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## Study Group - *Madhyamakavatanama*

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

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19 August 2003

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Generate a virtuous motivation as usual.

### 3.5.1.1.1.2.2.1.4. Showing Inherent Generation to be Completely Non-Existent (cont)<sup>1</sup>

According to *Illumination* we have reached this outline, which has two sub-headings: refuting those asserting inherent existence, and refuting objections to the above refutation.

#### 3.5.1.1.1.2.2.1.4.1. Refuting Those Asserting Inherent Existence

This heading has three sub-outlines: the consequence that an arya's equipoise would negate existence; the consequence that nominal truth would bear examination; and the consequence that ultimate generation wouldn't be negated.

##### 3.5.1.1.1.2.2.1.4.1.1. The Consequence That an Arya's Equipoise Would Negate Existence

This outline refutes those who assert inherent existence with the use of the consequence that an arya's meditative equipoise would become the cause for the annihilation of phenomena. Why? Because if phenomena were to exist inherently then they would have to be established in an arya's equipoise. Since they are actually negated in an arya's equipoise rather than being established, if phenomena were to exist inherently then an arya's equipoise would become the cause for the annihilation of phenomena. Since an arya's equipoise negates inherent existence, if phenomena were to exist inherently an arya's equipoise would become the cause for the annihilation of phenomena. That is the consequence.

##### 3.5.1.1.1.2.2.1.4.1.2. The Consequence That Nominal Truth Would Bear Examination

The second consequence is that if phenomena were to exist inherently then it would follow that they would bear analysis.

If we take as the object of our analysis the generation from self or generation from other then the mere generation of the effect from the cause, becomes lost under analysis. If it were to exist inherently then it should bear analysis.

Here, when we talk about analysis, we are talking about analysis into suchness. Of course conventional truth can be found here by conventional analysis, but that's not what it refers to here. For example the worldly truths of coming and going, or the worldly truth of seeds and so forth, are not being investigated here.

Analysis here refers to ultimate analysis, which is the analysis into suchness, and for that one needs to know the way of analysing suchness. One needs to know what is an analysis of suchness and what isn't. Here we don't investigate the existence or non-existence of a vase. Likewise we don't investigate the impermanence or lack of permanence of a vase. Here one investigates suchness, and there is a way of investigating suchness according to the Prasangika system, and a way of investigating suchness according to the Svatantrika system.

According to the **Prasangika** system everything is merely labelled by conception. Existence that is contrary to that mode, the existence not merely labelled by conception, is the object of negation according to the Prasangika system.

According to the **Svatantrika** system the object of negation is existence out of its own uncommon mode of abiding, not being posited by an uncontradicted awareness.

The opposite of that is how phenomena really exist. So when one investigates suchness, then one investigates whether or not a phenomenon's existence concords with the appearance of the object of negation. Here the impermanence or permanence of a vase, for example, doesn't really form the object of investigation. One is not concerned whether a vase is impermanent or permanent, but one is concerned with the object of negation, and whether according to the **Prasangika** system phenomena exists as being merely labelled or whether they exist not being merely labelled by conception. According to the **Svatantrika** this would be whether or not phenomena exist out of their own uncommon mode of abiding, not being posited by an uncontradicted awareness. So when we talk about the analysis that investigates suchness, then that's what we refer to and the object of investigation cannot be a worldly object.

##### 3.5.1.1.1.2.2.1.4.1.3. The Consequence that Ultimate Generation Wouldn't Be Negated

If phenomena were to exist inherently then it would follow that ultimate generation wouldn't be negated.

The **Svatantrika** say that the object of negation is the ultimate generation from self and ultimate generation from other. They say it is correct to refute ultimate generation from other, but that it is incorrect to refute generation from other. Why? Because effects are generated from causes.

They say that generation from other has to exist nominally because otherwise the cause and effect relationships of the totally afflicted type, and the cause and effect relationships of the totally purified type, would be non-existent.

To that the **Prasangikas** reply, 'If generation from other were to exist the way you asserted then the consequence that ultimate generation would not be negated follows'.

The root verse reads,

*During suchness reasons prove as incorrect*

*Generation from self and other;*

*By that reasoning it is incorrect also nominally,*

*How could something be your generation?*

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<sup>1</sup> Ed: This heading is not shown in the body of the *Mirror* text, but it is shown in the outline at the beginning of the booklet.

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*Mirror:*

Take the subject form - it follows it isn't established as *your* type of *generation* - because the *reasoning* that *proves as incorrect generation from self and* generation from *other* during investigation into suchness also *proves* inherent generation to be *incorrect nominally*.

Should the investigation into suchness not refute the nominal existence of the inherent existence, then it also wouldn't refute the nominal existence of ultimate generation.

The **Svatantrika** say that even though ultimate generation from other is nominally refuted, mere generation from other still exists nominally. Whereas the **Prasangika** say that generation from other doesn't exist at all. It is nominally refuted, and likewise ultimate generation from other is also nominally refuted. Why? Because for the Prasangika inherent existence and ultimate existence are the same.

According to the **Svatantrika**, however, ultimate existence and true existence are the same, but they don't equate that with inherent existence. Therefore the Svatantrika say that ultimate generation from other is refuted nominally but generation from other isn't refuted nominally.

The **Prasangika** however say that both generation from other and ultimate generation from other are refuted nominally. Should the investigation into suchness not refute nominal generation from other then the fallacy that would follow would be that ultimate generation from other would also not be refuted.

The Prasangika say that if inherent existence weren't refuted nominally then that would mean that phenomena exist truly and therefore also ultimately. Lama Tsong Khapa is saying here that according to the Prasangika system, according to the school of Nagarjuna and his two main disciples, there are various terms such as ultimate existence, true existence, inherent existence, existing out of its own nature, intrinsic existence, natural existence, and so forth, which are all synonyms. So when one says that nominally inherent existence is not refuted then what one is also saying that is true existence is not refuted, and hence ultimate existence is not refuted as well. There's no need to make the distinction between ultimate generation from other and generation from other because they are actually the same. If generation from other is refuted then ultimate generation from other is refuted, and vice versa. If generation from other isn't refuted then ultimate generation from other is also not refuted, because inherent existence means ultimate existence.

### **3.5.1.1.2.2.1.4.2. Refuting Objections to the Above Refutation**

This is the second outline of the heading Showing Inherent Generation to be Completely Non-Existent. Here the objection that is made by the **Realists** is that if phenomena nominally don't exist inherently in a nominal manner, then the generation and cessation of phenomena becomes impossible.

The refutation of that objection is contained within the next six lines,

*Empty functionalities such as reflections and so forth  
Those dependent on aggregation and not without renown  
Accordingly, like consciousness arising  
In the aspect of empty reflections and so forth  
All functioning phenomena, even though empty,  
Arise out of emptiness.*

*Mirror:*

The Realist says that since form isn't even generated nominally, it isn't inherently generated at all.

The Prasangika reply, 'There is no contradiction because *even though all functioning phenomena* are *empty* of inherent existence, effects are generated from the cause of *emptiness*'.

Effects empty of inherent existence are generated intensely from causes empty of inherent existence.

For example, it is well known that *empty* false functionalities *such as reflections and so forth* are *dependent on* the *aggregation* of causes and conditions.

When it says, 'for example it is well known that empty false functionalities such as reflections and so forth', here the false refers to the false in a worldly sense, and not the false in an emptiness sense. So it is just false in a normal worldly sense.

The reflection in a mirror comes about through an aggregation of causes and conditions, and generates the false perception of the reflection as form. Even though the reflection in a mirror is conventionally false, and is not the actual form, it can still generate the perception of the false eye-consciousness to which that reflection appears as the actual form. Likewise the cause that lacks inherent existence can still generate an effect that also lacks inherent existence.

The reflection in a mirror is false, and is empty of being the actual form. So in worldly terms the reflection in a mirror is a false phenomenon. It is empty of being the actual form that it reflects. Despite this it is the cause for the eye-consciousness to which that reflection appears. So the false reflection that is empty of being the actual form gives rise to the false eye-consciousness to which that reflection appears.

What is actually being said here?

The reflection is empty of being the actual form. So in conventional terms the reflection of the form is a distorted phenomenon. It is false and empty of being the actual form. Despite being false and empty of being the actual form, that reflection is the cause for the false eye-consciousness to which it appears. Likewise the cause that lacks inherent existence gives rise to an effect that also lacks inherent existence.

For example the appearance of the reflection, two moons, falling hairs, and so forth, to the mistaken eye-consciousness is similar to the appearance of inherent existence to an untainted eye-consciousness. Similarly here the appearance of the reflection as the actual form to the mistaken eye-consciousness is similar to the

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appearance of inherent existence to an unmistakable eye-consciousness.

There no outer existence of inherently existing sense objects such as form, sound, smells, and so forth. However there is an outer existence of forms and so forth that appear as inherently existing. Similarly here the reflection being the actual form is not the actual outer existence. However, there is the actual outer existence of a reflection that appears as that form. Here, when we say that the reflection is false refers to the reflection being not the actual form, it is false in a normal worldly sense. In the example in the text when it refers to the reflection as being false it doesn't refer to the reflection as false in the connotation of the Madhyamaka, but just in a normal worldly sense.

When a reflection appears as a form, we cannot make a distinction between the part of the reflection that appears as form and the part of the reflection that doesn't appear as form. The reflection as a whole appears as form. So the reflection as a whole is false, and the reflection as a whole is empty of being the actual form.

Likewise even though blue appears as inherently existing, there is no division into one part of blue appearing as inherently existing and another part of blue that doesn't appear as inherently existing. Blue appears wholly as inherently existing and is wholly empty of inherent existence. So blue wholly appears as inherently existing, and is wholly empty of being inherently existing. Blue as a whole appears as inherently existing, but at the same time blue as a whole is empty of what it appears to be. So blue is empty as a whole of being inherently existing.

Even though blue is wholly empty of existing inherently that doesn't contradict it being generated from its own cause and being capable of generating its own effect. For example, even though the reflection wholly appears as being the actual form it is actually empty of being that form. But just because the reflection is wholly empty of being the form it appears to be, that doesn't mean that the reflection is non-existent.

Likewise, even though blue appears to be completely intrinsically existing, blue is actually totally empty of intrinsic existence. But that doesn't mean that blue becomes non-existent. One can still ascertain blue even though blue lacks inherent existence.

In relation to the example of the reflection, having a profound understanding of what is being negated and what is not negated is an essential understanding necessary for comprehending the view of the Middle Way. Therefore Lama Tsong Khapa says one shouldn't take it lightly, thinking, 'I have now thought about it and I have understood it'. One should contemplate that point very deeply so that every part of the reflection is empty of being the form it appears to be. However that doesn't mean that reflection becomes non-existent. Even though every part of the reflection is empty of the form it appears to be, that doesn't mean that the reflection is not non-existent. Even though every part of the reflection is empty of the form it appears to be, the reflection is not non-existent. What is being negated and what is not being negated has to be understood very well

Even though phenomena exist they don't have to be generated intrinsically. Therefore there is a difference between a mere existence and inherent existence. Previously, during the presentation of generation, it was shown that inherent generation is non-existent. Therefore here one needs to make a very clear distinction between generation and inherent generation. If one doesn't make that very clear distinction between generation and inherent generation then one will become very confused regarding the existence and non-existence of phenomena. Then one will assume that just merely because phenomena exist, they exist out of their own nature and one will assume that if phenomena don't exist out of their own nature, then they will be totally non-existent. In such a way one either falls into the extreme of exaggeration or the extreme of denial.

Did you understand what we talked about today?

### Review

Is there no generation from inherently existing other?

[Student answer unclear]

Why is inherent existence non-existent? What would follow if inherent existence were to exist? If inherent existence existed then which fallacy would follow?

[Student answer unclear]

So what type of consequences would exist if inherent existence existed, and also why would those consequences exist?

[Student answer unclear]

Then phenomena would be annihilated in emptiness, is that your answer?

[Student answer unclear]

What is the measure of inherent existence?

*Student* : Existence from its own side being merely labelled by conception.

Existence not being merely labelled but by conception is the measure of existing from its own side. Sometimes we also say that if the imputed meaning could be found at the time of analysis, then also phenomena would exist inherently. That's what Buddhists posit as the measure of inherent existence. Did you understand that?

To the perception of an arya's meditative equipoise do conventional phenomena exist or not?

*Student*: No.

Why not?

*Student*: They are only understood in an ordinary person's conception.

Why don't they see conventional phenomena? The existence of forms and so forth for the perception of an arya's meditative equipoise is also the object of negation. An arya's meditative equipoise doesn't have any false perception, so conventional phenomena can't appear to that perception. An arya's meditative equipoise is free from the three types of duality,

- the appearance of true existence
- the appearance of conventional phenomena, and
- the appearance of subject object being different.

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Since it is free from those three types of appearances then it is non-dually absorbed into emptiness.

How many truths do we have?

*Student:* Two.

What are the two truths?

*Student:* Conventional truth and ultimate truth.

Is conventional truth true or not?

*Student:* It is true for the ignorant mind.

Why is it only true for ignorance and not true in general. Not existing in the way it appears is the measure of being false, and existing in the way it appears is the measure of it being true. Also here the object possessor in relation to which that statement is made is always the primary object possessor.

If a phenomenon exists the way it appears is there a pervasion that it is true? For example, does this clock exist the way it appears or not?

*Student:* No.

It does exist the way it appears because it does exist the way it appears to an enlightened consciousness. If you say there's no pervasion then how do you establish whether or not something exists the way it appears?

The clock exists the way it appears to enlightened consciousness, so in reference to what do we say that the clock doesn't exist the way it appears?

*Student:* In relation to its primary object possessor.

So isn't the enlightened consciousness the main primary object possessor?

[Student answer unclear]

Then what's the meaning of true grasping?

*Student:* Ignorance grasping at inherent existence.

If it is true grasping does it have to be ignorance?

*Student:* Yes.

Are you sure? Is there no primary consciousness that could be true grasping?

[Student answer unclear]

Ignorance is a mental factor isn't it? Don't we need a primary consciousness that has an entourage to which that ignorance belongs

The primary consciousness and the mental factors are concomitant from the point of view of:

- focus
- aspect
- basis
- substance
- time.

For example during meditation doesn't our primary consciousness become calm and still? The primary consciousness is not concentration, because the concentration is a mental factor and the primary consciousness is mind. Also mindfulness is not concentration. So primary consciousness always exists only in combination with the five ever-present mental factors.

If inherent generation isn't negated can ultimate generation still be negated? We just talked about that tonight? According to the Prasangika, if inherent generation is refuted then ultimate generation is also refuted.

What is the meaning of investigating suchness? That's very important to know because we need to know it when we engage in analytical and single-pointed meditation on emptiness. Initially we would engage in analytical meditation, but then we also engage in single-pointed meditation

*Student:* Is it finding the object of negation?

It is not finding the object of negation but analysing whether or not phenomena exist in the way the object of negation appears. These are all points that you should study well, because they are to understand the ultimate meaning of *Root Wisdom*.

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