

Existence of the External World: Idealistic Perspective

in *Lankāvatāra Sūtra*

Kattakaduwe Chandawimala Thera

Department of Buddhist Philosophy, Buddhist and Pali University of Sri Lanka

revchandawimala@gmail.com

Idealism is a philosophical approach that conceptualizes reality or reality as we can know it, as fundamentally mental, mentally constructed, or otherwise immaterial. The term "Idealism" is defined as "the belief that our ideas are the only things that are and that we can know about". *Yogācāra* tradition was developed based on the theory of "consciousness only" (*viñaptimātratā*) and to a greater extent on phenomenological analyses of personal experience.

Lankāvatāra Sūtra is included in the category of *Vaipulya* (sacred) sūtra. There are nine basic Sūtras in Mahayana Buddhism called *navadharmā* and *Lankāvatāra Sūtra* is one of them which explains the theory of *Viññāṇavāda*. The listener of this sutra is Mahāmate Bodhisattva. It was with the influence of the teachings of this sutra that *Yogācāra* tradition and its fundamental teachings were developed in Mahayana tradition.

In the second chapter of this sūtra the theory of cause and effect is divided into two aspects as Interior and Exterior. In that context exterior cause and effect theory is explained as follows.

Lump of clay, a stick, a potter's wheel, a thread, water, a worker, his effort and all together form the existence of a jar. The jar means one of the things in the external world. In this sūtra not only the jar but also a piece of cloth, a sprout is also explained by using exterior cause and effect theory. The conclusion of this paper is to show that the *Yogācāra Viññāṇavāda* is not mere idealism. The external world exists in accordance with the theory of exterior causality albeit this tradition refuses the existence of the external world.

Key words: *Yogācāra Viññāṇavāda, Lankāvatāra Sūtra, Existence, External World*