dependence on the collection, the collection of the parts of the body is unsuitable to be the body. If it is not like this, then one needs to accept a final partless particle.

The commentary first presents the reasoning for why there is no inherently existent body. If you can get a good understanding of this reasoning, then you can apply it to all the rest. Just as it states in *The Heart Sutra*: 'correctly and repeatedly beholding those five aggregates also as empty of inherent nature', similarly this is to be applied to all other phenomena. Thus, it is good to have a clear understanding of what it means to lack inherent existence.

The first syllogism the commentary presents is, *It follows the body does not exist inherently - because if it existed inherently, then an example of the body should be findable in the individual limbs of the body, in the collection of the accumulated parts or as a different entity from these. But it is not found either within the parts or as a different entity from them. An inherently existent body would have to be found, but it cannot be found. That's the reason being presented.*

Then the **non-Buddhist** school says, *The collection of all the accumulated parts is the body. What doubt is there about this?* So they are saying that the collection itself can be posited as the body. The **Madhyamika** refute this by saying, *because one labels the body in dependence on the collection and without the collection one cannot even use the label 'body'. It continues that, the collection of the parts of the body is unsuitable to be the body. If it is not like this, then one needs to accept a final partless particle*, meaning that if this were to be the case, by default one would have to assert that there is a partless particle, which cannot be the case.

The verses read:

78. *The body is not the feet or calves,
The thighs and waist are also not the body,
The stomach and back are also not the body,
The chest and upper arms are also not the body,
The rib cage and hands are also not the body,*
79. *The armpits and shoulders are also not the
body,
The internal organs are also not it.
If also head and neck are not the body,
Then what of this is the body?*

The commentary explains the meaning of the verses as follows:

Thus, when one analyses whether and how the basis of engagement for the label that expresses 'body' exists from the side of the body itself: The feet and calves of the person are not the body of the person, the thighs and waist are also not the body, and also the stomach and back are not the body because the body of the person is labelled in dependence on these. The chest and upper arms are also not the body, the rib cage and hands are also not the body, the armpits and shoulders are also not the body and the internal organs are also not it. If also the head and neck are not the body, then which of these parts is the body? Not any of them. Because also their collection is not the body or any different entity from these, the body does not exist inherently.

The statement *When one analyses whether and how the basis of engagement for the label that expresses 'body' exists from the side of the body itself*, is making the point that if the body were to exist inherently, it would have to exist from its own side. There is nowhere else it could exist inherently apart from the parts or the collection of the body. Then the following investigation applies: if the body were to exist from its own side then going through each part of the body, one would investigate whether that part is the inherently existent body.

The reasoning presented here refutes an inherently existent body after having searched for it. Even conventionally, any normal person would be able to accept that *the feet and calves of the person are not the body of the person*. Clearly, we can all accept that the feet and calves are not by themselves the body. Likewise, *the thighs and the waist are also not the body and also the stomach and back in itself are not the body, because the body of the person is labelled in dependence on these*. So these are not individually the body because what is labelled as 'body' is a combination of all of these. The commentary goes on, *The chest and upper arms are also not the body, the rib cage and hands are also not the body, the armpits and shoulders are also not the body and the internal organs are also not it. If also the head and neck are not the body, then which of these parts is the body?*

For an individual meditating on the emptiness of the body, the process is to first investigate whether the body exists inherently or not. That investigation is based on what appears as a body, meditating on whether each and every part are inherently existing parts of the body or not, and whether the collection of these parts make up an inherently existent body or not? When an individual employs this method to realise the emptiness of the body, they come to the conclusion that an inherently existent body is nowhere to be found. Not finding an inherently existent body is in fact realising the selflessness and emptiness of the body. So the investigative meditation and realisation is not based on negating a body, but rather negating an inherently existent body. This is the main point to be understood.

When one first conducts an actual meditation on the emptiness of the body, doing it in a proper way, one can come to a really good understanding of the emptiness of the body. To begin with, if the body were not empty of inherent existence, then it means that it would have to exist inherently. So first one needs to get a good understanding of how the body would exist if it did exist

inherently. If the body exists inherently, then it can only exist upon either the collection of, or the parts of the body. There is nowhere else an inherently existent body could exist. Thus one investigates the various parts that make up the body, and going through each one comes to the conclusion that there is no inherently existent body, neither the parts nor the collection of the body itself can be found as being inherently existent. At a certain point one experiences a sense of vacuity, just like empty space, and it is at that point one maintains one's focus on this vacuity. Having done the earlier profound investigation, it is at this point that one gets a true sense of the lack of an inherently existent body. It is said that when one reaches this stage one should not engage in further analysis, but rather just maintain that awareness of emptiness and meditate on it. This establishes a really good understanding from which you can get closer to the actual realisation of emptiness.

While these points will be explained further on, I will now present the common understanding we have of a person which actually shows one's own wrong perception. It is good to begin to recognise one's own mistaken view when one perceives an individual person, or their body.

When we see the body of a person how does it appear to us? We have an instinctive notion that the body actually exists from its own side, independently of causes and conditions, and we grasp onto that appearance in the belief that the body actually exists in that way, i.e. as existing from its own side. That is the misconception of apprehending a truly existent body. There is no other misconception of true existence other than how we normally perceive and apprehend the body, instinctively grasping onto a body as existing from its own side.

So the body that appears to us as existing from its own side is actually completely mistaken. An individual person, and their body, cannot exist independently from its own side. What we call 'a person and their aggregates' is merely imputed by mind. Therefore they are known as imputed phenomena.

This is really the key point of the Prasangika view as presented by Chandrakirti and Nagarjuna: that persons and phenomena are merely imputed by the mind, and that all existence is merely imputed and labelled by the mind. When one gets a good understanding of this point, one is getting closer to the real understanding of the correct view – the fact that things are merely imputed by mind.

When one has an inkling that there is no substantial existence, but rather that the body is merely imputed by mind, then all the attractive attributes of the body also start to disintegrate within one's mind, and thus one's attachment to the body also disintegrates. This how we need to understand that the right view of emptiness is the optimum means to overcome one's delusions such as attachment and so forth. As explained in the teachings, when one comes close to the correct understanding of emptiness, it begins to shatter the core of cyclic existence and one's delusions. This is the key point in the explanation here.

To summarise the earlier part, the commentary says, *Because also their collection is not the body or any different entity from these, the body does not exist inherently.*

The next argument is then presented: *The coarse body is of a different entity from the limbs and parts.*

This suggests that some think the 'coarse body' is of a different entity from the limbs and parts. The following verses are a way to refute this view.

The first two verses read:

80. *In case this body abides
In all parts individually
Then of course the parts abide in parts.
How can it abide in itself?*
81. *In case the entire entity of the body
Abides in the hands and so forth,
However many limbs such as hands,
Are found, they become bodies.*

The commentary explains the meaning of these two verses as follows.

Madhyamaka: If there is such a coarse body that possesses parts, and it is of a different entity from the parts, does then each part of that coarse body individually abide in one of the parts, such as one part in the hand, one part in the calves and so forth, or does the whole part-possessor [the body] abide in each of the parts without being divided up?

If one looks at the first, as the part-possessor [or body] pervades hands and so forth, with each part abiding on the respective part, then it would become infinite for each part, e.g. the hand has again parts such as the fingers, which then would also abide in their respective parts.

If the part-possessor [the body] is partless, then there are no individual parts that can abide in the individual parts. Rather, as in the later examination, the whole entity would abide in each of the parts of the complete body, and there would therefore be as many bodies as there are parts. As the parts would not touch the body, it is solely false and not in the slightest truly existent.

Then a summary is presented.

82. *If there is no body inside or out,
Then how is there a body in the hands and other
parts?
If it does not exist apart from them,
How can it exist?*

The commentary explains:

Summary: If one analyses well with reasoning in this way, then regardless of whether it is the body of the outer person asserted by the Buddhists or the internally fabricated person by the non-Buddhists, it does not exist inherently. Therefore, how could the hands and so forth be pervaded by an inherently existing body? They are not.

The commentary explains that if one analyses well with the reasoning presented earlier, *then regardless of whether it is the body of the outer person asserted by the Buddhists, (i.e. the Prasangika) that what the body is, is a mere label upon a base of imputation, which is the aggregates. What is meant by the outer person asserted by Buddhists or the internally fabricated person by the non-Buddhist does not exist, is that it does not exist inherently.* The body which does exist, the merely labelled body, as well as the body

asserted by non-Buddhists (which is a fabricated assertion of the body) do not exist inherently, *therefore how could the hands and so forth be pervaded by inherently existing body? They are not.*

The main point here is, *how could the hands and so forth be pervaded by an inherently existing body?*, which, being a rhetorical question, implies that they are not. With the reasons presented earlier this should all be clear.

The next verse reads:

83. *Thus, there is no body. Body awareness is generated
Through delusion regarding the hands and other parts,
Similar to awareness of a person generated as
A heap of stones; through the specific shape it is placed in.*

The commentary explains:

Although the body does not exist inherently, regarding the cause for being mistaken: Although the body does not exist inherently, there is a reason for being mistaken with regards to it because although it does not exist inherently, by fantasising that the hands and so forth exist truly, the awareness thinking that the body exists inherently is generated. For example, like the generation of the awareness of a person as a heap of stones because of the characteristic of the human like shape it is placed in.

Here the commentary affirms that while the body does not exist inherently, as an ordinary being one apprehends a truly existent, or inherently existent body. Why is that so? The cause for this mistaken perception is that, *although the body does not exist inherently, there is a reason for being mistaken with regards to it because although it does not exist inherently, by fantasising that the hands and so forth exist truly, the awareness thinking that the body exists inherently is generated.* In relation to parts of the body such as the hands, when you perceive these as being truly existent then naturally you will perceive the body itself as being inherently existent.

The next example, *like the generation of the awareness of a person as a heap of stones because of the characteristic of the human like shape it is placed in* refers to further conditions impeding perception. For example, at certain times of the day when the visibility is a bit hazy, and one is at a distance from a heap of stones stacked in a similar shape to a person, one sees a shape which looks like a person. One will have a mistaken perception of a person over there, which arises because all the conditions for that mistaken perception are present. This explains the example presented here. This is explained further in the next verse.

The verse reads:

84. *As long as the conditions are there
The body will appear as the person.
Likewise, as long as they are there regarding
The hands and so forth, they will appear as the body.*

The commentary explains the verse in the following way.

For as long as the conditions for the mistake such as the unclear appearance of the heap of stones are complete, for that long the shape will appear as the person. Likewise, for as long as the causes and conditions of the hands and other parts are complete,

for that long the body will appear as that which has limbs, and the awareness grasping at the body as existing inherently will be generated.

This clearly explains that for *as long as the conditions for the mistake such as the unclear appearance of the heap of stones are complete*, meaning that when all the conditions for perceiving a heap of stones as being a person are there, then for that period of time the shape will appear as a person. Likewise for as long as the causes and conditions for the hands and other parts are complete, i.e. *as long as they appear as being truly existent, then for that long the body will appear as that which has limbs, and the awareness grasping at the body as existing inherently will be generated.*

2.3.2.1.1.2. Comprehending that the parts lack inherent existence

The verse reads:

85. *Likewise, because of being the collection of fingers,
What could the hand also become?
Because they in turn are a collection of joints
Also the joints are divided by their parts,*

The commentary explains the verse this way:

The body of the person is labelled in dependence on the collection of limbs and parts, and does not exist truly. Likewise, as the hand is also labelled in dependence on the collections of parts and fingers, how could it become something inherently existent? It is impossible. Also because the finger is labelled in dependence on the collection of joints it cannot exist inherently. If the joints are also divided into their parts, they do not possess inherent existence. If the parts of the joints are divided into particles, then they also do not exist inherently.

The body of the person is labelled in dependence on the collection of limbs and parts, and does not exist truly. The reason the person does not exist truly is because it is merely labelled by mind upon the parts which make up the body. Similarly when you relate to each part of the body, such as the hand, then *the hand is also labelled in dependence on the collections of parts and fingers.* What we call 'hand' is nothing but the collections of the different parts which make up the hand, such as the fingers and so forth. So, *how could it become something that is inherently existent?* Being a rhetorical question, what is implied is that it cannot exist inherently. That is impossible. Furthermore, even the fingers are made of parts, the joints and so forth, so they cannot exist inherently.

86. *And the parts are divided into particles.
Should the particles be divided into directions,
Since the partitioned directions lack parts,
They are like space. Hence, there are also no particles.*

When the particles are also divided into different directional parts through the division into the directional part of the east and so forth, then they are labelled in dependence on directional parts and do not exist inherently. Also the directional parts do not exist inherently because they lack inherently existing parts, for example, like space.

Then, also the particles do not possess inherent existence because if they did, then one would need to accept partless particles, but this is refuted by the reasoning of 'if six are connected simultaneously'.

The commentary explains that, *When the particles are also divided into different directional parts through the division into the directional part of the east and so forth, then they are labelled in dependence on directional parts and do not exist inherently. Directional parts do not exist inherently because they lack inherently existing parts, for example like space because space is posited as being a mere negation of obstruction.*

The commentary continues:

Then, also the particles do not possess inherent existence because if they did, then one would need to accept partless particles, but this is refuted by the reasoning of 'if six are connected simultaneously'.

What is being presented here is that the particles themselves do not possess inherent existence. Of course, when you divide them into their smallest parts, even then they do not exist inherently, because if they did one would have to accept a partless particle. If a partless particle did exist, the logical refutation here is that it couldn't possibly coexist with other particles, like six other particles, because if it didn't have any parts to it, then in coming together with other particles it would all merge to become one, so they couldn't be separate particles. Then nothing solid could possibly exist as there are no parts to the particles, and all other particles would merge and become just one particle, which is absurd.

2.3.2.1.1.3. Then, attachment to the dream-like body lacking inherent existence is unsuitable

This is one of the points I mentioned earlier.

The first two lines of the verse read:

*87ab Thus, who with discernment,
Is attached to a dream-like form?*

The commentary explains these lines:

The dream-like form appears as something identifiable when not investigated but at the time of immediate investigation, it does not exist inherently. Who that possesses discernment would be attached? It is unsuitable, as there is nobody that comprehends the object of true-grasping.

The dream-like form refers to the body. The real point to understand here is the connotation of form or body being *identifiable* or existing from its own side, because it has not been investigated.

It is very true that with anything we perceive, like the hand, that when we don't investigate and just grasp onto it as it appears, it appears to us as really existing from its own side. The verse refers to the way forms are in fact like dreams; they have no real essence because they do not exist at all from their own side; to us however they appear as something real and identifiable. This is how something appears when it is not investigated, *but at the time of immediate investigation it does not exist inherently.*

As a group we can recite the Tara Praises and dedicate them to the success of Ingrid's treatment and also to Susan who is very unwell and has been admitted to hospital recently. Also dedicate them to Julie's mother who is also apparently very ill. I have been informed that while Susan is physically unwell, her mind is quite stable, quite happy and quite good.

I have advised her to put her complete reliance on Tara and recite Tara mantras and just think that whatever

happens, I rely upon you Tara, wholeheartedly. She commented to me that this has been really helpful for her mind, that it is a good practice.

It is good to give advice that is easy to comprehend and manageable as a practice for people to do. Sometimes a practice can become too much, then of course it becomes overwhelming. That's a point to keep in mind - to make advice simple and manageable. Actually this reminds me of what a geshe (who is quite a great scholar himself) once told me - that it is good to give easily understood, succinct advice for a practice, rather than giving too many things to think about. When people ask for advice we find that many give too much elaboration, not something that is manageable and simple. This geshe told me that when people asked a question, it is good to give a simple answer, something they can manage. This particular geshe has now passed away.

In relation to sharing something simple with people, once I said to someone it is good to remember that your real, true friend is within you; not outside, but within you. This person said that he'd never heard that and it was a very significant point. The person was in distress because he had lost quite a lot of money in a business, but when I mentioned that he hadn't really lost anything, he understood the point and came to realise that if the real true friend was inside, then in losing external things one actually hasn't lost anything. He maintained the internal real friend that is within him. That is the point he got from that simple advice.

On another occasion, again I shared some advice with a Dharma student who was very ill. I mentioned that of course it is preferable if we can all have a long life. However between this life and the next life, wouldn't the next life be more important to consider? And then this person said that advice really helped them. Accepting sensible, good advice was a true mark of them having a good understanding of the future life. This is what we need to prepare ourselves for: that our practice is done as a means of preparing for that inevitable time of death. Otherwise what use is Dharma practice? It is not meant to accumulate worldly possessions.

When we do practices, and accumulate numbers of mantras, remember the main point to think about during the recitation is to think about these points and remember that we have something to rejoice about. The teachings state that when we rejoice in others' good deeds, this is a virtue that further enhances our own virtue. Also, rejoicing in one's own good deeds becomes a means to further accumulate or enhance our virtue. In order to be able to rejoice in one's virtues, one has to accumulate virtues, so one has to have a virtuous mind.

The virtuous mind is something we need to familiarise ourselves with periodically: think about Dharma points during the day, when going out and about. That is how our mind becomes more and more familiar with virtue. There are so many non-virtues we can recall even in this life alone, not to mention all our past lives.

While we can't remember the non-virtues we've accumulated in past lives, we can assume that we have definitely accumulated many grave negative karmas, such as being a very evil person who we'd now condemn

as a murderer etc. We would have been born as animals, who are completely dependent on eating other animals. These are things that we can assume we have done in past lives. In terms of this lifetime, we can definitely recall certain non-virtuous states of mind or actions that we have engaged in and that what we need is to apply a purification practice. The main point of purification is to develop strong regret, because when one develops this it purifies half of the negative karma one has accumulated. In this way we embark on our practice of Dharma.

It is good to think about these points periodically to develop our practice of Dharma on a daily basis and further enhance a virtuous state of mind, and develop regret for the non-virtuous states of mind. That is how we familiarise ourselves with accumulating virtue. Otherwise there will be no end to it if we are completely preoccupied by the affairs of this life, thinking constantly about how things should be going in relation to this life's affairs. There will be no end to trying to fulfil one's wishes in relation to this life's affairs. If that was the case and if this life's wishes could be fulfilled, then there would be many who would already be really satisfied and happy by now. That we can see that this is not sufficient, and that we need to have a bigger scope to prepare us for our future existences, is something that constitutes the practice of Dharma.

There being no end to this life's affairs is illustrated in a story I would have shared in the past. Once there was a teacher and a student. The teacher used to promise that they'd have a picnic someday, and the student would periodically remind him about going on the picnic. The teacher would say, 'We will go. We will go when all our work is finished'. After a while the student would ask the teacher again, 'So when are we going on a picnic?' and again the teacher would say, 'When all the work is completed'. One day the teacher noticed something in the distance. He couldn't see very clearly and asked the student what was happening. It was a funeral procession, so the student said to the teacher, 'Well, that's someone whose work is all completed and who is now going on a picnic'. Whether this is a true story or not, it is a good illustration of our situation.

So when things are well, we constantly think that things are not going well and try to make them better. And during this time one's life will end.

So now we'll do the recitation of the Tara Praises and make the dedications. Since we can assume we here are endowed with morality, then the prayers would definitely be fruitful. The key point about whether aspirational prayers are actualised or not is dependent on the morality of the person who is doing those prayers. That is something which we need to keep in mind because if you are assuming that you are doing a virtuous practice of Dharma, whether that becomes a cause for our good rebirth or not is dependent on observing morality. So therefore we need to understand that morality is essential.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

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Homework**Answers**

Block:3 Week: 15 (22/11/2016) Assigned: 29/11/2016

1. What is the assertion made by the Mind Only and Svatantrika regarding the investigation into the person and body?

The specific explanation here relates to the assertion made by the Mind Only and Svatantrika Madhyamika school, in which they say, when investigated an inherently person is found upon basis of imputation. Likewise an inherently existent body can be found on the basis of its imputation. That is how the Mind Only and the Svatantrika Middle Way School actually establish an inherently existent self of a person and the aggregates/body. Here, according to the Prasangika, what is refuted is an inherently existent person and body; neither can be found as existing inherently when searched for on the basis their imputation.

Thus, according to the Prasangika, the reason an inherently existent person and body does not exist is because if it were to exist, the physical aggregates would have to exist without depending on causes and conditions and any of its parts. Therefore the ability for something to exist that does not depend on either its causes and conditions, or its parts is the proof that it does not exist inherently. While the lower schools would not accept that things exist without depending on causes and conditions at all, they do establish that things exist inherently, from their own side.

2. The Prasangika assert that the lack of true existence, inherent existence, and the lack of autonomous independent existence all come to the same point.

The Prasangika assert that the lack of true existence, inherent existence, and the lack of autonomous independent existence all come to the same point. That is, if they were to exist independently or inherently or autonomously, they would have to exist without depending on causes and conditions or any of its parts. Functional things are dependent on causes and conditions, whereas non-compounded phenomena, for example space, depend on its directional parts. This is how the lack of inherent existence is established, because all phenomena depend on either their causes and conditions or their parts.

3. For an individual meditating on the emptiness of the body, the process is to first investigate whether the body exists inherently or not. Describe the investigation involved in this process.

For an individual meditating on the emptiness of the body, the process is to first investigate whether the body exists inherently or not. That investigation is based on what appears as a body, meditating on whether each and every part are inherently existing parts of the body or not, and whether the collection of these parts make up inherently existent body or not? When an individual employs this method to realise the emptiness of the body, they come to the conclusion that an inherently existent body is nowhere to be found. Not finding an inherently existent body is in fact realising the selflessness and emptiness of the body. So the investigative meditation and realisation is not based on negating a body, but rather negating an inherently existent body. This is the main point to be understood.

4. Explain the refutation of the partless particle.

86. *And the parts are divided into particles.
Should the particles be divided into directions,
Since the partitioned directions lack parts,
They are like space. Hence, there are also no particles.*

When the particles are also divided into different directional parts through the division into the directional part of the east and so forth, then they are labelled in dependence on directional parts and

do not exist inherently. Also the directional parts do not exist inherently because they lack inherently existing parts, for example, like space.

Then, also the particles do not possess inherent existence because if they did, then one would need to accept partless particles, but this is refuted by the reasoning of 'if six are connected simultaneously'.

The commentary explains that, *When the particles are also divided into different directional parts through the division into the directional part of the east and so forth, then they are labelled in dependence on directional parts and do not exist inherently. Directional parts do not exist inherently because they lack inherently existing parts, for example like space* because space is posited as being a mere negation of obstruction.

The commentary continues:

Then, also the particles do not possess inherent existence because if they did, then one would need to accept partless particles, but this is refuted by the reasoning of 'if six are connected simultaneously'.

What is being presented here is that the particles themselves do not possess inherent existence. Of course, when you divide them into their smallest parts, even then they do not exist inherently, because if they did one would have to accept a partless particle. If a partless particle did exist, the logical refutation here is that it couldn't possibly coexist with other particles, like six other particles, because if it didn't have any parts to it, then in coming together with other particles it would all merge to become one, so they couldn't be separate particles. Then nothing solid could possibly exist as there are no parts to the particles, and all other particles would merge and become just one particle, which is absurd.