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## Study Group - *Madhyamakavatanama*

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

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18 November 2003

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Please generate a virtuous motivation as usual.

Last time we reached the outline,

### 3.5.1.1.1.2.2.2.1.2.1.2.2. Refuting Again the Existence of Consciousness without Outer Object

which was divided into the presentation of the Mind Only view,

#### 3.5.1.1.1.2.2.2.1.2.1.2.2.1. Presentation of the view

and the refutation of that view.

#### 3.5.1.1.1.2.2.2.1.2.1.2.2.2. Its Refutation

We completed the first verse, which reads,

*Mental consciousness to which blue etc. appears  
Arises during dreams for one without eyes.*

*Why doesn't a blind person generate one here  
likewise*

*From the ripening of its seeds without the eye-  
sense power.*

Whilst asleep a person generates an intrinsically existing mental consciousness without external object, to which blue and so forth appears from the ripening of karmic imprints on the consciousness. If such an intrinsically existing consciousness lacking an external object is generated in such a way whilst asleep, then it should also be possible to generate such a consciousness from the ripening of karmic imprints in the continuum of an awake blind person.

The **Prasangika** say to the Mind Only that the generation of consciousness to which blue appears clearly should be possible for a blind person, because both the blind person and the dreaming person are the same in not having an eye-sense power, and in having karmic imprints that ripen. Here the **Mind Only** reply, that even though both are the same in not having an eye-sense power and imprints that can ripen, they are dissimilar in that the awake person lacks the condition for that karmic imprint to ripen, which is sleep.

The **Prasangika** say that if this consciousness to which blue appears clearly can arise while asleep, without an external object, and merely from the ripening of karmic imprints, then the same should also be possible for an awake blind person. The **Mind Only** then reply, 'That doesn't have to be the case because the blind person is lacking the condition for the ripening of that imprint, which is sleep'.

From there the root text goes into this debate,

*If the ripening of the sixth's potential, existing  
during dreams,*

*Becomes non-existent during waking as you  
said,*

*Why is it unsuitable to say the ripening of the  
sixth's potential*

*Is as non-existent during dreams as it is here?*

*Mirror:*

If you [the Mind Only] say it isn't the same - because *the ripening of the sixth's potential, existing during dreams, becomes non-existent during waking*, then *why is it unsuitable to say the ripening of the sixth's potential is as non-existent during dreams as it is here* during waking.

'It follows that it is suitable to say this - because basically you are not saying anything different from what you have said before. Even though you now say that the condition for the ripening of that potential is not present when one is awake, that's just mere semantics. Basically you are not saying anything different from what has already been said. Hence my point is still the same. So it is suitable to say that that the potential on the sixth consciousness should also ripen when one is awake'.

The **Mind Only** say that it is not necessary for that mental consciousness to ripen whilst one is awake, because the conditions for the ripening are absent. To which the **Prasangikas** say, 'That reasoning is pure semantics and it doesn't change anything in the main premise and therefore my point, that whilst awake that imprint should ripen, is still valid'.

To this the **Mind Only** say, 'No it is not pure semantics. Whilst one is awake the condition of sleep is missing. This conducive condition of sleep is necessary for the ripening of that potential'. The **Prasangika** continue to say to the Mind Only, 'What you say is pure semantics and doesn't change anything in the basic premise'.

*Mirror:*

It follows it is suitable to say that - because, *similarly to the non-existence of the eyes not being the cause* of the generation of consciousness to which outer meaning appears during waking, *sleep also isn't the cause* for the inherent existence of consciousness to which outer meaning appears *during dreams*.

What this is saying is that the Prasangika say to the Mind Only, 'What you are saying is pure semantics. Similar to the non-existence of the eyes not being its cause during dreams, sleep also isn't a cause'.

*Similarly to the eye's non-existence not being its  
cause*

*During dreams sleep also isn't a cause.*

Whilst awake, the non-existence of the eye-sense power in the continuum of a blind person is not the cause for the generation of that consciousness clearly apprehending blue. This is similar to sleep not being the condition for the generation of such a consciousness whilst dreaming. Why? Because that consciousness exists inherently, and as an inherently existent consciousness it doesn't have any causes and conditions.

The **Mind Only** say that while awake the conducive condition of sleep is absent, and that's why the mental consciousness in the continuum of a blind person doesn't ripen. Then the **Prasangika** say, 'Well, during dreams

sleep also isn't a condition for that consciousness to ripen, because an inherently existent consciousness doesn't have any cause.

The Mind Only say that inherently existing consciousness lacking an external object is generated from the ripening of karmic imprints alone. The Prasangika say that if it is an inherently existing consciousness, then it doesn't have any cause, so it cannot be generated from a ripening of any imprints. Sleep cannot therefore be the condition for such a consciousness.

The Prasangika say that the consciousness to which blue appears clearly comes about through the condition of the external object, which is generated in dependence upon causes and conditions. That refutes them existing inherently. So the crux of the whole debate is the significance of the object of negation.

Therefore, in brief,

*Accept that also in a dream the functionality of form and eyes, the false object possessors, are the causes of realisation, because false consciousness is generated from false imprints.*

According to the **Mind Only** the imprints are truly existent, while according to the **Prasangika** the imprints exist falsely, the object exists falsely, and also the consciousness that apprehends the object exists falsely. Therefore from the ripening of false imprints a false consciousness is generated, which apprehends a false object.

We have further discrepancies between the Mind Only and Prasangika in that the **Prasangika** assert the existence of form that belongs to the source of phenomena, which the **Mind Only** don't accept. During dreams there is no eye-consciousness, there is only the dream eye-consciousness. Similarly, during dreams there is a dream elephant but not a real one. The Mind Only say that there is no form during dreams. The Prasangika say that form exists and that it belongs to the category of the source of phenomena. I have already explained form belonging to the source of phenomena before I think.

*Whatever answers are posited by them, Because of seeing that the premises are the same, Refute this debate.*

The **Prasangika** say here that the original premises of the Mind Only such as an intrinsically existing consciousness lacking external object, and inherently existing other-powered phenomena are actually non-existent premises. The various reasons that the Mind Only bring forth in order to support those premises are in fact just mere premises in themselves. The Prasangika say that the reasons the Mind Only bring forth in order to support their original premises are not really reasons as such. They, too, are just more false premises, which can therefore also be refuted.

With respect to sense power, consciousness and object, the **Prasangika** say, 'Take the subjects 'sense power, consciousness and object' - they don't exist inherently - because they are the objects of valid cognition; for example, like the dream horse and elephant'. That is the syllogism that the Prasangika posit to refute the inherently existent trinity of object, consciousness, and

sense power, where the object could be blue, with the eye-sense power, and the eye-sense consciousness completing the trinity.

How does establishing something by a valid cognition prove that something lacks inherent existence? It is because the Prasangika accept a pervasion that if something is the object of valid cognition, then it cannot exist inherently. Then the syllogism uses the dream horse and elephant as a concordant example.

To this however the **Mind Only** give two syllogisms, one relating to the object possessor and the other to the object.

For the **object possessor**: Take the subject 'the consciousness whilst awake' - it follows it exists inherently without external object - because it is a consciousness; for example like the dream consciousness'.

For the Mind Only there is a pervasion that if something is a consciousness then it lacks any external object. Therefore they say that the reason that an awake consciousness lacks an external object is because it is a consciousness, and as a concordant example they give the sleep consciousness.

For the **object** the Mind Only say, 'Take 'the object such as blue, when one is awake,' - it follows there is a consciousness apprehending it that lacks an external object - because it is an object. Then as the concordant example they give the dream object.

Then the **Prasangika** say, 'Not only does your pervasion not apply, but also your concordant example is non-existent. For example, during dreams there is an external form that belongs to the type of phenomena source. The is no pervasion to the reason 'it is an object' because there are objects that exist externally.

For the **Mind Only**, everything hinges on the inherent existence of other-powered phenomena. For them other-powered phenomena have to exist inherently, because otherwise they cannot posit totally afflicted phenomena and completely purified phenomena. The **Prasangika** can posit both the totally afflicted type and the completely purified type of phenomena, even though they lack true and inherent existence, but for the Mind Only that is not possible.

Therefore the **Mind Only** say, 'Take the truth of the totally afflicted type and the truth of the completely purified type - it follows they exist inherently - because otherwise they wouldn't have any meaning. For them if other-powered phenomena don't exist inherently then they lose all identity. The **Prasangika** say, 'That's not really giving a reason to prove a thesis! All you are doing is positing another thesis to support the first one. You don't really give any proof'.

### **3.5.1.1.2.2.2.1.2.1.2.3. Showing that the Refutation of the Mind Only Tenet Isn't Contradictory to the Scriptures**

*Buddhas don't Teach that 'phenomena exist' at all.*

Scripture doesn't contradict the refutation of the Mind Only school by saying that in actuality the **Buddhas don't teach that phenomena exist inherently at all.**

One of the quotes used is this one from the *Journey to Lanka sutra*,

*The three worlds are merely labelled and don't exist,  
There's no object that exists out of its own nature.*

The three worlds exist as merely labelled, but that doesn't mean that they are not functioning phenomena, or not phenomena at all. Even though the Buddha taught true existence from time to time, in actuality true existence is a non-existent according to the Buddha's own view.

Here one has to make a distinction between what the Buddha taught - true existence - and what the Buddha actually believed, which is that true existence is a non-existent. For example in sutras like the *Elucidation of the Sutras*, the Buddha taught that other-powered phenomena and perfectly established phenomena exist truly, and mental fabrications lack true existence.

### **3.5.1.1.1.2.2.1.2.1.3. Showing that the Refutation Doesn't Negate Meditation on Impurity**

This outline deals with the **Mind Only** debate.

*Mirror:*

If consciousness without external object doesn't exist inherently than that would contradict the teaching about the perception by yogis of the surroundings filled with skeletons.

In the root verses only the answer is explicitly mentioned, and not the debate,

*Whatever perception by yogis of the surroundings  
As filled with skeletons from the teacher's oral  
instructions.*

*They see as well that there is a lack of generation  
of all three*

*Because it is shown as distorted mental  
engagement.*

*If, like the object of your sense consciousness,  
The mind of impurity as well,*

*Likewise, directing awareness to that object  
Another realises, that isn't false as well.*

*Possessing sense powers with floaters is the same  
As a preta's awareness of the water stream as pus.*

*Mirror:*

There is no contradiction *because whatever perception of their surrounding as filled with skeletons yogis have from their teachers oral instructions, they see as well that there is a lack of inherent generation of all three*, object, faculty and consciousness, regarding them.

### **Not in Accordance with the Scriptures**

As we said before, according to the Mind Only the perception of yogis that their surroundings are filled with skeletons would not come about if consciousness did not exist inherently.

In the first verse the **Prasangika** say that it is explained in the sutras that those yogis also perceive the trinity of consciousness, faculty, and object as lacking inherent existence, and that the concentration of the yogis is shown as an artificial distorted mental engagement. If the consciousness were to exist inherently, then also the object of the consciousness has to exist inherently, and that would make the consciousness an ultimate

consciousness. However the consciousness that meditates on the surroundings as being filled with skeletons is shown as an artificial distorted mental engagement. It is not distorted or artificial from the point of view of being a wrong consciousness, but it is distorted from the point of view of not being an ultimate consciousness.

If the object possessor exists inherently, then also the object has to exist inherently, and then the object possessor has become an ultimate consciousness. In such a case then, the consciousness meditating on impurity would become a consciousness meditating on emptiness. Here it is shown in the sutras as a distorted consciousness from the point of view of being of being a consciousness that doesn't engage emptiness.

Did you understand that? If the consciousness that meditates on impurity exists inherently, then also the object has to exist inherently, and therefore that concentration would become a concentration engaging suchness. Because that is not the case then this consciousness is referred to here as a distorted consciousness, because the consciousness meditating on impurity is not engaging emptiness.

The **Mind Only** say that one can only meditate on impurity if object, sense power, and consciousness exist inherently. Then the Mind Only say to the Prasangika, 'What you say is not the case because the object doesn't exist inherently and the object possessor doesn't exist inherently. If they were to exist inherently then they would become a consciousness meditating on emptiness'.

### **Contradicted by Logic**

The second refutation shows that the debate of the Mind Only is also contradicted by logic.

*If, like the object of your sense consciousness,  
The mind of impurity as well,  
Likewise, directing awareness to that object  
Another realises, that isn't false as well*

What this means is that if the impurity, the skeletons and so forth, perceived by the mind meditating on impurity exists inherently, then they should also be perceived by those who are not meditating on impurity at all, simply because of the inherent existence of it. For example, the show exists inherently then not only would the audience see it but everyone would have to perceive it.

If the concentration meditating on impurity existed inherently then it would be generated also in those who hadn't received any teaching on it, because it would be totally independent of causes and conditions, which means that everyone should perceive the environment as being filled with skeletons and so forth.

### **Different Perceptions**

Take the subject concentration - it follows that it doesn't engage a false distorted object - because it exists inherently.

*Mirror:*

Take the subject '*A preta's awareness of the water stream as pus and blood*' - it follows it doesn't become an example for the inherent existence of consciousness lacking external objects - because it *is the same* in being false *as* the consciousness

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*possessing sense powers with floaters* that sees falling hairs.

It is the same as the consciousness that perceives falling hairs where there are none, or the consciousness that perceives a mirage as water, and a reflection as form, and so forth.

One debate is about the different perceptions of a vessel of water to humans, gods, and pretas, who can perceive one object in different ways: one as with filled pus and blood, one as filled with nectar, and one with water. For example, fish or other sentient beings living in water perceive the water, which appears to us as something to drink, as their living space. The debate comes about because if we have a vessel filled with a liquid, then the liquid is perceived by the humans as water, by the pretas as pus and blood, and by the gods as nectar.

We can go into that in detail next time.

In Buddhism we say that this comes about through the different ripening karmas. However even without taking karma into consideration, we can see how different people have different perceptions of one object - one person can be perceived as a friend and an enemy by different parties. Also in western science there's a recognition of the different perceptions of the one object. So there are different perceptions that can come about.

Here you have to meditate properly on the lack of inherent existence. The **Mind Only** insist that there's this inherently existent consciousness lacking an external object, and without this inherent existent they can't posit any functionality. That is completely refuted by the **Prasangika**. The reasoning of the Prasangika is something that one should contemplate very carefully. Those who have studied using the greater philosophical treatises, will have a much purer and better understanding than those who haven't. I told you some time ago about the example of the geshe who, although he had an understanding of emptiness, did not have a very well-defined understanding.

Having a proper understanding of emptiness is very important, so that when one meditates on emptiness the non-affirming negation - the lack of the object of negation, inherent existence, or the imputed meaning - should appear to one. That will be very beneficial for lessening the afflictions. So you should make some effort to slowly, slowly get there.

What are the two truths and what is an example for each one of them.

*Student: Conventional and ultimate truth*

What are the definitions?

*Student: Conventional truth is the meaning found by a valid cognisor engaged in conventional analysis which becomes a valid cognisor engaged in conventional analysis.*

What is that valid cognisor engaged in conventional analysis? It is its main object possessor. And what is blue's lack of inherent existence? It is ultimate truth.

The valid cognition engaged in conventional analysis analyses nominal existence, and the valid cognisor engaged in ultimate analysis analyses the lack of inherent existence of the nominal world. So basically we talk about

the main object possessors of the two truths.

Then what is the mode of the object of negation according to Prasangika?

*Student: That which exists without being merely labelled.*

The mode of the object of negation according to Prasangika is merely labelled?

[student answer unclear]

Then according to the Svatantrika?

*Student: Existing from its own side through its own mode of abiding and not being posted by an uncontradicted awareness.*

In such a way by just keeping in mind a few things, the definition of the two truths, their examples, and so forth. Then slowly, slowly you widen out your understanding. Then you won't forget them and slowly, slowly discussing and debating in such a way your understanding increases. The two truths are always relevant.

We talk about the state of unification of the two truths. When we talk about the state of unification of Vajradhara we talk about the unification of method and wisdom sometimes, or the unification of the two truths. With the presentation of basis, path, result, the basis is the two truths, the path is method and wisdom and the effect are the two buddha bodies.

### **On the Value and Perils of Debate**

In Buxa one Gomang Rinpoche drank tea before it was offered. When it was pointed out to him that the tea offering had not been done he replied saying, 'I am quite capable of doing the tea offering by myself.' So if you are clever ... *(laughter)*

There are many stories on that line. There was a geshe, now passed away, who had the habit of using snuff. When he was in hospital he was told that it was unhealthy to use snuff. He quickly asked, 'Do you use chilli?' and on hearing the reply, 'Yes,' said, 'What's the difference? There's no fault if your mouth burns but there is a fault if your nose burns?' A good logical mind helps one.

One time there was an elderly woman and a monk. The woman wouldn't offer him any accommodation, saying, 'You debate and you will just argue all the time.' Eventually she invited him to stay and then discovered a louse on her head, which she gave to her daughter to take outside. The monk made a comment and was thrown out. If you debate and argue too much you won't have a place to stay.

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