

Study Group - "Buddhist Tenets"

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

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Please establish a virtuous motivation as usual.

There is a two-fold division of Madhyamika into the Svatantrika-Madhyamika and the Prasangika-Madhyamika. We have now finished with the Svatantrika-Madhyamika.

One common thing between these two Madhyamika tenets is that they are both followers of Arya Nagarjuna and accept his presentation of base, path and result.

Base

Even though the elaboration of true existence is non-existent in regards to both person and phenomena, that does not negate the existence of action and doing, cause and effect. What is being explained is the base, which are the two truths. Everything is empty of true existence, but that doesn't mean that things are necessarily non-existent. Just because things are empty of true existence doesn't mean their conventional existence is negated. This explains the two truths that are the base.

Path

We have the profound path and the extensive path¹.

To the transcendental wisdom realising emptiness directly, the various conventional signs, definitions, characteristics and so forth, do not appear. The only thing that appears to that wisdom is emptiness. This is the profound path. The generation of spontaneous Bodhicitta from love and compassion and the practice of generosity etc. combined with Bodhicitta is the practice of the extensive path. This needs to be preceded by meditation on the motivations common to the small and medium practitioner.

The profound path and the extensive path have to be practiced in a unified manner.

Result

By meditating on the unification of the profound and extensive path the meditator will reach the result of the two Buddha bodies, which is free from the two extremes of peace and existence and through which he or she can benefit the three kinds of disciples can be taught.

Prasangika Madhyamika

8.1. Definition

"The Madhyamika who doesn't assert truly existent phenomena even in mere name, by positing merely a consequence of other-renown", is the definition of a Prasangika tenet holder.

The Prasangika assert the absence of true existence by merely expressing a consequence, which is a consequence of other-renown. It specifically says 'consequence of other-renown in order to draw the distinction to the Autonomous Madyamaka. If you remember, in the definition of the Svatantrika-Madhyamika says that they assert an autonomous (self) reason. That is, the Svatantrika-Madhyamika refutes true existence by way of asserting autonomous reason.

Here it is made very clear that the consequence, which is used in order to refute true existence, is not an autonomous consequence. Also the three modes, which are generated in dependence upon that consequence, and the inferential cogniser that is generated in dependence upon those three modes do not inherently or naturally exist. They are not autonomous reasons and consequences but 'other' reason and consequences.

This ends the first division explaining the definition of Prasangika.

8.2. Proponents of the Prasangika School

The second division gives examples. Here it mentions Buddhapalita, Chandrakirti, and Shantideva.

Also, Aryadeva should be mentioned here, because he is also Prasangika. However, because both the Svatantrika-Madhyamika and Prasangika-Madhyamika accept Aryadeva he is regarded as a general Madhyamika, and therefore is not listed here - even though he is actually Prasangika-Madhyamika.

8.3. Etymology

The text goes on to say, "Take the subject, Buddhapalita. The reason for him to be called Prasangika exists, because he is somebody who asserts that an inferential cogniser realising the thesis can be generated in the continuum of the opponent merely in dependence upon a consequence".

Buddhapalita is called a consequentialist, or a Prasangika, because he accepts that an inferential cogniser, in realising the thesis can be generated in the continuum of the opponent merely through a consequence.

'Thesis' refers to the combination of the subject and the predicate. For example in the syllogism, 'Take the subject sound. It follows that it is impermanent, because it is a product', 'sound' is the subject, 'impermanence' is the predicate, and 'product' is the reason. Impermanent sound, the combination of the predicate and the subject, is referred to as the thesis.

The thesis is realised in dependence upon a valid reason, which is called the three modes. In this case this is a product. The Svatantrika-Madhyamika assert that these three modes, the perfect reason, exist inherently or autonomously, and therefore they are called autonomists.

The definition of the thesis is **the combination of the subject and the predicate, which is understood in dependence upon the reason.**

8.4. Mode of Asserting Objects

The text follows the same sequence as in the previous tenets. The fourth point is positing of objects.

It is important to note that the Prasangika don't accept inherent existence, natural existence or existence from its own side.

8.4.1. Definition of Objects

The text says, "Objects are divided into hidden and manifest".

The definition of object is the same as posited by the Sautrantika School, so we just have to remember that definition.

Object is divided into hidden and manifest.

8.4.1.1. Hidden Objects

Hidden phenomena are objects that need to be realised in dependence upon a reason. This means that an object, when first realised by an ordinary being, has to be realised in

¹ Wisdom and Method

dependence upon a reason. Such an object is a hidden phenomenon.

Again the text mentions the word meaning 'those who see only this side', which is a poetic expression for what we call an ordinary person.

8.4.1.2. Manifest Phenomena

The meaning of *manifest phenomena* is **an object that can be ascertained by an ordinary person through the power of experience without depending upon a reason.**

We can apply this also to the definition of hidden phenomena. An object, which has to be realised by an ordinary person in dependence upon a reason, is the meaning of a hidden phenomena.

The text refers to the time **when the object is first realised.**

When an ordinary being needs to depend upon a reason in order to understand an object for the first time, then that object is a hidden phenomena.

When an ordinary being, in order to understand that object the first time, doesn't need to depend upon a reason, but can ascertain it through the power of experience, that object is a manifest object.

Examples for hidden phenomena are impermanent sound, or the emptiness of truly existent sound. As you will remember from before, impermanence is a subtle phenomenon that we cannot see directly. As ordinary beings, we need to depend upon reasoning in order to understand impermanence. Then by depending upon reasoning through inference we can understand impermanence.

Consider this point. Without depending upon reasoning and inference it would be impossible for us to understand impermanence, or the emptiness of true existence. In order to understand such phenomena as impermanence and emptiness, one needs to rely on reasoning and inference.

A vase and a cloth are manifest phenomena because they can be seen with just the eye consciousness.

Following the definition of manifest phenomena, the text goes on to say that directly perceivable and manifest phenomena are synonymous. Direct perceivable is that which is engaged by direct perception.

That being clear, objects have a two-fold division into conventional truth and ultimate truth.

8.4.2. Conventional Truth

Conventional truth (it's a long definition!) is: **The meaning found by a valid cogniser engaging in conventional analysis, as well as the valid cogniser engaging in conventional analysis becomes a valid cogniser engaging in conventional analysis with regard to it.**

So the definition has two parts.

- It is the meaning found by a valid cogniser engaging in conventional analysis.
- This valid cogniser engaging in conventional analysis becomes a valid cogniser engaging in conventional analysis with regard to it.

If something has both of those parts of the definition, then it is conventional truth.

Let us analyse this definition with regard to a vase.

- The valid cogniser engaging in conventional analysis would be the eye consciousness realising vase
- The found (realised) meaning, would be vase, which is conventional truth

- This valid cogniser that engages in conventional analysis becomes such a valid cogniser with regard to vase. This valid cogniser becomes a valid cogniser engaging in conventional analysis with regard to its object, which is vase - the conventional truth vase.

We can apply this system to all other conventional phenomena.

Here, it is not correct to have the two-fold division into accurate conventionality and wrong conventionality, because accurate conventionality is non-existent. That is because if it is a conventionality, there is a pervasion that it cannot be accurate, because if it is a conventionality it has to be wrong.

8.4.2.1. Accurate and Wrong Perception

Depending upon worldly perception Conventional truth has a two-fold division into accurate and wrong.

To worldly perception there is accurate and wrong conventionality. It is correct to have the two-fold division of conventional truth according to conventional or worldly perception into accurate and wrong. Form is, according to worldly perception, **accurate**; the reflection of form in the mirror is, according to worldly perception, **wrong**.

How does this division according to worldly perception come about? First of all worldly perception refers to the perception of a person who hasn't realised emptiness. So a person who hasn't realised emptiness cannot understand the non-existence of form the way it appears. The non-existence of form in the way it appears is emptiness. This is something that a person who hasn't realised emptiness cannot understand. Therefore to the perception of such a person, form will be accurate. However, a person who hasn't realised emptiness can understand the non-existence of the way the reflection of form appears in the mirror.

In the same way as we have this division of accurate and wrong according to the worldly perception of objects, we also have this division of accurate and wrong of awarenesses, or object possessors, according to worldly perception.

For example the grasping at true existence would be accurate according to worldly perception, because a person who has not realised emptiness cannot understand that true grasping is a wrong awareness. They cannot understand the absence of the apprehended object.

Therefore according to worldly perception true grasping is accurate. If it is accurate according to worldly perception, there is no pervasion that it is necessarily existent. For example, truly existent form is accurate according to worldly perception, because a worldly person who has not realised emptiness has not realised the emptiness of form. Therefore to that person's perception, truly existent form is accurate even though truly existent form is non-existent.

8.4.3. Ultimate Truth

The definition of *ultimate truth* is: **The meaning found by a valid cogniser engaging in final analysis, as well as the valid cogniser engaging in final analysis becomes a valid cogniser engaging in final analysis with regards to it.**

Take as the object the emptiness of the vase which is ultimate truth.

- It is the found meaning, or the realised meaning of the valid cogniser realising the emptiness of the vase, which would be the valid cogniser engaging in final analysis.
- The valid cogniser engaging in final analysis is the valid cogniser realising the emptiness of the vase.

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- That valid cogniser become a valid cogniser engaging in final analysis with regards to the emptiness of the vase.

The division of ultimate truth is the same as the Mind-Only. So one can posit the various divisions into selflessness of person, selflessness of phenomena, and one can posit the various emptinesses such as the four, sixteen and so forth emptinesses.

8.4.4. Etymology of Conventional and Ultimate Truth

The reason why the vase, which is a conventional truth, is called a conventional truth is because it is true to the ignorance grasping at true existence. Even though vase is a false phenomena, it is called truth because it is true to the ignorance grasping at true existence.

The Tibetan word for conventional existence has three words, *kun dzob den-pa*, which is explained in relation to the object. The first word *kun* means various or many, the second, *dzob*, has the connotation of false, the third *den-pa* refers to truth. So it is a conventional truth or *kun dzob den-pa*, because it is true to the ignorance grasping at true existence.

The Tibetan word for ultimate truth again has three words, *don dam den-pa*. These are explained with regard to the object, which is a slight variation from the explanation according to Svatantrika-Madhyamika, where it was explained in relation to the object possessor, the mind. Of these three words, *don dam den-pa*, *don* means meaning, *dam* has the connotation of superior and purest, and *den pa* is truth.

Ultimate truth is meaning because it is the meaning of the meditative equipoise of an Arya. It is purest because it is the object of the purest non-dual wisdom realising emptiness, and it is true because there is no discrepancy between appearance and mode of abiding. All three words are explained in relation to the object itself.

From the Svatantrika point of view, the second word *dam-pa* is the non-dual wisdom realising emptiness. So for example the emptiness of the vase becomes the first syllable 'meaning', because it is the object of the second syllable 'the non-dual wisdom realising emptiness'. So there is a slight variation.

Also in conventional truth we can see that all three syllables are explained with regard to the object, and not the object possessor.

The Prasangika accept that the truth of cessation is ultimate truth. So there is a pervasion that if it is the truth of cessation, it is ultimate truth.

8.4.3.1 False and True Phenomena

If there is a discrepancy between the way it appears, and the way it abides, then it is a false phenomena.

If there is no discrepancy between appearance, and the mode of existence, then it is a true phenomena.

*Transcribed from tape by Sharon Holley
Edit 1: Adair Bunnett
Edit 2: Venerable Tenzin Dongak
Edit 3: Alan Molloy
Check and final edit: Venerable Tenzin Dongak
Edited Version
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