
Study Group - *Madhyamakavataranama*

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

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You need to generate a good motivation.

One should remember that one has a very precious opportunity to accomplish one's purpose. One has the complete inner and outer conditions to accomplish a very great purpose. Having been able to accumulate all of those conducive conditions it is important that we don't waste them.

We have to think that when we die then we definitely have to go with our mind to a future life, leaving behind everything in this life.

You have to reflect on the positive potential of your mind and harmful potential of your mind; the positive potential benefits the mind and in such a way also benefits the person, while the harmful potential harms the mind and also harms the person. Since the person and the mind always have to go together one has to make use of the positive potential.

It is very important that one directs one's effort towards the attainment of happiness in the next life, and that one's activities are not focussed on achieving the happiness of this life. One needs to let go of the grasping for the happinesses of this life and direct one's efforts towards the attainment of happiness in future lives.

It is very important that one gives up the grasping for the happinesses of this life. By giving up the grasping for the happinesses of this life then naturally in the future those happinesses will come to one. While the more grasping at them there is in this life, the less one will have later. By giving up grasping at the happinesses of this life, grasping at material possessions, grasping at friends and relatives, grasping at one's body, the mind becomes very relaxed, clear, vivid and attentive. Of course we don't have that experience now because our mind is so occupied with external objects and with the material world. However, if we are able to let go of the external and material world then we can have that experience. So in order not to waste this opportunity that one has now, and in order not to let one's mind go to waste, it's important that one engages in study.

It is important one does not focus one's activities only on this life, but that one also makes preparation for the future. This means either taking care that one can again achieve a high rebirth in the next life as a human or as a god, or that one prepares for the attainment of liberation, or that one prepares for the attainment of enlightenment. It is important that one makes use of one's precious human life in such a way. One needs to be clear that it is necessary to do that; what one should do with one's life needs to vividly appear to one's mind. For that purpose it is also important to study.

If, for example, we look at our present situation there are very few people will still be here in 2050. Maybe one or two of those who are now here will still be here but otherwise it is very difficult. Also as one advances in age into one's forties and so forth, then it becomes more and more difficult, and the time of death comes closer and closer.

One is always pre-occupied with having a young body and a young mind and so forth, but as one advances in age one becomes sick more often and the body becomes weaker and so forth. However if one has studied and trained well in this life, then in the next life one will again have a young and strong body with all the necessary attributes. That maybe will make you happy, thinking you will receive again a fresh young body in the next life.

One needs to engage in the sequential practices of listening, contemplation, and meditation. The text *Introduction to the Middle Way* that we are going through is one of the most important and best texts on which to base those practices.

So one needs to generate a good motivation for the year.

3.5. The Way Suchness Is Explained

3.5.1. Establishing Emptiness Through Reason

3.5.1.1. Establishing the Selflessness of Phenomena with Logic

Out of the selflessness of person and the selflessness of phenomena the major topic that we studied last year was the presentation of establishing the selflessness of phenomena with logic.

3.5.1.1.2.2. Refuting the Mind Only School in Particular

We reached the point of the debate about the self-knower between the Mind Only and the Prasangika. The **Mind Only** assert that there is a self-knower, and that the self-knower is necessary to generate memory, and the **Prasangika** refute that idea, saying that asserting a self-knower is illogical. The Prasangika say that asserting a self-knower is like saying that a candle flame can illuminate itself or that a knife or sword can cut itself.

The **Mind Only** say that a self-knower is important to generate memory and so they assert that there are two parts to each consciousness - there is the part that knows the object and then there is the part that knows the mind itself, which is the self-knower.

This self-knower is not accepted by the **Prasangika** on the basis of not accepting inherent existence. The reason why the Prasangika do not accept a self-knower is because they don't accept inherent existence. We talked about that previously when we talked about the eight difficult features of the Prasangika system, which all are all based on the refutation of inherent existence. Chandrakirti says to the Mind Only that in order to generate memory there is no need to for an inherently existent self-knower, and that memory can still be generated without an inherently existing self-knower.

3.5.1.1.2.2.2.1.2.2. How Memory Is Generated Even Without a Self-Knower

How Memory is Generated According to According to Introduction to the Middle Way¹

The root text says:

*Therefore, from the experience of the object.
For me this memory doesn't exist as other.
Therefore one remembers, thinking 'I saw'.
This is also the worldly way.*

Here Chandrakirti explains that the memory of the object-possessor is generated in dependence upon the memory of the object, because the object and the object possessor exist dependent on each other. Chandrakirti is not saying that we have the situation where we have an inherently different memory being generated from an inherently different object. This is not what is being said. It is all on the basis that it is unfindable at the time of analysis.

In the **Prasangika** system the memory of the object possessor is generated through the memory of the object. Remembering the object, for example, 'That is the blue that I saw', induces the memory, 'I saw blue'. So by remembering the object one then remembers the object possessor.

The memory of the object inducing the memory of the object possessor is something that doesn't happen in the **Mind Only** system, because in that system the memory of the object can't induce the memory of the object possessor. According to the Mind Only system there is this self-knower that is necessary in order to generate memory. The self-knower has different features; it is an awareness that is directed only inwards and is solitary, meaning it is an awareness that is not concomitant with another mind or mental factor.

So much for the presentation of the way memory is generated according to the *Introduction to the Middle Way*.

How Memory is Generated According to Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life

There is also the way the memory is generated according to the *Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, a very special text that is taken very seriously.

First the **Mind Only** present a debate saying that if the self-knower doesn't exist then it is becomes impossible to establish the existence of the consciousness. They argue, 'Because you say that there is no self-knower you don't have possibility of actually establishing the existence of the consciousness. If the consciousness is established by a knower apart from the known consciousness then it becomes difficult, because then you would need limitless instances of experience in order to establish the initial consciousness.'

Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life explains how memory is generated if there is no self-knower, with the help of an example^{2?} The eye-consciousness apprehending blue is established relative to blue, and that is the way the eye-consciousness apprehending blue is established. There is no need for a non-dual self-

knower to establish the eye-consciousness apprehending blue.

After initially seeing blue, subsequently the memory of blue and the memory of the awareness of blue are generated. At that time by remembering, 'Previously I saw blue', the memory of the object possessor seeing blue is generated. There is no way of remembering the eye-consciousness apprehending blue without relying upon the memory of blue. Just remembering the eye-consciousness apprehending blue alone without remembering blue is not possible. What you have to keep in mind is that without the depending upon the memory of blue, the memory of the eye-consciousness awareness apprehending blue is not generated.

The *Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* says memory of the object-possessor is generated through the memory of another experience and uses an example to explain how the memory of the object-possessor is generated. It gives the example of a prairie-dog that is bitten by a rat with poisonous teeth while hibernating in winter. At the time of being bitten there is awareness of being bitten, of the pain, but it is not aware that it is infected with poison due to fogginess. When it comes out of hibernation it starts to feel the effects of the poison, and then by remembering that it has been bitten it also remembers that at that time it has been infected by poison. So while it is in hibernation there is awareness of the pain but it doesn't know it has been infected by a poison. After having come out of hibernation and starting to feel the effects of the poison it then remembers, 'At that time when I was bitten I was infected by the poison'.

If we relate the example to the meaning:

- The animal being bitten in hibernation and being aware of the pain is when the eye-consciousness apprehending blue is experiencing blue.
- Even though the poison has entered its body the prairie-dog is not aware of the entry of the poison due to fogginess, which is like being unaware of the eye-consciousness apprehending blue.
- The subsequent memory of having been infected with the poison through remembering being bitten is the example for remembering the object possessor of blue through the memory of blue.

Remembering that it was poisoned through remembering that it was bitten is the example for the memory of the object possessor of blue being generated through the memory of blue.

Did you understand that? Did you understand why there is no self-knower in the Prasangika system?

Even though there was no awareness of having been poisoned at the time of being bitten, later through remembering having been bitten the animal also remembers being poisoned. This is similar to there being an awareness of blue by the object possessor at the time of perceiving blue, which equals the awareness of the pain of being bitten, but at that time there is no self-knower that experiences the awareness of blue. So the awareness of blue is there but there is no self-knower that experiences that awareness of blue. This is like the poison

¹ The numbered headings are those used in *Mirror Clearly Reflecting the Meaning of the 'Madhyamakavatara'*. The headings without numbers have been introduced to assist the reader.

² *Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, Ch. 9, v. 23.

having entered the body but there not being any awareness of the poison.

Later, even though there was no awareness of the poison at the time of being poisoned, the animal feels the effects of the poison, and thinks back and remembers being bitten. Then it also remembers that it was poisoned at that time. That is similar to subsequently generating a memory of the object possessor through the memory of blue, even though there was no self-knower that experienced the awareness of blue at the time of apprehending blue.

Before Lama Tsong Khapa's time this way of generating memory as explained in the *Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* was sometimes not recognised. Lama Tsong Khapa validated this explanation saying that it is an accurate way of generating memory.

To go through it again, initially we have the awareness of blue that is the object possessor, and that awareness of blue is experiencing blue. It is directly perceiving and experiencing blue. However at that time, even though there is an experience of blue by the object possessor, by the awareness directly perceiving blue, there is no experience of the object possessor itself. So there's an experience of blue but there's no experience of the experience of blue. In the example the animal being bitten and being poisoned has an awareness only of the pain of being bitten, but has no awareness of being infected by poison.

Even though there is no awareness of being infected by poison at the time of being bitten, when, on hearing thunder, the animal subsequently comes out of hibernation it remembers being infected by poison while being in hibernation, even though there was no awareness of being infected with the poison at the time when it was actually being bitten. So it generates a memory of something it didn't have an awareness of at the time when it was happening.

If we relate that to the time of the direct perception of blue, this direct awareness of blue experiences blue, so we have an experience of blue, but there is no experience of the awareness of blue itself, similarly to having an experience of the pain, but no experience of being poisoned. Then subsequently through the memory of blue the memory of the awareness of blue, of the experience of blue, is also generated, without having actually an experience of the awareness of blue at the time when blue was being perceived.

So how did that go down?

Student question: Are you saying that the experience of blue is experienced, but there is no experience there. Is that what you are saying?

What Geshe-la is saying is that you have the experience of blue which is the direct awareness of blue, but there is no experience of the experience, so there is nothing that experiences the experience.

Student: Yes, that's what I meant.

It is similar for example to be being bitten by a dog. At the time of being bitten we only experience the actual pain of the bite. If for example one was infected when one

was bitten, because the teeth were dirty, then subsequently when one feels the effects of the infection one remembers, 'Oh actually I was infected at the time when that dog bit me - that was when I was infected'. It is similar when the eye-consciousness directly apprehends blue. Even though there is no self-knower that experiences that 'I'-consciousness, by just by remembering the object blue, then the memory of the eye-consciousness apprehending blue is subsequently generated.

Student question: There was point of clarification from a student, which was inaudible.

There is the sequence where first you generate a direct perception and then subsequently you generate the different conceptual thoughts that deal with what you have directly perceived. Here you generate a memory of something that you hadn't had an awareness of before. So you generate a memory of the eye-consciousness apprehending blue, even though you didn't originally have an awareness of the eye-consciousness apprehending blue at the time. This is similar to generating a memory of being infected by poison, even though you have no awareness of being infected by poison at the time of being infected.

Summary of the Comparison of Mind Only and Prasangika Systems Concerning Memory of the Object Possessor

The **Mind Only** say that the memory is generated because at the time of the eye-consciousness apprehending blue there is this self-knower that experiences that eye-consciousness. Then because of having had the experience of that eye-consciousness apprehending blue at that time, one can later remember that eye-consciousness. They don't say that the eye-consciousness is remembered because one remembers the object. So the Mind Only say that if one hasn't experienced something first then one can't remember it subsequently.

While the **Prasangika** say that one doesn't have to have an actual experience at that time in order to subsequently remember it. In the Prasangika system one remembers the object possessor through remembering the object, and it is not necessary to have had an experience of the object possessor first in order to then subsequently remember the object possessor. The object possessor is remembered through the memory of the object. But for the Mind Only that is not the case.

This leads up to another debate between the Mind Only and the Prasangika. The Mind Only posit the self-knower as that which establishes inherently existing consciousness. They say that the way one can know that there is an intrinsically existing consciousness is because of the self-knower. 'So', they say, 'If you Prasangika don't accept a self-knower then how can you posit a consciousness in the first place?'

The Mind Only say to the Prasangika, 'You don't accept a self-knower, you don't accept establishment through a different knower. So how is this consciousness established?' Then the Prasangika explain how direct perception is established, how inferential cognition is

established, and then also how other categories of consciousness are established. We will go into that the next time.

Think about these two different ways of looking at it: one remembering, 'I saw blue', where the emphasis is on the blue that I saw; and then remembering that it was me that saw blue, 'I saw blue'. So those two memories are related to each other - they exist relative to each other. We have this situation where we remember different objects, and then through the memory of those objects we also remember the object possessor. For example we remember that it was us who saw those objects. Through the memory of the object then memory of the object possessor is induced.

For the **Mind Only**, however in order for the object possessor to be remembered it needs to have this self-knower that generates an experience of the object possessor at the time, and then through that experience one subsequently can remember the object possessor.

For the **Prasangika**, because phenomena exist in dependence upon each other and because phenomena exist relative to each other, this system of remembering the object possessors through the remembrance of the object works.

Student questions: Inaudible.

At the time of the eye-consciousness apprehending blue there is no self-knower that experiences the eye-consciousness apprehending blue. For example you have the eye-consciousness apprehending blue and concomitant with it there is a mental factor of feeling. That mental factor of feeling also experiences itself without necessarily taking itself as its focal-object. In general we say that if there's an experience of something, that experience needs to take that which is experienced as its focal-object. However when, for example, the concomitant mental factor of feeling is experiencing itself then it doesn't take itself as its focal-object.

There is also for example the debate that since omniscient consciousness realises everything, it realises everything directly, so does it experience suffering since it realises suffering directly. But that is also of course not the case. Enlightened consciousness experiences itself. Why does enlightened consciousness experience itself? Because it arises in the aspect of enlightened consciousness. The eye-consciousness apprehending blue doesn't experience itself because it doesn't arise in the aspect of the eye-consciousness apprehending blue. Rather it arises in the aspect of blue. The mental factor of feeling that is concomitant with the primary eye-consciousness experiences itself but it is not focussed on itself, as it is focussed on blue. So the mental factor of feeling that is concomitant with the primary eye-consciousness also arises in the aspect of blue, it doesn't arise in the aspect of itself, it is focussed on blue and but it still experiences itself.

Anyway you know the debate. The **Mind Only** say that without having had a primary initial experience of the object possessor by this self-knower one can't have a subsequent memory of that object possessor, while the **Prasangika** say that without having had an initial

experience of the object possessor by a self-knower one can still have a subsequent memory of the object possessor.

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