

# **FPMT BASIC PROGRAM ONLINE**

## **TENETS**

### **FOURTEEN GUIDED MEDITATIONS ON THE FOUR SCHOOLS**

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# TENETS

## Fourteen Meditations on the Four Schools

### Part 1 - Vaibhasika

#### Meditation 1- Vaibhasika

##### Introduction

*In this meditation we will explore the way the Vaibhasikas define conventional truth. They posit that if you mentally or physically break an object up into its parts, and as a result the awareness of the object ceases; the object is a conventional truth. We will use the example of a house.*

##### Check your meditation posture

##### Briefly concentrate on the breath

##### Motivation

##### Visualization

##### Refuge, 7 limb prayer, mandala offering

##### Blessing with nectar-rain

##### Actual meditation

Please think of a house. Imagine the house is actually there.

We are going to mentally dismantle this house.

Remove the tiles from the roof. Is there still a house?

Take off the chimney.

Is there still a house?

Take out the glass from the windows.

Is there still a house?

Remove the doors.

Is there still a house?

Take away the roof.

Is there still a house?

Take away the inside walls.

Is there still a house?

Remove the right side outer wall.

Is there still a house?

Remove the back wall.  
Is there still a house?

Remove the outer wall on the left.  
Is there still a house there?

Take away the front wall.  
Is there still a house left?

Remove the floor.  
Is there still a house?

At some point you have lost the house; it no longer presents itself to your mind. You discover that there is a point when the awareness of a house no longer exists; it has disappeared. That is why, according to Vaibhasika, this is not an ultimate truth. Concentrate on this conclusion for short while.

The only thing left is a big heap of building materials.  
Now think that you take one single brick out of this heap.  
Gradually divide the brick into smaller and smaller pieces until you are unable to divide it further, until you get to the smallest part.

This is the smallest part you cannot divide any further.  
This is therefore an ultimate truth according to Vaibhasika.

Concentrate on this conclusion for a short while.

**Dissolve the visualization; dedication**

## Meditation 2 - Vaibhasika

### Introduction

*In this meditation we will explore the views of the Vaibhasikas further. One of their tenets is that phenomena exist truly, but not ultimately.*

### Meditation posture

**Briefly concentrate on the breathing**

### Motivation

### Visualization

**Refuge, 7 limb prayer, mandala offering**

**Blessing with nectar-rain**

### Actual meditation

Imagine walking down a street and looking at a house.

Establish for yourself that this house that you see exists truly, by making use of a number of reasons:

- It truly exists because you see it and you can live in it.
- You are not the only one seeing this house. If you ask someone else whether there is a house there, the other person would confirm this.
- The house exists without depending on you perceiving it, because it will definitely still be there after you have left.
- Also add any reasons of your own to support this.

Now imagine that you see the same house mirrored in the shop-window on the opposite side of the street.

Compare this mirror image with the first house.

This second house does not truly exist; establish this by using the same reasoning as with the first house.

Then come to the conclusion, just as the Vaibhasikas do, that the first house truly exists and is independent of your perception - but that it does not exist ultimately (as you have established during the previous meditation).

Concentrate on this conclusion for a short while.

### Dissolve the visualization; dedication

## Meditation 3 - Vaibhasika

### Introduction

*In this meditation we investigate the Vaibhasika views further. Another of their tenets is that the collection of the aggregates is an illustration of the self: the person who collects karma and continues on to a next life.*

### Meditation posture

**Briefly concentrate on the breathing**

### Motivation

### Visualization

**Refuge, 7 limb prayer, mandala offering**

**Blessing with nectar-rain**

### Actual meditation

Consider for a moment what a collection means to you.

Look for the collection of aggregates in your own continuum.

You can think of a collection that consists of two parts (body and mind) or of five parts (form, feeling, discrimination, compositional factors and consciousness).

What else is the self other than the aggregates?

There isn't anything apart from the body and mind, is there?

Then apply the following lines of reasoning:

- During your entire life you are the collection of aggregates.
- Although the body you had as a baby is not the same as the body you have now, it is still a body.
- And even though your thoughts today are not exactly the same as yesterdays, it's still mental consciousness.
- So the collection of aggregates is there all the time, from birth to death.

In addition, when you die the collection of aggregates remains because you continue as a bardo being with a bardo consciousness. You still have the collection of aggregates.

Imagine that you are reborn as a god of the formless realm where you no longer have a form aggregate.

However, even though the exact content of the aggregates has changed, it is still a collection; it is now a collection consisting of four aggregates.

Conclude that the self, the person who accumulates and experiences karma, is the collection of aggregates.

Take a short while to concentrate on this conclusion.

### Dissolve the visualization; dedication

## Meditation 4 - Vaibhasika

### Introduction

*In this meditation we will investigate the meaning of the gross selflessness of persons according to the Vaibhasikas. They refute the Hindu view that posits the existence of an 'atman'; a permanent, partless, independent self. Our own predominantly Christian background accepts the idea that there is a soul. You may have been brought up with this idea as well. We are going to investigate whether we can find a permanent soul.*

### Meditation posture

#### Concentration on the breath

#### Motivation

#### Visualization

#### Refuge, 7 limb prayer, mandala offering

#### Blessing with nectar-rain

### Actual meditation

Let's try to get a clear idea of a permanent essence, a permanent soul or self.

Your own soul is the essence of what you are.

When you die, your soul is what goes on to a next phase.

While alive, your body changes all the time and the content of your mind is in constant flux, but there is also a sense that your self in essence is staying the same.

That self, which does not really change, is permanent, is single, unitary, one entity, and it is independent of body and mind.

Look at how you experience this yourself.

When you woke up this morning and saw yourself in the mirror, didn't you have the impression that you were in essence the same person as yesterday?

In this way, imagine going back to the day before yesterday, last week, last month, last year, etc. Check whether in essence you were the same person.

As a baby, weren't you in essence the same person?

Go back into the womb, and ask yourself the same question.

In a previous life, weren't you in essence the same person?

The Vaibhasikas posit that such a self, which would be permanent, partless and not depending on body and mind, does not exist.

Try to follow the following lines of reasoning:

- If such a self would exist, it would have to be perceivable separate from the aggregates.  
If you put your body to one side, and your mind to the other side, is there still a self left?
- A permanent self is un-produced.  
Still, you say, “that is me” when you see your body.  
The body is a product, it is therefore impermanent, and it is the basis for the idea of ‘I’.  
It’s contradictory for the self not to be produced while the basis for it is produced.
- If you are a woman in one life, an animal in another, and after that again a god or a hell being, how can this be thought of as a permanent, independent phenomenon?

Conclude that you do not exist as a permanent, partless, independent essence.

Take a short while to concentrate on this conclusion.

**Dissolve the visualization; dedication**

## Part 2 - Sautrantika

### Meditation 5 - Sautrantika

#### Introduction

*In this meditation we explore the Sautrantika view with regard to ultimate truth. According to the Sautrantikas the definition of an ultimate truth is a phenomenon that is ultimately able to perform a function. This is mainly referring to the function of creating a result.*

#### Check your meditation posture

#### Briefly concentrate on the breath

#### Motivation

#### Visualization

#### Refuge, 7 limb prayer, mandala offering

#### Blessing with nectar-rain

#### Actual meditation

Again, take to mind a house. Imagine the house is actually there.

This house exists, because it can ultimately perform a function.

You can live in it, you can decorate it, you can put all kinds of nice furniture in it, you can sleep there and eat there, etc. The most important function of the house is that it produces its own next moment.

Now begin to mentally dismantle this house, throwing all its parts onto one big heap.

Take the tiles from the roof.

Can the house still perform a function?

The function now is to produce the next moment of a house without tiles on the roof.

Take off the chimney.

Can it still perform a function?

Its function now is to produce the next moment of a house without tiles or chimney.

Take the glass out of the windows.

Can it still perform a function?

Its function is to produce the next moment of a house without tiles or chimney or glass in the windows.

Take away the doors.

Can it still perform a function?

Its function is to produce the next moment of a house without doors etc.

Take off the roof.

Can it still perform a function?

Its function now is to produce the next moment of a house without a roof etc.



Remove the inside walls.

Can it still perform a function?

Its function is to produce the next moment of a house without inside walls.

Remove the right side outer wall.

Can it still perform a function?

The function now is to produce the next moment of a house without a right side wall.

Take away the back wall.

Can it still perform a function?

The function now is to produce the next moment of a house without a back wall etc.

Remove the left side outer wall.

Can it still perform a function?

Its function now is to produce the next moment of a house without a left side wall etc.

Take away the front.

Can it still perform a function?

Its function now is to produce the next moment of the house without a front etc.

Remove the floor.

Is it still performing a function?

The function now is to produce the next moment of a house without a floor etc.

Now there is no house left; all you are left with is a heap of rubble.

According to Sautrantika this heap of rubble is still an ultimate truth because it produces the next moment of rubble. Consider whether you can come along with this. Can the separate bits of rubble, like the pieces of stone and glass, still ultimately perform a function? Are they themselves an ultimate truth?

Now again imagine that you take a brick out of the rubble. And again, gradually divide this brick into smaller and smaller pieces until you get to the smallest part that you are unable to divide any further.

Can this part perform a function? Is this smallest bit an ultimate truth?

However far you divide up a composite phenomenon, in the end it is still capable of performing a function, and thus it is an ultimate truth.

Concentrate on this conclusion for a short while.

**Dissolve the visualization; dedication**

## Meditation 6 - Sautrantika

### Introduction

*In this meditation we will look into the way the Sautrantikas view the person, who accumulates karma and experiences its results in this and future lives. According to some Sautrantikas, the continuum of the aggregates is the illustration of the person.*

### Meditation posture

**Briefly concentrate on the breathing**

### Motivation

### Visualization

**Refuge, 7 limb prayer, mandala offering**

**Blessing with nectar-rain**

### Actual meditation

Go back in time to the moment you were born. As a small baby you came out of the womb. You do all kinds of things, like crying, drinking milk, and gurgling. Time passes and you become a toddler. Now ask yourself what has become a toddler. That is the person.

Is the person only the mind?

If that would be the case, you would still even now have the body of a baby!

Is the person only the body?

In that case, you'd still have the same thoughts and feelings as when you were a baby.

Is the person both body and mind?

If so, you would consist of two persons who each turn from baby into toddler, because body and mind are two separate phenomena.

Or is it the continuum of body and mind?

That seems to be the most acceptable way to look at it. The aggregates are in a constant state of flux, they do not stay the same for one instant; all those instants are connected and form a stream of moments, whereby each moment causes the next.

Now continue on in your life; you grow further, into your teens.

You have various pleasant and unpleasant experiences.

You perform all kinds of actions of body, speech and mind and thereby accumulate karma.

Try to get a feel for this continuously changing stream of physical and mental processes.

That continuity is you.

Keep on going through your life from your teens onward until you arrive at the present moment.

At this moment you have thoughts and feelings. Who has those experiences?

Is it only your mind? Or only your body? Or is it the combination of your body and mind? Isn't it most probably the continuum of body and mind?

Now think that you get older and older and die. That as well is the continuum of all those previous moments.

After your death you enter the bardo, and imagine that you then find a new rebirth as a puppy.

You are the continuum of all previous moments.

The person cannot only be the body, because the human body has now died.

The person cannot only be the mind, because the mind of your previous life was a human mind, and now it is the mind of a little dog.

The only possibly conclusion is that the person is the continuum of the five aggregates.

That is the person who accumulates karma and is the basis for karma to ripen.

Concentrate on this conclusion for a while.

**Dissolve the visualization; dedication**

## Meditation 7 - Sautrantika

### Introduction

*This meditation is about the subtle selflessness of persons according to Sautrantika; the lack of a substantially existent, in the sense of self-sufficient, person. A self-sufficient, substantially existent person appears to be the boss amongst the aggregates, the one who makes the decisions while also being itself part of the aggregates. It is like a head chef who directs his junior chefs by giving instructions and commands. The head chef and his junior chefs are the same with regard to all being chefs. But the head chef does not depend on his junior chefs in terms of power; he does not receive instructions from his staff, while his staff are dependent on him. They have to follow his orders. In this meditation we try to get an experience of such a substantially existent self, and then we try to refute its existence.*

### Check your meditation posture

### Briefly concentrate on the breath

### Motivation

### Visualization

### Refuge, 7 limb prayer, mandala offering

### Blessing with nectar-rain

### Actual meditation

You are now sitting here meditating.

You are trying to concentrate and to maintain a proper position.

Now ask yourself who has instructed you to concentrate and remain seated like this in the proper position? Who is in charge and directs your body and mind?

See whether you can get a sense of an 'I' as manager or controller. A manager that controls the aggregates, but is not controlled by them.

You are taking part in the Basic Program.

Who took the decision to become a participant in this?

Try to get a sense of 'I' as the decision maker. The one who makes the decision is the boss, and body and mind follow the orders based on this boss's decisions.

Try to also experience where in your body this boss is located.

You talk of 'my body' and 'my mind'.

Try to experience the 'I' that is the possessor of body and mind.

Isn't it the case that this possessor exerts power over the aggregates while the aggregates do not have power over this possessor?

Try to hold the experience of this self; a self-sufficient, substantially existent self. Concentrate on this for a while.

Imagine that the temperature in the meditation hall drops some ten degrees.

You are getting cold and you say, "I'm cold".

It is in fact your body that experiences that it gets colder in the room.

So it is obvious that your body influences the 'I'.

Now think that somebody is calling you names.

You get annoyed and you say, "I am furious about your abuse!"

In fact, it is your mind being under the control of the disturbing emotion of anger.

Obviously, the mind influences the 'I'.

Now realize that it has been a few hours since you have eaten.

You will think, "I'm hungry", while in fact you just have an empty stomach.

That empty stomach influences the 'I'.

Think how you possess a body and a mind.

You are the possessor.

There can only be a possessor, if there are possessions.

A possessor is dependent on possessions.

The 'I', who is the possessor of the body and mind, is dependent on those possessions.

Now come to the conclusion that there is no 'I' to be found that is not under the influence of the aggregates.

There is no 'I' that is a substantial, independently existent controller, boss or possessor.

Concentrate on this conclusion for a short while.

**Dissolve the visualization; dedication**

## Part 3 - Cittamatrīn

### Meditation 8 - Cittamatrīn

#### Introduction

*In this meditation we explore the view of the Cittamatrīn or Mind-Only school. They posit that there are no external objects. The appearances that we perceive arise due to the ripening of imprints placed on the mind-basis-of-all.*

#### Check your meditation posture

**Briefly concentrate on the breath**

#### Motivation

#### Visualization

**Refuge, 7 limb prayer, mandala offering**

**Blessing with nectar-rain**

#### Actual meditation

Look around you.

You see other students.

You experience them as external objects, existing outside of yourself.

You can estimate the different distances between yourself and several others.

That gives you a strong impression that they are there and you are here.

Ask yourself where this experience of seeing your fellow students actually takes place.

Doesn't this experience only take place in your own consciousness?

You can touch your fellow students.

That gives you even more the idea that they are external, outside of yourself, existing as external objects.

But where actually is the experience of touch taking place?

It's a physical process in your own body and events in your own consciousness that produce these experiences.

Listen to the sounds around you, some close, some distant.

Is this actually a matter of distance, or does this come about due to our interpretation, that we are thinking in terms of nearby and distant?

The experience of hearing these sounds only takes place in your own consciousness...

Now direct your mind to the different smells in the space around you. You may smell incense, flowers, or other smells.

You will think that the odour of incense or flowers must exist outside yourself to be able to smell them.

But the experience of odour is entirely internal.

That internal experience is caused by the ripening of the karmic seed that produced an imprint in the past.

It does not require external objects.

Conclude that all objects you experience, although they appear as external, are in fact internal experiences due to the ripening of karmic imprints.

Concentrate on this conclusion for a while.

**Dissolve the visualization; dedication**

## Meditation 9 - Cittamatrīn

### Introduction

*For Cittamatrīn, the mind-basis-of-all is the illustration of the person who goes from life to life and accumulates karma. In their view, the mental consciousness does not have sufficient stability to be the agent for carrying karmic imprints to the next life. The mind-basis-of-all does have such stability.*

### Check your meditation posture

### Briefly concentrate on the breath

### Motivation

### Visualization

### Refuge, 7 limb prayer, mandala offering

### Blessing with nectar-rain

### Actual meditation

Try to come to a clear conclusion that in this and all previous lives you have accumulated karmic imprints with body, speech and mind.

These imprints have the potential to produce concordant experiences in the future.

The question is, where are these imprints stored?

Who is the agent that carries these imprints? In other words, who is the person?

Imagine you are dying.

The physical senses no longer function and all the sense consciousnesses have dissolved.

All the gross conceptions within the mental consciousness dissolve, and the mental consciousness becomes very subtle.

It's becoming so subtle that even subtle forms of conception no longer occur; it is almost like you have become unconscious.

It is quite clear that the mental consciousness goes through tremendous changes during the death process.

How could something as unstable as this mental consciousness possibly be the carrier of the karmic imprints?

Now think that you have fallen asleep and have entered the phase of the deepest sleep that is without dreams.

At this time your mental consciousness is also very subtle.

It differs tremendously from the consciousness while you are awake.

How could such a mental consciousness, that is so unstable, be suitable to carry karmic imprints?



Imagine that you faint; for a short moment you are unconscious.

This experience is entirely different from your ordinary way of functioning.  
Your consciousness obviously functions in a totally different manner when you faint.

How could such a mental consciousness, which functions in such diverse ways, be a stable agent for carrying the karmic imprints?

Imagine you are lying on an operating table and will be brought under general anesthetic.

During the anesthetic, your mental consciousness functions at a totally different level.  
It is obviously not stable, and therefore it's not suitable to be the carrier of karmic imprints.

Therefore the person, who carries the karmic imprints, cannot be the same as the mental consciousness that is lacking so much stability.  
The person has to be a stable consciousness, and that is the mind-basis-of-all; the carrier of karmic imprints.

Concentrate on this conclusion for a while.

**Dissolve the visualization; dedication**

## Part 4A - Svatantrika Madhyamika

### Meditation 10 - Svatantrika Madhyamika

#### Introduction

*Svatantrika Madhyamikas posit that phenomena do not truly exist because they do not exist the way they appear to exist. Objects appear to exist by way of their own character without being posited through the force of a non-defective awareness (which is an awareness that is not under the influence of true existence)<sup>1</sup>. In actuality, phenomena exist due to a combination of existence by way of their own character and being posited by a non-defective awareness.*

#### Check your meditation posture

**Briefly concentrate on the breath**

#### Motivation

#### Visualization

**Refuge, 7 limb prayer, mandala offering**

**Blessing with nectar-rain**

#### Actual meditation

Imagine that you are in a street outside and you are looking at a house.

How do you know that it is a house you are looking at?

That is because of its specific characteristics.

Check for yourself what these specific characteristics are.

What kind of shape does it have?

Does it have a roof?

How many floors are there?

What is the color of the bricks?

What kind of windows does it have?

Does it have a balcony?

Imagine going inside. Again, establish what characteristics make it into a house.

Can you live in it, cook in it, sleep in it?

All the characteristics of this house appear clearly; this results in you knowing that this is a house. The house seems to be there without depending on your awareness.

But how did you establish the existence of the house with all its characteristics?

You have done that through your awareness. If there were no awareness of the house, there would be no house either.

It is clear that what is needed to establish the existence of a house is a combination of characteristics and awareness.

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<sup>1</sup> *Emptiness Yoga*, p. 88; *A Study of Svatantrika*, p. 149.

Imagine leaving the house again and going outside.

There is a car parked in front of the house.

Look at the car and establish with your awareness the characteristics of the car.

What kind of shape does it have? What is its color?

Does it have wheels, an engine, headlights, etc.?

Get inside the car and establish what the characteristics are that make this a car.

Can you use it to drive?

It is due to your own awareness establishing the characteristics of the car that you can say that the car exists.

In addition, what makes the house a house and not a car, and the car a car and not a house?

Why is it that you cannot use the house as a car and visa versa?

It's because the house exists due to its own specific characteristics, and the car due to its own specific characteristics.

If that would not be the case, then you would have to be able to use the house as car and the car as house.

Both only exist through being established by a non-defective awareness.

Concentrate on this conclusion for a while.

**Dissolve the visualization; dedication**

## Meditation 11 - Svatantrika Madhyamika

### Introduction

*The Svatantrika Madhyamikas posit the subtle mental consciousness to be the illustration of the person who accumulates karma and continues to the next life.*

**Check your meditation posture**

**Briefly concentrate on the breath**

**Motivation**

**Visualization**

**Refuge, 7 limb prayer, mandala offering**

**Blessing with nectar-rain**

### Actual meditation

Try to come to a clear conclusion that in this and all previous lives you have accumulated karmic imprints with body, speech and mind.

These imprints have the potential to produce concordant experiences in the future.

The question is, where are these imprints stored?

Who is the agent that carries these imprints? In other words, who is the person?

Imagine you are dying.

The physical senses no longer function and all the sense consciousnesses have dissolved.

All the gross conceptions within the mental consciousness dissolve, and the mental consciousness becomes very subtle.

This very subtle mental consciousness leaves the body. It abandons the body and leaves it behind as a lifeless corpse.

The body that you abandon cannot be the person. Therefore the subtle mental consciousness that leaves the body must be the person. The karmic imprints placed upon it propel it towards a new rebirth.

Now imagine that you are reborn as a long-life god. You have a luminously radiant body, you experience continuous blissful happiness, live in a beautiful environment and will never be ill.

In your previous life you were a human being, and now you are a god. Are you still the same person? Is the person who is now a god exactly the same or totally different from the person who was a human being?

The person can't be the same, because you were a human being first and now you are a god.

Well then, is this person who is now a god completely different from the person who was a human?

If this were the case, you would not experience results of actions created in your previous life.

So what forms the bridge; what is the connection between these two lives?

There must be something connecting this godly existence with the human life.

It's not the body, and it's not the gross consciousnesses.

Then it must be the subtle consciousness that was leaving the body upon death, and on which all the karmic imprints must be accumulated.

Concentrate on this conclusion for a while.

**Dissolve the visualization; dedication**

## Part 4B - Prasangika Madhyamika

### Meditation 12 - Prasangika Madhyamika

#### Introduction

*Prasangika Madhyamikas posit that all phenomena are empty of inherent, or true existence; they do not exist by way of their own characteristics.*

#### Check your meditation posture

#### Briefly concentrate on the breath

#### Motivation

#### Visualization

#### Refuge, 7 limb prayer, mandala offering

#### Blessing with nectar-rain

#### Actual meditation

Imagine looking at a house.

The house appears as though existing inherently, truly, by way of its own characteristics.  
The image of the house presents itself to you.

If the house could talk, it would be shouting at you, "I am a house!"  
That is the force with which the house appears to your mind.

Try to experience this clearly and concentrate on it for a while.

Then establish for yourself that there are only two ways in which the inherently existent house can possibly exist.

If the inherently existing house exists, it would have to be either one with its parts, or different from its parts. There aren't any more options.

Concentrate on this conclusion for a moment.

Now ask yourself:

Is the house that appears to my mind inherently one with its parts?

There are many parts.

Yet there is only one house.

If the house would be inherently one with its parts, you would need to end up with as many houses as there are parts.

Therefore, the house cannot be the same as or one with its parts.

Or is it one specific part that is the house?

Is the roof the house?  
Is the house the windows?  
Is the house the left side wall, or the right side wall?

Investigate further in this way whether the house is inherently one with its parts.

Establish that the house cannot be inherently one with its parts.  
Concentrate on this conclusion for a while.

Is the house then inherently different from its parts?

Imagine that you paint the house blue, and its parts you paint red.

Now try to put the blue house on one side, away from the red parts.

If the house would be inherently different from its parts, you would have to be able to set the blue house aside, away from its red parts, but you can't do that.  
You cannot perceive the house separate from its parts.

Conclude that the house cannot be inherently different from its parts.  
Concentrate on this conclusion for a while.

The house that appears to you as inherently, truly existent, as existent by way of its own characteristics, is not inherently one with and not inherently different from its parts.  
Therefore, it does not exist inherently, or truly, or by way of its own characteristics.

Concentrate on this conclusion for a while.

**Dissolve the visualization; dedication**

## Meditation 13 - Prasangika Madhyamika

### Introduction

*Prasangika Madhyamikas posit the mere 'I' as the illustration of the person; a mere imputation on the basis of the five aggregates. In this meditation we will first of all refute all the previous ideas of what the person would be, in order to be left with how the Prasangikas posit the person to exist.*

### Check your meditation posture

### Briefly concentrate on the breath

### Motivation

### Visualization

### Refuge, 7 limb prayer, mandala offering

### Blessing with nectar-rain

### Actual meditation

- First ask yourself whether the collection of the aggregates can be the person.

When you die, your consciousness leaves your body.

You continue as a bardo being.

Is that still the same collection of aggregates?

And if you are reborn as an elephant, is it still the same collection?

If not, how then can your present collection of aggregates be your self?

If you make one big heap of all the parts of, for example, the body - the legs, arms, head, feet, trunk - without connecting them up, you still have the collection of aggregates, but do you still have a person?

If you re-arrange the collection, for example, by putting the arms on top of the neck, and the head on the belly, and the hands in the place of the ears - you still have the same collection, but is the same person still there?

Come to the conclusion that the collection of aggregates can't be the self.

Take a short while to concentrate on this conclusion.

- Now ask yourself whether the continuum of the aggregates can be the person.

You as a person are one thing.

The continuum consists of many moments.

Which moment of the continuum is the person?

Is the person the moment of the continuum of this morning, or yesterday?

If both of these would be the person, you already end up with two persons!

Come to the conclusion that the continuum of the aggregates can't be the self.



- Ask yourself whether the mind-basis-of-all can be the person.

If this would be the case, then you would not be your body.

How could you then be hungry?

How could you say that somebody is looking young or old?

Come to the conclusion that the mind-basis-of-all cannot be the self.

- Ask yourself whether the subtle consciousness can be the person.

Would anybody still be able to recognize you?

They wouldn't recognize you by your face any more!

Come to the conclusion that the subtle consciousness cannot be the self.

- The aggregates are in a constant flux of change and there is a continuous ripening of cause and effect taking place.

It is impossible to find any static moment to be 'I'.

The entire process of continuous change can only be labelled 'I'.

That is why the person is only an imputation on the basis of the aggregates.

First, there is the basis, and then the imputation follows.

The aggregates are there first, and that basis can be labelled 'I'.

If the aggregates or any one of them would already be the 'I', it would not make sense to impute 'I' on them since the basis of imputation and the imputation itself are different.

Come to the conclusion that person is nothing but a label imputed on the aggregates.

Concentrate on this conclusion for a while.

**Dissolve the visualization; dedication**

## Meditation 14 - Prasangika Madhyamika

### Introduction

*Although the person is merely labelled on the basis of the aggregates, it appears totally different to our mind, as inherently existing. Prasangika Madhyamikas posit that the person is empty of inherent existence and does not exist truly or by way of its own characteristics.*

### Check your meditation posture

### Briefly concentrate on the breath

### Motivation

### Visualization

### Refuge, 7 limb prayer, mandala offering

### Blessing with nectar-rain

### Actual meditation

Try to experience yourself as truly existing, as existing by way of your own characteristics.

The idea is to get a sense of yourself as very concrete, substantial.

Such a self appears as not depending on imputation.

The following are examples of how you can make this self appear.

- You imagine hitting yourself on the chest and thinking 'I!'
- You think back to an occasion where you were accused of something you did not do
- You imagine being in the dark and being unable to make out what something is when you bump into it
- You imagine finding yourself at the edge of a precipice

Choose one of these options or use another way that works for you to make this self appear.

Concentrate on this for a short while.

If it would exist, it would have to be either inherently one with its parts, the aggregates, it would have to be the same as them, or it would have to be different from them.

Try to conclude that these are actually the only two ways in which this inherently existing self can exist.

There are no other possibilities.

Concentrate on this conclusion for a while.

Ask yourself:

Is this self that appears to me one with the aggregates?

There are five aggregates.

But there is only one self.

If the self would be inherently one with the aggregates, you would have to have as many selves as you have aggregates.

Therefore, the self cannot be the same as the aggregates, and it is not one with the aggregates.

Could there possibly be one specific part amongst the aggregates that is the self?

Is your head the self?

Is your torso the self?

Is your left arm the self, or the right arm?

Is this present moment of consciousness the self? Or the next moment?

In this way continue to investigate whether the self is inherently one with any part of the aggregates.

Establish that the self cannot be inherently one with the aggregates.

Concentrate on this conclusion for a while.

Is the self in the way it appears inherently different from the aggregates?

Try to separate the self from the aggregates by placing the self to the left while putting the aggregates to the right.

If the self and the aggregates would be different, you would have to be able to separate them, but you can't. You cannot perceive self and aggregates separate from each other.

Establish that the self cannot be inherently different from the aggregates.

Concentrate on this conclusion for a while.

The self that presents itself to you as inherently, truly existent, or as existent by way of its own characteristics, is not inherently one with or inherently different from the aggregates.

Therefore, it does not exist inherently, truly, and by way of its own characteristics.

Concentrate on this conclusion for a while.

**Dissolve the visualization; dedication**