
Study Group - "Buddhist Tenets"

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

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Please establish a virtuous motivation for listening to the teaching.

Out of the four Buddhist tenets we have completed the Vaibashikas, Sautrantikas and the Cittamatrins. Today we are going to start with the Madhyamika tenets.

The pioneer of the Madhyamika tenet was Nagarjuna. Later there were various practitioners who followed the school that he pioneered. They included such practitioners as Bhavaviveka, Shantarakshita and Kamalashila and Chandrakirti and so forth.

Nagarjuna pioneered the Madhyamika tenet that asserts that true existence doesn't exist even in mere name. This interpretation of ultimate truth according to the Madhyamika tenet is based on the sutra called *The Sutra of Inexhaustible Wisdom*. Nagarjuna composed various texts based on this sutra. One text is called *The Compendium of Sutras* in which he establishes the point of view of the Madhyamika with quotations. Then he composed what are called *The Six Works of Nagarjuna* in which he establishes the point of view of the Madhyamikas through reasoning. These texts are called *Root Wisdom*, *The Precious Garland*, *The Seventy verses on Emptiness*, 60 verses on reasoning, refutation of wrong views and profound analysis.

The point of view, which Nagarjuna pioneered, was the view that all phenomena are empty of true existence. This is uncommon to the Madhyamika School. For example, the Mind Only School was still asserting that other-powered phenomena and thoroughly established phenomena are truly existent.

6.1. Definition

The meaning of 'Madhyamika' in English is 'the middle way', as in abiding free from the two extremes. The two extremes are the extreme of nihilism, and the extreme of eternalism.

The Madhyamika are also called proponents of identitylessness. The text says that the definition of a proponent of identitylessness is *a person asserting Mahayana tenets who doesn't accept truly existent phenomena even in mere name*.

6.2. Division

Followers of identitylessness have a twofold division into Svatantrika-Madhyamika and Prasangikas.

We have finished the definition and the division.

6.3. Explanation

Now comes the third point, which is the explanation of the individual Madhyamika tenets. There is a twofold division that has just been mentioned.

First the text explains the Svatantrika-Madhyamika tenet. They are also sometimes called the Autonomist Middle-Way School in English. In this section we have, first the definition, then the division and the etymology.

7.1. Definition of the Svatantrika-Madhyamika¹

The text gives the definition of Svatantrika-Madhyamika to explain what an Svatantrika-Madhyamika actually is. The definition of an Svatantrika-Madhyamika is *a Madhyamika who doesn't assert truly existent phenomena even in mere name by way of verbally asserting autonomous reason*.

The section of the definition saying, 'who asserts verbally autonomous reason', refers to the fact that this school asserts the three modes, which is the definition of perfect reason as existing from its own side. Then through positing a reason that exists from its own side the opponent can understand emptiness.

Compare the definition of Svatantrika-Madhyamika with what is asserted by Cittamatrin. We find that the Cittamatrin also accept the existence of autonomous reason. The Cittamatrin are also followers of Mahayana tenet, but not a follower of a Mahayana tenet who doesn't assert truly existent phenomena. The Cittamatrin assert truly existent phenomena. So here the difference [lies in whether or] not true existence is asserted.

If we compare the Mind Only school with the Svatantrika-Madhyamika and the Prasangika, then first of all we find that the Svatantrika-Madhyamika assert natural existence, inherent existence and existence from its own side. They assert that all phenomena are inherently existent, existent from their own side and exist naturally. They say that natural existence, inherent existence and existing from their own side are all basically synonymous, and that is how everything exists.

What the [Svatantrika-Madhyamika] don't assert is true existence. The reason why they assert inherent existence is because they say that there has to be a certain essence to every phenomenon. Basically what they are saying is that the basis of imputation can be found at the time of analysis. The Prasangikas say that at the time of analysis, the imputed meaning cannot be found. The [Svatantrika-Madhyamika] say that at the time of analysis there is something that can be found, and that is the way of asserting inherent existence.

If you go down to the Mind Only point of view, the Mind Only assert that all phenomena exist from their own side, and they exist naturally, but they don't exist inherently and truly. This is because even though they assert that other-powered and thoroughly established exist truly; wholly labelled phenomena are empty of inherent and true existence. So there is a slight difference in the meaning the Mind Only give to the words 'inherently existent', and the meaning the Madhyamika tenet gives to the words 'inherently existent'.

According to the Mind Only point of view, the meaning of 'inherent existence' is **being not merely labelled by conception, and existing out of its uncommon characteristic**. So if a phenomenon is not merely labelled by conception, and exists out of its uncommon characteristic, then that phenomenon exists inherently. Therefore they say that wholly labelled does not inherently exist, because it is merely labelled by conception. However other-powered phenomena and thoroughly established phenomena do exist inherently according to the Mind Only tenet.

Mind Only tenet doesn't say that the meaning of inherent existence is whether or not it is found at the time of analysis. This is a different interpretation of inherent existence from that of the Madhyamika point of view.

From the Madhyamika point of view, whether or not something is inherently existent is determined by whether

¹ Ed. Although not strictly correct, starting a new category of numbering enables comparability across the different systems.

or not the imputed meaning can be found at the time of analysis. The Svatantrika-Madhyamika asserts that at the time of analysis there is something that can always be found and therefore all phenomena inherently exist. However they still assert that they are empty of true existence. As all phenomena are empty of true existence, there is a difference to the Mind Only. The Prasangika say that all phenomena are empty of true existence and inherent existence, because for every phenomenon the imputed meaning can never be found at the time of analysis.

7.2 Classification

The text says that Svatantrika-Madhyamika is synonymous with the Madhyamika asserting natural existence. Here we can see Svatantrika-Madhyamika is a Madhyamika who asserts natural existence. So the Svatantrika-Madhyamika has a twofold division into the Sautrantika Svatantrika-Madhyamika and the Cittamatin-Svatantrika-Madhyamika.

7.2.1 Sautrantika-Svatantrika-Madhyamika

The definition of a *Sautrantika-Svatantrika-Madhyamika* is *the proponent of Madhyamika tenet whose terminology is mostly concordant with the Sautrantika tenet*. Here the definition of Sutrist Autonomist Madhyamika mentions that they are Sutrist Autonomist Madhyamika because their terminology is mostly concordant with the Sutrist tenet, the Sautrantika. Here the meaning of being 'mostly concordant' refers to the common assertion that the focal condition of the sense consciousnesses is an outer phenomenon, which is established through a collection of particles. That is a common assertion between this Madhyamika School and the Sautrantika School - the focal objects of the consciousnesses are outer-established phenomena, and they are established on a collection of particles.

7.2.2 Mind Only-Svatantrika-Madhyamika

The other Autonomist Madhyamika School is the Mind Only Autonomist Madhyamika School. Their terminology is mostly concordant with the Mind Only. That means of that they don't accept outer existent phenomena.

Here the text gives two examples of the Sautrantika-Svatantrika-Madhyamika as Bhavaviveka, and Jnanagarbha. The Sutrist Autonomists Madhyamikas do not accept self-knowers.

The terminology of the Mind Only Autonomists is mostly concordant with the Mind Only tenet because neither asserts outer existent phenomena. They say that even though there is the appearance of outer existence, phenomena are actually established from the mind. Then various examples such as Shantarakshita, Haribhadra and Kamalashila are given.

7.3. Etymology

We come to the third division, the etymology of Autonomists. The text says, 'Take the subject Bhavaviveka, it follows that there is a reason he is called Autonomist Madhyamika, because he is a Madhyamika who asserts autonomous reason'. The meaning of autonomous reason is inherently existing reason or inherently existent three modes.

7.4. Mode of Asserting Objects

The fourth division is the positing of objects. The text mentions inherent existence; existence from its own side and natural existence are synonymous. Then it goes on to say that non-compounded space, the truth of cessation, the past, future, and the self, the subtle selflessness of a person

are non-affirming negatives, as well as conventional truth.

It says that inherent existence; existence from its own side and natural existence are synonymous. Then non-compounded space, the truth of cessation, past, future and the subtle selflessness of a person are conventional truth, as well as non-affirming negatives. Here the text says that this school asserts that selflessness of a person, the subtle selflessness of a person is conventional truth as well as a non-affirming negative.

Ultimate truth, suchness and the subtle selflessness of phenomena are synonymous.

At this point of positing the objects the text gives a twofold division of objects into conventional truth and ultimate truth, saying that ultimate truth is synonymous with suchness.

I'm going to leave it here for tonight.

Please give me the definition of a Buddhist tenet holder.

One who accepts the three objects of refuge.

That was very good. So what are those three refuges? What is the cause of going to refuge to those three objects of refuge?

The three objects of refuge are Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. The cause for going for refuge is, according to the Mahayana great scope, fear and faith for oneself and others.

What you say is correct. If you wanted to state it in a more beautiful way, then it is better to first give the cause for the common refuge, and then to specify the uncommon Mahayana refuge. Then so slowly, slowly you arrive.

How many Buddhist tenets holders are there?

Four.

Don't just keep them in your mind. If you express the four then your understanding becomes more stable. Sometimes it is very strange that we can't express what we have understood in our mind. So it is actually very good to express the understanding we have gained. So please, everybody.

Vaibashika, Sautrantika, Cittamatin and Madhyamika.

Please give me the definition of a Vaibashika tenet-holder?

One who doesn't assert true existence and doesn't assert the self-knower.

The answer given was, the tenet-holder who asserts outer existence but doesn't assert a self-knower. The definition should include 'Hinayana tenet holder.' If you don't want to say 'Hinayana tenet-holder' then you have to specify a tenet holder who asserts truly existent outer existence, and doesn't assert a self-knower. Then the only possibility for that description is the Vaibashika tenet. There are some tenets that assert outer existence, but then they don't assert a truly existent outer existence.

When we posit the definition of phenomenon the definition has to be completely synonymous with what it is defining, so the eight doors of pervasion have to completely 100% apply. It is not permitted that something could be the definiendum that that is not contained within the definition, or that you could posit something which is contained within the definition, but not contained within the definiendum. This is not allowed when we give the definition of a phenomenon. When we define a phenomenon the definition has to fit 100% with that phenomenon. Sometimes when we just try to explain the essential meaning of something, then the eight doors of pervasion don't have to apply 100%.

What is the etymology of Vaibashika? Why are they called

that?

Because they spell out the meaning.

You probably forgot that they are called the Vaibashikas because they follow the text that is called *Chedrak She Tso Chen-mo*. As these tenet holders base their view on this text, they are called the Particularists or Vaibashikas. I've explained this before, so if you look it up you will find it.

The next point is the way of positing objects so how do they posit objects? What do they posit as the definition of functioning phenomena?

(Inaudible)

So the definition of functioning phenomena is able to perform a function they say a functioning phenomena is synonymous with objects of knowledge. They assert that all objects of knowledge have the ability to fulfil their own particular function. Then they say that a functioning phenomenon has a twofold division into impermanent functioning phenomena and permanent functioning phenomena. So this is an uncommon assertion of this tenet. None of the other tenets assert permanent functioning phenomena. What is an example for a permanent functioning phenomenon?

Non-compounded space.

Non-compounded space and the truth of cessation. Then what is an example for impermanent functioning phenomena?

Person; Things that change from moment to moment

That's not difficult - we are all impermanent functioning phenomena! We are all examples for impermanence, and it is very useful to think about one's own impermanence. The more we understand our own impermanence the less self-grasping we will have. The less self-grasping we have, and the less grasping we have at our body, then the happier we will be in life. When we were young we didn't have many wrinkles on our face, but then as we grow older the wrinkles start to appear. So that's very easy to understand how one is impermanent. Even though we grasp at ourselves as being permanent, from its own side our body is showing us its impermanence. People who could walk quickly suddenly find they cannot walk quickly any more. They could once eat lots of food, and then suddenly they cannot eat lots of food and so forth. There are people who used to be healthy, and then all at once they start to get sick. Our body degenerates slowly, slowly.

There is another twofold division into ultimate truth and conventional truth. What is referred to as ultimate truth, and what is referred to as conventional truth?

It is conventional truth when the discernment holding an object stops. For example if you have a pot it ceases to exist when it is broken.

Correct. For example if the vase is destroyed by being fragmented into many pieces with a hammer, then the mind that used to apprehend that vase is also fragmented into many pieces. My *zen* for example is also a conventional truth. If you pull out one thread after the other then slowly, slowly my *zen* will cease to exist, and in the same way the mind apprehending that *zen* will also cease to exist. Likewise if we rip out page after page from a book then the book will stop existing, and together with that the mind apprehending the book will also stop existing. So that is the reason why a book is conventional truth.

Ultimate truth refers to something that cannot break, which are part less particles and also non-compounded space.

How do they posit object-possessors?

The Vaibashikas say that the mere collection of the five aggregates is an example for the person. The separation of our awareness into valid cognisers, and awarenesses that aren't valid cognisers is the same as in the other tenets. The Vaibashikas also have a twofold division into direct valid cognisers, and inferential valid cognisers. Direct valid cogniser has a threefold division into sense direct cognisers, mental direct valid cognisers and yogic direct valid cognisers. So one difference is that sense direct cognisers are not pervaded by being consciousness. The physical sense power can also be a direct valid cogniser.

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As usual please establish a virtuous motivation.

Last week we explained what a proponent of the Madhyamaka tenets is, including the definition. We also said that a proponent of the Madhyamaka tenets is called a proponent of Identitylessness. Then we went into the divisions of a Madhyamika which are the Svatantrika Madhyamika and Prasangika Madhyamika. We explained the definition of the Svatantrika Madhyamika, the divisions of the Svatantrika Madhyamika and the etymology. We also we began the positing of objects.

7.4. Mode of Asserting Objects

At the fourth point, the positing of objects, the text says that inherent existence; existence from its own side and natural existence are synonymous.

Then the text divides objects of knowledge up into conventional truth and ultimate truth. Here the basis of division is objects of knowledge and on that basis a twofold division into conventional truth and ultimate truth is posited.

7.4.1. Types of Existence

As the text says, inherent existence, natural existence and existence from its own side are said to be synonymous. If it exists then it exists in those modes, but nothing exists truly. So while accepting inherent, natural and existence from its own side the Svatantrika Madhyamika don't accept true existence.

Here there is a difference from the Mind Only school, which says that true existence and inherent existence are synonymous, but that not all phenomena exist inherently. The Svatantrika Madhyamika say that all phenomena exist inherently, while the Mind Only school say that not all phenomena exist inherently. However the Mind Only say that inherent existence and true existence are synonymous, and natural existence and existence from its own side are also synonymous. While everything exists naturally, not everything exists inherently.

The Svatantrika Madhyamika distinguishes between inherent existence and true existence. The way they posit inherent existence is by saying 'Things are inherently existent, because at the time of analysis the imputed meaning can be found.' That is their interpretation of inherent existence.

7.4.1.1. Inherent Existence

So Inherent existence, existence from its own side and natural existence are synonymous. The meaning of *inherent existence* is *the imputed meaning can be found at the time of analysis*. This meaning of inherent existence is posited by the Svatantrika Madhyamika, the Prasangika and also the Sautrantikas. The difference is that the Svatantrika Madhyamika asserts inherent existence, while the Prasangika don't assert inherent existence. That was the meaning of inherent existence.

When we go down to the Mind Only school there is a slightly different interpretation of inherent existence and true existence. The Mind Only say that inherent existence and true existence are synonymous, and the meaning of

true existence is *that which is not labelled by conception and exists from its own side out of its uncommon mode of abiding*. Not all phenomena exist inherently, because the category of wholly-labelled is empty of inherent and true existence.

7.4.1.2. True Existence

According to the Svatantrika Madhyamika the meaning of true existence is

Not being posited through appearing to a non-contradicted mind but

existing from its own side out of its uncommon mode of abiding.

They say that everything is empty of true existence. We have already established that they don't even accept true existence conventionally or in mere name.

It is very important to understand the object of negation.

We have a the conceptual valid cogniser being non-mistaken with regard to the self-characterised determined object, and a non-conceptual valid cogniser being non-mistaken with regard to self-characterised appearing object.

If this conceptual valid cogniser is non-mistaken with regard to its determined object, which is a self-characterised phenomenon such as blue for example, then that valid cogniser is a non-contradicted awareness. It will not be contradicted by some other kind of awareness that says 'it's a wrong mind.'

There is also a non-conceptual valid cogniser that is non-mistaken with regard to the self-characterised appearing object such as blue. Again this valid cogniser is also a non-contradicted awareness, because it is not contradicted by some other kind of awareness that would say it is a wrong mind. So we have these two kinds of non-contradicted awarenesses. If something does not exist through the force of appearing to such a non-contradicted mind, then that phenomena would have to exist truly.

The self-characterised object becomes very important later in the Prasangika tenets, when one investigates if there is a discrepancy between appearance and abiding.

7.4.2. Conventional Truth

We said earlier that on the basis of division, which is objects of knowledge, then a twofold division into conventional truth and ultimate truth is posited.

The definition of conventional truth is *that which is realised in a dualistic manner by a direct valid cogniser realising it directly*.

Ultimate truth is that which is realised in a non-dual manner by a direct valid cogniser realising it directly. So the definition here is the same as what was mentioned before¹.

The text gives the following examples of conventional truth: non-compounded space, truth of cessation, past, future and the subtle selflessness of a person. Here the subtle selflessness of a person is posited as conventional truth. In the lower Mind Only tenets subtle selflessness of a person is posited as an ultimate truth.

There is a twofold division of conventional truth, perfect conventionality and wrong conventionality. Here 'truth' is left out. One doesn't talk about wrong conventional truth, but one talks about wrong conventionality and perfect conventionality.

7.4.2.1. Wrong Conventionality

¹ 24 July 2001, sections 5.4.3 and 5.4.

The definition of wrong conventionality is *A conventionality as well as an ordinary being can realise it doesn't exist in the way it appears to the mind taking it as appearing object.*

When an ordinary person can realise a discrepancy between appearance and existence, then it is wrong conventionality.

7.4.2.2 Perfect Conventionality

A conventionality as well as an ordinary being can't realise it doesn't exist in the way it appears to the mind taking it as appearing object.

Here an example for **wrong conventionality** is the appearance of a mirage as water. 'Ordinary being' refers to a person who has not realised emptiness. An ordinary being can understand that there is a discrepancy between the appearance and existence of the mirage appearing as water. The mirage exists, and the appearance of the mirage as water exists, but obviously there is a discrepancy between what appears and how it really exists. We don't need to have realised emptiness in order to be able to understand that. Phenomena such as the appearance of a mirage as water or the reflection in a mirror as the actual form and so forth are called wrong conventionalities. That is because they are conventionalities, and an ordinary person can understand the discrepancy between appearance and existence.

Other conventional phenomena such as a vase and so forth are called **perfect conventionalities** because an ordinary person cannot realise the discrepancy between appearance and existence in relation to a vase. To understand the discrepancy between appearance and existence in relation to a vase one needs to have understood emptiness.

It says 'Being able to perform a function in the way the phenomena appears or not.' A mirage appears as water, but is not able to perform the function of water. A vase can perform the function of vase. It can perform the function of how it appears, while a mirage cannot perform the function of how it appears. So this is perfectly clear. (*Laughter*)

Rather than worrying about the long definition, we need to just look at it from the point of view of whether or not something is able to perform the function of the way it appears. We use The examples of the water of the mirage and water. Normal water can function in the way it appears. It appears to the mind as water, and it can function as water, and therefore it is a perfect conventionality.

The water of the mirage cannot perform the function in the way it appears because even though it appears as water to the eye consciousness perceiving the mirage, it cannot actually perform the function of water in the way it appears. Therefore it is called a wrong conventionality. If you follow the appearance of the mirage, thinking there is water there, and go to look for it then you find that there is nothing there. A mirage can appear as if there is a whole stream of water flowing there.

7.4.2.3. False and True Phenomena

Since vase is actually a false phenomenon doubt could arise about why a vase is called conventional truth? The meaning of false and true depends on whether or not there is a discrepancy between appearance and existence. If there is a discrepancy between appearance and existence then it is a **false phenomenon**. If there is no discrepancy between appearance and existence then it is a **true phenomenon**. A vase is a false phenomenon.

Then you might say 'Oh there's not a false phenomena

because it is true'. It is a true phenomenon because it is a conventional truth. Then one would have to say there is no pervasion. Even though it is a conventional truth, a vase is not a true phenomenon. It is called conventional truth because it is true to the conventional mind of the eye consciousness to which it appears. Because it is true to the conventional mind it is called a conventional truth. Does it have to be true phenomena because it is true to a conventional mind? No. A vase is a false phenomenon even though it is true to a conventional mind.

Here the meaning of conventional mind is *obscuring mind*. This might seem to be a new meaning but a conventional mind is obscuring in the sense that it is a mind that obscures the seeing of truth. The eye consciousness perceiving a vase is a mind that obscures seeing the truth and is therefore a conventional mind. The vase is conventional truth, because it is true to that obscuring conventional mind of eye consciousness.

7.4.3. Ultimate Truth

Next is ultimate truth. We have already mentioned the definition of *ultimate truth: it is that which is realised in a non-dualistic manner by a direct valid cogniser realising it directly*. There are various divisions of ultimate truth into the 20 emptinesses, 18 emptinesses, 16 emptinesses, 4 emptinesses that we already explained in a previous teaching² so I am not going to go through them again. If somebody asks, 'What are the divisions of ultimate truth?' it is good to remember them that there are various divisions into 20 emptinesses, 18 emptinesses and so forth. Those various emptinesses are differentiated not by nature, not by the object of negation but by the basis of negation.

What is the etymology of ultimate truth? Why is the emptiness of true existence of the vase called ultimate truth? Because it is true in the face of the ultimate mind of meditative transcendental wisdom equipoise of an Arya.

First of all the vase is a conventional truth, so it is the absence of true existence of the vase that is ultimate truth. being.

In talking about ultimate truth, the Tibetan word for 'ultimate' has two words *don-dam*. The syllable *don* means 'meaning'. The word *dam* has the meaning of holy or pure, correct and so forth. Then we add the word for 'truth'. So if you want to say 'ultimate truth' the Tibetan word is made up out of those three words - *don-dam dem-pa* that basically means 'meaning holy truth'.

The first two words *don-dam* refers here to the non-dualistic equipoise realising emptiness directly in the continuum of an Arya being. The absence of true existence appears to that ultimate mind as true and therefore it is ultimate truth.

Then the text says, 'ultimate truth and suchness and the subtle selflessness of phenomena are synonymous'. There is significance in why it says ultimate truth and subtle selflessness of phenomena are synonymous. Here it is good to remember this is according to the Yogacara Svatantrika Madhyamika, or the Mind Only Autonomist Madhyamika.

The Mind Only Autonomists assert two selflessnesses of phenomena - coarse selflessness of phenomena and subtle selflessness of phenomena. They assert that the absence of form and its valid cogniser being of different substance is the coarse selflessness of phenomena, and the absence of true existent form is the subtle selflessness of phenomena.

²24 July 2001

So Here subtle selflessness of phenomena refers to the absence of true existence, and there is a difference here from the Sutrist Autonomists who don't assert the absence of form and its valid cogniser being of different substance.

7.4.4. Sutrist Autonomist View of Outer Objects

The text goes on to say that, 'from the point of view of the Sutrist Autonomist Madhyamika the five objects of form and so forth and the five consciousnesses are of a different entity'. As we said before, the Sutrist Autonomists accept that the focal condition of the sense consciousness and the sense consciousness have a cause-effect relationship, and are therefore of a different nature, or different identity. According to the Yogacara Autonomist school the object focal condition is just what we call the appearing focal condition, but is not the actual focal condition. According to the Yogacara Madhyamika, as with the Yogacara, the object and consciousness are of same nature or identity and don't have a cause-effect relationship.

The text goes on to say that objects and consciousnesses are of a different identity, and they are outer established coarse meaning in the form of a collection of partless particles. Sutrist Autonomists say that they are outer phenomena, which act as the causes for consciousness, and the way they exist is that they are a collection of partless particles. At the same time, however, the Autonomous Madhyamikas assert that everything that exists has parts. So if they say that everything, which exists, has parts, how can those outer objects be established as a collection of partless particles?

The reason is that here 'partless particles' doesn't refer to the same partless particles as were asserted in the lower tenets. Here a partless particle, as in a particle that can't be divided and doesn't have directions and so forth, is not asserted because everything is asserted to have parts. However, they do assert particles that are so small that they cannot be made the object of the eye consciousness. These particles that cannot be made the object of eye consciousness are referred to as partless particles. Because phenomena are a collection of those partless particles and act as the cause for the perceiving consciousness then they are asserted to be outer existence. This way of asserting outer existence is concordant with the Sutrist School. The Sutrist School also said that phenomena like forms and so forth are outer existence, because they are established as a collection of artless particles, and then act as a cause for the perceiving consciousness. So that point is completed.

7.4.5. Yogacara Autonomist View of Outer Objects

Next the text goes on to say that, according to the Yogacara Autonomist Madhyamika, forms and the five objects of forms and so forth are of the same identity with the consciousness apprehending it. So forms, smells, tastes and so forth are of the same identity with the consciousnesses apprehending them, according to the Yogacara Autonomist School. Non-compounded space and so forth are of the same identity with the consciousness apprehending them, but they are not of the same substance with the consciousness apprehending them. It is also good to know this difference.

There is one doubt with regard to the definition of ultimate truth (that which is realised in a non-dual manner by a direct valid cogniser realising it directly), and the assertion that the subtle selflessness of a person is not ultimate truth.

Does that wisdom realising the subtle selflessness of a person directly in the continuum of a practitioner, who is on the hearer's path of seeing, realises the subtle selflessness of

person non-dually or not? Here we say that even though there is no appearance of the object and subject as being different, and there is no true appearance, there is conventional appearance.

We said that if a mind realises something in a non-dualistic manner it has to be free from the three modes of dualistic appearance, which are object subject appearing as different, conventional appearance and true appearance. Here the path of seeing in the continuum of a hearer realising the selflessness of a person there is still conventional appearance. So there is no true appearance, and there is no appearance of object subject being different, but there is still conventional appearance. So because there is still conventional appearance that mind doesn't realise its object in a non-dual manner. In the same vein we said before that if one awareness realises another awareness in a non-dualistic manner, it doesn't mean that it is realised in a non-dualistic manner by the direct perception realising it directly. This has all been mentioned before. If you listened carefully you will realise that I went over all those subtle points before.

The debate in regard to the Mind Only point of view of subject and object being of the same substance is actually a point of view which seems to also be consistent with various scientific points of view. See the red and yellow flowers here. All our eye consciousnesses see the yellow colour of the flowers. Do you see it? So is that yellow colour of the flower of one substance with your eye consciousness or not?

(Inaudible)

According to the Mind Only, the yellow of the flower is not established from the object's side, but is established through concordant imprints on the mental continuum. Then through the ripening of concordant imprints on the mental continuum we perceive the yellow of the flower. We don't perceive the yellow of the flower because there is a yellow outside of our eye consciousness, which then acts back on our eye consciousness as a cause for that eye consciousness to arise. Rather the perception of the yellow flower is generated through the ripening of concordant imprints on the mental continuum.

We say that at the time of no-analysis there is common appearance of yellow, but at the time of analysis there is no longer any common appearance of yellow. At the time when we don't investigate, there is a common appearance of yellow to all your eye consciousnesses, but at the time of investigation and analysis that common appearance of yellow does not exist any more.

This point of view also seems to be concordant with the modern scientific point of view, which says that each perception of an object through the force of perceiving that object also has an effect on the object. There's always the subject that always has an effect on the object. I don't know this modern scientific point of view - you probably know it. Anyway science seems to have a very similar point of view about the subject having an influence on the object.

There are these various perceptions that different people can have of the same object. Even though different people perceive the same object each person perceives that one object in an individual, slightly different way. Of course modern science doesn't talk about awareness as the Mind Only does, but still there seems to be some similarity.

When a group of people view the same object simultaneously, then at the time of no-investigation and no-

analysis there is a common viewed object, or a shared viewed object. Then at the time of investigation and analysis there is no longer any shared viewed object. There is only the object that appears to the individual eye consciousnesses. So at the time of investigation and analysis there is an uncommon or unshared appearance of the object to the individual eye consciousness, which is generated through the ripening of the concordant karmic imprints on the mental continuum.

At the time of investigation and analysis there is no shared appearance. So the fault of all the various consciousnesses, viewing that one object at the same time, being of the same continuum, does not arise. Doubt could be generated as to whether all these various consciousnesses viewing the one object at the same time are of the same continuum, because they all generated from mental imprints, and the object is generated together with the consciousnesses apprehending from imprints on the mental continuum. That fault does not exist.

Transcribed from tape by Kathi Melnic

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Study Group - "Buddhist Tenets"

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

11 September 2001

Please establish a virtuous motivation for listening to the teaching.

We have reached the tenets of the Svatantrika Madhyamika, and we stopped last time at the fifth point, which is object possessors.

7.5 Method of Asserting Object Possessors

Here mental consciousness is given as an example for person. Bhavaviveka asserted that mental consciousness is an example for person. The reason he gave is that wherever there is a person there is a mental consciousness, and whenever we look for the person we find a mental consciousness. Also, mental consciousness is that which goes from life to life, and therefore I (Bhavaviveka) am labelling the mental consciousness as person.

Here a collection of six consciousnesses is posited, not a collection of eight consciousnesses as earlier. The explanation is similar to what we had before: a collection of six consciousnesses, six uncommon sense powers and six kinds of objects. If we know this type of division, then it will benefit us regardless which tenet we are studying.

There is a twofold division into valid cognisers and awarenesses which are non-valid cognisers. Since there is the twofold division of awareness, first please tell me what is the definition of awareness?

That which is clear and knowing.

That was very good. Thank you very much. How many types of awareness do we have?

Seven

So if there are seven, please posit them.

Direct, inferential, wrong mind, subsequent, correct assumption...

If you want to posit seven divisions of mind, then they are direct valid cogniser, inferential valid cogniser, subsequent cogniser, correct assumption, doubt, awareness to which the object appears but is not ascertained, and wrong awarenesses. You could have made it easier if you had just posited the two-fold division into valid cognisers and awarenesses that are non-valid cognisers. But of course if you unwind them, then you get those seven.

Having posited a two-fold division into valid cognisers and awarenesses that are non-valid cognisers, then within valid cognisers you have the two-fold division into direct valid cognisers and inferential valid cognisers. Awarenesses which are non-valid cognisers have a five-fold division into those we mentioned before.

7.5.1 Valid Cognisers

The definition of awareness went very well, so what is the definition of valid cogniser?

A knower which is newly incontrovertible.

What is the purpose of mentioning 'new'? What does it abandon?

It eliminates mistaking it for subsequent.

And the purpose of 'incontrovertible'?

To eliminate confusing it with assumption.

Why is 'knower' mentioned?

To eliminate the idea that a physical sense power is a valid cogniser.

Which tenet asserts that subsequent cognisers can be valid cognisers?

(Inaudible) and Madhyamika Prasangika.

Who asserts that physical sense powers can be valid cognisers?

The Vaibashikas.

Who asserts that correct assumptions can be valid cognisers?

I don't know

How many divisions are there of valid cognisers?

Two.

Please posit them.

(Inaudible)

7.5.1.1 Direct Valid Perception

If it is a direct perception is there pervasion that it has to be a direct valid cogniser?

No.

Give an example for something which is a direct perception, but not a valid cogniser? The first moment of the direct perception apprehending form is a valid cogniser, and the second moment of the direct perception apprehending form is a subsequent cogniser, not a valid cogniser. So you can posit the second moment.

What is the definition of a direct valid cogniser?

Unmistaken non-conceptual knower which is free from conception.(wrong)

Like the unmistaken knower which is free from conception. Which tenet posits that as the definition for direct valid cogniser?

Sautrantika

First of all the Sautrantikas assert that all direct perceptions have to be non-mistaken, so of course direct valid cognisers also have to be non-mistaken. The Mind Only, and the Svatantrika Madhyamika following the Mind Only point of view, assert that sense consciousnesses are mistaken with regard to their object. That is because the outer form appears as being of a different substance from the consciousness itself. Even though there is this mistaken appearance of outer existence, the consciousness can still realise its object of form and so forth.

Is this definition that you gave of a non-mistaken knower being free from conception, the definition of direct valid cogniser?

The Sautrantika assert it

How many divisions does direct valid cogniser have?

Four.

Posit them.

Sense direct valid cogniser, mental direct valid cogniser, self-knowing direct valid cogniser and yogic direct valid cogniser.

Within Svatantrika Madhyamika we have one school which posits a self-knower, and one school which does not posit a self-knower. Which school is which?

The Svatantrika-Cittamatin school posits a self-knower, and the Sutra school doesn't.

That was correct. Very good. Also, if you go to other tenets the Prasangikas don't assert self-knowers, and neither do

the Vaibashikas assert self-knowers.

Mistaken and Non Mistaken

Of the two Autonomist schools, the Yogacara Autonomists assert four types of direct perception, which are sense direct perception, mental direct perception, self-knower and yogic direct perception. They say that self-knowing direct perception and yogic direct perception are pervaded by being non-mistaken consciousnesses, while the other two (sense direct and mental direct) have mistaken as well as non-mistaken consciousnesses.

We said that sense direct perception and mental direct perception each have two parts, mistaken and non-mistaken. An example for **mistaken sense direct perception** is the eye consciousness apprehending form in the continuum of an ordinary being. An example for **non-mistaken sense direct perception** is the eye consciousness apprehending form in the continuum of a buddha.

Sense Direct Perception

The sense direct perception apprehending form in the continuum of an ordinary being is mistaken, because it is mistaken to form appearing as outer existence, but it is not mistaken with regard to form. The sense direct perception in the continuum of an ordinary being realises form, and is not mistaken with regard to form. It is mistaken towards the appearance of form as outer existence. There is no pervasion that the sense direct perception in the continuum of an ordinary being is mistaken with regard to form, just because it is mistaken with regard to the appearance of form as outer existence.

This school of tenets asserts, as do the lower tenets, that even though awareness is a valid cogniser towards that object, it is non-mistaken with regard to that object. Here the eye consciousness apprehending form in the continuum of an ordinary being is non-mistaken with regard to form. It is a valid cogniser with regard to form, and therefore non-mistaken with regard to form. However it is mistaken with regard to the appearance of form as outer existence. This school asserts that there is a pervasion that if the consciousness is mistaken with regard to an object, it can never be a valid cogniser with regard to that object.

One difference between the Sutrast Autonomist school and the Yogacara Autonomist school is that the Yogacara Autonomists assert forms and so forth are of the same substance as its valid cogniser. So they don't assert outer existence. While the Sutrast Autonomist school asserts the opposite. They assert that form and so forth are established as outer existence and not of one substance with their valid cogniser.

Mental Direct Perception

Mental direct perception has two parts: those which are mistaken and those which are non-mistaken. **Mistaken mental direct perceptions** include the mental direct perception apprehending form in the continuum of an ordinary being. The reason why they are mistaken is because they have the appearance of form as outer existence. Then there are various examples of **non-mistaken mental direct perceptions** such as the clairvoyance knowing the minds of others, or the variety of mental consciousnesses in the continuum of an Arya being who realises emptiness, yogic direct perceivers and so forth.

Here is a two-fold question for you. One: if it is a yogic direct perception is there a pervasion that it is a yogic valid cogniser? Two: if it is a self-knowing direct perception is there a pervasion that it is a self-knowing valid cogniser?

Here you can apply the same rule as before. You can posit the second moment of the self-knower, and you can posit the second moment of a yogic direct perception.

With regard to omniscient mind, every moment of omniscient mind is a valid cogniser. Even the second, third, fourth and so forth moments of omniscient mind are all valid cognisers. There is no omniscient mind which is a subsequent cogniser. The reason for this is because each instant of omniscient mind realises its objects through its own power. The realisation of each instant of omniscient mind is not induced through the realisation of the previous moments of omniscient mind.

Yogic Direct Perception

With regard to yogic direct perception there are valid cognisers and subsequent yogic direct perceptions. The first moment of yogic direct perception is a yogic direct valid cogniser. It realises the object newly and freshly, but then the second and third moments of the yogic direct perception are the same as the first moment, in that they are incontrovertible towards the object. So from the point of view of realisation of the object there is no difference between the first and the second moment, but the realisation of the second moment of the yogic direct perception comes about through the realisation of the first moment. Because of that, it becomes what is called a knower which realises the realised. It realises its object through the force of the realisation of the previous moment, and because of that it becomes a knower which realises the realised, or a subsequent cogniser.

The text says 'The Sautrantika, Mind Only and Autonomist all assert that direct perceptions are pervaded by being consciousnesses free from conception. They also assert that if it is a subsequent cogniser there is a pervasion that it is never a valid cogniser. If it is a consciousness which is mistaken with regard to its determined object, there is a pervasion that it is a wrong consciousness. If the consciousness is mistaken with regard to a particular phenomenon, there is a pervasion that that consciousness is never a valid cogniser with regard to that phenomenon. If it is an inferential cogniser, there is a pervasion that it is never a valid cogniser with regard to its appearing object.'

If it is a consciousness which is mistaken with regard to its determined object there is a pervasion that it is a wrong consciousness, then this is in accordance with what we have already explained. Also, when we talked about the definition of the object of negation, it mentioned an awareness which is not contradicted.

We said there is a two-fold division into conceptual valid cogniser, which is non-mistaken with regard to its self-characterised determined object, and a non-conceptual valid cogniser which is non-mistaken with regard to its self-characterised appearing object. So there are two kinds of awarenesses, and both of them are non-mistaken with regard to their determined object, or object of engagement. Because of that, both of those awarenesses are awarenesses which are not contradicted. If it were the opposite, and these two types of awarenesses were mistaken with regard to their object of engagement or the determined object, then they would be wrong consciousnesses.

Inherent Existence

So what does the Autonomist school posit as the meaning of inherent existence?

Something that exists without being merely posited through appearing to a unfallacious awareness.

That's all?

Your answer is actually the meaning of **true existence**. What you posited was part of the meaning of the subtle object of negation of true existence. We said the other day that the meaning of *true existence* is *existing out of its uncommon mode of abiding and not through appearing to a non-contradicted awareness*.

Here, when we talk about not existing through the force of appearing to an awareness that is not contradicted, we are talking about two kinds of awareness, conceptual and non-conceptual awarenesses. Conceptual awareness is non-mistaken with regard to the appearance which is a self-characterised meaning, and non-conceptual awareness is non-mistaken with regard to the appearance of a self-characterised meaning. These two kinds of awarenesses are awarenesses which are not contradicted. If something exists without appearing to such an awareness, and it appears as if it exists out of its own uncommon mode of abiding, then it appears as truly existent. That was the meaning of the subtle object of negation of true existence.

The meaning of *inherent existence* is *whether or not the imputed meaning can be found at the time of analysis*. The Autonomist school asserts that everything is inherently existent because at the time of analysis the imputed meaning can always be found.

Inherent existence, existence from its own side and natural existence are synonymous. All phenomena exist in that mode.

At the point of the Mind Only school true existence and inherent existence are synonymous, and natural existence and existence from its own side are synonymous. Not everything which exists, exists inherently or truly. The meaning of inherent existence according to the Mind Only School is *not being labelled by conception, and existing out of its uncommon mode of abiding*. So according to the Mind Only not everything exists inherently or truly.

This debate between the Autonomist Madhyamika and the Prasangika Madhyamika as to whether or not the imputed meaning at the time of analysis can be found turns on the basis of imputation.

When the Autonomist Madhyamika say that the imputed meaning can be found at the time of analysis they refer to the object, the basis of imputation, or the basis of labelling. They say that the basis of imputation exists from its own side. Why does it exist from its own side? Because at the time of analysis the basis of imputation can be found.

The Prasangika say that at the time of analysis the basis of imputation cannot be found, and therefore the basis of imputation does not exist from its own side. Therefore nothing exists from its own side.

What are the four Buddhist tenets? What is the difference between a Buddhist and a Buddhist tenet holder?

A Buddhist hasn't analysed tenets, and doesn't posit or expound them, whereas a tenet holder has done so.

What makes a Buddhist, who is not a Buddhist tenet holder, a Buddhist?

Because he takes refuge in the Three Jewels from the depth of his heart.

What do we mean when we say Buddhist Dharma? It is the practices of generosity, morality and so forth which are held by refuge. They are Buddhist Dharma in my opinion. So the practices of generosity, morality and so forth which are held by refuge is Buddhist Dharma.

The three higher trainings are also Buddhist Dharma. Here there is a difference between what we call the three trainings, and the three higher trainings. There is the training of morality, concentration and wisdom, and the higher training of morality, concentration and wisdom. What differentiates the training of morality from the higher training of morality is that the higher training of morality is the keeping of the vows of individual liberation on the basis of refuge. So the practice of keeping the vows of individual liberation on the basis of refuge, or held by refuge, makes the practice of morality the higher training of morality. If it is held by refuge then it becomes a higher training.

When we talk about the baskets of teachings which explain the inner psychological states it is also good to know what they refer to? Those kinds of teachings are the teachings that explain the antidote to self-grasping. The teachings which explain the antidote to self-grasping are called the basket of teaching belonging to the inner science.

Within Buddhist Dharma there is realised Dharma and scriptural Dharma. Realised Dharma refers to our various practices such as morality, generosity and so forth, which are held by refuge. Scriptural Dharma refers for example, to the words which one can recite, also on the basis of the motivation of refuge. So refuge is very important. It is sort of a defining or dividing border between Buddhist and non-Buddhist practice.

It is as it is explained in this one verse, 'Not creating any non-virtue and perfecting all the virtues. This is the teaching of the Buddha.' If you want to define a Buddhist tenet-holder you could say a *Buddhist tenet holder is somebody who accepts the four seals of Buddhism*. We can also give the definition of a Buddhist tenet holder as one *who accepts as his final refuge the Three Jewels, and doesn't assert any other refuge*. So to define a Buddhist tenet holder we can either give this definition, or say that it is somebody who accepts the four seals of Buddhism.

Even though I have already discussed it earlier, what do we mean when we talk about a tenet? A tenet actually refers to a mental state of decision. For example when we meditate on the first seal of Buddhism, everything compounded is impermanent, we think about it with the help of quotations, and we analyse it with the help of various reasons. Through that process some kind of meaning will appear in our mind that everything compounded is impermanent. It will become more and more clear to our mind that indeed everything that is compounded has to be impermanent. We will reach a point where we can definitely make the decision that definitely everything that is compounded has to be impermanent. When one has made this inner decision, and holds that viewpoint that everything that is compounded is impermanent, then one has formed a Buddhist tenet. One holds that tenet, and one will propound that tenet to others. It is one's conviction that everything which is compounded is impermanent.

The same applies also to the other seals of Buddhism. The second seal, for example, is that all contaminated phenomena are suffering. Once one becomes a proponent of that tenet, then one will propound or explain that tenet to others with the help of quotations and reasons.

Probably we can stop at this point.

Next week I think you have discussion group and afterwards the examination. It is very good to have a discussion group. I am very happy with the discussion group, and also with the results of the last examination,

which went very well.

When you have the discussion group it is very important that you adopt a wide point of view. Don't have a narrow point of view and get upset if you don't understand something. Or have a narrow view, and then get angry because there is some unresolved issue. Don't be like that.

The Buddha taught the various viewpoints, and the various tenets and so forth, for a particular purpose, which was to guide the disciples at that time and place.

At certain times the Buddha would explain that a self of a person exists in order to lead people to an understanding of the law of cause and effect. On the basis of saying that, he could say that a self of a person experiences future suffering and happy results, depending upon which karma he creates now.

There are various differences between the different viewpoints. The Sautrantika school refutes certain viewpoints of the Vaibashika, the Mind Only refutes viewpoints of the Sautrantika and so forth. However all those different viewpoints were actually taught for the benefit of different disciples. The Buddha always taught according to the ability and disposition of his disciples. So having this great variety of teachings actually shows the great kindness of the Buddha.

When we see this great variety of the teachings we should remember the great kindness of the Buddha. He was so kind in teaching all of his disciples according to their individual needs and capacities.

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Study Group - "Buddhist Tenets"

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

གྲུབ་མཐའི་རྣམ་གཞག་བཤམ་པ།

2 October 2001

As usual please establish a virtuous motivation for listening to the teaching.

7.6 Method of Asserting Selflessness

Now we proceed to the sixth point, the positing of selflessness. Here the text says, "The emptiness of the person being permanent, single and independent is the coarse selflessness of person, and the emptiness of the person being a self sufficient substantially existent is the subtle selflessness of person". The way the selflessness of person is posited is the same as in the Mind Only school.

Then the text goes on to say that, "From the point of view of the Mind Only Svatantrika Madhyamika, the absence of form and its valid cogniser being of different substance is the coarse selflessness of phenomena. The emptiness of true existence of all phenomena, is the subtle selflessness of phenomena."

Here, coarse selflessness and subtle selflessness for both the selflessness of person and the selflessness of phenomena, are posited. Of the Svatantrika Madhyamika sub-schools, one posits the division of selflessness of phenomena into coarse and subtle, and the other doesn't.

The sub-school positing coarse and subtle selflessness of phenomena is the Yogacara Svatantrika Madhyamika. Because their terminology is mostly concordant with the Yogacara, they also accept the absence of form and its valid cogniser being of different substance. Since this emptiness cannot fall into the category of selflessness of person, they posit it as coarse selflessness of phenomena.

7.6.1 Differentiation of Selflessnesses

Then the text says, "The two selflessnesses are differentiated by way of the object of negation, and not by way of the basis of negation".

The Prasangika Madhyamika differentiate the two selflessnesses by way of the basis of negation. However the Svatantrika Madhyamika differentiate the two selflessnesses by way of the object of negation. Here is also a difference in subtleness between selflessness of person and selflessness of phenomena. Later on, the Prasangika don't posit one selflessnesses as being coarse, and the other as being subtle.

On the basis of person, both the selflessness of person as well as the selflessness of phenomena is posited. As was said before:

- The negation of the object of negation, true existence, on the basis of the person is subtle selflessness of phenomena.
- The negation of a self-supporting, substantially existent on the basis of the person is the subtle selflessness of person.

We mentioned before that, for example, the negation of inherently existent aggregates is the subtle selflessness of phenomena, but the absence of the aggregates being the object of engagement of a self-supporting, substantially

existent person is the selflessness of person. We can apply the same reasoning to all objects. For example, a truly existent glass would be a subtle object of negation.

- The absence of a truly existent glass would be the subtle selflessness of phenomena, and
- The absence of glass being the object of engagement of a self-supporting, substantially existent person would be selflessness of a person.

We have the grasping at the person being a self-supporting, substantially existent, which would fall into the category of that which engages the engager. That which is being engaged is the glass. So if the glass is empty of being the object of engagement of a self-supporting, substantially existent person, then that is the selflessness of person.

In the same way the two self-grasping are differentiated by way of their mode of grasping, and not by their focus.

- The grasping at true existence, which focuses on the basis of the person, is the self-grasping of phenomena. It is grasping at the self of phenomena.
- The grasping at a self-supporting, substantially existent which focuses on the basis of the person is the self-grasping of a person. It is grasping at a self of person.

So the grasping at a self of person and the grasping at a self of phenomena are differentiated by way of their mode of grasping, and not by way of focus.

7.7 Principles of Paths and Grounds

We now turn to the seventh point, the positing of grounds and paths.

7.7.1 Yogacara Svatantrika Madhyamika

From the point of view of the Yogacara Svatantrika Madhyamika the difference between the practitioners of the three vehicles lies in the fact that there are three different kinds of main obscurations, and three main objects of meditation.

7.7.1.1 Hearers

Practitioners belonging to the family of Hearers take as their main object of abandonment the grasping at a self-supporting, substantially existent, and the entourage of that grasping.

The view which realises the emptiness of the person being a self-supporting, substantially existent is the main object of meditation. By relying on that main object of meditation, they obtain their object of attainment, which is the small enlightenment.

Main Object of Abandonment

The practitioner belonging to the family of Hearers takes as their main object of abandonment the grasping at the person being a self-supporting substantially existent, because that grasping is the root of samsara. Therefore they take that grasping, as well as the entourage, as the main object of abandonment. We have to understand 'the entourage' as being the various delusions that arise from the grasping at root of cyclic existence.

We can also relate this to the first two Noble Truths. The entourage can also be the Noble Truth of Suffering, which arises from the root of the grasping at a self of a person, and the second noble Truth. In order to overcome this obscuration, the main object of meditation is the view realising the absence of the person being a self-supporting, substantially existent. Here we should also understand that first of all this view is the union of calm abiding and special

insight, which is of course supported by the other higher training of morality and concentration.

The Hearer's Progress Through The Stages

As mentioned before, when those practitioners who belong to the family of Hearer attain the spontaneous thought of fully qualified renunciation, then they enter the Hearer's Path of Accumulation.

While in the Hearer's Path of Accumulation they meditate on calm abiding, focusing on emptiness. When they progress in their meditation, and they attain the union of calm abiding and special insight focusing on emptiness, then they proceed to the Hearer's Path of Preparation.

When they again attain the non-conceptual direct realisation of emptiness through continuous meditation, they attain the Hearer's Path of Seeing. First they attain the Uninterrupted Path of Seeing, which is the direct antidote to the objects of abandonment of the Path of Seeing. After that they attain the Liberated Path of Seeing, which completely frees the mind from the objects of abandonment of the Path of Seeing, liberates the mind from the objects of abandonment of the Path of Seeing. Then they attain the first instance of the Truth of Cessation.

After completing the liberated path of seeing, they will arise out of their meditative equipoise. When they later engage again in the various meditative equipoises, they further progress along the path, entering the Path of Meditation until there comes a moment when they will be able to completely free the mind from true-grasping and its seeds.

When that moment comes, they will again enter the meditative equipoise, which is called the vajra-like concentration of the Path of Meditation. In this meditative equipoise they will free the mind completely from all delusions, and when the mind is freed from all the delusions, they will progress to the Hearer's Path of No-More-Learning and become an Arhat.

This has been a very short overview.

7.7.1.2 Solitary Realiser

The practitioner who belongs to the family of Solitary Realiser takes as their main object of abandonment the grasping at subject and object being of a different substance¹. As the main object of meditation they take the view that realises the emptiness of subject and object being of a different substance. This becomes the antidote towards their main object of abandonment, which is the grasping at subject and object being of different substance.

Here a question arises. Since the practitioners who belong to the family of Solitary Realiser also aim mainly for liberation, or the middling enlightenment, wouldn't they also meditate on the selflessness of a person? The answer of course is that they also meditate on the selflessness of person, since the grasping at a self of person is the root of cyclic existence. However they don't take the view that realises the selflessness of person as their main object of meditation. They take the view that realises the absence of subject and object being of different substance as their main object of meditation, and that already includes abandoning the grasping at a self of person.

One difference also between practitioners belonging to the Hearer and Solitary Realiser families is the way they meditate on the nature of cyclic existence. The solitary realiser will consider how one is bound to cyclic existence,

and then how one has to free oneself from cyclic existence by way of meditating extensively on the 12 Interdependent Links. Practitioners belonging to the Hearer family will do the same by meditating extensively on the Four Noble Truths. So there is this difference.

7.7.1.3 Bodhisattvas

The text says, "Bodhisattvas take as their main object of abandonment true-grasping together with the karmic latencies. As their main object of meditation they take the antidote that is the view that realises the emptiness of true existence of all phenomena. Through that they attain the great enlightenment."

When the practitioner generates spontaneous bodhicitta in the mind then they become a bodhisattva. Afterwards, on the basis of that bodhicitta they practise the six perfections, and they will actually practise the six perfections combined together. They take as their main object of abandonment true grasping together with the karmic latencies.

Again the same question arises as before. Don't they take also the grasping at the self of person as their object of abandonment? The answer is yes, they take that also as the object of abandonment. However it is not their main object of abandonment, because the main attainment for which they aim is complete enlightenment. If their main attainment for which they aim were liberation from cyclic existence, then their main object of abandonment would be the grasping at a self of person. However because they are bodhisattvas their main object of attainment is complete enlightenment, rather than liberation from cyclic existence. Again the same reason applies.

Liberation from cyclic existence is an object of attainment of the bodhisattva, but it is not their main object of attainment. If somebody takes liberation from cyclic existence as their main object of attainment, then what one understands is that they mainly want to become free from cyclic existence for their own purpose only. The main object of attainment for bodhisattvas is complete enlightenment, and therefore their main object of abandonment is true grasping together with karmic imprints.

This explanation has been according to the point of view of the Yogacara Svatantrika Madhyamika.

2.7.2 Sutrist Svatantrika Madhyamika

The text says that, "according to the Sautrantika Svatantrika Madhyamika, the Sutrist Svatantrika Madhyamika, there is no difference with regard to the main object of abandonment, and the main object of meditation between the practitioners belonging to the Hearer and Solitary Realiser families. Why? Because they are the same in taking the obscurations towards liberation as their main object of abandonment, and the selflessness of person as their main object of meditation".

It is good to mention here that according to the Yogacara Svatantrika Madhyamika there was a difference between the Hearers and the Solitary Realisers with regard to the object of abandonment and so forth. Here the grasping at subject and object as being of different substance, which was the main object of abandonment of the Solitary Realiser, is classified as a coarse obscuration to omniscience.

If the grasping at subject and object as being of different substance were to be classified as an obscuration to liberation, then the practitioner belonging to the Hearer family would have to also abandon that grasping. That is because the Hearer Arhat has attained liberation, and has

¹ Grasping at form and it's valid cogniser being of different substance.

therefore abandoned the obscurations towards liberation. So that is good to mention.

7.7.2.1 Main Difference Between Hearer and Solitary Realiser

There is no difference between the main object of abandonment and the main object of meditation between the Hearer and Solitary Realiser according to the Sutrists Svatantrika Madhyamika. However there is still a difference with regard to their object of attainment, or the result that they attain. This is because there is a difference with regard to the length of time they engage into the path and accumulate merits. The Hearer Arhat accumulates merit for three lifetimes, and the Solitary Realiser Arhat accumulates merit for 100 aeons. So that is the point of difference.

7.7.3 The Accepted Sutras

Both Mahayana and Hinayana sutras are accepted. As discussed the other day, the difference between the Hinayana sutras and the Mahayana sutras is made with regard to the disciples for which each was taught. If a sutra were taught to subdue disciples who were mainly interested in attaining liberation, then those sutras were classified as Hinayana sutras. If the sutras were taught to subdue disciples who were mainly interested in attaining complete enlightenment, then those sutras were classified as Mahayana sutras. Sutras which were taught both for the benefit of Hinayana and Mahayana practitioners are called a common Hinayana Mahayana sutras.

7.7.4 Classification of Sutras

Sutras are classified into definitive and interpretative sutras in the same way as the Mind Only do. Interpretative meaning refers to conventional truth, and definitive meaning refers to ultimate truth.

The definition of *an interpretative sutra* is *Either or both a sutra that takes as its main explicit subject conventional truth or/and a sutra that cannot be accepted literally.*

According to Svatantrika Madhyamika a *definitive sutra* is *a sutra that takes emptiness as its main explicit subject and is acceptable literally.*

The division of sutras into interpretative and definitive is the same as in Mind Only, but this school uses different examples.

According to the Mind Only system, the first and the second turning of the wheel are interpretative sutras, and the last turning of the wheel is definitive sutra. The reason for this classification is because in the first turning of the wheel it says that all phenomena are inherently existent, which the Mind Only doesn't accept literally. The second turning of the wheel says that all phenomena are empty of inherent existence, which the Mind Only also doesn't accept literally. Therefore they are both interpretative sutras. The last third turning of the wheel is a definitive sutra, because it explains the categorisation of phenomena according to the three characteristics, in accordance with the Mind Only point of view.

According to the Svatantrika Madhyamika the first and the third turning of the wheel are interpretative sutras, and the second turning of the wheel has a definitive part and an interpretative part.

The first turning of the wheel is interpretative sutra because its main subject is the Four Noble Truths, and the Four Noble Truths are conventional truth. Therefore the first turning of the wheel becomes a sutra that takes as its main explicit subject conventional truth, which full fills the

definition of an interpretative sutra.

The same applies for the third turning of the wheel, which is an interpretative sutra because it is a sutra that has as its main explicit subject conventional truth, and is also not acceptable literally. So both parts of the definition apply.

The second turning of the wheel has two parts: a definitive part and an interpretative part. The interpretative part is the Heart Sutra, and the small, middling and great Prajnaparamita sutras are the definitive part. The small, middling and great Prajnaparamita sutras are definitive sutras because their main explicit subject is emptiness or ultimate truth, and they are acceptable literally.

Even though the main object of expression of the Heart Sutra is ultimate truth, it is not acceptable literally because it doesn't attach the object of negation to its enumeration of the bases of negation. The Heart Sutra says, "There is no eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind." It doesn't say, "There is no truly existent eye, no truly existent ear" and so forth. That is mentioned only once at the beginning when it says, "Form is empty, emptiness is form" and so forth.

The Svatantrika Madhyamika say that because the Heart Sutra only enumerates the basis for the emptiness one after the other, without attaching the object of negation, or the absence of the object of negation, it is not accepted literally. It cannot be accepted literally, as it has to be interpreted. Therefore, even though its main explicit subject is emptiness, it doesn't become a definitive sutra, because it is not accepted literally. Rather it becomes an interpretative sutra.

The Prasangika Madhyamika have a slightly different point of view. They say that because the beginning, when it says "Form is empty, emptiness is form" and so forth, already expresses the object of negation, and the absence of the object of negation. Then later literally one can understand that it is attached after each of "No eye, no ear, no nose" without actually expressing it. Therefore it is, according to the Prasangika point of view, actually acceptable literally.

That finishes the Svatantrika Madhyamika. Next time we can start with Prasangika Madhyamika.

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Study Group - "Buddhist Tenets"

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Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

གྲུབ་མཐུན་རྣམ་གཞག་བཤམ་པ།

9 October 2001

Please establish a virtuous motivation as usual.

There is a two-fold division of Madhyamika into the Svatantrika-Madhyamika and the Prasangika-Madhyamika. We have now finished with the Svatantrika-Madhyamika.

One common thing between these two Madhyamika tenets is that they are both followers of Arya Nagarjuna and accept his presentation of base, path and result.

Base

Even though the elaboration of true existence is non-existent in regards to both person and phenomena, that does not negate the existence of action and doing, cause and effect. What is being explained is the base, which are the two truths. Everything is empty of true existence, but that doesn't mean that things are necessarily non-existent. Just because things are empty of true existence doesn't mean their conventional existence is negated. This explains the two truths that are the base.

Path

We have the profound path and the extensive path¹.

To the transcendental wisdom realising emptiness directly, the various conventional signs, definitions, characteristics and so forth, do not appear. The only thing that appears to that wisdom is emptiness. This is the profound path. The generation of spontaneous Bodhicitta from love and compassion and the practice of generosity etc. combined with Bodhicitta is the practice of the extensive path. This needs to be preceded by meditation on the motivations common to the small and medium practitioner.

The profound path and the extensive path have to be practiced in a unified manner.

Result

By meditating on the unification of the profound and extensive path the meditator will reach the result of the two Buddha bodies, which is free from the two extremes of peace and existence and through which he or she can benefit the three kinds of disciples can be taught.

Prasangika Madhyamika

8.1. Definition

"The Madhyamika who doesn't assert truly existent phenomena even in mere name, by positing merely a consequence of other-renown", is the definition of a Prasangika tenet holder.

The Prasangika assert the absence of true existence by merely expressing a consequence, which is a consequence of other-renown. It specifically says 'consequence of other-renown in order to draw the distinction to the Autonomous Madyamaka. If you remember, in the definition of the Svatantrika-Madhyamika says that they assert an autonomous (self) reason. That is, the Svatantrika-Madhyamika refutes true existence by way of asserting autonomous reason.

Here it is made very clear that the consequence, which is used in order to refute true existence, is not an autonomous consequence. Also the three modes, which are generated in dependence upon that consequence, and the inferential cogniser that is generated in dependence upon those three modes do not inherently or naturally exist. They are not autonomous reasons and consequences but 'other' reason and consequences.

This ends the first division explaining the definition of Prasangika.

8.2. Proponents of the Prasangika School

The second division gives examples. Here it mentions Buddhapalita, Chandrakirti, and Shantideva.

Also, Aryadeva should be mentioned here, because he is also Prasangika. However, because both the Svatantrika-Madhyamika and Prasangika-Madhyamika accept Aryadeva he is regarded as a general Madhyamika, and therefore is not listed here - even though he is actually Prasangika-Madhyamika.

8.3. Etymology

The text goes on to say, "Take the subject, Buddhapalita. The reason for him to be called Prasangika exists, because he is somebody who asserts that an inferential cogniser realising the thesis can be generated in the continuum of the opponent merely in dependence upon a consequence".

Buddhapalita is called a consequentialist, or a Prasangika, because he accepts that an inferential cogniser, in realising the thesis can be generated in the continuum of the opponent merely through a consequence.

'Thesis' refers to the combination of the subject and the predicate. For example in the syllogism, 'Take the subject sound. It follows that it is impermanent, because it is a product', 'sound' is the subject, 'impermanence' is the predicate, and 'product' is the reason. Impermanent sound, the combination of the predicate and the subject, is referred to as the thesis.

The thesis is realised in dependence upon a valid reason, which is called the three modes. In this case this is a product. The Svatantrika-Madhyamika assert that these three modes, the perfect reason, exist inherently or autonomously, and therefore they are called autonomists.

The definition of the thesis is **the combination of the subject and the predicate, which is understood in dependence upon the reason.**

8.4. Mode of Asserting Objects

The text follows the same sequence as in the previous tenets. The fourth point is positing of objects.

It is important to note that the Prasangika don't accept inherent existence, natural existence or existence from its own side.

8.4.1. Definition of Objects

The text says, "Objects are divided into hidden and manifest".

The definition of object is the same as posited by the Sautrantika School, so we just have to remember that definition.

Object is divided into hidden and manifest.

8.4.1.1. Hidden Objects

Hidden phenomena are objects that need to be realised in dependence upon a reason. This means that an object, when first realised by an ordinary being, has to be realised in

¹ Wisdom and Method

dependence upon a reason. Such an object is a hidden phenomenon.

Again the text mentions the word meaning 'those who see only this side', which is a poetic expression for what we call an ordinary person.

8.4.1.2. Manifest Phenomena

The meaning of *manifest phenomena* is *an object that can be ascertained by an ordinary person through the power of experience without depending upon a reason.*

We can apply this also to the definition of hidden phenomena. An object, which has to be realised by an ordinary person in dependence upon a reason, is the meaning of a hidden phenomena.

The text refers to the time **when the object is first realised.**

When an ordinary being needs to depend upon a reason in order to understand an object for the first time, then that object is a hidden phenomena.

When an ordinary being, in order to understand that object the first time, doesn't need to depend upon a reason, but can ascertain it through the power of experience, that object is a manifest object.

Examples for hidden phenomena are impermanent sound, or the emptiness of truly existent sound. As you will remember from before, impermanence is a subtle phenomenon that we cannot see directly. As ordinary beings, we need to depend upon reasoning in order to understand impermanence. Then by depending upon reasoning through inference we can understand impermanence.

Consider this point. Without depending upon reasoning and inference it would be impossible for us to understand impermanence, or the emptiness of true existence. In order to understand such phenomena as impermanence and emptiness, one needs to rely on reasoning and inference.

A vase and a cloth are manifest phenomena because they can be seen with just the eye consciousness.

Following the definition of manifest phenomena, the text goes on to say that directly perceivable and manifest phenomena are synonymous. Direct perceivable is that which is engaged by direct perception.

That being clear, objects have a two-fold division into conventional truth and ultimate truth.

8.4.2. Conventional Truth

Conventional truth (it's a long definition!) is: *The meaning found by a valid cogniser engaging in conventional analysis, as well as the valid cogniser engaging in conventional analysis becomes a valid cogniser engaging in conventional analysis with regard to it.*

So the definition has two parts.

- It is the meaning found by a valid cogniser engaging in conventional analysis.
- This valid cogniser engaging in conventional analysis becomes a valid cogniser engaging in conventional analysis with regard to it.

If something has both of those parts of the definition, then it is conventional truth.

Let us analyse this definition with regard to a vase.

- The valid cogniser engaging in conventional analysis would be the eye consciousness realising vase
- The found (realised) meaning, would be vase, which is conventional truth

- This valid cogniser that engages in conventional analysis becomes such a valid cogniser with regard to vase. This valid cogniser becomes a valid cogniser engaging in conventional analysis with regard to its object, which is vase - the conventional truth vase.

We can apply this system to all other conventional phenomena.

Here, it is not correct to have the two-fold division into accurate conventionality and wrong conventionality, because accurate conventionality is non-existent. That is because if it is a conventionality, there is a pervasion that it cannot be accurate, because if it is a conventionality it has to be wrong.

8.4.2.1. Accurate and Wrong Perception

Depending upon worldly perception Conventional truth has a two-fold division into accurate and wrong.

To worldly perception there is accurate and wrong conventionality. It is correct to have the two-fold division of conventional truth according to conventional or worldly perception into accurate and wrong. Form is, according to worldly perception, **accurate**; the reflection of form in the mirror is, according to worldly perception, **wrong**.

How does this division according to worldly perception come about? First of all worldly perception refers to the perception of a person who hasn't realised emptiness. So a person who hasn't realised emptiness cannot understand the non-existence of form the way it appears. The non-existence of form in the way it appears is emptiness. This is something that a person who hasn't realised emptiness cannot understand. Therefore to the perception of such a person, form will be accurate. However, a person who hasn't realised emptiness can understand the non-existence of the way the reflection of form appears in the mirror.

In the same way as we have this division of accurate and wrong according to the worldly perception of objects, we also have this division of accurate and wrong of awarenesses, or object possessors, according to worldly perception.

For example the grasping at true existence would be accurate according to worldly perception, because a person who has not realised emptiness cannot understand that true grasping is a wrong awareness. They cannot understand the absence of the apprehended object.

Therefore according to worldly perception true grasping is accurate. If it is accurate according to worldly perception, there is no pervasion that it is necessarily existent. For example, truly existent form is accurate according to worldly perception, because a worldly person who has not realised emptiness has not realised the emptiness of form. Therefore to that person's perception, truly existent form is accurate even though truly existent form is non-existent.

8.4.3. Ultimate Truth

The definition of *ultimate truth* is: *The meaning found by a valid cogniser engaging in final analysis, as well as the valid cogniser engaging in final analysis becomes a valid cogniser engaging in final analysis with regards to it.*

Take as the object the emptiness of the vase which is ultimate truth.

- It is the found meaning, or the realised meaning of the valid cogniser realising the emptiness of the vase, which would be the valid cogniser engaging in final analysis.
- The valid cogniser engaging in final analysis is the valid cogniser realising the emptiness of the vase.

-
- That valid cogniser become a valid cogniser engaging in final analysis with regards to the emptiness of the vase.

The division of ultimate truth is the same as the Mind-Only. So one can posit the various divisions into selflessness of person, selflessness of phenomena, and one can posit the various emptinesses such as the four, sixteen and so forth emptinesses.

8.4.4. Etymology of Conventional and Ultimate Truth

The reason why the vase, which is a conventional truth, is called a conventional truth is because it is true to the ignorance grasping at true existence. Even though vase is a false phenomena, it is called truth because it is true to the ignorance grasping at true existence.

The Tibetan word for conventional existence has three words, *kun dzob den-pa*, which is explained in relation to the object. The first sord *kun* means various or many, the second, *dzob*, has the connotation of false, the third *den-pa* refers to truth. So it is a conventional truth or *kun dzob den-pa*, because it is true to the ignorance grasping at true existence.

The Tibetan word for ultimate truth again has three words, *don dam den-pa*. These are explained with regard to the object, which is a slight variation from the explanation according to Svatantrika-Madhyamika, where it was explained in relation to the object possessor, the mind. Of these three words, *don dam den-pa*, *don* means meaning, *dam* has the connotation of superior and purest, and *den pa* is truth.

Ultimate truth is meaning because it is the meaning of the meditative equipoise of an Arya. It is purest because it is the object of the purest non-dual wisdom realising emptiness, and it is true because there is no discrepancy between appearance and mode of abiding. All three words are explained in relation to the object itself.

From the Svatantrika point of view, the second word *dam-pa* is the non-dual wisdom realising emptiness. So for example the emptiness of the vase becomes the first syllable 'meaning', because it is the object of the second syllable 'the non-dual wisdom realising emptiness'. So there is a slight variation.

Also in conventional truth we can see that all three syllables are explained with regard to the object, and not the object possessor.

The Prasangika accept that the truth of cessation is ultimate truth. So there is a pervasion that if it is the truth of cessation, it is ultimate truth.

8.4.3.1 False and True Phenomena

If there is a discrepancy between the way it appears, and the way it abides, then it is a false phenomena.

If there is no discrepancy between appearance, and the mode of existence, then it is a true phenomena.

*Transcribed from tape by Sharon Holley
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