

## Ultimate Reality in Madhyamaka Philosophy

[An Extract from 'Illuminating the Clear Intention', A Commentary on Acharya Chandrakirti's *Madhyamakavatara* (Entry Into The Middle Way)]

- by Lama Tsongkhapa

Given that there will be no presentation of the unique style of negation through reasoning by Svatantrika-Madhyamaka in the subsequent sections, I shall briefly explain here, in a manner to comprehend, the manner in which phenomena appear as illusion-like according to that tradition.

Now, to explain this with respect to things (determining all knowables to be subsumed into the two-fold category of those that exist as things and those that exist as non-things), things are confined to the classes of those that are material and those that are not. As for the negation of partlessness in the sense of possessing no directional parts, such as east and so on, in the domain of material things, and the negation of partlessness in the sense of the absence of temporal parts, such as prior and subsequent moments, in the domain of consciousness, these one should understand as explained elsewhere. In this way, establish the entailment that all things possess parts. Next, if the parts and the bearer of the parts are of different entity, they will become unrelated. This is rejected and they are thus demonstrated to be of one entity. Now, at this point, regardless of however much one directs one's thought to a given thing, it becomes undeniable that though being of one entity in reality, (parts and their bearer) appear as if they are different entities. In this way, then, just like a magical illusion, one comes to establish the convergence of the two facts, their appearance as something and their emptiness of it. Now, something like this is not a contradiction for a false mode of existence posited by the power of the mind. This is, however,

untenable if that basis possesses a mode of existence that is not posited in virtue of appearing to the mind. This is so because, for a true existence as defined above, it is impossible for there to be a disparity between the way things actually are and the way they appear to be. For, if something is a true existence, it must invariably remain so, shunning falsehood and, furthermore, since the cognition that perceives (the parts and their bearer) to be different entities would become non-erroneous, this will undermine (the fact of) their being of one entity.

Once this (absence of the true existence of things) is established, on the basis of this very same reasoning, true existence of non-things too can be negated. Even with respect to unconditioned space, one will have to accept that it pervades some material objects. There too, one will have to accept that there are parts that pervade the east and parts that pervade other directions. Likewise, with respect to suchness too, it has numerous parts in terms of its extension and numerous distinct parts in terms of being realized by distinct prior or subsequent states of cognition. This is true also of other unconditioned phenomena. Since the multiple parts and their bearer cannot be different entities, they are of identical entity; and, because this is tenable for a falsehood and not for true existence, as before, (true existence of unconditioned phenomena) is negated. Thus, all knowables come to be established as having no true existence.

*Vasubandhu's Vimsatika (Twenty Stanzas):*

Being simultaneously surrounded by six (other particles),

The (central) subtle particle is found to have six parts.

If these six (parts) have the same spatial dimension,

A massive (object) will conflate into (the size of) just a minute particle.

*Colophon: Translation by Thubten Jinpa, PhD*