
Study Group - *Madhyamakavatanama*

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

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Generate a virtuous motivation thinking, 'I have to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. In order to attain that aim I'm going to listen to this profound teaching, and then I'm going to put it into practice as much as possible.'

Generating this motivation repeatedly is a very important base for one's activities. We need to practise what we already know - there's no point in thinking one needs to know more in order to be able to practise. One needs to practise what one already knows, and then add onto that. So there's no need to wait for further Dharma knowledge in order to practise. You already know refuge and bodhicitta so put that into practice.

One should also think that one is now in a very good situation, where one has met with the Dharma that has both method and wisdom, and which also has the Tantric teachings and so forth. The mind needs to be trained very slowly. By slowly and gradually training the mind it will gradually improve.

3.5.1.1.1.2.2.1.2.1.1. Refuting the Examples (cont.)

Last time we started with the outline about refuting an example that is said to establish a consciousness without external existence as inherently existent¹.

3.5.1.1.1.2.2.1.2.1.1.1. Refuting the Example of a Dream²

The first of the three sub-outlines of this heading is,

3.5.1.1.1.2.2.1.2.1.1.1. One Cannot Establish That Consciousness Exists Inherently With The Dream Example³

The **Mind Only** posit the example of a person sleeping in a small room who dreams of an elephant. They are very clever and say that there is no external object here, because the elephant couldn't fit into the room. Although without an external object, the dream conscious is an example of an inherently existing consciousness. If they are asked why this consciousness exists inherently, they say that when the person wakes up then they will remember that they saw the elephant during a dream. That, they say, is the proof that the dream consciousness exists inherently.

Then the **Prasangika** say, 'Well then one could also take that as a proof that external elephants actually exist, because they also remember having seen an externally

existing elephant.

What you have to remember here is that the dream example cannot establish that the dream consciousness, which lacks an external object, exists inherently.

3.5.1.1.1.2.2.1.2.1.1.2. The Dream Example Also Doesn't Establish the Lack of External Existence While Awake⁴

If non-existent since visual consciousness is impossible

During sleep mental consciousness alone exists, Grasping its aspect to be mere outer existence, If posited here similar to the dream.

Mirror:

If the Mind Only assert: *Since visual consciousness is impossible* once one has fallen asleep, only *mental consciousness* without outer object exists at that time, but there is *grasping* at the appearance of the *aspect* of outer existence as outer existence. The existence of consciousness lacking an outer object *here* while awake is *posited, similar* to the existence of consciousness without outer object during *dreams*.

These lines state what the **Mind Only** assert. Since visual consciousness is impossible once one has fallen asleep, only mental consciousness without outer objects exists at that time. Visual consciousness and the perception of external objects is impossible, and therefore only mental consciousness without outer objects exists at that time.

However there is grasping at the appearance of the aspect of outer existence as outer existence, as the root text says when it states, 'Grasping its aspect to be mere outer existence'.

The Mind Only say that there is mental consciousness without outer objects, and that that mental consciousness exists inherently. Here they posit the dream as an example of an inherently existing consciousness lacking external objects.

Chandrakirti refutes the Mind Only position with these next five lines,

Similarly to the non-generation of your outer object

During dreams mind isn't generated as well.

Eyes, visual object and the mind⁵ generated by them

All three are also false

The three of the remaining ears etc. also aren't generated.

Mirror:

Chandrakirti: It follows that *similarly to the non-generation of your outer object, during dreams mind isn't generated inherently* - because during dreams *all three, the eyes, visual objects and the mind generated by them, are also false* and *the three, objects, faculty and*

¹ In the *Mirror* booklet this is given as Refuting the Metaphor.

² In the *Mirror* booklet this is given as Refuting the Metaphor of a Dream.

³ In the *Mirror* booklet this is given as The Dream Metaphor Doesn't Establish Consciousness to be Inherently Existing.

⁴ In the *Mirror* booklet this is given as It Doesn't Establish the Lack of Outer Existence

⁵ There is sometimes a little bit of confusion on how to translate the Tibetan word 'yid'. Quite often it is only with mental consciousness. However, it is actually synonymous with primary consciousness and mind. But because English is a word short for this distinction I have translated it simply as mind, because that's what it means.

consciousness, *of the remaining ears etc. also aren't generated.*

The previous verse that stated the Mind Only position ends with the line, 'If posited similarly here'. The 'if' acts as link to the five lines above, where Chandrakirti replies. Here Chandrakirti is turning the argument of the Mind Only around, and using dreams as an example for non-inherent existence. During dreams a mind isn't generated inherently. Why?

Mirror:

- because during dreams *all three, the eyes, visual objects, and the mind generated by them, are also false*

Of course it doesn't refer here to the actual eye but to the dream-eye's sense-power, the dream visual object, and the dream primary visual consciousness generated by them. All three are false. Why are they false? Because even though they appear to be the actual object etc., they aren't. The 'false' relates here to the discrepancy between appearance and existence. During dreams there is no actual eye and no actual visual object and therefore also no actual visual consciousness. Likewise, during dreams the trinity of the ear, nose etc. also aren't generated inherently.

The eyes of course refer to the eye sense-power, and then there are its objects, shape and colour, and then the mind, the primary visual consciousness. During dreams all three, eyes, object and mind, are false because there is this discrepancy between appearance and existence. The last line of this verse of the root text says that the three of the remaining ears and so forth also aren't generated inherently. 'The three' refers to the trinity of sense power, object and consciousness.

'And so forth' includes the sense powers of the nose, tongue, body and the mental sense power. That completes the whole six-fold trinity of the six objects, sense powers and consciousnesses.

Chandrakirti is saying that during dreams the six sets of three, the objects, sense power, and consciousness, are not generated inherently, and neither are they generated inherently while awake.

The **Mind Only** still try to make a distinction by saying that the three are false during dreams, but truly existing when we are awake. Then the **Prasangika** say, 'No, they do not exist truly during either dreams or while awake, they are always generated non-inherently'.

Actually there are five consciousnesses, each with their the faculties and their object. All the objects such as sound, colour, shape, taste, smells, and so forth, are contained there, and all exist non-inherently.

The **Mind Only** couldn't establish that they exist inherently during dreams and neither could they prove that they exist inherently when we are awake.

The Mind Only say that the consciousness exists inherently and lacks external objects. The **Prasangika** say exactly the reverse. They say the consciousness lacks inherent existence but has external objects and that the dream example cannot establish either of the two of the Mind Only positions. It cannot establish consciousness

existing inherently, and it cannot prove the lack of external existence.

The **Mind Only** say that the consciousness exists inherently but without external objects. We say that there are no external objects and in actuality the consciousness arises in dependence upon external objects. Since according to the Mind Only there is no external object, there is also no inherently existing object upon which it relies. Therefore the consciousness that is generated cannot exist inherently. Also something that exists inherently has to exist totally independently of anything else. So if a consciousness were to exist inherently, then it can't be generated in dependence upon causes and conditions. That means, for example, that if someone dreams of an elephant they would always have to dream of the elephant. There would be no causes and conditions for that dream to arise, and it would always have to be there. This is another way that one can use the dream example to refute inherent existence, which is also beneficial for one to understand. If the 'dream elephant' were to exist inherently then these types of faults would arise.

3.5.1.1.1.2.2.2.1.2.1.1.1.3. The Dream Example Shows all Phenomena to Exist Falsely⁶

The **Prasangika** say to the Mind Only, 'Not only does the dream example not show that consciousness exists truly, it actually shows that consciousness exists falsely.

*Like during dreams, phenomena are also false
Here, whilst awake. Mind doesn't exist,
Engaged objects don't exist and faculties also
Don't exist. Similar to being awake
Here all three exist whilst asleep.
When waking up all three are non-existent.
Waking up from the sleep of ignorance is similar.*

Phenomena are also false when one is awake, just as they are during dreams.

Mirror:

Take the subject '*mind, engaged objects, and faculties*'- they *don't exist* inherently - because like *during dreams, phenomena are also false here whilst awake.*

The **Mind Only** accept that the objects and faculties of dreams exist falsely. Then the **Prasangika** say, 'Then likewise when one is awake phenomena are also false, because they don't exist inherently'.

The meaning of 'false' here is that there is a discrepancy between appearance and existence. There is an appearance of true existence, and objects appear as if they exist truly, but in actuality they don't exist in that way. They actually exist non-truly.

All phenomena are false because they lack true existence, even though they appear as existing truly. Therefore the mind doesn't exist inherently, engaged objects such as sounds, forms, taste, and so forth don't exist inherently, and the sense faculties such as the six sense powers also don't exist inherently. As the root text says,

⁶ In the *Mirror* booklet this is given as It Shows All Phenomena Exist Deceptively.

*...Similar to being awake,
Here all three exist whilst asleep.*

So all three, mind, engaged objects, and faculties, exist when one is awake, and likewise all three exist to the perception of a person whilst asleep.

Mirror:

*all three, mind, engaged objects and faculties, exist when **being awake here** in this world, so likewise they also **exist** to be perception of a person **whilst asleep**. But **when** that person **wakes up all three are non-existent**.*

When the person wakes up all three, dream object, consciousness, and sense faculty have become non-existent. Likewise when one wakes up from the sleep of ignorance the objects and consciousnesses don't exist for the perception directly beholding suchness.

The **Mind Only** say that during dreams, when one is for example dreaming that one is seeing an elephant, there is no actual outer object. Also the eye-consciousness that is generated during the dream is not the actual eye-consciousness, and likewise the eye faculty, which one thinks that one has in a dream, is not the actual eye faculty.

The **Prasangika** say that we have all three, object, sense power, and consciousness, when we are ordinarily awake. Likewise during dreams we have also object, sense power, and consciousness, which appear to us while we are asleep. However, when one wakes up then the consciousness, object, and sense power, which appeared to one's perception while asleep, become non-existent.

While awake a person can understand that the elephant that the eye-consciousness saw a dream, the eye-consciousness that perceived the elephant, and the basis on which the eye-consciousness was generated, are all non-existent.

Likewise while one is still in the sleep of ignorance, then a truly existent object, truly existent sense power, and truly existent consciousness exist to the perception of the person, and when waking up from the sleep of ignorance those three are non-existent for the person who has woken up from the sleep of ignorance, and who is meditating non-dually on emptiness.

Why? Because conventional phenomena don't exist to the direct perception that directly realises emptiness. Of course conventional phenomena do exist for the consciousnesses that realise the world of multiplicity, but conventional phenomena don't exist for the consciousness that directly realises emptiness. So when one has woken up from the sleep of ignorance and is meditating directly on emptiness, then conventional phenomena don't exist, even though they existed truly when one was still in the sleep of ignorance.

The **Mind Only** use the dream example to show that first of all phenomena lack external objects, and also that that consciousness exists truly. The **Prasangika** say that actually the dream example shows exactly the opposite. First of all just because something is non-existent during dreams doesn't mean that it is non-existent at all, and secondly, just because something appears in a dream

doesn't mean that it necessarily exists as it is perceived. So just because something appears to a perception, that doesn't mean that that phenomena actually exists. It is no proof that something actually exists truly just because it appears as truly existent.

Actually the dream example shows that everything exists falsely by showing that everything exists non-truly, even though it appears as truly existent. During a dream we have the dream elephant, we have the consciousness that perceives that elephant, and we have the faculty upon which that elephant is generated. All of these exist for the person who is dreaming. However when one is awake all three are non-existent. Likewise while one is still within the sleep of ignorance, the outer objects, the faculties, and the consciousnesses appear as truly existent, but in actuality they lack true existence. This is because all three are non-existent for a person who has woken up from the sleep of ignorance.

The **Prasangika** also make a distinction here between the actual elephant and the dream elephant. They say that even though there is no form source in the dream there is what is called a source of phenomena. The form that appears during a dream is not a form source, or an external form, but it is what we call the source of phenomena. These are objects that are engaged only by mental consciousness and they are referred to as the form that is the source of phenomena.

- The object of the eye consciousness is referred to as the form source.
- The object of the ear consciousness is referred to as sound source.
- The object of the smell consciousness is referred to as the smell source.
- The object of the taste consciousness is referred to as the taste source, and
- The object of the like the tactile consciousness is referred to as the tactile source.
- The object of the mental objects that are primarily the objects of mental consciousness are categorised in this category called the source of phenomena.

Here there are certain types of form that are not engaged by the five sense consciousnesses, but which are engaged by the mental consciousness, and they are referred to as phenomena source. So we have these different types of forms, for example, the appearance of the elephant during a dream is said to be one type of form; we have the appearance of the actual elephant which is form, and also the form that is the phenomena source, which is the appearance of the elephant. So the appearance of an elephant during a dream is labelled as an elephant. What one thinks is an elephant is the appearance of an elephant during a dream. Also the appearance of falling hairs to the eye-consciousness is posited as form source, as is the appearance of the reflection in the mirror as the actual form.

Did you get that?

Does consciousness exist inherently and does it have external objects.

Students give a variety of answers.

The Mind Only say that consciousness exists inherently and doesn't have external objects. Do you concord with that?

Student: Disagree

If you concord with that then you are a Mind Only and if you disagree with that then you are a Madhyamika. So why do external objects exist? Do external objects exist, or not?

Student: Yes

Why?

Student: Contact with sense powers.

Its alright if you say 'because there is form that is not contained within a being's continuum'.

Of course one can say that external forms exist because they cause the consciousness, but then one can also say on that external form exists because form is not contained within a being's continuum.

Why do the Mind Only not accept external objects?

Student: Because they say they are of one nature with the mind.

Because they say that forms arise from karmic imprints on the universal mind foundation, and they are not a cause accumulation of external atoms.

Why does consciousness not exist inherently?

Student answer unclear

Why do the Mind Only say that consciousness exists inherently?

Student: Because we remember objects like in a dream

Not because you can remember the object, but because you can actually remember the consciousness, the object possessor. If you think, 'Oh, I remember this' then you remember the object. But you remember 'I saw' then you remember the object possessor - the eye.

In general the Mind Only say that consciousness exists inherently because the imputed meaning can be found at the time of analysis. Because an imputed meaning can be found at the time of analysis they say that the objects exist inherently, and that is related back to the self knower. Those tenets that posit a self knower say that the self knower is that which establishes the existence of consciousness. That's something we will get to later.

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Edited Version

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