

## **2011-04-04 Drubta /Tenets**

I appeal to the gathering to set out the right motivation to participate in this discourse so that we may gather merits collectively for the purpose of achieving Buddhahood with the aim of helping all sentient beings throughout space. We are here tonight to talk about Established Tenets which are conclusions arrived at by examining the topic with reason and whose conclusions are supported by scriptural citation.

Whilst there are four schools of Buddhist tenets they can be divided into two divisions; those subscribing to selflessness of phenomena and those which do not.

Vaibhashika, The Particularists, and Suatantrika, the Sutra System both don't believe in selflessness of phenomena. They were the target audience of the first turning of the dharma wheel (teachings of Buddha). Those who believed in selflessness of phenomena were those to whom Buddha gave his middle and last turnings of the wheel of dharma. The two schools arising from these are the Mind Only, the Cittamatin, and the Madhyamika.

### **Vaibhashika School Tenets**

Vaibhashika is a huge school with 4 major sub schools. They can be further divided into a total of 18 minor schools. The belief system of this school is talked about in three ways: ground reality, path reality and effect reality/result. When this school talks of ground reality, like others do, it says ground reality is subsumed by 2: conventional reality/truth and ultimate reality/truth.

#### Conventional truth according to Vaibhashika

An example of conventional reality according to them is: a vase is said to be an example of conventional reality in that if smashed the original image of it in the mind disappears. Its identity is easily lost and so they say the vase is a conventional truth.

For Vaibhashika conventional truth refers to things like the vase and the water in it for they are labeled by name. They exist in that way, as being labelled.

The Vaibhashika viewpoint refers to a vase and water as truly existent as vase and water as their names say. From this we can infer that this school believes in the notion of true existence.

#### Conventional truth according to Prasangika

There is a big difference in the term conventional truth used by the Vaibhashika School and that used by the highest school, Prasangika. For the highest school conventional truth refers to a concealer, referring to ignorance, the fundamental misconception that things have true existence. That misconception veils the mind from seeing things as they really are, providing an image with qualities that it doesn't have. Veiled by this misconception things appear to exist objectively from their own side and we believe them to be the truth. That is conventional truth according to Prasangika.

Conventional truth for the highest school, Prasangika, refers to a phenomenon labeled as truly existent by a veiled mind not seeing the truth.

#### Ultimate truth according to Vaibhashika

What are examples of ultimate truth for the Vaibhashika school?

Examples are form (sounds smells etc) and impermanence. They believe things like form and impermanence are ultimate because however much you may examine or investigate form and impermanence; you'll never lose the mind that grasps form and impermanence, as opposed to the vase which can be smashed.

We have described conventional and ultimate truth according to Vaibhashika. They say that that which they call conventional truth and that which they call ultimate truth, both, exist truly, independently. They say that they exist truly because on investigation they can be found as they are named. They do not only exist in name but in actuality.

Why do we make this presentation of the two truths of the first school? It helps because they form important stepping stones for us to finally understand the two truths according to the highest school.

#### What is the definition of this school?

A Vaibhashika proponent is a proponent of a Buddhist school that does not believe in a self cognizing consciousness/apperception/ knowing consciousness, and which believes in true existence of external realities.

They have been called realists. They not only believe in external realities, they also believe them to be true. They do not believe in self cognizing awareness, an awareness that knows an awareness. However they believe in outer reality and they believe it to be truly existent.

The fourth school, Madhayamaka, has two main schools. The first of these is called Savatantrika /Autonomous/ rangyupa. That has two divisions also: Yogacharya Savatantrika and Sautantrika Savatantrika school. Sautantrika also believes in outer reality, but the way they believe differs markedly.

Outer realities are believed in by 4 schools Vaibhashika/Consequentialists, Sautantrika/Sutra system, Sautantrika Savatantrika Madhayamaka and Prasangika Madhayamaka- they all accept outer realities.

What is the rationale for Vaibhashika believing in externals?

They say things have outer realities which exist truly because when you break a thing/an outer reality, into parts more and more, down to its atoms, you will reach a point where you have found an indivisible partless particle – and therefore they say things exist truly.

This indivisible partless particles exist, according to this school, not due to the ripening of predispositions of the observer of the thing, and not because it appears to the mind, also not because it is labelled by mind, it exists they say, truly in and of itself, and independent of these. Directionally partless particles are indivisible and not dependent on anything and so exist truly they say.

Now the Vaibhashika school says when directionally partless particles of earth, water, air and fire, plus form, smell, taste and touch come together, they constitute a compounded particle. These particles of the four elements and the sense objects come together to form a conglomerated particle.

If these eight come together around a centrally directionally partless particle, do they meet the central particle or do they not? Different answers are offered. One answer is yes, when they gather around a central directionally partless particle, it is not so much that there is actually a central partless particle. There isn't one. What is actually there is just air. The second answer is when these 8 particles come together; although they may meet, coalesce, they do not actually touch.

Vaibashika is very adamant about its position.

The third school of thought, Mind Only, debate intensely with Vaibhashika, pointing out the logical fallacies of their position, and Mind Only renders a coarse form of partless particle to be untenable.

Mind Only asks Vaibhashika; “Does a directionally partless particle have any parts or not? If a central partless particle comes into contact with another does it meet the east side or west side? You say it doesn't meet at all. Therefore the east and west sides have collapsed. However if you say that another particle coming into contact with such a ‘directionless partless’ particle meets with its east side, then it doesn't meet with its west side. If so, your claim of it being without parts, and therefore partless, does not stand up. It is wrong because when the new particle touches the east it does not touch the west and so the central particle is not partless. It has an east and west side.

How does the Mind Only School posit form?

They say form comes into being as a result of ripening of the predisposition of the observer. When the observers inner predisposition awakens, then form assumes form.

How does the discussion whether an atom is partless or not, serve any purpose. It serves a great purpose. It helps us reach closer to the position of the highest school. One of the positions which the highest school holds is; things do not have independent existence, because they have parts. Anything that depends on parts is empty of concrete existence.

Vaibhashika, the lowest school, is a proponent of a Buddhist system that believes in true existence of external phenomena and disbelieves in rang.rig/ internal self cognizing consciousness. They say external phenomena exist truly because coarse external phenomena are formed by the conglomeration of many partless particles. Since, they say, the basic building block of matter is the truly existent, findable partless particle, what is the outcome? Things, they say, exist truly without depending on an inner self cognising consciousness or being labelled.

We can again compare the first school with the last school. The first school, Vaibhashika, disbelieves in rang.rig/ self cognizing consciousness. The highest school also disbelieves in this rang rig, but the two reasons for this disbelief are very different. The function of a self cognising awareness is for the mind to know itself; like light shining on itself. Similarly you could say darkness can hide darkness; therefore there is no darkness to be seen. But darkness doesn't disappear, it can still be seen. Vaibhashika uses this example to show that rangrig doesn't exist.

What is rang.rig? Let me give you an example. All our consciousnesses have a self cognising aspect. When your visual consciousness apprehends a vase, it is your visual consciousness that certifies it exists. But how do you know it has perceived it correctly. The perception by visual consciousness that a vase is really a vase is certified by the apperception/ self cognition. How do you know that rang.rig certifies the existence of visual consciousness? It seems as if you need another perception to verify that –leading to infinite regression. To avoid that Vaibhashika says, visual consciousness that perceives the vase has two parts; parts apprehending the vase and part apprehending itself.

The highest school disbelieves in self cognizing awareness too because it amounts to saying that if you look for the apprehender of the vase it is visual consciousness, and when you look for the apprehender of visual consciousness it is apperception and it is as if when you look for something you end up finding the stuff, as it were. Then that would amount to objective reality, independent existence. The highest school says when you critically analyze where something exists among its parts it can't be found, but if one claims the existence of rang.rig it is tantamount to believing that things are findable upon ultimate analysis.

Rangrig is an important topic of discussion. It arises because of the importance of consciousness/mind in Buddhism. Mind is a dominant player and its existence and function need to be established. What establishes it is selfknowing consciousness.

Each school has a lot to say or refute about this topic. Vaibhashika rules out the existence of rang rig via many analogies. They ask how can there be a consciousness that knows consciousness, for in nature light doesn't need light to illumine. A sword doesn't need a sword to cut. If light needs light to illumine then by implication darkness needs darkness.

This concept of external phenomena and rang.rig inner self cognizing awareness are key concepts in understanding the Prasangika Madhyamika system. So we need to try and understand these concepts.