
Study Group - *Madhyamakavataraṇama*

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8 July 2003

You should generate a virtuous motivation for listening to the teachings thinking, 'I have to become enlightened for the benefit of all sentient beings, and in order to be able accomplish that I'm now going to listen to this profound teaching. Then I'm going to put it into practice as much as possible.'

3.5.1.1.1.2.2.1.2.1.2.1. General presentation of the two truths (cont)

We have reached that point in the refutation of generation from other where the Realists say that the refutation of generation from other by the Prasangikas actually contradicts ordinary worldly perception. This the Prasangika refute with a presentation of the two truths. Here the worldly view is related to the view of a person who hasn't realised emptiness.

We said that in general there is no such thing as a division of conventional truth into accurate conventional truth and distorted conventional truth, but that in dependence upon worldly perception, conventional truth is divided into accurate and distorted. There is a division into accurate objects and distorted objects according to worldly perception, and accurate object possessors and distorted object possessors according to worldly perception.

We said that whether or not an object possessor is accurate in dependence upon worldly perception depends upon whether or not that worldly perception is tainted by adventitious misleading causes. If the worldly perception is tainted by adventitious misleading causes then the object it perceives is distorted, and the object possessor is also distorted.

So there are certain objects that can be contradicted by worldly beings and there are certain objects that cannot be contradicted by worldly beings. Here again a worldly being refers to a person who hasn't realised emptiness. When we talk about being contradicted by worldly perception it refers to the perception of a person who hasn't realised emptiness.

For example, worldly perception can understand that even though the illusory horse and elephant appear as a horse and elephant they don't actually exist in that manner. So even though the illusory horse and elephant appear to the mistaken perception as a true horse and true elephant, worldly perception can understand that there is actually a discrepancy here between the appearance as true horse or elephant and reality.

Likewise with reflections of form in a mirror. An ordinary perception can understand that, even though the reflection of form in the mirror appears as the actual form,

it is not that actual form. So even though the reflection in the mirror appears to truly be the form, an ordinary perception can understand that the reflection is in fact not the form it appears to be.

These various types of objects are false according to worldly perception. But a worldly perception cannot understand that a form also doesn't exist the way it appears. Like the reflection of form in the mirror appearing as form, but actually being just a mere reflection, form appears as truly existent, but it doesn't exist the way it appears. In order to understand that form doesn't exist the way it appears one needs to realise emptiness. Worldly perception cannot understand that there is a discrepancy between the appearance of form and the reality of form.

So form is an object that is not contradicted by worldly perception, but the appearance of form in the mirror can be contradicted by worldly perception. Likewise the nature-like general principle that possesses the six characteristics as asserted by certain non-Buddhist tenets can also be contradicted by worldly perception, and also the appearance of mirages as water and so forth can be contradicted by worldly perception.

A nominal worldly perception can contradict the apprehension of the white conch shell as yellow. Should one, for some reason, perceive a white conch shell as yellow, than that perception can be contradicted by a conventional worldly perception, because conventional worldly perception can understand that the white conch shell is in fact white. So an undistorted perception of the white conch shell can contradict the distorted perception of the white conch shell as yellow, and can in such a way reject the perception of the white conch shell as yellow. Similarly, the perception of a white snow mountain as blue and so forth can also be contradicted by ordinary worldly perception.

The way the mistaken perception is contradicted by an ordinary worldly perception is similar to the way the wisdom that realises emptiness contradicts true-grasping. The principle is the same. We have the grasping at true existence, and the grasping at true existence is contradicted by the wisdom that realises emptiness, in the same way that the perception of the white conch shell as yellow is contradicted by the actual perception of the white conch shell.

It is very important that one reflects upon this process of contradicting mistaken perception. If one knows how this process works then it is very beneficial for one's life. If we think about it, the perception of a white conch shell as yellow cannot be validated by valid perception. It doesn't have the support of valid perception, because if we actually investigate the conch shell then we will find that in actuality it is white. So the perception of a white conch shell as yellow doesn't have the support of a valid cognition - it is not validated by valid cognition.

Likewise the perception of true existence doesn't have the support of valid cognition. It is not validated by a valid cognition, because if we investigate reality then we find that there is no such thing as true existence. So here we have applied the worldly examples of reflections, mirages and so forth to the actual meaning. That is the outline we

have reached, relating it to the present context.

3.5.1.1.1.2.2.1.2.1.2.2. Relating it to the present context

*The focus of an eye with vitreous humour
Doesn't harm consciousness without floaters. Likewise,
Awareness having abandoned stainless
transcendental wisdom
Doesn't harm stainless awareness.*

Previously we were talking about the different objects that can be contradicted by worldly perception, and now we go to the objects that cannot be contradicted by worldly perception.

The refutation of the generation from other on the basis of the perception of an arya's equipoise can't be harmed by worldly perception, because awareness having abandoned stainless transcendental wisdom doesn't harm stainless awareness. So even though worldly perception perceives generation from other, worldly perception can't contradict the transcendental wisdom of an arya's meditative equipoise that perceives the absence of generation from other, because awareness that is devoid of stainless transcendental wisdom cannot contradict stainless awareness.

It is like the example of a person who has an eye disease that causes them to perceive the appearance of falling hairs. An eye-consciousness tainted by that sickness couldn't contradict an eye-consciousness that is not tainted by that disease. The afflicted eye-consciousness, which mistakenly perceives falling hairs where there are no hairs, cannot contradict an eye-consciousness that is not afflicted by that disease. Similarly, an awareness that is devoid of stainless wisdom is unable to contradict stainless transcendental wisdom.

Here we have the analogy of an eye-consciousness that is afflicted by disease and an eye-consciousness that is not afflicted. Similarly to the eye-consciousness afflicted by the disease perceiving the appearance of falling hairs being unable to contradict the valid eye-consciousness that is not afflicted by the disease, which perceives that there are no falling hairs, the mistaken worldly perception that perceives generation from other is unable to contradict the unmistakable stainless arya's awareness.

Which awareness perceives generation from other? Generation from other is perceived by the mistaken worldly perception. Similarly to the afflicted eye-consciousness not being able to contradict the healthy eye-consciousness, that mistaken worldly perception is unable to contradict the arya's meditative equipoise, which is stainless transcendental wisdom.

The **Realists** were saying to the Prasangika that the Prasangikas' assertion of the absence of generation from other is actually contradicted by worldly perception.

Now the **Prasangika** say that mistaken worldly perception is unable to contradict stainless awareness, because it is the perception that apprehends generation from other.

The mistaken worldly perception that mistakenly apprehends generation from other is unable to contradict the valid perception of the lack of generation from other by the stainless wisdom. Similarly the mistaken perception of a white conch shell as yellow is unable to

contradict the perception of a white conch shell. So a mistaken perception is unable to contradict a valid perception. The **Realists'** argument that the refutation of generation from other is invalid because of being contradicted by worldly perception is in itself invalid.

3.5.1.1.1.2.2.1.2.1.2.3. Explaining the individual nature of the two truths

This has two sub-outlines: the explanation of the nature of conventional truth; and the explanation of the nature of ultimate truth.

3.5.1.1.1.2.2.1.2.1.2.3.1. Conventional truth

*Concealing since being ignorance obscuring nature
That appearing artificially as true through it
Was taught by the Able One as conventional
truth.*

Artificial phenomena are a mere conventionality.

The Etymology Of Conventional Truth And Ultimate Truth

First I'm going to explain the etymology of conventional truth and ultimate truth, which will bring us naturally to this verse.

Etymology of Conventional Truth

Take the subject 'form', it is conventional truth. There is a reason why it is referred to as a conventional truth.

As we already said so many times before the more literal Tibetan word for conventional truth is something like 'all-delusive truth'. So when we talk about the etymology of conventional truth, or all-delusive truth, we have to talk about these three terms, 'all', 'delusive', and 'truth'.

All means various, **delusive** refers to being false and it is referred to as a **truth** because it is true for the ignorance grasping at true existence. We have already said that conventional truths are false. They are referred to as truths are because they are true for the ignorance grasping at true existence. For example, form is true for the true-grasping at form. So true-grasping at form grasps form to be truly existent. Therefore for true-grasping at form, form is true. That explains why form is referred to as conventional truth or as delusive truth. Because it is true for the delusion of ignorance.

Etymology of Ultimate Truth

Now we are going to explain why the form's lack of inherent existence is referred to as ultimate truth.

The Tibetan word for ultimate truth again contains three syllables, which talk about the truth of ultimate meaning. Emptiness is the truth of ultimate meaning. First it is referred to as **meaning** because it is the **meaning** that is found by the arya's meditative equipoise. It is the truth of the **ultimate** because it is the ultimate mode of abiding, and it is referred to as **truth** because it is a phenomenon that doesn't have a discrepancy between appearance and existence.

Form is false since it is a conventional truth. Since it is false it is a phenomenon that has a discrepancy between appearance and existence. So we say that form is a false phenomena because it has a discrepancy between appearance and existence.

The form's emptiness is true. It is a phenomenon that

doesn't have a discrepancy between appearance and existence.

Form appears as truly existent to the eye-consciousness apprehending form, but the eye-consciousness apprehending form doesn't grasp at form as truly existent. Therefore even though form appears as truly existent to the eye-consciousness apprehending form, form is not established as truly existent to the eye-consciousness apprehending form, because the eye-consciousness apprehending form doesn't grasp at form as true. Even though it appears to the eye-consciousness as true, the eye-consciousness doesn't grasp at it as true.

The eye-consciousness apprehending form apprehends form, but it doesn't apprehend truly existent form. Truly existent form appears to that eye-consciousness but is not apprehended by that eye-consciousness. That's the difference. The eye-consciousness apprehends form but it doesn't apprehend truly existent form, even though truly existent form appears to it. What's the definition of conventional truth?

Student: The meaning found by a valid cognisor engaged in conventional analysis that became a valid cognisor engaged in conventional analysis with regard to that meaning.

And ultimate truth?

Student: The meaning found by a valid cognisor engaged in ultimate analysis that became a valid cognisor engaged in ultimate analysis with regard to that meaning.

Is there a pervasion that if something is realised by a valid cognisor engaged in conventional analysis, that it is conventional truth, and is there a pervasion that if something is realised by a valid cognisor engaged in ultimate analysis that it is ultimate truth?

Student: No, there is no pervasion.

So which example would you posit as something that is realised by a valid cognisor engaged in conventional analysis but is not conventional truth,

Student: Omniscient consciousness.

Omniscient awareness that apprehends the world of multiplicity also understands ultimate truth at the same time. So ultimate truth is understood by the omniscient consciousness apprehending the world of multiplicity. Likewise the conventional world is apprehended by the omniscient awareness understanding suchness.

Omniscient awareness realising vase is a valid cognisor engaged in conventional analysis isn't it?

Student: Yes

Since it is omniscient awareness can you possibly posit something that is not understood by that awareness. If you look at it from that point of view then it will help you to understand that point of debate. Since it is omniscient transcendental wisdom it understands all objects of knowledge.

Likewise the omniscient consciousness realising the vase's emptiness is omniscient consciousness. Even though it is a consciousness realising the vase's emptiness it is omniscient consciousness, and therefore you can't really posit anything that is not understood by it.

In the first verse, which pays homage to compassion, what are the three types of compassion?

[Student answer unclear]

So since you only gave me the meaning but you didn't give me the actual terms of the three types of compassion. You did give the correct meaning but Geshe-la says you also have to state the actual terms of the three.

Student: Compassion merely focussing on sentient beings, compassion focussing on dharmas and objectless compassion.

Then what are the three dharmas explained at this point? If you know them then you have to speak up. In relation to the Dharma, if one knows something one shouldn't feel ashamed to say it. One should feel ashamed with the creation of non-virtue but not with regard to the Dharma.

We say that form is a false phenomena that has a discrepancy between appearance and existence, while the form's emptiness is a true phenomenon, which doesn't have a discrepancy between appearance and existence. Now we have to see with regard to which mind form appears differently from the way it exists.

With regard to which mind does form appear differently from the way it exists?

[Student answer unclear]

We don't posit all conventional awarenesses, so with regard to which mind does form appear differently from the way it exists?

I already explained it perfectly before. Relate it back to the primary object possessor of that object. For example if we take the colour blue, what is the primary object possessor of the colour blue?

Student: The eye-consciousness apprehending blue.

The primary object possessor of the colour blue is the eye-consciousness apprehending blue. Does blue appear as truly existent to that eye-consciousness?

Student: Yes.

Does blue exist the way it appears to that eye-consciousness?

Student: No.

Now we have established the discrepancy between appearance and existence of the colour blue. That blue appears to the eye-consciousness apprehending blue as truly existent but its actual mode of existence is that it exists as lacking true existence. It appears as true but it doesn't exist in that way. What is the primary object possessor of the form's emptiness?

Student: An arya's meditative equipoise.

The form's emptiness appears to the arya's equipoise exactly the way it exists - there is no discrepancy between appearance and existence. So the arya's meditative equipoise is an unmistakable awareness.

The arya's meditative equipoise is untainted by the karmic latencies of true grasping and in the continuum of sentient beings the arya's meditative equipoise is the only type of awareness that is untainted by the karmic imprints of true grasping. All other awarenesses in the continuum of sentient beings are tainted by the karmic

imprints of true grasping. That's why the Prasangika say that apart from the arya's meditative equipoise all other awarenesses in the continuum of sentient beings are mistaken awarenesses.

Now we can go onto the verse and just have a small commentary on it.

The verse reads:

***Concealing since being ignorance obscuring nature
That appearing artificially as true through it
Was taught by the Able One as conventional
truth.***

Artificial phenomena are a mere conventionality.

Mirror:

Take the subject '**ignorance** grasping at true existence' - it is **concealing since** it **obscures** the direct perception of **nature**.

Regarding the first line, 'Concealing since being ignorance obscuring nature', ignorance is also referred to as a concealing awareness, an obscurer or a concealer because it obscures or conceals the final nature of phenomena. Here it explains why. So the first line is actually explaining the etymology of why ignorance is referred to as a concealer.

The second line goes onto the object of the ignorance, 'That appearing artificially as true through it was taught by the Able One as conventional truth'. First the verse explained the etymology of ignorance as being called a concealer, because it obscures or hides the object's nature.

Mirror:

Take the subject 'form **appearing as true** because of true grasping even though lacking true existence' - there is a reason why it **was taught by the Able One as truth of convention**, or here as the truth of a concealer - because it is true in the face of the concealing true grasping.

That's a reason why form that artificially appears as true through the ignorance is referred to as truth or concealer, because it is true in the face of concealing true grasping.

The lines:

***That appearing artificially as true through it
Was taught by the Able One as conventional
truth.***

were taught by the Able One as conventional truth in the *Descent into Lanka sutra*. There it says,

*The generation of phenomena exists conventionally
Ultimately it lacks nature
That which is mistaken regarding the lack of nature
Is referred to as obscuring the accurate.*

This verse of the *Descent into Lanka sutra* explain how phenomena and the generation of phenomena are a mere conventionality.

It says that generated phenomena are a mere conventionality and don't have an ultimate nature, and that which is mistaken with regard to the lack of that nature is referred to as concealing the accurate. So here it gives the etymology as to why ignorance is referred to as a concealer, or as a delusion. Why? Because it is mistaken with regard to the lack of ultimate existence. It says that from the beginning phenomena are mere conventionality

and lack ultimate nature, and that which is mistaken with regard to that lack of ultimate nature, meaning perceiving some ultimate nature where there is no such nature, is referred to as a concealer of the accurate. So the accurate nature of phenomena is the lack of ultimate existence.

If an awareness conceals, or is mistaken with regard to that nature apprehending something that is not there, then it is concealing the accurate nature of phenomena. Therefore it is referred to as delusion, or as a concealer.

The last line of the verse 'Artificial phenomena are a mere conventionality', refers to one doubt that occurs when it is asked whether phenomena are truly established in the face of all conventional awarenesses.

Mirror:

Take the subject 'form' - for hearer and self-liberator arhats and bodhisattvas on the pure grounds it is but **a mere conventionality** and not truly established - because they don't have true grasping and see them as **artificial phenomena**.

When you look at the root verse then the word 'artificial' appears twice, once in the second line and once in the last line. The second line, 'That appearing artificially through it', refers to true-grasping. It refers to phenomena being established as truly existent by true-grasping. The artificial phenomena of the second line refers to the appearance of truly existent phenomena being created by the imprints of true-grasping. So the first 'artificial' refers to true-grasping while the second 'artificial' is related to the karmic imprints of true-grasping. So to the mind of ordinary individuals who haven't abandoned true grasping, phenomena are established as truly existing by the true-grasping.

When practitioners actually reach either the state of a hearer or solitary realiser arhat, or reach the bodhisattva pure ground then they have abandoned true grasping. To their minds phenomena are not established any more as truly existent by true-grasping. So phenomena are not artificially elaborated or established by true-grasping as truly existent. However because their minds are still tainted by the karmic imprints of true-grasping, phenomena still appear to them as existing truly. This is because phenomena appear to their minds as existing truly. To their minds they are not established as truly existent because they don't have any true-grasping any more, so they see the appearance or true existence as an artificial phenomena.

Form is a conventional truth. With regard to which awareness is form posited as a conventional truth?

[Student answer unclear]

Form is posited as a conventional truth by the eye-consciousness apprehending form but with regard to which awareness is form posited as true?

[Student answer unclear]

Form is posited as true with regard to true-grasping and form appears as truly existing to the eye-consciousness apprehending form