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## Study Group - *Madhyamakavataranama*

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

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Generate a virtuous motivation thinking, 'I have to attain enlightenment to accomplish the welfare of all sentient beings. To do so I have to practice the profound Mahayana Dharma, and in order to do that I am going listen to this profound Dharma.

### 3.5.1.1.1.2.2.2.1.2.2. How Memory Is Generated Even Without a Self-Knower (cont.)

We have reached the point where Chandrakirti discusses with the Mind Only the existence or the non-existence of inherently existent other-powered phenomena, and how those other-powered phenomena are established. The **Mind Only** posit the other-powered phenomenon of an eye-consciousness apprehending blue, and they say this is an other-powered phenomenon that exists inherently. That inherently existing other-powered phenomenon of an eye-consciousness apprehending blue is established through the self-knower of that eye-consciousness apprehending blue. The Mind Only say that without such a self-knower the subsequent generation of memory of such an eye-consciousness would be impossible.

This is then refuted by **Chandrakirti**. *Illumination*<sup>1</sup> first sets out the way memory is generated without a self-knower according to *Introduction to the Middle Way*, and then secondly it shows how memory is generated without a self-knower according to *Introduction to the Bodhisattvas' Way of Life*. That's what we have done.

Then the **Mind Only** reply to the Prasangika, 'Well according to you it becomes very difficult to establish the existence of valid cognition - be it a direct valid cognition or inferential valid cognition. On the one hand you don't accept a self-knower that can establish the existence of a valid cognition, and on the other hand valid cognition can't be established by a other-knower, because then one would have the fault of needing limitless other-knowers in order to establish the existence of one valid cognition. Therefore according to you it becomes very difficult to establish the existence of valid cognition'.

### Establishing the Existence of Direct Cognition

Then we have the **Prasangikas'** reply, which first examines the way one establishes the existence of direct cognition, and then how one establishes the existence of inferential cognition. This debate is not in the root text.

In this debate between Chandrakirti and the Mind Only we can't of course say who is enlightened and who is not, but according to conventional appearance one has a

higher view than the other. When we read these debates we should also use them as an occasion to think about what it really means when we talk about consciousness.

What is the meaning of consciousness? To elaborate this further, consciousness is divided into mind and mental factors, and there is also the division of valid cognizers into non-conceptual direct valid cognizers, and inferential valid cognizers. We went already through this a little bit when I attempted to teach some Awareness and Knowing<sup>2</sup>.

It is a very valuable to reflect upon those different divisions of consciousness because that helps us to identify these different divisions of consciousness within our own mind. The reason why we now have difficulty in identifying those different divisions of consciousness is because we haven't made the effort to study and identify them. In general we have a consciousness, then we have mind and the mental factors. Mind is a primary consciousness, and we have six types of primary consciousness in one system, and in the other system we have eight types of primary consciousness. Without going into them in detail, within the mental factors we have the division into fifty-one mental factors where there are the five ever-present mental factors, the five ascertaining mental factors, the eleven virtuous mental factors, the six delusions, the twenty secondary delusions, and the four changeable mental factors. It is very good to know all these divisions.

When we read through these debates about the existence or non-existence of a self-knower then it will probably happen that one also develops an opinion about whether there is in fact a self-knower, or whether there is no self-knower. That is a point that one should arrive at. Through thinking about the topic and developing one's own point of view with reasons one could assert that there is a self-knower, or if one tends to the non-existence of a self-knower, one would assert the non-existence of self-knower. Through reading these debates and thinking about them, one should develop one's own point of view in one direction or the other. That is something that is quite likely to happen.

We have here the situation where the **Mind Only** posit this question to the Prasangika saying, 'Well then, how is the existence of consciousness established according to you, since you don't accept a self-knower and it is not possible to be established through a other-knower. Then you have the fault that the existence of consciousness can't actually be established'. This point of the Prasangika that the memory of the object possessor can be established through the memory of the object is a very fine point to grasp and is one of the eight difficult points of the Prasangika. 'Therefore', Lama Tsong Khapa says, 'I will explain it in great detail'.

If we look at the **lower tenets** such as the Vaibashika or the Sautrantika then we find that they say that the existence of the object can be established through a valid cognition. However, they say, the valid cognition can't be established through the object, and in order to

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<sup>1</sup> *Illumination of the Thought, An Extensive Explanation of Chandrakirti's Entering the Middle Way*, by Lama Tsong Khapa.

<sup>2</sup> Geshe-la taught this in October 2001. The text used was *Mind in Tibetan Buddhism*. See the supplement for a summary of definitions.

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establish the valid cognition one needs the self-knower. The position that the object possessor can be established through the object is one of the fine points of the **Prasangika** system, which comes about through the dependent arising that exists through the interdependent relationship between the object and the object possessor.

The **Mind Only** say to the Prasangika, 'Since the eye-consciousness apprehending blue, the apprehension of blue, lacks a self-knower it lacks what is called a self-experience, and it is also not established through another experience or through an other-knower. Then how is the existence of this apprehension of blue established?'

The **Prasangika** don't accept the self-knower, and they also don't accept what is termed 'other-knower'. Other-knower doesn't necessarily mean just a consciousness that is different, because enlightened consciousness knows enlightened consciousness. However, just because enlightened consciousness is known by enlightened consciousness, that doesn't mean that it is known by a self-knower or by an other-knower. Similarly, when we talked about refuting generation from other, we said that generation from other in this context is a very particular term that refers to a very particular thing. Just because something is generated from another cause doesn't mean that it is generated from other. Similarly here, just because something is known by another mind that doesn't mean that it is established by an other-knower.

### Countering the Realists' Objections

**Lama Tsong Khapa** says:

*If I explain the way of remembering the object and the object possessor with an example then you will be able to understand it very easily.*

Lama Tsong Khapa says that since one remembers the object possessor when one remembers the object, there is no need to establish the object possessor in any other way.

Through the mere memory of the object then one also remembers the object possessor, therefore apart from that there is no need for a memory of the object possessor. If one relates it to an object possessor such as the apprehension of blue, then through the mere realisation of the object blue that which realises blue is established.

Hence apart from the realisation of blue no other mode for the realisation of that which understands blue is necessary. One has the mode of the way blue is realised, so there is no other specific way needed in order to realise that which understands blue, apart from the way blue is realised.

The point that is being made here is that the eye-consciousness apprehending blue realises itself, so it has a valid cognition of itself. So the eye-consciousness that realises blue, the apprehension of blue, establishes blue. Here 'establish' means to realise. So the apprehension of blue establishes blue, meaning it realises blue. Through this that which comprehends blue is also established, meaning that it is also realised. The point that is being made here is that the eye-consciousness apprehending blue, realises itself. This is Lama Tsong Khapa's view.

There is a slightly different interpretation in *Dose of*

*Emptiness* by **Khedrup Je**, who was one of Lama Tsong Khapa's spiritual sons. Khedrup Je doesn't accept that the apprehension of blue realises itself. Why? Because he says that if the eye-consciousness apprehending blue were to realise itself then it would become a self-experience - it would become a self-knower. First of all he says the eye-consciousness apprehending blue can't realise itself implicitly. It also doesn't realise itself directly. That is because if it were to realise itself directly in an explicit way it would mean that it would have to arise in the aspect of the eye-consciousness apprehending blue. So it would have to have to arise in its own aspect. Both are impossible and that's why he doesn't accept that the eye-consciousness apprehending blue realises itself.

However in **Lama Tsong Khapa's** system the eye-consciousness apprehending blue realises itself. That's why when blue is established, meaning being realised, the eye-consciousness apprehending blue, that which understands blue, is also established, meaning it is realised. The significance is that this eye-consciousness apprehending blue realises itself i.e. it understands itself.

You have to understand very clearly the difference in position between the Mind Only and the Prasangika. The **Mind Only** say that the apprehension of blue, the eye-consciousness apprehending blue, is established independently of its object. It is realised by its self-knower that is non-dual with regard to that eye-consciousness. However it is impossible for such a self-knower to take blue as its object, so the only object which the self-knower apprehends non-dually is the apprehender itself - the eye-consciousness apprehending blue. The eye-consciousness apprehending blue is established or realised completely independently, and unrelated to the object self-knower.

In the **Prasangika** system this happens without a self-knower and through the realisation of the object. Through realising the object the object possessor is also automatically realised.

### How Is Memory of the Object Possessor Actually Generated?

Memory of the object possessor happens by remembering the object. The object possessor is remembered through remembering the object. So by remembering, 'Previously, at such a time, I saw blue', with the emphasis being on blue, or 'It was blue that I saw', then one also remembers the eye-consciousness that apprehended that blue.

Therefore, here there is no way of realising the apprehension of blue without remembering blue itself. So the memory of eye-consciousness apprehending blue cannot be generated without the memory of the object blue.

Before we go on with a quote from *Clear Words*, did you digest that a little bit? Did you generate some understanding of what is going on?

If you relate it to a situation where, for example, you remember, 'Oh previously I saw that person', then when we generate the memory, 'Oh I saw that person at such and such a time', we don't only generate a memory of the person, but we also generate a memory of ourselves

having seen the person at that time.

In Tibetan there are two ways of saying 'I remember seeing this'. In one the emphasis is on the object, and in the other, when you talk about the memory of the object possessor, the sequence of words is different. But in English whether we refer to the blue or to ourselves, we say 'I saw blue', and the emphasis could be referring to the blue, and it could also be referring to ourselves. In English when we refer to our memories one needs both the object and the object possessor, and we don't have different ways of expressing it. Of course we could also say, 'Oh it was blue that I remembered', but that's not the way we normally think. So maybe it's a little bit easier for us to understand the point that through the memory of the object one also remembers the object possessor.

In fact we can't remember the object possessor without also remembering the object and it is very difficult to separate thinking that one saw something without also remembering what one saw. So you can see that the memory of the object is tied to the memory of the object possessor, and vice versa. One can't have a memory of the object possessor without having a memory of the object, and that is why the *Prasangika* don't accept a self-knower. According to systems that accept a self-knower, it is possible to remember the object possessor without remembering the object. If you look at it in this way then you will probably also tend more to the position that there is no self-knower.

Now we come to a quote from *Clear Words* by Chandrakirti. This text is a commentary on *Root Wisdom* by Nagarjuna, so it is a very important text.

It says there that:

The number of valid cognitions is determined through the object that is being understood.

In the **lower tenets** the objects are established by valid cognition. However the reverse does not apply. The valid cognition is not established through the object.

Whereas, according to **Chandrakirti**, the valid cognition is established through the object, and the number of valid cognitions is determined by the number of objects that exist.

The valid cognition that understands manifest phenomena is a direct valid cognition, and the valid cognition that understands hidden phenomena is an inferential valid cognition. The number of valid cognitions, direct and inferential, is determined by the number of objects. The valid cognition that it takes as its object the manifest phenomena is direct valid cognition, and the valid cognition that it takes as its object hidden phenomena is an inferential valid cognition.

When a valid cognition arises in the aspect of an object then that is enough to establish the existence of the object. The source for the point of view that the valid cognisor is established through the object is Nagarjuna who said,

The valid cognisor is established from the object. Should a valid cognisor be established independently from the object then one would have the case that an effect could arise without cause.

The valid cognisor is really generated in dependence on the object. Should a valid cognisor be generated out of itself independently from the object then one would arrive at the fallacy that an effect could also arise independently from a cause.

If the eye-consciousness apprehending blue were to be established independently from its object blue, then it would have to be established in a non-dual manner. As we said before, if the eye-consciousness apprehending blue is established independently of its object blue, then that can only happen through the non-dual self-knower that establishes that eye-consciousness apprehending blue. That is one fault. It then follows that the eye-consciousness apprehending blue would also be established independently of its object blue. Why? Because its own existence is established by a self-knower independently of the object blue.

So you can understand the point that the object possessor is established in relation to the object, and that the object possessor cannot be established independently from the object. You can see here that the existence of direct valid cognition and inferential valid cognition is established through the realisation of the object.

Then the **Mind Only** say, 'Well here at least we have two divisions of valid cognition. So it might be feasible to say, Oh, a valid cognition realises itself, so both a direct valid cognition as well as an inferential valid cognition can be established through the memory of the object. It realises itself because they are valid cognition'.

### **The Case of Distorted Object Possessors**

However then they go onto another subject and say, 'What happens to your theory when we talk about distorted object possessors, such as the eye-consciousness that apprehends a white snow mountain as blue, or the grasping at sound as being permanent'? The **Mind Only** say, 'Take the subject "distorted consciousnesses" - it follows that there's nothing that establishes their existence - because on one hand they don't realise themselves implicitly upon realising the object, because they are not cognisors. On the other hand you don't accept that they are realised by a self-knower, so that doesn't leave any other possibility. Therefore there's really no knower that establishes the existence of distorted consciousnesses'.

The **Prasangikas** answer is that there is no problem. They say that non-conceptual distorted awarenesses that arise in dependence upon adventitious misleading causes such as faults in the eye sense-power and so forth, e.g. the eye-consciousness apprehending the white snow mountain as blue and so forth, and the different types of distorted conceptual consciousnesses e.g. the grasping at permanent sound and so forth, establish themselves implicitly upon establishing their object of comprehension directly.

Do you accept that? Do you accept that upon realising the object of comprehension explicitly then they realise themselves implicitly.

Here the point is that if it is a consciousness then there is a pervasion that it is a valid cognisor with regard to the appearance appearing to it. The appearance that appears

to the individual consciousnesses is always a manifest phenomenon. By being a valid cognisor of the appearance, then one also implicitly cognises the consciousness that realises the appearance. So through realising the appearance then the realiser of the appearance is also established.

In the example of the distorted eye-consciousness to which the falling hairs appear, the eye-consciousness cognises the appearance of the falling hairs, and through that cognition of the appearance of the falling hairs it also cognises itself.

Here we arrive at the point that if it is consciousness then there is a pervasion that it is a valid cognisor with regard to the appearance that appears to it. However that doesn't mean that this consciousness is a valid cognisor. Here then there is a fine distinction. If the consciousness is a valid cognition with regard to the appearance appearing to it, there is no pervasion that it is a valid cognition. For something to be a valid cognition it has to be a valid cognition with regard to its primary object. It has something to do with the way the primary object is apprehended.

Here one is only talking about the understanding of the appearance. For example the grasping at sound as permanent is a distorted conceptual consciousness. To that grasping there is the appearance of sound as permanent - sound appears as permanent to the grasping at sound as permanent. That appearance of the sound as permanent is understood by that grasping. Through understanding that appearance of sound as permanent, then that consciousness also understands itself. That however doesn't mean that it is a valid cognisor. It is still a distorted consciousness because it is mistaken with regard to the primary object.

The position is that if it is a consciousness then there is a pervasion that it directly realises the appearance that appears to it. If we relate it to the example of the grasping at sound as permanent, there is the appearance of sound as permanent to that grasping. That appearance of sound as permanent is a manifest phenomenon that is directly realised by that grasping. Through directly realising that appearance of permanent sound, then implicitly it realises itself. So the grasping at permanent sound directly realises the appearance of permanent sound, and through that then it implicitly realises itself. However it is still a distorted consciousness, because it is mistaken with regard to the primary object.

This is similar to self-grasping. If we are grasping at the self of person there is the appearance of self of person. Self of person doesn't exist, however there's the appearance of a self of person to the self-grasping. That self-grasping realises that appearance of the self of person directly or explicitly, and then it implicitly realises itself. So that appearance of the self of person is a manifest phenomenon that is understood directly or explicitly, by the self-grasping, and then implicitly the self-grasping understands itself. However that doesn't mean that self-grasping is a valid cognition. Just being a valid cognisor with regard to the appearance doesn't make that mind a valid cognisor. The definition of a valid cognisor includes being incontrovertible with

regard to its primary object.

### Defining Valid Cognition

The Sanskrit term *pramana* refers to valid cognition. Sometimes it is translated as prime cognisor, and sometimes as valid cognisor. The difference comes through the different interpretations of the word *pramana*. The **lower tenets** interpret it as meaning new or fresh. For them the valid cognisor is always a primary cognisor, only referring to the first instant. Here in the **Prasangika** system it is interpreted as a clear valid cognition. For them the definition of a valid cognisor is being incontrovertible with regard to its primary object. It doesn't have to be a new incontrovertible knower. Because of their different interpretations of the word *pramana*, the lower tenets define a valid cognisor as a newly incontrovertible knower while according to the Prasangika a valid cognisor is merely an incontrovertible knower.

If you relate this to an example, both the first and second moment of the eye-consciousness apprehending blue are incontrovertible, however obviously only the first moment is new, and the second moment is not new any more. So according to the **lower tenets** only the first moment is what is translated as prime cognisor and the second moment is what is termed as subsequent cognisor. The first moment is a newly incontrovertible knower and then the second moment is a knower that realises an object that has already been realised by a previous consciousness. But according to the **Prasangika** there is no need to make this distinction because their definition of a valid cognisor is merely being an incontrovertible knower. Since both the first moment as well as the second moment of the eye-consciousness apprehending blue are incontrovertible knowers, they are both valid cognisors.

In this way we conclude the outline How Memory Is Generated Even Without A Self-Knower, which relates to this verse from the root text:

*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 conventional (worldly) way.*

### 3.5.1.1.1.2.2.2.1.3. Refuting Self-Knowers With Other Reasoning

The next we come to the outline refuting self-knowers with other reasoning. This relevant verse from the root text is:

*Consequently, if self-knowers are non-existent,  
What apprehends your other-powered phenomenon?  
Since agent, action and activity aren't one,  
This itself is unsuitable to apprehend that.*

Here then the reasoning that agent, action, and activity would become one if there were self-knower is used. But we can stop here for tonight.

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*Edited Version*

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