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DECEPTIVE MIND AND MISTAKEN MIND: A PRĀSAṄGIKAMADHYAMAKA INVESTIGATION

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Abstract

The paper investigates the distinction between Deceptive mind (*log shes, viparyayajñāna*) and Mistaken mind (*'khrul shes, bhrāntijñāna*), specifically interpreting through *Prāsaṅgika-madhyamaka siddhānta*. It examines the definition of mind and the classifications into deceptive mind and mistaken mind. Mind engaging with its object involves two acts. First is the act of appearance of the object, and the second, is the act of apprehension of the object. That is, one act is conceptualised as object appearing to the mind whereas the other act is conceptualised as the apprehension of the object by the mind. Deceptive mind is defined with respect to object of apprehension while mistaken mind is defined with respect to appearance. All deceptive minds are necessarily mistaken minds while all mistaken minds may not be deceptive minds. The paper critically analyses the relation as three-modes (*mu gsum*).

Keywords: *Prāsaṅgikamadhyamaka, bhrāntijñāna, viparyayajñāna, appearing object, object of apprehension.*

Introduction

The paperⁱ acknowledges the vastness of Buddhist philosophical literature and the dissonance within it. To make the move from the broader framework of schools to precise framework of tenet systems (*grub mtha, siddhānta*), Wangpo's '*Precious Garland of Tenets*' (1733) is read in Sopa and Hopkins' '*Cutting Through Appearances*' (1989). In context of the interpretive concerns, the paper argues for methodical use of *Prāsaṅgikamadhyamaka siddhānta*. It then examines definition of mind and as preliminaries considers two two-fold classifications of mind (sense and mental consciousness; conceptual and non-conceptual minds) before examining seven-fold classification to understand deceptive mind and the two-fold classification into mistaken and non-mistaken consciousness to understand mistaken minds. Jambelsampel's '*Presentation of Awareness*' (sometime priori to 1959) is read through Lati Rinbochey's '*Mind in Tibetan Buddhism*' (1980)ⁱⁱ. The paper, then, analyses the definitions of *viparyayajñāna* and *bhrāntijñāna* and the relation between them. The paper concludes with asking the question, what is '*Prāsaṅgikamadhyamaka*' about the distinction?

Interpretive Specificity

What does it mean to use '*Prāsaṅgikamadhyamaka* interpretation'? The root of interpretive concern is located in the three turnings of the wheel of *dharma*. The First turning of the wheel of *dharma* is the first sermon of Buddhaⁱⁱⁱ, where presentation of Four Noble Truths, as truly existent, is made. In the second turning of the wheel of *dharma*^{iv}, it is presented that nothing truly exists. In the third turning of the wheel of *dharma*^v presentation of three natures^{vi} is made. This is historical sequence. The initial followers of the Buddha (*Śrāvaka*) gradually divided into four main groups, each group having several divisions, making a total of eighteen schools (*sde pa bco brgyad, aṣṭadaśanikāya*)^{vii}. Due to continued dissonance four systems^{viii} became prominent which are *Vaiśāṅghika, Sautrāntika, Cittamātra* and *Madhyamaka*. The order is important, for the order is not historical but philosophical, as progression of reason. What is the basis of the classification of four schools? Each of the four schools make the claim of being the middle way (*madhyamamārga*^{ix}), which means each of the four schools of Buddhism have differences in how they refute the two extremes (dichotomous pair) of permanence and nihilism^x.

The genesis of the idea of tenets is traced to *Laṅkāvatāra* sūtra.^{xi} It is defined as that which is based in reason, is established in the mind in consideration of various positions which are eliminated due to faulty reasoning. Once it is established, it is not to be wavered from; therefore, it is the final. Thus, tenets are established conclusions, as the end-products of reasoning^{xii}. The four tenet systems came into existence due to the dissonance in understanding the explanation of the intention of Buddha in the three turnings of the wheel of *dharma*. How are the four tenets related to the interpretive issues of the three turnings



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of the wheel of *dharmā*? The first two tenets, *Vaibhāṣika* and *Sautrāntika*, propound what can be labelled as realism (*dhon ma dhe nyi*), based on the first turning of the wheel of *dharmā*. The fourth tenet, *Madhyamaka*, advocates entitylessness based on the second turning. The mind-only tenet (*Cittamātra*) propounds only the thoroughly established nature to be real (*yongs grub; pariniṣpanna*), based on the third turning of the wheel. Such difference in the assertions only signifies the importance of interpretive considerations^{xiii}.

The reason they are known as a *prasāṅgika* is that the proponents of this system accept that inference, which cognises the thesis, can be generated in the minds through mere *reductio ad absurdum* (*thal gyur, prasāṅga*) (Wangpo, 1989). As *Prāsaṅgikamadhyamaka* is a *Madhyamaka* system, the assertions of *Madhyamaka* are applicable to *Prāsaṅgikamadhyamaka* as well, unless stated otherwise^{xiv}. Thus, how *Madhyamaka* refutes the two-extremes is accepted by *Prāsaṅgikamadhyamaka*. *Madhyamaka* refutes the position of permanence by asserting that all phenomena do not exist ultimately while nihilism is refuted by asserting that phenomena exist through imputed labels. Since there are phenomena, which exist through mere imputation of labels, there is no nihilism. *Prāsaṅgikamadhyamaka* asserts entitylessness and rejects everything that is established through self-characteristics, even on the conventional level. They maintain subject and object (*yul, viṣaya*) to be distinct entities^{xv}. Subject (also termed as object possessor (*yul can, viṣayin*)) is opposed to object under the broader category, also termed as object.

To use *Prāsaṅgikamadhyamaka* interpretation is to use *Prāsaṅgikamadhyamaka siddhānta* to understand phenomenon. An interpretation based in rejection of permanence and nihilism in the manner of rejecting objective existence but accepting existence through mere mental imputation. This specificity also leads to their specific views about mind such as mind cognises its object necessarily through the aspect (the image it creates)^{xvi} or that aspects are the images of the object, or that mind and its objects, the phenomena which the mind cognises or which the mind is aware of; are mutually dependent. This means that they arise as mutual dependents and not simultaneously. Significantly, the distinction of appearing object (*snang yul, pratibhāsa viṣaya*) and object of apprehension (*'jug yul, pravṛtti viṣaya*) (or object of engagement) is made according to *Prāsaṅgikamadhyamaka*, as two distinct aspects^{xvii}. Hugon terms this as “*aspectualism*” and differentiates it from “*representationalist view*” (Hugon, 2011).

Topology of Mind

The label ‘Mind’ is a ‘borrowed translation’ from English to stand in for the Tibetan term *sem*, which serves as a translation of the Sanskrit term *citta* which in turn is translated from the Pali term *citta* (Davids, 1914). Mind has also been used for *mano, vijñāna, jñāna, cetanā*, etc. There is no general agreement regarding the translations of key technical Buddhist terms, both in Sanskrit and Tibetan, into English yet. In the wider context of the issues and resultant ambiguities due to translation, these terms are used synonymously, though the alluded range of terms are technically different. Thus, the term ‘mind’ is used interchangeably with ‘consciousness’ (*shes pa, jñāna*), ‘awareness’ (*blo, buddhi*), ‘knower’ (*rig pa, samvedana*)^{xviii}. *Blo rig* (awareness and knowledge) is the study of mind and cognition^{xix}. Awareness is defined as a knower.

Jambelsampel defines mind as “...that which is clear and knowing” (Rinbochay, 1980). There are two important characteristics about mind in this definition which require attention. For an object to be visible, there must be light. When there is light on an object, only then it appears. Likewise, there is an aspect of luminosity to the mind in the sense that mind’s nature is luminous and that is what makes objects visible; mind illuminates its object. That is included in the definition through the term ‘clear’. Like a mirror, it shows whatever appears to it. All minds have an object that appears to it and this is termed as appearing object or object of appearance. The ‘knowing’ part of the definition is added due to the reason that there are things which are clear but which are not cognised. Like a mirror, which only forms the image but does not ‘know’ that the image has formed^{xx}. It describes the ability of the mind to know or cognize its object and is characterised as first-hand experience. Likewise, all minds have object of apprehension which it apprehends. HHDL describes the connection between the two aspects of clear and knowing as “*Cognitive events possess the nature of knowing because of the fundamental nature of clarity that underlies all cognitive events. This is ... the mind’s fundamental nature, the clear-light nature of mind*” (Gyatso, 1991). In other words, the clear-light nature of mind, which is the fundamental nature of mind, is



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responsible for nature of knowing, underlying all cognitive events. Luminous aspect of mind in turn allows the cognitive aspect. Both aspects are captured by the compound term, ‘clear-knowing’. It also implies that all minds necessarily cognise their object of cognition. These terms are to be understood in active sense, as active agents of knowing. “*The knowing nature, or agency ... is called mind and this is non material ...*” (Gyatso, 1991). Mind is characterised as empirical but non-physical^{xxi}.

There are three types of classifications of mind in the Buddhist literature^{xxii}, seven-fold, three-fold and (multiple) two-fold^{xxiii}. The reason for many classifications is the different bases of classification. For example, when a broader distinction is to be made between gross functions of mind, it is divided into affective mind and cognitive mind. When emphasis is about its features and functions, mind (*sems, citta*) and mental factors (*sems byung, caitta*) are discussed. We locate deceptive mind in the seven-fold classification of mind and we locate mistaken mind in one of the two-fold classifications^{xxiv}.

The paper first examines two classifications, as preliminaries, which remain in the background of analysis. First ‘preliminary’ classification is division of mind into (five) sense consciousness (*dbang shes, indriyajñāna*) and mental consciousness (*vid kyi nam shes, manoññāna*). It is an exhaustive division of *blo rig*. This two-fold classification has its bases (*rten, āśraya*) in whether a consciousness is produced in dependence on a mental sense power (a former moment of consciousness) leading to a mental consciousness or a physical sense power (eye, ear, tongue, nose, skin)^{xxv} therefore leading to the corresponding sense-consciousness (visual, auditory, gustatory, olfactory, tactile sense consciousness). For *Prāsaṅgikamadhyamaka*, visual object and eye sense consciousness make contact and eye consciousness ‘knows’. Eye-sense power is not a physical form which sees. It does not have the quality of clear-knowing, it cannot cognize its object. Further, it is held by *Prāsaṅgikamadhyamaka* that sense consciousnesses are necessarily non-conceptual consciousness while mental consciousness can either be conceptual or non-conceptual.

The second ‘preliminary’ classification is division into conceptual (*rtog pa, kalpanā*) and non-conceptual minds (*rtog med, nirvikalpa*). This is an exhaustive division of *blo rig*. Conceptual mind^{xxvi} is defined as a mind which apprehends its primary object (synonymous with main object) via generic image or meaning generality (*don spyi; artha sāmānya*). Non-Conceptual mind is defined as a mind which apprehends its primary object without using generic image. The emphasis here is the manner in which a mind apprehends its object. It does so in two ways. First, mind directly apprehends its object, and second, mind apprehends its object by means of a generic image. The first manner leads to non-conceptual consciousness. The second manner leads to conceptual consciousness. Conceptual minds can only be mental consciousness. What is the meaning of generic image? This can be understood as a technical difference between what conceptualises and conception. What conceptualises is the subject. What is conceptualised is the generic image^{xxvii}. Not all ‘images’ are generic images^{xxviii}. Further, the image through which mind apprehends the object, that is the primary object.

The seven-fold classification is a division into seven kinds of mind into, (1) Direct Perceiver (*mngon sum; pratyakṣa*), (2) Inferential Cognizer (*rjes dpag; anumāna*), (3) Subsequent cognizer (*bcad shes; parichchinnajñāna*), (4) Correctly Assuming Consciousness (*vid dpyod; manahparīkṣā*), (5) Non-Discerning Direct perceiver (*snang la ma nges pa; aniyatapratibhāsa*), (6) Doubting Consciousness (*the tshom; saṃshaya or vichikitsā*), and, (7) Wrong or Deceptive Consciousness (*log shes; viparyayajñāna*). This isn’t an exhaustive list of ‘awareness and knowledge’ (or all minds). It is a presentation in terms of correctness and incorrectness, the degree to which they get to their respective objects. This classification of mind can be understood in two (reverse ways) depending on the direction of the ordering of seven. Going from first to seventh, we can understand mind as being gradually distorted, with the direct valid perceiver being without distortion while wrong consciousness being completely distorted leading to the most refined form of ignorance (self-grasping ignorance). Taken in the reverse order, from wrong or deceptive consciousness to direct valid perceiver, one can understand it as the mind getting more purified of cognitive error, as more refined in cognitive reasoning. It is not about percentage of distortion, but the refinement of the kind of cognitive (philosophical) error. It is not the case that one moves sequentially from wrong or deceptive mind to doubting consciousness and so on all the way till direct valid perceiver.



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There are several two-fold classifications. The classification of mind into mistaken consciousness (*'khrul shes, bhrāntijñāna*) and non-mistaken (*ma 'khrul pa, abhrānta*) consciousness is a division made in terms of a consciousness being mistaken with regards to its appearing object.

Analysis of Deceptive and Mistaken Minds

Think of looking at a table. Table is the object, eye-consciousness which is 'seeing' the table, which cognizes the table, is a mind. Mind engaging with its object involves two acts (act of illumination and act of cognizing). Thus, the eye consciousness engaging with the table involves two acts; appearance of the table to the eye consciousness and apprehension of the table by eye-consciousness. Appearance of the object as one act and apprehension of the object as the other act. There are two different objects, object of appearance and object of apprehension. The eye consciousness apprehending a table is luminous so the table appears clearly to it. The table is the eye consciousness' appearing object. The eye consciousness also engages or apprehends the table and therefore, the table is also its object of apprehension. These are not synonymous^{xxix}. Mind can be mistaken with respect to both acts, that is, mind can be mistaken with respect to both objects. The image of the table that comes to the mind when we think of the table, although we are not actually looking at the table, the image of the table through which we get access to the main object, that is the generic image of the table.

Deceptive (wrong) consciousness is defined as a knower which is mistaken with regard to its object of apprehension. The distinction of 'object of appearance' rather than simply 'object' separates it from conceptual minds, which are defined as a knower mistaken with regard to its object. It is of two types, conceptual deceptive consciousness and non-conceptual deceptive consciousness, which is further divided into non-conceptual sense deceptive consciousness and non-conceptual mental deceptive consciousness (thus a total of three subdivisions of deceptive consciousness). The appearing object and apprehended object for a non-conceptual deceptive consciousness is not the same thing. Example of conceptual deceptive consciousness is a conceptual mind apprehending a unicorn. Example of non-conceptual sense deceptive consciousness is seeing two-moons. Example of non-conceptual mental deceptive consciousness is dreaming mind. Dreaming mind is always mental consciousness; thus, it can never be sense consciousness. Consider what happens during sleep. At times, all physical sense shut down but the dream continues; mental consciousness doesn't stop.

The mistaken mind is defined as a knower which is mistaken with regard to its appearing object. An example of mistaken consciousness is given as wearing blue specs and seeing white snow as blue. All conceptual consciousnesses are mistaken consciousness because the appearing object (in this case the primary object) for them is a generic image which is appearing as the actual object. Conceptual consciousness may not be deceptive mind. Likewise, non-conceptual deceptive consciousnesses is mistaken as the appearing object and apprehended object appear as the same thing, which is not the case.

Mistaken mind is mistaken with respect to the appearance of the object while deceptive mind is mistaken with respect to the apprehension of the object. That is, we define mistaken mind with respect to the first act, that is appearance of the table to the eye consciousness. Deceptive mind is defined with respect to the second act, the act of apprehension, that is, the eye-consciousness apprehending the table. If mistake happens at the level of apprehension, then necessarily it is a mistake at the appearance level. But if a mistake happens at the appearance level, it may not necessarily happen at the apprehension level. That is, if a mistake happens with act of apprehension, then necessarily a mistake happens with the act of appearance. But if the appearance of the object is mistaken, it is not necessary that the apprehension of the object is also mistaken. The relation between deceptive mind and mistaken mind is such that all deceptive minds are necessarily mistaken minds while all mistaken minds may not be deceptive minds. This also entails that conceptual minds which are always mistaken minds, because the primary object of a conceptual mind is generic image; are not necessarily deceptive minds as well.

There are only four kinds of relationships possible between two phenomena, which are the relations of synonymity, contradiction, three-modes and four-modes^{xxx}. Consider two sets, as A and B. Set A is Deceptive mind, which means all its members a_1, a_2, \dots, a_i ; are deceptive minds. Likewise, set B is Mistaken mind which means all its members b_1, b_2, \dots, b_j are mistaken minds. When three conditions are satisfied between the two sets, one can establish the relation of three-modes to exist between them. What are the three conditions? First, whatever is a member of A should be member of B, second,



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whatever is a member of B may not be a member of A, and third, there are members which are neither in A nor in B. Thus, all a_i belong to B. There is at least one b_j which is not a member of A. There is at least one member, c_k , which is neither in A nor in B. Thus, the relation between Deceptive consciousness (set A) and Mistaken consciousness (set B) can be understood as a Venn diagram of set B (mistaken consciousness) being the larger set, inclusive of set A (deceptive consciousness). The paper understands the relation between deceptive mind and mistaken mind to be that of three-modes (*mu gsum*).

Conclusion

The paper examined and analysed the relation between Deceptive mind and Mistaken mind, interpreting through *Prāsaṅgikamadhyamaka siddhānta*. The examination showed that deceptive mind is always mistaken at both level of appearance and level of apprehension while mistaken mind is mistaken only at the level of appearance. The analysis of the definitions of the two minds and the relation between them lead to the conclusion that the two minds are related as three-modes, meaning whatever is a deceptive mind is necessarily a mistaken mind but whatever is a mistaken mind may not be a deceptive mind.

What is *Prāsaṅgikamadhyamaka* about this distinction? It is the understanding of these concepts and their respective distinction in the context of lacking objective existence. But that they lack objectivity of existence (emptiness of objectivity) does not implicate that they do not exist. They exist through mere imputation of labels, they exist subjectively, and therefore, can be corrected through a cultivated transformation of mind^{xxx1}.

The relation of three-modes to the definition of mind can be traced back to, in unpacking the compound term, 'clear-knowing'. The mind, defined as clear-knowing, can be mistaken at both levels, with respect to clarity and/or with respect to knowing. The mind illuminates its object and it knows its object. If the illumination of the object of wrong, we are deceived, therefore we incorrectly know the object. Mind cannot know an object till it is illuminated, till it appears. Once it appears, it is apprehended. The apprehension may be correct (we may not be deceived) without the appearance being correct. It is easier to transform deceptive consciousness as opposed to mistaken consciousness. Consider an illustration. When I was young, I believed moon was smaller than my home because it appeared so. This is mistaken both with respect to the appearance and apprehension. Once I grew up and learned that the moon is very big, the mistake at the level of apprehension was corrected. But the moon still appears smaller than my home. I still see the moon as small even though I know this appearance is wrong. Appearance is still mistaken. The cognitive error which is rooted in apprehension of the object is easier to rectify than the cognitive error rooted in the appearance of object, object which appears as objectively real. It is more difficult to correct.

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- ⁱ The paper uses English equivalent of a technical term first and then provides back-translations into Tibetan, Sanskrit and Pali (where relevant). The reason for this order is that the English terms being used to stand in for technical terms in Tibetan are taken from Sanskrit, which are based in Pali. The paper follows IAST for Sanskrit and Wylie for Tibetan as translation schemes. All translations are presented on the first occurrence of a technical term, following which only their English translation is used. The paper also italicizes all non-English terms (including all book titles, which are placed in single quotes) except names of people.
- ⁱⁱ Based on the scholars whose works is primary for this paper, this paper's approach to the work is through Gelug's presentation.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Sarnath (~528 BCE).
- ^{iv} Rājagṛha (present day city of Rajgir).
- ^v Vaishali.
- ^{vi} The three natures (rang bzhin gsum/ng obo nyid; *trisvabhāva*) are, (1) imputed nature (kun btags; *parikalpita*), (2) other-powered nature (gzhan dbang; *paratantra*) and (3) thoroughly established nature (yongs grub; *pariniṣpanna*).
- ^{vii} Following the division from *Therāvāda* into *Mahāyāna*. Out of the early eighteen only two survive, *Mūlasarvāstivāda* (Tibetan) and *Dharmaguptaka* (Chinese and Far-East Asian). *Therāvāda* is not counted in these eighteen schools as it arose from *Sthaviravāda* much early on. It is categorised under *Śrāvaka*.
- ^{viii} There are further divisions within them.
- ^{ix} It is one of the labels for the entire teachings of the Buddha. Another connotative family member is *Buddhavacana*.
- ^x What exactly counts as permanence and nihilism is a product of Indological context and technically differs for the four schools.
- ^{xi} *Laṅkāvatāra* sutra (Descent into Lanka sutra), "My tradition of teaching is two-fold; That of advice [*tenpa*] and 'Siddhanta' [*druptha*]. For ordinary people, I speak advice; For yogis, I teach tenets."
- ^{xii} The tenets are a formulated on the dimensions of the basis (gzhi, *sthāpna*), path (lam; *mārga*) and the results or fruits ('bras bu; *phala*). The reasoning behind this division is the following: To get to the desired results, one has to follow the correct paths. To know the correct paths, which tally with reality, it is important to have correct knowledge and reasoning.
- ^{xiii} There is no general Buddhism.
- ^{xiv} In terms of the systematic presentation of *blo rig*, *Prāsaṅgikamadhyamaka* relies on *Sautrāntika*'s presentation (barring some changes). It differs is in the understanding. This is the progression of philosophical reasoning.
- ^{xv} This means they accept external objects. This point is quite significant in the context of difference from *Cittamātra siddhānta* with respect to externality.
- ^{xvi} However, this image may not be generic image since the distinction is not applicable to sense consciousnesses.
- ^{xvii} These are part of the developments of Tibetan epistemology. See (Hugon, 2011).
- ^{xviii} Some other terms like cognition, cognizer or perceiver have also been used elsewhere.
- ^{xix} These studies are primarily based in the works of Dignāga (6th CE) and Dharmakīrti (7th CE) (Seven treatises on cognition).
- ^{xx} Rinobochay (1980) summarises some other understood meanings of 'clear' and 'knowing'. One such view holds that 'clear' refers to the object appearing clearly from its own side to the mind while knowing refers to the subject, the awareness apprehending, knowing the object.
- ^{xxi} It is maintained that mind is neither the brain nor heart.
- ^{xxii} It includes Pali, Sanskrit and Tibetan texts.
- ^{xxiii} The use of hyphenated fold should suggest that they are not to be understood as distinct things. They are aspects of the same thing; they are being described as having those aspects like a bedsheet folded a few times.
- ^{xxiv} There is a three-fold classification of the case of non-conceptual mistaken mind which we do not pursue here.
- ^{xxv} The physical sense power is matter located within the sense organ acting as uncommon empowering condition.
- ^{xxvi} Thought and conceptual mind have the relation of synonymity here.
- ^{xxvii} According to *Prāsaṅgikamadhyamaka*, we don't apprehend the table directly, we apprehend through the image in between. This is not applicable for the five sense consciousnesses; this is only valid for mental consciousness.
- ^{xxviii} Only very specific images get the mind access to the object. For example, when we think of the image of Mona Lisa, we are not thinking of Mona Lisa. For this mind, the primary object is the image of Mona Lisa, not the generic image. Also, meaning generality is not used for sense consciousness.
- ^{xxix} Entity-wise one, isolate-wise different.



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^{xxx} The Occidental analogues of these relations are the following: The relation of synonymy is mutually inclusive (identity); contradictory is mutually exclusive. Three-modes is the relation of proper subset and the relation of four-modes is intersection between two sets.

^{xxxi} Or transformative cultivation of mind or transformation-cultivation of mind.