

## Ontul Rinpoche's Talk on the Two Truths:

In order to receive the teachings tonight. First, you should cultivate the right motivation that you would like to listen to these teachings in order to liberate all mother sentient beings. In the talk on Bodhicitta, we had discussed the 6 paramitas, which are the precepts or the practices of bodhisattvas. These 6 paramitas are the path of the bodhisattvas, but we do not have to leave the 6 paramitas to do sometime in the future. We can start to do (follow) the 6 Paramitas starting now in an easier way. For instance, while receiving teachings, we can try to practice the paramitas of generosity. By making offerings of flowers, incense sticks, and by making contributions, and donations of all sorts. The second paramitas, which is morality, can be practiced while we are listening to the dharma, by abstaining from all rude behaviors, and maintaining very polite gestures and behaviors. Even keeping the shrine room and kitchen area clean, can also be a sort of morality practice. So while we are sitting listening to the dharma, you might feel some inconveniences or physical discomforts, such as getting tired, having back pain or feeling hungry or thirsty. Enduring or tolerating these discomforts can also be considered a practice of the 3rd paramitas, which is patience. So when you listen to the dharma, come here because you take delight in the dharma. You like to listen to the dharma, so you make an effort to come to this place to listen to the dharma, an important thing to do, and this sense of delight in listening to the dharma, and making the effort to come here and sit here can be a practice of the 4th paramitas of enthusiastic effort. While listening to the teachings, you gaze at the face of the teacher and then you listen to the words with full attention and without wondering. This way of listening to the dharma is a kind of practice of the 5th paramitas, which is meditation. When we listen to the teachings, certain doubts and confusions in your mind get dispelled. When you gain that kind knowledge and gain confidence in the teachings, it is a kind of practice of the last paramitas, wisdom.

If we take a look at the matter of listening to the dharma, for instance. Then it includes all of the 6 paramitas. It is a complete path, of the 6 paramitas. We do not have to think of doing the 6 paramitas sometime in the future. This way of practicing the 6 paramitas is referring to the students. But even the teacher, who is teaching, can practice the 6 paramitas while teaching. So this needs to be mentioned here.

Tonight, Rinpoche will talk about the 2 truths, and the source of these explanations will come from the text, "Instruction of the Mahayana View, the Two Truths" by Dza Patrul Rinpoche, a great Dzogchen master.

For all those who want to rid themselves from samsara, there are two types of dharma to follow. The dharma of practice and the dharma of realization. The dharma of realization has two functions. To analyze and examine general phenomenon and the mind. Regarding, the division between general phenomenon and the two truths, relative and absolute, relative truth pertains to all phenomenon up to the 10th level

bodhisattva. All the phenomenon, experience, and specifications on the path between states is also called relative truth. Relative or conventional phenomenon are of 2 types, correct conventional phenomenon and incorrect conventional phenomenon. Incorrect conventional phenomenon is the perception of ordinary (deluded beings). The people here in the state of aspiration, there are 3 different paths to enlightenment and one of the stages is the stage of aspiration. Individuals who are on this stage, all the perceptions they have are considered correct conventional phenomenon. If the realization is not there. Without the realization, whatever they perceive and recognize is considered to be incorrect conventional phenomenon. After having achieved the stages of the Bodhisattva you get the realizations, then whatever you perceive, the way you perceive, you see phenomenon as correct conventional phenomenon. So the reason the perception of the individual on the path is called correct relative phenomenon is because he or she can directly relate to the reality of appearance, which is appearing but has no intrinsic reality.

From the first to the (10th)last stage of Bodhisattvas, all the appearance are there as a result of habitual patterns, a reflection of habitual patterns. Although the habitual patterns do not have an intrinsic reality, the unreal can be there. For example, there is a type of material, medicine, (deer musk) that is very smelly so that even though it is not there the smell stays around for some time. This is an analogy to phenomenon. It is there even though it does not have intrinsic reality.

So the Buddha went through all the stages of the Bodhisattva and did not have any habitual patterns and all the conventional phenomenon seized to appear as they appear to us as true. Such a person abides in a state free from all elaborations. Therefore, attaching to the ordinary world and sentient beings, holding on to them is called incorrect (perverted) conventional phenomenon. In order to get rid of this ordinary perception of sentient beings and the world, you can work on the practices of divine beings and meditating on the illusory like phenomenon. This kind of phenomenon is called correct conventional phenomenon, because it is used to overcome the incorrect (perverted) view of conventional phenomenon. These are all part of the first truth, relative truth.

Absolute truth means, the state where there are no elaborations, Where all elaborations have ceased, this is called dharmadhatu. Actually, dharmadhatu is defined as unconceived mode of existence, in Sanskrit dharmadhatu. Dharmadhatu itself does not have classification or division, but in order to realize it, some classification has been made. Therefore you can talk about realizing the nature of all phenomenon. You can talk about gaining the absolute realizations, solving all doubts about reality, and you can talk about dharmadhatu itself. But, in dharmadhatu itself there is nothing that can be experienced or not experienced. However, in order to relate to dharmadhatu you can explain it in this way. Ordinary beings can relate to absolute truth by inference but not directly and ordinary beings can infer or imagine but cannot directly see absolute truth. However, exalted beings on the path of the

bodhisattvas can relate more directly. By the definite cognition of the exalted beings, they can relate more directly.

There are three ways for the two truths to appear. There is the appearance and there is also attachment to it. This is how phenomenon appears to ordinary beings with ordinary perception; this is the incorrect or (perverted) relative perception. To persons on the exalted path, the path of the bodhisattva, phenomenon appears to them but they do not attach to it. This is how they perceive. This type of perception is called correct or (unperverted) relative perception. So when there is no more specification anymore such as, appearance and nonappearance, attachment and nonattachment, and realizing and not realizing, when all these dualistic perceptions have subsided that state is called Buddhahood, and also known as the Absolute Truth. Therefore, ordinary beings perceive the phenomenon and are attached. The second type of person, not yet enlightened but not ordinary, see the phenomenon and are not attached and the last are in a state of buddhahood with no specification of appearance or attachment. Such a being is beyond both extremes.

From these three, the first is an invalid cognition, the second is a cognition that is valid in the relative truth and the third is a cognition that realizes the ultimate or absolute truth. For ordinary beings to understand the relative truth they have to rely on examination and analization, whereas exalted beings or beings on the way to buddhahood can realize the nature of appearance directly without examination and analization. In the state of dharmadhatu, when you have realized the ultimate nature of phenomenon there is no specification such as realizing and non-realizing , however in order to relate to these states we need conventional terms such as realization, etc.

So from the point of view of the equalness of the two truths or the undifferentiability of the two truths, there is no perception of existence or nonexistence, so long as one holds on to any of these two extremes this is not a Madhyamaka view or middle view. The moment one realizes the unperverted relative truth, at that moment all the perceptions of existence and nonexistence dissolves. So at that moment, that very moment one realizes the absolute nature of conventional truth, all specifications that exist in the perception of existence and nonexistence, permanence and impermanence all this duality of ideas dissolve. The true condition or the true nature of the relative aspect itself is ultimate truth. The ultimate nature of the relative truth is the ultimate truth, that is said in the Prajna-Paramita Sutra. The reason for dividing the reality into 2 truths is to make it easier for people to realize it. To make it more systematic to follow. So whatever appears, perception which is not Enlightened is called relative truth. When all the confusions and the ordinary perceptions are dissolved, when the mind is free from the perceptions of not having confusions or ordinary perception, this is called Absolute Truth. Shantideva states in the Bodhicaryavatara, the perception of existence and nonexistence does not remain in front of the mind, they remain (?) no perception of

any sort. It is this state that is free from all conceptualization and the mind pacified. From the point of view of the ultimate truth there is no ability to be divided, since it does not exist itself as an entity. Because it does not exist as a true thing, it cannot be divided. The mind of the Buddha is free from all extremes. From that point of view, reality cannot be divided into any number.

Regarding conventional appearances, the two truths do not exist ultimately. All phenomenon exists as the unity of appearance and emptiness. When we realize the unity of appearance and emptiness, when one realizes the un-differentiable or un-discriminatable state of appearance and emptiness, such a person is said to have the understanding, view, or thought and understanding of the Buddha. This is called primordial wisdom, un-discriminatable wisdom of Dharmadhatu.

When the two truths are realized in their own order, this state is called non-dual wisdom or nirvana or enlightenment, without anymore rebirth in samsara. Although one realizes all the phenomenon but not the mind. In other words, although one realizes the subject but not the object, then the whole dharma remains an object to know and this is not a proper antidote for afflictive emotions. Moreover, if one does not realize the nature of the subject of the mind, then there is a possibility that one still have pride or ego based on the understanding of the object. So the way to realize the true nature of the mind which is the subject, we have to go through the understanding of the relative truth, the ultimate truth, and the unity of the two truths.

First what does it mean to understand the two truths. It means to understand the nature of general phenomenon which lack clear existence. Once you realize from the ultimate point of view there is nothing that has true and intrinsic existence, ultimately, one has to realize there is no difference between the two truths. And the mind should be free from all sorts of extremes and all the specifications have dissipated or dissolved from the mind that realizes itself as conventional. Shantideva states in his Bodhicaryavatara, that the relative aspect of phenomenon can be discerned with the mind not the ultimate. But there is a possibility that one may get pride and ( ), from the knowledge of phenomenon. So long as mind has pride and arrogance it is called a perverted mind, since it is under sway of these emotions. It is said in the sutras that thinking “yes I have achieved” is conceit and egotistically thinking “I have realized” is a kind of pride. They are to be gotten ride of. So arrogance and conceit are known as the activities of the maras. So these are like egotistic thoughts like “I have achieved and realized“. The mind that understands is relative and the nature of this mind is absolute.

If you look at the nature of this understanding mind. It appears that there is nothing truly existent. You will also come to know it is empty of any existence or nonexistence from primordial. It is empty of birth and cessation, coming and going. It is empty of permanence and impermanence. It is also empty of the three times, past, present, and future. For this reason it is called the reality, empty of all specifications.

In the sutra “Request by ( ? ) a disciple of Buddha. It is said that the mind is neither inside or outside of the body. It is also that it does not exist somewhere else. It is said in another sutra that the mind has no shape, no color, and no place, and is like space. The true mode of the way the mind exist is ultimately free from the notion of relative and absolute truth. The nature of the mind is one free from all extremes.

But we have just designated the two truths based on the mind. The classification of relative and ultimate truth are conventional ideas. In the state of enlightenment or Buddhahood there does not remain any specific entity as the mind , so there is no classification of the two truths. While sentient beings are perceiving the two truths which is a false perception according to the ultimate truth, the nature of these perceptions are also lacking any true existence. Therefore, by remaining in the unified state of mind where appearance and emptiness are unified, in this state one can realize the absolute truth. So in order to realize the undifferentiable nature of the two truths, one has to understand the definition of the two truths. For this reason the truth has been divided into two truths, to make it realizable. When the nature of all phenomenon and the realizing itself, the realizing off all phenomenon which is free from elaborations is realized in a unified way, in this unified state, the state of selflessness of person and the selflessness of phenomenon is realized. Here all the extreme views are dissolved and become the uncompounded mental state. So the correct realizing must be realized free from the perception of realizing and not realizing, seeing and not seeing.

In order to put into practice there are two dharmas. For a person of sharp intelligence who can practice ( ? ). For such people who have accumulated and internalized the 2 accumulations, knowing and reason. The absolute truth can be realized just by introducing it to them. Such a being of sharp intelligence, once given the introduction to absolute and relative truth can directly realize it, just by remaining in that realization regularly. While one is in the meditation of the absolute truth, the meditation should be lead in a way where there is no distinction between the object to know and the mind to know, the object of knowledge and the known, and also should be free from the notion of true and untrue. In short, free from all duality thinking. One should be meditating in a way where there exists no center or fringes. In such a meditation there is no particular negative thought to give up and no particular divine or positive thought to acquire and posses. As it said by Maitreya Buddha , from the point of view of the ultimate nature there is nothing to take away and nothing to get. Seeing the ultimate reality as it is, is the only thing that is needed. The moment one sees reality as it is, one is liberated. One should always try to maintain an outlook regarding the phenomenon which is dreamlike. They appear as dreams, which can appear but have no intrinsic reality, one should always try to maintain such an outlook.

People who have not reached that level of realizations, it is more effective to meditate on love, compassion, and Bodhicitta, practiced as viewing them as illusion,

not holding them as true. In this state, a lot of merit should be accumulated for the benefit of all sentient beings, but all these methods should be regarded as illusions. Ordinary beings, beginners, have to follow the path of the 4 ways of turning the mind and then proceed step by step to the ultimate realization. The 4 ways of turning the mind means to think about the precious human life that is hard to achieve, impermanence and death, karma and result, and the nature of Samsara. If one does not meditate in this way the ultimate truth cannot be totally realized, but one can have a glimpse of it.

Appearance that we relate to, all the things that appear to us and to which we relate are part of the relative truth. The true nature of the appearance themselves is the ultimate truth. The mind that is active and that realizes is the relative mind, that mind itself is the ultimate truth. For instance, the sound that is made in saying the words the two truths is the relative part, and the nature of the sound is the ultimate truth. From the point of view of the true nature of phenomenon and the point of view of the realization of a Buddha, there does not exist even the unified state of the two truths. That also does not exist. In this state, where there are no extremes left, this state is called a state free from elaborations, or a state of dharmata. From the ultimate point of view, the self or person, I, and the self of the phenomenon does not exist, as we perceive. When the self of person and the self of phenomenon are realized as having no true existence, this is called the view, and to maintain this view is called meditation. So the act, out of compassion to accumulate merit for the benefit of all sentient beings, is activity. This perception, the conception of the subject and object into the state of dharmadhatu is the truth, the result. So positing the wisdom beyond all directions and borders, that means knowing everything, having wisdom that pervades the activity is the quality. And spontaneously accomplishing the benefit of sentient beings is the activities.

The way to perceive is that everything has a name or label. We have words and ideas to relate to those things and this system should be related to just as names and nothing more. This is how you should maintain your perception. It is because the nature of the mind itself has no intrinsic reality. The nature of the mind is lacking any true existence of its own. For this reason, there is no perception of self, no perception of other, and there is no duality or specifications there from that point of view, like self and others.

When you see the words “do not exist”, this is to overcome the perception of thinking that things really exist. The things that we think exist do not exist, but nonexistence also does not exist. This mind which recognizes and perceives things through the senses, in reality, this mind does not exist on the object of perception, does not exist in between, or inside or outside. It does not come from anywhere. When it ceases to exist, it has no where to go. It is empty of arising and it is empty of feeling. It is said in the sutra, whatever you think relates to the desire, form, and formless realms. If we do not think of anything then we are relating to nothing. When

one does not relate to anything it is called the conduct of yogis or practitioners. When ordinary beings can maintain their practice in a way where there is no particular dharma, that is the best way for the ordinary person to practice. This actually means to maintain the ordinary nature of the mind, without trying to fabricate or make it better, just maintain the ordinary nature of the mind. It is said in the sutra, if you ask what is the best dharma. The best dharma is when a person does not have any conceptuality as specific to the dharma. It is said in another sutra, that enlightenment does not exist as an entity. Enlightenment is not visible. Since it is not an object that we can see, it is just a name. So the word Buddha is also just a name. (Rinpoche laughs)

From the point of view of the ultimate truth, in the state of dharmadhatu, all the elaborations and the specifications are dissolved and it is beyond expression and thinking. From this point of view, things such as meditation and practicing dharma are like space looking at the space, when we are viewing it from a relative level it is like space looking at space, because in the state of ultimate there is no such thing as meditation and no meditation. So while meditating on the ultimate truth, the (?) should maintain in the ordinary nature which is originally free from all elaborations. And one should maintain meditation that has no distinction between meditation and post meditation and it should be without particular hold, it should be free from all extremes.

So the reason that is called the relative truth, is because it is true for people at that level, although from the point of view of the ultimate truth it is not true. In the same way, the ultimate truth is true, because it is true for the people who realize it. They are both called truths. It is also reasonable to say that the two truths are one. Because the ultimate truth is nothing more than the nature of the relative truth. So the true nature of the relative truth is itself the ultimate truth, they are not separate. As it is said, the ultimate truth is not a property of the thinking mind. It cannot be realized by thinking. Since it is beyond the ordinary mind or the thinking mind, in this state, in point of view of the ultimate truth there are no elaborations or specifications. For example, it is said in Bodhicaryavatara by Shantideva, the way that the worldly person and the way that the yogi sees phenomenon is different. So since their two perceptions do not agree they always debate. Because their perceptions are different. In their own place, both of these perceptions are valid. The worldly beings' perceptions are true to them, so they are valid to that extent and the yogi's way of perceiving is true to them to their extent. This talk was based on the (Patrul's ?) Rinpoche's small text on the two truths.