

Shantideva's *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

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We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines: 'For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, so for that purpose I will engage in listening to the teachings and put them into practice well'. When we develop this strong motivation from the depths of our heart then our actions become most purposeful.

As well as generating a positive motivation, it is also good to engage in regular meditation practice to help settle the mind. A settled, more focused mind is an essential tool for whatever other practice or virtuous activity we wish to engage in, because that activity becomes more meaningful when the mind is focused.

Refuting the Mind Only in particular

2.2.2.2 REFUTING THE SELF-KNOWER THROUGH THE ANSWER TO THE QUESTION

2.2.2.2.1 Refuting the example (cont.)

Refuting the example of the crystal

- 19cd. *Unlike a crystal, blue does not depend
On something else to be blue;*
20. *Likewise, some are seen to depend on others,
And yet some are also not.
That which is not blue cannot produce itself
As blue out of its own nature.*

One needs to understand that the debates presented here are specifically between the proponents of the Mind Only school and those of the Madhyamika school who are refuting each other's positions.

The example being particularly refuted here is one used by the **Mind Only** school to assert a self-knower. The Mind Only school is asserting that there is a self-knower because, when the mind apprehends blue – when we recall having seen blue in the past – that recollection that one has seen blue is proof that there is a self-knower. This is because, at the time of seeing blue, it is the self-knowing mind that apprehends the mind perceiving the colour blue, and this allows you to remember that you have seen the object blue at the same time as the object possessor, which is the mind that perceives blue.

The **Madhyamika** school refute that by saying that one doesn't need to have a self-knower to remember the mind apprehending blue, as well as the object blue itself. Rather, this is remembered through the connection formed at the time of perceiving blue. Because of the connection that was made earlier between the object possessor, or the mind that perceives blue, and the object blue, one can now recall having seen blue.

These assertions and debates are very meticulous ways of explaining how the mind works. For example, when we perceive something, how is it perceived? How does memory work? How do we recall or recollect things? Each of the schools has its own presentation, and it is by analysing and looking into these different presentations that one gets a

clear understanding of how the mind works. This is a really significant point, and it is debated meticulously here.

So the Mind Only school uses the example of a crystal to present a self-knower. The Madhyamikas refute that, as presented, with the above verses. The subsequent argument initially presented by the **Mind Only** school is:

Argument: That the white crystal is generated as blue through the force of the basis is in dependence on other, rather than through its own nature.

The example presented in this argument by the Mind Only school is that of a clear crystal. When a clear crystal is placed on a blue base, that crystal will appear blue when one looks at it. If it is placed on a yellow base, the crystal will appear to the eye consciousness as yellow. Likewise, if it is placed on a red base, it will appear red, and so forth. The analogy rightly shows that the colour of the clear crystal – that which is reflected – is dependent on the colour of its base. That is quite clear.

The Mind Only argument further says:

The blue of the lapis lazuli is blue out of its own nature, and not in dependence on others. Likewise, the knowing of forms and so forth exists in dependence on the other mind, but the knowing of mind by mind itself exists independently from some separate knower.

The **Madhyamika's** refutation of this assertion of the Mind Only school is presented:

Answer: It follows that the example of the blue of the lapis lazuli being generated as blue independently from something else is not valid because blue does not by its own self generate itself in the nature of blue, which it would need to in order not to be generated from a cause as blue.

So the Madhyamika refute this assertion by saying that the blue in the lapis lazuli is not produced by itself and it doesn't exist by its own nature, because if that were the case, it would need not need to depend on, or be generated by a cause. So what is being presented in the answer is that because the colour blue in the lapis lazuli is dependent on causes, it cannot be generated by itself, by its own nature.

The Mind Only school uses the assertion that 'the blue of the lapis lazuli arises from its own nature' as an example of the mind knowing itself. But the Madhyamikas refute that by showing the absurdity of blue arising by itself, without having to depend on causes.

Although the Cittamatrins (Mind Only) are not claiming that the blue of the lapis lazuli does not depend on causes – they wouldn't assert that – the Madhyamikas are saying that if blue *were* to exist by its own nature, from its own side, then logically it would have to be the case that it could not depend on causes. So the Madhyamikas are refuting the Mind Only by default, saying that if you accept that something exists from its own side or by its own nature, then that would imply that it does not depend on causes.

The Mind Only school, of course, with its own system of logic, is presenting quite a meticulous argument by saying that, just as the blue colour of lapis lazuli exists by its own nature and doesn't depend on something else, similarly, the mind knows itself and doesn't have to depend on something else. This is on the basis of the Mind Only school asserting that there is true existence or existence by its own nature.

As I have presented previously many times, the Mind Only assert that dependent phenomena and thoroughly established phenomena exist truly, while imputed

phenomena do not exist truly. This is presented in the teachings of the tenets, so you should apply that understanding here.

2.2.2.2.2 Refuting the meaning

21. *If the statement, 'the candle flame illuminates'
Is made upon knowledge by consciousness,
Then the statement 'awareness is luminous'
Is made upon knowledge by what?*

If one says, 'Although the candle does not illuminate itself, but rather it merely illuminates', and says likewise 'it is known by consciousness' then, in that case, consciousness does not illuminate itself. Instead one has to say 'consciousness merely illuminates'. By which different substance is consciousness known that you make this statement? This is invalid.

When the **Mind Only** school asserts *although the candle does not illuminate itself*, this is in relation to the earlier **Madhyamika** refutation that, if light illuminates itself, this would imply that dark obscures itself, and that would be absurd. Now the Mind Only proponents are saying, 'OK. We accept that the candle does not illuminate itself – it merely illuminates. So that is the nature of the candle light, it merely illuminates.' Then they ask the Madhyamikas: *By which different substance is consciousness known that you make this statement? This is invalid.*

They further state:

If it would be known by a consciousness of different substance, it would become infinite. Hence, it is not known by self or by another.

Here, the **Mind Only** school is asserting a counter argument to the Madhyamika position by saying that, if you assert a different substance, or a different mind that knows the mind, and you say that the mind doesn't know itself, then that different substance that knows the mind would need a different substance to know that, and a further substance to know that, and so on. So there would be the fault of infinite regression and the absurdity would be that the mind is not known by itself nor by another.

In other words, the Mind Only school is saying that there would be nothing to know the mind; the mind would not be known if it is not known by itself and not known by another. This is what is presented next, and subsequently refuted by the Madhyamika.

22. *To remark about it being illuminated or not illuminated,
When it is not seen by anything,
Is pointless even though expressed,
Like the poise of a barren woman's daughter.*

The argument is saying:

As there is no knower seen by any consciousness, then although one may make statements regarding whether consciousness is illuminated or not, they are meaningless as the basis for the distinction is not established by prime cognition. If it is impossible for the daughter of a barren woman to exist, then it is meaningless to talk about her poise.

Here, the Mind Only school is saying, 'You Madhyamikas may refute us by saying that consciousness does not illuminate itself and so forth, but according to you, making statements about whether consciousness is illuminated or not is meaningless, as the basis for the distinction is not established by prime cognition'. The analogy presented here is like making comments about a daughter of a barren woman.

The literal analogy given is that of a mule. Apparently mules cannot have offspring. Thus, the absurdity being presented here is that, if the daughter of a barren woman doesn't even exist, then to talk about her poise, such as her looks, shape and elegance is meaningless.

2.2.2.3 REFUTING THE ARGUMENTS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF A SELF-KNOWER

Here there are three sub-headings:

2.2.2.3.1 Example of how memory is generated even though there is no self-knower

2.2.2.3.2 Refuting other reasons used to establish a self-knower

2.2.2.3.3 Refuting that other-knowers would be impossible if there were no self-knower

As a response to the Mind Only school's reasoning for the existence of a self-knower through examples, the **Madhyamika** presents another example to refute that there is a self-knower. As mentioned earlier, if there is no self-knower, there wouldn't be other knowers as well, so the Madhyamika refute this by showing the impossibility of a self-knower.

2.2.2.3.1 Example of how memory is generated even though there is no self-knower

The **Mind Only** school presents this verse:

- 23ab. *If there is no self-knower,
How can one remember consciousness?*

Mind-Only: If there is no self-knower, then how could there be recollection of the object possessor consciousness? There cannot be.

If one can infer the experience through the reason of recollection, and the recollection when one thinks, 'I previously saw blue' comes subsequent to the experience, then, when one says, 'I saw blue', one establishes the experience of the object through the recollection of the object, and that very experience of the object is the apprehension of blue.

The reasoning that refutes other possibilities as to what is it that experiences the apprehension of blue also establishes the self-knower.

The Mind Only proponents assert: *If there is no self-knower, then how could there be recollection of the object possessor consciousness? There cannot be.* They are arguing that without a self-knower, how could one remember that one has seen something? An object possessor is the consciousness that apprehends the object. What I explained earlier is now being presented here.

The Mind Only school argue: *If one can infer the experience through the reason of recollection and the recollection when one thinks, 'I previously saw blue' comes subsequent to the experience, then, when one says, 'I saw blue', one establishes the experience of the object through the recollection of the object, and that very experience of the object is the apprehension of blue.*

They further state:

When one says, 'I saw' one establishes the experience of the object possessor through the sign of the recollection of the object possessor, and that experience of the object possessor is the self-knower.

This is how the Mind Only proponents assert a self-knower.

That which serves as an answer by the **Madhyamikas** is in the last two lines of the verse:

- 23cd. *One remembers in relation to the experience of something else,
Like the poison of a rat.*

Madhyamika: The memory of the object possessor does not establish the self-knower. If the apprehension of blue experiences the other object of blue then, when one says, 'I previously saw this blue', the memory of the object possessor is generated from the memory of the relation between the object and the object possessor. It is not generated from the experience of the object possessor, just like the marmot does not experience the poisoned bite at the time but does remember it later.

For example: When the marmot in winter is bitten by a rat, although the poison of the rat enters its body, it only experiences the bite and not the poison. Later, when it wakes up due to hearing thunder, it remembers that at the time of the bite it had been poisoned, but without having earlier experienced the poison at the time.

Then the analogy is further explained:

The marmot being bitten is similar to the experience of the object by the apprehension of blue. Being poisoned at the same time as the bite is like the experience of the object possessor at the time of holding the object. That the object possessor does not experience itself at this time is like the non-experience of poison at the time of being bitten. Subsequently remembering the bite is like remembering the object. The memory of the object possessor through the memory of the object, along with the object possessor not having experienced itself earlier, is like the memory of the poison through the power of merely remembering being bitten, and without having experienced being poisoned at the time.

First of all, the Madhyamika asserts that the memory of the object possessor does not establish the self-knower. *If the apprehension of blue experiences the other object of blue then, when one says, 'I previously saw this blue', the memory of the object possessor is generated from the memory of the relation between the object and the object possessor. It is not generated from the experience of the object possessor ...*

This is in relation to the **Mind Only** assertion that one recollects by experiencing the object possessor the mind knowing itself. The **Madhyamika** says this is not the case. The analogy presented here is *just like the marmot does not experience the poisoned bite at the time, but does remember it later*. The marmot is an animal that hibernates in the winter. I think what is translated here as a rat may be more like a small mouse that has a poisonous bite.

When the marmot in winter is bitten by a rat [or a small poisonous mouse], although the poison of the mouse enters its body it only experiences the bite and not the poison. This refers to the fact that, when it is hibernating, the marmot would experience the pain of the bite, but would not yet experience the actual poison transmitted with that bite. That hasn't taken effect on the marmot's body, so it doesn't actually know that yet. It only experiences the bite and not the poison. Later, when it wakes up due to hearing thunder, it remembers that it had been poisoned at the time of the bite, although it had not experienced the poison at that time.

A marmot is an animal that hibernates underground for about six months a year in the winter months, so when another small animal like a poisonous rat or mouse bites it, apparently it has an awareness of the bite because of the pain of the bite. It experiences the pain of the bite, but because the poison has entered its body but has yet to be activated, the poison remains dormant. Later, when Spring comes along and the thunderstorms wake up the hibernating

animal, at the time the marmot wakes up the poison apparently gets activated, and that is when it feels the actual pain and suffering of the poison.

So although the poison entered the marmot's body at an earlier time, it was not experienced at that time because the poison had not yet been activated. Later, however, when it wakes up and experiences the pain of the poison being activated and spreading throughout its body, it feels the pain and then has the recollection, 'I was poisoned when I was bitten earlier'. Even though it doesn't recollect having been poisoned earlier, due to the delayed effect it now has a recollection that it must have been poisoned earlier. This is an analogy to show how recollection or remembrance comes about.

We can all relate to this example. We might have been out in some wilderness area and something might have stung us and we thought, 'Something has bitten me'. It could be a poisonous animal, like a rat or a mouse, but initially we would only experience the pain of the sting or the bite, and not pay much attention to it and move on. But then, later, after the poison starts to spread, the actual pain of the poison is felt. Even though one may have forgotten about the bite, later one will think that the poison is very painful and one can feel it spreading over a greater area, such as up one's leg.

So even though one would not have known at the time of the bite that one had been poisoned, later on, because of the pain spreading and knowing that it is the effect of the poison, one would reflect, 'I must have been poisoned earlier'.

The text refers to the marmot waking up due to hearing thunder and remembering that at the time of the bite it had been poisoned, but without having experienced the poison at that time. This analogy is basically refuting that there has to be a self-knower: that even though at the time one didn't know one had been poisoned, later one has the recollection of this.

The analogy is explained as follows: The marmot being bitten is similar to the experience of the object by the apprehension of blue; the experience of the bite itself is analogous to the experience of the object by the consciousness perceiving blue at that time.

Being poisoned at the time of the bite and not knowing one has been poisoned is like the experience of the object possessor – that which perceives the blue – at the time of holding the object, which in this case is the colour blue. The object possessor does not experience itself at this time, just like the poison is not experienced at the time of being bitten. So in this analogy, the object possessor not experiencing the poison at the time of being bitten shows how one does not need a self-knower to remember the object possessor. Subsequently remembering the bite is like remembering the object, the memory of the object possessor through the memory of the object – *the memory of the object possessor through the memory of the object, along with the object possessor having earlier experienced itself, is like the memory of the poison through the power of merely remembering being bitten, and without at the time having experienced being poisoned.*

The analogy is elaborately explained to show how there is no need to have a self-knower in order to remember the object possessor at a later time. Gyaltsab Je gives the following statements:

This reasoning to establish memory without a self-knower appears to me as having been composed by a fully qualified scholar, and as excellent. It seems it has

not been adopted correctly by those practising the words of the *Introduction to the Trainings*.

Actually these would be the words of Lama Tsong Khapa himself, recorded in notes taken by Gyaltsab Je Rinpoche. So it is actually Lama Tsong Khapa who is saying this. The final statement here is:

Because in general the answer given to, 'it is incorrect that the later consciousness remembers because the earlier consciousness did not experience itself', is 'the pervasion is not established', it says that the assertion, 'the *Introduction to the Trainings* does not refute a nominal self-knower' is not the position of the great bodhisattva.

2.2.2.3.2 Refuting other reasons used to establish a self-knower

24. *If, 'It can illuminate itself because That endowed with other conditions can see.' By applying the formulated eye balm, The vase is seen, but not the eye balm.*

Mind-Only: Having accomplished the mind of calm abiding, one can see the mind of others, then one can illuminate one's mind as one's object. For example, like being able to see the close mountain if one can see the far away needle.

Answer: Although one can see underground treasures such as vases by applying the substance made out of a medicinal eye balm, one does not see the eye balm itself. This reason harms the position of the self-knower, and does not support it.

Further: It is explained like this because, as they are the same in arising from the same illuminating cause, it follows that not only are that illuminating and that illuminated not established as one, they are certainly also not established as of one entity. This is so because at the time when the underground vase is seen due to applying the medicinal eye balm created through a secret mantra for seeing underground treasures, not only is the illuminated vase not one with the illuminating eye balm, they also do not become one entity.

Hence, not only is it unsuitable as a reason establishing a self-knower, it harms the existence of a self-knower.

The **Mind Only** are saying that, having established calm abiding and with other conditions such as achieving the higher mental concentrations, then due to acquiring clairvoyance, one is able to know others' minds. If one can know others' minds, which in comparison to one's own mind are external and far away, then one can definitely assert that one knows one's own mind which is close. The example given here is like being able to see a nearby mountain if one can see a needle far away in the distance.

So the **Madhyamika** then refute this example that the Mind Only use, which is that if you can see something far away, then by default that would imply one could definitely see what is near. The Mind Only use that example to assert, therefore, that there is a self-knower. The Madhyamika's counter-argument to establish that the Mind Only school assertion is not valid is:

Answer: Although one can see underground treasures such as vases by applying the substance made out of a medicinal eye balm ...

This eye balm is a substance that is a combination of medicinal plants and the mantras recited over it. It is said that when one applies the eye balm to one's eyes, it enables

one to see treasures underground. Although the treasures underground are seen, one does not see the eye balm itself.

So the Madhyamika present a meticulous example here. If the Mind Only say that if something far away is seen, then by all means one has to see something near, then how about a situation where one applies this eye balm to the eyes to see treasures underground? One would be able to see the underground treasures, but not the eye balm itself. This is a very good example.

This reason harms the position of the self-knower, and does not support it.

Further: It is explained like this because, as they are the same in arising from the same illuminating cause, it follows that not only are that illuminating and that illuminated not established as one, they are certainly also not established as of one entity.

The analogy is further explained:

This is so because at the time when the underground vase is seen due to applying the medicinal eye balm created through a secret mantra for seeing underground treasures, not only is the illuminated vase, ...

... illuminated vase meaning here a vase that is clearly seen ...

... not one with the illuminating eye balm, they also do not become one entity.

Hence, not only is it unsuitable as a reason establishing a self-knower, it harms the existence of a self-knower.

In relation to the analogy presented earlier, the Madhyamika says to the Mind Only that not only is it unsuitable as a reason to establish a self-knower, it actually harms the existence of a self-knower. So what the Mind Only asserts as being an example harms the very assertion of a self-knower.

2.2.2.3.3 Refuting that other-knowers would be impossible if there would be no self-knower

The Mind Only school then says that if there was no self-knower, it would be absurd to know other external phenomena. This is what the Mind Only school uses as a counter-argument and will be refuted next.

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

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