

Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas realize emptiness

Dose of Emptiness (Tibetan stong thun chen mo - TTC) translated by Jose Cabezon -

Note 706 p 482-483

This section [on why Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas necessarily realize emptiness] is one of the longest and most detailed of the entire stong thun chen mo. Despite the complexity of the section, especially of the exegetical material that sets forth the "correct" interpretation of certain scriptural passages, such as the one found in the *Daśabhūmika Sūtra*, the point being made is a very simple one. Śrāvakas and *pratyekabuddhas* attain arhantship. Of this there is no doubt. To accomplish this they must forever rid themselves of the afflictions. The only method to accomplish this, in turn, is through the direct perception of reality; that is, through the direct understanding of emptiness. Hence, *srāvakas* and *pratyeka-buddhas*, despite their impoverished attainments in the area of "method" (*upaya*), do cognize not only the selflessness of the person, but also the selflessness of phenomena; that is, full-blown emptiness. In short, the difference between *srāvakas* and *pratyeka-buddhas*, on the one hand, and bodhisattvas, on the other, lies not in the realization of emptiness. Both groups accomplish this. It lies, instead, in the degree of their compassion and altruism and in the *extensiveness* of their understanding of emptiness, bodhisattvas having an understanding of reality that is more in-depth, by virtue of the fact that they have mastered many forms of reasoning that establish emptiness, a feat that the *srāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas* cannot claim for themselves.

Similar treatments of this subject are to be found in Tsong kha pa's *Lam rim chen mo* (see *CMDR*, pp. 383-385); *dGongs pa rab gsal* (see *CTB*, pp.150-181); and *LSN*, folios 73b-77b (see *Essence of Eloquence (EE)*, pp. 299-305). See also *MOE*, pp. 296- 304; *SOS*, pp. 104-107; and Guy Newland, *Compassion: A Tibetan Analysis* (London: Wisdom Publications, 1984), p. 156, n. 15.

For discussion of this subject in non-dGe lugs pa works the reader is referred to the detailed treatment in the Karma pa's *dBu ma La 'jug pa'i rnam bshad*, folios 46b-56b; as well as the *rNam bshad* of Rong ston pa, pp. 24-31. Tsong kha pa's position, that *srāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas* do understand the selflessness of phenomena, is criticized by Mi bskyod rdo rje in *dBu ma gzhan stong smra ba'i srol*, folio 17b.

p 201-202

...The *Avatārabhāṣya* says: "From this scriptural [citation] one can clearly ascertain that *srāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas* have the understanding that all phenomena are essenceless." 708

As for [the three principal] logical arguments (*rigs pa*), the *Avatārabhāṣya* says: "Were it not so,

1. because [srāvakas and so forth] would be devoid of a complete understanding of the essencelessness of things, just as [the bodhisattva surpasses the heterodox (non-Buddhist)] who are devoid of worldly attachment, so too would the bodhisattva who has generated the first mind also surpass them, [the srāvakas and so forth,] by virtue of his intellect.
2. Just like the heterodox, [the srāvakas] too would not have abandoned all of the proclivities for activity (*spyod pa'i phra rgyas*), [that is, the afflictions,] in the three spheres.
3. Because they misperceive the own nature of form and so on, they are mistaken. Hence, they could not have even understood the selfless-ness of the person, as they misperceive the aggregates, that is, the cause of labeling something as the self."