Bhāviveka’s Jewel in the Hand Treatise: Elucidating a Path to Awakening Utilizing Formal Inference

Abstract

Madhyamaka soteriological theory can be summarized as a process of transforming cognition from conventional reality to ultimate reality. Hence, the diverse understandings of these two realities certainly influence different Mādhyamikans’ soteriology. Based on his unique theory of two realities, Bhāviveka elucidates a path to awakening utilizing formal inference in his Jewel in the Hand Treatise. Bhāviveka defines conventional reality as that of worldly experience, including language, which is for those sentient beings who are not yet awakened even though such a reality is derived from their attachments produced from ignorance. Based on the theory that worldly experience is the result of the activation of intrinsic natures, Bhāviveka accepts that things have intrinsic natures at this level of reality. Moreover, Bhāviveka’s understanding of ultimate reality contains three connotations: 1) from an ontological perspective, “ultimate reality” means the ultimate object which is understood as the true nature of things; 2) from an epistemological perspective, ultimate reality is non-conceptual wisdom, which refers to how the Buddhist sages view reality; 3) the teachings in accord with non-arising is ultimate reality. According to the first and the second definitions, reality transcends worldly experience, languages and so on. From this level of reality, things possess no intrinsic nature. In addition to the truth of things and non-conceptual wisdom, Bhāviveka suggested a secondary...
ultimate reality, i.e., the teachings in accord with non-arising to facilitate the interaction between the two realities. Therefore, a practitioner is able to transform their cognition from conventional to ultimate reality. Furthermore, Bhāviveka’s teaching of the secondary ultimate reality includes the knowledge of śūnyatā obtained from hearing, iiī thinking, and meditating. For Bhāviveka, the logical argument or a formal proof statement (pragyavākya) is a sufficient methodology to acquire the knowledge of hearing from which the other two types of knowledge can be acquired. Although formal proof statements (pragyavākya) had been developed in Buddhism for a long time, they never became an important methodology for debate before Dignāga (480~540 CE). Because of his influence, formal proof statements became a formal methodology for debate and were accepted by different religious schools. According to Dignāga, a formal proof statement is established on the basis of two kinds of cognitions (pramāṇa): direct perception (pratyakṣa) and inference (anumāṇa). Based on Dignāga’s perspective, Bhāviveka incorporated formal proof statements into his soteriological theory. In order to make formal proof statements a qualified methodology, Bhāviveka included the concept of intrinsic nature in his interpretation of conventional reality. That is, the inclusion of an intrinsic nature involving direct perception and inference in conventional reality allows for a decisive conclusion by means of a valid formal proof statement. Therefore, a valid formal proof argument is able to secure the correct understanding of (secondary) ultimate reality which becomes the initial step for awakening.

Three Jewels. Buddhist Paths to liberation. Morality. As a true Prasangika treatise it extensively employed consequences to elaborate Madhyamaka view. His younger contemporary Bhāviveka also composed a commentary to Nagarjuna’s work called Lamp of Wisdom (Prajñapradīpa) in which he criticized Buddhapiṭaka’s position. It is the way that Bhāviveka criticizes Buddhapiṭaka that belies Bhāviveka’s belief in autonomous inference (svatantranuma; Wylie: rang rgyud rjes dpag). Bhāviveka asserted that stating consequences was insufficient. To generate a valid conception of emptiness, one must state autonomously established syllogisms. Ācārya Bhāviveka Converts a Nonbeliever to Buddhism, Gelug 18th-century Qing painting in the Philadelphia Museum of Art[1]. Bhāviveka, also called Bhavya or Bhāvaviveka (traditional
Bhāviveka (Wylie: slob dpon bha bya, skal ldan, legs ldan, c. 500 – c. 578) was a sixth century Madhyamaka Buddhist. In Tibetan Buddhism Bhāviveka is regarded as the founder of the Svātantrika tradition of the Mādhyamaka school of Buddhism, which is seen as antagonistic to Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka. Contents. 1 Biography.