



# INTRODUCTION TO THE MIDDLE WAY

Chandrakirti's *Madhyamakavatara*  
with Commentary by  
Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche

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With commentary by Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche

Given at the Centre d'Etudes de Chanteloube  
Dordogne, France  
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Arranged according to Gorampa's commentary

Edited by Alex Trisoglio

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## **FOREWORD**

### **The view of Madhyamika in Buddhism**

In Buddhism, the view is essential for both theory and practice. All the various Buddhist schools and paths have been established based on the right view, and the result of the Buddhist path – enlightenment – is none other than the complete understanding or realisation of the view. The view is indispensable for all kinds of Buddhist practice, from the simple and seemingly mundane acts of a Theravadin monk shaving his head and not eating after midday, to the Mahayana practitioner abandoning meat, offering butterlamps and circumambulating, to more complicated and exotic paths such as building monasteries or practicing kundalini yoga. The view not only gives us the reason to practice; it is also the result we seek to attain through practice. Furthermore, the view is also a safety railing that prevents us from going astray on the path. Without the view, the whole aim and purpose of Buddhism is lost. If we wish to reach a destination, it is fruitless to proceed aimlessly on the journey if we have not established our direction and destination. Likewise, meditation and action will not bear fruit unless we have established the view.

For example, when teaching the Four Noble Truths, Buddha taught that the fundamental truth – the view – is that we *are* not suffering; we merely *have* suffering. Therefore, by knowing the nature and cause of suffering, we can follow the path to liberate ourselves from suffering. Nevertheless, although many of us are eager to follow the path to liberate ourselves from suffering, and we may even understand what our suffering is caused by, few of us pay attention to the view: the fact that we are not suffering, we just have suffering. Because we do not understand the view, we still cling to primordial suffering. Therefore, no matter how much we practice and seek to apply methods to end our suffering, our path is not a middle path – a Madhyamika path, a path beyond conceptual clinging. Instead, it ends up becoming an extreme path – a path of concepts, which will not liberate us from suffering.

Another example is the concept of renunciation mind, and the familiar images of monks with begging bowls, shaved heads on so on. When the Buddhist path teaches us to develop renunciation mind, we might think that we are being asked to renounce samsara with the attitude that it is imperfect, full of pain and endless futility – i.e. to recognise that samsara is suffering. Most of us find such renunciation difficult, as we feel we're missing out on the good things – we long for the pleasant and beautiful aspects of samsara, which we still believe truly exist out there. But it is something quite different to renounce samsara based on the view – the view of emptiness – which holds that both the desirable and futile aspects of samsara are just fabrications of mind. With the view of emptiness, we can see that renouncing samsaric life is not something painful. It's not really a penance or sacrifice, because we realise that there is, in reality, nothing to sacrifice.

This text, the *Madhyamakavatara*, is an indispensable text that is widely studied both in Buddhist philosophical schools and Buddhist meditative schools, and Chandrakirti's method of establishing the view in this work has been one of the most venerated throughout the ages. Now that Buddhism is taking root in the West, I feel it is important for at least some of us to pay attention to the study of the view and how it is to be established. Unfortunately, our human tendency is to be much more attracted to the methods of doing something, rather than why we are doing it. The study of the view appears to be very dry, boring and long-winded, whereas anyone can just buy a cushion, sit on it, and after a few minutes feel satisfied that they have sat and meditated. In this age of materialism, people suffer from alienation and lack of purpose, and

many people are seeking for something more. When there is so much seeking, there is a danger that a path specially designed to relieve temporal pain might come to overshadow the real path that uproots suffering, the true path to enlightenment. Interest in dharma is scarce to begin with, and even then, such interest is very fickle. And if we were to encounter a path that did not have the view, we would become even more disillusioned. This would be very sad, because there is genuine seeking. Without the view, the whole purpose of Buddhism is lost. It is then no longer Buddhism – a path to enlightenment – but merely a method for temporal healing. So, even for the sake of insurance, at least some of us should pay some attention to establishing the view.

I would like to stress that this work is not meant to be final and complete, but I believe it can be a start, a basis for us to work on and improve. The subject itself is very complex, and when I taught this text in France from 1996-2000, it was decades after I studied it myself. Moreover, even as I was teaching this, I never felt satisfied at my ability to express what I wanted to express, primarily due to my lack of language skills in English. Also, because the audience was mixed, you will find some very general teachings as well, and because it was taught over several years, you will find lots of repetition.

I must acknowledge the success of the teaching itself to the persistence of Tulkus Pema Wangyal, and a lot of assistance from his disciples, to name a few: John Canti, Wulstan Fletcher, Helena Blankleder, and Patrick Carré, and my own inscrutable friend Jakob Leschly. This particular transcript and editing was done diligently and meticulously by Alex Trisoglio, who I hope will continue working to improve it. I don't believe there is any merit in this kind of work, but if there is any, let us dedicate it to the further understanding of the Madhyamika, through which we can topple the kingdom of extremism

*Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse*



## **Editor's Introduction**

This document contains a transcript of Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche's teachings on Chandrakirti's *Madhyamakavatara*, 'Introduction to the Middle Way', which were given during the summers of 1996, 1998, 1999 and 2000 at the Centre d'Etudes de Chanteloube in Dordogne. The teachings have been lightly edited to improve readability, while keeping to the original style and vocabulary of the teachings as far as possible. In addition to Rinpoche's teachings, this document also contains the slokas (verses) of the root text, the *Madhyamakavatara*, which are indented and appear in italics.

### **Structural outline and logic trees**

In his teachings, Rinpoche followed various commentaries, principally the one by Gorampa, a 15<sup>th</sup> century Sakya master, and also that of Shenga Rinpoche, a 19<sup>th</sup> century Dzogchen master. The root text, Chandrakirti's *Madhyamakavatara*, does not have any kind of table of contents, outline or headings, but each commentator creates a *sabche* (structural outline) that presents the contents and arguments in a structured framework. The *sabche* is in fact the commentary itself in its most essential form. It is common practice for Tibetan scholars to memorise the entire *sabche* when studying a text, and the master will often stop to ensure the students understand where they are in the outline, a tradition that Rinpoche has continued in these teachings. In this case, the teachings and headings are organised according to Gorampa's structural outline (which appears in full after this introduction). However, although this outline is logically structured, it is quite difficult to present graphically due to its complexity (for example, at one point in this outline the headings run 28 levels deep!).

So, rather than numbering each heading completely in all its levels (e.g. 2.i.a.ii.b.i.a... etc.) and indenting each level, an alternative approach is used here. Each heading is marked in the margin by the letter 'H' followed by a number to indicate the level of the heading (where H1 is the top-most level, H2 is the second level, and so on until H28 – the 28<sup>th</sup> and lowest level). Successive headings at the same level are numbered (a, b, c...) or (i, ii, iii...), although this numbering has been added to facilitate comprehension; it does not appear in the Tibetan original of the structural outline. In addition to the headings from the structural outline, the text contains another set of headings that have been added during editing to aid comprehension. These headings do not have the letter 'H' or any numbering, and they are not part of the structural outline.

For an overview of the outline and structure of the arguments in the *Madhyamakavatara*, readers may find it helpful to consult the *logic trees* at the end of this text, which present the structural outline (in an abbreviated form) in a set of tree-structured diagrams.

### **Margin notes**

In order to improve readability, to help locate information and to increase the overall usefulness of this document, margin notes have been provided. These notes, which aim to highlight important points from Rinpoche's teachings, were added during editing, and Rinpoche has not checked them. They are not part of the structural outline or Chandrakirti's text.

### **Tibetan words and phrases**

The first appearance of a Tibetan word or phrase in the teachings will include its pronunciation, transliteration (according to the Wylie system), and English translation. In subsequent

appearances, the word will typically only be referred to by its pronunciation, e.g. *tsendzin*. Some of the more common Tibetan vocabulary is included in an appendix. For example:

*tsendzin* བකྟନ୍ତେଣ (mtshan 'dzin) = fixation on characteristics

Following the convention of T.R.V. Murti and Padmakara, the word ‘Madhyamika’ is used to refer both to the Madhyamika philosophy and to a student/practitioner following this philosophy. A list of some of the more important and more commonly used Tibetan words and phrases from the *Madhyamakavatara* is included as an appendix.

## **Index and Frequently-Asked Questions**

An index and a list of frequently-asked questions may be found at the end of the document, as well as a bibliography and references.

## **Hyperlinks**

For ease of navigation, the electronic version of this document contains hyperlinks for each heading from its location in the structural outline to where it appears in the text. .

## **Acknowledgements**

The rough translation of the root text of the *Madhyamakavatara* was prepared by Jakob Leschly, and the commentary and teachings by Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche were transcribed and edited by Alex Trisoglio. The editor would like to thank all those who provided comments, suggestions and inputs to this document as it has developed, particularly Jakob Leschly and Steven Goodman for their help with the Tibetan. Every effort has been made to faithfully reproduce the words and meaning of Rinpoche’s teachings, and any remaining errors are the editor’s responsibility.

We would like to thank everyone at the Centre d’Etudes de Chantelouve for hosting these teachings, especially Pema Wangyal Rinpoche and Jigme Khyentse Rinpoche. John Canti and Wulstan Fletcher of the Padmakara Translation Group ran revision sessions each year to help prepare students for the teachings, Patrick Carré provided French translation, and Khenpo Jamyang Ösel from Dzongsar Institute taught and answered questions in 1999.

Most especially, we would like to thank Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche, whose extraordinary blessings, inspiration and patient explanation made this work possible. May his aspirations be fulfilled! We dedicate our efforts so that all may realise the wisdom that is the ultimate Madhyamika, and to the long life and work of the masters who uphold these teachings.

## **Contact**

If you have any feedback or comments on how this document could be improved, or questions about the teachings, please write to: [alex@khyentsefoundation.org](mailto:alex@khyentsefoundation.org)





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The publication of this *Madhyamakavatara* text has been sponsored by the Khyentse Foundation, a non-profit charitable organization established in the United States in November 2001 under the direction of Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche. The ultimate mission of the Khyentse Foundation is to support the international community of dharma students and practitioners.

Publication of precious texts, such as this original *Madhyamakavatara* commentary by Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche, is of primary interest to the Khyentse Foundation. In addition to providing study materials to assist dharma students around the world, the Foundation hopes to sponsor the following publication projects as soon as funding becomes available:

- Printing of the Longchen Nyingtik Ngöndro practice manuscript, another work based on transcriptions of Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche's teachings.
- Restoration of the Khyentse Library in Dzongsar Institute in Tibet, which was destroyed during the Chinese Cultural Revolution of the 1960s.
- Translation of teachings by four great Longchen Nyingtik lineage masters: Longchenpa, Jigme Lingpa, Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo and Jamyang Khyentse Chökyi Lodrö.
- Publication of an introduction to Buddhism to be distributed free to hotels, schools, libraries, etc.

Besides these publication projects, the Foundation will also establish an Endowment Fund for Monastic Education and a Scholarship Fund to assist those who wish to pursue further studies or spend time in retreat, but lack the necessary means. Another Foundation priority is to set up an Education Fund which will endow a Chair or Professorship in Buddhist studies in a major university, and establish a Buddhist school for western children.

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P. O. Box 156648, San Francisco, CA 94115, USA.  
Phone: +1 (415) 922-5611, Fax: +1 (415) 922-1333, Email: [info@khyentsefoundation.org](mailto:info@khyentsefoundation.org).

Or contact any of the following Khyentse Foundation country representatives:

Australia:	Jill Robinson: +61 (2) 9489-0196	<a href="mailto:jill@khyentsefoundation.org">jill@khyentsefoundation.org</a>
Canada:	Amelia Chow: +1 (604) 875-8563	<a href="mailto:amelia@khyentsefoundation.org">amelia@khyentsefoundation.org</a>
Germany:	Doris Wolter: +49 (30) 624-4741	<a href="mailto:doris@khyentsefoundation.org">doris@khyentsefoundation.org</a>
Hong Kong:	Florence Koh: +852 (2) 786-4788	<a href="mailto:florence@khyentsefoundation.org">florence@khyentsefoundation.org</a>
	Alysia Lee: +852 (2) 525-2086	<a href="mailto:alysia@khyentsefoundation.org">alysia@khyentsefoundation.org</a>
Malaysia:	Yong Siew Chin: +60 (3) 7956-4653	<a href="mailto:siewchin@khyentsefoundation.org">siewchin@khyentsefoundation.org</a>
Taiwan:	Jain Yan-Nan Feng: +886 (2) 2940-0257	<a href="mailto:jain@khyentsefoundation.org">jain@khyentsefoundation.org</a>
UK:	Penelope Tree: +44 (20) 8780-9590	<a href="mailto:penelope@khyentsefoundation.org">penelope@khyentsefoundation.org</a>
USA:	Cangioli Che: +1 (415) 922-5611	<a href="mailto:cangioli@khyentsefoundation.org">cangioli@khyentsefoundation.org</a>

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# STRUCTURAL OUTLINE

## ACCORDING TO GORAMPA'S COMMENTARY

(Go Rabjampa Sönam Senge, 1429-1489, a great scholar of the Sakya tradition)

*dbu ma la 'jug pa'i dkyus kyi sa bcad pa dang gzhung so so'i dka ba'i gnas la dpyad pa lta ba ngan sel*

- Numbers in (*brackets and italics*): Page number in Gorampa's commentary (Tibetan text)
- Numbers in **boldface**: Chapter, verse, and line number in root text.
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## INTRODUCTION AND PRELIMINARIES

### The importance of the view

*With Madhyamika, we can establish the view; having the right view is like knowing the direction to Paris*

*If you do not know the direction to your goal, you will only reach it by accident*

*Establishing the view brings confidence in the path*

*There are many wonderful methods, but on their own, they lack a view*

*The only way to attain true happiness is by eliminating ignorance*

Now that the period of Buddhism's introduction in the West is almost over, we need to establish the proper study and practice of Buddhism. Up to now, we have tended to emphasise the methods, things like meditation and gurus, but we have tended to forget the view. The study of Madhyamika is important because it has vast and intensive analyses and methods to establish the view. Having the right view is like knowing the direction to Paris. Suppose that you are travelling to Paris with a guide who says that he knows the road, and then suddenly your guide takes out a guidebook and starts to act a little strangely. If you know the direction to Paris, then whether the guide is leading you along the highway or through the bush does not matter. As long as he is heading in the right direction, it does not even matter if he acts nervously, because you know and trust the direction.

Nowadays, it seems that people do not care much about the direction, but instead the car inspires them – the Vajrayana vehicle, the Mahayana vehicle and so on. Even worse than that, they find inspiration in the guide. With this approach, unless you have so much merit that you accidentally find success, it is quite difficult to attain the result. We hear teachings like “rest in the nature of the mind”, which are very intoxicating and nice to hear, but we have no fundamental understanding of the view. We have to establish that there is a mind that rests, that there is a so-called rest, and that it is actually possible to rest: to do this, we need to have a view.

I hope that these teachings will broaden our understanding of the view. I place great emphasis on establishing the view, because when we establish the view we then gain trust and confidence in the path. Then it will not matter if along the path you encounter all sorts of circumstance, like your guru acting strangely, because you will still have confidence in him or her.

There is also another reason. Nowadays the spiritual market is quite popular. I do not know so much about business, but I imagine that in much of business, you have to invent a certain idea and tell people that they lack something. Then after establishing this, you tell them “what you do not have, I have”! I have read many books and listened to many teachings, and I can see wonderful methods like aromatherapy, incense and the sounds of waves and birds. There are so many wonderful methods, and we should use them rather than negate them, but on their own, they lack a view, or at least an ultimate view. This is because most of these methods aim for temporal relief.

If your motivation to study or practice Buddhism is for temporal relief, it may work to a certain extent, but that is not the real aim of Buddhism. It was never an aim of the great scholars like Chandrakirti. You will see in this text, and in Vasubandhu's *Abhidharma*, that the way they analyse and approach reality is very subtle and sharp. Sometimes I think they should have written drama and fiction, then they would have become popular and more people would learn Buddhism! But they did not do that, so they are forgotten, whereas people like Shakespeare and Dickens are well known. These Buddhist scholars know that everybody wants happiness, but they also recognise that the only way actually to reach true and never-ending happiness is to get rid of your ignorance. By contrast, methods like poetry and literature can only provide temporary relief from suffering, so Buddhist scholars do not place much emphasis on writing poetry and stories. In fact, they think that any path, any book or idea, is only useful if it helps a sentient being to obtain permanent happiness. For example, one Hindu school emphasised the analysis of external phenomena, and its followers even wrote a book analysing whether or not

*Our philosophical  
opponents in this text  
represent our emotions*

crows have teeth! From Chandrakirti's point of view, this kind of thing is useless. What if we find whether a crow has a tooth, or not – so what? It does not serve any purpose!

So as we talk about establishing the view, please remember that the philosophy of Madhyamika is not just an idea, but is also something very practical. Although at times you will wonder whether these arguments between philosophical schools are of any practical value, they can actually be very helpful if you think of Chandrakirti's opponents as representing your own emotions, rather than philosophical schools. If you then read their arguments, the sharpness of your own ignorance will amaze you!

In many Indian philosophies, including Buddhist philosophy, in order for the teacher to establish the view for the student, it is often necessary to introduce an opponent to have a debate with. I was wondering if I should leave out all the technical words, the names of the different texts and views, and the seemingly boring arguments in these debates. But even though you may not understand it now, you will get used to it. There will be some kind of imprint in your head, and there will be a side benefit that you will realise that Buddhism is not just about love, compassion and resting in the nature of the mind! I want the style of these teachings to be as close as possible to the *shedras* or Buddhist schools in Tibet. I think that one of the reasons why Madhyamika is usually taught first among the five different subjects of Buddhist philosophy is that you first have to establish the view, and then logic and metaphysics can follow.

On a more personal note, this is a Mahayana teaching and not a Vajrayana teaching. I am just teaching you in my capacity as someone who has more information on the Madhyamika than you do, so there is no threat of Vajrayana *samayas* or the automatic development of the guru-disciple bond. Please do not have any emotional expectations, as I am only here to explain what is written in the text as best as I can. I am not here to touch your forehead with my finger and dissolve all your problems!

## **Some advice on how to study Madhyamika**

*Meaning what we say:  
precise definitions are  
important*

I would like to give you some advice on how to listen to or study this teaching. I think we will have many problems with the definition of terms, for example, when I say 'suffering', then you have an idea of what is meant by that, and I have an idea. So when I talk about it based on my idea and you listen based on your idea, problems can occur. In everyday life, we often do not entirely mean what we are saying, but now we are studying philosophy, so we need to mean what we say! We must be disciplined when we use words like suffering, and not take their meaning for granted.

*Dharmakirti's definition  
of a 'definition'*

I think that different definitions of words are one of the root problems between a teacher and student, especially an eastern teacher teaching western students. So, although we are not going to study it here, let me introduce some Buddhist logic here, as it will help you. When we talk of definitions, we have to establish what the definition of a 'definition' is. Until we can agree upon this, we will create a lot of loopholes, and we do not want any loopholes when we study. Dharmakirti's definition of a 'definition' is that it is free from the three kinds of fault of being too all encompassing, not all-encompassing enough, and not possible.

You can see that Buddhist scholars do not just teach, "Rest in the nature of the mind" – they go through all sorts of small details! Now, what is the definition of this pink flower that I have just picked up? You have to really listen to me very carefully, as you are a philosopher. Can you create a definition of this particular flower free from the three faults? You can see that the definition has to include me, for example my hand, since I am holding the flower. If you say the flower is pink, it is not specific enough, as there are many other pink things in this room. If you say the flower is round, that is not sufficiently all encompassing, as there are also many other

shapes in this flower. An impossible definition is easy, for example if you say that the flower talks.

The point of this example is that when we use big words like ‘emptiness’, or small words like ‘suffering’, all these words need a good definition. This is why when Buddhist masters talk about suffering, as in ‘samsara is full of suffering’, people cannot understand. For many people, the definition of suffering is something that is painful. So, they say, “No, I am having a nice time here right now. It is not true that whole world is full of suffering”. Whereas from a Buddhist point of view, even getting a suntan while having a nice time on the beach is a form of suffering, because your body is getting roasted and more wrinkled, and the clock is ticking all the time.

*The importance of defining ‘truly existent’*

I am giving you an idea of the importance of definitions when you study. Later on we will talk a lot about things that are ‘truly existent’, and to understand this, you will need the right definition of what is meant by ‘truly existent’. Many Buddhists take this for granted, and say that everything does not exist, and some careful Buddhists say everything does not *truly* exist. But even this raises questions, because if you say that everything does not *truly* exist, then that implies it should exist in a relative way. In fact, the definition of ‘truly’ is the reason why many of the Madhyamika philosophers cannot accept the idea of truly existing phenomena, as we shall see later.

*Do not think about the Madhyamika in a complicated way*

One other important piece of advice is that you should not think about or approach Madhyamika in a complicated way. There is actually something very simple underlying it, but sometimes we approach it in a complicated way. Now on top of all these, we need wisdom. That seems to be the key. Wisdom can be attained in only two ways: devotion, in this case to guru Manjushri, and compassion towards sentient beings. Somehow, compassion towards sentient beings is difficult, but devotion to some figure is perhaps possible, as we have the habit of looking to heroes. Now, there may be many different types of obstacles interfering with our wisdom and merit. In order to dispel these obstacles, and to accumulate some merit, we will begin every morning with the *Heart Sutra*, as it is done in the *shedras*, and we will pray to Manjushri and Chandrakirti.

Before we start, let us generate the bodhicitta mind, the intention of studying this Madhyamika philosophy for the sake of enlightening all the sentient beings. At the same time, also develop joy at the opportunity to hear, contemplate, discuss and maybe even gradually practice the essence of the Buddha’s teaching, which is emptiness.

## **The nine qualities of the Buddha’s teachings**

*The Dharma of transmission and the Dharma of realisation*

The Dharma can be classified into two aspects, the scriptural Dharma or Dharma of transmission, and the Dharma of realisation, that which arises in the mind of the practitioner along the path. The Dharma of transmission includes the Buddha’s own words, the sutras, and the shastras, which are the commentaries on the sutras.

The Dharma of transmission has five qualities:

- ***Virtuous in the beginning***: hearing and studying these scriptures invokes trust and devotion by convincing you of the ground, path and fruit.
- ***Virtuous in the middle***: as you contemplate on what you have heard, then you will be able to convince yourself that the result can be obtained.
- ***Virtuous at the end***: as you meditate on it, simultaneously your wisdom will grow.
- ***Excellent meaning***: it consists of teachings on both relative and ultimate truth.
- ***Excellent words***: Buddha’s teachings use ordinary language, something that is known in the ordinary world.

In order to understand these qualities, it is important to talk about what the teachings are being compared to. There are teachings or paths that have only relative truth or ultimate truth, or perhaps neither, whereas the teachings of the Buddha comprise both. You can say that it does not abandon either of the two truths. This is a very important remark because, for example, shastras like those analysing the tooth of the crow have teachings on neither relative truth nor ultimate truth. I think we can see many similar examples in bookshops these days. The quality of using ordinary language is also quite important if you know the history of Buddhism. Some Hindu schools use only Vedic words, so that in order to practice those methods you almost have to learn a completely new holy language. This may be why many Theravadin scholars believe that the Buddha's teachings were *written* in Pali rather than Sanskrit, because Sanskrit is a very Vedic language. I am saying this to show that what I am reciting is not just something poetic, but that every word has its purpose. These are the five qualities of the Dharma of transmission, which is like a medium for transmission.

*The four qualities of the Dharma of realisation*

*Non-duality means different things in Buddhism and Hinduism*

*Sources of a text's authority: the Buddha's words and reasoning*

*This text's principal supporting sutra is the Dashabhumika Sutra*

The actual Dharma, which is the Dharma of realisation, has four kinds of qualities:

- **Not mixed up, madrepa (ma dres pa):** this has nothing to do with the style of the teaching; it is contrasting Buddhism with Hinduism again. When Atisha Dipamkara was in Tibet, he heard that Maitripa had died in India, and he was very sad. He mourned deeply for several days, and later his disciple Dromtönpa asked him why he was especially sad this time, given that he had heard a lot of other bad news in the past. Atisha replied that only two scholars in India could differentiate between Hinduism and Buddhism, Maitripa and himself. Since Atisha was now in Tibet, there was almost nobody in India who could differentiate between Hinduism and Buddhism. This tells us that people like us can be easily be attracted to some of the Hindu teachings on non-duality, such as those taught by Shankara, but that they are not really the same as Buddhist teachings on non-duality, although they are very similar. Thus 'not mixed up' means that the realisation taught by the Buddha is not mixed up with the kind of realisation taught by Hinduism. This aims directly at the result of *shamatha* and the result of *vipashyana*.
- **Complete, yongsu dzogpa (yongs su rdzogs pa):** It has a compete method to dispel the defilements.
- **Pure, dakpa (dag pa):** It is pure from the beginning. Here we are talking about the Buddha nature.
- **Purifying, jangwa (sbyang ba):** It can purify the temporal defilements.

These are the nine qualities of the Dharma of transmission and the Dharma of realisation. The purpose of this list is to verify the authenticity of the text we are studying. The words of the Buddha (*lung*) make up the sutras, but here we are not studying sutra; we are studying shasstra, which is the commentary. The authority of the sutras comes from the fact that they are Buddha's own words, while the authority of the commentaries comes from reasoning *rigpa* (*rigs pa*). Strictly, from the point of view of Buddhist logic, reasoning is even more important than the Buddha's words, because the Buddha's words are open to interpretation. And although some kinds of reasoning can also be interpreted, when we reason that fire can burn you because fire is hot – that is reality. The Buddha might say that fire is cold and cannot burn you, and you might also find reasons why fire cannot be hot, but fire will still burn you. This logic cannot be interpreted!

When you are studying this kind of text, there will be many quotations from the Buddha, especially in the commentaries. You quote the Buddha's words mainly when your opponent is a Buddhist, but if your opposition is non-Buddhist, then the Buddha's words are useless. For almost every commentary, like the *Madhyamakavatara* we are studying here, there will always be one, two or more supporting sutras. In the case of the *Madhyamakavatara*, the principal supporting sutra is the *Dashabhumika Sutra* (*do sde sa chu pa*), the *Ten Bhumi Sutra*.

Keep this in mind when we debate with the Cittamatrin school. We have said that the *Dashabhumika Sutra* is our supporting sutra, but the Cittamatrin school, which is probably the principal opponent of the *Madhyamakavatara*, will also quote from this sutra and use it to contradict the Madhyamika school. This is because this sutra contains phrases like “Bodhisattvas, all these three realms are nothing but mind”. And in the ensuing debate, you will be able to see how Chandrakirti tries to escape from this kind of negation.

[H1]

## THE TITLE

The title starts with “*gya gar skad du*” (in the language of India), which is considered a seal of authenticity. The commentary on the title is in two parts: which Madhyamika, or Middle Way, is being introduced, and how it is introduced.

[H2]

### Which Madhyamika is being introduced?

In the title “Introduction to the Middle Way”, the title could be referring to two possible Middle Ways. It could be the absolute Madhyamika, the Dharmakaya, which is the absolute nature free of all conceptual extremes. Or it could be the scriptural teachings on Madhyamika, the texts that refer to the absolute Madhyamika. There are two categories of these texts: firstly, the Buddha’s words, particularly the *Prajñaparamita* sutras, which are the teachings on transcendental wisdom; and secondly, the shastras.

In this case the title refers to the scriptural Middle Way, and among the commentaries, it refers particularly to Nagarjuna’s *Mulamadhyamaka-karikas*, which is often called the root text of the Madhyamika. We know this because Chandrakirti also wrote a commentary on his own commentary, in which he said he would explain the *Mulamadhyamaka-karikas*. However, this autocommentary does not go through Nagarjuna’s text verse by verse, and it introduces some quite different subjects, so not all Tibetan scholars agree that Chandrakirti is referring to Nagarjuna’s text.

### Nagarjuna – a historical note

Not much is known about Nagarjuna, although he is the man often referred to as the father of Buddhist philosophy. He lived in India in the 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries AD, about four hundred years after the Buddha, who had predicted that “After I die, in the place of Beti there will be a great monk, and part of his name will be *Naga*. He will destroy both existence and non-existence”. Among Nagarjuna’s many works, some of the best known include:

- *Mulamadhyamaka-karikas (rtsa ba shes rab)*: *The Root Commentary on the Middle Way*, which he wrote to defeat Hindus and other Buddhists.
- *Yukti-sastika (rigs pa drug bcu pa)*: *Sixty Verses on Logic*, which he wrote to defeat Buddhists.
- *Vigraha-vyavartani (rtsod ldog)*: *Refutation of Wrong Views*, which he wrote in reply to questions raised about his other books.
- *Sunyata-saptati (stong nyid bdun bcu pa)*: *Seventy Verses on Emptiness*, where he expounds on why compounded things are impermanent.
- *Vaidalya Sutra (zhib mo rnam thag)*: *The Grinding Machine*, which was written to defeat various sorts of logic.
- *Ratnavali (rin chen phreng ba)*: *Garland of Jewels*.

Some of Nagarjuna’s  
most important works

*The Buddhist definition of a compounded phenomenon*

*The importance of birth, or arising*

*Inherent existence and logical existence in the Gelugpa tradition*

*Nagarjuna's refutation of the true existence of logic*

The *Mulamadhyamaka-karikas* has some twenty-one or twenty-two chapters, the first of which deals with causation and the classification of phenomena. Phenomena can be compounded or uncompounded. There is no third type of phenomenon that is both compounded and uncompounded, or neither. The general Buddhist definition of a compounded phenomenon is *kyene jiksum* (*skye gnas 'jig gsum*): birth, remaining and death. As long as a phenomenon has a beginning/arising, a remaining and an end/cessation, then it is a compounded phenomenon. Of these three, Buddhist philosophers think that birth is the most important for ordinary people. We ask questions like "how did we get here?" and in response, philosophers and ideologists invent all sorts of answers. Some say God, some say *atman*, some say atoms and others say there is no cause. In the first chapter of the *Mulamadhyamaka-karikas*, Nagarjuna deals with all the conditions and the so-called causes of the universe and the self. Later, he expanded this first chapter into the *Vigraha-vyavartani*, the *Refutation of Wrong Views*.

There is also a chapter in the *Mulamadhyamaka-karikas* that analyses compounding, which Nagarjuna later expanded into the *Sunyata-saptati*, the *Seventy Verses on Emptiness*, which has also been translated into English. Then there was an attack from a school that argued that it was wrong to say that phenomena do not exist inherently, because inherent existence can be proved with logic. For example, in the Gelugpa tradition, two kinds of existence are distinguished: *denpa drubpa* (*bden par grub pa*) is inherent existence, and *tsemé drubpa* (*tshad mas grub pa*) is logical existence. I think this is a very smart classification, because they then say that belief in inherent existence is the defilement that needs to be purified by meditation, and belief in logical existence is the defilement that needs to be purified by reasoning.

Anyway, what you need to understand here is that one philosophical school believes that inherent existence can be proved by logic. In reply to this, Nagarjuna wrote the *Vaidalya Sutra*, in which he completely dismantles the whole system of ordinary so-called logic. He shows that logic exists only to a certain extent, and that belief in logic as something truly existent is a mistake. Then there was another attack from certain schools that said that if things are inherently non-existent, then all things become like the horn of the rabbit, which has no substance whatsoever. Do not think this is just a school – we also think like that! And in reply, Nagarjuna wrote another text called *Vyavahara siddha*, "Existence from the conventional point of view".

In the *Mulamadhyamaka-karikas*, the primary emphasis is on wisdom, and there is no direct mention of methods. In order to explain the methods more directly, Nagarjuna wrote the *Ratnavali*, "Garland of Jewels". In addition to these texts, which are part of his 'Collection of Logic' (*rigs tshogs*), Nagarjuna also wrote a "Collection of Praises" (*bstod tshogs*), where he praises Dharmakaya and the Buddhas' wisdom, and a "Collection of Miscellaneous Sayings" (*gtams tshogs*).

## [H2]

### How it is introduced

*Chandrakirti enters Nagarjuna's Middle Way by refuting that phenomena have ultimate origins*

*Eternalism and nihilism in everyday life*

In Tibetan, the title is literally translated as "Entering the Middle Way". Here Chandrakirti is entering the Middle Way of Nagarjuna's *Mulamadhyamaka-karikas* as a whole, rather than the individual chapters. And the way that he does this, as we will find in the sixth chapter of the *Madhyamakavatara*, is by refuting arguments that say that things have true existence, or ultimate origin, *kyéwa* (*skye ba*). This is why the philosophy of *Abhidharma*, the teachings on the emptiness or egolessness of self and phenomena, is not simply an idea. It is also very important for practice, since it sets out the Middle Way between the extremes of eternalism and nihilism.

When we study dualism and non-dualism, you will hear the terms 'eternalism', *takpé ta* (*rtag pa'i mtha'*) and 'nihilism', *chepé ta* (*chad pa'i mtha'*). You might think that these are just philosophical views, but we regularly engage in both these views, *cheta nyi* (*chad rtag gnyis*) in everyday life. We are eternalist whenever we think that things will last forever or remain solid.

If you have not understood the Madhyamika, you are an extremist

For example, if I make an appointment to meet you tomorrow in a certain restaurant, then by thinking that the restaurant will still be there tomorrow, you are in some way a victim of eternalism. And we are nihilists when we think that things are not worth it, or that they have no ultimate meaning or result. For instance, if have been trying to cure your alcoholic husband for many years without success, and then finally you give up and decide you cannot help him any more, then you are a victim of nihilism.

Generally, we say that ignorance and dualistic mind are the same, although we will later meet concepts like *tsendzin* (*mtshan 'dzin*), ‘fixation towards characteristics’, which is not dualistic mind but is still a type of ignorance. We know that dualism is the cause of all the pain and suffering in samsara, and the purpose of Madhyamika, the middle way, is not to fall into these extremes of eternalism and nihilism. And although for the sake of communication we have to say ‘Middle Path’ or ‘Middle Way’, as Nagarjuna said, “A learned one must not even remain in the middle”. As long as you have not understood Madhyamika, you are an extremist, and you become a terrorist. If you want to be sober, you have to study Madhyamika.

We spoke yesterday of the words of the Buddha, and the shastras or commentaries on the Buddha’s words. At this point, we are studying Madhyamika philosophy, so our heroes are people like Nagarjuna. But you shouldn’t think that he is the only scholar within Buddhism. If you look at Buddhist metaphysics or Buddhist logic, other figures are probably as great as Nagarjuna. Nevertheless, Nagarjuna became very popular in India because of his strong emphasis on the non-dualistic view. Even Hindu philosophy changed a little bit after Nagarjuna and his followers defeated it, because of non-dualism.

### The commentaries on the *Mulamadhyamaka-karikas*

That middle way of no extremes is what we are trying to enter here, and trying to study. Our direct object is the scriptures on Madhyamika, especially the shashtra written by Nagarjuna. Nagarjuna wrote many books, but here we are trying to study the *Mulamadhyamaka-karikas*. How do we enter and study Madhyamika? We study the commentaries, and examine how the commentators are commenting, as each of these scholars has a different way of approaching his commentary. Eight Indian *panditas* wrote commentaries on the *Mulamadhyamaka-karikas* and, including Chandrakirti’s *Madhyamakavatara*, the ones that are best known are:

- *Akutobhaya* by Nagarjuna or Aryadeva (2<sup>nd</sup> century)
- “*Torch to the Mulamadhyamaka-karikas*” by Buddhapalita (end 4<sup>th</sup>/early 5<sup>th</sup> century)
- *Prajñapradipa*, “*Torch of Wisdom*” by Bhavaviveka (early 5<sup>th</sup> century)
- Commentary by Gunamati
- Commentary by Sthiramati
- *Prasannapada* and *Madhyamakavatara* (*dbu ma la 'jug pa*) by Chandrakirti (6<sup>th</sup> century)
- *Sitabhuyuda* by Devasarman
- Commentary by Gunasri

One of Nagarjuna’s disciples, Aryadeva, wrote the *400 Stanzas of Madhyamika*, and in that book, both view and action are taught equally. He also wrote the “*Quintessence Extracted from the Essence of Wisdom*”, which is principally concerned with the view, and an autocommentary. Actually, Chandrakirti was not a direct disciple of Nagarjuna, but of Buddhapalita. Buddhapalita and Bhavaviveka were both disciples of Nagarjuna, and their commentaries are very special, because the debates that arose because of their commentaries played an important role in the development of the schools of Buddhist philosophical interpretation:

- Madhyamika-Svatantrika (*rang rgyud pa*) Bhavaviveka

- Madhyamika-Prasangika (*thal 'gyur pa*) Buddhapalita, Chandrakirti
- Cittamatra (*sems tsam pa*) Asanga, Vasubandhu

The two subdivisions of the Madhyamika became distinct in the 5<sup>th</sup> century with a debate between Buddhapalita, who founded Madhyamika-Prasangika, and Bhavaviveka, who founded Madhyamika-Svatantrika. Prasangikas like Buddhapalita do not have any theories of their own. Instead, they use the method of *prasanga*, or *reductio ad absurdum*, to demolish their opponents' views by showing that they lead to absurd consequences. Bhavaviveka, however, disagreed with this approach, and said that it is not enough to destroy the views of others, but that we should also provide counter-arguments. His approach later became the Svatantrika, which should not be confused with the Hinayana school of Sautrantika (*mdo de pa*).

For both the Svatantrika and the Prasangika schools, the ultimate truth is the same, but they use different methods to establish it. However, there are subtle differences between their understandings of relative truth. In brief, the Prasangikas think that more things are relative than the Svatantrikas. The differences between Svatantrikas and Prasangikas should not be seen just as historical arguments, as they concern our own ways of seeing things. So, the Prasangikas are being very compassionate when they destroy others' views. It is not just a game.

Chandrakirti was Buddhapalita's disciple, and he wrote two main commentaries on the *Mulamadhyamaka-karikas* in reply to the arguments that Bhavaviveka made against Buddhapalita. In addition to the *Madhyamakavatara*, which is more of a commentary on the meaning, he also wrote the *Prasannapada* (*uma tshig gsal*), the *Clear Words*.

In the 8<sup>th</sup> century, Shantarakshita went to Tibet and founded the monastery at Samyé. He was not a direct disciple of Bhavaviveka, but the disciple of one of his disciples. He combined the Madhyamika-Svatantrika and Cittamatra schools, and created a new school of Madhyamika called Svatantrika-Yogachara-Madhyamika. His disciple Kamalashila, who wrote *The Stages of Meditation upon Madhyamika* (*uma'i sgom rim*), developed his ideas further, and together they were very influential in Tibet. Tibetan scholars wrote many commentaries on both Nagarjuna's *Mulamadhyamaka-karikas* and Chandrakirti's *Madhyamakavatara*. The best-known commentaries on the *Madhyamakavatara* include those by:

- Rendawa who was Tsong Khapa's teacher (14<sup>th</sup> century)
- Tsong Khapa, the founder of the Gelug school (14<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> century)
- Gorampa, a great Sakya master (15<sup>th</sup> century)
- The 8<sup>th</sup> Karmapa, Mikyö Dorjé (16<sup>th</sup> century)
- Mipham Rinpoche (19<sup>th</sup> century)

The Tibetan texts are popular because they are easy to understand and nicely structured, whereas some of the Indian commentaries are very flowery and difficult to understand, but when we study in the *shedra*, the Indian texts are much more useful.

I will teach this text with a lot of influence from Shenga Rinpoche (*gzhan dga'* – *gzhan phan chos kyi snang ba*, 1871-1927), a Dzogchen master, and we will principally follow the outline and commentary by Gorampa. Shenga Rinpoche says that according to Jayananda both the *Madhyamakavatara* and *Mulamadhyamaka-karikas* have explanations of the relative and ultimate truth, but Chandrakirti has emphasised the relative truth. Some of you may think that in coming here to study Madhyamika, you will be studying ultimate truth, but according to Jayananda, the main subject of this text is relative truth. The text talks a lot about the ten or eleven bhumis and the six paramitas, all of which are relative truth. You will also find that in the later parts that Chandrakirti repeatedly says that without the relative truth you will never understand the ultimate truth. He gives the analogy of a swan, that without the right wing of relative truth, one cannot understand the ultimate truth, and one will not fly towards the other

*The debate between Buddhapalita and Bhavaviveka led to the two schools of Madhyamika*

*The Svatantrika and Prasangika schools agree on the ultimate truth, but not on the relative*

*The development of the Madhyamika in Tibet*

*Well-known Tibetan commentaries on the Madhyamakavatara*

*We will primarily follow Gorampa's commentary*

*The main subject of this text is relative truth, not ultimate truth*

shore. I want to emphasise this, because we often take the relative truth for granted, thinking that it is easy to know, when in fact it is not.

Jayananda was an Indian scholar who went to Tibet, where he met and debated with the great translator Ngok Lotsawa (*rngog lo ts'a ba legs pa'i shes rab*, 1059? – Lekpé Sherab, Atisha's translator and disciple). Jayananda lost the debate, which was a bit of an insult for an Indian scholar, and he returned very discouraged to India, where he engaged in a practice of Manjushri for many years. Eventually Manjushri appeared to him in a vision, and he became a great scholar. He went back to debate with Ngok Lotsawa again, but by that time, he had died. Subsequently, Jayananda also wrote a big commentary on the *Madhyamakavatara* (*dbu ma 'jug pa'i 'grel bshad*).

[H1]

## THE TRANSLATOR'S HOMAGE

After the title comes the line “*Homage to Manjushri Kumara*”. These are not yet Chandrakirti’s own words, which only begin only after this. The translators wrote this homage, for blessings that they would translate successfully, completely and properly. The tradition of paying homage to Manjushri originated with the last important king of Tibet, Tri Ralpacan, who was a great benefactor of the Dharma in Tibet. He sponsored many Dharma works and translations, and for easier identification of texts, he requested that translators should add a particular homage according to which the section of the *Tripitaka* each text belonged:

*How to identify a text by the translator's homage*

- For texts from the *vinaya*, which cover ethics, morality and discipline, the translators should pay homage to the all-knowing Buddha.
- For texts from the *sutra*, which contain instruction on meditation, or the results of meditation, they should pay homage to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.
- For texts from the *abhidharma*, since they talk about emptiness, non-duality and similar difficult subjects, the translators should pay homage to Manjushri.

## The four necessary things that need to be told before starting

This is traditionally taught in Buddhist schools as an introduction at the beginning of a teaching, to build a structure. It is ‘necessary’ because it creates four necessary doubts, and dispels the four unnecessary doubts. If a text does not have these four qualities, there is no reason to study and practise the text:

• Subject:	<i>vakya</i>	<i>shes bya</i>
• Purpose:	<i>prayojana</i>	<i>dgos pa</i>
• Ultimate purpose:	<i>paramartha</i>	<i>nying dgos</i>
• Link:	<i>sambhanda</i>	<i>'brel ba</i>

If a person asks for a glass of water, water is the subject. The purpose is that by uttering these words, you will get the other person to understand what you want. The ultimate purpose is to actually get a glass of water, and there should be a link between subject and purpose; purpose and ultimate purpose; and ultimate purpose and subject.

How does this dispel the four kinds of unnecessary doubts? There are certain texts or words that do not have a subject, for example whether a crow has teeth or not. This is because no birds have teeth anyway. Remember that these examples were written in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, so you have to think the way they did! Some texts, such as texts on how to marry your mother, do not have a purpose. Some texts have no ultimate purpose, such as texts explaining how to steal the crown jewels of the king of the *nagas*. Finally, there are texts that have no link. I think this is aiming at

*How Asanga inspired Vasubandhu to study the Mahayana*

*The subject, purpose, and ultimate purpose of the Madhyamakavatara*

the first chapter of the *Upanishads*, which says that if you kill animals for sacrifice, you will attain heaven. If you go to a bookshop nowadays, you will find plenty of books that fall into these categories!

When Asanga wanted to inspire his younger brother Vasubandhu, who was a hard-line Vaibhashika scholar, he asked two monks to read two Mahayana sutras – the *Dashabhumika Sutra* and another – beside Vasubandhu's room. As the monks read the sutras aloud, pretending to learn them by heart, Vasubandhu listened despite himself. He initially thought that the Mahayana was not a complete teaching because it did not speak of a result. However, in the afternoon when the two monks read the other text, he realised that the Mahayana also has a great result. This story illustrates the purpose of knowing these four. So, for the *Madhyamakavatara*:

- The **subject** is the eleven bhumis, and the three causes of the Bodhisattva.
- The **purpose** is that by hearing this, we will gain confidence that such an extraordinary result can be obtained.
- The **ultimate purpose** is to go from the 1st bhumi to the eleventh bhumi.

[H1]

## THE MAIN BODY OF THE TEXT

[H2]

### A. Explaining the introductory branches, the expression of offering

[H3]

#### 1. Explaining the reasons for praising compassion

1:1      *Shravakas and pratyekabuddhas are born from the Muni king;  
Buddhas are born from bodhisattvas;  
And, from the mind of compassion, non-duality and  
Bodhicitta is born the bodhisattva.*

We start the main body of the text with another homage, but this time it is the author's homage. Nowadays, many writers just try to fill the pages so that they have a book thick enough to sell, but here we will see how authors like Chandrakirti can say so much in just a few words. For example, at the same time that he pays homage, he also teaches us the three causes of a bodhisattva. This text is special, because Chandrakirti does not pay homage to a particular person, as buddhists normally do, but to compassion. He also makes some other quite unusual and daring remarks.

[H4]

##### a) Of the four kinds of enlightened individual, praising the bodhisattvas above all (515)

In the first two lines, Chandrakirti praises the bodhisattvas. Among all the types of sublime beings – shravakas, pratyekabuddhas, buddhas and bodhisattvas – he praises the bodhisattvas most highly, saying they are the most important. It might appear that he is breaking the habit of praising the Buddha, dharma and sangha, but he is not saying this just to be different! Being controversial seems to be quite valued these days, and people can gain a lot from it. But Chandrakirti is not trying to do that, as he has a good reason why the bodhisattvas are supreme among the four beings.

[H5]

##### (1) How Shravakas and Pratyekabuddhas are born from buddhas (515), 1:1.1

[H6]

##### (a) How they are so born

*The three types of enlightened beings*

There are three states of enlightenment: shravakas, pratyekabuddhas and buddhas. Both shravakas and pratyekabuddhas are born from the Buddha's speech, meaning they have listened to the teaching of the Buddha and then practised it. According to the Mahayana, the *satsam (sa thsams)* or boundary that defines the state of enlightenment is whether a person has destroyed ego, the root of samsara. And according to the Mahayana, shravakas and pratyekabuddhas have both destroyed the root of samsara.

Pratyekabuddhas are sometimes called 'middle buddhas', because they have purified more defilements than the shravakas but much less than bodhisattvas. Similarly, shravakas are sometimes called 'small buddhas'. So, we can see that the word 'buddha' is not necessarily reserved for completely enlightened beings. As long as someone has destroyed ego, the root of

samsara, they can be referred to as an “awakened one”. Shravakas and pratyekabuddhas have awakened from samsara, and they will not go back to samsara. However, the bodhisattvas want something more. After they have destroyed the root of samsara, they are not satisfied merely with not returning to samsara; they also wish to gain omniscience. Furthermore, unlike the shravakas, bodhisattvas also distinguish between two types of obscurations. The only defilement recognised by shravakas is ego in the sense of attachment to self. However, bodhisattvas also identify another defilement that needs to be purified: the self of phenomena. Things are a little more complicated for pratyekabuddhas, as we will see shortly.

I am sure that many of us think that beings become shravakas and pratyekabuddhas because of practising Hinayana, and that they become bodhisattvas and Buddhas because of practising Mahayana. However, Chandrakirti says that not even the states of shravaka and pratyekabuddha can be attained without passing through the Madhyamika; according to him, they all have to study the Prajñaparamita.

[H6]

**(b) Examining doubts about this being so (516)**

[H6]

**(c) Definitions and etymology of the terms shravaka and pratyekabuddha**

*The shravaka is a nyentö, “hearer”, and “proclaimer”*

The Tibetan for shravaka is *nyentö* (*nyan thos*), which means both ‘hearer’ and ‘proclaimer’, someone that makes another person hear. The shravakas hear teachings from the Buddha, such as those on the Four Noble Truths or the twelve links of interdependent origination, and then tell others about them. How do they do that? They practise the teachings they have heard, and when they reach the state of shravaka, they proclaim this to others. Almost out of joy, they say things like *ditar jawa cheso* (*'di ltar bya ba byas so*), which means, “I have done what I need to do”. By saying this, they encourage other sentient beings to follow the path as well. When they proclaim, “I have done what I need to do”, they are saying that they have understood the truth of suffering and abandoned the cause of the suffering, as taught by the Four Noble Truths. They also say things like “I will not know any more becoming; I will not know any existence beyond this one”. For them, after they have managed to destroy the cause of suffering, they say there is nothing more.

*Followers of the Mahayana should not look down on shravakas*

Because of our petty Mahayana influence, I am sure that many of us look down on the shravakas, but we should not even attempt to do this! For example, there is a Mahayana story that when the five hundred shravakas heard teachings on the great emptiness, they had a heart attack. Petty-minded people like us might use these stories to boost our ego because we follow the Mahayana, but this would be a mistake, as the story is actually praising the shravakas! Their shock means that at least they understand something, whereas we are so dumb that it does not touch us.

*Shravakas also hear Mahayana teachings and tell them to others, but they do not practise them*

There is another way of explaining shravakas. When they hear teachings from the Buddha, they do not only hear the Four Noble Truths and other Theravada teachings, but also Mahayana teachings. For example, the *Heart Sutra* that we read this morning is a discussion between Shariputra, one of the greatest shravakas, and Avalokiteshvara. But although the shravakas hear Mahayana teachings, they do not practise the path of the Mahayana, because their aim is simply to get enlightenment for themselves. Nevertheless, some of them, like Shariputra, Ananda and Subhuti, teach the Mahayana path to others. The *Pundarika Sutra* (*dam chos pad ma dkar po'i mdo* – the *Lotus Sutra*) says, “Today we have become shravakas. We will announce the Mahayana path to those sentient beings who are interested”. You might wonder why they do this; it is simply a service to the Buddha, their teacher.

You might ask why bodhisattvas are not called shravakas, since they also hear the teachings and give the teachings. The difference is their aim. The shravakas aim to let people hear. The

bodhisattvas do not only aim to let people hear. Their aim and practice is also to let other people follow the path.

The pratyekabuddha, or solitary realiser, is another state of enlightenment. Pratyekabuddhas have also destroyed the root of samsara. There are two kinds of solitary realisers: those who live in communities, and those who live alone, like rhinoceroses. How can solitary realisers, who are born in a *kalpa* in which no buddha teaches, nevertheless be born from the Muni King? First, they hear the teachings of the Buddha. They study and reflect upon the twelve links of interdependent origination, and they accumulate merit for a hundred *kalpas*. They pray to be reborn at a time and in a place when there is no buddha, and they become self-realised at that time. They usually teach visually rather than verbally. For example, they display miracles such as when the upper part of their body becomes fire, and the lower part becomes water.

They are considered a higher form of enlightenment than the shravakas for two reasons: their accumulation of merit, and their accumulation of wisdom. The fastest shravakas usually accumulate merit for three lifetimes, whereas pratyekabuddhas accumulate merit for a hundred aeons. In their accumulation of wisdom, shravakas only realise one type of selflessness – the selflessness of the ego – whereas pratyekabuddhas also realise half of the selflessness of phenomena.

For the same reasons, pratyekabuddhas are considered less enlightened than bodhisattvas. A bodhisattva accumulates merit for three countless aeons and fully realises both types of selflessness, so he has two kinds of wisdom: wisdom that knows nature as it is, and wisdom that knows nature as it appears, in its multiplicity. Shravakas and pratyekabuddhas may have the wisdom that knows how it is, but they do not have complete wisdom of how it appears. We will come to this when we discuss the 11<sup>th</sup> bhumi, so do not worry too much about it now. These are only very general differences; there are many others. For example, the bodhisattva practice of exchanging oneself for others does not exist for the shravakas or pratyekabuddhas.

[H5]

## (2) How Buddhas are born from bodhisattvas (519), 1:1.2

The next question is, where does a buddha come from. You might think that he comes from bodhicitta, but in fact, he comes from a bodhisattva, a person. There are two reasons for this:

First, any buddha was previously a bodhisattva, and the first instance of a buddha comes right after the last instance of a tenth bhumi bodhisattva, so the cause of the buddha is a bodhisattva.

Second, bodhisattvas like Vajrapani and Manjushri act as teachers or reminders to many bodhisattvas. For example, the Mahayana view is that when Siddhartha was enjoying life in the palace, Manjushri and Vajrapani manifested birth, old age, sickness and death for him.

[H5]

## (3) Therefore, bodhisattvas are worthy of praise (520)

We are not paying homage to the bodhisattva yet; we are just saying that he is a greater being. Before we go on to discuss the three causes of a bodhisattva, let us have some questions.

[Q]: Chandrakirti says that the realisation of the arhats depends on their realisation of Prajñaparamita. Would the Nyingmapas have a slightly different approach here?

[A]: A little, but the Nyingmapas still have to explain one sloka later. Mipham Rinpoche says that with the *Abhidharma Kosha* you can actually attain enlightenment, although *Abhidharma* is known as a subject of the lower vehicle. There are certain scholars who believe that the *Abhidharma Kosha* alone is not a complete path, while others disagree. I think that the *Abhidharma Kosha* can be seen as part of the Madhyamika, as it was written

after Vasubandhu was inspired by Asanga reading all those books [see p.10]. Since the *Abhidharma* is sarcastic about the shravaka path, we can say that Vasubandhu is more of a Madhyamika. Furthermore, if we hold strictly to the *Madhyamakavatara* point of view, even the Svacittika-Madhyamika does not have a complete path. This is a bit shocking, especially for those who belong to Shantarakshita's lineage, which includes all of us! But Chandrakirti has a good reason. Many people think that if the ultimate truth of a path is perfect, that alone will be enough to lead us to enlightenment, even if its relative truth is imperfect. But according to Chandrakirti, if even the relative truth is degenerate, then you do not have a complete path.

[Q]: When you talked about the relationship of the *Abhidharma Kosha* and the Madhyamika, did you mean it can be seen as part of the Mahayana?

[A]: Yes – the Mahayana Madhyamika. There are two kinds of Mahayana and Hinayana. Each has both a theoretical or doctrinal aspect, and a practical aspect. Mahayana theory talks about both Mahayana and Hinayana practice and the Hinayana theory presents its own understanding of both Mahayana and Hinayana. Naturally, the Hinayana claims that it is Mahayana. After all, who does not want to be greater?

[H4]

**b) Explaining the three causes from which bodhisattvas are born (521), 1:1.3-4**

[H5]

**(1) Identifying these three causes**

Now that we have established that the bodhisattva is worthy of praise, the next question is where does a bodhisattva come from. Here, Chandrakirti presents the three causes of a bodhisattva:

*The three causes of a bodhisattva*

- Mind of compassion *nyinjé sem (snying rje'i sems)*
- Non-duality *nyisu me lo (gnyis su med blo)*
- Bodhicitta *changchubkyi sem (byang chub sems)*

[H5]

**(2) The sequence of these three causes (522)**

We will spend quite a lot of time in these four slokas, as you can almost say that they reveal the complete path of the Mahayana. For example, if somebody asks you how a person becomes enlightened, all you need to do is read them the first sloka or even just the last two lines: mind of compassion, non-duality and bodhicitta. But here we have to study it academically, so we will go through these three causes in more detail.

*Why does compassion come before non-duality and bodhicitta?*

First, why do the three causes come in this order, rather than with bodhicitta first? The reason is not that Chandrakirti was composing a letter and certain words did not fit on the line, so he had to put them in this order. It is not that at all! Actually, if you read some other Mahayana sutras, the order may be different. The main reason here is that compassion is the cause of the other causes of bodhicitta, so it comes first. There is a good explanation in the commentary by Rendawa, but briefly, we can say that from the mind of compassion comes non-duality and bodhicitta, and from these two together with compassion comes the bodhisattva. This is just a different way of reading the last two lines. Next, we will go through both compassion and non-duality in brief, and then we will discuss compassion in more detail.

*The meaning of compassion*

As we will see in a moment, the second sloka explains why compassion is the most important of these three. It is like a seed, like water, and like ripening. Therefore, compassion comes first. Although we translate the Tibetan word *nyinjé* (*snying rje*) as compassion, it does not necessarily mean ‘mind of sympathy’. Nor does it mean ‘to suffer with’. Here, it is important that compassion has the connotation of understanding. We have this in our ordinary language, when

*Sakya Pandita's image of fire in the stove*

*Compassion is based on understanding*

*Non-duality*

*Compassion without fixation upon goals*

*Telling other dreamers that they are having a nightmare*

[H5]

*What type of bodhisattva are we talking about?*

we say things like “you are not in his shoes”, or “if only you were in his shoes, you would know how he feels”. It does not mean that you also have to suffer, but rather that you know or understand.

I personally think there is an important reason why compassion comes first here. This is a little bit touchy-feely, but it does not matter. We have buddha nature, and as Sakya Pandita said, you can tell that there is a fire in a stove, if you touch the surface and you feel the warmth. Even if you are a deluded and aggressive being, some of the qualities of buddha nature can be perceived within you, and one of these is the ability to understand or identify with other people.

For example, if an aggressive person does something very nasty towards someone else, like beating them, they understand that by through their actions they will create pain, or at least they understand what pain is. This is very subtle. If a tree branch falls on your head, the branch does not know that this will hurt your head. But when we hurt someone, we know that our actions will create pain. There is a mutual understanding of the pain, between the pain creator and the pain receiver. And based on that understanding, we can develop compassion. If you do not have that understanding, then you cannot develop compassion, because you do not know about the pain. The phenomenon of the pain would not even exist for you. So, here you need to know that compassion is not only sympathy, but that it must also have a lot of understanding.

Second in order comes non-duality. We can also use words like “great mind”, or “great heart” as His Holiness the Dalai Lama does. Non-duality is simply realising the meaning of the Madhyamika, and thus being free from extremes like existence and non-existence, eternalism and nihilism, and so on. If a person has compassion but does not understand non-duality, then this person can become the victim of their compassion. Suppose that your wife or husband is an alcoholic, or has a certain addiction. You may have compassion for them, but if you do not understand non-duality, then you will become fixated towards and cling to the goal of being able to cure them or help them. Someone who understands non-duality has no such fixation on so-called goals, which is why bodhisattvas can continue to help sentient beings year after year, life after life. Since they are not goal-oriented, they do not give up. They do not say things like “I can never cure all sentient beings, so I will not try”.

If you do not cling to the goal of managing to help, your actions to help sentient beings will not stop. Even better, when you understand non-duality, your compassion becomes even stronger. Let us suppose that all of us in this tent are dreaming. We are all having a nightmare that we have a fatal disease, but somehow one of us knows that this is a dream, a nightmare. This person tries to tell his fellow dreamers, “Hey look, this is just a nightmare”, but they do not listen to him. They still believe that this is true and real. Can you imagine? The person who knows it is a dream may not have woken up. He just knows that it is a dream. But he feels a great responsibility to tell everyone else, and as he slowly reaches towards bodhicitta, he is determined to wake up, for example with a bucket of water.

Now we can see why the order is compassion first, then non-duality and then bodhicitta. However, we should know that the order could be different. Here we are following Chandrakirti, and his *Madhyamakavatara* text, which is meant for a general audience. Certain bodhisattvas may understand non-duality first, and then through that they may develop compassion towards other sentient beings that do not have that understanding.

### **(3) Identifying the bodhisattva born from these three causes (523)**

Now, it gets a little complicated! Here we are still on the last line of first sloka, which talks about the causes of the bodhisattva. Now there is a question – when we say bodhisattva, what type of bodhisattva are we talking about? How do we define the boundary? The question arises because Shantideva’s *Bodhicharyavatara* says that those who have the wish to enlighten all

*Relative and ultimate bodhicitta*

*Chandrakirti and Shantideva are referring to different kinds of bodhisattva*

*The bodhisattva is born from non-duality*

*The three analogies for compassion: seed, water, and ripening*

beings automatically change their name to ‘bodhisattva’, and they then become objects of refuge by gods and humans. According to Shantideva’s approach, almost all of us are this kind of bodhisattva from time to time. But is Chandrakirti talking about the same type of bodhisattva?

In general, we speak of two kinds of bodhicitta mind: relative and ultimate, and we classify beings that have this bodhicitta mind into three groups: worldly beings, bodhisattvas and buddhas. Unlike Shantideva, Chandrakirti is referring to the type of bodhisattva that has ultimate bodhicitta mind, which is the direct experience of emptiness. We know this because the fifth sloka says, “*With this attainment, from now on he is known as a bodhisattva*”, and in his autocommentary, Chandrakirti explains that he is discussing someone on the first bhumi bodhisattva level and beyond.

If you are a Prasangika-Madhyamika student, you do not want two of your great lineage scholars like Shantideva and Chandrakirti contradicting each other. However, compassion and relative bodhicitta can also exist within ordinary beings, which is what Shantideva is referring to when he says that a person with bodhicitta mind will automatically become a bodhisattva. Shantideva says that someone who merely has the wish to enlighten all sentient beings, which is relative bodhicitta, can obtain the name of bodhisattva. But here, when Chandrakirti talks of a bodhisattva, he is not talking about that.

There is another good reason. Chandrakirti has said that the bodhisattva is born from the mind of compassion, non-duality and bodhicitta. Here, you have to highlight the word ‘born’ in your text. It is a very important word here, because someone who is *born* from non-duality has to be a non-samsaric bodhisattva. Worldly bodhisattvas follow the paths of accumulation and application, and although they practice compassion and non-duality, they are not yet *born* as bodhisattvas. The word ‘born’ is important because we are talking about a result – being born, already having taken birth. The result that comes from understanding compassion, bodhicitta and especially non-duality has to be a non-samsaric bodhisattva.

We can also make some other remarks here. For example, by praising the bodhisattva as being supreme among the four kinds of being, we are also paying indirect homage to the Buddha, because by praising the seed we also praise the result. Anyway, in summary, the last two lines of first sloka are a general outline of the three causes of the bodhisattva, which are compassion, non-duality and bodhicitta. We deal with compassion first, which takes us to the second sloka.

[H4]

**c) Showing how compassion is the most important of these three (529), 1:2**

1:2      *Compassion alone is first seed for the abundant harvest of buddhahood;  
Then water for its growth,  
And finally, what matures as a state of lasting enjoyment –  
Therefore, first I praise compassion.*

If you want to know about compassion, this sloka will tell you. Three analogies are given here: seed, water and ripening. The first analogy of a seed, *makyé pa kye (ma skyed pa skyes)* tells us that compassion is like the seed that gives birth to all of the Buddha’s qualities. You did not have these qualities before, but if you have compassion, then you can obtain them. If you do not have a fruit, but only a seed, then you can plant the seed and expect the results. Compassion is like that seed.

The second analogy is that compassion is like water. One could also say it is like the earth, like ploughing, or like taking care of the seed. Compassion acts like the water or the earth, always taking care of this seed, encouraging and nourishing it. With compassion, a bodhisattva remains determined to enlighten sentient beings, even for three countless aeons. Without compassion,

*Compassion is present at the beginning, the middle, and the end*

*Does the Buddha have compassion?*

*Buddhas benefit beings without dualistic motivation*

*Compassion of buddhas is seen from the point of view of sentient beings*

then even if a bodhisattva has quite a good understanding of non-duality, he will have no means of encouragement. Although it's very unlikely, this kind of bodhisattva could conceivably become discouraged or tired on the path, because the path is difficult, and he might end up wanting to rest as a shravaka or a pratyekabuddha. So, compassion acts as a companion to encourage the bodhisattva as he proceeds along the path.

Finally, you reach enlightenment, and still compassion is necessary even when the flower has bloomed and the fruit has ripened. The ripening of the fruit is important, because without ripening there is no continuum of the seed. When you plant rice, rice grows, and then with this rice you can plant more. But the seed is important – it has to be perfect, because if it is rotten or broken, then it will not produce a good result. Compassion seems to be the only perfect seed.

Chandrakirti is telling us that compassion is present at the beginning, in the middle and even at the end. He uses the analogy of ripening in the third line when he says, “*finally what matures as a state of lasting enjoyment*”. This “*lasting enjoyment*” is important, as it refers to infinite and never-ending buddha activity. There is no such thing as a buddha benefiting a certain number of sentient beings and then going on holiday, or something like that. The buddhas’ activity for the benefit of sentient beings is endless, because of compassion. At the end, during the result, if there is no compassion, there is no act of ripening. And if there is no act of ripening, no more seed is produced.

We need to clarify a potential doubt here, about whether the Buddha has compassion. And if he does, is he motivated to help beings? The problem is that if we say that a buddha has motivation, it can disturb our fundamental view. Buddhas do not have subject and object, and all our dualistic clinging. Therefore, they cannot have the kind of motivation that sees the needs of a particular sentient being in France, and then decides to go there and manifest particular acts. So, does a buddha have compassion?

There are two answers. First, when the buddhas were bodhisattvas they made many prayers and wishes, and because of these prayers, they have obtained the three kayas. In particular, they obtained the Rupakaya, which is the Nirmanakaya, although Nirmanakaya is a Vajrayana term, and the Mahayana does not really talk about it so much. The way they benefit beings, as Shantideva said, is like the sun or a wish-fulfilling tree. The sun does not have a wish to illuminate certain parts of the earth and not shine in other parts. Instead, as the sun comes out, then whoever wishes to have sun and has merit or good karma, then they will receive sunshine. The sun does not have the wish to send its rays. The Buddhas manifest in the same way as this, without the subject and object kind of motivation.

The other way of clarifying this is that the compassion of the Buddha is seen from the point of view of sentient beings. For someone who has devotion and merit, from his or her point of view the Buddha’s compassion is there.

Here you need to understand that compassion is necessary in the beginning, in the middle, and even after you get enlightened. Therefore, we pay our first homage to compassion. We will next come to the different three types of compassion. Maybe you can ask some questions first.

[Q]: Why don't we speak of buddha nature as the seed of buddhahood?

[A]: Well, this can be argued. As I was saying earlier, compassion is like the rays of the buddha nature. I referred to Sakya Pandita’s analogy of the fire inside the stove. You can tell whether there is fire by touching the stove, and if you feel warmth, you know there is something like fire inside. Buddha nature does not really manifest. So, although you can see a person going through emotions like devotion and anger, we do not say, “he’s going through buddha nature”. But compassion, especially understanding, is one of the qualities of buddha nature. So, in this case you can say that the first line of the second sloka talks about buddha nature.

[Q]: In the first explanation of the Buddha's compassion, you said that the Buddha does not have the subject and object kind of motivation, but that he benefits like the rays of the sun. This explains how the Buddha benefits beings, but I do not understand how it shows that the Buddha has compassion.

[A]: Before they become buddhas, when they are bodhisattvas, the buddhas make many prayers. They even make specific prayers, such as who will be there when they become enlightened, how many disciples they will have and even what kinds of flowers will grow in that place. They benefit beings by the power of this compassion. It is still compassion continuing.

[Q]: It is past compassion.

[A]: But it is still there. You cannot really separate the seed, shoot and result. They are not really the same, but they are also not separate. Compassion works like this.

[Q]: You said that compassion includes understanding. But if this understanding is about the suffering of beings, it cannot fit with the idea of no subject and no object.

[A]: This is why there is a clarification and a second answer. If you pray to the Buddha, "please look upon me, I am suffering here, know me", and suddenly your problem dissolves, then you will thank him. You almost create the Buddha who knows your suffering and then actually helps you, but it is your point of view of his compassion.

This discussion is good! This is how you should study this subject, always trying to find a contradiction in what I am saying. As I was saying earlier, we are only talking about the author's homage here. Just in the homage, Chandrakirti has already explained many things, and I am not even doing it justice here! I am only explaining one thousandth of what is there! Tulku Jigme Rinpoche was just saying that when this text was taught by Khenpo Rinchen, another of my teachers, we spent two weeks just on the first four slokas. There are so many things to talk about! For example, we talked about shravakas in terms of one who hears and one who makes others hear. This leads to an immediate doubt – what happens if the shravaka is in the formless realm, as then he does not make any sound, so he cannot make other people hear! There are so many things like that, which I have skipped.

[Q]: I did not understand the link between non-duality and compassion, how non-duality comes about after compassion.

[A]: First, you dream that you have a fatal disease, although you do not yet realise that it is a dream. But as a greater being, you understand and have compassion towards your fellow dreamers. Then suddenly you realise you are dreaming, and you understand non-duality. But because you know that other people do not know this, you also want them to know that this is a dream. This is bodhicitta. It is that simple.

[Q]: Your second answer does not answer the question about whether the Buddha has compassion. Does the Buddha have it or not?

[A]: I am saying that the Buddha has it from our point of view. We have to be careful, as after all, his very existence might just be our point of view too!

[Q]: I am not happy with the first explanation. When we say the bodhisattva made many wishes, and this motivation is continued in buddhahood, it seems to me that wishes are relative, and must be exhausted at some point. They cannot go on continuously, endlessly.

[A]: The result is still there, and that is because of compassion. The first answer is that there is a continuum of compassion, and the second is that we see it from our point of view. The example works well. A flower has a particular seed, and then with water it grows, and then produces more seeds. Your argument is good, as you can indeed say that is finished now. Dharmakirti said that the entire path is gone, that the boat has to be abandoned. Nevertheless, this seed produces the next flower, so the benefit is there. But we still need the ripening. Let us suppose that if, despite seed and water, the flower does not grow. Then it will be the end of the lineage of this flower! This is what we are talking about. This analogy is so good: seed, water and ripening.

[Q]: Doesn't sympathy already contain the idea of understanding within it?

[A]: There is no problem if sympathy has the connotation of understanding. But I thought sympathy can mean just feeling sorry for someone, and that may not work. Let us imagine a very vicious sentient being that does not have any sympathy at all. If we say that

*Can relative bodhicitta be non-dualistic?*

sympathy is the ultimate compassion, then we must say that this being does not have compassion, and there is a danger that we might say they do not have buddha nature. But as a buddhist, no matter how bad someone is, you have to say they have buddha nature. It is the basis for them to develop all enlightened qualities. My viewpoint is that compassion seems to be the most evidently manifest quality of the buddha nature.

[Q]: When a flower produces a seed, the seed produces another flower. When you have aspirations while you are on the path, how can this produce something as different as buddhahood? How can a seed, which is dualistic, produce a fruit that is not dualistic?

[A]: Because the essence is non-dualistic. The Nyingmapas talk in terms of *lhündrup kyi nangcha* (*lhun grub kyi snang cha*), ‘the spontaneous aspect of appearance’, which refers to the Buddha nature’s inherent capacity for manifestation.

[Q]: Isn’t this like the argument against the Hindus, that the cause and the fruit are the same thing?

[A]: They do not even call it a cause and fruit – but then we are climbing to another stage, and we are not talking about Madhyamika any more. Here we believe in Buddhahood, or at least in a bodhisattva, and we believe that the three causes of the bodhisattva are compassion, non-duality and bodhicitta. Is your question about the type of compassion that bodhisattvas have?

[Q]: My understanding is that the relative bodhicitta that abides in worldly bodhisattvas is dualistic bodhicitta. But the relative bodhicitta that abides within other types of bodhisattva may not necessarily be dualistic – can bodhicitta be relative but non-dualistic?

[A]: Here we need to distinguish the meditation and post meditation time of a bodhisattva. That is why we mentioned *tsendzin* (*mtshan 'dzin*), fixation towards characteristics, at the beginning. A bodhisattva on the first bhumi has relative bodhicitta that has fixation towards characteristics during the post meditation time, but not during the meditation time. You could say that dualism, *nyidzin* (*gnyis 'dzin*) is ignorance; and fixation towards characteristics is something like ignorance. However, fixation towards characteristics is not necessarily dualism, it is *tsendzin*.

[Q]: Can you have duality without conceiving of the characteristics of things?

[A]: Yes, this is why I am not so sure that ‘dualism’ is the right word for *nyidzin*. We will talk more about *nyidzin* and *tsendzin* later. When we study defilements and ignorance, we talk of dualistic mind. A dualistic mind is one that has grasping towards dualistic phenomena, as a subject and object. A bodhisattva from the first bhumi onwards does not have this, but he does have fixation towards characteristics. This is not dualistic grasping, but seeing dualistic appearance – things like colour or shape.

[H3]

## **2) The actual praise based on these reasons (530), 1:3.1–4.2**

[H4]

### **a) Other ways of explaining the three types of compassion**

[H4]

### **b) This extraordinary way of explaining the three types of compassion (531)**

1:3      *Initially fixating on this so-called 'I' as an [existing] self,  
'Mine' gives rise to grasping.  
Helpless beings, driven as an irrigation wheel,  
To compassion for these, I bow down.*

[H5]

## **(1) Explaining them in terms of their different objects**

*There are three types of compassion, and they have three different objects*

In this sloka, Chandrakirti gives the second homage, and introduces us to the three types of compassion. Many scholars agree that these three types of compassion are not distinguished by their form or aspect, but because of their three kinds of objects:

- **Sentient beings that have two kinds of suffering – the suffering of suffering and the suffering of change:** According to Madhyamika, compassion is the wish to protect or free sentient beings from suffering. So, the first type of compassion is the wish to free sentient beings from these two kinds of suffering.
- **Sentient beings that are tormented by the suffering of compounding:** *duché* ('dus byas). Simply speaking, using touchy-feely language, we could say it is aimed at beings tormented by the suffering of impermanence, but it would be much better to use the word ‘compounding’.
- **Sentient beings that do not know that all phenomena lack inherent existence:** In touchy-feely language, we could say it is aimed at those who do not understand emptiness. Do not worry – more detail on this is coming!

The 3<sup>rd</sup> sloka covers the first of these three types of compassion.

[H6]

### (a) The meaning of the simile of the irrigation wheel

*The six reasons why sentient beings are like an irrigation wheel*

Now we will discuss what makes an object of the first type of compassion in more detail. Initially, although there is no concrete object, simply no object, you have this delusion of ‘I’. From there comes the idea of ‘mine’, which gives rise to grasping towards all sorts of objects. Chandrakirti compares sentient beings that suffer in this way to an irrigation wheel or waterwheel. There were no irrigation wheels in Tibet, but he is referring to the kind of irrigation wheel that was used in India, where several cups are attached to a wooden wheel. He gives six reasons why these sentient beings are like an irrigation wheel:

1. An irrigation wheel is tightened or held in place by ropes, nails and so on. Similarly, sentient beings are bound by karma and afflictive emotions, such as ignorance.
2. An irrigation wheel does not just rotate by itself. It must have a driver or operator. For sentient beings, this operator is consciousness, and the notions of ‘I’, ‘me’, ‘mine’ or ‘I am’.
3. An irrigation wheel brings water from the well, and pours it onto the field that is to be irrigated. I think this is referring to the highest realm of samsara, which, according to buddhism, many Hindus mistakenly consider nirvana. Although you may reach the highest level of samsara, you will still come down, just as the water will drain away from the field. You might find these analogies difficult, but remember that they were written in India.
4. A waterwheel has to be pulled up with a lot of strength, but going down is easy. Similarly, it is difficult to go up to higher birth, but to go down to the lower realms is easy.
5. The fifth similarity concerns the twelve links of interdependent origination. These are ignorance, perception, consciousness, name and form, the six senses, contact, feelings or sensation, desire, grasping, coming into being, birth, and old age and death. If you cannot remember all twelve, you can abbreviate them into three: emotion, action or karma, and birth. Whether you are talking in terms of three or twelve, the point is that you cannot really say which one comes first. Similarly, with an irrigation wheel, you cannot say which of the cups that is attached to the wheel comes first.
6. If you live next to a waterwheel, and you watch it, you will see that it does the same thing every day. It does not change direction, rest a while or engage in other activities like dancing – it just does the same thing repeatedly. Samsaric beings are the same – it

*We pay homage to common compassion because of the value of the object*

*The objects of the first kind of compassion*

*All compounded phenomena have a beginning, middle, and end*

is breakfast, lunch and dinner repeatedly. But to see that, you need to stay and watch for a while.

So sentient beings are like a waterwheel, going round and round. The first kind of compassion is to want to free sentient beings from this kind of suffering. Many scholars call this kind of compassion ‘common compassion’, because Hindus also have it. The Sakyapa scholar Shakya Chokden says that we pay homage to this type of compassion because of the value of the object. However, for the other two types of compassion, Chandrakirti pays homage not only because of the value of the object, but also because of the form of the compassion.

Now we need to ask who are included as objects of this first kind of compassion. All samsaric sentient beings that suffer from the two types of suffering are included, and also shravakas and pratyekabuddhas who are still on the path. In brief, the object of the first type of compassion is someone born in samsara without his own choice, someone that is reborn in samsara due to the power of karma and emotion, rather than his own will.

[H6]

**(b) The first meaning of the simile of the moon's reflection in water  
(532)**

*1:4.1-2     Sentient beings are as the moon's reflection in moving water.  
Seeing them as empty in their change and in their nature,*

The next half-sloka, the first two lines of the fourth sloka, covers the two other types of compassion. Here, only one analogy is given – the reflection of the moon in water that is slightly rippling, stirred by a gentle wind – but the same analogy is used twice, to explain both the second and third types of compassion.

The object of the second type of compassion is beings that suffer from the compounded nature of phenomena, i.e. impermanence. In general, compassion is the mind that wishes beings to be free from suffering. Here, the suffering is the all-pervasive suffering inherent to all compounded phenomena.

A compounded phenomenon always has a beginning. If there is no beginning, there is no act of compounding. Then there must be a state of dwelling or remaining; otherwise, again there is no compounding. Finally, there must be an end to the act of compounding. Even if I drink a cup of tea, there is a beginning, middle and end. For example, if there is no end to the act of drinking, there can be no concept of drinking a cup of tea, because you are always drinking, you are stuck there! So there is a beginning of the beginning, a middle of the beginning and an end of the beginning. You can say that the end of the beginning is the birth of the remaining, and the death of remaining is the birth of the death. The death of the death is the birth of the birth. Even if you have nothing, then there has to be a beginning of the nothingness – there is no space. As I drink a glass of water, it is the beginning of the emptiness of the glass. Then there will be a remaining of the emptiness, and soon the death of emptiness and the beginning of filling with coffee! It is also the beginning of going to pee!

Many people say buddhists are always talking about negative or sad things, like death, dying or impermanence. But these are not necessarily sad; they are just the nature of phenomena. Without an end, there is no beginning. I do not have a Ferrari car right now, but if I buy one, that is also impermanence. I have changed from having no car, to having a car! As long as compounded phenomena exist, there will be objects of this second type of compassion.

Chandrakirti explains this with the line “*Sentient beings are as the moon's reflection in moving water*”. Here we should underline the word ‘moving’. The water is moving because there is a wind. The lake is like samsara, and the wind is like karma, emotion and ego.

*As long as a phenomenon is impermanent, it can be harmed or changed*

*Nagarjuna's statement:  
all compounded  
phenomena are illusions*

*The objects of the second  
kind of compassion*

Again, there is something very special here. As long as a phenomenon is impermanent, it can be harmed. It can be manipulated, interfered with, obstructed or changed. This is also related to the Buddhist idea of permanence. To our ordinary mind, the sun is permanent. The ordinary mind equates permanence with something that continues for a long time. But here our definition of permanence is something that has no birth, no remaining and no end. It cannot have a beginning, because as long as there is a beginning, there is time, and so there is impermanence.

As long as something is impermanent, it can be harmed, manipulated or obstructed. Nagarjuna said *gang la gnod yod de bde min*, “Where there is a possibility of harm, or even actual harm, there is not happiness”. Maybe there is no harm right now, but harm is waiting there, and one of these days it will come. Therefore, as Nagarjuna said, something that can be harmed is not happiness.

In the *Mulamadhyamaka-karikas*, Nagarjuna also said *'dus byas tham chad slu'i chö 'di na de dag rdzun pa yin*, “Therefore all compounded things are illusions”. For example, if you go to a river this year and next year you go to the same river you might say “I saw this same river last year”. But that is an illusion – it is not true! The river you saw last year is gone, dried up, drunk by the whales and sharks! So Nagarjuna says that all compounded phenomena are illusions – this is incredible! So the conclusion is that as long as there is impermanence, there is suffering. This is a special assertion of the Mahayana. In the Vaibhashika and lower schools, they believe that something can change every instant yet not be suffering. We will talk about this later.

So, all these sentient beings are like a reflection of the moon in water that is being moved by the wind. And in the second line, “seeing them as empty in their change”, you need to underline the word ‘change’. In Tibetan, the same word is used for ‘change’ and ‘movement’. You also need to add the last sentence of the third sloka: “to compassion for these, I bow down”. This is the commentator’s wish. Chandrakirti does not want to waste space, as I said before – he includes everything, but he writes in a concise and condensed way.

So, who is included as objects of this second kind of compassion? Included are all the objects of the first type of compassion, and the shravakas and pratyekabuddhas, not only those who are on the path but also those who have already attained the result. I am surprised that you are not shocked! These are enlightened beings, yet they are the objects of compassion! On top of that are included all bodhisattvas, from the first to the tenth bhumi, during their post-meditation time. All are within the law of impermanence.

This compassion is also called common compassion, because it is also common to shravakas and pratyekabuddhas. They share this kind of compassion towards objects that are compounded and impermanent, but they do not include the post-meditation state of bodhisattvas from the first to tenth bhumis. They also do not include shravakas and pratyekabuddhas who have obtained the result of their path.

[Q]: How does this impermanence manifest, given that the shravakas and pratyekabuddhas have obtained the fruit of their path?

[A]: There is cessation, and there is awakening from the cessation. That is the impermanence.

[Q]: Why isn’t the Buddha also impermanent, as he is born and so on?

[A]: The Buddha is a body of apparition – he does all these things because we think he does all these things. It is Nirmanakaya.

[H6]

**(c) The second meaning of the simile of the moon’s reflection in water**  
(533)

For the third type of compassion, read the same two lines, but emphasise ‘reflection’ and ‘empty’. Again, here we add the last line of the third sloka “*to compassion for these, I bow down*”.

[Q]: The word “reflection” is not in the Tibetan?

[A]: The Tibetan is *chu yi nang gi da wa tar* (*chu'i nang gi zla ba ltar*) – ‘moon that is in the water’ – everyone knows that the moon has not fallen into the water!

*The story of the monkeys and the moon in the lake*

The object of the third type of compassion is all those who have not understood that all phenomena do not have intrinsic existence. There is a story about a monkey who went to drink some water near a lake one evening. He saw the reflection of the moon, and thought that the moon had fallen into the lake. He went to report this to the king of the monkeys, who was not only stupid but also ambitious, so he thought, “Ah, now there’s a good chance for me to be famous and heroic, if we could save this moon!” So, he summoned all the five hundred monkeys and went to the lake. There was a tree branch hanging over the lake, so all the monkeys held each other from the branch and tried to take the moon out of the lake. Finally, the weight of so many monkeys broke the branch, and they all fell onto the moon! They did not understand that it is an illusion. This is the suffering, and we are no different from these monkeys.

*Mere appearance*

We say that all phenomena lack inherent existence, that they are *tsam*, mere appearance. This word ‘just’ or ‘mere’ is very important here. They are just appearance, just sound, and just this experience. But when these experiences occur, we do not understand their lack of inherent existence. For example, when you have a small wound and say, “it is just a small thing”, or when we say it is “just” an appearance, it means a lot. We are not negating the appearance. We are negating the idea of inherent existence, like moon’s reflection in water – like the monkeys. Nobody is going to tell these monkeys that there is no reflection of the moon in the water! In fact, if they were clever monkeys, they could sit next to the reflection of the moon and enjoy all sorts of romance! We are saying that this moon is not real, but they do not know this. The bodhisattvas want them to know that and be free from this kind of suffering.

*The objects of the third kind of compassion*

The first two kinds of compassion are called *chöpé kün ne longwé nyungjé* (*spyod pas kun nas slong ba'i snying rje*), ‘compassion inspired by action’. This third type is *tawé künné longwé nyungjé* (*lta bas kun nas slong ba'i rnying rje*), ‘compassion inspired by the view’. It is uncommon compassion, because it involves understanding both of the selflessness of phenomena and the selflessness of ego. The object of this third type of compassion includes all the objects we mentioned earlier, and on top of that, even the meditation time of the tenth bhumi bodhisattva. This is because even during their meditation time, tenth bhumi bodhisattvas have not completely realised emptiness. In summary, the third kind of object is anyone who has not completely or totally realised emptiness.

[H5]

## **(2) Explaining that their form is common (533)**

[H5]

## **(3) Summarising the meaning of this important point (533)**

*The first compassion is towards those reborn in samsara without choice*

In summary, the object of the first type of compassion is someone born in samsara without any choice, helplessly. We say helplessly if your birth is dependent on conditions rather than yourself, wherever your karma throws you. For example, your karma might decide that you should be born as a dog, a rich person’s pet. Or your karma might decide you should be born as a very healthy human being, but born in war zone like Bosnia. You have no choice. Well indirectly, you had a choice, but you did not choose! You could always have refrained from certain things you should not have done, but you did not!

Now, there is one clarification. I was telling you earlier that the nature of compassion is one of understanding, rather than sympathy. When we talk about compassion towards the meditation

state of the tenth bhumi bodhisattva, if compassion meant sympathy, it would not really be suitable here. You cannot have sympathy towards a tenth bhumi bodhisattva's meditation time, but you can have understanding.

I think we have finished with compassion now, although I did not do it much justice. If you want to study compassion, read this. Now we have finished the homage, and we can finally begin the main text, which starts on the third line of the fourth sloka.

[H2]

## **B. EXPLAINING THE ACTUAL MEANING OF THE MAIN BODY OF THE TEXT, THAT WHICH IS INTRODUCED**

[H3]

### **I. Explaining the bodhisattva levels (bhumi) which are the cause (534)**

[H4]

#### **A) Showing their nature in general in terms of the union of means (compassion) and wisdom**

*What is a bhumi?*

Now we have to talk about the eleven bhumis. Before we talk about them individually, we need to talk about what a bhumi is in general. What makes a bhumi? Simply, it is a combination of wisdom and method. In Sanskrit, *bhumi* literally means earth, land or country – it can refer to many things. For example, in Indonesia, the language has a lot of Sanskrit influence. In their official forms, they use words like '*bhumiputra*' when they talk of citizenship. We use the name 'bhumi' for the combination of wisdom and method because the ground or earth acts like a container for all things to function. For example, you can hoist this tent because of the ground. Likewise, all the enlightened qualities can grow on the base of the combination of wisdom and method.

*The bhumi as a combination of wisdom and compassion*

This combination is essential. If there is only wisdom but no method, then it will become like shravakas and pratyekabuddhas. If there is only method but no wisdom, the state will become completely ordinary, like us – we have plenty of methods but no wisdom. The combination of wisdom and method makes the bhumi. Now, for a bodhisattva during the state of meditation, you cannot classify which bhumi he is in. There is none, because this kind of fabrication does not exist within their state of meditation. So, on what basis do we differentiate the first to tenth bhumis? Is it because they have attended certain universities and obtained certain diplomas, or did national service so they were awarded various medals?

*Enlightenment as a "result of absence"*

The whole idea of enlightenment is this: if your shirt is dirty, you wash and clean it. Becoming clean is the result, but it is a result of the absence of dirt. It is not that when you put your shirt into the washing machine it has somehow become new, or clean. The term 'result of absence', which is *dreldré* (*bral 'bras*) in Tibetan, is important to know. The extent of absence is different for each bodhisattva, and according to the amount of absence, you can say that this bodhisattva is on the first bhumi, that bodhisattva is on the second bhumi, and so on.

However, in their meditative state there is no classification or difference between the first ten bhumis. So, who can make this classification? Let us say that a first bhumi bodhisattva is meditating, and there is another in the same room. From his omniscience, he knows that the other one is a first bhumi bodhisattva, or whatever. You asked yesterday what is meant by fixation on characteristics: this is an example. During the post-meditation time, a first bhumi bodhisattva can know that he is on the first bhumi, but he cannot necessarily recognise the level of a bodhisattva higher than his own.

*The qualities of the bodhisattva in post-meditation time*

In the post-meditation time, a bodhisattva can be recognised by the number of his qualities. For example, a first bhumi bodhisattva has 1,200 qualities of the path, and a second bhumi

bodhisattva has 12,000 qualities of the path. They can also be identified by what is absent. In the first bhumi, there is the absence of *tongpang* (*mthong spang*), the defilement that can be abandoned through seeing. On the second bhumi, there is the absence of *gom pang* (*sgom spang*), that which can be abandoned through meditation. We will talk about these types of defilement later. Each stage of the bodhisattva path emphasises a particular paramita, and in addition, the bodhisattva usually takes a particular form at each level. For example, a first bhumi bodhisattva generally takes a royal form, of a king or queen. To be precise, as the *Dashabhumika Sutra* (*do sde sa chu pa*) says, “When a bird flies in the sky, we cannot indicate the traces of his flight. How can we even talk about it? Likewise, we cannot express the qualities of the bodhisattvas, so how can you even listen?” Now that we have introduced the general idea of the bhumis, we can begin with the first bhumi.

[H4]

## **B. Explaining the nature of each in terms of the paramita emphasised**

[Note: the description of the first bhumi begins on the next page]

## 1. The First Bhumi, Complete Joy

### a) Immaculate wisdom as the first, Complete Joy [1:4.3-5.2]

*1:4.3-4      The victorious one's son, possessing such understanding,  
And overcome by compassion, wishes to completely liberate all beings.*

*1:5.1-2      Fully dedicated as in the Aspirations of Samantabhadra,  
His joy is complete. This is known as the first.*

The third and fourth lines of the fourth sloka express the meditation time of the bodhisattva. When Chandrakirti says, “*possessing such understanding*”, he is referring to a bodhisattva with an understanding, or wisdom, that is free from all concepts. This refers to wisdom, and “*overcome by compassion*” refers to the method. One should never separate wisdom and compassion, and you can see they are together here: the third line talks of wisdom, the fourth of compassion.

The important words here are: “*possessing such understanding*”. This is talking about the wisdom that is the second of the *Seven Auxiliaries to Enlightenment* (*byang chub yan lag bdun*):

*The Seven Auxiliaries to Enlightenment*

- |                               |                                    |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Pure memory                | <i>dran pa yang dag</i>            |
| 2. Fully discerning phenomena | <i>chos rab tu rnam 'byed</i>      |
| 3. Pure perseverance          | <i>brtson 'grus yang dag</i>       |
| 4. Pure state of gladness     | <i>dga' ba yang dag</i>            |
| 5. Pure ecstasy               | <i>shin tu sbyangs pa yang dag</i> |
| 6. Samadhi                    | <i>ting nge 'dzin</i>              |
| 7. Pure state of equanimity   | <i>btang snyoms</i>                |

This wisdom is the ability to distinguish, to not remain in samsara because of wisdom and to not remain in nirvana because of compassion. This is an important quality of bodhisattvas, and although even the first bhumi bodhisattva has all seven of these qualities, we know from Chandrakirti’s autocommentary on the *Madhyamakavatara* that here he is talking about the second.

In the next two lines, we are talking of the bodhisattva’s post-meditation time. During his meditation time, he has wisdom and compassion. During his post-meditation, he does prayers and he has the joy of reaching this state. This is an important state because for aeon after aeon, he has gone through the path of accumulation and the path of application, and the last limit of the path of application is just finished. He then enters the state of meditation that is the *tonglam* (*mthong lam*), the path of seeing, where he abandons the defilement that needs to be abandoned by the path of seeing.

During the meditation state, it is inexpressible, but when he rises from this mediation and enters the post-meditation, a sort of ‘waking up’, he realises that he has crossed samsara. He realises that there has been earthquake, a hundred universes have been moved and a hundred buddhas have come and anointed him. He knows that he will never go back to samsara again, samsara is gone and he has crossed the border. There is tremendous joy at that time; hence, that is the name of the first bhumi. That’s it! Now maybe we can have some questions.

*Does Buddhahood have a beginning?*

*Egolessness is not the same as omniscience, as illustrated by stories about the shravakas*

[Q]: Is the bodhisattva's wisdom free from thoughts or free from concepts? I heard you use both words.

[A]: Either is fine.

[Q]: I have a question about permanence and impermanence. First, you said that impermanence has birth, remaining and death. Then you said that to be permanent, something must have no birth, no remaining and no death. So, can there be phenomena that have no birth and no death, but have a remaining?

[A]: That is not possible. As long as there is remaining, there must be a beginning of the remaining.

[Q]: So isn't there a problem with Buddhahood?

[A]: A Buddha does not have a beginning, end or middle. But ignorance has a beginning, end and middle. So, the end of ignorance is called "Buddha". But that is not a phenomenon.

[Q]: Isn't the end of ignorance the beginning of Buddha?

[A]: It is all that I can say now. We cannot point towards Buddhahood with a finger. We can only say that when ignorance is dispelled, then Buddhahood is there. It is like washing clothes. The difficulty here is that there the result and the ignorance are closely related in one way, but in another way, they are totally separate – like the dirt on the shirt. When you buy the shirt, you do not buy it together with the dirt! They are separate. However, if you think that the shirt needs to be washed, you are already accepting that it is dirty.

[Q]: You said that we can talk about the end of samsara, but we cannot talk about the beginning of buddhahood. But if you can talk about the end of samsara, then you have something that has no beginning, but has an end.

[A]: Yes, but that is something very individual, and all that is path language. During the time when we talk about the path, you can say you have a path, you have ignorance, and that you can 'attain' buddhahood or 'achieve' enlightenment. All this is what we call 'path language', which is used in order to encourage practitioners like us. But now that we are studying Madhyamika, we are establishing the view, so we need to use some different language. For example, when we talk about *denpa nyi* (*bden pa gnyis*) the two truths, this is very much 'ground language'. The two kinds of accumulation are 'path language', and the two kinds of kayas are 'result language'.

[Q]: Can I ask about meaning of *jinyépé kyenpa* (*ji snyed pa'i mkhyen pa*). I understand that the *jitawé kyenpa* (*ji lta ba'i mkhyen pa*) is the understanding of things as they are, namely that they are empty. Is *jinyépé kyenpa* the understanding of things as they appear?

[A]: *Jinyépé kyenpa* is not only the understanding of 'how it appears', but it also involves many other types of omniscience. For example, although *Maudgalyana* was a shravaka, he did not know where his mother was. He understood phenomena as they are, which is the egolessness, which is why he was a shravaka. But he still did not have *jinyépé kyenpa*, which is more than simply "how it appears", and so he did not know where his mother was. There is another story of when a layman came to Shariputra to be ordained as a monk. To be ordained, you need to have a seed of some kind of virtuous deed, but although Shariputra looked for one, he could find anything. He told the old man that he had no seed, so could not become a monk. The old man was very sad, and went to visit the Buddha, who saw that there was a seed, because millions of lifetimes ago this old man had been a pig, and he had accidentally run round a stupa!

[H6]

**b) Detailed explanation of the qualities of Complete Joy**

[H7]

**(1) Expressing praise of those on this bhumi**

[H8]

**(a) The quality that is transferred, the name, 1:5.3-4**

1:5.3-4      *With this attainment, from now on  
He is known as a bodhisattva*

We have talked about the introduction to the first bhumi. This is important, because as a buddhist, you will often say that someone is a bodhisattva. When you say that, what are you saying? In these two lines, you will find out. We touched on this in the homage, where we talked about shravakas, pratyekabuddhas, bodhisattvas and buddhas, and the boundary that defines when one becomes a bodhisattva. With this sloka, we now know that Chandrakirti is referring to the first bhumi bodhisattva onwards.

Generally, the name bodhisattva can be given in two ways. One way is from the perspective of a bodhisattva's action. The second is from the perspective of the bodhisattva's view, meaning his realisation of the view of emptiness.

[H9]

*The definition of a bodhisattva in Shantideva's Bodhicharyavatara*

*Aspiring and entering bodhicitta*

### **(i) Defining the term 'bodhisattva' by action (practice)**

In the *Bodhicharyavatara*, Shantideva teaches the first way of obtaining the name bodhisattva, which is from the point of view of action. From the moment that a person has the wish to enlighten all sentient beings, he is then qualified to be referred to as a bodhisattva, and he will then be the object of prostration and homage by gods and humans. This is a bodhisattva from the point of view of action.

We need a slight clarification, though. Someone might have this enlightened thought for just a moment; for example, "I wish I can enlighten all sentient beings". That state is only one of having bodhicitta, rather than being a bodhisattva. Even the *Bodhicharyavatara* distinguishes between a "wishing" bodhicitta and an "entering" bodhicitta. A person might wish to enlighten all sentient beings for a day or only a minute, but they do not qualify to be called a bodhisattva just because they have this wish for a couple of minutes.

But someone who has entering bodhicitta has committed that from now on, everything he does will be for the sake of all sentient beings. For example, he will drink a cup of tea for the sake of all sentient beings, or go from here to there for the sake of all sentient beings. Someone who has taken this kind of vow and made this kind of commitment can be called a bodhisattva.

These two, wishing and entering enlightened thought, are what we call relative bodhicitta. Someone who has both wishing and entering enlightened thought is called a bodhisattva, but this name is given from the point of view of action. For example, it could be people like us. From time to time, unexpectedly, you must all have the wish to enlighten all sentient beings. I had it once, just once! However, when you take initiations or do *sadhanas* or light butterlamps, if you really commit yourself, saying "from now on, may all my action be turned into something beneficial for the enlightenment of sentient beings", then you become a bodhisattva.

So your question is, does that mean ordinary people like us, in everything we do, always have to think that we are doing it for the sake of sentient beings? Because there are times when we do not even think about what we are doing, when we do not even have thoughts – like sleeping. So the question is, while we are asleep, do we then become a non-bodhisattva, and only become a bodhisattva again once we wake up and think of doing something for all sentient beings? No, that is not it. It is written in the *Bodhicharyavatara* that once you commit, once you have taken the vow, then even if you are sleeping or in a coma, you are still a bodhisattva and your merit grows all the time.

[H9]

### **(ii) Defining the term 'bodhisattva' by view (realisation)**

Here, the words "*from now on he is known as a bodhisattva*" refer to someone who has ultimate bodhicitta. He has obtained the name 'bodhisattva' from the point of view of realisation of the

view. He has a direct experience of emptiness, or direct seeing, which is why we say he is on the ‘path of seeing’. We know that Chandrakirti is referring to ultimate bodhicitta here, because he states this in his autocommentary, quoting from the 2,500 *Verses Sutra*.

[H8]

### (b) The qualities that are obtained, the meaning (537)

So, with this we have been introduced to the quality of this being that has the special name ‘first bhumi bodhisattva’, this *mingpoy yönten* (*ming po'i yon tan*). The fifth sloka tells us that he has obtained this name or title of bodhisattva, and in the following slokas, we are going to talk about several qualities of the first bhumi bodhisattva that he has obtained. The first quality is having obtained the name bodhisattva; he is not just an ordinary bodhisattva, but also an ultimate bodhisattva, a bodhisattva from the point of view of the view. It is like a soldier in an army, who after several years obtains the name or rank of ‘general’. As well as his name, the bodhisattva has obtained four qualities:

*The four qualities obtained by the bodhisattva*

1. Race, or family, *rik* (*rigs*)
2. Purification, accumulation and ability.
3. The ability to improve himself very quickly, reaching the next step easily. It is like walking up a staircase: after you have stepped with your left foot, your right foot automatically goes onto the next step. A bodhisattva has this kind of ability to go higher, whereas people like us may get some good qualities unexpectedly, and hopefully remain there for ten years, if we don’t lose them beforehand.
4. He excels over lower levels.

[H9]

#### (i) The quality of being born into the family, 1:6.1

1:6.1      *Now born into the family of the Tathagatas*

The first quality is revealed in the first line of the 6<sup>th</sup> sloka. We know that he is definitely not a worldly being, and the opposite of an ordinary being is an enlightened being. There are three types of enlightened beings: shravakas, pratyekabuddhas and buddhas. The first bhumi bodhisattva is neither a shravaka nor a pratyekabuddha, so what is he? By way of illustration, when you cross the Channel Tunnel, as soon as you reach France, you are no longer in England. You may only be at the border, but you have reached France. Similarly, a bodhisattva is sure to become a buddha. There are no sidetracks for him: there is just one track. This is why poets refer to bodhisattvas as *gyalse* (*rgyal sras*), ‘prince’, or ‘victorious one’s son’ or daughter. A bodhisattva is sure to become a buddha, so he belongs to the race or family of the buddhas. The word ‘Tathagata’, which means buddha, literally means ‘one who has followed the right path’. There is a travel agent in Bodh Gaya called Tathagata travel agency – I think it is a nice name!

[H9]

#### (ii) The quality of the ability to discard and to realise, 1:6.2-4

1:6.2-4      *Completely abandoning the three constant fetters,  
The bodhisattva possesses supreme delight  
And is able to stir a hundred worlds.*

The second quality is *küntü jorwa sum* (*kun tu shyor ba gsum*), which has been translated here as ‘fetters’. In Tibetan, it means something that not only holds you in samsara, but also pulls you down into samsara. There are three of these fetters, or causes that draw us into samsara and hold us there:

*Holding a certain view as supreme* (*lta ba mchog 'dzin*). This has three subcategories:

1. Thinking that the five aggregates are supreme, *jigtsok* (*jigs tshogs*). We think that I, me and mine are supreme. We hold this view as supreme – we think ‘I am supreme’ – that is why we are here, and why we return repeatedly.
2. Thinking Nirvana is supreme, *tar ta* (*mthar lta*), such as wanting to be reborn in heaven, thinking that heaven is supreme or that enlightenment is supreme.
3. Thinking that a wrong view is the supreme view, *logta* (*log lta*). For example, some people have an inferiority complex, and think that they are useless or worthless. This is a wrong view, but you think it is a supreme view. You are addicted to it – you love to think that you are bad or worthless. Another example is thinking that ignorance is something inherent that cannot be destroyed.

***Thinking that your discipline or ethic is supreme***, *tülshukgi chogzin* (*brtul zhugs gi mchog 'dzin*). For example, thinking that being a vegetarian is supreme, or that being non-vegetarian like the Vajrayana is supreme. It is when people think things like “this is the Vajrayana – we can eat meat, drink alcohol, and have women”, when they think that this is the great ‘openness’ of the Vajrayana. It is as simple as being proud of being a buddhist, or a Mahayana practitioner, or a Dzogchen practitioner. This only leads to rebirth in samsara, so be careful! Monks and nuns are also arrogant, and can go around holding up their sharp noses and thinking, “I am a monk”, or holding out their big chests thinking, “I am a nun”. Lord Maitreya said that the essence of ethics is that you have no pride, no arrogance.

***Doubt, té tsom (the tshoms)***: This doubt is one of the biggest problems for a practitioner, in the sense of not being able to decide what the right path is. It can become a big hindrance to enlightenment, and it can be the perfect cause for rebirth in samsara.

Suppose that Gérard Godet asks me the way to the toilet. His bladder is full. I tell him to take this road, turn right, turn left; I give him all the instructions. I say, “You will come to a door marked ‘men’. This is your toilet – turn the knob and go in. These are my instructions”. He can follow all these instructions, and actually reach the last stage when he is about to open the door. But then he looks at the sign ‘MEN’ and has all sorts of doubts. Is this really it? Perhaps the letters ‘WO’ fell off!

If he has these doubts, it is a hindrance. He has wasted time, and his urine should have come faster, but it has been postponed several minutes. That is a big obstacle! And on top of that, he does not know the Vajrayana method of pissing in your pants. What he really needs is the courage to make a mistake. It does not matter. If he opens the door and finds Ani Jimpa there, he can close it again! That courage is necessary, and the lack of it is *té tsom*.

If someone asks you what makes you reborn in samsara and dwell in samsara, the touchy-feely answer is to say ‘ignorance’. Instead, all you need to do is recite these three causes, which are what the bodhisattva has abandoned.

The quality of accumulation is taught here on the third line “*The bodhisattva possesses supreme delight*”. He has no insecurity about not attaining enlightenment. He is sure. As I said, he is already there – he is already in France, and it is only a matter of time until he reaches Paris. He has understood both the selflessness of the person and the selflessness of phenomena.

The fourth line “*And is able to stir a hundred worlds*”, talks about his ability. Perhaps the word ‘move’ or ‘shake’ would be better than ‘stir’. Every second, he can move the world if he wants to. He does not have to do it all the time, but he has the ability. Consider someone like Gorbachev, for example. When he became President of the USSR, all the stock markets went up and so on – somehow there was a feeling that the world was shaken.

**(iii) The quality of pressing on further (spontaneous progress), 1:7.1**

1:7.1      *Joyfully progressing from bhumi to bhumi*

Khenpo Kunga Wangchuk, one of my masters, said that when vultures begin to fly, they have some difficulty, but once they are up high, they occasionally move their wings a little, but they just stay in the sky. Likewise, the bodhisattva on the first bhumi will have no difficulties at all in progressing and reaching the second, third and fourth bhumis, and so on. Unless he decides out of compassion to remain as a first bhumi bodhisattva, he can progress any time he likes. This is because he has power, or control, over his diligence to engage himself in accumulating merit and wisdom.

For us, even though we may wish to attain enlightenment, when we actually engage in accumulating merit and wisdom, and purifying defilements, there are a lot of difficulties. There are many unfavourable circumstances for accumulating merit and wisdom, and favourable circumstances for accumulating defilements. This is expressed here in the first line of the 7<sup>th</sup> sloka.

**(iv) The quality of passing beyond lower levels, 1:7.2-3**

1:7.2-3      *The various paths to the lower realms have ended;  
The levels of ordinary existence are exhausted.*

The fourth quality corresponds to the second and third lines of the 7<sup>th</sup> sloka. The first of these two says that he has blocked all the lower realms, which refers to the Path of Application, *jorlam menché* (*sbyor lam sman chad*) and below. There are two paths, the paths of accumulation and application, and then there are all the samsaric realms. He has blocked these paths, which means he will never be forced to go down them by power of karma and emotion. But he can choose to go to these lower realms out of compassion.

[Q]: Earlier, you said that a bodhisattva might become discouraged, and then deviate towards the paths of the shravaka and pratyekabuddha.

[A]: This is not really going down to the lower realms. Without sufficient compassion, a bodhisattva might become so tired that he is attracted by the stage of shravaka or pratyekabuddha, but this is in order to seek a short cut to enlightenment – it is not really a lower realm. However, your question comes at exactly the right time, because the next line deals with this point, “*The levels of ordinary existence are exhausted*”.

You might think that Chandrakirti is repeating himself in the third line, but great scholars like him never repeat themselves. It might look like repetition, but there is always a new and different aspect. Here, for instance, right after mentioning that the paths to the lower realms have ended, he says that the levels of ordinary existence are exhausted. This phrase is a little sarcastic towards the Hindu doctrines, which teach that one attains the summit of existence through *shamatha*, the pacification of the mind. They think that this realm, the highest of the worlds of the gods, is enlightenment.

In Chandrakirti’s time, Hinduism was the main opponent or alternative to buddhism, but in general, we can say that other religions seem to have three kinds of aim:

- ***The highest existence* (*srid rtse*):** In some religions, this is heaven. In Hinduism, it is the peak of existence. This highest state of existence has no perception; therefore, much of this gross dualism does not exist. Because of this, unless you are an expert, you can easily mistake it for the real thing. It is like designer watches. The genuine article is

made in Switzerland, but you can buy an identical fake in Thailand, and unless you are an expert, you cannot tell the difference.

- **To be reborn in Northern Continent.** According to buddhist cosmology, we are now in the southern continent. In the northern continent, people live for a thousand years, and each of their years is a million of ours. They have wish-fulfilling cows, and enjoy great pleasure and wealth. In many religions, including the Hindu and Vedic religions, the aim is to be reborn in this northern continent. It is like a heaven. You do not need to worry about this one too much, but I have to mention it, because it is in the commentary. And it is good to know about – perhaps you will end up there, and you will realise that this is what we were talking about!
- **The state of Brahma.** This is direct sarcasm. For a bodhisattva, such states are all exhausted, as he has gone beyond them, and they are not even attractive or interesting to him. Heaven and the state of Brahma do not tempt him. He may even have revulsion towards them, because bodhisattvas consider that in these places, too much idealism is practised but no responsibility is taken. All the schools there are Rudolf Steiner oriented, no examinations are required, and there is no need to work and social security is good. But somebody still has to pay the bill!

The main reason why bodhisattvas are not interested in going to these three realms or stages is that they have so many ‘ripening obscurations’. There are two kinds of ripening obscuration:

- You accumulate merit by doing *shamatha* meditation, and then you reach that state. You think that this is final, so you do not wish to advance any further.
- While you are there enjoying yourself, your karmic bank balance is slowly running out, and one day you realise there are only a few cents left. You have to spend even those, and then you go back down again. Because of that, you do not even hear the Dharma, which is one of the freedoms and advantages of a precious human birth.

This can even happen in our day-to-day life. If we are too happy, we do not remember the Dharma. So, when you are very happy for five minutes, remember that for five minutes you have been reborn in a realm of long-living gods. But you do not necessarily have to be attached to that.

[H8]

### (c) The qualities taught by analogy, 1:7.4

1:7.4      *This is taught to be like the eighth sublime level.*

*The Hinayana argument  
that the Mahayana does  
not have a gradual path*

The last line of the 7<sup>th</sup> sloka gives an analogy. When a samsaric being destroys the root of samsara, he becomes an *arya*, which means a supreme, or non-samsaric, being. There is a Hinayana argument that the Mahayana path has an instantaneous progression from the path of seeing to the path of no more learning. So, they say that the Mahayana path cannot have an *arya*, a non-samsaric being who is still on the path, such as the first bhumi. So, some Hinayana people argue that the Mahayana does not have a gradual path, as they do not have non-samsaric beings still on the path. That is an important attack, because if you do not have a gradual path, then you do not have a path at all. And if there is no path, then there is no antidote to the defilements. That is what they are trying to get at.

Someone on the Hinayana path who has entered the stage of stream-winner is already an *arya*, a non-samsaric being. The next stage on the path is the once-returner, and then the never-returner and then the foe-destroyer, so there are stages of non-samsaric beings on the path. Some

Hinayana people say that Mahayana does not have that, because as soon as you are on the path of seeing, you instantly become a foe-destroyer.

So, the purpose of this line is to tell Hinayana people that the first bhumi bodhisattva is like the eighth aryan level. So how do we count to the eighth? There has been a lot of debate in Tibet about which is the eighth level.

Let me remind you that Chandrakirti is a Prasangika Madhyamika scholar, a consequentialist. Members of this school always use an analogy that is already accepted within their opponent's view. So, here he is using the view of his Hinayana opponent. At this point, you should write a big question mark in your notebook, because I spent two hours yesterday listening to teachings of khenpos and reading many commentaries, but I am still not clear as to how they count the eighth level. They definitely do not count downwards. There are two kinds of stream-winner: the enterer and the abiders. Then we have the enterer once-returner, the abider once-returner and so on. We will count upwards, in reverse order, which means that the eighth is the enterer stream-winner. But I am still not sure whether the eighth level is the enterer stream-winner or the abider stream-winner.

The *Five Paths* is more a Mahayana term. These are the path of accumulation, path of application, path of seeing, path of meditation, and path of no more learning. The first bhumi bodhisattva is on the path of seeing, so the borderline between samsara and nirvana is just before the path of seeing. According to Chandrakirti, the stream-winner is the same as the path of seeing. It is just a difference of language between Hinayana and Mahayana. All these are the fruit; they are already nirvana.

It is a big thing to be a stream-winner, because it means you have become a non-samsaric being. Those who are stream-winners receive great respect and devotion from other people. During the Buddha's time, some naughty monks wanted to impress the lay people. They were not stream-winners, and could not really lie about that. So as lay disciples were passing by, they went into a river and shouted, "Hey, I've just entered the stream", hoping that the onlookers would misunderstand!

[H8]

#### **(d) The quality of outshining others, 1:8**

1:8       *Striving for enlightenment, even when remaining on the first level,  
He defeats those born from the speech of the Sage King, including solitary  
realisers.  
And, through ever-increasing merit,  
On "Far Gone", his understanding also becomes greater.*

We have seen how one obtains the name and the four kinds of qualities of a bodhisattva. We have just finished talking about how the first bhumi bodhisattva is equal to the stream-winner, by using an analogy. Now we will look at another of his qualities, the quality of outshining others, which is the subject of the 8<sup>th</sup> sloka.

All the shedras and khenpos spend a lot of time on this sloka, because here we need to talk about the Hinayana, the Mahayana and many other things. The last line in particular is very famous, and people like Khenpo Rinchen would spend two or three weeks just on that line!

You need to underline the word 'even' in the first line, and 'also' in the fourth line. Just this word 'also' has been the subject of much discussion, as there is so much meaning behind it. Sometimes institutes like shedras would invite khenpos just to talk about this!

[H9]

*The image of the newly born crown prince, ministers, and generals*

*The image of the baby garuda*

### (i) Outshining others by the strength of merit on this bhumi, 1:8.1-3

Imagine that there is a king sitting on his throne, surrounded by majestic generals, ministers, members of parliament, representatives of the citizens, and so on. Then suddenly the queen comes in, holding the newly born prince. Although he is tiny, the prince already outshines the ministers with his merit, as he is going to become king. No matter how great or clever the ministers, how long their beards, how much knowledge they have, or how majestic they are, they will never become king. They will only ever be ministers and generals.

The first bhumi bodhisattva is like a baby crown prince, very small in front of these wise, majestic and mature shravakas and pratyekabuddhas. But it does not matter, because just as the prince is going to become king, the bodhisattva will become a Buddha, and not these others. Another example is given in the *Biography of Lord Maitreya Sutra*. There is a big tree with a garuda's nest, which is surrounded by vultures, owls, hawks, eagles and so on. There is a small recently born baby garuda, that does not even have hair on its wings, but it can still outshine the others. Hawks can fly better than the baby garuda, but the garuda is still the king of the birds.

The word 'even' in the first line tells us that if the first bhumi bodhisattva outshines the shravakas and pratyekabuddhas, then bodhisattvas from the second bhumi onwards will definitely outshine them. Why can bodhisattvas outshine the others? They do so because of their compassion, and because of the merit that they have accumulated over countless aeons.

[Q]: You said yesterday that the shravakas also have compassion?

[A]: Yes, but a shravaka's compassion is like a drop of water, whereas a bodhisattva's compassion is like the four oceans combined. But our compassion is like dew in the grass, and compared to us, the compassion of the shravakas is like the four oceans.

[Q]: You said that the bodhisattva is free from three fetters of clinging to a view, or ethics, or having doubt. Is it that they never have even a temporary stage of doubt, meaning the thought does not arise in their mind, or is it that it cannot affect them?

[A]: They do not have any doubt. It does not exist for them any more.

[Q]: The analogy says that the bodhisattva outshines others because he will be king in future, but we are all potential Buddhas.

[A]: Your answer is on the first line of 6<sup>th</sup> sloka. The bodhisattva is born into the family of the Tathagatas, so he is sure to become a Buddha. The shravakas and pratyekabuddhas are still in England, but he is already at the border of France.

[Q]: But what is important is where he is today, rather than that he will be in Paris next year. Perhaps the one who is in England today might reach Paris before the person at the French border?

[A]: When all the conditions are there, and there is no antidote or obstacle, then you can be sure the result will follow. The person in England does not have this. It's a bit like when someone says, "I want that", and another person says, "You've got it!" You do not actually have it, but you are sure it will be given.

[H9]

### (ii) Outshining others by the strength of understanding on later bhumis, 1:8.4

[H10]

#### (a) Outshining as implicitly stated in the sutra (539)

The last line of the 8<sup>th</sup> sloka says, "On "Far Gone", his understanding also becomes greater". In the *Dashabhumika Sutra*, which is our main supporting sutra, the Buddha says that a newly born prince will outshine all the mature and learned ministers and generals with his merit. When this prince grows up and is old enough to actually rule the country, then he will also outshine the ministers with his intelligence. The sutra continues, "Likewise, sons and daughters of the

*Indirect praise for  
shravakas and  
pratyekabuddhas*

victorious ones, as soon as a bodhisattva obtains ultimate bodhicitta, he will outshine the shravakas and pratyekabuddhas with the power of his noble aspiration”. In fact, ‘noble aspiration’ is a good phrase for compassion.

The Buddha goes on to say that when the bodhisattva reaches “Far Gone”, which is the name of the seventh bhumi, he will outshine the shravakas and pratyekabuddhas even with the ‘superior understanding of his own object’, *rangi yül shepé chewa* (*rang gi yul shes pa'i che ba*). It says the same thing here on this line: not only his merit, but also his understanding – his superior understanding of his own object – is greater. We will talk about what this means in more detail.

As you read this, you can sometimes almost feel that Chandrakirti is so taken with the Mahayana path that he just keeps praising bodhisattvas. In the first three lines, he says that a first bhumi bodhisattva can outshine shravakas and pratyekabuddhas with his merit, and in the last line, he says that a seventh bhumi bodhisattva can outshine them with his wisdom. There are no negative words here, like “he can *only* outshine them with his merit”. He is always praising the bodhisattva, and a Hinayana reader might interpret this as sarcasm.

Chandrakirti could have said that the first bhumi bodhisattva is only able to outshine shravakas and pratyekabuddhas with merit, but not with wisdom. But instead of saying that, he immediately goes on to say that when this bodhisattva reaches the seventh bhumi, he will also outshine them with wisdom. But Khenpo Rinchen, one of my teachers, says the word “*also*” is actually one of Chandrakirti’s greatest praises of shravakas and pratyekabuddhas. Chandrakirti is very clever. While he praises the bodhisattvas, he also praises the shravakas and pratyekabuddhas, by saying “*also*”. This is indirect praise, because it tells us that shravakas and pratyekabuddhas have a lot of intelligence – so much that even the sixth bhumi bodhisattva cannot outshine them.

[H10]

**(b) The actual meaning stated in that quote (540)**

[H11]

**(i) The sutra’s statement that shravakas and pratyekabuddhas understand phenomena to have no true nature**

*The shravakas’  
realisation of emptiness:  
the analogy of the space  
inside the mustard seed*

Generally, the view that needs to be realised by the shravakas, pratyekabuddhas and bodhisattvas is identical. But their realisation is not the same, as is illustrated by an image. Sometimes a tiny insect eats away the inside of a mustard seed, and creates a space inside the seed. The realisation of emptiness of the shravakas and pratyekabuddhas is as big as that space inside the mustard seed. Notice that I did not say ‘as small as’ – it is a big place! By contrast, the bodhisattva’s understanding of emptiness is as big as the sky, or perhaps I should say as small as the sky. Here we are talking about the intelligence of the bodhisattva. Even the first bhumi bodhisattva’s understanding of emptiness is greater than that of shravakas and pratyekabuddhas, so the question is, why does he not outshine them even on the first bhumi?

From the first to the sixth bhumis, a bodhisattva cannot irreversibly remove his *tsendzin* (*mtshan 'dzin*), what we are calling ‘fixation towards characteristics’. It continues to grow, and he cannot block it so that it will not return. Here we need to distinguish two types of defilement:

- *Dendzin* (*bden 'dzin*): When you look at this pen, you cling to it as a truly existent pen. If someone says it is spaghetti, you will say, “No, it is a pen”. This is *dendzin*.
- *Tsendzin* (*mtshan 'dzin*) is fixation towards characteristics. As long as there is an object and a subject, there is *tsendzin*. There are no details like whether it is truly existing or not. But this is a very rough explanation.

*Two types of defilement:  
dendzin and tsendzin*

*Why the first bhumi bodhisattva cannot outshine the shravakas*

*The two ways in which a bodhisattva outshines shravakas and pratyekabuddhas*

Let me give you a bad example. If you are dreaming about a cup of coffee, and in the dream, somebody asks you if you are drinking coffee, then if you do not know that you are dreaming, you will say, “Yes, I am drinking coffee”. If they ask if you are sure, you will say, “Yes, definitely, I’m sure”. And if they ask whether your coffee is satisfying you, you will say that it is. Then when you wake up and someone asks whether the coffee you drank really existed, you will say, “No, it was just a dream”. It was not a truly existent cup of coffee.

For now, for simplicity, you can say that *dendzin*, the belief in things being truly existent, is the cause of samsara. Shravakas, pratyekabuddhas and first bhumi bodhisattvas have already abandoned this belief. And, as I just said, the understanding of emptiness of shravakas and pratyekabuddhas is as big as the space inside a mustard seed, whereas the bodhisattvas’ understanding is like the sky. So, why can’t the first bhumi bodhisattva outshine the shravakas, given that he has a greater understanding? It is because none of the shravakas, pratyekabuddhas or bodhisattvas has managed to make their fixation towards characteristics irreversible. Here we are talking about their progress in term of *dreldré*, the result of absence.

Let us say that Gérard and I are both looking at that mountain. Gérard is a few feet closer, so he has a better view; but both Gérard and I have a problem with our eyes, so we are equal to each other in that sense. Likewise, shravakas, pratyekabuddhas and first to sixth bhumi bodhisattvas are all equal. One equal cannot outshine another equal, as you have to be greater than another person in order to outshine them. Therefore, the bodhisattvas cannot outshine the shravakas with their understanding.

As we have seen, the two ways in which a bodhisattva can outshine shravakas and pratyekabuddhas are his noble aspiration and his superior understanding of his own object. The noble aspiration is compassion, which creates merit and makes the first bhumi bodhisattva outshine the shravakas, whereas the superior understanding of his own object is what the bodhisattva has on the seventh bhumi ‘Far Gone’.

## [H11]

### **(ii) What the other traditions state about this quote**

[Editor’s note: Rinpoche did not teach anything under this heading]

## [H11]

### **(iii) Introducing the Master Nagarjuna’s understanding of this point (542)**

When we talk about the ‘superior understanding of his own object’, *rangi yül shepé chewa*, there are three subjects to discuss:

1. Superior
2. Understanding
3. His own object

We will start with the third, ‘his own object’. We need to start by introducing the four extremes, which are illustrated in the box below. According to Nagarjuna, all phenomena can be included within these four zones. If you come up with a fifth, I will give you a Manjushri pill! When we talk about existence, we are not differentiating between inherent or non-inherent or conventional, we are just talking about everyday existence in the world. For example, do you have a car? Yes, I have a car – this is existence. The example of neither existence nor non-existence is the sharpness of the horn on Gérard’s nose – because the horn does not even exist, you cannot talk about its sharpness.

<b>Existence</b>  <i>Example: a spoon</i> Cf. Christianity and some types of Hinduism	<b>Non-existence</b>  <i>Example: a rabbit's horn, or the horn on Gérard's nose</i> Cf. existentialism
<b>Both Existence and Non-existence</b>  <i>Example: the reflection of your face in a mirror</i> Cf. New Age	<b>Neither Existence nor Non-existence</b>  <i>Example: the sharpness of the horn on Gérard's nose</i> Cf. Taoism

Examples of how various religious views fall into the four extremes

The great emptiness is not the same as non-existence

These are the four extremes. If you fall into one or more of these, you are an extremist, and you do not have the right view of the middle way. Then you do not have ‘the view that is free from the extremes’. In the first zone, ‘existence’, we can find Christianity. I feel that when buddhists meditate on emptiness, many of them just delete the first one, ‘existence’, and dwell on the second, ‘non-existence’. The third one is New Age, where everything is all right, existence or non-existence. The fourth is Taoism. It is very close to buddhism, and many people think that ‘neither existence nor non-existence’ must be the Middle Way. But this is not so, according to Chandrakirti. We will come to this in the sixth chapter.

Roughly, one can say that if you just wish to destroy the root of samsara, you can destroy the first of the four extremes, existence. However, the view that a bodhisattva tries to meditate on is beyond all four of these zones. That is what we call ‘great emptiness’. So, emptiness is not the same as non-existence. Many people say that emptiness is something like a void, blank space or non-existence of this and that – but that is not true. Many people’s emptiness falls into the second extreme, the second trap.

Shravakas and pratyekabuddhas care more about the first extreme, existence. They emphasise the understanding of the non-existence of existence. However, a bodhisattva has to understand the non-existence of existence and the non-existence of non-existence. When you think, “I am”, that is clinging to existence. Then with some meditation, you can realise the emptiness of self, but sometimes a person can also have clinging or attachment to this non-existence. From the Mahayana point of view, that is also a type of defilement.

When the Mahayana says a flower does not exist, it actually means that the flower is free from the four extremes: it is not existent, nor is it non-existent, nor both existent and non-existent, and not neither existent nor non-existent. If you understand this, you will not ask questions like “how can the Mahayana say this tent does not exist? I can see it”. Chandrakirti will say it is not existent but also not non-existent. To our normal mind, ‘not non-existent’ means that it is sort of existent, but then Chandrakirti tells us that’s not it either. Whichever side you go to, Chandrakirti is there, saying, “No, this isn’t it!” That is why it is called the Middle Way. And after all this, Nagarjuna says that a learned one should not even remain in the Middle Way!

[Q]: When one visualises a *yidam*, for example, first you make it existent, then you dissolve it so then it is non-existent.

[A]: Yes that is true. In the sixth chapter, Chandrakirti says that all meditations and visualisations are part of relative truth. Chandrakirti is not saying that you cannot have existence and non-existence in the relative truth. Remember, as I said on the first day, here we are establishing the ultimate truth, the view of emptiness.

I cannot talk much about freedom from all these extremes. If you really want to understand this, understanding only comes from contemplation and meditation. Talking about it just makes it worse and worse. The more we talk, the worse it gets! But just from hearing the teaching and

*The 7<sup>th</sup> bhumi  
bodhisattva's superior  
understanding of his own  
object*

*Why shravakas and  
pratyekabuddhas have  
some understanding of  
selflessness of phenomena*

*Why do bodhisattvas not  
completely outshine  
shravakas and  
pratyekabuddhas?*

*Shravakas must also  
understand emptiness of  
phenomena*

[H10]

studying it, a general idea of the view can occur during the Path of Accumulation. It could happen to us!

And then you meditate on this general idea of the view, and during the Path of Application, a *nyam* (*nyams*) or experience, of freedom from the extremes can occur. The actual understanding starts at the first bhumi. This explains the analogy of the space inside the mustard seed and the sky. Even on the first bhumi, a bodhisattva has the beginning of actual understanding of freedom from all four of the extremes. This is a greater understanding than that of shravakas and pratyekabuddhas, who only understand the first extreme, and part of the second.

Returning to ‘superior understanding of his own object’, we will now explain the word ‘superior’, and discuss what makes a 7<sup>th</sup> bhumi bodhisattva superior to shravakas and pratyekabuddhas. When a bodhisattva reaches the 7<sup>th</sup> bhumi, during his post-meditation time, he can make his freedom from *tsendzin*, fixation towards characteristics, irreversible. This means that until the 7<sup>th</sup> bhumi, a bodhisattva still cannot manage to make his fixation towards characteristics irreversible, which is also the case with shravakas and pratyekabuddhas. This is why the first bhumi bodhisattva cannot outshine them with his intelligence.

It does not mean that a 7<sup>th</sup> bhumi bodhisattva is totally free from fixation towards characteristics from that point on. He still has *tsendzin*, but does not generate any more *tsendzin*. The seed has been planted and the flower is grown, but he is not planting any more seeds. We could say that he has made the seed sterile, as he no longer accumulates further causes of fixation towards characteristics. But that does not mean that he no longer has fixation towards characteristics, because then he would jump to the 10<sup>th</sup> bhumi or buddhahood! There is still more to purify on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> bhumis! This tells us that shravakas and pratyekabuddhas still have fixation towards characteristics, which is why they are equal to bodhisattvas on the first to sixth bhumis.

Now the real problem starts, because our quotations from the *Dashabhumika Sutra* and the *Biography of Lord Maitreya Sutra* give rise to another question. From both quotations, we now know that shravakas and pratyekabuddhas do have a realisation of the selflessness of phenomena, and not just the selflessness of the person. If this were not so, a bodhisattva on the first bhumi could easily outshine them even with his intelligence. However, because shravakas and pratyekabuddhas have an understanding of the emptiness of phenomena, the bodhisattva does not outshine them until the 7<sup>th</sup> bhumi.

We are talking about two things here: realisation, and purification of defilements. The superiority of a bodhisattva does not relate to things like his physical size or his colour, but lies in these two aspects: his noble aspiration, and his understanding of emptiness, which is much vaster than that of the shravakas. We used the example of the space inside the mustard seed to compare their realisation of emptiness. So, why doesn't Chandrakirti say that the bodhisattvas have totally outshone the shravakas? Because although they have superiority in terms of their realisation of the view, the way they perceive phenomena, they are not superior in terms of their purification of defilements. To use an analogy, if a shravaka and a bodhisattva are both washing dirty clothes, neither has reached the point where their clothes will never get dirty again.

The quotation from the *Dashabhumika Sutra* tells us that the baby prince does not outshine the ministers with his knowledge, which means that the ministers also have some knowledge. We also know that shravakas, pratyekabuddhas and bodhisattvas have all understood the selflessness of the person, as they are all non-samsaric beings. So, this quotation tells us that a first bhumi bodhisattva will not outshine shravakas with his intelligence, which means that shravakas must have some understanding of selflessness of phenomena.

### (c) Disposing of disputes on that question (542)

*Bhavaviveka's objection:  
shravakas only  
understand the  
selflessness of a person*

We now have to talk about the understanding of the selflessness of phenomena by shravakas and pratyekabuddhas. You may wonder why I am emphasising this so much. The reason is that if we make even a slight mistake, we could end up with the consequence that shravakas are already practising the selflessness of phenomena, and so there is no point even teaching the Mahayana.

In particular, Bhavaviveka said that shravakas and pratyekabuddhas only understand the selflessness of a person, not of phenomena. Here he is raising an objection, and Chandrakirti responds by explaining the consequences that Bhavaviveka will have because of saying this. Be patient here, because we need to go through this. If we have even a small problem here, it will lead to big problems with the rest of the Madhyamika.

If we look at the framework for the whole of the Madhyamika, there are two things to be realised:

- Absence of existence of the individual self:
- Absence of existence of phenomena:

*gang zag gi bdag med  
chos kyi bdag med*

And there are two defilements to be eliminated:

- Clinging to/belief in the individual self
- Clinging to/belief in existence of phenomena

*bdag 'dzin  
chos kyi bdag 'dzin*

If you want to talk about ignorance, defilements and obstructions to enlightenment, all these are included in the bottom two. The top two, understanding the absence of existence of the individual self and of phenomena, are wisdom. When we talk in terms of what has to be eliminated, we talk about the two types of clinging, and when we talk of what is to be realised, we talk about the two types of wisdom.

*How can the two  
defilements be separate?*

You might ask how these two defilements could be separate. This is a good question. It depends on your interest. If you want enlightenment, *moksha*, liberation, then you should get rid of the first. Once you have done that, that's it – you are in *moksha*! That is what shravakas and pratyekabuddhas want, so that is what they do. As we saw in the homage, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> sloka, this defilement is "*initially fixating on this so-called 'I' as an existing self, 'Mine' gives rise to grasping*". Here we are talking about the ego. It is the first defilement, and it is the cause of the other eleven links of interdependent origination. But how can these two defilements be separate things? After all, there can be no notion of 'I' or self without the five aggregates. And the five aggregates belong to the second defilement. This is the problem.

According to Bhavaviveka, shravakas are only interested in getting enlightenment, so they are only interested in getting rid of the first obscuration, which is ego. That is fine. But then Bhavaviveka says that the method of realising the emptiness of phenomena is exclusive to the Mahayana. This is his mistake, according to Chandrakirti. This tells us that shravakas and pratyekabuddhas must also have knowledge of the emptiness of phenomena. If they did not, they would not understand the emptiness aspect of the five aggregates. Now, when the causes and conditions are there, and there is no antidote, the result will follow. Here, the result would be clinging to 'I'. If they did not understand the emptiness aspect of the five aggregates, ego could come automatically. There have been many different ways of thinking about this, not only in India but also in Tibet. For example, Mipham Rinpoche, Gorampa and Tsong Khapa all had their own ideas, but I am not going to explain them here.

Now we will talk about *bdag 'dzin* (*chos kyi bdag 'dzin*) and *bden 'dzin*.

*Dagdzin: Clinging to the  
self*

*Dagdzin* (*bdag 'dzin*) means clinging to the self, which also includes clinging to the self of phenomena. The characteristics of a phenomenon are the things that can be perceived by the six senses. The self is also included there. *Chos* means phenomena, and *bdag* means something like

identity or true self, the thing that identifies something, or makes something what it is. For example, when we identify something, as in “this is a glass of water” or “this is a piece of apple”, that is *bdag*.

[Q]: In western philosophy, we make a distinction between what is perceived, and the underlying thing that causes those sensations to happen. We do not perceive what is underlying. We only perceive the sensations. But people believe that there is something underlying that causes those sensations. That is what we call substance. Is *bdag* that substance?

[A]: When I say ‘I’ or ‘me’, it is a name, identification, a certain habitual pattern and a confirmation. Similarly, saying that this is a tent – this is also identification, a hallucination, a concept and a self. *Bdag* is ‘true self’, as when English people say ‘itself’, as in ‘by itself’.

[Q]: When you talk of the thing ‘in itself’ are you talking about something completely separate from us, which exists in its own right, and which causes our sensations of that thing? If there is no perceiver, does that thing still have a self?

[A]: No, because then it does not become a *chos* (dharma), or phenomenon. If none of the six senses are there to perceive it, then there is no phenomenon.

[Q]: You cannot perceive the underlying substance of something directly, but only through your senses. You can perceive things like its colour, its hardness or its shape, but you cannot get beyond your senses. Someone who was not a buddhist would say, “Yes, it’s really there”.

[A]: When we say “this is a cup”, you are asking whether beyond ‘cup’ there is something that we can then refer to as a cup. According to Chandrakirti, that is *zhi mé* (*gzhi med*), there is no such thing. It is a complete hallucination. There is no base, but you take it as a base and think ‘this is me’. Here we come to the seven-point analysis of the chariot, in which Chandrakirti tells us that there is no base, but we hallucinate that there is a base and say, “this is a chariot”. Similarly, when we say, “this is a tent”, what are we referring to? Is it this iron beam, or this piece of fabric? If we cut one piece and then another, we will not find the tent. There is no base, but we still have an idea that this is a tent, and we cling to it. That is *dagdzin*.

Similarly, when Jakob thinks his girlfriend is beautiful, that is also *dagdzin*. When he is very much in love, he thinks her smell is good, her looks are good, her taste is good – all of that. But this is baseless, because if there were a truly existent base, then he should always think she smells good and so on. But one day, when he hates her, her smell is bad and she is no longer beautiful! This shows that there is no base to her beauty – it is a ‘baseless assumption’.

Then we come to *dendzin* (*bden 'dzin*), thinking that something is truly existent. This is a more gross defilement, because something can be *dagdzin* without necessarily also being *dendzin*. This is because *tsendzin*, fixation towards characteristics, is *chos kyi bdag 'dzin*, but it is not *dendzin*.

We have seen that, in order to understand the selflessness of the person, shravakas and pratyekabuddhas must understand the selflessness, or non-substantiality, of the five aggregates. Indeed, the Buddha taught them about the second selflessness, the selflessness of phenomena, as we can see from the following quotation. He said that “form is like a bubble and feeling is like a bubble”, meaning they are essenceless, that they have no substantial existence. There is no true existence, no reality in there. The Buddha also said that “perception is like a mirage, and karmic formation is like a banana tree”. A banana tree has many layers, and when you look at it from outside, it looks very solid. But it is all just layers of skin. As you peel layer after layer of skin, you end up finding that there is nothing inside. There is no real solid substance, as it is all made out of skin. This quotation also says that consciousness is like a magical illusion.

So, why is the Mahayana taught, and what makes the Mahayana special? This challenge comes from Bhavaviveka, who thinks that the teachings on the selflessness of phenomena are exclusive to the Mahayana. He says that if this subject were also taught to the shravakas, then there would

*Dendzin*: thinking something is truly existent

*Bhavaviveka's challenge*:  
Why is the Mahayana taught?

be nothing special about the Mahayana, so there would be no reason or benefit in teaching it again.

Chandrakirti says that the shravakas and pratyekabuddhas must understand the selflessness of phenomena, because if they did not understand that, they could not understand the selflessness of the person. And if you do not understand the selflessness of the person, then you are in samsara. So, in response to Bhavaviveka, Chandrakirti asks him two questions. Is Bhavaviveka saying that the teachings of the Mahayana in general are irrelevant? Or is it just that the Mahayana teachings on the selflessness of phenomena are irrelevant?

The first objection is definitely invalid, since the Mahayana not only has teachings about the selflessness of a person and of phenomena, but it also has teachings on the paramitas, prayers, compassion, dedication, and so on. And the aim of the Mahayana is not just to go beyond one extreme, but also to go beyond all four extremes.

Now we will respond to the second objection, that the Mahayana teachings on the selflessness of phenomena are irrelevant. Here we are still talking about the ‘superior understanding of one’s own object’, and we have already discussed ‘superior’ and ‘one’s own object’, so now we come to ‘understanding’.

[H10]

#### (d) Negating Explanations Based on Conceptual Analysis (545)

Although shravakas and pratyekabuddhas do practise the selflessness of phenomena, there are three reasons why the Mahayana teaching on this subject is greater:

*The three reasons why the Mahayana teaching on the selflessness of phenomena is greater*

1. It is clearer
2. It is vaster
3. It is complete

**How is it clearer?** To the shravakas and pratyekabuddhas, the Buddha only said that form is like a bubble, perception is like a mirage, and so on. He did not clarify this. But in the Mahayana, he said that form is emptiness, and emptiness is form. This is much more clear and direct. Although the Buddha said this to Shariputra, as in the *Heart Sutra*, Shariputra does not practice it. He just repeats it, which is why he is *nyentö* (shravaka).

**How is it vaster?** When the Buddha teaches shravakas and pratyekabuddhas the selflessness of phenomena and of the person, he only negates one aspect: existence. But in the Mahayana, he not only negates the first aspect, existence, but also the other three: non-existence, existence and non-existence, and neither existence nor non-existence. There is a classification of either 16 or 20 types of emptiness, which we will come to when we discuss the 6<sup>th</sup> bhumi. When we say ‘vaster’, it refers to the quantity of emptiness. For shravakas and pratyekabuddhas, only one type is taught, but in the Mahayana, all 20 types are taught.

**Why is it complete?** Shravakas and pratyekabuddhas only understand the first of the four extremes and a little of the second. In the Mahayana, all four extremes are taught – it is complete.

There are several different explanations here. Although I will skip over the debates here, they are good. Nobody is wrong; all are great. The debates are not about winning. If there is anything to gain, it is wisdom.

In particular, Tsong Khapa says that from the first to the seventh bhumis, a bodhisattva still has to purify the first defilement, which is *tsendzin* (fixation towards characteristics), although his purification of *dagdzin* (clinging to the self) is finished. Remember that we were talking about

two kinds of defilements – clinging to the self and clinging to phenomena. The bodhisattva needs to purify clinging to the existence of phenomena, not just for enlightenment, but also for omniscience. The selflessness of phenomena is divided into nine parts, and these nine are the obstacles that need to be purified by the nine stages of the bodhisattva.

When a bodhisattva manages to destroy clinging to the self of the person, he attains the first bhumi. One can almost say that this first stage of the buddha is just an instant. The *tonglam*, the path of seeing, occurs as soon as you see the emptiness. That's it! But as Tulkus Jigme Rinpoche was saying, for them one minute and one hundred years are identical.

So today, we have completed the line "*On 'Far Gone', his understanding also becomes greater*". This usually takes ten or twenty days to teach. Do not tell Tibetans that I taught it in one day. They would never believe it! I would become an outcast!

[Q]: Is the path of seeing free from the four extremes?

[A]: Not completely. This is why bodhisattvas on the path of seeing are still on the path.

[Q]: Isn't it true that if shravakas and pratyekabuddhas understand the selflessness of phenomena, compassion will arise out of this understanding, and they will then become Mahayana?

[A]: Yes, they certainly have a lot of compassion, but it is tiny when compared to the Mahayana.

[Q]: Why are selflessness of phenomena and the person treated separately?

[A]: It is a question of what different people are interested in. Some only want enlightenment, so they need to abandon clinging to the self of the person, which is what binds them to samsara. Others want to go further, and gain omniscience, so they need to abandon clinging to the self of phenomena, which is what binds them to nirvana.

[Q]: The 'I' can only perceive phenomena through itself, so I cannot see any real difference. It also seems that the 'I' can perceive itself through phenomena.

[A]: You still have that, even if you have abandoned clinging to the self of the person. You only abandon the clinging to the person; you do not abandon the person.

[Q]: So can we say that the ego transforms during this journey?

[A]: Yes, it looks like that. But strictly, you should speak in terms of the *dag*, the baseless assumption towards something that does not have any base. We will come to this in detail later. For example, although there is no basis for thinking so, you think this is a tent. That is similar to clinging to the self of a phenomenon. On top of that, you think that this is a truly existent tent, which bodhisattvas do not. It is stupid to try to speak on behalf of the bodhisattvas, but I am guessing that they have an idea of a tent, and the one that perceives the tent – subject and object – but not the clinging. These two are not truly separate. It is like a large staircase that goes up to the first and second floors of a house. You can leave the stairs at the first floor if you are happy with that. But if you want to go further, you continue on the same staircase until the second floor. It is the same staircase, but you could divide it into two by saying that one set of stairs goes to the first floor, and another set of stairs goes to the second floor. In summary, although there is no basis to the idea of a tent, an ordinary person will think this is a tent, and believe that it is truly existent. Bodhisattvas do not believe it is truly existent, but they still have the idea of subject and object, although without clinging.

*The meaning of "absence of ignorance"*

We talked earlier of *dreldré*, the result of absence. In fact, the word *buddha*, or in Tibetan *sangyé* (*sang rgyas*) especially *sang* (which means 'purified') is very much this *dreldré*, this result of absence. When we praise the Buddha, we say, 'awakened one'. That is the supreme praise, rather than 'great one', 'powerful one', or 'beautiful one'. His greatest quality, being awakened, is a result of absence: the absence of sleep, the absence of ignorance, and so on. We should take the meaning for granted, as there is a lot to think about here. In Sanskrit, 'ignorance' is *avidya*, and in Tibetan, it is *marigpa*.

The problem is that in English, ignorance means 'not knowing'. This implies that there is something to know that you do not know, but that is not good here, because the word *avidya*

*Ignorance is not a misunderstanding or evil. It is a mirage, a hallucination.*

*Ignorance is classified into two: clinging to the self of a person and the self of phenomena*

connotes just the opposite. It is not that you do not know something that you should know, it is that you know something where there is nothing to know! There is no base; there is nothing there in reality. But you create something and then ‘know’ that. That is *avidya*, that is the not knowing – not knowing the reality. Of course, misunderstanding is also included within ignorance. If somebody thinks this teabag is a fish, it is also ignorance. But here we are talking about the situation where there is nothing solidly existent in reality, but your mind thinks there is something. That is *avidya*. And that something is *dag*, and clinging to it is *dzin*. *Dag* is almost like a self. For example, Jakob thinks his girlfriend is beautiful. Here, ‘beautiful’ is the *dag*. And when others are near her, Jakob is jealous: this attachment, this clinging, is the *dzin*.

So, in buddhism, ignorance has nothing to do with evil or misunderstanding. It is a hallucination, a mirage. People think that dualism refers to bad/good, ugly/beautiful and so on. Yes, these are also dualism. But there are no separate solid entities such as subject and object – they are one. When you do not know that, and you divorce subject and object, then it becomes dualism. Dualism is also ignorance. When we look at this teabag, our habitual mind thinks that this is a solidly existent external phenomenon. We think there really is a teabag there, which is separate from my mind that thinks, “This is a teabag”. But according to buddhism, especially the Mahayana, there is no teabag if there is no knower, one who gives this type of label. So this is why, if I ask you whether you see the cup of tea that I see, you would normally say yes, but in fact you never see my idea of this cup of tea – you only see your idea of this cup of tea.

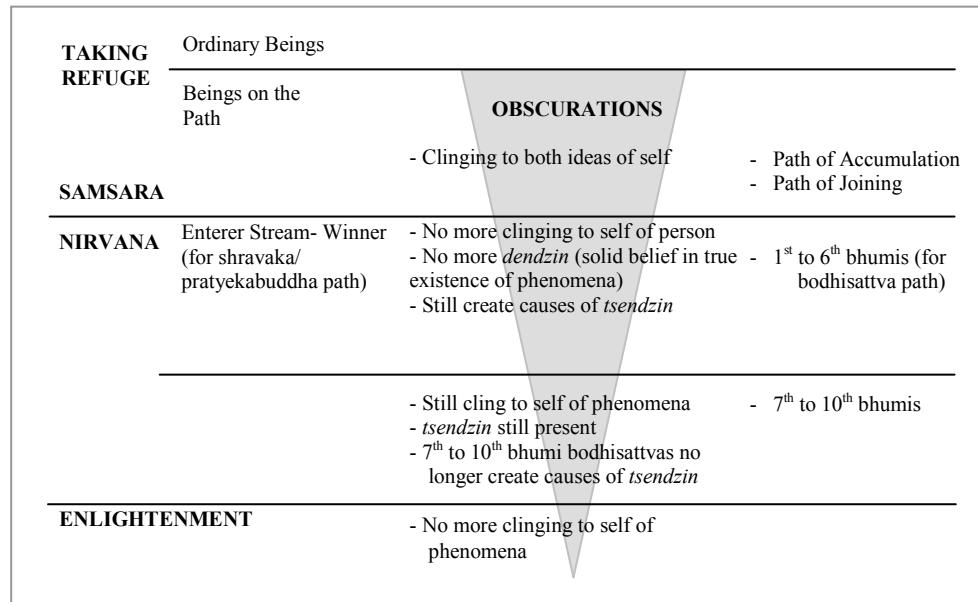
Although there is just one type of ignorance, it is classified into two types according to its object of focus: clinging to the self of the person, and clinging to the self of phenomena. The second one includes the first, but the first is focussed mainly on the self, such as when you think, ‘I am’. When you think, ‘he is’, that is a phenomenon. The self of a person refers to your own person, whereas a phenomenon, like a tent, is something that is not you. You can abandon the first type of clinging and still be stuck with the second. Let us suppose you are washing clothes because you see them as dirty. It takes half an hour to remove all the dirt, but some people just want to wash the clothes for fifteen minutes, and then they’re happy. They do not see the rest of the dirt as dirt, whereas true hygiene fanatics really wash it properly. The way that ignorance works, the way it obscures, is also categorised into two:

- Apprehending things as truly existent
- Apprehending things as mere appearance

The first is thinking things like “I think I am truly existent”. Do not worry about whether you have the second kind of ignorance, because for us this dirt would be an attainment rather than an obscuration! To show these ideas, we can draw a diagram (see illustration on next page). The triangle in the diagram above represents ignorance. It is drawn without a break to represent that there is just a single continuity. The beginning of the path is the point at which you take refuge, or when you accept the four mudras or the four seals, which are:

1. All compounded things are impermanent.
2. All emotions are suffering.
3. All phenomena are without truly existing characteristics, without a truly existing ‘self’.
4. Nirvana is beyond the extremes (nirvana is peace).

If you have taken refuge, then these four mudras are included when you take refuge in the Dharma.



The 1<sup>st</sup> bhumi bodhisattva has crossed the border between samsara and nirvana

The 10<sup>th</sup> bhumi is the borderline between path and no more path

The 7<sup>th</sup> bhumi bodhisattva no longer creates the causes of *tsendzin*

Shravakas and pratyekabuddhas as “island enlightenment”

When you cross the border between samsara and nirvana, you become a first bhumi bodhisattva. According to the Hinayana, you would be called an *Enterer Stream-Winner*. Upon reaching the first bhumi, the bodhisattva has abandoned clinging to the self of the person and *dendzin*, the type of clinging that we have called ‘apprehending things as truly existent’.

The tenth bhumi is the borderline between the path and no more path. Enlightenment has two meanings: no more returning to samsara, and omniscience. You could also call the 1<sup>st</sup> bhumi enlightenment, since there is no more returning to samsara. But at the bottom of the diagram, is complete omniscience, *dzokpé sangyé* (*rdzogs pa'i sang rgyas*).

There is another borderline at the 7<sup>th</sup> bhumi. As we discussed earlier, the first bhumi bodhisattva can outshine shravakas and pratyekabuddhas with his merit, but not with his intelligence. Bodhisattvas have a greater view, a superior understanding of their own object, because they are looking at all four extremes, whereas shravakas and pratyekabuddhas are only looking at one and a half. But 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> bhumi bodhisattvas cannot outshine them with intelligence, because they still create the causes of *tsendzin*, ‘apprehending things as mere appearance’. The 7<sup>th</sup> bhumi bodhisattva outshines shravakas and pratyekabuddhas, as he no longer creates the causes of apprehension of mere appearance. But until he has omniscience, he is still suffering because of his apprehension of mere appearance, so he is still an object of compassion. This is the third type of compassion that we talked about earlier (on p. 19).

This is why Chandrakirti refers to the shravaka and pratyekabuddha states as ‘island enlightenment’. In ancient times, Indian adventurers made voyages to the middle of the ocean to look for jewels. Sometimes, after months of seeing only the sky and the ocean, they would get tired. And if they came across a small island, they felt happy and wanted to settle down there for a while. But according to the Mahayana point of view, eventually they will all have to continue on their journey.

[H7]

## (2) Expressing the Qualities of the Paramita emphasised (558)

**(a) Showing that the paramita of generosity is the principal one, 1:9**

1:9      *Here, the first cause for perfect enlightenment,  
Generosity, is the most important.  
Giving his flesh with enthusiasm,  
Infers what is not seen.*

Here we are talking about the qualities the bodhisattva seeks to cultivate during his post-meditation time, and in particular, the paramita that is most important on this bhumi. On the first bhumi, the most important paramita during the bodhisattva's post-meditation time is generosity. There are three types of generosity:

*The three types of generosity*

- Material generosity;
- Protection;
- Dharma.

Although the bodhisattva practices all of them, the emphasis here is on material generosity. There are two types of material generosity: outer (giving flowers, water, incense, elephants, peacocks, and palaces), and inner (giving up one's wife, son, or daughter). There are many examples of material generosity in the stories of the bodhisattvas' past lives.

*The story of how Shakyamuni gave up his family for a word of Dharma*

When Shakyamuni was a king in a previous life, he gave up his whole family for a single word of Dharma. As an Indian king, he had all the material wealth imaginable, but still he was not satisfied with life. He declared that if someone could give him wisdom, he could give up anything. Lord Indra transformed himself into a Brahmin, and said he would give Shakyamuni a word of wisdom if he would give him all his queens. And Shakyamuni gave them up.

Actually, the love for wisdom of the Indian kings was amazing. It was perhaps the greatest in human history. It was only after the Moghul invasion of India that the kings became intoxicated with women, wine and expansion of the kingdom. Hari Chandra, one of the Rajput kings, lost his entire kingdom because his favourite pastime was debating with his fifty buddhist scholars and fifty Hindu scholars. Although his ministers informed him that the Moghul invaders were right at his walls, he wanted to finish the debate! The ancient kings' love of wisdom was also reflected in their architecture. Instead of building ornate palaces, they would just have four pillars and a ceiling. They did not even have walls. But Ani Jimpa is complaining that this is a sidetrack, so we should return to the text!

*The courage to give up your own body*

There should be the word 'even' at the start of the third line: his act of generosity is the most important, so that "*even giving his own flesh with enthusiasm infers what is not seen*". For example, when Shakyamuni was a prince called 'Courageous One', he was walking in a forest and he gave up his body to a hungry tiger. The last line is important, because how can an ordinary person judge whether someone is already on the first bhumi or not? You cannot see, smell or taste such qualities. But if someone has the courage to give up his own flesh, this tells us that he has inner qualities that we cannot see, and that he is on the first bhumi. However, until they reach the path of seeing, bodhisattvas are instructed not to give up their flesh or their life, with the exception of donating organs after death.

*The story of the debate between Aryadeva and Ashvaghosha*

The hard-line Hindu master Ashvaghosha did this. He debated with Aryadeva, the disciple of Nagarjuna, and their bet was that the loser would join the winner's religion. Ashvaghosha lost three times, but his dislike of buddhism was so great that he decided to jump into the Ganges. Aryadeva sent a monk from Nalanda University to catch him and then lock him in Nalanda library for seven days. There was nothing there for Ashvaghosha to do except read books, and he found a passage where Buddha Shakyamuni had predicted him, and predicted that he would be the first person to narrate the life of the Buddha. During those seven days, he remembered all

his previous lives as a bodhisattva, and attained great devotion to the Buddha, Dharma and sangha.

He became one of the greatest poets in India, and wrote the *Buddhacarita*, which is the story of the Buddha. For example, Ashvaghosha narrates the scene of prince Siddhartha's night time escape from the palace very beautifully. He describes all the sleeping courtesans, including one who has been playing the *tambourah* and has now fallen asleep holding it as if it were her lover. It is so beautifully written.

*The story of Ashvaghosha and the tiger*

One day Ashvaghosha was travelling through a forest, and he met a tiger. The tiger ate his limbs, but not completely, and Ashvaghosha continued to crawl along although he was losing blood and dying. Every time he saw a stone, he wrote a poem, and after seventy verses, he died. This poem is called *Seventy Aspirations*, and they are prayers you can recite.

[H8]

**(b) Praising other kinds of generosity (559)**

[H9]

**(i) As what causes beings to escape from suffering, 1:10-11**

1:10     *Ordinary individuals, craving happiness,  
Cannot live without comfort.  
Recognising that comfort comes from generosity,  
It was this the Muni spoke of first.*

*The causes and conditions of material wealth*

The 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> slokas praise acts of generosity in general, not specifically those of a first bhumi bodhisattva. In this sloka, Chandrakirti says that as long as a person is materially poor, generally this person is considered unhappy, although we should emphasise the word 'generally' so there won't be questions like "Isn't Milarepa happy". Material wealth cannot occur without causes and conditions. These are of two kinds:

- The knowledge and the ability to accumulate wealth, such as knowledge of business strategy, patience, cleverness and putting an emphasis there. But these are just conditions, not the main cause, as one can see that many people with a business degree are still poor and starving.
- The real underlying cause is acts of generosity in past lives or at the beginning of this life. The Buddha knows the good qualities of having generosity and the downfalls of not having it, which is why he taught generosity as the first of the paramitas.

*The three stages of Buddha's teachings*

In general, we say there are three stages to the Buddha's teaching on this earth, each of which is to overcome something. First, in order to overcome non-virtuous deeds, he taught cause and effect, reincarnation, karma, and similar things. The second stage is in order to overcome clinging to the self, and the third is to overcome clinging to all types of view. The third is exclusive to the Mahayana, the second is common to both Mahayana and Theravada and the first is the most common. Since generosity is an act of karma, it is taught in the first stage.

1:11     *Uncompassionate, extremely insensitive,  
Striving solely for personal benefit –  
Even such individuals will obtain comforts,  
And have all sufferings pacified, through generosity.*

*Why generosity was taught first*

In this sloka, being 'extremely insensitive' also includes those with ridiculous 'courage' to ignore the suffering of all other sentient beings, which refers slightly to shravakas and pratyekabuddhas.

**(ii) As what also causes lasting happiness, 1:12**

*1:12 Furthermore, practising generosity,  
They will swiftly meet with a superior,  
Completely cutting the stream of samsara.  
Having such a cause, they proceed to the yield of peace.*

Normally, people perform acts of generosity for worldly gains rather than for enlightenment. But here Chandrakirti says that even if people do not have this greater kind of motivation and if they practice generosity only with worldly motivations such as becoming richer, as long as they keep on practising generosity, then eventually they will meet a superior being. This also comes from a sutra, which says that *aryas*, which are non-samsaric beings such as bodhisattvas, are bound to go to generous people. They are attracted to them. For example, the Buddha's begging bowl represents that he goes to town to beg alms.

*The story of the poor girl  
who repaired the tear in  
the Buddha's robe*

Once there was a small tear in Buddha's robe. Ananda offered to repair it, but Buddha declined his offer, put on his robe, and went to a nearby village to beg alms, as he usually did. He met a poor girl with nothing to wear who came and sewed this tear up with grass. At that moment Shariputra laughed, and when he was later asked why, he said that at that very moment in the *Heaven of the Thirty-Three*, Lord Indra ordered Vishwakarma, the god of architectural design and engineering, to measure the palace for her when she would take rebirth there.

*The story of the nun  
Utpalmo and the prince*

But she did not want that, as her aim was enlightenment. I think she became the nun Utpalmo, named thus because she was as beautiful as the *utpalā* flower. Although she was a nun, she was so beautiful that a local prince chased her. After many days she stopped and asked him which part of her body he liked most. By this time, she was already a Foe-Destroyer. The prince was stunned, and did not know how to reply, so he said he liked her eyes. Then she took out both of her eyes and gave them to him. At that moment, the prince realised the truth of phenomena, understanding that beauty is only a compounded thing, just an idea.

If a person keeps on engaging in generosity, one day he will meet a superior being. Then he will hear the teachings, cut the stream of samsara and reach nirvana.

**(c) Praising the bodhisattva's generosity****(i) The result obtained, manifest joy, 1:13.1-2**

*1:13.1-2 Those pledged to others' welfare,  
Will soon gain happiness through generosity.*

Now we turn to the generosity of a bodhisattva. For us, the result of our generosity, which may be future wealth or happiness, may come in ten years or even in the next life. It is neither obvious nor quick, which may explain why people are not generous. But bodhisattvas are not seeking to become rich and powerful; they have pledged to other people's welfare, and their aim is to make others happy. So, as soon as they give, they know the other person is happy, and this is why the bodhisattvas gain happiness. For us, the motivation behind our generosity is that we can gain happiness. For a bodhisattva, the motivation is that others can become happy, so naturally he gains his result more quickly.

**(ii) This generosity is therefore of foremost importance, 1:13.3-4**

*1:13.3-4 Hence, for those with compassion and those without  
The importance of generosity is stressed.*

Therefore, the happiness of all beings relies solely on generosity, whether they have compassion, like the bodhisattvas, or not, like shravakas, pratyekabuddhas and people like us. This is why the importance of generosity is stressed.

[Q]: We say we are generous in order to gain happiness, but isn't that also the case for bodhisattvas? Surely, it also makes them happy to give?

[A]: It makes them happy, but the difference is that it makes them happy to have the other person happy. For us, the result just makes us happy.

[Q]: Do bodhisattvas intend to make themselves happy?

[A]: No, they do not. This is actually quite an important thing for Mahayana buddhists to know. If, for example, you are supposed to build a temple for your teacher, then as soon as you have the intention to build it, that pure intention, then it is already a success. Success does not depend on actually managing to build the temple and having a consecration ceremony. As soon as you have that motivation, it is the end of an act. But this does not mean that you should just be happy with it. Of course, you can accumulate more actions that are positive. But if the temple were to be destroyed by wind or an earthquake, a bodhisattva would have no regrets. Instead of giving up, he would build it again.

*Pure intention is central  
in the Mahayana*

**(iii) It is much greater than a particular analogous kind of joy, 1:14**

*1:14 When hearing or thinking of "give!"  
The pleasure of a bodhisattva  
Exceeds the pleasure of the arhat's nirvana,  
Not to mention [the joy of] giving everything.*

Again, we are talking about bodhisattva's act of generosity. Even the happiness of shravakas and pratyekabuddhas cannot exceed the simple happiness of a bodhisattva when he hears the word 'give'. Chandrakirti is not just saying this to be poetic or nice to bodhisattvas. It is logically true, because the aim of shravakas and pratyekabuddhas is to reach enlightenment, whereas the aim of bodhisattvas is to make other people happy. We do not even need to mention whether a bodhisattva actually gives anything, since just hearing the word 'give' makes him so happy. The Sanskrit word *danaparamita*, 'give', has many other meanings as well. It connotes impermanence, death, reincarnation, past life and next life. It also connotes the chance to accumulate merit. This is another reason why bodhisattvas are happy when someone says "give". It not only creates the chance for them to give, but also reminds them of many teachings.

**(iv) Disposing of disputes about how this joy is obtained, 1:15**

*1:15 Suffering when cutting and giving his body,  
He realises the pain  
Others endure in the hells and so forth.  
He thus endeavours in eradicating suffering.*

When a bodhisattva gives his own limbs or flesh, he feels great pain as he cuts his body, because he still has *tsendzin*, clinging to mere appearance. Because of this hardship, an ordinary person would refrain from continuing, but a bodhisattva will feel the sufferings of the hell and hungry ghost realms in his own body, and it will remind him of his responsibility to end the suffering of all beings. So, instead of stopping, he will complete these acts even more quickly.

[H8]

**(d) Categorisation of this paramita (560), 1:16**

1:16     *Giving, which is empty of giver, gift and receiver –  
Is known as transcendent paramita.  
Attachment to these three  
Is taught as being ordinary paramita.*

[H9]

**(i) Explaining the meaning of the word paramita (561)**

Now we are talking about two kinds of paramitas here. The real paramita does not yet exist on the first bhumi. ‘Paramita’ means ‘gone beyond’, and a first bhumi bodhisattva has not yet gone beyond. He has something almost authentic, but it is not complete.

[H9]

**(ii) That which can truly be given this name**

When there is no clinging whatsoever to the self of the giver, or the thing that you are giving, such as a flower, or the receiver – then the generosity it is called ‘beyond worldly paramita’.

[H9]

**(iii) That which can be given this name by association**

Although a bodhisattva can have attachment to these three, not as being truly existing but just as mere appearance, if he dedicates his act of generosity for the sake of the enlightenment of all sentient beings, then it is called “worldly paramita”.

*Giving the name of result  
to the cause*

To illustrate this, suppose that I want to give this spoon to Gérard Godet. I give it to Gérard, and then he says, “I do not have my bag with me, so please can you look after it for me”, and he gives it back to me. Now, although the spoon is in my hand, it is no longer mine. It has already been dedicated. Although it was my gift, if I run away with the spoon, I will be stealing from him. Likewise, although a bodhisattva still has clinging, if he dedicates his act of generosity to enlightenment, then it becomes a worldly paramita. This is what is called ‘giving the name of result to the cause’. It is like the sun penetrating our tent.

[H6]

**c) Concise summary of its qualities by means of similes (564), 1:17**

1:17     *The bodhisattva, firmly established in such mind,  
Has become a holy being, ravishing and radiant with joy,  
Which, as the water crystal jewel,  
Perfectly vanquishes dense darkness.*

So, the bodhisattva remains firmly in such a mind of understanding his own object. And as he remains in that state, a radiant joy comes from his realisation that he has reached the first bhumi. This joy is like a water crystal jewel, which is an Indian name for the moon, and it will vanquish all the dense darkness of clinging to the self of a person and clinging to phenomena as truly existent.



*Here ends the first enlightened aspiration of “The Philosophy of the Middle Way”.*

[H5]

## 2. The Second Bhumi, Without Stain

[H6]

### a) Detailed explanation of the qualities of the paramita emphasised

[H7]

#### (1) The features of Discipline, the paramita emphasised

[H8]

##### (a) Attaining perfect discipline, 2:1.1-2

2:1.1-2     *Here, because he possesses perfect discipline  
He abandons the stains of faulty ethics, even in dreams.*

[H9]

##### (i) Its definition

*Two types of downfalls*

*In buddhism, bad deeds are defined by your motivation, not divine judgement*

The second bhumi bodhisattva emphasises ethics, so we need to start by discussing ethics a little. When they talk about discipline, buddhists talk about ‘downfalls’ or *tung wa* (*ltung ba*), including ‘natural downfalls’ and ‘downfalls depending on breaking the precepts’. In buddhism, it is important to know that it is not a superior being, such as the Buddha, who determines things like bad karma or unwholesome deeds. You decide them. For example, suppose you are very angry with a particular person such as Gérard. You want him to have unhappiness and to be separated from happiness. Now, if you have recently arrived on Earth, you may not know what makes people happy and unhappy, so you may actually do the reverse.

But you are not like that. You have been in samsara for millions of lifetimes. That is, of course, if you believe in reincarnation. If not, at least you have been here a few years, meaning that you have an education here. We know that, in general, stroking someone gently produces happiness and punching him or her on the nose causes unhappiness. You have a reference, because someone once punched you and you felt pain. And now you are using that reference in order to cause him pain.

But let us suppose that Gérard Godet has come from Jupiter, and that he has a strange nose and ears. For him, punching someone on the nose is actually a greeting. But because I do not know this, I still have bad karma when I punch him, because I think that it will give him pain. It all depends on my motivation. If I know that he loves to be punched on his nose, some sort of kinky stuff like that, and then I do it as a greeting, it is different.

*Natural downfalls*

When we shake hands, I do not think we are creating good karma, but if we do it with a certain sort of motivation, it can also create good merit. If you do that, this is what we call a ‘natural downfall’. When we speak of “good karma” and “bad karma”, the words good and bad are just to distinguish the result. We call it bad karma because the result is painful and good karma because the result is not painful. That’s all. You can change it if you like.

*Downfalls depending on breaking the precepts*

Now, we turn to “downfalls depending on breaking the precepts”. The Buddha said to the monks that they should not cut trees. If you are a follower of the Buddha and you disobey that, you are breaking a vow. It does not have much connection with ‘natural downfalls’, but it is something that you promised to do and you broke it. For example, in the Vajrayana, if your teacher tells you never to tell anyone that there is a sun and a moon in the sky, you should never say it,

although you know that the whole world knows. You should still keep it secret. You should not even think of saying to your teacher that everybody knows this, as perhaps you may miss an important opportunity to receive a teaching. But anyway, let us forget this Vajrayana touchy-feely stuff.

[H9]

### (ii) Its nature

*In the Theravada, vows have a physical form*

According to the Theravada, many vows are actually a form. Usually, the Theravada speaks of two kinds of form. One is something that you can see and feel with your senses. The other you cannot perceive, but these imperceptible forms are still dependent on elements. For example, when a person takes a monk's vow, that vow is a form, and is it dependent on the elements of this person's body, his aggregates. Therefore, when a person dies, his monk's vow also exhausts. Of course, the result of the vow, which is the merit, continues. But the vow exhausts, which is why, if the person is reborn as a bird, for example, he will not be a bird monk.

This is why, when a person is about to become a monk, there are many questions, like "do you have a secret organ". This is because if you do not have a secret organ, you cannot take a Theravada vow, and you cannot become a monk or a nun. There are intensive studies of things like this in the *Vinaya*. People think the *Vinaya* is just 'the Buddha said do this, and do not do that'. But, for example, it contains a detailed discussion about what happens if a person who is a hermaphrodite takes a monk's vow, and after a few months, his secret organ changes.

*In the Mahayana, vows do not have a form*

In the Mahayana, the bodhisattva vow is not a form vow. A bodhisattva can take a bodhisattva vow from now until enlightenment. In between, he might be reborn as a snake, a bird or human being, but he is still a bodhisattva. This does not mean that if a Mahayana bodhisattva took a monk's vow that he will go on being a monk, because the authority on monastic comes from the Theravada sutras. It is important to know that when a follower of the Mahayana takes a monk's vow, they are always taking it from the point of view of the Theravada. This is very important to know.

*The difference between regret and guilt*

In the second line of the first sloka, we should highlight the word 'even'. The first sloka introduces us to the second bhumi bodhisattva, and his post-meditation time qualities of ethics or discipline. We need to clarify 'the stains of faulty ethics'. Here we are talking about having no guilt. As long as you feel guilty about breaking a vow or a rule, it shows that you have not yet perfected discipline. I am currently explaining the difference between regret and guilt as follows. When you feel regret, you have more power to not repeat the action. But with guilt, although you know that it is not the right thing to do and you might whine about it, but you still do it. A bodhisattva on the path may feel a lot of regret and guilt at breaking rules and vows, but the second bhumi bodhisattva is free from both of these.

[H9]

### (iii) The measure of its perfection

But this does not mean that a first bhumi bodhisattva has faulty ethics. Chandrakirti is saying that the second bhumi bodhisattva stresses this method of discipline more, not only in his real life, but also in his dreams. This is because his deeds of body, speech and mind are pure. They are pure because he has completely abandoned harming other beings, and on top of that, he has pledged to help other beings.

[H8]

### (b) Accumulating the ten positive actions, 2:1.3-2.2

2:1.3-4     *Because deeds of body, speech and mind are pure,  
He accumulates the ten-fold aspect of the sacred path*

2:2.1-2     *On this tenfold path of virtue,  
As he progresses, it becomes exceedingly pure.*

Because of that, he accumulates the ten-fold aspects of the sacred path. The ten-fold aspects of the sacred path are three of body, four of speech and three of mind:

*The ten positive actions*

- **Body:** refraining from killing, sexual misconduct and stealing.
- **Speech:** refraining from lies, gossip, harsh words and divisive speech.
- **Mind:** refraining from covetousness, harmful intentions and wrong views.

When Chandrakirti says, “*it becomes exceedingly pure*”, he is not saying that the first bhumi bodhisattva does not have these ten-fold aspects of the sacred path, but that on second bhumi, it will be even more exceedingly pure.

[H8]

### (c) Making the bodhisattva beautiful, 2:2.3-4

2:2.3-4     *As the autumn moon, ever immaculate [discipline]  
Is ravishing in its soothing light.*

The third and fourth lines talk about one of the qualities of discipline, which makes the bodhisattva immaculate, beautiful and pure. The analogy is that of an autumn moon. Generally, the moon is clear and white, but in India, the autumn moon is considered especially bright, as there is less haze and mist in the sky during that season. Likewise, the second bhumi bodhisattva is free from all the downfalls of body, speech and mind.

[H8]

### (d) Being free of dualistic attachment to subject, object and action, 2:3

2:3     *Dwelling on the purity of his own discipline,  
Is not pure discipline.  
Thus in regard to its three [aspects], at all times  
He is perfectly free of the engagements of dualistic mind.*

This sloka talks about a special quality of the bodhisattva’s discipline: not clinging to the three faults of object, subject and action. There should be the word ‘if’ somewhere in this English translation. Although it is not possible, if a bodhisattva were to have pride (one of the three fetters, see p. 29) at being a very well disciplined person, then he would no longer have pure discipline. Therefore, the second bhumi bodhisattva is always perfectly free from dualistic mind becoming engaged in the discipline that has to be kept, the action of keeping, or the bodhisattva who is the keeper of the discipline.

[H7]

### (2) In praise of other types of discipline (566)

[H8]

### (a) The penalties of contravening discipline, 2:4-5

2:4      *Having comforts through generosity, yet miserable,  
This arises from breaking the limb of discipline.  
Having exhausted all your investments,  
Later these will not yield much comfort.*

Now we are praising discipline and ethics in general, rather than the bodhisattva's discipline in particular. Perhaps the translation should have 'wealth' rather than 'comforts' in the first line, as it is the result of generosity. A person may engage in acts of generosity and become comfortable with all sorts of worldly wealth, but despite their comfort, we can still see beings in this world in a miserable situation. An example is becoming king of the *nagas*, who are supposedly very rich. Some people are wealthy because of their generosity in past lives, but they may now be so stingy that they do not share their wealth with others or even spend it on themselves.

*A person is fortunate to the extent that they can understand the Dharma*

From the perspective of the Dharma, being fortunate or not is usually judged according to whether a person can understand the Dharma or not. From this point of view, when a person is born into a very wealthy family, but as their pet or a horse or something like that, it is because they have broken the limb of discipline. When a person is reborn into such situations, he will exhaust all his good karmic investments. Since such a being is using up all causes for wealth, and not creating more causes for wealth, later this being will not enjoy worldly wealth. This is one aspect of the fault of not having discipline.

2:5      *Dwelling independently in an agreeable place,  
One may still not be able to stay,  
Falling into an abyss and losing one's independence,  
How will one get out later on?*

The fifth sloka gives us advice on why a person should have discipline. When a courageous warrior is free, healthy and in good circumstances, he should take advantage of this opportunity, and advance – perhaps to conquer more of the enemy, or gain greater victory. If such a warrior is trapped by enemies, then bound and imprisoned by them, then no matter how courageous he is, he cannot move. He cannot do anything. If you are dwelling independently in a good and agreeable place, you may nevertheless not be able to stay. In other words, if you do not take advantage of that good circumstance, then when you fall into some kind of abyss and become dependent upon others, how will you get out? Therefore, discipline is necessary, to be free.

[H8]

### (b) Keeping discipline as an antidote to these, 2:6.1-2

2:6.1-2    *For this reason, having spoken of generosity,  
The Buddha spoke of discipline.*

Because there are many faults if you lose discipline or ethics, as stated in the two preceding slokas, the lord Buddha therefore spoke of discipline right after he spoke of generosity.

[H8]

### (c) Discipline as the basis for all good qualities, 2:6.3-4

2:6.3-4    *Qualities grown in the pasture of discipline,  
Yield unending fruits of enjoyment.*

If you have a good pasture of discipline, then all the enlightened qualities will grow without any ending.

**(d) Discipline as the cause for higher rebirth and certain excellence,  
2:7**

2:7        *Ordinary individuals, speech-born,  
Those certainly possessing enlightenment for themselves,  
And bodhisattvas, all attain certain excellence and  
Higher rebirth solely from discipline.*

When you study these Indian texts, instead of looking at lots of commentaries, the way you read them can also clarify things. For example, all you need to do is read the seventh sloka as follows:

*For those ordinary individuals who attain a higher rebirth, the sole cause of their higher rebirth is discipline. Discipline is also the sole cause of the speech-born, which are the shravakas, attaining excellence. This is also the case for the self-buddhas, meaning the pratyekabuddhas, and the bodhisattvas. Here we are speaking of two kinds of result: certain excellence, which is nirvana, and a higher rebirth.*

[Q]: When we say, “born from speech”, does that include both shravakas and pratyekabuddhas?

[A]: Yes, but usually, pratyekabuddhas are not referred to as *nyentö*, which means those born from speech. Here, we are referring specifically to shravakas.

When you perform a non-virtuous deed, one of the ten non-virtuous actions, if it is very strong, then it will cause rebirth in the hell-realm. If it is less strong, it will cause rebirth in the animal realm, and least strong will cause rebirth in the hungry ghost realm. If there is still some karmic power remaining, then although you may be reborn in the human realm, there will be other effects. In general,

*Some common karmic results of negative actions*

- If you have *killed* in your past life, you will have sickness and a short life.
- If you *stole* a lot in your past life, you will lack wealth or you will have to share your wealth with others.
- If you engaged in *sexual misconduct*, you will have untrustworthy friends, or a spouse who will somehow always create many enemies.
- If you told many *lies*, you will be subject to scandal and being cheated.
- The result of *slander* is that you always end up in situations of conflict and you cannot resolve the conflict. You will also have bad mannered companions.
- If you have *spoken harsh words*, you will be prone to bad news. And no matter what you say, your words will always become a cause for a big argument or some kind of disaster.
- If you have *gossiped*, then nobody can really make any sense out of what you say. You will also have unsteady courage. For example, when you go shopping, you need courage to make decisions like whether you should buy a red T-shirt. But some people do not have this. They hesitate and wonder whether to buy a red one or a blue one.
- *Covetousness* creates constant dissatisfaction, and desire for all sorts of materialistic things.
- *Harmful thoughts* will always make you want to search for something, and what you search for will always be harmful to you. Others will also harm you.
- If you had *wrong views*, then no matter how clever or sceptical you normally are, if somebody tells you something incredibly stupid, you will believe it. An example is Cat Stevens. You will also become very critical, always going around looking for faults. It becomes a habit. All journalists are born in this category.

All these results occur within the basic philosophy of karma I told you before. It is not as if there is a buddhist police force that determines the appropriate punishment for your crime! The reason

I am explaining this is so you can see that the result is a continuum of the cause. If you kill someone, you will have a shorter life. If you plant rice, it grows into rice, not into horse!

[H7]

### (3) Analogy for perfectly pure discipline (568), 2:8

2:8      *Just as a corpse and the ocean,  
And auspiciousness and misfortune [cannot] co-exist,  
So a great sovereign applying himself to discipline,  
Cannot live with carelessness.*

This is very Indian. In India, they used to throw dead bodies into the ocean, but in the morning, the ocean would always throw them back. This sloka says that just as the ocean and corpse do not remain together, auspiciousness and misfortune cannot coexist. Similarly, the second bhumi bodhisattva is overpowered by discipline, and so he cannot live with carelessness.

[H7]

### (4) The divisions of this paramita, 2:9

2:9      *Who abandons, what is abandoned, and for whom –  
Discipline with these three points of reference,  
Is taught to be ordinary paramita;  
Absence of clinging to these three, transcendent.*

There are three points. The one who abandons (such as the second bhumi bodhisattva); what is abandoned (such as killing); and for whom (such as animals or British cows). If a bodhisattva has an attachment or clinging to these three, this is taught to be worldly paramita. But one should still dedicate the action. However, if there is no clinging then, as with the first paramita, the action is a beyond-worldly, or transcendental, paramita.

[H6]

### b) Summary of its qualities in words of certainty (568), 2:10

2:10      *The moon-like bodhisattva while non-worldly,  
Is the glory of this world.  
Like the radiance of the autumn moon – the Stainless –  
His stainlessness soothes the anguish of sentient beings.*

The bodhisattva on the second stage is not worldly, yet he is the glory of this world, because he can give protection to worldly beings. He is called stainless, because he has no downfalls of discipline. Like the autumn moon in India that cools people who are suffering from heat, the second bhumi bodhisattva soothes the anguish of all sentient beings. The second chapter is finished now, and we will try to go to the fifth chapter today. It is usually done this way in the *shedras*, where the second to the fifth chapters are taught in one day. This is like a Sunday holiday for students – it is less difficult to study, and this is when the students wash their clothes. But this is it! There are a few more slokas like this at the beginning of the sixth chapter, but from then they are like diamonds – they are so tough!



*Here ends the second enlightened aspiration of “The Philosophy of the Middle Way”.*

### 3. The Third Bhumi, The Luminous (Giving out Light)

#### a) The nature of this bhumi in words of certainty (569), 3:1

3:1     *Because the wisdom-fire, burning the firewood of all phenomena,  
Blazes, so the third bhumi  
[Is called] ‘Luminous’. Here as the son of the Sugata  
Radiates like the sun’s copper light.*

Here, phenomena are compared to firewood, and wisdom is compared to fire. So, the first line tells us that the wisdom fire burns the firewood of all phenomena, burning all clinging to notions of phenomena as truly existent.

*The various colours of the dawn as an analogy for the stages of enlightenment*

I do not know if there are such concepts in the West, but in India, many stages of dawn are distinguished before the sun actually rises – there is a first dawn, a second dawn, and so on. Just after the last dawn, a reddish-purple coloured light appears in the sky. Here we are trying to explain that final, complete enlightenment is like the complete existence of the sun in the sky. But the copper-coloured light appears first thing in the morning. Likewise, although a third bhumi bodhisattva is not yet on the final stage, he will have a complete *nyam* (*nyams*), or experience, which is compared to that purple light of dawn. This does not mean that he sees a purple light, but that the first indication of complete enlightenment is shown at this stage, which is why this bhumi is called ‘the creator of the luminous’. During his post-meditation time, the bodhisattva’s practice on this bhumi is patience.

#### b) Detailed explanation of the qualities of the paramita emphasised

##### (1) The paramita emphasised, Patience

##### (a) Patience mainly through compassion (569), 3:2

3:2     *Although he is innocent, aggressive individuals may  
Carve from his flesh and bones,  
Slowly, measure by measure,  
Yet, such dissection merely makes his patience grow.*

Innocent is not the right word. A bodhisattva cannot be an object of aggression, as he is so gentle and kind that he does not provoke any aggression. Someone like this may be so innocent that he does not deserve to be an object of your aggression. But some people are so selfish and aggressive that they can cut a bodhisattva’s body, wait a while, and then cut some more. They cut him apart gradually, measure by measure. This is based on a story.

But even in this kind of situation, instead of getting angry towards such people, the third bhumi bodhisattva will have great compassion and patience towards the creator of his pain. This sloka tells us about the power of his patience motivated by compassion.

[H8]

**(b) Patience mainly through the view (569), 3:3**

3:3      *Because for the bodhisattva who sees selflessness  
Victim, perpetrator, moment, manner,  
Purpose – are all seen as a reflection,  
[He attains] patience.*

The third sloka tells us about the power of his compassion due to his understanding of reality, of emptiness. A bodhisattva on the third stage has seen the selflessness of a person completely. He has also realised the selflessness of phenomena, and abandoned clinging to phenomena as being truly existent. At this point, the bodhisattva sees all phenomena as a reflection in a mirror, and for him there is no longer a victim, perpetrator or action. Through his understanding of the truth, he will obtain patience.

[H7]

**(2) The penalties of lacking patience**

[H8]

**(a) It produces an unpleasant karmic result, 3:4-5**

3:4      *If you take revenge upon having been harmed,  
How can this reverse the harm done?  
Accordingly, revenge is useless for this life,  
And counterproductive with regard to the next.*

Now we will talk more about general things, such as the faults of lacking patience. If someone has harmed you and you wish to take revenge on this person, will taking revenge return you to the initial state before the other person harmed you? In other words, will it solve the real problem? In the 4<sup>th</sup> sloka, the first two lines ask this question, and the answer given in the next two lines says it will not.

That is why it is not necessary to take revenge and lose patience in this life, as it is something that will also produce bad effects in future lives. As Aryadeva said, “if someone criticises you, you should check whether what he said is true or not. If it is true, then you should not get angry or impatient, because it is true. If it is not true, again you should not get angry or impatient, because it is not true”.

3:5      *The result of earlier non-virtuous action,  
Is regarded as having been called purification [by the Buddha].  
[Yet] you harm the other. The suffering from that anger,  
Is what you now proceed to sow.*

Here we are still talking about the faults of not having patience. When one goes through pain or suffering caused by someone else, one should regard this as the exhaustion of a past life’s karma. If instead we are motivated to harm others and actually take revenge, it is a cause of suffering. So how could one lead oneself to such suffering?

[H8]

**(b) It diminishes merit already accumulated (570), 3:6**

3:6      *Because getting angry at a bodhisattva,  
One hundred kalpas’ virtue accumulated through generosity and discipline,  
Is destroyed in an instant.  
Therefore, an evil worse than anger does not exist.*

*Of all the actions that  
destroy virtuous deeds,  
anger is the worst*

*Shantideva and  
Chandrakirti say different  
things, but they do not  
contradict each other*

*What is the meaning of an  
action being “destroyed”  
by anger?*

If one gets angry towards a bodhisattva, the merit that one has accumulated for one hundred kalpas through generosity and discipline will all be destroyed in one instant. Therefore, among the evil deeds that destroy virtuous actions, anger is the most powerful.

There are several categories of non-virtuous actions, which have different effects of destroying or ripening. For example, a non-virtuous action that has the greatest result, or ripening, is killing one's own father. This is one of the five limitless non-virtuous actions. Of all the actions that destroy virtuous action, anger is the worst.

There are two points to be clarified here. Firstly, in the *Bodhicharyavatara*, Shantideva says that anger can destroy the virtuous deeds of a thousand kalpas, but in the *Madhyamakavatara*, we have seen that it is one hundred kalpas. Since Chandrakirti and Shantideva are both Prasangika-Madhyamika, how can they have a different view? However, there is no contradiction here, because they are commentating on two different Mahayana sutras. Shantideva is explaining the *Sutra of the Heap of Jewels*, *Ratnakuta Sutra* (*dkon mchog brtsegs pa*), and Chandrakirti is explaining the *Sutra of the Display of Manjushri*. The first sutra, the *Ratnakuta Sutra*, talks about a lower bodhisattva such one on the path of accumulation, becoming angry towards a higher bodhisattva such one on the path of seeing. However, the *Sutra of the Display of Manjushri* talks about a higher bodhisattva, such as one on the path of application, losing patience with one on the path of accumulation. The point here is that both sutras are talking about bodhisattvas losing patience and getting angry, not ordinary people. If an ordinary person gets angry with a bodhisattva, we would not even measure the result in terms of one hundred or one thousand kalpas!

The second clarification concerns the word “destroyed”. How strong is Chandrakirti's meaning? Does it mean that if an ordinary person gets angry, it completely destroys his merit and makes it non-existent? This is an example of how the great saints and scholars use emphasis when they write. Here Chandrakirti really wants us to have patience and abandon anger, so he prefers to use strong words like ‘destroy’.

In the *Flower Ornament Sutra*, the *Avatamsaka Sutra*, Buddha says that an action can never be destroyed by anything else unless it has ripened. There would be another problem here, which is that a bodhisattva in the path of accumulation could never ever reach enlightenment. They will always be angry at times, and each time one hundred kalpas' or one thousand kalpas' merit would be gone. So, here the actual meaning of the ‘destroyed’ is ‘postponed’. Anger will postpone the ripening of the merit that is the result of generosity and discipline.

[H8]

### (c) Its penalties are visible and invisible, 3:7

3:7       *It creates an ugly body and leads to the unholy,  
Robbed of discriminating mind,  
Impatience will hurl you into the lower realms –  
Patience remedies the above and develops qualities.*

Here again we are talking about the general downfalls of lacking patience or having anger. The first two first lines of the 7<sup>th</sup> sloka are obvious downfalls, and the third line talks about a downfall that is not obvious. The first line says that the moment a person is angry, it creates an ugly body. It shakes them, and it makes them ugly. That's it.

Even if someone is normally very holy, gentle, sober and wholesome, when they get angry, it leads them downwards. It makes them lose their wholesomeness, gentleness and good character. They become so involved with their anger that it robs all their intelligence and discernment of right and wrong. If you check this, it is very true. We make most of our mistakes when we are angry, like driving too quickly and missing the red light. The third line talks about how

impatience or anger will also lead you to the lower realms, such as animal, hungry ghost or hell realms. The last line talks about the quality of patience, saying that it has the opposite effects to impatience.

[H7]

### (3) The excellence of the qualities of patience (570), 3:8

3:8     *Through patience [you will be] beautiful;  
Adored by holy beings; skilful in  
Discerning right and wrong; and thereafter  
Born as a human or god, you will exhaust evil.*

Continuing from the 7<sup>th</sup> sloka, the 8<sup>th</sup> sloka says that patience creates a beautiful body; leads to the holy; promotes a discriminating mind; and raises us to the higher realms. These are opposite to the faults of anger.

[H7]

### (4) The importance of therefore practising patience (570), 3:9

3:9     *Ordinary individuals and bodhisattvas,  
Knowing the defects and qualities of anger and patience,  
Abandon impatience and rely on  
Patience as praised by Superiors.*

To understand this sloka, you just have to change the order of the words. Knowing that ordinary individuals have the defects of anger, you should abandon impatience and rely on patience. Knowing that bodhisattvas have the enlightened qualities of patience, you should abandon impatience and rely on patience as praised by the superiors.

[H7]

### (5) The divisions of this paramita (571), 3:10

3:10     *Dedicating to perfect enlightened buddhahood,  
With threefold reference is ordinary paramita.  
If non-referential, the Buddha  
Taught this to be transcendent paramita.*

This sloka talks about the different kinds of patience. As with the other paramitas, although you may have dedicated your patience, if you have the threefold reference, then your patience will be referred to as worldly paramita. If there is no clinging, it is taught by the Buddha to be beyond-worldly paramita. If you want to know more about patience and the faults of anger, read Shantideva's *Bodhicharyavatara*, as it includes very elaborate methods, such as the twenty-four types of patience, and so on. Here, I will briefly explain the four types of patience, which are having patience towards:

- Unfavourable circumstances for oneself and one's own friends and relatives.
- Obstacles to favourable circumstances for oneself.
- Favourable circumstances for one's enemies.
- Obstacles to unfavourable circumstances for one's enemies.

These include all types of patience. The first two are easy to understand. The third is that we do not like it when our enemies have a nice time, and the fourth is that we do not like it if somebody is about to intervene and solve our enemies' problems.

*The four types of patience*

**c) How other qualities are also attained on this bhumi (571), 3:11**

3:11     *On this bhumi the bodhisattva [attains] samadhi and foreknowledge,  
Exhausting entirely desire and anger.  
And is always able to overcome  
This world's gross attachment to desire.*

On the third bhumi, the bodhisattva has all the attainments of samadhi. There are four samadhis, but first I will tell you the six types of clairvoyance or foreknowledge:

*The six types of  
clairvoyance*

- Divine eye
- Divine ear
- Remembering past lives
- Knowing other people's minds
- Knowing things through miraculous powers
- Knowing things without emotion

The third bhumi bodhisattva does now have the fifth and sixth of these. Do not worry too much about these; I am just reciting the names for your information. The four concentrations of the form realm, the four meditative absorptions, are the result of *shamatha* meditation. In buddhist terminology, it is called *shinjong* (*zhin sbyong*), the mind becoming supple.

The first two lines of this sloka talk about the bodhisattva's own qualities. The first line talks about what he has obtained and the second talks about what he has purified. We need to clarify the words "exhausting entirely desire and anger"; we may think that this was already done on the first bhumi. By the first bhumi, the view of desire and anger as being *dendzin*, or truly existent, is destroyed. But the *tsendzin*, or apprehension of mere appearance, is divided into nine categories. There are nine defilements, which means that every bhumi apart from the first has its own share of defilements. The second line is saying that the third bhumi bodhisattva has abandoned his share of defilements.

So, the two first lines talk about his quality of obtaining purification, and the two last lines talk about what he can do for others, although I am not sure that this translation will work. We are saying that the third bhumi bodhisattva has not only managed to overcome desire, which is the cause of the desiring realms, for himself. He can also overcome this in others.

**d) Explanation of the three general practices, generosity and so forth (572), 3:12**

3:12     *These general practices – generosity and so forth –  
The Sugata advocated for householders.  
[These] known as the accumulations of merit,  
Are seeds of the body, containing the Buddha's form.*

This sloka is almost a conclusion, almost. The three practices of generosity, discipline and patience are praised as the ideal practice for bodhisattvas that are householders. In the Mahayana, we talk of two kinds of accumulation, of merit and wisdom. If someone asks you about merit, it is explained in the third line of this sloka. Similarly, if someone asks you about the causes of Nirmanakaya and Sambhogakaya, the Buddha's form, the answer is given in the fourth line. Actually, Nirmanakaya and Sambhogakaya are not really Mahayana terms; there we talk of the Rupakaya, the form body.

**e) The qualities of this bhumi: concise concluding summary (572), 3:13**

3:13      *The bodhisattva who is the radiance of the sun,  
First completely dispels his own darkness,  
He then wishes to dispel the darkness of sentient beings.  
On this bhumi, though very sharp, he knows no aggression.*

The third bhumi bodhisattva is the creator of the luminous, or light. While he is obtaining the wisdom of the third bhumi, he dispels his own share of darkness, which is the *tsendzin* or apprehension of mere appearance. In doing that, he dispels the darkness of others, and he is then very sharp at dispelling his own downfalls and those of others.

Now we come to an important statement of the Mahayana. Although he is very sharp, he does not have aggression towards someone who has faults. Ordinary beings are not like this. Perhaps some of us can solve our own problems, but when we manage to do this, we become proud and this pride leads us to aggression. Pride is always based on some kind of comparison. You look at someone who has a fault, and you think that they have a fault that you had before, so there is pride and aggression. But when a bodhisattva sees a fault in someone, he sees their complete ability to solve the problem on their own. For instance, if we wake up from a nightmare and we see someone else still having a nightmare, we do not boast about how we managed to wake from a nightmare, as it is such a small thing to do.



*Here ends the third enlightened aspiration of “The Philosophy of the Middle Way”.*

[H5]

## 4. The Fourth Bhumi, Dazzling with Light

[H6]

### a) The great qualities of diligence itself, 4:1.1-2

4:1.1-2     *All qualities depend on diligence –  
Cause of the two accumulations of merit and wisdom.*

All the post-meditation enlightened qualities depend on diligence. Diligence is a cause for both kinds of accumulation, merit and wisdom.

[H6]

### b) The nature of this bhumi, which emphasises diligence, 4:1.3-4

4:1.3-4     *Blazing with diligence,  
The fourth bhumi is known as Radiant.*

In this 4<sup>th</sup> bhumi, diligence will blaze. When there is blazing diligence, it is referred to as the 4<sup>th</sup> bhumi, which is known as the ‘Radiant One’.

[H6]

### c) Words of certainty concerning this bhumi in terms of meditation experience, 4:2.1-3

4:2.1-3     *Here the bodhisattva's radiance  
From thoroughly meditating on the aspects of buddhahood,  
Shines brighter than copper.*

The purple colour that we were talking about before has now become much redder. On the 4<sup>th</sup> bhumi, the bodhisattva has extra qualities of all the 37 limbs or wings of enlightenment. He had them all on the 1<sup>st</sup> bhumi, but now his power of these limbs is greater – here there are extra qualities. For your information, I will read them:

- Four contemplations
- Four perfect abandonments
- Four limbs of miracles
- Five powers
- Five forces
- Seven limbs of enlightenment
- Eight noble paths

[H6]

### d) Leaving behind what is specifically abandoned on this bhumi, 4:2.4

4:2.4     *Belief in self and its effects are exhausted.*

On this line, we are again stressing that he abandons his own share of defilements.



*Here ends the fourth enlightened aspiration of “The Philosophy of the Middle Way”.*

## 5. The Fifth Bhumi, Difficult to Overcome/Practice

### a) Words of certainty concerning this bhumi, 5:1.1-2

5:1       *All the demons of self-importance,  
Cannot defeat the [bodhisattva] on the bhumi Difficult to Overcome:  
Meditation is excellent, mind is good, the nature of truth  
Is thoroughly realised, thus he becomes skilful.*

This great being on the 5<sup>th</sup> stage cannot be defeated by all the demons of self-importance, including the four kinds of physical demons such as *maras* or *yakshasas*. This bodhisattva cannot be overthrown from the stage called “Difficult to Overcome”, which is now his name.

### b) The paramita emphasised, 5:1.3-3½

Here even during the post-meditation time, he stresses meditation, like *shamatha*.

### c) Other qualities, 5:1.3½-4

The translation here on the third line is not so good. He will have a greater understanding of the subtle meaning of the Four Noble Truths. For example, the Four Noble Truths can be condensed into the two truths, but the two truths cannot be contained within the Four Noble Truths. For example, Sukhavati, the realm of Amitabha, is relative truth. But if you talk in terms of the Four Noble Truths, this realm is not suffering, nor emotion, nor path, nor cessation. So, the pure realms have to be relative truth. The fifth bhumi bodhisattva understands things like that.

[Q]: When we talked of a moment of anger that can destroy kalpas of merit, you distinguished between a bodhisattva and an ordinary being. But I thought that once someone takes the bodhisattva vow, the power of his or her action increases. So, the anger of a bodhisattva is even worse than the anger of an ordinary being, and therefore more negative.

[A]: The bodhisattva’s vow is like a golden pot, which can be repaired. The Theravada vow is like a clay pot that, once broken, will always be broken.

[Q]: But ordinary beings have no pot!

[A]: If there is no pot, it is good, because we can start to have a pot. This is all touchy-feely, but a virtuous action is always more powerful than a non-virtuous action and it is actually easier to create than a non-virtuous action, because negative actions involve lots of sweat. There is also a good logical reason. If a dirty shirt is washed, then it is easier to make it clean. But it is impossible to make the shirt dirty. There may be a stain on the shirt, but it is impossible to unite the shirt and the dirt.

[Q]: But there are many more beings in the lower realms than in the higher realms.

[A]: I am giving you the theory and logic behind it. I am not denying that there are many dirty shirts, but in reality, the dirt and the shirt cannot be made inseparable. You can unmask a mask, but you cannot unmask where there is no mask.



*Here ends the fifth enlightened aspiration of “The Philosophy of the Middle Way”.*

## 6. The Sixth Bhumi, Advancing / Knowing Clearly

### a) Attaining cessation by emphasising the paramita of wisdom, 6:1

6:1

*In 'Advancing' his mind dwells in meditation,  
Advancing towards the dharma of perfect buddhahood.  
Seeing the suchness of dependent arising,  
[The bodhisattva] dwells in wisdom, thereby reaching cessation.*

*The qualities of the sixth bhumi bodhisattva*

*He attains cessation of the four extremes, and understands that everything is illusion*

*All bodhisattvas look at the same object, wisdom, but see it differently even in their meditation*

*Bodhisattvas have tsendzin during their post-meditation time*

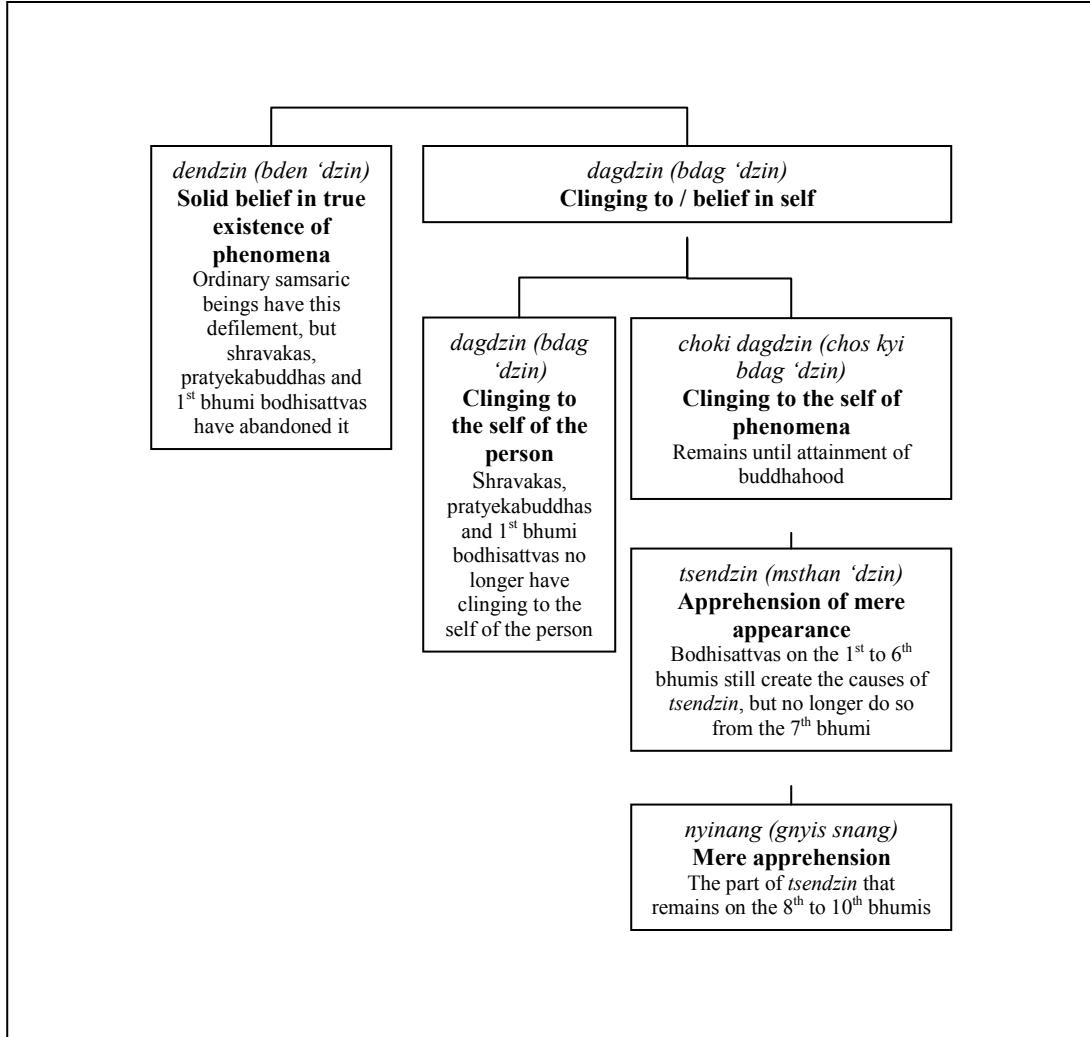
In the first sloka, the first two lines talk about the sixth bhumi bodhisattva's quality of *shamatha*, and the last two lines talk about the qualities of his *vipashyana*. When he was on the fifth bhumi, this bodhisattva placed great emphasis on *samadhi*, meditation. Because of that, now that he has reached the sixth bhumi, he is advancing towards the unique qualities of the Buddha, such as the ten powers. Do not forget that here we are talking about the bodhisattva's qualities during post-meditation time. But as you can see, on the sixth bhumi, his post-meditation qualities now resemble meditation qualities.

By the power of his *vipashyana*, he sees the reality of dependent arising, and with this wisdom, he attains cessation. In this case, cessation is not nirvana, but cessation of the four extremes. He understands everything as illusion, much more completely than on the five previous bhumis. For example, his understanding of the third noble truth, the truth of path, is much more pure and perfect.

Here I want to stress something important. All bodhisattvas are looking at the same object, wisdom, but even during their meditation, there is a difference of distance. The tenth bhumi bodhisattva is much closer than the first. A bodhisattva can see no difference between his wisdom and the wisdom of a higher bodhisattva. However, a bodhisattva on a higher bhumi, using his clairvoyance, can see differences during the meditation time between his wisdom and that of a lower bhumi bodhisattva.

However, although bodhisattvas can remain in meditation for a long time, they cannot remain there forever. The strength of their meditation exhausts, and they have to rise from their meditation state. Then they enter what we call post-meditation time. During this post-meditation time, bodhisattvas see things and discriminate between them, for example between man and woman, or black and blue. This is what we call *tsendzin*, the apprehension of mere appearance.

I will now add another defilement to our list, which is part of *tsendzin*. The first seven bhumis are referred to as the 'impure seven bhumis of the bodhisattva path', and the three last bhumis are referred to as the pure stages of the bodhisattva. The last three bhumis are very special stages. From a very ordinary point of view like ours, we cannot tell the difference between such bodhisattvas and the Buddha. From the eighth bhumi onwards, bodhisattvas do not receive teachings from the Nirmanakaya any more. But they have still a defilement, which is part of the *tsendzin*, called *nyinang* (*gnyis snang*) 'mere apprehension'. There is no more appearance, no more perception. I think that this is probably why only these bodhisattvas have access to the Sambhogakaya. We will go through this later, but I am introducing the name now so you will be prepared (for a discussion of *tsendzin*, *dendzin* and *dagdzin*, see diagram below, and p.44)



[H6]

**b) To those who are blind, the greatness of the paramita of wisdom itself (575), 6:2**

6:2     *As an entire crowd of blind people  
Can easily be led to their desired destination  
By a seeing individual, likewise intelligence  
Can lead the blind qualities to victory.*

The 1<sup>st</sup> sloka is a summary of the 6<sup>th</sup> bhumi. The second sloka is a summary in praise of wisdom. If five or ten blind people, or even a thousand, are travelling through a strange place where they have never been before, they only need one person who is not blind to lead them to their destination. Here, Chandrakirti is saying that without wisdom, all the other enlightened qualities such as generosity, discipline, patience and meditation are all blind. But wisdom will lead all the other qualities that do not have the wisdom eye or *nyam*, to the victorious place. The 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> lines of the 1<sup>st</sup> sloka state that “*seeing the suchness of dependent arising, the sixth-bhumi bodhisattva dwells in wisdom, thereby reaching cessation*”. This gives rise to two questions.

- What do we mean by dependent arising?
- What do we mean by a bodhisattva dwelling in the kind of wisdom that knows dependent arising?

*Only someone who has reached the first bhumi can answer them*

*So how will Chandrakirti answer?*

[H6]

**c) Establishing the way in which this paramita of wisdom is introduced**

[H7]

**(1) The basis according to which this teaching is here explained, 6:3**

6:3

*The one who realised the profound dharma of this [bhumi],  
Through the scriptures as well as through reasoning  
Was Arya Nagarjuna. Based on his scriptural tradition,  
I shall explain this tradition, as it exists today.*

*Chandrakirti will teach according to Nagarjuna's tradition*

*How do we know that Nagarjuna has reached the first bhumi?*

[H7]

**(2) To whom this teaching is to be explained (578)**

[H8]

**(a) The recipient who is to be taught, 6:4**

*What are the three types of people to whom Madhyamika may be taught?*

Now we are going to talk about the qualities or characteristics of a listener of these teachings. To what kind of person should we answer these two questions? Or more directly, to whom should we teach Nagarjuna's words?

6:4

*Even an ordinary being may, when hearing of emptiness,  
Repeatedly feel immense joy surging within,  
Bringing forth tears that moisten his eyes,  
And making the hairs on his body quiver.*

6:5      *He has the seed for the mind of perfect enlightenment  
And is a perfect recipient for instruction,  
He must be taught the ultimate truth.  
So the resulting qualities will arise.*

6:6      *Applying at all times perfect discipline, he comes to abide therein.  
Giving with generosity, adhering to compassion,  
And meditating on patience,  
He completely dedicates his virtue to beings' enlightenment.*

6:7.1    *Devoted to the perfect bodhisattvas,*

The answer is given in the 4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> slokas, and the first line of the 7<sup>th</sup> sloka. How do we know whether a person has the qualities of a listener? Even an ordinary being may have repeated joy upon hearing the teachings on emptiness. The sign of such joy is that it will bring forth tears that moisten his eyes, and make the hairs on his body quiver. This kind of person has the seed for enlightenment, and can receive instructions on both the selflessness of phenomena and the selflessness of the person. And then, the following enlightened qualities will slowly arise in him:

- He will appreciate the preciousness of these teachings on emptiness, and that they can only be obtained and understood with a precious human birth. Therefore, he will ensure that he does not violate the codes of discipline and ethics, so he will be reborn in a higher realm.
- He will know that in order to receive such teachings, one has to have favourable circumstances, so he will plant the cause for these by engaging in generosity.
- He will meditate on compassion, knowing that if he does not have compassion, he may become satisfied with the first type of freedom from extremes, and then not go forwards to understand the other kinds of freedom from extremes.
- He will understand that if he has strong anger or aggression, he will not be able to discern the right path from the wrong path, so he will practice patience.
- In order for his merit not to be wasted, he will dedicate it all to the enlightenment of all sentient beings.
- He will know that the only person who can actually guide him on the path and in his practice is a bodhisattva. Therefore, he will have devotion towards the perfect bodhisattvas.

This list is like a summary. Now I will explain in more detail the three kinds of people to whom one can teach the Madhyamika:

## [H9]

### **(i) Those who believe in philosophies that speak of an outer or inner reality**

*One can teach a person with a clear philosophy, but it is hard to teach a New Age person*

*To a person with an established philosophy, we teach Madhyamika with all its logic*

The first kind of person is someone who already has an established philosophy, such as Hinduism or buddhism. This is why it is much easier to teach a hard-line Moslem or Christian, because at least they have a view, and then we can debate. It is so difficult to teach New Age people, because they are like honey. They paste things from here and there, they do not know what they are talking about and we do not know where we should be directing our arguments. There is a big difference between *rimé* (*ris med*) non-sectarian, and New Age. *Rimé* always tries to be as authentic as possible, and to have pure vision, whereas New Age people are always diluting everything, from classical music to Dharma.

For the kind of person who already has a philosophy, we can teach Madhyamika with all the Prasangika-Madhyamika arguments and logic. An example of this kind of person is a follower

of the *Samkhya* school, a Hindu philosophy that believes in self-born entities, which will be our opponent for the next few days.

[H9]

*To teach a beginner, they must have some hang-ups: some shame and embarrassment*

## (ii) **Beginners**

The second kind of person that we are supposed to teach is someone completely new, who has no philosophical background. However, according to Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo, such a person has to have one quality: shame and embarrassment. This is very important, so listen carefully. If you encounter someone who does not believe in anything, it is almost impossible to teach him something. Therefore, you have to find a cause to begin with. You have to find shame and embarrassment in him, and you will find it easily. As long as a person has ego, he has shame and embarrassment.

For example, if I ask Gérard to lift his skirt because I am not sure about his sex, he will be embarrassed. Why? He might not believe in reincarnation or karma, but his embarrassment shows that he has a philosophy of some sort. Then we can start our discussion of Dharma! He may not have this kind of philosophy, but why is he embarrassed? He has some kind of theory. Here we are talking about shame and embarrassment, about hang-ups. Whether they have cultural hang-ups or ego hang-ups, as long as a person has hang-ups, then from an academic point of view, they have some kind of doctrine or theory. Based on that, we can develop a dialogue.

*For a beginner, we first teach a gradual path of mind training, and later teach Madhyamika*

For someone like this who has no religious or philosophical background, we should begin with mind training. We should teach them things like the faults of samsara, the effects of karma, the preciousness of a human body, *shamatha* meditation and different meditations on bodhicitta. We should teach a gradual path, and then we can introduce the Madhyamika. Because according to the Mahayana sutras, if a person does not have a good foundation of mind training and practice, it is considered a violation of the bodhisattva vow to teach them the Madhyamika. It could destroy them. In the *Mulamadhyamaka-karikas*, it is said that teaching emptiness directly to someone who is not qualified is like someone without any experience holding a poisonous snake.

[H9]

## (iii) **Those who have already awakened into the family of the Mahayana**

The third kind of listener, who is described here in the fourth sloka, is someone that you can teach directly. He does not need to be convinced with logic, and he does not need any kind of foundational teachings.

[H8]

## (b) **The benefits derived from being so taught, 6:5.1-7.1**

[H8]

## (c) **The importance of therefore listening to what is taught, 6:7.2-4**

6:7.2-4      *Skilled in the ways of the profound and the vast,  
He will gradually attain the bhumi of Extremely Joyful.  
Therefore, those aspiring thus should hear of this path.*

*The benefits of hearing  
teachings on emptiness*

In the last three lines of the 7<sup>th</sup> sloka, Chandrakirti is requesting us to listen. “*Skilled in the ways of the profound*” refers to emptiness, and “*vast*” refers to the ten bhumis. Since the first bhumi will be attained gradually, those who want to attain it should listen to this. It is like a request. One may not understand the meaning of the great emptiness completely or even a little, but just hearing the words and phrases that talk about the great *shunyata* can be of great benefit in this life and the next. The story of Sthiramati is an example.

*The story of Sthiramati and his past lives as a pigeon and a beggar*

Vasubandhu had four disciples, all of whom were greater scholars than him. When he taught buddhist logic to Dignaga, Dignaga became a greater scholar on the subject of buddhist logic than he was. Another of his disciples was Sthiramati (Lodrötenpa), and on the subject of *Prajñaparamita*, he was considered greater than Vasubandhu himself.

In his past life, Sthiramati had been a pigeon. For almost all his life as a pigeon, his home was near a cave where Vasubandhu lived, and he heard Vasubandhu reading the *Prajñaparamita of 8000 Verses* every morning as his daily practice. When the pigeon died, it seems that his previous karmic deeds were not good, because even after a life as a pigeon, he was reborn as an outcast, a *sudra* (*dmangs rigs*), the lowest Indian caste. He was born as a son in a very poor family of beggars. In India, it was usual for children, especially the sons, to beg for their parents and the rest of the family. But this boy always got into trouble with his family, because he brought home so little from his begging.

Close to his home, there was a statue of Tara, and every time that the boy begged some food, he would first bring it to this statue and offer it to Tara. He would put food on her hand, and it would always fall down, but because he considered that the fallen food now belonged to Tara, he did not bring it home. So, what was left was very small, and his family would beat him. One day, after begging for a whole day, he had seven beans. He put them on Tara's hand, and they all fell. Now he was very afraid to go back to his family, as he knew what would happen, so he talked to the statue. He asked her how she could do this, as she did not accept anything he offered, and he had nothing left to take home. He started to cry in front of the statue, and his devotion was so strong that the statue came alive and held him. His family decided that this boy was a little abnormal, so they brought him to Vasubandhu. He became Vasubandhu's attendant, and later became a very great scholar.

*The scholar's deities*

Most of the Indian scholars, such as Sthiramati, Chandrakirti, Asanga and Vasubandhu, practised Manjushri, Arya Tara, and Achala (Miyowa) as their deities. These three are called the scholar's deities. Achala is wrathful form of Vajrapani, also sometimes considered a wrathful form of Manjushri, with his left knee bent down.



## Accumulating merit

*Traditional ceremony to create merit after finishing the 7<sup>th</sup> sloka*

At this point, after the 7<sup>th</sup> sloka, it is traditional to have a ceremony. With the 8<sup>th</sup> sloka, we are going to start the meat of the *Madhyamakavatara*. The Madhyamika is so difficult that our human wisdom and intelligence is not enough to understand it, so we need merit and blessings. This is why we have a ceremony. The *drubchen* will finish tomorrow, and it is a very good coincidence that we will start the selflessness of phenomena.

*Chandrakirti's view is a lion's roar that will protect you from wrong and incomplete views*

The way that Chandrakirti establishes the view is called a great 'lion's roar'. He will roar from tomorrow onwards, and hopefully remain roaring in your mind and in your heart for the rest of your life. Because if the lion roars all the time in your heart, then wrong views, incomplete views, and touchy-feely views, which are like foxes and hyenas, will never even dare to come near you. So, for those of you who are seriously listening to this, it would be good if tomorrow you could offer some candles, incense and flowers to the shrine. I will also do this, because I also need blessings, perhaps more than you do, so that my mouth will work and my mind will be clear! It is also a big responsibility for me to teach you the right view of the Madhyamika.

The Madhyamika can be very difficult at times, but you should not be discouraged. The study of buddhist philosophy is not the same as studying some other things. For example, if you want to understand relativity, you cannot really visualise Einstein in the sky in front of you and receive blessings from him. But you can here. And in a way, you already have the complete knowledge of what you are studying here. Other studies are of things you do not have, so you have to start somewhere. But here you are studying yourself; once your mind ‘clicks’, everything will become easy. This is all a study of how your mind works – things like how you cling to things, how the clinging creates problems, what happens if you get rid of that clinging, and so on. This is why even the highest teachings in the Nyingma tradition, such as Dzogchen, will always praise Madhyamika, Mahamudra and Mahasandhi as inseparable.

*We should rejoice that we are hearing teachings on Madhyamika*

*The importance of merit*

If you are unable to engage in any other methods to accumulate merit, you should rejoice that we have the opportunity to be together here to talk about a great subject like this, as it shows that we have accumulated merit in the past. And while we are hearing the Madhyamika we are also accumulating a lot of merit, and by rejoicing, we will create even more merit.

When we talk about merit, it is not something touchy-feely. We are talking about causes and conditions. Let us imagine that we are all watching a movie, but that you do not know that what is happening right in front of us is a movie. You think that the events in the movie are really happening, and so you become very involved with the story. If something sad happens, you cry. You get excited, or if we are watching a horror movie, you will be scared. The person who is sitting next to you knows that you are suffering, and he wants to tell you to relax, as this is just a movie.

Although he might want to say this to you, if you have no merit then he may have a sore throat at that time. Or perhaps he does not have a sore throat and he is telling you clearly, but at that moment, somebody behind you coughs loudly so you miss what he is saying. Even if those things do not happen, you still may not hear it properly. And even if you hear him clearly when he says that the movie is not the real thing, you might interpret him to mean that reality is even worse than the movie. So having merit is so important.

Having merit makes you a good listener. Having merit also makes a person a good speaker, although in these teachings you do not seem to have the merit to be listening to someone who speaks well! So, create merit. It can be as simple as offering a biscuit to a child. And if you do not have a biscuit right next to you, you can just rejoice.



## Avoiding a narrow view of the Madhyamika

*We often develop a very narrow understanding of the Madhyamika*

It is such a shame that a great idea like Madhyamika philosophy has to be taught by people who have a religious appearance. It automatically limits the whole idea of Madhyamika philosophy. The listener or the reader of the Madhyamika philosophy will automatically make it into something very narrow, such as a buddhist thing to do, or a religious thing to do, which is such a shame. To be honest, it is a great shame even to have to use words or language, because it limits the understanding and study of Madhyamika so much. Every time I speak, every time I give you a new name, you are creating a phenomenon inside your head, and I am quite sure that it is a limited phenomenon. But unfortunately, this is the only way that we can communicate.

Like any other ideas, like science, economics and politics, Madhyamika philosophy is trying to build a better society, very simply speaking. In fact, if possible, the Madhyamika aims to create

*Madhyamika is trying to build a better society by studying what makes it dysfunctional*

*Our selfishness, our ego clinging is the problem*

*The aim of the teachings is to help us distinguish what is a fake and what is reality*

an enlightened society. In the Madhyamika, we are studying the cause that makes a society dysfunctional. Why is our society not good? What is it that makes everybody go through endless pain? Economists talk of business recessions and failures in economic policy as the cause. Here in the Madhyamika we are also trying to understand what makes this society not function properly, both temporally and permanently.

The Madhyamika finds that the problem is ignorance, the ego, clinging to the self as truly existent. Simply speaking, this selfishness is the problem. Then it embarks on a thorough study of where this selfishness comes from. Can we actually overcome it? Can we overcome it permanently, or just for a few years? Is it really something that we can purify? For questions like this, there are studies, meditations and contemplations. And based on these, all sorts of religious-sounding terms and techniques came, such as the notions of guru, discipline, ethics, generosity, and so on.

Sadly, because our mind is so small, we somehow get lost with these terms, and we think that Madhyamika is a religion, because of all these small techniques. Sometimes I think that instead of saying meditation on Madhyamika, we should say research on Madhyamika. And, for example, the *drubchen* that is going on now, instead of calling it a *drubchen*, we should call it a conference. It is the same. It is just a big gathering where we are trying to solve the problem.

When we go through seemingly complex philosophical debates, we should remember what these people are trying to tell us. It actually very simple – they are trying to tell us that we should understand what is reality. That is all. But then again, sometimes it is too simple, so it may seem difficult. We are more used to fiction and to fakes than we are to reality. This alone tells us that the Buddha has such great compassion. He almost has to surrender himself to our minds that love fiction and fakes. He almost has to adopt that, and then devise an entire path that is also a fiction. That is the only way that he can teach us. It is like the story of the person who dreamt that a big monster was attacking him, and he was so frightened that he did not know what to do. So, he asked the monster, “What can I do”? The monster replied, “I don’t know, this is your dream”.

Let us suppose that you want to wake a person who is dreaming. You do not have a bucket of water with you, or perhaps there is a bucket of water right in front of you, but your hands and feet are tied, so you cannot use it. The only thing you can do is to tell them, “Hey look, you are dreaming”. But if you say that, the other person may simply not listen. Worse than that, when you meet this kind of person, you might try to tell them once or twice that they are dreaming, and then you give up. This means that you have no compassion! If you are really a compassionate person, then you really have to be skilful here. You almost have to go along with him, and say “yes, that’s true”, this shows you have some kind of compassion. The Buddha’s teachings are like this.



Before we start the 8<sup>th</sup> sloka, I have several more things to tell you. I looked at four commentaries, and between them, I counted 428 pages of preparatory discussion preceding the 8<sup>th</sup> sloka. There is a lot of material, so I think we will find it helpful to follow where we are by using the structural outline. I will be using the outline by Gorampa, but you could also use Mipham’s if you like. At times, when the subject gets really difficult, you should exercise your mind a little bit by doing everything the opposite way round. This is my personal advice to you. For example, when you wake in the morning, think that you are now going to sleep. Say good night to everyone, and think that when you are walking around, you are dreaming. And then, when you go to bed, say hello and good morning to everyone. It might also help if you put on

your suit, shirt and tie when you sleep! Or you could wear your jacket like a pair of trousers sometimes, and put your legs in the sleeves. You can do things like this, just to break your normal habits a little bit. But I am just joking here, so do not take it seriously.

[H7]

*The two ways in which emptiness will be taught*

### (3) Establishing emptiness, the subject to be explained (580)

From the structural outline, you will see that emptiness is to be taught in two ways:

1. Explaining emptiness as it is to be realised by all vehicles. This refers to the three vehicles of the shravakas, pratyekabuddhas and bodhisattvas.
2. Explaining emptiness as it is to be realised by the Mahayana.

We will come to the second one later, perhaps in the third year. The first one is very important, because we are going to talk in detail about the two truths and the two kinds of selflessness. This alone tells us that the shravakas, pratyekabuddhas and bodhisattvas are all looking at one object, the same emptiness. The only difference is the size of what they see.

[H8]

*The four philosophical schools in buddhism*

### (a) Establishing emptiness as it is to be realised by all vehicles

When we talk about path and fruit, *lam dang drébu* (*lam dang 'bras bu*), we also talk in terms of the three vehicles: shravakas, pratyekabuddhas and bodhisattvas. And theories or philosophical tenets, *drumta* (*grub 'tha*), are divided into Mahayana and Hinayana. When we talk about a philosophy, we are talking about a philosophy that includes path and fruit. Buddhism has four main philosophical schools: Madhyamika, Cittamatra, Sautrantika and Vaibhashika. The first two are Mahayana schools, and the other two are Hinayana:

Madhyamika Cittamatra	Mahayana (bodhisattvas)
Sautrantika Vaibhashika	Hinayana (shravakas and pratyekabuddhas)

*All four schools talk about the path and the result (shravakas, pratyekabuddhas, and bodhisattvas)*

This is very important, so please pay attention, as I know you will ask questions about this repeatedly for the next few years. All four schools talk about the result of the path: shravakas, pratyekabuddhas and bodhisattvas. They all have their own view of these three results. All four schools also talk about the path. In fact, the three other schools also call themselves Madhyamika. Everybody wants to be a follower of the middle way! In India, even for Hindus, following the middle way is supposedly a very prestigious philosophy, so each school tries to prove that their way is the middle way. When we talk about the Madhyamika, we adopt this name for ourselves. But the other schools refer to the Madhyamika as 'Nisvabhava', which means emptiness-talker or nothingness-sayer.

*We can look down on the philosophy of the Hinayana, but never its path or fruit*

When the structural outline talks about "establishing emptiness as it is to be realised by all vehicles", it is not referring to the philosophical Hinayana and Mahayana, but to the path and fruit of shravakas, pratyekabuddhas and bodhisattvas. It is very important that you understand this. I sometimes hear Mahayana people looking down at the Hinayana, and when you listen carefully, they are putting down the path and fruit of the shravakas and pratyekabuddhas. This is an incredibly bad mistake, and will bring incredibly bad karma. We can look down on the Sautrantika and Vaibhashika schools during the philosophical argument, but we should never look down on shravakas and pratyekabuddhas. How can we? They are great people. Nyoshul Khen Rinpoche has a beautiful term for the Hinayana. He says that instead of calling it the Hinayana, we should call it the 'Root Yana'. This tells us that the Mahayana and Vajrayana cannot exist without the Hinayana. The path and the philosophy are two different things. But

*Path and philosophy are different, but we need a philosophy to establish a path*

*For Chandrakirti, dependent arising means the same as emptiness*

*The Ten Equalities*

without a philosophy, there is no dialogue to establish the path. There is no means or medium. So, somebody has to talk about it; somebody has to prove it.

[Q]: When we say ‘lesser vehicle’, we seem to be criticising the Hinayana motivation, as we are referring to the motivation to liberate just yourself rather than all beings.

[A]: It is not really a criticism, although you might read it as a criticism. It is like saying that a Land Rover is better than a Peugeot. That is not really a criticism is it? If you want to go to Scotland or Africa, you take a Land Rover. But if you want to go to big cities like Montignac, then you drive your Peugeot.

At this point, we are starting to explain the emptiness that needs to be realised by all the vehicles. Chandrakirti is very clever here, because he alternates the word ‘emptiness’ and the word ‘dependent arising’. Sometimes he will use the term dependent arising, and at other times, he will use the word emptiness. By changing the words, he is letting us know that they mean the same thing. Later on, you will realise that this is a great tactic of his. We will be using this term ‘dependent arising’ repeatedly.

[H9]

### **(i) Establishing interdependent arising by means of the absence of any self in phenomena**

In order to establish the first kind of emptiness, which is the emptiness to be realised by all vehicles, we will proceed in two ways. First, Chandrakirti explains dependent arising by means of the selflessness of phenomena, and secondly, he explains it by means of the selflessness of the person. In brief, it is a teaching on the selflessness of phenomena and the selflessness of the person. The first of these has three subcategories:

- (a) As ascertained from the sutras on suchness.
- (b) As established in the shastras.
- (c) As determined in this text by means of logical reasoning.

[H10]

### **(A) As ascertained from the sutras on suchness (581)**

According to the *Dashabhumika Sutra*, which is our supporting sutra, the Buddha said, “*Oh, bodhisattvas, a bodhisattva who has just crossed beyond the path of ‘Difficult to Overcome’ (meaning the fifth bhumi) will enter the sixth bhumi in ten different ways*”. The name of the sixth bhumi is ‘Advancing’, so you can say that a bodhisattva will advance to the sixth bhumi in ten different ways at the same time. These ten methods are called the ten equalities, *nyampanyi chu* (*mnyam pa nyid bcu*). They are:

- The equality of having no truly existing characteristics. In other words, all phenomena are equal in the sense that they do not have any truly existing characteristics, *tsenma mépa* (*mtshan ma med pa*). Similarly, we have:
- The equality of having no defining characteristic or definition, *tsennyi mepa* (*mtshan nyid med pa*).
- The equality of the primordial absence of birth from any of the four extremes, *togmar kyéwa mepa* (*thog mar skye ba med pa*).
- The equality of being unborn, *makyépa* (*ma skye pa*).
- The equality of absence, *wenpa* (*dben pa*).
- The equality of total purity, *takpa* (*dak pa*).
- The equality of having no elaborations or extremes, *tröpa mepa* (*spros pa med pa*).
- The equality of being beyond acceptance or rejection from the point of view of the ultimate truth, *langdor mepa* (*blang 'dor med pa*).

- The equality of being illusory like a dream, a mirage, a scarecrow, an echo, reflection of moon in water, reflection of oneself in the mirror, and a magic manifestation, *gyuma* (*sgyu ma*).
- The equality of being neither real nor unreal, *ngöpo dang ngö mepa* (*dngos po dang dngos med pa*), equal in the non-differentiation of entity and non-entity;

The first eight of these are spoken from the point of ultimate truth. It is not important for us to spend too much time on these ten equalities, because the *Madhyamakavatara* is only concerned with one of these ten, and by teaching one, it covers all of the others. You might ask, why then does he tell us this? It is good for you to hear the names, and it is good for you to realise how little you have heard before. You may have received many teachings, and you may have heard a lot about things like freedom from elaboration or extremes, which is the seventh equality. But we have not really touched the others. This is just to tell you that study is vast.

## [H10]

*We will only talk about one of the ten equalities: the absence of birth*

*The classification of all phenomena as composite (or compounded) or non-composite*

*The definition of a composite (or compounded) phenomenon: it has birth, remaining, and cessation*

## (B) As established in the shastras (582)

The shashtra we are referring to here is the *Mulamadhyamaka-karikas*. As I just mentioned, we are only going to talk about one of the ten equalities: *skye ba mepa*, namely, that there is no such thing as the arising or production of phenomena. Most shastras use the fourth equality to explain emptiness. We are going to talk about this for a few years, so do not get too excited! We have enough time to talk about this.

Buddhists says that all phenomena can be classified into two groups: compounded and uncompounded, or we can say composite and non-composite. It is important for us to agree on this classification before we embark on the rest of our studies. Can you find a phenomenon that is neither of these? There is only one possible exception, which is the state of enlightenment. But we have already discussed this (on p.27). Some scholars say that enlightenment is not a compounded phenomenon, some say that it is. The Nyingmapas may say it is not even a phenomenon, so you cannot even begin to classify it into one of these two. So, do you agree with this classification of composite and non-composite phenomena?

[Q]: Can these two categories be explained in more detail?

[A]: When we talk about things being composite, we need to agree upon the definition of composite. Strictly, from the buddhist point of view, we define a phenomenon as being composite if it has the three aspects or characteristics of birth, remaining and cessation.

[Q]: Can't we say that a composite phenomenon is a gathering of causes and conditions?

[A]: If we say that its characteristic, or definition, is that it is a gathering of causes and conditions, it will not be pervasive enough. Remember when we talked about the definition of 'definition' (on p.2 in the introduction), that a definition has to be free from three kinds of fault? The gathering of causes and condition may be a definition of something specific, but may not cover the general case. For example, if might help with the definition of a 'sandalwood tree', but it might not be general enough for the definition of a 'tree'. We can always have a debate about this. I can see there is some point to your question, as someone could argue that the gathering of causes and condition must be the definition of composite phenomena. But someone could also negate this by saying that the very fact of no gathering of causes and conditions is also a composite phenomenon. Sometimes the causes and conditions do not gather, but that very act of not gathering is also a composite phenomenon. But then, he can extend his argument, saying that in order not to gather, there must be a cause and condition for the not gathering. It can go round and round, and so I would say that it is dangerous to definite composite in terms of causes and conditions. I cannot delete it, but if you were debating in front of monks from Sera University, you would have to be careful!

[Q]: Can't the word composite mean that something can be analysed or cut into parts?

*The Vaibhashika definition of a composite phenomenon*

*Can a non-existent phenomenon be composite?*

*How buddhists negate the notion of space*

*In ordinary life, we always ask about origins and causes*

*Nagarjuna's four statements*

*We will encounter different opponents as we go through these statements*

*These schools represent our emotions, the way we think*

[A]: Yes that is also fine. In fact, that is the definition made by the Vaibhashika school. This will come! I am always excited when I talk about the Vaibhashika school, because the way they define ultimate truth and relative truth is incredibly smart. I think it is especially relevant nowadays when you face the scientific world and their definition of ultimate truth. But this is not the time – we will talk about this later.

[Q]: How can non-existent phenomena be composite?

[A]: That's a very tricky question. Yesterday is not existent today, but it is nevertheless a composite phenomenon. You might talk about a non-existent phenomenon like the horn of a rabbit, but if I am a clever debater, I will ask you a question. When you talk about the horn of a rabbit, I am imagining a horn of a rabbit, although I may attempt to say that there is no such thing. I have to be careful! Philosophical debate is like a courtroom, and you have to be very careful about what you say.

[Q]: When we talk about these three aspects of birth, remaining and cessation, it seems as though we are talking about the categories of space and time.

[A]: Yes. That is very good. We are talking about space and time here, but more about time. Buddhists do not talk much about space, but if you want to know about how they negate the notion of space, read Aryadeva's *400 Stanzas of Madhyamika*, which has a thorough investigation of so-called space.

This is good, because when we talk about time, this brings us back to the definition of a composite phenomenon. The idea is this. If there is no cessation, then there must be either a continuum of birth or a continuum of remaining. This leads to a complication. For example, if there is no cessation of today, then tomorrow will never come. If the cessation of today is non-existent, then the remaining of today is always there.

We also talked about whether birth, remaining or death is the most important issue for our ordinary minds, and we concluded that is birth. Of course, people sometimes think about death or about living, but these are occasional thoughts. In our day-to-day life, and in many different philosophies, we are always asking about origins. What is the origin of this? What is the cause of this? How? Why? That is our habit, which is why it is important. So, here we will deal with all these questions about birth. In the shastra, the *Mulamadhyamaka-karikas*, right after Nagarjuna pays homage, he writes:

*All these phenomena have never been born from, grown or produced by self.  
They have never been born from or produced by other.  
They have never been born from or produced by both,  
And they have never been born from or produced by neither (i.e. with no cause).*

This sloka is not really a thesis, as we have to remind ourselves that the Madhyamika do not have theses, but for the time being, we will call it a statement. Nagarjuna made these four major statements in his *Mulamadhyamaka-karikas*, and as we study each of these, we will meet all sorts of sophisticated opponents. For example, in the first of these four, production from self, our opponent is the Samkhya school. We will have to argue with many very well established and very intelligent schools, and this will give rise to many difficulties as we study. Debating production from other is much more difficult than production from self, because our opponents are not only Hindus, but also include the highest school in Mahayana buddhism apart from Madhyamika, the Cittamatra. They are also opponents of Madhyamika philosophy here. The greater that our opponent is, the greater the difficulty that we will have when we study.

It is even more important for you to know that each of these schools represents your emotions, the way that you think. For example, if I ask Gérard where he was yesterday, he might say that he was in Montignac having a nice time with Ani Jimpa. And then if I ask him where he was this morning, perhaps he will say he was with Adrienne. Now, he thinks that the macho man who was with Ani Jimpa last night is the same as the man who was with Adrian this morning. This is belief in being born from the self. He will say that he is the same guy. And when he goes back to Ani Jimpa tonight, he will say that he is still the same guy. But because of his guilty

conscience, he will act a little differently, which Ani Jimpa will notice. She will say that he is behaving slightly strangely today, but he will say, “No, I am the same person”. That is belief in being born from the self.

When the Buddha taught, in order for him to teach, he had to have Brahma and Indra. We should really thank some of the characters here – like Gérard Godet, Ani Jimpa, Jakob and Adrian – because without using them as our examples, we cannot teach this. It is a bit like the rabbit’s horn that was a favourite example of the ancient scholars.

[H11]

**(i) Identifying the differences between the Prasangika and the Svatantrika (582)**

[H12]

**(a) In general**

*The origins of the two Madhyamika schools:  
Prasangika and  
Svatantrika*

*The similarities between  
the two schools*

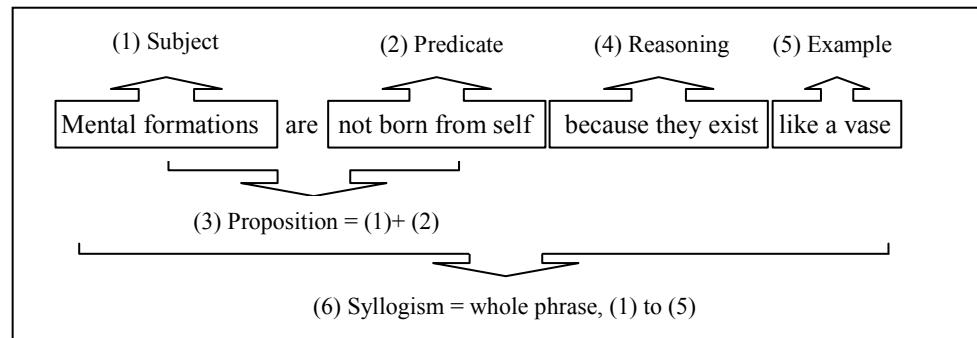
We come to a difficulty here. There are two different ways of explaining the four statements made in this single sloka written by Nagarjuna, which led to two schools of Madhyamika philosophy in India. These two schools are called the Prasangika-Madhyamika and the Svatantrika-Madhyamika. Bhavaviveka founded the Svatantrika, and Buddhapalita founded the Prasangika (*See also* Introduction, p.8).

The two schools of Madhyamika have many similarities. They both believe that the cause of samsara is attachment to the self, or ego, as truly existent. And both agree that production from the four extremes has to be refuted in order to destroy the mind that clings to the truly existent self of phenomena and the person. If we refer back to the root classification of existence, non-existence, both and neither, then production from the four extremes of self, other, both and neither are all a subdivision of the first extreme, existence. Of course, only something that exists can have a so-called birth. So, both schools also agree that all these four extremes have to be refuted. So, the question is how are the two schools different. They are very different in the way they establish the ultimate view, and in the way that they accept conventional truth.

[H12]

**(b) Differences in the reasoning by which they determine absolute truth (589)**

There are six major differences in the way that they establish the ultimate view, which correspond to the six elements of a buddhist syllogism. The six elements of a syllogism are illustrated by the example below:



*The six elements of a  
buddhist syllogism*

The *predicate* is the thing that you are trying to prove. For example, if you say, “she is beautiful”, then ‘she’ is the *subject* and ‘beautiful’ is the *predicate*. Taking the subject and the predicate together forms the thesis or *proposition*; i.e. “she is beautiful”.

*It is important not to take the meaning of words for granted*

Next, in order to establish that she is beautiful, you give some *reasoning*, such as “she is beautiful because she has two noses and four eyes”. Then you give an *example*, such as “like Ani Jimpa”. The whole phrase taken together is what we call a *syllogism*. For example, “she is beautiful because she has two noses and four eyes like Ani Jimpa”.

You might think that these six things are very plain words, but they are not. If you want to know the difference between Svetantrika and Prasangika Madhyamika, they all matter. The way we say things matters a lot. For example, there is a big difference between saying that “the cup is empty” and that “there is no water in the cup”. Many problems in the world start from when we take the meaning for granted. For example, if I say, “the cup is empty”, I might expect that you hear “there is no water in the cup”.

[H13]

### (i) Subject (*chos*)

**Svetantrika:** For the Svetantrikas, the subject is usually very specific, such as ‘mental formations’. This is due to historical reasons, because many of these Madhyamika scholars previously belonged to another buddhist school, such as Cittamatra, Sautrantika or Vaibhashika; they might even have been Hindus. And they would always bring some of their influences from the past, such as, in this case, having a very specific subject. Returning to our example of a syllogism:

*“Mental formations are not born from self because they exist, like a vase”*

This is what the Svetantrikas are trying to say here. Keep in mind that we are going to base our explanation on the four affirmations of Nagarjuna. Nagarjuna said that things are not born from the self, and now the Svetantrikas are giving a good reason why.

<i>Mental formations</i>	1	Subject <i>chöchen (chos can)</i>
<i>are not born from self</i>	2	Predicate <i>drubjé chö (bsgrub bya'i chos)</i>
{1 + 2}	3	Proposition/Thesis <i>drubja (bsgrub bya)</i>
<i>because they exist</i>	4	Reasoning <i>tak (rtags)</i>
<i>like a vase</i>	5	Example <i>pé (dpe)</i>
{whole phrase}	6	Syllogism <i>jorwa (sbyor ba)</i>

They are saying that mental formations are not born from self, because they are existent. For example, like a vase. It is an incredible logic. In order for something to be born from the self, it must be there before. If it is already there, why are we saying is it born? The logic is so simple, so incredible, that it might even cause a heart attack! The logic is very simple: because it is existent. But it has so much meaning! In this way, they conclude that mental formations are not self-produced.

*Svetantrikas will have a specific subject, but the Prasangikas prefer to include all phenomena*

**Prasangika:** Although the Svetantrikas will always bring a specific subject such as mental formations, the Prasangikas do not. Instead, they will add the word “etc.”, and say, “mental formations etc. are not born from self”. They always prefer to include all phenomena, but the Svetantrikas do not do this. This is a very big difference. As we will see later, the Svetantrikas actually have a thesis during the relative truth, so they do not like to say “all phenomena”. They prefer to make it specific.

[H13]

### (ii) Predicate (*bsgrub bya'i chos*)

**Svetantrika:** The Svetantrikas say “mental formations are not born from themselves *in the ultimate truth*”. They would add the words “*in the ultimate truth*”. They say things like, “in the ultimate truth, things are not born from themselves or from others”.

*The Prasangikas say things are not born in the relative truth as well as in the ultimate truth*

*Chandrakirti relies on the cowherd to tell us about relative truth*

*Den drup and tse drup:  
Two kinds of existence*

*The Svetanrikas accept birth in the relative truth*

*The Prasangikas do not require this*

*Prasangikas have no theses. Their method is to demonstrate that their opponent's thesis is incoherent*

### [H13]

*For the Svetanrikas, the reasoning must also be mutually accepted*

**Prasangika:** Now, the Prasangikas do not accept this. They will just say that mental formations are not born from themselves. Because according to the Prasangikas, even in the relative truth, things are not born from themselves, from other, from both or from neither. This is another lion's roar.

In particular, Chandrakirti belongs to the school that is called ‘Prasangika-Madhyamikas that accept ordinary experience’. He would definitely not add “in the ultimate truth”. He says that if in the relative truth you ask a cowherd, where does cow dung come from, they will not talk in terms of it coming from self, other, both and neither – they will just say it comes from a cow! Chandrakirti says that this is relative truth, and you do not talk about it any more than that. We will come to this later. The Svetanrikas accept the distinction between:

- Truly existent
- Existence logically established

*den drup (bden grub)  
tsedrup (tshad grub)*

The Svetanrikas do not say that things truly exist, because if they said that, then the whole Madhyamika philosophy would collapse. However, they do accept that in the relative truth, some things are logically existent. This is why they accept that some things are born from other in the relative truth, which is why they need to add the words “in the ultimate truth”. In this way, the Svetanrikas indicate that they accept this in the relative truth. But the Prasangikas do not.

### (iii) Thesis / Predicate (**bsgrub bya**)

**Svetanrika:** For the Svetanrikas, both the proponent and opponent must agree that the subject, in this case “mental formations”, is logically existent. And then, after the subject has been mutually agreed as logically established, they establish the thesis (in this example, “are not born from themselves in the ultimate truth”). In other words, they actually have a thesis, which in this case is that things are not born from the self in the ultimate truth.

**Prasangika:** For the Prasangikas, firstly the subject does not have to be logically established. And secondly, the subject does not have to be mutually agreed upon. As long as your opponent accepts it, it is fine. You, the proponent, do not need to accept it. For example, if you and I are debating about this conch, if I am a Svetanrika then we must have a mutual agreement that this is a conch. But if I am a Prasangika, I do not care, because I am a consequentialist. As long as you think it is a conch, it does not matter whether or not I think it is a conch.

If we ask the Prasangikas, do you have a thesis, they will say, “No, not for myself”. So, we ask them, why do they say that things are not born from themselves. And they will answer, “We say this only to clarify your own ignorance. We are not saying it for ourselves, we are saying it for you”. If a Prasangika says that you are dreaming, they do not have any thesis in there, for example about themselves not dreaming, or about the non-dreaming of phenomena. They can be very irritating, because we know they are right, but they have no thesis themselves. You will see this often later on. An important difference between the Svetanrika and Prasangika methods is that the Svetanrikas will destroy their opponent’s position by proposing a contrary view, while the Prasangikas will destroy it by demonstrating that it is incoherent, that it collapses by itself.

### (iv) Reasoning (**rtags**)

**Svetanrika:** Here the reasoning is “because they exist”. As with the subject, there must be mutual acceptance of the reasoning by the opponent and the proponent. In this case, both must accept that “they exist”, and then using that as a logic, the Svetanrikas will defeat their opponent. Let us suppose that there is smoke on the hill. A Svetanrika would say, on that hill, where there is smoke, there is fire because there is smoke. We are talking to someone who sees

the smoke, who does not really know whether there is a fire or not, and we are trying to convince him that there is a fire because there is smoke. That's it; it is simple.

There needs to be mutual agreement on the subject and the reasoning, but not the thesis. The thesis is what you put in their mind. Both people need to have eyes, and they both need to be able to see smoke in the distance. They must also know what smoke is, and that smoke comes from fire, because if you are talking to someone who has never seen smoke or fire, then the logic will not work.

[Q]: But this does not make sense, as you said that both must logically agree the subject. So if I see smoke, I must immediately know that there is fire, since I accept that smoke comes from fire.

[A]: It could be something like this. Perhaps until now you did not see the fire, and while you are turning away, I suddenly see the smoke, and I say, "Hey, Dominique, there must be a fire on that hill, because there is smoke".

*For the Prasangikas, it is sufficient if the opponent accepts the reasoning*

**Prasangika:** Again, for the Prasangikas, this is not necessary. As long as the opponent accepts the reason, that is fine. If the other person sees smoke, and yet he does not believe there is a fire, the Prasangikas would say, "Well, in that case, there should not be any smoke if there is no fire". Of course, the Prasangikas must also know that the other person accepts that smoke comes from fire.

The Svetantrikas say, "There must be fire because there is smoke". The Prasangikas say, "There cannot be any smoke because there is no fire". It is as simple as that. The Prasangikas are more on the attack, nastier, so to speak. They would say that you will end up with the consequence that there should not be any smoke, as you say there is no fire but you can see the smoke! You cannot deny that, so there must be fire.

### [H13]

#### **(v) Example (dpe)**

It is the same here. The Svetantrikas require the example to be mutually agreed by opponent and proponent, and the Prasangikas accept an example that only the opponent accepts.

### [H13]

#### **(vi) Syllogism (sbyor ba)**

*The Prasangikas do not accept the syllogism themselves*

*Another lion's roar of Nagarjuna: "I have no thesis, therefore I am innocent"*

Overall, the Prasangikas do not accept the syllogism for themselves. They do not have their own so-called inferential logic. Instead, they use only their opponent's inferential logic to defeat them. They do not believe in things like "there must be fire because there is smoke". But because they know that you believe in this logic, although they do not believe it themselves, they will use your logic and defeat you. So, these six differences in reasoning make up one of the essential differences between the two schools. This is another lion's roar of Nagarjuna:

"I have no thesis, therefore I am innocent. I am free from all faults".

[Q]: Do the Prasangikas accept logic as a criterion of truth?

[A]: They accept it just to clarify the other person's doubt. This is a good question, because many of the Svetantrikas are ex-Sautrantika or ex-Cittamatra. Those two schools are very logic oriented, and they believe in the so-called undeceiving nature of logic, which the Prasangikas do not accept. They only accept it for the sake of communication.

[Q]: Do the Prasangikas have a view, given that they have no theses?

[A]: They do not have a view in the ultimate truth, and they do not even have a view in the relative truth. This is their beauty!

*If the Prasangikas have no view, why do they teach?*

*The Prasangikas aim to destroy all views*

*The Prasangikas have compassion without a view*

*It is important not to mix path language and view language*

*To establish the view that there is no view, the Prasangikas must destroy all views*

*If you have grasping, you have no view*

*The three stages of attachment on the path*

I am sure that many people take the approach that in the ultimate truth, such things do not exist; but in the relative truth, buddhists always go a little bit weak. They say that such things may work in the relative truth. That is good during the path, but in the theory, when we are establishing the view, you cannot do that.

At the end of the sixth chapter, our opponent asks, if you do not have a view, why are you doing this? The Prasangika answer is that it is out of our great compassion, because we know you have so many problems, and we cannot resist telling you that you have these problems! Therefore, we have come here to destroy all your views. Whenever His Holiness the Dalai Lama teaches, even when he was about to receive the Nobel peace price, he chants the following sloka, which essentially means, “To the lord Buddha, who has no view, I prostrate”:

*To the lord Buddha,  
Who taught us the view-less teaching,  
In order to destroy all views,  
I prostrate.*

This is actually the aim of the Prasangika Madhyamika, to destroy all views.

[Q]: What about the Four Noble Truths? Surely, they are also a view?

[A]: Yes. The Prasangikas accept all that, but only for the sake of others. But you might ask them, how could you say that you are debating with your opponents out of your compassion for them? If you do not have a view, then why do you say that you have compassion? Their answer is that they are not saying that they have established their compassion as logically or truly existing. They know very well that compassion is illusion. Yet, the Prasangikas talk about compassion the most; all is for the sake of other beings. And the fact that we cannot accept that they do not have a view tells us how strong our emotions are towards having a view.

[Q]: But it is normal for us to talk of view, meditation and action, so the view is there.

[A]: I have some good advice for you: do not mix these. When we talk of view, meditation and action, we are talking about the path. Even if you are a Prasangika, you have to teach a path. And during the path, we talk about view, meditation and action. But right now, we are establishing the view. The Prasangikas are establishing the view that there is no view, so for them, establishing the view means destroying others' views.

[Q]: What about ground, path and fruition? Doesn't a view have to include these three?

[A]: Even ground, path and fruition are also path language. If you attain enlightenment now, you have not studied Madhyamika before, because there is no such thing as 'before'. There is no view. Therefore, the fruit is not a result of a certain practice.

[Q]: In the *Bodhicharyavatara* by Shantideva, who is Madhyamika Prasangika, he says that you can only have perfect compassion when you have no view. Why is it only then that one can have perfect compassion? Is what holds back the other views that their compassion is not perfect?

[A]: I would not put it like that. I am so Sautrantika oriented, and if you put down the Cittamatrins, I get even angrier!

[Q]: Why is their compassion not perfect?

[A]: I think it is because of this view. When you have grasping, you have no view. But most people interpret this to mean that you should only have no grasping in the ultimate truth. But for the Prasangikas, it also applies to the relative truth. This is incredible! This is what they call the lion's roar. We will come to this again.

[Q]: When one attains enlightenment, there is no path, so what is more important? It is the path or enlightenment?

[A]: The path. Without the path, enlightenment is boring! The path is what makes it exciting. There are three stages of attachment on the path: the first stage is you think you are not perfect. The second stage of attachment is that you want to be perfect. And the third stage of attachment is following a path to perfection. One *mahasiddha* said that our first mistake is to think that we need a path.

With this, we have very briefly finished looking at the differences between Prasangikas and Svatankrikas based on their approach to the ultimate truth.

[H12]

### (c) Differences in the way they set out the conventions of relative truth (592)

In the structural outline, the differences between Prasangikas and Svatankrikas are discussed in two parts: (a) in the way they establish the view; (b) in the way they accept conventional truth. We have now come to the second part, which has three points: ground, path and fruit (or result).

[H13]

#### (i) Ground

Are seed and shoot different in the conventional truth?

Can a phenomenon be both composite and undeceiving?

Can a valid cognition be undeceiving?

The Prasangikas have four types of logic

Is the distinction between valid and invalid relative truth made only on the object or the subject as well?

The Svatankrikas accept that in the relative truth, in the conventional truth, seed and shoot are different. Therefore, from a seed that is different from the shoot comes a shoot that is different from the seed. But the Prasangikas do not accept that. There will be a detailed explanation later. Also, for the Svatankrikas, there is a common ground between composite phenomena and undeceiving phenomena. In other words, a phenomenon can be both composite and undeceiving. For the Prasangikas, all composite phenomena are fake or deceiving. No phenomenon is both composite and undeceiving. This is important if you are studying buddhist logic, but it is not important here.

The Svatankrikas also say that a valid cognition, such as when you see a fire, is undeceiving. But for the Prasangikas, a valid cognition can also be deceiving. When the Svatankrikas talk about valid cognition, they talk about two kinds of cognition – direct and indirect. Therefore, there are two types of logic system:

- **Direct cognition** (*mngon sum tshad ma*). For example, this is a microphone, because you see it.
- **Inferential logic** (*rjes dpag tshad ma*). You do not see the fire, but you see the smoke – indirect cognition. The existence of fire has been proved with indirect cognition logic.

You will study this further if you study buddhist *pramana*, logic. The Svatankrikas say that there are only these two classifications, but the Prasangikas add two more.

- **A special example.**
- **The Buddha's word**, which they say cannot really be classified within direct or indirect cognition logic.

The next one is important. We normally talk about two kinds of relative truth – valid and invalid relative truth. According to the Svatankrikas, the classification of valid and invalid relative truth is only made based on the object. But for the Prasangikas, the classification of valid and invalid relative truth is made on both subject and object. This is important, and the explanation will come. So, we have finished the ground, briefly.

[H13]

#### (ii) Path

Do shravakas understand the selflessness of phenomena?

There are also differences during the path. The Svatankrikas do not accept that shravakas and pratyekabuddhas understand the selflessness of phenomena, but the Prasangikas say that they do understand this. If they did not, they could not understand the selflessness of a person. We have already talked about this (see chapter 1, p.38). According to the Svatankrikas, there is perception

of appearance during the meditation time of an *arya*, a non-samsaric being. But according to the Prasangikas, there is no perception of appearance.

[H13]

### (iii) Fruit

The Svetantrikas say that there is a difference between the post-meditation time and meditation time of a buddha, but the Prasangikas say that there is no difference.

[H11]

### (ii) Refuting the Svetantrika way (593)

[H11]

### (iii) Detailed explanation of how the Prasangikas determine the truth (594)

Now, I want to make a special introduction to the Prasangika Madhyamika before we return to the text. There is a good key for this, which is the distinction between truly established *dendrup* (*bden grub*), and logically established *tsédrup* (*mtshad grub*).

*Both schools seek to purify the defilement of 'truly established'*

*The Prasangikas do not accept things that are logically established*

*The difference between questions related to the path and the view*

I have already said that both the Prasangikas and the Svetantrikas try to purify the defilement of considering things to be truly established. This automatically tells us that the Prasangikas have a path, because the defilement that needs to be purified by the path is this clinging to things as truly established. The Prasangikas accept that sentient beings are ignorant, which is why they teach them. But they are not saying that they are *logically* ignorant. They do not accept things that are logically established. However, all the views and ideas that have been founded by other schools are the conclusions of a certain system of logic; this is why the Prasangikas do not accept these kinds of view.

As a student of Madhyamika philosophy, you should be developing certain habits about how you say things. While establishing the view, the Prasangikas do not have any assertions. While establishing the path, such as practising meditation, of course there is ground, a path, a result and all of that. But if somebody asks if any of these are existent, then this question is coming from the other department – the department of establishing the view. Questions like “do they truly exist” or “do they not exist” are part of establishing the view. However, questions like “how can I have devotion to guru” and “how should I abandon defilements”, are questions related to the path. These are two different kinds of questions.

It is very simple. Suppose that you ask Chandrakirti whether he has some drinking water in his house. If you are thirsty, and you really want to drink some water, he will say yes. But if you are a logician, and you are there to debate with him, then he will be careful and ask you what you are talking about. There is always a difference between the path, and establishing the view.

[H12]

### (a) Setting out the Prasangika view

We study this under three categories: (a) establishing the view on one's own part, (b) refuting wrong views on the part of others, and (c) refuting objections to the Prasangika view.

[H13]

### (i) Establishing the view on one's own part

[H14]

### (a) What is to be established (594)

- That relative truth is like an illusion

*The Prasangika view:  
Relatively, all is illusory.  
Ultimately, all is free  
from the four extremes*

*Negating clinging to  
appearances as truly  
existing*

- That absolute truth is free from any elaborations
- That in terms of both there is no truth in appearances

When establishing the view, the Prasangikas are trying to establish two principal things. In relative truth, that everything is like an illusion, and in the ultimate truth, that everything is free from extremes.

As you can see, the Prasangikas are not going to say it is only in the ultimate that nothing exists, but that relatively everything exists. You might almost think that saying everything is an illusion is actually an ultimate view. And for both, whether you are trying to establish that relatively everything is like an illusion, or the view that everything is free from extremes, first you have to negate this clinging to appearance as truly existent. This is very important! You are trying to establish a relative view, which is illusion, and you are trying to establish an ultimate view, which is free from extremes. For both, you need to negate clinging to all appearances as something truly existent. This is why from now on, you will repeatedly hear the word *denmé* (*bden med*), which means “not truly existent”, as it is of primary importance.

[H14]

### **(b) How it is established (595)**

In order to establish this, there are two proofs. For those who can accept them, the Prasangikas will bring quotations from the *ngé dön* (*nges don*) sutras, the absolute sutras (or sutras of certain meaning), not the *drang dön* (*drang don*) relative sutras (or sutras of provisional meaning). The second proof is through the special consequentialist logic of the Prasangikas, which says things like “you will end up with these consequences if you accept this”.

[H13]

#### **(ii) Refuting wrong views on the part of others**

[H14]

##### **(a) Identifying what is to be refuted**

[H15]

##### **(i) By means of the path**

[H16]

##### **(a) All delusory appearances**

What needs to be refuted by the path is all the delusions, such as anger, which are to be refuted by love, compassion, non-duality, bodhicitta, generosity, discipline, and so on.

[H15]

##### **(ii) But here, by means of the Buddha's words and logic**

Something more needs to be refuted, this time, by the Buddha's words and logic. So, we need to talk about the objects of this second kind of refutation. Two things need to be eliminated or refuted: one based on the object, one based on the subject.

[H16]

##### **(a) The object**

There are two things to be eliminated or refuted. We cannot say ‘defilements’ here, as that is path language. Defilements are things like anger, jealousy, and pride, which need to be purified by the Vajrasattva mantra. But all that is path language, so here we talk about the two things that need to be refuted.

- The first is labelling created by imputation-ignorance, *küntak marigpa* (*kun brtag ma rig pa*). Please do not get stuck here, because I will explain this later! As Longchen

*The two types of labelling  
that are to be refuted*



Rabjam said, if you want to see the whole view, it is good not to become stuck on the path. You should go right to the top and then look down.

- The second is labelling created by innate ignorance, *lhenkyé marigpa* (*lhan skye ma rig pa*). Perhaps some of you who have been to a few Dzogchen teachings are familiar with the words. There are two kinds of ignorance, labelling and innate. Here it is almost the same, but there is a slight difference. The difference here is that both are labelling. Imputation is labelling, and innate ignorance is labelling.

[H17]

### (i) **Labelling created by the ignorance of imputation**

This first object of refutation includes all the conclusions of all the theoretical schools except the Prasangika Madhyamika. From now on, we will refer to all other schools of buddhism or Hinduism apart from the Prasangikas as *substantialists*, because they believe in substance. Now, labelling created by the imputation-ignorance (i.e. the kind of ignorance that is imputation) has two subcategories: exaggeration and underestimation.

[H18]

#### **Exaggeration: the extreme of existence**

This is also divided into two:

[H19]

– **Self of a person**  
The self of a person refers to all ideas of self that are established by buddhists and Hindus. Here we are talking about the label of 'I' and 'me' that are given by theoreticians. We are not talking about the idea of self that you create yourself, as in the 3<sup>rd</sup> sloka of chapter 1: "*Initially fixating on this so-called 'I' as an existing self, 'Mine' gives rise to grasping*". We are not talking about that here.

[H19]

#### – **Self of phenomena**

The self of phenomena again refers to all the assertions or labelling by all the Buddhist and Hindu philosophers, this time about phenomena.

[H18]

#### **Underestimation: the extreme of non-existence**

The second subcategory is underestimation, which is another type of labelling made by imputation. Here we are referring to schools like the Charvakas (not to be confused with shravakas!), and probably the existentialists as well. They do not believe in past lives, cause and effect, and so on, but only in coincidence. Do not worry that you have to know all this right away. We have to start somewhere: do not get discouraged. The important thing now is for me to continue, and create a few landmarks such as Gérard Godet, so that you will remember. When you write a story, people only remember when something dramatic happens.

[H17]

### (ii) **Labelling created by innate ignorance**

Labelling by innate ignorance refers to those who have a theory, or no theories. Whether or not people belong to a religious or philosophical school like buddhism, they all have a notion of 'I'. We have now finished with the object, so we turn to the subject.

[H16]

#### **(b) The subject**

*The four methods of refutation used by the Prasangikas*

[H14]

The subject includes clinging to things as truly existent (*bden 'dzin*), or apprehending their mere appearance (*mthsan 'dzin*).

### (b) Explaining the reasoning by which it is refuted

The Prasangikas use four methods to refute the views of others. These will all come in detail later on, but in summary, they are:

- **Pointing out contradictions** in an opponent's view ('gal ba brjod pa'i thal gyur)
- **Using the opponent's inferential logic** (gzhān la grags kyi rjes dpags)
- **Reductio ad absurdum**: where we use the opponent's logic to derive conclusions that the opponent does not accept (rgyu mtshan mtshung pa'i mgo snyoms). For example, if he says, "I am a human because I have a head", we might say, "That dog is also a human because it also has a head". Here he is trying to prove his view using a particular logic, but we use his own logic to derive a consequence that he does not want to prove. You will find that the Prasangikas do this a lot.
- **Pointing out circular arguments that prove nothing**: (grub byed grub bya dang mtshung pas ma grub pa). A circular argument arises when the proof that the opponent is trying to use is the same as what he needs to prove. In other words, the proof is not yet proven, so it cannot be used as the basis of deriving another proof. For example, it would be like saying, "this is a head because it is a head". This is a big mistake, but it is common for many philosophers to make it.

[H13]

### (iii) Being rid of any faults for one's own part (596)

[Note: Rinpoche did not teach specifically under this heading]

[H12]

### (b) Refuting objections to the Prasangika view (598)

There are two subcategories to "Refuting objections to the Prasangika": based on establishing the relative, and based on establishing the ultimate.

**Relative:** At times in this text, it will seem like the Prasangikas are accepting things. For example, they might accept that there is smoke, but they do not accept things for themselves. They are only saying that they agree in order for the other person to understand that there is fire.

**Ultimate:** When the Prasangikas say they have no assertions, it is important to know that by saying this, they are not making another assertion. In this way, no logic can ever enter into this kind of statement, even though it is not a thesis.

This is all an outline and we will begin to go through it in detail after some questions.

[Q]: For people who say they do not affirm any views, it seems as though the Prasangikas have many views about the ground and the path.

[A]: As I said before, they accept these things during the path, but not during the view.

[Q]: Do the Prasangikas and Svacittikas agree that self-production does not exist?

[A]: As far as a phenomenon not being self-produced is concerned, they both agree. But there is a big disagreement in the way they establish this. As I said, the Svacittikas want to add a few words; the Prasangikas do not. At a glance, you may not think it is such a big difference, but later on, you will see why the Prasangika view is exceptional. But then of course, you are studying Prasangika text, so you will not hear so much about the

*Studying the view of the Svetanrikas*

*We have been omitting the arguments among the Tibetan schools*

*Study is like a suit of armour and like endless wealth*

*As long as something goes against your ego's wish, it becomes a practice*

*We need meditation to isolate ego from distractions*

Svetanrikas, which is a shame! Ideally, after studying this text, you should study the *Madhyamika Alankara* (*dbu ma rgyan*) by Shantarakshita – let us see what he has to say!

[Q]: Can you say some more about the structural outline you are using?

[A]: I am using Gorampa's structural outline, but I am deleting all the arguments among the Tibetan schools. We have not even touched on these so far. You see, there are not only the arguments between the Prasangikas and Svetanrikas on how to define things, there is also a debate between Tsong Khapa and Gorampa and all the great Tibetan scholars on how to define the definitions! I have not even touched on these debates. The commentaries of Gorampa and Mipham are very similar, although Tsong Khapa has his own unique presentation. During the arguments about production from other, I might go through some of the Tibetan arguments, as they are very interesting, and not just a pile of words. But the approach also depends on the particular school. Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo and Jamyang Khyentse Chökyi Lodrö set up the Dzongsar school, and they mainly used the commentary by the Dzogchen Khenpo Zhenga, because it does not have any Tibetan fabrication.

The Madhyamika is a vast study. Over 200 different authors have written commentaries on the Madhyamika in Tibet alone. But do not think it is hopeless. It is possible for you to learn all this. It is a matter of interest. You can do it, if a person like me has the energy and interest to read a complicated novel like Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, with all those names in Russian, all those happenings and goings back and forth. This is much easier!



## **Combining study and practice**

Somebody asked me a question about how to combine study with practice. Study is like building a suit of armour. It will help you to develop a diamond-like devotion. You might later realise that your guru is a sadomasochist transvestite, but if you have diamond-like trust, you may not fall apart! Study is also important because it is like endless wealth. If you have great wealth, you can also give it to others. If you have studied well, it also benefits many people.

When it comes to practice, then you are bringing your emotions. Emotions know no logic, although sometimes they pretend that they know logic. Just look at our emotions – at a certain point in time, we like things using a particular logic, and then after a few years, we do not like them, but this time using a different logic! There is no established solid logic. When we are talking about practice, as long as something goes against your ego's wish, it becomes a practice. And for that, meditation is strongly stressed, because meditation, especially *shamatha*, isolates the ego from all its distractions. Isolation is the last thing that ego wants, because ego is fundamentally unhappy with its condition. Ego's very nature is insecurity: insecurity about its own identity and its own existence.

Therefore, ego always wants to have all sorts of excuses and distractions in which it can somehow take refuge, and for a time forget its own insecurity. You should try sitting still somewhere for a minute! Your hand will move towards a newspaper or to a remote control to switch on the television. Ego needs to be occupied, but the more you let it occupy itself with something, the more it settles down and becomes strong. So, we need meditation, which isolates ego from all these distractions. However, studies like this can also become a distraction. So, you have a guru. And if he tells you that your meditation is to drink 38 coca-colas a day, then you should do that! And the less you fabricate the better. Beyond that, I do not know, as I am not your spiritual master. You need to ask your spiritual master, individually.



## The importance of mind training

*Madhyamika should be taught together with lojong*

*Lojong is the essential Mahayana teaching. It shows us the futile aspect of samsara*

*The eight worldly dharmas*

*They are like armour for the ego, and we need to check if we are their victims*

*The story of Rinpoche handing out leaflets in Soho*

*Until your emotions are flexible, the Madhyamika will enter your head, but not sink into your heart*

When Madhyamika philosophy is taught, the teacher is supposed to remind the students about all the other types of mind training and *lojong* from time to time. A strict teacher like Khenpo Kunga Wangchuk would do this almost every day. He would teach *lojong* for 45 minutes, and then spend 45 minutes on the *Madhyamakavatara*. Unfortunately, we cannot do it that way here, as the situation is different. But I should remind you of this repeatedly.

Like guru yoga in the Vajrayana teaching, *lojong* is the essential teaching of all the Mahayana and all the Hinayana. Without this, there is no ground, because without *lojong*, one does not see the futile aspect of samsara. Until we see the futile aspect of samsara, we will remain victims of the eight worldly dharmas. And if you are victim of the eight worldly dharmas, then you are a weak person. The eight worldly dharmas are:

*Wanting to be praised  
Wanting to gain  
Wanting to be happy  
Wanting to be famous*

*Not wanting to be criticised  
Not wanting to lose  
Not wanting to be unhappy  
Not wanting to be ignored*

These eight worldly dharmas are like armour for the ego. Ego wishes to have four of them, and wishes to not have four of them. From time to time, it is important that we check whether we are, at this very moment, victims of one or all of these eight worldly dharmas. When I check myself, I am very much a victim of all of them. For example, if you want to receive some exotic, high-class Vajrayana teachings, all you have to do is praise me. Of all the eight, I think this is the biggest problem for me. So, we must check repeatedly whether we have fallen into this trap.

I will give you another example. I realised that when a person is victim of these eight worldly dharmas, they lose genuineness. For example, I realise that because of my position, I am always living a very pretentious life. I do not have the shame and embarrassment that I should have. But I do have the lack of inhibition! So, every move that I make, even blowing my nose, is an act to draw attention to myself.

When I was last in London, I wanted to check myself. So, I went to Soho, a red light district, and I came across a young man who was distributing leaflets in the street. These leaflets were for prostitutes, telephone sex and all that. Then I thought, well, I should try this. I went to him and asked if I could distribute them for him. He was surprised at first, and he looked at me for a while. But then he said that if I really wanted to, of course I could. He became very happy and left. So then, I distributed them. But every time I saw someone Japanese or Chinese who resembled a Tibetan, I hoped that they were not Tibetan. I worried that they might ask me, "Rinpoche, in what act for the benefit of sentient beings are you engaged?" Also, some people started asking me questions once they read the leaflets, such as what should they do next? I did not know anything, and said that everything is written down there. There was a garbage bin nearby, and many times, I was tempted to throw all the leaflets in there. But I did not do it, and I managed to distribute them all!

As I was saying, until we have a good *lojong*, our emotions will be very rigid. And until your emotions are flexible, or at least soft, this kind of Madhyamika philosophy might enter your intellectual head a little bit, but it will not sink into your heart. Your emotions will not accept

that things are not truly existent, that things are not logically existent. With this, let us return to the text.



[H10]

### (C) As determined in this text by means of logical reasoning (598)

We are now starting the third subcategory of explaining interdependent arising by means of the absence of any self in phenomena. The first two were how the Buddha explained it and how it is explained in the shastra. The third is how it is explained here in this text.

You need to understand a few things here. The Prasangikas are definitely not seeking to negate the process of birth in general. If you ask Chandrakirti whether his mother gave birth to him, he would say yes. The problem here is that theologians and theoreticians, from both buddhist and Hindu schools, have established so many views.

When we talk about truth, it is like a basic instinct that we have. Truth is something that we adopt, and what is not true, or fake, is something that we do not adopt. For example, we distinguish between genuine Italian leather – truth – and fake leather made in Thailand. We do this. You should also notice that without the imitation, there is no such thing as something genuine. If it were not for imitations, advertisers could not brag about how genuine their products are. But in the ordinary world distinctions such as fake and truth, genuine and imitation, are completely taken for granted. There is not much reasoning behind them. The decisions are mostly made by common or majority agreement, or by direct cognition, such as when you touch the fire and it has heat, so you decide that from now on it is hot. That is as far as it goes, and it does not go very far.

I am telling you this because the ideas of true and not true are the basis upon which we develop our philosophies, ethics, religions and everything else. For example, the Vedic religions have the idea that God is truth. Again, you can see here that the definition of truth is something that is not a fake. It is something that is unfabricated, something that has always been there whether you fabricate it or not, something independent from all causes and conditions. It is like the difference between magic and non-magic. For example, this tent is true; it is real, because it is not dependent on a magician. If a magician were somehow to display a magical tent, then it would be a fake. The magician would have created it, and it would be dependent on him. We would say that it was his idea, his trick.

So, many of these Vedic religions believe that God is truly existent. It is independent from causes and conditions; human beings do not fabricate it. It is not a fake; it is there all the time. And the rest is all *maya*, or illusion. This is what they believe.

I think that Christianity, Islam and Judaism must also talk about truth and non-truth, although they may not use this language. We can debate this, but I think that there must be a right and wrong way of doing things – ethics. Why is going to church every Sunday the right way? There must be a view, and as we go on, they will say things like it is because God is the only merciful one, and so on. If we ask why killing is bad, they will have another answer: because it is against this and against that. The distinction between truth and non-truth is always there. In other words, they are establishing a truly existent phenomenon.

The Vaibhashika school in buddhism has extensively defeated the idea or notion of God, and shown that it is a fabrication of whatever the religion. For the Vaibhashikas, only two smallest

*We distinguish between truth, like genuine Italian leather, and fake, like Thai imitations*

*The ideas of true and not true are the basis for all our philosophies and religions*

*Vedic religions believe that God truly exists, and the rest is illusion*

*All other religions also distinguish true from not true, i.e. establish a truly existent phenomenon*

*The Vaibhashikas refuted God, but they were refuted by the Cittamatrins, who said that only mind is truly existent*

*Chandrakirti does not believe anything is truly existent. He only accepts dependent arising*

things exist: a very small thing like an atom, and a very small particle of mind. This is why we call them Vaibhashika, which means ‘proponent of discrete entities’ (*bye brag smra ba*). The Sautrantika view is very similar, although there are some differences. The Cittamatra school has extensively defeated these ideas of the Vaibhashikas and Sautrantikas, and they conclude that only mind is truly existent. Everything else is just an illusion, made in Thailand. Mind is the only one that is genuine leather.

But Chandrakirti does not believe in genuine leather. Well, he believes in genuine leather, but not in truly existent genuine leather. He thinks that if it exists, then it has to have a birth. And if it is truly existent, then it has to come from self, other, both or neither. Since he will refute all of these possibilities when he examines them, he concludes that it cannot exist. So, if you ask him, well in that case what would you accept, he would say, “dependent arising”. Without genuine leather, there is no imitation leather. Without imitation leather, there is no genuine leather. Genuine is dependent on imitation, and imitation is dependent on genuine. This is his philosophy, so for him there is no such thing as a real cause.

Chandrakirti will proceed in three stages. He will explain dependent arising, in order to refute the four extremes of birth. Next, he will explain why everything is dependently arising. And then he will explain the benefit of understanding dependent arising.

[H11]

**(i) The use of reasoning to refute the four extreme theories of genesis (598)**

6:8.1-2     *Not created by itself, how can it be created by another?*  
                *Not created by both, what exists without a cause?*

[H12]

**(a) Explaining the truth of interdependent arising by refuting (the four extreme theories of) genesis (598)**

[H13]

The first two lines of the 8<sup>th</sup> sloka are a brief presentation of the four affirmations of Nagarjuna. The first of these, “*Not created by itself*”, will not be explained thoroughly in this text, but there is a good explanation in the ninth chapter of Shantideva’s *Bodhicharyavatara*. Here, our emphasis is on the second one, “*how can it be created by another*”, and our opponents will mostly be buddhist. The third and fourth affirmations are in the second line: “*Not created by both, what exists without a cause*”.

[H13]

**(ii) Detailed explanation of the reasoning (599)**

[H14]

**(a) Autogenesis (Self-Arising)**

Here our symbolic opponents are the Samkhya school, which was founded by Kapila, who is thought to have lived in the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC. It advocates a quite complicated dualistic vision of the universe, starting with the old question, what is the universe made of. It leads on to questions about the true self or, more accurately, telling the true self from that which appears to be self.

According to the Samkhyas, there are two basic categories in the universe: *purusha* and *prakriti*. They say that the history of the world is the history of these two fundamental constituents, which is quite different from *Upanishad* thought. From this simple dualism develops a very complex set of interrelations between *purusha*, which is like the spirit of atman, and *prakriti*, which is like the matter of original nature. The nature of *purusha* is spirit; it is many spirits. It is being, consciousness. It is limitless, untainted awareness.

*The Samkhya view: the two basic constituents are purusha and prakriti*

The three gunas: *rajas*, *tamas*, and *sattva*

Liberation is obtained at death, when the bonds between *purusha* and *prakriti* dissolve

The Samkhya view is known as the theory of existent effect – the cause contains the result

What exists cannot change, and what does not exist cannot be born – the pot is in the clay

The Samkhyas argue that the world is formed as *purusha* infuses *prakriti*, and thereby stimulates the three states of *prakriti*, which are called the three *gunas*. These are activity (*rajas* in Sanskrit), inactivity (*tamas*) and transparency (*sattva*). This is a very interesting theory – it is the highest Hindu philosophy. If you are not careful when explaining the Buddha nature, you might end up talking about something more like *purusha*.

The *gunas* interact and play different parts in the development of *prakriti*. As *prakriti* is activated, it becomes *buddhi*, or intellect, out of which individual egos evolve. Individuals often confuse their ego with their true self, and liberation can only happen when the true distinction is understood. The true liberation is obtained at death, when the bonds between *purusha* and *prakriti* are dissolved.

The Samkhya school also believes strongly in causation. This part is important. They argue for cause, effect and the indestructibility of matter. Scientists say something quite like this. It is known as the *theory of existent effect*, which means that the effect already exists in the cause of all things. So, in some mysterious way, the cause of something pre-exists its effect, although they are distinct. Consider a jar of clay, for example. The jar is the clay, but it is not the lump of clay.

The basic idea is that what already exists cannot change, and what is not existent cannot be born. This is a very good idea! What is there cannot be changed into something else, what is not there cannot be born. In a way, it is a dualistic view, and they accept that. They are saying that in that clay, the vase is already there. It is not as though it was clay before and then becomes, or changes into, a vase. They are saying that the pot is in the clay: the effect exists at the same time as the cause. I am sure that if I prepare for a few days and then take the side of the Samkhyas, most of you will end up fumbling with words as you try to attack me. The Samkhyas are a great school, not just a stupid bunch of people!

[Q]: What happens if the pot breaks?

[A]: Which pot? If you are making another pot with the broken clay, then the other pot already exists there. Cause and effect exist at the same time. It is known as the theory of the existent effect. Water has the effect of quenching our thirst. This effect is there, which is why we drink water. If it did not have the effect of quenching thirst, then no matter how much water we might drink, it would never quench our thirst. This logic is incredible!

[Q]: Is there a substance that is underneath all this?

[A]: Yes – *prakriti*, in its three states of *rajas*, *tamas* and *sattva*.

[Q]: But this makes no sense.

[A]: That is good! Because that is exactly what Chandrakirti is saying. You do not need to know everything about the Samkhya school here; all you need to know is that one of their essential theories is that the cause already contains the result. Their logic is that what is existent cannot be changed, and what is not existent cannot be born. So, within the clay, there must be a pot. If the pot does not already exist there, then it cannot be born. So, no matter how a potter might try to make a pot, he could never create one.

[Q]: If the effect already exists in the cause, we cannot speak of the theory of causality.

[A]: I am not defending them! We will come to all this shortly.

[H15]

**(i) Reasoning from the commentary (*Madhyamakavatara*)**

[H16]

**(a) Autogenesis refuted by suchness**

[H17]

**(i) Untenable consequences explicit in the opponent's statement**

I do not know how you are finding things like these syllogisms. You might think that we are learning new things here, but we are not. We are learning something that we have always done,

*Even in boiling an egg, there is a complete syllogism*

*We use syllogisms to prove something that cannot be directly cognised*

*If things are self-born, birth has no purpose, as they are already there*

*Shantideva refutes self-birth in the ninth chapter of the Bodhicharyavatara*

*The Samkhya cannot talk of 'potential', because they believe in things being truly existent*

[H18]

but in order to study a philosophy, we have to learn about our normal habits using words and categories. This is why you might find it difficult.

Even when a cook boils an egg, there is a complete syllogism and a complete inferential logic. If you have this much water, this much heat and this much fire in the stove, the egg will be cooked around this time. So now you might ask, why do we need to study this? We need to study this because we are trying to prove something that cannot be directly cognised, like the fire on the hill. That is not an object of direct cognition. But if you can see the smoke, then you can say that there must be fire. This is the syllogism, the inferential logic, and we have drawn conclusions this way for many centuries. It is similar in this case, when we talk about the refutation of ‘born from the self’, or autogenesis. However, the root text is very condensed, and you may find it hard to follow, so I will explain it briefly and then we should have a discussion.

**(a) Such genesis would be meaningless (Buddhapalita's refutation),  
6:8.3-4**

6:8.3-4     *There is no purpose in something already arisen arising again.  
What is already arisen cannot arise again.*

Chandrakirti starts to negate self-birth in the third line of the 8<sup>th</sup> sloka. The third and fourth lines of the 8<sup>th</sup> sloka are Buddhapalita’s refutation. He argues that if things are born from the self, then there is no purpose or benefit to the act of birth. The act of birth is not even necessary if things are born from the self, because they are already there. As we have seen, the Svatantrikas say that mental formations are not born from the self because they are existent. You can only have the idea of birth for something that does not already exist. There was no flower in your garden before, but now it is being born.

Do not think that this is complicated. It is very simple. If something is already there, then it cannot be produced, because it is already there. If something is born from the self, then there must already be a self there that is giving birth. And if the self is already there, then what is the point of being born? The whole purpose of so-called taking birth is that you do not have a child, so you produce a child. But here, the child is already there. If somebody walks into the tent and says she has come from the kitchen – that is our ordinary conception. But in this kind of analysis, she was already here. That coming from the kitchen does not exist. These are hidden simple aspects of life. They are very simple, but they usually remain hidden in our lives. The important thing to remember is that the Samkhya say the result is already there.

The Samkhya are saying that cause and effect have one essence, and that the cause contains the result. In the ninth chapter of the *Bodhicharyavatara*, Shantideva negates this argument, saying that in this case, when you eat rice, you must be eating shit (9:135.3-4). You might argue that there is a potential of shit there, and that this is what you are eating. But because the Samkhya believe in things being truly existent, they cannot use the word ‘potential’. They believe that *purusha* is truly existent, that *prakriti* is the wealth of the *purusha*, and that *purusha* enjoys the *prakriti*. *Purusha*, the atman, is truly and permanent existent, so they cannot even dream of talking about potential. Words like ‘potential’ belong to the dependent arising school, people like us.

**(b) No genesis would ever actually occur (Chandrakirti's refutation),  
6:9.1-2**

6:9.1-2     *If you truly believe something already created could recreate,  
Production such as germination could not occur in ordinary experience.*

If cause and effect have one essence, then seed must produce seed

[H17]

[H18]

External conditions like warmth and moisture cannot change a seed into a shoot, as then it would no longer be self-born

[H18]

If things are self-born, cause and result cannot be distinguished

[H18]

Objection: seed transforms into shoot, but they are not totally different entities

If things are self-born, their suchness must remain. It cannot be transformed

The first two lines of the 9<sup>th</sup> sloka are a new negation by Chandrakirti. The Samkhyas say that cause and effect have one essence, so they are saying that the seed comes from the seed, because they are one essence. This is another Prasangika method of attack. Since the Samkhyas believe things have the same essence, they are saying that seed is producing seed. In this case, there will never be a time with a shoot. The occurrence of shoot can never exist at all, because the time is totally occupied by the seed.

### (ii) Conflicting consequences implicit in the opponent's statement

#### (a) Such genesis would be endless, 6:9.3-4

6:9.3-4     *Or a seed would continue to recreate until the end of existence – What [sprout] would ever cause it to cease?*

The third line is very similar to the first two lines, but concentrating more on the seed. Here the Samkhyas will have the consequence that the seed will continue forever, so the shoot will not have a chance to arise. The fourth line is almost like an answer to a question, which is hidden here. The question, or objection, from the Samkhyas is that when a seed produces a shoot, the condition of the seed gradually changes because of things like water, earth, moisture and warmth and so the seed gradually becomes a shoot. Chandrakirti's answers: how can it destroy itself, because according to the Samkhyas, the causes and conditions are not separate from the shoot. If they are separate, their theory is that phenomena are other-born, not self-born.

#### (b) The nature of cause and effect would be mixed up, 6:10.1-2

6:10.1-2     *A sprout different from its instigating seed – with a distinct form, Colour, flavour, potency and ripening – could then not exist.*

The first and second lines of the 10<sup>th</sup> sloka say that for the Samkhyas who believe in the self-born, a consequence will be that the cause and the result will become mixed up. In other words, he is saying you could never differentiate between the seed and the shoot, in terms of their colour, flavour, potency or ripening, because they are the same.

#### (c) Cause and effect would be both different and the same, 6:10.3-11

6:10.3-4     *If the self-substance of the previous vanishes, As it assumes another nature, what remains of its suchness?*

The two next lines are saying something like this. When you make yoghurt, you start with milk. But when the milk becomes yoghurt, you cannot say that the yoghurt is a different entity from the milk. You will not find a shoot that is a totally different entity from a seed. Another example is enlightenment. When you attain enlightenment, we Vajrayana people say things like this person gets enlightenment, this Buddha nature becomes awakened. The result is already there; all you need to do is realise this. But because you do not realise this, you create a separation between cause and effect. And that is delusion, which in turn creates all this illusion. Chandrakirti's negation here is in the form of a question. He asks them: if the previous self-substance, such as the seed or milk, vanishes into another nature like yoghurt, then what remains of its reality or suchness? He is asking them, what remains of the thing that they call self-born? If something is self-born, then that same suchness must remain, but they have said that it is already transformed.

If seed and shoot are not different, you should see both of them together or neither of them

6:11     *If in ordinary experience seed is not different from sprout,  
You could have perception of neither seed nor sprout.  
And, if they were the same, when seeing the sprout,  
You should also see the seed. Thus, your thesis is unacceptable.*

If the seed is not different from the shoot, then the consequence for the Samkhyas is that in the same way that they cannot perceive the seed, they also will not see the shoot. Or because they are the same, then when they see the shoot, they should also see the seed. Now he negates self-born even in the relative, conventional truth.

[H16]

**(b) Autogenesis refuted by ordinary conventional experience, 6:12.1-2**

Cause and effect are separate in ordinary experience. This refutes the Samkhyas

6:12.1-2     *Because a result is seen upon disappearance of the cause,  
To say they are the same is not accepted even in ordinary experience.*

Even in the ordinary experiences, although the cause such as milk exhausts, we can still see the result like yoghurt. That's why even in ordinary experience, ordinary people would not say that cause and effect are one, because ordinary people would say that it was milk before and it has now become yoghurt. They would say that they are separate. This is why a thesis that believes in things being born from the self, such an imputation, cannot be accepted not only in the ultimate truth, but even in the conventional truth.

[H16]

**(c) Concluding summary of these two, 6:12.3-4**

6:12.3-4     *So-called creation from a self, when properly investigated  
Is impossible, in suchness as well as ordinary experience.*

[H15]

**(ii) Reasoning from the commentary (*Nagarjuna's Mulamadhyamakakarikas*), 6:13**

6:13     *If creation arises from a self, it follows that the created, the creator,  
The act and the agent all are the same.  
As these are not one, this ascertainment is impossible,  
As there will follow the shortcomings already extensively explained.*

In conclusion, the creator and the created must be the same, which is impossible

In conclusion, if one asserts that things are born from the self, then the one that is created, such as smoke or shoot, will become the same as the creator, like the fire or the seed. In addition, an act such as writing, and the agent, the writer, will also become the same. That is not possible, because there are so many shortcomings that we have already explained.



**Discussion on production from self (auto-genesis)**

So, we have gone through this briefly, and we will go back and discuss it a little more. But first, I would like to know where your difficulties are with this, or what you cannot accept. One of the

*The main problem with the Samkhyas is that they try to establish truly existent phenomena*

*Ordinary people are flexible and do not analyse, but they have no path*

*The Samkhyas believe in truly existent Atman, but we don't believe in truly existent emptiness*

*Bodhisattvas do not cling to any views, but we need to establish a view for ordinary people like us*

biggest problems here is that not knowing much about the Samkhyas, our opponent. So, please ask some questions.

[Q]: Can you summarise the problem with the Samkhyas?

[A]: What Chandrakirti is unhappy about is that they are trying to establish a truly existent phenomenon here, *purusha*, and a *prakriti* which is like self-born. So, because you say they are truly existent phenomena, he refutes them with several different arguments. For example, they say that things are born from the self. Birth means that you produce something that you do not already have. Otherwise, what is the point of producing? What is produced? And if you do not have it already, how can it be born from something you do not have? If you separate these two words – born and self – there is a contradiction. It is not only a contradiction; it is meaningless. And it is not only meaningless; it is useless, because it is already there. But there is a big danger here, because we are trying to make it sound very simple to attack the Samkhyas, and I do not want to do this. They are very tough people. Actually, all we need to do is delete the word truly existing, and what they say makes a lot of sense. For example, they are saying that the conch has a sound. And this is true. But where they went wrong is that they said it is truly existent. If you were to ask Chandrakirti “Where does the nice sound of the conch come from?”, then conventionally speaking, he would say it is dependent arising. Mouth depends on the conch, conch depends on mouth and sound depends on conch and mouth: dependent arising. But the Samkhyas want to create a god, *purusha*, which is a truly existent creator. That is where they went wrong.

[Q]: If we use ordinary conventional experience to refute the Samkhya argument, then why don't we accept other-arising as true, since this is accepted by ordinary conventional experience?

[A]: You will see when come to discuss the other-born. Today, our hero said that self-born is not accepted by ordinary people. But tomorrow, when we talk about other-born, he will say that ordinary people would say “I planted this tree”, “I planted this son in my wife's womb”: they do not accept the other-born. He will slip to the other side again! Ordinary people are like Madhyamika people: they are flexible, and they do not analyse. The only difference is that ordinary people just accept a certain reality, but the Madhyamikas analyse and find out that things are dependent arising. Ordinary people do not have a path, but the Madhyamikas have a path.

[Q]: I think we are misrepresenting the Samkhya position. We are analysing things that they say do not truly exist as if they truly exist. It seems to me that they are saying that Atman truly exists. When they say that all these phenomena are born from self, it is just a linguistic convention of theirs. What they mean is exactly what you mean. Things cannot actually be born from the self; they are an illusion. It seems as if they are born from the self, and it seems as if they have a separate nature, but in fact, they do not. They are all the Atman. So, we have separated their argument, and we are agreeing with them while also trying to show that they are absurd.

[A]: The only trouble here is the truly existing. They believe in truly existent Atman, whereas we do not believe in truly existent emptiness or dependent arising.

[Q]: But they say that atman is limitless. It has no beginning, so it was not born.

[A]: But that is self-contradictory. They cannot both say that atman truly exists and that it is limitless.

[Q]: Can you explain how they understand time?

[A]: They say that time is illusion; it is *maya*. They are only slightly different from buddhism, I think. In the Vajrayana, the Samkhyas are so highly praised that their view actually qualifies as a defilement that needs to be purified by the first initiation, the vase initiation. They are very high.

[Q]: Do the bodhisattvas have the view that we are trying to establish here?

[A]: A bodhisattva on the sixth bhumi does not have the three fetters, and because of that, he does not have the clinging to the view of the Samkhya school. But nor does he have clinging to the view of the Madhyamika school, because he does not have clinging to any view. But right now, we are establishing a view for ordinary people like us. We are gradually beginning to establish a view by negating the four corners of birth from self,

*Bodhisattvas do not believe in truly existent emptiness*

*Clinging to self is simply ignorance, but creating a theory about self is the worst kind of problem*

*Chandrakirti has gentle compassion to clinging to self, but is wrathful towards theories of self*

*The Samkhya view conflicts with ordinary experience: do you think you are purusha?*

*Showing that brain is mind, but mind is not brain*

*The view of science is always changing, but the reality of phenomena never changes*

other, both, and neither. Today we are starting by negating the first corner, which is self-born.

[Q]: But what about when we talk about the bodhisattva seeing the gift, the giver and the recipient all as empty?

[A]: That is totally different. The key here is truly existent. Bodhisattvas do not believe in truly existent emptiness. So, a bodhisattva understands the unity of these three by understanding that the three do not truly exist. This is why they cannot become one. For the Samkhyas, although they are also trying to say that they are all one, the difficulty is that they say they are based on truly existent *puruṣa* and *prakṛiti*. This is the problem.

I think that the theory of self-born is actually quite difficult to communicate. Most of the time, if we are students of a philosophy, science, technology or whatever, we are usually more oriented towards the other-born. The self-born theory is almost something religious. I do not think that scientists talk about self-born, do they? Scientists do not have this problem of truly existent, do they? Of course, they still cling to truly existent emotions, but they do not try say that these are theoretically established.

Let me give a simple example. I am. I have a clinging to a truly existent self. I am true. I am not like a rainbow; I feel pain when something hits me, I have emotions. Then I start a school, and after much analysis, I found that I am truly existent. That is a theory. It is the worst kind, because you already have your own share of problems, but now you are creating a new problem for yourself.

Chandrakirti has compassion towards the kind of ignorance like feeling ‘I am truly existent’. He has very gentle compassion, and he gives us a path for this – compassion, bodhicitta and so on. But if I have created an idea or ideology of ‘I’, he has a very wrathful compassion. He does not teach me compassion or give me any meditation instructions. First, he will use my own logic and defeat me. He will show that my establishment of this self is wrong. Ordinary people do not share the ideas of the Samkhyas. Do you think that you are *puruṣa*? No, you think you are John, or whatever. Scientists fall into this second category.

[Q]: But modern science is showing that the mind depends on the brain.

[A]: If you say that brain is mind, I will accept that. Buddha also said it. Brain is part of the *kamsum* (*khams gsum*), the three realms. Buddha said everything is mind, so brain has to be mind! But mind is not brain; there is a difference. There is a problem if you think that mind is brain. Let us suppose that the brain presently sitting in your head, and all its brain cells, are all in good condition. And then I show you six objects in front of your head. There is no sickness and no dysfunction, and there are six objects, so the brain has to perceive all six objects simultaneously. But the brain chooses not to see all of them, and that choice comes from habitual patterns. This demonstrates that mind is not brain (see discussion starting on p.240).

[Q]: The brain is a systemic organ. Science has shown that habitual patterns are created while young people are growing up, so what you are saying is not necessarily true.

[A]: All right. We will come to this during other-production anyway. Debating with scientists is so difficult, because they do not have an established view! They are always changing their view, every century, every year, even every time they have a conference! When the Buddha taught the reality of the phenomena, he said that even before the Buddha came to this earth, it was like this. And even after all the buddhas have gone, it will still be like this. Even if buddhas are teaching something completely wrong, reality will never change. We do not need conferences; we do not need discussions. It is there, it has been like this, it is going to be like this and it is like this right now.

[Q]: But who is there to say this?

[A]: Nobody has to be there to say this. That reality is simply dependent arising.

There is nothing exotic, colourful, or interestingly shaped – just dependent arising. That’s it. As long as there are some crazy scientists who think that they have found what is ‘smallest’, then the

*As soon as you try to express it, reality is deformed*

mind that thinks ‘this is the smallest’ is very much dependent on the object ‘smallest’. And the object ‘smallest’ is dependent on the crazy mind that decided that it is the smallest. And this is why at times you will find it said in buddhism that reality is inexpressible and unthinkable. That is not an excuse; it is the best answer. As soon as you try to express it, reality is deformed; it becomes paralysed, like a vegetable, as soon as we speak. But despite that, I would still tell you that reality is simply dependent arising.

I think this is an incredible finding. But the Samkhyas do not believe in dependent arising. They do not believe that *purusha* is dependent on anything. Ah! If only they would say that *purusha* is also dependent, then they would be accepting that it is not truly existent. From now on, it will help if you think that ‘dependent arising’ and ‘not truly existent’ mean the same thing. This is because to be truly existent, a phenomenon must be independent and unfabricated. Otherwise, it is dependent on something else, and hence it is dependently arising.

[Q]: Is there a relationship between the three qualities, the *gunas*, and the twelve links of interdependent origination?

[A]: I think so; it is just a different term.

[Q]: The Samkhyas believe that activities come from the imbalance of the three *gunas*.

[A]: All of this is fine.

[Q]: But there are always mental projections. If there were a complete equilibrium of the *gunas*, there would be no more mental projections, and so the experience of subject and object would be the same. Then there would be no consciousness of time, and it would be emptiness.

[A]: No, it is not emptiness. First, on what basis are they saying this? Is it on the relative level or on the ultimate level? It has to be on the ultimate level. An ultimate truth must not contradict relative truth; otherwise, it will not be ultimate truth. Also, what you have said contradicts relative truth; whereas Chandrakirti’s dependent arising is never in contradiction with relative truth. This is why I was talking about genuine Italian leather and fake Thai leather. Only with the artificial can you have the genuine. Here, it is as though you are trying to say that there is no artificial, and then trying to find the genuine. Impossible! Because the moment you delete the artificial, you are also deleting the genuine idea. There will not even be the concept of genuine if there is no artificial.

I think that when you study this, you should have a little training in the way you approach it, in your mentality or the way you think. From our previous discussions about the Samkhyas, two ways of thinking could cause difficulties for you:

The first is thinking that they are always wrong because they are Hindus. This is not true! Theirs is a great theory and, as Atisha said, unless you are a great scholar, you will have a hard time differentiating between buddhism and the Samkhyas.

The second is that not being skilful in interpreting the debate because your minds have developed so many attitudes. It is good for you to be open to the possibility that the Samkhyas could be right. But you will have a problem if your lack of skill in interpreting the debate, or interpreting it in your own way, leads you to think that Chandrakirti’s refutation did not really work. Our next opponents, the buddhist schools, are incredibly sharp, especially the Mahayana and the Cittamatrins. If you cannot follow Chandrakirti’s refutation of the Samkhyas, you will never understand the Madhyamika refutation of the other buddhist schools.

Earlier, we talked about the difference between truth and non-truth. This is one aspect of relative and ultimate truth, which we will come to later. We need to agree upon the definition of the word ultimate, for example, whether it has the connotation of being unchanging or independent or without analysis. Does English have a completely different language of philosophy? For example, how would you translate *döndampar drubpa* (*don dam par grub pa*), which we have been translating as ‘absolutely existent’?

*An ultimate truth must never contradict relative truth*

*Advice on helpful ways to think about the Madhyamika debates*

*Do not be dismissive of your opponent’s view*

*Do not let your own lack of skill in interpreting the debate let you think Chandrakirti failed*

*Defining the word “ultimate”*

Let us suppose you are watching a magician. Then you know that if he creates a flower out of nothing, it is a magical illusion. We say it is just magic, not reality. When you say that it is just magic, does it mean that any time a magician wishes to transform this flower into something else, it will become that something else?

This is one way to understand the debate with the Samkhyas. They believe that *purusha* and *prakriti* are truly or absolutely existent. But Chandrakirti does not believe that anything exists absolutely. Because, according to the Madhyamika, in order to exist, a phenomenon has to have a beginning, a remaining and an end. Do you accept that?

[Q]: That refers to relative existence, but for absolute existence, that is not necessary. In fact, it is contradictory.

[A]: Exactly. For a Madhyamika trained philosopher, existence means birth, death and remaining. That is automatic for them, as their minds are trained like that. But I do not know if that also happens with you. But then again, I have been trained in the study of Madhyamika for 17 years, but when I say that there is coffee existing in this cup, I am not thinking about birth and remaining. This I know.

[Q]: Among other things, my dictionary defines absolute to mean unrestricted, independent, like when we talk about an absolute monarch, and not relative. It also means unqualified, unconditional, and in philosophy, self-existent and conceivable without relation to other things. It can also mean ultimate, as in the case of absolute zero, because nothing can be colder than that.

[A]: Exactly, and that is our opponent here. Since we are Madhyamikas, we could still use that definition of absolute, because we are going to say to our opponents that we are using the word ‘absolute’ just for them. We do not need it. At the end of the sixth chapter, we will say that the burden of defining the ultimate truth is not ours. You said that something exists, so you need to define the ultimate truth. We did not say this. That is what the Madhyamikas will say.

In Tibetan, the same word is used for ‘absolutely existent’ and ‘truly existent’. Is this also the case in English? Until we come to some conclusions about the language, I do not think we will make much connection here. We should keep in mind the distinction between genuine leather and imitation.

But I am beginning to become a little lazy here. I should not define terms and then put them in your head. I should not brainwash you, in other words, when it comes to definitions. That is the worst way of teaching the Madhyamika! For example, when I ask you what you mean by “real”, you should come with a fresh innocent mind when you define things. You should not use any Dharma books for reference, or any philosophical terms.

[Q]: If we’re going to use the term ‘relative truth’ later on, I don’t think we can say that ‘truly existent’ means absolute truth. Otherwise we will have trouble with relative truth, as there is no reason to use the word ‘relative’ if we are using the word ‘true’ to mean absolute. You cannot have something that is relatively absolute!

[A]: Are you saying that relative truth is also truly existent?

[Q]: I am saying that if we are going to use ‘true’ as in ‘truly existent’ to mean the same as ‘absolute’, we will have a problem. We do not readily use these words in English, as we do not have a comparable philosophical project. So maybe it will be necessary for us to make some definitions, otherwise words like ‘existence’ and ‘truth’ have many different meanings depending on the context.

[A]: I will do it then, with your permission.

There is something important that you need to know here. As soon as we talk about existence, we are talking about birth, remaining and exhaustion. Then when we say *dön dampar drubpa*, which means absolutely existent, when we say ‘absolutely’, we are saying that something is unfabricated and independent. Nagarjuna argues that if something is dependent upon something

*The Madhyamikas will use their opponent’s definition of absolute*

*The Tibetan words for ‘absolutely’ and ‘truly’ existent are the same*

*If something depends on another thing, it cannot be absolute – a girl is her mother’s daughter, but not an absolute daughter*

*There is a contradiction between ‘absolutely’ and ‘existence’*

*If you do not like a definition, improve it – the Madhyamikas give this challenge to their opponents*

*The definition of ‘being’*

*A Christian perspective on being and existence*

else, then it cannot be absolute. For example, a girl is a daughter to her mother, but that is in reference to her mother. You cannot say that this girl is *absolutely* a daughter, because if she married someone, this person would also have to think of her as a daughter, rather than a wife.

You cannot really say that the absolute depends on your current reference point, because then you cannot really trust in the absolute. The whole purpose of creating an absolute truth is so that you can trust it. If genuine Italian leather changes every time it moves to a different shop, then when should we consider it genuine? We cannot say that it will be genuine at a certain street number, but that when it goes to the shop next door, it becomes a fake. It should not change; otherwise, it is not absolute.

In addition, it must be independent, because if it is dependent on something, then again it can change at any time. For example, the coffee in this cup is dependent on the cup. If I break the cup, the coffee will come out. Similarly, if the absolute truth is dependent on something, it can lose its quality. Therefore, it has to be independent.

[Q]: Rinpoche, It is very important to realise that when you are talking and using these words, you are giving them new meaning. Because when we talk about absolute or relative, in our western kinds of thought models, they are different.

[A]: Actually, this is not just only about Western thought, as I was saying before. When Jakob falls in love with his girlfriend, he thinks absolutely that she is beautiful. We all have these emotions, not only in the West.

[Q<sub>1</sub>]: The phenomenon of having or not having an absolutely true being is a different conversation from the one in Christianity, where things are said to be existent. In Christianity, things are not absolutely existent, because they have dependent existence.

[Q<sub>2</sub>]: As you have defined the terms, there is effectively a contradiction between the word ‘absolutely’ and the word ‘existent’

[A]: Exactly. There is no such thing as absolutely existent; this is what Chandrakirti wants to demonstrate. The Madhyamikas do not have such a thing as absolutely existent, so we have no problem. We do not have absolutely non-existent either.

[Q]: But Rinpoche, we have to be fair to our opponent, as if they were to accept your definition of existent, and your definition of absolutely existent, and we were to take two minutes, we could show them that they are completely incoherent. So, their camp must mean something different by these terms in order to prevent the definitions from collapsing from their own perspective.

[A]: That is your job! To defend the opponent is your job!

[Q]: But there has to be a definition!

[A]: Then create one! The Madhyamikas will always do this. They will say things like “things are classified into existence, non-existence, both and neither – come up with a fifth”. They do things this way. They will define something, and challenge you to come up with something outside their definition.

[Q]: There is a problem of vocabulary. There is a difference of meaning in English between the words ‘being’ and ‘existence’. The contradiction might not arise if you say that something has ‘absolute being’.

[A]: I see. What is the English definition of ‘being’, *chönyi* (*chos nyid*)?

[Q]: [Student reading from dictionary]: “Being is that by virtue of which something exists, that which underlies its existence. It is the base, the substrate. If something has no being, it cannot exist”.

[A]: That is fine. That just means absolute. We could always analyse whether this being has beginning end or middle.

[Q]: What about space?

[A]: Space is definitely existent.

[Q]: The interesting thing is, as we were saying before, that Christians say phenomena have being that is relatively dependent on the absolute existence of God. They exist by virtue of the being of God. But in practice, Christians do the same things as the Samkhyas. They regard things as having an absolute existence, although things are born, remain and end.

*Is ‘being’ a phenomenon?*

*The definition of ‘being’ is very similar to the word chö, or ‘dharma’*

*The definition of absolute truth: something unfabricated and independent*

*Does samsara have a beginning and an end?*

But during that time of birth, remaining and death, they consider that they are unchanging, and therefore substantial. So we have to define how the word ‘being’ differs from the word ‘existence’.

[A]: There is not much of a difference for me. Whether you call it ‘being’, ‘existence’ or something else, all it has to have is the three characteristics of beginning, end and middle. If it does not, then it is an interesting one!

[Q]: But there is no speculation about existence or non-existence. Every philosopher said that there is something underlying reality, what we are calling ‘being’. But being is not limited by time, so it does not have to have beginning, middle and end.

[A]: If being has no beginning, end and middle, is it a phenomenon in the first place?

[Q]: To a Christian, being is the divine in us. Existence is the way to go to the divine.

[A]: But that still does not help with our definition.

[Q]: Christians use ‘being’ as an ultimate term that cannot be analysed. If we try to analyse it in terms of this ‘absolutely’, we are not going to have any argument to disprove, because by its own definition, it goes beyond all argument and analysis.

[A]: What are we doing here? Some of us want to become enlightened, and some of us want to understand Madhyamika philosophy. In either case, you need to understand the truth. Dharma means ‘truth’, so coming to some conclusions about the truth is important. If you have even a little doubt left in a corner about being and non-being and all that, it could hold you back. In terms of what you just said, your definition of ‘being’ sounds like the truth itself. The word ‘being’ is very similar to the word *chö* (*chos*), which means ‘dharma’ in general. It is just an idea that we use to define other things, like the being of this conch, the being of a flower, and so on. Are you saying that you do not think in that way?

[Q]: Christians say that all being comes from God; whatever it is that makes it.

[A]: I think it is *chö*, and in that case, we have no problem here. But I will let you think about this as your homework. We will not make any conclusions here. Right now, in order to go through this text, I will define ‘absolute truth’ to mean something that is unfabricated and independent.

Chandrakirti classifies all things into four categories: right now, we are talking about the category of ‘existence’. Again, in our ordinary world, out of the four categories of existence, non-existence, both and neither, existence seems to be the biggest issue. From the identity card to enlightenment, it is all an issue of existence. For Chandrakirti, existence means that something has to have the three characteristics of birth, end and remaining. I think we can bring up one valuable doubt here. Is there another way of defining existence that does not have to have these three characteristics? This is quite difficult, and I would like to wish you a lot of luck! Because as soon as you say that something is remaining, that it is there, then it must have a beginning. And if it is not there, then why do you bring it up?

[Q]: What about samsara? We refer to it as having no beginning and no end.

[A]: That is just practice language. It is touchy-feely path language! It is like the chicken and egg. The chicken is first! Without a chicken there is no egg, but without the egg, we still have a chicken! Actually, when we talk about samsara having no beginning and no end, we are talking about the original beginning or birth of samsara. Of course, samsara has a beginning and an end; otherwise, samsara could not be impermanent. If samsara is permanent then we are really wasting time here! We should go and have fun instead! Studying Madhyamika and *pramana*, Buddhist logic, is very difficult. Students would often cry, and sometimes they would tear their books, as they did not understand. One day, one of my classmates said that this so-called next life had better be true; otherwise, he was really missing out on a lot!

Although there is no beginning in general to samsara, there is an end individually. But I am very sure that if you read all the buddhist texts from top to bottom, they would never say samsara exists absolutely, nor would they say that it does not exist absolutely. They would mention words like “existence”, just on the relative level of course!

*Saying ‘God exists’ is fine, but saying ‘God exists absolutely’ is a problem*

*Our fundamental fear is negating the notion of ‘I’*

*Buddha nature is beyond the four extremes*

*Chandrakirti’s method: absolutely, go beyond the four extremes; relatively, do not analyse*

If people want to say that God exists or *purusha* exists, that is fine. Chandrakirti will keep quiet. The problem arises when they say they exist truly or absolutely. Existence just means that something has a beginning, end and middle. If you say that Jesus Christ comes from somewhere, or that God came from somewhere in the beginning, then it is fine. Nobody will argue. But if you say they are absolutely existent, then that is a big problem, as that means they are independent and unfabricated.

This is exactly what Dominique was saying earlier, that ‘absolute’ and ‘existence’ are a contradiction. I think that if the Samkhyas said that *purusha* is absolute, and they did not say existence, I do not think Chandrakirti would mind. But they would not just say “*purusha* absolutely”, as it does not make sense! Many of the Madhyamika philosophers say that these religious people have a fundamental fear. Our fundamental fear, or insecurity, is that we find it so difficult to negate the notion of ‘I’. The great religions are wonderful when they talk about things like *gunas*, *sattvas*, *rajas* and *tamas*. Or like illusion and renunciation mind. But when it comes to the self, deep inside, then they change the name to things like *purusha*. This is what I was saying before. If you are not careful, then Buddha nature could fall into this category. You have to be very careful, and if you present Buddha nature, it must definitely go beyond the four extremes.

[Q]: But there is the notion of beyond existing and non-existing.

[A]: Yes, in the path, you can imagine that there is a beyond.

[Q]: And for some Christians, God is beyond.

[A]: Then there is no problem at all, if God is beyond the four extremes. It is just a name – God or Buddha nature – what difference is there?

[Q]: But God created heaven and earth, so you cannot say he is beyond.

[A]: I told you that you have to be careful when defining the Buddha nature! Not many people seem to realise this. I have read so many new books that talk about buddha nature and it makes me feel like I am travelling along some kind of cliff that has no support at all.

[Q]: What is the definition of Buddha nature?

[A]: Buddha nature has to be beyond the four extremes.

If God is beyond the four extremes, then there is no problem. Chandrakirti has no problem with anyone, as long as (a) absolutely, they accept that things are beyond the four extremes, and (b) relatively, things are left unanalysed. If you say that this is a tent, just leave it – do not analyse. That is the relative truth. This is a tent, that’s it; just accept that. As soon as you start to analyse, asking whether this part or that part is tent, then the tent will fall apart, because then you are approaching the ultimate.

This is his very beautiful idea. Absolutely, go beyond the four extremes, and do not analyse. Relatively, just do not analyse! That’s it.

If we return to the argument that there is no purpose of being born from the self, I hope it makes a little more sense now that we have talked about existence and the absolute. Just keep in mind the idea that absolute has two characteristics (unfabricated and independent) and existence has three characteristics (birth, end and remaining). Then you can read the text. The Samkhyas say that *purusha* exists. In that case, it has to come from somewhere, because it has to have a beginning, as it exists. So, where does it come from? The Samkhyas do not want to say that it comes from somewhere else, because *purusha* is their beloved and special one. But nor do they want it to be dependent on something else, so they say it comes from itself. If it comes from itself, what they are actually saying is that cause and effect are the same, in one essence.

Then, there are two main arguments here. One is that *purusha* should not exist, because only something that does not exist before can arise. If it exists already, then what is the point of its arising? Now, the Samkhyas cannot say that there are two *purushas* or hundreds of *purushas* for one being, because then *purusha* becomes impermanent. Then yesterday’s *purusha*, which enjoyed yesterday’s *gunas*, cannot enjoy today’s *gunas*.

By contrast, I do not think that the Christian God is self-born. I think it is in the other-arising department, because God created the world and phenomena. I do not know much about the Christian God, but I have a feeling that it is like the Cittamatra mind-only, and the Vaibhashika atom. The mind-only school says that the mind not only created, but it is creating all the time. Next, we will move on to other-arising, which is a very vast subject. It includes the category of Shiva and Brahma, and there I think we can easily include what has been said about the Christian God.

[Q]: What gives me a problem is how the Samkhyas understand the equilibrium of *gunas*. Normally, one says that with the equilibrium of the *gunas*, at that moment one has the cessation of mental projections, which corresponds to emptiness. If it is not emptiness, how are we to interpret this?

[A]: We have no problem with *gunas*; we have a problem with *purusha* and *prakriti*. The problem here is that right now our debate is about establishing the view. If *purusha* exists absolutely, and it works as you say, that is fine. But according to Chandrakirti, the absolute existence of *purusha* is in doubt.

I would like to say something to those of you are impatient with all the discussion. Sometimes, instead of me talking and taking for granted that you understand what I am saying, it is good for you to talk. Then I will know what you are thinking, and you will know what I am thinking.

*A summary of some of the consequences for the Samkhyas*

I hope that now you have a slightly better understanding of the debate with the Samkhyas. Do not think that these arguments are a repetition, because each of them is different. For those who believe that things are born from the self, there are many consequences. For example, it means that cause and results are the same because they are one essence. It also means that there is no purpose to birth; that what has already arisen cannot arise again; that a cause will last forever since it produces itself; and that a seed will never develop into a shoot. So, *purusha* will always remain as a cause.

If it is a seed and it produces itself, then it produces a seed, so there will never be a chance for a shoot. And if it is a shoot and it produces itself, it will produce a shoot and never produce a seed. You might say that a seed produces a shoot, which then produces a seed. But if the seed produces something else, it will have changed. This will interfere with the definition of absolute, namely that it is independent.

[Q]: You say that the cause and effect are the same. But the cause is the seed, and the shoot is the effect. If you say that the seed and the effect are the same, you cannot say that the seed is producing itself, because you also have the shoot. If the cause and effect are the same, it means the seed has produced a shoot, but it is the same.

[A]: But that is exactly what the Samkhyas are saying.

[Q]: If something has produced itself once, then it can produce itself again a second time, and a third time and a fourth time. There will be no end.

[A]: Yes that's it. There will be no place for something else. Whether it is seed or shoot does not matter. There will be a problem as long as something is produced by itself.

[Q]: What about the chicken and the egg?

[A]: The chicken and egg example does not work here. You might think that chicken produces egg and egg produces chicken. Ordinary people might think that is like self-arising, but we are talking about something slightly more complicated than that. If I produce a name for myself, it is not classed as self-production here, because when I produce a name, I am producing another different entity. I can always change it, and that is the end of my name and beginning of another name. But according to our opponents here, *purusha* is truly existent, which gives rise to a contradiction here. If it is truly existent, it must have birth, remaining and cessation (to be existent), and be unfabricated and independent (to be truly existent). So, if *purusha* is truly existent and it produces itself, the consequence is that it is always producing itself and can never produce something else.

[Q]: Do the Samkhyas accept that existence means birth, remaining and cessation?

*The chicken and the egg is not an example of self-arising*

*Chandrakirti presents the Samkhyas with definitions from their own texts*

*Based on your experience of 'reality', you have to find out how it really is*

*Chandrakirti does not mind people talking about the colour of sky-flowers; he calls it a fantasy*

[A]: They have to, as this is what they are saying. You can always try to come up with another definition. I have classified all phenomena into four categories – find a fifth. And I have come up with three characteristics for the definition of existence – find another! Or find another existent phenomenon that does not have these three.

[Q]: You will not find one in practice.

[A]: It is impossible. This is why the Madhyamikas say only their philosophy talks about the true nature of reality, both relatively and ultimately. They will produce a definition, and wait for you to produce another definition or find a phenomenon that does not fit this definition. We do not need the burden of knowing the Samkhya definition of existence. We can ask them, but even if we do not, eventually they will talk about it. They may use different language, or they may talk about it in a different order. It does not matter. As long as it has a beginning, middle and end – that is fine. And remember, the Prasangikas do not have any thesis. Defining existence as birth, remaining and exhaustion is not a thesis of the Madhyamika; it is a thesis accepted by their opponents.

[Q]: But you can only have a debate if both sides share the same understanding.

[A]: You have a complete right to represent the Samkhyas. I will only use a thesis that you accept, and then I will defeat you.

[Q]: Yes, but if you talk about your four extremes, that only works if the Samkhyas take 'existence' to mean the same thing as you do.

[A]: So what do you think they mean by existence? Come up with a definition!

[Q]: Do they agree with your definition?

[A]: They have to. They have no choice, as they said it! Chandrakirti does not have time to present all the Samkhya books, but he will design a certain frame, and say to his opponents – this is what you said. And, they did say it! That is the problem. It may be in Chandrakirti's words, but they said this. That is the irritating part!

[Q]: It seems that we do not all agree upon precisely what we mean when we define 'existence' as having a beginning, remaining and cessation. Without a proper definition, we just are taking it on faith. Since these concepts and ideas are not the same as ours, I think it is important that we struggle to get some kind of link between this very unfamiliar language and the language that we usually work with.

[A]: Yes. If you have a certain faith in another type of existence, please give us a definition now.

[Q]: Can you say that Chandrakirti is using that definition of existence because that is the way we proceed? As human beings, we would naturally assume that phenomena arise, remain and then disappear.

[A]: This is what we are saying here. The Madhyamikas claim that they are the best at classifying and defining phenomena. And they will not say anything that requires any invention of devotion and faith; they will just talk about how it is.

[Q]: You mean how we experience things as humans, not how it is?

[A]: They are not separate in reality. Based on your experience, you then have to find out how it is. That is relative truth and ultimate truth.

[Q]: But God can function and still be ultimate.

[A]: When you talk about 'function', you talk about beginning, end and middle. The moment you open your mouth about existence, you will talk like that. The problem is that you think it is not what you are saying. This is what we call the essence of a religion. You always believe something based on faith, and you will talk about things based on faith.

[Q]: Do the Madhyamikas accept the category of unconditioned phenomena like the Vaibhashikas? Like nirvana, for example?

[A]: Yes.

[Q]: Then that is another category of existing.

[A]: For the sake of argument, they classify phenomena into composite and non-composite. You just want to put the Samkhyas' *puruṣa* into the category of non-composite phenomena. But then it cannot produce. If you don't want to have the faults of the self-born that have been explained by Chandrakirti, then there are only three escapes: non-existence, both and neither. You will then have the problem that your *puruṣa*, or whatever you claim is self-produced, is useless. It is almost like talking about the colour of flowers that grow in the sky. You can talk about it poetically for as long as you want. That is fine. Chandrakirti

will not stop that; he will call it a fantasy. Actually, he calls all these theories something like the last leftover fantasies.

In any case, the self-born is not a big problem in our day-to-day life. It is only relevant in certain Vedic religions, those that believe in atman and all the rest. The real problem for us comes now: other-arising. Here seed and shoot are cause and effect. In other-arising, a seed produces a shoot, and they are different. As before, I will go through it first, and then explain in more detail afterwards.



[H14]

## (b) Genesis from other (600)

[H15]

Now, our principal opponents are the Vaibhashika, Sautrantika and Cittamatra schools, both while establishing the ultimate view and the relative view. In addition, even the Svatantrika-Madhyamika is our opponent while establishing the relative view, although not while establishing the ultimate truth. This is because the Svatantrika-Madhyamika has been greatly influenced by the Sautrantika and Cittamatra, which led to the two sub-schools of Sautrantika-Svatantrika-Madhyamika and the Yogachara-Svatantrika-Madhyamika. The Yogachara-Madhyamika is revered as a great school. Some people consider Shantideva to be a Yogachara Madhyamika because in chapter 5 of the *Bodhicharyavatara* he says:

5:5      *The hellish whips to torture living beings –  
Who has made them and to what intent?  
Who has forged this burning iron ground?  
Whence have all these demon women sprung?*

5:6.1-2    *All are but the offspring of the sinful mind.  
Thus the Mighty One has said.*

*The definition of 'other'*

This is an indication of influence from the Cittamatra, or mind-only, school. As I said earlier, when you study Madhyamika, you have to mean every word that you say. So, give me a definition of what you mean when you say ‘other’.

[Answers from students]: Not self, separate.

[A]: The Madhyamikas will be immediately happy when you say ‘separate’. But don’t you have any other definitions? You must have been using this word ‘other’ for all these years, and yet you still do not know what you mean?

[Q]: But it can mean many things in different contexts.

[A]: But I can always ask for the definition of a tree, and then I can ask for the definition of a sandalwood tree. Here I want to have a generic definition of ‘other’.

[Q]: That depends on your viewpoint

[A]: I cannot give you a viewpoint, as then it becomes particular!

*The Madhyamika definition of 'other': two things at the same time*

The Madhyamika definition of ‘other’ is very interesting; one of its aspects is that it has to be present at the same time. This is so good! The Madhyamikas are quite clever, and they will get increasingly irritating now. Even though, as Orgyen Tobgyal Rinpoche said, all this is a result of

Shantideva chewing the betel nut and sleeping, chewing the betel nut and sleeping in Nalanda University day after day.

[H15]

**(ii) Explanation of the refutation**

[H16]

**(a) Refutation of genesis from other (other-arising) from the point of view of the two truths**

[H17]

**(i) Refutation from an absolute standpoint**

[H18]

**(a) Exposing fallacious reasoning (601)**

[H19]

**(i) Exposing some extremely fallacious implications**

[H20]

**(a) Things could arise from things of a different type, 6:14.1-2**

*6:14.1-2    Were something to be created based on something other than itself,  
                You could have deep darkness arising from a flame.*

[H20]

**(b) Things would arise without any predictability**

[H21]

**(i) Refutation, 6:14.3-4**

*6:14.3-4    Anything could arise from anything,  
                As anything [that is] not the creating agent would be equally other.*

*For other-arising, a non-cause must also produce the result, as they are equally 'other'.*

Now the arguments have started. The two lines say that if a phenomenon comes from something other than itself, then darkness could come from fire, since they are ‘other’. The next two lines add that everything must come from everything. Even the non-cause must produce the result, because they are equally ‘other’. A tree should produce you, and a car should produce this tent. They are all separate, and here he is attacking the idea of separate, which is the word you chose! I did not do it!

[Q]: It is not our fault.

[A]: Yes, it is your fault! Here again, you need to keep in mind that Chandrakirti does not believe in absolutely existent other. For him, ‘other’ is just conventional language. You can use it whenever you want to, as long as you do not think about it, because as soon as you think about it, the quality of ‘other’ collapses. I can see what you are thinking – we also used to think that this is unfair!

[Q]: ‘Other’ usually applies to things of the same category. It also implies sameness.

[A]: Then there are big dangers. Then when I say that you and I are ‘other’, some people might misinterpret this to mean that you and I are the same. You are a philosopher here, so you have to speak very carefully, and mean what you say. Talking about things being in the same category is different. We can talk about a tree, a sandalwood tree and an oak tree; but when you talk in terms of categories, you are talking about different again.

[Q]: Could we define ‘other’ as distinguished by kind and number?

[A]: You will still fall into the fault of distinguishing something separate.

[Q]: Is the other taken as a mental projection of oneself only?

[A]: That is done in the Cittamatra school, which we will talk about later. That will drive you crazy. Do not bring mental projections yet! Right now, we are debating with the substantialists.

[H21]

## (ii) Disposing of objections to it

[H22]

### (a) The objection, 6:15

6:15     *[Objection:] Perfectly capable of being created [by other], it is certainly called the effect,*

*Capable of creating, although other, it is indeed the cause.*

*Contained within the same continuum and created by its creator,*

*It is not as if rice could sprout from barley.*

*The objection: other-arising can only occur for phenomena within the same continuum*

This is our opponent's objection to our refutation. At this point, we have only an embodiment of our opponent. We are just refuting the other-arising in general. Here, our opponent is saying is that although the cause and result are different, our consequence of everything coming from everything will not fall upon them. This is because only a cause that can produce such a result can be referred to as a cause of a particular thing. For example, it must be something that belongs to the same category, the same lineage or the same continuum. For example, when you plant rice, rice grows and not corn. When you plant a seed from one continuum, it will not grow into something from a completely different continuum.

[Q]: We are no longer talking about simultaneity because we are talking of a continuum.

[A]: No, this is our opponent's reply to us. He says that although the cause and result are separate, the fault of everything coming from everything will not occur, because only a cause that can produce the result is referred to as a cause.

[Q]: But something can only be other if it is simultaneous.

[A]: Yes, but that is what our opponent does not understand, just as you did not understand when I asked you for the definition of 'other'.

[H22]

### (b) The reply, 6:16

6:16     *[Reply:] Barley, lotus, the kimshuka flower, and so forth,  
Are neither regarded as creators of the rice sprout, nor as having that potential,*

*Nor being of the same continuum, nor as being similar –*

*In that same [fourfold] manner, a rice seed too is other.*

*The refutation: this is a circular argument, as the idea of 'other' is part of the idea of 'continuum'*

We talked earlier about the four different ways that the Prasangikas attack their opponents. The 16<sup>th</sup> sloka is saying that they have made a circular argument. Here, the thing that they are trying to prove, the thesis, is the same as the reason being used to prove it. They say that a corn seed does not have the potential to produce a result such as rice. Or in this case, barley, saffron and the kimshuka flower are also not in the same continuum as rice. The cause that is barley does not have the same continuum as the result of rice. They do not belong in one family. Therefore, we do not consider barley as a seed for rice. Likewise, a saffron seed does not have the potential to produce barley, because they are not in the same continuum or species. Why? Because they are different, they are separate. So, you see that the idea of 'continuum' has to include the idea of 'separate'. In other words, they are saying "things are separate because they are separate", which is a circular argument. Their objection has proved nothing, so they cannot eliminate the fault of everything coming from everything.

[Q]: Could you say that the rice seed has a special relationship to the rice shoot, as any other seeds do to other shoots, and the special relationship between the rice seed and rice shoot cannot be logically demonstrated.

[A]: You cannot say they are related, because according to you they are separate. If you ask Chandrakirti whether they are the same or different, he will say they are neither the same nor different. He hates theoreticians, as they always make decisions, and he hates making

*This is not just a debate about saffron and barley, but about relative and absolute truth*

*Ordinary people talk about other-arising, but without any analysis*

*Analytical meditation is the way to destroy our conventional thinking*

decisions! He hates saying things like “this is separate from that”. Instead, he says that ultimately everything is beyond the four extremes, and relatively, if you make these decisions, you will always fall into a fault. It is as simple as that. You should not hate him! Instead, you should love him, because he is supporting our ordinary view of worldly phenomena; he is supporting the way we think. It is very nice!

I want to emphasise something here. Do not think that Chandrakirti and these important philosophers are having a fight about saffron and barley! They are talking about relative truth and ultimate truth, about what is fake and genuine, absolute and non-absolute. For example, the Vaibhashikas say that when you look at this flower, you see a white flower. They say that this is relative truth. This imputation comes from all sorts of influences. What is really behind this flower? If you pluck the petals, remove the stalk and cut it into smaller and smaller pieces, eventually you will reach the ultimate constituent atoms that cannot be divided any further. They say that anything that can be dismantled by mind or matter is relative truth and anything that cannot be dismantled by mind and matter is ultimate truth. This smallest particle is the cause of all these outer phenomena, and it is truly existent. I think this is like science. Now we can see what other-arising means: the entire world comes from these atoms.

[Q]: But ordinary people use the word ‘other’ as well.

[A]: He says that when ordinary people talk about other, they do not really talk like theoreticians. If you are just an ordinary person, you will say, without any analytical mind, that the rice shoot comes from a seed. You could say that they are different, but farmers do not usually think like that, do they. Once you start to analyse, then you are no longer talking about the relative truth.

My advice is that when you say ‘other’, it has to mean ‘other’. When you say ‘same’, it has to mean ‘same’. Do not just take the meaning for granted. This is what is called analytical meditation. This is the way to destroy our conventional thinking. Normally when we say that something is true, we just take it for granted. We never think about the definition of true. But the scholars and *panditas* do not just sit like this; they analyse. And this is how they attain enlightenment.

The structural outline may not seem so useful during the teaching, but it is very useful when there is something to read. I hope that during these few years that we will study Madhyamika, that some of us can develop a commentary with a structural outline, so that in the future, people could use it as study material. Right now, I am using several of the *drelchen* (*'grel chen*), the great commentaries. In the future, if you have a chance, you should also use the so-called *tsikdrel* (*tshig 'grel*), which are a commentary on each word. That would really help you come together. Right now, it is rather scattered.

Going through the structural outline is another way of teaching. If you ask His Holiness the Dalai Lama to teach Madhyamika in three days, he will teach like this, going through the structural outline. And then he will finish, just like that. When we appoint a khenpo at Dzongsar Institute, we choose a subject for him to teach in public. He has no preparation, and he does not know what I am going to ask. If I ask him for the structural outline of the *Madhyamakavatara*, he will recite it point by point, as he knows the whole root text by heart.

I will now briefly go through where we are in the structural outline. Although I have already taught this material, I want to give you another idea of how you can study this. We are now going through the ‘*Explanation of the refutation*’ [H15 (ii)], the second sub-heading within the heading of ‘*Genesis from other*’ [H14 (b)] and there are three parts to this refutation:

- H16 (a) *Refutation of genesis from other from the points of view of the two truths*
- H16 (b) *The two benefits of these refutations*
- H16 (c) *Refutation of the Cittamatrin viewpoint that upholds genesis from other*

The third of these is important, because I sometimes feel that if we were somehow to delete all Chandrakirti's refutation, we would easily accept the Cittamatrin view. It is so good and so logical. Some scholars are not even sure that Chandrakirti managed to refute the Cittamatrins after all.

We are currently going through the first part of this refutation, '*Refutation of genesis from other (other-arising) from the points of view of the two truths*' [H16 (a)], which is divided into refuting other arising in the absolute and in the relative. The second of these, '*Disposing of objections based on ordinary experience*' [H18 (b)], is very important, because here we have to teach the two truths, relative truth and ultimate truth. However, we are now going through the first of these, '*Exposing fallacious reasoning*' [H18 (a)], as illustrated in the outline below:

[H14 (b)]	<i>Genesis from other</i>
[H15 (ii)]	<i>Explanation of the refutation</i>
[H16 (a)]	<i>Refutation of genesis from other from the points of view of the two truths</i>
[H17 (i)]	<i>Refutation from an absolute standpoint</i>
<b>We are here:</b>	<b>[H18 (a)] Exposing fallacious reasoning</b>
	[H18 (b)] <i>Disposing of objections based on ordinary experience</i>
	[H17 (ii)] <i>Refutation from a relative standpoint</i>

Within '*Exposing fallacious reasoning*' [H18 (a)], there are three sub-headings. We have just finished the first of these, and we are about to start the second:

[H18 (a)]	<i>Exposing fallacious reasoning</i>
[H19 (i)]	<i>Exposing some extremely fallacious implications</i>
[H20 (a)]	<i>Things could arise from things of a different type</i> [6:14.1-2]
[H20 (b)]	<i>Things would arise without any predictability</i>
[H21 (i)]	<i>The Refutation</i> [6:14.3-4]
[H21 (ii)]	<i>Disposing of objections to it</i>
[H22 (a)]	<i>The objection</i> [6:15]
<b>We have just finished:</b>	<b>[H22 (b)] The reply [6:16]</b>
[H19 (ii)]	<i>Refutation of genesis from other in terms of time</i>
[H19 (iii)]	<i>Refutation of genesis from other in terms of the fourfold classification</i>

Now that we have gone through the structural outline, let us return to the text.

- [H19] **(ii) Refutation of genesis from other in terms of time**
- [H20] **(a) If they do not coexist, a difference between cause and effect cannot be proved**
- [H21] **(i) Refutation, 6:17**

6:17     *Since the sprout and the seed do not exist simultaneously,  
There cannot be otherness. So how can the seed be other?  
Thus, as creation of sprout from seed is not established,  
Reject this premise of production from other.*

Here Chandrakirti is refuting other-arising by saying that if cause and effect exist at two different times then there is no such thing as 'other'. Isn't this so frustrating? If cause and effect exist at two different times, then there is no other. But if they exist at the same time, the effect is already there!

*Two things must coexist  
(i.e. at the same time) in  
order for them to be  
'other'*

*Chandrakirti accepts the idea of other in ordinary experience, but not when defined philosophically*

*The idea of ‘union’ is misunderstood in the Vajrayana*

*Since seed and shoot do not coexist, they cannot be said to be ‘other’*

In order to say that ‘this’ is other than ‘that’, then the two must exist together at the same time, because otherwise there is no point of reference. In order to establish the concept of other, you need one entity sitting on the right, the other on the left. You need to be able to refer to ‘this’ to be able to talk about something being ‘other than this’. Because the two entities must coexist together, you have to be concerned about time. For these philosophers, when they say ‘other’, it has to be other in terms of time and space.

Although Chandrakirti does not believe in other, this does not mean that he simply rejects the idea of other! He accepts that we talk about other in the relative truth. When we talk about other in ordinary life, we do not think about what we mean by that. We do not philosophically establish what makes a so-called other. But here our opponents are philosophers, and when they talk about other, they are saying that there is a truly existent cause, which is other than the result. So again, we always come back to the problem caused by the words ‘truly existent’.

Here, following the structural outline, we are saying that if two entities do not coexist, a difference between cause and effect cannot be proved. This is in two parts: the refutation, and disposing of objections that our opponents raise against our refutation. The first of these, the refutation itself, is explained in the 17<sup>th</sup> sloka

In this commentary, Maitreya and Upagupta are used as an analogy. But we can use Gérard and Ani Jimpa, or perhaps Raphaële today. This is very important, because even in the Vajrayana, many people have a misunderstanding about union. They talk about the union of yin and yang, female and male energies – this is rubbish! It is the degeneration of Buddhism. The aim of these people is entirely different you know!

According to Chandrakirti, if two things are both truly existent, they cannot unite. So, we have people like Gérard and Raphaële, who believe in unity and at the same time in diversity. They believe in diversity, as they believe in their own identity. Raphaële should dress like this in order to seduce Gérard, and Gérard should walk like that in order to seduce Raphaële. They do not do the same thing as each other; both have to have a different style. Yet, towards the end of the day, they believe in unity.

So this is why they exchange rings, get married, and try all sorts of ways to unite. But you can see that their relationship never works, because they are simply two different people. In Indian mythology, Shiva wanted to have unity with Uma so much that he actually cut his body in half and Uma’s body in half and pasted them together. You can see statues like this, which are half woman and half man.

This is very important, when proving that there is no such thing as other. If we have both Gérard and Ani Jimpa, then it is possible to talk in terms of other. Ani Jimpa is other than Gérard, she has certain attributes and Gérard has a certain passion for these attributes. And if there is no other Raphaële at that time, then there can be no jealousy of Raphaële when Gérard looks at such attributes of Ani Jimpa.

So, in order to establish ‘other’, two entities have to be on the same time. But this is not the case here, when we talk about cause and effect, because without the exhaustion of the seed, there is no shoot. This is why they are not other. And since they are not other, you cannot say that a cause such as the seed, is producing an ‘other’ result, such as the shoot. So, in the last line, Chandrakirti rather sarcastically advises his opponent to abandon this kind of thesis or idea.

## **(ii) Disposing of objections to it**

The second point, disposing of objections, also has two parts: the objection, and the refutation. The first part comes in the first three lines of the 18<sup>th</sup> sloka.

**(a) An objection raised in other texts, 6:18.1-3**

6:18 [O:] Like the arms of a pair of scales,  
Rising and descending simultaneously,  
Creation arises as the creator ceases.

*Objection: ceasing of the cause and arising of the effect are simultaneous, like the arms of a pair of scales*

In the *shedra*, our khenpos would not refer to our opponent as ‘opponent’; they would say ‘our object of compassion’. They have all kinds of sarcastic terms like this! Here, our object of compassion is talking about a pair of scales. When you measure something, the rising of one side and the descending of the other side come together at the same time. Likewise, when a cause leads to an effect, the exhaustion of the cause and arising of the result come at the same time, like the arms of a pair of scales. This is a very nice example to illustrate their view of how cause and effect works. The refutation to this objection is in the last line of the 18<sup>th</sup> sloka and the whole of the 19<sup>th</sup>.

**(b) Explanation of how this objection is countered, 6:18.4-19**

6:18.4 [A:] If simultaneous, but this is not the case.

6:19 When arising, still in the process of production, it is non-existent.  
When ceasing, although in the process of disintegration, it still exists.  
How does this compare to the movement of a pair of scales?  
And with no agent of creation, this makes no sense at all.

*Refutation: the arms of the scales coexist; the seed and shoot do not*

*To say that something is ‘arising’, it must already be arisen, so the arising must have finished*

Now, Chandrakirti is saying that the example does not work. He agrees that the arms of the scale coexist at the same time. And the right and left sides are two different things. Yes, that is also fine. But the seed and the shoot do not coexist at the same time, so this is not a valid example. He will now explain that.

The example would work if they are simultaneous, but this is not the case here. A shoot that is arising is already in the direction or state of ‘arisen’. To say that a shoot is arising, you need to be able to see it growing now, so it is already in the state of ‘grown’. But if it has arisen, then you can no longer say that it is still arising. Chandrakirti is saying that as soon as you see the shoot, and as soon as we can say it is ‘arising’, then it has already ‘arisen’. Therefore, the arising has already finished – you cannot say that the arising still exists! What do you think? Can you show me one state of truly existent arising? Nobody is stopping you!

[Q]: When you say that something is in the process of being born, the existence of that something is already necessary, because we are referring to a finished product. So that ‘is being born’ is a logical absurdity. It is just empty words.

[A]: Yes that is exactly what Chandrakirti is trying to tell them, that their idea of other-arising is just an empty word.

[Q]: It is ridiculous

[A]: Yes, it is ridiculous, but it is not what Chandrakirti is saying that is ridiculous. It is what our object of compassion is saying. Why don’t you take their side, and give me just one single worthwhile arising state.

[Q]: But everything is dependent arising.

[A]: Yes, please tell our opponent, do not tell me! Our opponent will say, but you Madhyamika people talk about dependent arising? When you say dependent arising, don’t you have to think about two things to depend on each other? But, like Nagarjuna, we will not have that kind of fault, because we do not believe in truly existent dependent arising.

[Q]: When we say that something is in the process of something, such as going somewhere or doing something, then we are referring to an end, with which we are acquainted. And we

*The Madhyamikas believe in dependent arising, but not in truly existent dependent arising*

*We only differentiate between cause and effect out of emotional habit*

*The arising of the shoot cannot coexist with the exhausting of the seed*

*A seed is still a seed until it has exhausted, but a shoot is not a shoot until it has arisen*

*The example of the pair of scales comes from the Rice Seedling Sutra*

can see that using the words “being in the process of arising” is a state attained, we do not think of anything more than that.

[A]: That is fine, if you are talking about ordinary experience, as long as you do not analyse any further, and do not add analytical words like ‘this is truly existent’. If you are frustrated with this, what would happen if you read Nagarjuna’s *Mulamadhyamaka-karikas*? It contains a whole chapter on going and coming, where he analyses what is going and what is coming.

Similarly, when we speak of a cause that is extinguished or exhausted, what is exhausting is not yet exhausted. You can only say that it is exhausted when it no longer exists. So, if it is exhausting, it still exists. So, how can you say that cause and effect are the same as a pair of scales? Equally, you cannot say that although the seed and shoot do not necessarily coexist at the same time, their actions of exhausting and arising can coexist at the same time. You cannot say that, but this is the how we think!

This is just bothering our conventional emotional habits, that’s all! All this is emotional thinking. We differentiate between cause and effect, and between the action of cause and action of result. And although we think that cause and effect are not there together at the same time, we think that the action of the cause, such as exhaustion and arising, can be together at the same time. This how we normally think, and this is why our opponents think that it is a good reason to prove other-arising.

Why is this impossible? It is because you cannot have an action that does not have a subject to act upon. Film schools would really like to hear this, because this is how they present the cinema. They show you the action, and this is how they trick you into thinking there is a character. Action is the character, they always say. There is no such thing as an action without a subject. Therefore, there is no such thing as cause and effect, despite the fact that this is how we normally think.

We are saying that the act of arising of the shoot cannot exist while the act of exhausting of the cause is going on. To have an arising of a shoot, there has to be a shoot. Only then can you say that there is an arising of a shoot. But our opponents are saying that there is no shoot at that time, only the arising of the shoot. Likewise, when a seed is exhausting, the very act of the seed’s exhausting cannot exist during the arising of a shoot. If you have the exhausting of a seed, then the seed must still be there. And if there is still a seed, then there cannot be a shoot yet, because our opponents say that seed and shoot are ‘other’. But if there is no shoot yet, then we cannot say that the shoot is ‘arising’, because for it to be arising, it must already be arisen, as we have seen. During Chandrakirti’s time in Nalanda, he debated so much in this manner that they wanted to beat him up!

What he is saying is that an act of arising cannot exist during an exhaustion of a seed. It is very difficult to translate. If an ordinary Tibetan were to read this in Tibetan, they would not know what is going on, because it says something like “*When ceasing, although in the process of disintegration, it still exists, because it is ceasing*”. Perhaps we could say that a seed that is in the process of cessation is still a seed, so there is a seed until it has ceased. But for a shoot that is in the process of arising, there is no shoot there until it has arisen.

As the structural outline indicates, our opponent’s example of the scale was not just made up by him. It actually comes from the *Rice Seedling Sutra*, which was probably the first sutra that was translated into Chinese. Supposedly, this sutra inspired the great traveller Huang Tsang. It is a beautiful sutra about cause and effect. Even the king of Tibet sent a messenger to find out about this sutra, and it became a very interesting subject. In the *Rice Seedling Sutra*, the Buddha said that one side of the scale rises as the other side descends. Likewise, as the cause exhausts, the shoot arises. The Buddha said this, which is why our opponent has brought up this subject.

*The Rice Seedling Sutra talks about dependent arising, not about other-arising*

*If cause and effect coexist, there is no arising. If they do not, there is no 'other'*

*Objection: the eye consciousness and its object coexist, but they are 'other'*

*Refutation: if object and consciousness are truly existent other, then what is the purpose of seeing?*

*If the effect does not exist, then why look?*

There are two answers for that. First, this quotation is not *nge dön*, a quotation from a sutra of certain meaning. This sutra needs interpretation. But this becomes difficult now, because there is a whole argument about which sutra needs interpretation, and which sutra does not. For example, in some sutras the Buddha says something like the hell realm is beneath the earth, but in other sutras, he says that hell is a state of mind. However, this is another subject of study, so we will not spend time on it here. But even if the *Rice Seedling Sutra* did not require interpretation it has to be understood in the following way. The sutra is not aiming to establish other-arising. Nor is it interested in established a truly existent arising. It is talking about dependent arising, with the seed depending on the shoot and the shoot depending on the seed. That is all it is talking about, and comparing it to the way that in any given moment, the ascending of one side of the pair of scales depends on the descending of the other.

In conclusion, there is no other if cause and effect are in two different times. And there is no arising if they are in the same time. With that, we have finished with the refutation of genesis from other in terms of time.

### **(b) If they do coexist, cause cannot be said to give rise to effect, 6:20**

6:20     *[O:] Eye consciousness existing simultaneously with its creators:  
Eye and [form] along with consciousness and [perception],  
[Does indeed] exist as other. [A:] Then what is the need for the arising of the  
already existent?  
[O:] It is not yet existent. [A:] In that case, the defects have already been  
explained.*

Now we are talking about the same time. Now the opponent is saying, fine, you win on the subject of two different times. But things that exist at the same time can definitely have a cause and effect relationship. In general, it is too complicated to prove that things like cause and effect exist at the same time. But things like an eye-consciousness and the object of vision exist at the same time. Likewise, feeling/touching exists at the same time as the object felt. In addition, the tree that I am looking at, my idea of the tree, and my eye are separate. They are different. So, these kinds of cause and effect coexist at the same time, but the idea of the tree in my mind (the effect) comes from the tree out there (the cause). As you can see, here they are still trying to prove that there is other-arising.

Both the objection and its refutation are together in the 20<sup>th</sup> sloka; they are almost hidden together in just one sloka. Again, the argument here is tricky, so listen carefully!

According to our opponent, the cause of the eye perception, such as the tree, is there at the same time as its effect, which is the eye perception. But if the tree is separate from the eye consciousness and the understanding of the tree, then the eye consciousness and the understanding of the tree must already exist. And if it already exists, then why look? Why watch? Why go around and have a sightseeing tour around a beautiful place, because the result, the eye consciousness, already exists! The problem arises when they say it is truly existent. If they did not accept a truly existent other cause, then even scientists would be fine!

The outer object is only an example. He used the eye first, then the ear, nose, tongue, body and then the mind. It also applies to the inner object. Try to imagine a state of mind that does not think, and that does not have an object, whether it is a solid object outside or a mental fantasy. This discussion is getting a little bit high, Dzogchen and all that, which I am not going to explain here.

As long as the opponent is saying that the result is separate from the object but exists at the same time, then why look or listen? The object is already there, whether it exists outside or inside. So,

to get around this refutation, now our opponent changes his argument and says, fine, the effect does not exist yet. In reply, Chandrakirti again says, why look? There is no point looking at the cause, because you have just said that the effect does not exist!

[Q]: Are you speaking in terms of time or space?

[A]: Both. Chandrakirti does not care about time or space. All he wants to do is defeat the notion of truly existent arising. In this case, we are talking about simultaneous existence, so we are speaking in terms of time. If the effect exists simultaneously with the cause, you do not have to look – it is already there.

[Q]: Can you explain further, why we do not need to look at the object?

[A]: We do not need to look at the object because the result of our looking is already there. Our opponents have said that cause and effect are simultaneous. These arguments are very simple, and although we may think that all this should be complicated, it is not! This is why I told you earlier that the Buddha is so compassionate. Reality is very simple, but we make it difficult. So, he has to surrender to us and make the path difficult! You asked for it, you know!

[H19]

### **(iii) Refutation of genesis from other in terms of the fourfold classification, 6:21**

6:21     *If a creator is the cause of creating something other,  
Is [the effect] existent? Non-existent? Or both? Or neither?  
If existent, why a producer. If non-existent, what is created?  
If both, or neither, what could create it?*

In the structural outline, we now come to the third subcategory within ‘*exposing fallacious reasoning*’. The first two were ‘*exposing some extremely fallacious implications*’, and ‘*refutation of genesis from other in terms of time*’. The third refutation is in terms of the fourfold classification of other-arising. This comes almost directly from the *Mulamadhyamaka-karikas*, and it is quite easy to understand.

This sloka is almost like a conclusion of this particular subject. Chandrakirti first restates our opponent’s position: there is a so-called cause, and it produces a result that is ‘other’ than this cause. For example, an Atman, a god or an atom is the cause that produces other *mayas*, other illusions. If this is what they are saying, then Chandrakirti asks them four questions.

Firstly, does this cause have a result? This is a very fundamental logic of their position. First comes God the creator, and then comes the creation. Indirectly, we are saying that it is almost thanks to the creation that God can be referred to as the creator of this creation. This is not a stupid question because until something has a result it cannot be a cause. Until somebody has a son, he does not become a father. This is why we are asking whether the cause has a result. If it does, then why produce? It already has a result!

If it does not, then what is being caused? Why is it referred to as a cause? If the result is both existent and non-existent, then both faults will occur. And if it is neither, then you cannot have a result. If there is no existence and no non-existence, then there is no such thing as the negation of existence and non-existence either. So, why do you worry about something producing something?

In the *400 Stanzas on Madhyamika* by Aryadeva, it says “*Those who believe that there is a result, and also those who do not believe in a result, equally I don’t see any reason why there should be any decorations in their house*”. This is a very smart statement! If you believe that cause is other than the effect, then decorating your house does not change anything. Of course, in the conventional truth, you can decorate your house, because you do not think in that way.

*A cause cannot be called a cause until it has a result. If a result exists, then why produce?*

*Is the result existent, non-existent, both, or neither?*

*What is the point in decorating your house?*

*By not analysing, the cowherd does not create unnecessary defilements*

*Chandrakirti has no philosophical views, like the Buddha*

*You should study the Madhyamika view, but at the end of your studies, you should get rid of all views*

But here we are establishing the view, and we are refuting our opponent's belief in is a truly existent cause. We cannot bring our conventional thinking here because it will not work here. This is establishing the view, and when you say that something exists, you have to mean it.

[Q]: So we should not talk about cause and effect?

[A]: Not while we are talking about the ultimate, nor during the relative truth. It does not exist in the relative truth, because relatively people do not think like that. In the relative truth, a farmer plants rice, it grows, and then he harvests it at harvest time. That's it! They do not think so much. In India, a cowherd is considered the worst and most stupid, but Chandrakirti places them above the Cittamatra school. He does this because he says that the Cittamatra school have unnecessary and ridiculous defilements that they have created by theory, which the cowherd does not have.

[Q]: This is because the cowherd does not seek a justification for relative truth, and that is the error of the philosophical schools. The cowherd does not seek absolute justification of his relative view.

[A]: That is right. The only time he seeks justification is with his wife, when the cows are out of the boundary or something.

[Q]: Chandrakirti is criticising his opponents precisely because they take the whole process of causality and elevate it into some kind of theory, but they do not make a distinction between relative and absolute truth.

[A]: Chandrakirti is always bragging that the Prasangikas are the only ones who really talk about causality, the relationship between cause and effect. I think it is true. If you want to be non-religious and a non-philosopher, then this is what you should study. Chandrakirti does not believe in philosophy. His belief is: in the ultimate truth, go beyond four extremes. In the relative truth, do not analyse. That's it!

[Q]: Is the aim of his view to abandon all philosophical views?

[A]: Yes. "*I prostrate myself in front of Gautama who has rejected all opinions*". The Buddha had no opinions. He was considered a revolutionary in India, because until he came, everyone had an opinion. And in addition, he broke the rule of caste, *savadharma*, because he was born a *kshatriya*, a warrior, but he decided to become a Brahmin. And it worked for him. By contrast, the other Hindus said that only Brahmins can be Brahmins, and warriors can only perform warriors' duties. But he decided that he could do it. Mahavira, the founder of the Jain school, was another revolutionary, another incredible man. However, from the buddhist point of view, the Jains are eternalists.

In some of the big buddhist schools in Tibet, they have slogans like "*I pay homage to Gautama who has rejected all views*" written right on top of the door, right as you enter the main shrine. They talk about how the monks should study the Madhyamika view, Chandrakirti, buddhist *pramana* and all of that. But at the end, it says that after all of these studies, you should get rid of all of them.

[Q]: There is no need to say that just because one should not analyse on the relative level that one should not be discerning?

[A]: That is not this kind of analysis. For clarity, I should say philosophical analysis.

[Q]: Didn't you analyse when you decided to follow buddhism?

[A]: Yes, I analysed and I thought Vajrayana is best. My mind is always analysing something! Some of you requested a Manjushri initiation, but I have not been able to make the necessary arrangements. Instead, I will read the text *Manjushri Nama Sangiti*, which is like a *Song of the Names of Manjushri*. This is praised as the root of all the tantras. It is like the buddhist *Bhagavat Gita*. As I read, you should pray to be born as Manjushri's assistant, as his disciple, when he attains enlightenment. He is supposedly the last buddha that will be enlightened during this kalpa. It is also said that he was the first buddha of this kalpa. We never know what they are saying! I think he has been enlightened several times! At one point when he attained enlightenment, his form was with a black body and white face and he only benefited the *nagas*.

[H18]

## (b) Disposing of objections based on ordinary experience

Returning to the structural outline, we have finished ‘*exposing fallacious reasoning*’, which we started with the 14<sup>th</sup> sloka. That was the first type of refutation of genesis of other from the absolute standpoint, and we now come to the second, which is ‘*disposing of objections based on ordinary experience*’.

Here our opponents are becoming clever, saying that they are going to become consequentialists as well. They remind us that we say we are Madhyamikas who accept the ordinary point of view. But now they are telling us that we are contradicting ordinary experience, because ordinary people accept other-arising. There are also two subcategories here: explanation of the objection and refutation of the objection.

[H19]

### (i) As expressed in other texts, 6:22

6:22 [O:] *Whoever holds a normal viewpoint, accepts ordinary experience as valid,  
What is the need here for analytical view?  
Creation from other is commonly accepted.  
Therefore, creation from other exist. What need for reasoning?*

When our opponents say, “Whoever holds a normal viewpoint”, they are referring to ordinary people who are not trying to follow philosophical logic. They have their own normal viewpoint such as ‘this is vase, this is tree, this is house’, and so on. Based on that kind of viewpoint they try to obtain what they want and get rid of what they do not want. And somehow, it works. If, without any philosophical logic, they think that this is a tent, then they can go inside this tent and obtain the benefit of sitting inside it.

*Objection: the  
Prasangikas negate  
ordinary experience, but  
they claim to accept it*

Now you, Chandrakirti, said you are a philosopher who accepts ordinary experience. So, why are you giving us all this logic to negate other-arising? In fact, what is the point for us substantialists to prove for you that other-arising exists? Because even without any logical reasoning, ordinary people already accept other-arising. So we do not have to work hard to prove to you, Chandrakirti, that other-arising exists. And as for all those negations you have created in the past, you will be contradicted by ordinary experience. Chandrakirti’s refutation of this objection has three subcategories, which will connect us until we meet again in 1998.

[H19]

### (ii) Explanation of the reasoning used to counter the objection

[H20]

#### (a) The validity of ordinary experience refuted by differentiation into the two truths and their subdivisions (603)

*Refutation: Chandrakirti  
accepts ordinary  
experience, but does not  
say it is valid*

*A truly existent dream  
about a million dollars*

Firstly, Chandrakirti did not say that ordinary experience is valid; he just said that he would accept it. There is an important difference! He merely accepts it. For example, he accepts that there is a dream, and he knows that you can wake up from this dream if you try. The problem arises if you say that any of this is truly existent when you wake up. Let us suppose that in your dream, you saw a million dollars in your bag, but they are not there in your bag when you wake up. If you say that there is a truly existent disappearance or absence of the million dollars, then you must have those million dollars when you wake up, because only then can they become absent.

All Chandrakirti will say is that, yes, he had a dream of a million dollars, and then he woke up. Therefore, if you ask him about the absence of the million dollars in the ultimate state, the awakened state, he cannot say it exists, he cannot say it does not exist, he cannot say it is both, he

cannot say it is neither. And during the dreaming state, again he cannot say that it exists, does not exist, both or neither, because you do not analyse like that while you are dreaming.

The three subcategories in Chandrakirti's refutation are:

- First, Chandrakirti negates the validity of ordinary experience. He does not negate ordinary experience, only its validity. He then explains the two truths.
- Second, he will show that ordinary people do not contradict the Madhyamikas. The Madhyamikas do not believe in a truly existent disappearance of a million dollars, so someone who just woke from the dream will not come and ask them where the money has gone. In fact, because the Madhyamikas accept that it was just a dream, and they do not have any opinions about it, the dreamer will become a good friend with the Madhyamikas.
- Third, he will identify the real victims of contradiction by ordinary experience. And that is our opponent who has been telling us that we are contradicted. He will tell them that they will have a contradiction with ordinary experience because they believe there is a truly existence disappearance of a million dollars.

Now that we have set out the three categories, I think that this is a good place to stop for this year. In the time that remains, I will say a few words about the two truths.



## A brief introduction to the two truths

*The Madhyamikas define the two truths from the subject's point of view*

*If the person who looks is somehow defective, he will see relative truth. The problem is if he thinks it is the ultimate*

*All emotions, including the 'good' ones, give rise to a defective subject*

*Path is the ultimate delusion*

*But if we see relative truth as relative truth, the path works very well*

As you will realise next time, the Madhyamika way of defining the two truths is very much from the subject's point of view. It is very important to realise that when we talk about two truths, we are not talking about two separate entities. We are talking about two separate ways of looking at it: one with a deceptive or defective subject, and one without. This kind of defect is a bit like the way that if you have jaundice, you will see white things as being yellow.

Likewise, even in our mind, there may be many defects, such as anger. If you have anger, then there is a defect in your subject. Then the object that you see through this anger is relative truth. It is important to note that the problem is not that you are seeing relative truth. The problem is that you see the relative truth and think that it is the ultimate truth. That is the biggest problem that we have. If you see relative truth and think that it is relative truth, then that is good!

Let us suppose that you have an emotion such as anger, and you see someone nasty. If you think you are seeing someone nasty out of your anger – ah! – Then you are a small-time meditator. Strictly speaking, even things like devotion and compassion, which we praise so much, are defects. I am sorry to say this, but they are defects! This is why Dharmakirti said, “*Path is the ultimate delusion*”. Nevertheless, based on the philosophy that you accept relative truth as relative truth, it can still be a path. But if you think that the relative truth is the ultimate truth, then everything becomes a hindrance.

Based on the philosophy of seeing relative truth as the relative truth, devotion works, compassion works, and all of these methods work wonderfully. Take ego, for example. We know that ego is very difficult to get rid of, and that it is there all the time. When we manifest out of ego, and when we think that ego is the most important thing, the ultimate truth, we then become the

victims of ego. But if you realise that you have ego, and yet you do all sorts of egoistic manifestations such as posing and lifting your nose up and things like that, then it becomes humorous. For example, if you are angry and you know you are angry, and you go on with that for a while, it becomes very funny. Touchy-feely teachings are so good, aren't they!

For our final example this year, I will have to mention Gérard and Ani Jimpa again. Let us suppose that Gérard and Ani Jimpa are both looking at this tent. But Ani Jimpa is wearing green sunglasses, and Gérard is not. Then Ani Jimpa sees this tent as green. Now, normally when we look at something white through green sunglasses, we know that what we are looking at is not green. But it looks green because of our sunglasses, and so it becomes funny and a sort of pleasure. This is why people wear tinted sunglasses, to change the colour a little bit.

*The difference between  
wearing sunglasses and  
being sunglasses*

But what if Ani Jimpa were born with green sunglasses along with her two boobs? Then there is a real problem, because there is a difference between having the sunglasses and being the sunglasses. If Ani Jimpa has the sunglasses, it means that she is not the sunglasses. That is good news, because it means that she is not that delusion in reality. Her delusion is temporal. It is something extra that she collected somewhere in a shop. So based on this, we can go on to talk about Buddha nature, because this is a teaching on the Buddha nature: not being the sunglasses, but having the sunglasses.

*We have defilements, but  
we are not our  
defilements*

Let us suppose that Ani Jimpa has been wearing the sunglasses for a long time. It is not that she is the sunglasses, but she has been wearing the sunglasses for so long that she thinks she is the sunglasses. The problem is that whatever she sees is somehow inseparable from the sunglasses. And then Gérard may try to explain to Ani Jimpa that the tent is not green. She will reply, why not? I can see that it is green. And somehow, with great skilful means, Gérard might manage to tell her that she is wearing sunglasses, and that this is why she sees the tent as green.

*The most appropriate  
teaching for us will  
depend on our principal  
defilements*

Gérard's approach will depend on what kind of person she is. She may be the type of person who finds it difficult to accept that the tent is white. In that case, Gérard's teaching will emphasise that she is wearing sunglasses. Or perhaps she is the type of person who has difficulty accepting that she is wearing sunglasses, in which case Gérard will emphasise that the tent is white. It is just a matter of mentality. She may be the kind of person who finds it difficult to accept that the tent is white, or the kind of person who finds it difficult to accept that she is wearing sunglasses. I am talking about her defilements. All this depends entirely on their merit, karmic link and so on. After a while, she might know that the tent is white. And then she may still ask this question: I know that the tent is white, but why do I see it as green? We ask this type of question repeatedly. For example, I know that everything is emptiness, but why do I have a headache? Well, there is only one way forward – Ani Jimpa has to offer her body, speech and mind to Gérard. And he will accept it with much kindness. And then they will become the sunglass buddhas. This is how the two truths work.



*End of 1996 teachings*

## 1998 Teachings

### The purpose of studying Madhyamika

I am very happy that many of those who were here 1996 have returned, and I am sure you have had plenty of time to contemplate what we talked about. For those who are here for the first time this year, it may be slightly difficult at the beginning. But because John and Wulstan have done a great job with the review classes, I am sure that most of you are prepared.

*Do we have to study  
Madhyamika to achieve  
enlightenment?*

As you will see, Madhyamika philosophy is quite a complex subject. At times, you will ask yourself if it is necessary. Not only will you think this, but I have thought about this too. If you were to ask, do we have to study Madhyamika in order to achieve enlightenment? Do we have to study this particular text, Chandrakirti's *Madhyamakavatara*? In reply, I would say that perhaps it is not necessary. After all, do not forget that there are 84,000 teachings to choose from. So, again we might ask, what is the purpose of studying this text?

I think this kind of study can strengthen our confidence and devotion in the path. This path, this journey, involves our emotions a great deal. Sometimes the path is very soothing and encouraging, but sometimes, because it involves our emotions, we may encounter difficult situations. Two things drive ignorant sentient beings like us. One is hope, for things like good weather, or things like enlightenment. Another is doubt. We will meet all kinds of hope and doubt on our path. For example, we might hope that our master will smile at us, or we might doubt the path itself. We might think of all these years of practice and meditation, of joining a monastery and becoming somebody's disciple. But when we see that our minds and those of others are still so rigid, we might begin to feel disillusioned with the path and the teacher. When such hopes and doubts torment us, if we have enough information about the Madhyamika, then it can help.

*When hope and doubt  
torment us, the  
Madhyamika can help*

*We need to think  
seriously about buddhism  
in the West*

There is another immediate good reason why we should study such things, which will apply to at least some of us, if not all of us. Although buddhism is quite young in the West, it is relatively new. We have now reached a time where we really have to think seriously about this buddhism. There are now many texts, including supposedly academic texts on buddhist theory and buddhist philosophy, such as Madhyamika. Perhaps this is simply due to my deluded narrow-mindedness, and my poor understanding of the English language. But when I read some of the texts by certain renowned and influential professors from prestigious universities in the West, I feel a little scared – where is this buddhism going?

*The blind doubt and  
cynicism that we see  
among some Western  
academics is dangerous*

For example, the Madhyamika was originally written in Sanskrit, and Patsap Nyima Trakpa translated it. These translators were not only well versed in the Sanskrit language, but they were also practising buddhism. First, they would meditate on the essence of Madhyamika, and only then would they translate it. These days, it seems that most translators only need to speak a language and know a few words before they translate. To make a commentary on the Madhyamika philosophy is a very big task. The authors of such books should be very careful, because they are teaching at big and very prestigious universities, and in a sense, they are the future of buddhism in the West. If they were to make certain judgements on this kind of philosophy from a very narrow-minded point of view, it would be a great shame. I think there is a difference between being secular and being cynical. Perhaps I am wrong here, but I think that it is very fashionable to be cynical and critical, especially in the Western academic world. This is dangerous. Just as blind devotion is dangerous, so is blind doubt and endless criticism and

cynicism. You do not get anything out of it and you do not inspire others. Even worse, you may block other people's path. These are just a few words on purpose of study of this text.



## Motivation while studying Madhyamika

*Buddhist philosophy is not just for reading and discussion, but also for practice*

Now, according to the tradition, I shall remind you of the kind of motivation that you should have. Our motivation can influence our entire approach to this study. Of course, we should apply the great Mahayana practice of bodhicitta, such as studying this in order to benefit all sentient beings. But one very important motivation that we should have is to remember that all the logic and argumentation that we will hear is not just a play of words. It is telling us something. If you listen carefully, you will realise that it is actually describing each one of our emotions. And this is probably one of the very special qualities of buddhist philosophy. It is not just something to read, discuss and then file somewhere. It is something that we can practice in our day-to-day life.



## Establishing the view

*What do buddhists believe in?*

*The four mudras, or four great seals*

This year in particular, our discussions will place great emphasis on establishing the ultimate truth, the view. When you are roaming around in this world, other people may find out that you are associated with certain buddhist groups, and they will ask you, what do buddhists believe in? If you do not know what to say, buddhists believe four things. As long as you accept these four, even if you do not refer to yourself as a buddhist, you are nevertheless a follower of Gautama Buddha. These four views, which are known as the four great seals or the four mudras, are:

- All compounded things are impermanent
- All emotions are pain
- All phenomena do not have inherently existent self
- Enlightenment is beyond extremes

These are not just words! They have such a great meaning. For instance, if we could only understand and accept just one of these four views, that all compounded things are impermanent, our life would be so much easier! For instance, when you are infatuated with someone, you think that pleasant feeling is permanent. You may not use these words, but this is how you think. And when your infatuation does not last, then you are shocked. This is because you do not understand the first view. Similarly, when you go through a depression, you think that it is the end of the world, that you are finished. But you do not have to think that. No depression has ever lasted forever. Some have lasted longer than others have, but they have all ended. When you feel that you are finished, it is also because you do not understand the first view.

*In our study of the Madhyamakavatara, we will talk about the third mudra*

During our study of Chandrakirti's *Madhyamakavatara*, we will be talking about the third of these four views – that all phenomena do not have an inherently existent nature. There are many ways in which we can establish this third view, ten of which are described in the *Dashabhumika*

*Only through our merit and devotion can we understand the ultimate truth*

*The whole purpose of these studies is to prove that everything we think is wrong*

*As soon as we talk it is all contradiction; as soon as we think, it is all confusion*

*The Prasangikas will prove we are wrong, but they are not nihilists: they are very flexible people*

*We will focus on 'arising' or 'birth', a characteristic shared by all phenomena*

*Chandrakirti cannot accept analysis, because it makes relative truth collapse*

*If we say, without analysis, that seed gives rise to shoot, that is all right*

*Sutra* (see “the ten equalities”, p.73). But here, in the Madhyamika, we will concentrate on *kyéwa mepa* (*skye ba med pa*), no arising: ‘all phenomena are equally without origination, or without arising’.

So, our purpose here is to establish the ultimate truth. If you ask me, by listening to these teachings and reading this Madhyamika text, will we realise and understand the ultimate truth? No! The understanding of the ultimate truth has to come from your merit, your devotion to the guru, your compassion towards sentient beings and all that. That is not our subject this time. I am sure you all have your own path, and you should follow it. But if this text and the explanations of the Prasangika Madhyamika cannot point out the ultimate truth to us, what can they do? By studying and contemplating this kind of view, we can prove that everything that we think and everything that the world thinks is wrong. That is the whole purpose of these studies, to prove that everything that we think is wrong!

The Prasangikas are not going to bring some kind of celestial logic here to prove that everything that we think is wrong. Instead, they are going to prove that we are wrong with our own reasoning! That is what ‘Prasangika’ means. They are consequentialists, and they will show us the consequences of our own reasoning. Jigme Lingpa, the great Nyingmapa master, said *shetsé nangal, samtsé triulpa* (*bshad tshad nang rgal, bsam tshad 'khrul pa*), “As soon as we talk, as soon as we utter words from these lips, it is all contradiction. As soon as we think, it is all confusion”. This is the Prasangika view, which we are going to demonstrate here.

But this will not be straightforward. There are many different kinds of people, who think in different ways. Some are more sophisticated than others, and when the Prasangikas challenge some of the more sophisticated thinkers, the debate will become difficult. And when I say that the Prasangikas are going to prove that everything that we think is wrong, this ‘we’ not only includes ordinary people like us but also theologians, theoreticians, scientists, and anyone that sets out an idea. But, having said this, you should not develop the idea that these Prasangika people sound like spoiled brats who simply negate everything that others believe in. The Prasangikas are the most flexible people on earth! They have a path, they have bhumis and they have everything laid out beautifully. They are certainly not nihilists.

Two years ago, we talked quite a lot about arising or origination, *kye wa*. Some of the people who are new here this year might wonder why we are spending so much time on birth, arising and origination. This is a big subject, but we can start by saying that buddhists define a ‘phenomenon’ to have three characteristics: arising, dwelling and cessation – or we could say beginning, middle and end. Of these three, the birth or arising seems to be the most important for us, because we are always talking about it. We ask things like ‘why are we here’, or when we are sad, we ask ‘why am I sad’. So, we will talk a lot about arising and about cause and effect in the process of arising.

Before we go through this, I would like to tell you one thing. What Chandrakirti is not happy with, so to speak, is when any theologian or theoretician, who might include scientists, makes an analysis and then establishes a cause by which one thing arises from another. That is what Chandrakirti does not like and cannot accept. If you say things like a flower grows from a seed, then it is all right. As long you just leave things as they are, and do not analyse them, it is fine. But, according to Chandrakirti, the moment that you analyse, the relative truth will collapse.

As you may remember, in 1996 we showed that things cannot arise from the self, and we started to refute the theory that things arise from a cause that is other than the self. Now we shall continue with this. Here it is important to realise that when Chandrakirti is refuting other-arising, he is not saying that seed and shoot are not different. He is not saying that at all. He accepts that, although he would say that we should not analyse. We should just accept that there is a seed, there is a shoot, and the seed gives birth to the shoot. Without analysis, that is all right.

*The problem is that theoreticians and philosophers have established theories of how things arise*

[H18]

[H19]

*Chandrakirti accepts conventional truth – the fabrications of ordinary people*

*While establishing the view, we should not violate ordinary people's experience*

*If you analyse, you will not find anything. This shunyata is the ultimate truth*

*The challenge: since ordinary people accept other-arising, so must Chandrakirti*

The problem is that certain theoreticians, certain philosophical schools, have established that a particular cause is the cause of everything. For example, if you ask scientists, they will say that phenomena are made of atoms or small particles, or something like that. An ordinary cowherd would not say this. If you ask a cowherd where the horns of a cow come from, he will give a simple, unanalysed answer like ‘from the cow’s head’. But a scientist would say it comes from particles, atoms and so on. Chandrakirti does not like this type of analytically established view, and this is what he is going to negate.

### **(b) Disposing of objections based on ordinary experience**

#### **(i) As expressed in other texts, 6:22**

6:22 [O:] *Whoever holds a normal viewpoint, accepts ordinary experience as valid,  
What is the need here for analytical view?  
Creation from other is commonly accepted.  
Therefore, creation from other exists, what need for reasoning?*

We will begin with the 22<sup>nd</sup> sloka of chapter 6, which is quite a good challenge from our anonymous opponent. Now, there are several Madhyamika schools, and even within the Prasangika Madhyamika, there are different schools. Chandrakirti is known as a ‘Madhyamika philosopher who accepts conventional truth’, *jikten drakder chöpa* (*'jig rten grags der spyod pa*), the consensus of ordinary people. This is actually quite amazing – it is something that nobody else has done! Chandrakirti is saying that all the decisions and fabrications of ordinary people – as long as they are ordinary, not theoretical – should be accepted, without analysis, as relative truth. He is saying that we should not interfere with those.

But there is a danger of misinterpretation here. When Chandrakirti says that we should not violate the view of ordinary people, he is not saying that we have to practice what ordinary people think as a Dharma path. That is not it at all. Remember, here we are establishing the view. And he is saying that when we are establishing the view, we should not violate ordinary people’s experience. For him, scientists and theoreticians such as the Cittamatrins or the Sautrantikas are all violators of the ordinary people’s view.

Chandrakirti says that when you analyse, you will not find anything. This *shunyata* or emptiness is the ultimate truth. What he does not like is when people do some analysis and then find something as a separate cause. Because, according to him, when these theologians and theoreticians find something and establish a view, they are abusing the ordinary people’s view with their logic.

In sloka 22, our opponent is saying that since you, Chandrakirti, are someone who accepts the ordinary people’s consensus, what is the use of all this reasoning and logic to establish that there is no other-arising. In our everyday life in the normal world, ordinary people accept other-arising. Ordinary people accept that from the cause comes the result, which is different from the cause. For example, from the seed comes the shoot. Therefore, ordinary people automatically accept other-arising. This is why our opponent is saying that there is no need for him to give good reasons to prove other-arising, because Chandrakirti accepts ordinary people’s point of view, and ordinary people accept other-arising. Therefore, not only does our opponent not have to go through the difficulties of proving that there is other-arising, but he is also saying that Chandrakirti’s attempt to disprove other-arising will be negated by the consensus of ordinary people.

[H19]

#### **(ii) Explanation of the reasoning used to counter the objection**

**(a) The validity of ordinary experience refuted by differentiation into the two truths and their subdivisions (603)**

*The reply: the opponents do not understand the two truths, and fear the ordinary people's view*

*The two truths show why ordinary people do not refute Chandrakirti's view*

In reply to this sloka, we enter into a long and complex discourse on the two truths, the two kinds of truth. In his autocommentary, Chandrakirti says that before he answers this challenge, he will explain the two truths to his opponents. He says that these challengers do not seem to understand the relative and ultimate truths, hence they are cowardly in the face of ordinary beings, and they fear their view.

Chandrakirti has said all along that he accepts the ordinary people's view; but he never said that he accepts it as a valid view. So, in order to answer this opponent, he will first prove that the ordinary people's view is not valid. And in order to do this, he will introduce the two truths. Then, after differentiating the two truths, he will use them to explain why he is not refuted by the view of ordinary people when he says that there is no other-arising. Finally, he will tell us what kind of concept can be refuted by the view of ordinary people.

**(i) General introduction and definitions, 6:23**

6:23     *[R:] All entities can be seen truly or deceptively,  
So, whatever there is has two natures:  
The domain of perfect seeing is suchness;  
False seeing has been termed all-concealing truth [by the Buddha].*

*Sloka 23 is very important: it introduces the two truths*

This sloka is a very important one. You should write it down somewhere, or perhaps tattoo it on your chest! It is the introduction of the two truths. Let us concentrate on the word 'termed' in the last line, which is a translation of the Tibetan word *sung*. The Buddha who has completely understood the nature of the two truths without any error, has taught us, spoken, or termed these two truths. I am emphasising the word 'termed' because only someone who has understood the two truths can reveal the absolute teaching, the ultimate teaching on the two truths. And that is only the Buddha himself.

Now, the ultimate truth is something that is perceived by the wisdom of sublime beings. And the relative truth is something that is perceived by ordinary beings whose subject is contaminated, or obscured by ignorance. I do not really like the word 'relative', because the Tibetan is *künzob* (*kun rdzob*), and *rdzob* has the connotation of 'obscuring', and I do not know if 'relative' has that connotation. But as long as you know that, I will continue to use the word 'relative' truth for simplicity of usage. With this, we have introduced the two truths according to the Prasangika Madhyamika, which we will now discuss further.

*There are four bases for distinguishing the two truths*

When we make distinctions like relative truth and ultimate truth, we would naturally think that there must be a basis for making this distinction. There must be a basis to say that this is relative truth and that is ultimate truth. Since this is a common source of misunderstanding about the two truths, the question is what that basis is. There are four choices, and any one of these four bases for distinguishing the two truths is all right, whichever you choose:

- Mind.
- *Tendrel*, or interdependent origination.
- Contents of sutra, *brjod bya*.
- Knowledge.

*Any of them is acceptable, since in reality, there are no 'two truths'*

Why can we use any of these four seemingly very ordinary bases? One might think the basis of the two truths should be something very attractive and holy, but it is very ordinary. This goes back to what I was saying earlier about the word 'termed', because the distinction of the two

*Other philosophers distinguish the two truths objectively, but the Madhyamikas say it must be subjective*

*If you find a true object, you have to depend on it*

*In the West, an ultimate truth must be validated objectively*

*For a Vaibhashika, any phenomenon that can be broken by mind or matter is just labelling not ultimate truth*

truths is only made for the sake of ordinary people's understanding. In reality, there is no such thing as two truths.

I have to repeat this. There is no such thing as two truths existing somewhere outside there. I am stressing this because almost every theological or theoretical finding, no matter where it is established, has one fault. This includes theologians and theoreticians like the Vaibhashikas, Sautrantikas, Cittamatrins, scientists, philosophers, politicians, and so on. This is very important. Whatever these people decide about the two truths, they always make the distinction between relative and ultimate truth based on the object and its intrinsic nature or existence. The Madhyamikas refute this totally, and say that the distinction between the two truths must be made subjectively.

I do not know whether you can see the importance of this, but there is something very important here when we talk about two truths. When we talk about ultimate truth, we always value it as something very holy, something absolute, something indestructible, and something very nice and beautiful; something absolute, anyway. But if you make such a distinction based on the object, and then you find a holy and indestructible object that is ultimate truth, you are in great trouble, because you have to depend on that. But for the Madhyamika, the two truths are distinguished subjectively, so they are based on you. This is very important. I sometimes feel that it is perhaps the difference between eastern and western philosophy. When western philosophy talks about 'truth', the distinction between two truths is made objectively. I think this is true for all western civilisations. What do you think? I am trying to provoke you a little bit here!

[Q]: But we do not talk about two truths in the West.

[A]: This is not true! Everyone makes the distinction between relative and ultimate truth, whether they realise it or not. In the West, there is great value and pride attached to being objective, whether it is in the newspapers or elsewhere.

I want to make sure that you understand this, because it is quite important and will come up again throughout the text. Apart from the Madhyamika, all the philosophical schools that use any kind of intellectual or logical theories establish the 'truth' of something, in the sense of the two truths, in the same way. They always establish whether something has intrinsic existence from the side of the object, therefore 'truth' means that a phenomenon exists intrinsically and objectively.

For example, in the West, the belief in a creator or a deity or a god, and the functioning of their blessings, is considered or established as relative truth. For something to be considered an ultimate truth, it needs to be established and validated objectively, for example mathematical theories or sophisticated technical tools. Only when it has been validated objectively is it accepted as an ultimate truth.



## **The two truths according to the different buddhist schools**

### **Vaibhashika**

We will now briefly discuss how the other buddhist schools distinguish the two truths. The Vaibhashika talk about five bases, such as very small particles, and they say that these are ultimate truth. I think they are perhaps the closest to modern scientists, and the five bases that

*But the bases for the labelling, such as small particles, exist substantially and are ultimate truth*

*The Sautrantika distinguish truth based on whether an object can function*

*For both these schools, ultimate truth can be directly experienced, but the experience alone will not liberate you*

*The three natures of the Cittamatra*

*Some relative truths, such as dependent reality, exist substantially*

*Cittamatrins have both compounded and uncompounded ultimate truth*

they talk about are quite worthwhile for you to explore. They distinguish the two truths as follows: they say that if something can be destroyed or broken down by mind or by matter, it is just a labelling, and it is therefore relative truth. For example, ‘long’, ‘short’, ‘continuity’, ‘person’ and all these kinds of things can be destroyed, so for the Vaibhashika, they are relative truth.

Take this pen, for example. According to the Vaibhashika school, the idea of ‘pen’ is relative truth, because it can be destroyed by mind and matter. For example if I melt it, and then show it to you and ask you what it is, nobody would say that it is a pen. Therefore, the idea of ‘pen’, this label, is gone. This is why it is a relative truth. They also say that there are some things, such as very small particles, which cannot be destroyed by mind or matter. As you can see, their distinction of relative truth and ultimate truth is very much based on the object. The basis of labelling exists substantially, and it is the ultimate truth, but the labelling itself does not substantially exist. It is just a fabrication, and is therefore relative truth.

## **Sautrantika**

The Sautrantika approach is very similar, with the slight difference that they distinguish relative truth and ultimate truth based on whether the object can ultimately function or not. First, they say that all phenomena can be divided into inanimate and animate. For example, forms like the five present moment senses and their five sense-objects, which are arisen but not yet ceased, such things ultimately exist. Again, the distinction between the relative truth and the ultimate truth is based on the object. In fact, you should realise that both the Vaibhashika and Sautrantika are saying that ultimate truth can actually be seen by eyes, heard by ears and tasted by the tongue. I think scientists would also say that the ultimate is something that you can directly experience with these senses, or detect through some technology, of course! Therefore, both the Vaibhashika and Sautrantika schools accept that just seeing the ultimate truth will not liberate you. Why? It is because the distinction of the two truths is based on the object.

## **Cittamatra**

Now, the Cittamatra school is slightly more complicated. They talk about three characters or natures (which are explained in more detail on p.186):

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Labelling or imputation</li><li>• Dependent reality</li><li>• Ultimate truth</li></ul> | <i>küntak (kun brtags)</i><br><i>zhenwong (gzhan dbang)</i><br><i>yongdrup (yongs grub)</i> |
|--|---|

This dependent reality, *zhenwong*, is the mind, *künshi namparshepa (kun gzhi rnam par shes pa)*, which is the famous *alaya*. This *alaya* is used as a base to distinguish relative truth and ultimate truth. On the base of this dependent reality, when the power of karma and emotions ripens, then you have subject and object. And although there is no true entity that is ‘subject’ or ‘object’, you have a clinging or fixation that there is a separate subject and object, and the Cittamatrins refer to this as labelling. They are not saying that all of relative truth is substantially not existent, because although the labelled subject and object are not substantially existent, the *zhenwong*, the dependent reality, is substantially existent. Thus, even the Cittamatrins accept that certain relative truths exist substantially.

And on this dependent reality, a sublime being’s wisdom realises that all these delusions of subjects and objects are not truly existent. This is what we call wisdom, which is the *yongdrup*. From this, you can see that according to the Cittamatrins, there is compounded ultimate truth and uncompounded ultimate truth. The object of wisdom, which is the emptiness of subject and object, is uncompounded. And the realiser of this emptiness is wisdom, which is compounded.

*If perceiving an object enhances emotions or dualistic mind, it is relative truth*

*For Madhyamikas, ultimate truth is the subject that knows that things are not arisen*

*Are the two truths one or are they two separate things?*

*The four ways in which things can be separate*

*What do we mean by ‘analysis’?*

To be precise, according to the Cittamatrins, if by perceiving an object it increases or enhances the emotions or dualistic mind, then it is the relative truth. If, by perceiving this object, it does not increase dualistic mind, delusion or emotion, then it is the ultimate truth. Here again, you can see that the Cittamatrin distinction between the relative truth and the ultimate truth is completely based on the object.

## **Madhyamika**

The Madhyamika school is totally different. As explained in sloka 23, their distinction of the two truths is never based on the object. The ultimate truth is the *yilchen* (*yul can*), the subject or wisdom that knows that things are not arisen or produced from self, other, both or neither. Relative truth is a deluded mind that sees that things arise, are born or have a beginning.

Now, we have quite an important question. Are the two truths one? Or are they two separate things? If you say they are one, there are four faults. If you say they are separate, there are another four faults! There is a big discussion about this, but we are not going to talk about it very much. For example, if the two truths were the same, then ordinary people would not have to practice, because when they see a flower, they would also see the ultimate truth, so then they would become enlightened. However, since we are discussing this, we have to reach a conclusion.

One easy solution is to say that they are neither one nor separate. However, several scholars think that they are separate, but in a particular way which they then define. Indian and Tibetan scholars have concluded things can be said to be separate in four different ways:

- **Separate substances:** for example a flower and a pen.
- **Separateness of existence and non-existence:** If something exists, the thing that exists and the non-existence of that particular thing are not two different substances. But nonetheless, they are two separate concepts for us, and we cannot say that the existence and the non-existence of the thing are the same. So, there is separateness, but it is not the same as for flower and pen.
- **Separate aspects of one nature:** This is more from the aspect of labelling. For example, a vase is constituted through the action of a potter, and an intrinsic quality of that vase is that it is impermanent. Therefore, the vase itself, the action of its making, and its impermanence are three separate aspects, but not three different things. They are three separate aspects of the same nature.
- **Separate names:** The fourth kind of difference or separateness is for example, one person with different names. For example, we also refer to the planet ‘moon’ poetically as ‘the cool one’.

According to some scholars, the relative and ultimate truths are separate in this second way. With this, we have completed a brief introduction to the two truths, and the elaboration will come from tomorrow. Perhaps now we could have a few questions.

[Q]: When we speak of analysing, it is always very deep analysis. When we talk about the relative truth of scientists, they analyse a lot. Or when we say that from the seed comes the sprout, this is also analysis in a way, because we do not spontaneously know it.

[A]: As long as analysis is being used to construct a philosophical theory, then that kind of analysis is what we are talking about and discouraging here. But when a farmer says that a sprout comes from a seed, he is not analysing in this way.

[Q]: But if we learn to plant things, there is a certain science behind it. Is that considered analysis?

[A]: Does it have philosophy?

*Mind is object for the Cittamatrins*

*What is meant when Buddhapalita says there is 'no purpose' to self-arising?*

*We use the two truths throughout everyday life, although we may not use these words*

*Examples: 'genuine' Italian leather, or agreeing on the 'facts'*

[Q]: No, it is science, techniques. Scientists are like clever farmers, and they presuppose causality in the same way as farmers do, because there are some things they cannot afford to analyse. They assume causality and use it all the time; otherwise, they could not do research or reach any conclusions. In science, there are two phases. They observe what happens, and then they construct a hypothesis about it, which they then try to prove or disprove. So perhaps Chandrakirti might accept the first stage, although he would not like that second stage, the construction of hypotheses.

[A]: I think so.

[Q]: I have some difficulty understanding the objective character of the Cittamatrin distinction between relative and absolute truth. Perhaps the Cittamatrins make the subject and object collapse in some way. Of course, they will not say that an object that is just an imputation can increase emotions. So when we say that this difference is objective, is it objective because the mind is object?

[A]: Yes, in this case, mind is object. All that we have discussed today will help a lot during the next few days, as it will come up repeatedly.

[Q]: In Buddhapalita's objection to self-arising, he says there is no benefit to self-arising. Why does there need to be a benefit?

[A]: When he says there is no benefit, he is saying there is no point. If things are self-born, that means that the result is already there. So, where does the arising fit in? The whole purpose of arising is that something did not exist before, and then it arises. Buddhapalita is saying that if something is self-born, it is already there, because only then can it be self-born. Then what is the benefit of arising? It is already there! We are not asking about the use of the result, we are asking what is the use of the *kyepa*, the arising itself, since it is already there. For example, some people would say you are your daughter's mother. But if she was already born before you existed, then why are you called her mother? Your whole function, in being her mother, is in giving birth to her. Similarly, in the text, we are asking what is the use of recreating something that is already born, something that is already there.

[Q]: Does something exist if there is no witness?

[A]: The witness is the mind. When we speak of the 'birth' of a phenomenon, we are speaking of a mind to witness this birth occurring.



## The two truths in philosophy and everyday life

Yesterday, we briefly ran through all the different views on the two kinds of truth. The idea of two truths comes mainly from philosophy and theory, especially in buddhism, but also a little in Hinduism. But these two truths actually occur in our mundane, non-religious, non-philosophical life all the time. We may not use the term 'two truths', but we are using the two truths every time that we value or measure things in our normal, worldly life. For example, when we talk about the 'fact', or say 'this is the fact' or 'in fact', we are talking about an ultimate truth, although we are not using this word.

We place more value in things that are facts, genuine, uncorrupted and unfabricated. For instance, we talk about the value of 'genuine' Italian leather, and we attach no value to things that are fabricated, false, untrue or fake. We find this everywhere; for example, when there is agreement between two people, then there are two truths functioning. When there is disagreement, there are two truths functioning. When both people in a couple agree on the 'facts', we call this a good and harmonious relationship. Therefore, the two truths are also very individual in many ways.

*We are taught the ‘facts’ in school, so we do not become obscured by ‘fakes’*

*A spiritual path is there to stop you from falling into what is ‘fake’ and thus take you to the truth*

*Only the Madhyamika distinguishes truth based on the subject*

*Perceivers of both ‘beautiful’ and ‘ugly’ have a fault*

*This distinction of the two truths is to reply to the opponent’s challenge on sloka 22*

And then, why do we have schools, universities and institutes, places where we learn the facts? Whether it is historical fact, scientific fact or medical fact, we all love and value the ultimate truth. And why do we learn this? Because we do not want to become obscured by what is fake, because we are so afraid of this ‘fake’. And in order to distinguish between them, we go to school. Likewise, people send missionaries or politicians here and there to teach other people what are supposedly the facts. This is how it works.

We have many ideas, and all these ideas are based on the two truths. There is no third truth. There is no such thing as semi-fake or semi-genuine, there is no in between. Things are true or not true. The difficulty here is that some of our ideas come from curious and inquisitive minds that are supposedly more sophisticated and logical. From this kind of curiosity and analysis, many groups of people from different religions and philosophies have reached conclusions about what is true. They all have their own idea of what is ultimate truth and what is relative truth. For some, as we saw during the refutation of self-arising, the ultimate truth, the thing that is ultimately existent, is the creator. Everything else is the play of illusion, and is not ultimate truth. This is how a path develops, because a spiritual path, for example, is there to prevent you from falling into all these false or fake areas. In that way, you can reach the ultimate, the authentic state. That is why there is a path.

Now, according to Chandrakirti, all other theologies or philosophies apart from Madhyamika distinguish the two truths based on the object. But for the Madhyamika, the distinction between the two truths is made subjectively. For example, if someone has aggression, then when they see an object such as an “enemy”, because of their aggression, they see this object as ugly, bad, and so on. When perceived by someone with passion or desire, this same object is seen as something beautiful and desirable. According to the Madhyamika, the perceivers of both the ‘beautiful’ and the ‘ugly’ perceptions have a fault. These faults are things like aggression, passion and so on. When a sublime being who does not have passion, aggression, or ignorance sees the same object, he does not see beauty or ugliness, or any of these. Hence, the Madhyamika way of distinguishing the ultimate and relative truth is subjective. There will be further explanation of this later, so do not worry if you feel that you have missed something.

I would like to remind you that we are spending all this time distinguishing the two truths in order to answer the challenger in sloka 22. I think that Chandrakirti has already made himself very comfortable, and now he can answer easily, because he has said that his opponent is talking about the two truths objectively, which he is not doing. In the following slokas, we will first talk about relative truth, by making some distinctions within relative truth. And later we will talk about ultimate truth, although the ultimate truth can only be taught by using the relative truth as an analogy. Nobody can teach the actual ultimate truth. We can only use examples.

[H21]

**(ii) Explanation of each individually (605)**

[H22]

**(a) Relative truth explained in terms of its subdivisions**

[H23]

**(i) Subdivided according to ordinary beings’ minds**

[H24]

**(a) Classifying deceptive seeing on the part of the subject into two, 6:24**

6:24

*Again, for deceptive seeing one considers two:  
That of clear faculties and that of impaired faculties.  
Perception by impaired faculties is considered mistaken,  
Compared with that of healthy faculties.*

*Sloka 24 introduces the two kinds of relative truth*

*Valid relative truth: the findings of senses that are functioning properly*

*Invalid relative truth: the findings of senses that are impaired*

*Internal examples: eye disease, drinking alcohol or taking drugs*

*External examples: mirage, echo, or reflection of face in mirror*

*Crucially, all findings of theoreticians and philosophers are also invalid relative truth*

In sloka 24, Chandrakirti will distinguish two aspects of the relative truth. You should pay some attention to these, because he will use them as an example later when he talks about ultimate truth. Here relative truth has been translated as ‘deceptive seeing’. I do not really like the word ‘relative’ truth, because it does not have that connotation of obscuring or concealing. But as long as you have an idea about it, that is fine. We will use the word relative truth, as it is easier. There are two kinds of relative truth, which are introduced on the second line of sloka 24.

The first kind arises when things are seen by the six senses, i.e. the five senses and the mind, when they are clear, unpolluted and not interfered with by any outer or inner obstacles. The findings of senses that are functioning properly are what we call *valid relative truth*. For example, hopefully all of us see this pencil as a pencil, because our eyes and our eye sense consciousness is functioning properly. Similarly, if you think that you are a human being, your mind is functioning properly, but if you begin to think that you are an animal, then perhaps your mind is not really functioning properly.

And then, the findings of six senses that are faulty or defective are called *invalid relative truth*. For example, if you have jaundice. In the commentary, this is explained quite thoroughly, so I am just going through it briefly. I also need to mention an example that comes up repeatedly in the text, which is *rab rib* (*rab rib*) and *trashe* (*skra shad*). This is supposedly a type of eye disease where you see hair falling all the time, perhaps something like a type of cataract. Other examples include the effects of eating *datura*, taking any kinds of drugs, or drinking too much alcohol. When your perception is interfered with in one of these ways, like jaundice, *datura* or alcohol, then the experience that you have, the object that you see, is something different from what you would see with clear senses. For example, you do not see this pencil as a pencil, but as something else. This is what we call invalid relative truth. These examples are mostly caused internally, for example because you have eaten something. And then there are things like a mirage, an echo or the reflection of your face in a mirror. These are also considered invalid relative truth, because they are also defective. They are examples of defects of the five senses, because, for example, there is no mirage there if you cannot see. But they are also defects of the sixth sense: mind, because your mind is deluded by seeing water when there is only a mirage. Or, to take another example, if you mistake an echo for the actual sound, your ear senses are working correctly, because you still hear the sound as a sound. But your mind is deluded, because it thinks the echo is real.

Now we come to the main point. For the Madhyamika, the findings of a defective mind, the sixth sense, not only include things like seeing a mirage as water, an echo as real sound, and a reflection as a real face. In addition, all the findings of theologians and philosophers are also considered findings of a defective mind, and so they are all invalid relative truth!

The last two lines are saying that a perception that is perceived by defective faculties is considered mistaken or false compared to the perception of a perceiver that has no defects. For example, if someone with jaundice sees a white conch as a yellow conch, we will definitely say that their idea of yellow conch is wrong, because they have jaundice. Likewise, we say that our perception of the white conch is right, because we do not have jaundice. This is how we distinguish a true or false perception. So, with these two lines, we know that in sloka 24 he is talking more about the subject, such as the six senses. In the next sloka, which is still talking about valid and invalid relative truth, he will talk about the object.

[H24]

**(b) Accordingly establishing two kinds of wrongly perceived object, too, 6:25**

*An object perceived by unimpaired senses is a true object*

*Valid and invalid relative truths are distinguished purely from ordinary people's point of view*

*You cannot make use of invalid relative truth*

*Theories come from deluded minds, so ordinary people cannot use them*

*Like mirages, things like atman and alaya do not exist in ordinary experience*

6:25

*Whatever the six unimpaired faculties  
Perceive in [unanalysed] ordinary experience,  
Are true for ordinary experience alone; other perceptions  
Are deluded in terms of ordinary experience.*

Now we are talking about the object, whereas in sloka 24 we were talking about the subject. There we said that someone with jaundice, for example, has a faulty subject. But here we are saying that object, the yellow conch that is seen by someone with jaundice, this yellow conch itself is considered a faulty object. An object that is perceived by unimpaired faculties is considered a true object. And the rest, meaning objects perceived by a defective subject such as someone who has drunk a lot or eaten *datura*, these objects such as the hair in front of the eyes or the yellow conch, are considered defective objects.

Something I would like to emphasise here is that when we talk about ‘truth’ or ‘true’ objects, we are talking purely from the ordinary people’s point of view, not from a sublime being’s point of view. This distinction between valid and invalid relative truth from the ordinary point of view is made for the sake of communication. For example, when I ask you to bring me a pencil, you bring me a pencil and not a spoon. These kinds of objects, and these kinds of subjects, are what we call *valid relative truth*.

As for *invalid relative truth*, you cannot make use of it, so to speak. Take an echo, for example. You might think that an echo is useful, but if you think that echo is separate from whatever has given that echo, you will never be able to communicate with anything. For example, if you hear a dog barking, and you run inside the cave that is the source of the echo instead of going to where the dog is, you will never catch the dog. In that sense, the echo is useless. Similarly, you cannot use a reflection or drink mirage water. When you look at a mirror and see the reflection, you do not paint your lipstick on the mirror! In that case, you would be using the invalid relative truth, but what you actually do is put the lipstick on your own lips.

[H24]

**(c) Showing that even in ordinary experience the second is not so,  
6:26**

6:26

*Also in ordinary experience there are neither a  
Fundamental nature as construed by the  
The tirthikas (who are severely afflicted by the sleep of ignorance);  
Nor phenomena such as illusions and mirages.*

Now Chandrakirti is beginning to answer the question. He is saying that all these invalid relative truths (like the echo or the mirage water that you cannot drink) do not exist even within the ordinary experience. He is pointing out two things here. The first two lines say that the ideas or theories constructed by *tirthikas* or even the Cittamatrins, Vaibhashikas, or Sautrantikas all come from deluded mind. They are all afflicted by ignorance. Therefore, ordinary people cannot use their ideas.

Beings who are deluded by all this ignorance, who have not understood the ultimate and relative truth, have fabricated all kinds of ideas as a truly existent cause or entity, such as atman, creator, atoms, smallest particles and *alaya*. None of these can be utilised by ordinary people. In ordinary experience, they do not exist. Similarly, if substances like *datura* or alcohol affect our eyes or other senses, and then we see things like mirages or magic, these do not exist in the ordinary experience. We are not saying that we do not have magic or mirages in the ordinary realm; rather, we are saying that even from the ordinary people’s point of view, we would say that mirages and magic are something not truly existent.

*Why don't the ideas of the theoreticians exist in relative truth?*

You might ask this question: all the ideas that are constructed by theoreticians may not exist in the ultimate truth, but why not in the relative truth? Chandrakirti will explain this thoroughly as we proceed, but here in his self-commentary he gives a sympathetic warning. He says that all the ideas of theologians and theoreticians are like this. For example, if you want to climb to the top of a tree, first you hold onto the first branch, and then the second, and so on. But these theoreticians let go of the first branch before they hold onto the second, and then they fall. As they construct theories like creator, atoms, atman, and so on, they violate the ordinary people's acceptance because these new fabricated ideas do not fit into the relative truth. But they also do not fit into the ultimate truth, so the theoreticians fall into the precipice where there are no two truths.

[H24]

#### **(d) Applying an analogy, 6:27**

6:27     *What is seen by someone with dimmed eyesight,  
Cannot contradict what is seen by someone with good eyesight.  
Likewise, a mind lacking immaculate wisdom,  
Cannot contradict a mind possessing immaculate wisdom.*

*A person with jaundice cannot refute the perception of somebody with no jaundice*

*The perception of ordinary people cannot refute the perception of sublime beings, that there is no arising*

*How would a sublime being perceive relative truth?*

*For a sublime being, both the white and yellow conches are relative truth*

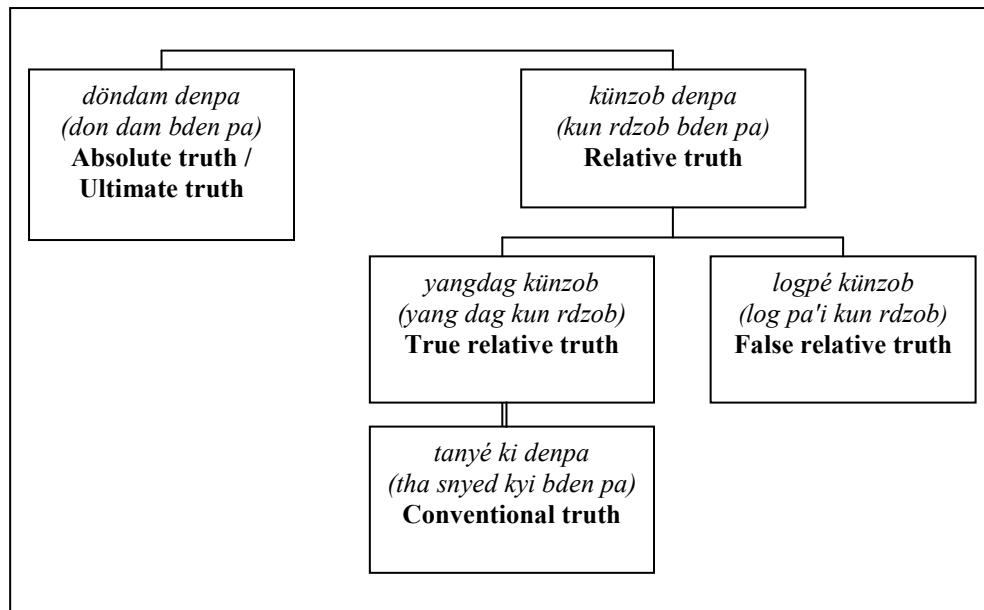
Here Chandrakirti gives his first answer. The root text uses the example of a person who has *rab rib*, the eye disease in which you perceive hair falling all the time, but perhaps I could use jaundice. A person who sees a white conch as a yellow conch cannot refute a person who does not have jaundice, or his perception of white conch. Likewise, someone who has abandoned (literally) this immaculate or unstained wisdom, meaning someone who has obscurations, cannot contradict the perception or the mind of someone who possesses this wisdom.

Our challenger in sloka 22 said we accept ordinary experience as relative truth, and therefore we have to accept other-arising because ordinary people accept other-arising. As an answer to this, Chandrakirti has explained the two truths, and then the two kinds of relative truth, as an example. And now he is pointing out that a defective perception cannot refute a perception that is not defective. He is saying that the perception of ordinary people is defective, so they cannot refute the perception of sublime beings. In particular, the perception of the sixth bhumi bodhisattva is that things are not born from self, other, both or neither, so you cannot use ordinary people's belief in other-arising to refute his perception.

Now there is something else quite important that we have to discuss. We have two truths: ultimate and relative. And we have two kinds of relative truth: true relative and false relative, or what I have been calling valid and invalid relative truth. The true relative also has two aspects. One is the true relative itself, and the other is what we call *conventional truth*. Now, we are going to discuss how a sublime being would perceive relative truth, and so we have to talk about conventional truth.

When we talk about true and false relative, we were talking more from the point of view of ordinary people. For example, a yellow conch is false relative, and a white conch is true relative. Now, the question is, how would the distinction between these two relative truths be made by a sublime being. For a sublime being, there is no distinction between true and false relative. Both are relative truths, because although both jaundice and ignorance delude a jaundiced person, someone without jaundice is nevertheless ignorant. The white conch that he sees is also relative truth, so there is no distinction.

*A diagram of ultimate, relative, and conventional truth*



*But the yellow conch is not conventional truth, so it cannot be used as a method*

*Conventional truth can be used as a method or means of communication*

*But what about saying 'everything is illusion', which we also use as a path*

*We are not using the dream as a path, but rather the idea that the dream is false*

*Conventional truth is the same as true relative truth*

But, from the sublime being's point of view, there is a distinction between what is called relative truth and conventional truth. The yellow conch and the white conch are both relative truths from the sublime being's point of view, but the yellow conch is not conventional truth. This is the distinction. This is because we usually use conventional truth as a method, and ultimate truth is the result of the method. But the yellow conch cannot be used as a method. This is quite important during the study of Madhyamika.

This distinction is made purely based on usage. You can use a conventional truth, but something that is not conventional cannot be used as a path or skilful means. The path, the bhumiś and so on are all part of conventional truth, but we do not say they are relative truth, because relative truth includes false relative truth. And things like the path, meditation and compassion are not false relative truth. They are conventional truth. Conventional truth can be used as a means of communication.

But then you might ask why couldn't things like mirages, illusions and dreams be used as a path? For example, the teachings say that "everything is like a dream, everything is like an illusion" – surely, here we are using the false relative truth as path? No, we are not using the dream as a path; we are using the idea of dream as false. This is important to know, because our entire path, including meditation, discipline, generosity, and so on, falls within conventional truth. In conclusion, if something is relative truth, it does not necessarily exist, but as long as it is conventional truth, it all exists. I think that if you can make sense out of this, then you will be able to unlock a lot of the confusion that gives rise to questions like 'if everything is emptiness, why do we have to meditate?'

Relative truth is a generic term, and 'conventional truth' refers to those things within the relative truth that are accepted as valid or true. Now I will ask you a question. According to Chandrakirti, is the Cittamatrin view relative truth or conventional truth?

[Q]: What does 'conventional truth' add to relative truth?

[A]: Because conventional truth is something that can be used as a method to realise wisdom. It is the same as true relative truth.

[Q]: If they are the same, why do we introduce the additional category of conventional truth?

[A]: We will talk about this in detail later, but to satisfy this question now, I will tell you briefly. Here we are studying philosophy, and we have to study many different points of view.

*But it is nevertheless useful to talk about both relative and conventional truth*

*The findings of the theoreticians are as false as the yellow conch*

*Chandrakirti has to accept the majority view in order to be able to communicate*

When we talk about two truths, we do not usually use the word *tanyé denpa* (*tha snyad bden pa*), ‘conventional truth’. This is because we also like to include the ‘false relative truth’ when we distinguish between ‘relative truth’ and ‘ultimate truth’, so we do not want to limit ourselves by using the word ‘conventional truth’. When we construct the theory, we also divide the relative truth into false and true relative. But there are busy and curious students, who ask questions like “where do things like the path, meditation and compassion fit it?” Then we use the word conventional truth. In Tibetan, *tanyé* has the connotation of a ‘means of communication’. Compassion and meditation are means to gain enlightenment, but they are themselves a means of communication, so they are called conventional truth. Now, we know that someone with jaundice sees a conch as yellow where someone who does not have jaundice sees a white conch. So, we might ask, would a sublime being categorise these as false relative truth and true relative? The answer is that a sublime being would not distinguish between false and true relative truth. From his point of view, both are just relative truth, and both are motivated by ignorance, even if one has a little extra ignorance. But things like compassion, meditation or even a white conch can be used as means of communication, so sublime beings categorise them as conventional truth. But sublime beings cannot use things like the reflection of a face in the mirror, *sugnyen* (*gzugs brnyan*), as a means of communication. Here Chandrakirti is really saying that sublime beings cannot use the findings or theories of the theoreticians as a means of communication.

- [Q]: Is the distinction of conventional truth introduced because sublime beings want to help ordinary beings, and that this is the only way that they can discuss the subject?
- [A]: As I said earlier, all theories are false relative, because they are findings found by defective mind, and so they cannot be used.
- [Q]: Are they as false as the yellow conch?
- [A]: Yes. The yellow conch is false for the same reason, because it contradicts the common understanding of ordinary people.
- [Q]: When you talk of a defective subject, who is to decide who has healthy faculties and who does not? For example, if there were a mad man here who thinks he is an animal, we would look at him and say, ‘no you are not an animal, you are a human being’. That is because we as a majority see that he is a human being. But if you define healthy or unhealthy faculties according to a majority view, it does not seem very secure, because a majority view can be wrong.
- [A]: Yes, it is wrong.
- [Q]: But I think it can be wrong even on the relative level. For instance, a thousand years ago everybody thought that the earth was flat. But now we know that this is not the case, although we continue to perceive it as flat. But the flatness of the earth is not functional, because for example, in order to fly between countries, we need to know it is a globe. There does not seem to be any logical distinction between what is healthy and what is not.
- [A]: First, you should not forget that the conventional truth is part of the relative truth. Therefore, it is also *dzob*, impaired or obscured. Sublime beings accept that.
- [Q]: So does Chandrakirti accept it just as a sort of working principle in order to communicate with people?
- [A]: It is only for the sake of communication. Because things like bhumi, meditation, stages of the bodhisattvas are all *dzob*, obscured. They are all relative truth. When we talk about ultimate truth, we presume that we are talking about the ultimate truth, but as soon as we open our mouths, we end up (*tsong tsö*) talking about relative truth. This is how it is.
- [Q]: Is it because Chandrakirti has to accept the majority view in order to communicate?
- [A]: Yes that is about all there is. In *tanyé denpa*, the Tibetan for ‘conventional truth’, *tanyé* means ‘communication’.
- [Q]: In the third line of sloka 27, how can Chandrakirti be sure of his answer? Who will decide if someone is lacking immaculate wisdom? The opponent will always say that he does not lack it. Who is going to contradict him?
- [A]: Are you talking about the relative level or the ultimate level? On the relative level, it is easy. A person who has jaundice cannot refute someone who does not have jaundice.

*How do we know that there are any people without jaundice?*

[Q]: That is not convincing. When you talk about wisdom, you cannot say 'I have wisdom but you do not have wisdom'. It is not like knowing you have a disease and complaining about the suffering of the disease.

[A]: First, we have to convince someone who has jaundice that they have jaundice. Only after that can we develop the theory. I am presuming that we have already convinced the person who has jaundice that they have jaundice. You say that you are not convinced that the other schools will accept that their perception is defective, but this is the argument that Chandrakirti is slowly building. All he is saying is that as long as they say that there is a truly existent something, it sounds like they have jaundice. That is all he is saying! Only when there is a case of somebody having jaundice can you talk about not having jaundice. If everyone has jaundice all the time, we cannot talk about a non-jaundice time.

[Q]: It seems to me that there is no logic in sloka 27; it is just based on faith. At this point we are just assuming that there is a person who does not have jaundice, i.e. that there is immaculate wisdom, although perhaps the argumentation will come later to prove that.

[A]: All along, we have been using a lot of logic, for example during the refutation of self-arising. Chandrakirti was not only using the quotation of the Buddha, so we are not only talking about faith. Immaculate wisdom is like not having jaundice. The reason that Chandrakirti has the confidence to talk about the possibility of not having jaundice is that there is a state of jaundice.

[Q]: But for all those with jaundice, we are introducing the concept of somebody without jaundice.

[A]: What is wrong with that?

[Q]: It is fine, but we are waiting for the argumentation, and so far, it is a statement without any logical backing.

[A]: If you have an illusion, the only way to tell you that you are having an illusion is by constructing a theory that there is non-illusion. Why would a doctor even go near to a person with jaundice? He does this because he has the confidence that there is a so-called state of no jaundice. That is what Chandrakirti is doing, like a doctor. The similar argument for you is that when the doctor goes to the person with jaundice, he is making a blind assumption by asserting that there is a state free of jaundice.

[Q]: It is more the patient's point of view. Does the doctor really see something? That is hard to grasp. The patient has always perceived what is white as yellow, so he may not see it.

[A]: Yes, some patients are quite stubborn, as we can see!

[Q]: It seems to me that Chandrakirti is just being pragmatic. He is using a thing that works. Quite independent of the Dharma, people have an idea of what is normal and what is not, but from the point of view of a sublime being, the true relative and the false relative are equally false. So in order to teach beings, the enlightened being must use what they as a majority think is normal, so that a white conch as seen by a jaundiced person appears yellow but it is not yellow, it is white. If he had entered a world in which jaundice was normal, he would have used other examples.

[A]: Yes, perhaps like a white conch!

[Q]: Perhaps we forget the truth of suffering. It is a way of saying that I suffer, but I do not want to know this. I want to forget that I suffer. It seems logically impossible anyway. How do I know that the Buddha does not suffer?

[A]: By knowing that suffering is not permanent, that it can be manipulated, destroyed, conditioned. That is what the whole of buddhism is about.

[Q]: A sublime being does not think that a pillar is sick. But his wisdom includes things like a pillar that is sick

[A]: He will only use it as a communication means.

[Q]: Is conventional truth defined by its communication aspect, or by its utility for the path?

[A]: Conventional truth is perceived by defective mind, but it is not invalid in the relative world. It has a certain function, which is used in the world by the majority of people, and that is how the majority of people get by. Everybody thinks that this table is a table, and it works like that. That is the relative truth and the conventional truth. But a minority of people who have jaundice think this table is a chair. That does not work. That is all.

[Q]: What if everyone has jaundice?

If everyone had jaundice,  
then the bodhisattvas  
would teach differently

[H23]

- [A]: They do, a lot! If everybody has jaundice and only a few do not, then the whole system of the bodhisattva's way of teaching would be different. There is no problem there.
- [Q]: The conventional truth includes sutras, mantras and so on. Does it also include what ordinary beings perceive as being how the world works, without analysis?
- [A]: Yes, without theoretical analysis. More on this will come later.

## (ii) Subdivided according to ordinary vs. sublime beings (relative truth and merely relative), 6:28

6:28     *Because of obscuring ignorance, the nature [of all phenomena] is concealed.  
What makes the artificial appear true  
The Muni named all-concealing truth.  
Thus, artificial entities are mere all-concealers.*

The last line of the sloka is quite an important one. This sloka explains the relative truth thoroughly, with a definition. First, we need to talk about ignorance. What does ignorance do? It obscures sentient beings from seeing the reality, *rangshin* (*rang bzhin*) and the true nature. And with such ignorance, when you see things, not only do you not see the real nature, but also you fabricate and construct something artificial. There are two things here:

- Because of ignorance, you do not see reality
- But worse, not only not do you not see reality; you actually fabricate and invent your own reality.

Whatever is being fabricated and perceived with this ignorance is what the Buddha calls relative truth. Again, Chandrakirti is emphasising here that it is termed by the Buddha. The first three lines introduce the relative truth, namely what is perceived by a person that has grasping mind or ignorance.

Not only do we not see reality, but worse, we also fabricate our own reality

Mere relative truth

Bodhisattvas and arhats also perceive mere relative truth

Dendzin: ordinary beings grasp onto phenomena as being truly existent

Tsendzin: even bodhisattvas grasp onto characteristics

A buddha has no dendzin, tsendzin or nyinang. A buddha has no perception at all

The last line introduces the conventional truth again, which is sometimes referred to as *mere relative truth*. Here we are talking about the object. It is the same object that is being perceived by the ignorant being, but now we are not talking about the subject, only the mere object, which is perceived by sentient beings as mere relative.

The mere relative truth is something that is perceived by arhats and bodhisattvas from the 1<sup>st</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> bhumis during their post-meditation time, but not as something truly existent. Arhats and bodhisattvas perceive it as something fabricated and artificial, which is why we call it 'mere relative'. This object of the perceiver stained by ignorance is not only an object for ignorant beings; arhats and bodhisattvas also perceive it.

Now, we have *dendzin*. *Dzin* is 'grasping'; *den* is 'truly'. Ordinary beings like us have the kind of grasping mind that thinks these phenomena are truly existent. In the Mahayana path, bodhisattvas from the 1<sup>st</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> bhumi during their post meditation time do not have *dendzin*, but they still have *tsendzin*, a mind that grasps characteristics. *Tsenma* (*mthsan ma*) is like a 'mark'. They would not confuse a table for a chair, but they still think that blue is blue, yellow is yellow, and so on. They have a mind that grasps such characteristics, and these characteristics are what we call 'mere relative'. However, it is hard to speak about this, because I am not on the first bhumi, and I am guessing that you are not on the first bhumi either! Now, from the 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> bhumis, bodhisattvas during their post meditation time have what we call *namshe* (*rnam shes*) or *nyinang* (*gnyis snang*), which is 'perception'. They still have perception during their post meditation time, and the object of that perception is again this mere relative truth, the conventional truth. A buddha, someone completely enlightened, does not have *dendzin*, *tsendzin* or even *nyinang*. He does not have perception. For the Buddha, all continuity of the mind has stopped (See diagram on p.44).

*Dendzin is like a  
magician's trick of a  
monkey riding an  
elephant*

*Ignorance with and  
without afflictive  
emotions*

*If the buddhas do not  
have perception, how do  
they benefit sentient  
beings?*

*Ultimate truth cannot be  
spoken of directly, so it is  
explained with an  
example*

[H22]

*The example of impaired  
vision (falling hair)*

It is like a magician performing a trick – for example, a monkey riding an elephant. All those ignorant beings that do not know think, ‘what a funny sight, a monkey riding an elephant’. This is *dendzin*, because they think that it is truly existent. That is the ignorance, and because of this ignorance, they roam in samsara. They part from their money to see this magic, and they suffer. They become hooked to it, addicted to it. Now, the magician himself also sees the elephant and the monkey that is riding it. Of course, he has to be able to see them. Otherwise, he could not perform his trick correctly, and he might mistakenly put the elephant on top of the monkey. But he knows that it is just magic, so he does not have that grasping mind. He does not pay, and the magic does not hook him. That is the difference between *dendzin* and the rest. But the point here is that for sublime beings from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> bhumis, the elephant and the monkey are mere relative truth. But for an ordinary person looking at the elephant and the monkey, they are the real relative truth.

This is quite a good introduction to two kinds of ignorance:

- ***Ignorance with afflictive emotion*** is something like looking at form, feeling, karmic formation, and so on, and thinking ‘this is me, this is I’. This is what we call *gangsag gi dak* (*gang zag gi bdag*) the self or ego. Meditating on the selflessness of the person purifies this type of ignorance.
- ***Ignorance without afflictive emotion*** is merely grasping to form, feeling and so on, without making any labels like ‘self’. Meditating on the selflessness of phenomena purifies this type of ignorance.

What we are now studying is thoroughly taking us through the second meditation, the theory of the wisdom that understands the selflessness of phenomena.

Now we may ask, if the buddhas do not have perception, how do they benefit sentient beings? This is discussed during the last chapter, but I will answer it briefly now. The beneficial activity of a buddha, which is the manifestation of the buddha, is something perceived by sentient beings. For sentient beings that have devotion, good karma and the good fortune to perceive such a manifestation, they have the notion of the buddha benefiting sentient beings. You might still think that enlightenment would be almost like nothingness, like the death of candlelight when no wax remains. But enlightenment is not like extinction. This is going to be thoroughly explained later.

With this, we have introduced the relative truth, and now we turn to the ultimate truth. As I said earlier, ultimate truth cannot be spoken, or introduced with words or logic, because they will contradict the reality of ultimate truth. So, the ultimate truth will be explained here using an example.

### **(b) Absolute truth explained in terms of an analogy, 6:29**

6:29      *Due to disease of the eye, hairs and so forth  
May be perceived erroneously.  
With a healthy eye, the actual nature is seen,  
You should know suchness in this way (here).*

This sloka 29 is quoted very often, and I think it is a very good example. I still have not found the right word for the eye disease with falling hairs, so I will call it ‘impaired vision’. Suppose that a person with impaired vision is holding a plate. He perceives hair falling continuously, and so his plate becomes covered with hair. When it is filled with hair, he changes plates or throws the hair away. Then he holds up the plate again to collect more hair. Now if someone else, who

*Saying 'there is no hair' does not deny the hair, because there is no hair.*

*Likewise, emptiness is not a denial of phenomena*

*Our confusion is that we first develop hair and then think 'there is no hair'*

*The whole idea of ultimate and relative truth is part of the path, a means of communication*

*Why should we follow the buddhist path, as opposed to some other path?*

*You can follow any path as long as you accept the four great seals (see p.118)*

does not have impaired vision, sees the person frequently changing his plate, he will wonder why he is doing this.

He sees this effort of the first person, looks at the plate, sees nothing and then says, "Look, there is no hair!" Here Chandrakirti points out in his self-commentary that when the second person says that there is no hair, he is not denying the hair at all, because there is no hair for him to deny. If there was some hair there and then he said that there was no hair, it would be a denial. But he is not denying the hair, because there is no hair to deny! Likewise, emptiness is not a denial of phenomena.

Now, this example has a lot of meaning here. Although there is no hair, he has to say that there is no hair. This is where many students get confused. For all of us, when someone says that there is no hair, instead of just listening to that, we automatically develop some hair so that we can think that there is no hair. This is the problem! This is also the reason we said that the two truths – relative and ultimate – are not one, because, you cannot construct the idea of the oneness of hair and no-hair on the plate, because there is no hair right from the beginning.

What the person with impaired vision perceives is simply the result of impaired vision. Therefore, it is deluded; it has never existed. So, when a second person that does not have impaired vision tells the first person that there is no hair on his plate, this second person is not somehow abusing the first person's perception. The second person is simply telling the truth. Where we go wrong is when the second person says that there is no hair heaped on the plate. At that very moment, we think there was actually some hair that has now been refuted and eliminated. This is wrong, because there has never been any hair there on that plate. However, although there is not any hair on the plate, the Buddha may in his skilful means have prescribed some treatments to cure that disease as if there were some hair on the plate.

We are still answering the challenge in sloka 22, and we will continue tomorrow.

[Q]: You said that we should not think that relative and absolute truths are one, because there was no hair. So perhaps the confusion could be that there never was any relative truth.

[A]: Nor ultimate. The whole idea of relative and ultimate truth is only there during the path. It is a means of communication. It is *tanyé denpa*, conventional truth. Chandrakirti is not in love with ultimate truth. He does not want to keep it as some kind of last token or something. It is simply a means of communication. Remember, as I said before, that the only thing that the Prasangika Madhyamikas do is negating all the theoretical achievements that theoreticians or we have in our minds. Yet they are not nihilist. They accept the entire path for the sake of other sentient beings, and I think that this works very well.

[Q]: The path is based on the conventional truth, but the conventional truth in the West is not the same as in India or Tibet, so why is the buddhist path good for the West?

[A]: As long as you have communication, then it is fine. It does not have to be Buddhist communication or eastern communication. What is the problem?

[Q]: Why can't we all just follow some other path?

[A]: You can! But according to Chandrakirti, apart from the Madhyamika path, all the other paths are invalid relative truth. But you do not have to agree; you can always challenge that.

[Q]: You said before that you can challenge other people's views, but you should not challenge their path.

[A]: No, I just said that Chandrakirti says that all the theories of the philosophers and theoreticians are all invalid relative truth. Do you agree with that? You can always disagree with that.

[Q]: Why should we follow a buddhist path? Why can't we decide to do something completely different, like meditating on trees? Why could we not reach the truth through that path?

[A]: If you are trying to reach the truth that is introduced by Chandrakirti, as long as you accept the four great seals, you can meditate on a tree and get it. To remind you, the four great seals are that all compounded things are impermanent, all emotions are pain, everything

*We think we talk about the 'real' Buddha, but we can only talk about a manifestation Buddha*

*All of our problems come from looking at something not true and thinking it is true*

*Chandrakirti's whole purpose is liberate us from the root of suffering, which is not knowing the truth*

*Knowing that the world is round and that it seems flat are both important*

does not have a truly existing self and nirvana is beyond extremes. These are what you need to accept.

[Q]: So, there are no bhumis other than the perception of sentient beings?

[A]: This is what I meant by *song tsö de lom tsö* (*song thsod de rlom thsod*), 'presumption'. As soon as we talk about the 'real' buddha, we presume that we are talking about it, but we are always talking about the manifestation buddha. We cannot talk about the ultimate. Yes, there is a real buddha somewhere. That's true. But when I say this, I presume that I am talking about a real buddha, but in reality it ends up becoming the manifestation buddha, because I am the one who is talking about it and thinking about it. And it is because of my good fortune, devotion and so on, that I accept that there is such a buddha, such a manifestation and so on.

[Q]: So, is the Buddha my projection?

[A]: Yes, why not? But these statements are very slippery. One has to be very careful with all these kinds of statements.

[Q]: When an ordinary being glimpses the illusory quality of grasping mind, is that still conventional truth?

[A]: If it can be used, yes. Anything that can be used as a means of communication, in the majority sense, is conventional truth.



## **Looking at something not true and thinking that it is true**

In general, we have many different kinds of problems such as pain, depression and suffering of many kinds. All these problems are caused by one single thing, which is looking at something that is not true and then thinking that it is true. That is the fundamental problem. This phrase is so important, 'to hold as true what is not true' (*bden pa ma yin pa la bden par bzung*).

Most of us are tormented by this problem. For those of us who are small-time Dharma practitioners, our inability to accept the truth torments us. We know that it is true, but we still cannot accept it. Our head accepts it, but our heart cannot accept it. But that is a very small portion in this samsara; only a few genuine Dharma practitioners have this problem. For example, many so-called Dharma practitioners like us know the fact that we will never know which will come first, tomorrow or the next life. But still we go on making plans, like 'I will do a three-year retreat starting in a month'.

I am saying these things because right now we are studying Madhyamika according to Chandrakirti. And in the midst of this philosophical analysis and debate, we may forget that Chandrakirti's whole purpose in writing this book is to introduce us to the fact that we look at something that is not true, we think it is true, and then we grasp onto it. Chandrakirti is a Mahayana master, a sublime being with compassion. He is teaching Madhyamika not only to benefit a certain community or society, or even just human beings. He is teaching Madhyamika to liberate all sentient beings, not only from temporal problems, but also from their root. For Chandrakirti, the root is misunderstanding or not knowing the truth.

Understanding the truth, realising the truth, has so much benefit. Some of the early explorers doubted that the world was flat. They were not satisfied with the fact that the world is flat, so they began to contemplate and think about this, and then eventually found that the world is round. They accomplished a theory that the world is round, and this has been the fact until today, but who knows what we will find tomorrow! But since human beings realised that the world is round rather than flat, it has made things much easier. For example, planes can travel,

*The greater your ambition, the more you need to know the truth*

*Throughout history, people have tried to understand and explain the truth*

*The issue of arising or production is especially important*

*The time of establishing the absolute truth*

*When establishing the absolute truth, the theoreticians all find something, but Chandrakirti does not*

and at least we no longer fear falling off the edge! But although understanding the truth is very important, we should not despise this false one. The one that is not true is also very powerful. The world is round, but we do not see it as round; we see it as flat. If we always saw it as round, we would feel wobbly and we would need an extra gear in our cars! But we see the world as flat, although the fact is that it is round!

If your ambition is not very big, for example if you want to plant some flowers in your garden, then a flat world is fine. But if your ambition is bigger, for example to travel to United States, then you need to know a little about the facts of the world. Likewise, if your ambition is just to join a new age centre, relax and think about ecstasy and all that, there is no need to understand the truth. You can just feel relaxed, light incense, and have a massage. This will do! But if you want to get enlightenment, then you have to see the truth.

Throughout history, many people have tried to understand the truth. Even in the mundane world, we know that certain things are not true. For example, for scientists, the fact is that the world is round, not flat. Likewise, even ordinary beings like us, uneducated nomads, cowherds, and very ordinary illiterate people, accept that certain things like dreams or mirages are not true. Ordinary people like us think that a dream is not true but the everyday world that we see is real. But some other people think things like “maybe the everyday world is not real, but only the almighty creator is real”. Likewise, throughout history many theoreticians and philosophers have tried to find and carve out the truth.

There is one particularly important aspect associated with finding the truth, which is the question of production, origination, generation or genesis. Of course, when you try to see the facts about something, you do not only ask about how this thing came about and what kind of cause created it. But without thinking about the arising of an entity, you cannot even begin to think that it is the truth. Therefore the issue of arising, production or evolution is so important.

Many scientists, philosophers, and theoreticians like the Vaibhashikas have tried to find the truth, and in their search, they have used many different kinds of meditation, reasoning, and logic. Nowadays, we also have things like microscopes and so on. These theoreticians all make many deductions about what is true and what is not true, in other words, what is truly existent. For example, the Vaibhashikas come up with two things: the smallest atom and the smallest mind. Now, I have been trying to be more sympathetic towards scientists, because I am not sure that scientists are really opponents of Chandrakirti, because scientists say that their truths are changeable, and not final. But Jigme Khyentse Rinpoche does not agree. He feels that whether they say it or not, they hold onto something as existing, because whenever they observe something, they are presupposing that it already exists already. In this case, sadly we have to include scientists.

Now we come to some important words: *döndam tenla bepé kab* (*don dam gtan la 'babs pa'i skabs*), “the time of establishing the absolute truth”. In all these processes of searching for the truth, like when scientists try to find whether the world is flat or not, or when the Vaibhashika think whether this gross form is true or not, they are analysing. And this time of analysis is what we call ‘the time of establishing the absolute truth’. I do not know if the academic world in the West has an equivalent term for this, but it is like what we are doing now: performing research, perhaps, or contemplation and investigation. Anyway, all these theoreticians try to establish the absolute truth, and they all find at least one true thing. But Chandrakirti is saying that after all this he found nothing. He found that absolutely nothing exists truly, and he did not even find ‘nothing’.

Now if you ask him, what should we do during the non-truth time, the time that is not ‘the time of establishing the absolute truth’, he will say, “don’t analyse; just let it be”. That is it. That is his theory now. Earlier, I was saying that when establishing the absolute truth, one big factor to think about is arising, *kyéwa*. Now, when there is arising, there must be a cause to make things arise. And this brings us to the whole subject of Chandrakirti’s *Madhyamakavatara*. Some say

*Chandrakirti is not negating arising. He negates independent arising and an independent cause*

*You cannot bring the logic of ordinary people while establishing the absolute truth*

*An analogy for ultimate truth: for someone without impaired vision, they will see neither the hair nor its absence*

*If ordinary people perceive the absolute truth, then what is the need for a path?*

[H20]

**(b) Therefore this (Madhyamika) viewpoint is not contradicted by ordinary experience, 6:30-31.2**

6:30     *If ordinary experience was valid,  
One could perceive suchness within ordinary experience.  
What need for Superiors? What need for the path of Superiors?  
Thus, to rely on the foolish is senseless.*

6:31.1-2     *In no aspect is ordinary experience [ultimately] valid,  
Therefore, ordinary experience does not contradict ultimate truth.*

Now Chandrakirti is being very sarcastic towards his challenger. If ordinary people's experience is valid, then whatever ordinary people perceive is the absolute truth. In that case, what is the need for a sublime being such as Nagarjuna, and what is the need for his path? Returning to the example of the round world and the flat world, if the flat world that is seen by ordinary people is the truth, what is the need for scientists and their path? In the last line of sloka 30, Chandrakirti

*Since impaired vision is compounded, it is not permanent, so there must be something beyond it*

*So, what can be refuted by ordinary experience?*

*The example of a person whose vase has been stolen*

*Theoreticians who say the vase is just an idea or just atoms will be beaten up!*

*Rig pe nyé pe nyé dön: the findings of logic and analysis*

gives some advice to the challenger, saying that this is why it is senseless to see the foolish people and their ideas as valid.

Now, here I will answer a question that has come up several times. We are making an immediate presumption that there is wisdom, and from that point of view, we are devaluing the perception of ordinary people. We are not establishing this only with faith and devotion in the Buddha's words, but also with logic and reasoning. It is very simple. We cannot prove the existence of wisdom with words or similar means. We cannot prove unimpaired vision, but we know that this defective perception or impaired vision is definitely a compounded thing. It is caused by something and conditioned by something, and therefore it is not permanent. Therefore, there must be something beyond it. If you are not satisfied with this, we will continue this debate afterwards.

The first two lines of sloka 31 come together with sloka 30. All the time, ordinary people have emotions and ignorance. They are always contaminated by impaired vision, which is why whatever they see is not valid. Therefore, when we are trying to establish the absolute truth, or when we are talking about the wisdom of the sixth bhumi bodhisattva, at this time we will not be refuted by ordinary people's experience.

[H20]

### **(c) Explanation of what is specifically contradicted by ordinary experience, 6:31.3-4**

*6:31.3-4      The phenomena of ordinary experience are accepted by ordinary experience, Any denial of these would be contradicted.*

With the next two lines, we come to the next level in the structural outline. This is an explanation of what is specifically contradicted by ordinary experience. Our opponent is becoming a little frustrated. He is saying that Chandrakirti says he does not abuse, refute or disagree with the experience of ordinary people. In addition, Chandrakirti scolds other people, saying that they refute ordinary people's experience. But when our challenger says the same thing to him, Chandrakirti goes on and on, saying that ordinary people's experience cannot refute his argument. So, our challenger now asks what kind of logic or reasoning will be contradicted by ordinary people's experience? Remember, in the earlier slokas, Chandrakirti has said that we will not be refuted by ordinary experience because this is the wrong time. This is the time of establishing the absolute truth, so they cannot contradict us. So, now he will tell us, on what kind of basis will we be contradicted by ordinary experience?

Chandrakirti's answer is so witty here! In the self-commentary, he gives the following example. He says what if somebody stole something from a person, and then a second person asks, what was stolen? The first person says it was a vase, and the second says 'a vase is not a substance; it is just a name, an idea!' Chandrakirti says that in this case, he will be refuted by ordinary people's experience. The first person will beat him up!

I think that this would also be a problem for scientists, and that they would be beaten up. If the same conversation took place with a scientist as the second person, the scientist would say 'there is no vase; it is a collection of atoms'. This is because when scientists find atoms and molecules, it is while they are establishing the ultimate truth. In this case, the owner of the vase would get very angry! The same reasoning would follow for practitioners like us if we break something, and then say 'Oh, everything is impermanent, it does not matter'.

This brings us to another important phrase: *rig pe nyé pe nyé dön* (*rigs pas rnyed pa'i rnyed don*), the '*findings of logic and analysis*'. This includes anything that is found by science, logic or analysis. Chandrakirti does not agree with any of these. For example, an atom is a finding of logic and analysis. If Vaibhashikas, Cittamatrins or scientists were to say that things are atoms

If a Madhyamika says  
'everything is emptiness',  
an ordinary person will  
refute it

Studying the Madhyamika  
is like dipping your jacket  
into acid

Without the sixth  
consciousness, there is no  
inferential logic

just as ordinary people do, i.e. without any analysis, then Chandrakirti would have no problem. The problem arises because they have gone through a lot of logic and analysis, come up with an answer and then said that what they have found is something truly existing. In the commentaries, Chandrakirti also says that if somebody has the same conversation about their stolen vase with a Madhyamika who says 'Oh, that is emptiness', this would also be refuted by an ordinary person. This is quite important. We have introduced two important phrases today:

- **The time of establishing the ultimate truth** (*döndam tenla bepé kab*)
- **The findings of logic and analysis** (*rig pe nyé pe nyé dön*)

[Q]: Has Chandrakirti started talking about the subject, the perceiver? Previously we were talking about the basis of the division between the two truths as being on the object, now it seems that we are talking about the perceiver, the subject, who is either an ultimate or an ordinary being.

[A]: if Chandrakirti talks about the object, it is always just to let the opponent understand. He never makes the distinctions of the two truths objectively; he always distinguishes them subjectively. That is the big difference. Because for him, after applying all kinds of logic and analytical methods, he could not find anything objectively existing there, neither in the relative truth nor the ultimate truth.

[Q]: Is Chandrakirti saying that the scientist deserves to be beaten up because he has mixed up the ideas of relative and absolute truth, because he is using his analytically established absolute truth in an everyday sense?

[A]: If he does this, but this is hypothetical. Scientists and theoreticians have found something with logic and analysis, so if hypothetically someone says that they have lost something, the theoreticians have to respond in a certain way. Because they have established something with logic and analysis, they have to say, 'Oh, that is not a thing, it is such-and-such a substance'. In this hypothetical case, then ordinary people will beat them up. But for Chandrakirti, in the absolute truth there are no words, no expressions, nothing. In the relative world, he just accepts everything without any analysis. So, if someone asked Chandrakirti, he would respond without analysis. As Aryadeva said, although it may not give you complete liberation, you should really study this Madhyamika. It is like dipping your jacket into acid and then removing it – there is a form, but it will fall apart. If you dip yourself into this kind of logic, nothing really makes sense. But you can still live in this kind of world.

[Q]: In the West, we talk about five senses. Buddhists add a sixth. What is the healthy faculty of the mind if analysis is not part of it?

[A]: Without this sixth consciousness, there is no logic, especially inferential logic. For example, when you see smoke on the mountain, you may not see fire, but you think that there must be a fire because you can see the smoke. That is done by the sixth consciousness. With only five senses, you would have to see the fire.

[Q]: Wisdom cannot be proved by means of a positive argument, but we know that impaired vision is compounded, and you said that therefore there must be something beyond it. Why is that?

[A]: Here we are not focussing on the vision itself, but rather its impaired aspect. If there is an absence of impaired vision, then there is correct vision. You do not have to call it 'wisdom'. 'Wisdom' is just a name for this, for communication.

Earlier we talked about the 'findings of analysis and logic'. If you are trying to establish the truth using logic and analysis and you find something, what you find must become the ultimate truth, because it is truly accomplished or truly existent. Until the 31<sup>st</sup> sloka, we have been answering the challenger by saying that other-arising does not exist on the ultimate level. An independent and unfabricated cause that is 'other' and an independent and unfabricated arising do not exist on the ultimate level.

And then our challenger objected that ordinary people accept that other-arising exists, so we should also accept that since we accept the ordinary people's view. Then Chandrakirti explained why ordinary people's experience is not valid, because we are now establishing the ultimate truth, and when we talk of ultimate truth, you cannot bring the point of view of ordinary people to refute this. Now our challenger says that this is unfair. Every time he talks about something like other-arising, Chandrakirti brings up the issue of ultimate truth, and of course, ultimately, nothing arises. The challenger is saying that this is unfair. Sloka 32 is an answer to that.

[H17]

## (ii) Refutation from a relative standpoint, 6:32

6:32     *An ordinary [person] who merely has sown his seed,  
Will exclaim: "I created this child!"  
People also think: "I planted this tree!"  
Hence, even in ordinary experience is there no creation from other.*

*Other-arising does not even exist in the relative truth, because ordinary people do not analyse*

Here Chandrakirti is saying that other-arising does not exist not only on the ultimate level, but also in the relative truth. Because all that ordinary people do is sow some seeds, and then later say, 'I produced this child'. And they put some seeds under the earth, and later when the tree grows, they will say 'I planted this tree'. They never analyse. Here there is another phrase that I would like you to pay attention to, *matag maché pa* (*ma brtags ma dpyad pa*), which means 'unanalysed' or 'without analysis'.

An ordinary person will never feel puzzled and think things like, 'oh, I inserted something like snot or glue, and after nine months something with eyes and a month came out'. Ordinary people never think like this. They think 'I made this son, I made this daughter'. This is how ordinary people think.

In earlier slokas, Chandrakirti has said that even if ordinary people accept other-arising, their acceptance is invalid and will not harm his argument, because it comes from their deluded ideas. They are fools, ordinary people, who are contaminated by ignorance and so on. In this sloka, he says that actually they do not accept other-arising anyway.

[Q]: But when an ordinary person says, "I created this child", they think that 'I' and 'child' are different.

[A]: They actually say, "I gave birth to it". They do not think things like "someone else gave birth to it". Without any analysis, ordinary people say "I made this so. I created those flowers". Without analysis, they think they made these things themselves. They do not really accept or make a specific observation that I, a separate being, am creating another separate being. Now, if you find with analysis and logic that a cause is giving birth to a different result, then there is other-arising. But if an ordinary person says, "I created this son or daughter", they are not using this kind of analytical and logical mind. They are not even saying that there is self-arising. They do not say anything. What is the problem here?

[Q]: Chandrakirti is saying that they do not recognise self-arising, other-arising, both or neither, so it seems that Chandrakirti is just playing here.

[A]: No, I do not think so. I have a feeling that all of you think that Chandrakirti should say something very profound and complicated. His logic is profound, but it is not complicated. Here, you have to concentrate on the statement "I produced this child". For example, when Gérard and Ani Jimpa, have a child, Gérard will say, "this is my son. I made this". Of course! Perhaps Ani Jimpa was very unfaithful and slept with Jakob, for example, but maybe Gérard does not know this, and so he still thinks he created the child. This is what we are talking about. If you say that the child and I are two different things, you are already analysing. Without analysis, we simply say I created this. Someone like Gérard has great pride in having a son, his own child that he created. Gérard inserts a substance inside Ani Jimpa, you understand, some kind of substance that comes from him. It is not as though he

*If an ordinary person says 'I produced this child', they are not establishing this using analysis and logic*

*Chandrakirti's logic is profound, but not complicated*

*An enlightened being does not have 'will'*

*The other schools have all established theories that accept arising*

*The Prasangikas accept mere arising, but as soon as you talk of self-arising etc., is it analysis, which they refute*

[H16]

[H17]

*So, why are we negating all these theories?*

*A path that falls into an extreme is faulty, and will not lead you to liberation*

takes it out of his pocket and puts it in! The examples of creating a vase, a chair or a tree are very similar. This is the case as long as there is an 'I' involved, and we say that I created, or my 'self' created this. You should concentrate on this word 'I'. For example, if Gérard says, 'this is my child', and then someone like Jakob says, 'no, this is not your child; it came from that substance', then Gérard will be very sad. Similarly, when the theoreticians and the substantialists say that there is other-arising, this other cause is *rig pe nyé pe nyé döñ*, something that is accomplished by reasoning, logic and analysis.

[Q]: If we say "this is my baby", it is not a finding of logical analysis at all, it is simply a statement. We think that we are so logical, but that is just a theory as well, because we are not.

[A]: Yes, so the last line says that other-arising does not even exist in the relative world.

[Q]: Maybe these theories add causes of suffering on top of ordinary experience, which is already difficult enough!

[A]: Yes, please tell the theoreticians!

[Q]: For example, when we say, "he drinks a cup of tea", there is action and will. If a being has realised the non-separateness of other and I, object and subject, and thus realised the empty nature of things, whose will is it when they are performing an action? They cannot say "I drink this tea" any more, and surely, the cup has no will. So, whose will is it?

[A] For an enlightened being, there would be no will. Realised beings do not have will from their own point of view, but from the point of view of devoted disciples and students, we can then say that they have a will and compassion for beings.

Sloka 32 is quite important, because the Svatantrika-Madhyamikas say that other-arising should be accepted during the relative truth. But, for the Prasangikas, as long as there is arising, the arising must be from self, other, both or neither, and whatever theory you accept, that theory comes from analysis and logic. For instance, the Samkhya school in Hinduism accepts that things arise from the self. The three buddhist schools – Vaibhashika, Sautrantika and Cittamatra – accept that things arise from others. Jainism accepts that things arise from both, and Charvakas believe that things come from no cause. They are nihilists, and do not believe in causes. All these theories are established with much analysis. They analyse for years, until there is nothing left to analyse, and then they come to one of these conclusions.

By contrast, the Prasangika-Madhyamikas do not accept theories that are accomplished by analysis and logic, like a theory of arising. According to the Prasangikas, if you analyse, there is no arising, let alone self-arising, other-arising and all that. There is no arising. But without logic and analysis, then there is mere arising, and the Prasangikas accept that mere arising. If you were to ask them, what is this mere arising? Is it other-arising, self-arising, both or neither? They will say it is none of these. The moment that you talk of so-called other-arising and self-arising, it is analysis. But, as Chandrakirti is saying here, when a father says, "this is my child", there is no analysis involved at all.

## **(b) The two benefits of these refutations (614)**

### **(i) The benefit that they free one from eternalism and nihilism**

So now, our opponent asks Chandrakirti, what is the purpose and benefit of all these things that you have been talking about? What is the point that you are trying to make here? What is the benefit of negating other-arising and all these other theories?

Correct me if I am wrong, but it seems to me that the difference between western philosophers and eastern philosophers, especially buddhists and Hindus, is that eastern philosophers are crazy about not falling into the eternalist extreme or the nihilist extreme. This is so important for them, which is why we talk about Madhyamika, the middle way. If you fall into one of the extremes, then your path will become a faulty path. It will not lead beings to anything; it will mislead

them. But if a path is a middle way, and does not fall into any extremes, especially eternalism or nihilism, then it is a correct path to liberation. So now, in sloka 33, Chandrakirti will talk about the benefits of all this negation and reasoning, and explain how they make this Madhyamika path into something that does not fall into any of the extremes.

[Q]: When you talk about ‘without analysis’, is Chandrakirti saying that this is all right?

[A]: He is not giving permission. He is just saying that this is relative truth.

[Q]: He says that if we analyse and find something such as being or non-being, it is a mistake. Why does everyone else but him always find something that is a mistake?

[A]: Chandrakirti is a consequentialist. He uses your own logic, your own theory to contradict you, and thus proves that you are wrong.

[Q]: So he cannot be contradicted himself?

[A]: No, he does not have a view. He does not have a religion.

[Q]: But he practices analysis, and he says that we have to analyse objects, our ego and so on.

[A]: This is coming! Just make sure that you do not die tomorrow or the day after tomorrow!

*Chandrakirti cannot be contradicted, because he has no view or religion*

[H18]

### (a) How one is free from eternalism and nihilism, 6:33

6:33

*Because a sprout is not other than the seed,  
At the time of the sprout, there is no destruction of the seed.  
Because they are also not one,  
At the time of the sprout, you cannot say a seed exists.*

[H19]

Chandrakirti is saying that when we say things like the shoot and the seed are different, we are speaking in terms that belong to the ‘time of analysis and establishing the view’ (*don dam gtan la 'bebs pa'i skabs*). The substantialists, our opponents, have already constructed a seed or a cause that is independently existing and unfabricated. They believe in truly arising, which Chandrakirti does not accept. So, because the shoot is not different from the seed, when there is the arising of the shoot, the seed is not exhausted or extinct. During the time of the shoot, the seed is not destroyed, which proves that Chandrakirti’s way does not fall into the extreme of nihilism. Also, the seed and the shoot are not one, so we are not saying that during the time of the shoot there is a seed. This is why Chandrakirti’s way does not fall into the extreme of eternalism.

*Seed and shoot are neither the same or different, so avoiding the eternalist and nihilist extremes*

*Seed and shoot are just labelled without analysis, so arising is also just a label*

From this sloka, we also know that even during the relative truth, there is no cause during the time of the result, and there is no no-cause. There is not any concept of the cause being there, nor any concept of the cause not being there. What you need to know is this: if the seed or the shoot were truly existent, then we would have to talk about whether or not they are different. But in reality, both seed and shoot are labelled without any analysis. Therefore, the idea or notion of arising is also just a mere idea, a label. There is no such thing as a truly existent arising. This will be made clearer in sloka 34.

[H18]

### (b) Detailed explanation of what allows this (616)

[H19]

#### (i) Ultimately, they have no true nature, 6:34

[H20]

#### (a) Refuting genesis from other as absolute truth

*If phenomena were truly existent, then emptiness meditation would be a destroyer of phenomena*

*Emptiness meditation is trying to become accustomed to reality*

*This is a problem for Cittamatrins: they are a Mahayana school, but they say dependent reality is truly existent*

[H20]

### **(b) Applying quotes from the sutras**

In the *Ratnakuta Sutra*, the Buddha said to Kashyapa, “emptiness will never make things empty. Things are empty from beginningless time”. He also said “whether buddhas were to come to this world or not, the nature of phenomena would not change”.

[H20]

### **(c) Thus dispelling the idea that emptiness is established as the truth**

This is a big statement because many people think that the Buddha invented this emptiness, but this is not the case. Whether or not the Buddha comes, the emptiness is always there. It does not get better; it does not get worse.

[H19]

### **(ii) Conventionally, they have no true nature (619)**

[H20]

### **(a) If thoroughly analysed, conventional truth is destroyed, 6:35**

6:35     *Were you to analyse these objects,  
Apart from the actual entity of the absolute,  
Nothing enduring is found; thus the truth  
Of conventional ordinary experience is not to be analysed.*

*If there is no arising on the relative level, how can there be relative truth?*

This sloka gives further explanation about this *matag maché pa*, ‘without analysis’. We might still have the doubt that although there is no arising on the ultimate level, whether other-arising or self-arising, that we nevertheless have to accept other-arising on the relative level. We still

*Ultimately, there are no two truths*

*Conventional truth should left alone, unanalysed*

*If Chandrakirti does not accept arising in the ultimate or relative truth, where do these phenomena come from?*

*Even in the ordinary world, people know that their reflection in a mirror is not a truly existent face*

have this kind of doubt. So, our opponents say, even if we suppose that there is no other-arising on the ultimate level, you still have to accept other-arising on the relative level, otherwise there would be no relative truth. And if there is no relative truth, how could you talk about two truths?

In response, Chandrakirti says that there are no two truths on the ultimate level. We only talk about two truths for the sake of communication in the conventional truth. In addition, words like ‘relative truth’ and ‘ultimate truth’ belong to the time of analysis. Ordinary people do not talk like that. This 35<sup>th</sup> sloka is almost like an advice. If you analyse all these phenomena, then anything that you find will end up becoming the ultimate truth. You will end up finding the ultimate truth, and you will not find anything beyond the ultimate truth if you analyse further.

The last line is important. Therefore, the conventional truth should not be analysed. You should just leave it alone. Here the question was whether we can have truly existent other-arising in the relative truth, and the response was no, because so-called truly existing other-arising belongs to the time of analysis. Here, in the relative truth, you should not analyse, because if you analyse, you will not find anything beyond the ultimate truth. For instance if you want to see a mirage, you should not go near it! As you get ever closer to a mirage, you do not find anything that you thought was there.

[H20]

**(b) Thorough analysis shows that it is the same even for conventional truth, 6:36**

6:36     *With the analysis of suchness  
Neither creation from self nor from other is possible;  
It is not feasible even conventionally.  
Now what happens to your creation?*

Now Chandrakirti says that all the reasoning and logic that he has just used to prove that there is no other-arising in the ultimate level can also prove that there is no other-arising even in the conventional truth. He is being a little witty here. He says that there is no self-arising and no other-arising, and on the last line, he sarcastically asks the opponent, so where is your arising? Then our opponent becomes a little annoyed, and asks a question in return. All right, so you, Chandrakirti, do not accept any arising in the ultimate truth or in the relative truth. So, in this case, what are all these phenomena? Where do they come from? When you look at a mountain, you see a mountain, when you listen to music, you can hear music. What are these things? How do they arise? This is his challenge. Chandrakirti’s answer to this question is given in sloka 37 and the first half of sloka 38. It is such a great advice for practitioners like us.

[H20]

**(c) Using analogies to illustrate genesis non-analytically, 6:37-38.2**

6:37     *Empty things such as reflections,  
Namely composites – are [generally] accepted.  
Likewise, from something empty, such as a reflection,  
Consciousness of its characteristics may be created.*

6:38.1-2     *Similarly, while all entities may be empty,  
They are fully created from [their] emptinesses.*

Here Chandrakirti even brings help from ordinary experience. He says it is not just his view that things do not arise from truly existent causes and conditions. It is not only he. Ordinary people in this world generally accept empty things like a reflection or a mirage. When you look in the mirror, your face appears and you say things like ‘I see my face’. These results are generally accepted in the world, and yet everybody knows that a mirage is not truly existent. Everybody

*Even in a dream, which does not truly exist, you will not confuse a monkey and an elephant*

accepts that the reflection of a face in the mirror is not truly existent. Chandrakirti is saying that he has not done anything extra here, because this is something that is done by everyone.

The last two lines of sloka 37 say, “*Likewise, from something empty like reflection, consciousness of its characteristics may be created*”. For example, if you are dreaming about a monkey and an elephant, you still have a very good discriminating wisdom, although it is a dream and not truly existent. You do not confuse the monkey for an elephant or the elephant for a monkey. That kind of consciousness arises. Similarly, the first two lines of sloka 38 say that although everything is emptiness, from this emptiness comes everything. Based on this kind of idea, things like visualisations in the Vajrayana work. If you had a truly existent form, you might as well forget it, because your visualisation would never work.

[H18]

### (c) Concise conclusion, 6:38.3-4

6:38.3-4    *Because in the two truths there is no inherent nature,  
There is neither eternalism nor nihilism.*

*Ultimately, there is neither birth nor death,  
and relatively, everything is dependent arising*

The last two lines of sloka 38 are the conclusion. None of these phenomena exist truly within the relative truth or the ultimate truth; therefore, they are neither eternalist nor nihilist. On the ultimate level, everything is like when you dream that a child is born to you, and then within the same dream the child dies. From the ultimate point of view, since there was no real birth of a child, the death of that child is also not real. And in the relative truth, everything is dependent arising, thus neither eternalist nor nihilist.

Next, our opponent asks a very sharp question. He says, very well, if you really do not believe in these things, then what is happening when someone creates a bad karma, and only receives the result of that karma after one hundred lifetimes? Our opponent is still trying to prove that there must be something truly existent to link the cause with its effect. This is a sharp question, so the argument will become very tough.



### Why do we need to analyse and debate so much?

*Traditionally, there is a lot of repetition in a Tibetan teaching*

As you have noticed by now, the buddhist style of teaching involves a lot of repetition. In a buddhist school, the abbot usually teaches the whole teaching three times: in the morning, in the afternoon, and the next morning before he begins the new teaching. I am very tempted to go over the root text more quickly than we have been, but since this is something that we cannot do again and again, I feel that I should also try to cover as much as possible. Therefore, I am trying to teach you in the way that a Tibetan abbot would teach his students. This is why you will find so much repetition. I have not opened these texts for almost twenty years, and so much is forgotten. It is mainly my laziness and lack of enthusiasm for all these difficult subjects, although sometimes my excuse is that I would rather practice than go through all this intellectual stuff.

*The purpose of the Madhyamika is for us to understand that phenomena do not have a truly existing nature*

Now, here I am going to repeat again. The main purpose of the Madhyamika teachings is for you to understand that all these phenomena do not have an inherently existing or truly existing nature. In one way, you might think it is quite easy. Why don't we just say that everything does not have a truly existent nature? Why do we go through all these analyses, debates and arguments?

*We know that dreams do not exist, but things like power and money are still very important to us*

*Many spiritual paths teach the futility of worldly phenomena*

*But states of bliss or reduced emotions are not enlightenment*

*For the Madhyamika, everything is not truly existent on the ultimate level*

*Asking 'am I standing up?' is not analysis, but asking 'am I made of atoms?' is*

*Ultimately, Chandrakirti has no view. Relatively, he does not analyse*

There are many reasons for this. We know that certain phenomena, such as dreams, magic or mirages, do not truly exist. That is why we do not necessarily have grasping mind towards these things. But generally, things like fame, possessions, position, power, attention and praise are all very important for us. This is because we think that they are true and therefore important, and so we place great emphasis on them.

Now, there are many methods in this world. There are many philosophers and many religions. To a certain extent, they have also realised that things that are considered valuable and important in this world are not important. And they have taught us how we should renounce these things and attain the spiritual achievements that they have designated. For example, many Hindu spiritual paths know that worldly dharmas, worldly phenomena, such as praise and criticism; gain and loss; and happiness and unhappiness are completely futile. And knowing this, they have taught people that they should not be attached to these things, and they should pursue a certain path to get rid of all this grasping and craving for them. So, even many Hindus do practices like *shamatha*.

These methods are wonderful, and they actually manage to reduce or weaken many of our emotions. But then, there are other people, like the Vaibhashika, Sautrantika or Cittamatra schools, who are not happy just with weakening the emotions. They want to reach enlightenment. They think that many of these philosophers' paths will only lead you to a state where there is some kind of bliss, because you have temporarily reduced many emotions. But that is not enlightenment. So, their quest or search has become much more sophisticated, and so they introduce methods like *vipashyana*.

But then, from the Madhyamika point of view, these three schools still believe in certain things that exist truly. For example, normal human beings think that praise is very important, and so they place great value in it and work very hard for it. They might do things like printing pamphlets and distributing them widely in order to create this kind of situation. They do this because they believe that praise is truly existent, or at least they like the feeling when people praise them. Now, from the Madhyamika point of view, just as these ordinary people are bound by this truly existent praise, people like the Cittamatra school will be bound in samsara by truly existent entities such as *zhenwong*, dependent reality.

That is why the Madhyamikas keep on insisting that everything is not truly existent on the ultimate level. And, according to Chandrakirti, the idea or term 'truly existent' is not applied on the relative level, because it belongs to the time of establishing the ultimate truth. I am not saying that a salesman will not argue if you tell him that his leather is not genuine! But in this case, the 'genuine' that he talks about has got nothing to do with establishing a theory.

I want to explain this a little further, because I have a feeling that many people only vaguely understand this word 'analysis'. For example, people come to me and say that there is analysis in every moment. For instance, if I ask you to stand up and you stand up, then you might analyse the situation and say 'I am standing up'. But we are not talking about that kind of analysis. We are talking about theoretical analysis. If I ask you to stand up, you do not ask yourself things like 'is this 'I' that is standing up made up of atoms or not?' You do not think like that; you just think 'I am standing up'. We are not referring to that kind of ordinary analysis here, but only to theoretical analysis.

Ultimately, Chandrakirti does not have any view. He has no religion, no religious view, no philosophical view and no thesis. Relatively, he does not analyse. So, if someone tells Chandrakirti that they have lost a vase, then maybe Chandrakirti might help them to find it. It is completely unanalysed. And Chandrakirti is a Prasangika Madhyamika master, a consequentialist. So, if you are a scientist who says that a vase is in fact made of atoms, then Chandrakirti will point out the consequences of your theory. For example, if you were a policeman and someone reports to you that they have been attacked, then if you are that kind of theoretician, you would also have to say that this person is not being attacked by anyone. It is

*An important issue: what about karma and reincarnation?*

*How can a good deed lead to a good result much later?*

*For buddhist schools, mind is impermanent, and moments of mind are very short-lived*

*So, the actions of the present mind will give rise to results for a different future mind, with random effects*

*This is a problem for other schools, but not Chandrakirti, since he does not believe in truly existent things*

only some atoms. Chandrakirti is pointing out to you that this is the consequence of what you are saying.

So, you should relax and broaden your mind here! When we talk about ‘not truly existent phenomena’, it includes everything: the cause, the result and the action, which is the arising, dwelling, and the cessation. All these are not truly existent. Again, the Prasangika Madhyamikas will point out the consequences of their theories to the substantialists, scientists, philosophers and theoreticians. If they say that there is a truly existing cause such as atoms or infinitesimal particles of mind or dependent reality, then the consequence is that there must be a truly existent arising. The further consequence is that there must be a truly existent dwelling and a truly existent cessation. Everything then becomes truly existent. This is what Chandrakirti is pointing out.

Now, there is a big issue for those who accept karma and reincarnation. This argument applies mainly to karma, although they are similar. I do not know whether these arguments apply to scientists, but let us find out. Many religions accept karma, not only buddhists, but also Hindus and others who believe in good and virtuous deeds, such as obeying God and his wishes, and then obtaining the reward. They are all the same in this case. Let us suppose that you create some karma, by doing something bad or good. You may not get the result immediately, right after that. For instance, by giving a beggar some coins, it will not immediately make you a millionaire. But all these religions believe that this kind of result, if it is not destroyed by any obstacle, will come eventually, whether it is five hundred lifetimes later, five hundred days later or just minutes later.

In summary, you create the bad karma, and then you will get the results, but it may only come after a few hundred lifetimes. For instance, you might go to a temple or a church and do a good deed today, but to go to heaven, you have to wait until you die. This is where the problem arises, because in between, you may not go to church or do any more good deeds. We can make the example clearer. In the morning, you go to church and offer flowers, do good deeds like generosity, and so on. Then you are tired, so you sleep until the next day. But then the next day, just as you wake up, you die and go to heaven. Since the day before, you have been sleeping, so you have stopped doing good deeds. Nevertheless, it is believed that you will get the result, although your virtuous actions have not been continuous.

The three buddhist schools in particular have thought a lot about this. They think that mind is impermanent. For instance, it is believed that within the time that it takes a healthy person to snap their fingers, there are about sixty moments. And within these sixty moments, there are more than sixty moments of mind. Each moment, the mind of the past is gone forever, and will never come back. If we remember yesterday, it is not that the past mind is coming back. The present moment is now, then that will be finished and the future mind will come.

So, the issue here is that a mind creates this good karma, but then it is gone. And after hundreds of moments, or hundreds of lifetimes, the good result of this karma comes. But then the result of this karma is coming to a different mind from the one that created it. This is unfair, because the creator of a good karma will never get the result of the good karma, because the creator is long gone! And the receiver of the good karmic result has an accidental success. Suddenly, for no reason, something good happens. Similarly, the creator of bad karma does not really have to worry, because the mind that created it will go. But for the receiver it is unfair, because suddenly for no reason, something bad happens.

All these schools and theoreticians have to solve this problem, but it is not an issue for Chandrakirti. This is the beautiful thing about him; it is not an issue for him although it is an issue for everyone else! Do you know why? It is because all the others believe in a truly existent cause, truly existent arising, truly existent dwelling and truly existent cessation. That is why they have this issue, and in order to resolve it, they come up with all kinds of very good ideas.

*For Vaibhashikas, the effect of an action is not lost because it is a substantially existent phenomenon, vijñapti*

*The form of the vow also leads to effects like guilt if you break the vow*

*Sautrantikas believe in continuity of mind, namshé, and habitual tendencies, bagchak*

*Madhyamikas do not accept truly existent arising, ceasing, or a 'gap' between cause and effect, so there is nothing to explain*

For example, the Vaibhashika believe that there is a substance, a substantially existing phenomenon, which they call a ‘promissory note’ (*vijñapti*), or ‘IOU’. They believe that the effect of an action is not lost (*las 'bras chud mi za ba*), because it is a substantially existing phenomenon. For example, if Gérard takes a celibacy vow, for many other buddhist schools, this vow would be considered a very mental thing. But the Vaibhashikas believe that it is a form. That is why if, for example, Gérard fantasises about having a fling with you-know-who, it would not destroy his vow. But if he does it with her, then it destroys the vow. That is why it is a form. You should not despise the Vaibhashika; they have very clever ideas! So, let us say that you take a celibacy vow this morning, and then you sleep. Although you do not think about being celibate while you are sleeping, it does not matter. You have the vow, and it does not get lost.

Similarly, you might take a vow to never tell a lie. There are two aspects here. If you have taken a vow never to lie, but sometimes you tell lies in your mind, it does not really break the vow, which proves that it is a substance. And if in the future you break the vow, then why do you feel guilty about telling a lie? According to the Vaibhashikas, that guilt comes from this form, so to speak.

The Sautrantika believe in a substance called ‘continuity of mind’, *namshé* (*rnam shes*), and in something called ‘habitual tendencies’, *bagchak* (*bag chags*) that act as a connection between the creator of the karma and the receiver of the karmic result. The Cittamatra school is very similar, but their identification of that *namshé*, that mind or consciousness is very different.

For the Madhyamikas, first they do not believe in truly existent arising, so therefore they cannot accept truly existent ceasing. Things only exist on the conventional level, so they only accept some kind of cessation without any analysis. On the ultimate level, Chandrakirti never believes that there is a truly existing ceasing. So, unlike the three other schools, Chandrakirti does not have the problem that the mind, which was the creator of the karma, has ceased. This argument is very similar to sloka 33. For the other schools, the creator of the karma has ceased to exist, and the receiver of the karma comes much later, so they need something in between. But since Chandrakirti does not accept truly existent cessation, he has no problem about having something in between. For him, the so-called ‘ceasing to exist’ is not truly existent, and the arising is not truly existent. Therefore, this ‘gap’ does not exist. There is no truly existent gap. We should always use the words ‘truly existent’; otherwise, it could be misleading.

I would like to clarify something here. When you read the root text of the *Madhyamakavatara*, you will find some seemingly contradictory words. For example, the second line of sloka 33 states that “*At the time of the sprout there is no destruction of the seed*”, which indicates that the cause has not ceased to exist during the time of the result. Then in sloka 39, which we are about to come to, the first line says, “*Because an action does not inherently cease*”, which almost indicates that the action does not cease to exist. But then the third line says, “*Long time may have passed since the completion of an action*”, which indicates that the action does cease to exist. All you need to know is that these are not contradictory, because Chandrakirti is talking at different levels, sometimes on the ultimate level, and sometimes on the relative level.

[H17]

**(ii) The benefit that they allow for the effects of actions (620)**

[H18]

**(a) Although there is no Ground of All, the effects of actions are not lost**

[H19]

**(i) The main subject, 6:39**

6:39      *Because [an action] does not inherently cease,  
And although there is no all-ground, an action is able [to produce a result].  
A long time may have passed since the completion of an action,  
Yet know that it will still manifest a result.*

[H20]

*Therefore, there can still be the action of cause and effect even without a 'connector' such as the alaya*

**(a) The main explanation of how connection between action and effect is allowed for**

Because there is no truly existent arising, there is no such thing as truly existing ceasing. Therefore, even without the connecting substance such as the *kinzhi*, the *alaya*, we can still have the action of cause and effect. We do not need the *alaya*, because actions have not truly arisen, and they have not truly ceased. In the conventional truth, it is possible that we will experience the cessation of an action, and after many years, it is still possible to perceive a mere result of that action, also conventionally. Chandrakirti will explain this with a very good analogy in sloka 40.

[H19]

*This can happen just as we can awake still attached to the objects we saw in a dream*

**(ii) Explaining with an analogy (633), 6:40**

6:40      *After seeing objects in a dream,  
Upon awakening, a fool is still attached.  
Likewise, actions terminated and without self-existence,  
Still manifest results.*

So we ask Chandrakirti, how is that possible? How can something function in an orderly way if it does not truly exist, arise or cease? In reply, he gives us an example. Let us say that our friend, I will not mention his name, has had a dream – a very steamy dream! And then he wakes up, and although she has gone far away, to the United States, he can still have desire for her. Actually, the text says that people may have a passionate dream about a beautiful girl, and when they wake up, certain fools may still desire the girl that they have never met. Likewise, actions that are not truly existent can still manifest certain results that are not existent.

[Q]: Why does this example work?

[A]: That girl in the dream is not truly existent even in the relative world, but when you wake up, you can still have desire towards her, and this desire is relatively true. The girl is relatively not true, but you can still have the desire. Likewise, Chandrakirti is saying that going back to the higher truth, everything is like this. Although phenomena are not truly existent, you can still have desire. You can still have aggression. This is how Chandrakirti works; he is so clever that in just a few words he gives both an example and reason.

[Q]: How does it actually function?

[A]: Now we are talking about the connector. The problem with our opponents is that there is karma – creator, created, gone – and then there is a result. In between, what is the connector? Chandrakirti is saying that they have this problem because they believe that there is a truly existing karma, a truly existing ceasing and a truly existing result. Therefore, they need a connector, but Chandrakirti does not, because he has no truly existent cause, ceasing or result. If this is the case, we ask him, how do we function? Like a dream! In your dream, the dream girl came, and when you awoke, you still desired her. For the theoreticians, the dream girl would actually have to come in the morning in order for you to have desire for her. But there is no need for that. Here Chandrakirti is using conventional experience, saying that you can have a dream and then after the dream still crave whatever happened in the dream. That is something that everyone understands and experiences, and therefore it does not need further explanation. Then he says that karma and the results of karma function in a similar way.

*Karma and its results function in the same way as a person craving objects in a dream*

*If you realise that your actions do not inherently exist, that is liberation*

*[Q]: It seems that Chandrakirti is mixing up the relative and ultimate truths in his argumentation*

*[A]: There is nothing to talk about on the ultimate level. We can only talk about time, space and so on relatively*

*[Q]: Karma is not evident to everyone, so Chandrakirti is introducing a theory*

[Q]: If I punch someone, or commit a violent act, and after one hundred lives a person comes and craves revenge, where does he obtain the knowledge to punch me?

[A]: The result may not necessarily be punching, as he may already be enlightened by then. Things like that can happen. Of course, Chandrakirti is just using the dream here as an example. After an experience in a dream, one can later have an experience that is still a craving based on the dream. It does not mean that if we punch someone, that they will experience and remember that same kind of craving for a hundred lifetimes.

[Q]: Is a universal god righteous?

[A]: You are asking how karma works. This question belongs to a completely different department! It works, as we will explain later. But here, we are presuming that you already accept this fact.

[Q]: The basis of Chandrakirti's argument seems to rest on the fact that the other buddhist schools are talking about cause and effect being truly existent. But I am not happy with that. Even for the Vaibhashikas, the person and the action are not truly existent. Likewise, the *vijnapti* is not truly existent because it ends as soon as the karma is exhausted, so I do not follow why he is saying that all these things are truly existent in the other buddhist schools

[A]: It can exhaust, but the exhaustion of the *vijnapti* is a truly existing exhaustion. You are right, the Vaibhashika and Sautrantika also meditate on emptiness of person and they have taken care of most gross phenomena. But they still believe in subtle phenomena, like atoms, and as long as they accept even one thing as truly existent, they must have a truly existent arising, abiding and exhaustion. This is what Chandrakirti is attacking. Chandrakirti knows very well that the Vaibhashika meditate on selflessness.

[Q]: If you could clearly see that your actions do not inherently exist, would there then be no karmic result?

[A]: If you actually realise it, then that is liberation.

[Q]: When we talk of absolute truth, doesn't that imply that relative truth exists really?

[A]: Yes, but Chandrakirti never said that absolute truth truly exists on the ultimate level. On the relative level, yes, both exist.

[Q]: It is not just about karma. The other schools will also have the problem of a connector between any cause and any effect. So even just for a fraction of a second, they still have to explain the connection.

[A]: That is the consequence. You are rightly taking the side of Chandrakirti here.

[Q]: Chandrakirti seems to be mixing levels in his argumentation. On the one hand, he talks about absolute truth, where there is no time. But on the other hand, he talks about relative truth, where he talks about time, one thing after another, cause and effect and so on. So, my question is how he can build an argument while switching between levels. It seems a little tricky to me.

[A]: Why is this tricky?

[Q]: For a true dialectic, you need to use the same entities or terms.

[A]: When we talk about relative truth, we have to talk about time, space and so on. Actually, this is the only time that we can talk about them. For Chandrakirti, there is nothing to talk about on the ultimate level. But he negates the ways in which other people establish the ultimate truth, saying that they do not work both ultimately and relatively. First, he observes and analyses the logic and analysis that has been put forth by his opponents, and then he uses their own reasoning to show the consequences of their analysis, and thereby render it obsolete. When Chandrakirti is refuting the reasoning that his opponents use to establish absolute truth, such as the true existence of substances, he merely says that if something truly exists in that sense, then it should have a true continuity, or link between the result and its causes. So, it is in this sense that Chandrakirti is talking about the absolute truth. He is not putting forth any thesis that says 'this is absolute truth'.

[Q]: Chandrakirti says that in the absolute, there is no karma. But when he talks about relative truth, he appeals to ordinary experience. Until now, he has been talking about things that are evident to everybody, such as causality, but karma is not evident to everybody. How can he talk of karma without introducing a theory?

*[A]: Our opponent is also asking this, and it will be explained in the next two slokas*

[A]: There are several answers. We can talk about what is ‘evident’ to people. This is a good doubt! First, when Chandrakirti says, “I do not have any thesis”, he is saying, “I do not have a thesis established by analysis and logic”. Of course, if you ask him, “are you Chandrakirti”, he will say yes. That is some kind of thesis. But that thesis is conventional truth, and conventional truth is never established using theory and logic. So, then maybe your argument is as follows: in this case, when we do a good deed, like meditating on compassion, how can this give us a good result? Is that a thesis? Is that also established by analysis, by analysing that meditation on aggression does not give us a good experience? This is a very timely question, because the explanation is coming in slokas 41 and 42. It is exactly what our opponent is asking. He is saying that, if we believe what Chandrakirti proposes, then in this case, the result will be endless. Even if the action stops, it will still go on producing the result. We will have this kind of problem.

## [H18]

*Challenge: if there is no connector, then the logic of cause and effect will collapse*

### (b) Rejecting two extreme consequences

I do not know how you will accept the reply, but it is very witty and clever. The objection is that if Chandrakirti does not believe in a connector, and he does not believe in truly existent arising, ceasing, and so on, then all the logic of karma will be dismantled; it will collapse. Although the action ceases to exist, it will still go on giving all kinds of results. Or a good action will give bad results, and a bad action will give a good result. Things like this will happen.

## [H19]

*Someone with jaundice sees a white conch as yellow, not as a flower*

### (i) The consequence that maturation would be endless, 6:41

6:41     *While objects may be as non-existing,  
Someone with diseased eyes may perceive floating hairs,  
But not other [non-existent] forms.  
Similarly, know there is no repeated maturation.*

Although the object is not truly existent in the relative world, someone who has impaired vision sees the floating hairs. But he does not see that a donkey has a horn. Someone with jaundice sees a conch as yellow conch, but he does not see it as something else, like a flower. Similarly, a karma that has already ceased to exist will not necessarily give another result. This is Chandrakirti’s answer.

## [H19]

*Those who go beyond virtuous and non-virtuous actions will reach liberation*

### (ii) The consequence that maturation would be without coherence, 6:42

6:42     *Although seeing the non-virtuous ripening [that arises from] black deeds;  
And the virtuous ripening [that arises from] virtue [as empty],  
Liberation is achieved by a mind free from good and evil.  
Speculation about the consequences of action was discouraged [by the Buddha].*

His answer is not finished. He goes on to say that a non-virtuous result comes from non-virtuous action. For those who are experiencing a virtuous result, such as happiness, this result comes from virtuous action. Those who go beyond virtuous and non-virtuous actions will reach liberation. In conclusion, he adds that the Buddha discouraged speculation about the consequences of actions. There are many reasons why it is discouraged. In particular, there is a strong tendency especially among the theoreticians to develop certain things like *alaya*, promissory notes, and so on, which can destroy the *tanyé denpa*, the conventional truth. Therefore, this sort of complicated thinking about the consequences of action is skilfully discouraged. If you are not happy about this, we will discuss it further.

*For other schools, seeing a flower is not necessarily obscured*

*For the Prasangikas, anything you see and label is an obscuration*

[H18]

In addition, the Prasangikas see everything from the perspective of the subject, while the other schools see everything more objectively, so they identify so-called obscurations in different ways. For example, for the non-Madhyamika schools, since there is an object outside, there can be some perception that can be correct. For those schools, when they see a flower, for example, the seeing of that flower is not necessarily incorrect, because it is not necessarily seen as obscured. Whereas for the Prasangikas, the moment you see a flower and label it, this is referred to as an obscuration. So, you can see that the differences between seeing things subjectively and objectively can give rise to very subtle differences between views.

### (c) The Ground of All was taught as expedient truth, 6:43

6:43     *“Existence of an all-ground”; “an existing individual”;  
“Merely the skandhas exist”, –  
Such instructions address those for whom the profound teachings  
Are incomprehensible.*

[H19]

*Chandrakirti accepts alaya conventionally, but not as something truly existing*

*Tanyé tō ché ki rig pa:  
Reasoning by conventional analysis*

#### (i) The need for refutation

Here I would like to repeat that Chandrakirti is not negating *alaya* in the conventional truth; he is saying that *alaya* does not exist in the ultimate truth. The Cittamatrins' *alaya* is a finding of analysis and logic. If you ask Chandrakirti what kind of *alaya* he is accepting, he says he only accepts it for the conventional purpose, which is communication. He never accepts it as something truly existing. Never forget that the notion of truly existing is always a finding of logic and analysis. This is why Chandrakirti will say that a good deed will give a good result. He will say it without the analysis and logic of the theoreticians, because if you use logic and analysis, then there is no such thing as a virtuous or non-virtuous deed. This is why he was saying, on the third line of sloka 42, that those who go beyond virtuous deeds and non-virtuous deeds will be liberated.

Now we can introduce some more vocabulary: *tanyé chöché kyi rigpa* (*tha snyad dpyod byed kyi rigs pa*), “*reasoning by conventional analysis*”. Earlier we talked about *döndam chöché kyi rigpa* – the analysis that observes or establishes the ultimate nature of things, and here we are talking about the analysis that observes or establishes the conventional nature of things. The analysis that observes the conventional nature has both direct cognitive and inferential logic, but it is not like the analysis that the theoreticians use to establish the ultimate truth. It only goes as far as statements like ‘if you see smoke, there must be fire’. That is as far as it goes. It does not ask questions like what smoke is or what fire is. So Chandrakirti accepts *alaya*, or connected things, in the conventional truth with this logic that establishes the conventional truth, but nothing more.

[H19]

#### (ii) Explaining how this is done

You may remember that in 1996, I was telling you that logic and reasoning are most important when you study buddhism. You have to establish the view using reasoning. But you cannot really trust that reasoning alone can get the truth thoroughly, because reasoning depends on your own thinking and your own six senses, so it does not go very far. Therefore, we also use scriptural authority.

Now our opponents bring some scriptural authority to contradict Chandrakirti. In the *Lankavatara Sutra*, the Buddha taught about *alaya*. Using analogies like the ocean and its waves, he said that *alaya* is the basis for the distinction of all kinds of habitual patterns. He also said that this *alaya* could be the cause of all kinds of emotions, and that all kinds of emotions

*The Buddha taught about alaya, the individual, and the skandhas. Why does Chandrakirti not accept these?*

could arise from this *alaya*. Unfortunately, you do not have the commentary on this text. But let us hope that this is the beginning, and that there will be a commentary translated for people who want to study the *Madhyamakavatara* in the future. Anyway, in the *Lankavatara Sutra*, the Buddha talks about the existence of *alaya*, or ground of all, and also the existence of individuals. He says things like, “Monks, sangha, the five aggregates are a load. The one who carries this load is a person, an individual”. In other sutras, he says that only the skandhas exist. He says that there is no person, but only mind, consciousness, a form. So now, our opponent asks, what are those? The Buddha taught about all these things like *alaya*, so can’t you accept that?

[H20]

**(a) The Ground of All is an expedient teaching**

[H20]

**(b) Individual and skandhas are expedient teaching**

[H20]

**(c) That the material world has a true nature is expedient teaching**

[H20]

**(d) Of the expedient teachings, distinguishing what should and should not be accepted as conventional truth**

In sloka 43, Chandrakirti says that all these teachings are for those who cannot grasp or comprehend the profound teachings such as emptiness. The Buddha taught such things for them. As you may recall from 1996, the Buddha’s teachings are of two types:

- *drang dön* (*drang don*) provisional or expedient meaning
- *ngé dön* (*nges don*) ultimate or certain meaning

*For people who think they have souls, the Buddha taught alaya first, before teachings of certain meaning*

Many buddhists used to be *tirthikas*, meaning that they come from a religious background that believes in things like an atman, a creator and so on. Actually, this includes all of us. We do not necessarily come from a religious background like that, but we all like to believe that there is something inside us. For people like this, it is too much to directly give a teaching of certain or ultimate meaning, such as all is emptiness. So, the Buddha first taught them something that resembles their atman or soul, and he refers to it as the *alaya*, individual or aggregates.

6:44     *Although free from the view of transitory collection,  
The Buddha still would say “I” and “my teaching”.  
Likewise, while things have no inherent nature,  
In the context of expedient truth, he spoke of a [relative] existence.*

*The Buddha talked of ‘I’ for the sake of communication, and similarly he taught that some things exist*

Sloka 44 says this further. Although the Buddha himself is free from all kinds of transitory collections like form, feeling, karma and so on, when he addresses his disciples, he says things like “I”, “I reached enlightenment in Bodh Gaya”, or “I was once upon a time a bird”. [Note: a view of transition collection, Tib. *'jig tshog gi lta ba*, is a view that hold a collection of entities as a solid entity]. He also talks about “my” father and “my” mother, because it is necessary for the sake of communication. Likewise, although things do not have any inherently existent nature, for the sake of communication, he teaches that certain things exist, and those are teachings of expedient or provisional meaning.

In the autocommentary there are a few wonderful verses coming from the Theravada sutras, which I will quickly go through. They offer praise to the Buddha and at the same time give an explanation about teachings that have provisional meaning.

*If the buddhas do not act according to ordinary people’s acceptance, then ordinary people will never have a chance to understand who is the Buddha and what is the teaching that he taught.*

*Explanations of teachings of provisional meaning from the Theravada sutras*

*Teachings like form, feeling, aggregates; teachings based on elements; teachings on sense-fields and on the three realms; all these are also in accordance with ordinary experience.*

*Phenomena never had names, but using names that ordinary people like us cannot even imagine, the Buddha taught. That is also done in accordance with ordinary experience.*

*Phenomena do not have names, but the Buddha created names for the sake of communication with the ordinary world. He created names so beautiful that ordinary people like us could not even imagine them, such as emptiness.*

*The Buddha taught emptiness, yet he has never denied anything that is non-existent. That is also in accordance with ordinary experience.*

*Things have never arisen, things have never dwelled and things have never ceased to exist. Yet, for the sake of sentient beings, he said that things arise, exist and cease to exist; that they are impermanent, and so on. That is also for the sake of ordinary people, and in accord with their experience.*

So, all these verses have established that all the sutras or teachings of the Buddha that talk about *alaya*, aggregates, individual, and so on, are all teachings that have provisional meaning and require interpretation. As Chandrakirti makes these statements, we are coming to the main problem. Our opponent is now, finally, the Cittamatra school.

[H16]

### **(c) Refutation of the Cittamatrin viewpoint that upholds genesis from other (642)**

According to the commentary, it says that when Chandrakirti says these things, the Cittamatrins could not bear it, because for them, these sutras have direct or certain meaning. The next three slokas set out the thesis of the Cittamatra school.

[H17]

### **(i) Expressing that viewpoint according to its texts**

Actually, there are three steps to the exposition of the Cittamatrin viewpoint here:

- First, the Cittamatrins are going to introduce us to what is realised or understood by the sixth bhumi bodhisattva.
- Second, they will tell us how these objects and subjects come just from the mind
- Third, they are going to talk about the definition of ‘mind’

First, the sixth bhumi bodhisattva understands that without the mind, there is no object. And then he meditates on this understanding that all the three realms do not exist externally, and that they are just mind. After he meditates on this repeatedly for a long time, the division of object and subject will cease to exist, and then he will realise that just mind is truly existent. He will understand this with *rangrig*, self-awareness.

Now we are talking about one of the highest buddhist views, and in this case, they are our opponents. This is why our discussion is going to become very tough. In fact, I do not understand much at all about Madhyamika, and I like the Cittamatra school so much. It is so much easier for me to accept the Cittamatra view that everything is just mind than the Madhyamika view that everything is just emptiness, although this is just out of my emotion, and has nothing to do with my wisdom. When I hear that everything is just mind, it makes some sort of sense. And, if you have read buddhist history, you will know that the masters of the

*How the Cittamatrin viewpoint will be presented*

*The sixth bhumi bodhisattva realises that everything is mind, and only mind is truly existent*

*Some of the greatest buddhist masters were Cittamatrins*

*If we think we have refuted the Cittamatrins, it is like a crow dancing like a garuda when it meets a dead snake*

*No object can exist independently of a subject*

*Everything is mind, because everything we experience is clear and aware*

*The Dashabhumika Sutra says, "The three realms are just mind"*

*Although we do not yet realise that phenomena have no truly existent nature, we should know that all the things we value are futile*

Cittamatra school are not ordinary people. They include some very great people such as Asanga, Vasubandhu, and Dharmakirti. They include Shantarakshita himself, who was among the teachers who introduced buddhism in Tibet. They all have a Cittamatrin tendency, at least. This is even true of our beloved Shantideva, so it will not be an easy task to refute them!

As we go through their arguments, at times we might dance and think that we have managed to refute them. But, as Shantideva says, that is like when a crow meets a dead snake, the crow dances like a *garuda*. Even within the Madhyamika, there are two favourite schools. One is Chandrakirti's school, the *jig rten grags der spyod pa'i dbu ma pa*, the *Madhyamikas who accept ordinary experience*, and the other one is the *Yogachara-Madhyamika*, which is very much influenced by the Cittamatra school. Moreover, tantric practitioners somehow also find the ideas of the Cittamatra or Yogachara schools to be very adaptable. They also have a Cittamatrin tendency.

There are several reasons. The Cittamatrins are saying that everything is mind because there cannot be an entity that is an object independent of a subject. Subject and object come together, and that is irrefutable logic. You cannot think of any logic that can refute this. That is why they do not accept things like *atman* or creators, because a creator is supposedly the creator of everything, so he would have been there before anyone else. But the Cittamatrins will say who knew he was there? The knower of this creator must be there together with this creator. Until then, he is not a creator. For example, for most of you, I was not there thirty years ago. But right now, you can think that I must have been a small child, because you are using inferential logic in the present day and then projecting it back to the past.

Another reason to support the Cittamatrin view is that everything is clear and aware, in the sense that everything that we experience is clear and aware to our consciousness. This has been so from the moment that we were born until now. When we were children, whatever was in front of us was clear to our eye consciousness, and our eye consciousness was aware of it. Or rather, our consciousness was aware of it. Here we are not talking about consciousness in the usual sense of 'I am conscious', or conscious as opposed to unconscious, but just the simple fact that there is something clear and aware of what is in front of us. That has not changed from since we can remember until now. That is the reason that everything is mind, because we have not experienced anything except that.

There is nothing except for what is perceived or known by the six senses. And this mind is the only thing that exists. The Cittamatrins also have strong support from the sutras, particularly the *Dashabhumika Sutra*, which is the principal supporting sutra for the *Madhyamakavatara* as well. This sutra records that when the Buddha was talking to bodhisattvas on the sixth bhumi, he said, "Oh bodhisattvas, the three realms are just mind". This quotation provides the major support for their view.



## **How to study and practice the Madhyamika**

At this moment, we may not be able to understand that all these phenomena have no truly existent nature. Of course, it is our ultimate aim to understand that. But although we cannot do that now, at least it is very important to know that the things that we value and consider important are all futile. They are all impermanent, and they change all the time, every second, every moment. They are never what we think they are, and although some of them can give some kind of satisfaction or happiness, in the end they are all causes of pain, hope, fear and all

*Until we see the futility of phenomena, our understanding of Madhyamika will always fall into an extreme*

*Things do not exist in the way we think they do*

*When you are trying to realise the meaning of the Madhyamika through practice, it is completely individual*

*The story of Nyoshul Longtok and Patrul Rinpoche*

*Most people become more deluded when they see the stars!*

*The results depend greatly on your merit*

*Just hearing the teachings creates vast merit, like Sthiramati when he was a pigeon.*

kinds of anxiety. So, from time to time, it is important for us to remind ourselves with these kinds of renunciation thoughts. This is because in studying Madhyamika, our ultimate aim is to benefit sentient beings. Our aim is to understand the ultimate truth, and to help other people understand the ultimate truth. Our aim is not just to satisfy ourselves intellectually or even become a scholar or critic of this subject.

I am saying this because until you see the futility of all these phenomena, all this worldly wealth and all these things we have, you will not be able to grasp these teachings properly. Probably, there are certain things that we can give up, certain things that we can agree with Chandrakirti that they are not truly existent. But somewhere inside us, if we do not have a genuine renunciation mind, we will still be clinging to something. As long as you have established firmly that there is something that is a truly existent phenomenon, which could be as simple as your own space or something like that, your approach to studying Madhyamika will always be one-sided. As long as we think like that, which we do unconsciously most of the time, then our understanding of Madhyamika philosophy will always fall into an extreme.

Normally, we have two kinds of fixations. We have established two kinds of view. We have fixation towards ourselves: the person, the being or the ego. We also have fixation or grasping mind towards phenomena. Now, this is my interpretation, but I think that Chandrakirti could simply say that things do not exist in the way that you think they exist. Of course, he does not mean that phenomena have a different mode of existence beyond our way of thinking, which he is going to tell us about. It is not at all like that.

I would also like to say something about practice. Now we are studying Madhyamika, but things are different during the time of practice, for example if you are doing meditation. If you have a teacher and you are trying to realise the meaning of this Madhyamika, then it is completely individual. Your master may ask simple questions like ‘what is the sound of one hand clapping’, and things like that can immediately open your mind, and you can immediately understand the whole meaning of the Madhyamika and the *shunyata* or emptiness.

Nyoshul Longtok told his master Patrul Rinpoche that he could not understand the true nature of phenomena. In reply, Patrul Rinpoche said, “there is nothing much to understand, it is so simple, just follow me”. Then they went to some flat ground, a meadow. It was early in the morning, or perhaps late at night, I cannot remember so well. Then Patrul Rinpoche asked Nyoshul Longtok, “Look, in the sky, can you see the stars”, and Nyoshul Longtok said “yes”. There were also some distant dogs barking at that point, just ordinary dogs, not celestial dogs or anything special! Patrul Rinpoche then asked, “can you hear the dogs barking”, and Nyoshul Longtok said “yes”. Then Patrul Rinpoche said, “That’s it, there is nothing more now”. At that moment, all of Nyoshul Longtok’s fixations and clinging to these seemingly solid phenomena dissolved. He broke the seal of samsara and nirvana, although I should not be talking about these things, because that is Dzogchen language, and this is not the right time. Nyoshul Longtok got it! He got the message, and from then on he never had to ask any questions, like where should I do retreat, in Nepal or in Australia?

Now, many romantic people must have said to their partner, “hey, can you see that shooting star”. But most of them have become increasingly deluded because of that star! This has a lot to do with your merit, your devotion to the master, and all that. There is something inexpressible here, but a lot depends on your merit, as I have been telling you many times. And listening to the Madhyamika and Chandrakirti’s words and teachings creates so much merit. There is a German lady here, who does not speak a single word of English or French. She sits here, and she was frustrated when I told her that she should continue to sit in the teachings, but I asked her to do this because I believe that both she and I must be creating a lot of merit. As I mentioned before (see p.67), Vasubandhu had many disciples, and one of his favourites was Sthiramati (Lodrötenpa), who had been a pigeon in his previous life. Every morning, Vasubandhu recited the *Prajñaparamita Sutra*, and this pigeon heard him do this every morning. One day the pigeon

*These studies are also very practical, as they develop your wisdom to discriminate what is genuine Dharma*

*Many attractive paths are not genuine Dharma, like the butcher with donkey's meat and a deer's tail*

*Study inspires confidence and trust in the Dharma*

*These philosophical schools represent our habitual patterns*

*We are still negating truly existent other-arising, and we now face the Cittamatrins*

*Cittamatrins say teachings about alaya have certain meaning. The Madhyamikas disagree*

died, and was reborn as Sthiramati. And he was known as the disciple that was even more learned than his master Vasubandhu on the subject of buddhist metaphysics.

We have been talking from a practical point of view, but the study of this Madhyamika philosophy and the arguments between the different schools can also be very practical. As I was telling you at the beginning, the understanding of this philosophy will develop a type of discriminating wisdom that will allow you to understand how to differentiate between what is the genuine Dharma and what is not.

Because increasingly, we have many paths that are not genuine Dharma, and these paths that are not genuine Dharma are very attractive. Most of the non-genuine Dharma or non-genuine spiritual paths are like this. Their whole body and structure are not genuine, but they always have one or two very good or attractive parts, which is why many people get caught up with these paths. Sakya Pandita told the story that there was once a butcher who had a donkey, and when the donkey died, he wanted to make some money, so he tried to sell the donkey's meat. But nobody in his town would buy the meat, so he was skilful. He cut a deer's tail and left it somewhere nearby, and when people came by and asked what kind of meat it was, then he pretended, saying "I don't know, but the animal had this kind of tail". Although he actually knew what the meat was, the other people thought that he was a very stupid butcher, because he did not know that it was very expensive deer meat. So, they all bought from him. Things like this happen.

When you study, you develop the kind of intelligence that can discriminate what is genuine Dharma. It might look similar to the sort of cynical mind that we usually have, but it is actually quite different. The cynical and critical mind that the modern world promotes these days comes from jealousy and envy. It is already based on a certain view, so it really does not work. By contrast, the study of Madhyamika develops a certain intelligence that is also something like confidence. Even for someone like me, who was born a buddhist, and groomed and brought up as a buddhist for a long time, trust in the Dharma and the spiritual path can disappear. But when I read Chandrakirti or think about his logic, I sometimes think that even if I had never been a buddhist, I would be impressed with his logic and his argument. Study will inspire this kind of confidence.

You should also remember that all these schools, like the Vaibhashikas, Cittamatrins and so on, actually represent our habitual patterns. Right now, some of us may not have the most sophisticated sorts of habitual patterns, but they will come. As our mind becomes more sophisticated, more sophisticated kinds of views and habitual patterns will come, and these schools represent those.

Now, returning to the text, we are still in the process of negating other-arising. The text may not add the words 'truly existing', because it is unnecessary. But one must know that whenever we talk about negating other-arising, we are negating truly existing other, truly existing arising, truly existing dwelling, truly existing cessation, and all that. And in the relative world, we do not use words like 'truly existing'. We do not even think whether things arise from self, others, or anything like that. Things just arise from whatever. In the process of negating other-arising, today we begin to face the Cittamatrins, who believe that there is truly existent mind, which is like the cause or base of all phenomena. This argument started because of this issue about whether there is anything in between the creator of the karma and the receiver of the karma.

We have just seen that the Madhyamika philosophers say that although phenomena like *alaya*, the individual, and things like that were taught by the Buddha, they actually belong to the teachings that require interpretation, or teachings of provisional meaning. Now, when Chandrakirti says that these are teachings of provisional meaning, the Cittamatrins disagree, because for them, they are teachings of certain meaning. And so, they begin to talk about their own view, starting in sloka 45, where they introduce us to what the sixth bhumi bodhisattva has realised.

**(a) Realising (on the 6<sup>th</sup> bhumi) that the nature of things is the mind alone, 6:45**

6:45     *[Objection:] Without object, and no subject to be seen,  
The three-fold world is fully realised as consciousness alone.  
Thus, the Bodhisattva dwells in wisdom,  
Realising mere consciousness as suchness.*

*The Cittamatrins and  
Madhyamikas have a  
different understanding of  
'emptiness'*

What the sixth bhumi bodhisattva understands is that the three realms (which is an expression that refers to all phenomena) are not truly existent, although they may appear as subject and object. He also understands that the only thing that is truly existent is the mind. So for instance when the Cittamatra school reads the *Heart Sutra*, "Form is emptiness, emptiness is form", their understanding of emptiness is different from that of the Madhyamika school. For the Cittamatrins, it means that something is empty of labellings such as subject and object, beautiful, ugly and so on. But the thing that is being referred to as beautiful or ugly, the base, exists substantially, and is what the Cittamatrins refer to as dependent reality, *zhenwong*. If you reflect a moment, I think you will find that we would all like to think like this.

For example, let us imagine that two people are looking at a girl, and one of them sees her as beautiful and the other sees her as ugly. The Cittamatrins are saying that the 'beautiful' and 'ugly' are just labellings, and they do not exist, but there is a base that does exist, some kind of substance that they refer to as dependent reality, *zhenwong*. The Madhyamikas would not even accept that. Simply put, this is the difference. Of course, the Cittamatrins would say that dependent reality is something beyond something and object, but the consequentialists, our heroes, say that the consequence to the Cittamatrins is that it becomes an object. This is because all the substantialists, including the Cittamatrins, divide relative truth and ultimate truth based on the object. This is why Chandrakirti said in sloka 34 that when the Cittamatrins do emptiness meditation, it would become a destroyer of phenomena.

**(b) From the mind alone arise subject and object, 6:46**

6:46     *As wind agitates the sea  
Stirring up waves on the water surface,  
From the seed of all, so-called all-ground,  
Mere consciousness arises through its own potential.*

*The analogy of the ocean,  
the wind, and waves to  
explain the origin of  
phenomena*

*Just as waves are all  
ocean, phenomena are all  
waves of the ocean-like  
mind*

Here in slokas 45 and 46 the Cittamatrins are still talking. So now, someone asks the Cittamatrins, if there is no external object and everything is just mind, then what is the origin of all these things that we see, like this tent, forms, sound and taste? What are they? The Cittamatrins answer this question wonderfully, saying that when an ocean is agitated by the wind, then many different kinds of waves will arise. The base of both samsara and nirvana is *kunzhi* or *alaya*, and on this base, there are many kinds of habitual patterns. And from these habitual patterns are the source of all this continuation of form, feeling, sounds, and all that, but they are all still mind, just as a wave is still an ocean, although they look different. Here the wind is the analogy for the condition that invokes or agitates the habitual patterns. The ocean is the *alaya* itself, and the waves are subject and object, all the variety of dualistic perceptions. Although the waves may appear different from the ocean, they are actually ocean. Likewise, although these forms and sounds appear different from the mind, they are actually waves of the ocean-like mind. Sloka 46 tells us that all these dualistic perceptions, this subject and object come merely from the mind. That's all.

**(c) The definition of the mind alone, 6:47**

*Sloka 47 defines the mind or alaya as substantially existing, and the origin of all*

*Three aspects to the definition of alaya*

*It is independent of duality, just as the striped rope does not have to be associated with a snake*

*But as soon as there is dualistic perception, the alaya is dependent on a perceiver*

*Dependent reality does not have to depend on outer phenomena to produce duality*

*The ocean is the base for the wave. The wave depends on the wind*

6:47     *Therefore the essence of the dependent nature,  
Becomes the cause of the imputed existence of phenomena.  
Manifesting, with nothing to grasp externally;  
Inherently existing, it is not the domain of elaborations about existence.*

Sloka 47 tells us the definition of this mind, the *künzhi* or *alaya*. This dependent reality, *alaya*, *künzhi* – all these are the same – just mind. The word ‘therefore’ in the first line is saying that the *alaya* exists substantially, which is why it is the origin of all. Dependent reality is the cause of all this labelling, such as subject and object, so it becomes a cause of the imputed existence of phenomena. The Cittamatrins are saying that otherwise there would be no base for delusion. This answers another question that we often ask ourselves, namely, what is the base of this ignorance? And then, the last two lines actually give us the definition of the *alaya* or dependent reality. There are three aspects here:

- First, dependent reality exists or functions **independent of duality** as far as subject and object is concerned. Perhaps you can see some kind of contradiction here? We will talk about it
- Second, it exists **substantially**.
- Third, it **cannot be expressed** either through language nor concepts.

So here, when they say ‘independent of duality’, it means that the outer things that we hold on to as subject and object are imputed. And this dependent reality is independent of that duality. This is quite difficult to chew on, I think, but the Cittamatrins usually give a very good example here. It is possible for a person to mistake a striped rope for a snake. Of course, without that rope, it is impossible for the person to mistake the rope for a snake. But if you think that a striped rope always needs to be associated with a snake, then it would be difficult. Instead of saying, “I need a striped rope”, you would have to say something like “I need a striped rope snake”. Therefore, the word ‘independent’ means that for the rope to be mistaken for a snake, the rope never had to go and ask a snake, “may I go and look like you”.

Why is it called dependent reality? From the moment that our perception is deluded by dualistic perception, the dependent reality is under the influence of, or dependent on, that perceiver. It is going to be perceived as a snake or as something else. It is never going to be perceived as it is.

[Q]: Don’t you mean that it is dependent on the limitations of the person perceiving, in other words on karma and conditions?

[A]: Not necessarily, as there is *dakpé zhenwong* (*dag pa'i gzhen dbang*), ‘pure dependent reality’. There are two types of *zhenwong*, pure and impure. One comes from the object; one comes from the subject. We can explain it this way. This dependent reality does not have to depend on some outer phenomenon to produce duality. In itself, it has the power to produce duality, subject and object, and all the experiences that we have. It has its own in-built capacity or potential to produce our illusions and delusions.

[Q]: The wind is external to the ocean. The wind brings the forms, so the wind must be explained.

[A]: This is quite difficult, as your mind has to work in many different ways! The ocean is not dependent on the wind, but the wave is dependent on the wind. But the ocean is the base to create the wave.

[Q]: What about the wind?

[A]: No, you are being scientific! Actually, we are going to come to this. The Cittamatrins will talk in detail about potential, so do not worry so much now, but I would like to get this across, because if you do not know this then the arguments ahead will not make sense.

[Q]: The ocean is independent, so why do we call it dependent?

[A]: Good question! When we talk about *zhenwong*, we should know that although the Cittamatrins talk about three natures or characteristics, they end up saying that there is one ultimate thing. They are actually talking about one ultimate truth, which is this mind that is

*There is one reality with three natures. Ultimately, it is free from duality. But when this nature is experienced, then zhenwong depends on the perceiver*

*Alaya does not depend on an object. It is 'mere clarity, mere awareness'*

*The Cittamatrins say this mind, the alaya, is not the sixth sense, but the eighth consciousness*

*The Madhyamikas accept alaya, but only relatively, as part of the sixth sense*

*Alaya focussing inward is 'emotional mind'; focussing outward it is 'consciousness mind'*

free from delusions, beyond subject and object. If there is just one nature, it must mean that it is mistakenly seen, and that is called *kiuntak* – mere labelling, nothing more than labelling. When others experience this nature, within a dualistic conceptual world, it is called dependent. But from its own aspect, this nature is not at all stained or polluted by dualistic perceptions or any kind of duality. When we talk, one simple thing is missing. For me, it is like this: that striped rope is a striped rope and it does not have to depend on the perceiver of a snake. Now let us look from the other side. A person perceives the striped rope, so the striped rope becomes dependent on him.

[Q]: Do the Cittamatrins say that the object, the rope that is the base, is truly existent? Or is the subject truly existent, the observer who wrongly sees the rope as a snake?

[A]: For them, the *zhenwong* exists. That is the whole point here. The *alaya* exists. It is not the snake that exists, but the rope. The Cittamatrins do not think this is a problem; they actually think it is a good thing. But for Chandrakirti that is what is wrong.

Sometimes, when we discuss these things, we can get lost in all the words, when actually it is very simple. I would like to tell you this again, because it is very important that you know our opponent's view.

First, this *zhenwong* is not some kind of thing or black box. It is mind; it is not something inanimate. Now, when we look at this tent and think, "Ah, this is a tent", this is also mind. But this mind has an object; because looking at the tent we see a tent. So, we think that for something to be a mind, it always has to have an object about which it thinks 'this is blue, this is white'. But this *zhenwong künzhi namshe* (*gzhan dbang kun gzhi rnam shes*) is the eighth consciousness, a particular mind that does not think things like 'this is blue, this is white'. This is what our opponents are saying here. I think the translation of the third line of sloka 47 is slightly wrong here. The point is that this mind does not depend on the kind of object that makes it think 'this is blue, this is white'. But the Cittamatrins do not believe in truly existent external objects in any case. So, this base, the *alaya*, is a mind; it is not just matter. But although it is a mind, it does not depend on a particular object. In Tibetan, we call it *seltsam rigtsam* (*gsal tsam rig tsam*), where *tsam* means 'just' or 'mere', as in 'mere clarity, mere awareness'. This means that this 'just' or 'mere' cuts all kinds of discriminations like blue, black or white. It does not have such things. It is mere clarity, mere awareness. It does not depend on an object.

We have this phenomenon in the ordinary world too. It is mind, because it is not inanimate, yet it does not have a specific object. It does not make analyses, like 'this is blue'. You are not a vegetable, because there is clarity and awareness. This mind becomes dependent reality when a cause, such as the dualistic mind of subject and object, overpowers it.

This is why, when we talk of six senses (or sense-consciousnesses) in buddhism, the Cittamatrins are saying that this mind is not part of the sixth sense, because the sixth sense is the one that thinks "Ah, this is me, this is him, this is a mountain". Whereas the mind that is 'mere clarity, mere awareness', can be the base for all kinds of habitual patterns. And it continues from now until enlightenment, from sentient beings to enlightened beings. We call it 'impure dependent reality' during the time of samsara and 'pure dependent reality' during nirvana. The important thing here is that this is not the sixth sense. According to the Cittamatra school, they call it the eighth consciousness.

Now, the Madhyamikas accept the *künzhi namshe*, the *alaya*, but in a different way, and only in the relative truth, not in the ultimate truth like the Cittamatrins. For the Madhyamika, it is the sixth sense, within which there is an aspect of 'mere clarity, mere awareness', which is the *alaya* according to the Madhyamika, but only in the conventional truth. I emphasise this so you do not need to ask me questions later.

According to the Madhyamika, it is all just *alaya*, that 'mere clarity, mere awareness', but it is the sixth rather than the eighth consciousness. That same *alaya* focussing inward is *nyönyid*, 'emotional mind'. When focussing outward towards things like form, sound, mountains, rivers,

blue and black, it is called *yikyi namshes* (*yid kyi rnam shes*), ‘consciousness mind’ or mental consciousness. And if there is grasping, then it becomes *chöki dagdzin* (*chos kyi bdag 'dzin*), ‘grasping at phenomena’, which is the ‘obscuration that obscures omniscience’. That is the first aspect of the definition of *zhenwong*. The other two are that it exists inherently, and that it cannot be perceived by an ordinary extreme mind.

- [H17] **(ii) Explaining what refutes it**
- [H18] **(a) The logical reasoning that refutes the Cittamatrins**
- [H19] **(i) Showing that it contravenes the two truths**
- [H20] **(a) Refuting that there can be mind alone without an object**
- [H21] **(ii) Detailed explanation**
- [H22] **(a) Its impossibility seen using the analogy of deluded mental consciousness (dream)**
- [H23] **(i) Refuting the proposition, 6:48**

6:48 [Reply:] Is there an example of an [intrinsic] mind without an object?

You say: “As in a dream”, but when I look

At my mind when it is dreaming,

It has no [intrinsic] existence. Hence, you have no valid example.

Now Chandrakirti asks for an example of a mind without an external object

The first Cittamatrin example is deluded mental consciousness, a dream

Until now, we have been explaining the Cittamatrin view, but now we are beginning to argue. Now Chandrakirti asks them to give an example of a mind without an external object. It has been one of the theses of the Cittamatrins, which is that the outer object does not exist, but only the inner subject exists, namely mind. So, we ask them for an example.

And the Cittamatrins give the example of a dream, which is a wonderful example. In a dream, there is no truly existent external phenomenon, but there is the mind that sees it. And here, Chandrakirti actually says, let me think! The word ‘when’ in the second line refers to the sixth bhumi, so we are now talking about what is understood or realised by the sixth bhumi bodhisattva, which is the ultimate truth. In reply, Chandrakirti says that during this time, even while dreaming, for him there is no mind, so the example is invalid. During the ultimate truth, Chandrakirti does not accept that there is mind. You see, when you give an example, the example has to be mutually agreed. If you say, “she is beautiful like a rose”, that example “rose” has to be agreed by both. But Chandrakirti does not believe that even the mind exists during this time.

- [H23] **(ii) Refuting what is used to support it**
- [H24] **(a) Refuting that it exists because it is imputed by memory, 6:49**

*The second example of the Cittamatrins is memory*

*Chandrakirti says that for the same reason, the dream-horse should be here now*

[H24]

[H25]

*The Cittamatrins reply: all we see, in dreams or when awake arises from habitual patterns*

*This is why there is only the subject, mind, and no objects*

6:49     *If there is memory of the dream when awakening,  
And that mind exists, then the external objects [of the dream] should exist in  
the same way,  
Because remembering [the dream], you may think, "I saw".  
In the same way, the external world [of the dream] should also exist [when  
awake]*

Again, the Cittamatrins challenge Chandrakirti's answer. Now the Cittamatrins are talking about memory. When you wake from a good dream or a nightmare, at that time you can remember what happened during the dream, which proves that there is a mind. For example, if you dream about a horse, the dream-horse does not exist, but when you wake from the dream, you think about the horse. This example, memory, is an example of a mind without an existent object. In reply, Chandrakirti says that in that case, that dream-horse should come here right now, for the same reason. This is one of the four different ways of attacking used by the Prasangika-Madhyamika, which is drawing consequences based on the same reason used by the opponent. There is not much to explain here; it is very straightforward. Do not think it is too complicated.

The first line and the second up to "and that mind exists" is the Cittamatrins, and the rest of the sloka is Chandrakirti. To prove the existence of mind, the Cittamatrins used memory as the reason, and the same reason was used by Chandrakirti to prove that the elephant or horse that you dreamt about should be here now. The last two lines say that just as when you wake after a dream, and remember that you have seen a horse and things like that, the same external world of the dream, the dream-elephant or the dream-horse, should exist while you are awake. Another debate is coming.

### **(b) Refuting that it exists because it is a dream (644)**

#### **(i) What the Cittamatrins would say, 6:50**

6:50     *[Objection:] While sleeping there is no eye consciousness,  
In the absence of [external objects], there is only mind consciousness  
Whose manifestations are grasped as external.  
As in the dream, so it is [when awake].*

The Cittamatrins reply again. When a person is sleeping, there is no eye-consciousness, because the eye is closed. When you sleep, you close your eyes, and so your eyes do not work. This is simple. So, our opponent is making a big point here, that when a person is sleeping, their eyes are not functioning, because they are sleeping, but mind is functioning. These are very good examples. So, why do you dream about a horse? It is because you saw a horse during the daytime. You might say that you can dream about a special horse, for example one with wings, but that is because you saw a horse and a bird, and you can put two and two together. Because of habitual patterns like this, then you actually see a horse in the dream, without your eyes opening.

So, just like in a dream, even during the time that we are awake, all the things that we see, like houses, this tent, human beings walking up and down, they all arise from habitual patterns. And then as they emerge from the habitual patterns, they arise as a tent, a mountain, as a tree. The problem is that we think that they are something separate and truly existent 'out there', and that this is how grasping mind, hope and fear, and all the rest comes. This is what the Cittamatrins are saying, that there is only the subject, mind, but there is no object, such as a horse or an elephant.

[H25]

#### **(ii) Refuting that**

**(a) There is no truth in the cognition of the dream object, 6:51-52.1**

6:51 [Reply:] However, just as external phenomena in your dreams are unborn  
Likewise, mind too is unborn.  
The eye, its object, and the mind they create-  
All three are false.

6:52.1 These three are also false in regard to hearing and so forth.

*Just as the dream-horse does not exist, nor does the eye that sees it or the mind that thinks about it*

*Object, sense, and consciousness are all equally invalid*

Now Chandrakirti responds. He says that you, Cittamatrins, yourselves accept that in the dream there is no truly existent external object such as horse. Likewise, even the subject that sees the horse is not truly existent. You dreamt that you saw a horse with your eye in the dream, but that eye is a dream-eye. And then you think, “Ah, that is a horse”, but that horse is a dream-horse. And when you wake up, all of them are fake, invalid or not true. This is the consequence. For Chandrakirti, as much as the dream horse does not exist, the thinking of the dream horse does not exist; but the Cittamatrins are saying that although the dream-horse does not exist, the thinking about the dream-horse does exist. The consequence is that the dream-horse does not exist, but the knower of the dream-horse does exist.

The example of the dream-horse was oriented more towards vision or form, but the same argument also applies to the object of the ear, namely sound, and the object of the tongue, taste. All these things are ‘these three’: object, sense and consciousness. All those are not true. For example, when you hear a sound in the dream, the dream-sound and the ear in the dream and the consciousness of the sound in the dream, they are all not true. They are all equally invalid.

**(b) There is no truth in the cognition of the waking object, 6:52.2-4**

6:52.2-4 As in dreams, so also in this waking state  
Their phenomena are false - there is no mind,  
No objects, and no sense-faculties.

From the second line of sloka 52 onwards, we are on a different heading in the structural outline. As in the example of the dream, even after awakening from the dream, all these phenomena are all false. There is no mind, there are no senses and there are no six sense objects and so on. During this discourse between Chandrakirti and the Cittamatrins, the Cittamatrins produce four examples:

- The first example is **deluded mental consciousness**, in this case the dream.
- The second example is **deluded sensory consciousness**.
- The third example is the result of **mistaken meditation**. Here, it is not that the meditation is mistaken, but that the deluded experience that can arise during meditation is mistaken.
- The fourth example is **deluded perception**, such as when a human being sees water he sees it as water, whereas a hungry ghost may see it as liquid pus and blood. What each being sees is due to his or her past actions.

We are still going through the first example of the dream.

*Four examples used by the Cittamatrins to try to prove there is mind with no object*

[H26]

**(c) In terms of their existence, mind, object, etc. are therefore similar, 6:53**

6:53     *In ordinary experience, just as while awake,  
While sleeping, these [above] three seem to exist;  
Once awake they do not.  
Awakening from the sleep of ignorance is similar.*

*Like awaking from a dream, when we wake from the sleep of ignorance, we will see that object, sense, and mind are all false*

This is easy to understand, but Chandrakirti is making an important point here. He is saying that the Cittamatrins are making a differentiation, saying that mind exists, but the sense and objects do not exist. But for Chandrakirti, when a person is dreaming, the object, sense, and the mind all exist. But when he wakes up, they are all false. Then the last line says that, likewise, when we sentient beings wake up from this deluded sleep of ignorance, then we will see that object, sense and mind are all false. This is not the same as the Cittamatrins, who say that mind has to exist truly.

Now the Cittamatrins come up with an even better example. We have seen that the dream really does not work here, because the dream is definitely in the mental state. The Cittamatrins still want to find to prove that there can be a subject, but where the object of that subject does not exist inherently, so now they bring another example.

[H22]

**(b) Its impossibility seen using the analogy of deluded sense consciousness**

[H23]

**(i) In both (deluded and undeluded) cases, the objectless consciousness and what is seen are similar (in either existing or not), 6:54**

6:54     *[Objection:] The consciousness of someone with diseased eyesight,  
And the floating hairs that appear due to that disease [do exist as non-external  
phenomena].  
[Reply:] These both are true for that mind,  
But for the clear-seeing both are false.*

*The second example is impaired vision; it is easily refuted in the same way as the first*

Now the Cittamatrins are using the example of someone who has impaired vision. This person is not sleeping, so there is less of the mind involved. This person with impaired vision is looking at a plate, and they see lots of hair or flies falling. So, the Cittamatrins are saying that there is no hair, but the perceiver of the hair still functions. This is a good example of a mind that is truly existent but with an object that is not.

Chandrakirti easily refutes this. He says that for someone who has impaired vision, the vision of the falling hair and thinking that there is falling hair both exist for him. For someone who does not have impaired vision, both do not exist.

[H23]

**(ii) Untenable consequences of holding that objectless consciousness could arise**

[H24]

**(a) Untenable consequences, 6:55**

*If there were awareness without an object, someone without impaired vision should also see hair falling onto the plate*

*In the false relative truth, both subject and object exist. In the true relative, neither exists*

*[Q]: If Chandrakirti does not like the results of logical reasoning, what does he want us to do?*

*[A]: Ultimately, refute all views; relatively, accept everything without analysis; conventionally, do your practice*

6:55      *If there is an awareness without object,  
Then for those lacking what connects the eye and the hair – the disease –  
Strands of hair should also appear.  
As this is not the case, such an awareness cannot be established.*

Still the Cittamatrins will keep debating this. These slokas are not that difficult, and they will make sense if you read them carefully. In sloka 55, we can see that the arguments of the Cittamatrins are obsolete. As we have seen, the person with impaired vision sees floating hairs or floating flies on a base, which in this case is the plate. The Cittamatrins are saying that there is no truly existing object, such as a hair or fly, but there is a truly existing mind that can see this object. In this case, upon the same base, in this case the plate, someone that does not have impaired vision would also see hair. It is quite simple to understand. According to the Cittamatrins, the subject is truly existent but the object is not. Chandrakirti is saying that this does not make much sense, because when someone who does not have impaired vision looks at the same base, they should also see the hair falling, because they have the subject, mind. But that is not the main reason. The main reason is on the first line, and is that the Cittamatrins are saying that there is awareness without an object.

As you may remember, we talked of two relative truths, false relative and true relative. Here, Chandrakirti is saying that for something that exists during the false relative, both subject and object exist, and for something that does not exist during the true relative, both subject and object do not exist. You cannot have a case where only the subject exists but not the object.

Now, we reach the conclusion. The Cittamatrins think that although the floating hair does not exist during the conventional truth, the mind that sees the floating hair does exist in the conventional truth. They create a difference between subject and object. For the Madhyamika, during the ultimate truth there is no difference, because during the ultimate truth there is no subject and object. During the conventional truth, there is also no difference, because Chandrakirti does not make any distinctions about whether one exists or not. If one exists, both exist. If one does not exist, both do not exist. Finally, during the false relative truth, again Chandrakirti does not make any distinctions. For someone who is dreaming, both the horse exists and the mind that sees the horse exists. He keeps on doing nothing and making no distinctions, and we become increasingly confused!

[Q]: If Chandrakirti does not like the result of logical reasoning, what does he want us to do? Do you want us to walk out of the tent and never come back again? Do you want us to learn this so we can teach it to others even if nobody is going to listen anyway? Do you want us to sit on a mountaintop and think about it? What do you want us to do?

[A]: That is easy. As a follower of Chandrakirti, you negate all the logic and so-called rational reasoning of others and you do not establish a truly existing or solid view. You do not deny other logical analyses; you simply refute them and do not abide by them, because you see their inconsistency. In the relative truth, you just accept everything without analysis. And in the conventional truth, you have compassion, you make mandala offerings, you do one hundred thousand prostrations and so on.

[Q]: If Chandrakirti says that his mind is not truly existent, how can he use this mind to prove that there is no truly existent mind?

[A]: Because truly non-existent is also not existent. That is it!

[Q]: You said that sloka 48 refers to the sixth bhumi bodhisattva, but for me it seems that even for ordinary people, we cannot clearly say that there is mind when dreaming. Either I am conscious of my dream, in which case you cannot say that I am dreaming, or I am not conscious of my dream, in which case how can you say that I have mind?

[A]: Yes, that is all right, but here Chandrakirti is trying to point out that right now we are trying to establish the view, the ultimate truth. At that time, I do not have mind. But, yes, it is not necessarily that consistent even in the relative truth.

[Q]: When Chandrakirti is refuting the Cittamatrin example of impaired vision, I cannot really follow his consequence. If there are two people, one that sees the hair and the other that

[Q]: How can the Cittamatrins prove that there are other minds?

[A]: They do not have to, because they are establishing the ultimate view that all is mind

If we talk of mind-streams, it is relative truth

does not, you cannot say that they have similar minds. There are two minds, so I cannot follow his argument. He says the second person should see the hair of this person with the cataract, but they have two minds.

[A]: That is quite a good understanding, but the point that Chandrakirti is attacking is that the Cittamatrins are saying the object is not truly existent, whereas the mind that sees the object does exist. This is what Chandrakirti cannot accept. Actually, Chandrakirti is saying what you are saying. For someone who sees the hair, for him there is both the hair and the thinking of hair. For someone who does not have impaired vision, he does not have hair and he does not think about hair. But for the Cittamatrins, they are saying that hair does not exist, but thinking of hair does exist. That was the problem.

[Q]: I am not quite sure I understood, because in refuting the Cittamatrin argument, he seems to be suggesting that there is one mind. But there should be two different minds.

[A]: There are two minds; you are right about that. One of the definitions that the Cittamatrins have given is that this subject is aware, and this awareness should work on its own. Therefore, you should ask, what is it aware of? If it is not aware of the object, it is aware of things on its own. So, in that sense it becomes obsolete, because the Cittamatrin definition of mind is that it is aware. But if there is nothing out there to be aware of, in the sense of subject and object, then what is this subject subjected to? Since you are saying that you can see something, although there is no object, why can't someone else see that as well? I want to make clear that although we are discussing the example of impaired vision, this is not a pathetic debate about hair and impaired vision. It is actually about the most profound *zhenwong*, the *alaya*. Of course, the Cittamatrins want to prove that there is a truly existent mind, but that the entire external world and all dualistic phenomena are not truly existent. Chandrakirti is trying to contradict such consequences, where the object is not truly existent, but the subject is truly existent.

[Q]: Is this non-labelling simple mind like the mind of a baby child, which is not taught to name and differentiate things, but just rests and accepts. Is that a good example?

[A]: Quite good! You are quite close. The only thing is it has that *ka nang ta* (*kha nang lta*), focussing inside, and thinking that "this is me", that *nyonyid*. But that is a good contemplation.

[Q]: When the Cittamatrins say that the person with the eye disease sees hair, is Chandrakirti saying that he creates the hair with his mind, and so all other minds should also perceive the hair?

[A]: No. The Cittamatrins are saying that although there is no object, the subject can see a hair. So, Chandrakirti is saying that with the same reason, we should all see hair, because there is no object.

[Q]: But then we should all see the same thing.

[A]: That is what Chandrakirti is saying!

[Q]: I have a question about Cittamatrin theory. If you say that there is only mind, and there is no external world, it seems difficult not to fall into what in Western philosophy is called solipsism, which is saying that only I am here. So, for example, in this tent, I see all these objects and people, and all are supposed to be projections of my mind. Presumably, the Cittamatrins will say that there are many minds, but how am I supposed to know this? How can I know that there are other minds apart from my projections? Do they just say there are other minds, and that I have to accept it on faith?

[A]: No, the Cittamatrins do not have this burden. They do not have to prove that there are other minds, because we are now establishing the ultimate truth, and during establishing the ultimate truth, the Cittamatrins say that all these three realms are just mind. That is all.

[Q]: So there is just one mind, just mind?

[A]: Yes, just mind.

[Q]: So mind-streams do not exist?

[A]: Now you are bringing the relative truth.

[Q]: But they must have a theory, something that is simpler!

[A]: Of course, the Cittamatrins would say that there are other people and phenomena during the relative truth. The relative truth is very similar.

[Q]: But I cannot know this.

*Until your karma is exhausted, you will not see the truth*

*A path has to have a complete view and a connected meditation and action*

*[Q]: Where do habitual patterns come from initially?*

*[A]: Samsara is beginningless*

[A]: In the relative truth, you do not analyse. This is also the case for the Cittamatrins. During the dependent reality and during the *küntak*, the labelling time, yes, there are other sentient beings.

[Q]: But I cannot know this. All I know is the projections of my mind, so the existence of other minds must be something that either I believe on faith or I do not believe at all. It just seems to me a way of showing that there is something wrong with the Cittamatrin view, even on the relative level.

[A]: If you are trying to refute the Cittamatrins from the ultimate point of view, yes, that is quite a good contemplation. You are hitting the point of truly existent mind, and that is interesting. But wait! One of these days I will take the side of the Cittamatrins, you will take the side of Madhyamika, and we will debate!

[Q]: Yesterday you said that when you can see the emptiness of all your actions, then you are liberated. Can you also have liberation before your karma is exhausted?

[A]: Until you have exhausted all your karma, you will not see the truth.

[Q]: If this is so, then people could conclude that the quickest way to liberation is to beat yourself up all day long to get rid of negative karma. But this is not true, is it?

[A]: Beating yourself up does not have a view, meditation and action.

[Q]: So?

[A]: A path has to have a right view, a complete view, it has to have a connected meditation and it has to have action. The view has to have a ground, path and result. Beating oneself does not have that. But perhaps your question could be: if that is the case, should we do just virtuous deeds? In that case, yes. The three turnings of the wheel of Dharma are based on that. The first is to negate all non-virtuous actions. The second is to negate the self. And the third is to negate all views, including the view of emptiness.

[Q]: But beating oneself to extinguish karma is also expounding the self.

[A]: Yes, if it is not correct. But as long as you have understood, and you are closer to the truth, then do what you want to do. Beat yourself, feed yourself, do whatever you want. It does not matter!

[Q]: A few days ago, in sloka 36, the opponent said that if you do not accept arising in either truth, how do things come, like a mountain or music, or how do phenomena arise to begin with? And, from what I understand, Chandrakirti's answer is that they arise out of emptiness.

[A]: Or interdependent reality.

[Q]: Today a similar kind of question was raised in sloka 45, and then answered in sloka 46 in terms of everything arising from habitual patterns. But I do not accept either of these answers. On one level, it makes sense, but on another level, how do even habitual patterns arise? Why does that even come about?

[A]: The first sloka that you are talking about is the Madhyamika answer, whereas the habitual pattern is the Cittamatrin idea.

[Q]: But I still do not understand how these habitual patterns arise to begin with.

[A]: We are not necessarily saying how this universe started, or rather how we started. Rather, the texts explain the cause of suffering. If, for example, we analyse and identify the origins of our sufferings and pains, we can observe that habitual tendencies and negative emotions cause them. So, it is in that sense that these causes are put forth, rather than in the sense that they explain the beginning of the universe, because the teachings simply say that samsara is beginningless.

[Q]: So it just began? I am still not happy, but I suppose it is just my ignorance. Are you saying that it just arises?

[A]: We are not saying that it just arises. We simply say that we observe that this is how it seems to arise, rather than saying that this is how it arises, or saying that it arises. Similarly, we might describe how a particular disease seems to make people sick rather than saying that, for example, that HIV began with monkeys. We are simply saying that this is how it seems to affect us, so it is seen more from the practical sense.

[Q]: But wouldn't you want to know how it started in the beginning?

[A]: I think we would all love to, but I am not sure that we can.

[Q]: But why can't we know that?

*The very wanting to know the beginning is a labelling that we have to remove*

[A]: The very wish of wanting to know the beginning is also one of the labellings that we have to remove.

[Q]: I thought the point was that it did not start.

[A]: ‘Did not start’ is also a labelling!

I would like to make an announcement. There is a rumour that from tomorrow, there will be another traditional element introduced into the classes. Traditionally, every morning before the teacher gives the teachings, he has the names of all the students in an envelope and he picks one of the students, who will have to explain the teachings of the previous day. I just wanted to let you know, just in case you are picked out!



## **How the Buddha's teachings lead us to enlightenment**

*The Buddha taught two kinds of listeners*

*The first kind of students see the futile aspect of worldly life, and Buddha taught them to get rid of clinging to the self*

*The second kind of students seek enlightenment, and Buddha taught them to get rid of clinging to phenomena*

*Enlightenment is freedom from the delusion of looking at something not true and thinking it is true*

*Until you practice and understand these teachings emotionally, they will not counterattack your deluded habits*

When the Buddha taught, he taught two kinds of listeners who had two different kinds of motivation. Certain students, certain beings, are motivated to free themselves from all this suffering. They have seen the futile aspect of this worldly life, the endless impermanent and essenceless aspect of all this so-called valuable worldly life. They do not only see them as futile, but they actually see that these futile so-called valuable things in this worldly life eventually lead us to pain and anxiety. So for them, the Buddha taught the importance of getting rid of this clinging to the self, because this clinging to the self causes all these problems, all this anxiety and so on. This self is the one that values all these so-called valuable things in worldly life. There are countless teachings on the selflessness of a person, and if you go to a general buddhist teaching, the first thing they will emphasise you should purify is self-grasping to the person. Like all the teachings of buddhism, even the *Madhyamakavatara* will cover grasping to the self and the necessity to purify it. But in the *Madhyamakavatara*, the selflessness of the person will be taught after the selflessness of phenomena.

The second kind of disciple or student is not only interested in freeing himself or herself from suffering, but he or she actually wants to achieve liberation, enlightenment. They not only see that this world of suffering is essenceless, but they are not interested in the state where there is no suffering. They want to achieve nirvana, enlightenment. For them, the Buddha taught the importance of purifying or getting rid of grasping to phenomena. Although we are studying one of the most important texts, from time to time, it is important for us to remember that when buddhists, especially Mahayana buddhists, talk about enlightenment, we are not talking about some kind of place. We are talking about a state where you are free from all this delusion. And again, delusion is not very complicated. As we discussed a few days ago, delusion is simply looking at a phenomenon that is not truly existing and thinking that it is truly existing. This is the delusion. As long as you are free from this kind of delusion, then you have a little bit of enlightenment, so to speak.

If we continue to talk intellectually about why things do not have truly existent nature, as we have been doing, it might make some sense at some point. We might have a glimpse of understanding in our heads. But if you have not practised, if you have not understood this emotionally, so to speak, then you will still not manage to counterattack this habit, this delusion. It is like knowing intellectually that smoking is not good, but you still smoke, because you still have the habit of liking to smoke. So, I am saying that real understanding of the Madhyamika comes from your practice, your meditation and so on. What we are trying to do now is to contemplate and study the view of meditation, because although we may meditate, because we

*But studying the view can increase our confidence when our emotions and ego interrupt our practice*

*In establishing the ultimate view of the Madhyamika, we talk of the selflessness of the person and of phenomena*

*Some say that the Madhyamikas have never really refuted the Cittamatrins*

*We should try to apply the examples from these debates to our ordinary habitual patterns*

*A review of where we are in the structural outline*

are still ordinary beings, at times our emotions can interrupt or manipulate or interpret this meditation according to ego's way. And when such things happen, an understanding of the Madhyamika philosophy and the view can increase our confidence and resolve our doubts.

Now, I will just give you a broad outline. Right now, we are trying to establish what is realised by the sixth bhumi bodhisattva. In other words, we are trying to establish the Mahayana's ultimate view. Within that, there are two main subjects: the selflessness of phenomena and selflessness of the person. And right now, we are discussing the selflessness of phenomena. As we talk about this, we then ask the question, where do these phenomena come from? In trying to answer this question of the cause of phenomena, many theoreticians have established a certain view of a truly existing cause. Some say that things arise from themselves, and others say that an independent different cause has given an independent different result, which is the theory of other-arising.

We are still examining other-arising, and right now, we are talking with the Cittamatra school. When I told Orgyen Tobgyal Rinpoche this morning where we were, he jokingly said that the Madhyamikas just pretend that they won the debate with the Cittamatrins, but actually, they never won it. He said that the Madhyamikas can negate self-arising quite wonderfully, but they have not really managed to negate other-arising, especially the Cittamatra school, or arising from no cause (which is the last of the four types of arising). I think that this is a very interesting point! Today most of the arguments are very straightforward, so we will have more time for questions. We are still debating with the Cittamatrins, who have given us all kinds of examples and reasoning, and so far, Chandrakirti has consistently negated them.

You should always try to apply these simple examples, such as the floating hair or floating flies, to our ordinary mundane habitual patterns, and to any habitual patterns that you have collected from religious training, such as buddhism. It is important to try to apply that, and you should remember that the floating hair is just an example. Do not get stuck with it.



## **Where we are in the structural outline**

Traditionally the teacher appoints someone who has to recite the entire structural outline. This can really help you in knowing where you are, because I am afraid that we might be losing track of our location. We are still going through the '*Explanation of the refutation*' [H15 (ii)] within the heading of '*Genesis from other*' [H14 (b)] and there are three parts to this refutation. We are currently going through the third of these, '*Refutation of the Cittamatin viewpoint that upholds genesis from other*' [H16 (c)], where the Cittamatin viewpoint is first explained and then refuted.

[H14 (b)] *Genesis from other*

[H15 (ii)] *Explanation of the refutation*

[H16 (a)] *Refutation of genesis from other from the points of view of the two truths*

[H16 (b)] *The two benefits of these refutations*

[H16 (c)] *Refutation of the Cittamatin viewpoint that upholds genesis from other*

[H17 (i)] *Expressing that viewpoint according to its texts*

[H17 (ii)] *Explaining what refutes it*

**We are here: [H18 (a)] The logical reasoning that refutes the Cittamatrins**

[H18 (b)] *Explaining the need for the Cittamatin view to have been taught*

[H18 (c)] *The other scriptural authorities that support it come from teachings of expedient meaning*

Within ‘*The logical reasoning that refutes the Cittamatrins*’ [H18 (a)], Chandrakirti starts by showing that their position contravenes the two truths [H19 (i)], and he begins by refuting that there can be mind alone without an object [H20 (a)]. Within the detailed explanation [H21 (i)] that follows, the Cittamatrins produce four examples as they attempt to establish their position, and we are currently tackling the second:

[H18 (a)] *The logical reasoning that refutes the Cittamatrins*

[H19 (i)] *Showing that it contravenes the two truths*

[H20 (a)] *Refuting that there can be mind alone without an object*

[H21 (i)] *Detailed explanation*

[H22 (a)] *Its impossibility seen using the analogy of deluded mental consciousness (dream), 6:48-53*

**We are here: [H22 (b)] Its impossibility seen using the analogy of deluded sense consciousness**

[H22 (c)] *Its impossibility seen using the analogy of a deluded meditation experience*

[H22 (d)] *Its impossibility seen using the analogy of deluded visual perception*

[H21 (ii)] *Summary*

[H19 (ii)] *The erroneous consequences of contravening the two truths*

[H19 (iii)] *Rejecting its similarity to relative truth*

[H24] **(b) Refutation of the Cittamatrin’s counter-argument (649)**

[H25] **(i) The counter-argument, 6:56.1-3**

6:56.1-3 *[Objection:] For someone with healthy eyesight,  
Mental potential has merely not ripened; for this reason, they see nothing,  
Not because a perceived object is lacking.*

The Cittamatrins are saying that there is only mind, and all other phenomena that are not mind are not truly existent; they are just labelling. But the mind, *zhenwong*, dependent reality, *alaya*, whatever you call it, that is the only thing that is truly existent. Chandrakirti has been negating this in many different ways, and the most recent one is that it is impossible, because the mind will become non-existent just as the object is not existent. Because after all, the subject has to depend on an object, and an object has to depend on a subject. For instance, in sloka 55, Chandrakirti was saying that if there is a mind (a subject) that is independent from an object, then looking at the same base, like a plate upon which someone with impaired vision can see hair, someone without impaired vision would also see hair. Here Chandrakirti is using the same reasoning as his opponent to derive the consequence, which is one of his four methods (see p.85).

*The Cittamatrins are not saying that subject and object must always come together*

*Instead, they talk about ‘potential’*

Now, in sloka 56, the Cittamatrins are giving a further explanation of their last example. This is not a different thesis, but they are telling Chandrakirti that he did not know enough about their last example, so they will explain it more fully. The first three lines are the Cittamatrin viewpoint. The Cittamatrins are not saying that subject and object must always come together. In other words, they are not saying that where there is an object, there is also a subject that sees that object; and where there is no object, there is no subject that sees that object. But they are saying that for a person who has impaired vision, he has a potential or an energy, *mepa (med pa)*, in his eyesight. And when a certain condition agitates this potential then he sees floating hair or floating flies.

*When the potential to see things is agitated by certain conditions, then we see things*

*Similarly, the ocean has the potential to become a wave when there is wind*

*People with healthy eyesight do not see hairs, because they do not have the potential*

This is also something that we ordinary beings would say. If we ask someone, why do they see floating hair? It is because they have that disease, which is what the Cittamatrins would philosophically refer to as a potential, power or *bagchag* (*bag chags*), habitual pattern. And when certain conditions agitate this *bagchag*, then it comes. Similarly, our impaired vision is worse at some times than others. The Cittamatrins are saying something very logical here, which is not different from what they have been saying from the beginning. Remember that example of the ocean and the waves. When there is wind, there are waves. When there is no wind, there are no waves. The ocean has the potential to become a wave when there is wind. This is what he is saying.

I have been talking about impaired vision, but in the first two lines of the root text, the Cittamatrins were talking about someone who does not have impaired vision. I have to do this for clarity, but this is where I become frustrated, because the root text is so poetic. We are not even touching the poetic side of the root text at all. Not only that, but in just these two lines, there is so much information. This is why there are hundreds of pages of commentaries. Almost each word, like *gang chir* (*gang phyir*), “thus” – all these words have a lot of hidden meaning. In the first two lines, the Cittamatrins say that for those who do not have impaired vision, meaning those with healthy eyesight, these people do not have the potential to see floating hairs. That is why they cannot see the hair. On the third line, they say it is not because there is no hair that they do not see it.

[H25]

## (ii) Refutation

[H26]

### (a) Overall refutation, 6:56.4

6:56.4 [Reply:] But potential does not exist; therefore, this cannot be established.

The last line of sloka 56 gives the Prasangika response, which is that the potential is not truly existent. This is a general response, and now follows a more specific response.

[H26]

### (b) Refuting in turn each of its aspects

*Chandrakirti's reply: what kind of potential is this? Is it past, present or future?*

If you have contemplated Chandrakirti's earlier approach to debating, you will see that his strategy of negating is very similar here, so there is not much to explain. He asks them a question. Very well, if there is a potential, what kind of potential are we talking about? Is it a potential of the past, of the present or of the future? He is very clever; he always divides things up, then he attacks things individually. This is the Prasangika way of attacking, and it is right to do that, because the opponent is talking about a substance, an entity. And as soon as you talk about an entity, it has to be based on time.

[H27]

### (i) Refuting present potential, 6:57.1

6:57.1 The already created does not have potential,

The first line is about the present potential. Chandrakirti is saying that there is no purpose to a present potential, because the subject, that mind that thinks that there is a floating hair, is already there. So, what is the purpose of a potential? This is very easy.

[H27]

### (ii) Refuting future potential, 6:57.2-58

*The future mind does not yet exist, so its potential also cannot exist*

*The Cittamatrins say that we can think about the potential of cooked rice before we start to cook*

*In reply, Chandrakirti emphasises dependent arising, so there is no independent future mind with a potential*

*Chandrakirti does not deny potential or mind, but says they exist dependently*

*[Q]: How do we differentiate the inferential mind of ordinary people and of theoreticians?*

*[A]: Anything that seeks to develop a theory about something truly existent is a problem*

**6:57.2-4** *Likewise, the uncreated essence has no potential.  
When a characteristic does not exist, there cannot be any possessor of such characteristic,  
Otherwise, it would also exist for a barren woman's child.*

The second line talks about the future potential, the potential of a future mind that sees or knows the floating hair. Chandrakirti is saying that this is not possible, because in this case, the mind that grasps or thinks that this is blue, hair or fly, is not here right now. When a characteristic does not exist, in this case the mind that sees the blue or the floating hair, then the possessor of such a characteristic, which is the potential, also cannot exist. Because a future phenomenon is not an entity right now, you cannot talk about the characteristics of that non-entity. If you talk like that, then Chandrakirti says that the barren woman's son should see something. Of course, the barren woman does not have a child, so the child cannot see anything. This is further explained in the next sloka.

**6:58** *If you explain this [potential] as giving rise to [perception],  
In the absence of potential, nothing will arise,  
As objects that are mutually dependent,  
The holy ones ascertain to be without intrinsic nature.*

But, the Cittamatrins are saying again, right now we do not have the future mind that sees the floating hair or the floating fly. But there is a potential that can become the perceiver of this floating hair or floating fly. That is why they now accept that there is a potential. The Cittamatrins are saying that when they talk about the potential in our mind, they are assuming and referring to the future consciousness that sees the floating hair or floating fly or blue. That is why there is a potential. They give a good example here. When you cook rice, or make a sweater out of wool, there is no sweater or cooked rice at the beginning. But you can think about cooking this rice and making a sweater out of this wool. You can already see the potential. This is what they are saying.

Now, Chandrakirti uses a similar argument as before, but this time emphasising that when all causes and effects arise, they arise dependently rather than independently. He is saying that if there is so-called potential that exists independently, then one can say that out of this potential we then have a separate mind, the future mind, which sees the blue, the hair and so on. But because there is not an independently existing future mind that sees things, we cannot accept the characteristics of that mind, such as the potential. In other words, he is saying that the potential does not exist because the future mind does not exist now. He is saying that you cannot point to something and say that the future mind comes from this potential. So, Chandrakirti is not denying the potential and the mind at all, but he is saying that they only exist dependently. And on the last line, he says that anything that is dependently existent does not have a truly existent nature, which is what was said by the sublime or holy beings, such as Nagarjuna and his disciple Aryadeva said. These slokas are quite straightforward.

[Q]: On the subject of a mind without an object, I remembered that is it possible to have a completely blank meditation state without any perception. For example, the gods of the form and formless realms meditate in a completely blank state where they do not have any kind of perceptions, like sleeping without any dreams. Wouldn't that be an example of a mind without any object? Or is it something different?

[A]: We will come to this. It is the last example of the Cittamatrins.

[Q]: Could you explain on what basis, according to what criteria, Chandrakirti distinguishes between the inferential mind of ordinary people and the inferential mind of theoreticians. It seems that when we say we see smoke and so there must be fire, that is all right, but if we then go into it more, then it is not all right.

[A]: Anything that develops a theory about something truly existent is a problem.

*The two things to be refuted: (i) the true existence of things, by logic or reasoning, (ii) the so-called validity of things, by the path or practice*

*Buddha said “I have no disagreement with ordinary people. They disagree with me”*

[Q]: You might call it a lack of analysis, but there is some basic inferential logic even with ordinary people. And Chandrakirti is saying that is all right, but he is saying that the theoreticians' elaboration on basic inferential logic is not all right.

[A]: Yes, because the theoreticians' analysis is all done in order to establish the ultimate truth. The whole purpose of their theories is trying to establish the facts, not where the cows are coming from, or things like that. I have been wondering whether scientists would be included, but Jigme Khyentse Rinpoche says that they are.

[Q]: For myself, I find that these two are usually not very distinct, because we have some kind of theory for some provisional meaning and we cling to some truth. For example, I think that I need to put some fuel into the tank of my car in order to use my car. But usually I do not only have this provisional meaning; I also truly think that there is some fuel, a car and so on.

[A]: Yes, but you are not trying to establish a theoretical ultimate truth.

[Q]: Maybe I am.

[A]: If you are, then your theory would be included here.

[Q]: You are saying that even a scientist may have a theory, such as a gene, if it is to cure some illness. This is no problem. But you say that if they think there is truly a gene in people, and that this explains the entire world, then there is a problem. So, there is not a separate side.

[A]: It is a very thin line. There are two kinds of defilements; two things need to be negated or purified:

(1) *rig pé ga ja* (*rigs pas dgag bya*), ‘what is to be refuted by logic or reasoning’.

(2) *lam gyi ga ja* (*lam gyis dgag bya*), ‘what is to be refuted by the path or practice’.

What is to be refuted by logic or reasoning is the true existence of phenomena, and what is to be refuted by the path or practice is the so-called validity of things, such as needing to put petrol in your car. It is very valid, but it needs to be refuted by the path or practice. We should say, *tsedrub* (*tshad grub*), something that is accomplished as valid, like praise, criticism, happiness, all of these are valid. Does that help you?

[Q]: From the Western view, this cannot really be helped, because you have a theory of how things are made by cognition. There is no difference between the ordinary and the extraordinary, so if you believe that you have to put petrol in your car, it is because you believe that the engine is fuelled by petrol. That is a certain view of the world, and there is no distinction between something ordinary and something extraordinary. Like a scientist, there is a theory like he can only find what he presumes to start with. This is also how our ordinary world functions. We think the car is going because we put in some petrol, and we do not try to drive the car without it. We just confirm our projection. That is how science works.

[A]: Do you mean that scientists do not differentiate between unanalysed and analysed?

[Q]: Yes, it is just a more refined way of doing the same thing.

[A]: I have been told many times that scientists are like farmers, but more sophisticated.

[Q]: Yes, that might be one view, but there is a whole philosophical debate about whether in good faith that can be called science. Chandrakirti cannot say that you cannot debate some things, but you can debate other things. He is making it a bit easy for himself by saying that he will not discuss some things, and that others cannot be put in a theory.

[A]: No, if the scientists have not developed something that is truly existent, Chandrakirti will just include the scientists within ordinary people's experience. That is up to you, I am not a scientist.

[Q]: But if he is arguing with theory, then he should be consistent. He accepts the ordinary people's view, but that is also a type of theory, because they think that is how the world functions.

[A]: He has no disagreement with ordinary people's theories. The Buddha himself said “I have no disagreement with ordinary people. It is the ordinary people that disagree with me”.

[Q<sub>1</sub>]: But if you go to Bhutan, there might be a different view of ordinary than in France or Greenland or the North Pole. Is there just one ordinary view?

[Q<sub>2</sub>]: If, for example, you ask a scientist what is a chair, he will give a learned answer about atoms and so on. But if you catch him off guard and ask “is there a chair over there”, he will say, of course, can't you see it? That is the difference.

*Chandrakirti is not trying to refute the logical analysis that establishes the relative truth*

*If Chandrakirti breaks someone's vase, he will apologise*

*Enlightenment is not truly existent in the absolute truth*

*Chandrakirti accepts alaya conventionally, but refutes its true existence ultimately*

[A]: Yes, even the Prasangikas have that kind of thing. They would never say, "Hey, give me that emptiness". You are right. But if a scientist is bringing a philosophical view, then he is definitely included in the invalid relative truth.

[Q]: I have the impression that we are forgetting two things, two types of suffering. For example if I jump into a swimming pool I may fear drowning, and there is a fear which corresponds to looking for a theory which corresponds to how things really are, and perhaps Chandrakirti is saying that a theory never corresponds to how things are. And that creates another kind of suffering, and when I forget that I am a subject of this great experiment and study, then wondering about how others describe the world, how others decide how to act in the world, there is so much comprehension.

[A]: There seem to be two distinctions being made in these teachings. There is one thing called *döndam chöché kyi rig pa* (*don dam dpyod byed kyi rig pa*), 'the logical analysis that goes into establishing the absolute truth'. And the other one is *tanyé chöché kyi rig pa* (*tha snyad dpyod byed kyi rigs pa*), 'the logical analysis that goes into establishing the conventional truth or how things function'. Chandrakirti is not trying to refute the logical analysis that goes into establishing the relative truth. We can see this from the example that he used earlier. There he said that if someone breaks someone else's first century vase, and this person is upset, he would not simply say, "Oh that was just some clay". He will say, "I am sorry". So, in that sense, he is not going against conventional truth, or the logical analysis that goes into establishing relative truth. Now, with the example of putting petrol into your car, it is different. If you really believe that the petrol is truly existing, first, it will be difficult to find truly existing petrol that goes into a truly existing car, and which fuels a truly existing going anywhere. In that sense, it is definitely something that Chandrakirti is refuting. But Chandrakirti is not at all trying to refute the simple fact that in this illusory world you need to put illusory petrol into an illusory car.

[Q]: If there is no potential, what is the seed of enlightenment?

[A]: Relatively, there is potential. There is illusory potential. Chandrakirti never negates that. But truly existent potential does not exist.

[Q]: That means enlightenment is not truly existent?

[A]: Never, in the absolute truth.

[Q]: Yesterday we talked of *alaya*. Is it something shared, that we all partake in, or is it separate for each individual?

[A]: Relatively, the Cittamatrins says it is individual.

[Q]: I thought that *alaya* was supposed to be something absolute, since the ocean represents it, and the waves are duality.

[A]: Yes, *alaya* exists absolutely according to the Cittamatrins. But it is more than that.

[Q]: But if *alaya* is absolute, I do not understand how Chandrakirti is supposedly refuting the existence of something absolute just by asking for an example of a mind with no object, because when he asks this question, he is getting back to the relative level.

[A]: Because Chandrakirti does not agree with truly existent *alaya*.

[Q]: But he is not refuting it, he is saying that he does not believe in it.

[A]: In the conventional truth he believes in *alaya*. But he is refuting truly existent *alaya*.

[Q]: He is not refuting it. To refute the existence of the ocean, he asks for an example of a mind that would exist without an object, and then he leaves the ocean and returns to the level of duality, where minds cannot exist without an object.

[A]: That is a very good trick, don't you think? This is how he refutes it. It is a very good way of reasoning, very skilful. When someone says, "the object does not exist, but subject does exist"...[Rinpoche is interrupted]

[Q]: But *alaya* is not a subject.

[A]: Remember, *alaya* is mind.

[Q]: But it cannot be talked of, cannot be conceived.

[A]: Right now, Chandrakirti and the Cittamatrins are debating. The Cittamatrins have given their definition of *alaya*, but just because they gave a definition, Chandrakirti does not have to accept it. They say *alaya* cannot be talked about, but it has some other qualities that can be talked about. The consistency of that definition is debatable, and that is what is being debated. For example, the Cittamatrins might say, for example, "I am the creator". But just

*Just because the Cittamatrins give a definition does not mean we must accept it. We should ask for reasons, as we would if someone said, "I am the creator"*

*Chandrakirti has asked for an example, but they have not provided one that he can accept*

*The main problem is that the Cittamatrins say alaya is truly existent*

*Chandrakirti is not simply refusing to accept true existence, but showing why he cannot logically do so*

because they say, “I am the creator and I should not be questioned”, Chandrakirti does not have to accept that. The Cittamatrins must first give reasons to convince him that they are the creator, and reasons why they cannot be questioned. Chandrakirti is doing this right now. He is saying that the Cittamatrins are saying that this cannot be debated, that *alaya* is inconceivable, yet this inconceivable phenomenon truly exists. We are debating the definitions that the Cittamatrins have given.

[Q]: I understand that. But then Chandrakirti’s position is just as false.

[A]: It is not as false, because Chandrakirti is not proposing anything. It is a skilful means in the sense that when a person says, “I am so”, that person has to have a reason for saying that they are that. And that is what is happening now. For example, I say I am Patrick. You ask why. I say because Ivan says so. And then we have to see why Ivan’s saying so has to be true. And that is what we are trying to do. Chandrakirti’s investigation is using the usual logic that is common to both.

[Q]: But it is not a western logic, he is not trying to be logical in some way.

[A]: The Cittamatrins say that in the external, objective world all these phenomena do not truly exist. Only mind truly exists. That is their fundamental view. Then Chandrakirti asks for an example of a truly existing mind that does not have a truly existing object. Then Cittamatrins gave the example of a dream, because a dream is not truly existent. But Chandrakirti said he could not accept that there is a truly existent mind in the dream, so the example of the dream does not work. In an argument, the example has to be mutually agreed by both parties, otherwise it will not work. Chandrakirti does not have to agree with the Cittamatrins.

[Q]: Yes, but Chandrakirti comes up with another theory, which is the absence of theory. He is saying that *alaya* does not exist and that *alaya* is not non-existent. But still this is a theory, so how can he think that his non-theory is more valuable than the *alaya* theory. Both are relative in any case, so both could be seen as skilful means.

[A]: The troublemaker here is their insistence that *alaya* is truly existent, that it is independently existent and unfabricated. That is the main problem. Along the way, the ways that the Cittamatrins establish this view are all small problems, side problems. The main problem is the notion of truly existent, which is a finding of logic and analysis. And if you search for anything with logic and analysis, you are establishing the ultimate truth. According to Chandrakirti, in the ultimate truth, you cannot say ‘this is truly existent’, because nothing truly exists. And in the relative world, there is no analysis.

[Q]: Then you cannot say that something does not truly exist either.

[A]: Yes, Chandrakirti says that too, because he does not have a thesis, remember. For the sake of communication, I am saying this is not truly existent, but truly non-existent is also not existent. Chandrakirti never has a thesis in the ultimate truth, but in the conventional truth, everything exists. Right now, Chandrakirti is debating with all the substantialist schools, and we are in the process of refuting the true existence of things. We do this by saying that if a true thing exists, it must be born either from itself, or something different from it, or from both or from neither. So, Chandrakirti is not simply saying that he just refuses to accept it. We are in the process of learning how and why he cannot logically accept it.

The following slokas are quite straightforward, so I am going to go through them quickly. Keep in your mind that the opponent is saying that something is truly existent in the ultimate level, and this is what we are trying to negate. Most of these theses are very similar.

[H27]

### **(iii) Refuting past potential**

[H28]

#### **(a) The consequence that arising would occur without any coherence, 6:59**

*Past consciousness creates a habitual pattern, which ripens to give the future subject and object*

*But this means that cause and result are different, so any kind of result could come from any cause*

[H28]

*The Cittamatrins say this cannot happen, because there is continuity between past and future mind*

*But Chandrakirti points out that this ‘continuity’ is a thesis, not an explanation*

[H28]

6:59     *If [consciousness] were to arise due to the ripening of an already ceased potential,  
Then from the potential [of one consciousness] a different [consciousness] could arise.  
However, if [the successive elements of] a continuity were separate,  
Anything could thus arise from anything.*

Now we are talking about the past potential. On the first line, the Cittamatrins are saying that a consciousness of seeing blue or seeing a fly, for example, is past. As soon as this past consciousness is gone, it develops a certain habitual pattern; and when this habitual pattern ripens, the future subject and object appear.

On the second line, Chandrakirti says that in this case, a consciousness that is something other than the potential will come from this separate entity, the potential. In other words, a different result will come from a different cause, the potential. He is hitting on the point that they are different. The past is different from the present. Because, according to the Cittamatrins, all these moments of mind, past, present and future exist separately and substantially. In this case, all kinds of cause that have nothing to do with an immediate or particular result can also produce all kinds of result. A result such as a baby could then come from a rice seed.

**(b) The counter-argument is the same as the thesis to be proved (circular argument), 6:60**

6:60     *If you claim that the separate (elements) of a continuity,  
Partake in a non-separate continuity, and therefore  
There is no fault, this remains to be established.  
As a non-separate continuity is impossible.*

In this sloka, Chandrakirti is again using one of the four Prasangika methods of debating (see p.85). He is saying that the reason, which is what the opponent is using to establish certain thesis, is the same as the thesis that he is trying to establish. So, it is not a valid reason, because the reason itself is the thesis. In other words, it is a circular argument.

Now the Cittamatrins are introducing a new idea, another new argument. We have just been talking about potential, and now they are saying that although there is a process of past mind, present mind and future mind, during these different moments of mind, there is what they call *gyün* (*rgyun*), ‘continuity’, although this is not a separate entity. Now Chandrakirti will attack this continuity. Again, this idea corresponds to another of our habitual patterns. For example, when we look at a river this year and then return to look at the river next year, we think it is the same river. The reason that we think it is the same river is that there is continuity. The Cittamatrin idea of continuity of mind is very similar to that.

The two first lines and half of the third line say that although all these past, present and future minds are substantially separate, they have a single continuity. Therefore, the fault implied by Chandrakirti earlier will not apply, namely that all kinds of uncertain results could come from all kinds of uncertain causes. This is what the Cittamatrins are saying. But Chandrakirti points out that the notion of ‘continuity’ is a thesis, not a reason. There is no such thing as continuity, because there are three separate entities or substances: past, present and future. This is explained further in sloka 61.

**(c) What is other cannot share a single continuity, 6:61**

*Like Maitreya and Upagupta, past, present and future minds are totally different. They have no continuity*

*This reasoning is simple, but it goes against our habitual patterns*

[H23]

[H24]

*The Cittamatrins reconfirm that only dependent reality exists substantially*

6:61

*The phenomena particular to Maitreya and Upagupt  
Are different and not of one continuity.  
Phenomena possessing their own particular characteristics  
Therefore cannot be a single continuity.*

This sloka says that there is a contradiction between ‘one continuity’ and ‘being different’. Maitreya and Upagupta are two different beings. Therefore, what Maitreya has, Upagupta does not have. If Maitreya eats, Upagupta does not have satisfaction. Therefore, you cannot say that there is continuity between Upagupta and Maitreya. Here, Chandrakirti is simply saying that the Cittamatrin thesis of past, present and future minds are like Maitreya and Upagupta. They are totally different things; therefore, they cannot have continuity.

This reasoning is very straightforward, but if you apply it to your normal habitual patterns, then it is not straightforward, because our opponent, who is our mind, does not like to think that way. For example, we have to say that our ‘self’ of yesterday and our ‘self’ of today are different. Otherwise, there is no impermanence. But if they are different, how can we still remember today what we learned yesterday? We have so many habitual patterns like this. The Prasangikas do not accept that cause and effect are separate things, therefore just for the conventional truth, they can accept that there is continuity between the cause and conditions. It is so simple. For the Cittamatrins, continuity is not possible, but for the Madhyamikas it is possible! Chandrakirti can accept it, simply because he never said there are two truly existing separate things. So, as you can see, whenever the opponent brings something comfortable or good, Chandrakirti can have them all, and the opponent cannot have them! The next three slokas are arguments from the Cittamatrins.

### **(iii) Refuting a re-statement in terms of support and object**

#### **(a) The statement according to their texts, 6:62-64**

6:62

*[Objection:] Eye consciousness' own potential for production  
May create anything, as explained above.  
And through that potential, based on its own consciousness,  
Arises the concept of the eye, the form-perceiving faculty.*

This is actually a re-explanation of some of the earlier points. When we see the colour blue, when an eye sees something, the Cittamatrins say that there is a potential or habitual pattern within the *alaya* that can see the form. When that potential is agitated by a certain condition, then there is a so-called perceiving the blue or perceiving the floating hair or whatever. Ordinary sentient beings then refer to this potential or the habitual pattern as so-called ‘eye’. This is the Cittamatrin definition of eye. When we talk of an eye perceiving blue, the Cittamatrins are saying that ordinary people are actually pointing to the *alaya*, this habitual pattern or potential.

So here again, the Cittamatrins are reconfirming that apart from this *zhenwong*, this dependent reality, there is no substantially existing eye consciousness or eye sense. This is in contrast to some of the other schools, like the Vaibhashika, who believe that there is a so-called container of the eye sense (a very small substance that looks something like a flower) and things like that. But the Cittamatrins are saying that there is only the potential that is based on the *alaya*, and when that is agitated by conditions, this does all the work of the eye consciousness and that is considered as the eye.

*Neither the eye sense nor the sense objects exist externally. All appearances arise from the alaya*

*Appearances in our dreams arises within alaya from potential, and it is the same when we are awake*

*Chandrakirti's reply: so why can a blind person dream of blue but not see blue while awake?*

[H24]

[H25]

[H25]

6:63     *In ordinary experience perceptions arise from the senses - Without there being objects, from their own cause, Appearances such as blue and so forth arise. Those without realisation Accept these exterior objects of the mind.*

The next sloka is saying that not only the senses, like the eye sense or, ear sense, do not truly and substantially exist, but that even the sense objects are not truly existent. In this world, when a perception is perceived by the senses, nothing exists out there externally as a form or as a sound. But based on this *alaya*, the potential or habitual pattern can arise as a form, a sound, as blue and so on. All these things will arise. But ordinary people do not understand this so they think that the outer world such as sound, form, taste and all these things externally exist. This has already been explained.

6:64     *In a dream the perceived forms are not external – They arise from the maturation of their own potential, within the perceiving mind. Likewise, when we awaken, There exists a non-external external mind.*

Again, sloka 64 is something we have discussed a lot already. I have explained certain things out of sequence in order for you to understand, so you might think it is a repetition, but it is not really a repetition. Although there is no real elephant, when the potential to see a dream-elephant arises, then all kinds of elephants can come, and not only elephants, but all kinds of sounds, tastes, and so on can come. Likewise, even when you wake up, this entire outer world (including sounds and form and all these things) does not exist outside this *alaya*. This is the Cittamatrin explanation.

### **(b) How this is to be countered**

#### **(i) A challenge using their very reasons, 6:65**

6:65     *[Reply:] As in the dream-state, without [the organ of] the eye, Mental cognition of colours does occur. Accordingly, in the absence of the eye-senses, the actual seed [of consciousness] Maturing, why should visual perception not occur to the blind?*

Again, in this sloka, the Prasangikas are using the reason given by the Cittamatrins in order to negate them. Something very similar has been said before, but this time Chandrakirti is saying that in the dream, without the eye you still see blue and things like that. And you still say that blue consciousness is valid, so in this case when someone who is blind wakes up, why do these blind people not see blue? The consequence is that even blind people should see the blue.

#### **(ii) Disposing of their statement with the reasoning they used in their previous counter-argument, 6:66-67**

6:66     *If the potential of the sixth [consciousness] matures in the dream, And disappears upon awakening, If this potential of the sixth [consciousness] thus does not exist [when the blind person awakes], Why should it exist when he is dreaming?*

*If the blind person has no potential to see blue while awake, how can he see blue during his dreams?*

The Cittamatrins are saying that during the dream the mind consciousness, the sixth consciousness, has this potential to see things when it is agitated. But when he wakes up, a blind person does not have the potential or habitual tendencies to see colours and shapes in the real world, so the potential cannot be agitated and so he does not see things. Now, Chandrakirti is using the same example but reversing the logic. If the Cittamatrins are saying that just as a person who is awake yet blind does not have the potential or habitual tendency to unfold this real world in front of him, he will not see any form in the dream, so the Cittamatrins should also say this.

6:67     *Thus the absence of eyes is not the cause,  
And for dreams, sleep is not the cause.  
You must concede that even in dreams, things [perceived] and the [perceiving]  
eye,  
Are causes for the conception of a false subject.*

Again, Chandrakirti is clarifying. The Cittamatrins are saying that a blind person who is awake cannot see because he does not have the causes or conditions that allow him to see. In the same way, we can say that while we are dreaming, sleep itself is not the cause of the eye consciousness, the perception of that, nor the object that is experienced in the dream. So we should realise that just in the same way as the sensory organs of the eyes are not truly existent, the sense consciousness that depends on them, and the objects that depend on them to be seen, are all equally non-existent or all equally untrue.

[H25]

**(iii) All the proofs they use are the same as the thesis to be proved,  
6:68.1-3½**

6:68     *As the Cittamatrin answers and statements  
Seem to be [mere] propositions,  
The dispute is settled. The Buddha has never taught  
That anything inherently exists.*

This is a conclusion. Whatever the Cittamatrins answer, all their answers and reasons are just theses, so there is no good reason to establish that *alaya* is truly existent.

[H25]

**(iv) There is no scriptural authority for their position, 6:68.3½-4**

Then he is also saying that in the sutras, the buddhas never taught that any of these phenomena truly exist.

[Q]: Could you clarify the meaning of pure and impure *zhenwong*?

[A]: Impure dependent nature transforms to the *dakpé zhenwong* (*dag pa'i gzhan dbang*). You have no problem with this, so what is your question?

[Q]: I would like to get more clarity about what these three things are for in our experience in everyday life. I would like to get a living explanation of what we can use them for, rather than just have them as names.

[A]: For the *dakpé zhenwong*, a living example is quite difficult. The only thing I can find is *saltsam rigtsam*, ‘mere clarity mere awareness’. To make things less confusing, I have not even talked about the different kinds of vocabularies of the various schools. The Cittamatrins and the Madhyamikas both have their own vocabulary, but we have not talked about that much as it will confuse us a lot! Right now, what is going on is quite enough! When you say things like ‘mind focussing inside’ or focussing outside, that is a very Madhyamika vocabulary.

- [Q]: Does the difference between pure and impure *zhenwong* relate to the difference between dualistic perception and clinging to characteristics, *tsendzin*?
- [A]: *Madakpé zhenwong*, impure dependent reality, (*ma dag pa'i gzhan dbang*) is *zhenwong* during the time of sentient beings. And until the eighth bhumi, *tsendzin* is impure dependent reality. Until enlightenment, it is all impure dependent reality. (Also, see diagram on p.44).
- [Q]: I thought that two years ago you said that *dakpé zhenwong* (*dag pa'i gzhan dbang*) is the experience of beings on the bhumis during post-meditation. Also, what is the difference between *tsendzin* and *nyinang*?
- [A]: That is difficult, the difference between *tsendzin* and *nyinang*. I want to do some research on both questions. I am almost sure that it is impure dependent reality until the *gyünta* (*rgyun mta'*), the last stage of the tenth bhumi bodhisattva. If they had pure dependent reality, then they would already be enlightened. But they only have the *madakpé zhenwong* during their meditation time, not during their post-meditation time.
- [Q]: Two years ago, you said that the difference between ordinary beings and sublime beings during their post-meditation is that ordinary beings cling to the true existence of things. Whereas, due to the effect of their meditation, sublime beings do not have this clinging to the true existence of things, but they still perceive the characteristics.
- [A]: Yes. That is *tsendzin*. I think *tsendzin* and *nyinang* are within *madakpé zhenwong*.
- [Q]: Then what is the difference between *yongdrup* and *zhenwong*? You said that *yongdrup* is when you realise that *zhenwong* is empty of *küntak*?
- [A]: Yes.
- [Q]: Therefore, you get beyond *tsendzin*; therefore, in post-meditation on the bhumis it must be *dakpé zhenwong*.
- [A]: I remember saying that one is *du jé* ('*du byas*), a compounded phenomenon. If your question is coming from the Mahasandhi teachings, where they also talk about three characters, it is slightly different.
- [Q]: I could not figure out from my notes whether the Prasangikas admitted *zhenwong*, *küntak* and *yongdrup* on the relative level for the sake of communication.
- [A]: I do not think so, except perhaps for the sake of communication. The Yogachara Madhyamikas have this concept, but the way in which the Prasangikas would refer to *zhenwong* is different from the Cittamatrins. For the Cittamatrins, it is the eighth consciousness, which has nothing to do with the sixth consciousness, whereas for the Prasangikas it is the sixth. So already, there is a difference. But they might, of course, accept the name *zhenwong*, as there is no harm in that.



## Purifying the delusion of truly existent mind

*Even in our ordinary experience, we think that our minds are the most important parts of ourselves*

Even in our ordinary experience as a human being, we think that body is important, and we think that mind is very important. We see that without the mind, our body and five other senses cannot function. And for many of us, this combination of the mind and the body is what we refer to as me, myself, they, he, she and so on. And if you ask further, ordinary beings like us probably think that mind is the most essential thing that we have, because without it, we cannot conceive things, contemplate things, understand things or so on. People like the Cittamatrins also place importance on the mind, but the reason why they place importance on the mind is not the same as ordinary people like us. I mean, from the theoretical point of view. Of course, a Cittamatrin is still a human being, and as a human being, he or she may go through an ordinary experience. But the Cittamatrin idea of mind-only is established by all kinds of logic and reason. And for the

*The Cittamatrins also think mind is most important, but for them, it is truly existent*

*It is ultimate truth, so it is independent and unfabricated*

*But Chandrakirti only accepts dependent reality; something independent would have to come from somewhere, which is why Chandrakirti is refuting arising*

*We also need to purify ordinary delusions, but this is done with the path, not logic (see p.174)*

*A valid relative truth is delusion without analysis, something that can be purified*

*Whereas the ideas of the theoreticians are like dirt that does not even exist – it is a complete waste of time trying to clean it*

*The third example of the Cittamatrins: mistaken meditation*

sake of communication and explanation, this mind is referred to with many different terms, such as *alaya*, dependent nature and so on.

Then they think that only this mind exists truly, and everything that is not mind is all labelling and fabrication. When we talk about truly existent, I would like to remind you that the definition of ‘truly’ is something that is independent and unfabricated. Now if you ask an ordinary cowherd, do you really have mind, he will say yes, I have a real mind. But when they say this is a real or true mind, I do not think that they are applying a definition like independent and unfabricated. But for theoreticians such as the Cittamatrins, establishing that this mind is truly and independently existent is quite important. This is true not only for the Cittamatrins, but also for the Sautrantika and Vaibhashika schools. For something to exist independently, such as a small particle, is quite important. Because they know that if their ultimately existent thing is dependent, whether it is mind, particle or something else, it cannot be ultimate. If it depends on something, it can change. It would be changeable and fickle, so it could not be ultimate. That is why this aspect of being independent is so important. Similarly, its unfabricated aspect is also important, because they are saying that the ultimate truth is there without needing to be labelled or fabricated by a theoretician. That is why it is ultimate truth.

Now Chandrakirti and the Prasangikas are those who accept dependent reality. They do not accept anything that is independent and truly existent somewhere, because if anything exists independently, it would have to come from somewhere. If it is something, it has to come from somewhere or have a beginning. This is why there is all this analysis about arising. Now, as I was saying earlier, ordinary people also talk about things being truly existent, as in ‘are you sure you have a mind’, ‘yes I do really have a mind’, things like that. This kind of fabrication, this idea of mind, is something that needs to be purified by the path. This is what I wanted to tell you this morning; it is quite an important message. Although Chandrakirti says that he will accept the relative truth without analysis, this does not mean he is not going to purify ordinary people’s delusion during the path, definitely not! He is just saying that when you develop any theory, you have to talk about relative truth and ultimate truth. And what is relative truth? The basis of that relative truth is something unanalysed.

This does not mean that Chandrakirti is saying that we should not purify those delusions. If you want to obtain enlightenment, you should purify them. But the purifier of these delusions is not analysis, logic or all the things that we are doing now. It is the path: meditation and contemplation. The reason that Chandrakirti refers to these things as valid relative truth, or true relative, is because there is something that can be purified. On the relative level, there is actually a delusion without analysis. But he is saying that all the ideas that are established by the theoreticians, such as a truly existent atom, a truly existent mind and all that, are something extra. It is extra dirt. Let us say that you want to purify or clean something like a cup. Chandrakirti is saying that these theoreticians’ ideas are like dirt that does not even exist in the relative level. So trying to clean it is a complete waste of time and energy, whereas at least you can purify the unanalysed dirt, that which looks dirty. Otherwise, you are just buying more problems for yourself. He says this with great compassion, not with arrogance.

So, all theses that are established by the substantialists are the defilements that need to be purified by analysis or logic. And ordinary people’s experience is the defilement that needs to be purified by the path.

But the Cittamatrins have not yet given up. Now, they bring their third example. The first example was the dream, *yishepé trulpey pé* (*yid shes pa'i 'khrul pa'i dpe*), which is the example of deluded consciousness. The second example is deluded sensory consciousness, and the third is deluded meditation. But we should be careful with the term mistaken or deluded meditation. When we say deluded meditation, it does not mean that the specific meditation is leading you to something wrong. It refers more to the example of the falling hair given a few days ago, where for a deluded consciousness, both are true, but to a consciousness that is not deluded, both are not true.

**(c) Its impossibility seen using the analogy of a deluded meditation experience, 6:69-70**

6:69     *A yogin meditating on the instructions of his teacher  
Sees the earth as covered in bones.  
Still the three he sees are uncreated,  
And this is taught to be false conceptualisation.*

*If you meditate that people are skeletons, you can reduce desire*

*Again, this is an example of a mind, with no external object (no skeletons are really there)*

*Chandrakirti's reply:  
neither the skeleton, the mind seeing it or the meditation is truly arisen*

*This practice is invalid relative truth, because people are not skeletons*

*If the skeleton is truly existent, then even people not meditating on skeletons should also perceive them*

A yogin who wishes to reduce or diminish his passion or desire goes to a guru. And then the guru tells the yogin to meditate that all the things that he or she sees as desirable are like a skeleton. This is the example. Then, after a certain time of practising, the yogin will begin to see everything as a skeleton, and that is how the yogin manages to diminish his desire. For a certain person in this tent to think of a certain other person who is in the United States as a skeleton would be quite difficult! Anyway, the Cittamatrins are saying that although there are no skeletons out there, the yogin can meditate, think that there are skeletons and actually see people as skeletons. And this actually has the effect of diminishing desire and even eventually achieving enlightenment. This is such a big effect! Therefore, they are again giving us an example of a mind that is independent from the external object. It is such a good example.

But again, the Prasangikas simply say that this is not right, it is not enough. Again, we talk in term of the three things – the subject, object and meditation. The skeleton, the mind that sees it, and the meditation: all these are not truly arisen. And on top of that, on the last line, Chandrakirti is saying that actually these are invalid relative truth. This is a very big statement. This yogi is practising something that is invalid relative truth, because in reality, these people are not skeletons, but the meditator thinks that they are skeletons. That is why it is an invalid relative truth. But this does not mean that Chandrakirti is saying that in the ultimate reality they are not skeletons. I do not want you to think that, because then you will attack me from a different point of view! In the ultimate reality, they are also beyond ‘not skeleton’.

But this really harms the Cittamatrins, because they are saying that there is a truly existent mind and that is the whole problem for Chandrakirti, as we know. Therefore, when the yogin is looking at skeleton, we say that this whole process is invalid relative truth. Why? Because there is no skeleton and yet he sees a skeleton. That is why it is invalid. Chandrakirti is not saying that this must be a beautiful man or woman. He is not even saying that this is ‘not skeleton’. He is not making a thesis here. Ultimately it is beyond skeleton and non-skeleton.

6:70     *Just as whatever mental objects you may have,  
Such as [meditation on] ugly mental images,  
Merely focusing the mind [on them],  
[The concept of them] should make them real.*

The Cittamatrins are saying that the yogin’s mind that perceives things as skeletons is also the mind that sees things as the ultimate truth. So, for example, if we look at a dance, all of us will see it as a dance. It is not that some see it as a dance and some see it as something different. In any case, we are all told it is a dance, so it is a dance for us. Likewise, Chandrakirti says that even other people who are not meditating on the skeleton must also perceive this skeleton. Our consequentialist has produced a very good consequence here.

In summary, the Cittamatrins are saying that mind truly exists, which is why they are bringing this example. So, the perceiver of the skeleton is a valid truly existent mind. And so, the object that is being perceived by truly existent mind must be a true and real one. In this case, other people should also see a skeleton. But they do not. Some of us here never even see the bone structure, let alone a skeleton.

*[Q]: Why didn't he say this at the start?*

*[A]: it should have been enough for the Buddha to say, "you are all buddhas", but he had to give more complicated teachings, adapted to our minds*

*Chandrakirti is needed in the West, where logic and reason are considered so valuable*

*But although he cannot accept some things, he adapts very well to ordinary experience*

[Q]: Why didn't he say this at the start? This argument alone is enough to cover everything. If mind exists, object exists, and it is finished!

[A]: This is a very good question. The Buddha should not need to say this. In fact, he should not need to say anything to us, or if he did say something, he should simply have said, "You are all Buddhas". That should have been enough. But as we know, there are many different capacities and complexities of mind. We know how complicated our minds can be, and the teachings are adapted to that. Some of them are so sophisticated and complicated that they could not have been done by anyone ordinary. If an ordinary person managed to make something complicated, it would be as confusing as it was complicated, whereas here the teachings are so consistent within their complexity. This should also make us appreciate the teachings of the Buddha, his great compassion and his extremely skilful ways of expressing that. An ordinary person cannot make something so complicated and yet organised, which alone shows the compassion and skilful means of the Buddha.

Many times, we hear arguments that are very similar, with slightly different examples, but if you think carefully, this is how our ordinary minds work. We understand that something is not true looking from one side, but then we think it must be true looking from another. So, Chandrakirti is covering everything, and later in the text he will tell us, after all this vicious negation so to speak, he will then say he never wanted to have to do this. He is almost praising his opponent, almost thanking them for being such a good challenger, and thereby representing us. It is a wonderful way of saying this. But he does not say thank you; instead, he says that he did not want to do this. There is a good example. Beings like us, who sort of pretend that we are Dharma practitioners, we somehow vaguely, intellectually, theoretically know that this so-called worldly life is essenceless and all that. But we are still attached to our own Dharma, guru and path.

Actually, Chandrakirti is someone that the West really needs, especially within our modern, intellectual society. In modern society, something that is established by logic and reason is considered very valuable. Being rational and so on is good, but the rest is superstitious, religious and so on. This is where Chandrakirti would have something to say. But Chandrakirti would not go about being a revolutionary and say that any rational, or what we might call linear, thinking is totally wrong. He would also find that unreasonable. Just because Chandrakirti finds some things unreasonable, he will not use that as an excuse or a driving force to become a bohemian. He is not just a critic who always says the opposite of what is said to him. Out of his compassion, he adapts very well to ordinary experience; he is very social. But if necessary, he is someone who will milk a painted cow! He is a *mahasiddha*, a realised being, not just a philosopher, so if necessary he will do such things. But usually he is very sociable.

[Q]: Why does Chandrakirti need a painting of a cow? He could do it without one.

[A]: This is simply a demonstration that Chandrakirti has realised the ultimate nature, the emptiness nature of all phenomena. It is not at all that some milk companies did not have enough milk! It is a demonstration of emptiness, like Milarepa going inside the horn. Why we cannot do it, because we are so fixated towards the idea that a painting of a cow is painted, while a real cow is not painted.

[Q]: Could you explain sloka 67 again. I understood your explanation that the mind, consciousness and object are not truly existent or producing each other, but when I try to read the two last lines of sloka 67, I cannot really make the link between the root text and the explanation.

[A]: Chandrakirti is explaining the consequences to the Cittamatrins, saying that just as the eye sense organ is illusory or false, likewise the eye consciousness and the form, like the blue flower, will also become false. That is what he is saying.

[Q]: I do not understand why he says that we must concede that things and eye are causes. Is he just saying that this is the consequence, and that it is absurd?

[A]: Yes, of course. Almost all the consequences are absurd. If they are not, I am sure he will keep them for himself!

**(d) Its impossibility seen using the analogy of a deluded visual perception, 6:71.1-2**

6.71.1-2     *Similarly, as someone afflicted with a visual aberration,  
A hungry ghost will experience a running river as pus.*

*The fourth example of the Cittamatrins: deluded perception*

*Looking at the same object, beings in different realms perceive it differently*

*These different kinds of perceptions arise from different habitual patterns*

*We all see a flower as a flower, because we are ripening similar kinds of habitual patterns*

*The Cittamatrins say that these external phenomena do not truly exist: they are all just labelling*

*Do not confuse the Madhyamika teachings on the three Cittamatrin natures with teachings from the Yönten Dzö or from the shentongpas*

The first line of sloka 71 is just an analogy. Chandrakirti is saying that as we have talked about how someone with impaired vision will see floating hair and floating flies and so on, the same argument will apply here. Now the Cittamatrins will give their fourth example, deluded perception.

If you think about these four examples as we negate them, it might sound like they are fundamentally the same, but each has its own character. For instance, this example is very pervasive, a very big one. Here the example is that when looking at a certain object, human beings like us think that this object is water. We drink it, we wash and take showers in it and we use this object as so-called water. Beings like *pretas*, the hungry ghosts, see the same object as pus and blood. Other beings in the animal realm, such as fishes, see this same object as a home in which they can dwell. Certain formless god realm beings see this as space or sky, since they do not have any form, and certain *asura* beings see this same object as a weapon.

The Cittamatrins are not saying that there is a different substance there for each individual being. They are all focussing on the same one object, but this is a very good example of the *bagchak*. Because of the ripening of different habitual patterns of different sentient beings, different kinds of perceptions arise. This is a very good example.

We need to notice two things here. When beings with similar kinds of habitual patterns look at the same object, when their similar habitual patterns ripen, they have similar kinds of vision or perception. And, still looking at the same object, when different kinds of habitual pattern ripen, different kinds of perception arise.

Let us begin with the first one. For instance, when all of us here right now look at this flower, we are all looking at one object and we all agree that this is a flower. When we do that, we are ripening similar kinds of habitual patterns and so we do not disagree about whether or not this is a flower. Now, this does not mean that I see exactly the same flower as you. It is very important for the Cittamatrins that you never see what I see. But although I never see what you see, we all see a flower, and we all agree that this is a flower because we have a similar kind of habitual pattern, since we are all human beings I guess. Again, the Cittamatrins are talking about the habitual patterns or *bagchak*, which are based on this *zhenwong*, the *alaya*. The Cittamatrins are saying that the actual external phenomena such as the pus and blood, the weapon, the water and all that, do not exist externally. They are *kiintak*, labelling. But this *zhenwong*, the *alaya*, is truly existent, as I repeat for the hundredth time! Repetition is important, because even when I am trying to teach, I keep on losing it!

I would like to explain the three natures of the Cittamatrins, the *küntak*, *zhenwong* and *yongdrup*, once again, as several people have requested this. Using the example of the Cittamatrins will work quite well here. But for those of you who have studied the *Yönten Dzö*, for instance, or for those who have been *shentongpa* oriented, you should not mix up what you have learned there with my presentation of the Cittamatrin's three characters. I have to emphasise that the *shentongpa* view is not a substantialist view. It is a great view, and belongs to the Prasangika Madhyamika. Some people think that the *shentongpas* are mostly Nyingmapas and Kagyupas, but that is also mistaken. For example, the Nyingmapas also have many *rangtongpas*, such as the great Dzogchen master Zhenga. And great masters like Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo and Mipham Rinpoche accept both *rangtong* and *shentong*. There are Kagyupa masters like Künchen Pema Karpo (a great Drukpa Kagyü master, 1527-1592, the fourth Drukchen) who are very lenient towards *rangtongpas*, while some Sakya like Sakya Chogden are very much

*The example of the striped rope and the snake*

*Pure and impure dependent nature*

*The three natures of the Cittamatrins*

*The two kinds of ultimate reality*

*shentongpa*, so it is not the case that all Sakyapas are *rangtongpa*. But we will come to *rangtong* and *shentong* later, because it is a Tibetan issue, not an Indian issue, and we are studying an Indian text. I only mention it now for those who have studied these things, so you will not mix them up with Madhyamika.

I will take a classic Cittamatrin example, which works very well. In a room, there is a striped rope. Someone mistakes it and labels it as a snake, and then they become frightened and so on. Then somebody turns on the light, and they see there is no snake. In this analogy, we can say that the fear of the snake is like samsara, and the relief from this snake is like nirvana. I am being brief here. That striped rope is *zhenwong*, the dependent nature. And the mind that sees it, mistakes it and labels it as a snake, is the *küntak*, or imputed reality.

The additional complication is that there are two *zhenwongs*, two dependent natures. When I first introduced this example, I talked only of the striped rope, just *zhenwong*. But now I am talking about *dakpé zhenwong*, ‘pure dependent nature’ and *madakpé zhenwong*, ‘impure dependent nature’. Before we were not talking about subject and object, but as soon as we make the distinction between these two, then we are introducing the subject. If a mind has the potential to see a snake, and that mind sees a snake where there is a striped rope, then at that time, the striped rope becomes impure dependent nature. In addition, a mind looks at the rope and sees that there is no snake. This is caused by a different kind of habitual pattern, such as meditation and all that. When this mind sees there is no snake, then that object, the striped rope, is what we refer to as pure dependent nature.

<b><i>küntak</i> (<i>kun brtags</i>) Imputed reality or labelling</b>	Mind that sees rope as snake	
<b><i>zhenwong</i> (<i>gzhän dbang</i>) Dependent nature</b> (i.e. there are some causes). This is the mind, or <i>alaya</i> .	Rope seen as rope	<i>dakpé zhenwong</i> Pure dependent nature
	Rope seen as snake	<i>madakpé zhenwong</i> Impure dependent nature
<b><i>yongdrup</i> (<i>yongs grub</i>) ultimate reality</b> (there are no causes)	Realising there is no snake	<i>chinchi ma logpé yongdrub</i> , correctly perceived ultimate reality/truth
	Rope just rope (there never was a snake)	<i>gyurmé yongdrub</i> , unchanging ultimate reality

### The three natures according to the Cittamatra

We also talk about two kinds of ultimate reality. One is called ‘unchanging ultimate reality’ and the other is ‘correctly perceived ultimate truth’. In this example, the unchanging ultimate truth is that the rope has never been a snake, so it is not the absence of a snake. The rope is just a rope. Whatever you do, whether or not you switch the light on or off, the rope is just a rope. It has never been a snake, so it cannot become a non-snake. The ‘correctly perceived ultimate truth’ is when you see, “Ah, there is no snake”. That’s it. (See table above and explanation on p.123)

[Q]: What is the difference between pure dependent reality and ultimate truth correctly perceived?

[A]: If we talk in terms of the example of the rope and the snake, there is a big difference between ‘no snake’ and ‘striped rope’. When you talk about a striped rope, you do not talk about snake or no snake. That striped rope is *gyurmé yongdrub* (‘gyur med yongs grub’).

[Q]: This correctly perceived ultimate reality, *chinchi ma logpé yongdrub* (*phyin gyis ma log pa'i yongs grub*); is this what perceives that there is no snake?

[A]: Let us talk just about the snake and the striped rope, the *dakpé zhenwong*. When a mind, such as *vipashyana* meditation, has a *bagchag* that ripens to see that there is no snake, that

object is the *dakpé zhenwong*. This is different from *chinchi ma logpé yongdrub*, which is already understood.

[Q]: Then this *dakpé zhenwong*, this pure dependent reality, refers to the post-meditation of the *aryas*?

[A]: I think so, because for the buddhas there is not even meditation.

[Q]: So, what is the difference between *gyurmé yongdrub* and *chinchi ma logpé yongdrub*? Am I right that this correctly perceived ultimate reality that there never was a snake is actually wisdom, whereas the unchanging ultimate reality, the *gyurmé yongdrub*, refers to the nature?

[A]: When we talk about *gyurmé yongdrub*, the unchanging *yongdrub*, we are not talking about a perceiver. We are just saying that is how it is, a striped rope. But when we talk about *chinchi ma logpé yongdrub*, we are talking about a perceiver who has already managed to see.

[Q]: Is the *gyurmé yongdrub* explained from the point of view of the object?

[A]: Yes, and *zhenwong* is explained from the point of view of the object as well. When we say ‘dependent’, we are saying that it is dependent on perception. We are giving the name, if you like, the problem of the perceiver to the object. That is why it is called *zhenwong*. One is seen or perceived, and the other is there as potential, i.e. ready to be perceived by anyone.

[Q]: Is there a difference between ‘pure dependent reality’ and ‘ultimate reality correctly perceived’? I understand that ‘ultimate reality correctly perceived’ refers to wisdom, which correctly sees what is there. But for me, pure dependent reality also refers to the subject that sees there is no snake. I do not understand how to differentiate between these two realities, although I can see that there must be a difference!

[A]: As long as we are talking about *zhenwong*, we are talking about subject and object. When we are talking about *dakpé zhenwong*, we are coming from the striped rope’s point of view so to speak. Now, the understanding or realisation that there is no snake is *chinchi ma logpé yongdrub*, ‘correctly perceived *yongdrub*’. And the *dakpé zhenwong* is the striped rope that is being perceived by someone who has the potential to see that there is no snake. That object is the *dakpé zhenwong*, so there is a difference. *Zhen* means ‘dependent on other’, which in this case means dependent on that meditative mind. And *chinchi ma logpé yongdrub* is a meditative mind that has already realised that there is no snake. That is a good contemplation.

[Q]: Is ‘ultimate reality correctly perceived’ just a result of the path? When we say that pure *zhenwong* is a result of the path, and the *gyurmé yongdrub* is always there as unchangeable ultimate reality, is the *chinchi ma logpé yongdrub* that same ultimate reality that is perceived by a perceiver?

[A]: That is also the result of the path, but there is a very subtle difference.

[Q]: At the end of the path, does pure *zhenwong* fuse with *yongdrub* and become one?

[A]: See, because we have *madakpé zhenwong* and *dakpé zhenwong*, the *zhenwong* needs to be transformed from impure to pure. But for *yongdrub*, there is no transformation. Try that with the analogy of the snake and the rope and see if it works. But do not be satisfied with this; otherwise you will not learn. You should think more, and I will think more. But let me finish this sloka 71!

[H21]

## (ii) Summary (661), 6:71.3-4

6.71.3-4    *In brief, in the absence of an object,  
There is also no intellect. Know this as true.*

The answer of Chandrakirti, which is in the last two lines of sloka 71, is almost the same thing. Since there is no object, therefore there should not be any subject, so this is what you Cittamatrins should learn.

*Chandrakirti's reply: if  
there is no object, there  
cannot be a subject*

[Q]: As far as I understand, we have impure *zhenwong* perceiving a snake where there was merely a rope. Through meditation, we dispel this confusion and see it is a rope. You mentioned that at the eighth bhumi there was something else, this *nyinang*. Is that to do with the *chinchi ma logpé yongdrub*?

[A]: No.

[Q]: Is it already their ultimate result?

[A]: It is a little bit of *chinchi ma logpé yongdrub* from the point of view of the lower bhumis, but not from the upper bhumis. The example is this. When you see a new moon, you can say, "I have seen the moon".

In the analogy in sloka 71, again the Cittamatrins were saying that object is just *küntak*, labelling, but the mind that sees this object is truly existent. Chandrakirti again refutes that in the same way here in the last two lines of sloka 71, when he says that since there is no object, you cannot find a subject.

[H20]

**(b) Refuting that the doubly empty dependent nature exists as a substance**

[H21]

**(i) There is nothing to prove that the dependent nature exists, 6:72**

6:72     *Without an object, and free from a subject –  
If a dependent nature free from duality were to exist [inherently],  
What could recognise its existence?  
Not being an object [of a mind], its existence cannot be claimed*

*If dependent reality is free from subject and object who could realise its existence?*

Sloka 72 is almost a confirmation of Chandrakirti's negation of this substantially existing dependent nature. The Cittamatrins are again saying that there is a *zhenwong*, a dependent nature, which is substantially existing and free from both subject and object. They always say that subject and object, that kind of dualism, is always labelling and does not truly exist. This is what Chandrakirti is attacking now. It is not repetition at all. He is now talking about another aspect of the *zhenwong* proposed by Cittamatra, which is the *zhenwong* that is free from the subject and object. So Chandrakirti asks, who could recognise or realise the existence of such a *zhenwong*? One cannot claim that something exists without being perceived by something.

[H21]

**(ii) Examining and refuting self-awareness as a proof**

[H22]

**(a) Refutation of self-awareness as having any true nature of its own, 6:73.1**

6:73.1     *Something experiencing itself cannot be established.*

*The Cittamatrins say that dependent reality knows itself, like a lamp in the darkness illuminates itself*

*Memory is used to prove self-awareness, which is used to prove there is truly existent dependent nature*

The Cittamatrins are saying that a lamp in the darkness illuminates not only other objects but also itself. Likewise, this mind, this *zhenwong*, not only knows others, but it also knows itself. Now they are talking about awareness, which is quite important, as Chandrakirti is about to negate truly existing self-awareness.

Chandrakirti is saying that truly existent self-awareness cannot exist. First, this is because we have already negated self-arising and all that logic will apply here. But the Cittamatrins are now saying that there is a truly existent dependent nature. As proof, they introduced the example of *rangrig*, self-awareness. Now they are bringing memory to prove the existence of self-awareness or self-consciousness. This is like when we say, for example, that I saw something blue yesterday. If it were not for that experience, I would not be able to remember it today.

**(b) Refutation of memory as proving that self-awareness exists,  
6:73.2-74**

6:73.2-4    *You may argue that a later memory validates it,  
Yet, as [memory] in itself remains to be established [as inherently existing],  
It cannot serve as valid proof.*

*But the existence of  
memory has not been  
established, so it cannot  
be used to prove self-  
awareness*

*Chandrakirti accepts self-  
awareness during  
conventional truth, but  
this does not prove self-  
awareness. It is a ‘non-  
definitive reason’*

*Even if we accept self-  
awareness, one memory  
cannot perceive another*

*The two memories are  
'other', and this  
reasoning will destroy all  
other arguments*

*Different beings look at  
one object and see  
different things. This is  
deluded perception*

*The Cittamatrins say that  
in reality there is no  
'water', 'home', or any  
other external substance*

Now, the last line of sloka 73 is saying that in order to establish self-awareness, you Cittamatrins are now bringing the reason that there is memory. But the existence of memory itself has not been established, so you cannot use it to prove that there is self-awareness. This is going to be quite difficult to refute. To refute it in the ultimate truth is easy, because ultimately you cannot prove there is memory. You can always use the logic of the four types of arising (self-arising, other-arising, both and neither) to prove that there is no memory.

But if the Cittamatrins say that the memory that they are using in their reasoning is based on conventional truth, this is going to be quite difficult, because then we will have to talk of buddhist logic a little bit here. There is one easy way out, which is to say that the logic and analysis that establishes relative truth will not establish absolute truth. The problem is that Chandrakirti also accepts that there is so-called memory and that there is so-called self-awareness during the conventional truth. So, the Cittamatrins can use that as a reason to prove that there is self-awareness. In reply, Chandrakirti is saying that this reasoning is ‘uncertain reasoning’, *rtags ma nges pa*, ‘a non definitive reason’, which is a term from buddhist logic. For example, just by seeing the silhouette of a human being, you cannot confirm that you have seen Patrick. The good side effect of this debate is that it shows that the Prasangika-Madhyamikas accept both self-awareness and memory during the conventional truth.

6:74    *An own awareness can indeed be experienced,  
Yet, since a memory of a memory is unseen,  
It would be like something alien and never known arising in the mind.  
This reasoning vanquishes all the others.*

This sloka is easier to understand. Chandrakirti says very well; let us presume that there is self-awareness. But one cannot say that by memory you will perceive another memory. Again, he is touching on that word ‘other’, because the Cittamatrins accept that these two, cause and effect, are other, separate things.

Chandrakirti says that memory cannot see memory because they are “other”. And the Cittamatrins accept that they are “other”, like Upagupta and Maitreya are two different beings. This reasoning, i.e. that they are “other”, destroys all the other kinds of answers that they might give. Here, Chandrakirti is saying that again the Cittamatrins could talk about continuity, potential and those things that they talked about earlier. They might say that memory has continuity, potential and all of that. But Chandrakirti is saying that there is no point in bringing up all of these, because when he says that they are other, i.e. two separate things, this reason will destroy all their logic. That’s it.

Now, the Cittamatrins have presented their fourth and last example of deluded perception, which is that different beings can see different things while looking at one object, such as water. For example, human beings can see it as water and fishes can see it as a home where they can swim and sleep.

The Cittamatrins are trying to say that in the ultimate reality, there is nothing external. There is no water, no home, none of the substances seen by different beings. In a way, this is very good thinking because in the normal world we think that whatever is decided by majority of people is good. For example, the majority of us think that a certain political system is good. Or the majority of people think that this is a table, so that is why it is a table. But you cannot really

apply that when it comes to different perceptions, because obviously there are more fish than human beings. We do not say that water is home because the majority of beings perceive it that way. You see, in this case we must talk not only about human beings, but also about all other beings.

*Only the mind that sees these things exists, and different potentials agitated by different conditions give these perceptions*

*Chandrakirti does not disagree that these things come from mind, but he refutes that mind truly exists*

*Each time he refutes true existence, so there must be something very wrong about clinging to that*

*Nagarjuna said, "For those who can accept emptiness, for them everything is acceptable"*

*Chandrakirti can accept mere memory, because he has not established anything as truly existing*

It is like the expression ‘beauty is in the eye of the beholder’. The Cittamatrins are saying, and this is very logical, that the substances perceived, such as water and things like that, do not exist externally. Only the mind that sees such things exists, and different minds have different kinds of potential. Some have a potential to see this substance as water, some have a potential to see it as a home, some have a potential to see it as pus and blood. When these different potentials are agitated by different conditions, then different beings looking at one object see different things.

Again, Chandrakirti has negated that logic using the same reasoning, saying that that mind does not exist truly, independently or inherently. Of course, this does not mean that Chandrakirti will disagree with the Cittamatrins when they say that looking at one object, one person sees something beautiful and the other sees something ugly. Chandrakirti will not disagree when they say this comes from the mind; he is only disagreeing with them when they say the mind is truly existent. Then the Cittamatrins brought self-awareness as a reason to prove that mind truly exists. And in order to establish self-awareness, they brought memory as a reason. They say that since we have memory, then we have self-awareness and therefore we have *zhenwong, alaya*, mind. But Chandrakirti has negated all those, because again, he cannot accept their truly existent aspect.

All this time, as you may have noticed, Chandrakirti is pointing out the same fault. He does not agree that there is something truly existing. By now, because of all this effect that he has put into negating it, we should realise that there must be something terrible about believing that something is truly existing and grasping to it. This must really be something wrong.

### **(c) How we understand that memory conforms to experience, 6:75**

6:75      *According to our tradition,  
Because memory is not other than that which experiences an object,  
It is the memory that thinks, "I saw".  
This agrees with conventional ordinary experience.*

We have already negated self-awareness and memory, so now the Cittamatrins are replying in sloka 75. You should not forget that this text is a commentary to the *Mulamadhyamaka-karikas* by Chandrakirti's master's master, Nagarjuna. And in the *Mulamadhyamaka-karikas*, Nagarjuna said, “For those who can accept emptiness, for them everything is acceptable”. Now Chandrakirti is saying the same thing, but in a different way. Again, he will say that for the Prasangikas, everything is acceptable. However, for the substantialists, like the Cittamatrins, the Vaibhashika, theoreticians and probably scientists – for all of them, nothing is acceptable because they limit themselves. Now, someone like a Cittamatrin cannot even accept the idea of memory, because they have established a truly existent mind.

So here, Chandrakirti is saying that for a Prasangika, the mind that sees or is aware of something blue, that consciousness is not different from the object blue. Because he has not established anything that is truly and independently existent, they are not different for him. And since he does not have a separate mind and a separate object, he can accept mere memory. But he will only accept this for the sake of conventional truth.

[H22]

### **(d) Summary, refuting how they understand it, 6:76**

*Since self-awareness has been refuted, who perceives the alaya?*

6:76     *Therefore, as self-awareness cannot exist,  
What perceives your dependent nature?  
As the agent, the action, and the object cannot be one,  
Experience of itself cannot be possible.*

This sloka is the beginning of a conclusion. With all the reasons that we have discussed, we have now accomplished that there is no self-awareness, so now I, Chandrakirti, ask you Cittamatrins, who knew or perceived this *zhenwong*, this dependent nature? Who perceived that there is a truly existent *alaya*? Since the agent, the action and the object of action are not one, you cannot say that *alaya* itself sees the *alaya*.

[H21]

### (iii) Refuting its existence even in the absence of proof, 6:77

6:77     *If, without being neither born nor known,  
An inherently real dependent-nature would exist.  
Its existence would be illogical.  
What did the barren woman's child do to you?*

Chandrakirti says if you still persist in saying that there is an *alaya* that has not arisen from self or other, that is the base of all samsara and nirvana, that is not perceived by self-awareness, and yet truly exists, then what did the barren woman's son do to you? We know the *alaya* is not perceived by self-awareness because we have just proved that self-awareness does not exist.

*What did the barren woman's child do to the Cittamatrins so that they will not accept it as the base of samsara and nirvana?*

In the last line, Chandrakirti is being sarcastic. He is saying that the barren woman's son does not exist, just like *alaya*. And yet the Cittamatrins are saying that *alaya* exists, but they cannot accept the barren woman's son. This is why Chandrakirti asks what did the barren woman's son do to you? Why don't you accept the barren woman's son as the base for all of samsara and nirvana?

[H20]

### (c) Refuting the notion of a cause imputed as being material, 6:78

6:78     *When the dependent does not exist even the least,  
How can it cause all-concealment?  
Our opponent, through his attachment to substance,  
Destroys the categories of accepted ordinary experience.*

Chandrakirti gives another consequence here. Now, as we analyse this *zhenwong*, this dependent nature does not exist at all. So, what is the base of all this relative truth or all-concealing truth? Here *künzob* (*kun rdzob*), 'truth for an all-concealer', is another name for relative truth.

Our Cittamatrin opponents are very much attached to the idea of *alaya* as truly existent. Since the Cittamatrins are saying that subject and object do not exist in the relative truth, and *alaya* does exist in the ultimate truth, the consequence is that they are destroying the categories of ordinary people's acceptance. The point is that the Cittamatrins do not accept the relative truth, such as subject and object, form, feeling and so on. But with logic and reasoning, they have established an entity called dependent nature. This is why they are destroying the ordinary people's acceptance.

[H19]

### (ii) The erroneous consequences of contravening the two truths, 6:79-80

*For those apart from  
Nagarjuna's path, there  
is no liberation*

*Some commentators  
interpret 'liberation' to  
mean complete  
enlightenment*

*Two kinds of shravaka  
path:  
(i) based on theory  
(ii) based on path and  
fruit*

*The theoreticians will  
achieve nothing, but those  
based on path and fruit  
actually practice  
Madhyamika*

*You cannot reach  
enlightenment unless you  
understand both of the  
two truths*

*Conventional truth is the  
means; absolute truth is  
the result of aim of these  
means*

6:79      *Apart from this very path of the venerable Acharya Nagarjuna,  
Other paths will not serve as means to attain Peace,  
As they incompletely [grasp] the all-concealing and absolute truths;  
They fail to establish liberation.*

This sloka makes a very powerful statement: “For those who are apart from the Acharya Nagarjuna’s path, there is no liberation”. This is a very big statement, because it includes the three other buddhist schools. He is saying that the Vaibhashika and Sautrantika will not manage to reach even the arhat level, which is the result that they claim or promise to reach. And by practising according to the Cittamatrin school, you will not even reach the first bhumi.

Now, some commentators in Tibet say that this word *zhi wa* (*zhi ba*), ‘liberation’, is referring to the Buddha’s state of *parinirvana* or enlightenment. So, they say that the other paths can actually take you at least to the first bhumi, the tenth bhumi and so on. They would say that the shravaka path could actually make you reach arhathood, but not buddhahood. If you would like to go through these things more thoroughly, please read some other commentaries, like those written by Mipham Rinpoche. I have mainly been using the commentary written by Rendawa, who was also the guru of Tsong Khapa. These commentators differentiate between two kinds of shravaka path: one that is based on path and fruit, and one that is based on theory.

Now, these commentators say that all these theoreticians, meaning the Vaibhashika, Sautrantika and Cittamatrins, definitely cannot even reach arhathood or the first bhumi. But shravakas based on the path and the fruit are actually practising the Madhyamika. Their support for this statement is the *Prajñaparamita Sutra*, which says that those who want to reach the result of arhat or pratyekabuddha must practice the *Prajñaparamita*, and those who want to reach final enlightenment, *mahaparinirvana*, must also practice the *Prajñaparamita*. So based on this, there are two kinds of shravaka and pratyekabuddha, one that is based on theory, and one that is based on path and fruit. The theoreticians, including the Cittamatrin school, can never reach enlightenment, because they are on a mistaken path, *rtoq ge lam du bzhug pa*. They will never reach anything. Whereas those based on the path and fruit actually practise Madhyamika.

These last two lines of this sloka are two great lines, especially for us in the today’s contemporary world. We must always remember, especially Buddhists like us, that the reason why is there no possibility of liberation is because all these substantialists have lost the idea of how to distinguish relative truth and ultimate truth. Not only have they not found the right ultimate truth, but they have also lost the whole sense of relative truth. So, they have no relative truth and no ultimate truth. That is why they cannot reach enlightenment. As I was saying earlier, this is such important advice for us, because nowadays people are so much into the ultimate truth, and they ignore relative truth completely. Here this great advice is that you cannot reach enlightenment by separating them and not understanding them both. We think that we know relative truth, but we do not know ultimate truth. But we need to know both of them. This is explained further in sloka 80.

6:80      *Conventional truth is the means;  
Absolute truth is the aim.  
Whoever is unaware of this distinction  
Will enter inferior paths because of wrong conceptions.*

Conventional truth is the means, which includes all the skilful means and methods such as meditation, refuge, bodhicitta, compassion and all these things. Conventional truth also includes the kinds of dialogue such as emotions, or negative things that need to be abandoned, and devotion and wisdom that need to be achieved. And absolute truth is the aim, or the result, of this skilful means. Those who cannot differentiate between these two and those who cannot understand the meaning of both conventional and ultimate truth, these people have entered a wrong path with a wrong kind of approach. A wrong path with a right approach would be

*The Cittamatrins have both a wrong aim and a wrong path*

[H19]

[H20]

*Chandrakirti does not accept dependent nature ultimately or even relatively. He has no theses.*

*But for the sake of the fruit, relatively he says that things like path and compassion exist, without analysis*

*This is the only way he can communicate*

slightly better, but this is doubly wrong! In this case, the Cittamatrins are the ones with the wrong approach and the wrong aim, who are following the wrong path.

### **(iii) Rejecting its similarity to relative truth**

#### **(a) A substantial dependent nature and relative truth cannot be the same, 6:81-82**

6:81     *This dependent nature which you assert as real,  
We do not accept even as an all-concealing [truth].  
[On the other hand], for the sake of the [ultimate] fruit, we have stated the  
non-existent exists,  
[Merely] to conform to ordinary experience.*

Now in sloka 81, Chandrakirti is saying a little bit about how he would present things. First, he says he has never established a thesis like the Cittamatrins, when they say that *alaya*, or dependent nature, is truly existent. Chandrakirti does not accept this not only in the ultimate truth, but also in the relative truth. The last part is important. He does not make such theses not only in the ultimate truth, but also in the relative truth.

What kind of fruit is being referred to in the third line? It is the temporal fruit, such as understanding the selflessness of phenomena and the selflessness of the person, and the ultimate fruit such as achieving enlightenment. For the sake of such fruits, although these relative phenomena like the path and compassion do not exist in the ultimate truth, without any analysis or logic, Chandrakirti will say that they exist. And the last line is so wonderful. He says, that even when he says that they exist relatively without analysis, he is not saying this out of his free will. He is saying this because he has almost no choice, because it is the only way for him to communicate with people.

6:82     *If, just as for the arhats  
Who have abandoned the aggregates and dwell in peace,  
The [aggregates] would not exist in ordinary experience,  
I also would not claim they exist in ordinary experience.*

For the arhats who have already purified all kinds of aggregates, for those who have reached the *parinirvana*, these relative aggregates, this ignorance and all this kind of continuity does not exist. In other words, the arhats have no aggregates when they reach enlightenment. Here Chandrakirti is again being very sarcastic, saying that he knows that what the arhats have realised is true. Earlier, he said that he did not do this out of his own will; he did it because he had no choice. Now he is saying that he knows the arhats have realised the truth that there are no aggregates, but if that were the case in the relative world, then he would also say that nothing exists even in the relative world.

#### **(b) Denials of relative truth would be contradicted by ordinary people's experience, 6:83**

6:83     *If you [think you] do not contradict ordinary experience,  
[Then try] refuting ordinary people.  
You should debate with [those perceiving] ordinary experience,  
And I will rely on whoever is the stronger.*

Again, this is very simple. Chandrakirti is saying that if you Cittamatrins think that you do not contradict ordinary people, then try to debate with them. And then whoever wins, I will of

*Chandrakirti will take refuge with the strongest definition of ordinary experience*

*It turns out that he is very gentlemanly!*

*Chandrakirti is not like bohemians who reject all lifestyles apart from their own*

*Chandrakirti is criticising Cittamatrin theory, which they believe is the path*

*[Q]: Why can't paths that talk about God reach enlightenment?*

*[A]: Firstly, as long as your view does not contradict the four mudras, it will lead to enlightenment*

*Non-buddhists like Krishnamurti talk about non-duality nowadays, but this is plagiarism, not skilful means*

*The lower buddhist schools do not have the third great seal*

course take refuge with whoever is stronger. This is again sarcastic, also to people like us, like contemporary philosophers, bohemians or existentialists. This is because he is saying that you cannot deny things like ordinary people, family and responsibilities. They have to be respected. He is wonderful here. All this time we have been thinking that he is some kind of spoilt nihilist, but it turns out that actually he is very gentlemanly!

[Q]: What do you mean by bohemian?

[A]: People who are slightly like you, I think! Artists who deny the outer world, hippies, flower children, and yuppies, all of these – all those who believe in a certain structure of life and deny all other lives, saying that they are not good.

[Q]: What did the barren woman's son do to you for you to accept that there *is* a basis to samsara and nirvana, or that there *is not* such as basis? Please clarify this.

[A]: He is saying that *zhenwong*, the dependent nature, is like the barren woman's son. It does not exist in the relative truth, and it does not exist in the ultimate truth. Yet, the Cittamatrins still insist that it does exist. So what about the barren woman's son? What did he do that you are in favour of dependent nature, and yet you cannot accept this child, which is equally non-existent?

[Q]: Is the barren woman *shunyata*, in this analogy?

[A]: No. The barren woman's son is a phenomenon. Emptiness is not a phenomenon.

[Q]: At the beginning, you said that there was no point in criticising the path of other people, which was very interesting, but now with verse 79, we are criticising their path. So, I would like more explanation here.

[A]: No, what he is criticising is still a theory, not a real path. He is saying that the Cittamatrins believe that their theory is the path, and he is criticising their theory.

[Q]: I am also not clear on this point. Because if it is said that other paths cannot reach any kind of clarity or enlightenment, then why are there so many paths in this world which all talk about God and things. When I read it, sometimes I feel that they use the word God, *shunyata* and mind quite similarly. Why can't I say that they are also using words like God, 'unlimited truth' or 'unlimited power' for the sake of communication? Why should I accept that they never reached anywhere?

[A]: I have two answers for this: The first one is that as long as you accept the four great seals, the four views of buddhism, it does not matter. As long as your view does not contradict the four great seals, then it will lead to enlightenment. These four seals or four mudras are (*See also* p.118):

- All compounded things are impermanent
- All deluded emotions are pain
- All phenomena do not have truly existent self
- Nirvana is beyond extremes.

As long as you accept these four, to explain them you can use all kinds of words and all kinds of methods, whether it is God or some other path. My other answer is this: there are people already doing that. They are not necessarily doing so out of good motivation, but they somehow know that the world is becoming increasingly scientific, and I have realised that even many religious people are beginning to talk a little bit about non-duality. It probably does not exist in their original texts, but they are now borrowing and stealing ideas from other people. I would say that this is not a skilful means, but just plagiarism. That is all. I personally think that two of the greatest lineage holders of this plagiarism are Krishnamurti and Bhagawan Sri Rajneesh. I am trying to provoke you so you can debate more!

[Q]: The four seals are applied to systems of tenets, theories. Would the Madhyamikas say that lower buddhist schools do not have all four?

[A]: Yes, the third seal is what we are discussing here.

[Q]: Does Mipham Rinpoche follow Rendawa in distinguishing shravakas by path and theory?

*It is a good idea to follow the advice of great masters, as we will save a lot of time*

*Cittamatrins and tirthikas both think that there is a truly existent base, but the tirthikas do not say things produced are just labelling, so their theory is self-arising*

*The Cittamatrins say all is other-arising, because everything comes from a truly existent mind*

[A]: I do not remember, but I think Mipham Rinpoche has a different explanation. You have to find that out, but if it comes from Mipham Rinpoche, then I am sure it will be something very profound, because Mipham Rinpoche is Manjushri himself. There is a lot to discover in his writings. Right now, as we are trying to analyse and observe the nature of phenomena, we might think that we are actually observing the nature of phenomena. But we are probably only observing maybe a billionth of a billionth of phenomena, and even that might be saying too much, as far as our analysis and our understanding goes. That is why it is a very astute thing to follow the advice of great masters, because then we will really save a lot of time. Of course, we could go around analysing and checking every aspect of phenomena, but that could take us a long time. For example, if we go into a city we might ask a person for directions on how to go somewhere. If we have no reason to think that the person we ask is lying, then it is much better to follow that person and get to that place, rather than trying to walk through every street of the city to see whether what they told us is true.

[Q]: Do the Cittamatrins affirm production from self or production from others?

[A]: From others. They do not say this, but that is the consequence. They say ‘other-arising’ but do not see it as a fault. Even the Svantrika-Madhyamikas accept other-arising during the relative truth.

[Q]: If everything arises from the mind, then are all outer objects also mind?

[A]: Yes, but mind is a truly existent entity and everything comes from that, which is why it becomes other-arising. This is different from atman. The difference between the Cittamatrins and the *tirthikas* is that the Cittamatrins say that *zhenwong*, or dependent nature, is truly existent. Things that are produced, *küntak*, are only labelling. They do not exist, which is why it becomes other-arising, whereas when the *tirthikas* talk about the self, they talk about twenty-five different kinds of qualities of the self that are also existent. They do not say that these are just labelling, which is why their theory becomes self-arising.

[Q]: I am not sure about slokas 76 and 77. It seems to me that these are the key points where Chandrakirti has brought the concepts of self-awareness and dependent nature, *rangrig* and *zhenwong*, but he is taking them away from the level of ultimate reality, and bringing them down to the level of conventional truth. And then he is saying that the Cittamatrin theory is illogical, because ordinary people would not agree that that is how ordinary experience works. But I really do not understand what he did in these two slokas, especially 76.

[A]: Sloka 76 he is just negating self-awareness.

[Q]: On which level?

[A]: On the level of ultimate truth, as always.

[Q]: For an ordinary being, at the time of *madakpé zhenwong*, the *küntak* is production from other. But for a sublime being, at the time of *dakpé zhenwong*, it seems to be production from self, as it is a sort of self-awareness of the mind.

[A]: For the Cittamatrins, it is still other-arising. As soon as you say that everything comes from mind, you are talking about other-arising. Everything comes from truly existent mind. If mind is not truly existent, then you have a route to escape, but Chandrakirti has already taken that route! But the Cittamatrins believe that there is truly existent mind, and from that mind comes all other phenomena, and so it is other-arising, whether it is *dakpé zhenwong* or *madakpé zhenwong*.

[Q]: At the time of *dakpé zhenwong*, the sublime being realises that there is no other.

[A]: There is no *küntak*, yes, so then it becomes *yongdrup*.

[Q]: You referred to Shantideva as a Madhyamika with Cittamatrin tendencies, because in chapter 5 of the *Bodhicharyavatara* he says:

5.5     *The hellish whips to torture living beings –  
Who has made them and to what intent?  
Who has forged this burning iron ground;  
Whence have all these demon women sprung?*

5.6.1-2     *All are but the offspring of the sinful mind.  
Thus the Mighty One has said.*

*The Yogacharas talk about three natures, but they do not accept truly existent mind, unlike Cittamatrins*

*A challenge: Buddha is mightier than ordinary people, and he said, “these three realms are just mind”*

[H18]

[H19]

[H20]

*Saying that the three realms are created by mere mind is to refute ideas of a truly existing creator*

He concludes that everything is just mind, so the object is just mind. So, it is production from self (See also p.103).

[A]: But the Yogachara Madhyamikas do not believe in truly existent mind; they only talk of the three characters. Chandrakirti's kind of Madhyamika, those who accept ordinary people's acceptance, do not have that kind of idea. When we talk of the Yogachara Madhyamikas and the Madhyamikas who accept ordinary people's acceptance, let us talk about how they would deal with students. The Yogachara school would ask the students to go and contemplate that everything is mind. First, they analyse that, and then after having analysed that, they would teach that mind also does not exist. That is how they would approach things. But the Prasangika Madhyamikas who accept ordinary people's acceptance do not do that kind of thing. The only difference is that the Yogachara emphasise mind, and the other Madhyamika school does not.

Now, on behalf of the Cittamatrins, we say to Chandrakirti that he seems to be indicating that he is afraid of violating ordinary people's experience. But there is someone mightier than an ordinary person, namely the Buddha. And in the *Dashabhumika Sutra*, he said, "Oh bodhisattvas, all these three realms are just mind". So, how can you not accept that?" That is their question, or challenge to Chandrakirti.

**(b) Explaining the need for the Cittamatra view to have been taught**

**(i) To refute other (religions') ideas of a Creator (668)**

**(a) The principal purpose of the scriptures, 6:84**

6:84     *The Courageous Mind advancing towards realisation  
Realises the three worlds as mere consciousness.  
This refutes a permanent self as creator,  
[And he] realises the creator is “mind only.”*

The sixth bhumi bodhisattva, whose courageous mind is advancing towards this realisation, has realised that all these three realms are just consciousness, mere mind. This kind of understanding refutes that there is a truly and permanently existing creator, such as a self or an almighty creator. In order to refute such ideas, this bodhisattva understands that all these phenomena and experiences are created by mind only. All our experiences come from karma; karma comes from emotion; and emotion is rooted in the mind. That is why, at times, mere mind is referred to as the creator. This is explained further in slokas 85 and 86.

[H20]

**(b) What was established by other scriptures, 6:85**

6:85     *In order to increase the faculties of the intelligent,  
And to cut through [misconceptions],  
The Omniscient One in the Lankavatara Sutra  
Vanquished the towering mountain[-like view] of the tirthikas with his vajra speech.*

Therefore, in order to increase the faculties of intelligence within the bodhisattva, and to destroy the big heaps (or mountains) of mistaken views or theories, this vajra-like speech was spoken in sutras like the *Lankavatara Sutra*.

[H20]

**(c) The purpose of those scriptures, 6:86**

6:86      *In their treatises,  
The tirthikas propound a person and so forth [as a creator];  
Not having seen such a creator,  
The Victorious One spoke of the creator of the world as being mind only.*

In the different texts of different schools, various philosophers or theoreticians like the *tirthikas* propose different kinds of creator, and the Buddha, with his omniscience, has not seen such as creator. That is why the Victorious One spoke of the creator of this world as being only mind.

[H19]

**(ii) To establish the importance of the mind alone**

[H20]

**(a) The purpose of scriptures on the importance of the mind alone, 6:87**

6:87      *Just as Awakened to Suchness refers to the Awakened One,  
When in some sutras [the Buddha] spoke of “mind only”  
When speaking to the world about mind’s importance,  
The point of these sutras was not to deny form.*

*But when he says things  
are mind only, the  
Buddha is not negating  
external phenomena*

When a mind is awakened to suchness, it is referred to as ‘buddha’ or awakened one. This is an example. Likewise, within these phenomena, mind is of primary importance. That is why, in certain sutras, the Buddha emphasised mind only. But at that time, the Buddha is not negating form and all the external phenomena, because that is not the subject of the sutra.

[H20]

**(b) To think otherwise is in contravention of the scriptures (669), 6:88**

6:88      *If his intention was to say all this is mind only,  
When he refuted [external] form in the sutra,  
Why did the Great Being also in that [same] sutra  
State that mind is produced from ignorance and action.*

*In other sutras, the  
Buddha says things arise  
from ignorance and  
karmic formation*

*These are placed before  
mind in the twelve links of  
dependent origination*

If this great being, the Buddha, knew that only the mind is important, and if he had negated or refuted form and all external phenomena, then why does he say in certain other sutras that things arise from ignorance and karmic formations? Here Chandrakirti is saying that if mind is the only important thing then why in certain sutras does the Buddha talk about action as being important? Now you might wonder, isn’t ignorance also part of mind? But this particular sloka is referring to the twelve links of interdependent origination. When the Buddha taught the twelve links of interdependent origination, he taught ignorance, karmic formations, and then mind, form, *ayatanas* (sensory feelings), touch (contact), feeling, desire, grasping, becoming (existence), birth and death. So, when he talks of the twelve links of interdependent origination, mind is placed on the third stage, not the first. This sloka is all Chandrakirti talking.

[H20]

**(c) Setting out what establishes (the mind alone) as important, 6:89**

6:89      *The vast multiplicity of sentient life,  
And the enveloping physical world springs from mind.  
The Buddha taught sentient beings arise from karma,  
So without mind, karma could not exist.*

*Mind is important, as it is the creator of karma and the six realms*

There are vastly many different kinds of sentient beings throughout the six realms, and all of these different beings use the external world such as water, fire and so on in different ways, such as water to drink or as a home. All these are, we could say, placed or decorated by mind. The Buddha said, “All things come from karma”, and if one does not have mind, then there is no karma, because there is no creator of the karma.

[H20]

**(d) Explaining what is to be refuted if the word ‘only’ is omitted, 6:90**

6:90     *Form does indeed exist,  
[Yet] it is not a creator like mind.  
A creator other than mind is denied,  
Not the existence of form.*

*Without mind, form could not create things independently, but the existence of form is not denied*

Of course, there is form, things like water, mountain, river, the six realms and all that. But, without the mind, these forms cannot create anything independently. That is why the enlightened being is saying that apart from the mind there is no external creator. At the same time, the enlightened being is not doing what you Cittamatrins are doing, by refuting external world or by saying that only the mind truly exists.

[H19]

**(iii) Thinking otherwise is contradicted by both scriptural authority and reasoning**

[H20]

**(a) Contradicted by reasoning, 6:91**

6:91     *According to the truth of ordinary experience,  
The five skandhas exist as commonly accepted.  
To the yogi for whom the wisdom of suchness arises,  
None of the five appear.*

*For a yogi who has realised suchness, none of the five aggregates appear*

As I was saying, this text is very poetic in many different ways, and I can only manage to express it sometimes. For those who dwell in the ordinary people’s ultimate truth, which is relative truth, the five aggregates and so on all exist. For example, mountains, rivers and all these kinds of things that are agitated by certain conditions arise as similar and different kinds of appearance. To the yogi, for whom the wisdom of suchness arises, none of these five aggregates or all of these kinds of labelling-appearance appear.

[H20]

**(b) Contradicted by scriptural authority, 6:92**

6:92     *If form does not exist, do not maintain mind exists.  
If mind exists, do not maintain non-existence of form.  
Thus in the Prajñaparamita [mind and form] were equally refuted,  
[While] in the Abhidharma [they were equally accepted].*

*Ultimately, there is neither form nor mind, relatively there are both – you cannot say just one exists*

This is such a good conclusion. What he is saying here is like an advice. In the ultimate truth, if there is no form, then similarly do not think that there is mind. In the relative truth, if you think there is mind, then similarly do not think that there is no form. If they exist, they equally exist. If they do not exist, they equally do not exist. How do we know that? Again, in the *Prajñaparamita Sutra* the enlightened being said things like “form is emptiness, emptiness is form”. Likewise, all phenomena are emptiness, and emptiness is all the phenomena. In other words, all are equally refuted. But then at the same time, in the *Abhidharma* sutras the Buddha equally accepted all of the aggregates, emotions, devotion, path, fruit, and all that.

*This advice is very valuable, because it prevents our path falling into any extremes*

*The problem is that we do not know the dangers of falling into extremes, or benefits of not falling*

*We might think that sober buddhists like us do not fall into extremes, but we do it all the time*

*This is because we separate relative and ultimate truths*

*Chandrakirti does not say everyone should follow Madhyamika*

*But he says that nobody should be deprived of the two truths, as then they could not be liberated*

*We sometimes seek to protect underdogs, but we should seek to destroy paths without the two truths*

*We need relative truth to do or even think of anything, such as building a temple or structuring a ritual*

Now, I think that all of the things that we have been talking about today are very valuable advice. They are an advice for people like us who are slightly interested in philosophy, and who are on the way towards establishing a view. For people like us who are trying to establish a view, there is always a danger of falling into a certain extreme, and all this advice protects us against falling into these extremes. If you want to achieve liberation, you have to follow a path, which should not fall into any extremes. Both Chandrakirti and I have repeated this so often. I think that for most of the philosophers or those aspiring to be philosophers, for many of us, there are several problems here.

First, we do not know the fault of falling into the extremes. And second, we do not know the value of not falling into the extremes. We do not know this. There is probably a little difference of interpretation here when we talk about eternalism and nihilism. Most of us think, “it is almost impossible for someone sober like me to fall into extremes. It is just not possible”. But that is just not true. There are dangers of falling into these extremes are very great. We fall into them almost all the time. We think that we are sober buddhists, but we are not! We think that buddhists like us could never fall into extremes. I also think that historically we have had a certain very stupid fear about falling into a nihilistic extreme. Due to that fear we think we should not be nihilistic, but eternalism is sort of all right. But more recently, being nihilistic is now a little bit of a fashion, to go against society and all that. So, we fall into these extremes all the time. And why do we always fall into these extremes? It is because we do not know what relative truth is, and we do not know what ultimate truth is. We always separate them, so that when we talk about relative truth, we deny ultimate truth, and when we talk about ultimate truth, we deny relative truth. At the end of this chapter, Chandrakirti says very poetically that the sixth bhumi bodhisattva is like a swan. This swan will fly over the ocean with two wings, which are relative truth and ultimate truth. First, we do not have wings. Secondly, even if we do, we have only one wing.

Earlier, Chandrakirti said that those who cannot accept Nagarjuna’s path would have no enlightenment. This is a very big statement. It is based on what we have been talking about – eternalism, nihilism and not understanding the relative and ultimate truth. Now, Chandrakirti is not at all trying to convert all of us into becoming Madhyamika philosophers, or becoming followers of Nagarjuna. Nor is he saying that everybody should become buddhists. All he is saying is that you should know the two truths. You should not be deprived from an understanding of the two truths, because if you are, then there is no liberation. And, while he has been negating many kinds of schools, including one of the supposedly highest buddhist schools, the Cittamatrin, he has found a fault in the way that they establish the relative truth and the ultimate truth. He says that they are deprived of the relative and ultimate truth. Of course, we do not have to accept that. If you are a Cittamatrin lover, you can argue with Chandrakirti. As Chandrakirti himself said, “I will take refuge in whoever wins the debate”. But I doubt that you will win.

I am emphasising this because sometimes we have a very strange sympathy. For example, we see underdogs and things like that, and although they are wrong we somehow try to hide their faults and protect them, and that is not good. If someone who is deprived from the two truths is bringing a path, we have to destroy that path using all available means. Here we are studying Madhyamika philosophy, so of course it is a one-sided story, so to speak. So sometimes, we might think about siding with the Cittamatrins just because they are sort of underdogs. We human beings do that.

What we need is liberation, and for liberation we need a path. We need a path that is not *nyampa* (*nyams pa*), deprived of or lacking relative truth and ultimate truth. A path should not fall into any extremes. Now, perhaps people here do not understand why the relative truth and ultimate truth are so important in the path. We might wonder why the importance of the two truths is stressed so highly. For example, we know that for simple beings like us, a relative truth such as our usual logical analysis is very much necessary for us to lead our sophisticated lives and make our sophisticated machines. It is important to know how to establish relative truth even for us to

*We need relative truth to practice Dharma, and thereby approach the ultimate truth*

*If we mix up the two truths, we might just be approaching what has already been approached, namely relative truth*

*We are identifying means and goal, in this case freedom from ego clinging*

*Ultimately, we find no self upon analysis, but relatively we cannot deny we feel it*

*Understanding the two truths allows us to resolve this discrepancy and dispel our doubts*

*But we should not become proud that we follow the Madhyamika, or despise other paths*

*If we despise other paths, we break our bodhisattva precepts, and even the study of Madhyamika is part of relative truth, which we are trying to purify*

get up and go to the toilet, so we might use some conventional truth. And, for example, if we think of ourselves as religious people, even in building a temple or structuring a religious ritual, relative truth is important. To even think of anything, relative truth is important. So, with this, we can realise that the relative truth is very important.

In the same way, we need relative truth to practice what we call the Dharma, which is meant to dispel our obscurations, our negative emotions and our clinging, whether it is specifically to our ego or more generally to everything that we possess, which is also part of relative truth. We need to dispel these things by using the means of relative truth, which should be consistent. And when we use that relative truth, we are trying to aim at something that is less relative and more stable or ultimate. So, we are using the relative truth as a path to reach the ultimate truth. If we mix up relative and ultimate, even when we are trying to approach them intellectually and through studies, then by trying to approach the ultimate truth, we might simply be approaching what has already been approached, which is the relative truth. Therefore, knowing the distinction between those two is quite important. This is not to say that there are ultimately two truths for us to follow. For example, saying that something exists ultimately, or the ultimate truth exists, or this is the ultimate truth – these are also seen as imputations. Similarly, if we do not know this distinction, we might disparage things. We might say, “This does not exist”, which actually ends up saying that it does not exist in the relative truth.

Now, we are not saying that everyone should make the distinction between the two truths, or that everyone should abide by those two specific words, ultimate and relative truth. But in trying to make that distinction, we are also making a connection between the means and the goal, identifying the means that take you to the goal. Here, in the text that we are following, the goal that is specifically given is called freedom from samsara. Or rather, the goal is freedom from ego clinging, because ego clinging is seen as the root of our being caught in samsara. And as far as ego-clinging is concerned, if we analyse, we cannot find anything ultimately existing, but we cannot deny that we feel it now. Therefore, there must be an inconsistency. Either our logic in not finding anything is wrong or what we are feeling is wrong. If we can see that our feelings are changeable, that might also help us here.

So, we see a discrepancy between ultimate and relative truth, between knowing what seems to be and what we feel. The understanding or distinction of the two truths dispels this doubt. Therefore, we are not seeking to understand the so-called two truths as an end in itself, but because if we have doubt or hesitation on the path, then we cannot reach the goal. And these two truths are a means to dispel that doubt. Sometimes we might feel that all these arguments and debates are creating doubts in our mind rather than dispelling them. But that is not the issue. For example, if we were totally certain, without any doubts, about where we were going, then nobody could create a doubt in our minds. Even if we were presented with twenty truths, we would not be confused. But because it is possible for us to be confused, it means we are not clear, and so it is necessary to dispel that doubt.

We have already seen that it is possible for people to wrongly take the side of the underdog in these teachings. But it is also possible to have the opposite kind of problem, where we feel that as students of the Madhyamika, we are victorious, and therefore all other paths are not valid. If you are feeling this, I should say that this is not the goal of this text, of these teachings, nor of Chandrakirti, because all that is doing is simply making us more proud. This text is not about making us Madhyamikas think that we are victorious or that buddhists are much better than all other schools. Indeed, as you may know, if we despise other paths then we are breaking one of the major precepts of a bodhisattva. So, as we study this, we should not become pompous arrogant debaters either, because we know that this is part of the relative truth, which is specifically what we are trying to dissolve or purify. So, we are not trying to say that everyone should think in this way just because Chandrakirti says so. But if they study this reasoning and find it valid, or indeed whichever reasoning they find to be valid, then until it is disproved, there is not any other way that we can think, is there?

*Now we have heard  
Chandrakirti's logic, we  
should apply it, but not in  
a sectarian sense*

*Chandrakirti is not  
saying that all other paths  
are wrong*

*But anyone who puts  
forth a thesis should have  
the courage to uphold it,  
and if there is no  
incoherence in this thesis,  
we should take refuge in  
it*

*It is very important not to  
violate the system of  
relative and ultimate  
truth*

*"One's view should be  
like the sky, and one's  
actions as fine as grains  
of flour"*

*The ideas of non-duality  
and emptiness have  
misled many philosophers*

*I do not agree that all  
religions lead to the same  
goal, or that we can  
combine them*

We know how our mind works, in the sense that we have so many habitual tendencies, and it is so easy for this mind to misinterpret things. In addition to our tendency to take the side of the weak, the underdog mentality, we also have a subtle mentality that sometimes unconsciously takes the side of the winners. We might think that the poor underdogs are losing, so we feel a bit guilty for them; but actually, we do not feel so bad because we are on the side of the winners. That kind of mentality can also lead to many unnecessary things that we have in this society, such as sectarianism or fanaticism. So, when we study Chandrakirti's text, which is so explicit in giving us good reasoning and analysis, we should not take it in such a way that we might become fanatics that have heard the logic but have not been able to apply it. Therefore, we should not take it in a sectarian sense.

We can also understand that it does not mean that everyone in this world should be Madhyamika buddhists. It specifically does not mean that. He is not saying that every other path is wrong, but that when a path with a result has been set forth, it should be subjected to logical scrutiny. Although we might think that different schools have their own types of logic which should not be mixed up, that kind of reasoning is probably not valid. There has to be a means of communication, whether among different cultures or different philosophical schools, and that communication will always use the same basic kind of reasoning. Chandrakirti is saying that anyone who is bold enough to put forth any kind of thesis should also have the courage to uphold that thesis. Theses should not just be taken on trust. They should be subject to scrupulous logical analysis and if we find any incoherence, then we should deal with it. If we do not, we should take refuge in them. I feel that this is actually the goal and inherent message of Chandrakirti's text.



## **Not violating the two truths and not mixing medicines**

Like many masters of the past, Chandrakirti places great emphasises on not violating the system of relative truth and ultimate truth. For instance, the consequence of the Cittamatrin view is that all external and labelled phenomena do not even exist in the relative truth, which violates the relative truth. And then at the ultimate level, the Cittamatrins accept that *zhenwong*, or dependent nature, truly exists. And this violates the ultimate truth. This emphasises on not violating the relative and ultimate truth is closely related to the words of Guru Rinpoche, Padmasambhava: "one's view should be as vast as the sky, and one's action should be as subtle and fine as grains of flour".

When we talk about things like non-duality and emptiness, this has misled many philosophers and practitioners, with the result that many people have violated the laws of cause, condition and effect. I mentioned this briefly regarding Krishnamurti yesterday. Now, this is my personal opinion, which is not necessarily valid, and I am not judging Krishnamurti himself. I think he is a wonderful man, or at least I think he is the most handsome man that I have seen in my life. He is a wonderful and elegant person. But from my limited point of view, I totally disagree with his idea of no path, no teacher and all of that, because it violates relative truth.

Right now, we are studying philosophy and trying to develop an ultimate view. In other words, we are not having a religious peace conference here so we do not have to be diplomatic. This is again my own opinion, but this is something that I really do not like about people nowadays. As you know, some people very romantically believe that all religions have one goal, and all lead to one thing. This is a very nice things to say in a conference, but I think that there is just no way that it is possible to combine buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, and make them all into

*In particular, we do not need to adapt buddhism to the West; anything we do will be a mistake*

*People should take the medicine that is appropriate for their disease. There is no point mixing them, or making everyone take the same medicine*

[H19]

one. It is just not possible. I do not think we should try to adapt buddhism or even Hinduism or Christianity. In particular, we do not have to adapt buddhism to the Western world, the modern world, the eastern world or the Tibetan world. The Buddha already made things adaptable. We cannot do anything more than that. It is not necessary, and anything more that we do will be a mistake.

Do not misunderstand this, as I am not denying the value of other religions like Christianity or Islam. It is like medicine. A headache medicine is good for treating a headache. A foot medicine is good for treating feet. There is no point in combining them. It is not necessary. They should be left separately, and they should each have their own view, meditation and action. Then the medicines will work. If you put them all together, I think that you will end up with a new kind of disease! This is also my interpretation of what it means to be non-sectarian. Someone who has a stomach-ache should have pills for stomach-ache. But at the same time, they should respect someone who has a headache, and recognise that they should take pills for their headache, and not for a stomach-ache. You should not impose on them that they should eat the same medicine that you eat.

**(iv) Therefore acceptance and rejection of the extremes of existence are advised, 6:93**

6:93     *Even though these two levels of truth are dismantled,  
Your substantial [other-dependent phenomena] cannot be proven as this was  
already refuted.  
Therefore, for these levels reality is originally  
Uncreated according to suchness, while created according to ordinary  
experience.*

*Ultimately, all these phenomena have never truly arisen*

*But relatively, we say things arise where they arise, and do not arise where they do not*

Here, Chandrakirti is saying that all these substantialists are dismantling the two truths. And because of this dismantling of the two truths, Chandrakirti has negated everything substantially existing, such as dependent nature. Therefore, one must know that all these phenomena, from beginningless time, have never truly arisen. But in the relative truth, one must say that if things arise, they arise and if things do not arise, they do not arise. For example, horns do not arise on the head of the rabbit. But if there is cause, condition and no obstacle, then horns may arise from an ox's head. This is acceptable.

In the text, the word *döma* (*gdod ma*), ‘primordial origin’, is very profound. Rather than understand it as aiming at some mysterious beginning, perhaps we could understand it in the sense that when we perform the analysis to establish the absolute truth, we do not find that things have arisen, and we cannot find how they could ever have arisen.

[H18]

**(c) The other scriptural authorities that support it come from teaching of expedient meaning**

[H19]

**(i) Other scriptures in which (the Buddha) spoke of mind alone are of expedient meaning, 6:94**

6:94     *The sutra teaches external appearances are non-existent,  
And that mind manifests in diverse ways.  
For those with strong attachment to form,  
Such expedient truth repels [fixation on] form.*

*Teachings of certain and provisional meaning*

In the next few slokas, Chandrakirti is discussing the differences between teachings that have certain meaning, *ngédön* (*nges don*), and teachings that have provisional meaning, *drangdön*

*The teaching that “all is mind” is for people who have strong attachment to form*

(*drang don*). In some sutras, the Buddha said that the external world such as form does not exist, because it is only the perceptions of one’s own mind. For some people, this seems to indicate that only mind truly exists, although the Buddha did not actually say this. It somehow indicates that mind exists because of the previous negation, which leads people to think, “Oh, if they are not there, it is just mind”. So here Chandrakirti is saying that this kind of teaching is taught, for example, to those who have strong attachment to form, such as beautiful or ugly forms. Such clinging to form gives rise to desire, anger and all kinds of emotions. So, the Buddha has spoken such words in order to diminish these kinds of emotions and this kind of wrong view. Therefore, these teachings have provisional meaning. For example, when the Buddha taught monks and nuns, he taught that they should meditate on members of the opposite sex as being skeletons, dirty and so on, in order to reduce their emotions. This is further explained in sloka 95.

[H19]

## **(ii) Setting out proof for that by both reasoning and scriptural authority (670)**

[H20]

### **(a) Scriptural proof, 6:95**

6:95

*The teacher taught this is expedient meaning,*

*Which is also [proven] logically.*

*Like [in the Lankavatara Sutra] other sutras too [the Sutra Unravelling the Thought]*

*Elucidate the expedient meaning.*

*Both logically and through the Buddha’s words, we know that teachings on mind only are provisional*

This sloka has so many pages of commentary, that I got a headache when I tried to read them all! For those who want to go into this more deeply, perhaps we could have a one or two-day discussion, and I think we would need several scholars. Roughly speaking, in this sloka Chandrakirti is saying that even the Buddha confirmed that sutras like the *Lankavatara Sutra* have provisional meaning. The second line says that, in addition, reasoning and logic confirm that these sutras have provisional meaning. In the third line, he says that there are other sutras with provisional meaning, and we know this because of certain quotations of the Buddha himself.

Now, I think that today we will have to tackle one unavoidable problem. This is the third line, which says that some other sutras are also teachings that require explanation. I have been reading the commentaries by Rendawa, Gorampa and so on, although I forgot to read Sakya Chogden yesterday. Most of the commentaries I have been using are very much *rangtongpa*, self-emptiness, and for them, sutras like the *Lankavatara Sutra* have provisional meaning. What might be a little shocking for you is that these commentaries would also say that any sutras that taught buddha nature, *deshek nyungpo* (*bde gshegs snying po*), are actually teachings that have provisional meaning. It is a big statement. But other commentaries do not agree, and both have wonderful reasons.

*Even the teachings on buddha nature are of provisional meaning*

*Teachings with provisional meaning are not inferior. They are essential in leading us to the truth*

But before I explain this, I want to say that you should not think that teachings with provisional meaning are inferior. This is not at all the case. In a way, they are probably more popular or appropriate teachings, because all of us need to be led to the liberation. And any words or phrases that are used to lead us individually to the certain meaning are what we call provisional meaning.

*The Buddha said that just as doctors give different medicines to different sick people, for some people, he taught that all is mind*

First, Chandrakirti is saying that the Buddha himself said that the external world and external phenomena do not exist apart from your own mind. This is a very important quotation. The Buddha also said that for different ill or sick people, different medicines have to be applied depending on their different diseases. Likewise, the Buddha taught certain sentient beings that things are just mind. According to these commentators, this quotation is used by Chandrakirti to demonstrate that sutras like *Lankavatara Sutra* are teachings that require explanation, as follows. If everything is just mind in the ultimate truth, then why does the Buddha have to say that “for

*People like to hear about basic human goodness, so buddha nature is often taught*

*But such teachings have provisional meaning*

*Buddha nature is not the same as the atman of the tirthikas*

*Emptiness itself is sometimes referred to as buddha nature, for beings who fear losing the self*

*A difference between rangtong and shentong is which sutras are said to have provisional meaning*

*The teacher's approach is also very individually adapted to the needs of the student*

*Chandrakirti says that emptiness teachings have certain meaning*

different sick beings, doctors give different medicines, likewise for some I taught that everything is merely mind"? He would not have to say this if the teaching that everything is just mind is the certain meaning. According to these commentaries, that is Chandrakirti's logic or reasoning.

Now we come to the third line of sloka 95, the one that I was saying it is important to discuss. In the *Lankavatara Sutra*, when the Buddha taught buddha nature, he described the buddha nature as having all the enlightened qualities right from the beginning as its ultimate nature, as the ultimate nature. He also taught things like the buddha nature, with its 32 major marks and 80 minor marks; all these exist here this very moment. This is also taught in the West, because many people like to hear things like basic goodness of human beings and all that. Now, the commentary is saying that these teachings have provisional meaning, which could be a bit shocking, especially if you do not know the philosophy very much. But if you know it, it is not shocking.

The Buddha further explained that the buddha nature has all the qualities of the buddha, like the most precious jewel. But right now, temporally, it is wrapped by all kinds of emotion. It is like a precious jewel that is wrapped in all kinds of dirty clothes, dust and all that. Then a disciple asked the Buddha, "in this case, what is the difference between you talking about this buddha nature, and the *tirthikas* talking about a truly existent *atman*, gods, almighty creators and all of that. What is the difference? They are exactly the same". The Buddha replied to this bodhisattva that this buddha nature is definitely not the same as truly existent god, *atman* or any of the others. He further explained that the name Buddha nature is given to this nature of never-arising, never-ceasing, non-duality.

The Buddha said that this emptiness, this very *shunyata*, is sometimes given a different name and referred to as Buddha nature. These are still all the Buddha's words. He said that, "I did this because there are certain sentient beings who fear losing the self". This is very much like us; for example, we become very afraid when we talk about selflessness. For those sentient beings that have a great fear of losing the self or the ego, in order for them to eventually understand the great *shunyata*, he then used the word buddha nature, *tathagatagarbha*, as a substitute name for emptiness. In this way, even treatises like Lord *Maitreya's Uttaratantra* are actually only shastras of provisional meaning, whether you like it or not. There it is!

Earlier, somebody asked about *rangtong* and *shentong*, self-emptiness and other-emptiness. Well, when we realise the difference between self-emptiness and other-emptiness, then we will get enlightened! But just to talk about it for the sake of talking and passing the time, we could say a few things. One of the differences is in their identification of which sutras have provisional meaning. For example, the other-emptiness people might not like to say that *Uttaratantra* has provisional meaning.

These discussions about provisional meaning and certain meaning are very complex, because until you reach enlightenment, all teachings have provisional meaning. It is also something very individual. For example, if a teacher is very skilful, compassionate, and intelligent, the first thing that they will try to decide upon meeting a new disciple is, to which side is the disciple leaning? Are they more eternalist or nihilist? If they lean more towards eternalism, then words like emptiness are quite important. If their upbringing makes them think they are ultimate sinners, then the teacher may proceed in different ways. Perhaps it is good to talk about emptiness, how sin is emptiness. Or it may also be important to talk about buddha nature. It is very individual, which is why it is so complex. But generally, where the Buddha used words like 'me', 'my father', 'a long time ago, I was a lion', when he uses words like that, he is using them in order to communicate. So, a sutra like the *Wise and Foolish Sutra*, which contains many stories of the Buddha's life, is definitely considered a teaching that has provisional meaning.

Whereas, Chandrakirti is saying that teachings on subjects like going beyond extremes, emptiness, *shunyata*, absence of characteristics and so on, are teachings of certain meaning. This is because teachings of provisional meaning usually have a purpose; they usually lead us

*Beyond emptiness, there is nothing further to lead us towards*

*The rangtong method is very good while establishing the view and getting rid of clinging to truly existent phenomena*

*The shentong method is very encouraging and auspicious when we are practising*

*For rangtongpas, only the second of the three Dharma-wheels has certain meaning*

*Distinguishing real and uncertain is very beneficial, because of our preferences for what is 'real'*

*"Mind; mind does not exist; the nature of mind is luminosity"*

*shentongpas say both second and third turnings are certain, as they talk about the emptiness and clarity aspects of mind*

*We should be very cautious about judging people as being rangtongpas or shentongpas*

somewhere. But with emptiness teachings, there is nothing further to lead us towards. There are four extremes; we have already gone beyond them, and that is the *shunyata*. If there were something else to lead to, another view beyond that, then emptiness would become another extreme. So, this is the main reason why many scholars say that teachings based on emptiness are direct teachings that do not require any interpretation.

This has also been a profound issue in Tibet, where the *rangtongpas*, those who accept ‘self-emptiness’, do not accept that teachings on buddha nature are teachings of certain meaning. And then there are the *shentongpas*, those who accept ‘other-emptiness’, who accept that these teachings have certain meaning. Both have an equally wonderful logic, reason and benefit. Many scholars of the past have said, and I think that this is true, that during the establishment of the view, and while a practitioner is trying to get rid of clinging to truly existent things, the *rangtongpa* method is incredible because it refutes all truly existent reality. This is also why I felt more comfortable using the *rangtongpa* commentaries, because this course on Chandrakirti is mainly about establishing the view and hopefully trying to get rid of some clinging to self. And as you can recall, Chandrakirti has managed to refute anything that is truly existent, and this has developed a view to some extent, at least intellectually. When it comes to practice, I think that *shentong* is very encouraging and very auspicious. Many saints and scholars of the past have said this, and I think it this is a wonderful judgement.

Earlier, I was saying that the *rangtongpas* give many reasons to show why sutras like the *Lankavatara Sutra* and subjects such as buddha nature are teachings that have provisional meaning. Broadly speaking you could say that according to the *rangtongpas*, the first turning of the wheel contains teachings with provisional meaning, the second one contains teachings with certain meaning and the third turning is again provisional because it talks about buddha nature a lot.

I would like to repeat again that making these distinctions has so much benefit. Because, do not forget that our aim here is just to discourage our clinging to the self. I think that this is a wonderful way of doing this kind of division. It is always like this; even in our mundane world, when we say, “this is the real one, and this is the duplicate one”, then we always go for the real one. And the bodhisattvas know this habit in us, so they identify what we need, and then say that this is the real one. So we are rather trapped, which is good, because it makes us go there. A good way to understand the distinctions is by using a very special quotation of the Buddha:

Mind; mind does not exist; the nature of mind is luminosity



It has three portions that correspond to the three Dharma-wheels, as illustrated above. Now, many other scholars, mainly *shentongpa* scholars, say that mind has two kinds of aspects: emptiness and clarity. In the second turning of the wheel of the Dharma, the Buddha talked more about the emptiness aspect, and in the third, he talked more about the clarity aspect. Therefore, both the second and third turnings are teachings that have certain meaning. This is also a wonderful way of judging and *shentongpas* therefore say that teachings on the *tathagathagarba*, the buddha nature, are teachings with certain meaning.

I would like to clarify something here. In the midst of this argument between *rangtong* and *shentong* we tend to demean all the masters of the past, when we say things like ‘Shantarakshita is a *shentongpa*’. Yes, he is considered one, as is Jamgon Kongtrül Lodrö Thayé, people like that. But we have to be very careful when we say these kinds of things, because it is almost like wondering whether Tilopa was a buddhist or not? When we say things like ‘buddhist’, ‘*shentongpa*’, ‘*rangtongpa*’, ‘non-buddhist’, we all have a certain idea of what a buddhist is, and so on. And then when we say that Tilopa is a buddhist, we think that he thinks of himself as a

*Part of the problem is our desire to belong to certain groups with prestigious members*

*Both rangtong and shentong have great blessings, and we should avoid being sectarian*

*The story of Dudjom Rinpoche's divination for Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche*

buddhist in the same way that we think of ourselves as buddhists. It is very dangerous to make these kinds of judgement. It is a bit like wondering whether the Buddha is a buddhist or not!

For us, it is so important to fit ourselves into a certain society or group. And that group has to have a certain prestigious member. It is so important, isn't it? Like artists, Cambridge graduates, Sorbonne University graduates and so on. It is so important to have such groups, and then we can feel that we belong to a group. We tend to do this to the Dharma as well. For instance, if you go to the United States, you will often hear a question that is one of the most ultimately stupid questions, which is 'what is women's role in buddhism'. That is the most pathetic question you can ask! It is like asking what the role of women in science is. There is equally no role for men or for women! All sentient beings, if they practice, will attain enlightenment.

I was saying earlier that many of the *shentongpa* methods are very auspicious and encouraging, and they have great blessings. But I want to make clear that every time that I say something good about the *shentong*, this does not mean that the *rangtong* does not also have this. You should never understand it that way. However, Tibetans can be very hypocritical, narrow-minded, and sectarian. And in Tibet, there were many very sectarian scholars, to such an extent that some of them even changed the words of the Buddha. For example, it is believed that in the past Pabongkhapa actually erased the last word from "mind, mind does not exist, the nature of mind is luminosity". He erased the word 'luminosity', and changed it to 'emptiness'. This kind of thing is terrible.

Many great masters are known as *shentongpa* masters, and I would like to you tell a story. Just before he turned 73, His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche went to His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoche in Nepal, and asked him to do a divination about his life. His disciples always requested him to remain a long time, and Jamyang Khyentse Chökyi Lodrö had predicted that Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche would definitely live until 73, and he would live a few years longer if there were still some auspicious conditions. That is why Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche went to see Dudjom Rinpoche for a divination. Dudjom Rinpoche was known as someone very energetic, who never sat still. He stood up and thought for a while, then sat down and spoke to Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche.

He told a story of Situ Chökyi Jungné of Kathog, who was known as a *rangtongpa* master. Towards the end of his life, he went to his guru, Kathog Rigdzin Chenpo, and similarly requested a divination about his life. Kathog Rigdzin Chenpo told Situ Chö Jung that it would be very good, because there were very auspicious reasons, if Situ Chö Jung would change his view from *rangtong* to *shentong*. That would definitely lengthen his life. Kathog Rigdzin Chenpo told Situ Chö Jung, who was in Nepal at that time, that he should offer one thousand butterlamps to the Bodhnath stupa, and at that moment he should change his view.

At that point in his story, Dudjom Rinpoche folded his hands, and said to Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, "Of course, you have definitely been a *shentongpa* master from the beginning. But, just as with Situ Chö Jung and Kathog Rigdzin Chenpo, you should go to the Bodhnath stupa, offer many butterlamps, and then reconfirm your *shentongpa* view. Then, you should again take a bodhisattva vow to never let go of all these sentient beings until they achieve enlightenment. And this will definitely lengthen your life". As I mentioned, Dudjom Rinpoche is a very energetic person, and then he pointed to his wife, Sangyum Kusho, he said, "She is much better than me, and she should also do a divination. But what I have said will definitely help".

This whole story in itself is a big teaching. Dudjom Rinpoche is not saying that being a *rangtongpa* shortens your life! I am sure there are many other meanings, but for me, this is about what I meant by auspiciousness. Perhaps the word 'auspiciousness' is too limited, and we should use *tendrel*, 'dependent connection'. You see, these great masters like Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, Dudjom Rinpoche, Kathog Rigdzin Chenpo and Situ Chökyi Jugné, are here for sentient beings like us. They have already gone beyond long life and short life, death, birth, and all that. But sentient beings like us have such a strong attachment to long life; we have are so

*We should apply both the rangtong and shentong methods at the appropriate times*

[H20]

attached to solidity and permanence and all that. So, I think that people like us should apply both methods. We should apply *rangtong*, or self-emptiness, while establishing of the view and getting rid of the *dendzin*, the clinging to phenomena as truly existent, and *shentong*, or other-emptiness, more while practising the path that we have established.

### (b) Reasoning (672), 6:96

6:96

*The Buddhas taught that with non-existence of object,  
Elimination of knower is easily achieved.  
Without object the perceiver is disproven,  
And therefore, objects were first refuted.*

*The Buddha first taught  
the refutation of external  
objects; so, it is easier to  
get rid of the subject,  
mind*

This sloka is again emphasising that if there is no object, then there is no subject that knows this object. This is what the Buddha has taught. Referring to the same quotation, he also said that if there is no object, it is easier to eliminate the subject, which is why eliminating the object was taught first. When the Buddha said that all these external phenomena do not exist, and they are just the projection of our mind, this is a kind of refutation of the existence of external phenomena. So through the refutation of object, external phenomena, we will easily get rid of the subject, mind.

[H19]

### (iii) How this distinction into certain and expedient applies to all the Buddha's teachings, 6:97

6:97

*To know the categories of the scriptures,  
Understand that sutras explaining other than the meaning of suchness,  
Teach expedient truth, – these are to be interpreted,  
While those explaining emptiness teach certain truth.*

So, by understanding of the categories and the history of two kinds of teachings, *drang dön* and *ngédön*, we should understand that if a sutra does not teach the ultimate truth, it is a sutra of provisional meaning. And a sutra that teaches the ultimate meaning is a sutra with certain meaning. This is the conclusion. So now, after three years we have finished other-arising. From tomorrow, we will start the other two kinds of arising, and then we will come to another big issue, which is the selflessness of the person. There are several opponents there, but our immediate opponent is ourselves!

[Q]: Is Chandrakirti *shentong* or *rangtong*?

[A]: That is a Tibetan issue. He is just a Prasangika Madhyamika.

Now we will spend a little time in review!

[Q]: What is the thesis of the Cittamatrins?

[Rinpoche]: When the Cittamatrins talk about intrinsically existing consciousness, what is their actual thesis? What are they actually referring to, and how do they talk about it?

[Student]: The Cittamatrin thesis is that, ultimately, the only real thing is mind or consciousness.

[Rinpoche]: In that case, the Vaibhashika are the same as Cittamatrins! Your definition is incomplete.

[Student]: Is it that the Cittamatrins try to prove the absolute existence of mind and the non-existence of object just to reconfirm the thesis that nothing can be produced from something else?

[Student]: We should add the notion of *rangrig*, self-knowing, and clarity.

[Student]: If we say that only mind exists, and not phenomena, there would be no need for a spiritual path, as we would all be enlightened. We need to add the three natures: *küntak*, labelling, the pure and impure *zhenwong*, and *yongdrup*. Otherwise there would already be

*[A]: Their ultimate truth is a mind that is self-aware but devoid of subject and object*

*[Q]: How do the Vaibhashika and Sautrantika present the two truths?*

*[Q]: According to them, if we realise the ultimate truth, do we attain enlightenment?*

*[Q]: According to them, is the absolute truth visible?*

*[Q]: Why do the Madhyamikas say the Cittamatrin ultimate truth is false relative truth?*

a clearly luminous mind, and no need for a path to purify the impure *zhenwong*. If it were not for the three natures, we would all already be enlightened.

[Rinpoche]: That is helpful, but we would like the Cittamatrin thesis complete and precise, in as few words as possible.

[Student]: *Alaya* stores habitual tendencies, and when activated, they manifest as the phenomenal world.

[Rinpoche]: That is part of it, how do they define this self-luminous mind?

[Student]: You cannot define the mind, it is like the snake; it is a label.

[Rinpoche]: It has something to do with labelling, yes.

[Student]: The first part is the key word *rang shin*, which is that dependent reality functions independently of all the dualism of subject and object. The second part of the definition is that dependent reality exists substantially, and the third part of the definition is that it cannot be expressed in language or concepts.

[Rinpoche]: That seems to answer the question. The Cittamatrin definition specifically includes this word, where they say that this self-luminous mind is totally free of subject of object. So, we should not think that the Cittamatrins believe in the usual idea of the subject being truly existing. Their thesis is that the ultimate truth is a mind free from the usual idea of subject and object. Otherwise, the Cittamatrin view would be even sillier than our view! In Tibetan, they say that the ultimate mind is *sungzin nyitong gi shepa rangrik rangsel* (*gzung 'dzin gnyis stong gi shes pa rang rig rang gsal*), something that is devoid of clinging to subject and object. People sometimes claim that the Cittamatrins are saying that only the subject exists in the conventional truth, but they are not as silly as that. Therefore, their definition is quite sophisticated and clear: ultimate truth is mind that is self-aware, but is devoid of subject and object.

[Rinpoche]: How do the Vaibhashika present the two truths? Here we want a precise definition, not fluffy commentaries on it!

[Student]: Neither mind nor matter can destroy the ultimate truth, but they can destroy relative truth.

[Rinpoche]: Now, the Sautrantika school

[Student]: Something that does not function is relative; something functional is absolute.

[Rinpoche]: According to the Vaibhashika and Sautrantika schools, if we realise the ultimate truth, do we attain liberation from samsara? We know the answer according to the Prasangikas, but what is the answer according to their school?

[Student]: If they meditate on theory, no, but if they meditate on emotions, yes.

[Student]: That answer is a Prasangika commentary, not what they think. They think that if they can realise there is no 'I', no aggregates, they attain cessation. They have broken the twelve links of interdependent origination, so they no longer have to take rebirth in samsara.

[Rinpoche]: Maybe we can return to this question later! Here is another question: according to the Vaibhashika and Sautrantika, is the absolute truth visible?

[Student]: For the Sautrantika, as long as what we see is a mental image, it does not function, so we cannot see the absolute truth. For the Vaibhashika, all we can see has parts, so we can break it by mind. So it is not absolute either.

[Student]: The absolute can be seen by eyes, heard by ears, and tasted by tongue for both Vaibhashika and Sautrantika. Their distinction of ultimate truth is based on the object, so they say that seeing the ultimate truth will not liberate you, the subject.

[Rinpoche]: Very good! The doubt of the previous answer is also very important, however, and it will come up later when we will talk about aggregates with a residue and aggregates without a residue. Based on that, the substantialist schools, such as the Vaibhashika, say that the actual body of the Buddha is not the refuge.

[Rinpoche]: Another question. The Madhyamikas consider the Cittamatrin's ultimate truth a false relative truth. Why is this?

[Student]: Not only does it not function in the conventional world, but also it does not correspond to any absolute, because it is another thesis.

*[Q]: Why do the substantialists need to have other-arising?*

*[Q]: What is the special inferential logic of the Prasangikas?*

*An introduction to Gesar of Ling and windhorse practice*

[Student]: The Prasangika refutation of the Cittamatrins is that the Cittamatrins say that subject and object arise simultaneously, so the object perceived should be controlled by the subject, which is mind. The refutation of this is that this mind, and what it perceives, is a fruition of karma. Karma is part of the twelve links of interdependent origination, and dependent origination is something that does not come from ultimate truth, but is part of relative truth. So this whole base of perception that the Cittamatrins give can be traced to the base of dependent origination, this cannot be part of the definition of ultimate truth.

[Student]: According to the Prasangikas, the ultimate cannot be spoken in words. As soon as you speak it, it becomes relative. So, the fact that the Cittamatrins put forward a thesis automatically makes it relative. It is false because we distinguish true and false relative truth according to the acceptance of ordinary people. The Cittamatrin idea that the world is illusory and not existent goes in the face of ordinary accepted truth.

[Rinpoche]: The second part of the last reply correctly answers the question.

[Rinpoche]: Why do the substantialists feel the need for an arising from other?

[Student]: Things cannot arise from the self, because they have defined the other as truly existing, so you need other-arising.

[Rinpoche]: That was good and simple. All these seemingly complicated problems are actually very simple.

[Rinpoche]: The Prasangikas have a special inferential logic; please describe it.

[Student]: I am blank!

[Student]: The last response was right: the Prasangikas have nothing to say! They only use the logic and arguments of their opponent, so they have no theses of their own.

[Rinpoche]: Give an example of how they use this logic, based on fire and smoke.

[Student]: If somebody says there is smoke, they would accept that there must be fire. But one of the characteristics of their logic is that neither the thesis nor the proposition has to be accepted by both parties. They would be quite happy if just the other person believes it.

[Student]: The Svacittantra-Madhyamikas use inferential logic, but the Prasangikas do not believe in it. They would say that we do not see smoke, so there cannot be fire either. So, they use it to refute their opponents using their own logic.

[Rinpoche]: The Prasangikas claim they have no theories or theses of their own. Are they saying this relatively or ultimately?

[Student]: Ultimately they have no thesis, and relatively they accept relative truth.

[Rinpoche]: That is not a thesis is it? A thesis is something that you develop yourself.

[Student]: So, they say it both relatively and ultimately.

[Rinpoche]: Following on from the last question, in this case, where do the path, meditation, compassion and all that fit in?

[Student]: Conventional truth, which is also not a thesis.



## Is buddhism a philosophy or a religion?

Today we are going to do only one session, and have a little break from all this philosophy. In the second session, Orgyen Tobgyal Rinpoche and the other Rinpoches have decided to do a *sang* offering to Gesar of Ling.

We may have refuted the Cittamatrin view, but we somehow know that all our experiences somehow come from our mind. Without a mind, our body would just be a body, a dead body. It would not have any feeling and it could not do anything. This mind, the luminosity and emptiness that we talked about yesterday, is sometimes referred to as awareness-wisdom, and in the *sang* offering it is represented by Guru Rinpoche in the form of a warrior. It is believed that

when we eat different kinds of food and mingle with different kinds of people, the radiance of this inborn warrior within us becomes covered or obscured. And the discontinuity of this inner radiance is sometimes referred to as the breakage of windhorse. To enhance this windhorse, its speed, its majestic quality and all kinds of other enlightened qualities, we can do *lung ta* (*rlung rta*) offerings to uplift this positive energy.

*It is practices like these that make some westerners think that buddhism is a religion*

*Relatively, everything is acceptable, which is the pride of buddhism*

*Conventional truth is like a skilful means to realise ultimate truth*

*For example, reciting the Prajñaparamita Sutra protects us from all kinds of obstacles*

This is an example of why people in the West people have difficulties in knowing how to identify buddhism. Is it a philosophy or a religion? Although I must admit, I still do not know the meaning of these two words in any case. For example, buddhism has things like making smoke offerings, and all kinds of ritualistic things, so in our limited modern mind we think that is not a philosophy. We say, “That is purely a religion, one can see that. Look, they are doing prostrations and they are burning incense. All that is very religious stuff”. I think many people think this, and it is a very understandable delusion because all this does appear to be very religious. But strangely, this very fact is a source of pride for buddhists. Theoretically, nothing is acceptable, because nothing is truly existent. But relatively, everything is acceptable, and that is the pride of buddhism, especially of Mahayana buddhism. As you have heard for several days, I do not think that buddhists have the term ‘religion’.

Anyway, during our philosophical discussion and analysis, we have identified two sorts of theoreticians. One sort of theoretician has established a view with reasoning and logic. As for the other sort of theoreticians, they do not really refer to themselves as theoreticians, but for the sake of communication, we will call them theoreticians. And although they have looked, they have not found any so-called ultimate truth or relative truth that is established by reasoning and logic.

As Chandrakirti says here, conventional truth is like a skilful means to realise the absolute truth. And based on conventional truth, we have all kinds of methods. For example, when we begin our session each morning we recite the *Prajñaparamita Sutra*. The essence of the teaching of the *Prajñaparamita Sutra* is emptiness, and there is a tradition to recite this sutra. The Buddha himself encouraged us to recite this, especially before entering into any study, meditation or contemplation on difficult subjects, because it protects you from all kinds of obstacles. When we say ‘obstacle’, this can mean many things. It includes obstacles such as headaches and external obstacle, and ultimate obstacles such as clinging to the self and to phenomena, and so on.

And, for example, another skilful means is doing prostrations. When the Buddha taught, the first thing he would do was to prostrate to the throne that he was about to sit upon, and circumambulate it three times. Of course, this is to emphasise the importance of the teachings and to increase our humility. When we have humility, then our minds become open. And when our minds are open, then we will learn. And then we make mandala offerings, again to signify that the teachings and words of wisdom that talk about emptiness are so precious. In order to value them we make offerings.

And as I have been saying many times, although we may study Dharma, a real understanding of the Dharma comes very much from our own humility, open mind and merit. So many things come from merit, and when we do things like reciting the *Prajñaparamita Sutra* or making mandala offerings, they create the atmosphere and circumstance of merit. And as Mahayana practitioners, to train our mind and enhance our motivation, we arouse the great motivation of seeking to enlighten all sentient beings. This alone not only creates merit but makes all of our actions beneficial not only for ourselves but also for others.



[H14]

## (c) Genesis from both self and other

[H15]

*For arising from both self and other, our opponents are the Jains*

*For example, a clay vase depends both on the clay (self), and the potter and all his equipment (other)*

### (i) What earlier adherents of this view believe

So, now our opponent is Jainism, although ‘opponent’ is not really the right word. As we study this, you should keep in mind that it is very important not to underestimate the other schools, especially the Hindu schools like Jainism. They are one of the most sophisticated schools. Both buddhism and Jainism were considered revolutionary in India after the Hindus, and both the Buddha and Mahavira were respected very much. These opponents say that all Chandrakirti’s earlier refutations of self-arising and other-arising will not negate their theory. They accept that if things arise only from the self or only from the other, then Chandrakirti’s refutation will work. But in their belief things arise from both self and other, so they argue that neither of the faults will occur for them.

They give us an example here. For instance, when you make a vase out of clay, the clay is not separate from the vase, and so there is self-arising. But the vase also depends on the potter and various kinds of equipment, and all these are other causes, which is why all phenomena are created by both self-arising and other-arising. This is true not only the external world, as in the example of the vase, but also for internal phenomena such as beings. When a being reincarnates, the same soul or mind reincarnates. Therefore, there is self-arising. But there are also many other conditions like father, mother, tradition, culture, food and so on, and these causes are “other”, so there is other-arising. These are just examples, so do not think that Jainism is as simple as this.

[H15]

### (ii) Refuting that view (673)

[H16]

#### (a) Disposing of it with reasoning already used

[H17]

##### (i) Disposing of it with reasoning in terms of the two types of genesis, 6:98.1-2

[H17]

##### (ii) Disposing of it with reasoning in terms of the two truths, 6:98.3

[H16]

#### (b) Disposing of it with further reasoning, 6:98.4

6:98      *Creation from both [self and other] is also not reasonable,  
As the defects already explained would arise;  
[Such creation] accords with neither ordinary experience nor suchness,  
As creation from neither [self nor other] could be proven.*

*Arising from both self and other is refuted because of the defects already explained for them individually*

On the second line of sloka 98, Chandrakirti says that the defects already explained would arise. All the faults that have been explained individually for self-arising and other-arising would all apply to this school as well. Therefore arising from both causes cannot be accepted, not only during the relative truth, but also during the ultimate truth. As an exercise, I will ask you later what the defects that have already been explained are. That’s it! That is the end of arising from both self and other.



[H14]

## (d) Genesis without any cause

[H15]

*For arising from no cause, our opponents are the Charvakas*

*The story of the master who wanted to sleep with his own daughter*

*But all of us are like Charvakas, for example, if we do not believe in future lives*

### (i) What earlier adherents of this view believe

Now the opponents are the Charvakas, who believe in truly existent arising, but without any cause. I do not know whether mundane people who do not really think about cause also do not think about truly existing arising. Do existentialists do this? This is something that we can talk about. The Charvakas say that if things come from a cause, then Chandrakirti's refutations of other-cause, self-cause and both all apply. But their view is that things do not come from a cause, and so none of the faults will arise.

It seems that historically, even in places like in India, schools like Charvakas that did not believe in a cause were a small minority. Even the Hindus are such believers in karma. So, there is not a detailed refutation of this theory that runs to many pages. It is almost as if other schools have already refuted this theory, so to speak, and I am not sure that the Charvakas even exist any longer. I am a bit puzzled about these Charvakas, because in one way they sound very stupid, and it is almost unbelievable that anyone would say such things. Perhaps this is just my own expectation, but I cannot believe that they are so stupid! Anyway, there is a story about a certain master who wanted to sleep with his own daughter because she was so beautiful, and so developed the theory that there is no cause. As you know, in India, things like ethics, morality and karma are so important, so in order to justify his actions he said that these things do not exist. In their own texts they say things like, "Who rolled the peas? Nobody rolled them. Who sharpened the thorns? Who made the lotus petal so smooth? Who painted the shade? Nobody, these things just come because they come".

But, on the other hand, you should not underestimate this way of thinking. This habit of the Charvakas exists within us all. For one thing, we do not believe in reincarnation, past life and future life. Anyone who cannot accept future and past lives falls among the Charvakas. For example, one monk in Dzongsar Institute said, "this reincarnation stuff that buddhists talk about better be true, otherwise I am missing out on a lot!"

[H15]

### (ii) Refuting that view

[H16]

#### (a) Refutation of genesis from a very essence

[H17]

#### (i) It would contravene reasoning, 6:99.1-2

6:99.1-2    *If creation had no cause whatsoever,  
Everything could arise from anything.*

*If phenomena arose with no cause, then everything could come from anything*

There are a few more slokas based on the view of the Charvakas. In sloka 99, Chandrakirti says that this theory cannot be accepted because if things come without any cause, then everything could come from anything. That definitely makes sense. If things do not come from a cause, then human beings could come from trees, and all kinds of things could come from human beings. All the logic of cause, conditions and effect would collapse.

[H17]

#### (ii) It would contravene what can be seen, 6:99.3-100

6.99.3-4    *To have a harvest, there would be no need as usual  
For the hundreds of things such as gathering the seeds.*

*Farmers would not need  
to work in order to have a  
harvest*

*Like an *utpala* flower in  
the sky, we would not  
perceive things*

Then in the last two lines, he says that if things did not come from a cause, ordinary beings would not go through all the work of farming and harvesting in order to obtain food. This is obvious.

6:100     *If sentient beings were void of any cause,  
Then, as the colour and scent of a sky-*utpala*, they could not be perceived.  
Yet as ordinary experience is perceived vividly,  
Know that just like mind, the ordinary experience arises from causes.*

This sloka is also quite easy to understand. It has an interesting example, of an *utpala* flower that grows in the sky, and of course, no flowers grow in the sky. He is saying that if things arise without any cause, then like an *utpala* flower that grows in the sky, we will not perceive things, see things, hear things or taste things. Here he is borrowing some Cittamatrin logic. He is saying that when you see blue, that blue is caused by your mind alone. Perhaps we should not say that it is Cittamatrin logic. If we are talking about logic, something is either logical or not. It does not have to belong to anything. For example, people sometimes talk about a western logic or an eastern logic, and we might wonder whether this is valid for the West or for the East. If you really think that way you could also ask, for example, did gravity exist before Newton? Whether it is eastern gravity or western gravity, it is about the same thing. That is why we should simply say that Chandrakirti is being logical, rather than that he is stealing this logic from the Cittamatrins.

[Q]: This treatment of the Charvakas is unclear, because Chandrakirti does not specify the kind of cause and there are different kinds of causes. Traditionally in the West, we would talk about a substantial cause, an efficient cause or an agential cause. If the Charvakas are saying that there is no agential cause, for example that nobody created the universe, that is entirely the same thing as is said in Western materialism and for that matter in buddhism too because the buddhists do not accept God the creator. It seems to me that the Charvakas are saying is that there is no pattern in things, that there is no reason to suppose why one thing should follow another. But in buddhism, if you were to say that there is a pattern in things, that itself is an example of the mind imposing a sort of coherence on reality.

[A]: That is easy I think, because in buddhism they do not even accept truly existent arising.

[Q]: But in fact, the Charvakas are extremely modern and western. I see what you meant when you said they are like existentialists. They are saying that the universe is meaningless, that there is no real reason why the man should not sleep with his daughter. Why shouldn't he? The fact that it is taboo is simply an invention. If Chandrakirti is trying to refute their view by saying that a lotus cannot grow in the sky, presumably they are saying that somewhere lotuses grow in the sky. The fact that lotuses do not grow in the sky is unimportant, because there is no logical reason why they cannot grow in the sky.

[A]: The example of the lotus is different. Chandrakirti is using the logic that when you see a blue lotus, if you cannot see, then there is no blue lotus. From that, you should know that the cause of that blue lotus is your own mind.

[Q]: Yes, but they are saying that in the end, the world is absurd.

[A]: They are saying that there is no cause but that there is truly existent arising. That is the problem. You believe in truly existing arising, as you want to sleep with your son or daughter, therefore you want and believe in the result. This man is just denying the cause, but not the result, whereas Chandrakirti will not do that.

[H16]

**(b) Refutation of genesis from an elemental cause**

[H17]

**(i) Such views demonstrate an inability to understand anything beyond this world, 6:101**

*More sophisticated Charvakas are like modern materialists*

*When the elements exhaust, there will be no more phenomena based on the elements*

*When the energy of semen and egg exhausts, there will be no more mind, and hence no future lives*

*Chandrakirti does not ultimately believe in arising, so he has no burden to prove the existence of future life*

*The Charvakas refute future life because they say it cannot be perceived*

*Even if there is no truly existing cause, Chandrakirti will refute any truly existing result*

*They claim they have direct experience both of something existent (the four elements) and something non-existent (no next life), which is absurd*

*6:101      These elements you conceive as a primary nature.  
Yet they possess no such nature.  
How could someone with such thick mental obscuration  
Ever properly know what is beyond [this life]?*

Now we encounter some more sophisticated Charvakas, who are like scientists. They say that things like karma are false, but things that are visible, for example the four elements, are true. They are extreme materialists, and I think that perhaps existentialists would say something similar. These Charvakas talk of the four elements, earth, water, fire and wind, and say that when they function there are things like a so-called lotus, a so-called pear and so-called beautiful patterns on peacock feathers. But when the energy of these elements has exhausted, then there will no longer be beautiful colours, and all that.

Likewise they have a very good example for the inner world. When you make wine, you add some yeast and then after three days, this liquid has a particular energy that can make people drunk. Likewise, when semen and egg meet, after a certain time, due to the energy of these two, there is an effect of a discriminating consciousness. This energy can distinguish things; so that when this energy perceives a vase, it definitely sees the vase, and has no doubt as to whether it might be a pillar or something else. That is the so-called mind. When that semen and egg element degenerates, that kind of mind will not function any longer. Therefore they are saying that there is no future life and no past life. The Charvakas are important opponents.

The root text is quite condensed here, so I will go through it first and then we will discuss it. Part of the difficulty here is that there is quite harsh, or direct, criticism in the last two lines when Chandrakirti says, “how could someone with such thick mental obscuration ever properly know what is beyond this life”. I sometimes feel that there is a general cultural presumption that it is horrible to say things like this during an argument. In any case, the key is this. Ultimately, Chandrakirti does not accept that things arise from a cause, because he does not even accept that there is arising. So he does not have the burden of proving that there is a next life or past life on the ultimate level because he does not even accept arising in the first place.

Here the Charvakas say that they do not accept the next life or past life because when the energy of the elements exhausts, there will be no entity left to continue. In proving this, one of their arguments is that there is no longer anything that can be seen or perceived. They say that since they cannot perceive it, this is why it does not exist. So Chandrakirti is now refuting that not-perceiving part, and we should always keep in mind that he does not accept truly existing arising. People like Charvakas or existentialists may not believe in a cause, but they cannot deny the arising. And if you accept truly existent arising but then establish a view that there is no cause, then Chandrakirti would refer to you as someone with a thick mental obscuration because it is a big contradiction. It is like the story of the man who wanted to sleep with his beautiful daughter; you want a result, but deny the cause.

As ever, Chandrakirti will refute anything that is truly existent, and it does not seem to matter to him whether this truly existing phenomenon has a cause or not. Whether or not it has a truly existing cause there is still a truly existing result, and that is what the Madhyamikas have, let us say, a grudge against. The commentary seems to be asking this question. How do you know that this life after death does not exist? And the Charvakas say that it is because they cannot see or experience it directly.

So our next question is, are you saying that you cannot experience it directly or only indirectly through inference? If they say that their experience is direct, then they directly experience the non-existence of life after death. This means they have experienced something that does not exist. In that case, we would experience everything, even experiences that we did not have. In that case, we cannot talk about anything being non-existent. Existence and non-existence become the same, so we could not even talk about non-existence, since we only posit non-existence in relation to existence. Since this consequence is absurd, it is not convincing to speak

of the direct experience of the non-existence of life after death. This is the consequence of the Charvakas claiming that they have both a truly existent experience of a truly existing phenomenon (the four elements) and a truly existent non-existence.

[H17]

**(ii) A logical proof that this view is mistaken, 6:102**

6:102     *When refuting that beyond ordinary experience,  
You are mistakenly viewing the self as having the nature of an object,  
Because you base your view on the physical body.  
Just as when you assert the elements as having an inherent self.*

*Chandrakirti negates the four elements, as they do not truly exist*

When the Charvakas establish their view that there is no life beyond this one, i.e. beyond this world, Chandrakirti says that they are mistakenly viewing the self as having the nature of an object. This is because they say that the elements truly exist. The Charvakas say that the elements are the cause for this life and this world, and the non-existence of these elements is used as a reason to prove that there is nothing beyond this world. In his refutation Chandrakirti negates these elements, saying that he cannot accept them as a cause because he does not accept their existence in the ultimate truth.

[H17]

**(iii) Disposing of an objection raised against an analogy of that logical proof, 6:103.1**

6:103.1     *Discussion of the existence or non-existence of the elements has already been completed,*

Chandrakirti starts by saying that these elements do not have truly existing arising. He has already said from the beginning that phenomena do not come from self, other, both or neither, and these elements are phenomena. I think this negation is very interesting.

[H13]

**(iii) The meaning of what is determined in this way (675), 6:103.2-4**

6:103.2-4     *Because [creation] from self, other, or both as cause,  
As well as uncaused creation, has been generally refuted.  
Therefore, without a [specific] discussion the elements have no [inherent]  
existence.*

To recap, the Charvakas say that there is no beyond this life. Their reason is that the four elements cause this life and this world, and when these four elements and energies are exhausted, there is nothing more. As Chandrakirti has shown, the consequence is that the Charvakas are saying that there is a truly existing non-existence of something beyond this life. Now Chandrakirti is ironically helping them by saying that the elements do not exist in the ultimate truth either. But this actually destroys their position rather than helps it, because it shows that there is no truly existing non-existence of something beyond this life.

*Since the elements do not truly exist, they cannot truly exhaust, so there is no truly existent non-existence of beyond this life*

Chandrakirti is saying that these elements do not exist because they do not arise from self, other, both or neither. So in the ultimate level, he has established that there is no exhaustion of elements, so there is no truly existing non-existence of something beyond this life and beyond this world. This has been the issue here. For Chandrakirti, his only interest is in establishing that there is ultimately no truly existing arising. Our opponent is saying that there is no cause, which is completely different. One is arguing the non-existence of arising; one is arguing that there is no cause.

*Even existentialists have a theory that is established by logic and reasoning, which they use to support a program or aim. Such theories need to be destroyed*

The analogy of the father who wants to sleep with his daughter is important, and I think it will also apply to existentialists. People who want to do such things, like sleep with their daughter or whatever, have an agenda. They have a program or an aim, such as wanting to sleep with someone. Therefore, they have a theory to support or justify this aim, and this theory has to be destroyed. That is quite important. Although I do not know about existentialists, I think that they also have a certain theory that is established by reasoning and logic. For the Madhyamikas, this kind of fault does not occur, because they say that nothing arises on the ultimate level, whether from self, other, both or neither.



I know that many of you have questions that you wish to ask, so for the next few days we will not cover many more slokas. We will only do the selflessness of phenomena this year, and start the selflessness of the person next year. And today's slokas are quite straightforward, which is not to say that they are easy, but that there is not much commentary for me to read or explain to you. So we will have time for your questions, doubts or debate. For instance, the negations of arising from both and arising from no cause are very brief, so some of you have had difficulties applying the Madhyamika logic to these. I think this can best be explained if we have a discussion so that I can understand where you are having difficulties and I will then try to clarify whatever I can.

You will notice later today that Chandrakirti will tell us more about the benefits of dependent arising. You might think that this is a bit repetitious, but for the sake of communication between you and me, I have had to explain some of these things beforehand. In the root text, there has not been much emphasis on dependent arising until now, because we have been busy negating the theses of other people. But now, Chandrakirti is beginning to praise the dependent arising slogan and talk of its benefits.

[H11]

**(ii) Disposing of objections from those who believe in (genesis from) self and/or other**

[H12]

**(a) Rejecting that (the non-existence of such genesis) is repudiated by what ordinary beings see, 6:104-106**

*The reasoning called 'diamond splinters'*

*Phenomena do not arise for self, other, both, or neither. So, they do not have truly existent nature*

*It is hard for us to realise emptiness because we lack merit, so this kind of analysis is helpful*

6:104      *Because no [phenomena] are created from self, from other, from both,  
Or independent of a cause, all things are without inherent [existence].  
Due to the dense clouds of ignorance enveloping ordinary experience  
Objects appear in a deceptive way.*

Again for the sake of explanation, I have already explained this although the root text did not mention it. Here Chandrakirti is confirming his reasoning, which is known as the 'diamond splinters'. In the first two lines, he confirms that all phenomena do not arise from self, other, both or neither. Therefore, all phenomena do not have truly existent nature.

Here we must keep in mind that when we meditate on emptiness, for example, we need to see the non-existing nature of phenomena. This is what a meditator would meditate upon. But in order to understand that non-existent nature, one has to convince oneself why it is non-existent. I am just giving you an analogy. Because of our thick ignorance and lack of merit and wisdom, it is difficult for someone to point out to us, "Hey this phenomenon, this flower, this vase, is empty of truly existent nature". It is very difficult for us to understand that. But it is very helpful if we

*Things exist in the relative truth, but they do not truly exist in the relative truth*

*A common doubt: if everything is empty, why do we still have headaches?*

*We have ignorance, but how does it cover the true nature?*

*We tend to think that ignorance prevents us from seeing the true nature*

*But there is no true nature being blocked; misunderstanding ‘true nature’ this way is itself the ignorance*

*Due to impaired vision, we mistakenly perceive things that do not exist*

*Likewise due to ignorance, we see things that are not as they are*

*All actions, whether virtuous or non-virtuous, come from ignorance*

begin to contemplate why it is not truly existent by analysing its cause. We can analyse whether these phenomena come from a cause that is itself, a cause that is a separate entity, or both, or perhaps these things do not come from a cause. At this point, Rendawa, the Tibetan commentator, strongly emphasises that we have to understand that the Madhyamika philosophers are not establishing that things are nothing, but that phenomena have no truly existent nature. Also, when Chandrakirti says that things exist in the relative truth, he is not saying that things truly exist in the relative truth. The last two lines explain this well.

We have a doubt, which is actually a very common doubt, not only for students of philosophy but also for practitioners. If everything is ultimately emptiness, then why do I see these things? Why do we have headaches? If buddhists say that this self does not exist, who is it that wishes to achieve enlightenment? Who is it that has an ego? These are the standard questions of confused buddhist students.

In this world, in this samsara, we have a dense cloud-like ignorance and because of this, beings like us have all kinds of wrong visions, deceptive ideas and deceptive view or ways. Here Chandrakirti is saying that these are general problems for beings in samsara. And in the commentary, an interesting question is raised after this sloka. Although ignorance might cover the true nature of phenomena, how is it that ignorance misunderstands the true nature?

There are two aspects here. I think this is quite important because normally, when we talk about ignorance, I think we have the idea that we have a particular ignorance that prevents us from seeing the true nature rather than that it misinterprets the true nature. I do not know whether you agree, but the commentator thinks that this is quite important. The next sloka explains this. There is no true nature being blocked; but the very misunderstanding, the very misinterpretation of the true nature is the ignorance. As we were saying earlier, we think that there is some kind of true nature somewhere out there, something like ‘emptiness’ that has to be realised. Chandrakirti is pointing out that there is nothing there; so, we must not misunderstand this.

*6:105 Due to disorders of the eye, some mistakenly perceive hairs, double moons  
Eyes of the peacock’s feathers and honeybees.  
Similarly, due to the defect of ignorance, the minds of the unskilful  
Perceive merely a variety of composite [phenomena].*

Again, the answer uses the example of impaired vision. Due to all kinds of eye disorders, such as impaired vision or pressing the eyes, you see things like floating hairs or, when you press your eyes, you see two moons. In the second line, there is an example of the eye on a peacock feather. When you look at a peacock feather, if you hold it just in front of you and concentrate on it, it can sometimes look three-dimensional, although it just flat. The honeybees could refer to the result of impaired vision, but I remember one of my teachers saying that sometimes you see what looks like a black cloud, but it is actually just a gathering of many flies. Perhaps this only happens in India, and not here. Likewise, due to the defects of ignorance, passion, jealousy, anger and all kinds of defective mind, we will see things that are not as they are. Here, Chandrakirti is clearly saying that there are not two moons. What is happening is just a misunderstanding.

*6:106 That karma is based on ignorance, while without ignorance  
[Karma] is said not to arise, is exclusively a belief held by the unwise.  
The sun of their excellent minds perfectly clearing away obscurity,  
The wise comprehend emptiness and are liberated.*

This sloka is very similar. This is such priceless advice for practitioners. As we can see, the *Madhyamakavatara* also has a lot of practical advice for practitioners and meditators. All the so-called non-virtuous actions such as killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, covetousness and so on, all come from ignorance. Also, all the good deeds, like generosity, discipline, patience, compassion and devotion also come from ignorance. Here Chandrakirti is saying that only a

*The wise will be liberated because they understand emptiness beyond virtuous action, non-virtuous action, and ignorance*

[H12]

foolish person thinks that all action and karma comes from ignorance, but that without ignorance there is no action and no karma. Someone who possesses excellent mind, such as a sixth bhumi bodhisattva, has an understanding of emptiness, which is like the sun that illuminates all the darkness of ignorance and action. Those who are wise will be liberated, because they have understood the emptiness that is beyond virtuous action, non-virtuous action and ignorance. This is a big statement, and it should tell you something about buddhist emptiness. It is not a nihilistic statement at all, if you think about it carefully. Who dares to say things like this? Very few, I think.

[H13]

**(b) Rejecting the consequences of holding that (such genesis) does not exist even in the conventional truth (676)**

**(i) The objection, 6:107**

6:107     *[Objection:] If all things were non-existent in suchness,  
Then even conventionally they would be like a barren woman's child.  
This is not the case, and therefore  
Things must [inherently] exist.*

*If things do not exist ultimately, why don't phenomena also become non-existent in the relative truth?*

*This is like us asking:  
Why, if everything is emptiness, do we have headaches?*

[H13]

**(ii) Dealing with it**

[H14]

**(a) The consequence, which applies to false relative truth, is not definitive, 6:108-110**

6:108     *[Reply:] Try first arguing a little  
With those afflicted by cataracts  
Who perceive unproduced floating hairs and so forth,  
And then later with those afflicted by the cataracts of ignorance.*

*Try telling someone with impaired vision that there are no floating hairs*

Chandrakirti first asks them, why not try arguing with someone who has impaired vision, and tell them that all the floating hairs do not exist. And then, later, tell those normal beings who are afflicted by ignorance, the impaired vision that is ignorance. In one way, he is saying why not go and help me!

6:109     *If you can see that a dream, a gandharva city,  
A mirage, a hallucination, a reflection and so forth,  
Are [truly] uncreated, and as if non-existent,  
Why do you insist [phenomena consequently] could not be seen.*

*Why not start with  
yourself? You also have  
dreams and see mirages*

*Similarly, just because  
things do not exist in the  
ultimate truth does not  
mean we will not perceive  
them*

*But like a barren  
woman's child, these  
phenomena have not truly  
arisen ultimately or  
relatively*

*Thus, phenomena are  
primordially pure from  
extremes and naturally  
beyond suffering*

*For buddhists, real  
suffering refers to  
anything related to time  
and change*

Sloka 109 is yet another answer to the same challenge, this time a little sarcastic. Before you challenge people with impaired vision and people with ignorance, why not challenge yourself? At times, you also have dreams, and see mirages and all kinds of illusory reflections and fairy towns in the sky. So ask yourself, why can you see a dream but not a barren woman's child? Then, gradually, you can challenge us. So, when we Prasangikas say that everything is emptiness, you are bringing the analogy that everything will become like a barren woman's child, but this is not right.

6:110     *If in suchness these [similes] are uncreated,  
Why in ordinary experience, are they not as a child of a barren woman,  
Something unseen?  
Therefore, this [objection] is not definitive.*

So, because of the reasons given above, although things do not arise in the ultimate truth, we will not have the consequence that things will not be perceived by ordinary beings, as with a barren woman's child. So Chandrakirti is saying that the opponent's accusations are not convincing.

### **(b) Their proposition is disproved by both logic and scriptural authority, 6:111-112**

6:111     *The [intrinsic] creation of a barren woman's child,  
Exists neither in suchness, nor in ordinary experience.  
Such is the nature of all entities –  
Neither in suchness nor ordinary experience are they created.*

This sloka gives a further explanation. The barren woman's child is not truly arisen not only within the ultimate truth but also in the relative truth. Likewise, these phenomena have never truly arisen either in the ultimate truth or in the relative truth, in this world. We need to focus on the word 'intrinsic': *rang gis bdag nyid kyis skye pa*, translated here as 'intrinsic creation' of the barren woman's child. Chandrakirti is saying that it is not accepted that such things arise even in the relative truth, which he has said all along.

6:112     *For this reason the Teacher said all phenomena  
Are primordially peaceful, uncreated,  
And naturally beyond suffering.  
For this reason, there is never any creation.*

Therefore, for these reasons, the teacher (the Buddha) taught that in both relative truth and ultimate truth, all phenomena are primordially pure from all kinds of extremes, uncreated and naturally beyond suffering. In this case the word 'suffering' refers to all kinds of extremes. You see for buddhists, suffering is not like pain. The real suffering refers to anything that has to do with time, like arising. Arising is suffering, because it is related to time and change. If a phenomenon has nothing to do with time then it cannot arise, because 'arising' means that there is a beginning, middle and end. And when something is subject to time, then there is impermanence, and impermanence is a pain. So when Chandrakirti says "naturally beyond suffering", it might sound like he is talking about something romantic like nirvana but he is pointing out, what is nirvana really? It is when you go beyond all these extremes, and therefore all these phenomena never truly arise.

Now we will have some questions. And sometimes, I will let you answer each other's questions. This is not only a good excuse for me not to do anything, but I think it is also good for you as an exercise.

[Q]: I do not accept Chandrakirti's refutation of arising from both self and other, because it does not take account of the idea of similarity

[Student 1]: There is only one sloka, sloka 98, for my favourite extreme, which is arising from both self and other. In negating arising from both self and other, Chandrakirti says that the defects already explained would arise, but I do not agree, and I would like to demonstrate why with a few examples. For example, you need both semen and egg to create human life. Similarly, you need both wheels and a motor to drive a car. All this is conventional truth. Now, in sloka 71, you said that human beings perceive an object as water, and *pretas* might perceive the same stuff as pus. You also said that we all have a similar kind of perception, so we can agree that a flower is a flower, although we all see the flower in a different way. The problem is that unless you have the concept of 'similarity', you cannot say there is a certain degree of sameness between different humans that are other. My main problem here is that for the Madhyamikas, the difference between two things that are completely different is as big as the difference between two things that are much more alike.

[Rinpoche]: I still cannot see the connection between sloka 98 and sloka 71 that you are trying to develop. Can someone explain what she is trying to say, so that there are no misunderstandings?

[Student]: She is asserting dependent origination, saying that things cannot exist without each other. But Chandrakirti is refuting inherent existence, which is a different issue. So, I think Chandrakirti agrees with what she is trying to say. But that also applies to sloka 71, because different individuals perceive things without an inherent existence in different ways.

[Rinpoche]: I am still not clear about the connection between the two slokas.

[Student 1]: The consequence of the Prasangikas seems to be that these two white flowers are as different as this white one and that orange one. This I cannot accept.

[Student]: She is denying that we can divide things into either self or other, but that we need both.

[Rinpoche]: If you are indicating that Chandrakirti has so-called other and self, then you are mistaken.

[Student 1]: He makes a division between those two.

[Rinpoche]: He does not do it for himself; other people make the division.

[Student 1]: So why does he not agree with arising from both?

[Rinpoche]: Because he does not have this thesis of other, both, neither or self.

[Student 1]: But I do not agree with this *rígpe nyépé nyedön* (*rigs pas brnyed pa'i brnyed don*). I do not accept this logical reasoning, and nor should you, because you are a Madhyamika Prasangika.

[Student]: I think that she wants to debate based on the way people experience things, and not logical reasoning. And I do not think that anyone apart from her understands the relationship between slokas 71 and 98 that she is trying to make, because nobody else can explain what she is trying to say. I do not think there is any connection between the two.

[Rinpoche]: Now there is a real debate! But I need to understand what she is saying before I let you answer.

[Student]: She is trying to define 'other'. Is it completely different, or can something similar also be other? So, what is meant by other-arising or self-arising? Does the product of the other have to be completely different? How different does it have to be to be called other, and how similar does it have to be to be called self?

[Rinpoche]: Is that it? Are you challenging Chandrakirti's idea of other?

[Student 1]: The Prasangikas say that things are only self or other, but you need both self and other to define 'similar'. There are things that are completely different and things that are completely the same, and some things in between.

[Rinpoche]: Why didn't you say that? We have an answer for this, but I will let the rest of you answer this.

[Student]: It seems to me that Chandrakirti is examining two ways of talking about causality. In other words, two attempts to render the process of causality intelligible in rational terms. The first is the theory of so-called self-arising, and the second is arising from other. This has nothing to do with interdependence. It is quite a different issue. When we say arising from self, it means that the cause and the effect are the same thing. When we say arising from other, it means that the cause and the effect are two separate things. Chandrakirti is

showing that both these theories are demonstrably false, so there is no way of rendering causality intelligible in rational terms.

[Student]: Chandrakirti is not challenging interdependence, because with interdependence – the car, the key, the motor, the driver, the city you are travelling to – you can never say that one element is the cause for the whole thing to happen. Perhaps you love a man in Paris, but perhaps you are interested in him because he is rich. All this is interdependence, and there is no centre about which you can say, “This does not move, this is my base”. Therefore, Chandrakirti will refute you if you say that mother is one base, father is another base and from these simple two bases, consciousness will suddenly arise.

[Student]: She said that two white flowers are somehow more similar than a white flower and a red flower. In both cases, the flowers are ‘other’, but one ‘other’ is more similar than the other ‘other’ is, so we need to have the idea of similarity, and we need both self and other in order to define it. That is her point. Her example of egg and sperm making a baby is not an example of both self and other, because both egg and sperm are other than the baby. Chandrakirti is not saying both other and other; he is saying both self and other. Since this is not an example of both self and other, her example does not actually refute Chandrakirti at all.

[Student]: From a western philosophical view, Chandrakirti mixes things up, because he tries to prove this on a metaphysical level, but he applies examples from the relative truth, which do not work. We had this two years ago with the seed and the sprout. This sprout does come from the seed, and for the ordinary mind, it is nonsense to refute that. But Chandrakirti jumps from one level to another, which is not consistent, and when he becomes stuck, he says it must be the case because the Buddha says so. From a western academic point of view, this is not very consistent.

[Student]: The earlier argument about dependent arising is circular. Dependent origination is not a thesis of Chandrakirti; it is a consequence of establishing that there is no arising from other or self.

[Student]: I want to respond to the comment made about mixing conventional examples and metaphysics. Even if you managed to establish metaphysical examples that did not deal with the conventional world, how would we ever understand them or make the connection? Chandrakirti is not saying that there is a metaphysical world that would be validated by giving metaphysical so-called examples. He is just stating a consequence.

[Student]: This question has nothing to do with metaphysics. It is a question of logic and, in the long run, a question of common sense. Chandrakirti is not mixing arguments on the relative level and the absolute level. However, he is pointing out how theoreticians do precisely that when they bring forward rational explanations of what happens in the world. The question of causality is just a test case; it can be applied to any other category. Chandrakirti is pointing out by logic that people are producing explanations that they regard as valid in the ultimate truth, when in fact they cannot be substantiated rationally. All that Chandrakirti is doing is demolishing the Samkhya and the buddhist explanations of causality.

[Rinpoche]: I think this last statement is quite important.

[Student]: I wish Chandrakirti would indeed do that! I can see what the Madhyamika means, but I cannot see how he does it, because his examples do not make sense.

[Student]: In the explanation of the sprout and the seed, how is there mixing?

[Student]: Well, the sprout does come from the seed on the relative level. We are not talking about the sprout and the seed, but whether phenomena come from one absolute cause, and on that level, the Madhyamika can be followed. But it does not make much sense to try to prove this by using that these practical examples where cause and effect is not to be refuted.

[Student]: He is not denying that the shoot comes from the seed on the relative level. He is refuting the explanation of that process.

[Student]: But on the relative level it does come from the seed.

[Student]: Yes, but if you want to elaborate a theory of causation, you will not succeed. Everybody accepts that causation happens.

[Student]: But I cannot see that Chandrakirti accepts it. He does not.

[Rinpoche]: This is good. She said she does not see that Chandrakirti accepts causation. Now, several slokas in the root text prove that he accepts causation, so please find them. This is a

very good way of learning, and it is exactly what happens during buddhist debates. If you have the root texts in your head, you will be able to bring them up. How many times did he say this? Where did he say this? If possible, you can even say where it is in the structural outline. But for now, I would just like to hear the numbers of the slokas.

[Students]: various answers.

[Rinpoche]: Actually, there are many. For example, he says that everything arises like a dream or an illusion. Everything exists: cause, condition and effect. Also, do not forget that Chandrakirti is referred to as a Madhyamika philosopher who accepts ordinary people's experience.

[Student 1]: I think the confusion is not that the Prasangikas mix absolute and relative, but that they mix examples and logical reasoning. My issue comes down to how Chandrakirti refutes arising from both self and other. If he says he is doing it with logic, I will ask him what he means. Didn't he say that he does not accept *rigpé nyépé nyédön*? In this case, nor do I. And if you do not accept logical reasoning, then how do you refute arising from both self and other? That is what I would like to know.

[Rinpoche]: Before I let other people answer, I want to clarify something here.

*Prasangikas do not have to accept the reasons they use in their arguments. It is only to dismantle opposing views*

*Chandrakirti goes back and forth in his arguments just like ordinary people*

*In their arguments, Madhyamikas will always say things like 'there is no vase', not 'this is not a vase'*

Firstly, you should not forget that Chandrakirti is a Prasangika, which means that he will use certain reasons in his arguments. Normally, when we argue, we ourselves accept the reasons that we use in our arguments. But the Prasangikas do not do this. When they give a reason, it is only to dismantle the other person's view: that is all they do. Do not forget that. So, as you have seen in the text, when he negates self-arising he is almost saying that self-arising does not exist even in the relative truth, because ordinary people roughly say that other-arising exists. And when he is negating other-arising, then he goes on to say that ordinary people say that self-arising exists!

He goes back and forth, but that is a wonderful thing to do, because that is what ordinary people do! This is why it is not *rigpé nyépé nyédön*. Ordinary people do not have a basic thesis. Today they say something, and tomorrow they say something else. Even in the space of a few minutes, they say different things. So what ordinary people say is not a thesis, whereas the other schools and theoreticians have used logic and analysis, and they have found something. This is the *rigpé nyépé nyédön*. The theoreticians have found something truly existent. However, the Madhyamikas have not found anything in the ultimate truth and the *rigpa* (*rigs pa*), or the analysis or the logic which they use is always other people's logic or analysis, and never their own. So, ultimately they have found nothing, and relatively, they do not analyse but just leave things alone.

So now, with this in your minds, go on with your arguments. There are two other terms that you should know, *ma yin gak* (*ma yin dgag*) and *mé gak* (*med dgag*). When you say, "this is not a vase", you are automatically establishing that this is something else. This is what we call *ma yin gak*. But when you say, "There is no vase", which is *mé gak*, you do not establish anything. You are just saying that there is no vase, which is different from saying that this is no vase. The Prasangika Madhyamikas will always use this *mé gak*, so they never have the automatic effect of establishing anything. This is why they always say, "I have no thesis, which is why I have no fault".

[Student]: I have two questions for the person that first asked this question. Firstly, when you say you do not accept the *rigpé nyépé nyédön*, what do you mean? Do you mean that you do not believe in logic?

[Student 1]: If the Prasangikas say that they do not believe in it, I will also say that I do not accept it. I will use the same tactic that they use.

[Student]: Then you are like a Prasangika then?

[Student 1]: No, I just use the same way of reasoning. For example, the Prasangikas use the reasoning of the Cittamatrins to refute the Cittamatrins, but that does not mean that the Prasangikas are Cittamatrins.

[Student]: My second question is whether you can point to any place in the text where Chandrakirti's arguments are illogical.

[Student 1]: No, because I am trying to do the opposite here. I am saying that they cannot refute arising from self or from other just with examples, so they cannot do it without referring to logic and reasoning. Similarly, how are they going to refute arising from both self and other without logical reasoning? That is my question. They do not accept this, so I also will not accept this. I use the same strategy.

[Student]: But they use logical reasoning! Are you saying that they do or do not use logic in their arguments?

[Student 1]: In sloka 98, they demolish arising from both self and other with logic. My question is, why do they do this? Because they do not accept logical reasoning, and nor do I.

[Student]: They do accept logical reasoning. If they did not, then there would be no conversation.

[Student 1]: Then I do not accept that they mix examples and logic. It is either one or the other.

[Student]: I do not understand what you are saying. It seems to me to be clear that Chandrakirti is pressing the position of self-arising theory and other-arising theory to its logical conclusion, which is an absurdity. He is showing that it cannot stand up as a theory. To do this, he uses logic and the same kinds of arguments that his opponents put forward to support their case. When he demolishes other-arising, he uses one kind of argument, and when he demolishes self-arising, he uses a different kind of argument. It is not the same argument, because he is using the argument of his opponent.

[Student 1]: No, he is saying that he accepts logical reasoning for the time being, because that is what his opponents do, and he uses it when it is convenient for him to refute them. He says that it is just their way of talking, and he will try to defeat them with their way of talking. So I say, very well, I am with you; we will do it without logical reasoning. We can refute arising from self with examples, without logical reasoning, but what about the third extreme? Can somebody tell me how he will do this?

[Student]: It is very logical because, as has been said before, to believe in self-arising is to believe that the cause and the effect are the same. And to believe in other-arising is to believe that the cause and the effect are different. When Chandrakirti says that it is impossible for a thing to be born from both another and itself, his proof is very simple because the result would be simultaneously the same as the cause and different from the cause.

[Student 1]: But this morning I showed examples of when one and one is not two. It is possible that I do not like this and I do not like that, but when I put the two together, I do like the combination.

[Student]: Putting things together is interdependent origination.

[Student 1]: Now, you are returning to logic, which is the whole problem here.

[Student]: I would like to make a little bit of a provocative statement. You seem to be saying that arising from both self and other is not a thesis. But it is a thesis, although you seem to be saying that you do not accept theses. However, Chandrakirti's refutation is not a thesis. He has no thesis.

[Student 1]: And I say, how can you say this is not a thesis? Show me!

[Rinpoche]: This is quite a good debate!

[Student]: If you are asking me to prove that this is not a thesis, I have no problem with that because there is no thesis! For me I never set out any theses. In fact, theses are the problems that I am fighting!

[Rinpoche]: That's it! He does not have to prove that there is a thesis.

[Student]: Chandrakirti uses two techniques to refute his opponents. One is through logic; the other is through examples. She is saying there is a difference between those two. She does not understand why he uses examples, because they do not seem to fit into the logic.

[Rinpoche]: Chandrakirti gives examples for the opponents. He does not have a thesis.

[Student 1]: He may say that he has no thesis, but he does not prove that. I do not accept that he has no thesis.

[Rinpoche]: Chandrakirti does not have the burden of proving that he has no thesis.

[Student]: There is something called the 'principle of the excluded middle', which is quite important in western logic. This is that when you refute a thesis, you automatically imply your belief in its opposite.

[Rinpoche]: Exactly, that is what I was saying with *ma yin gak* and *mé gak*.

[Student]: But Chandrakirti is not doing that, he is simply demolishing. He is actually violating that law.

[Rinpoche]: If you are saying that Chandrakirti does not abide by the general rules of argument, yes, I agree with you.

[Student 1]: But then what does this mean when you try to refute certain theses?

[Student]: This is why there is no alternative except to be Prasangika. Chandrakirti does not put forward his own opinion. He simply points out the weak points of what the other person has been saying, full stop. What is shocking for us in Chandrakirti's approach is that he just smashes everything and does not put anything in its place.

[Student 1]: But I still do not see how he demolishes arising from both self and other.

[Student]: There are two possibilities: one is that you think there is a flaw in Chandrakirti's consequences, which means that you do not think Chandrakirti derives his consequences properly. I say, very well, but then show me the verse where he does not do it properly. The second possibility is that you have a thesis about production from both self and other. If you have such a thesis, expose it, and we will refute it. And if you have no thesis, we have nothing to say, because where there is no illness, there is no need for a doctor.

[Student 1]: You are not using Madhyamika reasoning at all here. I do not need to expose any thesis about arising from both self and other. I am just saying that you cannot refute this theory without logical reasoning.

[Student]: If nothing has been expounded, there is nothing to refute.

[Student]: I thought that Chandrakirti had no logic and was not trying to make a point.

[Rinpoche]: He is trying to make a point, and he has many strategies, but all are to destroy the theses of others. He has no thesis or point of view of his own. Ultimately he does not have a thesis and relatively he just leaves things unanalysed.

[Student]: It seems to me that even those who understand Chandrakirti very clearly are also clinging to some kind of theory.

[Rinpoche]: Then we are about ordinary people like us, not Chandrakirti.

[Student]: She is saying that Chandrakirti cannot disprove arising from both and other. She gave examples, like the car, but no logic. Since she gives no logic, Chandrakirti cannot use her logic to disprove anything. So how will he proceed?

[Student]: It is purely destructive when Chandrakirti destroys arguments and puts nothing in their place, but we should realise that he is not saying that there is just nothing, only that we cannot understand the absolute with our ordinary minds. He is implying, and this is the operative word, that there is another way of knowing. But he never says it, so it is not a thesis. If he said this, it would also be a thesis.

[Student]: I do not think that all these logical arguments are used here by Chandrakirti to establish his own particular philosophy. He is only trying to show the fault in the philosophies of others, and dismantling other people's attempts to establish a truth. He does this because he sees that sentient beings suffer because they hold onto things that are not true. He would like sentient beings not to suffer, so refutes theses that believe in a true existence. He is essentially saying that these philosophies are not going to lead to happiness, because they are false. All he is doing is showing they do not hold, and to prove his point, he uses his opponents' argumentation. But there is no point where anybody could leave this place saying, "I am an orthodox follower of Chandrakirti"! Because his whole point is that every time somebody tries to construct something, they are making a big blunder. Many people throughout history have tried to construct some kind of absolute truth, and they are the people that Chandrakirti is proceeding to deconstruct, because he cannot accept that there is something truly existing in the absolute truth.

[Student]: I would like to say something about the third extreme. You said it was associated with the Jain philosophy, and I think it is in some ways similar to the philosophy of Hegel in the West. He says that when you expound a thesis, it is opposed by an anti-thesis and you bring the two together in a synthesis. What Chandrakirti is saying to the Jains, and would say to Hegel, is that simply putting together two opposing points of view is an entirely arbitrary procedure, and the composite of the two extreme views does not solve the inherent

problems in either of the two extremes. Therefore, it is vulnerable to the same defects that are present in the thesis and the anti-thesis.

[Student]: If you want to say that electricity and the light bulb create light, yes it is conventional truth. I can check just by asking people in this room whether they all agree. If they do, I can say, yes it seems that it is conventional truth. So there is no problem. But if you say that, conventionally, people think that things come from both self and other, I will say no. People do not say that electricity is other than the light or the lamp is the same as the light. Conventional people have no thesis about the light and the lamp. They just say, please switch on the light.

[Rinpoche]: Because of these discussions today, we are actually starting to understand what the Madhyamika Prasangikas are actually saying. We may not realise its meaning, but we are starting to have a vague idea of what the Madhyamika is all about. And for that, I am very happy that these teachings have had this effect. We should realise how important this is, and how fortunate we are that these debates and discussions have taken place. Although I did not really comprehend them all completely, many of them were very valuable. For tomorrow, try to think of arguments about establishing the next life, beyond this world. We have seen the Charvakas argument that there is no past life and no next life. So try to refute Chandrakirti.



## The purpose and approach of the *Madhyamakavatara*

I would like to remind you of a few things that we have talked about before. I would like to explain the meaning of *Madhyamakavatara*, ‘Entering into the middle way’. Since the ultimate truth cannot be taught, expressed, listened to or explained, it is not an object of deluded mind. Therefore, the ultimate Madhyamika, the ultimate truth, can only be the indirect aim of this text, not the direct aim. Chandrakirti hopes that we indirectly enter into this inexpressible truth. So, we could say that the main subject of this text is the approximate ultimate truth, *namdrangpé döndam* (*rnam grangs p'ai don dam*), not the absolute ultimate truth *namdrang minpé döndam* (*rnam grang min p'ai don dam*). With our words and our deluded minds, we can only talk about what we assume is the ultimate truth. But as I have said many times, as soon as you talk about it, it will end up becoming something other than the absolute truth. But talking still helps, and it is the only way. There is no other way. Our aim is to be on the other shore and, whether you like it or not, we are now on this shore! By introducing the idea of the other shore, we will only have an assumption about what it is like; it does not mean that we are there. So, we will have to go through all the experiences of going from here to there.

In order to express these two kinds of truth, we have sutras and shastras. The Buddha spoke the sutras, and the shastras are the commentaries by his followers. And, as Chandrakirti humbly stated at the beginning of the text, he cannot express the sutras himself. Only those who have reached the first bhumi can express what the Buddha taught. Because of this, we know that even the Madhyamika sutras that are taught by the Buddha are not the direct aim of this text. Now, *Madhyamakavatara* means entering the Madhyamika, and we know our ultimate subject cannot be the absolute Madhyamika, because this cannot be expressed. Likewise, our aim is not the Madhyamika sutras, because Chandrakirti has said that he cannot explain them. So, we now know that the direct aim of this *Madhyamakavatara* is to enter the shastras, such as the *Mulamadhyamaka-karikas* written by Nagarjuna. Given this reasoning, and what is said in the commentary, we know that the main subject of this text is relative truth, or more precisely, conventional truth.

*The main subject of this text is the approximate ultimate truth, not the absolute ultimate truth*

*As soon as we talk about ultimate truth, it ends up becoming something else. But there is no other way*

*Since only those on the first bhumi can express the Buddha's teachings, this text does not aim to enter the Madhyamika sutras, but rather the Madhyamika shastras. The main subject is conventional truth.*

*The first five chapters discuss five bhumis and their associated five paramitas – the sixth bhumi emphasises sherab, or ‘supreme mind’*

*We then ask, why are some minds ranked as supreme?*

*The emphasis of bodhisattvas on the sixth bhumi is to see the truth*

*So, he then searches for the supreme mind*

*Many theoreticians have developed ideas of the supreme mind, and we need to see if they are valid*

*Seeing the fact is the supreme mind, so what are the facts?  
Chandrakirti finds no fact established by reasoning and logic*

*He accepts everything conventionally, but he only does this for communication*

*When Chandrakirti accepts conventional truth, this is not a thesis*

*This is because ordinary people say all kinds of things and change their minds*

Based on the approach of the *Dashabhumi Sutra*, Chandrakirti structured the text of the *Madhyamakavatara* to talk about the ten bhumis or bodhisattva levels. He mainly talks about their understanding in the post-meditation time, and using inferential logic, he talks a little bit about their understanding during the meditation time. In the previous five chapters, we were taught five kinds of paramita, which are the main practices of these first five kinds of bodhisattva during their post-meditation time. Now we have reached the sixth bhumi, which emphasises *prajña*. In Tibetan, this is translated as *sherab*. *Rab* means ‘supreme’, the top, or the best. *Shes* means understanding, wisdom, awareness, or consciousness; *sherab* means ‘supreme mind’. So then we ask the question, how does this idea of supreme mind come about? Why would we rank some minds as supreme and others as not supreme? This ranking is done with a very simple conventional logic. Someone who sees the fact better, more clearly or more completely than someone else is said to have a superior mind. There is nothing more than this; you do not have to make it any more complicated.

This *sherab* is the main emphasis of the sixth bhumi bodhisattva, who is more interested in knowing ‘the fact’ than many other bodhisattvas. He knows that until you see the fact, you will suffer. Until you see the fact, or until you see it sufficiently clearly, or completely, you will still be subject to pain, suffering and anxiety. The sixth bhumi bodhisattva knows this very well, so his emphasis is to see the truth.

So, the sixth bhumi bodhisattvas think, what is truth? He knows that a truth has to be something that is independent and unfabricated. So, he looks at a white flower, and sees a fact. He sees a white flower; therefore, a mind sees the white flower. But is this the supreme mind? No, because it is changeable, and it will change. He knows that it is dependent and fabricated, so he cannot give the rank ‘supreme mind’ to this mind. He cannot say that this mind that merely sees a white flower as a flower is a seer of the truth; he cannot call it *sherab*. So, the bodhisattva then searches for the supreme mind, knowing that everything that is seen through the dualistic mind is not supreme mind. But it is not easy. So many theoreticians have developed ideas of the supreme mind, and we need to examine whether these are the valid supreme mind or not. And this is what we have been studying.

Now, seeing the facts is the supreme mind, so the question is what the facts are. All the other schools or theoreticians have developed a so-called fact, with reasoning and logic. But Chandrakirti does not do that. Not only does he not have a truly existent view or fact that he has established by reasoning and logic, but also he actually finds fault with all the other people that do this. One way of thinking about this is perhaps to say that Chandrakirti has developed criteria to distinguish what is not fact. That is one very important thing to remember when we debate. It is also important to remember that in the conventional truth, Chandrakirti accepts everything. But when he accepts these things, he is not accepting them from his own will. He is accepting them only for the sake of others, (*'jig rten nor byas bdag gis smra bar byed*). He said, “I have no choice, I am only doing it for communication”. And so, he accepts bhumis, paths, emotions and all of these.

For example, when Chandrakirti says that in the conventional truth he will accept whatever ordinary people accept, I have the feeling that some people think that this is his thesis. But it is not, because the idea of conventional people is never a thesis. The definition may not be the same in the West, but by ‘thesis’, we mean something developed by *rigpé nyépé nyédön* (*rigs pas brnyed pa'i brnyed don*), by logic and reasoning, which means that it cannot change. It should be there as the fact. During conventional truth, people say all kinds of things, as Chandrakirti himself has demonstrated. Sometimes conventional people say that things arise from self, and sometimes they say that the same thing arises from others. Conventional things are totally crazy, but Chandrakirti accepts this for the sake of communication. Perhaps “accepts” is a misleading word here, and “goes along with” might be better.

For example, if Chandrakirti is debating with the Samkhyas, he will use all the Vaibhashika school’s methods to defeat the Samkhyas. But that does not mean that he has suddenly become a

*Depending on whom he is debating with, he will use arguments from different places, but he never develops a thesis of his own*

*Then he explains dependent arising to us in two ways*

[H14]

*Ultimately, no phenomena exist, but where they are known to exist in ordinary experience, he will accept that they exist conventionally*

*Dependent arising is not a truly existent arising*

theoretician that accepts the Vaibhashika school. No, he will just use this weapon as much as he wants, and then drop it. That is the whole idea. And when he comes to refuting the Vaibhashika, he will use all of the Sautrantika school's methods. And to defeat the Sautrantika, he will use the Cittamatrin methods. And to defeat the Cittamatrins, he will use certain Madhyamika ideas. That is what he does, but it never means that he has automatically developed his own thesis, never.

So, Chandrakirti then thoroughly explains this dependent arising to us in two different ways. Dependent arising taught based on the selflessness of phenomena, and dependent arising taught based on the selflessness of a person. This is from Gorampa's commentary. And we are right now beginning to conclude the first of these, the selflessness of phenomena.

### (c) Their thesis is contradicted by their own analogy, 6:113

6:113     *While vases and the like do not exist in suchness,  
Look how they exist so commonly in ordinary experience.  
Likewise, it does not follow that all things  
Are like a child of a barren woman.*

Chandrakirti says that this vase, all these phenomena, do not exist in the ultimate truth. But in the conventional truth, in ordinary people's experience, they are known to exist. That's it! All phenomena are like this. But the barren woman's child is not known to exist, so you cannot say that my view is like the barren woman's child. It is funny here as he is almost saying that if in ordinary experience there is something known as a barren woman's child, Chandrakirti will be the first to accept it. But because it is not accepted in ordinary people's experience, he cannot accept it either. That's it. This sloka explains everything. It is as convenient as this. There is a khenpo at Dzongsar Institute who always gets angry and agitated with Chandrakirti, because he is always right! How he wishes that he would be wrong at least once or twice!

With this sloka, we know that dependent arising is not a truly existent arising. Actually, we also know this from earlier slokas, as you can see if you follow the structural outline. However, because the structural outline comes with the commentary, some points that we cover from one of the commentaries may be missing in your structural outline. For those who want to stick with the root text, if would be good if in the future, you could have the structural outline by Mipham.

[H12]

*Phenomena do not arise from self, other, both, or neither*

*Therefore, they are fully created in dependence*

### (b) Explaining genesis on the basis of interdependent arising, 6:114

6:114     *Because neither uncaused, nor caused by God,  
[Caused by] itself, another or both,  
There exists no phenomenon that is [inherently] produced,  
And therefore [phenomena] are fully created in dependence.*

Now in the self-commentary on this sloka there are several funny things. The sloka is quite straightforward. With many reasons we have seen that things do not arise from themselves, from the almighty, from another, from both or without any cause, which is why things are not inherently produced. Therefore, things are created only in dependence. This is a repetition of the negation of arising from self, other, both and neither. But the new thing here is the last part: "Therefore, phenomena are fully created in dependence". What he wants to emphasise is this. For generation after generation, year after year, all these theoreticians and substantialists thought and analysed with all kinds of reasoning of logic. But more than that, they also meditated and contemplated, and they all found something. Some found that things do not come from a cause; some concluded that things come from the self; some concluded that things come from other, and

*The problem of the theoreticians is that they find something truly existent with logic and analysis, and then they cling to it*

*Chandrakirti is a humble monk. He is won't prevent us from looking for mirages*

*He has no problems with an unanalysed, dependently existing mirage*

*But if we find a truly existing mirage, then we are in trouble*

*Similarly, all phenomena are just dependent arising*

[H12]

[H13]

*Because things arise dependently, all the extreme theories of genesis are powerless*

so on. Anyway, whether we say that things arise from self, other, both or neither, all these kinds of ideas are findings of analysis and logic.

I suppose that I will have to keep repeating this to you. The problem is not simply that these people have found something with logic and analysis, but that they have found a truly existent arising and a truly existent cause using logic and analysis. They have found something independent and unfabricated, and that is the problem here. When we talk about the findings of logic and analysis, *rigpé nyépé nyédön*, the reason that people get into trouble is that if they find something, they are going to think that what they find is truly existent. For many generations, they have found something with analysis and logic, and they will cling to this object. But for Chandrakirti, his *rigpé nyépé nyédön*, his findings of logic and analysis are that he does not find anything, so we should not get confused here.

For example, we might look at a mirage. Now, Chandrakirti is not some kind of dictator who is laying down a rule that we should not go near the mirage. He is not doing that at all. He is a poor, humble, begging monk. He is just a Nalanda university student. What he is saying is that if you examine a mirage using analysis and logic and as you go nearer and nearer you find something existing independently, then you are in big trouble. Of course, you can go there if you want to. That is not a problem at all. But if you find something when you get there, that is the problem.

Suppose you see the phenomenon called a mirage, and then go towards it. Now, we are not saying that you will not find earth, heat or things like that. But if you think that the mirage is water, and you actually end up with some independently existing water, then there are two possibilities. Either your idea that it is a mirage is wrong; in which case you did not find a mirage. Or, if you still find a mirage, it would be something independent of the heat, the surface and so on, and therefore we need to ask whether it is really a mirage? And if you persist in calling this phenomenon a mirage, it would not correspond to anything in our experience. It would have to be an independently existing mirage, a mirage that would exist independently from the heat, from the eyes of a person at a certain distance, and all that.

Now, if we ask Chandrakirti, are you saying that there is no mirage? He never says that. He says yes, there is a mirage; it is dependent on the sun, on being thirsty and things like this. As long as you do not go there, it is unanalysed, and it is just a mirage. This is what he is saying in this sloka. Likewise, all phenomena are just dependent arising. There is no independent cause of arising.

**(c) The benefits of understanding how interdependent arising disposes of the two extremes**

**(i) The reasoning of interdependent arising cuts through the net of false views (677), 6:115**

6:115     *Because things are completely [inter-] dependent,  
These [extreme] beliefs remain powerless.  
And for this reason the reasoning of interdependent origination  
Is what cuts through the variety inferior views.*

Because things are completely interdependent, they arise dependently, which is why we cannot really rely on all these extreme ideas of things coming from self, other and so on. They are not reliable; they are powerless. Now Chandrakirti is saying that this reasoning of interdependent origination can cut through all views that are produced by ignorance, such as the findings of analysis and logic.

**(ii) The realisation of interdependent arising counteracts all conceptual notions, 6:116**

6:116     *Conceptions occur if things have an existence,  
Yet how things have no existence has already been decided.  
Being non-existent, these [extreme beliefs] will not occur, as for example  
Without firewood, you will have no fire.*

*Phenomena do not exist inherently, so there is no inherent arising*

**(iii) The result of investigation is that all conceptual notions are (seen to be) wrong, 6:117-118**

6:117     *Ordinary beings are fettered by thoughts;  
Yogis are freed through non-thought.  
Therefore, to [recognise] that thoughts are erroneous  
Is the outcome of analysis. So the wise have said.*

*Yogis are free from all thoughts, which is why they achieve liberation*

*Through analysis and logic, we now know that truly established theories of arising are wrong*

*The Madhyamika shastras were not written for the sake of argument, but to free ignorant beings*

*If certain theories collapse when logically examined, this is not the fault of Chandrakirti*

This sloka explains everything that I have explained earlier. Ordinary sentient beings are bound by all kinds of thoughts and deluded conceptions, but some ordinary people are even worse than others because they are further bound by their own fabricated views. Yogis are free from all kinds of thoughts, hence they achieve liberation. And this is very similar to what I said before, that both virtuous actions and non-virtuous actions come from ignorance. Some people were shocked when I said that, but even for virtuous thoughts and actions, there is a subject and an object. A yogi or a bodhisattva like a sixth bhumi bodhisattva has to go beyond that.

The last two lines are exactly what we were talking about earlier. Chandrakirti is not denying analysis and logic at all, as we know. We now know that truly established things like self-arising and other-arising and all these kinds of thoughts are wrong. And we know they are wrong because of analysis and logic. The outcome is that they are wrong, as the Buddha said. Now Chandrakirti is saying here that as we analyse, we now know that all those findings of the past, such as other-arising, are all wrong. He is going to explain this further.

6:118     *Analysis in the treatises does not come from fascination with polemics  
Suchness is shown for the sake of [attaining] liberation.  
If suchness is fully explained,  
And [the views] of opposing scriptures will come apart, this is not [our] fault.*

After all this refutation, now he is saying that shastras like the *Mulamadhyamaka-karikas* or his own works were not written or taught for the sake of argument. It is because we like to liberate sentient beings, and especially ignorant beings like the Cittamatrins who have wrong views, who have found something that is truly existent. Here he is saying something very compassionate.

The last two lines clearly explain what I talked about a few days ago about the underdog business. Right now, we are trying to establish the fact, the truth: the ultimate truth. Political correctness and all of that is not an issue here. Some of you may ask how we can do this, because everyone is equal here. There are equal rights and human rights, and the Cittamatrins have their own rights to remain as they are, as do the Vaibhashika and the other schools. But Chandrakirti says no. Right now, we are establishing the truth using analysing and logic, and if certain theses collapse, then it is not his fault. He is not guilty. This is what he is saying.

If our aim is to make a bonfire, then the wood will be burned

[H13]

A wise person goes beyond attachment and aggression to any views, and so they will be liberated

Sloka 106 is often misunderstood

Faith and devotion come from ignorance, because all are relative truth and do not exist

In reality, both karma and ignorance do not exist

Dharmakirti likens the path to a boat that must be abandoned at the other shore

There are some examples in the commentary. When you are making a bonfire, if the wood is not happy about being burned, then we do not have much choice, because our aim is to have a bonfire. What can we do? The wood will be burned. If our aim is to draw a straight line, then some crooked lines will be revealed. If these crooked lines are not happy, we cannot do much. And where the sun shines, owls cannot see. We cannot do much, because we need the sun here.

#### (iv) Therefore, one is advised to abandon attachment and aversion and to investigate, 6:119

6:119     *Clinging to one's own view and equally Assailing the views of others, such are [limited] attitudes. Therefore, when first clinging and hatred have been cleared away, Analysis will bring liberation.*

This is the conclusion, and it is very beautiful. We think our view, the Madhyamika view, Chandrakirti's view, is the best. But if you have attachment to your own view, or even to Chandrakirti's view, or if you have animosity towards other people's view, that is an extreme. Therefore, a wise person must go beyond attachment and aggression, and then a wise person will be liberated.

This is it. We have now finished the selflessness of phenomena. Next, using very similar methods, we shall investigate the selflessness of the person. If, using logic and analysis, you find a so-called 'I' or 'me', again Chandrakirti will shake his head and say, "Wow, this is crazy". For two weeks, we have discussed why *rigpé nyépé nyédön*, any phenomenon that you find with reason and logic is wrong and invalid. Similarly, if with logic and analysis you found a self, there is again something wrong. And we will talk about this next year.

Sloka 106 seems to have been misunderstood or misinterpreted by many people. This misunderstanding is very understandable, because it is a very big statement. From very young audiences like this one to some very mature audiences, I have been asked to clarify this several times. Why do faith and devotion also come from ignorance?

Right now we are talking about emptiness, as you can see on the last line of sloka 106. When you talk about emptiness, everything is emptiness including aspects of the path such as devotion, compassion and meditation. They are all relative truth, *künzob*. Ultimately, none of them exists. And why are they relative truth? The first and second lines of sloka 106 tell us. From ignorance comes karma or action. Those who think that karma comes from ignorance, and those who think that without ignorance there is no karma, are both equally unwise from the perspective of ultimate truth because in reality, both karma and ignorance do not exist. This is a very profound sloka. There are many people teaching Dzogchen these days, and this Madhyamika is a sutra teaching, but it is so profound that I do not think that contemporary Dzogchen teachings even get close to this sutra teaching, let alone to the real Dzogchen.

Chandrakirti is saying the same thing as Dharmakirti (the buddhist logician) who said, "The path is like a boat. You use the boat to reach the other shore and then you abandon the path. If you do not abandon the path, you are still in the boat and you are not on the other shore". You use the path, of course. But it is probably the last obstacle that you will have to get rid of. This is why I was saying that from ignorance come all kinds of non-virtuous actions, and from ignorance come all kinds of virtuous actions. There is ignorance because there is subject and object involved, but this is a much more subtle and sophisticated ignorance, not just our normal dull ignorance.

Again, Dharmakirti's words are incredible. He said, "The Dharma, the path, such as buddhism must be abandoned, because the whole path is deceptive". This is an incredible statement. Do

*Dharmakirti said,  
“The path must be  
abandoned, because it is  
deceptive”. Do any other  
philosophers have this  
daring?*

any other theoreticians, philosophers or religions have this kind of daring? Buddhists are saying that your final and worst obstacle will be the path itself. Now, do not talk about Krishnamurti here! You know, there are certain worms that eat wood and create a little bit of space around themselves to be able to get in there. Krishnamurti's understanding of emptiness is just that much. A bodhisattva's understanding of emptiness is like all of space. I am saying that Dharmakirti's words are wonderful because he says that buddhism must be abandoned because it is deceptive. Krishnamurti could not even dream of saying this, because he does not even have a path to abandon. This is why his understanding is as small as that worm. Have I provoked any challenges? Are there any supporters of Krishnamurti here?

[Q]: Do you think that Krishnamurti has realisation?

[A]: Oh, that is personal. I cannot judge personally at all. I cannot even say that all of you are not enlightened. Probably all of you are enlightened, and I am the only one who is talking about enlightenment!

[Q]: You said that it is incredible that Chandrakirti says what he does, but I do not think it is so incredible. This is just the outcome of his logic, and if he did not say this, he would not be credible as a Madhyamika.

[A]: I do not think that Chandrakirti thinks it is incredible, but I do! I was just making a comparison with all the other sorts of philosophers and theoreticians, who all love their ideas so much. How many of them would say that their own ideas are going to be the biggest problem in the future?

[Q]: In sloka 106, what is the difference between ‘not having ignorance’ and ‘comprehending emptiness’?

[A]: When you understand emptiness, then you know that there is no truly existent ignorance, therefore there is no truly existing karma arising from that ignorance.

[Q]: But surely, when you comprehend emptiness, you do not have ignorance,

[A]: But that is different. On one level, we say that if you have ignorance then you have karma. If you do not have ignorance, you do not have karma.

[Q]: What is the difference between not having ignorance, understanding emptiness and being liberated?

[A]: It is subtler, that is all. In one way, not having ignorance is the same as understanding emptiness. But Chandrakirti wants to make sure that there is also a path. We try to contemplate and reduce our ignorance. But he is pointing out that you can get attached to the path, or to trying to get rid of truly existing ignorance. We might also think that everything is not existent, but Chandrakirti says that it is also wrong to think like that because even the non-existence is non-existent.

[Q]: Why isn't the comprehension of emptiness as empty as not having ignorance?

[A]: Yes, but that is all that we can say. Beyond that we all have to shut our mouths! This is what the Buddha almost did. The Buddha did not speak fourteen things, because there are just no words. This is what I have been saying. We assume that we are talking about ultimate truth, but it always ends up becoming relative truth.

[Q]: With this last verse, we have seen that dependent arising is the same as emptiness. So how can we say that the sutras that talk about dependent arising do not have definite meaning? After all, they expose emptiness. And how can we say that people who realise dependent arising or impermanence do not realise emptiness?

[A]: Your question is very similar to a previous question. It is about subtlety. The teachings of certain meaning address the subtle meanings of dependent arising. By contrast, many of the sutras do not have that subtle meaning. That's it. For example, teachings on impermanence are also teachings on dependent arising teaching, of course. But they are a very gross dependent arising teaching. In fact, many monks invoke renunciation mind by thinking that this so-called life is soon going to end. However, that teaching can become increasingly subtle depending on the practitioner. And if you are a disciple of superior faculties, just hearing a teaching on impermanence can itself teach you the whole emptiness.

[Q]: Is it because people do not understand that they disparage this sutra?

[A]: Some people cannot understand a teaching that has certain meaning. That is what tantric people say. Tantric people say that dependent arising is not exposed properly or completely

*Beyond a certain point,  
we simply cannot say  
anything about emptiness*

*Teachings on dependent  
arising are given at  
different levels of subtlety*

*Chandrakirti accepts conventional truth without resistance, not because this is how things are, but because this is how they are known*

*How can the shentongpas accept both emptiness and truly existent characteristics?*

- in the sutras. They say that the inner dependent arising is only taught in the tantra, which is why tantra is much better. They say it is like comparing a firefly and the sun.
- [Q]: So, can you truly realise dependent arising on the Hinayana path?
- [A]: They do not have the subtle dependent arising.
- [Q]: So, can they attain cessation and go beyond samsara?
- [A]: From the Mahayana point of view, they can go beyond samsara, but they cannot reach omniscience.
- [Q]: You talked earlier this morning of ordinary people's acceptance, which seems to me to be the path of least resistance. It is like water flowing in a river that fills whatever gaps it encounters, but without any motivation or aspiration of its own.
- [A]: When we talk about the ordinary people's acceptance, we are talking about relative truth. In that case, talking about 'least resistance' does not work. The danger is that you still have some resistance. I do not think that Chandrakirti resists the ordinary people's acceptance at all. In Tibetan, it is called *jikten drakder chöpa* ('jig rten grags der spyod pa). Literally, *jikten* ('jig rten) means the world, ordinary people. *Drakder* (*grags der*) is what ordinary people know. *Chöpa* (*spyod pa*) is someone who accepts or acts according to that. Dharmakirti was a famous debater, and when he was asked, "Are you Dharmakirti?" he said, "That is how I am known". This "being known" is important, because it means that this is not how something is, just how it is known. Chandrakirti does not analyse that, he just accepts that this is how it is known.
- [Q]: Some days ago you said that Rendawa emphasises that the Madhyamikas do not establish that things are nothing, because they are interdependent, but rather that they lack true existence. But if we examine the interdependence, it quickly becomes nothing upon examination because everything that makes up the interdependence will also prove to be interdependent. And we can go on indefinitely. So, if he says that the Madhyamikas are not saying that things are nothing but that they lack true existence, he seems to be distinguishing between a thing and its true existence.
- [A]: This is a very deep and traditional debate. We will discuss it some other time, although Rendawa did not say this. Some masters accept the conventional truth quite strongly, and although they actually believe that things are empty of true existence, they accept a vase conventionally.
- [Q]: When they say that, do they think it is actually there?
- [A]: I do not think so.
- [Q]: For these people with a strong idea of conventional truth, what exactly do they think is there?
- [A]: A logically existent conventional truth. There is a base, like the striped rope, without which there would be no base to meditate upon. But do not open this can of worms!
- [Student 1]: When you talked about *rangtong* and *shentonga* few days ago, you said that the *shentong* accept both the second and the third turnings of the wheel. I did not quite understand that. How can they accept both emptiness and that something can have characteristics? If a thing has characteristics, how can it be empty?
- [Rinpoche]: That is a good question. Can anybody answer it?
- [Student]: I think the *rangtong* said that if things are mind and mind is empty, then you cannot establish the emptiness of things, but I am not sure. Does it relate to clarity?
- [Student]: *Rangtong* means that things are empty by their nature. There is no intrinsic nature to phenomena. That is *rangtong*, empty of self. The *shentong* empty of something else or other, means there is an emptiness of factors that would be extrinsic to the actual nature of things. If we had a factor extrinsic to the nature itself, it would refer to all the impurities that are actually veiling the nature of things, which is the nature of our minds. This may look like a contradiction, but I think that these two things can go together very well. The problem only occurs if I assert either the *rangtong* or *shentong* exclusively.
- [Rinpoche]: Can you ask your question again?
- [Student 1]: The third turning of the Dharma wheel talks about the characteristics of buddha nature. Now, for a thing to have characteristics, it must exist. Something that does not exist cannot have characteristics. So how can you both say that something has characteristics, which means that it exists, and that everything is empty, which is the second turning? I do

*This is the argument that the rangtongpas use against the shentongpas*

not understand how you can hold to both of those at the same time, which is what the *shentongpas* say they do.

[Student]: I think that in the third turning of the wheel, the Buddha did not expound qualities as inherently existent. Instead, he was speaking about the enlightened qualities of the nature of the mind. This means that the mind can have two aspects. You can see it as emptiness, and you can see it as luminosity. If we emphasise the empty nature of the mind, we will get the *rang tong*, and if we emphasise the clarity then you can speak of all the buddha qualities, although when the Buddha taught these, he did not say that they exist inherently or in themselves. When we talk about the 32 major marks and the 80 minor marks, this means that they are just contained in potential in the nature of the mind. It does not mean that they exist here now, just that they can arise, because actually these 32 marks just refer to the form body of the Buddha.

[Student]: My answer would be that the emptiness aspect and the luminosity aspect are inseparable from each other, and I think is also meant by the svabhavikakaya, namely that the dharmakaya, sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya are somehow inseparable. Perhaps sloka 37 could also answer this, “likewise from something empty, such as a reflection, consciousness of its characteristics may be created”.

[Student]: My understanding is that even for the *shentong*, the emptiness aspect that is the second turning applies more to the view of the ground. And the third turning applies more to the view of the path. In this case, there is no contradiction.

[Rinpoche]: Does that satisfy you?

[Student 1]: I thought we were talking about the view. We were not talking about ground and path. So, if we are talking just about the view, i.e. what ultimately exists, you have to choose. Either you say that something exists, or you do not.

[Rinpoche]: I think he is not satisfied yet!

[Student]: the third turning of the wheel is based on the first establishment of emptiness. Once emptiness has been established with the second turning then there is a presentation of buddha nature. It is based on the second turning, which is that nothing inherently exists. But it also talks about the clarity aspect of the emptiness, which is buddha nature, but which still remains essentially empty.

[Student]: Also, the *shentong* came after Chandrakirti.

[Student 1]: But I am talking about *shentong* and *rangtong* not Chandrakirti.

[Student]: I understood that people choose either *shentong* or *rangtong* as a definitive path, not as a definitive view.

[Rinpoche]: What is it that you are not satisfied by?

[Student 1]: It is simple. In the third turning, we talk about characteristics. These are the characteristics of the buddha nature. The question is, do these characteristics truly exist or not? Because my understanding is that the *shentongpas* say that the third turning has definitive meaning. This means that it is ultimate truth, so these characteristics must truly exist. I am not talking about path here but about the view, about true existence. So my question is, how can they say that those characteristics exist and, at the same time, say that nothing truly exists?

[Rinpoche]: This is quite a valuable question.

[Student]: I would suggest that maybe the correct *shentong* does not attribute true existence to the buddha qualities, but that the *rangtong* and *shentong* are two different approaches. If you take an exclusively *rangtong* approach, then the whole conversation stops there. There is nothing more to be said. But the *shentongpas* say that once you understand *rangtong*, you can go on to talk about something in a meaningful way, namely the qualities that arise on the path.

[Rinpoche]: This question is exactly the argument that the *rangtongpas* have, so we should find an answer to that if we want to defend the *shentongpas*.

[Student]: I am not even sure that this is about *rangtong* and *shentong*. He is saying is that if something has characteristics, it has to truly exist. Surely what we have been saying all along is that something can only have characteristics if it does not exist. If something exists truly, it cannot have characteristics.

[Rinpoche]: Does that satisfy you? It should! It is not bad.

[Student]: Two days ago we said that the Buddha said, if we all agree that this is a dream, when we wake up we see that the monster is not chasing us. So, we know that the suffering came from something that does not exist; yet, it manifested. This might be another way of saying what has just been said, that it has characteristics because it is empty. And to defend the *shentongpas*, as soon as they abide in freedom, they know that through reasoning, they freed all their hopes and doubts, but there is no mistake in the illusion that we all seem to be in.

[Student]: If we accept that there is a distinction between a thing and its true existence, we end up with something a bit sticky, which we do not want to end up with. On the other hand, it has been said that a phenomenon can only have characteristics if it has no true existence. Rendawa's point is that it is not nothing, because it is interdependent, but at the same time, it lacks true existence. Yet 'nothing' is a phenomenon, but it has no characteristics. That is to say, that an individual phenomenon does not have an existence and it is only any use as part of a whole, which is interdependence. That is not to say that we want to remove it from the equation because it lacks true existence. To think of a phenomenon as something that merits or needs true existence, and then to create the distinction of the job that things do, indicates interdependence by the inability of phenomena to exist independently.

[Rinpoche]: Look at the problem that you have caused!

[Student 1]: The clarification was helpful, but I still left with my question. Suppose we talk about these characteristics. Take any one of the 32 major marks. If this truly exists, which seems to be what the third turning of the wheel is talking about, it means that it is unchanging, unfabricated, and is there forever as one of these characteristics, which means it has the nature of ultimate truth. Now we have just established in the second turning that you cannot make any statements at all about the ultimate truth. But here we are now making a statement about one of these characteristics, which appears to be ultimate as far as we can tell, so I still do not quite understand.

[Student]: I agree with this question. Perhaps we have explained the word 'characteristic', but the previous responses did not explain nature. How can you say that something not inherently existent has a nature, even if it has characteristics?

[Student]: I do not know that we ever said that things have a nature.

[Student]: Buddha nature!

[Student]: I cannot provide a precise answer, but I think that the key lies in the idea that the qualities of the Buddha and all the results of the path, which culminate in the absolute truth, are the results of absence. They are the removal of things rather than the addition of some kind of entities.

[Rinpoche]: Perhaps it is a little unclear, because when the *shentongpas* say that this buddha nature is existent, and that the characteristics of 32 major marks and 80 minor marks are all there unchanging, they make their own definitions. This is why I think it is a little bit unfair. The question we are debating is almost identical to one that has been raised by many *rangtongpa* scholars to the *shentongpas*. But many *shentongpas* make different definitions of unchanging, permanent and all that. First, their view is based on buddha nature. Their school believes that the third turning of the wheel is also a teaching with certain meaning, so buddha nature is quite an important issue for them. They define words like unchanging and permanent, to refer to something that is beyond unchanging and changing. It is beyond permanent and impermanent, but for the sake of communication we have to use a word. And 'unchanging' is an auspicious word, because we would not like to talk about the changing character of the buddha nature. But this is not just an easy way out, though. The *rangtongpas* have a similar fault, if you take them very literally. For example when they say that everything is emptiness, even the word 'emptiness' has that sort of one-sided meaning, that everything is emptiness. So the *rangtongpas* have a fault, just as the *shentongpa* have a fault when they say that the buddha nature exists unchanging.

[Student 1]: I am not quite happy with that, because Chandrakirti makes no statements. He does not say that everything is empty. He just denies all other statements and views. I think it is invalid to accuse him of that fault, because he does not say that.

[Rinpoche]: Yes, but we need to talk about the path as well, because the distinctions between *rangtong* and *shentong* are very important on the path. Yes, I agree very much that when you establish the view, theoretically, you are right. Chandrakirti does not have any kind of

The *shentongpas* use the word "unchanging" to refer to something beyond permanent and impermanent

*Chandrakirti has no thesis when establishing the view, but even he must give instructions on how to meditate*

*We do not establish a view for its own sake, but as part of a path to enlightenment*

*The three turnings of the wheel and the analogy of the child and mother's milk*

*A child may have a disease that means it cannot drink milk*

*Once the disease is cured, however, milk is necessary for the child's nourishment*

*The first turning is realising that there is a disease, the second turning starts the treatment, and the third continues it*

*The only way to understand the Madhyamika is through your practice*

thesis. But Chandrakirti has to say, “I have to meditate on emptiness”, and when you say words like that then you say things like “Everything is empty”, or “Buddha nature is existent”, or things like that.

[Student 1]: But then it seems to me that you can ask people to meditate on emptiness, meditate on the buddha nature, or even meditate on a tree. You can define it to be whatever you want.

[Rinpoche]: Oh yes, in the conventional path, there are 84,000 methods, there are plenty! Is that not enough?

I would like to say some more about this. We do not only establish a view because the establishment of the view is so important on its own. In Tibetan, we talk about *göpa* (*dgos pa*) and *nying-gö* (*snying dgos*), the ‘immediate reason to establish a truth’, and the ‘ultimate reason’. The ultimate reason, according to the teachings of the Buddha, is so that all sentient beings can attain enlightenment (see p.9) And for that, we need to know the nature of things.

So first according to the first turning of the wheel, the Buddha has defined, or rather suggested, that there is an impractical thing in samsara called suffering. Then he gives a first treatment for it, which is the second turning of the wheel. Then perhaps we could say that the third turning of the wheel, which is another way, is the path of convalescence or healing. An example that is often used here is of a mother and a child. For example, suppose that the physician tells the mother that her child cannot digest milk yet. Therefore, she should try not to feed her child with her milk. Now, in order to have herself understood by the child, the mother might try many ways to avoid feeding milk to her child. She might have to tell her child that milk is bad for her, and she might even put some weird tasting things on her nipple so that her child does not like it at all.

But when the child is cured from that disease, which is here called “clinging to material things as truly existing”, the physician then says, “Now it is necessary to give mother’s milk to your child for its nourishment and growth”. The previous disease has gone, so there is no point in continuing with the previous treatment. And if the child continues with that treatment, it will become malnourished from lack of milk. So now the doctor says the mother that she should feed milk to her child, so the mother now tells the child that it is good. And if the child likes chocolate, honey or sweets, the mother puts something sweet on her nipple, and then puts her child’s mouth to the nipple, and then the child starts to think that maybe milk is not so bad after all.

So from that perspective, when the Buddha taught the first turning of the wheel, it is like realising that there is that disease. The second turning of the wheel is considered part of the treatment, and the third turning of the wheel is considered another way of continuing that treatment. According to the *shentongpas*, the emptiness that they talk about is called *namkiin chogden gi tongpa-nyi* (*rnam kun mchog ldan gyi stong pa nyid*), which means something like ‘emptiness complete in all its aspects’, or rather the treatment seen from all its aspects. Although we might have a tendency to think that the main part of the treatment is taking those medicines, in fact there is another part of the treatment that is necessary for a person to be totally cured. For example if you take antibiotics, at the end you have to take acidophilus to be cured from that treatment. So this is not a refutation, but perhaps we can understand *rangtong* and *shentong* in that sense.

These discussions are very important. We should all rejoice that we have done this for these few days. Unless you are a sublime being, understanding this subject thoroughly is very difficult. Just an intellectual understanding is not a real understanding. The only way to understand Madhyamika is through your practice. At certain times, some of this may have made sense for you, and sometimes it may not have made any sense. But every time that you read it, what did not make sense before will make more sense later. So, if things do not make sense, it is just because your understanding is slowly growing. You may not understand it now, but if you study more, if you practice more, then you will understand. So this has the very good effect that it makes you humble.

*Many people have great inspiration and devotion when they become buddhists*

*But inspiration alone will not sustain us, as it is fickle*

*You should become dharmapalas, having no attachment to your own views or aggression towards others' views*

*Now you realise that buddhism is about more than meditation and mantras, and this will start to give you a dharmapala attitude*

*[Q]: How does Chandrakirti refute the Charvakas?*

I am told that many people are becoming buddhists, and people become buddhists for many different reasons. Some reasons are very obscure. For example, some people just like sound of it, and others become buddhists by seeing great beings like the Dalai Lama just because his appearance is very inspiring. Other people do not find inspiration in him, but in other teachers who act strangely but claim that they are great masters. Some people are more inspired by such teachers than by anyone else. All these people are making a connection with emptiness and compassion, and from that point of view this is wonderful. But this kind of approach of all will not sustain us, because things like devotion and inspiration are all very fickle. Sometimes they come, and sometimes they do not come. And when they come it may be for very stupid reasons, and when they do not come it may be for very wise reasons. We do not know!

So we talk about *dharma*palas, guardians of the Dharma. I think it is very important that you consider yourself a *dharma*pala. You need to understand this, especially the last line of today, “when first clinging and hatred have been cleared away, analysis will bring liberation”. By not having all the faults that Chandrakirti talks about, by not having attachment to one’s own view or aggression towards other people’s views, then you will be real Dharma protectors. And even if you think that all these arguments are difficult, when you go back home you will know one important thing. You now know that buddhism is not just about chanting mantras and doing meditation, but that there is something more than that. You may not know it completely, but you know this much. There is something more than that. That is already good enough, because it already creates a little bit of the *dharma*pala attitude there. Otherwise, things can get dangerous. So have this kind of motivation as much as you can.

*[Student]: Could you just briefly go through Chandrakirti’s argument when he refutes the Charvakas, because it seems that the Charvakas are very similar to modern materialists, so it would be interesting to understand Chandrakirti’s refutation.*

*[Rinpoche]: I will let someone answer this, and then if I am not satisfied, I will explain.*

*[Student]: I feel there are two kinds of Charvakas. The first type denies all causes. The second type accepts the elements, material things, but they deny previous and next lives. Either because there would be no cause, or because they could not have any perception of, let us say, something surviving. I think in modern science we say that mind is the product of matter. A man and a woman together make a material being, and on this material basis will arise consciousness as a secondary level. That is what I think they say, but I do not remember how Chandrakirti answered.*

*[Student]: Chandrakirti used the Cittamatrin argument that perception depends on mind, and if there is a mind, there must be a cause.*

*[Rinpoche]: That is part of it.*

*[Student]: Chandrakirti is taking the reasoning of the Charvakas, which says that life is an energy produced by the combination of elements. For a human being, the union of semen and egg creates energy, which is the consciousness. Through diseases and old age, that energy decreases. It ceases completely when there is no more life, and then that is the end of it for the Charvakas. For Chandrakirti, these elements of semen and egg are phenomena, so they have no true existence, as they are not created from self, other, both or neither. Thus they have not been born, so they cannot cease. So, there is no cessation of existence, because there has never been existence in the first place. Then Chandrakirti asks the Charvakas if they perceive this non-existence through logic or directly, and the Charvakas answer that they perceive it directly. Then Chandrakirti says that they perceive something that is ultimately non-existent, so they cannot at the same time perceive something that exists ultimately. They cannot perceive absolute existence and absolute non-existence simultaneously, so their position is nonsensical.*

*[Student]: I do not like the way this argument is unfolding. We did not explain the Charvakas’ view, and we did not clearly elucidate their main points. For example, in a book on the Charvakas, I read that they only believe in the reality of their own perception. I think this has just been refuted very logically, but another point is that for that very reason they do not accept inferential logic, so Chandrakirti will have a hard time using his logic against them.*

*[Rinpoche]: That is quite a good argument.*

[Student]: There are many other points, and they are not as gross as you think they are, so I think that before we try to refute them, we should clarify the Charvakas' position. Otherwise, it is unfair. We are just interested in proving that we are right, and not in debating their view.

[Student]: I think that what has been said is very important, because the main debate with the Charvakas is on the proof of non-existence. Of course, they say that life ceases because after death we cannot perceive it any longer. So we rely on our perception, and since we do not see life, we say it is non-existent. So the main point of debate here is whether you can prove non-existence based on no perception. In a way, the Charvakas' argument is somewhat conventional. If I know somebody, I can say that I see directly he is not in the tent. In the same way, you can say that after death, I no longer see the elements so there is no life. But Chandrakirti has shown that this is not a valid proof, because if you say you can perceive what cannot be perceived, then you can perceive everything. In my example of the tent, we can see that it is not a good example. If somebody is just entering the tent, I can say that I can see he is not in the tent, because I can see that his left foot is outside. I can show that he is not outside the tent because I can see his right foot in the tent. So, both I can show he is not in the tent and he is not outside the tent. So, the proof of non-existence by direct perception is wrong.

[Student]: Do we have more information about how the Charvakas do not accept inferential logic? For me, there is a more ordinary example that we need inferential logic so we do not go mad. For example, you see my hand? This is direct perception. If I hide it and you have no inferential logic to say that it is behind my back, then I can say I am a magician. Look, it has disappeared!

[Student]: I am not going to defend the Charvakas, but it seems that they do not accept inferential logic because they do not accept that a perception will be reproducible. They believe in the reality of perception, but not that the same laws will apply later. So, the whole approach of inferential logic does not apply, because it does not relate to their existential approach. For example, you might say that all men are mortal, so you will have to die. But they would say that you do not know that you have to die until you die, and have the direct perception.

[Student]: Do the Charvakas consider mental thought as a perception or not? How can we debate unless we know this? They cannot say that everything is just sensory perception. Somehow, they have to accept that we have mental perceptions. If they accept this, then they are accepting something that they cannot see, and they would be saying that the mind functions without being something material or visible. This is the very problem that scientists have. They know very well that mind exists, because they use it all the time. But it is convenient for them to say that it does not exist when they do not want to consider previous lives or life after death. I think this is more a problem of emotional intelligence versus reasoning intelligence. Scientists have gone to extremes of developing reasoning intelligence, but they do just do not use their emotional intelligence. They are taking advantage of a situation and trying to prove a point just because it suits them. This is not even intellectually honest; it is just convenient.

[Student]: I have a problem with this debate, because I am not sure that I really know what the Charvakas think, so I do not feel safe arguing for or against their view.

[Rinpoche]: What if they think that there is no next life or past life, and that all that we have is this. And then that there is no cause. If that is what they think, do you have anything against it or for it?

[Student]: Do the Madhyamikas define living by existence?

[Rinpoche]: Not really. They define living by dependent arising. That is their view. That is all they have.

[Student]: I am not sure I fully understood the new position of the Charvakas. If they only believe in the reality of their perceptions, Chandrakirti has already refuted this by saying that you cannot at the same time directly perceive existence and directly perceive non-existence. Whether they accept inferential logic does not matter, because this is just a pure contradiction. You do not need inferential logic in order to demonstrate that. So, if that is the position of the Charvakas, we have refuted it.

[Student]: I would like to say something about what was said about so-called emotional intelligence. She said that scientists refuse to accept existence before or after this life

*The Prasangikas and Charvakas both have not found a cause, but the Charvakas have a thesis that there is no cause, so they say there is no future life*

*All is emptiness - this life, next life, past lives.  
Nothing, including non-existence, truly exists,*

*Scientists have not finalised a view, but their attitude during action is finalised. This 'divorcing the view and action' is very dangerous*

because it does not suit them. But they could say the same thing to her, namely that she only believes in them because it suits her. So, it is not really an argument that she can use. Now, the Charvakas are saying the same thing as modern materialism, which is that there is no evidence, in the normal sense of the word, for the pre-existence or post-existence of this life. We only have the data that are in the world now. And as far as I understood the argument about direct perception, they are saying that we do not have direct evidence for the existence of life continuing after death. But presumably, according to their definition of life and mind (namely that the mind is a kind of epiphenomenon of the body), then when the body dissolves at death there is no mind to continue perceiving existence. So for the dead person, there can be no direct perception of a continued existence. It seems to me that Chandrakirti's answer is that they are saying they understand the perception of non-existence in the same way that they have understood the perception of existence in this life. And that is the weak point of their argument. He is not going to bring forward some sort of argument to prove existence after death; he is just showing that the Charvakas' position does not stand up.

[Rinpoche]: I would like to say something here. The Prasangikas say that all phenomena are beyond extremes; they are *shunyata*, emptiness. This is all that buddhists talk about anyway! So you should keep in mind that on the ultimate level, the Prasangikas have not found a cause, a result or an arising. The Charvakas, our opponents here, also say that there is no cause. But there is a big difference, because they have found that there is no cause. It is a thesis, so they say things like there is no next life. The Prasangikas never found a cause; they never found that there is no cause. This is so important. They are free from the four extremes.

For Chandrakirti, everything is emptiness. This life is emptiness, the next life is emptiness and the past life is emptiness. In the ultimate truth, everything is emptiness; nothing exists, including non-existence. The Prasangikas analysed day and night, from one generation to the next, but they could not find anything in the ultimate level, whereas the Charvakas are saying that they have found that there is ultimately no cause, which is a thesis.

I still doubt how similar the Charvakas are to modern scientists, because scientists never have a finalised view. They say that this is what we have up to now, but their view can change, so to speak. They are always in doubt about their view. Because they have not finalised a view, an unchangeable ultimate thesis, they can be saved by the diamond-splinter-like logic of Chandrakirti. But having said this, I must also tell you that scientists do something that Chandrakirti would find very fishy. Their view is not finalised, but their meditation and action, their attitude, is finalised. Their attitude, which is their meditation and the way they run the world, is very much finalised, and the masters call this "divorcing the view and action". And that is very dangerous. It is important not to divorce them, because the way we approach things depends on our view. For example, if you like this girl, then you will even move your hips in a different way. When our friend approaches a certain nun, he has a certain view, so his attitude is different. I think that scientists can still accept the whole theory of the Madhyamika, and so they can be a vessel for the Dharma, but not the Charvakas.

[Student]: I think that we are referring to scientists as they were in the 1940s. For example, when Einstein said to Niels Bohr, "Does the moon exist when I stop looking at it", Niels Bohr, a scientist from the next generation, said, "How can I answer"? He was at the start of a generation that has always been discouraged from looking at the reality behind the numbers that they were observing.

[Student]: I would like to give a brief reply on behalf of the scientists, because I think they have been rather misrepresented. But first, scientists do not say anything about past lives or future lives, because for a question to be scientific, it has to be falsifiable. You have to be able to conduct an experiment which will either give you the answer yes or no. Now, I cannot imagine an experiment that could investigate the existence of a future life or a past life, so it is just not a scientific question. So, what do scientists actually believe? Firstly, all scientific truths are dependent truths. They all depend on evidence. Scientists do not

believe in the ultimate truth. Their theories are only true to the extent that they agree with the experimental results we have found so far. If you come back in a thousand years time, a lot of the science will have changed, because there will be new evidence. In addition, many scientists now believe that the laws of science are also dependent on our current universe, and that if we were in a different universe, there would be different laws of science. Thus scientific theories are also dependent at this much higher level as well. In other words, they are not independent or ultimate truths.

[Student]: What about the perceiver?

[Student]: Science also takes into account the perceiver, which is illustrated by a very famous experiment from the early days of quantum physics. If you have very small particles, like electrons, you can get them to behave either like solid particles (the kind of thing a Vaibhashika would believe in), or like waves that cannot be located in any particular place. The observer can select this difference purely by deciding what kind of experiment he wishes to perform. The electron's behaviour is subjective, in the sense that it is essentially dependent on how you look at it. The electron has both those possibilities, and depending on how you choose to look at it, the object will appear completely differently. The point is that quantum physics is the very base of science, so the perceiver is included there at the very foundation.

[Student]: But scientists are using the human mind as a tool, and they have not defined the standards of that tool.

[Student]: Some scientists are interested in the human mind, but most scientists are like very clever gardeners or cowherds. Their interest is how they can have a better crop for their field next year. So, they might look at planting in different ways, or applying more or less fertiliser, and then look at the results. And then if they find a way to get a better crop, then they would say that by putting this fertiliser with this type of seed, I would get more result. They do not worry about the mind. They are just looking at the outside world, and drawing correlations between different things in the outside world.

[Student]: But when you make a scientific experiment, you need define the materials you are working with. You need some standards for your tools, like how your thermometer behaves, but scientists have not defined the main tool that they are using, which is the human mind, the one that creates their experiments.

[Rinpoche]: He is agreeing with that.

[Student]: I am saying that it does not matter to scientists. It is not relevant to them.

[Student]: It is relevant, because it influences the results.

[Student]: In Chandrakirti's refutation of the Charvakas, the argument is on the level of ultimate truth, whereas belief in life after death is on the level of relative truth. I would like to ask a question about buddhism in general here. It seems to me that if there is no physical evidence for survival after death, the proof of the truth of life after death must be a logical proof. Now, perhaps it was not necessary in India and Tibet to elaborate a positive demonstration of the truth of life after death because everybody believed it. But this is not the case in the modern west. And it seems to me that although buddhists succeed in showing that belief in life after death is not irrational, they do not go further than that. I would like to know if you think it is possible to prove logically that there is life after death on the relative level.

[Rinpoche]: You are right. In the ultimate truth, we have no burden to prove or disprove past or future lives. Conventionally, we accept past and future lives without analysis, like a dream, like a mirage, like an illusion.

There is only a certain amount of reasoning within conventional truth, and if we go beyond that then we would be approaching the ultimate truth, and we would have to answer from the ultimate point of view. So we can only answer within conventional logic. But it is very important in this modern day to have at least a little bit of reasoning and logic to support past and future lives. For ignorant beings like us, the only reasoning and logic that we have for these two is inferential logic, because there is no direct cognitive understanding until you are a yogi. For example, in the second chapter of the *Pramanavarttika* by Dharmakirti, there is a detailed establishment of the

*One way to talk about future lives is using the logic of karma*

*With cause, condition and no obstacle, the result has to follow. If you do not agree, you will not even be able to boil an egg!*

*This statement is self-evident, and if you do not agree with it, then we cannot debate. This is the first point*

*Secondly, in buddhism, mind and body are different*

*They have a container - contents relationship, but they are two separate things*

*Thus, an obstacle that stops the body will not stop the mind, as they are separate*

*Of course, it will affect the mind, because they have a relationship. If the container breaks, the contents are in shock, and the bardos are such special moments*

existence of ‘beyond this world’, with past and future lives. However, it is quite complex, because there are almost no mutually agreed examples.

But one thing that can be easier than the rest (although it is already quite complex) is the logic of karma. The logic of karma is simply that if there is a cause, a condition, and no antidote, then there will be a result. If there is no obstacle, there will be a result. This is the buddhists’ very favourite logic: if there is cause, condition and no obstacle, the result has to come. It has no choice. If there is earth, seed, water and sun and there are no obstacles such as a bird eating the seed or people stamping on the shoot, if all the conditions are gathered, then the flower has to come. It has no choice. Even the scientists have to agree with this. If you were to disagree, I do not think that you would even be able to boil an egg. This is standard problem for students of buddhist logic, which we call *drub ja* (*grub bya*), ‘one that has to be accomplished’, which contains the thesis and then the reasoning. I have not brought the thesis yet. I am bringing the reasoning, and this is what we have to agree upon. To repeat, if there is cause, condition and no obstacle, then the result has to come. Can you disagree with this? If you can disagree with this, then our way of developing reincarnation is very fragile.

[Student]: it is important at this point to note that this is not a logical statement, but just an empirical generalisation that everyone accepts in practice, on top of which we will build our logic. If people think that you are stating something logically, they will try to raise an objection. But it is not a logical statement.

[Rinpoche]: It is what we call *ngönsum tsema* (*mngon sum tshad ma*), self-evident. You cannot dispute it. Now, we are not talking about ultimate truth at all here, so do not introduce ultimate truth, otherwise there is no argument. I will not use the word logic, because it is something self-evident. But this phrase is very important: *gyütsok tsangshing gekmé na, drebu jung du rungwa* (*rgyu tshogs tshang zhing dgegs med na 'bras bu byung du rung ba*), “if there is cause, condition and if there is no obstacle, the result has to come”. If you do not agree with this, then we cannot debate. This is the first point.

The second point concerns mind and body. In the conventional truth, buddhism considers that mind and matter, or mind and body are different. You can even borrow a bit of approaching to the ultimate logic and argue, but you buddhists say that everything is mind, so surely body is also mind? Surely, brain is mind? Conventionally, buddhists would agree that brain is mind, but mind is not brain. Therefore, mind and body are two different things. For buddhists, body is something tangible with a form, colour and shape, whereas mind is the opposite of that. Then you might ask, do they have a relationship? Yes, they have a very strong one. And the term for this relationship is *ten dang tenpé drelwa* (*rten dang brten pa'i 'brel ba*), a container and contents relationship. But they are still separate, two different things.

Now let us go back to the first self-evident proposition. Mind and body are separate, so the causes and conditions of the body and the causes and conditions of the mind are therefore separate. Therefore, a discontinuation of one set of causes and conditions will not necessarily affect the other. For example, if you want to destroy the body, you could jump off a cliff or into a fire, get yourself killed or whatever. That is what I meant by an obstacle. When the body meets a big obstacle like this, then the body stops. But that does not stop the mind, because they are two separate things.

Your immediate question is, but surely, it will affect it? Yes, of course it does, because they have a container and contents relationship. For example, if you are sitting in a house, the house is container and you are contents. If the house is destroyed, it will not necessarily destroy you, because they are two different things. When the container breaks, the contents are definitely in a different situation. This is called a ‘shock’. Tantric practitioners use things like this as a *bardo*, and there are very big opportunities there. But this is not the time to talk about the *bardos* and all that. In brief, it is considered one of the very special moments where you can grab a certain bonus, so to speak. Anyway, when the container breaks, the contents will definitely have a shock. But that does not mean that the contents will be destroyed.

*To discontinue mind, we need to introduce an obstacle. This is why we practice the Dharma*

This is where you can disagree, but we will talk about this later. First, let me finish my logic, or whatever you would like to call it. Now, if you want to discontinue mind, then you have to bring an obstacle to discontinue it. Otherwise, if the causes and conditions are in place and there is no obstacle, then things will continue. This is the basic reasoning here. It is for this reason that you practice the Dharma, because the Dharma or the wisdom is how we discontinue the mind. And this is what we call enlightenment. This is why buddhists do not agree with penance. They think that destroying your own body for the sake of enlightenment does not work, because mind and body are two different things. At the same time, buddhists will encourage certain types of penance like fasting and all that, because the mind and body have a relationship. Of course, if two things have a relationship, this means that they are different. How can one thing have a relationship? So, I think that if we can agree on this, we can at least talk about past and future lives. I think that any other reasoning is beyond our imagination.

I have to be careful to clarify what I am talking about here. When we say ‘body’ and ‘mind’, I am only referring to this tangible gross body, with its form, colour and all that. Do not bring concepts like mental body and all that. There are many different types of body, but if you talk about all the other types, we will have to go through many other types of reasoning. Right now, we are talking about the conventional body and mind that we think, or imagine, that we have.

[Student]: What you have just said seems to express the problem very clearly. I was asking whether there is a logical argument to prove future life. At the beginning, when you were assembling the elements of your logical proof and you were talking about seed and so on, that was an empirical generalisation, something self-evident. Then you introduced your second point, saying that the difference between the mind and the body is self-evident. But this is not self-evident. When you said that buddhism says that mind and body are different, in a sense it is buddhism’s way of describing experience. Why not? It is perfectly all right to do that. We have a solid body and we have thoughts. But it is not self-evident to say that the mind and the body are two completely separate entities. If you base your logical argument on something that is not self-evident, you may be able to show that the belief in an after-life is possible, so it is rational and not stupid. But you do not succeed in showing that it must be the case. And in that case, buddhism must be dogmatic in that sense, and we are back to the earlier statement that you believe it because you want to.

[Rinpoche]: The problem is that we have to prove that the body and the mind are different. We are now entering a very big debate here. But until we finalise what you mean by mind and body, we cannot discuss this much further.

[Student]: Isn’t it simpler to refute the present life, rather than prove the future life. You can say to people, you are asking me to prove the future life, but first you have to prove that you have this present life.

[Rinpoche]: Your argument is coming from the ultimate point of view. Conventionally, you cannot say that. People can believe in past life, present life, future life and all of that in the conventional truth. Otherwise, there would be no path.

[Student]: What other people use to deny future life could also be used against them to deny the present life.

[Rinpoche]: On an emotional level, perhaps, but what about on a scientific level? Give me the definition of mind, in the Western scientific view. And not only ‘mind’ and ‘body’, but also what do you mean by ‘being’? Unless we can have some agreement on this, it will be quite difficult.

[Student]: I think a scientist would be very materialistic, and he would say that the mind depends on the body, but it is not the same as the body. But if you do not have a body, you do not have a mind. It is a bit like having a picture on a television screen. If you have no television screen, you will not have a picture. So the picture is not the same as the television screen; but if you break the television screen, it is not as if the picture goes somewhere else. There just is no picture. I think the Western scientific view is quite a lot like that.

[Rinpoche]: So there is no definition of mind?

*In order for us to debate, we need definitions of mind, body, and being*

*In buddhism, 'being' means 'one that has mind'. It is wisdom, buddha nature*

[Student]: Well, there is no specific definition. It is a bit like the buddhist definition, where you say it is not physical, but it somehow emerges from a physical base. I am sorry that I cannot give you a better definition. Perhaps someone else can.

[Rinpoche]: You have exactly one year to think about this!

[Student]: There is a branch of science called computer science, which has scientists studying artificial intelligence. Their question is, can we build a machine that has a mind? That is a debate, to which there are two sides and nobody has yet come up with a firm answer. Some would say that you definitely can, and that we will eventually create a computer with a mind. Other people say that it will never be possible. So, that is why there is no firm answer in western science, because there are two different views.

[Rinpoche]: It seems that this problem is actually coming from the modern world, because there is no agreement on the meaning of mind, body and being.

[Student]: Although there is a debate, I think neither school would disagree with the example of the television screen. Both sides would say that the picture depends on the television, and once the television is broken, there is no picture. They would say that the picture is like the mind, and the television is like the body.

[Rinpoche]: I think buddhists would also agree with that.

[Student]: But the buddhists would say that the mind continues, whereas western scientists would say that once you break the television, there is no picture.

[Rinpoche]: Buddhists would say that if you break your television, the broadcasting continues! The buddhist word 'being' is what we call *sem chen* (*sems can*), which means 'one that has mind'. I forgot the Sanskrit word, but it is a very profound word. So then, the question is who has the mind. The answer is awareness, wisdom. This is getting very sophisticated now. It may be easier to understand if we talk about buddha nature. It is buddha nature that has the mind, which means sentient beings. Therefore, inanimate things like a table cannot get enlightenment, because they do not have that buddha nature. Now, we have really opened up a big argument here! Unfortunately the last day, and there is a train to catch! The reason why I mentioned this, although it is difficult, is that the whole idea of this so-called enlightenment is based on this. Enlightenment is about uncovering this mind, so to speak, which means that there is something to uncover. But I do not want to take an easy route out, and I am very interested in discussing this, because it is very important. I think it is too early for us to argue, because you need to have your definitions of mind, body and being. You have one year to prepare!

[Student]: Mind and body cannot be the same. If we just say that they are the same, then they would have to have identical characteristics, and it is obvious that mind and form do not have identical characteristics, because mind is self-aware. And if they have different characteristics, then they must have different causes.

[Rinpoche]: That is one reason, but you should also not forget the ego, the self-clinging. There is also a big role for the ego here. The body alone does not have this kind of self-clinging. There are so many things to think about now, and as I said before, we have one year to think about them.

[Student]: We are now talking about philosophical views and reasoning, but what about the testimony of different people about their own past lives. We are using reasoning, but are we taking into account the fact that people remember their past lives, especially in the East. Perhaps, it is not taken seriously here, although there is quite strong evidence for it, but in the East, it seems to be quite common. This kind of belief is also very relevant.

[Rinpoche]: It might be true for some people, but again, it could be very deceptive. Somebody could just be hallucinating.

[Student]: I would like to respond to the example of the television set to show that it all falls back on the mind. When you have a television set and an image, if you break the television, the image disappears and does not go anywhere. That is right. But there is also broadcasting. The scientists say that you cannot compare the broadcasting to mind, because you can stop the broadcasting. But there is interdependence. To have the experiment, the guy constructing the machine, to have all the conditions, all that comes from human motivation. This motivation is mind, so we can say that the broadcasting also starts with mind. So, you can never locate mind somewhere.

*Until you prove there is no next life, I will still practice Dharma!*

[Student]: We need to look at the implications for Chandrakirti's arguments given the fact that in the West, in the modern day, we have different conventional truths on certain points, and karma is one of them. We cannot say that we have a conventional truth about future life, and mind and body is another example. I think that we need to look at the repercussions of these things on what Chandrakirti is saying, because he was living in an Indian context, where there were certain shared assumptions that we no longer share.

[Rinpoche]: This is an important issue, but there is plenty of time for you to think about it. We may well not have a mutually agreed conventional truth, and maybe we have not really come to a convincing conclusion that there are future lives. We will see. But I think that the Madhyamikas do not bring a completely new world or a completely new way of thinking. They are simply working with our own normal habitual patterns and all that.

[Student]: If you succeed in redefining a commonly held conventional truth, you might find that it is not necessary in the end to believe in future lives, even though that is such a shocking thing to say!

[Rinpoche]: When we talk about conventional truth, we are not really talking about something very complicated. We are talking about *rgyu tshogs tshang zhing dgegs med na 'bras bu byung du rung ba*: when there is cause, condition and no obstacle, there is a result. That is the conventional truth. That is what Chandrakirti accepts as self-evident. But I would like to conclude by saying that until next year, until you manage to prove that there is no next life, I will still practice the Dharma! Because in case there is a next life, I do not want to miss out, so to speak! And if, after next year, we find that there is no next life, then it will be time to go to Hawaii or Brazil. Why should we do all this study and practice, when there are so many other things to do? But perhaps you will find Chandrakirti's arguments so persuasive that you will not see any point going to Hawaii or anywhere else, because their non-existence is also very logically established. So, that's it for this year. Read the root text sometimes if you have time, because it has many blessings, and you will not forget the meaning. I offer my prayers and best wishes for you to be happy and prosperous, at least until next year. Now, we have seen that there are many examples in the *Madhyamakavatara*, such as the falling hairs and the yellow conch. I would also like you to remember the new examples that have now been introduced into the Madhyamika, such as Gérard Godet and Ani Jimpa, and in conclusion, Gérard would like to say a few words.

[Gérard]: On behalf of Ani Jimpa, I would like to thank Rinpoche from her. She was very happy to learn that she had a child, and she would like very much to know if it is a boy, a girl, both or neither. We will not speak about the imputed father, because there are several possibilities, but she said that she felt no pain during her pregnancy, so she thinks it must be a *tulku*. She would like you to take good care of him, so that he can have all your good qualities. I leave the responsibility of that statement to her. And then I would like to thank you on behalf of all the participants here. I talked to a few people, mostly women I must say, but it is not my fault if there are more women in the audience than there are men! Everybody thinks that these teachings have been working at a very deep level, not only intellectually but also emotionally. We think the result is very positive, and that it is due to the teacher, the teaching and to both. But it definitely did not arise from no cause. We are very grateful to you for introducing us to these beautiful teachings and taking us deeper into them. Two years ago, some of us felt that we were drowning in the deep sea of Madhyamika, and although we are not yet swimming like fish, at least we have our heads a little above the water. So, Rinpoche, whatever merit has come from having listened to your enlightened explanation, we dedicate it to your long life, to the long life of Tulku Jigme Khyentse and to all our teachers and the teachings, and we pray that they may spread and benefit all beings.



*End of 1998 teachings*

## 1999 Teachings

### Putting emptiness into practice

*You cannot understand emptiness through study alone*

*Generate bodhicitta to listen to these teachings for the sake of all beings*

First, it is important that we tune our motivation, as usual. As we said last year, to understand emptiness fully, it is very important to practice. Mere academic or intellectual study will only give you a little bit of information, and without practice you cannot understand emptiness. In order to understand emptiness, which is the view of buddhism, the mind, which is the viewer, has to be very special. And to make this viewer special, you need to practice. If you don't practice, but just study this Madhyamika, then the subject (the viewer) will still be stained with all kinds of wrong views and narrow views, and you will always be carried away by extremes.

So, when you put the emptiness into practice, bodhicitta is very important. When we talk about practising emptiness, we are talking about practising the ultimate bodhicitta. We cannot have ultimate bodhicitta without relative bodhicitta and ordinary beings like us rely very much on tuning our motivation in order to generate bodhicitta. We have strong habits of selfishness and dualism, so it is very difficult for our minds to have even some genuine relative bodhicitta, such as the wish to listen to these teachings for the sake of all sentient beings, for their liberation. But at least we can try. For example, when we listen to the arguments, such as the seemingly endless arguments between the Cittamattra school and Madhyamika school that we heard last year, we can at least imagine that the Cittamatrins represent some of our most subtle and sophisticated habitual patterns. Then some of these teachings might help us to dismantle or at least weaken the strong net of delusion that we have.

At times, this text is quite difficult to understand. It may have a lot to do with whether we have the merit to be able to interpret the great wisdom of great masters like Chandrakirti. In addition, the style of the argument and debate may be culturally different to an extent, so sometimes you may think that it does not make sense. But for those who wish to establish the view of buddhism, the study of Madhyamika is a very popular approach within the Tibetan buddhist tradition, especially the study of this text, the *Madhyamakavatara*.



### Emptiness and dependent arising

*Different terms for 'emptiness' are used at different times, but they all mean the same thing*

Most of us know that in buddhism we talk about three *yanas*: the Shravakayana, the Pratyekabuddhayana and the Mahayana, the bodhisattva's path. And to clarify any doubt, I want to say that whenever we talk about the Mahayana, this always includes the Vajrayana, although this is not the time to talk about that. In the *Prajñaparamita Sutra*, Buddha himself said that all those who wish to follow any of these three *yanas* have to understand the meaning of emptiness. They all have to realise *shunyata*. Some people might think that only the Mahayana talks about *shunyata*, but this is not the case. For all three *yanas*, their aim is to realise emptiness, their path is based on emptiness and their view is emptiness. Many different terms are used to refer to emptiness, such as 'unborn' and '*shunyata*'. My view is that different terms are used at different times. For instance, if we are talking about the buddhist view, then the term '*shunyata*' or

‘emptiness’ is used. If a disciple and teacher are talking about the path, then the master might use words like ‘buddha nature’ as well as emptiness. When the disciple and the master talk about the result, then the master could use words like ‘Dharmakaya’. So, I personally think that these different terms may have one meaning, but different terms are used for different times. And this works very well.

Now, as we are going through this text, we are trying to establish the view. During this time of establishing the view, *tawa ten mabepé kab* (*lta ba bstan ma 'bebs pa'i skabs*), we will use terms like ‘emptiness’, ‘unborn’ and ‘not arising’. This also has a lot to do with our opponents, because when these theoreticians or logicians establish their view, they come up with all kinds of ideas about how things are born or originated. This is why we have talked so much about the unborn, *kyéwa mepa* (*skyé ba med pa*) during the past two years.

*It is important to use the expressions of the Prasangika Madhyamika*

*Chandrakirti explains dependent arising based on the two categories of selflessness*

*The importance of the word tendrel*

*Emptiness is the same as dependent arising*

*But the ultimate view of buddhism is that all is dependent arising rather than all is emptiness*

I would like to emphasise more this year. As I listened to some of my teachings from the previous years, I realised that in my attempt to make the explanation easier to follow, I did not use the Prasangika Madhyamika expressions enough. This is very important, especially for you young Madhyamika students. Important terms like *tawa ten mabepé kab*, which means ‘establishing the view’, have a particular style that is part of the living tradition of Prasangika Madhyamika expression. You should study them and write them down.

Now, when Chandrakirti talks about the unborn, he uses the two categories or approaches that we normally talk about. These are the selflessness of phenomena and selflessness of a person. But Chandrakirti and his disciples have a very good style when they interpret these terms. They add the word *tendrel* (*rten 'brel*), which means dependent arising, so that the two terms become ‘explaining dependent arising based on selflessness of phenomena’ and ‘explaining dependent arising based on selflessness of a person’.

Chandrakirti has been negating arising from self, from other, from both self and other, and from neither. If we ask him, relatively, to describe arising, he will say it is dependent arising. So, we ask him, what is that? He will then explain dependent arising in two ways, one based on the selflessness of phenomena and the other based on the selflessness of a person. So just adding the word ‘*tendrel*’ makes a big difference. When I listened to the tapes, I realised that I should not forget some of these unique expressions of Chandrakirti. Otherwise, this is how the dharma gets degenerated, because of people like me teaching here.

I will give you one example. First, many people don’t know what the view is, the ultimate view, of buddhism. Some people know vaguely that buddhists talk about emptiness and *shunyata*. They read about things like ‘no nose’ and ‘no tongue’ in the *Heart Sutra*, then they read some Zen buddhist stories, and somehow they link emptiness and buddhism together. Now if you are a good listener with sharp faculties, *wangpo nönpo* (*dbang po rnon po*), then of course you will get the right message. But if you are not, then a partial understanding of emptiness can be quite dangerous. For instance, if someone told you that emptiness is the same as the Madhyamika idea of dependent arising, you might be shocked. But it is actually true.

For example, whenever His Holiness the Dalai Lama teaches about buddhist view and action, he always says: *tawa tenching dreljung chöpa tsewa mepa* (*lta ba rten cing 'brel 'byung spyod pa 'tshe ba med pa*). This means, “The ultimate view of buddhism is that things are dependent arising and the action is non-violence”. He would never say, “The view is emptiness”, *tawa tongpa-nyi* (*lta ba stong pa nyid*). If you were to ask me to show you a living example of the Prasangika Madhyamika, His Holiness the Dalai Lama is it. The moment that he opens his lips, out come Chandrakirti, Nagarjuna and Aryadeva! It is very Prasangika Madhyamika.

And here when we talk about the selflessness or emptiness of phenomena, we add *tendrel* to create a beautiful balance: explaining dependent arising based on emptiness of a person. It is a beautiful balance, which is why I am saying that it is a very important expression. These are the words that Chandrakirti and his disciples always use: *tendrel chökyi da mé* (*rten 'brel chos kyi*

*Why the selflessness of phenomena was explained first in the Madhyamakavatara*

*bdag med)* and *tendrel gangsak gi da mé* (*rten 'brel gang zag gi bdag med*), which mean explaining dependent arising based on the emptiness of phenomena or of a person.

Anyway, whether I have managed to explain this to you properly or not, and whether you have managed to understand it properly or not, we concluded the explanation of dependent arising based on the selflessness of phenomena. Listening to my tapes, I feel like we should go back again. Justice has not been done, not even close! But I think that we should finish this text. So now, we are going to talk about dependent arising based on the selflessness of a person.

We talked about this at the beginning of *Madhyamakavatara*, but the selflessness of phenomena was explained first. According to Gorampa's commentary, this is because until we have a firm understanding of the selflessness of phenomena, attachment to the self of the person can never be abandoned. As long as there is attachment to phenomena, there is always a tendency for attachment to the self of the person.

Now, many of us know that attachment to the self is what buddhists refer to as the root of samsara, its main cause. Until we abandon this clinging to the self of a person, we will always be subject to emotions. And as long as we have all these negative emotions, we are bound to have *lé (las)*, karma or action. And when there are these three: attachment to the self of the person, emotion and action, then there is always the results: samsara. This is why Chandrakirti teaches the selflessness of phenomena first. I mention this because we would normally consider abandoning attachment to the self of the person first, especially if we are talking about a path, because we do not want to be reborn in samsara. Let's begin with the text, starting at sloka 120.



[H9]

**(ii) Establishing interdependent arising by means of the absence of any self in one's person (677)**

[H10]

**(a) The need to refute what is grasped at by views that hold there to be a self (677), 6:120**

[H10]

**(b) Explanation of the reasoning of refutations that meet that need (678)**

6:120      *Understanding that all afflictions and defects  
Arise from the view of the transitory collection –  
Realising self is the object of this [view],  
The yogi terminates such a self.*

*The root of samsara is clinging to the self, not the self itself*

*For the Prasangikas, self-clinging has no base. For Svetantrikas, the base is the five aggregates*

This is a very interesting sloka, and there are many things to talk about here. First, as you can see, Chandrakirti is deliberately differentiating between *gangsak dagdzin* (*gang zag bdag 'dzin*), which is the clinging to the self, and the so-called 'self', which is the object to which the self-clinging is arising, *shenpé yül* (*zhen pa'i yul*). You need to know that the root of samsara is not the self, but attachment to the self.

The Prasangikas say that our dualistic mind looks inwards, mainly to the five aggregates. And although there is nothing there that we can point to as a so-called 'self', this dualistic mind nevertheless presumes or makes up an idea of 'self'. And then it clings to this idea called self. For the Svetantrikas, there is a difference, although there is a very thin line here. The

*The example of the scarecrow – is there a base for thinking that it is a human being?*

*Prasangikas argue that the basis for imputation of a self is the self, in the conventional truth*

*When we say 'I', what are we referring to?*

*The yogi refutes the baseless idea of self, which is the root of self-clinging, through logic and reasoning*

*Chandrakirti's view: there is no base for self-grasping, but relatively, he accepts mere self*

Svatantrikas say that, relatively, the five aggregates are like a base from which the self-clinging can arise. They are the base where the self-clinging dwells, where it focuses.

An example that they give here is of the *toyor (tho yor)*, scarecrow. When some animals such as crows look at a scarecrow, they think it is a real human being. Now, the Prasangikas would say that there is no human being there. But because of their habitual patterns, their ignorance, these crows make up an idea of a human being. They cling to this idea of a human being, and then they fly away. But the Svatantrikas say that the scarecrow is a base or ground, *zhi (gzhi)*, upon which the feeling that there is a human being can arise. You might think that this argument is completely useless, but you will see that it is quite important for the debate to follow. We are going through some new ideas today, but if you have a rough understanding, then you will find the argument from tomorrow onwards will be easier to follow.

This is something that we should contemplate on, because it is something that we have every second. We should ask ourselves, when we are saying, 'I' or 'me', what kind of entity or phenomenon are we pointing to? This is a big question for us to contemplate.

If you ask the Prasangikas what is the basis for the imputation of a self, relatively in the conventional truth, they will say it is the self. Similarly, if you ask them what is the basis for imputation for a 'vase' or a 'pillar', Prasangikas will say the basis is the vase or the pillar. It is no more than that. Remember that as a Prasangika, you never analyse. The Prasangikas say that if you were to follow the Svatantrika explanation, then the consequence would be that whenever you impute something such as a 'vase' the basis of that vase should be the atoms that make up the vase, not the vase itself. But these atoms are different phenomena altogether. Do you remember the wit of Chandrakirti? It will come again here.

So, when we say 'I', what is the basis for saying this? To what kind of entity are we referring? The Prasangikas say that it is just the 'I', that is all – they do not have any basis that they find by analysis. Although Chandrakirti says that the self is the basis for attachment to the self, he would nevertheless say that when their self-attachment is functioning, it looks at the five aggregates, even though the five aggregates are not the vase for attachment to the self. By contrast, for the Svatantrikas, the five aggregates are the base to which the mind grasps; for them, the 'I' or 'me' is focussed on the five aggregates.

Let's return to the example of the scarecrow. The Prasangikas say that when a crow thinks that a scarecrow is a human being, the basis for the crow to think this is not the scarecrow; it is the crow's own wrong idea. In fact, another Prasangika Madhyamika master said that this is one of the very reasons why we cannot tolerate the clinging to the self, because it does not even have a proper base. Now, let's go through this sloka 120.

So, what does the yogi do first? Does he negate, refute or abandon the self, or the attachment to the self? The first thing that he does is to refute the self, using logic and reasoning. Why? It is because all our emotions, *nyönmongpa (nyon mongs pa)*, actions and suffering come from attachment to the self. The yogi knows that this self is like a base for this attachment to the self, so the yogi begins by refuting this baseless idea of self. He will begin with reason and logic to establish that the self does not exist. And then gradually he will practice and progress along the path, and when he reaches the first bhumi bodhisattva's level, at that point, he will uproot clinging to the self in its entirety.

So, with this, we know that Chandrakirti is saying that there is no base for the attachment to self. There is no base that truly exists, or is established by reason. However, during the relative truth, he accepts that there is mere self, which acts as a base for the attachment to the self.

Now don't panic, because this is only the first sloka, where he is creating the foundation for what he will do next. Since this may seem somewhat long-winded, I will summarise what I said earlier. According to Prasangikas like Chandrakirti, as long as there is attachment to the five

*As long as there is attachment to the five aggregates, there will be the idea of ‘self’. The self is the base for self-clinging, but it is just a presumption, an idea*

*We look at the five aggregates and think ‘I’, but this does not mean that they are the base*

*But if the so-called self can go to heaven or hell, what is the base for this?*

aggregates then there will always be the idea of ‘self’. And as long as there is a self, then there will be attachment to the self. This attachment to the self creates emotion, action and samsara. What we need to concentrate on is the self, not the five aggregates and not the attachment to the self. The self is like the base for clinging to the self, as in ‘I’ or ‘me’, but if you were to ask Chandrakirti what is this base, he would say it is just a presumption. It is an idea, nothing more.

Some confusion might arise here. You might think that the five aggregates are the base, because as you look at the five aggregates, you think, “this is me”, and then based on that, you have clinging to self. Well, followers of the Svantrika Madhyamika people would say, yes, the five aggregates are the true base, and that when we focus on the five aggregates, we then have clinging to the self. However, Chandrakirti will say, no, there is only this idea ‘self’. This idea is completely baseless. Of course, we are looking at the five aggregates, but this does not mean that the five aggregates are the base. Although a crow looks at a scarecrow and sees it as a human being, the scarecrow does not have the slightest potential to become human, not even for a split second.

Now, you may ask, what is the point of talking about this baseless idea of self? Why do we make such a big deal about this? There is quite an important point here. Many religious people think things like if a person does something bad he will go to hell, and if a person does something good he will go to heaven. Even among buddhists, we believe that different reincarnations can be in higher or lower realms. We know that these aggregates, this body, exhaust after 60 or 70 years. In order that this so-called self can go to heaven, hell or whatever, many theoreticians thought that they should have a base to which this clinging to the self occurs.

[H11]

**(i) Use of reasoning to analyse and refute the idea that the person is something substantial**

[H12]

**(a) Refuting the idea that the person exists with five aspects**

[H13]

**(i) Detailed explanation of the reasoning used for this refutation**

[H14]

**(a) Refuting the idea that the self and the aggregates are different things**

*The Samkhya say there is a base for self-clinging, which has five qualities*

*(1) It experiences the results of good and bad karma*

So, let us begin to discuss with our first opponent, which is mainly the Samkhya school. Theirs is one of the most sophisticated notions of self to be found in India, and probably in the world. Of course, we are going to give a buddhist presentation of a Hindu idea, so you could argue that we are not doing so faithfully. The Samkhyas say that there is a base to this attachment to self, and this base, the so-called ‘self’, has five qualities:

1. The first quality is ‘**experiencer**’, *sawapo (za ba po)*. The self is a consumer or enjoyer, one who experiences. Of course, we are not referring to food like fruits here. As I mentioned before, if you create bad karma during this life, then next life you will go through suffering. Or perhaps this morning you created bad karma, and then this evening you will go through the effect. The self is the one that enjoys or suffers, that experiences the suffering; hence, the first quality is ‘experiencer’.
2. The second quality is that it is **permanent**. According to Chandrakirti, this is their biggest blunder and he will use this as his main target when attacking them. The Samkhyas say that no matter how many lifetimes you change your body, no matter how many times you reincarnate, the self is always the same. I think this is one of the four reasons Krishna gave to Arjuna to explain why he should kill the *gururavas* (five brothers in the *Mahabharata*).

(3) *It is not a creator*

(4) *It does not have the three qualities (rajas, tamas, and sattva)*

(5) *All our experiences occur when prakriti changes expression*

*Other Hindu schools have similar ideas of self, but with more qualities or slight differences*

One of the reasons is that Atman can never be killed; it is always there. In Sanskrit, I think this is called *purusha*.

3. Third, this *purusha* or self is **not a creator**, *khewapa* (*skye ba pa*). It does not create the world. That is the role of *prakriti*, another great Hindu concept. *Prakriti* is inanimate, and it is the creator. I am sorry that this is quite tough, but our opponent is quite tough! This is the highest Hindu philosophy.
4. Fourth, *purusha has no qualities*. Here the Samkhyas are referring to the three *gunas*: *rajas*, *tamas* and *sattva*. In Tibetan, these are *diil* (*rdul*), *münpa* (*mun pa*) and *nyingtop* (*snying stobs*). I think in English, “*rajas*” is translated as “energy”, “*tamas*” as “inertia”, and “*sattva*” as “spiritual power”. These three terms are a very sophisticated understanding of the inner aspects of aggression, passion and ignorance. Some people even connect Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva to these three. Anyway, this *purusha*, the base of the self, does not have these qualities.
5. Fifth, it **does nothing**. Not only is the self not a creator (the third quality), but also it is inactive: it does not do anything (the fifth quality). Here the Samkhyas are saying that no matter where you go, whether hell realm, hungry ghost realm or human realm, all that is really happening is that this *prakriti* is changing its expression. When the *prakriti* is changing its expression in a more negative way, then you experience the hell realms, and when *prakriti* is changing its expression in a more positive way, then you experience heaven.

[Q]: Are the third and fifth qualities same?

[A]: No. The third quality, creating, is actually becoming like a god; the self is not that. The fifth quality is that it does not do anything. All experiences occur when the *prakriti* is changing its expression. The self never changes; it remains where it is all the time. It is a bit like buddha nature, if you are not careful!

[H15]

### **(i) What those with this view believe, 6:121**

6:121      *The tirthikas assert a [self] to be an experiencer, permanent substance, non-creative,  
Non-possessor of the [three] qualities, and inactive.  
Based on minor differences,  
The tirthikas themselves have different traditions.*

Now we will talk about these minor differences among the Hindu schools. There is also a Hindu school called Vaisheshika, which says that the self has some additional qualities, totalling nine different kinds of qualities. When these nine qualities, which include things like bliss and suffering, are slowly diminishing through the understanding of *shamatha* and different kinds of *samadhis*, that is what they call ‘self on the path’. And when these nine qualities have exhausted completely, then that is what they call ‘nirvana’. Some other minor schools believe in something slightly different, namely that the self actually does something, that it is active. The Samkhyas, the main school, believe that the self is animate, conscious. But some schools believe that the self is inanimate, unconscious. Finally, some schools have very similar beliefs to those of the Samkhyas, but they think that all sentient beings share only one self, but they all have different *prakriti*.

[Q]: Does the basis for grasping to the self also function as a cause?

[A]: Yes, all *zhi* functions as a cause.

[Q]: Are the five aggregates part of the self, or part of phenomena?

*The five aggregates are phenomena, but looking at them and then clinging is part of the self of the person*

*The mind invariably says 'I' when it sees the aggregates, but this is just a habitual pattern*

*Even during meditation, how many people are truly attacking the root of self-clinging?*

*If there was a true base for the scarecrow, then we could never destroy our fear that it was a human being*

*The human being has not disappeared, because it was not there to start with – only a scarecrow*

- [A]: The five aggregates are phenomena. They belong in the department of *chökyi dag* (*chos kyi bdag*), ‘self of phenomena’. But when you look at the five aggregates and think, “Oh, this is me”, that is *gangsak gi dag* (*gang zag gi bdag*), ‘self of the person’.
- [Q]: According to the way that you distinguished the Prasangika and Svatantrika Madhyamika positions, it seems that there is no reason within the basis or five aggregates to grasp onto it as one thing rather than something else. For example, if you have a rope, why do you grasp onto it as a snake and not a dog or some other thing if there is absolutely no basis or reason to do so?
- [A]: Quite good! The problem for you is that Chandrakirti will just agree with you. He will say that there is no base, but that he is talking about dependent arising. When there is *kyen* (*rkyen*), a cause or condition, you can have a completely wrong idea about something.
- [Q]: But why do we see a rope as a snake and not an elephant?
- [A]: As I just mentioned, cause and condition. And we have certain habitual patterns, for example, we think that snakes are usually stripy and long, rather than square or fat.
- [Q]: When the mind sees the aggregates, it says invariably says ‘self’. This suggests that there is a correlation between the aggregates and the self.
- [A]: It is a habitual pattern, nothing more.
- [Q]: But the habitual pattern has to be explained. How does it start?
- [A]: Now you are asking about the origin of ignorance, which is a question of ultimate truth. If you analyse this, you will find nothing. Relatively, all that we can say is that it is a habitual pattern. When we see something that looks like a human being, there is a certain kind of clinging, which comes from a habitual pattern has been implanted in us for a long time.
- [Q]: In the example of the crow, when the crow sees a scarecrow and thinks it is a man, it is because of the resemblance between the scarecrow and the man.
- [A]: But the scarecrow does not become a man.
- [Q]: But this example suggests that there must be some resemblance in the aggregates to dispose the mind to think ‘self’.
- [A]: This is the habitual pattern, *shimépa la ngao nyampa* (*gzhi med pa la nga'o snyam pa*). This is such a good phrase. We can translate it as “Although there is no basis, there is the thought ‘I am’”. Or perhaps we should say, “A thought of me or I, even though there is no basis”. What is very interesting is that everybody likes to have a *zhi*, a basis to cling to, and this is exactly what Chandrakirti is trying to refute. Even when we meditate, when meditators say they are meditating on selflessness, I am sure that they are attacking more the gross aspects. The root, the ‘I’, is still there. You are trying to work with that attachment to the ‘I’, but here Chandrakirti is trying to get rid of the self first. But of course, having said this, he is not saying that there is something like a self that needs to be destroyed. It is just an idea. It does not exist in the ultimate truth, of course, and relatively, it only exists as a self. The gross reason for attachment to self that the commentators gave us is the five aggregates, for instance the body. Sometimes we say ‘me’ while pointing at our chest. If someone steps on your toe, you might say, ‘you stepped on me’, but it does not mean that your toe is you. You don’t change your size between big and small, so the aggregates do not qualify as a good base for the self. But you are definitely looking at the five aggregates. A crow will not see a human being if there is no scarecrow. So, the crow sees a scarecrow and thinks it is a human being, but that human being is totally baseless. That’s what Chandrakirti is saying. He also points out the opposite example, which is that as soon as you realise that the scarecrow is only a scarecrow, then your fear in thinking that it is a human being will disappear. If the scarecrow were truly the basis for this fear, then this fear would never diminish. We could never destroy it.
- [Q]: Why do you say that?
- [A]: It makes a lot of sense. When you realise that the scarecrow is a scarecrow, of course you will abandon the fear that it is a human being. But this does not mean that the human being disappeared.
- [Q]: Because it was not there to start with?
- [A]: Exactly. This is why Chandrakirti is saying that the idea that the scarecrow is a human is completely baseless, even though it is there! He is not saying that the self-clinging is not

there, but rather that this idea is a baseless base. It is baseless, but itself is the base for self-clinging.

[Q]: If the aggregates had been the base for the idea of self, then the destruction of the aggregates would mean the destruction of the self, since you would have destroyed the base. But if, by contrast, you say that the aggregates are not the base for the self, then even the destruction of the aggregates does not necessarily imply the destruction of the self. Therefore, why is it so important to begin with the selflessness of phenomena?

[A]: This is true! If you understand the selflessness of phenomena completely, one could say you have understood the selflessness of a person too. It's true; you have to say that. I must admit that I very much like the approach of the Svantranika Madhyamika. Many people do. For example, if you study the *Madhyamika Alankara* (*Uma Gyen*), it is very comprehensible. But I guess when you really cut through, you will agree with Chandrakirti's way of doing things. He is so right. Our self-clinging is baseless. We don't really have a choice. We can only do two things. We can analyse and find one, but then he will really torture us. Without analysing, all we can say is that this is a presumption, an idea. Chandrakirti is saying that the self is just an idea, without any solid basis, but this idea becomes the base to which our clinging to the self arises.



## Reducing our clinging to the path

*Shunyata is the reality or nature of phenomena*

*If we don't understand the truth, we are deluded and in samsara. But we have almost become used to the non-truth*

*For students of superior faculties, this study may be unnecessary*

*But many of us lack these superior faculties: we doubt what we should trust, and trust what we should doubt*

Yesterday we discussed many new terms, so maybe some of you are a bit worried that this text is too tough or difficult to understand. If you go to a Mahayana buddhist master, then you will eventually receive teachings on emptiness, *shunyata*. I imagine that all of us know that *shunyata* is not something that we develop or create. *Shunyata* is the reality or nature of phenomena, how they exist on the ultimate level, in actuality, as a fact. It is not something that you can go to a buddhist centre and try to make.

The purpose of understanding the ultimate truth, which again we all know, is that if you don't understand the truth, you will always be the subject of the false or not-true. And that is what we call delusion. The continuum of this delusion is what we call samsara, and in this samsara, we find pain, anxiety and suffering. But although we know that it is pain, it is not so easy to get out of, because we are so used to it. So, we have almost become more used to the non-truth than the truth, which is why we are struggling.

The Madhyamika that we have been studying for almost three years will hopefully be of some assistance to our practice. But it can also build some theoretical understanding of Mahayana buddhism. If you have certain great faculties, then perhaps all of this is not necessary, because at the very moment that your master introduces the nature of phenomena, you will have a glimpse of this emptiness. And then based on this glimpse, you try to stabilise this recognition, and you then try to get rid of all clinging, fixations and so on.

But many of us don't have these faculties. Don't think that these faculties are a supernatural power or incredible wisdom to understand emptiness. It is not always this abstract. For instance, if your guru tells you to do something totally ridiculous as your path to understand emptiness, your mind will then begin to have all kinds of doubts. That shows we are lacking the superior faculties that the Mahayana is talking about. Having superior faculties could be something as simple as having complete trust or devotion to your master, the teaching or the method, even if it seems very ridiculous. Our human mind is very strange. Where we need doubt, we don't have

*We become attached to meditative experiences too easily, despite what our teachers tell us*

*An understanding of emptiness can help us reduce clinging to the path*

*There are two kinds of self: innate and imputed. Here we will primarily refute the imputed self*

*The 'self' is what goes to heaven; it includes the western idea of 'soul'*

*Chandrakirti accepts the baseless idea of 'I' as the object of self-grasping, but only in the relative truth, without analysis*

*The debate with the Samkhyas is important, because we are very attracted to the idea of a self that persists in time*

doubt. But where we need trust, we don't have that trust. This is why we do not have these superior faculties.

For example, our masters teach us emptiness, and some of us meditate. Then we may have all kinds of meditative experience, and many of us are convinced that this is it. Who knows? Our experience, interpretation and understanding have always been very fickle. What we understood last year does not seem that great when compared to this year. Our master tells us that our understanding is like a patch on clothing, and experience is like mist in the morning, so we should not be attached. But no matter how many times they say this, and no matter how many times we read it in the instruction books, we are nevertheless very much attached to our understanding. We are very much fixated towards our experiences. So, we can see that we don't have these superior faculties, because we are not listening to our masters.

This is understandable. We are so used to being goal-oriented people, and achieving the goal is such an important thing for us. So, after a few days of meditation, if we see a good vision, of course, it is so attractive! Who would like to get rid of that? I guess we need the kind of information that is in the *Madhyamakavatara* for these kinds of problems. Because maybe in the future if you have a little understanding of emptiness, a little understanding of the selflessness of a person, then you can use some of Chandrakirti's sharp refutations to refute your own ideas. Then perhaps it can help us not to be attached to this path.

You have probably heard the word 'ego' a lot, especially if you have gone to some buddhist teachings. Clinging to the ego and egolessness are big subjects. Normally, ego is explained as being attachment to the self, and that's it. We don't explain further, and it is not necessary when we practice. But as we study the *Madhyamakavatara*, we will hopefully hear about every aspect and interpretation of this ego.

Normally, buddhists talk about two kinds of self. Even within the self of a person, we talk of two kinds of self of a person. These are *lhenkyé kyi dak* (*lhan skyes kyi bdag*), the 'co-emergent self' or 'innate self' and *kuntak kyi dak* (*kun brtags kyi bdag*), the 'imputed self'. We will talk about both innate and imputed self, but Chandrakirti will primarily refute the imputed self. However, according to Gorampa, these techniques of refuting or negating the imputed self can also be used as a path or means to refute the innate self.

The self is very important, as we know. It is what makes us want things; it is what drives us to do things. This self is going through samsara, and it wishes to reach nirvana. Many of these theoreticians, logicians and theologians also know this. They know there are many questions to be answered, such as if somebody lives a good life and then goes to heaven, who is it that goes to heaven? In answering these questions, this self is given different names. I feel that the Western concept of 'soul' can also be included here, although we can always debate this if you disagree.

Now, if we were to ask Chandrakirti what is the self, we know how he would answer. He would say that it is dependent on these five aggregates. Consciousness looks at the five aggregates and then creates a completely baseless new idea called 'I', which becomes the base for attachment to the self. This is his idea, but he only accepts this during the relative truth, without any analysis. He says that we should not analyse, because if we analyse, we will not find this self. We will find nothing. You should remember this way of expressing things, as it is special to Chandrakirti. Do not analyse the relative truth. If you analyse, you will find nothing. Or if after analysis you find something, we know that Chandrakirti would not be happy!

So, we have seen how the Samkhyas came up with a self that has many different qualities, such as 'enjoyer', 'inanimate', 'permanent', and so on. They concluded this because of analysis. Now you may wonder, what is the point of listening to this argument between Chandrakirti and the Samkhyas? It is very important for us to hear it, because our mind is so easily influenced by attractive ideas of self. Even the most stubborn person can be an easy target when the circumstances and situation are right. Our minds are easily influenced. For instance, the

Samkhyas are saying that self is permanent. If we had never heard about Chandrakirti, their idea would probably seem very attractive. Wouldn't we say that yesterday's 'I' and today's 'I' are the same, even in our mundane world? It may be a very attractive idea, but if we listen to Chandrakirti, at least it will poke a small hole in that theory, and that is good enough.

I don't know very much about Freud, but I think that if he had read Chandrakirti, his theory would be different. For instance, my parents are very compassionate, and they have really taken care of me very well. But several months ago, I went to a Freudian psychoanalyst, pretending to be a patient. I can see that if I let go of all this buddhist stuff, I could find many reasons to brood about my life, such as 'in the past I have been wronged by my parents'. But upon hearing Chandrakirti, we realise that this 'unconscious' or 'subconscious' mind is all imputed. I have a feeling that all this would become a target for Chandrakirti. I am trying to provoke some psychotherapists here! The point is that although we may not have heard these Samkhya terms like *rajas*, *tamas* and *sattva*, we nevertheless have quite a strong tendency to like these ideas. It is quite an attractive thing to hear that the self is permanent.

Let us return to the text, where Chandrakirti is in the process of refuting the imputations of self of the Samkhyas and the other theoreticians. If you remember, right at the beginning of the *Madhyamakavatara* we talked about the Prasangika's four ways of refuting other theories. One of these is using the opponent's thesis to refute their own theory, and Chandrakirti is going to do this in sloka 122.

[H15]

**(ii) Explaining what is wrong with that**

[H16]

**(a) Refutation by examining the nature and particularities of that difference**

[H17]

**(i) Refuting its nature, 6:122**

6:122      *Uncreated like a barren woman's child,  
Such a self is non-existent.  
Not acceptable as basis for I-fixation,  
It cannot even be considered an all-concealer.*

In this sloka, the barren woman's son is just used as an example. Chandrakirti's refutation will mainly use the Samkhyas' own theory. The second quality of their imputed self is that it is permanent.

Chandrakirti is giving two reasons here. First, he is saying that he cannot accept the kind of self that is imputed by the Samkhyas, because this kind of self has never arisen. Why not? Because this kind of self is permanent, as the Samkhyas themselves have said, and anything permanent cannot arise. This is typical buddhist logic, which is also used by Dharmakirti. The three characteristics of impermanence are birth or arising, existing or abiding, and cessation. If something has arisen, there is an act of arising or taking birth that is involved. And this act must have a beginning, middle and end. That means the act is subject to time, and time is impermanent. Some of you may be finding this slightly difficult because perhaps you have a different cultural interpretation of permanence. What is 'permanent' in English? What are the characteristics of 'permanence'?

[Student]: Probably something that remains without changing.

[Rinpoche]: Like the sun and the moon? Normally in our human mind, it's like the sun and the moon. I might think that I'm permanent because I was here yesterday, and I am still here today. That is a vague way to understand permanence, but I am sure there is a more philosophical, sophisticated understanding.

*A permanent self cannot have arisen*

*The buddhist definition of 'permanent' is like the western term 'eternal', i.e. 'beyond time'*

*In Christian theology, only God is eternal. The soul exists within time*

*Since the self is the base for self-clinging, it is being manipulated in time. It is therefore subject to time, so it cannot be permanent*

*A discussion of the western definition of 'existence' and 'essence'*

[Student]: I don't think it's used in an absolute sense, I think it is used relatively, relative to what is changing.

[Student]: I think normally Western academics use two different terms. One is 'eternal', which is beyond time, so it does not last all the time. It does not have duration, because it is beyond time.

[Rinpoche]: That will work here.

[Student]: There is another word for something that lasts for all time, without any change.

[Rinpoche]: The first interpretation is the buddhist one, beyond time.

[Student]: But I know that I am not eternal, beyond time. Everyone knows that.

[Rinpoche]: That's good!

[Student]: We feel that the ego is not eternal, but it lasts. That is a little different. We think that yesterday's ego and tomorrow's will be more or less the same. But are you talking about permanent or eternal?

[Rinpoche]: Are these different? Does eternal have arising and abiding? Is eternal beyond time?

[Student]: You are including the idea of immutability, not changing.

[Rinpoche]: To fit the buddhist idea of 'permanent', the term should not have any time.

[Student]: Then the right term is 'eternal'. For example, in Christian theology, it is never said that the soul is eternal. God is eternal, but the soul is not eternal. It is there all the time, but it is not eternal because it exists in duration. It is within time, not beyond time.

[Rinpoche]: All right, so when we talk about eternity, we don't talk about a beginning. In this case, I would say that the Samkhyas are saying that their self is eternal.

[Student]: I think you can quite easily use the word 'permanent' and redefine it, take the term and give it a new meaning. There is not an equivalent in English.

[Rinpoche]: Permanent here means 'beyond time'. There is no abiding or existing, and no cessation.

[Student]: The trouble is that the word 'eternal' suggests something everlasting, but in a buddhist context, 'permanence' can be used for things that don't last forever. But while they are there, they don't change. For example, the atoms are permanent in the sense that they don't change, but they are constantly going out of existence and coming into existence. There isn't really an easy solution.

[Rinpoche]: Wait until you hear this one! The Samkhyas are saying that self is permanent, which in the buddhist sense means no birth, no cessation and no abiding – basically, no time. Now Chandrakirti says that since it is permanent, it cannot be used as a base upon which this self-clinging arises, because as soon as you can use it, then its aspect of permanence begins to fall apart, because somebody is manipulating it in time. I need to ask for another definition. What do you mean by existence? We need to know this, because Chandrakirti's first argument is that the Samkhyas' self does not exist, because it has never arisen. And this is because it is permanent. Now, according to your western interpretation, what are the characteristics of existence?

[Student]: Something that comes into a form.

[Rinpoche]: Here there is an element of arising or birth. That's why it is not working. Chandrakirti is right, you see. He is always very frustrating here.

[Student]: In Christian theology, they say, "God is but other things exist", so existence implies that something is created and lasts for some time. Existence means something that is not equal with essence, in other words something that is not eternal.

[Rinpoche]: Something that is not equal to God? You can only say, "God is"?

[Student]: God is eternal. It is its own being by itself. But all other things have being through another, which is God. They are created.

[Rinpoche]: So everything that is not God is all existence? So the question is, does something eternal exist?

[Student]: You cannot say, it is improper to say this.

[Rinpoche]: I see. That is very interesting.

[Student]: I would say that the word 'exist' etymologically means to 'stand out'. It is often used to suggest something that stands out, as contrasted with nothing. To exist means 'not to be nothing'. In classical western philosophy, we say there is a difference between 'being' and 'essence'. The essence is what a thing is, the 'whatness' of a thing, and the being is that it

*The Samkhya self does not exist and cannot be the base for self-clinging. We cannot even see it!*

*Any permanent self can be refuted because such a self has never arisen*

*This reasoning also refutes the Samkhya qualities such as rajas, tamas and sattva*

[H16]

exists or not. So, your essence is that you are a man, and your existence is the fact that you are not nothing. And it is only in the case of God that his essence is existence. It is his essence to exist.

[Rinpoche]: We are trying to define the terms, but my brain is totally washed in a different way! So, whenever you say ‘to be’, I keep on hearing an element of arising. This is why sloka 122 is very important. Since I do not know western philosophy, I do not know whether this sloka can be used to debate with western philosophers. But it definitely applies to the Samkhyas. This is why I want to know the definitions of ‘existence’, ‘eternal’ and ‘permanent’. Because if they are very similar to the Samkhya definitions, then Chandrakirti’s argument could be altered just a little bit to say ‘these ideas of God or soul do not exist because they have never arisen, because they are permanent’. If you could worship or pray to God, then he would be changeable, and thus impermanent.

[Student]: I am not an expert in western philosophy, but I think that most of western religion and philosophy is about how things start. For example, the scriptures begin by saying, ‘in the beginning there was *logos*’. And there is the big bang theory, and other theories about the beginning. The beginning is always implied in western philosophy. I think that even the beginning of eternity is implied, for example, when we die we go to heaven and heaven is permanent, eternal. But the beginning of our eternity is our death. Westerners deeply believe in the beginning, we are very much concerned about the beginning of time.

[Rinpoche]: Let me draw your attention to the self once again, and let’s put aside the definitions of existence for a while.

Chandrakirti is refuting the self that is imputed by Samkhyas. They call it *purusha*. Maybe this is equivalent to soul in the West, but maybe not, as Wulstan seems to be shaking his head. Chandrakirti said three things in sloka 122: first, such a self cannot exist. Second, such a self cannot become a base to which attachment to the self can arise. This is a very important statement. Third is a witty statement: even during the relative truth, we cannot say that such a self exists, because we cannot see it. The point is that when we talk about relative truth, we have to see it or smell it, and so on but you cannot do that with the Samkhyas’ self, even in the relative truth.

[H17]

## (ii) Refuting its particularities, 6:123

6:123      *The characteristics [of self] mentioned in the various scriptures  
Of the tirthikas,  
Are contradicted by the tirthikas themselves with their reasoning of non-  
creation,  
Rendering non-existent these characteristics.*

It is not too difficult to understand this sloka. A single reason will refute all the imputed selves of the Samkhyas, whether those with five qualities or those of the other Samkhya sub-schools. The reason that these kinds of self do not exist is that they have never arisen. And they have not arisen, because they are permanent.

The same reason of not being born will refute not only the imputed self of the Samkhyas, but also the qualities that they have imputed, such as *rajas*, *tamas* and *sattva*. The point is that for the Samkhyas and the other minor schools, their theory is that there is a self that is independent from the aggregates. As we have seen before, something independent is usually a target for Chandrakirti’s refutation.

## (b) Refutation by examining the absence of any difference from the aggregates, 6:124.1-2

*A permanent self that is independent from the aggregates does not exist*

*The self cannot be independent of the aggregates; else, we might see our self in a flower*

*Animals still have self-clinging, though they do not understand imputed Samkhya qualities*

*The ‘innate self’ is the idea of ‘I’. If innate self is analysed by theoreticians, they find only ‘imputed self’*

*Chandrakirti’s reasoning will refute imputed self, and can be used to refute the innate self. He only accepts mere self, not established by reasoning or analysis*

6:124     *Thus a self distinct from the aggregates cannot be,  
Because apart from the aggregates, there is nothing to fixate on.*

Using the reasoning that we have just seen, we now know that there is no permanent self that is independent from impermanent aggregates. You see, even the Samkhyas believe that the aggregates are impermanent. They have to, because we can see that our body decays, our mind changes, our consciousness changes and our karma changes. Karma can become good or bad. Bad karma can be purified, and we can accumulate good karma. The Samkhyas know all this. But they have created a self that is independent from the aggregates. And Chandrakirti is saying that a self that is independent of the aggregates, and which has all the five qualities, does not exist.

If there were a self that was independent from aggregates, then one would have to say that even by looking at a pillar, a vase or a flower, one might have this notion of self, ‘I’. But we never experience this; therefore, we may conclude that the self is dependent on the aggregates. This will reply to some of the questions about the rope and the snake that came up yesterday. Here again Chandrakirti is saying that the kind of self that is imputed by the Samkhyas, with its five qualities, cannot be used as a base for sentient beings to cling to the self. If you were to ask a person a blunt question like ‘where are you’, they will say ‘I am here’. They do not say things like ‘permanent’ or ‘enjoyer’. And beings like animals have clinging to the self as well, even though they have no understanding of qualities that Samkhyas have invented.

[H16]

**(c) Refutation of the idea of such a focus for the ‘I’ and brief conclusion, 6:124.3-125**

6:124:3-4     *Ordinary beings do not accept it as the basis of fixating on I,  
Because although they do not perceive it there is still view of a self.*

6:125     *Those born as animals for many aeons,  
May never have seen this uncreated permanent [self].  
Nevertheless, it is clear they cling to a self,  
Therefore, other than the skandhas there can be no self.*

As we just said, although animals have no ability to understand the qualities imputed by Samkhyas, they still have attachment to the self. This is another reason to prove that there is no self that is independent of the aggregates and which has the five kinds of qualities.

Earlier we were talking about innate self and imputed self. Generally, innate self is the idea of ‘I’ or ‘me’ and then clinging to this is what we call attachment to the self or ego. When we talk about the so-called imputed self, it is not a separate self. We are not talking about a separate entity. We are describing how theoreticians, logicians and probably even scientists try to analyse this innate self, and they all come up with their own different ideas about self. For example, we have seen that the Samkhyas come up with the idea that the self has five qualities and so on. This self is what we call ‘imputed self’.

According to Chandrakirti, anything that is imputed, even during the relative truth, does not exist. Of course, it also does not exist in the ultimate level. And the reasoning that refutes or negates the imputed self can be used to destroy or negate the innate self. According to Chandrakirti, in the conventional truth, he accepts mere self, the self that wanders in samsara, which meditates and studies, and which gets enlightenment. But I want to repeat here that this kind of mere self is not established by reasoning or analysis.

When we talked about the selflessness of phenomena last year, we had several opponents, including some opponents that believed in the self-arising of phenomena. But we spent most of

*Our main opponents will be those who believe that self and aggregates are one, much like our mundane habit*

the time refuting those who believed in other-arising. Even in our mundane habit, we have a well-established idea of things coming from a cause, from something other. Similarly, now that we are talking about the selflessness of the person, our main opponents will be those theoreticians who believe that the aggregates and self are one, which is much like our mundane habit. The Samkhya theory holds that the self and the aggregates are different, but now we will come to some buddhist schools that believe that the self and the aggregates are one. These opponents are tougher from a buddhist point of view, because they do not assert that the self is permanent. In general, they do not make these gross mistakes, but according to Chandrakirti, they nevertheless make some more subtle mistakes. These subtle mistakes are quite important mistakes, and they are what he is going to refute from now on.

[H14]

**(b) Refuting the idea that the self and the aggregates are the same thing**

[H15]

**(i) What those with this view believe, 6:126**

6:126     *As a self other than the aggregates is not established,  
The focus of the view of self is solely the aggregates.  
For the view of self, based on the skandhas,  
Some see it as five-fold while some see it as a single mind.*

*Our main opponents, the Mangpö Kurwa (the Sammitiyas), believe that the aggregates are the self*

*There are seven extreme consequences for those who hold to this view*

Several different schools believe in the theory that the aggregates and the self are the same. But among the 18 different schools coming from the Vaibhashika and the Sautrantika, there is one school in particular that is our opponent here, known as *Mangpö Kurwa* (*mang pos bkur ba*), the Sammitiyas. This sloka briefly introduces the view of these theoreticians. They are saying that because one cannot even think of self if there are no aggregates, we can therefore say that the aggregates are the self. Some of these schools believe that all five aggregates are the base to which attachment to the self can occur. Some believe that only one aggregate, mind, is the base. I want to remind you once again here that the Prasangikas would never say that the aggregates are the base for clinging to the self. In his refutation, Chandrakirti says that there are seven extreme faults or consequences for those who believe that the aggregates and self are one.

[H15]

**(ii) Explaining what is wrong with that (684)**

[H16]

**(a) Using reasoning to contradict what is meant by self and aggregates being the same thing**

[H17]

**(i) Refutation by analysing what is grasped at, the self and the aggregates**

[H18]

**(a) Contradicting it with seven extremely fallacious implications, 6:127-128**

6:127     *If the aggregates were the self,  
Being multiple, there should be multiple selves,  
The self would be substantial,  
And being substantial, [self] would be unmistaken.*

(1) There will be multiple selves corresponding to multiple aggregates

(2) The self will be substantial, like the aggregates

Unlike Chandrakirti, the *Mangpö Kurwa* are happy to accept something that exists substantially

(3) There is no reason not to cling to a substantial self: it is not a wrong view

(4) The self will cease to exist upon enlightenment

(5) Whenever our aggregates change, so must our self, e.g. in each rebirth

(6) The self will cease along with aggregates when we die: it cannot gain enlightenment

6:128      *At the time of nirvana there certainly would be no self.  
Before nirvana, there would be creation and cessation [of self],  
And without agent, there would be no consequence [of action],  
And [action] accumulated by one [person] would be experienced by another.*

Most of these seven extreme consequences are quite easy to understand.

(1) **Multiple selves:** Because there are five aggregates, so the consequence is that you will end up with at least five different selves. And even within just one aggregate, form, there is one nose, two eyes and so on. There are so many different parts, so you should have endless selves.

(2) **Substantially existing self:** If the aggregates and the self are one, then the self will become a substance. This is a good argument, which is based on the opponent's view that the aggregates are substantial, such as form, particles or matter. Logicians such as the Charvakas hold this kind of theory. They say that phenomena are *dze yö* (*rdzas yod*), 'existing substantially', or *dak yö* (*bdags yod*), 'existing by imputation'. For example, they would say that sandalwood exists substantially; whereas when you say 'forest', it is just an idea. No entity corresponds to 'forest', although individual trees are *dze yö*. Using the logicians' categories, Chandrakirti shows that for the *Mangpö Kurwa*, the aggregates exist substantially, so their self will also have to exist substantially, because they are the same.

This is a very interesting explanation. They also say that attachment to something that has imputed existence, such as forest, is a wrong view. Without analysis, Chandrakirti would also accept that. But they say that it is not a wrong view to accept something that substantially exists, such as a stone or a flower. In general, one of the reasons that buddhists negate the idea of self or ego is because they think that it only has imputed existence. At least we can see our form: I have two hands, two eyes and one face. But the self only has an imputed existence, and attachment to this imputed existence is even more absurd, so to speak, than thinking that I have a hand. That is more understandable and reasonable.

(3) **Why abandon clinging to self?** According to your theory, clinging to the self is not a wrong idea, because the self and the aggregates are the same, and the aggregates substantially exist. Since, according to you, it is not a wrong idea to accept things that substantially exist, why abandon clinging to the self?

(4) **The self will cease to exist at enlightenment:** Since our opponents here are buddhists, the fourth consequence is very important. For you, when you reach enlightenment, you will have to say that self has ceased to exist. This is important, because many people think this. Many people think that when you get enlightened, your experience will be like the extinction of a fire, and the drying up of water. Your self would be completely gone, so would have no more eyes, no more nose, and so on. This is if you are slightly more sophisticated, and I don't think we even come that close. But I have a feeling that some people think like that. The important point that Chandrakirti is making is that according to you, you will have to say that when you get enlightenment, the self will cease to exist.

(5) **The self would have to change with each rebirth:** We know that until we reach enlightenment, our form, our aggregates change all the time. Every time we die, our aggregates change. But according to these theoreticians, self and form are one, so the self has to change all the time. This would be very strange! Until enlightenment, the self would have to change each time that the form changed, many times, not only once.

(6) **There will be no enlightenment:** The aggregates are impermanent. They cease to exist when you die, as your body decays. For you, *Mangpö Kurwa*, since you believe that the aggregates and the self are the same, the self must also cease to exist, so therefore there is no agent. Since there is no agent, there will be no result, such as enlightenment. So, by

(7) Karma will not function, as karmic consequences will affect another self

[H18]

The idea of a continuum linking selves together across lifetimes has already been refuted

[H17]

Buddha did not discuss the end of samsara, but according to the Mangpö Kurwa, it should end

[H17]

The yogi would cease to exist upon realising selflessness if self and aggregates were the same

practising dharma, so to speak, the practitioner will have ceased to exist. Therefore, there will be no enlightenment. This sixth consequence should answer some of the questions that are sometimes asked in dharma centres. It seems that when buddhists talk about egolessness, some people ask, if there is no ego, who gets enlightened. This question should be answered with this sixth argument.

- (7) **Karma will not function:** Finally, the rule of karma will be demolished. The creator of karma and the person who experiences the karmic effect will become separate entities, separate beings. The consequence would be that you create the karma and someone else enjoys or suffers through your karmic consequences.

### **(b) Rejecting the counter-argument and brief conclusion, 6:129.1-3**

6:129.1-3 [You hold] there is no fault having a continuity in the absolute,  
[But] when earlier examined, the faults of a continuity were all explained.  
Thus, that skandhas and mind should be a self is not feasible,

These two lines are related to something that we talked about earlier, when we talked about eternity and permanence. These theoreticians are telling us something very similar. They are saying that they don't have all the extreme faults identified by Chandrakirti, because although this life's aggregates and the past life's aggregates are different, and today's self and yesterday's self are separate entities, there is a continuity or continuum, *gyün* (*rgyün*). They say that this continuity is the self. Chandrakirti says that he has already explained the fault of asserting the idea of continuity (see sloka 6:15, p.105).

### **(ii) Refutation by the fact that its results, the end of the world etc., do not hold, 6:129.4**

6:129.4 Because the end of the world and so forth was/were not discussed.

There were several questions that the Buddha was asked, which he did not answer. For example, are the aggregates and self are permanent or not, and does samsaric existence have an end or not. Here Chandrakirti is saying that according to you, *Mangpö Kurwa*, the Buddha should have answered. He should have said, yes, there is an end to samsaric existence.

### **(iii) Refutation from the subjective standpoint of the yogi**

#### **(a) The consequence that when the absence of self was realised, the aggregates would disappear, 6:130**

6:130 For a yogi who sees selflessness,  
Entities will certainly disappear  
If it is a permanent self that is abandoned,  
[In that case] your mind or aggregates cannot be the self.

Now Chandrakirti is saying that according to you, when the yogi recognises that there is no self, aggregates of this yogi will automatically cease to exist, because the self and the aggregates are the same. But now our opponent says, when the yogi understands that there is no self, he only understands that there is no imputed self, such as that imputed by theoreticians like the Samkhya.

*If yogis only abandon the imputed self, the base for our self-clinging cannot be the aggregates*

[H18]

*If yogis only abandon imputed self, they do not understand the nature of the aggregates, so they will still cling to form*

*We want to abandon our imputed idea of ego, but keep the real ego! Our opponent represents us very well*

*We don't believe in the self theoretically, but we believe in it emotionally*

*Comparing aggregates and self to substantial trees and insubstantial idea of 'forest'*

In this case, when ordinary people like us have clinging to the self, the base or object to which we have this clinging cannot be our own aggregates. This is because when the yogi understands, he is only abandoning the imputed self, not the innate self. Our opponent says that clinging to the self is based on the aggregates, but the consequence is that this could not be so, because when a yogi realises that there is no self, he only understands that there is no imputed self.

**(b) The consequence that when the absence of self was realised, desire would (still) arise, 6:131**

6:131     *[Therefore] when a yogi sees selflessness,  
He will not realise the suchness of form etc.  
Observing a form, desire and so forth will arise  
From not understanding its essence.*

This sloka is easy to understand, because when a yogi understands selflessness, he only understands the selflessness of imputed self. So obviously, this yogi does not understand the nature of form and all the other aggregates. Therefore this yogi could look at a beautiful form, yet still have desire and all kind of other emotions, according to you. Why? It is because this yogi has not understood the nature of form.

[Q]: I did not understand the point about the imputed self and the innate self towards the end of what we were discussing.

[A]: You see, we are all practising dharma so that we can become yogis and then attain enlightenment. Now, according to the *Mangpō Kurwa*, when you become a practitioner, you are only trying to get rid of imputed self. Tomorrow we will come to a very good example. Chandrakirti says that it's as though you are keeping a poisonous snake in your house, but you tell other people, 'hey, there is no elephant here'. I don't know if you realise this, but it is very common for us to have this defilement. We tend to think that our interpretation of ego is an interpretation that is imputed, and we are trying to abandon that dirt. But we keep the real ego! So, our opponent represents us very well, if you think about it. And even if theoretically we do not believe in the self, we believe in it emotionally. This is the problem. This is what the path is about. For example, we know that samsara is futile, but we somehow also don't know that. This indicates something very special, and Gorampa of the Sakyapa tradition believes it is unique to Chandrakirti. Chandrakirti says that unless you understand the selflessness of the aggregates, you will not understand the selflessness of a person. But there is a debate between this interpretation and those of other schools, such as the Nyingma tradition, which I will leave entirely with you!

[Q]: Why didn't the Vaibhashikas locate the self just within the mental faculties, rather than within all five aggregates?

[A]: All this will come. Chandrakirti is trying to block every possible door.

[Q]: I don't agree with 6:127.3, where it says that the self is substantial. If the self is multiple, it is compounded, so it must be insubstantial.

[A]: The aggregates are substantial. It is like asking whether a forest and the willow trees are the same or not. The theoreticians say that they are, but Chandrakirti says that this self is like a forest: it is a totally baseless idea. But where does the idea come from? You are looking at willow trees, gum trees or whatever, and then you invent this idea 'forest'.

So, what is Chandrakirti doing here? I am trying to give you an example of a summary. I will also ask you to do this, as an exercise. As one of you mentioned yesterday, the big question is how things began. And everybody, in his or her attempt to answer this, came up with a certain answer: 'this is the main creator, this is the beginning', and so on. There are many different ideas not only among non-buddhist schools or theoreticians, but also among buddhists.

As we know, Chandrakirti has been refuting all these theories about things like a creator or the beginning. But if we ask him, ‘how do things begin’, his answer is that everything is dependent arising. That’s all he says. And then he explains dependent arising in two ways, the selflessness of phenomena and the selflessness of the person. We have finished the selflessness of phenomena, and now we have started on the selflessness of the person. Let’s remind ourselves of the outline up to sloka 131.



## Where we are in the structural outline

We have finished ‘Explaining interdependent arising by means of the absence of any self in phenomena’ [H9 (i)] and we are now going through ‘Explaining interdependent arising by means of the absence of any self in one’s person’ [H9 (ii)]. We are going through the ‘Explanation of the reasoning of refutations that meet that need’ [H10 (b)], and we are in the first sub-heading here, ‘Use of reasoning to analyse and refute the idea that the person is something substantial’ [H11 (i)]. Within that, we are in the first sub-heading ‘Refuting the idea that the person exists with five aspects’ [H12 (i)], and we are going through the second sub-heading of the detailed reasoning, ‘Refuting the idea that the self and the aggregates are the same thing’ [H14 (b)].

[H9 (i)] Explaining interdependent arising by means of the absence of any self in phenomena

[H9 (ii)] Explaining interdependent arising by means of the absence of any self in one’s person

[H10 (a)] The need to refute what is grasped at by views that hold there to be a self

[H10 (b)] Explanation of the reasoning of refutations that meet that need

[H11 (i)] Use of reasoning to analyse and refute the idea that the person is something substantial

[H12 (i)] Refuting the idea that the person exists with five aspects

[H13 (i)] Detailed explanation of the reasoning used for this refutation

[H14 (a)] Refuting the idea that the self and the aggregates are different things

<b>We are here:</b>	<b>[H14 (b)]</b>	<b>Refuting the idea that the self and the aggregates are the same thing</b>
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[H14 (c)] Refuting the idea that they exist as support and something supported

[H14 (d)] Refuting the idea of self as possessing the aggregates

Within the subheading of ‘Refuting the idea that the self and the aggregates are the same thing’ [H14 (b)], we have finished explaining ‘What those with this view believe’ [H15 (i)], and we are now going through ‘Explaining what is wrong with that’ [H15 (ii)]. We have just finished ‘Using reasoning to contradict what is meant by self and aggregates being the same thing’ [H16 (a)] and we are about to start ‘The absence of any scriptural reference to self and aggregates being the same thing’ [H16 (b)].

[H14 (b)] Refuting the idea that the self and the aggregates are the same thing

[H15 (i)] What those with this view believe

[H15 (ii)] Explaining what is wrong with that

[H16 (a)] Using reasoning to contradict what is meant by self and aggregates being the same thing

[H17 (i)] Refutation by analysing what is grasped at, the self and the aggregates

[H17 (ii)] Refutation by the fact that its results do not hold

[H17 (iii)] Refutation from the subjective standpoint of the yogi

We are about to start this:

[H16 (b)] The absence of any scriptural reference to self and aggregates being the same thing



[H16]

**(b) The absence of any scriptural reference to the self and aggregates being the same thing**

[H17]

**(i) The absence of any scriptural reference to the aggregates explained as being self, 6:132-133**

6:132     *You may consider the skandhas to be the self,  
Because the Teacher taught so,  
[But] that was to refute that self is other than skandhas.  
Other sutras state that form is not a self.*

6:133     *Self is not form, nor feeling, nor perception,  
Nor formation, nor consciousness,  
Because of the negations in various sutras,  
It is simply not taught skandhas are the self.*

Sutras that say, “The self is nothing but the aggregates” are to refute ideas of an independently existing self

Now, as you can see, the view that aggregates and self are the same is actually very deep. It is constructed quite deeply within our habitual pattern, and within theoretical systems. In certain sutras, Buddha himself said this self is actually nothing but this form, these feelings and this consciousness. For the *Mangpö Kurwa*, since they are buddhists, these sutras give very good support to their view that the aggregates are the self. But Chandrakirti is saying that the *Mangpö Kurwa* do not appear to understand the actual meaning of these sutras, which is to negate a self independently existing from the aggregates. The Samkhyas imputed that kind of self, and in order to negate this kind of self, Buddha said the self is nothing but form, feelings, consciousness, and all that. In other sutras, Buddha clearly said that form is not self, feelings are not self, and consciousness is not self and so on. Therefore, we can see that the earlier sutra is just to refute the notion of an independently existing self.

[H17]

**(ii) If there were such scriptural references, they would be contradicted by both scriptural authority and logic (687)**

[H18]

**(a) Contradiction by scriptural authority, 6:134**

6:134     *When it is said skandhas are the self,  
It is the skandhas as a gathering, and not the individual skandha.  
Not a protector, not a tamer and not a witness.  
Not being these, the gathering cannot be [a self].*

This is the continuation of the two previous slokas. Here Chandrakirti is explaining the meaning of these two sutras in more detail. Now, let's say that you, *Mangpö Kurwa*, interpret the meaning of the sutra to say that the aggregates are the self. If we interpret the sutra in this way, then Chandrakirti is saying that only the gathering of the aggregates can be the self, not the

*Even if we say that the aggregates are the self, we can only mean their gathering*

aggregates individually. For instance, you cannot point at a single tree and say that it is the forest, but you can say that the gathering of trees is a forest. Take note! This is a very important argument. You might feel that he is putting words in his opponents' mouths, but this is the only thing that they could say anyway, whether they like it or not.

It is important for us to contemplate this point. The Samkhyas may not have influenced us, so we may not think that there is a self that is permanent, that enjoys and that has all those qualities that we talked about earlier. But, we definitely think that the gathering of the five aggregates is the self. Just list their names: form, feeling, perception, consciousness and karmic formation. We would say that the gathering of those has to be the self, and we have this as an important ongoing defilement. It is just like the forest. The gathering of a few trees is a forest, but you cannot point to one tree and say it is a forest. This does not only apply to the five aggregates, but even within a single aggregate. For example, form constitutes colour, shape and so on.

[Q]: What happens in the realms where there is no form?

[A]: They have other aggregates, but you should ask me this question again later.

*Chandrakirti says there is no such thing as a gathering or aggregation*

I think the word 'gathering' is not so good; perhaps 'collection' is better. If we cut off our ears, nose and all our limbs and put them all over the place, we would not say that 'this is me'. But we do say this about the collection or aggregate of our parts. We can say it is an aggregation of many aggregates. But now, watch out! Chandrakirti does not believe in this gathering, this aggregation. He says that it is just an idea, that there is no such thing as an aggregation.

*A mere gathering does not exist, so it could never be one's own protector or witness*

In sloka 134, he says that if we say that a mere collection of aggregates is the self, then what about other sutras where Buddha said "*the self is one's own protector, the self is one's own enemy, the self is also one's own witness*". There are so many quotations like that in the sutras. Since a gathering or collection does not exist, a self that is merely a gathering or collection can never be one's own protector, enemy or witness. I think that this is very sharp logic.

*The collection of aggregates cannot be the self either; it is just an idea and cannot be used*

What Chandrakirti is saying is that you can never utilise the forest. You can only utilise trees. A forest is just an idea: it is completely baseless. So, if you believe that a mere collection or mere aggregation is the self, then you would have to say that the self is not a protector, enemy or witness. The only other possibility is that the collection of aggregates is the self. But that is not possible, because the collected assembly is just an idea: it cannot be used.

[H18]

### (b) Contradiction by logic (688)

[H19]

#### (i) If they are just a coming together of things, it is like the example of the chariot, 6:135

6:135

*Because a variety of parts*

*Make up a chariot, the self is comparable to a chariot.*

*The sutras teach [imputation of self] is based on the skandhas,*

*Therefore, [self] is merely a gathering, not a [true] self.*

*Just as a chariot is dependent on its parts, the notion of self can arise depending on the assembly of aggregates*

*But this is dependent arising, not saying that aggregates are the self*

This is a wonderful comment. Here he is giving us an example, the chariot. We could use a car, these days. When the parts of the chariot, like the wheels and so on, are gathered, then the idea of 'chariot' occurs. The notion of chariot is dependent on this gathering of the parts. He is making an important comment here, which you should take note of. He is saying that a mere assembly of aggregates is not the self, but the notion of self can arise in dependence on the assembly of the aggregates. This is a big difference. In one case, we have dependent arising, and in the other, we are just looking at a few parts and thinking it is the self. Here Chandrakirti is again proving his theory of dependent arising. Therefore, the mere gathering of the aggregates is not the self. This argument will lead to all kinds of problems for the substantialists. For

example, human beings of different sizes would have different amounts of self. But since Gérard is not here, I really cannot tease Ani Jimpa, so I will have to shut up.

[H19]

**(ii) If the skandhas have a shape, they cannot be mind, 6:136**

6:136     *Because shape exists in [the skandha of] form,  
You call this a self;  
But the mental skandhas cannot be a self,  
Because they do not possess shapes.*

This sloka points to another of our strong habitual patterns have, and now our opponent seems to be representing us. We might argue, very well, a mere gathering of aggregates may not constitute a self, but when these parts are gathered, there will be a shape, and that shape is a self. Now our opponent is saying that.

*If the shape of the  
aggregates is the self,  
only form could be self,  
because shape is form*

Well, shape only exists within the form aggregate, so in this case only the form aggregate could be the self. The other aggregates such as consciousness and karmic formation do not have any shape. And even within the form aggregate, things like taste or smell do not have shape. So, these will also have to be excluded from the self that you are imagining.

[H19]

**(iii) The implication would be that action and agent are both the same thing, 6:137**

6:137     *That perpetuator and action should be one is illogical,  
Were it so, action and agent would be identical.  
If you think there can be action without agent,  
This is not so. Without actor, there is no action.*

*If self and aggregates are  
the same, then the  
aggregates' possessor  
must be same as the one  
possessed, so there can  
be no 'possessor'*

This is slightly easier to understand. Normally the self is seen as the possessor or agent, and the aggregates are the possession or the thing that is taken by the actor. When we say ‘my body’, the self thinks ‘this is my body’. According to the *Mangpö Kurwa*, the agent and the possession will become the same. But there is no action or possession if there is no agent or person who possesses. Since they say that the self and the aggregates are the same, then the one that thinks ‘this is my body’ is the same as the body. Chandrakirti is pointing out this contradiction.

[H17]

**(iii) Summary of what has previously been established based on scriptural authority, 6:138-139**

6:138     *A self depends on earth, water, fire,  
Wind, consciousness and sky,  
The six faculties, the [senses such as] the eyes, and the bases of contact,  
This the Sage clearly taught.*

6:139     *[A self bases itself on] mind, mental events and dharmas –  
[This the Buddha] ascertained. [A self] is not other than these,  
It is not the same, neither is it their gathering.  
Thus, fixation on I is in neither of these minds.*

When Buddha described the definition of self, he said that this self depends on, or arises dependently from the six elements: earth, water, fire, wind, consciousness and sky. It also depends on the twelve *ayatanas* (*skye mched*) or sources of perception, which comprise the six

*The self arises dependently on 18 factors: the six elements and twelve ayatanas*

*Neither these 18 factors nor their gathering is the self, and they cannot be the direct object of self-grasping*

*Chandrakirti's view is that self and aggregates are dependent arising*

sense organs and the six consciousnesses, from the eye consciousness to the mind consciousness. So, Buddha identified that the self is based on the mind and mental events, and altogether it depends on these 18 factors.

Here Chandrakirti is trying to point out that the Buddha clearly stated three things:

1. These 18 factors are not the self.
2. The mere gathering of these 18 factors is also not the self
3. These 18 factors cannot be the direct object of grasping to the self.

For example, let us consider the parts of the car, things like wheels, nails, brakes, steering wheel and engine. Buddha said that these are not 'car'. That is the first point. In addition, the mere gathering of these parts is also not 'car'. And when someone thinks, 'Ah, this is my car', the object of this kind of grasping mind is not these parts. This is Chandrakirti's speciality. He is very stubbornly asking what the base is when a person thinks 'this is my car'. The base is the idea 'car', which has no base at all. But by looking at these parts, we create a new idea, 'car', and this idea then becomes the very base for our attachment to the car. That is what he has been telling us. It is a subtle but important point that he is making here. I really want you to think about why he is being so stubborn on this point, because the importance of this point somehow seems to disappear in the midst of our discussion.

[Q]: I would like to clarify the terminology. Yesterday you were saying that we should use the term 'permanent' rather than 'eternal'. But in that case, you cannot use the term 'eternalist' for someone who believes in permanence. You also said that Gorampa says that we have to understand the selflessness of aggregates in order to understand the selflessness of self, but that this is different from the Nyingma view. Could we have a brief explanation of the Nyingma view and where they are different?

[A]: Yes, as time goes by.

[Q]: What I don't like about Chandrakirti is that he mixes up quotations. For example, the Buddha's words quoted in sloka 132 contradict those in sloka 134.

[A]: This is how he usually refutes people. He always uses quotations or reasons that are accepted by the other opponent. He does this any time he likes, however he likes, conveniently.

[Q]: But he is using contradictory quotations.

[A]: What's wrong with that? He's very open-minded here. He says that if you are stuck with the first quotation, how will you explain the other quotation where Buddha said self is not form and not feeling. So, he then offers an interpretation. The real interpretation should be that when Buddha said form is self, he is trying to refute the imputed self such as that introduced by the Samhyas, because they believe that there is a self that is independent from form. Now, if you do not accept that interpretation, how are you going to explain the other sutra where Buddha said that form is not the self? Now, if you turn round and ask him, so how are you, Chandrakirti, going to construct this view? He will say that self and aggregates are dependent arising, that's all.

As I mentioned, he is making three points. The first is that the five aggregates are not the self. I think this is quite comprehensible. Second, a mere gathering of aggregates is also not the self. This is still comprehensible, but perhaps slightly more difficult for us. Now, in many slokas, he is making a third point, that the aggregates are not the direct object onto which self-grasping focuses. Now, I do not know whether you can understand this third point, but it is very important. Why is he pointing this out repeatedly? In a couple of days, a khenpo will be arriving, and you should ask him this question, because there are so many answers.

[Q]: I have one doubt about all this reasoning, because since the very beginning, western philosophers have known about the point that Chandrakirti seems to be making. For example, an 18<sup>th</sup> century philosopher restated a very old idea in the sentence, "what is not one thing is not a thing". What is made of parts but has no substantial unity is not a real

*Even if we argue that an organism is more than the sum of its parts, this is still not the direct object of self-grasping*

thing. But this was just the beginning, because they said you could deal in this way with what is a merely an aggregate, like a heap of stones, for example. But it is very improper, not logical, to deal with organisms in this way, or whatever thing cannot be reduced to the mere collection of its parts. Because it is obviously not true to say that all things that are made out of parts can be reduced to the mere collection of their parts. An example is an organism, which only exists when all its parts are functioning together, as in a living being. If you have a heap of stones and you cut it into two parts, you have two heaps of stones. But if you cut a man into two parts, you do not have two men.

[A]: You are talking about function.

[Q]: Yes, so since some buddhist schools seem to be defining what is efficient, couldn't we say that insofar as some special effect is produced, an organism can be living. It can perform many functions, so we have to recognise that it is not the mere sum or aggregation of its parts, but that there is something more. We could call this 'self' or 'essence'.

[A]: According to Chandrakirti, that is not a direct object of grasping. But mind is looking at that, and then mind creates a new phenomenon called self. That becomes the object where self-grasping focuses.

[Q]: But my point is not exactly that. Is it honest to consider the five aggregates in the same way as we reason about a heap of stones or a forest? The aggregates seem actually to be functioning together and producing some special effect. Similarly, if we take the example of the chariot, it is also not the same as the heap of its parts, because we cannot travel anywhere on the heap of its parts, so the assembly clearly performs a function. Similarly, a vase cannot hold water with the heap of its atoms. It seems to have a unity as a whole, not merely as a sum of its parts. Couldn't it be said to have some sort of unity in this way? Couldn't the chariot for example be said to have some sort of unity because it functions as a whole in another way than just the sum of its parts?

[A]: That is what our opponent seems to be saying as well. So, what is your point?

[Q]: Because the chariot has some sort of unity, or the body has some sort of unity because its parts are functioning together, why could it not be called 'self'? Why would this 'self' not be really established?

[A]: We do this, but Chandrakirti would say that this is not the direct object of our grasping. I think you and Chandrakirti agree. The only thing is that you seem to have a certain romantic feeling about this unity, or at least you think that it should be the object of grasping.

[Q]: Why not? Another point is that in this case it is not only true that the whole is dependent on the parts, because in a living organism the parts also depend on the whole organism. We need a healthy body to be able to maintain the health of its component parts, and we need the component parts to be healthy in order to keep the whole body alive.

[A]: This is a good doubt. But what you need to think about is the interpretation of unity.

[Q]: I understood you to be saying that the functioning thing, this is to say all the parts together, is not the basis for the ego grasping. Of course, Chandrakirti is saying that one can't ride on a heap of car parts. The car is functioning when all the parts are not only present but also arranged in a certain way. But I understood you to say in the third point, that when you say 'my car', what is happening is that you are, as it were, advertiring to the fact that you have a functioning heap of car parts. But Chandrakirti is saying that this is not the basis of your imputation of car, which is coming from somewhere else.

[Q]: It is not just a heap of car parts; it is a gathering. This means that they are put together in a way that works.

[Q]: I agree with the idea of the car as a functioning thing as a whole, but my question is who is the driver? Who owns this car?

[A]: This is a very interesting one! What do you say to this?

[Q]: That is the Samkhya question, which is something completely different. That is about a self that is independent from the aggregates.

[A]: That was a good doubt, and a good clarification!

[Q]: But this whole debate is unnecessary, because if there were no interdependence, then the universe would not work.

- [A]: You are taking Chandrakirti's side. But our opponents do not understand this, which is why there is a debate.
- [Q]: Yes, but how can consciousness and matter function together if they are of different natures?
- [A]: You are asking the opponent? Do you want me to take the side of the opponent? I am not saying that consciousness and matter are of different nature; I am saying that the self and the aggregates are the same. They are one.
- [Q]: But how can they function, if the aggregates are somehow within the reality of phenomena?
- [A]: Don't talk about phenomena. I would say these five aggregates are the self.
- [Q]: But are they substantial?
- [A]: According to the *Mangpö Kurwa*, yes, they are substantial.
- [Q]: So how can they function together?
- [A]: They can function together because they are substantial. That is what I would say.
- [Q]: But how can they be conscious if they are substantial? Then a stone would be conscious.
- [A]: But that is Chandrakirti's refutation. I think that what you think is part of what Chandrakirti is saying. I do not see any problem here.
- [Q]: I wanted to refer to an earlier question about the functional unity of an entity. It seems to me that it is not a problem for Chandrakirti to think that a functioning entity could be considered as a self, because it is a dependently arising thing. Chandrakirti is saying that if this functioning entity is the self, then it cannot be the base for attachment. But it is only the attachment to the self is the problem, but not the self as an object. Is this right?
- [A]: Perhaps someone can answer.
- [Q]: I think Chandrakirti could not possibly agree with the point about the functional unity of an entity. Even if the functional unity does not qualify as a proper basis for what we commonly or ordinarily grasp to when we say 'I' and 'me', nevertheless philosophers could impute some form of self. It could be Hindu philosophers or whatever, but we are talking about something that is a substantial unity, pervading in all the aggregates, that may also be changing, because it can also be the basis for grasping to a series of aggregates. This reminded me of slokas 60 and 61, where there is a discussion with the Cittamatrins about what makes the continuity of something. I was thinking that if there were no unity then the five aggregates would go their own way and scatter rather than stay together. Let us suppose that there is a causality of body going on its own way, and then one of sensation, and then the aggregates of this person and that would be mixed up, and so on. The fact that the unity of the person seems to be conserved is also a function of this self that I was trying to advocate for. The second point is that if this exists, then Chandrakirti would refute it, because as Rinpoche has said, Chandrakirti rejects all sorts of assumptions or positions. So, even if it does not correspond to what we grasp to generally when we say 'I', he would reject it.
- [A]: Chandrakirti would probably accept this idea of function on the relative level, because as you point out, without this function, if you put the wheels over here and the brakes over there and so on, you cannot think that it is a car.
- [Q]: But you said that a scarecrow is not a proper candidate for being grasped to as a human being. In what I am developing, it sounds like something that would be a basis for grasping to the self. And this should be refuted.
- [A]: What you just said is very good. This is the third point that Chandrakirti is making. The aggregates, whether we take five or three or one doesn't matter, are not the direct base when there is grasping to the self. This is an important point for several reasons. One of the supreme reasons is that buddhists meditate on egolessness or selflessness, and if you were to follow the *Mangpö Kurwa*, you would have to start by saying that there is a self, but then meditate on the idea that there is no self. But according to Chandrakirti, there is no self, right from the beginning, so you just have to learn that there is no self. This difference comes from accepting this idea, which is why it is very important. Because there is no human being, the idea that there is a human being is wrong, right from the beginning. But even though it is wrong, we have this idea, and then we cling to it. In other words, to get rid of the idea that this is a human being, you don't actually have to dismantle the scarecrow.

*If you accept a base for self, it is contradictory to meditate on selflessness.*

*But for Chandrakirti, there is no self, and that is what we need to learn*

*Since the aggregates are not the self, you do not have to do penance to tame the aggregates*

*According to Chandrakirti, no words correspond to any entity*

This is also where the idea of taming the mind arises. Otherwise, you would have to tame the aggregates, with penance and things like this. Such things are not necessary.

[Q]: If you take the snake and rope example, when you go into the room and the rope is there and you think it is a snake, you think it is a snake because you already know what snakes are, you have some kind of predisposition. But imagine a little baby who had never heard about snakes, and didn't know what a snake was; when he saw the rope, he would not be afraid. Maybe he would just go and sit on it or something. Whatever the case, he would not see it as a snake. This demonstrates that the imputation made about the thing is not necessarily connected with the thing itself. So in the case of the car, you may have the functioning car, but if you then say this is 'car', 'my car', and so on, you are taking something to the situation yourself. It is not coming from the car. We can see this in the way that people have very different attitudes to cars. For example, a little old lady or old man may have absolutely no idea about how a car works, and for them, the way it works is as wonderful as any fairy story. But a garage mechanic would have a completely different idea about his car.

[A]: Very good, you are describing dependent arising very well.

[Q]: But when one looks at the car, one sees the thing. One doesn't see the dependent arising.

[A]: Of course, I don't have to tell you that this *dagdzin* (*bdag 'dzin*), grasping to self, is a big habitual pattern. We know that it is.

[Q]: I have two questions. First, I wonder whether Chandrakirti is being honest in portraying the doctrine of the Sammitiyas. I thought that they were very careful to be buddhists and not to say that there was a self. I thought they said that the self is neither the same nor different from the aggregates. That, I believe, is how Vasubandhu refers to their doctrine.

[A]: Vasubandhu is a more refined Vaibhashika person, so he is not our immediate opponent.

[Q]: But he talks about Sammitiyas.

[A]: Go on.

[Q]: The second question is, am I right in thinking that Chandrakirti is saying that universals don't exist. So, in other words, you have a word like 'forest'. This is your idea of a collection of trees, but the word does not correspond to any entity. But then it seems to me that no words correspond to any entity.

[A]: That's true, according to Chandrakirti.

[Q]: You could say the same for a tree, which is also the sum of parts. So, Chandrakirti is deconstructing language completely, and saying that nothing we say ever corresponds to any reality whatsoever.

[A]: In reality, yes. That is what he is saying.

[Q]: So, for the Prasangika Madhyamika, there is no relationship between language and anything else, is that right?

[A]: The Prasangikas will only speak language that is used by their opponents, as is their usual way.

[Q]: But language is some expression of our own mental formations. This is what language is about.

[A]: Yes. There has always been a question about how well we are representing the views of the opponents. It is more straightforward for the Sammitiyas, but we have a big doubt about the Cittamatrins. Last year we somehow presumed that Chandrakirti defeated the Cittamatrin, but there are serious doubts. Who knows? This is where you have to study the *Pramanavarttika*. I cannot say. But for now, this guy seems to be the hero.

[H16]

**(c) If self and aggregates were the same thing, what is to be refuted is confused with what is to be upheld (689), 6:140-141**

*Imputed self is not the base for grasping to self, so realising its selflessness cannot be realising the whole of selflessness*

*You keep a poisonous snake but say there is no elephant – this is ridiculous!*

6:140     *Realising a selflessness that refutes a permanent self,  
Cannot be considered [refuting] a basis for I fixation.  
That such cognition of egolessness  
Should uproot the view of the transitory collection as a self is indeed an astonishing statement.*

According to the Sammitiyas, when one understands the selflessness of the person, one only understands the selflessness of the person that is imputed by the Samkhyas. The Sammitiyas themselves say this imputed self cannot be the base for grasping to self. Yet, the Sammitiyas are saying that when you understand the selflessness of the imputed self, you understand the whole selflessness of a person. This is extraordinary.

6:141     *As when discovering a snake's nest in the wall of one's home,  
And comforting oneself that it is not an elephant,  
Besides relieving fear of the snake  
Alas! One is the laughing stock of others.*

This is easy to understand. You are keeping a poisonous snake inside, but in order to abandon the fear of the snake, you tell other people that there is no elephant there. Then you are an object of laughter.

[Q]: We talked earlier about the unity of a living organism, where the parts depend on the thing that is conscious of them, and consciousness depends on the parts. I wanted to answer in a joking way, that you are insulting me. Because I can dye my hair blue, have a car accident and lose my leg. The basic problem is that logic should tame the emotions, but the emotions are somehow much cleverer than logic. Because I can deal with the idea of me with blue hair, in a dream, happy or afraid – I can deal with so many things, whereas my logic is incapable of dealing with the basics of what we are talking about now, as I get everything mixed up. So, should we see logic and emotion as having a link, or is emotion a basic cleverness supported by logic? Where is the place of logic? At the end, it never seems to get the point, namely this attachment.

[A]: That you have to meditate upon.

[Q]: I have a question about 137:4 ‘without actor there is no action’. I was a little surprised when I read this, because in grammar there are, for example in Tibetan, unintentional verbs. European languages also have verbs where actions can occur by themselves.

[A]: But if there is no you, there is no you talking.

[Q]: But if there is no ‘me’, many other things are going on, like the wind and so on.

[A]: We are not talking about that. We are talking about aggregates and the self. That’s all. The self happens to be the actor or the possessor, as in when we speak of ‘my’ body and ‘my’ feelings. But if we say that this is my cup – then what am I? I am the possessor, and this is the possession. But according to the Sammitiyas, possessor and possession are one. Of course, we are not talking on the ultimate level right now. Well, then think it is ultimate, but ultimately you cannot talk or analyse. The Sammitiyas represent many of us, because we have these sorts of mental habits.



## **Summary with reference to structural outline**

Tulku Rinpoche sees what we are doing as a *shedra*, and we should respect the traditions of the *shedra* from time to time. One of these traditions is that it is customary for the students to

summarise where we are in the teachings, with reference to the structural outline. It helps to remind us where we are, which points we are talking about, and which opponent we are debating with right now.

[Student]: This is according to Gorampa's commentary on Chandrakirti's text, "The introduction to the middle way", the *Madhyamakavatara*, which itself is Chandrakirti's way of explaining Nagarjuna's root text on the *Madhyamika*. In order to explain the text there are four main sections, the title, the translator's homage, the main body of the text, and the conclusion. We completed the title and translator's homage right at the beginning. The main body of the text has three different sections: the introductory branches; the actual meaning of the main body of the text; and explaining the culmination of the meaning of the text. We completed the first of these at the beginning, and most of the teaching has been on the second of these three main sections, explaining the meaning of the body of the text.

Explaining the meaning of the body of the text has two sections, explaining the bodhisattva levels (the bhumis) which are the cause. And explaining the level of buddhahood, which is the result. In the first section, there are three subdivisions. The first was a brief introduction showing their nature in general, in terms of the union of means and wisdom. The second explained the nature of each of the bhumis, especially in terms of the paramita emphasised on that bhumi. And the third was explaining the qualities of each, in terms of its special enumerated features. The first of these we have completed, and we are now in the middle of the second of these.

These ten bhumis correspond to the ten main chapters in the book, and we are now in the sixth chapter, which deals with the sixth bhumi, which is called 'Advancing' or 'Knowing Clearly'. This sixth chapter has four main sections. The first is attaining cessation by emphasising the paramita of wisdom. The second explains, to those who are blind, the greatness of the paramita of wisdom itself. Third, establishing the way in which this paramita of wisdom is introduced. And lastly, a summary of the qualities attained in this way. The first two were relatively brief introductions, and the third one contains the main body of teaching in this chapter. This also has three subdivisions. The basis according to which this teaching is here explained, to whom the teaching is to be explained, and establishing emptiness, which is the subject to be explained.

We are in the third of these sections, which has two subdivisions. Explaining emptiness as it is to be realised by all vehicles, and explaining emptiness as it is to be realised by the Mahayana in particular. We are still in the first of these two sections, explaining emptiness as it is to be realised by all vehicles. This is divided into two main sections, explaining interdependent arising by means of the absence of any self in phenomena and explaining interdependent arising by means of the absence of any self in one's person. We finished all of the first section at the end of last year, and we started the second section at the beginning of this year's teaching.

The second main section contains four sub-headings. The first is the need to refute what is grasped at by views that hold that there is a self. The second one, which we are now in, is explaining the reasoning of the refutations that meet that need. There are four sub-headings in this second section. We are still going through the first one, which is using reasoning to analyse and refute the idea that the person is something that substantially exists. The second one is going to be the presentation of the person as dependently imputed.

We are getting towards the end of the first section, which has two main subdivisions: refuting the idea that the person exists with five aspects, and refuting the existence of the individual as something that is describable. The first of these sections, which we are still in, gives a detailed explanation of the reasoning used for this refutation. The second section will be a brief summary. This first of these two had four sub-sections. First, refuting the idea that the self and the aggregates are different things. Second, refuting the idea that the self and the aggregates are the same thing. Third, refuting the idea that they exist as a support and something that is

supported, and finally, refuting the idea that the self is something that possesses the aggregates. We have finished the first two of these, and we are now just coming to the third one.



## The benefits of listening to the Madhyamika

[Rinpoche]: I was thinking last night and this morning, of some way to make all of us, not only you but also myself, understand this selflessness of a person, at least intellectually. I think that this touches on one of the bad sides about the way I have been teaching this text, because of my own lack of time or laziness. Ideally, this teaching should be taught at one go. It should not be stopped even for a few days, but we stop for many months. And then I imagine that some of you lose the thread, and also some of you are completely new and only just getting used to these terms, and I can see that some of you seem to be struggling.

When you look at some of the older students, who are slightly more used to the terms, some of you may be encouraged to do this. Some of you may get a little discouraged, thinking that you will never be able to do this. I am sure that you are going through this kind of thinking. I have to tell you that this is quite a difficult subject. Of course, to realise *shunyata*, you have to meditate, accumulate merit and purify defilements. That is the only way. In order to have this wisdom of understanding, not only intellectual understanding but also realisation of this emptiness, the only way is purification of defilements, accumulation of merit, and especially the blessing of the guru. But it is very wrong to think that you can realise emptiness just by sitting through these teachings, especially with me talking to you!

I notice that some of you are still sitting here year after year. Some of you don't even speak English or French, but only speak German or another language, and yet you still sit here. This is good. First, there is a lot of blessing. Even though my explanation doesn't have blessing, the teaching of the Madhyamika has so much blessing. And even those of you who cannot understand everything, you will be surprised if you just keep on listening to this. After five or ten years, suddenly someone will mention something, and you will suddenly think, "Ah, that's it". This will really become a tool to open a few blockages. I think this especially when I see some of the younger ones sitting here, and I am sure that some of you wonder what is going on here, when we talk about 'substance', 'aggregates', 'self' and all that. But I think it is good to listen. My khenpos always used to say *namjang (rnam sbyangs)*. It is like listening to music. You just switch it on somewhere in your house, you listen to it repeatedly and then one day without realising it, you actually know how to sing the tune. This can happen. So I am encouraging you to explore this in whatever way you can. A few minutes are good; a few hours are also good. A few years are good, and of course, a few lifetimes are good.

This is what establishing the lineage or tradition is all about. A master from the east comes here, gives you one teaching, and then you practice that. Of course, the lineage is transferred, but it takes time, a long time. As you hear this repeatedly, the way you hear it, the way you listen to the words such as 'emptiness' will be different as you listen repeatedly. For instance, if you are completely new and someone mentions emptiness, your first idea of emptiness will be like an empty cup or some kind of space. But as you listen to these teachings, then you will know that when buddhists talk about emptiness, it also includes the emptiness of emptiness. In this way, your ability to interpret will become much better.

Last night, Ani Jimpa came to my place and told me that I should talk more and have less time for questions. She just couldn't stand people talking. She thinks it is a waste of time. I think

*You cannot realise emptiness just by listening to teachings*

*But these teachings have many blessings*

*If you keep listening to music, you will learn to sing the tune. The same is true for these teachings*

*It is important not to be embarrassed when asking questions. Nothing is too obvious*

that is wrong, you should ask questions. Really, it is also learning for me when you ask questions. So today, we are going to double the time for asking questions. And Tulku Rinpoche wished me to ask you questions about the past subjects, which we will also do gradually.

Nyoshul Khen Rinpoche is such a great master. When I received teachings from him, he would say, ask me whatever questions you want. Not many Tibetan lamas told me this, I am sure because of certain hang-ups. We are Tibetan ‘Rinpoches’, you understand. But even though we are Rinpoches, we don’t know some things that everybody knows. So, as Nyoshul Khen Rinpoche said to me, you feel embarrassed. You feel that you can’t ask certain questions because you feel you are supposed to know already. I am sure that you have this embarrassment as well, and you should ask your questions. There is nothing to be embarrassed about. When Nyoshul Khen Rinpoche said this to me, it really helped a lot. It is the same here. Please ask me all kinds of stupid things, the more stupid the better. And if I cannot answer, we will ask Ani Jimpa. After all, she doesn’t have much to do these days, since her beloved is somewhere else.

Now, before we return to the root text, I want you to pay attention to these terms. They might help you.

<i>Dagshi (gdags gzhi)</i>	ground of labelling.
<i>Dagchö (btags chos)</i>	phenomenon as labelled.
<i>Dak yö (bdags yod)</i>	imputedly existing; existing only as an imputation.
<i>Dze yö (rdzas yod)</i>	substantially existing.

*An important term used by substantialists: dagshi dze yö: ‘the ground of labelling exists substantially’*

There is another important technical term that is used by substantialists, *dagshi dze yö*, which means ‘the ground of labelling is substantially existent’. I was thinking this morning that even scientists might say the same thing. This is a very popular expression in the substantialist schools, including the Samkhyas and the Svetantrika Madhyamikas during the relative truth. They are saying that the label, the phenomenon as label, exists only as an imputation. For instance, Ani Jimpa is like a *dagchö*, which only exists as an imputed phenomenon. But that voluptuous, beautiful thing that moves in all kinds of directions, which is what we call *dagshi*, the ground of labelling.

According to the substantialists, like the *Mangpö Kurwa*, this ground of labelling substantially exists. Can you see the difference? In our mundane language, a name is just an imputation, but we would say that the ground or object to which we give the name is real. But according to Prasangika Madhyamika, even the *dagshi*, the ground of labelling, does not substantially exist. This is the same as *dagchö*, the labelled phenomenon, which also does not substantially exist. This is a big difference between the Prasangika Madhyamika and the other theoreticians, including the Svetantrika Madhyamika. Because during the relative truth, even the Svetantrikas say that *dagshi*, the ground of labelling such as the five aggregates, exists substantially. They say this only during the relative truth. But other substantialists, like the *Mangpö Kurwa*, say that *dagshi*, the ground of labelling exists substantially even in the ultimate truth. I think that scientists say this as well.

This is why the Prasangikas insist that when you have a grasping mind, you are grasping at something totally baseless. They never say that there is a substantially existent ground. What do you think that western scientists or psychologists would say?

[Student]: From the point of view of Jungian psychology, we find within us a whole series of images. When the images fit something in the outside world, the projection then hooks onto the outer object, and these are increasingly subtle. So, the inner essence might be projected onto a mandala, but there is nevertheless something inside. Jung believes that those images have some substantial reality. He didn’t say what it was. But he would say that there is something out there.

[Rinpoche]: Are there any more comments?

[Student]: Anglo-American philosophers of language would say that there is a ground of all.

*Western philosophers have found many aspects of the truth, but they have no path to the truth*

*The idea of unanalysed (*matak machépa*) is important, as we don't analyse relative truth, and relative truth is the base of the buddhist path*

[Rinpoche]: But does that substantially exist? I thought that the West would say that a name is just a label, not that it substantially exists.

[Student]: In very general terms, there has been a big change over the history of science. I think Newton would definitely have said that there is an external reference. But everything has changed since Einstein.

[Rinpoche]: Would Einstein say that the *dag zhi*, the ground of labelling, does not substantially exist? If he does, he is really getting close. If he says this, and he can produce a path to understand that, then I think that no more is necessary. But I am saying that our habitual pattern is to think that the ground substantially exists.

[Student]: This is precisely the problem. Many western philosophers have also discovered things like the non-existence of self, or the fact that you can call matter into question, but nobody has been able to create a path. The path is lacking.

[Student]: In some fundamental science, people are not really so interested in existence. They are more interested in valid cognition. Is it established properly? Are there any contradictions?

[Rinpoche]: According to Jung, does the base of that mental image exist substantially?

[Student]: Jung would say that we don't know. We know the images exist, because we experience them, but that does not mean we know where they come from. But by comparing images across cultures, he would say that they come from something that is ultimately shared.

[Rinpoche]: Do you think he would say that substantially exists?

[Student]: He wouldn't say.

[Student]: Ultimately, scientists do not have a substantially existing base for mind, but in a relative sense, when you talk about how the mind works, I think they would accept the brain as a basis for mind.

[Rinpoche]: This reminds me to tell you something. I don't know whether you have realised this, but we have been discussing *matak machépa* (*ma brtags ma dpyad pa*), i.e. the unanalysed. This is quite important, because the whole path exists as part of the relative truth. As Wulstan was saying earlier, one of the problems with people like Einstein is that they may have found a certain truth, but there is no path to that truth. But Chandrakirti has the path to that truth, and when he talks about that path, he is talking about the relative truth. The base of relative truth is that we do not analyse. This 'do not analyse' is not a moral obligation; it is just that the moment that you analyse, for example 'where is me', then the whole concept will fall down. That is what we ultimately have to understand, but right now, we don't. Since we don't, we have to follow the path. If we analyse 'self', then the whole notion of 'self' will fall apart, which is what Chandrakirti is doing. Then there is no path, no practice, nothing to abandon and nothing to get. But of course, that is what you have to realise. It is the truth, but we have not yet realised this.

[Student]: the problem seems to be not so much about existence, but about the ground of existence, the ground of attachment. Our ground of attachment could be anything. Our mind seems to be able to find a so-called ground of existence in science, in religion, in almost anything. The problem with this attachment is that we look for a ground. Even a crazy person does this. But my question is what is it? We don't all seem to agree upon what we mean by existence, and the scientists like Einstein are not so simple as to say 'existence'. They realise the problem.

[Rinpoche]: But it is very simple. As simple as when you are calling someone by his or her name. We know it is a label. But what about the object that the name is labelling: does it exist? It doesn't matter that you are emotionally grasping. Either the object exists or not. The point here is that the Madhyamikas say that this object does not substantially exist.

Well, it seems from our discussion that we all seem to have some general idea of what we have been going through during the last few days. The dispute between the Prasangika Madhyamika and the substantialists is about the ground of labelling, and whether it exists substantially. In the process of establishing their philosophy, substantialists also use words like *chitsen* (*spyi mtshan*), 'generally characterised phenomenon' and *rangtsen* (*rang mtshan*), 'specially characterised

*Substantialist definitions of chitsen and rangtsen, generally and specially characterised phenomena, like the forest and the trees*

*Substantialists generally consider rangtsen to be ultimate truth, cf. the Vaibhashika atoms*

*Since the ground of self-clinging does not exist substantially, meditation on egolessness is correct*

*Buddhists want to understand selflessness, but what they negate becomes the imputed self*

*What they are seeking to abandon is the wrong object*

*When the substantialists approach the scarecrow, they will have to say, "The human has gone"*

phenomenon'. These concepts are similar to those that we came across yesterday when talking about the forest and the trees. 'Generally characterised phenomena' are things like the forest. As we discussed yesterday, when we talk about a forest and a tree, a tree is something that substantially exists, but not a forest. 'Forest' is just a label. Of course, when we talk about a tree, then we say that it has branches, roots, flowers and leaves. Then the tree becomes the *dag chö*, phenomenon as labelled and all the branches and leaves become the *dagshi*, the ground of labelling.

In general, the substantialists view *chitsen* as relative truth, and *rangtsen* as ultimate truth. We have talked about this before. For example, this is why the Vaibhashikas say that the smallest atom is the ultimate truth and a big thing like a vase is relative truth, because 'vase' is a label. And it is not only a label, but it can also be destroyed, as we discussed two years ago.

So, when we say 'self', 'me', 'I', 'we', we know that these are labelling. But then we ask, what is it that we are labelling? What are we pasting this label to, so to speak? Then the various theoreticians come up with all sorts of different answers, such as five aggregates, three aggregates or one aggregate. For the Prasangika Madhyamika, none of them exist substantially. When a crow is looking at a scarecrow, and the crow labels this as a human being, it is the same. But now we are not talking about the scarecrow, we are talking about the ground of labelling of human being.

So according to the Prasangika Madhyamika, the label 'human being' does not exist. It is only a label. And in the same way as this, the ground of labelling does not exist substantially. Notice that we are not talking about the scarecrow, although we are looking at a scarecrow. This Chandrakirti does not deny. This is quite an important remark here, as I said yesterday. If you say that the ground substantially exists, then when you meditate on egolessness, you will have the bad karma of killing someone, because you are destroying a self. But because it does not, then when you meditate on egolessness, you are doing the right thing. Similarly, there is no human being when you look at a scarecrow, so it is good and right to say that there is no human being. If a crow had never seen a human being, then a scarecrow would never work. But remember, although we are looking at a scarecrow, we are not talking about a scarecrow; we are talking about a human being. So, with this in our minds, we can go through some more slokas.

I would like to say something else about innate self and imputed self. When we are talking about the innate self, we are talking about labelling. In the process of trying to talk about the innate self, the substantialists come up with another labelling. This second labelling is the imputed self. When we look at a scarecrow and think it is a human being, this is the innate self. Then with analysis, with some kind of technique, we search. The Samkhyas searched and found something. Unlike the Samkhyas, buddhists are not trying to find a permanent ego. Of course, buddhists want to understand that this innate self is non-existent. But for the Prasangikas, when the other buddhist schools are trying to understand the selflessness of phenomena, what they are trying to negate automatically becomes imputed self. For the Samkhyas, when they talk about 'self', they don't talk about whether to abandon the self or not. But Chandrakirti is saying that when the buddhist substantialists point out that there is something that we need to abandon, the object that they are pointing to is wrong.

If you have some idea about what we have been talking about this morning, the following slokas should be all right. You will be able to chew them easily. When we look at the scarecrow, from a distance we see a human being. Then as we approach the scarecrow, we will realise that the idea that there was a human being there is wrong. Nothing of a human aspect exists there; there are no traces. Here Chandrakirti is saying that according to the substantialists, instead of saying from the beginning that there was never a human being, as they approach the scarecrow, they will have to say, "Oh, the human has gone". This is an important point.

**(c) Refuting the idea that they exist as support and something supported, 6:142**

6:142     *Neither does the self dwell in the skandhas, nor is it in the self  
The skandhas dwell. For this reason,  
Were they different this could be conceivable,  
But not being different, this is a [mistaken] notion.*

*Self and aggregates are not separate entities, so they cannot be container and contents*

Here we are talking about the container and its contents. He is saying that there is no self as the contents with the aggregates as a container. And there are no aggregates as the contents with the self as a container. Why? Because the so-called self and aggregates have to be separate entities in order to be container and contents. But because the self is not a separate entity from the aggregates, and the aggregates are not separate from the self, there is no such thing as one being a container and the other being the contents. Here, we are talking about the same thing that we talked about earlier: the ground of labelling is the container, and the labelling is the contents. So, whatever the opponents have imputed here is *lokpar tokpa* (*log par rtog pa*), wrong view.

**(d) Refuting the idea of the self as possessing the aggregates, 6:143**

6:143     *The self cannot be considered to possess form, because a self  
Does not exist and hence the idea of possession does not apply.  
[It would apply iff] they were different, as in possessing a cow; or identical, as  
in possessing a body.  
The self is neither form nor different.*

*Self cannot possess the aggregates, or vice versa, because they are neither the same nor different*

This sloka is very similar to what we just talked about. The self does not have form or aggregates, because there is no such thing as a self, so it cannot possess anything. Thus the term *denpa* (*ldan pa*), which means to ‘possess’ or ‘have’, cannot be used here. There are two ways that we talk about possessing or ‘having’. The first is something like ‘a person has form’, something which is not necessarily different from you. The other is, ‘a person has an ornament’. But both ways cannot be used here, because the self and the aggregates are neither the same nor different.

**(ii) Summarising, and how this view is taught about in terms of expedient and definitive truth, 6:144-145**

6:144     *Form is not a self and self does not possess form;  
Form does not exist in a self and self does not exist in form.  
The four [other] skandhas too are like this,  
These are the twenty views of a self.*

*The twenty wrong views of self, referred to as a mountain with 20 peaks*

*The Samkhyas’ imputed self is not included, as it is independent from the aggregates*

There are four statements about self and form in this sloka. The form is not the self. The self does not possess the form. The self does not exist, or there is no existence of self, in the form. The self does not have a form. The same is true for the other four aggregates; and four times five gives a total of twenty. These are twenty faults or wrong views of holding onto a so-called self. In some sutras, the Buddha sometimes refers to them as a mountain with twenty peaks. You should note that the Samkhyas’ imputed self is not included within these twenty, because it is independent from the aggregates.

In the *Mulamadhyamaka-karikas*, Nagarjuna talks about 25 different kinds of views. He adds a further five wrong views. These are a self that is independent from form, a self that is independent from feelings, a self that is independent from consciousness, and so on. He says that

All 20 wrong views will be destroyed when we realise the selflessness of the person

[H12]

**(b) Refuting the existence of the individual as something indescribable (694)**

[H13]

**(i) Statement of that view, 6:146**

6:146     *Some [hold] an indescribable substantial person  
With identical or different, permanent or impermanent self and skandhas.  
[Such a self] can be seen as an object of the six consciousnesses,  
And is regarded as the ground of I-fixation.*

I realised that we have been using the name *Mangpö Kurwa* to refer to the Sammitiyas. In fact, this school has three different sub-schools:

The three Sammitiya sub-schools

The Nemapuwa hold that self and aggregates exist substantially, but the relationship between them is inexpressible.

Like the Prasangikas, they say that the basis of self-grasping is the self

[H13]

**(ii) Explaining what is wrong with it**

this kind of self does not exist. And in this case, the Samkhyas' view of imputed self will be included. But we are not talking about that right now.

6:145     *The mountain [-like] view [of an inherently existing self] is destroyed by the [wisdom]-vajra of realising selflessness.  
Simultaneously with this are also destroyed  
The strong mountains of the view of the transitory collection,  
The towering peaks [of the twenty views of transitory collection].*

This sloka is quite easy to understand. He is saying that when we realise the selflessness of the person, this vajra-like wisdom destroys these twenty views, and when this view is demolished, then all suffering and all imputed selves will be destroyed. We should know one thing in this sloka. These twenty views are not necessarily obvious imputed views. They may be within us. Even those who have not studied any theory and are not following any doctrine could still have these twenty views. This is because for many lifetimes, we have been influenced by doctrines that believe in things like a self that has a form, or the form is the self, the twenty views that we have talked about. Here Chandrakirti is saying that the vajra-like wisdom will destroy everything, including these kinds of imputed self.

**(b) Refuting the existence of the individual as something indescribable (694)**

**(i) Statement of that view, 6:146**

6:146     *Some [hold] an indescribable substantial person  
With identical or different, permanent or impermanent self and skandhas.  
[Such a self] can be seen as an object of the six consciousnesses,  
And is regarded as the ground of I-fixation.*

I realised that we have been using the name *Mangpö Kurwa* to refer to the Sammitiyas. In fact, this school has three different sub-schools:

- *Kaurukullaka (sa sgron ril gnang pa'i sde)*
- *Avantava (rung ba pa'i sde)*
- *Vatsiputriya or Nemapuwa (gnas ma bu ba'i sde)*

Now, sloka 146 describes an idea that comes from the *Nemapuwa*. If you read it in just a glimpse, it seems to be a bit of a contradiction, a bit paradoxical. This sub-school of the *Mangpö Kurwa* is saying that we cannot say that the self and the aggregates are the same, separate, permanent or impermanent. Their view is that this is inexpressible. But at the same time, they say that the aggregates and the self do exist substantially. They hold the interesting view that this inexpressible thing can be perceived by the six kinds of consciousness, and that it is the ground when grasping to the self arises. Remember that we are still tackling the root problem of trying to find what grasping to the self is based on. This school is quite tricky, because in one way they are quite similar to the Prasangika Madhyamika, in that they say that the base of this grasping to the self is the self, not the aggregates. But they are unlike some of the substantialist schools that we discussed earlier, who believe that the ground exists substantially, but the label exists only as something imputed. Here the *Nemapuwa* are saying that both ground and label exist substantially.

[H14]

**(a) If it was indescribable, it could not substantially exist, 6:147**

6:147     *Because the difference between form and mind is not indescribable,  
And [something] real and existing is not perceived as indescribable.  
Were someone to prove a real self,  
Being a proven reality like the mind, it would not be indescribable.*

*Something inexpressible  
cannot be said to exist,  
and an animate mind is  
expressible*

This sloka is saying that something cannot substantially exist if it is inexpressible. If something is inexpressible, we cannot say that it exists, since then we have expressed something. If we say that form is inanimate and, separate from this inanimate form, we have a mind that is animate, then this mind is expressible. Chandrakirti argues that this ‘is not inexpressible’. Generally, if something substantially exists, we cannot say that it is inexpressible. If a self exists substantially as an entity then, like a mind, it is something expressible. It is not inexpressible.

[H14]

**(b) If it was indescribable, (holders of this view themselves) say that it could only exist as an imputation, 6:148**

6:148     *Because you [claim] the nature of a pot does not exist substantially,  
As one cannot describe its form and so forth [as different or identical],  
A self and skandhas being [equally] indescribable,  
[Does not allow you to view] self as inherently existing / You cannot view self  
as inherently existing.*

*Something inexpressible  
that exists can only do so  
imputedly*

*Therefore, their self  
cannot exist substantially*

In these slokas, Chandrakirti is saying that if something exists, yet it is inexpressible, then it only exists as imputed. For example, a name such as ‘vase’ does not exist substantially, because it is a label. We discussed this earlier. According to this particular school, they are saying that the name ‘vase’ does exist, but we cannot express this name and its substance such as mud and atoms as either one, separate, permanent or impermanent. In their view, the ideas ‘self’ and ‘aggregates’ exist, but we cannot express that they exist separately or as one. In this case, the consequence is that we also cannot express that the self exists. So, the consequence is that self does not truly exist.

There is a difference between slokas 147 and 148. In sloka 147, Chandrakirti is pointing out a consequence of what the opponents have said. We cannot say that self is inexpressible if we say that it exists substantially. He uses the example of form and mind, which they accept. This is a typical Prasangika way of refuting. In sloka 148, Chandrakirti says that the self cannot exist substantially, because you cannot express it. Anything that cannot be expressed cannot exist as a substance. Here we have the example of a vase, where ‘vase’ is just a label. Again, he is using their theory. Of course, we can say ‘vase’, so it is expressible.

[H14]

**(c) Since it is not a real phenomenon, it cannot be proved to be real, 6:149**

6: 149     *You do not regard consciousness as different from itself,  
But you do regard it as an entity different from the skandhas.  
Because entities are regarded as having these aspects [of identity or  
difference],  
[But here] not having these [two] characteristics of entities, there is no self.*

*Since their self cannot be  
said to be one or  
different, it does not have  
any of the characteristics  
of an entity*

In this sloka, Chandrakirti is saying that their imputed self does not seem to be an entity, because it does not have any of the characteristics of an entity. They say that mind is not separate from the self but that form is separate from the self. Entities such as consciousness and form do have

characteristics, such as being one or different. But according to their previous thesis, the consequence is that there is no self, they have said that they cannot express whether their imputed self is one or different from the skandhas.

[H11]

## (ii) Presentation of the person as dependently imputed

[H12]

### (a) Using previously explained reasoning to establish that it is imputed, 6:150

6:150     *Therefore the basis for fixating on a self is not an entity,  
It is not other than the skandhas, nor is it the skandhas themselves;  
It is neither based on the skandhas, nor does [it] possess them.  
[Rather, self] is established in dependence on the skandhas.*

*Chandrakirti's view: the self is not same or separate from aggregates, nor their container or possessor. But relatively, self arises dependently on the aggregates*

*Therefore, we can have notions of practising Dharma and gaining enlightenment*

This is an important sloka, which is almost like an expression of Chandrakirti's own view. Given all the previous arguments, we can conclude that the base or object of this self-grasping does not substantially exist. So this self is not separate from the aggregates, this self is not the aggregates, this self is not the container of these aggregates and this self does not have these aggregates. But on the relative level, without any analysis, we can say that this self arises depending on the five aggregates, creating a completely baseless notion of self.

As in the selflessness of phenomena, Chandrakirti refutes all the truly existing causes: self-arising, other-arising, both and neither. Then in the relative truth he says that, like cause and effect or shoot and seed, things arise through dependent arising. They arise depending on each other. Likewise, in the relative truth, here he also says that depending on the five aggregates this notion of self can arise, and based on that, attachment to the self develops. Therefore, we can have the notions of self, practising Dharma, purifying defilements and attaining enlightenment. All these are perfectly possible.

Next, we will come to the famous 'seven-fold reasoning of the chariot', which made Chandrakirti quite popular in India and Tibet, and will now hopefully do the same for him in France. But before then, perhaps we can have some questions.

[Q]: My question is about the Vatsiputriya. Did they actually mention the term 'substantially existent'?

[A]: Yes. That is exactly what Chandrakirti is saying.

[Q]: It is worth noting here that 'substantially existing' is used here in a philosophical way. It does not mean physically existing, but existing in and of itself.

[Q]: I have a question about terminology. When you say 'without analysis', what do you mean?

[A]: Yes, we need to finalise the meaning of *matak machépa* (*ma brtags ma dpyad pa*).

[Q]: In French, one could understand it to mean several things. I suppose it is not 'without conception', because as Mipham Rinpoche said, "without conception there is no teaching". I also suppose that it is not 'without inference', because as Mipham Rinpoche also said, "without inference we will be like new-born babies".

[A]: It means 'not analysing using the reasoning of any particular doctrine'. Many of you may not be followers of any doctrine, such as believing in reincarnation or whatever. But although you may be a so-called 'free thinker', saying you do not believe in any doctrine or philosophical system, you still have a belief. And this belief is very much influenced by these doctrines. When we speak of 'analysis', we are primarily referring to theoretical analysis. Perhaps we could say it refers to any system of analysis coming from a certain path that has a view, meditation, action and result. If you use that kind of analysis, then the identity of relative truth will fall apart. But this is turning into quite a big discussion! When we say 'view', what do we mean? A view has to have both relative truth and ultimate truth. This is one of my arguments against people like Krishnamurti, the famous scholar and

*Without both relative and ultimate views, you cannot construct a path*

*If you analyse the relative while attempting to construct the ultimate, the relative will collapse*

*[Q]: Why do the Svantrikas say that the aggregates are the base for self-grasping?*

*[A]: Because they believe in other-arising*

philosopher. From my very limited view, I find that he does not have both relative truth and ultimate truth. And if you don't have both relative truth and ultimate truth, you cannot construct a path. You cannot just say 'hey look, nothing exists', because it makes you hopeless. Do you understand?

[Q]: I am just looking for a guide in life. What kind of analysis should I reject?

[A]: This is a very interesting thought. You should ask the khenpo who will be coming soon. It's very interesting, because there is some kind of blur, isn't there.

[Q]: What if we don't have any philosophical view or background whatsoever, like a newborn baby.

[A]: It is very difficult. There is almost no one like that nowadays. I guess the bottom line is that analysis is unavoidable. But if you find something, then you should go to see Chandrakirti and he would just refute it.

[Q]: But we need to analyse in order to find our way to our goal.

[A]: When I say don't analyse, this is not given as moral advice. Of course, we should analyse, and as a student, one has to analyse. But the substantialists analyse the relative truth in their attempt to construct the ultimate truth. When Chandrakirti tells them not to analyse, this is because if you analyse the relative truth, then it will fall apart.

[Q]: Is a correct analysis on the relative level the kind of analysis that explains how things work? For instance, if you want to boil an egg, you have already an idea of causality, that effects follow causes and so forth. But if you then bring into play a whole theory about causation, and an explanation of what is going on when you boil the egg, and then you say 'this is it, this is the case', then you have mixed up the two truths. You are talking in absolute terms about what is merely relative. And that is what Chandrakirti is trying to get rid of.

[A]: I think so, yes.

[Q]: But if you really believe that you are boiling an egg, you are already classifying it.

[A]: I don't think it is necessary to classify the egg into order to boil it, even relatively!

[Rinpoche]: Now I have a question for you. The Svantrikas say that the aggregates are the base or ground for attachment to the self of the person. Relatively, this is what they say. I want you to tell me, what is the reason that they say this? I will give you a hint: go back to the selflessness of phenomena, and then tell me.

[Student]: A self is only perceived when perceiving the skandhas, and there is no perception of a self apart from perceiving the skandhas.

[Rinpoche]: This is connected to what I want to hear, but say more. What is the reason why they say this?

[Student]: Because if it arises, it must have a cause, otherwise you would be talking about something that is arising without a cause.

[Rinpoche]: As you know, a philosophy student should not only be able to explain the meaning, but they should also be able to use the right terms, so use the right terms. You have almost explained the meaning, but I want to hear the right terms as you say it, because I want you to get used to these terms. What is the reason?

[Student]: I just said that in general, if any phenomenon arises, we have to assume that it arises from some cause.

[Rinpoche]: Yes, you said the meaning quite clearly, but I would like you to use the correct philosophical terms, so that we can get used to them.

[Student]: Conventionally, they accept causality from other.

[Rinpoche]: That's it. That's what we want to hear, because the Svantrikas are believers in other-arising. I was just trying to be very Tibetan here. When we study, firstly it is difficult to remember things. Then we might remember the meaning, but our philosophy masters always insist that we use the right expression, the right terms.

[H12]

### (b) Applying the simile of the chariot (696)

**(i) Summary, 6:151**

6:151     *Similarly, we cannot consider a chariot as being other than its parts;  
Nor identical; nor possessing these;  
It is not in the parts; nor are the parts in it;  
It is not the mere collection; and it is not their shape.*

I think it will be slightly easier today. Most of the things that we are going to talk about today are like a summary of what we have been talking about before. Some of these phrases are difficult for me to translate, because of my inadequate English vocabulary. For example, here Chandrakirti uses *zhenmin mayin* (*gzhän min ma yin*) as a very powerful way of saying ‘oneness’, but it literally means ‘not otherness’. You might think that it doesn’t make much difference, but as a philosopher, one has to be very strict with the terms that we use. I am going to place some of the blame here on Tulku Rinpoche, who is an excellent translator, but told me to translate. So, this is what you get! Great khenpos, like my teacher Khenpo Rinchen, would never need a commentary. But right now, I am using a commentary, and although you may think that there is a lot of information in the commentary that I have not given you, it is all here. I have not gone into all the arguments among the Tibetan interpreters, but all the arguments between the Indian philosophers are here. And all the information is contained within the short sentences of the slokas. Such is the power of the language.

Although this seven-fold analysis of the chariot is used here to refute the imputed self, you will see that it can be used as our method of analysis in meditation. The seven points are:

*The seven-fold analysis of the chariot*

1. The chariot is **not other than** the parts of the chariot.
2. The chariot is **not the same as** or one with the parts of the chariot.
3. The chariot is **not endowed with** the parts of the chariot.
4. The chariot is **not the contents** that are contained within the parts of the chariot.
5. The chariot is **not the container** that contains its parts as contents.

These five types of reasoning were already very popular before Chandrakirti, but he added two other types of reasoning:

6. The chariot is **not an assemblage** of the parts of the chariot.
7. The chariot is **not the shape** of the chariot.

The seven-fold reasoning is really something that you can explore in detail. When you go through this seven-fold reasoning, try to go beyond your normal way of thinking. It is difficult for us to realise these, because we either think things like the parts of the chariot make up the chariot, the chariot is the container for its parts. Perhaps it would help us if we used the example of a car.

*Despite this analysis,  
Chandrakirti negates  
neither the chariot nor its  
parts in relative truth*

One thing that I have to tell you here is that Chandrakirti is not negating the chariot or the parts of the chariot in the relative truth. He never does this! For example, when we say ‘car’, the car is just an idea. So, the car can never be the same as the parts of the car, such as the steering wheel. Yet, at the same time, without the steering wheel, doors and wheels, the idea of ‘car’ cannot occur in our minds, so we can also say that the car is not a separate entity from its parts. The main point here is that we can apply this same analysis to the aggregates and the self.

**(ii) Detailed Explanation****(a) Establishing the simile**

[H15] **(i) If it is analysed with the sevenfold reasoning, it has no substantial existence**

[H16] **(a) The mere collection of parts is not a chariot, 6:152.1-2**

[H16] **(b) The collection of parts and shape is not a chariot**

[H17] **(i) Without the parts, the collection and shape are not the chariot, 6:152.3-4**

6:152     *If a mere collection [of the parts] were the chariot,  
The disassembled parts should too be the chariot.  
But that the parts, without a part-possessor,  
Or even the mere shape should be the chariot, is absurd.*

*Without possessor, there  
can be no possession, i.e.  
no parts. So, the shape or  
collection of these parts  
cannot exist either.*

This sloka is extending or expressing in further detail the two last reasons of ‘assemblage’ and ‘shape’. If the mere assemblage of the parts of chariot were a chariot, then when the parts are in a garage for instance, separated in different bags or whatever, then you would still have to see a chariot. But we don’t see a chariot at that time. We also know that the possessor of the parts, namely the chariot, does not exist. It’s a mere idea. Even our opponents agree with that. And since there is no possessor of the parts, then there cannot be any possession. Therefore, the parts of the chariot are also an idea. So, there is no chariot.

[H17] **(ii) Nor is the shape of the individual parts the chariot, 6:153-154**

6:153     *You claim the original shape is still in the individual parts,  
Even [now] when the chariot is assembled.  
Thus, as it did not exist when the parts were unassembled  
The chariot does not exist now either.*

*If mere shape is the  
chariot, do we mean the  
shape before or after the  
parts are assembled?*

This is very much how we think about a car. When we say ‘car’, so much of the time when we think or talk about a car, we are referring to its shape. Of course, we are referring to all of the things we have discussed, but we are also referring to the shape. Now if a mere shape is the chariot, then we ask our opponent two questions. The point is that there are two shapes here – a shape before assembly, and a shape after assembly. So which one are we talking about? If you say that it is the shape before assembly, then Chandrakirti has two more questions. Before assembly, each part has its own shape. For example, wheels are round; nails are sharp, things like that. Is this the chariot? Or it is the case that as we assemble the chariot, things that used to be round are no more round, because a new form or shape begins to appear during assembly. So, is that the chariot? This is Chandrakirti! He is really going to analyse everything here!

*If the shape were in the  
parts before assembly,  
then we should see a  
chariot with each part  
before assembly*

Suppose you are saying the shape of the parts of the chariot before assembly is the chariot, i.e. all the things that are round, sharp, long and so on. In this case, then when all these shapes are separate, perhaps the wheel is over there, the nail is up on the roof, the brakes are somewhere in the basement, then you will see a lot of chariots! You would have to see a complete chariot everywhere that there is a part of a chariot. But in our experience, that is not the case. So, Chandrakirti is saying that because we do not see a chariot before the assembly of the parts of the chariot, after the assembly, we will also not see a chariot.

*If the shape were in the parts after assembly, then the shape of the parts must all change*

6:154     *Now, when there is a chariot  
If the wheels etc. exist differently,  
This should be perceived, yet it is not.  
Thus, the chariot cannot exist in mere shape.*

Now we come to the second question. As we assemble the chariot, of course we are changing the original shape. For example, the floor of the car used to be flat, but as you assemble it, it changes. In some cases, there are major changes; in some cases, the changes are slight. Now if you say that this new shape is the chariot, then we have sloka 154. In this case, after the assembly of the chariot, we will have to see a new shape in every part of the chariot, but we don't see this.

[H17]

### **(iii) Nor is the shape of the assembled parts the chariot, 6:155-156**

*The idea of assemblage cannot exist, and an idea cannot have shape*

6:155     *Because your [substantial] collection is non-existent,  
Shape is not a collection of parts.  
Therefore, based on nothing,  
How can you have a shape?*

Now, as I mentioned, there were four questions and two root questions. The second root question was whether the chariot is the same as its shape after assembly of the parts. That is what we usually say. Here he is attacking the idea of a new shape. It hasn't become like some different kind of shape. Therefore, again he says it is not possible to say that the shape of the chariot is the chariot.

Here, he is saying that if you say that the ground substantially exists and labelling exists only as imputed, then there is a contradiction. The very idea of a so-called assemblage does not exist. What is it? What does this assemblage or collection mean? It is not that there is a separate entity called the assemblage when we have assembled the wheels, roof, floor and the rest. There is no such thing. You yourself say that when a car is assembled, you don't see the parts of the car's shape separately and individually. When we look at the car, we don't see one big nail! The very idea of an assemblage does not exist substantially, and an idea can't have a shape.

6:156     *According to your own thesis  
Of the manifest result being untrue,  
You should know it must be based on a false cause,  
And that all creation is likewise.*

Since the idea of an assemblage is just an idea, shape cannot exist. But depending on a false or unreal cause such as ignorance, a false or unreal result, such as karmic formation, can also arise. This is what the opponent has to understand. Now, in the next sloka, we come to another school that says that things exist as they are, like vases, forest, trees and tents. Then onto that base we project phenomena like vases, tents and forests. I think this school is also very similar to scientists or the way that we think.

[H17]

### **(iv) Using the proof for other related (examples), 6:157**

6:157     *Consequently, it applies to all those ascertaining the eight atoms,  
That their thought of vase is absurd,  
Since without creation, the eight atoms also cannot exist,  
And therefore [objects] cannot exist as the shape.*

Different Vaibhashika schools believe in between 8 and 11 types of atom

They argue that when these atoms combine and function, we can have a self. But this requires arising, which has been refuted already

As we have seen, an idea such as a ‘vase’ is a label, and we are trying to find the ground onto which you affix this label. Now we come to the explanation of this school, one of the strong Vaibhashika schools. They say that there are eight major types of atom or particle: earth, water, fire, air, and then form, smell, taste, and touch. They sometimes add a ninth particle, the particle of ‘sound’. And in certain phenomena, there is a tenth particle of ‘sense’. Some other phenomena have extra senses, so altogether there are eleven particles or atoms.

Many of these particles cannot be cognised by our ordinary eyes or ears, so the existence of these particles can be recognised only by their function. Remember that we were talking about function earlier? Now this school says that if, for instance, you are making a vase, the very reason that it holds together is because of the water particles. And we can only move the vase from the bedroom to the living room because of the particles of air. They are saying that when there is a gathering of some or all of these particles, and when there is function, then we have ideas such as ‘chariot’, ‘vase’, ‘self’ and so on. But Chandrakirti is saying that this is not possible. Ideas such as ‘vase’ or ‘self’ are not possible because first we have to talk about arising. And as soon as we talk about arising, we can go back to the analysis of arising from self, other, both or neither. We have thoroughly analysed this, and we know that phenomena have not been born, so you cannot create a substantially existing shape. We can discuss this later if you are not satisfied with this explanation.

[H15]

## (ii) The chariot exists for ordinary people without analysis

[H16]

### (a) When dependently imputed, the chariot exists in conventional truth, 6:158

6:158     *Indeed, neither in suchness nor in ordinary experience, is such [phenomena],  
Established according to the sevenfold analysis.  
Yet in this world without analysis,  
Based on their parts, things are dependently imputed.*

The chariot exists neither ultimately nor relatively, but depending on the notion of parts, we can have a notion of chariot

[H16]

### (b) In the same way, things with parts etc. exist in conventional truth, 6:159

6:159     *Having parts which again have details,  
A chariot is regarded by everyone as possessing itself.  
Beings exist as possessing themselves.  
Do not demolish the all-concealer accepted in ordinary experience.*

If we impute that chariot is assemblage, shape etc., we are destroying the ideas of ordinary people

So, Chandrakirti is saying that the chariot, the idea of chariot, exists only as a dependently arising phenomenon. Depending on the parts of the chariot, you can have the idea of chariot. Based on the parts, depending on the idea of parts, then we can have the idea of a possessor of those parts. In this world, when we say ‘get me a chariot’, this kind of idea only works based on dependent arising. If you go on insisting that the mere assemblage, shape or any of the earlier imputations are the chariot, then you are destroying the ideas of ordinary people. Chandrakirti is saying that if we agreed with our opponents, we could never say ‘get me a chariot’. We would have to say something like ‘get me the assemblage, shape, that which is called vehicle’, or whatever. But ordinary people don’t think like that.

*The problem for the substantialists is that they agree that the parts exist, but the possessor of the parts does not*

[H15]

The point is this. Most of our opponents here are buddhists. They all have the view of selflessness of a person. But Chandrakirti is pointing out the consequence that because of the way that they establish their view, they keep on saying that the parts substantially exist, but the possessor of the parts does not. Remember, as substantialists, they say that the ground substantially exists but the label such as ‘chariot’ only exists as an imputation. That’s why they are destroying the ideas accepted by ordinary people. So, as you can see in the structural outline, Gorampa says that in the same way, we can say that things with parts exist in conventional truth.

[H16]

### (iii) The benefits of analysis with the sevenfold reasoning

#### (a) It introduces the true nature of things, 6:160

6:160     *How can something not existing in this seven-fold way then exist?  
The yogi not finding anything,  
Will easily enter suchness.  
However, understand it [also] exists just [unanalysed].*

*The sevenfold reasoning helps the yogi enter the ultimate truth more easily, but he still accepts the mere, unanalysed self in conventional truth*

This sloka is telling us the benefit of understanding the seven-fold analysis of the chariot, and it will be helpful for many of the questions that you asked yesterday. As a yogi analyses using this seven-fold reasoning, the yogi will realise that of the whole notion of the chariot, the parts of the chariot and all this, nothing exists. He will not find anything that exists substantially. So, the seven-fold reasoning will then enable this yogi to enter the ultimate truth more easily. At the same time, during the relative truth, when the yogi needs to travel somewhere, he will say ‘bring me a chariot’, and at that time, he will use words and ideas like chariot. But when he uses these ideas, he will know that he is only using them during the conventional truth. And in the conventional truth, you are not analysing as in the ultimate truth.

[H16]

#### (b) It refutes notions about things with parts, 6:161

6:161     *When there is no existence of a chariot,  
Without the whole, the parts also do not exist.  
For example, if a chariot burns up there are no parts,  
When the fire of knowledge incinerates the whole, the parts [are burned] too.*

*Since there is no possessor of parts, there is nothing possessed.  
Thus there are no parts either*

According to Gorampa, this dialogue is also unique to Chandrakirti. Most of our opponents believe that the parts substantially exist, but that the possessor of the parts, such as the chariot, is just an idea. Here Chandrakirti is saying that as we examine the concept ‘chariot’ using the seven-fold reasoning, we will understand that there is no chariot. Since there is no chariot that is the possessor of its parts, then you cannot say that the possession, namely the parts, exists either. For instance, if a chariot is burned, the idea of chariot will disappear. At that time, although maybe some parts may still be lying around here and there, the idea of the chariot cannot occur. You can only think things like ‘this wheel belonged to my chariot that was consumed by fire’; you cannot think of the chariot itself. The last line says that likewise, the wisdom fire such as the seven-fold reasoning of the chariot can consume or burn all conceptions such as the chariot or the parts of chariot. In the next sloka, Chandrakirti will again stress dependent arising.

[H14]

#### (a) Applying the simile to the subject under discussion (699)

[H15]

#### (i) At the time of dependent imputation, a proprietor and so on exist, 6:162

6:162      *Likewise as in accepted ordinary experience, based on the aggregates,  
The elements, and the six sense-spheres,  
The self is considered the proprietor.  
The appropriation is the action while [self] is the agent.*

If we analyse, we will not find the concept ‘chariot’. If we do not analyse, then in this world, there is a notion of chariot. Likewise, in this world, in this existence, we can have all these other conceptions, such as five aggregates, eighteen different kinds of elements and six different kinds of *ayatanas*. And we can say that this self is the possessor of all these faculties. So therefore, we can say that the aggregates are the ‘action’ and the self is the ‘agent’. Again, Chandrakirti is stressing that if we analyse, all kinds of extremes will disappear.

[H15]

**(ii) At the time of thorough analysis, all elaborations without exception are stopped, 6:163**

6:163      *Not substantially [existing], [self] is not unchanging,  
Not arising and ceasing, not changeable,  
Not [characterised] by permanence or any other extreme,  
Not identical, and not different [from the skandhas].*

*Through analysis, we know the self does not exist, so it is neither permanent nor impermanent, neither arising nor exhausting*

This is a very beautiful sloka. It is something that we could almost write on our wall and think about. He is saying that if we analyse, using wisdom or analytical methods such as arising from the four different kinds of extremes, or the seven-fold analysis of the chariot, we know that his self does not exist as a truly existing substance or entity. He is saying that since the self does not exist truly, the self is not permanent. It is also not impermanent. The self does not arise, so it does not have cessation or exhaustion. Of course, this self does not have all the imputed qualities that have been invented by theoreticians like the Samkhyas. Since it is not substantially and truly existent, this self is not one with the aggregates or other than the aggregates. So in this case, we ask Chandrakirti, where does this idea of ‘me’ or ‘I’ come from?

[H15]

**(iii) The focus of belief in an ‘I’ is set up by the power of ignorance, 6:164**

6:164      *In reference to [the ground]  
Which sentient beings always strongly grasp as an I,  
Arises the self of the mind fixating on ‘mine’,  
It arises from ignorance [in terms of] unanalysed accepted [ordinary experience]*

*Grasping to self comes from ignorance, and ignorance comes from grasping to self, but we can only say these exist without analysis*

Looking at five aggregates or one aggregate, we have this idea of self. And then the minds of sentient beings will grasp at this self. After grasping to the self, we will then have this grasping towards things, such as ‘this is my bag’, ‘this is my house’ and so on. This continuous grasping to the self comes from ignorance, and the ignorance is grasping towards the self itself. But even that, I can only say exists based on no analysis. Using the same analysis, Chandrakirti is also saying that even the things that we think of, like ‘this is my bag’, can be purified or refuted. Using the same analysis, we can refute grasping towards things.

[H15]

**(iv) Refuting ideas of ‘mine’ in the same way, 6:165.1-2**

[H12]

**(c) The result of that analysis, 6:165.3-4**

*There is no self, therefore no agent, no action, and no possessions of self, so the yogi is liberated*

6:165     *Because without agent there is no action,  
Therefore, with no self, there is no ‘mine’.  
And therefore seeing self and mine as empty,  
The yogin is fully liberated.*

Since there is no self that is an agent, there is no action. Therefore there are no notions, such as ‘this is my form, these are my feelings’, and so on. A yogi will then be liberated from these kinds of delusions by knowing that there is no self and there are no possessions of the self. In the next sloka, Chandrakirti is now going to say that these analyses should be applied to all other phenomena.

[H11]

**(ii) Using that same logic to expose all existing things**

[H12]

**(a) Exposing all existing things that are dependently imputed, 6:166**

6:166     *Vases, cloth, tents, armies, forests, garlands, trees,  
Houses, carts, inns and so forth, whatever things there may be,  
Accordingly, [as these things appear] to ordinary persons, accept them as  
such,  
Because the Lord of the Sages did not argue with ordinary experience.*

*When analysed, no phenomena exist substantially, but when left unanalysed, all exist*

When we were studying in school, the students began to feel a happier when we came to this sloka, because from now on, things will get a little lighter. As the sloka says, all phenomena, such as vases, clothing, tent-cloth, armies, forests, trees, houses, small chariots and guesthouses, if we analyse all these we will not find anything that exists substantially. But in the conventional truth, without any analysis, all these exist, because the Lord Buddha never wants to dispute with ordinary beings. The next sloka will also emphasise that this reasoning should be applied to everything.

[H12]

**(b) Exposing in particular all existing things that are actions, 6:167**

6:167     *Parts and whole, qualities and qualifiers, passion and the impassioned,  
Description and described, firewood and fire, all such objects –  
When subjected to the analysis of the chariot, in all seven aspects, have no  
existence.  
Otherwise, in terms of accepted ordinary experience, they do exist.*

*When analysed, there are no parts, qualities or possessors of these, but unanalysed, all exist*

Consider parts, for example the wheels of a car, and the possessor of the parts, such as car. Consider qualities, such as compassion, and the possessor of the quality, such as a compassionate person. If you analyse all these with the seven-fold reasoning, you will not find anything substantial, but without analysis, these are known in the conventional truth. Without any analysis, these are apprehended. Ordinary people don’t even use words like ‘exist’; this language is more philosophical. In the next sloka, Chandrakirti is emphasising that this same reasoning can be applied to the idea of cause and result.

[H12]

**(c) Exposing all existing things that are causes and effects**

[H13]

**(i) According to reasoning already explained, causes and effects have no true nature, 6:168**

*When analysed, we cannot say whether cause or result comes first, but unanalysed, cause and effect can be apprehended*

6:168     [Only] if you see a cause creating something is it a cause;  
When no result is created, there cannot be a cause.  
If the result has a cause, it exists, therefore  
Tell us, which gives rise to which, and which is first?

I think that, according to your western proverbs, this is the question of chicken and egg. Chandrakirti is using the same question here. But I don't know whether chicken and egg has anything to do with cause and result. If someone asked me whether chicken or egg comes first, I would say that they come together. The chicken's father and mother came before their sons and daughters; it's not about the egg! I don't see what is so great about the chicken and egg. Anyway, if a cause gives birth to a result, then we can say that it is a cause. If it does not give birth to a result, then it is not a cause. We can only have a result if there is a cause. So tell me, which cause or result came first? But if you don't analyse, then this entire system of cause, condition and effect can be apprehended, like chicken and egg, or chicken and chicken's father and mother.

Whenever he discusses cause and effect, Chandrakirti always seems to want to emphasise and explain it further. He does the same here, in the next two slokas.

[H13]

**(ii) When analysed in terms of whether or not there is contact between them, they have no true nature, 6:169-170**

6:169     According to you, if a result is created from meeting the cause,  
With identical potential, cause and result would not be different.  
With different potential, causes and non-causes would not be distinguishable.  
Therefore, with these two refuted, there can be no further alternative.

6:170     If your cause does not create a result, the result cannot exist as an object.  
A cause without a result, not being a cause, is even non-existent.  
Because these both resemble illusions  
I am not at fault, accepting the entities of ordinary experience as existent.

*If cause and result exist substantially, they are in contact or not, but then they cannot function as cause and result*

*But for Chandrakirti, both cause and result are illusory, so the problem of contact does not arise*

If cause and result exist substantially or truly, then the question is, when the cause gives birth to the result, do the cause and result meet or not? If they meet, if there is a contact between cause and result, then the consequence is that cause and result are not different. If there is no contact, then there will be no difference between this cause, and another cause that is unrelated to this particular result. For example, the seedling that is the cause of rice, and something that is not a cause of the same result, such as a stone, will not be distinguishable. If you insist on a substantially existing cause or result, then there is no third alternative for cause to give birth to result other than these two extremes of contact and no contact.

Since according to your conception, the cause does not give birth to a result, you cannot say that this so-called result is a result. For Chandrakirti and the Prasangikas, since we say that both result and cause are illusory in both relative truth and ultimate truth, we do not have to go through this analysis of whether they have any contact or no contact. Now, in the next two slokas, our opponent will try to refute Chandrakirti. This is quite an interesting argument.

[H13]

**(iii) Rejecting two objections, such as the similarity (in consequences) claimed to apply to our own argument**

[H14]

**(a) The opponent's objection, 6:171-172**

*Does Chandrakirti's refutation contact his opponent's argument?*

*The opponents say they can see clearly, so there is no need to analyse whether there is contact*

*Chandrakirti says he has no position, so he has no need to respond to their criticism*

[H14]

[H15]

[H16]

[H16]

[H17]

6:171 [Objection:] Does this refutation meet with what it refutes or not.  
Doesn't the [refuted] fault apply to you?  
Whenever voicing [such refutation] you merely defeat yourself,  
And your refutation has no power to refute anything.

At last, our opponent is using Chandrakirti's tactic. He is saying that when you refute us, does your method of refutation have any contact with our proposition or not? Shouldn't you ask yourself this question as well? You, Chandrakirti, persist in thinking that you have managed to refute others, but you do not know that the same problem lies in yourself; therefore, all your refutations have failed, because all your reasoning is also illusory.

6:172 Because the consequence of your words is deceptive,  
They are absurd. And as they negate things real  
You will not be accepted by the holy.  
As you have no position, your refutations are random confrontation.

Here, our opponents are saying that Chandrakirti is denying all phenomena. They argue that when a magnet and a small piece of iron are at a particular distance, the magnet will attract the iron. Similarly, when we look at things, within a certain distance we can see things clearly, and when we are not within a certain distance, we may not see them. At this point, we don't have to analyse whether the magnet and the iron have contact or no contact, and so on. Therefore, people like you, Chandrakirti, will never be accepted by holy beings, since you yourself do not have any theory. Your only interest is in attacking other people, so the noble ones will not accept you. Now Chandrakirti will answer this, in the following sloka.

**(b) What is wrong with it (701)**

**(i) Dispelling the objection by having no position**

**(a) Our argument does not have the same flaw because we do not take the position of true existence, 6:173**

6:173 [Reply:] Whether or not the refutation touches  
What is to be refuted – the fallacy in question  
Befalls those taking the positions of true [existence],  
But not myself, as I have no position.

Chandrakirti is saying that he has no position or theory. Only those who have some kind of position or theory, like you, will have to answer this question. But now you ask how does this work for me? It works in two ways, which I will explain.

**(b) An example of an action that is valid as long as there is no analysis**

**(i) A valid example that refutes the objection, 6:174**

6:174 Just as you may perceive the sun  
Reflected during an eclipse,  
[Thinking off] whether or not sun and reflection touch,  
Is absurd, as [the reflection] arises as a conventional dependent.

*We can use the sun's reflection to study an eclipse without worrying about whether sun and reflection have contact*

[H17]

*Chandrakirti has no reason that his analysis exists ultimately, but it can still be of benefit in the conventional truth*

*Chandrakirti prefers to analyse the parts of the chariot first, as once you have done this, the chariot is gone*

*There is no contradiction between the yantras, and studying Madhyamika will complement your study of Vajrayana*

When there is a solar eclipse, you can't look at the sun, as it is too powerful. So, you might look at the sun on a jar or in a container, where you have a reflection. And then you can examine and analyse the image, and say this like now from the east side there is an eclipse and so on. At this point, you don't have to think about whether the real sun and the reflected sun have any contact or not. In the conventional truth, it works. You can study the extent of the eclipse. And in addition, there is still a lot of benefit from my analysis and refutation of you.

## (ii) A valid example that proves the point (702), 6:175

6:175     *While a reflection [in a mirror] is not real,  
You rely on it to make yourself attractive.  
Likewise understand that although unusual, [Madhyamika] reasoning  
Will clean the face of wisdom, bringing realisation of the goal.*

The reflection in a mirror is not true. It's just a reflection; it's not your face. But the reflection can be used as an object if you want to beautify yourself. And at this point, you substantialists, your face is so dirty. It is my compassionate duty to clean it and make it beautiful. So, I will use this seven-fold reasoning and other Madhyamika reasoning as a reflection in the mirror. And, very important, I do not have a single analytical reason that my refutations truly exist, in relative truth or ultimate truth. But, in the conventional truth, without any analysis, I can benefit you.

These last few slokas are very important, because we now know the whole aim of Chandrakirti. He is not just a philosopher who wrote some books and argued with people. He is a great compassionate *mahasiddha*. Don't forget that this man milked a painted cow.

[Q]: In Gorampa's structural outline, we first analyse the inexistence of the self of phenomena, and then the inexistence of the self of the person. I can see that we have refuted production, which is, if I remember, the third of the ten equalities, the ten types of sameness. And this refutation is mainly aimed at phenomena but it also applies to the person. Then we refuted the fact that phenomena can be composed, using the reasoning of the chariot. This applies mainly to the self of person, but Chandrakirti said that it also applies to phenomena. I was wondering if this is the first equality, namely that all phenomena are equally devoid of any characteristics. But my question is about sloka 168, because it seems that we have come back to the refutation of production, which was done at the beginning of the text.

[A]: Chandrakirti is beginning to conclude his chapter, very slowly.

[Q]: But we are turning back to causation.

[A]: As I said, Chandrakirti places great emphasis on causation. Normally, you hear about the selflessness of the person first, even in the path. But Chandrakirti loves to talk about the selflessness of phenomena, because that is where the trouble is. He prefers to analyse the parts of the chariot rather than the chariot, because he knows that once you have analysed the parts of the chariot, then the chariot is gone.

[Q]: This is related to slokas 161 to 165. Is it possible to see a correspondence between the five aggregates and the subtle level of the body and between the five poisonous emotions and the five buddhas? If so, then are the five buddhas the purification of the five poisonous emotions?

[A]: You can definitely use all this analysis to think about these things, but this is a strict Mahayana text, so when you talk about the five buddha families and things like that, who are they? But you will learn this when you study. When you study buddhism, you need to know one thing. Many people think that there is a contradiction between the shravaka sutras, the Mahayana sutras and the Vajrayana sutras. But they never contradict each other; they complement each other. Right now, we are talking about Mahayana sutras and shastras, so we cannot really discuss the Vajrayana shastras, because it will give rise to many paradoxes and confusion. But when you study Vajrayana, you can comfortably use

*Your ability to interpret the Madhyamika will increase as you do more practice*

*The analysis done by a car mechanic is still unanalysed, according to the Madhyamika*

*If you don't fall into extremes, you are just an ignorant sentient being, an object of compassion*

*Chandrakirti will not oppose a theory of how a car works unless it says things are truly existent*

*True existence is to be refuted by the path, and valid establishment is to be refuted by reasoning*

all this knowledge from today. It will really complement your study very well. That is how the path is designed. But not many people know this, which is why people like women's rights supporters go crazy and say things like "in one sutra, Buddha said women can't get enlightenment". This is the problem.

[Q]: Sloka 164 seems to completely disqualify reasoning. It seems to say that the only purpose of reasoning is to shut up. For example, we use the seven-fold reasoning, we have to sit and relax and not be so excited with emotions and then when we do this analysis, we can see how we are not going to explode or disappear if reason is gone. But I have a practical question. I think that you mentioned that Madhyamika is the base, and then there is the path and the fruit. My first assumption was that the base would contain clear concepts about everything, and now the case seems to be that any clear conception defeats the purpose. So how much should one study this Madhyamika? How do we know when we have studied it enough?

[A]: That is easy. Do your *ngöndro*, and then read the *Madhyamakavatara* again. You will change your interpretation. Then after that, receive an initiation from your master, and then read it once more. Again, your interpretation will be much better. And by the time that you are a tenth bhumi bodhisattva, you should read this again.

[Q]: Rinpoche, we seem to be making a distinction between things being analysed and things being unanalysed. We are saying that when things are unanalysed, then it is conventional truth. But when you analyse, then you are approaching the ultimate truth, and you find nothing. Now, for example, if my car is broken, I can look at my car and say it is broken, but I don't know why. So I take my car to the mechanic, he analyses my car, and then he fixes it. Now he is clearly doing some kind of analysis there to be able to fix my car, so what do we call that?

[A]: That is unanalysed, according to the Madhyamika. That is a very good question. All so-called analysis in our world, including Chandrakirti's seven-fold analysing, works only on the unanalysed. He just said this. This remark of his is very important, that his logic will only work during the unanalysed time.

[Q]: If we say that, I think we have to say that all of science is similarly unanalysed.

[A]: Yes. But as we said yesterday, the problem is that people analyse the unanalysed, and then they find something and say 'this is it'. That is something that Chandrakirti really doesn't like.

[Q]: But my mechanic is finding the problem. He is finding something. He has a theory of how the car's electrical system works.

[A]: I don't think he would say that it is a truly existent problem. He will not say that it is other-arising, self-arising, both or neither. As long as you don't fall into those extremes, you are innocent. Of course, you are an ignorant sentient being, and you are an object of compassion. But if you analyse and you find something, you have an additional fault.

[Q]: I think the problem is when you say, "You find some thing". Because the car mechanic still has some kind of theory about how the car works, although I suppose he never says it is a truly existing theory.

[A]: Theoreticians have to add words like 'truly existent' in order to qualify as Chandrakirti's opponent here.

[Q]: If the mechanic found a truly existent problem in your car, he would stop working and become a professor explaining how he found the ultimate car problem. But because he doesn't believe that these problems are truly existent, he goes on working and fixing problems.

[Q]: It seems to me that it shows up the difference with the Svacittikas. If I understood the point about the mechanic, it seems that the analysis of the car mechanic is some kind of valid analysis, which is what the Svacittikas are saying.

[A]: The point is that true existence is to be refuted by the path, and valid establishment is to be refuted by reasoning. True existence is within valid establishment, but valid establishment

*True existence is part of valid establishment, but not necessarily vice-versa*

*All phenomena, from the aggregates up to buddha nature, are only accepted in conventional truth*

*Refutation of other-arising*

*The Prasangikas define 'other' as separate and simultaneous; and 'truly existing' as independent and unfabricated*

is not necessarily within true existence. As we were saying earlier, a problem could be truly solved, but the mechanic may not have validly established this by reasoning.

[Q]: In sloka 160, Chandrakirti explains that with the benefit of seven-fold analysis, the yogi realises that nothing is truly existent. But when does he do this analysis?

[A]: The meditation is done during the time of analysis.

[Q]: But afterwards, does the yogi accept conventional truth?

[A]: There is a beautiful expression “from form to the ultimate state of omniscience, everything is accepted only in the conventional truth”. The reason that we start with form is that when buddhists talk about phenomena, they usually begin with the five aggregates, with form, feeling and so on. Then we have all the countless phenomena, and at the end of the phenomena, we include enlightenment. So basically, we are saying that all these ideas of buddha nature, path, tenth bhumi bodhisattva, compassion, enlightenment, meditation and so on, all of this is conventional truth. Of course, if you analyse, you will not find anything solid. We keep forgetting this, especially if we meditate and experience something, like a vision of the Buddha. Wow! We think that this has to be validly, truly, substantially, logically existent! But this is where Chandrakirti is saying no!

[Q]: Rinpoche, are you agreeing with Tsong Khapa?

[A]: Yes! I am a big fan of Tsong Khapa. Even the very idea of relative truth and ultimate truth is conventional truth.

[Q]: But if I could use all the seven ways of negating, I would use them for myself as a person as well, so I would not exist. I would be enlightened at once. But since I exist, I obviously cannot understand everything in the text. Is that true?

[A]: I can see your point. Because we are in the relative truth, because we are doomed by ignorance, that is why there is the notion of understanding this Madhyamika text or not.

[Q]: When you mentioned the all-concealer, are you talking about ignorance or common sense, or is it the same thing?

[A]: I think common sense and ignorance are the same. Common sense is definitely ignorance. When we need to go to the toilet, we go to the bathroom, not to the bedroom – that's what we call common sense, isn't it? But that is relative truth, and relative truth is the perception of ignorance. This is why I say that many of these Indians have so much wisdom, but no common sense.



## **Introductory summary of genesis from other**

[Student]: I will summarise Chandrakirti's refutation of genesis from other. Without going into the whole outline, we are now in the part where we are using logic and reasoning to refute the four extremes of production. This is part of establishing the selflessness of phenomena. And the four extremes of production are production from self, other, both and neither. Self comes first, and now we are in production from other. This is the main section. It goes from chapter 6 slokas 13 to 97, and it is the main section, partly because it corresponds to the view that we often have about production. To start with, the Prasangikas define 'other' as something that is both separate from and simultaneous with something else. We should also say that the whole of this discussion is focussed on production of, from, and by truly existing entities. This means that they are independent and unfabricated.

*The refutation from the absolute standpoint*

*(1) If two entities are "other", anything could arise from anything*

*(2) If two entities are simultaneous, one cannot cause another*

*(3) The four-fold classification: does a cause have a result or not/both/neither?*

*The two truths: we accept ordinary views, without analysis, but not as valid*

*The refutation from the relative standpoint: there is no theory of 'other', so we do not accept other-arising relatively, but Svantrikas do*

*The benefits: practising emptiness does not destroy phenomena, and we do not need to invent a theoretical link to explain karma*

*The Cittamatrin view: there is truly existing other-arising. Mind / alaya exists, but all objects are just labels*

*Refuted by 4 examples:  
(1) dream, (2) seeing falling hair, (3) meditate that people are skeletons, (4) in different realms, water is seen differently*

There are three parts to the refutation. There is the refutation from the absolute standpoint and the relative standpoint, then there are the two benefits of these refutations and thirdly, there is the Cittamatrin view, because they accept other-arising.

**(1) Refutation from the absolute standpoint.** There are three main reasons that Chandrakirti uses here. The first is that if entities are absolutely different from each other, then there is no reason for any one thing to produce any other, which means that there would be no causal laws. So, anything could arise from anything, and do so unpredictably.

The second is time. Either two different entities are simultaneous or not. If they are simultaneous, then we can't prove that one is the effect or the cause of another. And if they exist at different times, then you cannot define one entity as 'other' than the first, since they must be simultaneous for that definition to hold. The example of the scales was used here, but it was refuted because the two branches of the scales are simultaneous, and cause and effect cannot be simultaneous.

The third reason is called the four-fold classification. The question asked is does this cause have a result or not or both or neither? If it does, then there is no need for production, because the result is already there. If it doesn't then you can't call it a cause, because it hasn't produced anything. If it is both, then it has both faults, and if it is neither, then there can't be any result. So, with these arguments, Chandrakirti refutes absolute other-arising.

Then there is an objection that he is contradicting ordinary opinion, because most people actually think that one thing produces another. To refute that, Chandrakirti introduces the principle of the two truths. In summary, he accepts other-arising conventionally, but not as valid. Since the ordinary view, even true relative truth is actually tainted with defilements and ignorance, it can't be considered valid. So, he simply accepts it without analysis.

Then for the refutation from the relative standpoint, his main argument is that in the relative world there is no theory of otherness. Things aren't defined as 'other' in this philosophical sense, so therefore he doesn't accept other-arising on the relative level. And in this, he is different from the Svantrikas, who do.

**(2) The benefit of these refutations.** There are two benefits. First is that we will be free of eternalism and nihilism, because during the relative truth, at the time of the result there is no concept of a cause either being there or not being there. And so it also means in our practice that *shunyata* does not destroy phenomena, because there are no phenomena there to be destroyed in the first place. The second benefit is that it allows us to explain the effect of karmic actions. Since there is no arising, there is no true cessation, so we don't need to invent a theoretical link in order to link an action and its result in the way that other buddhist schools do.

**(3) Refutation of the Cittamatrins.** Firstly, just in brief, the Cittamatrin view is described. They accept truly existent other-arising. Their view is that there are no external objects, which means that all objects are imputed and labelled, but there is a truly existent *alaya*, which is free from duality, substantial, and inexpressible. So, it means that the ground of imputation exists substantially, while the objects are just labelled and imputed. So, Chandrakirti argues that this contravenes the two truths. And he uses four examples to refute the possibility of mind alone without an object. The first example is a dream. The second is deluded sensory consciousness, where he uses the example of someone that has an eye disease and sees hair falling in front of his or her eyes when other people would see none. Third is deluded meditation experience, where we can do practices and see people in the form of skeletons. Fourth is deluded visual perception, where he gives the example of how different kinds of beings see water, for example, in completely different ways. Chandrakirti's point throughout is that it is illogical to have a truly existing mind that creates non-existent objects.

*Refuting alaya: if no one perceives pure alaya, we cannot say it exists*

*Self-awareness cannot be proven. Memory does not prove self-awareness: it is a circular argument*

*alaya cannot be accepted as a substantial cause, as it goes against conventional truth*

*The Cittamatrin view was taught to refute the idea of a creator*

*Chandrakirti establishes the selflessness of phenomena to explain dependent arising*

*The sixth bhumi bodhisattva understands that everything is dependent arising*

*The Prasangikas do not assert that anything exists truly, but they still have a path that leads to enlightenment, based on no analysis*

His second refutation is refuting the substantial existence of *alaya*. There is pure and impure *alaya*, according to the Cittamatrins, and Chandrakirti's question is who can perceive the pure *alaya*, which is beyond duality? If you can't perceive it, then it does not exist. The Cittamatrins say that self-awareness is enough to explain how we can know it. They then use the example of memory to prove self-awareness, and Chandrakirti says that this is a circular argument, because memory itself assumes self-awareness, and memory is not proved. So, since agent, action and object cannot be one, *alaya* cannot see the *alaya*, so in the absence of any proof of its existence, it is as absurd to say *alaya* exists, as it is to say that a barren woman's son exists. We could say that anything exists.

Lastly, he refutes the *alaya* as a substantial cause, because he says that the Cittamatrins upset the ordinary view. His main principle is that you should never go against conventional truth. The Cittamatrins do this because they reject the existence of external objects even in the relative truth, which ordinary people accept, and on the contrary, they propound the existence of *alaya*, which is a theoretical construction. In this way, they contravene the two truths. Chandrakirti says that substantialists don't properly distinguish the relative and the absolute truths. They find absolute truths that are simply ideas and constructions, and meanwhile they lose their sense of the relative, so they end up with neither. Chandrakirti emphasises that to have a path and to gain enlightenment, we need both relative and absolute truth. Since the Cittamatrins are buddhists, he then explains why the Cittamatrin doctrine was taught. He goes into the difference between provisional and definitive teachings. The Cittamatrin doctrine was taught to refute the idea of a creator, so it is not a definitive teaching but it is a skilful means. That is how he refutes genesis from other.



## A short summary of where we are

[Rinpoche]: I think it is good to refresh our minds in this way. So, we have had an extensive analytical approach, analysing whether things arise from self, other, both or neither. And with this, we have established the selflessness of phenomena. I would like to remind you that Chandrakirti does this in order to explain dependent arising. And second, we have a very thorough analysis using techniques such as the seven-fold reasoning to analyse the chariot. Using that, we have established that there is no truly existent self of a person. And this is again explaining dependent arising. If one has to accept one of the extremes, such as things arise from self, or that aggregates and self are other, or that one is container and one is contents, then what happens is that we immediately fall into the extreme of nihilism or eternalism.

I would like to remind you that we are on the sixth chapter, which talks about the wisdom that is understood by the sixth bhumi bodhisattva. So, we can definitely say that the sixth bhumi bodhisattva's wisdom understands dependent arising, or realises that everything is dependent arising. Therefore, not a single entity among all phenomena exists independently. For the sake of understanding this more easily, we can say that to say that something is independently existing, and to say that something is truly existent is almost the same. But this is my way of putting it, just for the sake of communication. We have to be careful about things like this, because after a few years, these kinds of new ways of expressing become some kind of doctrine or school, and it can be a very deluded school.

So from some of the last slokas that we went through, we know that the Prasangika Madhyamikas do not have any theory that asserts or says that something is truly existent. But I would like to tell you that this does not mean that Prasangika Madhyamikas would say that they

have no path, bhumis, enlightenment, and so on. They say all of this, purely based on no analysis, during the conventional truth. Now somewhere here there is some discussion with the Svantrikas. For example, we know that Bhavaviveka's approach has a lot of influence from the *pramana*. In sloka 171, we were talking about whether the refutation of the Prasangikas has any contact with the theory of the substantialists or not, and Bhavaviveka had his own approach when answering that. Remember that Chandrakirti answered by saying that these kinds of faults or problems will only apply to those who have a theory. Someone like him who does not have any established theory will have no consequences.

Yesterday, many of you raised valuable questions about what do we mean by 'unanalysed'. Now, the other side of this coin is, what we mean by *damcha* (*dam bca'*), which is like 'thesis'. We should talk a little bit about the meaning of thesis. In one sense, one could say that Chandrakirti has a so-called *damcha* or thesis, because he has to say that there are so-called, bhumis, enlightenment, and so on. But this he only does during the relative truth, and in the ultimate truth, he has no thesis. This is something that we should think about further.

*Bhavaviveka's response to the substantialists*

Now, Bhavaviveka has a different way of answering the challenge of the substantialists. He says that at this point, we are discussing produced and producer; we are not talking about *selja* (*gsal bya*) and *selche* (*gsal byed*), the illuminated and the illuminator. I sometimes wonder if this is important to tell you, but since it is in the commentary, if I do not tell you, I will feel guilty throughout the day. So, I will spit it out. This is what we call *tsemé chöké* (*tshad ma'i chos skad*), the expression of *pramana*. We need to have a little foundation of *pramana*, which is buddhist logic or the buddhist way of approaching what is valid. *Tsema* (*tshad ma*), the *pramana*, is not just 'dialectic'; it means 'valid'. The study of *tsema* is the study of what is valid and what is not valid. In fact, if you understand the *tsema*, you might almost prefer Bhavaviveka's way of answering this challenge from the substantialists. Chandrakirti does not differentiate between the time of produced/producer or illuminated/illuminator, because he is saying that in any case, he has no thesis in the ultimate truth. Therefore, all these techniques of refutation exist only in the conventional truth.

*The Madhyamika is more than just freedom from the four extremes and the sevenfold analysis of the chariot*

Another reason why I would like to mention this to you is that now that you have gone through more than half of this book, and some of you may think that the study of Madhyamika or the *Madhyamakavatara* is easy. You might think that it is just the study of freedom from the four extremes or the seven-fold reasoning of the chariot. I just want to give you a few indications that if you study texts like Shantarakshita's *Madhyamika Alankara*, *Uma Gyen* 'The Ornament of the Middle Way', it will be very interesting for you. That is one of the greatest living texts.

Since we have this big habit of being substantialists, you will find texts like the *Madhyamika Alankara* very useful, because it relates very well to some of the very subtle habitual patterns that we have. It explains them very well, and as Tulkus Rinpoche was saying, if you read the commentary by the great Nyingmapa scholar Mipham Rinpoche on the *Madhyamika Alankara*, you will be able to understand the common approach of Madhyamika and Cittamatra schools. This is quite important, because while we have been presuming that the Madhyamika has won the debate on other-arising with the Cittamatras, just you wait until you read books by people like Asanga and Dignaga! These people are not easy targets. They are supposedly greater in debate than Chandrakirti, and Dharmakirti is known as the greatest debater of all.

Today most of the slokas are comparatively easy, and I have a very good assistant, now that this khenpo is here. Last night and this morning, I asked him some of the important questions, and I realised how backward I am when it comes to the Madhyamika. I have to go through the entire text, but when I asked him some questions, and he could answer right away. I even tested him on the page numbers, and he could say where each point is to be found. So, you will have the opportunity to ask him questions over the coming days. Now, let's go through some more slokas.

[H16]

**(c) Flaws in the analysis only point out that the opponent is at fault**  
**(703), 6:176**

6:176     *If our predicate and its reasoning – the means for understanding – were established as real,  
And likewise the nature of our predicate—the object to be understood—  
The [above] logic of contact would apply [to ourselves].  
This is not the case, so you are merely exhausting yourself.*

*Chandrakirti has no truly existent reasoning, so the question of whether his refutation meets his opponents is irrelevant*

This completes the discussion that we had yesterday. Chandrakirti is saying that if we Madhyamikas had something to be established by reasoning, and if there were a truly existent reasoning, then of course your challenge is valid. Whatever you say, however you analyse whether my refutation meets with the view of the substantialists or not, it will affect me. But because I do not have anything that is truly established, everything that you are trying to do is just a cause of tiredness.

[H16]

**(d) There is no need to prove any true existence, 6:177**

6:177     *Making [others] realise that all entities have no reality is easy,  
However to make us believe in an [inherent] nature  
Is not simple at all.  
Why entangle ordinary people in webs of false logic?*

*Ideas of imputed self are hard to explain, and entangle ordinary beings in a net of false logic*

It is easy to understand that everything has no truly existent nature, like vases, forests, chariots, self and aggregates. But your way of saying that certain things do not exist, while certain other things are truly existent, is so difficult to understand. Besides, I, Chandrakirti, have examples such as dreams, illusions and mirages, to tell people that things do not exist even though they appear. You don't have any examples or analogies to show that some exist and some do not. Sentient beings already have their innate self and their attachment to this self, and they are already going through a lot of trouble. And now you add this imputed self. Why are you doing this? Why do you make these sentient beings suffer more, with all this net of logic and reasoning?

[H15]

**(ii) Dispelling arguments using the rest of the refutations, 6:178**

6:178     *Understanding the refutations given above,  
You should then forget [these arguments] about contact, [made exclusively] for  
the opponent,  
And not mere random confrontations.  
These statements should be understood by the opponent.*

*The two types of reasoning can refute all wrong views*

Anything that needs to be refuted, all kinds of views and wrong views, can be refuted by two categories of reasoning. The first type of reasoning is the reasoning that things do not arise from four extremes: self, other, both and neither. And the second type of reasoning is about whether the self and aggregates are one or different, whether the self has the aggregates or not, and so on. It is the seven-fold reasoning of the chariot. We can also use these two types of reasoning to refute the substantialist question about whether the refutation meets with the view to be refuted or not.

*Chandrakirti's refutation is not mere argument, but destroying wrong views and creating a path*

You cannot also say that Chandrakirti or the Prasangikas only wish to refute other people. This is another term in the system of *pramana* – it is a fault that applies to certain logicians, namely that their only interest is to refute others. But Chandrakirti says that he doesn't have that fault, because his refutation destroys all the net of delusion that other theoreticians create. The gradual

destruction of this net of delusion is a path: he is creating a path here. This is what our opponent needs to understand.

With this, we have completed the two types of selflessness: the selflessness of phenomena, and of the person. So now, we go to one of the main subheadings in the structural outline: ‘Explaining emptiness as it is to be realised by the Mahayana’.

[H8]

**(b) Establishing emptiness as it is to be realised by the Mahayana**

[H9]

**(i) How (the Buddha) gave detailed explanations in terms of (beings') needs, 6:179**

6:179     *In order to liberate sentient beings,  
The two divisions of individual and phenomenal selflessness were taught.  
Accordingly, the teacher repeatedly taught this point  
In various ways for various trainees.*

In order to liberate sentient beings, Buddha categorised selflessness into two types: the selflessness of phenomena, and of the person. Again, in order to benefit different types of sentient beings at different times, Lord Buddha expressed the selflessness of phenomena and the selflessness of the person in many different ways. Later, you should ask the khenpo, which of these different kinds of emptiness that we will talk about is realised by the shravakas, the pratyekabuddhas and the bodhisattvas.

[H9]

**(ii) Showing what is to be realised through the Mahayana (706), 6:180**

6:180     *When elaborate, of emptinesses  
He taught sixteen, when brief  
He taught four – all these  
Are also taught to be the Mahayana.*

*The sixteen types of emptiness*

When elaborated, Buddha taught emptiness in sixteen ways. And he taught emptiness in four ways. In the last line, Chandrakirti says that the Mahayana also accepts this. The word ‘also’ is something that one has to underline, because it means that some of these sixteen types of emptiness are also understood by shravakas and pratyekabuddhas. We will briefly go through the names of these kinds of emptiness.

1. *Nang tongpa-nyi (nang stong pa nyid)*, inner emptiness (the senses).
2. *Chi tongpa-nyi (phyi stong pa nyid)*, outer emptiness (their objects).
3. *Chi nang tongpa-nyi (phyi nang tong pa nyid)* emptiness of inside and outside (the gross faculties).
4. *Tongpa-nyi tongpa-nyi (stong pa nyid stong pa nyid)* emptiness of emptiness.
5. *Chenpo tongpa-nyi (chen po stong pa nyid)*, emptiness of vastness (ten directions).
6. *Döndam tongpa-nyi (don dam stong pa nyid)*, emptiness of nirvana, of the absolute itself.
7. *Dü jé tongpa-nyi ('dus byas stong pa nyid)*, emptiness of the compounded.
8. *Düma chepé tongpa-nyi ('dus ma byas stong pa nyid)*, emptiness of the uncompounded.
9. *Ta lé dé tongpa-nyi (mtha' las 'das stong pa nyid)*, emptiness of the limitless.
10. *Togma dang tama mepa tongpa-nyi (thog ma dang tha ma med pa stong pa nyid)*, emptiness of that which has no beginning and no end.
11. *Dorwa pa mepa tongpa-nyi (dor ba med pa tong pa nyid)*, emptiness of that which is not to be abandoned.

12. *Rangshin tongpa-nyi* (*rang bzhin stong pa nyid*) emptiness of nature, inherent emptiness.
13. *Chö tamché tongpa-nyi* (*chos thams cad stong pa nyid*), emptiness of (characteristics) of all phenomena.
14. *Rangtsennyi tongpa-nyi* (*rang mtshan nyi stong pa nyid*) emptiness of inherent existence or self-identity.
15. *Mimigpa tongpa-nyi* (*mi dmigs pa stong pa nyid*) emptiness of non-conceptualised, of objects which do not have specific character, emptiness of self-nature.
16. *Ngöpo mepé ngowonyi tongpa-nyi* (*dngos po med pa'i ngo bo nyid stong pa nyid*), emptiness of the (nature of) non-substantiality.

Don't worry – all this will be explained in the following slokas.

[H9] **(iii) Detailed explanation in terms of the attributes of the ground of emptiness**

[H10] **(A) Explanation of the detailed classification into sixteen**

[H11] **(i) Emptiness of inner, 6:181-182**

6:181     *Because its nature is [non-inherent]  
Eyes are empty of eyes  
Likewise the ears, the nose, the tongue  
Body and mind too are explained as such.*

6:182     *Not continuously dwelling, and also not disintegrating –  
The six senses, eyes and so forth,  
Are without inherent existence.  
This is regarded as emptiness of inner.*

Here, what you need to understand is the meaning of ‘inner’, which is explained in sloka 182. You also need to notice that we are not saying that eye is empty of ear. We are saying that eye is empty of itself; this is what is said in sloka 181. Here, ‘inner’ is referring to something that is within your own being. We have a slight problem with the translation of the Tibetan word *tersuk* (*ther zug*). There are two kinds of *tersuk*. According to Rendawa, it refers to something that stands still, that is not bound by time or a limit. According to Gorampa, the concept refers to something that is compounded, but thought to be truly existent. Of course, we are not saying that Chandrakirti accepts this. He is saying that our eyes, nose and so on are not permanent.

[H11] **(ii) Emptiness of outer (708), 6:183-184.2**

6:183     *Because of its nature,  
Form is empty of form.  
Likewise sound, scent, taste and touch:  
All phenomena are so.*

6:184:1-2     *Form and so forth have no inherent nature,  
This is outer emptiness.*

This is explaining outer emptiness, something that is not necessarily your own being.

[H11]

### (iii) Emptiness of both outer and inner, 6:184.3-4

6:184:3-4 *The absence of inherent existence in both [outer and inner phenomena],  
Is emptiness of outer and inner.*

The emptiness of someone else's eye, nose, form and so on is what here we call both outer and inner emptiness. Because that eye or whatever is an inner phenomenon when it comes to the possessor of the eye, but it is an outer phenomenon according to the point of view of another subject, someone else. I think that these first three types of emptiness are realised even by shravakas and pratyekabuddhas.

[H11]

### (iv) Emptiness of emptiness, 6:185-186

6:185 *All phenomena's lack of inherent existence,  
Is explained as emptiness by the wise.  
That emptiness also,  
Is regarded as being empty of any essence.*

6:186 *The emptiness of that known as emptiness,  
Is known as emptiness of emptiness,  
And was taught to avert the fixation  
Of those holding emptiness as real.*

*We may think that all is  
emptiness, but we also  
need to realise that  
emptiness is emptiness*

Many of us know that we make this mistake, not only during study, but also during meditation. We never think that emptiness is emptiness. We think that everything else is emptiness, and that's where we stop. We don't think that emptiness is emptiness. So, here in sloka 185, because there is nothing that has an inherently existent nature, a learned one would say that this is emptiness. But even that emptiness is also emptiness. And in sloka 186, it is clearly stated that because we can still have clinging to this idea of emptiness, in order to get rid of this clinging, Buddha taught us the emptiness of emptiness.

[H11]

### (v) Emptiness of vastness, 6:187-188

6:187 *Pervading without exception  
All sentient beings and the outer world,  
Without limits, as in the [Four] Boundless,  
The directions [of space] are vast.*

6:188 *In the tenfold entirety of [of space],  
The directions are empty.  
This is the emptiness of vastness  
Taught to avert fixation on vastness.*

When we talk about vastness, here it is referring to directions, because direction is all pervading. It not only pervades the container, such as the world, but also the contents, such as sentient beings. There is no end; there is no such thing as the 'real East'. There is no such thing as the 'real West', the 'ultimate West'. So in order to refute or negate this concept of greatness or vastness, when referring to direction, Buddha taught the emptiness of vastness.

[H11]

### (vi) Emptiness of the ultimate, 6:189-190

*Nirvana itself, however defined, is also emptiness*

*This can help us to reduce expectations of the path, and reduce disappointment and guilt*

[H11]

*All compounded phenomena are impermanent, and also emptiness*

[H11]

6:189     *Being the supreme goal,  
The ultimate is nirvana.  
The emptiness of it,  
Is the emptiness of absolute.*

6:190     *To avert fixation  
Of those holding nirvana as an entity,  
Absolute wisdom was taught as  
The emptiness of absolute.*

The supreme goal for the three *yanas*, the three paths, is nirvana. And for the different *yanas*, there is a different nirvana. For example, for shravakas and pratyekabuddhas, nirvana is dwelling in the state where there is no suffering and no cause of suffering. For a Mahayana bodhisattva, nirvana means dwelling beyond samsara and nirvana. Whichever it is, nirvana itself is emptiness. The emphasis here is the word *döndampa* (*don dam pa*), where *dön* is the goal and *dampa* means ‘holy’ or ‘supreme’. In this case, it means the ‘ultimate nirvana’. This is something else that we don’t understand, so we need to hear this. Many of us really think that nirvana is a truly existing entity, which is why we go to Dharma centres. This is also very practical advice because, for example, practitioners like us have such a big clinging to nirvana as an entity. And when we think it is an entity, naturally we have expectations. We have all kinds of expectations, all the time. And this is why many practitioners like us go through endless disappointment and guilt. And Chandrakirti is saying that Buddha taught the emptiness of nirvana in order to get rid of this kind of clinging.

### (vii) Emptiness of the compounded, 6:191

6:191     *Arising from conditions,  
The three worlds were certainly explained as compounded.  
The emptiness of this  
Was taught as emptiness of the compounded.*

These three worlds are caused and conditioned; therefore, we refer to these three worlds as compounded phenomena. Again, this is a very important point. Many substantialists believe that everything is compounded, but they do not understand that all compounded things are emptiness. Mere understanding that all things are compounded is already very good. If you understand that, you already know that everything is impermanent, which is already good. But it is not enough. You also have to understand that they are empty. If you do not understand that compounded, impermanent things are empty, you are stuck at the last moment, so to speak. This is why the Buddha taught the emptiness of compounded phenomena.

### (viii) Emptiness of the uncompounded, 6:192

6:192     *[All phenomena] are created, dwell and are impermanent,  
Are [inherently] non-existent, thus being uncompounded.  
This emptiness  
Is emptiness of the uncompounded.*

There are many imputed phenomena, whether imputed by substantialists or in our habitual mind, which are not compounded. These uncompounded phenomena may have no arising, abiding and cessation. According to the substantialists, one example is the sky. Another is a kind of *nirodha*, a ‘non-analytical cessation’. It also includes some misinterpreted buddhist ideas about buddha nature. For example, some people think that buddha nature is a phenomenon, and then try to

describe it as an uncompounded phenomenon. But according to the Madhyamika, the Buddha taught that even these uncompounded phenomena are empty.

[H11]

### (ix) Emptiness of the limitless, 6:193

6:193     *Whatever has no limitations  
Is said to be beyond limits;  
It is in itself emptiness,  
Explained as emptiness of the limitless.*

*The limitless phenomena  
of the Sambhogakaya are  
also emptiness*

This sloka has a slightly different interpretation in different commentaries. For now, I will stick with the interpretations of Gorampa and Mipham Rinpoche. Here ‘beyond limits’ refers to the phenomena of Sambhogakaya. Actually, strictly I should say Rupakaya. Dharmakaya is a term given to the *shunyata*, the essence of all phenomena. But Sambhogakaya is probably the closest term that describes enlightenment ‘in action’, so to speak, because when you talk about Sambhogakaya, you talk about pure realms, buddha fields, disciples, teachings and so on. We don’t talk about the Dharmakaya when we talk about ‘enlightened beings’. You can’t talk about teachings and Buddha fields on the Dharmakaya level. But you can talk about them on the Sambhogakaya level, although the qualities of the Sambhogakaya are something that is limitless. This is what we are referring to here as ‘emptiness of the limitless’.

[H11]

### (x) Emptiness of that without beginning or end, 6:194-195

6:194     *Because the two extremes of beginning and end  
Do not exist, samsara  
Is said to be without beginning or end –  
With neither coming nor going, like a dream.*

6:195     *Therefore samsara is said to be empty of itself,  
Without beginning and end,  
It is known as empty.  
As explained with certainty in the scriptures [of Prajñaparamita].*

*Samsara is like a dream,  
without beginning or end.  
It too is emptiness*

Actually, the translation is not quite right here – the scripture is not *Prajñaparamita*, but the *Mulamadhyamaka-karikas*. The *Prajñaparamita* is not what the *Madhyamakavatara* is entering. This sloka is easy to understand. The point is not that we are saying that samsara is emptiness. Of course, generally we say that. But here, he is making the point that samsara does not have beginning or end. Samsara is like a dream; therefore, there is no truly existing coming, and no truly existing going. There is no truly existing emergence of samsara, and no truly existing cessation of samsara. So, this is the emptiness of no beginning and no end. Hence, we not only have the emptiness of samsara, but also the emptiness of no beginning and no end. This is taught in the shastra, the *Mulamadhyamaka-karikas*.

[H11]

### (xi) Emptiness of non-discriminating, 6:196-197

6:196     *To discard means to disperse,  
To throw out – so it is firmly defined.  
To retain is to not discard,  
[Mahayana] is what is never discarded.*

*The Mahayana path is emptiness: there is nothing to discard and nothing to purify*

*Wisdom is described on the sixth bhumi, because here it is the main post-meditation quality*

*Conventional reality has both spontaneous and imputed aspects*

*Imputed aspects such as the western idea of no reincarnation may vary among cultures, but the spontaneous aspect is the same everywhere*

6:197

*The non-discarded suchness  
Which is empty of suchness,  
Is therefore  
Called the emptiness of non-discard.*

These two slokas are very important. Normally we think that we should abandon non-virtuous deeds, and adopt virtuous ones. Of course, that is right and true. That is the path. But in the process of that, we can cling to these virtuous thoughts and actions as truly existent so here, we have the emptiness of non-discard. In other commentaries, this emptiness is called the emptiness of Mahayana path, emptiness of path, emptiness of purification or emptiness of discarding. There is nothing to discard. There is nothing to purify. This is what needs to be understood. Discarding ignorance, that is the path. But that discarding is emptiness. We will stop here for some questions.

[Q]: We say that the bodhisattvas understand emptiness on the first bhumi, so why is it described in the sixth chapter, and not on the first bhumi?

[A]: The ten bhumis are associated with the ten paramitas because of their importance in the post-meditation time. In the sixth bhumi, wisdom is the predominant quality during the post-meditation phase, and therefore it is emphasised at this time. Although the first bhumi bodhisattva has *sherab* (*shes rab*), wisdom, during his meditation time, during the post-meditation time, his emphasis is on generosity.

[Q]: On the first bhumi, does the bodhisattva have a direct experience of emptiness?

[A]: A little bit

[Q]: Does this mean that in the process of ‘getting rid’ of things as he advances through each level that until the sixth bhumi he has not got rid of enough defilements to express this wisdom fully?

[A]: During post-meditation, yes, of course.

[Q]: In the West, I think our conventional truth does not include reincarnation, so do we have to understand the Madhyamika in a different way, given that we have a different conventional truth in the West?

[A]: This is a very good question. According to khenpo, we should distinguish between two aspects of superficial or conventional reality. One is the *lhenkyé* (*lhan skyes*), the spontaneous one, and the other is the imputed aspect. The imputed aspect may be completely different in different cultures, for example, maybe scientists have different opinions about conventional reality than those during Chandrakirti’s time but the spontaneous part is the same, whichever country or culture we may belong to. In the West, we hold an imputed idea of self that does not include reincarnation, because in childhood, our parents and teachers told us that there is no past and future. Therefore, the Western concept of no past life and no future life is an imputed view, not an innate view.

[Q]: But how can we correctly establish conventional reality without reincarnation?

[A]: First you try to understand the logic of karma, then you try to understand the existence of past and future lives, and then you will become a good vessel for understanding the Madhyamika.

[Q]: Question to khenpo: we all know the example of the snake and the rope. My question is why don’t see the rope as an elephant.

[A]: Obviously, there is no connection between the rope and the elephant. We have the habitual pattern of seeing something striped and long, something snake-shaped, as a snake. Therefore, we think that rope is snake, because of that habit.

[Q]: But both of these are inherently non-existent. So, in that case, since the rope is inherently non-existent and everything is the projection of our own vision at that point in time, then why don’t we project an elephant onto the rope? The only answer could be that because of one’s karmic vision, circumstances manifest so that one can run one’s karmic movie at that

*The beings of different realms perceive things differently based purely on their habitual patterns*

*Ultimate truth can only be realised, not talked about – teachings on emptiness are concepts, only for communication*

*[Q]: How can we talk to non-buddhists that do not accept karma and reincarnation as self-evident?*

point in time. Of course, as your vision changes, then the circumstances outwardly appear to change in one's own vision.

[A]: You are mixing the relative truth and ultimate truth all the time.

[Q]: But there is no other way to explain it!

[A]: There are many ways!

[Q]: Continuing on this point, there is a debate regarding Tsong Khapa's doctrine about how various beings see various things on the basis of what we perceive as a pot of water. For example, *pretas* see pus; the others see molten iron, and so on.

[A]: This is easy. It is due to their habitual patterns.

[Q]: But a yogi can breathe through his eyes.

[A]: A yogi is someone who understands ultimate truth. He can transform that rope into spaghetti and eat it! What you just said is the answer.

[Q]: This is a chicken and egg question, which came first –the snake or the rope? Did one find oneself in the area of the rope before one saw the snake, or did one see the snake and then find oneself in the area of the rope? That is the crux of the matter.

[A]: It depends on the subject. Both snake and rope are objects. They require a subject to see them as a rope or a snake.

[Q]: In a way, I can see that the Cittamatrin view of mind-only supports the stories of the miracles of the *mahasiddhas*. If one follows the Madhyamika and demonstrates that mind does not exist, the miracles of the *mahasiddhas* would be impossible.

[A]: That is a nihilistic view. In conventional truth, mind exists even in the Madhyamika. Therefore, you can practice. But if you misunderstand the Madhyamika view, then you can fall into an incorrect nihilistic view that believes that the Madhyamika absolutely negates the mind.

[Q]: Absolute truth is one of two concepts that Chandrakirti uses: absolute truth and relative truth. If emptiness itself is empty, then what is emptiness, if it is not something that we can talk about?

[A]: There are two aspects of absolute truth. The Buddha teaches one. The other is realised. What is taught is to be realised. The realisation is something that one cannot talk about. One has to realise it. What is taught is something for communication, and therefore a concept. But the real absolute truth, which is what is being talked about, is something to be realised, and cannot be talked about.

[Q]: Does the present moment of consciousness depend on the moment of consciousness immediately preceding it?

[A]: The answer is yes, which demonstrates the necessity of previous and future lives. This is true for the Prasangika Madhyamika in the relative truth.

[Q]: That argument only works if there is general agreement on the nature of consciousness. I wanted to go back to the question about the fact that belief in reincarnation is not generally accepted in conventional truth in the West. Most people in the West don't believe in reincarnation for whatever reason, and when the question was put to Khen Rinpoche, he said that we would understand reincarnation if we had a proper understanding of karma. Now, if you want to construct a rational proof for something, you have to start from self-evident principles. The point is that karma is not a self-evident principle. And even in buddhism, it is said to be a deeply hidden phenomenon, and the only demonstration of it is *lung gi tsema* (*lung gi tshad ma*). This is fine for buddhists, but it is useless as a proof when speaking to non-buddhists. You cannot appeal to Buddha's word to prove that there is such a thing as karma. Karma is not just cause and effect; karma says that action results in other experiences. It's not just like flicking at the switch and the light goes on. So, we still have the question of how does one talk to non-buddhists that don't believe in reincarnation.

[A]: What is the main difficulty here?

[Q]: That karma is not self-evident

[A]: What do you mean by self-evident?

*Two kinds of logic in Buddhism: direct cognitive logic, and inferential logic*

*Chandrakirti is only demonstrating things for the sake of others. He has no wish to do so for himself*

- [Q]: That people accept that it cannot be otherwise. A self-evident principle is a principle that when it is fully understood, the contradiction of it is inconceivable. It is inconceivable that it should be false. Something self-evident is something whose opposite is inconceivable.
- [A]: Khenpo is saying that karma may not be the best logic to prove reincarnation. The only way to prove reincarnation, one of the main arguments to prove it, is that mind has to come from mind. The first mind of this life has to come from the last mind of the past life. Would you say that is also not self-evident?
- [Q]: It's not self-evident in the sense that many people don't think it. Many people think that the mind is a product of the body. We had this conversation last year, when we were debating the views of the Charvakas.
- [A]: And what if mind is product of the body?
- [Q]: Then mind arises from matter, not from mind. In order to begin this conversation, one would need to have a clear definition of what we mean by mind, and what we mean by matter.
- [A]: Perhaps what we really need to ask is for proof that mind comes from mind. Buddhists have an answer for what is meant by mind. The scientists don't have an answer.
- [Q]: It is the famous expression: "The mind; there is no mind; the nature of mind is luminosity".
- [A]: This is very subtle. In buddhism, there are two kinds of *tsema*, or logic: direct cognitive logic, *ngönsum tsema* (*mngon sum tshad ma*), and inferential logic, *jépak tsema* (*rjes dpag tshad ma*). We may not be able to use direct cognitive logic here, but we can use inferential logic. Khenpo is saying there are fourteen different kinds of questions that were unanswered by the Buddha. This is not because Buddha did not understand the answer, but because you cannot answer such questions. He gave an analogy. If someone asks you, would the horn of a rabbit break or not? You cannot answer, because if you answer positively or negatively, then it would mean that you accept that there is a rabbit's horn. There are certain questions like that, which cannot be answered. You use these fourteen unanswered things here, he is saying, because this is relative truth. I want to ask, what do you mean by assumption?
- [Q]: It means that we agree to accept that this is the case, but we don't have hard evidence for it.
- [A]: So does the inferential logic that buddhists use fall into the department of assumption or not? Will inferential cognition be considered an assumption?
- [Q]: I think that there is a certain character of assumption involved, because inference doesn't have the same force as direct perception, because for inference to work, it depends on the correctness of the science involved, and we might be mistaken about the science.
- [A]: Exactly. In this case, you have to know the meaning of *tsüllsum* (*tshul gsum*), the 'three ways of proving'. These are the three characteristics that have to be present in a syllogism, which make the inferential cognition strong. But I have to say that there are many assumptions in an inference. Inference is a mental process, not a direct cognition.
- [Q]: The main question is how is using this Svatantrika reasoning compatible with the Prasangika position, because we are now using positive inferences, like the Svatantrika. To demonstrate reincarnation, we need to have our own ground and then make the syllogism.
- [A]: That's easy; Chandrakirti just borrows other people's *tsüllsum*.
- [Q]: This is easy when making a refutation, but how can he do this to make a positive demonstration?
- [A]: He will only demonstrate things for the sake of others. He does not have any wish to demonstrate anything for himself. That is the best thing! Chandrakirti is a bit slippery here.
- [Q]: It's not that as a Prasangika he demonstrates anything at all, but for instance when he is debating with the Charvakas, he demolishes their position and shows that their theory of materialism is illogical and won't work. He says that you have no reason for saying that there is nothing after death. But I wanted to say that the problem is that there is no hard evidence for life after death, and as buddhists, we would love to have some hard, completely watertight arguments proving that this is so. And what seems to be happening is that if, for instance, Dharmakirti succeeded in proving the reality beyond the world, what he has done is used purely logical reasoning to prove the existence of something for which there is no evidence. And it is a huge issue, at least in western philosophy, as to whether you can prove the existence of something without having any appeal to evidence. So, it seems to me that

once you start with a self-evident principle, once you have agreed on the principles, once you have agreed on the nature of mind, and the difference between mind and matter, everything follows. I would think that Dharmakirti's argument about the cause of consciousness is probably all right, but it only works if there is a general agreement on the nature of mind. So I would think that as things stand, there is probably no possible debate, there is just a difference of opinion at the beginning.



## Questions & Answers with Khenpo Jamyang Ösel

[Q]: What is the difference between the realisation of emptiness of the shravakas, pratyekabuddhas and bodhisattvas?

[A]: All that has been explained up to the 16 forms of emptiness in terms of the selflessness of the person and the selflessness of phenomena, is commonly understood by the realised beings of the three vehicles. But the 16 emptinesses are specific or special to the realised beings of the greater vehicle, the Mahayana. What is called emptiness is more or less the same, but there are two distinctions.

*The 16 types of emptiness are specific to the Mahayana*

*The Shravakayana only refutes the first extreme, existence, whereas the Mahayana refutes all four extremes*

*The Gelugpa view is different; namely, that realisation of emptiness is the same in all yanas*

*But the philosophy of the Shravakayana is not a complete explanation of selflessness*

Firstly, although the meaning of the word emptiness is the same, it is not applied exactly to the same thing. The subjects of these 16 types of emptiness are specific to the Mahayana. The meaning of the word emptiness is the same, but it is not applied exactly to the same thing. Second, there is a difference in the way that things are empty. In the Mahayana specifically, things are explained as being empty in terms of being devoid of discursive proliferations of the four extremes. The four extremes are existence; non-existence; both existence and non-existence; and neither existence nor non-existence. That is specific to the Mahayana, and is not present in the Shravakayana, because although all four extremes are refuted in the Mahayana, only the first one, existence, is refuted in the Shravakayana.

In the Shravakayana, if you distinguish between the subject aspect and object aspect, the pratyekabuddhas understand the selflessness of the object, which is not understood by the shravakas. The shravakas only understand the selflessness of the person based on the five aggregates. On this question, there is not complete agreement among the four main schools of Tibetan buddhism. The Gelugpas say that the understanding of emptiness is the same in the three vehicles, whereas the three other schools Sakya, Kagyu and Nyingma think that there is a difference or hierarchy of understanding between the three vehicles. The Gelugpas actually say that the object of understanding is the same and the view is the same in all of the three vehicles. The non-affirmative negation or mere negation is the same; there is no difference.

Here khenpo is speaking about the content of the realisation of realised beings of the various vehicles. If you consider things from the point of view of the philosophical school or philosophical tenets, then things are different. In the Shravakayana for example, the philosophical system and the tenets that go together with it, like the Vaibhashika and Sautrantika systems, don't have a complete explanation of selflessness, because their system implies some form of grasping to self. So, we must know that in each of the four philosophical schools there can be a way to understand the three vehicles and describe their realisations and so forth. Here, we are taking things from the point of view of the Madhyamika, and explaining the three vehicles as described from the Madhyamika point of view. So, it's actually not the point of view of the philosophical tenets, but the point of view of the realisation.

*Shravakas realise the selflessness of the person completely, but not the selflessness of phenomena*

*Grasping to the self and phenomena are different, because we don't grasp to outer things as 'I'*

*The sixteen types of emptiness negate various types of assumptions found in different philosophical schools*

*Most commentators, including Prasangikas, consider that the five aggregates are the basis for self-grasping. Only Gorampa and Rongtön differ*

[Q]: But in this case, according to sloka 79, if an arhat has only a partial comprehension of the selflessness of the person, he cannot attain liberation.

[A]: It has not been said that the shravakas and pratyekabuddhas don't have the realisation of the selflessness of the person. They actually have it fully. It is complete and sufficient, which allows them to reach the liberation that corresponds to their *yana* or vehicle. However, they do not have the full understanding of selflessness of phenomena.

[Q]: We saw this morning that there are 16 particular refutations, types of emptiness, which were to refute 16 different objects of attachment. This seems to imply that the object of attachment can move around, in the sense that in the Shravakayana, they realise one type of emptiness, but in the Mahayana, someone comes along and discovers that there are all these other kinds of emptiness. My question is, does there exist either in the Mahayana literature or Nagarjuna's work a description of how this attachment from ego can move from one object to another?

[A]: First, within the grasping to the self, we should make a clear distinction between the two types of self. First, there is grasping to the self of the person, especially in one's own case, grasping to the idea of 'I' or 'me'. Then there is grasping to the self of phenomena. This list of 16 emptinesses mostly has to do with grasping to the self of phenomena. So, we should not think that the self that we have imputed to our own person would somehow move outside and we would put it in other things. This is not so, because we don't grasp to outer things as being 'I' or 'me'.

For example, in the *Bodhicharyavatara*, at some point we practice the exchange of self and other, and apply our I-grasping to other people. We grasp to other people as being 'I' or 'me', but this is not exactly like I-grasping being actually transferred to something outside. It is just a training to get rid of anger or hatred. That is one point.

We might also ask if these 16 emptinesses would correspond to 16 gradual refutations with some sort of order or progression, as if the grasping would move gradually from one object of grasping to another. But this is not the case. In fact, these 16 emptinesses are negations of various assumptions; ideas or types of grasping that are present in different people or philosophical systems. For example, the two first types of emptiness are primarily directed towards shravakas. However, the emptiness of the uncompounded or unconditioned is directed towards people who may indulge in that kind of belief because of their own philosophical system. But this is very specific to certain philosophical systems, not everyone. It is like 16 aspects of emptiness, responding to 16 various beliefs that different types of people may have.

[Q]: In the story of Maitriyogin (*'byam pa'i mal 'byor*), when someone threw a stone at a dog, and he felt the wound of the dog, what was happening in that case?

[A]: That is specific to realised yogis, it is not really within our reach and we cannot really understand it.

[Q]: In Chandrakirti's text, he explains that the Svetantrikas take the five aggregates as the ground for the imputation of self. I was wondering whether khenpo could explain how the Svetantrikas would explain this from their point of view.

[A]: First, there is a clarification. It is the special interpretation of Rongtön (*rong ston*) and Gorampa that the five aggregates are not the basis or ground for the self-grasping. That is not the commonly held doctrine. Most commentators, both Svetantrikas and Prasangikas, consider the five aggregates to be the basis for grasping to the self of the person. Only Gorampa and Rongtön consider that the basis for grasping to the self of the person is the person.

Khenpo says that all other commentators would agree that the five aggregates are the basis for grasping to the self of the person. But then there are differences in the way that these aggregates are considered as real, whether conventionally or ultimately, according to various schools. If I understood khenpo correctly, the Prasangikas say that they are not real, even conventionally.

*Substantialists say they are real ultimately; Svatantrikas say real\* conventionally; and Prasangikas say they are not real at all, even conventionally*  
[\*See question below]

*Three unbearable consequences of accepting that the five aggregates truly exist as the basis of imputation*

*Unlike Prasangikas, the Svatantrikas consider it possible to be liberated from samsara without realising the selflessness of phenomena*

*Svatantrikas only accept that phenomena are ‘established by their own characteristics’ conventionally, not that they are real*

You do not have to consider them as truly established even conventionally in order to consider them as a basis for the grasping to the self of the person. The Svatantrikas consider them to be established as real conventionally but not ultimately. Then there is a discussion about whether the shravakas consider them to be established as real, even ultimately. According to the Svatantrika interpretation of the Hinayana doctrines, the imputed self is imaginary – it is not real, but mere imputation. But the five aggregates that function as its basis of imputation are established as ultimately real.

However, Chandrakirti and the Prasangikas don't follow this point of view, because they say it would imply three unbearable consequences. The first is that the shravakas could not understand the selflessness of the person if they considered the five aggregates as truly established. Second, it would follow that they could not get rid of the obscuration of afflictive emotions so they could not gain liberation. And third, exactly like non-buddhists they could not get free of the afflictions that bind them to the three worlds. This means that they could not get out of samsara.

[Q]: I would like to check something. Khenpo seems to be saying that Chandrakirti and the Prasangikas are saying that in order to get out of samsara it is necessary to realise the emptiness of phenomena. So, an arhat must have realised the emptiness of phenomena. This is the Prasangika view, Chandrakirti's view. But the Svatantrikas are saying that phenomena are real on the relative level. Does this mean that the Svatantrikas would say that the arhats are able to leave samsara without realising the emptiness of phenomena? Is that the difference? Is it that Prasangikas say that they must realise the emptiness of phenomena to be liberated, whereas the Svatantrikas say that they can be liberated without realising the emptiness of phenomena?

[A]: It is a point on which there is a distinction between the Svatantrikas and the Prasangikas. For the Prasangikas, it is impossible to gain liberation from samsara without understanding the selflessness of phenomena. That is why they have to consider that somehow the shravakas also have an understanding of the selflessness of phenomena. But this doctrine is not followed by the Svatantrikas, for whom it is actually possible to gain liberation from samsara without a realisation of the selflessness of phenomena. That is the point at issue between the two branches of the Madhyamika. Also, because I asked the question in a clumsy way, khenpo corrected my question. When I asked, I said that it seems that the Svatantrikas admit that the phenomena are established as real superficially or conventionally. He said that they are not established as real even superficially or conventionally, but they are established as having an inherent nature. Perhaps it would be worthwhile to ask more questions about the distinction that he is making here.

The Svatantrikas don't say even conventionally that things are established as real, but they admit or assume that conventionally they are *rangtsen kyi drup pa* (*rang mtshan kyis grub pa*), ‘established by their own characteristics’. This can be explained as meaning that they have some kind of efficiency. For example, a lamp can cast light; a fire can burn, and so on. They produce some effect, conventionally. That is what is meant by “being ‘established by one's own characteristics’”, which is not the same as being established as real.

[Q]: When different beings see things differently according to their karmic formations, how do they all agree that there is something there to be perceived? They seem to agree that there is a common ground before it is labelled or perceived.

[A]: If something was really established on the object's side, then there should be a common basis for all beings to make their various imputations. But here it is explained in another way. It is said that within our cognitive faculties, there is something that is ‘spontaneous’ and something ‘imputed’. Let's call them ‘innate’ and ‘imputed’. If you consider the innate part, rather than the imputed part, it can be common to all members of a group of beings, such as all human beings, because of their common karmic traces from previous lives. So, because of that they have more or less similar perceptions. So therefore a certain thing appears as a bowl of water for all human beings, while it appears as pus for *pretas*. Khenpo says that it is a big point at issue, and there have been many debates on this question. For

*When beings of different realms perceive things differently, it is solely due to their karma. There is nothing there on the object's side*

*The only thing common to different realms is a common location, a mere point in space*

*But for beings with no common karma, there is not even a common focus or intentional object*

example, Je Rinpoche, Tsong Khapa, has a very special doctrine on this point. But we should not think that there is a truly established common basis for all perceptions. It is just that all members of a group of beings can share some common karma and perceive more or less the same thing. And then they may make similar imputations on this basis. All humans would see something because of their common karma, and all *pretas* would see something else because of their generic common karma, and so on. From the point of view of human beings, seeing pus, molten iron, nectar, or whatever is to be considered as *lokpé kündzop* (*log pa'i kun rdzob*), erroneous or superficial reality, or erroneous conventional truth. But from the point of view of the *pretas*, seeing water out there should also be considered as erroneous superficial reality, something like a dream or hallucination. But we should stress the point that, at least for the Prasangikas, there is nothing on the object's side.

[Q]: To say "there is nothing" does not answer my question. Why do *pretas* and human beings that do not share the same karmic vision agree that there is something to be perceived?

[A]: We may ask whether there is any outwardly existing undetermined phenomenon that would be there as a completely open basis for imputing things. Khenpo said that actually it is not the case. The only common thing is a mere point in space or location. There is a common location, but other than that, there is nothing "out there". There is nothing that could be the common basis for imputation of phenomena. There is nothing beyond whatever the particular or common karma of beings causes to appear for them at this point.

[Q]: The problem remains. If we say that there is no common object, but there is a common space, we are simply changing the terms. How do you explain that common space?

[A]: Well, to put it very simply, there is more or less a common focus or common intentional object, for all beings that have some common karma. But if they have no common karma at all, then there is not even a common focus. Khenpo said that it is just from the point of view of unexamined superficial reality as it appears to the spontaneous cognitive faculties, not the conceptual ones. To the innate mind or innate cognitive faculties, there may seem to be some common focus or point in space, but that is just from the uncritical view.

[Q]: Does this mean that in each realm there is a common karma, for *pretas* to see pus and humans to see water and so on? Is Khenpo saying that in all the six realms, a common karma enables beings to see objects?

[A]: It would be quite difficult to say that there is any amount of common karma to all beings whatsoever in samsara. If you take things very abstractly, you can say that they have in common the perception that they think somehow that all things are real. Or they have the perception of seemingly real things. But that is not a reason to say that they have a common karmic ground for perceiving any specific object.

[Q]: Please could we be introduced to Khenpo's name and monastery?

[A]: He is Khenpo Jamyang Ösel, and he was born in Kham in Tibet. He studied at Dzongsar Institute, and now he teaches there.



All of the slokas that we will cover today are part of the sixteen types of emptiness, or the eighteen types of emptiness. As we all know, emptiness is something inexpressible. It is inexpressible, it is something that we cannot think about, interpret or describe. But the outline of the sixteen types of emptiness here might give us an approximate idea of the benefit of the different aspects of emptiness or different approaches to emptiness. We are not supposed to think that there are actually sixteen different kinds of emptiness. I trust that you are not making this misinterpretation.

The slokas themselves will go quite quickly, and I will again make use of this time to allow you to ask questions. Later on, if we still have time, we can go on discussing the existence of future life. Because if there is no future life, what are we doing here? We are missing a lot of fun! I

have to tell you that the study of Madhyamika does not really include much information about karma, reincarnation and so on, but I can see the importance of this for some people, so you can ask questions to me or khenpo. Perhaps later, we can discuss the *tsiilsum*, the three ways of establishing logic or valid cognition.

[H11]

### (xii) Emptiness of true nature, 6:198-199

- 6:198      *The essence of the composite –  
Has not been fabricated  
By the [shravaka-] disciples, the pratyekabuddhas,  
The bodhisattvas or the buddhas.*
- 6:199      *Therefore the essence [of compounded and uncompounded],  
Were explained [as empty].  
By way of suchness,  
Inherently empty.*

There are two ways to understand these two slokas. One is that all compounded phenomena have the characteristics of birth, remaining and cessation. These characteristics are not produced or created by shravakas, pratyekabuddhas or buddhas. You know that fire is hot, but the Buddha does not create even those kinds of characteristics. These characteristics, these natures themselves are empty, and this emptiness is what we call ‘emptiness of nature’.

The other way of understanding this is that the nature of all phenomena is emptiness, and the Buddha did not create that. Although you may hear that all phenomena are emptiness in the buddhist teachings, this does not mean that phenomena became emptiness after Buddha said so. The nature of phenomena is empty by itself.

[H11]

### (xiii) Emptiness of all phenomena, 6:200-201.2

- 6:200      *The eighteen constituents, the six senses,  
The related six perceptions,  
Form and formless,  
All compounded and uncompounded dharmas –*
- 6:201:1-2    *All these phenomena,  
Are empty of themselves.*

*The 18 constituents or elements (dhatus)*

There are eighteen constituents or elements, *dhatu* in Sanskrit. What are they? There are six inner constituents of sense. Then there are six outer constituents, such as objects, including form. Then there are six result constituents. For example, when there is contact between the eye and the form, there will be a consciousness of thinking that this is a form. Altogether, there are eighteen. Then there are also six different kinds of feeling that come out of these six different kinds of contact, like contact between form and eye, and so on.

I think that these sorts of groupings come when Indian philosophers wish to be more specific about general categories like ‘phenomena’. For example, normally we say ‘all phenomena’, but sometimes we like to be more specific, so we might make a gross grouping like ‘animate phenomena’ and ‘inanimate phenomena’. Then we can make an even subtler or more precise grouping. At the moment, we are talking about all phenomena, so Chandrakirti is mentioning some of these groups of phenomena, all of these can include all phenomena, and he will give some examples, such as form and formless. The point is that all these phenomena are empty of

all these categories and ideas, such as animate, inanimate and so on. So therefore, we speak of the emptiness of all phenomena.

[H11]

#### (xiv) Emptiness of characteristics, 6:201.3-215

6:201.3-4 *The emptiness of insubstantial [phenomena], including form,  
Is the emptiness of characteristics.*

6:202 *Form has the characteristics of taking form;  
Feeling is the experiencer;  
Perception perceives attributes;  
Formation actually gathers [causes and conditions];*

6:203.1-2 *Perceiving each particular object,  
Is the specific characteristic of consciousness.*

Here there are two kinds of phenomena, *chepé suksu rungwa* (*dpyad pas gzugs su rung ba*) and *rekpé suksu rungwa* (*reg pas gzugs su rung ba*). *Chepa* means that you analyse, and if you can touch and feel that something is a form, then it is a form. These categories are only briefly mentioned here, and the main point that we have to learn is their emptiness. If you are interested in all the constituents, elements and *ayatanas*, you should study the *Ngönpa* (*dnong pa*), the *Abhidharma Kosha* or “Treasury of Abhidharma”. There you will find a detailed explanation of these things. When we say ‘feelings’, we may be referring to pleasant, unpleasant or neutral feelings. The characteristic of a ‘perception’ is the joining of a name and an entity, for example when you think that the name, such as ‘vase’ and the thing that is made out of clay are an entity. Formation, or karmic formation, is actually engaging in some kind of action. And consciousness is the one that cognises the object.

6:203.3-4 *Suffering is the specific characteristic of the skandhas,  
The characteristics of the constituents are like a venomous snake.*

6:204 *The senses, so the Buddha taught,  
Are the sources of creation.  
Being interdependently connected  
Is the characteristic of the conditioned.*

The first two lines are the characteristics of the skandhas and constituents as a group. The characteristic of the aggregates is suffering. Again, this is a very abbreviated or condensed description of these characteristics, so you cannot use this as a base for arguments or questions. As I have already mentioned, if you would really like to go through this, you have to go through the *Abhidharma Kosha*.

The characteristic of the constituents is that they are like a snake. This is very short! Just briefly, in the sutras, when the characteristics of the constituents are explained, Buddha said the constituents are like a snake because they coil around you and bind you in samsara. They also have venom that obscures the growth of wisdom, so to speak. These constituents can poison the root of nirvana.

The *ayatanas*, the sense fields, are like a door through which consciousness can arise or emerge. And the characteristic of the twelve links of interdependent origination is that they act as a bridge between the cause and the result. This is just a brief list of the characteristics of all deluded phenomena.

*The characteristics of feelings, perceptions, and karmic formation*

*The characteristic of the aggregates is suffering*

*The characteristic of the constituents is that they are like a snake*

*The characteristics of the ayatanas and the twelve links of interdependent origination*

*The characteristics of the six paramitas*

6:205     *Giving is the paramita of generosity;  
Discipline is the absence of anguish;  
Patience is the absence of anger;  
Endeavour is the absence of regret.*

6:206     *Meditation has the characteristic of concentration;  
Wisdom has the characteristic of non-attachment;  
The six-fold paramitas  
Have been described as such.*

This sloka is easy to understand. Giving is generosity. Because discipline protects you from downfalls, it frees you from anguish or regret. That is the characteristic of discipline. The absence of anger is patience, and the absence of non-virtuous acts is diligence. Not getting distracted and concentrating inwardly is meditation. And wisdom is no grasping. These are, very briefly, the characteristics of the six paramitas.

6:207     *The [four] samadhis, the [four] boundless,  
And others such as the [four] formless –  
With his wisdom of perfect knowledge  
He taught these as having the characteristic of immutability.*

Perhaps in the translation we don't have to say 'four' since it is not in the Tibetan, but there are actually four samadhis, four immeasurable thoughts and four different kinds of formless meditation. The Buddha taught that all these are the state of 'not disturbed' because once you reach these stages, you will have no more gross agitation or passion, and so on.

6:208     *The thirty-seven limbs of enlightenment  
Have the characteristic of accomplishing certain [liberation].  
The characteristic of [the first door of perfect liberation], emptiness,  
Is the absence of entities through the non-existence of objectification [as truly existing];*

*The 37 branches of the bodhisattva's qualities*

In the Mahayana sutras, there are so-called 37 branches or limbs of a bodhisattva's qualities. These are four kinds of mindfulness, four miraculous legs, four perfect rejections or abandonments, five senses, the noble eight-fold path, five powers and the seven limbs of enlightenment. Actually, some of these will come later in the eleventh chapter. So, do not worry. In any case, these 37 limbs of the bodhisattva's qualities are what liberate you from samsara.

6:209     *The [second], the absence of characteristics is peace;  
And the characteristic of the third, [wishlessness],  
Is absence of suffering and ignorance.  
Such are the characteristics of the instigators of liberation.*

*The three doors of liberation*

Then there are the so-called three doors of liberation, which are quite big things in the Vajrayana. This is what is explained in sloka 209. In sloka 208, the last two lines talk about the first door, the door of 'emptiness of nature'. The second door is that the 'cause is without characteristics', the third is that the "result cannot be wished for". Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's interpretation of this is "Journey Without Goal", the goal that cannot be wished for.

6:210     *The nature of the [ten] powers  
Was completely established [by the Buddha].  
The protecting fearlessnesses,  
Are in essence extreme stability.*

*The four great seals are the heart of the Buddha's teaching, and cannot be changed*

6:211     *The perfect [types of] comprehension of particulars,  
Such as memory, have the nature of immeasurability.  
To perfectly accomplish the benefit of sentient beings  
Is known as great loving-kindness;*

6:212     *To fully protect those suffering,  
Is great compassion;  
[Sympathetic] joy has the nature of joy.  
Equanimity is known as being unpolluted.*

Now we come to the ten powers. What it really means is that when Buddha understands or concludes something about phenomena, he has ten unique powers. This is such bad language, but we have no choice except to say it like that. The characteristic of these ten powers is that they give the power to conclude. It is something that scientists don't have, which is why they are still wondering what mind is. Whereas Buddha said, "this is it". No more, no less. It is that kind of power. Whereas everyone else, such as scientists or philosophers, thinks, "maybe this is it". But after two thousand years, they will think something else. This is quite an important point actually. This is why the four views or the great four seals of the Buddha can never be changed (*See also p.118*):

- All compounded things are impermanent
- All emotions are pain
- All phenomena have no inherent nature
- Nirvana is beyond extremes

It has always been like that, before the Buddha and after the Buddha. And these things are good to know, because there are so many buddhist authors and buddhist teachers coming up these days, like me for instance. And people like me are very attracted to power, position, fame and all that. So, if the market demands that buddhism should be based on some kind of technique like massaging on the right shoulder, or something, I might bypass these four. Do you understand? This happens a lot. I heard that people are writing books about new, modern buddhism that does not worry about reincarnation. But such things do not exist. What the Buddha taught: that's it; there is no more. The shastras can be changed, but what the Buddha taught can never be altered. In other religions, things may be altering all the time. Perhaps you go to Nicaragua and find that the Nicaraguans want something different. All these things exist, of course, as part of skilful means. But the real wisdom can never be changed, and that power of decision has to be something coming from the top. I feel in a bit of a critical mood today!

*The four types of  
fearlessness*

Then there are four types of fearlessness. Their characteristic is something that makes the Buddha very stable. This is actually a very special quality of the Buddha. I think King Ashoka thought this was the most special quality of the Buddha. Even today, the Indian government uses the emblem of the four-headed lion, but I am sure that Hindu-oriented and Moslem-oriented Indians don't understand any of this now, although this is actually something buddhist. The Buddha has four different kinds of affirmation or proclamation. For himself, he had a strong proclamation regarding purification and realisation; therefore, he has two kinds of fearlessness. He has purified for himself everything that needs to be purified, so there is nothing more to be purified. Therefore, there is no fear. And he has realised everything that is to be realised, which is another fearlessness. The third fearlessness is that he knows what kind of path should be given to which kind of person. And finally, when a person is going along the path and he encounters obstacles, Buddha knows what kind of antidote should be applied. These are the four types of fearlessness. Then there are four perfect understandings. Their characteristic is to maintain courage all the time, without any break. The wish to help other sentient beings is love or *karuna*. The ability to free sentient beings from suffering is the great mind, compassion. Enjoying the taste of going beyond extremes is joy, and not being stained by attachment and aggression is equanimity.

*The eighteen uncommon dharma's of the Buddha*

6:213     *By having a buddha's uncommon dharmas,  
Ten and eightfold,  
The Teacher was unmistaken,  
Having the characteristic of being unmistaken.*

These qualities make the Buddha uncommon when compared to the shravakas, pratyekabuddhas and bodhisattvas. For instance, Shariputra is an arhat, who has already destroyed the enemy, in this case the ego and all that. But, for example, he did not know that a certain devotee who wished to become a monk had the basic merit that was required.

The 18 dharmas are six of the body, six of the mind, three of wisdom and three special qualities of activity. For instance, when the Buddha helps a sentient being, he doesn't need motivation. Or when he helps a sentient being, he doesn't see the object, the sentient being and the suffering. He doesn't have dualistic mind. He doesn't have subject and object.

6:214     *The wisdom of omniscience  
Is considered to have the characteristic of being direct.  
On the contrary, fleeting [cognition]  
Is not considered direct.*

6:215     *The characteristics of the compounded and  
The characteristics of the uncompoounded,  
Are in suchness emptiness;  
Their own characteristic is suchness.*

*The only valid direct cognition is that of the Buddha*

From sloka 214 we know that according to buddhism, especially in the Madhyamika, the only valid direct cognition is that of the Buddha. There are many reasons for this. For example, the Buddha never has any so-called inferential cognition. So in his view, when he cognises there is no concept of direct cognition anyway, because the concept of direct cognition only exists in reference to inferential cognition. So the small direct cognition of the shravakas, pratyekabuddhas or even bodhisattvas on the tenth level, is not complete direct cognition.

In sloka 215, Chandrakirti concludes the emptiness of characteristics, because all this time we have been talking about the characteristics of different phenomena belonging to samsara and nirvana. And here he is concluding, saying that all phenomena that possess the characteristics of compounded phenomena or uncompounded phenomena are all in themselves empty, and this is what we call the 'emptiness of characteristics'.

[H11]

### **(xv) Emptiness of the non-apprehended (710), 6:216-217**

6:216     *The present does not remain;  
Past and future do not exist –  
With no observation of these  
They are known as non-referential.*

6:217     *The essence of this non-referentiality  
Is absent. This [absence] is  
Not continuous, not dwelling, not perishable.  
It is the emptiness of that known as the unapprehended.*

As soon as this present moment appears, at that very moment it will exhaust or cease to exist. The past is gone; the future has not yet come, so they are not entities. This is what we call 'not apprehended'. But there is no such phenomenon about which you can conclude that it is an

unapprehended phenomenon, because ‘unapprehended’ itself is empty. This is ‘emptiness of unapprehended’.

[H11]

### (xvi) Emptiness of the nature without substantial existence, 6:218

6:218      *Being created from circumstances,  
All composite entities are without essence.  
In suchness, the composite is empty –  
The emptiness of the insubstantial.*

Everything comes from a gathering or assemblage of causes and conditions. But the very idea of an “assemblage” of cause and condition does not exist. This non-existent assemblage is itself emptiness. So, this is the sixteenth emptiness.

[Student]: In theory, language is a bubble. Nothing can come in, and nothing can go out. So everything we talk about is only language, and we cannot refer to anything else when using language except language itself. This means that things that are outside it, such as phenomena, are out of reach. This is probably the reason why we talk about *shunyata* in negative terms, saying it is not this or not that. I wanted to talk about reincarnation, and how to talk about it. It seems that in the Western world, there is no consensus about it, and so if there is no consensus, there is nothing in the bubble of our language about it. We cannot take anything out of language, because language refers only to language. And unfortunately, it does not seem as if we could speak about reincarnation in a negative way, like ‘absence of non-reincarnation’.

[Student]: But what language is this true for, because it seems to work in some Eastern languages.

[Rinpoche]: This is a very important issue.

[Student]: There is a problem of translation from people to people, and language to language.

[Rinpoche]: Chandrakirti only has to accept reincarnation in the conventional truth.

[Student]: The *Madhyamakavatara* doesn’t deal with reincarnation. It’s about something different.

[Rinpoche]: That’s true, but somehow we have to have a little bit of belief in reincarnation. The only reason I am still here is that I feel that if there is reincarnation when I die, then I might as well prepare a little. That is the only fear that drives me. So, if I spend my time preparing for the next life, practising dharma or whatever, and when I die I find that there is no reincarnation, then I have missed a lot of fun, but that’s about it! We will talk about reincarnation later. But we were discussing something about language, and I am quite interested in that.

[Student]: When we say language is within its own sphere, how much is it just another phenomenon, and how much is it within its own sphere? How tight are the boundaries? It would make it very easy then to say, I have an idea, the idea is not a substance and then without ideas I am just a nice vegetable, I am happy. So, what does he mean? Of course, we all agree that the book that I read does not physically enter my head, but I would like a closer definition of language, and its connection to the so-called outer phenomena. Language is a phenomenon that we deal with, and then we deal with other phenomena. The Buddha, for example, has direct cognition. Valid direct cognition seems to be non-duality.

[Rinpoche]: Wait. I have a question for you. Please give me a definition of concept. What do we mean by concept? What are the characteristics of a concept?

[Student]: In classical western philosophy, we don’t use the term ‘concept’ as buddhists usually do. Western buddhists always talk about ‘labelling’, which has nothing to do with a concept. A ‘concept’ is when you understand properly how a complex thing is made. I mentioned an organism the other day; it is a complex assemblage. A concept is an idea that is adequate to a thing, something that grasps it fully. For example, Wulstan compared the idea that an old man or woman has about his or her car compared to that of a mechanic. Let

*Tokmé, non-conceptual, and tokpa, concept, which is defined as dradön drezin gyi lo*

*The non-conceptual: the yogi's direct perception when in the state of mindfulness*

*All our concepts are deluded, because we think that our labels are the same as the things that appear*

*Discussion of the word 'concept'*

us imagine the person who grasps completely how the car functions, the super-mechanic. We could say that he has a concept of the car. Etymologically, the meaning of the word is that you 'grasp it all together'. You are grasping all the elements of the thing. In this case, having a concept means having some real understanding of how it works. Otherwise, you should not use this word.

[Rinpoche]: In buddhism, there are two related concepts. *Tokpa (rtog pa)* is what we would normally translate as 'concept', and *tokmé (rtog med)* is 'non-conceptual'. *Tokpa* is defined as *dradön drezin gyi lo* (*sgra don dres 'dzin gyi blo*), where *dra* is 'sound' such as the name 'vase'; *dön* is the entity, such as the vase itself. *Dre* means 'mix', *zin* means 'grasp', and *lo* means 'concept' or 'mind'. So, combining all these, you have *dradön drezin gyi lo*, 'mind that combines the word with the object and grasping'. This is something that you have to think about when you talk about language. We are supposed to be studying Madhyamika, but now you are studying *abhidharma* and *pramana*, buddhist logic. If you want to study these things, open the *Abidharma Kosha* or *Pramana*.

We also have *tokmé*, 'non-conceptual', which is an idea that mainly comes from the *abhidharma*, from the metaphysicists. If you ask them to explain this, they will talk about seven things. There are five types of sensory consciousness. The sixth is that the mind is conscious of itself. It usually has this ability, even if it is wandering or whatever. And the seventh is when a yogi dwells on mindfulness, without any distraction, imagining or daydreaming at all. When he remains in the state of mindfulness, the yogi's direct perception is what we call 'non-conceptual'.

When we talk about this non-conceptual, we should know that our conceptions are always deluded, but the non-conceptual is very seldom deluded in comparison, so to speak. The non-conceptual can only be deluded, for instance, when a person has cataracts and then sees falling hair. When we talk about conception, we are actually talking about the delusion. It is a delusion, because you constantly think that what appears and what you label are the same. That is the 'concept'. Do you think that Freudians and Jungians are trying to touch this?

[Student]: I think that you are right. I was thinking about this earlier today. A newly born baby looks at her mother, there is only one moment of non-conceptual perception and then immediately a need has to be met. The mother stops being what she was, and now becomes food, nurturing, love and so on. And so, from the moment of birth, we straightaway have what you call conceptual thinking, where the thought or feeling is confused with the name or whatever. I agree. It has to be confused and laden with a whole series of complex interactions and thoughts, but I am not sure that your use of the word concept is the right word.

[Rinpoche]: I wonder about this too.

[Student]: A concept is a grouping of ideas, feelings, and all the different inner elements that we need to symbolically represent something and conceptualise it. A concept is a grouping of ideas and associations that we hold within ourselves, which we symbolically use to represent something that we are trying to understand.

[Rinpoche]: That sounds very much like Jung, when you say 'symbolically'!

[Student]: A symbol always represents something that is slightly unknown. If you know what a symbol means, then it is no longer a symbol; it is a sign.

[Rinpoche]: Now it looks as though we are going to have some kind of refutation!

[Student]: It just seems to me that these definitions of the term 'concept' are more complicated than we need. Even the word 'book' is a concept. A book is a very simple thing, but it is also a group of ideas, it has a front, a back, it has pages, and you have to be able to open the pages. How complex does something have to be before it becomes a concept? And as for a symbol, when does a symbol stop being a symbol and become something else? I don't understand that. Symbols are always symbols.

[Student]: I think actually we are wasting time, in the sense that I think it is perfectly true that if you take the term 'concept' in ordinary language, there is a great deal of disagreement as to what it means. If you just take it as it stands, it is true that there will be problems. But if

you are talking about a technical subject, you can use this word, if you clearly define what you mean by it. So, although the word ‘concept’ may have problems, I think you will have difficulty finding anything better. But if you define what you mean, then we know that when we are talking about buddhist theory, we are using the word ‘concept’ to mean this. It is better to translate very clearly the Tibetan definition of *tokpa*, and then apply it to concept. I don’t think you will find anything better.

[Student]: I would like to make a linguistic comment. The Tibetan word *namtok* itself is a translation of the Sanskrit *vikalpa*. *Nampar* is *vi* and *tok* is *kalpa*. In Chinese, they have translated this word for 1,600 years in the same way as ‘differentiation’ or ‘discrimination’. There is not a word of ‘concept’, ‘thought’ or ‘mind’ in that definition, only differentiation. And Chinese buddhism works very well with that.

[Rinpoche]: Chinese buddhism doesn’t use the word ‘concept’?

[Student]: No, only discrimination, distinction or difference.

[Student]: But their understanding will coincide with that of the Indian buddhists. They have taken a word and decided what they mean by it. But to return to *dradön drezin gyi lo*, the mistaken element is that you take the word for the thing, in other words, you think that the word really corresponds to the thing, that there is equivalence. But in fact, this is not the case. That is all right as a working basis, but from a buddhist point of view, there is an element of ignorance there. So it may be better to say ‘to mix the word with the thing, and then take the word for the thing’, because to ‘take something for’ can just mean to take it. But it also has this element of confusion.

[Student]: There are some related concepts in western philosophy as well. There is one philosopher, called Susanne Langer, who divided between sign and symbol. For her, a symbol is something that we use all together, that we learn socially. But, for example, a baby just sees things as signs.

[Rinpoche]: Whenever you say ‘symbol’, I think that is what buddhists mean when they talk about ‘appearance’.

[Student]: You can have different systems of these symbols, such as music. Music is a different kind of symbolisation. We can use it as well. Since it is a system, you have to define each element and understand them in order to enter into the subject.

[Rinpoche]: What is ‘concept’ in French?

[Student]: ‘Concepte’

[Rinpoche]: So, at last, the English and French are together! What about Greek?

[Student]: ‘Silipsi’

[Rinpoche]: What does it mean?

[Student]: To take together many things and make one thing out of many things, because of reasoning. When you take together many things, there is a new picture in our minds.

[Student]: Can a ‘concept’ be a mental representation?

[Rinpoche]: I don’t know. ‘Representation’ sounds a little bit long-winded. Well, it looks like we have a difference of terms, but there is a similarity too. As the Greeks say, it is putting together many things. The buddhists are saying that too, because you are putting together the *dra* and the *dön*. And then you have talked about symbols. The moment that the *dra* and the *dön*, the term and object are united, it becomes a symbol.

[Student]: What you make out of these many things is something new. In Greek, the same word describes when a baby is conceived. When two different things come together, in our mind, we create something new using these two things and they are not there any more in the new concept that we have.

[Rinpoche]: We still haven’t talked about *tokmé*, the non-conceptual. Do you have this concept of the non-conceptual, or the state of non-conceptual?

[Student]: It is called stupidity, very often!

[Student]: There is conceptual art, so there must be non-conceptual art!

[Student]: The sense impressions are non-conceptual, and the concepts come on top of that and grasp.

[Rinpoche]: Here we have the ‘getting together’ again, which is the same. This is good.

[Student]: Conte has the idea of the base of perception, that when we grasp onto a thing, there are actually multiple sense perceptions that grasp all together onto one thing, to create one

unitary perception of the multiple sense-aspects of a thing. In effect, one applies a concept onto a non-conceptual base.

[Student]: We think we will die if thought stops. It's like the fear of death.

[Rinpoche]: But I think that "thought" and "concept" are different?

[Student]: In Jungian psychology, we only use the word 'concept' up until a certain stage, until we know something. When we know it, we don't use the word concept any more. While we are developing an idea or coming to an understanding, we use the word concept. But once we understand it, we give it a name. Now, when we use the *dradön drezin gyi lo*, it's all cognition, so you might want to call it dependent cognition.

[Student]: You are using the word 'concept' in a psychological sense. We are trying to use the word 'concept' in a buddhist philosophical sense. The word concept can have different meanings, and in a sense we are inventing one here.

[Student]: People don't talk about their concept of a book. They say that they know what a book is.

[Student]: That's their concept of a book.

[Student]: As we said earlier, in Tibetan, scholars don't talk about *tokpa* and *tokmé* in the way that we are talking about it now. They use it in a very technical sense, and there is no reason why we can't use the word 'concept' in a clear technical sense. Rinpoche could call it a banana if he wanted to, as long as he defined what he meant.

[Student]: I think you can use the word concept in the way you have described, but I think that for many of us, it would be useful to add an extra word to make it clear than you are referring to this specific Tibetan usage.

[Rinpoche]: We have to stop here. I think that when you come here for the discussion later, you should not only talk to the khenpo, but also debate amongst yourselves. That is what debate is for. If I have time, I might just pop in. I want to watch how you debate. I was thinking of dividing scientists and buddhists, and let them debate, and then psychologists and philosophers.



## Questions & Answers with Khenpo Jamyang Ösel

*The difference between 'shape' and 'collection' is that a shape has its parts organised recognisably*

- [Q]: What is the difference between sloka 152 and sloka 153, between a 'mere collection' (the sixth item in the seven-fold reasoning of the chariot) as compared to 'shape' in sloka 153.
- [A]: The object of refutation in sloka 152 is not the same as that in sloka 153. When 'mere collection' is mentioned, it is the sum of the parts without any order or structure. They could be disassembled. 'Shape' means that the parts are arranged in a recognisable way.
- [Q]: In sloka 153, we talk of 'before assembly'. Is that not the same as the mere collection of sloka 152?
- [A]: It depends on the emphasis. When you talk about 'mere assemblage', you are not talking about the shape of the parts. But in the second case, you are debating with someone who thinks that the so-called chariot is something to do with the shape of either its parts or as a whole. So, here we deal with the first of these in sloka 153, the shape of the parts.
- [Q]: In the Prasangika, is the object that is to be refuted phenomena, or attachment to phenomena, or both?
- [A]: Suppose there could be a possibility for the object to be established as real, how would you refute grasping? The main thing to be refuted is grasping, but if something in the object were real, how could we ever refute our grasping to it?

*For substantialists, 'truly existing' means the same as 'established substantially'*

*Prasangikas have no problem with unreal effects arising from unreal causes, because none are real for them*

*How can we meditate on emptiness?*

*Gelugpas understand emptiness as mere negation, but the other schools consider it to be beyond the four extremes*

[Q]: in sloka 156, could you clarify the difference between ‘truly existing’, *denpa* (*bden pa*) and ‘established substantially’, *dze yö* (*rdzas yod*)?

[A]: For substantialists, *denpa* means real or truly existent. ‘Existing by its own characteristics’ and similar terms all have the same meaning. There are many such words with the same meaning.

[Q]: The substantialists are saying that manifest results must be untrue. That is no problem, but in the third line of sloka 156, they say it must be based on a ‘false cause’. But why is this? Sometimes a false result can be based on a true cause, like labelling. You seem to be saying that a false result must come from a false cause, but I don’t think that the substantialists say this.

[A]: It’s not strictly true that Prasangikas don’t have theses of their own, but they don’t have truly established theses. For example, they say that fire is hot and they have similar assertions on the conventional level, so it is not true that they have no affirmations. Also, according to the substantialists, the meaning of 6:156 is that if the cause was not real, a real effect could not arise. But in Chandrakirti’s system, there is no problem with the arising of an effect even if the cause is unreal, as an unreal cause can give rise to an unreal effect. In fact, there is no real cause for a Prasangika.

[Q]: So this sloka is not a refutation of the thesis of the substantialists?

[A]: It is not a refutation. It just says, fine, if for you the cause is unreal, the effect will not arise, but in my system that is not possible.

[Q]: In a recent teaching, Rinpoche asked people “how do you meditate on emptiness”, and nobody had a good answer. How would you answer this?

[A]: There is the uncommon object of meditation of the root vehicle, the *dharmadhatu*, which is beyond the four extremes or devoid of discursive proliferations of the four extremes. But it is far beyond our reach as beginners. We can’t consider something beyond the four extremes, so we meditate first on the refutation of one extreme. For example, for a few instants we consider the negation of the first extreme, then slowly we practice and on the path of joining, we might be able to meditate on something beyond all four extremes of being, non-being, both and neither, at once. Now, if you are talking about analytical meditation, we should also distinguish the self of the person and the self of phenomena, and the order of meditation. First, we should meditate on the selflessness of the person, and then the selflessness of phenomena. For example, first apply the seven-fold analysis of the chariot with respect to the self of the person. In our mind, there are two aspects: the conceptual and the non-conceptual. In the conceptual aspect, the mind that combines the name with the object and then grasps to it, we cannot consider both the self of the person and the self of phenomena simultaneously, as they are two different thoughts. That is another reason why we have to proceed gradually.

[Q]: This is a continuation of the question about emptiness. Rinpoche explained that Gelugpas have a different way of meditating on emptiness than the other schools. They actually create some emptiness, whereas the other schools do not. Could khenpo explain the different ways of meditating on emptiness?

[A]: The main difference is that Gelugpas understand emptiness as mere negation without any positive counterpart, it is mere non-affirmative negation, mere negation. By contrast, the other schools consider emptiness as beyond the four extremes. If you consider it as beyond the four extremes, you can also meditate gradually, negating the extremes one after the other. That is the main difference.

*[Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche enters discussion]*

[Student]: I want to ask again to make sure. When we say *dradön drezin gyi lo*, if I understand properly, there is a sort of clinging to a subject, self, and a process of clinging to an object. We label a so-called substance. I wonder then, when you directly see that one is empty,

*There cannot be two different concepts in a single mind at the same time*

*When refuting the Cittamatrin example of memory, Chandrakirti uses their statement that the memory is different from the person having it*

why doesn't it automatically make the second one empty? Why do you still need to go to the other side?

[Rinpoche]: Someone should answer this. We will do this like a *shedra*. Does anybody have the answer for him?

[Student]: My question was, when you are dealing with eliminating clinging to the 'I', you are working on the self and the aggregates and the aggregates are anyhow part of the self of phenomena. So, they are not two different ideas.

[Student]: But it has also been said that realised beings like shravakas can have an understanding of the selflessness of the person. That is enough for them to gain their own liberation, even though they don't have full understanding of selflessness of phenomena. So, it must be possible to gain a partial understanding.

[Student]: I'll try to make my question more accurate. It seems that we cannot process two items of information at the very same instant. So, when a musician is concentrating on being one with music, the clinging is on so-called object, the score and the notes. So, this means that he cannot at the very same time have some clinging to 'I am playing the music'. If you read the score while being self-conscious, then you will lose the music.

[Rinpoche]: One human being cannot have two concepts at the same time, because in one mind stream you cannot have two different conceptual operations in the same instant. They have to arise in different instants.

[Student]: But thought is not the same as perception. You can watch a cello being played and hear the sound, but have no thoughts at all.

[Rinpoche]: If you can perceive two things at the same time, then in the same way that there are two objects of vision at the same time, you would need two subjects of vision at the same time. Then the mental series would be split.

[Student]: I am suggesting that there is an object of vision and an object of hearing, both of which can be processed.

[Rinpoche]: That's fine; it is accepted in *abhidharma* with no problem.

[Student]: You can't advert to two things at the same time. You can't pay attention to two things at the same time.

[Rinpoche]: Khenpo says something different again. He says that you can have many shades of visual field, you can have a whole visual field at one instant, it is not a problem. But this is not the case for the conceptual mind, because it is a mental factor. You cannot have two mental factors at the same time. You cannot have one consciousness grasping 'this is a vase' and another grasping 'this is a pillar' at the same time. But now, I want to change the subject. I want to introduce some kind of exercise. Is there anyone who disagrees with Chandrakirti in any slokas or subjects, or in his way of refuting? I would like to know.

[Student]: I would like to go back to sloka 74, when we were talking about the emptiness of phenomena, and Chandrakirti was refuting the Cittamatrins. He says, "An unawareness can indeed be experienced, yet since a memory of a memory is unseen, it would be like something alien and never known arising in the mind. This reasoning vanquishes all the others". This is a very bold statement. I wonder about this memory of a memory being unseen. Perhaps I am being too literal-minded, but you can easily have a memory of a memory. We have a word for it, 'nostalgia'.

[Rinpoche]: Now, can you answer that?

[Student]: A memory is something passed, which has no existence.

[Student]: A memory of memory is nostalgia, he claims, but nostalgia is just a memory. Here I think Chandrakirti is referring to a shadow, which cannot exist.

[Student]: Maybe we can discuss it in a logical way, but as for the experience, we can very well remember some point in the past where we were remembering something else.

[Student]: That is a memory!

[Student]: The experience exists, because now we can remember some time in the past when we were remembering something more remote in the past.

[Student]: Chandrakirti is not denying this. He is not saying it is impossible to have a memory of a memory, he is just saying that the fact that you can have a memory of a memory does not prove that the *zhenwong* (*gzhan dbang*) or dependent nature exists truly. If you believe in a truly existent *zhenwong*, then you are committed as a buddhist to these different moments of

consciousness. That means that the memory now is as different from the event then as the thought you have now from something that exists in somebody else's mind. Therefore, he says it is like you are remembering something that someone else has done.

[Rinpoche]: Khenpo has a different answer. According to the buddhist *pramana* or logic, Chandrakirti's main reasoning here, is that it is different, *zhen* (*gzhan*). This is his main reason. Chandrakirti doesn't have to worry that this is a vague or abstract reasoning, because the opponent establishes the fact that it is a different entity. Therefore, Chandrakirti does not have any burden.

[Student]: On the same point, to establish *rangrig* (*rang rig*), direct perception, there is a problem. We seem to be using a *talgyur* (*thal 'gyur*), demonstrating the consequences, which is a form a *jépak* (*rjes dpag*) or inference, against something that is known by direct cognition. This looks odd. Because if the self-consciousness is established as direct perception, how can you refute it by inference?

[Student]: He is refuting their argument to support it. He asks them for an example, and then he shows that example that they give is inadequate.

[Student]: Because there is no example for *rangrig*?

[Student]: Yes, but they say that memory is an example.

[Student]: Can you say what is shown by direct perception?

[Student]: You know your own mind.

[Rinpoche]: The main point here is that opponent has agreed that things are different. The person having the memory is different from, or other than, the memory.

Khenpo has a question for you. All these refutations by Chandrakirti, such as refuting self-arising and other-arising, and then refuting that the aggregates are the same as the self, and all that. Are these refuting the innate self or the imputed self?

[Student]: The arguments are first aimed at the imputed self, but they also destroy the innate self, because if we destroy only the imputed self, the innate self will still manifest. And it will have all the defects that have been exposed. So, it will destroy the innate self, using the same method.

[Rinpoche]: So, it is aimed at imputed self. This is why I came here this afternoon, actually. I want to introduce a little of the debating system. Now, what you have answered is actually quite right, but the debating system is designed so that even if you are right, they will encourage you to think even further. This is what khenpo is going to do here. Let's see if it works.

Now you said that the technique of refuting the imputed self, which includes both the selflessness of phenomena and the selflessness of the person, could also be used to refute the innate self. In the innate self, when we talk about *chökyi dag*, the self of phenomena, people don't really think that things come from self, both or neither. But Chandrakirti said that people think that things come from a cause. That is the innate self, during the selflessness of phenomena. So, using the technique of refuting the imputed self of phenomena, how are you going to refute the innate self?

I'd like to say it again, in a different way. It is easier with the self of a person. We have investigated whether the aggregates and the self are one or not, whether they are container or contents, and so on. Here the idea is to refute the imputed self. Now we can use that to destroy the innate self of a person. But the innate self of a phenomenon is when people think that a result comes from a cause. For example, a shoot comes from seed. How are you going to refute this innate self of phenomena using the same method that refutes the imputed self of phenomena?

[Student]: When we consider the innate self of phenomena, by the way that we consider it, it becomes the imputed self. So to destroy the innate self, we are obliged to destroy the imputed self, because the only cause is imputed.

[Rinpoche]: You are saying that, in reality, there is no innate self that is independent from the imputed self.

[Q]: How can we refute the innate self with the techniques used to refute the imputed self?

*[Q]: Why do we have to understand selflessness of phenomena in order to understand selflessness of the person?*

[Student]: We cannot say anything about the innate self that is different from the imputed self. The moment that we start to think about it, it is the imputed self.

[Rinpoche]: Khenpo says that you are not answering properly because, first, our opponent has no doctrine. But he still believes in causality, in cause and effect. Since he has not followed a doctrine, he will not think that something comes from other or self, but at the same time he still has a grasping that things come from something. That has to be destroyed, otherwise it is ignorance and he will never get enlightenment. It is grasping to the innate self. But how do you use the method of getting rid of imputed self in this case, where our opponent has no theory? In sloka 74, Chandrakirti's method works because the Cittamatrins are speaking about things being different, so we can debate and destroy their theory. But this ignorant cowherd, or whoever, doesn't know. He does not even have an imputed self, other or any of that. But at the same time, he has innate self-grasping to phenomena. So how are you going to destroy that?

[Student]: I would ask him whether he thinks that milk is the same as the cow. Is it the same, different, both or neither? I suppose that even the cowherd will say something.

[Student]: The intrinsic nature of phenomena is that they do not exist in the three times. They are not arising, not dwelling and not ceasing.

[Rinpoche]: Is this your answer? He will say that's a view. How are you going to introduce that view? Nevertheless, khenpo said it is quite good. Most of the scholars of the past would proceed in this way, except that Tsong Khapa would disagree with you. I think that should be left for you to research further into what Tsong Khapa said if you have a particular interest in that. As you can see, when we study these things, it is such a big subject. The answers are very simple, but these simple answers get lost inside these complicated subjects. This happens a lot.

I have another question for you. Why is it that you have to understand the selflessness of phenomena in order to understand the selflessness of a person? My advice is: don't say much. The more you say, the more you put yourself in danger!

[Student]: If you understand the selflessness of the person first, what is going to deconstruct the selflessness of phenomena?

[Rinpoche]: That's not a straight answer, because we want the selflessness of a person. We cannot say that if there is no self then there are no phenomena. But we want to destroy the self of a person.

[Student]: When we're attached to the self of the person, we're often attached to the five aggregates and we see those as phenomena. So, we need to be able to establish the emptiness of phenomena in order to be able to establish the emptiness of the person.

[Student]: If we had to explain the self of an individual, we would be obliged to explain phenomena. The individual is interdependent with his aggregates and aggregates are phenomena.

[Rinpoche]: Those are quite close, but still not valid answers. When we talk about aggregates, aggregates are usually classified in the department of self of a person. We talk about the self and the aggregates. So, you still have to give a more valid answer. Why, when we need to understand the selflessness of a person, why do we need to understand the selflessness of phenomena?

[Student]: Usually phenomena are the object of clinging, and if we realise the nature of phenomena, then we will have less clinging and fewer emotions. So, it will be easier to realise the selflessness of the person.

[Student]: I don't agree with khenpo that the five aggregates belong to the self. I think they belong to phenomena.

[Rinpoche]: Khenpo didn't assert this. When we talk about the self of a person and the self of phenomena, usually the self of a person includes the self and the aggregates, otherwise how can you talk about the chariot and its parts?

[Student]: Is he asking the question at the level of the path or at the level of the view?

[Rinpoche]: He said you do not need to worry, because while we are studying, that's establishing the view, so that is a path!

[Student]: I think that if we don't get rid of four types of production, you might still think that there is actual production of the self of the person.

[Student]: I meant that you could still have an idea of the self somehow being produced based on the aggregates.

[Rinpoche]: I see. You are saying that if you do not destroy the four extremes, you could think that the self could arise from self, other or something. Khenpo said that he knows that the sevenfold reasoning of the chariot and the reasoning of refuting the four extremes should all complement each other. But it is important to note that a unique thing about Chandrakirti is that he emphasises that one has to have a direct cognition or realisation of the selflessness of phenomena in order to be able to realise the selflessness of the person.

[Student]: If you don't realise the selflessness of phenomena first, you cannot realise the selflessness of the person, because there will still be grasping or fixation towards phenomena.

[Student]: The self of a person is just one variety of the self of phenomena. For example, a tree could be compared to the self of phenomena, and a plum tree would be the self of the person. So, if you ask someone to cut down all trees, then of course the plum trees would be cut as well. But this is a matter of understanding, not of realising.

[Rinpoche]: Khenpo says that these answers are not valid, because within the selflessness of phenomena, there is also an object and subject. It is not as though phenomena are only objects and the self is only ever a subject. Again, we are not talking about imputed self at all here. Khenpo is only talking about innate self now.

[Student]: At the moment we are talking about the sixth bhumi bodhisattva, and because the bodhisattva has already realised a lot in his meditation time, his problem is that during his post-meditation time he still has a lack of wisdom.

[Rinpoche]: There is a hint of an answer here, but it is very vague. One should not forget that shravakas also understand the selflessness of a person, which is why they become shravakas. You mentioned a Mahayana bodhisattva, on the sixth bhumi, but khenpo is saying that you shouldn't even think about the sixth bhumi bodhisattva. Just think about shravakas. They understand the selflessness of a person, and in order to understand that, they also have to understand the selflessness of phenomena. Why is this?

[Student]: If you don't understand the selflessness of phenomena, you cannot get rid of the obscuration of conflicting emotions. If you cannot get rid of that, you cannot obtain the nirvana of any of the three vehicles.

[Rinpoche]: Are you saying that in order to get rid of *nyöndrip* (*nyon sgrib*), the emotional obscurations, you have to understand the selflessness of phenomena? Khenpo says that this is a circular argument, because *nyöndrip* is within the self of a person.

[Student]: It is because the idea of 'self', 'I' is based on aggregates, which are phenomena.

[Rinpoche]: If you talk about the five aggregates, you are already in the department of selflessness of the person, so khenpo will not accept that.

[Student]: I have a very vague and new age sort of answer. Chandrakirti begins his book by saying 'first they think I, and then they think mine'. In other words, they appropriate phenomena because they think 'I'. But in ordinary experience, it is in relationship to phenomena that the idea of 'I' comes up, and if you have no perception of phenomena, you wouldn't have a strong notion of 'I'.

[Student]: With phenomena, we can get out of samsara, but without the self, we cannot leave nirvana and be a bodhisattva.

[Student]: The examples that are used for the logical refutation of the person are phenomena, for example, a chariot. So first, we need to establish the selflessness of phenomena so that we can understand the logical reasoning to show the consequences of the refutation.

[Rinpoche]: When we say *chö* (*chos*), or phenomenon, within the *chö* we have *chökyi dag*, the self of phenomena, and *gangsak gi dag*, which is the self of the person. But *gangsak gi dag* is not part of the *chökyi dag*. Generally, this is a very big debate between the Prasangika and Svatantrika Madhyamika. According to Chandrakirti, when we talk about the twelve links of interdependent origination, first we talk about *avidya* or *marigpa* (*ma rig pa*), which is ignorance. And according to him, that ignorance is the innate self of a person. So, we now know that the cause of the eleven other links of interdependent origination is the first,

*Ignorance, the first link of interdependent origination, is the cause of the others*

ignorance. That is the innate self. But now we have to ask, where does ignorance come from? Where do all twelve links of interdependent origination come from? We have to have a cause, and that cause is attachment to the aggregates. All this time we are talking about the innate self, both of the person and of phenomena. Now remember, out of the twelve links, the first is *marigpa*, the innate self of the person. The cause of that is attachment to the aggregates, which is *chökyi dagdzin* (*chos kyi bdag 'dzin*), clinging to the self of phenomena, in this case the innate self.

[Student]: Why did the Buddha only speak of twelve links, if there are thirteen?

[Rinpoche]: When we talk about twelve links, we talk about *sipa* (*srid pa*), which is cyclic existence. When we talk about cyclic existence, then we talk about *lé*, karma, *nyönmongpa*, afflictive emotion and *kyéwa*, birth, which includes death and sickness. When we talk about these three, we never talk about attachment to the aggregates. So, the root of all the twelve links of interdependent origination has to be included throughout all the twelve links. This is why you do not count it as something separate. This discussion has been very good, everything that he said was based on the sutras and shastras but he used a trick earlier that you missed. You should think about this, and you can discuss this further tomorrow.



The discussion that we had yesterday afternoon was very timely, because there are certain points that we need to discuss in between the sixth and seventh chapters. But first, we will go through some more slokas.

[H10]

### **(B) Explanation of the condensed classification into four**

[H11]

#### **(i) Emptiness of things, 6:219**

6:219      *The meaning of “entity” in brief  
Is described as the five aggregates.  
The emptiness of these,  
Is taught as the emptiness of entities.*

This is an interesting sloka. It is also related to something that we talked about yesterday. From this sloka, we understand the concept of an entity or thing, as you can see clearly that a thing or an entity can be condensed or summarised into five aggregates. These things are by itself emptiness, and this is what we call the ‘emptiness of entity’. We have now finished talking about the sixteen types of emptiness, and we are condensing them into four. This is the first of the four.

[H11]

#### **(ii) Emptiness of absence of things, 6:220**

6:220      *In summary, non-entity  
Describes all uncompounded phenomena.  
That emptiness of non-entities,  
Is the emptiness of non-entity.*

When we talk about ‘uncompounded phenomena’, such as non-analytical cessation, these are very much substantialist terms. However, for the sake of communication, they can also be

accepted in the Madhyamika during conventional truth. These uncompounded phenomena are a result of the path. They are what we call *ngöpo mepa* (*dngos po med pa*), a non-entity or nothing, something insubstantial. These so-called non-substantial things are also empty by themselves.

[H11]

### (iii) Emptiness of own nature, 6:221

6:221      *The absence of essence of a nature,  
Is called the emptiness of nature.  
Thus because nature is uncompounded,  
It is called nature.*

This is very similar to the type of emptiness that we talked about earlier, *tongpa-nyi tongpa-nyi*, the emptiness of emptiness. When we talk about *rangshin* (*rang bzhin*), or nature, we are talking about something unfabricated. Here, we need to learn that even this so-called nature is empty by itself.

[H11]

### (iv) Emptiness of other nature, 6:222-223.2

6:222      *Whether buddhas appear,  
Or do not appear, in reality,  
The emptiness of entities  
Is widely known as transcendent entity.*

6:223:1-2    *This is the perfect extreme, suchness,  
Or the emptiness of transcendent entity.*

This is very similar, but here you have to emphasise the term *shengyi ngöpo* (*gzhan gyi dngos po*), the thing that is alien. So, we have the ‘emptiness of the thing that is alien’. Roughly speaking, this ‘alien’ thing refers to something that is supreme, the thing that nothing is beyond or above. As stated in the first half of sloka 223, that is the ultimate end. We are referring to the emptiness that can be only understood by the Buddha. We cannot really express this in language, but we can say the object that is the only object of Buddha’s wisdom. Even that is empty by itself. Within these four types of emptiness, all of the other types of emptiness are included.

[H9]

### (iv) Brief conclusion mentioning the scriptural source, 6:223.3-4

6:223:3-4    *According to Prajñaparamita,  
These are the widely known [twenty emptinesses].*

*The sixteen or twenty  
types of emptiness all  
come from the  
Prajñaparamita Sutra*

*The meaning of semchen  
and chöchen*

This is saying that these sixteen or twenty different categories of emptiness actually come from the *Prajñaparamita Sutra*. They were not just made up by Nagarjuna or Chandrakirti. I would like to discuss something else here. I would like to find a definition for the Tibetan word *chen*. For example, *chö* means ‘phenomena’, so how would we translate *chöchen* (*chos can*)? Another example is *semchen* (*sem can*), which means ‘sentient beings’. Here, you are talking about wisdom that has a mind, which is an ignorant sentient being. But if the mind is dropped, then you just have wisdom. We could say that *semchen* means ‘endowed with mind’. It is an important term, because when we say ‘all sentient beings’, we are actually referring to an awareness that has mind. This definition makes a big difference. Don’t you think? Everyone has the wisdom mind or pure consciousness, *rigpa* or *yeshe*, but only sentient beings have mind. When we talk about a ‘man with a hat’, what is the hat? The ‘man’ is subject, and the ‘hat’ is an

attribute. Similarly, *semchen* means something like ‘one who has mind’, but then we need to ask the question, who is the ‘one who has’.

Likewise, when we say *chöchen*, it means ‘one that has phenomena’, so to speak. There is another word, *chönyi (chos nyid)*, which means ‘*dharma*ta’, the nature of phenomena. We can only divide the twenty emptinesses based on *chöchen*. It is important to realise this, because otherwise you might think that there are twenty separate types of emptiness, like potatoes, tomatoes and so on.

Let’s suppose that many different people have to meet a particular man in Montignac, and he has a hat and a shirt and so on. Now, for each of the twenty people, depending on their sight or their nationality, perhaps you will describe the man differently. You might choose to describe the man in terms of certain attributes that will attract them, or that they will notice. For example, if I were to tell Ani Jimpa, I would say ‘that man with a big nose’, and she will immediately find him, because she is usually looking at that particular feature. So, for these 20 different people, because of the *chöchen*, we are talking about the same man.

Now there are only three more slokas and we will have finished chapter six. Chandrakirti is now beginning to conclude in these last three slokas. They are so beautiful. This is the sad part. I feel sorry for you because I am not explaining it properly. It is so beautifully written, so poetic.

[H6]

#### **d) Summary of the qualities attained in this way**

[H7]

##### **(1) The qualities of realising the absolute, 6:224**

6:224      *Through the illuminating light of wisdom,  
As clear as a myrobalan fruit held in his own hand,  
He realises the three worlds as originally uncreated,  
And through conventional truth proceeds to cessation.*

This *myrobalan* fruit is also called *curura*. There are several celebrated fruits ending in ‘*rura*’: *curura*, *arura* and *parura*. The particularity of the *curura* fruit is that it is completely transparent, and one can truly see through it.

*With his understanding of emptiness, the sixth bhumi bodhisattva sees through phenomena, like the transparent curura*

Here Chandrakirti is saying two things simultaneously in a very beautiful way. On the one hand, he is identifying the sixth bhumi bodhisattva, through his aspect of understanding the ultimate truth. On the other hand, he is simultaneously telling us the benefit of understanding the ultimate truth. So, with this kind of wisdom that understands the sixteen or twenty different types of emptiness, a bodhisattva will illuminate all the darkness of delusion. It is like the *curura* fruit in your own hand. Here ‘in your hand’ means that it is something small and compact. It is easy to see, not far away in a tree. It is within your own reach. So, not only do you see the whole of this transparent *curura* fruit, both inside and outside, but you can also see through the *curura* to see the lines of your own hand.

Likewise, a bodhisattva that understands the ultimate truth will see these three worlds, because with an understanding of the twenty different kinds of emptiness, there is no darkness or obstruction, so he sees through everything. He sees the container and the contents at the same time. And during his meditation time, he will understand that all these three worlds have never had a birth or beginning. By understanding the nature of the unborn, and with the help of conventional truth, he will then approach cessation.

[H7]

##### **(2) The qualities of realising the relative, 6:225**

*Because of wisdom, the bodhisattva has no wish to remain in samsara, and he has no wish to remain in nirvana because of compassion*

*The bodhisattva can now outshine shravakas with his wisdom*

*The image of the swan flying with the wings of relative and ultimate truth*

6:225     *Even though his mind is always dwelling in cessation,  
He generates compassion for unprotected sentient beings.  
Later, all shravakas and pratyekabuddhas without exception  
Will be defeated by his mind.*

Again, Chandrakirti is saying two things simultaneously in this sloka. He is telling us the benefit of understanding the relative truth, and he is describing the power of the sixth bhumi bodhisattva's compassion. Now, the bodhisattva normally dwells in the state of cessation, which is a state of meditation, roughly speaking. The bodhisattva dwells in this realisation of going beyond the four extremes, beyond any extremes. But all the time, this bodhisattva generates compassion for all those who have no protector. Therefore, as much as this bodhisattva has no wish to dwell in samsara because of his wisdom, he has no wish to dwell in nirvana because of his compassion. Now, we could spend a long time talking about the two last lines. Khenpo Rinchen, my teacher, used to teach on just these two lines for ten days, sometimes more. This is because Chandrakirti makes a very important remark here. As the sixth bhumi bodhisattva approaches the seventh bhumi, at that time he will outshine the shravakas and pratyekabuddhas, even with mind. Now this gives rise to many questions! Such as, does this mean that until now this bodhisattva does not outshine shravakas and pratyekabuddhas? We will briefly discuss this later.

Remember that we talked two years ago about how a bodhisattva is like a baby bodhisattva from the first bhumi to the sixth bhumi. The classic example is that he is like the crown prince of the Chakravartins, the king of the universe. The king of the universe has a crown prince, who is an infant. Of course, the ministers and warriors, all the wise people in the court, are much more skilled in strategy and politics. So, this baby may not be able to outshine them with his mind, because he is still a baby. But because of the baby's merit, no matter how smart the ministers are, or how great they are in their strategy, they will never become king. They cannot become crown princes. They are ministers, and this is as far as they go. But one day, this baby will grow up and become the king of the kings. And now, at the end of the sixth bhumi and the beginning of the seventh bhumi, he is growing up. Now he will outshine even the minds of the ministers, which is why a lot of discussion is necessary here. Anyway, let's conclude this. There is just one more sloka, 226 – such a beautiful sloka.

### [H7]

### (3) The qualities united, 6:226

6:226     *Spreading his broad wings of [the truths of] concealment and suchness,  
Leading the swans of [ordinary] individuals, this king of swans,  
Soars ahead on the strong winds of virtue,  
And proceeds to the supreme far shore of the Victorious Ones' qualities.*

This is such a beautiful sloka, but at the same time has an important meaning. For some time, the flock of swans has been flying together. Then suddenly the king of the swans takes over and leads. He is now in front. The other swans are the shravakas and pratyekabuddhas. This is saying that the sixth bhumi bodhisattva is finishing all that needs to be understood, and when he reaches the seventh bhumi, he is going to overtake the other swans.

The two wings of the swan are relative truth and ultimate truth. You can say that one wing represents generosity and all the six paramitas. The other wing is the understanding of the two kinds of selflessness. And the swan will take advantage of the wind, which is virtuous action. He will go across this infinite ocean of the qualities of the enlightened beings, and he will go towards the other shore. If we look at the last three slokas, we can also say that sloka 224 explains the benefit of understanding the ultimate truth, sloka 225 explains the benefit of understanding the relative truth and sloka 226 explains the benefit of understanding their union.

*Since one can attain shravakahood in three lifetimes, why not do this and take a shortcut to the seventh bhumi?*

That's it! We have finished the sixth bhumi. How long did it take us? Two years! Before continuing, I would like to say a few things. If in the future you meet some other scholars and khenpos, and you would like to discuss this, then maybe you can ask some of these questions. I don't really think that I can answer all of these.

There are some interesting doubts here. For example, it is a well-known fact that in order to become a shravaka, it takes three lifetimes. Of course, when we say this, we are talking about the maximum speed. For those who are following the Mahayana path, again at maximum speed, it takes one countless aeon to reach the first bhumi bodhisattva level. To reach the seventh bhumi, it takes another countless aeon, which makes two, and only now does this bodhisattva outshine the shravaka. So, why not become a shravaka first? It takes only three lifetimes. And even in the Mahayana sutras, it is stated that one will eventually become a Mahayana practitioner and become enlightened. In these Mahayana sutras, it says that the shravakas' and pratyekabuddhas' state is like an island, from which you continue further. So the question is, what about doing that? Why not go forward as a shravaka for three lifetimes, and then go straight into the seventh bhumi. Why not take a short cut, so to speak?

The difficulty is that some of the information that we need is not found in this text. This is why it is necessary to study all the other subjects, such as *Prajñaparamita* and *Abhidharma*, because once you know that, you will know the answers to these questions. This is why I found it a little unfair when khenpo was asking you questions yesterday and you were unable to come up with the correct answer. It is not actually your fault. It is because some of you have not studied things like the *Prajñaparamita Sutra*. You would not have had the problems you had yesterday if you had studied the Prajñaparamita shastras, the *Abhidharma Kosha*, or the *Abhisamaya Alankara*, *Ngöntok Gyen* (*dngon rtogs rgyan*), 'The Ornament of Realisation'.

For example, the khenpo asked you why is it necessary to understand the selflessness of phenomena before you can understand the selflessness of a person. Given that many of you don't have all the information you need, most of the answers that you gave were quite good. I'm not flattering you, because I don't intend to go on a date with you!

*The two 'chariots': the teachings of Nagarjuna and Lord Maitreya*

You see, the text that you are studying now is a commentary to the *Uma Rigsok* (*dbu ma rigs tshogs*), the *Treatises of Reasoning*. We speak of two main 'chariots', which are those of Nagarjuna and Lord Maitreya (some would say Asanga). Now, if you study Lord Maitreya's work, most of his work, such as the *Five Teachings of Maitreya*, is more instructional. It is *mengak*. There you will find different techniques and descriptions of meditation, how each antidote works with which poison, and all that. Most of the times that we listen to things like *ngöndro* teachings, these are instructional. It is not the time for reasoning. So, this is why some of you unconsciously answered questions more from the instructional point of view. Perhaps you are not even aware of that, but I could hear instructional answers in what you said.

There are two different ways to do meditation. One is based on the analytical approach, through which we will discover the view. And the other way is that we just leave it as it is, and then we find the view. We can get to realisation by two different procedures. Another way to understand this is through the saying, "from meditation you discover your view or through the view you find your meditation".

*From meditation, you discover your view, or though the view, you find your meditation*

Now it is up to you how you choose. Maybe both are necessary at times. But the point that I am trying to make is that according to Lord Maitreya, shravakas and pratyekabuddhas have not realised the selflessness of phenomena at all. So, when we ask, why do we need to understand the selflessness of phenomena in order to understand the selflessness of the person, this is a very Madhyamika oriented, Nagarjuna-oriented question. Those who have primarily had instructional teachings might answer in a different way. But according to Nagarjuna, shravakas and pratyekabuddhas both have to understand the selflessness of phenomena, because otherwise they would never understand the selflessness of the person.

I have to confess here, that when I was 13 and 14 and this was my principal study, I primarily followed the Sakyapa literature, such as Gorampa. So, although I try very hard not to fall into these traps, I think that much of what I say may have that influence. This is something that you should ask different scholars. But in the presence of two great Nyingmapa masters, I want to praise the Sakyapa tradition at least once! I think that on the practice level, such as meditation, there is no doubt that the Nyingma path, like Mahasandhi, is incredible. But when it comes to philosophy discussions and debate, the way that Sakyapas and Gelugpas analyse and debate is quite meticulous. It is quite amazing.

[Tulku Rinpoche]: Rinpoche, may I say one thing. This is because the Nyingmapas and Kagyupas, but especially the Nyingmapas were not interested in ruling the countries. Therefore, they concentrated on their realisation.

[Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche]: I have a very good answer for that. Do you know why they had no interest in ruling the countries? It is because they were already the rulers of the countries. Nyingmapas like King Trisong Detsen and Tri Ralpachen were the rulers!

Now, I have not consciously asserted any Sakyapa views here, but I am saying that I may have, so I have to confess this. If you go with the transcript of my commentary to a Nyingmapa master, they may have some disagreement. Now, although the four schools of Tibetan buddhism may commit errors and have their own downfalls, this is nothing to do with the path itself. This is about human error, not the Nyingma or Sakya schools going wrong. It is the Nyingmapas and the Sakyapas going wrong. For instance, although I can't say this on behalf of all Sakyapas, I can say this on behalf of my own limited view. I have to admit that, having studied in the Sakyapa tradition for a long time, I have to say that there is probably too much emphasis on the dialectical approach and that can sometimes become a trap. But sometimes in the Nyingma school, there is too little emphasis on the dialectic. If devotion and all the rest work, it is wonderful. But when it falls apart, then things can go wrong. When I studied with masters like His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, Dudjom Rinpoche, Nyoshul Khen Rinpoche or Tulku Urgyen, one of the first things that they would tell me is that I always fall into what they call the 'casket' of theory. This is so true, and it is because I place too much emphasis on theory. Anyway, we have to go back to the main point, which is why Nagarjuna said that the selflessness of phenomena must be understood before selflessness of the person.

[Q]: What are the differences between how Sakyapas and Nyingmapas would approach this text?

[Tulku Rinpoche]: I think that after twenty or thirty years' study, you can differentiate between the Sakyapas and Nyingmapas. What Rinpoche is trying to teach here is what is commonly accepted. The differences are beyond our context.

[Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche]: I am only saying that I may have inadvertently introduced some Sakya bias. I am saying this because some of you may wish to study Madhyamika further, and you may go to another teacher, and then you might get confused. This is how our mind works. You have heard it taught this way, and then if you hear it taught in a different way, you will wonder which is correct. So, I am saying that as much as I am trying to be unbiased, I may have certain habitual patterns because of my own background in philosophy studies, because I have studied this for six years. So, I am saying that certain ways that I use words, certain phrases, could be very Sakyapa. But I cannot really think of anything that I have said that would be considered a hard-line Sakyapa view.

[Q]: Which is the right view, that of Nagarjuna or Lord Maitreya?

[A]: No, there is no wrong or right view. This is what I have been trying to explain for the whole morning. I am saying that Lord Maitreya said that shravakas and pratyekabuddhas do not understand the selflessness of phenomena at all. But Nagarjuna said that they do somewhat. You have heard the analogy of the hole made by the insect, and this is to describe the extent of their understanding. So, to answer you, I cannot say that Lord Maitreya is wrong or that Nagarjuna is wrong. However, now we are studying the *Madhyamakavatara*, which is entering Nagarjuna's *Mulamadhyamaka-karikas*. Therefore, Nagarjuna's way of talking about these things will be more evident.

*Nagarjuna taught for  
disciples from all three  
yanas*

*Lord Maitreya's  
teachings are exclusively  
for the Mahayana, and  
seek to emphasise the  
qualities of the Mahayana  
path*

*For Maitreya, an  
understanding of the five  
aggregates is only an  
understanding of the  
selflessness of the person*

*The shravakas only  
understand the first  
extreme, that aggregates  
are not truly existent,  
“like a bursting bubble”*

*Grasping to the self of  
phenomena is not  
technically included  
within the twelve links of  
interdependent  
origination*

Now there is a good reason for this. When Nagarjuna wrote the *Uma Rigtsok*, for instance, he places great emphasis on the *lung*, the words of the Buddha. His teachings are taught for the three subjects, three kinds of disciples and three kinds of audience. They are for all three types of audience, shravakas, pratyekabuddhas and the Mahayana bodhisattvas. This is why I have repeatedly used this quotation: “those who wish to reach the shravaka level have to go through the understanding of the *Prajñaparamita*. Those who wish to reach the pratyekabuddha level also have to go through the *Prajñaparamita*. Those who wish to reach the bodhisattva path also have to go through the *Prajñaparamita*”. So, the path of Nagarjuna and his followers is an explanation for three types of audience or disciple. By contrast, Lord Maitreya's teachings such as the *Abhisamaya Alankara* are exclusively for Mahayana students. Lord Maitreya wants to emphasise the Mahayana path, and so he wants to emphasise the extraordinary qualities of the Mahayana. In order to do this, he says that shravakas do not understand the selflessness of phenomena.

I don't know if any students of the *Abhisamaya Alankara* are here. If there are, you will have an important question about its homage. In the homage of the *Abhisamaya Alankara*, there is a big phrase, which His Holiness the Dalai Lama recites wherever he goes. It is praise to the *yum*, the mother, which refers to emptiness. But in the homage, it says that shravakas and pratyekabuddhas are led by this understanding of this mother, of this emptiness. This means that they must understand emptiness. But according to one of the greatest commentators of *Abhisamaya Alankara*, Senge Zangpo (Haribhadra), whose view is accepted by all the schools of Tibetan buddhism, even he said that the homage is just a prologue. Right after the homage, the main text is exclusive Mahayana teaching.

For Nagarjuna, in order to understand the selflessness of the person, you have to understand at least the selflessness of the five aggregates. Now the understanding of the selflessness of the five aggregates is considered a small understanding of selflessness of phenomena. Some of you mentioned the aggregates when you answered Khenpo's question, but I will explain later where you went wrong, when I explain the twelve links of interdependent origination.

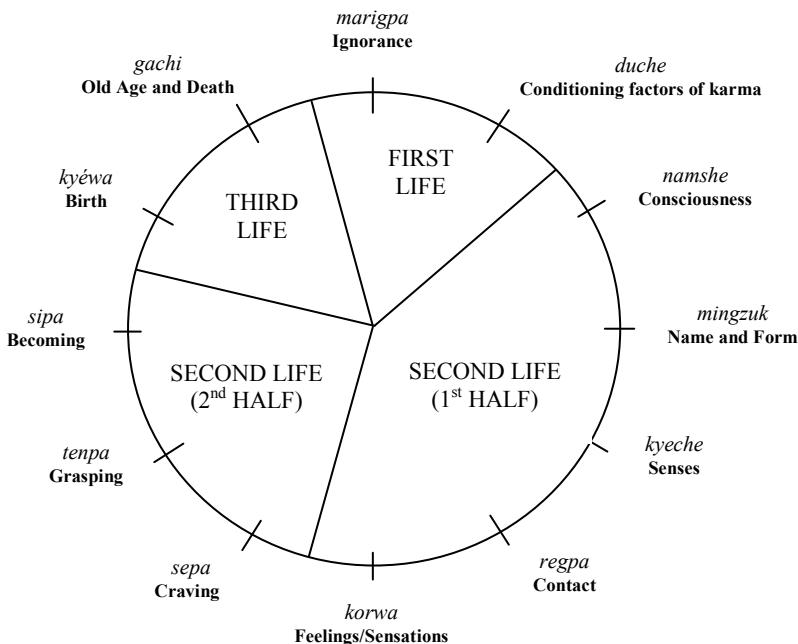
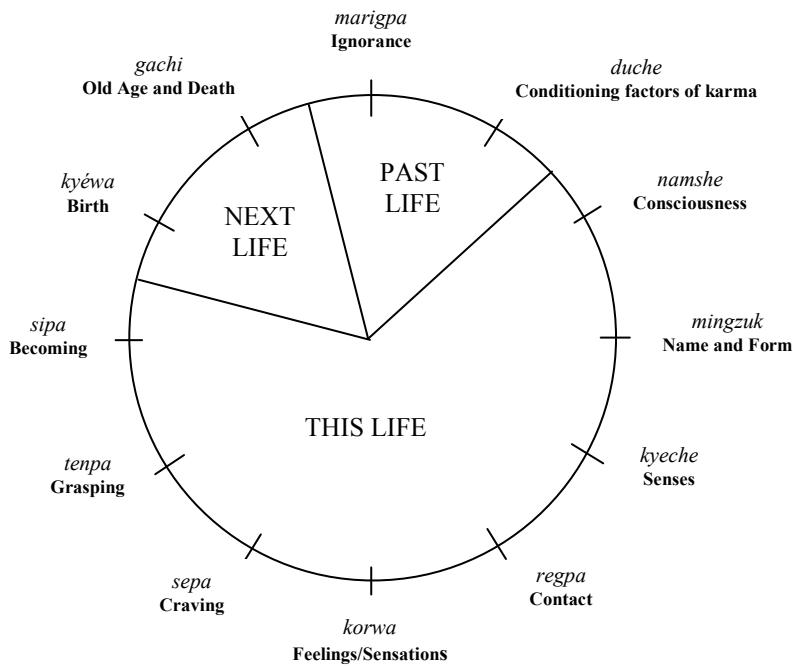
For Maitreya, an understanding of the selflessness of five aggregates is only considered an understanding of the selflessness of the person. According to Maitreya, shravakas and pratyekabuddhas understand the five aggregates as follows. As is stated in the sutras, they understand that “form is like a bursting bubble, feeling is like foam on the water, perceptions are like a mirage, karmic formation is like a banana tree, and consciousness is like an illusion”. This is how the shravakas understand the five aggregates. What does this tell us? It tells us that shravakas only understand the five aggregates with respect to one of the four extremes. The four extremes are not truly existent, not truly non-existent, both and neither. But they do not understand the final three of these. They just realise that the nature of form is merely empty, like a bubble that has burst. They don't refer to the other three extremes. So, this is why I am saying that it is a bit unfair to ask you some of these questions and expect the right answer.

You raised another good question, which is why don't we have a thirteenth link of interdependent origination rather than only twelve. The question is like the very famous question, ‘what is the beginning of this samsara?’ Let's ask this question: what is the root of the other eleven interdependent links? The root of the eleven interdependent links is the first one, ignorance. Now, when we talk about twelve interdependent links, technically you cannot include grasping to the self of phenomena within these twelve interdependent links. We came to this problem yesterday. When we condense these twelve independent links into *kyéwa*, *lé* and *nyönmongpa*, birth, karma and emotion, then we cannot technically include grasping to the self of phenomena in these three.

Now the difficult part comes here. As an exercise, we can divide the twelve interdependent links into three lifetimes. Let's put ignorance and ‘conditioning factors of karma’ into past lives, the first and second. Then we put the next eight, from ‘consciousness’ to ‘becoming’, in the present life. And ‘birth’ and ‘death’, we put into next life.

*How the twelve links of interdependent origination can be divided between three different lifetimes*

These twelve links are very flexible. Let's say that we take this life as the first life, the next life as the second, and future life as the third life. Now, remember, when we talked about the present life, we had from 'consciousness' to 'becoming'. Now out of these eight, 'craving', 'grasping' and 'becoming' then transform into 'ignorance' and 'conditioning factors of karma'. Since the first life is now this life, the second life is the future life. The future life's birth and death then transform into *namshe*, consciousness, *mingzuk* name and form, *kyeche* senses, *rekpa* contact and *korwa* feeling. But this is only the first half of the second life. This is how buddhists explain how life functions. In the second half of the second life, we still have becoming, grasping and craving. And then in the third life, we have birth and the death (see illustrations below).



*Grasping to the self of phenomena pervades all twelve links, so is not included separately*

*Ignorance as the cause of the twelve interdependent links, and the cause of the eleven interdependent links*

*The buddhas can only be distinguished from one another from the point of view of beings to be tamed*

[Rinpoche]: In buddhist sutras, we hear about the illusion of circle. For example, when you have a lighted stick and turn it in the air, you have an impression that there is a circle there. When we talk about a circle, we are talking about the circle of the twelve links of interdependent origination. When we talk about this circle, we cannot include the self of phenomena. This is what khenpo is trying to emphasise. This is because when we talk about birth, karma and emotions, the grasping to the self of phenomena is within all of that. So, we do not have to talk about it independently. It pervades all, so when we categorise as twelve interdependent links, we do not have to include the *chökyi dag* as a separate entity. I would like to ask those who have gone through the *Yön Ten Dzö* whether the division that I have just made is similar to that in the *Yön Ten Dzö*?

[Student]: Yes it is. I don't know if this is true, but it seems that the key is that this is like the circle of the firebrand whirled in the air. The twelve interdependent links, which are an explanation of what we call a person, are telling us where we come from, the nature of incarnation and so on. That whole thing is like a firebrand; in other words, it is unreal. The fact that we take it as real is belief in the self of phenomena. The self of phenomena is implicit in every link. The fact that we actually see a circle to begin with, with the twelve links, implies a belief in the self of phenomena. It's not something extra; it's what underlies everything. It is what makes the circle possible; it corresponds to the illusion of the circle in the air.

[Student]: Are you saying that if you haven't realised the selflessness of phenomena at death, for example, you are going to have a very real sensation of dying?

[Rinpoche]: No. As Chandrakirti has been telling us, when it comes to grasping to the self of the person, there is actually no base. But on a baseless thing, we create an idea of 'I'. So, where does this come from? He says it comes from looking at the five aggregates. So he is saying that there is clinging or grasping to the five aggregates, and we need to understand at least the first extreme, which is that it does not truly exist. This will help us reduce grasping to the self. Now, when we come to grasping to the aggregates, this is like a cause of all the twelve interdependent links. It is almost as if there are two kinds of ignorance here. One kind of ignorance is the cause of the twelve interdependent links, and another that is the cause of the eleven interdependent links. When we talk about eleven, we do include the first one, which is the root. If this argument works, it might help to prove rebirth. Every instant, you can actually construct these twelve interdependent links. For instance, an instant of anger has all these twelve links of interdependent origination. If you are interested, we can discuss this later.



## Questions & Answers with Khenpo Jamyang Ösel

*[Translation and additional commentary from Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche]*

[Student]: On what ground can an enlightened being judge the experience of another enlightened being? And in a more general way, do two buddhas share the same experience?

[Rinpoche]: The experience of buddhas is completely beyond our mind or understanding. And despite the fact that they can know our experience, we cannot know anything of their experience based on ours. From our own point of view, the buddhas cannot really be distinguished. It is said that in the Dharmakaya, the buddhas are not really different or distinguished from one another. It is from the point of view of beings to be tamed, or disciples, that the buddhas can be distinguished from one another. And you can definitely say that this buddha is performing these actions, he has these qualities, and so forth.

[Student]: If we are speaking only of bodhisattvas, how can they be the judge of the enlightened experience of pratyekabuddhas and shravakas, since they don't even have the same vehicle and path?

[Rinpoche]: Khenpo says that it is the distinction of meditation and post-meditation. While the bodhisattvas are dwelling in meditation, they do not have any knowledge of what happens for shravakas and pratyekabuddhas and so forth. They are just meditating. But in their post-meditation, the bodhisattvas on the first bhumi have already eliminated all that is to be eliminated in the shravaka vehicle, and they have also understood or realised all that is to be realised in this vehicle. So, it is said that when you have reached a certain level, you know everything up to this level. So, they would know the realisation of shravakas and pratyekabuddhas.

[Student]: I have two questions on sloka 224:3-4. On line 3, it is written, "he realises that the three worlds are originally uncreated". This morning, Rinpoche said he realises this during his meditation. I was quite astonished by that, because it was said at the beginning of these teachings that the realisation of the bodhisattvas from the first to the ninth bhumis is the same during meditation. We can distinguish them only during their *jétop* (*rjes thob*), post-meditation. I also understood that during the discussion of the Cittamatrins that we were describing the post-meditation time.

[Rinpoche]: You are right. It was my mistake. It is during the post-meditation time.

[Student]: I have a question on 224:4. I do not understand what the first half of this line, "through conventional truth", means. Of course, we have seen that the entire path is at the level of conventional truth, but why does he put such an emphasis on conventional truth on the first half of this line.

[Rinpoche]: You are asking why are we mentioning conventional truth when talking about the ultimate truth?

[Student]: Why specifically is it emphasised here on the sixth bhumi? Why do we need to say that he will attain cessation through conventional truth when we already know that the entire path is conventional truth? Why is it spoken of here, in this particular place?

[Rinpoche]: It is the way of expressing. What we are trying to say is that because of his understanding of the conventional truth, he then reaches cessation. And then in the next sloka, we say that even though he reaches cessation, his compassion does not stop. It is like a link between the two slokas.

[Student]: So, if I understand, this is to emphasise that he dwells neither in samsara nor nirvana. He stays in samsara out of compassion.

[Rinpoche]: In addition, he is trying not to divorce ultimate truth and relative truth. Mipham Rinpoche's commentary is beautiful here. In the ultimate truth, there is no such thing as a person who enters cessation, and no such thing as the act of entering. But in the relative truth, there is a concept of bodhisattva entering cessation.

[Student]: My question is about what we discussed a couple of days ago, namely the theory of how different beings in different realms perceive things differently. I wanted to ask what the status of this kind of theory is. Because ultimately, of course, we know that there is nothing, that all is empty. Conventionally, everything is like an illusion. But we seem to have some intermediate level of explanation here, where we talk in terms of karma, different karmic histories, different beings, different objects, and so on. I am wondering, is that also conventional truth?

[Rinpoche]: Is you asking whether there is any ground? We say that hungry ghosts see a glass of water as a glass of pus and blood. As we say this, are you asking if we have a ground for saying that?

[Student]: It wasn't so much what is *in* the explanation. I was looking at the fact that there *is* an explanation, and I am wondering about the fact that there is an explanation. How are we to accept that? Is that just conventional truth, or is that some kind of theory?

[Rinpoche]: When you say conventional truth, are you thinking that it is more valid than theory?

[Student]: We talk about these kinds of explanations quite a lot in the text, and a modern scientist might disagree with some of these types of explanation. So I am wondering whether they

*You don't have to agree with Chandrakirti's conventional truth, insofar as it is only to establish emptiness*

*Discussion of Tsong Khaba's explanation of what is perceived by beings in different realms*

are essential to the understanding of the text, or whether because they were just conventional in India in Chandrakirti's time, we can say that today's understanding is different and it doesn't really matter: Madhyamika is still Madhyamika. Or do we actually need to defend these ways of understanding, because they are in some way fundamental to the integrity of the Madhyamika?

[Rinpoche]: You mean if the Madhyamika says that hungry ghosts see water as blood, do we have to defend that theory or not?

[Student]: Do we have to defend the theory that the reason that they see things differently is because they have karmic habits, and that this gives rise to their different perceptions?

[Rinpoche]: As long as it is an object of a deceptive subject, it is relative truth, and you don't have to really agree with the conventional truth that is portrayed by Chandrakirti, insofar as it is only for the establishment of emptiness.

[Student]: This compassion seems to be a source of problems! It is difficult enough to understand perception in a single realm. So why do we compare realms, and say that humans see water where *pretas* see pus. I don't see the point. Why is this comparison made?

[Rinpoche]: It is just to prove that everything is mind. The Cittamatrins were saying that all outer objects do not exist as pus or water; it is all in the mind.

[Student]: The fact that humans see water and *pretas* see pus can be used as an example that there is no external object and there is only mind. But it also sounds as if there is some kind of substrate, some obscure kind of thing that is there, which is perceived by humans as water and by *pretas* as pus. When we asked this question, khenpo said that there is no thing there. There is just a location.

[Rinpoche]: I think there is some misunderstanding. Khenpo didn't say that there is something there which is not water, not fire and not blood. There is nothing. But individually, there is water, pus and all of that. It is Tsong Khapa who says there is a little bit of fire, a little bit of pus, a little bit of all of each substance.

[Student]: Where?

[Rinpoche]: It is on the object we are looking at, like here. If you want to debate, I can always defend Tsong Khapa. His is a very good idea. What he is saying is actually a better idea than that of Gorampa or Mipham.

[Student]: You said that there is nothing of a man in a scarecrow, so why is there any pus in water?

[Rinpoche]: It's all *bagchak* (*bag chags*), habitual pattern. In fact, that analogy helps me!

[Student]: That means that there is something there.

[Rinpoche]: I feel that I should really support Tsong Khapa's view, because you all seem to be saying that it is impossible. Now, remember that we talked about innate self and imputed self. We know that the imputed self is definitely a not good thing, because it does not exist. The innate self is more conventionally existent. If not, why are we here? We are samsaric beings because of this innate self. Now, does a hungry ghost have an innate self or not? Whatever he sees, whatever his object is, has to be valid relative truth for him. If there were an animal rights group here, they would really be the friends of Tsong Khapa. Because the followers of Gorampa and Mipham are saying that compared to us, animals see invalid relative truth, something that is imputed. Tsong Khapa actually respects other points of view. After all, there are more fish than human beings.

[Student]: Tsong Khapa is asserting the conventional existence of outer objects no less than inner mind.

[Rinpoche]: Well, do you believe there are hungry ghosts or not?

[Student]: That is not the point. The point is whether there is a common object of perception for the hungry ghosts and us. If you say that there is no common object, that everybody just sees the projection of his own *bagchak*, then there is nothing to discuss.

[Rinpoche]: We are not talking about beings from the six realms walking in and looking at some kind of unidentified substance.

*There is no ‘objective’ external reality. It all comes from our own habitual patterns*

*This includes all the laws of science, and even the Dharma itself*

[Student]: But it implies that, because you say they are looking at the same object and one sees it as pus and the other as water. If this is not so and there is no common object, then each can be valid.

[Rinpoche]: So, what is the problem with that?

[Student]: Then Tsong Khapa’s hypothesis is completely useless, because there is no need for an outer object that has some of all the characteristics that appear to each of the six classes. It is just a useless hypothesis.

[Rinpoche]: Think about it in terms of valid relative truth and invalid relative truth. Beings in other realms are also beings. They have an innate self, which is conventionally existent. And when there is grasping to the self within a hungry ghost, he has to have a phenomenon. So, there is blood and pus in your glass.

[Student]: You cannot say that these various things are in the same glass, because there is no basis.

[Rinpoche]: According to Gorampa and Mipham, you are saying that animals and hungry ghosts are much better. They only have an imputed self, not an innate self. There is a big point here. If you are talking about nothingness there, you are almost getting close to the ultimate truth, which you are not allowed to talk about. We have to talk about *tong-nang (mthong snang)*, ‘perception’. And when we talk about perception, we are talking about relative truth. And when we are talking about valid relative truth, we are talking about the object of innate self.

[Student]: But Chandrakirti admits anything that anybody says conventionally. If you show him a glass of water and say that it is good to drink, he says, fine I accept that.

[Student]: But then Tsong Khapa does not accept relative truth, because if I accept only relative truth, I say to the human that it is water, I say to the hungry ghost that it is pus, and so on. But Tsong Khapa is saying that it is water, pus and so on.

[Student]: In this model, it seems that there is no information coming from outside. It is all coming from the *bagchak*. Is that right?

[Rinpoche]: Yes, but that *bagchak* is of two kinds: innate self and imputed self. The innate self is valid, of course. How can you say that pus and blood does not exist, and that what the hungry ghosts think is imputed?

[Student]: We say that there is no common object.

[Student]: All the information comes from the *bagchak*, so even these things that we think we have picked up like laws of science, which we think have something to do with objective external reality, none of those truly exist. They are all coming from our own *bagchak*. Is this true?

[Rinpoche]: That’s fine.

[Student]: So, even the entire laws of science are just part of my habitual patterns?

[Rinpoche]: Everything, even the whole buddhadharma.

[Student]: So we are creating an entire world just out of our own habitual patterns. There is nothing out there. So, where is all of that stored? Where is all of that information that creates this entire world kept? We seem to be saying that there is no information out there. It is all inside us.

[Rinpoche]: According to the Cittamatra, there is the true mind, and according to the Prasangika Madhyamika, without analysis, there is *alaya*. That’s all.

[Student]: You said that we should deal with how things appear; otherwise, conventional reality will be lost. But I think it is possible to say, and this is Berkeley’s doctrine, that no ordinary, uneducated man believes in outer reality, because this idea never occurs to his mind. He just has perceptions, and at no moment does he think that it is something ‘outer’.

[Student]: From what Rinpoche just said, even the laws of mathematics must be part of the *alaya*. I don’t think that is so. Geometry isn’t part of the *alaya* – it is out there.

[Student]: Who perceives it as geometry? You need a human mind to perceive it as geometry.

[Student]: My question is related. Part of the point of science is that it is making predictions about the future. So, we predict that in roughly a week from now, there will be a total solar eclipse. So, you are saying that even that is purely part of our *alaya*, even predictions about the future, based on our own habitual tendencies of the past.

[Rinpoche]: Everything. This is why it is called *alaya* the base of everything, *kiunzhi (kun gzhi)*.

*Understanding the innate self of phenomena is more difficult, because we need to go beyond all four extremes*

*Innate ignorance and imputed ignorance*

[Student]: After all these enlightened questions, I do not dare to ask mine! But my deluded mind needs an answer. This morning khenpo was insisting that we should first refute the innate self of phenomena, and then from there we should go to the refutation of innate self of the person. So, in my deluded mind, I get the impression that the refutation of innate self of the person has the taste of being more complex than the refutation of the innate self of phenomena. Is this conventionally true?

[Rinpoche]: Actually, it is the opposite. Innate self of phenomena is much more difficult to understand.

[Student]: Why?

[Rinpoche]: For instance, as we saw this morning, as long as you know that form is like a bubble, and so on, then you know that self does not really exist. That will do for the innate self of a person. But to really understand the selflessness of phenomena, you not only have to understand that it does not truly exist, but you also have to understand that the non-existence does not exist, and both and neither. You have to go beyond that.

[Student]: It seems that according to what has been said that all objects are merely the projection of our mind. So in this case, it would seem that also all the conversations we are having here, all the questions and answers, and the minds and reasoning of others, are merely projections of my mind. Is this possible?

[Rinpoche]: Yes that's it.

[Student]: How then is one mind different from another?

[Rinpoche]: The difference lies only in when you think it is different. The ignorant mind thinks that there is a difference. First 'I', then you think 'mine'. As long as you think that, there is a difference.

[Student]: This morning you said that ignorance is the cause of the twelve links of interdependent origination, and that ignorance is the cause of the eleven links of interdependent origination. Are those two different types of ignorance?

[Rinpoche]: They are two different types of ignorance, and at the same time, they are two aspects of one. The cause of the twelve links is greater, so to speak, and the cause of the eleven links is lesser. We can distinguish between the ignorance that is part of the twelve and cause of the twelve. They are innate ignorance. Actually, we should begin to use this term 'innate ignorance', instead of saying 'innate self of phenomena' and 'innate self of the person'. We can combine these and give it the name innate ignorance and imputed ignorance.

[Student]: When you mentioned Je Tsong Khapa's idea that everything is there in the object, you said this makes it possible for us to perceive water and *pretas* to perceive pus. So, who perceives the thing that is possessed of all these qualities?

[Rinpoche]: It depends on the different subjects. A subject that has the karma or *bagchak* to see pus will see pus.

[Student]: But if you say that it has all six, you need someone who can see the six at one time, otherwise why talk about six things being in the thing? It is just hallucination otherwise.

[Rinpoche]: Buddha sees it.

[Student]: It looks superfluous, because it is enough to say that the Buddha sees the perception of beings.

[Rinpoche]: I want to make a better argument! Your question is who sees the common thing with all these six qualities in it. Since there is no seventh realm, there is nobody who has the ability to see it.

[Student]: If it appears to nobody, it is not conventional reality. It is only a hallucination of the philosophers.

[Rinpoche]: In this case, even water would not be valid conventional reality. How can we say that pus and blood is not valid, and water is valid? Je Tsong Khapa is speaking for the six realms of sentient beings, whereas Gorampa and Mipham Rinpoche are only speaking for human beings.

*Tsong Khapa would say that the vase is empty of true existence, not that it is empty of itself*

[Student]: It is not true. This debate only comes because Je Tsong Khapa is supposing one common basis that could be either water or pus or both or something. But we do not assert any such thing, so we have no fault.

[Rinpoche]: Right now, I am not refuting you. Right now, I am not criticising your view, I am saying that my view, Je Tsong Khapa's view, is good. Your refutation to this view is what I am refuting, that's all. You are all lacking compassion, setting one realm against the other!

[Student]: We are just trying to understand what he actually said. What we have been discussing seems such an outlandish idea. I am sure that what he said is far subtler, and that he could defend it in a far more powerful way. I just want to know how.

[Rinpoche]: This is a bit unfair. We should ask a Gelugpa master this one. But again, this is a very special concept of Je Tsong Khapa. I think the scientists would really agree. What Je Tsong Khapa is saying is this. We look at this tent, there is an imputation that this is a tent; but beyond that, there is an entity. Beyond this imputed thing, there is an entity with its own way of being, its own way of existence. When Tsong Khapa interprets emptiness, he will say vase is not empty of itself. He will say that the vase is empty of true existence.

Don't laugh at it. This is something that Sakyapas and Nyingmapas think they have refuted, but I don't think they have. Then there is another term, *tanyé tsedrup* (*tha snyad tshad grub*), something validly existent during conventional truth. When we talk about *tanyé* (*tha snyad*), conventional truth, we often talk about a conventional truth that is *tsemé drupa* (*tshad mas grub pa*), established by valid cognition. You cannot really say that this is only mind's object. Generally, this is so, because validity and non-validity are usually related to consciousness, but when you see a vase, there is a lot of involvement of *wangpo* (*dbang po*), the sense faculties.

Actually thinking that it is a vase is already not *tanyé tsedrup*. According to Je Tsong Khapa, that is imputed. That is not *tsemé drupa*. It is a *tanyé*, it is a conventional truth but it is not *tsemé drupa*, not validly established. You see, when you look at the vase, the vase is there, whether you say or think that it is a vase or not. This is why when we turn away from the vase it is still there. If you do not think so, the Cittamatra school has influenced you. One reason why he has to say this is that if there are ten human beings looking at a glass of water, what do they see. They see a glass of water. Six people with a similar education and background can look and say this is water, so they see water. One reason why Je Tsong Khapa says this is also to establish that theory.

[Student]: It seems that the Svacantrikas need to establish something, whereas the Prasangikas just come up with a working proposal for a path. The Prasangikas will not be so attached to it, and do not say it is established, it is just in order to communicate. But it seems that the Svacantrikas are attached to establishing something.

[Rinpoche]: Maybe.

[Student]: I wanted to ask how would a buddhist philosopher classify the laws of mathematics. These are pure logic, there is no observer and there is no difference of opinion among observers because there is nothing to observe. They are pure logic, and yet we can come up with results that are not conventionally self-evident. They are deduced as a matter of theorising and constructing a logical argument. They would seem to have some kind of eternal existence. I don't think we can say that they are empty, so what kind of status do they have?

[Rinpoche]: Merely that human beings commonly accept them.

[Student]: But I don't think that it is just human logic. We said this last year. Surely, we are not saying that *pretas* have different logic from human beings. Logic is logic, it is not a matter of perception of logic, it is just logic. It is not a question of different kinds of logic.

[Student]: But mathematics is a creation of the human mind.

[Student]: The son of a sterile *preta* is just as non-existent as the son of a barren woman!

[Student]: We seem to be saying that there are some things that are valid always and everywhere, completely independent of any mind.

[Rinpoche]: That is quite a good question. I will ask khenpo. It seems that we have some followers of Tsong Khapa here!

[Student]: The problem is that the Prasangikas would say that nothing exists ultimately. Does this kind of mathematical truth not seem to exist ultimately?

[Rinpoche]: Khenpo says that when we talk about *lé tünpa (las mthun pa)*, commonly shared karma, he is saying that maybe when we count the beings with commonly shared karma, we are making ourselves very limited. There are infinite sentient beings, and for some of them, no matter what tools you use to try to sterilise them, it will not work with them! Give me something concrete that I can tell him.

[Student]: A scientist observes the universe and sees that the background radiation is the same wherever they look, and it has been the same for the last fifteen billion years.

[Rinpoche]: He will say that it is all our projection. He will say that it is not direct cognition, that there is analysis involved.

[Student]: They use instruments where you can reproduce the results independent of the observer.

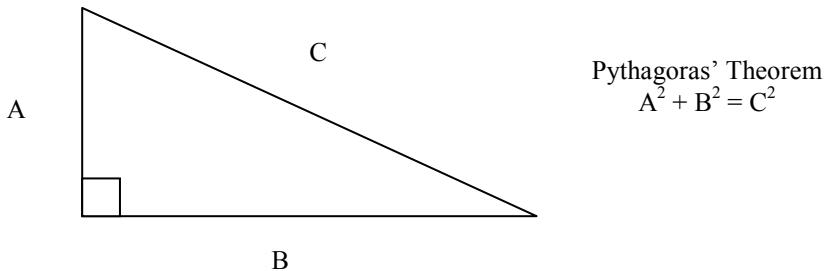
[Rinpoche]: Khenpo will say that as long as there is mind involved, it is interpretation.

[Student]: For example, if the universe was totally devoid of all living beings, and there were no minds there at all, it would still be true that two stars and two stars would make four stars.

[Rinpoche]: That won't work.

[Student]: Pythagoras' theorem, which is about the properties of a right-angled triangle.

[Rinpoche]: Can you draw that?



Pythagoras' Theorem  
 $A^2 + B^2 = C^2$

[Student]: Here we are talking about geometry on a flat surface, a plane. The diagram shows a right-angled triangle. A right angle means that the two lines are A and B completely perpendicular. Is there a word for that in Tibetan? Anyway, whatever the lengths of the sides A, B and C, Pythagoras proved that  $A^2 + B^2 = C^2$ . This is his theorem. When we say  $A^2$ , we mean A times A, so, for example, if A = 3, then  $A^2 = 3^2$ , which is equal to  $3 \times 3 = 9$ . If we have A = 3, B = 4 and C = 5, then as you can see,  $9 + 16 = 25$ . No matter what the size or shape of the triangle, Pythagoras' Theorem will always be true for a right-angled triangle on a flat surface. So, I am saying that this is an example of a law that is independent of any observer.

[Rinpoche]: Khenpo says that there are many things like that, things like  $4 + 4 = 8$ , which are always true without any reference. Even Chandrakirti would accept them during the unanalysed time. For example, if you say, "look there is fire because there is smoke", Chandrakirti would use that logic in order to refute the opponent. Now, we are not analysing the essence of the number four. If we analyse four, then there will never be the idea of  $4 + 4$ , because the notion of 'four' will disappear. But in the conventional truth,  $4 + 4$  is a dependent arising; therefore, it works. So, he is saying that these kinds of things are dependent arising. I was asking if khenpo would say that it is validly established for all beings that  $2 + 2 = 4$ . Khenpo says that although there are many things that are specific to each category of being there may be things that appear commonly to several types of being or to all beings. It is possible that there are things that are true for all beings, but it is hard to say.

[Student]: When Buddha said that if no buddha had ever come, the nature of phenomena would be this, is this dependent arising conventional truth?

[Rinpoche]: It's a relative truth.

*Conventionally, there is no problem accepting mathematical laws as dependent arising*

[Student]: But mathematics is just logic. There is nothing else there. If he is saying that logic is dependently arising, how can Chandrakirti use logic to refute anything?

[Rinpoche]: He is just using the opponent's logic. He has no logic.

[Student]: That's not true. He has no theses established by logic, but he certainly has logic.

[Rinpoche]: He only uses other people's logic. What is logic?

[Student]: Logic is the rules of valid reasoning.

[Student]: When this question was first raised, we were talking about something that is valid for everything, and Khen Rinpoche said that there may be things that are valid across the board for all six realms. That means such things are independent of perception. When he said *pus* for *pretas*, water for humans and so on, this depends on their perception. But now, he is saying that there may be something common to all of them, which means that it is independent of their perception. If it is common to all, then it is not dependent on perception. Nobody perceives it. It also seems that when you talk about mathematics, it sounds like you are coming up with a third truth, in between the relative and absolute. If you want to put it on the relative, that is all right, but it has a sort of absoluteness which other relative truths don't have.

[Rinpoche]: I would say that mathematics is *döndam chöché kyi rigpa* (*don dam dpyod byed kyi rigs pa*), reasoning that investigates the ultimate.

[Student]: Didn't you just say that it is dependent arising?

[Rinpoche]: Of course, that's what Chandrakirti would say. For him, the conclusions of mathematics are just imputation.

[Student]: Rinpoche, you said that in this case, if there might be some kind of universal truth like that, proved purely by logic and independent from point of view, then it would be an object of knowledge for valid cognition, knowing the ultimate nature. Then maybe it is possible; why not have the hypothesis that mathematics could belong to the time when you establish the ultimate nature.

[Rinpoche]: Maybe, but that is not necessarily Chandrakirti's idea of *döndam* (*don dam*), absolute truth.



## **Summary: Sevenfold analysis of the chariot**

[Student]: I asked Rinpoche a question the other day, something that needed clarification, about the seven-fold reasoning, and instead of answering it, he said 'you go ahead, you explain about this stuff'. The reason why I asked Rinpoche to explain the seven-fold reasoning is because it is interesting in the context of the *Madhyamakavatara* that we have a lot of emphasis on refuting the various naïve viewpoints that occur concerning absolute reality. But the sevenfold reasoning is a tool. We can use it to analyse any given phenomenon, and see how we impute an existence to this phenomenon that is not there. So, even though I don't feel that I have mastered the understanding of this, it keeps popping up in my head. I look at objects and I have a solid perception of them, such as this tent. But I can use this sevenfold analysis to see that this tent really doesn't work. It is in fact just an imputation.

Last year I saw a movie, 'Babe', a good little movie about wonderful human qualities embodied in a little pig. When you see this movie, you develop some attachment and fondness for this pig. Some time later, I read in a newspaper that the hero of this movie had ended up as bacon somewhere, and I was a little bit distraught. But more recently, somebody told me about the making of this movie, and there were actually eighteen different pigs playing the part of this little pig in the movie. When I watched the movie, I imputed an inherent existence onto this pig. But later on, it turns out that many pigs played different parts. Some of the pigs were good at

walking up staircases, and some were good at playing with sheep, and so on. There were eighteen pigs, whereas I imputed a solid existence onto one pig. It turned out that the basis was not there, as there was no single pig. So, the fallacy of my belief in Babe became evident.

I was just trying to beat around the bush! So, here we are with Chandrakirti's *Madhyamakavatara*. It has four parts: title, translator's homage, main body of the text, and conclusion. We are in the third part, the main body of the text, which comprises the introduction, the main body and the culmination. We are in the second part, which consists of explaining the bhumis, which are the cause, and buddhahood, which is the result. We are still in the first part, which is the bhumis, the cause, and here we have three parts: showing the bhumis' nature in terms of the union of method and wisdom; showing the nature in terms of the various paramitas, and then their nature in terms of enumerated features. Within the second part, we are in the sixth bhumi, advancing or knowing clearly. Here we have: attaining cessation by emphasising the paramita of wisdom; to those who are blind, the greatness of this paramita; establishing the way this paramita is introduced and finally a summary of qualities. We are in the third part, in which this paramita is introduced. This has three parts, the basis of the teaching; the subject; and the emptiness. We are in the third section: explaining the emptiness that is to be realised by all vehicles. Here we have two sections: explaining interdependent arising by means of the absence of self in phenomena, and explaining interdependent arising by means of the absence of self in one's person. Within that there are two parts: the need to refute what is grasped at by views that hold there to be a self, and the second part is explaining the reasoning of refutations that meet that need. In the second part there are three parts: reasoning to analyse and refute the idea that the person is something substantial; presentation of the person as dependently imputed, and using that same logic to expose all materially existing things. So, the second part is using the presentation of the person as dependently imputed. And this is where we arrive at the presentation of the sevenfold logic.

The sevenfold logic consists of seven essential realisations:

*The sevenfold analysis of the chariot*

1. That the phenomenon imputed is **not the same** as its basis of imputation. In the case of say a car, the car is not the same as all the parts of the car.
2. That the phenomenon imputed is **not different** from its basis of imputation. This is the realisation that the car, while it is not the same as the car parts, is also not different from the car parts.
3. That the phenomenon imputed is **not dependent on** its basis of imputation. This means that the imputed notion of the car is not dependent on the car parts.
4. That the phenomenon imputed is **not the support** on which its bases of imputation are dependent. This means that the car parts are not dependent on the idea of a car.
5. That the phenomenon imputed does **not possess** its basis of imputation. This means that the idea of the car does not contain the car parts
6. That the phenomenon imputed is **not the mere collection** of its parts. If we have all the car parts gathered, just spread out, it would logically follow that we would still have a car. But we do not; hence, the car is not the mere collection of its parts.
7. That the phenomenon imputed is **not the shape** of its basis of imputation. If this was true, and if the shape of the imputed car was truly the car, then if we took the car apart, then it would absurdly follow that the shape of the parts of the car would also change.

I hope that Rinpoche will explain this a little bit more. Whereas much of the *Madhyamakavatara* is deconstructing things, this seems to be a helpful tool. I came across a Gelugpa presentation where they do something more. They preface this sevenfold analysis with a need for ascertaining the object to be negated, which in this case is the self. We have to recognise our clinging to self, and we have to notice how it works. And then it is essential to ascertain the pervasion. This means that when we acknowledge that the sevenfold logic would be significant, as soon as we apply that to the object, then there won't be anything left to which we can cling as being the true self. That would be the consequence of the pervasion.



[Rinpoche]: The ideal way to study the Madhyamika is if we don't have to stop in between for eleven months. As you can see, it takes some time to get used to the language. But I guess that on the other hand, for those who are seriously studying this, it also gives you some time to study. But whatever it is, I am responsible for this. Somehow, the planning didn't really work as well as I wished it would. Since I had invited a khenpo to come this year, I thought that at the end of this year's course, we would have a good discussion or perhaps go through the sixth chapter, since this sixth chapter is like the meat of the *Madhyamakavatara*. But then somewhere in between, I also thought that perhaps I should just finish the text, because first of all I don't know how much to say, and then some of you have come from very far away, from places like San Francisco, Sao Paolo and Sydney. It is a long way to travel just to hear such a dry and sometimes completely pointless presentation, or at least it seems that way to me, of philosophy or whatever.

So, I thought maybe it would save a lot of energy, money and time if you didn't have to come back to finish this. But then, I read the end of this text. I read the eleventh chapter, which describes the Buddha, the result. The words alone are so beautiful, so touching almost. Until now, we have gone through the text quite slowly and thoroughly, so to speak, and it would be inauspicious if I just run through the final chapter quickly. So now, I have changed my mind, and we will do it again next year, perhaps for a shorter time. So now, we have two days more, and I am sure that we will finish the ninth or tenth chapter this year. Since khenpo is here, I will ask him to give us some ideas on some of the important points. One part of me has good intentions, because Tulku Rinpoche has for many years wanted to set up a *shedra* atmosphere, and I think it is very important in the West, just like in Tibet. Generally, the study of sutra is very much emphasised. Now buddhism is growing in the West. If you are devoted, if you can take the guru as the Vajradhara, and just follow the path of devotion, then that alone will do. Of course, we have heard this many times, but how many of us can do this? At the same time, we still have to establish the teaching of the Buddha here. So, I am saying that one side of me has a good intention, trying to assist this vision of Tulku Rinpoche. On the other side, I have this laziness, I want to finish and be done with it. These two things frequently come together in my mind.

*If you can follow the path of devotion, you may not need this study. But how many of us can truly do that?*

[Tulku Rinpoche]: With Rinpoche's permission, I would like to add just a few words to what Rinpoche has said. I don't think that anybody feels it is too far to come from either Sydney or San Francisco. As we know, for every word of these teachings, the Tibetan scholars went to India, and at the cost of their lives crossed so many mountains, encountered snakes and dangerous animals. They did all this just to seek out these teachings, and they returned. That is what could be called a difficult journey. But by plane, one cannot really say that the journey is difficult. And one can come to France, take some holidays and do a little tourism, so there is not really much sacrifice there. Thirdly, I would like to express my gratitude to Rinpoche. Of course, it is wonderful to receive the transmission, the lung, from Rinpoche. This is very important. But without the actual understanding of the text, of course, we would have blessings, but we would not understand what Chandrakirti is trying to express or transmit. So, we are very grateful to Rinpoche, not just for the transmission or lung, but also for the hints that he has given us. I would also like to request, and I have already requested to Rinpoche, that he should continue teaching whichever subjects Rinpoche would like to choose. As you know, the title of Chandrakirti's text is *Uma La Jugpa*, the '*Threshold to Madhyamika*'. Now we know the entrance, but we don't know what the palace is inside. So, I think it is great that Rinpoche indicates the door, but we don't know where we are going to enter. Therefore, it would be great if Rinpoche could continue. Of course, there are many khenpos all over the world, but there are very few like Rinpoche who can express these teachings in our own language. Other khenpos

can talk about it, but there are very few who can translate, so we lose most of the meaning. At the end, we will just be left with a small amount, and maybe it will be completely distorted, which doesn't much help. So, I request Rinpoche himself to bring as many khenpos as he wants, but I would like to request him to talk. I would like to add one more thing, that our personal lineage here is the Khyentse lineage. From the very beginning, the lineage has always aimed to introduce what is common among the different schools; it has never wanted to look at the differences between teachers and lineages, and this is a tradition I would like to request everybody to preserve.



*Here ends the sixth enlightened aspiration of “The Philosophy of the Middle Way”.*

## 7. The Seventh bhumi, Gone Far

### a) The quality of the meditation, 7:1.1-2

### b) The quality of the paramita, 7:1.3

7:1      *On [the bhumi of] Far Gone,  
[The bodhisattva] enters cessation at any instant,  
Brilliantly mastering the paramita of Upaya.*

Later on, we will be discussing this quite a lot. This is one place where the *Madhyamakavatara* becomes quite complicated. The name of this stage is ‘Far Advanced’, or ‘Far Gone’. It is in past tense, already past. In the root text, it is written ‘moment by moment, the bodhisattva enters into cessation’. Moment by moment, the bodhisattva can dwell with his mind in the state beyond extremes, the understanding of *shunyata*. And then he obtains the ability to rise from that state of entering into cessation. We need to discuss these things.

*The sixth paramita, wisdom, is divided into four: method, aspiration, strength, and primordial wisdom*

Then out of the ten paramitas, he obtains or masters the paramita of method. Normally we list about six paramitas, and the sixth paramita (wisdom) is divided into four: method, aspiration, power/strength and wisdom. The last is not really wisdom, but more like *yeshe*, primordial wisdom, even beyond wisdom. There are many different kinds of methods. There are methods to ripen others. There are methods for abandoning certain defilements of oneself. A bad example is that one of the reasons that people like us can’t abandon defilements is that we don’t have this method, so we always end up treasuring the antidote and grasping towards it. And that becomes the defilement. Very often, we are attached to the boat. Even though we have crossed the river, we are so attached that we want to carry the boat on our shoulders, or we want to carry the bridge for instance. Even on the path of accumulation, people have such an understanding, but I am just giving you an example of this method. Of course, how can I really talk about the seventh bhumi bodhisattva’s method? Anyway, that is the end of the seventh chapter.

Now, how should we begin? Yesterday, we talked about the different ways that Maitreya and Nagarjuna identify the self of phenomena, and we covered why there are two different approaches. The seventh bhumi bodhisattva has a special quality that Chandrakirti describes in his autocommentary. The term is *rangi yül shepé chewa* (*rang gi yul shes pa'i che ba*), which we previously translated as the ‘superior understanding of his own object’. *Rang* means one’s own, *yül* is object, *shepa* is understand, and *chewa* is dignity, majesty or greatness. He gains a certain dignity, which is what outshines the shravakas and pratyekabuddhas.

The problem is the outshining, which we first came to in sloka 8 of the first chapter. Yesterday, I briefly mentioned how bodhisattvas from the first bhumi to the sixth bhumi can outshine or subdue the shravakas and pratyekabuddhas by their merit, but not by their understanding and knowledge. It is not like they read more sutras or something like that; it is much more complicated than that. But here in the seventh bhumi, they begin to outshine shravakas and pratyekabuddhas because they have obtained this quality, *rangi yül shepé chewa*. How can we translate that? ‘Dignity of knowing one’s own object’.

Most of the time we don’t even use the word *rangi*, ‘one’s own’; we just say ‘the majesty or dignity of knowing the object’. Now, what is this object? Of course, it is all phenomena. First, in brief, you might ask what is this quality *yül shepé chewa*? At this point, the bodhisattva renounces or abandons the concept that we talked about. The concept, *tokpa*, is also referred to

as *tsendzin*, which is how we also talked about this earlier on. This indicates that people like us never understand the object, which is why we don't have this dignity. When we look at the object, we are always stuck with this *dendzin*. And we have *tsendzin* on top of that. But at this point, the bodhisattva manages to defeat or renounce the defilement of *tsendzin*. *Dendzin* is looking at a vase and thinking that it is a true vase, but this defilement was already defeated by the time of the first bhumi bodhisattva. But until now, the bodhisattva still has *tsendzin*, which is thinking that what you say, like 'vase', and what is there, are one (see diagram on p.44). We discussed this *dradön drezin gyi lo* earlier. For example, when someone asks you to bring a book, you bring a book, thinking that this is it. That is *tsendzin*. This *tsendzin* is being defeated here, and as you defeat it, then you begin to see the true so-called object, and that is a dignity that the shravakas and pratyekabuddhas don't have, and therefore the bodhisattva manages to defeat them.

*Therefore, he has rangi yül shepé chewa: the dignity of knowing the object without any interference*

Right now, of course ordinary beings like us have *tsendzin*, for sure. But we also have *dendzin*, so whenever we see an object, we have both *dendzin* and *tsendzin*. This bodhisattva has already defeated both of them, so he sees the real object. This is why it is *rangi yül shepé chewa*, "the dignity of knowing the object". It means knowing the object without interference. I think we used this example before. If someone looks at a snow mountain with very thick green sunglasses and he sees green, and someone sees it nakedly, without any interference, then we can say that the second person's perception is much truer.

For the sake of easier communication, for now you can say that *tsendzin* and *tokpa* are the same thing, and the *dradön drezin gyi lo* is just a description of that. Psychologists or scientists may describe this as unconsciousness or whatever, but the difference here is that these are defilements. In buddhism, as long as there is dualism, there will always be defilements. That is something that you have to know. Let me give you another very bad example, but one that might help you a little. We have both *dendzin* and *tsendzin*, but our *dendzin* is so obvious, that as we practice, the grosser dirt goes first. And then you have to rinse again, and the remaining dirt is more stubborn, it is almost like the object itself. It is one thing to wash this glass, but if you want to sterilise it for scientific research, then you have to do it through different kinds of attitude. Normally, people don't see the germs and things like that. Normally we see germs and glass as the same, as one. We don't see it. But with scientific research, you can see that the germs and glass are different. This is a very bad example, but it's like that.

I will say this once more. *Dendzin* is when we look at a vase and think that it is a real vase, a true vase. Here we also have an imputed version of 'true vase', not only the innate version of 'true vase'. *Tsendzin* is thinking that the name 'vase' and the object are the same. You don't necessarily have to think that it is true. It is like looking at a movie. You don't necessarily think it's true, but you think that something is happening there, and it still affects you. That is *tsendzin*. This is a very bad example, but khenpo will explain.

[Q]: If I understand what you are saying, you have washed all the second and third generation thoughts, and you are left with the object itself. There is no projection 'I like the vase' or 'I don't like the vase', 'I want it' or 'I don't want it', or 'pretty blue colour'. It is just the vase. So one doesn't have the idea that vase and concept of vase are the same thing. But in that case, how does one function in real life?

[A]: The seventh bhumi bodhisattva has just started to gain this majesty. When he finishes totally, then he is on the eighth bhumi. And once you manage to destroy the so-called *tsendzin*, then there is what we call effortless, spontaneous arising.

[Khenpo]: So, the base is the eighth sloka of the first chapter, which is related to what we are talking about today, the bodhisattva 'Far Gone'. Based on this line, there is a lot of discussion between Chandrakirti and the Svacittika Madhyamika. According to the Svacittika Madhyamika, their doubt is this: if the shravakas and pratyekabuddhas have the realisation of selflessness of phenomena, then how can a bodhisattva on the seventh stage

*Washing a glass – an illustration of gross and subtler kinds of dirt*

*Most Tibetan scholars accept that Svatantrika and Prasangika contradict; they have adopted Prasangika*

*There appears to be a contradiction between Maitreya and Nagarjuna. How is it to be resolved?*

*Three different views on this contradiction*

*Nagarjuna clearly stated that pratyekabuddhas and shravakas understand the selflessness of phenomena*

*Maitreya stated that shravakas do not understand selflessness of phenomena at all, and pratyekabuddhas only understand half of it*

*There is no contradiction as both masters are saying the same thing, but with different words*

outshine these shravakas and pratyekabuddhas, because what they have renounced is common or similar.

If you ask Tibetan scholars whether the views of the Svatantrika Madhyamika and the Prasangika Madhyamika are contradictory or not, most of them would say that they are contradictory. So many Tibetan scholars, most of them, have adopted the view of the Prasangika Madhyamika. But having accepting the Prasangika Madhyamika path, we now have another question. This is whether Nagarjuna and Maitreya, these two great chariots, contradict each other or not. This is the big question. Now both Nagarjuna and Maitreya are commentators on the *Prajñaparamita Sutra*, but when Maitreya commented on the *Prajñaparamita Sutra*, he placed more emphasis on the hidden meaning, which describes the gradual stages of realisation. And he commented on emptiness in a more indirect way. However, Nagarjuna placed more emphasis on emptiness, and talked about different stages of realisation in an indirect way.

Earlier we explained that Tibetan scholars accept that the Prasangika and Svatantrika Madhyamika are contradictory. But we can't do the same with Maitreya and Nagarjuna because if you say that these two are contradictory, then you have to say that one of them is wrong. Or else, you have to say that there is a contradiction in a sutra taught by the Buddha. So therefore, we have a big question that we have to resolve.

In Tibet, there are three different views about this question. Certain scholars believe that there is a contradiction between Nagarjuna and Lord Maitreya. Another group of scholars say that because both Nagarjuna and Maitreya say that shravakas and pratyekabuddhas realise the selflessness of phenomena, there is no contradiction. A third group of scholars say that both Nagarjuna and Maitreya say that shravakas and pratyekabuddhas do not understand.

The first group of scholars says it is this way, because they do not want to say that there is a contradiction in the sutras. So instead, they say that there is contradiction between Maitreya and Nagarjuna. Now, one cannot really say that Maitreya and Nagarjuna contradict, because they are both realised beings so you cannot say that one is wrong. You cannot criticise them in that way, because then you are criticising *aryas*, realised beings. Now, if you are going to interpret according to the third group of scholars, who believe that both Maitreya and Nagarjuna are saying that shravakas and pratyekabuddhas do not understand the selflessness of phenomena, then there is another problem. In this case, when you study Nagarjuna's texts, you will have to interpret them in an indirect, crooked, or roundabout way. You cannot really interpret Nagarjuna's way in a straightforward way. This is because Nagarjuna clearly stated that both shravakas and pratyekabuddhas understand the selflessness of phenomena.

According to Maitreya's view, shravakas do not realise the selflessness of phenomena at all, whereas pratyekabuddhas realise one half of it and bodhisattvas understand it completely. This is if you follow the second group of scholars, who believe that Maitreya and Nagarjuna do not contradict each other, because they both say that shravakas and pratyekabuddhas understand the selflessness of phenomena. This framework of the three groups of scholars might seem complicated, but it is quite important. We should not just discard it.

To recap, the second view is that Maitreya and Nagarjuna do not contradict, because they are both saying that shravakas and pratyekabuddhas understand the selflessness of phenomena.

According to Nagarjuna, for instance as is clearly stated in the *Mulamadhyamaka-karikas*, the shravakas understand the selflessness of phenomena. So, here there is seemingly a contradiction, because Maitreya said that shravakas do not understand the selflessness of phenomena, whereas Nagarjuna clearly stated in the *Mulamadhyamaka-karikas* that they do understand. But actually, there is not a contradiction; it is only that their way of expressing things is different. We are not talking about ultimate and relative truth here. In the essence, they are actually saying the same thing, but when they say it, they have a different way of talking about it. We are now going to explain why Maitreya and Nagarjuna are not in contradiction, although it sounds like they are.

*For Nagarjuna, the self of phenomena is when a mind thinks the five aggregates truly exist, and the self of a person is when it thinks 'me' and clings to it*

*For Maitreya, the self of phenomena is tsendzin, e.g. if there is grasping to three kinds of concept such as giver, gift and recipient*

*So, for Maitreya, since shravakas still have tsendzin, they do not understand selflessness of phenomena*

*Since Nagarjuna agrees with Maitreya on this point, they do not contradict each other*

*Similarly, Maitreya agrees with Nagarjuna that shravakas understand selflessness of the aggregates*

*Thus, we see that the masters are saying the same thing, but define selflessness of phenomena differently*

When we talk about the self of phenomena and self of a person, we are talking about two things. Now Nagarjuna and Maitreya are using the same words to refer to two different things. When Maitreya talks about the self of phenomena, he is pointing to something that is different from what Nagarjuna is pointing to when he uses those words. This is quite important. What Nagarjuna points to as the self of phenomena is when a mind thinks that the five aggregates are truly existent. And then, based on that, when you think that this is 'me', 'I' or 'self', according to Nagarjuna, this is the self of the person. This is what we have been talking about all along. According to Nagarjuna, grasping to the aggregates is clinging to the self of phenomena. And thinking that there is an 'I' and grasping to that 'I', is clinging to the self of the person. Given these definitions, Nagarjuna says that shravakas and pratyekabuddhas understand the selflessness of phenomena.

However, Maitreya does not distinguish using terms like 'truly existent' or 'not truly existent'. It doesn't matter whether the object is truly existent or not. Now, we have been talking about *dradön drezin gyi lo*, this mind that thinks that the term and the entity are one. But within that, there is *tsendzin*. At the beginning of the text, Chandrakirti said that when the bodhisattva gives, he has the object to give; a beggar to whom he is giving; and the giver, the bodhisattva. According to Lord Maitreya, as long as there are these three kinds of concept, it is *chökyi dag*, the self of phenomena. So therefore, his definition of the self of phenomena is totally different from Nagarjuna's.

So, according to Maitreya, shravakas don't have *tSENma mépa* (*tshan ma med pa*), the absence of grasping to the three characteristics of which we just spoke. They do have *tsendzin*, so as part of their realisation, they don't use *tSENme* as an object. This is why Lord Maitreya says that shravakas do not understand the selflessness of phenomena, because for Maitreya, the self of phenomena is the object that is perceived by *tsendzin*, grasping to characteristics. It is subtler than the previous definition. So, we can vaguely say that there is a difference between *denmé* (*bden med*) 'not truly existent', and *tSENmé* 'non-existence of characteristics'.

So, the reason that Nagarjuna and Maitreya do not contradict each other is that they are referring to completely different things. Even Nagarjuna has to agree that shravakas do not have this non-existence of characteristics. You see that we have returned to this essential point about the seventh bhumi bodhisattva outshining shravakas and pratyekabuddhas. He does this because he has liberated himself from this belief in characteristics.

For instance, the sixteenth sloka of chapter one, Acharya Chandrakirti says, "Giver, gift and receiver, empty through giving, is known as beyond worldly paramita". In the commentary, Chandrakirti says that non-bodhisattvas would never understand such things. So, we have to know that shravakas still have this grasping to characteristics. This, according to Maitreya, is the self of phenomena.

Now, even Maitreya accepts that shravakas understand the selflessness of aggregates. For instance, in the *Abhisamaya Alankara*, it is clearly stated and accepted that shravakas do understand the selflessness of the aggregates, but he does not refer to this as understanding the selflessness of phenomena. This is quite important, because if you can understand that Maitreya and Nagarjuna do not contradict each other, then you will be able to see that all the other great masters do not contradict each other.

So, both Nagarjuna and Maitreya commonly agree that shravakas do understand the selflessness of the aggregates. And both of them commonly agree that shravakas do not understand the absence of characteristics. So therefore, they only appear to be seemingly contradictory, but in the essence, they are actually saying the same thing. So, we don't have this fault of having two *aryas*, sublime beings, contradicting each other. In essence, what they are saying is not contradictory, although they say it in a different way. And there is a reason for identifying the selflessness of phenomena in a different way.

*When commenting on the Prajñaparamita Sutra, Nagarjuna and Maitreya were doing so for different audiences*

Now, we mentioned earlier that both Nagarjuna and Maitreya commented on the *Prajñaparamita Sutra*. Nagarjuna, in his commentary, decided, so to speak, to leave all the three *yanas* or paths of the shravakas, pratyekabuddhas and bodhisattvas as they were taught in the *Prajñaparamita Sutra*. We have already mentioned the quote “those who wish to reach the shravaka level also have to understand the wisdom of the Prajñaparamita”. Based on that, Nagarjuna decided to teach all three *yanas* in his works, such as the “*Five Teachings of Nagarjuna*”. At this point, in order to inspire the followers of the shravaka teachings, Nagarjuna said that shravakas do understand a little bit of selflessness of phenomena.

When Maitreya taught the *Abhisamaya Alankara*, he taught it exclusively for people oriented towards the Mahayana. Since this is a shastra for Mahayana practitioners, there is no necessity to inspire those who are oriented towards the paths of the shravakas or pratyekabuddhas. Also, in order to emphasise the greatness of the bodhisattva path, Maitreya says that shravakas have no understanding of selflessness of phenomena.

Now if you follow this structure, then we can explain very well why when a bodhisattva reaches the seventh stage, at that time they will outshine or subdue shravakas and pratyekabuddhas, even with their realisation or their wisdom. We can also say that until a bodhisattva reaches the seventh bhumi, even though they can outshine shravakas and pratyekabuddhas with merit, they cannot outshine them with their intellect. We can easily say these things, if we accept what we have been discussing.

Now, we can talk about how the bodhisattva on the seventh bhumi outshines the shravakas. We will do that tomorrow. For instance, when Khenpo Rinchen taught this subject, he taught just this point for almost 13 days. And this was for five hours every day without any translation. There is so much information in here, and it is important. Here you will know what is really going on with these bodhisattvas. It is all about this ‘outshining’, and when you talk about that, then you have to talk about how much they understand and we understand, why they manage to outshine on the seventh bhumi and not before, and so on. This is why there is a lot of knowledge involved.

[Q]: In this discussion, are you regarding Maitreya and Asanga as the origin of the mind-only teachings? In which case, is this a way of seeing that the two can be harmonised as well?

[A]: Generally, you can say that Asanga and Maitreya are the source of the Cittamatra school but not in here. Actually, the *Abhisamaya Alankara* is a hard-line Prasangika Madhyamika text. For instance, the *Five Teachings of Maitreya* are divided by some scholars into those of the Cittamatra school and those of the Madhyamika school. But this time, we have to base it on the Madhyamika, especially the Prasangika.

[Q]: Is khenpo basing his explanation on a particular master or a particular text?

[A]: It is a text written by Gorampa. It is a commentary on the Prajñaparamita, called the *Yum Chen Rabsal* (*yum chen rab gsal*). There are actually two texts, whose names may be translated as ‘The Perfect Clarification of the Meaning of the Prajñaparamita’ and ‘The Opening of the Treasury of the Profound Hidden Meaning’.

[Q]: In Shantideva’s ninth chapter, around sloka 38 or 40, Shantideva mentions that a monk, in order to respect proper discipline, he should have understood emptiness. How can this be explained?

[A]: *Shunyata* also refers to the selflessness of a person. There are many different kinds of *shunyata*, twenty. Until *shunyata* is understood, you cannot get rid of samsara, and we know that shravakas have got rid of samsara. So, they must understand *shunyata*. But that *shunyata* is only the negation of the first extreme.

[Q]: What is the relationship between *tsenma* and *dzinpa*?

[A]: If there is no *tsenma mépa*, there is no *dzinpa* (*'dzin pa*), or grasping. *Tsenma* (*tshan ma*) means mark or characteristic, so *tsenma mépa* means the absence of grasping to characteristics.

[Q]: Is *tsenma mépa* the same as *tsendzin mépa*?

*The Five Teachings of Maitreya can be divided into Cittamatra and Prasangika teachings*

*Chandrakirti strictly uses Nagarjuna's terminology*

*Until discussing the 20 types of emptiness, he was only negating the first extreme, so the path is common to the shravakas*

- [A]: No, *tsendzin mépa* (*tshan 'dzin med pa*) and *tsenma mépa* are two different things. It's like no object and no subject. One refers to the subject; the other refers to the object.
- [Q]: It seems that although we are explaining Chandrakirti's text, and he is explaining the text of Nagarjuna, we have used the terminology of Maitreya not Nagarjuna. So, when we have talked about the selflessness of phenomena, we have done so according to Maitreya's definition. Namely, it is without the perception of characteristics and so on. It seems that we have all along been using the 'strong' selflessness of phenomena, not the 'weak' one of Nagarjuna, which just means perceiving the emptiness of the aggregates.
- [A]: But they are the same, although they are pointing to different entities, but anyway, go ahead.
- [Q]: Now it is clear, but it has been confusing. Let's back to the question that was asked yesterday, namely why should we first explain the selflessness of phenomena. If we answer according to Nagarjuna's meaning, our answer would be quite different, and quite simple.
- [A]: The reason that they have to identify this in two separate ways is because Nagarjuna's teaching is designed and taught as a path to all the *yanas*. That is the only reason.
- [Q]: So is Chandrakirti also aimed at all *yanas*, or only the Mahayana?
- [A]: When he teaches the Madhyamika, since it is entering the *Mulamadhyamaka-karikas*, he should mainly use Nagarjuna's terms.
- [Q]: But Gorampa didn't do this.
- [A]: He did!
- [Q]: When we explained the text, when we spoke of the selflessness of phenomena, we used it as a synonym for absence of grasping to characteristics, not in the weaker meaning of absence of grasping to the aggregates. So, we have used the terminology of Maitreya, not Nagarjuna. That is my question.
- [A]: Chandrakirti strictly uses Nagarjuna's terminology. This is the interesting point. Until we came to the point in the outline where Nagarjuna began to reveal the twenty different kinds of emptiness, actually he was only teaching emptiness that negates the first extreme. So, in this way, it is also a common path for the shravakas. And when Nagarjuna or Chandrakirti says that shravakas do understand the selflessness of phenomena, they always refer the aggregates. They insist that it is the aggregates, not the *tsenma* as Maitreya said. But having said this, since it is a path for all vehicles, there are also many elements of *tsenma mépa*. Let me tell you something. This morning, Orgyen Tobgyal Rinpoche said to me, 'you guys go up there, and you build something out of Lego that you call your opponent. Then you destroy this and you think you have triumphed'. He said that if a Cittamatrin or even a Vaibhashika logician walked in here, all of us would faint!
- [Tulku Rinpoche]: I would like to give a hint, with Rinpoche's permission. Not only Gorampa discusses this. In his *Yishin Dzö* (*yid bzhin mdzod*), Longchenpa clearly explains how we can unite the approaches of Nagarjuna and Asanga, and Mipham Rinpoche comments on this. Another of the greatest masters and scholars of the past, Rongdzom Mahapandita, also talks how to unite these things. So, there are many subjects for you to research.



## Questions & Answers with Khenpo Jamyang Ösel

- [Student]: This morning, khenpo explained how the second and the third turnings of the wheel don't contradict each other. And at the very beginning, he said that some scholars think that there is a contradiction between the Svatantrika and the Prasangika. I would like to ask whether those two are linked in any way, and whether those who think that there is no contradiction between the second and third turnings also think there is no contradiction between the Svatantrika and the Prasangika. Or are these two completely separate issues?

*How shentongpas and rangtongpas accept the second and third turnings of the wheel as expedient and definitive*

*No school would hold both the second and third turnings of the wheel to be definitive*

*Since the mindstream of sentient beings is relative truth, the assertion of buddha nature in such a mindstream would be of expedient meaning*

*Teachings on ultimate truth are of definitive meaning, and teachings on relative truth are of expedient meaning*

[Rinpoche]: First, khenpo said nothing about the non-contradiction of the second and the third turnings of the wheel. He talked about the non-contradiction of Nagarjuna and Maitreya, the two who opened the way for the interpretation of the Prajñaparamita. There is nothing there about the third turning of the wheel.

[Student]: Could khenpo explain then how the *shentongpas* hold the second and third turnings of the wheel as not being contradictory?

[Rinpoche]: Khenpo said it is not true that the *shentongpas* assert that both the second and third turnings of the wheel of dharma are to be put on the same level. Actually, it is not in terms of contradiction, because there is no Mahayana buddhist scholar who would say that there is a contradiction between any of the turnings of the wheel. The point is that the *shentongpas*, people like Dolpopa Sherab Gyaltsen (*dol po pa shes rab rgyal mtshan*, 1292-1361), assert that the *dharmadhatu* is established as real. They consider that the third turning of the wheel of dharma is of definitive meaning, whereas the second turning of the wheel of dharma is only of expedient meaning. By contrast, the *rangtongpas* say that the second turning of the wheel of dharma is of definitive meaning, while the third turning of the wheel is of expedient meaning. Perhaps you are confusing the doctrines of the *shentongpas* with those of Mipham Rinpoche. Mipham Rinpoche says that only the synthesis, the conjunction of the last two turnings of the wheel of dharma, is profound.

[Student]: Last year, Rinpoche talked of emptiness and clarity as aspects of the second and third turnings of the wheel, and said that both were of certain meaning. This seems different from what khenpo said.

[Rinpoche]: Perhaps this comes from the fact that Rinpoche wasn't talking about the absolute *shentong* and *rangtong*. The root *shentong* is that the *dharmadhatu* is established as real, and all other things are empty. Then there are various schools, such as the Gelug, which are pure *rangtong*. And, for example, Sakya Chokden said that *yeshe* is established as real, which is slightly different from the root *shentong* position. But khenpo has never heard anyone say that both the second and third turnings of the wheel are of definitive meaning.

[Student]: In the Nyingma tradition, many scholars say that texts speaking of the buddha nature or *tathagatagarbha* are of definitive meaning.

[Rinpoche]: Gorampa's interpretation is that the *sugatagarbha* is of definitive meaning, but the assertion that there is a *sugatagarbha* in the consciousness stream of all sentient beings is said to be expedient.

[Student]: If we assert that all beings have buddha nature, is the problem related to whether buddha nature exists or not, or is it to whether it is in all beings or not?

[Rinpoche]: So that we don't waste time disputing things that are unclear, we need to define the distinction between definitive and expedient. This is connected to the two truths. Whatever is connected to the ultimate truth is of definite meaning, and whatever is connected to the relative truth is of expedient meaning. So, if we speak of buddha nature, it is not other than the *dharmadhatu*, the ultimate reality. This is none other than the union of clarity and emptiness, so teachings on this are of definitive meaning. Now, the mind streams of all sentient beings are not considered ultimate reality or definitive, so when we speak of the buddha nature within their mind streams, it is expedient. The Buddha has two types of wisdom. He knows all things as they are, *ji tawa* (*ji lta ba*), which is ultimate reality. And he knows them all in as many ways as they appear *ji nyépa* (*ji rnyed pa*). So, all that is perceived by this wisdom is of expedient meaning. Now we should make a two-fold distinction. Generally, whatever deals with conventional superficial reality is said to be of expedient meaning. But some statements describe superficial reality in a way that is conventionally established and others do so in a way that is not conventionally established. For example, the assertion of the buddha nature in the mind stream of all sentient beings belongs to the first category. It is valid and not contradicted conventionally. But if we want to say that there is a buddha nature that is eternal and established as real in the mind stream of all sentient beings, like a jewel in a vase, then that belongs to the second category. It is a statement of expedient meaning, which is not established conventionally.

[Student]: We have made the distinction between definitive and provisional, and then within provisional we have valid or invalid conventionally.

*Expedient teachings are used by the Buddha to draw students to the path of correct Dharma*

*The refutation of four extremes of production is only the refutation of the first extreme of being*

*During the path, we abandon the four extremes of existence gradually*

*The preceding discussion follows Gorampa's interpretation, so it is not a Nyingma view*

[Rinpoche]: We should understand that ‘expedient’ meaning is used by the Buddha to draw potential disciples to the path. In other words, we should think in terms of its use, purpose and necessity, *göpa* (*dgos pa*). Why did the Buddha teach of the eternal blissful buddha nature in the mind stream of ordinary beings? It is to turn people such as Hindus and other non-buddhists, who believed in an eternal self, to the Dharma. It was used as a skilful means, or one might say ‘trick’, to attract them to the correct Dharma.

[Student]: If we show that all phenomena are free from the four extremes of production, do we refute only the first extreme of existence or do we refute all four extremes?

[Rinpoche]: The refutation of the four extremes is merely refutation of the first extreme of being.

[Student]: Is there, on the level of logic, a way to refute the other three?

[Rinpoche]: First we refute the extreme of being, such as the doctrines of the Samkhyas, Charvakas, and substantialists among the buddhist school, such as those on the shravaka path who assert that self is within the aggregates and so on. These are all refutations of the first extreme, of mere being. Now, if having refuted the first extreme, we were to cling to the second extreme, the negation of existence, or if we refute this and cling to the third or fourth, all these would have to be refuted. This is because inasmuch as there is any form of clinging, that is not the correct view.

[Student]: In which text is this reasoning taught?

[Rinpoche]: It is not taught in this text, because in the introduction to the Madhyamika, Chandrakirti is mainly interested in refuting the extreme of existence. But there are many types of reasoning to refute the second extreme, for example in the writings of Nagarjuna. An example of such reasoning is that non-being is imputed in connection to being, so grasping to non-being is imputed in dependence to grasping to being. They are mutually relative; hence, non-being does not exist either.

[Student]: Along the Mahayana path, do we have to abandon the four extremes of existence at the same time, or can we do so gradually?

[Rinpoche]: It is gradual. It is impossible for beginners to shift directly to a view that is devoid of all four extremes, both in theory and in practice. For example, in theory, we begin by refuting the first extreme, and then we move to the second. And in meditation, our mental consciousness cannot perceive the absence of four extremes simultaneously, so we have to train ourselves gradually. First, we get rid of clinging to existence; next, we get rid of clinging to non-existence, and so on.

[Student]: You mentioned that sutras about the *sugatagarbha* have definitive meaning. If it is expedient to say that buddha nature exists fully accomplished in the mind of beings, in what sense are these sutras definitive?

[Rinpoche]: First, I apologise for a mistake in translation. Khenpo did not speak of texts being of definitive or expedient meaning. The statements about buddha nature can be definitive, but statements about the presence of buddha nature in the mind streams of sentient beings are necessarily of expedient meaning. We can also have statements that are only of expedient meaning. Some sutras explaining the *tathagathagarbha* are expedient because they speak of it in incorrect terms. For example, the buddha nature or *dharma-dhatu* can be described as the union of emptiness and clarity completely devoid of any of the proliferations of the four extremes. But if sutras describe the buddha nature as eternal and so on, this is expedient meaning of the second type. Any assertions about the presence of buddha nature in the mind streams of sentient beings are necessarily of expedient meaning, even if buddha nature is correctly described.

[Student]: We should warn any Nyingmapas here that this is a Sakya view, not a Nyingma view.

[Rinpoche]: These statements are according to Gorampa's interpretation.



*Here ends the seventh enlightened aspiration of ‘The Philosophy of the Middle Way’*

## 8. The Eighth bhumi, Immovable

### a) The quality of increasing previous virtue, 8:1.1-3

Before continuing with Khenpo's explanation, we shall continue explaining how the seventh bhumi bodhisattva subdues or outshines the shravakas and pratyekabuddhas with his intellect or wisdom. First, I will just finish the eighth chapter. The eighth bhumi is right after the seventh; so much of the information is related.

*8:1:1-3 In order to attain further increase of virtue,  
The great lord enters The Immovable,  
So that [virtue] becomes irreversible –*

Now for the eighth bhumi bodhisattva to attain enlightened qualities that are more advanced than the previous seven bhumis, he will enter into this state of 'Unshakeable', which is irreversible so to speak. That is actually also the name of the eighth bhumi bodhisattva.

*On the eighth bhumi, the bodhisattva is not afraid that things are unborn*

And he does that because he enters into this irreversible state, because he has now obtained a quality called *mi chewé chöla zöpa töpa* (*mi skye ba'i chos la bzod pa thob pa*). This term can be found in many other stages. Loosely translated, *zöpa* is like 'patience', but here I would translate this as 'not being fearful', 'fearless', 'not being afraid of the characteristicless'. Or we could say, "not being afraid of the fact that things are unborn". The last term, *töpa*, means 'actualised'. Here it refers to someone who is able to bear, and more than that, actualise that kind of capacity, that kind of vision. It is the actualisation of the absence of fear, which is more than just patience. That is one description, which is very vague, and I would like to make it more specific.

Most of us don't really know the meaning of *mikyéwa* (*mi skye ba*), unborn, which is why we are not afraid. One of the reasons that the shravakas and pratyekabuddhas do not enter into this path is because this unborn, the nature or reality which is referred to as 'unborn', is something that we are quite unaccustomed to. We cannot cope with it. This ability to cope with reality is a big strength. Of course, we are now talking about bodhisattva's qualities, not reasoning between the Cittamatra school and the Madhyamika school, where our intellect can understand things a little. However, these are qualities of the bodhisattva, and I believe that many of us are not at the level of the eighth bhumi bodhisattva. But we should nevertheless talk about these things, for our own merit, for the future. Everyone is going through this path; it is good to hear about it repeatedly. Just by hearing these qualities of the buddhas and bodhisattvas we will be getting closer to these qualities. It is difficult to talk about. For us, it is difficult to talk about the vision of a person with two eyes on their toes instead of their face. With inferential logic, perhaps we can vaguely talk, but we really cannot talk. I don't know how things would look to them. It is like that. Of course, it is much more than that. I am just giving an example.

*He has completely purified tsendzin, and now has effortlessness*

Here, specifically in this eighth bhumi bodhisattva, *mi chewé chöla zöpa töpa* refers to the complete purification of *tsendzin*, the grasping to characteristics. And how does this bodhisattva manage to obtain enlightened qualities in a more advanced way? Because he has this quality of *mi chewé chöla zöpa töpa*, because he has abandoned all grasping to characteristics, therefore he has this ability of *tsölwá mépa* (*rtsol ba med pa*), effortlessness. Rendawa has an example, saying that if you are sailing somewhere, then when the ship is initially on the shore, you have to have a little bit of effort to launch it and get it going. But once you are in the middle of the ocean, you put up the sail, and the wind will take care of it, so to speak.

The first three lines are more like the quality of the meditation time of the eighth bhumi bodhisattva. Now the next line talks about the quality of his post-meditation time.

[H6]

**b) The qualities of what is abandoned and what is realised on this bhumi**

[H7]

**(1) The special qualities of the paramita, 8:1.4**

[H7]

**(2) The special qualities of what is realised, 8:1.5**

8:1:4-5     *Here [the paramita of] aspiration is exceedingly pure,  
And he is roused from cessation by the Victorious Ones.*

This bodhisattva will have the perfection of aspiration, which is part of wisdom. Now, all the countless, ten infinite hundred thousand prayers that he has done throughout all the time that he was a bodhisattva from the first stage to the seventh stage, now that he has reached the eighth stage, he will have the perfection of this aspiration. This is because he has purified the *dendzin*, the grasping to self and phenomena as truly existent, and the *tsendzin*, grasping to the characteristics of phenomena. In addition, because he is so accustomed to the nature of all phenomena, which is emptiness, he has no effort in entering into the state of cessation.

*Stories of how great beings can remain in the state of cessation for a long time*

Now for those who are new to this material, I should tell something you. Of course, we know that entering into cessation is almost like the ultimate aim of the shravakas path and the pratyekabuddha path. But here, as you will hear later, according to the Mahayana, the bodhisattva path, you will hear it spoken about as if it is not enough. That is why the last line says ‘buddhas will wake him from this state of cessation’. It doesn’t mean that he is ignorant or anything like that. According to Tulku Rinpoche, when holy lamas died, sometimes they could remain in some kind of state for three days or three weeks, and he thinks that this is a similar state. This is also a big thing for the Theravada path, which you will find if you explore places like Thailand. For instance, when Buddha passed away, he gave his disciple Kashyapa the authority to be the first regent. According to buddhist history, Kashyapa is still alive. But when we say alive, he is not breathing. It’s believed that he is still in this state, somewhere in Szechwan in China, at a place called ‘Chicken-foot Mountain’. Usually, when shravakas are in this meditative state, they don’t really die. But they don’t have to function as we do. Anyway, many shravakas do this. If you go travelling in Thailand, you will see what looks like a dead body, and the only sign of life is that the person’s nails and hair keeps growing. But again, I tell you, this *gokpa* (*’gog pa*), cessation, of the eighth bhumi bodhisattva is not something petty like this. Always remember that Chandrakirti said that the shravakas and pratyekabuddhas’ understanding of emptiness is like a hole in mustard seed created by an insect. How bad can sarcasm be? A mustard seed is already quite small, and their understanding of emptiness is like a hole inside that! Meanwhile, for a bodhisattva of the first bhumi, let alone the eighth bhumi, their understanding of emptiness is like the sky.

But when we mention sarcasm directed towards shravakas and pratyekabuddhas, we should clarify this. If we compare our realisation with theirs, it is like comparing the space inside a mustard seed with the sky. When Chandrakirti talks about this, he is a realised bodhisattva, and he can compare these differences. But we should not think of arhats as some poor beings who have only realised as much as the space inside a mustard seed. For most of us, what the shravakas realise is like the sky or space when compared to our realisation, which is like the space inside a mustard seed. This is important. The shravakas can actualise their realisation of *nirodha*. We cannot approach to that level at all. And we might have this notion of ‘poor shravakas, poor pratyekabuddhas’, but as you know, we do not know how to realise *shunyata*, and we make mistakes even when we are practising *kyerim* and *dzogrim*. As is clearly mentioned by Atisha, one of his best students had been doing the practice of Miyowa (Achala)

for many years, and finally he just fell into cessation one day. But this was one of his best students who had practised for many years. We cannot say, if we have merely received an initiation, that we are Vajrayana yogis! Receiving an initiation is great, but there is still a very long way to go. So, when the eighth bhumi bodhisattva is in this kind of state of cessation, buddhas will wake him up, saying, “you don’t have the qualities of wisdom and qualities of strength as we, buddhas, do so you have to be diligent”. Things like that.

[H7]

### (3) The special qualities of what is abandoned (717), 8:2

8:2     *Because a mind free from attachment cannot have any faults.  
Defilements and their roots are fully pacified on the eighth bhumi.  
While his afflictions are exhausted and he is the supreme of the three worlds,  
Still [the bodhisattva] is unable to procure the limitless sky-like wealth of the  
buddhas.*

A mind that has no grasping cannot abide together with faults. Therefore, the eighth bhumi bodhisattva’s grasping to characteristics is destroyed from the root. Because of that, the eighth bhumi bodhisattva is like a protector for the three worlds. To give you a vague idea, once you reach the level of the eighth bhumi bodhisattva you cannot tell the difference between them and the Buddha. They are so close in appearance. But as the last line of this sloka says, even then, the bodhisattva has not reached the quality of the Buddha that is infinite like the sky.

[H6]

### c) The qualities that will be perfected on subsequent bhumis

8:3     *Samsara has been stopped and as he attains the ten powers,  
He will manifest in a variety of ways to sentient beings.*

He has stopped samsara, which means that he will not be born in samsara out of his karma, emotion or ignorance. But because the bodhisattva of the eighth state has obtained these ten different powers, he will manifest in many different ways to many different sentient beings at many different times. The ten powers are, very roughly:

1. **Power of life span, tse.** If these bodhisattvas wish, they can go on for aeons after aeons, endlessly.
2. **Power to remain in samadhi,** in all kinds of ‘doors of samadhi’. For instance, in one instant, if they wish, they can remain in a thousand different kinds of techniques of samadhi, simultaneously.
3. **Power of resources.** For instance, if they want to adorn this place with all kinds of ornaments, like a lake with a swan and trees, like a buddha field, they have that power.
4. **Power over karma.** They can manipulate it, so to speak. They have the power to bless karma, in such a way that beings might not experience its results in a similar way. We are talking about blessing other people’s karma. Normally, positive actions to save one’s life result in a long life. But if blessed in such an infinite way, one positive action becomes infinite, and one negative action can be purified. So in that way, bodhisattvas can bless.
5. **Power of rebirth.** When we talk about manifestation or incarnation, there are many different types of rebirth. It does not only refer to mankind. A bodhisattva can manifest in many different ways.

*The ten powers of the  
eighth bhumi bodhisattva*

*The meaning of  
reincarnation*

I think that reincarnation is widely misunderstood in the West. It's because of people like me, who are supposedly reincarnations of some great being. I think there is a lot of misinterpretation between reincarnation and manifestation. There is something called a *kyéwa tulku* (*skyé ba sprul sku*), which is like a reincarnation. Let me tell you that there are people who are said to be *tulkus*, like me, whom I do not believe are *kyéwa tulku*. There are so many *tulkus*. For instance, the *Heart Sutra* is categorised as a teaching of the Buddha. It is at the heart of buddhism, but actually, it is a discourse between Shariputra and Avalokiteshvara. Buddha blessed them so that they had this urge, so to speak, to discuss then. There are so many things like that. I don't know if this is the right time to discuss these things, but for instance, there are things like a *chinchipé tulku* (*byin gyis bslabs pa'i sprul sku*), which is a blessed manifestation. In our situation, it is like the bodhisattvas blessing Marc and Yvonne so they can debate with each other.

*Other kinds of  
manifestation*

For instance, there is something called a *zowé tulku* (*bzo ba'i sprul sku*), which is like a form manifestation. If a bodhisattva such as an eighth bhumi bodhisattva notices that some people need a bridge or a boat to cross a river, he will manifest as a bridge or boat. That is also a *tulku*. It may not be referred to as a *tulku* (*sprul sku*), but it is a *trülpá* (*sprul pa*), a manifestation. It doesn't have to be life long. Suppose that an eighth bhumi bodhisattva, out of his incredible power, sees that there is a specific coffee shop somewhere in Casablanca. And that in the year 2022, for instance, someone is going to visit this coffee shop for just half an hour to have a cup of coffee, that's all. The eighth bhumi bodhisattva knows that this person will become a perfect vessel only at that time. He will wait. This is the power of his patience. And then perhaps in January of that year, the bodhisattva will then manifest, or bless a waiter or waitress in the coffee shop. And then at last this man walks in and orders a coffee, and this waitress exchanges maybe two and a half sentences with him, that's all. And that's it: it's over. The bodhisattva has done his job, he is very happy. He has planted the seed of the dharma, and the waitress still goes on as a waitress, but no longer as a bodhisattva. Just for that period. This could happen; this is what I am saying. It can also happen with so-called reincarnate lamas like me. I feel that most of them, if they're like me, are manifestations of devils and all of that. But some of them, if they happen to be genuine *tulkus*, could be so for only six months, but then they continue to take the advantage of that. And that is so unfair, I think! *Tulkus* can also be sources of inspiration. So, it could be a slow motion drop of water coming from a leaf, touching another leaf. If that inspires someone, it could be a manifestation of an eighth bhumi bodhisattva. Anything that gives sentient beings an instant of happiness, or an instant of relaxation, is a bodhisattva's manifestation. It sounds a bit like New Age, doesn't it!

*Bodhisattvas can also  
manifest in any way that  
brings happiness to  
sentient beings*

*The story of Riké Chadral  
and Tangtong Gyalpo*

One of my masters, Riké Chadral, is supposedly a reincarnation of Tangtong Gyalpo (*thang stong rgyal po*), but he said that this could never be, because Tangtong Gyalpo was a great master, and he could never be his reincarnation. However, Tangtong Gyalpo was known as one of the great bridge-builders. When he built bridges in Tibet and Bhutan, in the process of building the bridges, many insects would die. But Tangtong Gyalpo would make prayers for them, and my master thinks he must be one of these insects. And Riké Chadral is a great master, and yet he claims that he is merely a reincarnation of one of these insects, but through the aspiration of Tangtong Gyalpo, he carries the name of Tangtong Gyalpo's reincarnation and benefits many people. Similarly, His Holiness the Dalai Lama said that he could never be Avalokiteshvara's reincarnation. Perhaps when Buddha Shakyamuni was teaching in India, he was one of the innocent cowherds who never even joined the teaching, as he was looking after a lone buffalo somewhere far away in a beautiful Indian field as Buddha was teaching. He could just have been a small boy looking after a buffalo, and just because he saw the Buddha and some monks praying, that link has now produced something like this. Anyway, the final five of the ten powers are:

6. **Power of prayer** or aspiration. Now you can understand what we are talking about.
7. **Power of motivation.**
8. **Power of miracles.**
9. **Power to talk about the qualities of the Buddha.**
10. **Power to express the ultimate truth.**

That is the end of the eighth chapter.

[Q]: I have a question about the waiter. When he said his words to the other man in the café, didn't he accumulate a tremendous amount of merit by saying this? He actually brought another being to the Dharma. So, he must already have had the karma to be there at the right time. So, what makes us say that it is the blessing of the bodhisattva and not the good merit of the two people coming together?

[A]: They are like cause and effect.

[Q]: So we don't need the blessing of the bodhisattva then. It sounds a little bit like worshipping a god.

[A]: No, because without the buddhas and bodhisattvas, there is no merit.

[Q]: So is God a bodhisattva?

[A]: No problem! In that context, I accept Shiva, Brahma, Jesus all of them. Although I don't know about Mohammed! There is a little bit of difficulty there. But as for the others, there is no problem. For me, they are the same.

[A]: [Wind blows and overturns a *thangka* above Rinpoche's head] OK, Mohammed also!



## Outshining shravakas once on the seventh bhumi

So, in the eighth sloka of the first chapter, we mentioned that the bodhisattva on the seventh bhumi would subdue shravakas and pratyekabuddhas. This discussion now is like a supplementary discussion. It will help us to understand what is to be abandoned and what is to be realised by these bodhisattvas.

We all know from the root text and the commentary that as soon as the bodhisattva reaches the first bhumi, he will outshine shravakas and pratyekabuddhas with his merit, but not with his intellect. Chandrakirti says this based on a sutra, the *Dashabhumika Sutra*, in which Buddha gave an analogy of the crown prince managing to outshine the ministers with merit or virtue, *sönam* (*bsod nam*), but not by intellect. In general, the reason why bodhisattvas from the first to the sixth bhumi cannot outshine shravakas and pratyekabuddhas is that shravakas and pratyekabuddhas understand the selflessness of the aggregates. But to be more specific, the main reason is that until the seventh bhumi, bodhisattvas have not obtained this particular quality called *rangi yül shepé chewa*, the dignity of knowing the object, one's own object. When we compare the shravakas and pratyekabuddhas, and the Mahayana path, their approach and understanding of the selflessness of phenomena differs in several aspects. For example, there is a difference of clarity, *salwa* (*gsal ba*), completeness, *dzokpa* (*rdzog pa*) and vastness, *gyepa* (*rgyas pa*).

So, we now know that bodhisattvas cannot outshine shravakas and pratyekabuddhas based merely on their understanding of *denme tokpa*, their realisation of the non-truly existent. So now we have to explain what makes the bodhisattvas outshine them. It is because bodhisattvas understand the *tsenma mépa*, the 'absence of characteristics'. That makes a seventh bhumi bodhisattva have this quality of outshining the shravakas. We should also note that a direct understanding of 'absence of characteristics' on its own is not enough for bodhisattvas to outshine the shravakas and pratyekabuddhas, because even the first bhumi bodhisattvas have the realisation of 'non-existence of characteristics' during their meditation. But during their post-meditation, grasping to characteristics occurs again.

*The seventh bhumi bodhisattva has the quality 'the dignity of knowing one's own object'*

*Seventh bhumi bodhisattvas understand absence of characteristics during their meditation and post-meditation*

*The two categories of defilement: emotional obscurations, and obscurations to omniscience (nyöndrip and shedrip)*

*Difference of expression between Gorampa and Mipham about when nyöndrip is purified*

*Three different types of concept, tokpa*

*What remains to be purified after the first bhumi: the grasping to characteristics, tsendzin*

*The three characteristics of giver, gift, and receiver*

*On the seventh bhumi, the bodhisattva begins to defeat tsendzin in his post-meditation, hence outshining shravakas*

In the Mahayana terminology, there are two categories of defilements. One is *nyöndrip* (*nyon sgrib*), ‘the obscuration of emotions’, and the other is *shedrip* (*shes sgrib*), ‘obscurations to omniscience’, which is sometimes translated as ‘cognitive obscurations’. When we talk about the obscurations of emotion, we are talking about emotions such as miserliness, passion, aggression, and so on. But when we talk about obscurations to omniscience, we are talking about a concept that has three aspects: agent, action and subject. For example, the giver, the object to give and the subject to whom you are giving. The grasping to these three aspects of phenomena is called ‘obscurations to omniscience’.

First, according to the omniscient Gorampa, by the time that you reach the first bhumi, you purify all the *nyöndrip*, the emotional obscurations. And then he divides the obscurations to omniscience into nine groups. These become what we call *gom pang* (*sgom spang*), defilements to be purified through meditation. This means that these nine defilements or nine obscurations to omniscience are what need to be purified by the nine bhumis. Mipham would say something different. He would say that *nyöndrip* is not entirely purified by the first bhumi. Again, like the discussion we had about Lord Maitreya and Nagarjuna yesterday, there is a difference when Mipham and Gorampa define ‘emotional obscuration’. This is why there is seemingly a contradiction.

Now when we talk about this concept, this conceptual grasping, *tsendzin*, there are again several different aspects. First, there is *tok chö gyi tokpa* (*brtag dpyod gyi rtog pa*), the analytical concept. Second, there is *dra dön dre dzin gyi tokpa* (*sgra don dres 'dzin gyi rtog pa*), which we talked about for several days, ‘thinking that the term and the object are one’. And the third sort is *lokpé tokpa* (*log pa'i rtog pa*), ‘incorrect’ or ‘improper concept’. Here we are only talking about the second type, the *dra dön dre dzin gyi tokpa*, thinking that the term and the object are one. When we talk about this concept, according to Gorampa, it is divided into four. There is the self of the person and the self of phenomena. And each of two can be innate and imputed, so that means four. Now, for instance, an example of innate self is our thinking that the term ‘I’ and the entity that is so-called ‘I’ are one. In this way, there are four categories of concept.

Among these, the first bhumi bodhisattva has already purified all imputed selves. To use another term, we call this *tongpang* (*mthong spang*), the defilement that is purified by the path of seeing. Now this is where it gets a little difficult. Within the innate self, there are also two kinds of grasping. Here we are referring to the innate selves of both phenomena and person, and when we grasp, there are two ways of grasping to the innate self. One is thinking that this is truly existent. And the other is thinking that this is just an idea, but at the same time still having a grasping. And we know that thinking that this innate self truly exists has again already been abandoned on the path of seeing. So now, what remains is grasping to the innate self just as ‘imputed’. We use the word ‘imputed’, but it is not the same kind of ‘imputed’ as in ‘imputed self’. What is left over is this *dradön drezin gyi lo*, thinking that the term and the object are one.

This is what we call *tsendzin*, as we have said many times, and it invokes three aspects. When you give something, there is still a notion of ‘giver’, an ‘object’ such as money to give, and a ‘receiver’. That kind of concept is what we call grasping to the innate self, not as truly existent, but as *tsenma*, as characteristics. These are the characteristic of giver, characteristic of something to give, and characteristic of receiver. If you don’t have these three, there is no act of giving, but the bodhisattva still has them. During his meditation time the first bhumi bodhisattva has complete realisation that there are no characteristics such as giver, object to give and subject to give to. But during the post-meditation time, such kinds of concepts or notions still occur. Now when he reaches the seventh bhumi, he begins to defeat this during the post-meditation time. This is the main reason why he can outshine the shravakas.

However, there are different ideas among the Tibetan schools. For instance, this morning we talked about how the eighth bhumi bodhisattva has managed to uproot all negative emotions. Even with the Sakya school, there are certain scholars who believe that those are actually the emotional obscurations. But then there are people like Gorampa, who say that they are not the

emotional obscurations. But anyway, except for the followers of Tsong Khapa, which are the Gelugpas, the three other schools (Kagyu, Sakya and Nyingma) say that the first bhumi bodhisattva has defeated *dendzin*, grasping to things as truly existing.

The Sakya, Nyingma and Kagyu schools believe that the ultimate view is going beyond four extremes, beyond all extremes. So, for them, if your aim is to reach the state of shravaka or pratyekabuddha, then grasping to things as truly existent is the only defilement that needs to be defeated. But if you really want to obtain enlightenment, the state of the Buddha, you still have to defeat grasping to characteristics.

*Tanyé tsedrup in the Gelug school: a valid cognition cannot negate another valid cognition*

*For example, a vase validly established in conventional truth cannot be negated by analysis approaching the ultimate truth*

*The Gelugpas say: "Vase is not empty of vase; vase is empty of true existence"*

*Chandrakirti's negation of the Svacitrikā could be applied to Tsong Khapa's doctrine. If something is established by valid cognition, it will be truly existent*

Now we come to the dangerous part. I don't know whether I should translate this! According to the Gelugpas, they say that what needs to be negated and what needs to be abandoned or purified is grasping to things as truly existent. These are very refined points! They also say that what is accomplished or established by a valid cognition cannot be defeated by another valid cognition. This is the beginning of this *tanyé tsedrup*. A phenomenon that has been established by a valid cognition cannot be defeated or negated by another valid cognition. Therefore, something that is negated by a valid cognition cannot be established again by another valid cognition. This is the interesting part. In the conventional truth, a vase is empty of true existence. The vase is not empty of vase; it is empty of true existence. Because this is established in the conventional truth, we cannot defeat or negate the vase that exists conventionally using the analysis of ultimate truth. In simpler language, a vase that is validly established in the conventional truth cannot be defeated or negated by the analysis approaching the ultimate truth.

The classic term from the Gelugpas is 'vase is not empty of vase; vase is empty of true existence', and I agree with this very much. Now, suppose we use reasoning directed at the absolute, analysis that is directed at the ultimate truth. For instance, if we ask where things come from – is it from self, other, both or neither, things like that. When you use this kind of analysis, it only defeats or negates true existence. But the Gelugpas say it does not defeat the vase. We know that something that is negated by a valid cognition cannot be established by another valid cognition. So, based on this logic, the analysis that tries to establish the ultimate truth can defeat true existence. This does not mean that during the conventional truth, there is true existence. According to the Gelugpas, like any other schools, Chandrakirti's school does not believe in true existence in both ultimate truth and relative truth. Remember the logic, if something is defeated by a valid cognition, you cannot use another valid cognition to prove that it is existent. So, when in the ultimate you say there is no such thing as true existence, this cannot be re-established again in the relative truth.

So, the Gelugpas themselves say that there is a vase when you are using reasoning that investigates the ultimate truth, *döndam chöché kyi rigpa* (*don dam dpyod byed kyi rigs pa*). Although there is no truly existent vase, there is a vase. Because of this, according to the Gelugpas, during the path, when you meditate or think that there is no truly existent vase, this notion does not need to be defeated.

Now according to Mipham and Gorampa, we say that is not possible. Because if you say that something exists in the ultimate truth, then anything that exists in the ultimate truth has to be truly existent. Now, the Svacitrikā Madhyamikas assert that there is something existent in the conventional truth, which exists in its own level or its own characteristics. Gorampa would say, and even Mipham Rinpoche might agree, that when Chandrakirti defeats or negates the Svacitrikā Madhyamikas, the types of reasoning that he uses could also be applied to Tsong Khapa. One of the main reasons that many scholars criticise this idea of *tanyé tsedrup*, 'something validly existent during the conventional truth', that has been stated by Tsong Khapa and his followers, is that if it is established by valid cognition then it will be truly existent.

[Q]: I remember the discussion about Tsong Khapa saying that in the glass there is some part of water, some part of pus, and so on. But in the light of what has been explained, I begin to understand that if a human sees water, it is a feeling of his undiluted sense perception, so it

*There is no short cut for shravakas: once they join the Mahayana path, their progress will be slower than a non-arhat*

is a valid cognition. The same thing is true for a hungry ghost that sees pus. So, both are valid cognition. According to Gelugpas, this cannot be negated by another valid cognition. So maybe it is not only that Tsong Khapa has a greater compassion than other masters, but also to validate their theory of valid cognition.

[A]: Of course, compassion is still there. But your understanding is right. That is why it is such a compassionate and benevolent way to think. The other way, of Mipham and Gorampa, is so totalitarian. Only the human way of seeing is valid cognition, and that defeats other people's valid cognition. But if we follow Tsong Khapa, it is very fair.

[Tulku Rinpoche]: I think that these three Manjushris are trying to interpret things with different terminology, but there is no contradiction at all.

[Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche]: That is the usual easy way out!

[Q]: Is it right to make prayers to the buddhas so that all beings may perceive things as humans do.

[A]: The Dharma is what makes certain human rebirths more precious and supreme. Other than that, there is nothing! Human beings do even worse than birds!

[Q] Are the negative psychic imprints removed from the bodhisattva because of generating altruism, whereas for the shravakas, the negative psychic imprints remain? Is this a prerequisite for the bodhisattva to abandon clinging to characteristics?

[A]: Are you asking whether we have to become shravakas?

[Q]: Are there negative psychic imprints that remain for the shravakas but are removed for the bodhisattva?

[A]: Perhaps there is something related. The following question is often asked. Since, if you are a fast learner, it takes only three lifetimes to attain the state of shravaka, then why don't we all become shravakas and then take a shortcut to the sixth, seventh or even the eighth bhumi? Well, this has been analysed in detail. According to some of the commentaries on the *Prajñaparamita*, it is often written that if a shravaka decides to become a Mahayana practitioner, he has to back all the way to the path of accumulation, before the first bhumi. And there is more, according to Lord Maitreya's *Sutra Alankara* (*mdo sde rgyan*). Let's say there is a race. Let's say that someone who has never followed any of these paths takes a bodhisattva path, and then someone who took shravaka path later decides to join the Mahayana path. Even if this second person has already reached the shravaka level, if they practice together, then although he has destroyed the root of samsara, the shravaka arhat will be very slow, much slower than one who is fresh. This is more Mahayana chauvinism! There are many reasons for this. For instance, if I ask you to think that I am a woman from today on, you will have real difficulty, because you already have a preconception. But if I tell a baby that I am a woman, it is much easier.

[Q]: When you said that Tsong Khapa says that what is established on the conventional level by conventional truth cannot be refuted by absolute truth, I presume that he means that the conventional truth, being true, is as true as absolute truth is. This is why absolute truth cannot refute the conventional truth. But I understood that the absolute truth is true in a way that is different from conventional truth. Because what we call conventional truth is actually just appearance. And it is the task of absolute truth to show that the conventional object is an appearance. So, they are not true in the same way.

[A]: This is what the followers of Gorampa would say.

[Q]: Because if that is true, then the absolute truth annihilates the conventional truth totally, and therefore the idea of a truly existent something doesn't work.

[A]: There is a big difference. In the conventional valid cognition, you do not negate true existence, whereas in the ultimate truth, you do. In the conventional truth, the path does not negate. When we think of a truly existent vase, we do not negate the 'truly' existent part. That makes a big difference.

[Q]: I still don't understand the *dendrup* and *tsedrup*. If grasping to characteristics is defined as grasping to the thing and the name as one, then I suppose that animals do not have this kind

*The bodhisattvas are continually trying to help beings, but not all beings have the good karma to accept this help*

of grasping. So, are they more advanced than shravakas? It seems that it is more difficult to erase clinging to characteristics than it is to erase clinging to the reality of things.

[A]: The cat has it, very strongly, but it is completely overpowered by *dendrup* and *dendzin*. We talked about this yesterday. It is like washing a glass and sterilising it. For a trained mind, such as a biochemist or whatever, there is still a lot of dirt. If you go to India, you will see this. If a cleanliness fanatic goes to Tibet and someone gives you a cup of tea, even though they wash it, it's quite difficult! But in any case, animals have their own language, if that's what you are implying. How do you know that when dogs wag their tails it means that they like us? That's how we humans think, but maybe it means no, don't touch!

[Q]: You did not explain why it is much quicker to reach the shravaka level. Why is it so quick?

[A]: Because you have abandoned *dendzin*.

[Q]: But the seventh bhumi bodhisattva takes a much longer time to reach the same state.

[A]: Exactly. That's why. All it takes is three lifetimes to become a shravaka. By then, you have very good insurance. You don't have to go back to samsara.

[Q]: So why does it take such a short time?

[A]: No need to accumulate a lot of merit, which is why.

[Q]: The eighth bhumi bodhisattva has the capacity to manipulate karma, and it is said that they can make use of qualities of other planets at certain levels. They still have a connection with this planet, and the wish to benefit sentient beings through their compassion. So, why wouldn't they put it to use here to generate additional enlightened beings?

[A]: They are doing this all the time. It's like BBC radio. It is such a good program, with such good news broadcasting. But many sentient beings don't have the good karma to listen to that. Instead, they have the bad, emotional negative karma to be attracted to CNN. It's like that.



*Here ends the eighth enlightened aspiration of 'The Philosophy of the Middle Way'*

## 9. The Ninth bhumi, Perfect Intelligence

### a) The special quality of the paramita, 9:1.1

### b) How other qualities are also attained, 9:1.2

9:1     *On the ninth [bhumi] [the bodhisattva's] various strengths become perfectly purified,  
And he attains the perfect purity of the qualities of [validly] cognising phenomenon.*

*The eighth, ninth and tenth bhumis are the 'Three pure stages'*

*The only remaining defilement is nyinang, dualistic perception*

*The four kinds of perfect cognition attained on the ninth bhumi*

The ninth chapter has only one sloka, which has only two lines. First, during the post-meditation time, the ninth bhumi bodhisattva will complete the paramita of strength. Now, these three bhumis, eighth ninth and tenth, are many times referred to as *dakpé sa sum (dag pa'i sa gsum)*, the ‘three pure stages’. Of course, the whole defilement of grasping to characteristics has been defeated. The only defilement, although the word ‘defilement’ is too gross, the only obscuration that they have is *nyinang (gnyis snang)*, mere apprehension, which is like dualistic perception. It’s somewhat dualistic. The *dradön drezin gyi lo*, ‘the mind that thinks object and the term are one’ has already been defeated. But although they may not think that the object and term are one, they still see an ‘object’ and that is their obscuration. They still see the object separate from the subject.

At the eighth bhumi, the bodhisattva obtained ten different kinds of power. The ninth bhumi bodhisattva also gains four special powers or strengths. These are four kinds of perfect cognition.

- The perfect cognition of **understanding every phenomenon**
- The perfect cognition of **understanding the meaning**
- The perfect cognition of **definite statement**
- The perfect cognition of **courage**

This is like wisdom that has four different aspects, which are closely linked together. The first perfection of cognition (cognising every phenomenon) understands the characteristics of every phenomenon both on the ultimate and relative levels. Again, as I said yesterday, we can only assume these great qualities. It is beyond us to discuss them. I can only give you some vague ideas and examples. When we look at an object, we only see the partial characteristics of the object, and even then only when we are ‘sober’ so to speak, when our mind is not deluded. And that is very rare, almost non-existent. A bodhisattva, when he or she looks at something, they see every aspect of its characteristics both in ultimate truth and in relative truth. This is why bodhisattvas don’t need renunciation mind. For instance, when we look at a beloved object, we only see a partial side, and even that we only see through totally deluded mind. That’s why renunciation mind is difficult. If we could see what would happen after ten days with this beloved person, then we would never have this attachment. These are very vague, bad examples. I say this just to give you an idea.

The second cognition allows the bodhisattva to understand the distinctions between all phenomena. Again, I have a bad example. Suppose you have an object, again the beloved one. You put Jakob there, Ani Jimpa here and six other sentient beings around. The ninth bhumi bodhisattva knows the phenomena of each person. This is like the source of compassion. When

the bodhisattva knows the phenomena of every individual being's perceptions, he sees that one person is not better than another. This is a very bad example.

With the first cognition, the bodhisattva sees the ultimate characteristics or nature of each person, and with the second, he sees the differences between one person and another, their distinct qualities. With these two types of wisdom, he knows the nature as it is and whatever needs to be seen or realised. This is similar but nowhere close to the qualities of the Buddha. Now, because the bodhisattva has this quality, he also knows what to say to different sentient beings in order to liberate them, depending on their different kinds of perception. For each person, he knows how to communicate, the right usage of words and terms, everything. For example, he would teach the shravaka path to someone who can only understand that.

This bodhisattva also knows every single phenomenon's favourable causes and conditions, therefore he has courage and therefore he is adaptable. So, that is the end of the ninth chapter.



*Here ends the ninth enlightened aspiration of 'The Philosophy of the Middle Way'*

## 10. The Tenth bhumi, Cloud of Dharma

### a) Empowerment as the buddhas' representative, 10:1.1-2½

### b) The special quality of the paramita, 10:1.2¾

### c) Explanation of the name of this paramita, 10:1.3-4

10:1     *On the tenth bhumi [the bodhisattva] is empowered by all the buddhas, Receiving holiness, his wisdom becomes even more supreme. As from rain clouds, for the sake of sentient beings, The sons of the victorious ones spontaneously rain down Dharma upon the crops of virtue.*

*The coronation of the tenth bhumi bodhisattva at the end of his path*

Now the bodhisattva will finish the path. The path ends here. Such a bodhisattva can achieve ten hundred thousand multiple modes of concentration. He will also receive a coronation or empowerment similar to a buddha's ability. Remember, during the first bhumi, he was crowned as a crown prince. Now this is the final stage or ceremony to crown him as a king. This crowning will be right at the end of these countless samadhis. And when the bodhisattva achieves that level, he will be able to manifest and display ten hundred thousand billion fold buddha fields, each of which will include attendants, students, and whatever is mentioned in description of buddha fields. And as soon as he is set on this samadhi, in this beautiful realm adorned by all sorts of ornaments, then the buddhas of the ten directions and three times will send light from their forehead centres, and then empower this crown prince as a king.

*The vajra-like samadhi*

And at that very moment of the vajra-like samadhi, *nyenpo dorje tawui tingedzin* (*gnyenpo rdo rje lta bu'i ting nge 'dzin*), the indestructible state of awareness would be actualised. Some views would consider that state of realisation to be part of the secret mantrayana. This diamond-like samadhi acts as an antidote, defeating whatever needs to be defeated. And during his post-meditation, the tenth bhumi bodhisattva will emphasise primordial wisdom. This is very well structured, so to speak, because when he becomes a buddha then there is no post-meditation and meditation. And now, already on the tenth level, his meditation is primordial wisdom, and post-meditation time is primordial wisdom. The only difference between him and a buddha is that he still has post-meditation time.

And then during the tenth bhumi, like a cloud producing timely rain or showers in order to cultivate the crops, likewise this bodhisattva will shower down compassion and blessings spontaneously and endlessly, all the time, in order to cultivate and nurture the virtuous thoughts and actions of sentient beings. Hence, this bodhisattva's name is 'Cloud of Dharma'.

And then the moment he obtains this diamond-like samadhi, he will destroy all remaining defilements. And then he will enter the eleventh bhumi, which is just a term. There is no longer a path now. As a sign of this, the three worlds will shake greatly. The lords of the god realm, even though they are in the battlefield, they will have to stop their most important tasks and come with offerings to this bodhisattva. The *nagas* will have to climb up to this earth to make offerings. And the four lords of Mara, the demons, will faint into a coma. The entire degenerated environment will be restored; for example, dried trees will have new leaves growing without any choice. The same will be true for fruits, flowers and the rest. And all the lords of the most powerful ones of these three worlds will have to put their foreheads under the feet of this bodhisattva, or buddha. And that's all we can talk about. After that, it goes beyond us,

*Although you may not be able to practice the Madhyamika, if you keep listening to it and studying it, it will become deeply imprinted in you*

beyond even words. This is what Chandrakirti will say on the eleventh bhumi, as in sloka 48 of the eleventh chapter.

11:48      *Sugathas in the buddhafields of all the directions,  
As many as there are particles and atoms in these—  
Just as many aeons do you enter holy supreme enlightenment.  
Yet, this secret of yours should not be told.*

[Q]: You have said that these teachings can be very beneficial, for example, if our devotion wavers while we on the path. Could you give us some practical advice about how we can bring these teachings into our everyday life?

[A]: I don't think you can! There is no time to apply the seven-fold analysis of the chariot when there is some kind of emotion going on. But just listening to this, contemplating on this at times, reflecting about this somehow puts something inside you. You can't chant this like mantra. Just listening to this is good. It somehow imprints somewhere, it really does. This is what I was saying earlier. Some people might think that they do not understand this at all. Because this is quite difficult, especially if you come in the middle, you don't know what is going on. But if you listen to this, it will strongly sit there within you somewhere. Khenpo Rinchen, one of my teachers, was a very funny khenpo. He never knew how to do rituals. One day, a Tibetan family invited him to do a ritual for a sick person in the family. But Khenpo Rinchen did not know how to do this ritual. But he thought that all sickness comes from ignorance, and ignorance dwells in wrong views, and since the *Madhyamakavatara* defeats wrong views, he decided he should read some *Madhyamika*. So, he actually went to the family and read some *Madhyamika* to the sick person! He is very funny. When there were vegetables and rice to eat, because he was always thinking of philosophy, he would so often just eat rice and forget the vegetables, or eat just vegetables and forget the rice.

[Q]: When we talk about the *dradön drezin gyi lo*, I don't really understand what is meant. When you say that, people will say, of course we know there is a difference between the name and the thing. And people would say that we don't normally mix the name and the thing, so what exactly is meant here?

[A]: Thinking that the term is the entity.

[Q]: But we don't think that!

[A]: Whoever says 'vase', thinking that what he says and what he means are one thing. What is the problem with that?

[Q]: When he says vase he is actually referring to something, is that what you mean?

[A]: Yes, 'referring' is a much better word than 'mixing'. The moment you hear the word 'vase', you know what it refers to.

I want to return to the *tanyé tsedrup* that we talked about yesterday, since some of us may think that Tsong Khapa made a grave mistake. It is quite difficult to comprehend who is wrong here, because even Chandrakirti accepts that there are four valid things in the conventional truth. He accepts the notion of validity, *tsema*, for instance when he accepts that there is direct cognition or inferential cognition. And he has to accept *lung gi tsema*, the validity of scripture, and *pe nyer jel gyi tsema* (*dpe nyer 'mjal gyi tshad ma*), the validity of analogy. For instance, if someone has never seen a Mexican donkey, let's say, then you can show him a Himalayan donkey and say that the Mexican donkey looks like this. This way, the person who is looking at the Himalayan donkey can have a vague idea of what a Mexican donkey looks like. This is the 'validity of analogy'. Chandrakirti also accepts that, and it is very similar to what Tsong Khapa is saying. Now, in his refutations, Chandrakirti often uses the idea of *jigten drak der chöpa* ('*jig rten grags der spyod pa*), 'accepting the ordinary people's view'. Now, many modern *Madhyamika* scholars say that it is a declaration of Chandrakirti, but it is not Chandrakirti's system or theory. Chandrakirti declared it for the sake of argument, but it is not his tradition. The tradition of *jigten drak der chöpa* is something very new, something very exclusively Chandrakirti.

[Q]: Is there a difference between *tokpa* and *tsendzin*, or are they really the same?

[A]: Well, sometimes *tokpa* refers to everything, even including the *tsendzin*. It's like when I talked about the glass, which has dirt, and subtler dirt that is only visible to scientists. But when we say dirt, we are referring to all of this.

[Q]: Does that even apply to abstract phenomena, such as devotion?

[A]: Devotion can have both *dendzin* and *tsendzin*.

[Q]: Is there a connection between the sixteen types of emptiness and the mandala of the sixteen vowels?

[A]: Well, there may be, but you should ask these Vajrayana people. I don't know anything about this; it's Vajrayana language – it's foreign to me! I follow the Mahayana, and I actually have a little doubt about whether the Vajrayana was a teaching of the Buddha! It looks very Vedic, Hindu-influenced. But anyway, you should direct this question to Tulku Rinpoche.

[Q]: It is still about *tanyé tsedrup* and the thesis of Tsong Khapa. I understand that this *tanyé tsedrup* is on the level of conventional truth. So, can we say that all valid cognition is on the level of relative truth? And you said that Chandrakirti accepts these four types of valid cognition. But when we speak about direct perception, it is not the same among all beings. And even inferences are not the same in all realms. Even in this human realm, the inference of a shravaka is not the same as the inference of all the schools of buddhism. A superior school can destroy the inference of the lower school, and even within each school, some inferences are good and some are not. In other words, it is relative. If so, how can Tsong Khapa say that we cannot destroy a valid cognition by another valid cognition?

[A]: When Tsong Khapa talks about *tanyé tsedrup*, he is saying that what has been established by one valid cognition cannot be demolished by another. We are talking about two entities, one that cannot be established and one that can be. But when you are talking about different perceptions, such as that of a shravaka and an ordinary person, we are talking about the subject. For instance, let's say we are both looking at one tree, but you are closer than I am. Because you are closer, you see more of the tree and I see it less clearly. So your valid cognition is superior to mine, that's all. It doesn't demolish mine, because we are looking at one tree.

[Q]: You would say the same thing for Vaibhashika and Prasangika?

[A]: According to Tsong Khapa? He would say that a Vaibhashika's valid cognition is in fact invalid relative truth. And between the path of accumulation and first bhumi, it is just as I said, near to the truth and further from the truth.

[Q]: But who decides?

[A]: Chandrakirti said that those who cannot accept Nagarjuna have no liberation. It is as easy as that.

[Q]: But this is conventional truth, not absolute.

[A]: Yes.

[Q]: So the fact that they cannot attain liberation does not mean anything about conventional truth.

[A]: It does, because they are falling into extremes. They are not looking at the tree. They think that they are looking at the tree. But at least you and I are looking at the tree; it is just that I am further away. So, you are superior. Pratyekabuddhas are superior to shravakas.

[Q]: Rinpoche, it is still about this *tanyé tsedrup*. When you started to talk about it, you presented it according to the view of Tsong Khapa. You said that according to him, in one thing such as water, there are also different aspects (let's say pus or molten bronze), because this is what hungry ghosts or the denizens of hell perceive. Does Tsong Khapa say this, or is this what the opponents put in his mouth?

[A]: That I cannot tell. It sounds like something that his opponents put in his mouth.

[Q]: So in that case, what would the opponent say regarding the perception of the Buddha regarding the same thing that I perceive as water?

- [A]: That depends. If you ask a Nyingmapa, they would talk about *wakkas*, *tsittas* and so on. What would Tsong Khapa say? Does the Buddha perceive six different things? In the sutras, he would say nothing. But in the tantras, he would say, there is *Guhyasamaja*.
- [Q]: So when the Buddha tastes something, what does he taste?
- [A]: I don't know. Let's ask when you and I get enlightened! As for Tsong Khapa, I think he would say what I just said.
- [Q]: Could you speak about compassion?
- [A]: Yes, compassion is a mind that understands emptiness.
- [Q]: A question about Tsong Khapa – he seems to say that it is pointless to refute the second, third and fourth extremes provided that the object of refutation has been properly defined. And you refute the refutation just on that affirmation. This looks very convincing. What can we say towards Gorampa and other scholars?
- [A]: You should read Gendün Chöpel's *Ludrup Gongyen* (*klu grub dgongs rgyan*), where you will find *tanyé tsedrup* properly explained. He's a Gelugpa, so he can't put words into Tsong Khapa's mouth.
- [Q]: But when we are reasoning to establish the ultimate truth, what is the point of refuting non-being, both being and non-being and so forth?
- [A]: It is very important.
- [Q]: Is it actually possible that people have grasping to the non-being of something?
- [A]: Of course, that is what Shakyamuni said.
- [Q]: But what if we have included all forms of grasping in the object of refutation?
- [A]: You cannot, that is the whole debate.
- [Q]: To go back to this direct perception. We had seen earlier that what is considered correct direct perception is based on the consensus of what everyone else thinks. So, in this case, you could say that a madman who thinks he is a boiled egg is to be condemned solely because he is in a minority. So, this sounds like a desperate situation, and it seems that maybe Je Tsong Khapa is trying to give a basis, to say that there are some objective criteria for saying what correct and incorrect direct perception is. But it does not seem very good to me if you can only say that a direct perception is correct because we can appeal to scripture.
- [A]: The validity of this direct perception should be judged based on karma. If you have the karma to see water as water, then you should see water as water. If not, then you will be categorised as a madman.
- [Q]: But Je Tsong Khapa seems to be arguing from the point of view of ordinary people. That is to say, it is based on what is directly perceived. If you then bring in karma, it seems like special pleading to me. It is fine if you are talking to buddhists, who know what karma is, but if you are trying to debate with non-buddhists, then you cannot really use that argument.
- [A]: Who can't use it?
- [Q]: Nobody, including Je Tsong Khapa, if they want to debate with non-buddhists.
- [A]: Are you saying that non-buddhists would have more inclination to accept Mipham's or Gorampa's way of thinking? I cannot really answer this.
- [Q]: What is the emptiness of compassion?
- [A]: It is the emptiness of the object of compassion, the emptiness of the subject of compassion, non-dual compassion. There is no goal, no sentient beings and no person having compassion.
- [Q]: But you said that compassion is the mind that understands the emptiness.
- [A]: We have to use this language. We have no choice.



*Here ends the tenth enlightened aspiration of 'The Philosophy of the Middle Way'*

[Tulku Rinpoche]: I would like to say a few words with the permission of Rinpoche, about how grateful we are for all the teachings he has given, he is giving, and that he will give. There is no way from my point of view that even one word, even one gesture, is superfluous. You will only know when you realise how that gesture can give you direction. Every instant that he has spent with us in the past and the present, and that he will spend in the future, for this there is no way for us to repay his kindness. But as a symbolic way to represent all his students from previous lives, and at present in this and other universes, and those who will be in other infinite universes, to show our gratitude I would like to request Rinpoche to please continue turning the wheel of the Dharma. To manifest infinite billion fold to bring all of us to the state of freedom, without making any differences but finding the path that brings everything together in the way that our forefathers from the Khyentse lineage have shown us. Thank you so much.

[Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche]: You know, when reincarnate lamas are young, their instructors are very strict. When I was young, I was very wild, so I had some of the strictest tutors. Before they beat me, they would do three prostrations. And they would say incredible things, like ‘you are an omniscient being’, ‘you are the reincarnation of Manjushri’ and all of that. Now, Tulku Rinpoche was just saying a few things. This is one very good example of how some of these well-trained masters can talk, and then they can say several things at one time. I am sure that you heard that he is saying something to you in appreciation of my teachings and all that. But he is also telling me something. He is saying you have a big name; you are supposed to be the reincarnation of this and that, so you should have a great mind. You should always teach, you shouldn’t think about relaxing. You taught before, you are teaching now, and you should teach in the future.

[Tulku Rinpoche]: Of course Rinpoche! That is the vow of the bodhisattvas! We have the witness of all the buddhas, bodhisattvas and sentient beings, Rinpoche. You have no choice.

[Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche]: What else did he say? I forgot. “Even his gestures”: Now, imagine. If you were in my place, how would you feel? From now on, I even have to be careful about how I move!

[Tulku Rinpoche]: That is also a teaching!

[Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche]: This is exactly how His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche trained me. When we were young, some of my friends who were younger Rinpoches were, well, maybe envious is not the right word, but I can’t find another word. His Holiness could be quite strict, but I was allowed to disappear at night, whatever, and His Holiness would say nothing. And some people, out of their kindness would report to His Holiness where they found me during the night, and instead of scolding me the next morning, he would tell me who told him! And this was very skilful, because I had a lot of teachers, and the others could be quite strict because of their tradition or whatever. But of all the teachers, it was worst with His Holiness! He just gave me more freedom, saying ‘whatever you do, I trust you’, that’s it! That catches you! I thought that now he really trusted me, so I really had to behave. This is exactly what Tulku Rinpoche is doing!

[Tulku Rinpoche]: So we shall wait for next year’s teachings, and for those of you who have the fortune to receive them in other places, please do not waste this opportunity. So thank you Rinpoche, please take care for all of us. Please live long.



*End of 1999 teachings*

## 2000 Teachings

*The qualities of the Buddha expressed*

*Previous chapters have shown that there is no inherently existing arising*

*So what happens when we understand this? This is explained in chapter 11*

[H4]

[H5]

[H6]

The eleventh bhumi is the final one: it is the stage or bhumi of the Buddha. In the following slokas, Chandrakirti tells us that the actual qualities of the bhumi of the Buddha cannot be expressed; what we can describe here is no more than a drop from the infinite, ocean-like qualities of the stage of the Buddha. Nevertheless, a practitioner's joy and enthusiasm will increase upon hearing about the Buddha's qualities, as will his or her merit.

In the previous chapters, especially the sixth chapter, Chandrakirti introduced an extensive explanation of dependent arising. He showed that things do not arise from self, other, both or neither (i.e. without a cause). To a certain degree, I think that some of us can understand dependent arising on a gross level, such as the dependence of left and right: if you don't have left, then you don't have right. But even that limited understanding is mainly intellectual, so we go through a lot of pain and disillusionment when it comes to our daily life and our practice. And to understand the subtler levels of dependent arising is even more difficult, because for many lifetimes we have had the habit of falling into extremes, such as eternalism or nihilism, or believing that things arise from self, other, both or neither. These habitual patterns obstruct us from understanding dependent arising, especially on a more subtle level. When we understand dependent arising, we understand that there is no such thing as "truly arising". For a school or a theoretician who accepts dependent arising, even the "arising" itself does not exist inherently, so we do not have to ask the question of where things arise from – from self, other, both or neither. The very movement or act of arising itself does not exist inherently.

So now the question is: what happens when we finally understand that there is no inherently existing arising, from the self or any of the four extremes? Obviously, the purpose is not to become a university professor or write a book about it and participate in prestigious conferences. That is not the purpose here! As we understand that things are unborn, and do not have an inherently existing arising aspect, and as we contemplate this further, it gradually frees us from all kinds of bondage. Now, when you actually reach complete freedom from all kinds of bondage, what then happens? Can you still have your cup of coffee? Can you still see these things as they are? Perhaps these slokas can give us some answers to these questions. For someone like me, or like some of you, who has never had even a glimpse of experiencing a moment of freedom from this bondage, these slokas will not make much sense. But for some of us, they will nevertheless paint a beautiful picture.

### C. Explaining the qualities of each in terms of the special enumerated features (720)

#### 1. The qualities of the first seven bhumis set out in terms of numbers

##### a) Explanation of the twelve hundred-fold qualities of the first bhumi, 11:1-4.2

- 11:1     *At this time [of the first bhumi], seeing one-hundred buddhas,  
And understands he is blessed by them.  
He remains for a hundred kalpas on this [bhumi],  
Even the end of the last and the beginning of the next [kalpa] is perfectly  
perceived.*
- 11:2     *This Wise One enters and arises from a hundred samadhis;  
He is capable of moving and illuminating a hundred worlds;  
Likewise, he is miraculously able to bring a hundred beings to maturation,  
And he is able to travel to as many buddha fields.*
- 11:3     *The Muni prince perfectly opens the doors of the Dharma,  
Displaying within his single body one-hundred bodies,  
And just as every body is endowed with its own entourage  
Each of the one hundred has an equal display.*
- 11:4.1-2     *Such qualities of the Wise One dwelling on the pramudita bhumi,  
Are perfectly achieved in exactly the same way, but thousand-fold*

When a bodhisattva completes the paths of accumulation and application, he finally attains the realisation of the first bhumi: the *tonglam*, or path of seeing. He enters the first moment of the meditation stage of the first bhumi, and when he arises from that meditation, in his post-meditation he then acquires 1,200 different qualities. These special qualities of the first bhumi bodhisattva are called *tonglam gyi yönten gyadrak chunyi* (*mthong lam gyi yon tan rgya phrag bcu gnyis*), “the 12 hundred different qualities of the path of seeing”. They are also referred to in twelve sets of 100:

1. In one moment, the first bhumi bodhisattva can see 100 buddhas from the ten directions.
2. In one moment, he will be blessed by 100 buddhas, and he will realise that he is being blessed.
3. Because he has acquired the power to transform a moment into aeons, and aeons into a moment, he has the power to remain for 100 kalpas or aeons. Here we are talking about his life span.
4. In one moment, he can remember both the beginning and end of all his previous lives within these 100 kalpas.
5. In one moment, he can enter into and arise from 100 different types of samadhi at will, such as ‘heroic fearless concentration’.
6. With his miraculous powers, he can move 100 realms or universes in one moment.
7. He can also illuminate 100 universes with the light issuing from his body.
8. With his miraculous powers, he can ripen 100 sentient beings within one moment. This means that he can enable 100 sentient beings to reach the path of seeing in one moment.
9. In one moment, he can enter or travel within 100 different buddha realms, the universes of the buddha. Remember, we are not talking about him doing this within his life span, but within one moment.
10. During his post meditation time, this bodhisattva can open 100 different doors of the dharma. He can teach on 100 different types of subjects or topics of the dharma – such as elements, dhatus, aggregates, ayatanas, paramitas, dependent arising, and so on – in one moment.
11. In one moment, he can also manifest 100 manifestations of himself, particularly his body.
12. For each of the 100 bodies that he manifests, he will have a retinue of 100 retinue bodhisattvas, who will follow his bodhisattva activity.

**b) The qualities of the second to seventh bhumis set out in terms of how many times they are multiplied, 11:4.3-5**

11:4.3-4 When he dwells on the [bhumi] of Stainless.

[In the following] five bhumis the bodhisattva achieves one hundred thousand [qualities],

11:5 Then one billion, and then ten billion;

After that, he achieves one trillion followed by

Ten million trillions which again are

Multiplied thousand-fold, all of which he obtains completely.

For the other bhumis, we just have to multiply these sets of 12 by large numbers. On the second bhumi, the stainless, the bodhisattva will acquire 12 sets of 1,000 (i.e.  $10^3$ ) qualities of the path of seeing, rather than 12 sets of 100. For example, he will see 1,000 buddhas in one moment (this is the first set of qualities, as above), instead of 100. On the third bhumi, he acquires 12 sets of 100,000 (i.e.  $10^5$ ) qualities of the path of seeing. On the fourth bhumi, he acquires 12 sets of 100,000,000 (i.e.  $10^8$ ); on the fifth bhumi, he acquires 12 sets of 1,000,000,000 (i.e.  $10^9$ ); and on the sixth bhumi, 12 sets of 100,000,000,000 (i.e.  $10^{11}$ ). So, for example, a sixth bhumi bodhisattva sees 100,000,000,000 buddhas in one moment.

For the seventh bhumi, we count as follows: first, we count 10,000,000,000, and each of these is called one. And then we count 100,000 of these, which makes  $10^{15}$  (i.e.  $10^{10} \times 10^5$ ). He can see this number of buddhas in one moment; he can receive this number of buddhas' blessings and understand it; he can live for this number of kalpas, and so on.

**2. The qualities of the last three bhumis set out in terms of particles of dust (721)**

Until the seventh bhumi, the qualities of the bodhisattva are still countable. The structural outline refers to the qualities of the first seven bhumis "set out in terms of numbers". However, the qualities of the last three bhumis are "set out in terms of particles of dust", so we cannot count them individually. We have to use a bigger unit.

11:6 Dwelling on the eighth bhumi, the Immovable [the bodhisattva] has no discursive thoughts.

If one gathered a hundred thousand of the billion fold universe,

All the dust motes these contain

Would equal the amount of qualities he here achieves.

When a bodhisattva has reached "immovable", the eighth bhumi, he has already abandoned all conceptions, *namtok (rnam rtog)*. Therefore, as he arises from his meditation and enters post-meditation, he acquires an incredible 12 sets of qualities. To understand these, we need to understand the *tongsum (stong gsum)*, the three thousand-fold universe (i.e.  $1000^3$ ). The first *tong* is *tong jigten gyi kam* (*stong 'jig rten gyi khams*) made up of 1000 universes, each of which consists of the four continents, Mount Meru, the sun and moon, and all the branch mountains. In the first *tong*, there are 1000 sets of the four continents, 1000 suns, 1000 moons, and so on: together these make up the first thousand fold-universe. 1000 of the first thousand-fold universes make up the two thousand-fold universe, *tong nyi pa barmé jigten gyi kam* (*stong gnyis pa bar ma'i 'jig rten gyi khams*), and 1000 of the two thousand-fold universes make up the three thousand-fold universe.

We count the three-thousand-fold universe as one, and then count 100,000 of them (i.e. a total of  $1000^3 \times 10^5 = 10^{14}$  universes). Then we add together all the atoms that make up all of these universes. For the eighth bhumi bodhisattva, he acquires this number of 12 sets of the bodhisattva's qualities. He sees that number of buddhas in one moment, he receives blessings from that number of buddhas in one instant, he teaches that number of teachings in one moment, and so on.

[H6]

**b) The qualities of the ninth bhumi, 11:7**

11:7     *Dwelling on the [ninth] bhumi of Excellent Intelligence,  
The bodhisattva achieves the previously mentioned [twelve] qualities  
[Multiplied] by as many as ten times the dust motes  
In a hundred thousand of the infinite [universe].*

The ninth bhumi bodhisattva, he acquires a “countless” number of the 12 sets of qualities. This term “countless”, *drangmé* (*grangs med*) does not really mean countless; it is actually the name of a quantity. If you count powers of ten: 1, 10, 100, 1000, etc., and continue until the 60<sup>th</sup>, this is called *drangmé* – i.e.  $10^{60}$ . All these different names are in the *Abhidharma*. Now, if we take all the qualities of the eighth bhumi bodhisattva, and count these as one, and then go up to the 60<sup>th</sup> – the countless – we then count the result as one. Then we count 100,000 of these to obtain the number of 12 sets of qualities (i.e. the number of atoms in  $10^{14} \times 10^{60} \times 10^5 = 10^{79}$  universes). This is what you will achieve when you understand that things don't arise from self, other, both or neither. So, it's not all just an intellectual pursuit - it's worthwhile to follow this path of dependent arising!

[H6]

**c) The qualities of the tenth bhumi**

[H7]

**(1) The qualities set out in terms of numbers, 11:8**

11:8     *To say the least, qualities on the tenth [bhumi],  
Exceed the reach of words.  
Were one to describe the indescribable,  
They are as many as there are motes of dust.*

The 10<sup>th</sup> bhumi acquires a number of the 12 sets of qualities that is beyond speech. If you count the quantity “beyond our expression” as one, and then multiply by as many atoms as exist, the result will be the number of 12 sets of qualities acquired by the 10<sup>th</sup> bhumi bodhisattva.

[H7]

**(2) The quality of manifesting, 11:9**

11:9     *The bodhisattva is able to manifest at any moment,  
In every pore of his body, bodhisattvas  
Together with perfect buddhas, infinite in numbers,  
As well as devas, asuras and humans.*

In the 9<sup>th</sup> sloka, Chandrakirti explains this by emphasising how the 10<sup>th</sup> bhumi bodhisattva can manifest. Inside a single pore of his body, in a single instant, this 10<sup>th</sup> bhumi bodhisattva can manifest countless bodhisattvas and buddhas performing their activities, together with countless gods, asuras and human beings.

So, this has been a brief account of the qualities acquired on the first ten bhumis. Now with the 10<sup>th</sup> sloka, he will start to express the qualities of the 11<sup>th</sup> bhumi, which are the qualities of the

Buddha. In the commentaries, there are several sub-categories here within the structural outline, such as refuting the idea that buddha has dualistic perceptions. But rather than explain this now, since it might create a lot of misunderstanding, we can discuss some of these points later.

[H3]

## **II. Explaining the level of buddhahood which is the result**

[H4]

### **A. General explanation (721)**

[Note: Rinpoche did not teach specifically under this heading at this point]

[H4]

### **B. What is taught in the text (731)**

#### **1. How the Buddha attained enlightenment**

##### **a) The explanation itself**

###### **(1) The time, 11:10.1-2**

###### **(2) The place (732), 11:10.3-4**

11:10     *As the moon shines brightly in a clear sky,  
You strove repeatedly for the bhumi that develops the ten powers.  
In the Akanishta buddhafield, you accomplished the aim of all efforts - the level  
of supreme peace –  
With its ultimate and incomparable qualities.*

*The bodhisattva does not rest on the 10<sup>th</sup> bhumi, but goes on to attain buddhahood by applying the vajra-like antidote*

In this sloka, Chandrakirti explains when and where the Buddha achieves buddhahood. He uses the analogy of the moon – when the moon rises in a stainless, cloudless sky, it clears or purifies all the darkness. As a bodhisattva goes through all these bhumis, he destroys or abandons all his delusions, such as conceptions. In particular, when he reaches the 10<sup>th</sup> bhumi, he will not rest there. Instead of resting on the 10<sup>th</sup> bhumi, a bodhisattva will exert himself further, and try to destroy the subtlest level of obscuration that obstructs omniscience. This is the time that he achieves buddhahood. We are talking about the last moment of the 10<sup>th</sup> bhumi bodhisattva's stage, when the 10<sup>th</sup> bhumi bodhisattva applies the antidote that is referred to as "diamond-like" or "vajra-like". The place is Akanishta ('og min), the highest plane of existence. At this time and place, this bodhisattva will acquire all the qualities of the Buddha, without any exception. This sloka is a summary, and more details will follow. The 11<sup>th</sup> sloka explains how he acquires this omniscience.

[H7]

### **(3) How he attained wisdom, 11:11**

11:11     *As the divisions of a container does not create different space,  
Likewise, the various categories of phenomena do not divide suchness.  
Therefore when perfectly comprehending one taste,  
You excellent Wise One comprehended [everything] knowable in a single  
instant.*

There is space inside different containers such as a vase or a bucket, but the differences between the containers do not, in reality, create a difference between the big space and the small space. They are of one essence. Similarly, if we compare the space inside this tent and the space outside this tent, the fabric that is this tent does not in reality create two separate spaces. It doesn't change the nature of the space.

*The bodhisattva's understanding on the 11<sup>th</sup> bhumi*

There are countless phenomena such as form, feeling, existence and non-existence – but they are of one essence. This is what the bodhisattva will understand on the 11<sup>th</sup> bhumi. Instantly, with the power of the vajra-like antidote, all phenomena will be understood. The commentary adds

that there are no phenomena inherently existing as something to be understood or something to know – the bodhisattva will understand in a way that is beyond understanding and what is to be understood.

[H6]

## b) Disposing of an objection

[H7]

### (1) The objection, 11:12

11:12     *[Objection:] If peace is suchness, there is no engaging intellect. With no engaging intellect, an apprehender of objects certainly makes no sense. The absence of apprehender contradicts any cognition, And without any cognition who can teach others, saying, "It is so"?*

*Objection: If the object – phenomena – is unborn, then the subject – wisdom – cannot know it*

Now we have an important refutation from our opponent, as follows: when we reach the 11<sup>th</sup> bhumi, we now know that all phenomena do not have inherently existing arising. They are free from all sorts of fabrication. In this case, we are saying that the object – i.e. phenomena – is unborn. But if the object is unborn, then the subject – i.e. wisdom – cannot observe this object. Thus, our opponent is saying that since everything is unborn, the concept of ‘all knowing’ is actually a contradiction, because there is nothing that is to be known. In such a case, the Buddha cannot lead his disciples and teach the nature of phenomena, because he himself has not understood. Why? It is because there is no inherently existing object for him to understand.

There is a doubt that I’d like to discuss here, as to whether the Buddha actually has any manifestations or activities. I feel that some buddhist philosophers, both in early times and even today, seem to fall into this downfall or trap. Many buddhists think that ignorance is the cause of the subject, mind and the object – all these objects. In other words, subject and object come from ignorance. I should point out that what I am going to say is abstracted from some of Gorampa’s ideas, and it may be somewhat *rangtongpa*, so you don’t necessarily have to agree with me. But in any case, both subjective and objective phenomena are caused by ignorance. And during the path, as we meditate and practice the path, we gradually purify this ignorance. This is the standard view. Even the subtlest ignorance or *bagchak*, habitual pattern, will be destroyed or uprooted by the vajra-like antidote during the 10<sup>th</sup> bhumi. After that, like a rainbow dissolving in space, the *rigpa* or the awareness dissolves into the dharmadhatu. So the question is where do the *kayas* (such as body), *jñanas* (such as wisdom) and buddha activities fit in? Here, many philosophers say that all these are merely the perception of others – they are our point of view. For example, when the Buddha manifests, it is our point of view. Even when Buddha says, “when I was a bird”, this only occurs as a projection of another person, such as a devotee.

*Does the Buddha actually have manifestations and activities, or all these are just our perception?*

*If you are free from the notion of time upon enlightenment, there is no past – so how can the Buddha remember the past?*

There is another doubt here as well, to do with time. When you reach enlightenment, you will be free from the notion of time. You will not be bound by the so-called concept of time. Now we are not saying simply that you will not be bound by future time, the time that is going to come. We are saying that the past time is gone, the future time is gone and the present time is gone. Once you get enlightened, you can’t think, “There was a time when there was time”! So you can’t think things like “I attained enlightenment because I received Madhyamika teachings, and then I practiced dependent arising for 100 kalpas. That’s why I am here”. Something like this never happened, so there is nothing to record. And yet, we should not think that enlightenment is a blank experience, because loss of memory does not occur. Nor would it exist, because it did not arise at all. I don’t think that we can understand this, because we cannot even imagine the experience of a phenomenon that has nothing to do with time. We can’t even imagine a life without tomorrow, or the next moment. And that’s just one time, the future time, let alone all three times.

*Gorampa's question:  
How can the vajra-like  
antidote be purified?*

*It cannot purify itself, but  
Buddha's wisdom cannot  
purify it, since he does  
not have wisdom  
according to his own view*

*The opponents'  
(unconvincing) reply is  
that the antidote exhausts  
by itself*

*When bodhisattvas on the  
path experience the  
Buddha and his activities,  
what is happening?*

*If kayas and jñanas are  
projections of the  
bodhisattvas, then the  
path of accumulation  
already has the Buddha's  
qualities*

*If not, they are nobody's  
projections, which makes  
them very strange  
phenomena!*

According to Gorampa, all these ideas seem to have some problems. First, he does not agree that ignorance is the cause of all phenomena. Because if that were the case, then even the wisdom of the last stream – the vajra-like antidote – would actually be the result of ignorance since it is a phenomenon. Now if that were a defilement to be abandoned, then what kind of antidote could we use to purify this defilement? The vajra-like wisdom cannot purify itself, since ignorance cannot purify itself. But you cannot say that we have to introduce a new antidote to abandon this vajra-like samadhi, for two reasons. Firstly, because this is the highest path of the paths of learning. There is no greater path than this, so you cannot find something better than this. Secondly, according to the position that Gorampa is questioning, Buddha does not have wisdom according to his own view. His *kayas, jñanas* and activities are all the projection of other beings. Within his own reality, or his own perception (if there is such, but there isn't) the rigpa, or the awareness, is already dissolved into the dharmadhatu. That's all there is – nothing. So, you cannot use the wisdom of the Buddha to purify that final defilement. Gorampa is questioning this, saying that if this is the case, who is going abandon the vajra-like samadhi? It is still a path, and a path is defiled, as it means you have not reached your destination. But the Buddha has no wisdom in his own view, and a path cannot destroy itself. This is Gorampa's question.

Gorampa's opponents have an interesting reply. They say you do not need another antidote because the power of these habitual tendencies is exhausting, and when they have completely exhausted, you reach the 11<sup>th</sup> bhumi. Since the defilement is impermanent, it dismantles itself, so no new antidote is required to destroy it. But there is a problem with this theory too, because what is supposed to be the most difficult defilement to abandon now becomes the easiest. All you have to do is wait for it to exhaust itself, which is going to happen anyway. Since you have already destroyed the root of samsara upon reaching the first bhumi, there is no going back. So almost nothing can go wrong, and all you have to do is wait!

There are other problems here as well. Many of these philosophers are saying that the *kayas, jñanas* and activities are all the projections of others. Buddha does not have them within his own projection. So given this, Gorampa has another question. During the path of accumulation, the lowest of the five paths, many bodhisattvas actually see the Buddha and experience his activity, like light shining through their forehead and dissolving into their heart and so on. Now Gorampa asks, what is this? Is this just the mind of those bodhisattvas on the path of accumulation, or something else independent from that?

This is actually quite good for *shentongpas*. If the *kayas, jñanas* and manifestations of the Buddha perceived by bodhisattvas on the path of accumulation are simply their projections, i.e. within their mind, then you are forced to conclude that the path of accumulation already has the qualities of the Buddha - because apart from that, there are no *kayas, jñanas* and manifestations of the Buddha. But if these *kayas, jñanas* and manifestations of the Buddha are something else that has nothing to do with the bodhisattva's mind on the path of accumulation, then they are very strange phenomena! In that case, they not a projection of those on the path of accumulation, but they are also not the Buddha's own projection – remember, this is the opponent's root view. So, they are nobody's projection, and yet we still have these *kayas, jñanas* and manifestations of the Buddha. Where do these phenomena fit in? I think this is a good analysis, and unless I'm mistaken, I think that some of the recent buddhist books in English have fallen into the same trap as Gorampa's opponent.

So now we must ask whether the Buddha has *kayas, jñanas* and manifestations, or not. Now we're not talking about our projection, but about his projection – we may even ask the question, does he have a projection? For example, when we talk of Samantabhadra's offerings, what does he see? We will discuss this during these coming days.

[Q]: When we talk of Samantabhadra's offerings – was he making offerings to the Buddha, or was Buddha making cloud offerings to Samantabhadra?

[A]: Even when we make offerings, what does he receive? We have already discussed this. When we make offerings to the Buddha, we are also making offerings to the Buddha that is

*According to the Mahayana, you cannot attain buddhahood as a human being*

our projection. But there's more to it, because we also believe that the Buddha's compassion is unobstructed, so it can't be that we are imagining the Buddha and making offerings to this imaginary Buddha, while the "real" Buddha is not even paying attention, so to speak.

[Q]: If it is said that buddhahood is attained in Akanishta, which is a heavenly realm, does this mean that it is not possible to attain buddhahood as a human being?

[A]: As a human being? That sounds very Vajrayana! Only the Vajrayana talks about transforming *prana*, *nadis* and *bindus* into something enlightened. There are several types of Akanishta, actually. For example, when we talk about the five certainties in the Vajrayana, we talk about a certain type of Akanishta. This is different.

[Q]: So in other words, you can't attain buddhahood as a human being, according to Mahayana?

[A]: No, especially parinirvana. In this case, you have to die.

[Q]: In what you have explained, things either exist as phenomena grasped by mind, or they don't exist. But you say that for the Buddha, either it is only your phenomenon, or it is nonexistent. It seems that if I see a snake while looking at the rope, maybe the false concept of the snake comes from my ignorance. But it doesn't say that even if I've recognised from the beginning that there isn't any snake, then I have to get rid of the snake or the rope or something like that. It is purely nonexistent. So, even if a phenomenon comes from ignorance, it does not mean that it is purely nonexistent.

[A]: But inexistence itself is just a phenomenon. Are you talking about the rope as a base upon which you can have (or not have) the illusion of the snake? If so, then you are supporting the beliefs of the Yogachara or Cittamatra. Chandrakirti can accept this on the conventional level, but he will not say that it is a truly existing *zhenwong*, dependent nature.

[Q]: When we speak of the vajra-like antidote, can we say that it is the result of ignorance, since all phenomena are caused by ignorance?

[A]: Yes, I think that is what they are saying. And when you reach the stage of the Buddha, you no longer have this antidote, because you no longer have a path. This is the argument: who is going to uproot this biggest problem, namely the antidote itself, at the end of the path?

[Q]: So, when we talk about getting rid of the antidote, is the question as follows: I have a cleaning agent and something to be cleaned. So, once I have got rid of the dirt, how do I get rid of the cleaning agent?

[A]: That's a very good analysis. Gorampa is following Chandrakirti's approach: he doesn't have any thesis here. He is questioning this opponent who says that *jñanas*, *kayas* and manifestations are only the projection of others. If after the last samadhi, the vajra-like samadhi, your rigpa dissolves into the dharmadhatu, there's nothing. So Gorampa's question goes as follows: if the Buddha does not have *jñanas*, *kayas* and all that, he has nothing to defeat this vajra-like samadhi. So, who will defeat it? It cannot defeat itself, because no ignorance can defeat itself – it needs something different to purify it.

[Q]: Who is this opponent?

[A]: I will tell you one of these days. All I will say now is that they are early *umapas* (followers of the Madhyamika).



## The indescribable wisdom of the Buddha

The qualities of the ten bhumis that we were discussing yesterday, and especially the 11<sup>th</sup> bhumi: all these are beyond our conception. It is not simply a question of them being difficult to

*The qualities of the bhumis are not merely difficult; they are beyond us*

*For someone who has never seen a clean cup, it is very hard to describe one*

*For someone who has only known darkness, it is very hard to describe sunlight*

*How can we say that everything is emptiness yet still speak of an all-knowing wisdom?*

[H7]

[H8]

*Both object and subject, such as the Buddha's wisdom, are unborn*

understand. We have come across difficult arguments before, such as arising from self, other, both and neither. But at the same time, if we concentrate on the arguments, we can grasp something here and there. However, the qualities of the bhumis are not merely difficult; they are beyond us. We can count up to a few million or trillion of these 12 sets of qualities, but beyond that, we cannot conceive. It is possible to use inferential logic to try to describe some elements of these qualities, but you will not find much detail in this text. If you want to know more about it, you should read the Prajñaparamita.

It's like this. Let's say that a cup is dirty, and we ask someone to wash it. We can describe to this person that if they wash the dirty cup, then a so-called clean cup will arise. This is possible because we have seen a clean cup before, so we know what will happen when we use some soap and wash the dirty cup. But if you are dealing with someone who has never seen a clean cup before, you have a problem. It will be hard to talk about the so-called clean cup, the kind of result that can arise when you clean the cup. It is so difficult to establish that. It is quite an achievement just to accept the fact that the dirt on this cup is washable, that it is impermanent. Most of us don't even accept this much; we think that the cup will be dirty forever. However, a path like the Madhyamika gives us a tool to wash the dirt, so at least we can develop a vague understanding that the dirt is washable.

Let's imagine that we have been in the dark for our entire life, that we have never experienced so-called daytime, with sunlight and all that. We can say that when the so-called sun comes, all this will be bright and shining. But for the moment, that's a little bit like a fairy tale, because we have never experienced daylight. I guess that's similar to what you're experiencing when we talk about millions and trillions of 12 sets of the bodhisattva's qualities!

For the sake of communication, we dare to use words like "Buddha has wisdom". That's already a daring thing to say, but we have to say something. Some philosophers are even more daring; they say, "Buddha doesn't have wisdom", because wisdom, *jñanas* and *kayas* and so on are just another's point of view, and we are just fabricating all this. But there is a difficulty here because the Buddha taught the view of emptiness, and also the path to understand emptiness. So now we are left with a question: if things are not inherently existent, then what kind of mind knew these things? It is a contradiction to say that "everything is emptiness" while speaking of an "all knowing wisdom". If we say that Buddha taught us this path, including the Four Noble Truths, emptiness and so on, this seems to imply that there is a mind, or wisdom, that knows everything - or that knows this emptiness. We should bear in mind that even the word "emptiness" that we use, *shunyata*, is only for the sake of communication, as the term closest to reality. If the word "fullness" works, we could also use that. So, now Chandrakirti will continue trying to answer these questions.

## (2) The answer to it

### (a) Although it is uncreated, reasoning is valid, 11:13

11:13     *[Reply:] If the uncreated is suchness, [perceiving] mind too is uncreated  
Therefore, realisation of suchness is realizing that nature.  
As a mind that fully perceives an object  
Knows it in conventional dependence.*

When we analyse, we find that nothing is born: that is the truth, the absolute reality. Because the object is unborn, the subject, such as the wisdom of the Buddha, which knows this unborn object, is also unborn. The reality of the object and subject, their essence, is the same: they are both unborn. That is what the Buddha taught. So we can only say, "Buddha knows everything" or "Buddha knows the unborn nature of phenomena" on the conventional level. Even the concepts "unborn" and "omniscience" are only on the conventional level. Once again, Chandrakirti will

*Even in normal life, when you say "I see a blue object", the first image of the blue object has gone, and remains only as a reflection in your mind*

*Likewise, conventionally, we can say that buddha knows everything without having to have an object*

[H8]

use one of the normal tactics of the Prasangika Madhyamika, i.e. using an analogy that is found in the opponent's thesis.

In this case, our opponents are actually substantialists, mainly followers of the Sautrantika school (*dodépa*). The Sautrantikas believe that when we look at something blue, for example, that our consciousness does not actually see the colour blue. Let's briefly describe their theory, which I think is quite scientific too. They say that when you look at something blue, the object is "hidden", *kog na mo* (*lkog na mo*). Because everything is impermanent, the first limit, or the first moment, of that blue object has already gone. So, when you think, "Ah, this is blue", the first moment of the blue object has already gone – you are not looking at it. But they believe that the first limit of the object, the first moment of this colour blue delivers an image to the consciousness, *nampa töpa* (*rnam pa gtod pa*) and the consciousness later thinks "I have been looking at that colour blue".

Can you see how Chandrakirti is being clever here? He's saying that even in normal life, when you look at something blue and say, "I see this blue object", you are not really seeing it. The actual first moment of the colour blue is long gone, and remains only as a reflection in your mind, but still you can say, "I can see the colour blue". Likewise, on the conventional level, we can say that Buddha knows everything. You don't have to have an object, and yet at the same time you can still say "I am seeing the object". It's the same assumption that we make when we say we can see the blue object, even when the first moment of the colour blue has gone.

[H9]

Likewise, we can say that Buddha knows everything, even though there is nothing to know. We can still have the convention, *tanyé* (*tha snyad*), of saying that Buddha knows everything. The explanation continues in the next sloka.

**(i) Although it is uncreated, cognisance of Dharma can arise (735), 11:14**

11:14      *Sambhogakaya is attained through [the Buddha's] merit,  
And through emanations in the sky and other [locations]  
He teaches the Dharma of suchness,  
So even the world perceives suchness.*

*Buddha leads beings to understand the nature of phenomena through the kaya that is similar to the cause, gyütün gyi ku*

Here we introduce the idea of a particular kaya called *gyütün gyi ku* (*rgyu mthun gyi sku*), the "kaya (or body) that is similar to the cause". It's not the same as nirmanakaya, as we will see later; rather these manifestations arise as a reflection of the infinite merit of the sambhogakaya buddhas. All kinds of manifestations arise from this kaya similar to the cause, such as the supreme manifestations, reincarnations, material manifestations, and multi-manifestations such as trees, water, bridges and even sounds. Some scholars might say that even treasure teachings are among these manifestations. With these methods, Buddha leads sentient beings to understand the nature of phenomena. So now we might ask, since Buddha does not have conception, how does he teach? How does he manifest? How does he benefit sentient beings?

[H9]

**(ii) A simile showing that it is valid to say he taught the Dharma even without discursive thought, 11:15-16**

*If the Buddha doesn't have conceptions, how does he benefit sentient beings?*

*The analogy of the potter's machine*

*Even a cooling breeze is a manifestation of blessing of the Buddha*

*The cause and condition required for the Buddha's blessing to ripen*

*A chicken-and-egg problem: your merit is both cause and result of Buddha's blessing*

*11:15 Just as when a strong potter Spins his wheel for a long time to set it turning, Later with no exertion of effort, The turning is seen to cause a pot.*

*11:16 Likewise, without any effort at present [The Buddha] resides as the embodied Lord of Dharma, Through the virtues of ordinary beings, and his own extraordinary prayers, His greatness being inconceivable.*

The bodhisattva has already abandoned conceptions when he reaches the 7<sup>th</sup> bhumi, let alone by the stage of the Buddha. But if the Buddha doesn't have conceptions, how does he benefit sentient beings? Here we are given the analogy of a potter, a very skilled potter, who creates a certain pot-producing machine. It is some kind of technology that mixes the mud and so forth; once it has been set in motion, the machine will automatically produce many pots, vases and so on, without any effort from the potter. We have to be cautious here, because this example could mislead us and create a lot of confusion. Personally, I have some doubts about this one.

Likewise, upon reaching the 11<sup>th</sup> bhumi, this buddha who has entered the dharmakaya will benefit sentient beings. Without any effort or conceptions, the blessings and power of this buddha's activity can enter into these sentient beings. I need to explain this further. In the Mahayana sutras, it is believed that if a momentary breeze cools a sentient being tormented by heat in the desert, and he has a little bit of bliss for a moment, even that breeze is a manifestation or the blessing of the Buddha.

In the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> sloka, Chandrakirti is telling us that two things are necessary for the Buddha's blessings to ripen – a cause and a condition. The main cause is the merit or virtue of the sentient being that is the recipient of the Buddha's blessing or activity. The condition is all the prayers and aspirations to benefit beings that Buddha made while he was on the path, which is a completely different explanation from the one given in the Vajrayana.

So, when you have merit, the main cause, and when the Buddha's earlier aspirations ripen, then the activity of the Buddha will occur and you will receive the so-called blessings of the Buddha. The analogy of the experienced potter refers to when Buddha was a bodhisattva. Some doubts can be raised here which we will discuss later, but Chandrakirti includes a safety device at the end of the sloka when he says, "it's beyond our conception, it's beyond our thoughts, we never know what happens". This is quite a difficult subject, as we will see.

[Rinpoche]: I'd like to ask, by the way, what is the Christian idea of blessing? Is it something that you're not personally responsible for, but that someone else creates, and you receive it when you pray for it?

[Student]: It comes from God.

[Rinpoche]: So it's not yours? It's his, and you just ask for it?

[Student]: If you want to look for the Christian equivalent, the idea of blessing used in this context is more like the Christian idea of grace. I would say that the relationship between grace and what you do to get it is a little bit like between merit, *sonam (bsod nams)*, and blessing, *jénang (rjes gnang)*. It's the same sort of relationship; they automatically go together.

One potential doubt is that there seems to be a chicken-and-egg problem with Chandrakirti's explanation, related to the concept of merit. We have been told that when Buddha was a bodhisattva, he prayed that he would be able to help sentient beings. Now these aspirations have ripened, so the so-called blessings arise. But why do you have merit in the first place? It is because of the Buddha's blessing. So, your merit is both the cause and the result of the Buddha's blessing, hence the chicken and egg problem.

*If Buddha's aspirations are created on the path, they must exhaust – so how can they continue as the ongoing source of his enlightened activity?*

*We know the Buddha doesn't have dualistic mind, but beyond that we don't know*

[Rinpoche]: The question is this: you are Buddha, and as we have seen, this means you have no conceptions, no thoughts. So how are you able to help sentient beings, if you cannot even conceive of them?

[Student]: When you say you have no conception, do you mean that you cannot perceive any objects?

[Rinpoche]: Since you, the Buddha, do not have delusion, you cannot see phenomena such as suffering sentient beings that need help. Yet, as your devoted follower, I have devotion and that is my merit. But if you don't have conceptions, or even motivation, how are you able to help me? Here, Chandrakirti is saying that you had many aspirations as a bodhisattva, and these are ripening now.

[Student]: This sounds like building a hotel while on the path, with the aspiration that it will be a place of rest for travellers, and then once you are enlightened, people can still rest there even if you no longer perceive the hotel.

[Student]: I would refute this example: in the time of the Buddha, the hotel doesn't exist anymore. It is part of the path, which is left behind.

[Student]: No, that's the Sautrantika view, which holds that enlightenment is the cessation or destruction of everything.

[Rinpoche]: I think the chicken and egg problem is fine, actually. My concern is about the aspiration. We have said that the Buddha's aspirations are created on the path level, and anything that we create on the path is a compounded phenomenon, which is impermanent. Therefore, the aspirations must eventually exhaust. Once the potter starts the wheel of his pottery machine, because it was constructed during the path, then after a while it will stop.

[Q]: Yes, but it has produced pots.

[A]: Yes, it has produced some. But as a buddha, you are supposed to produce infinitely!

[Q]: But we're forgetting an important aspect, which is dependent arising. If phenomena are unborn and unending, going on all the time, then where is the problem?

[A]: We shouldn't have a problem, but something is bugging me here! These two slokas have always bugged me, and although I have asked so many khenpos, they have never given me a satisfactory answer.

[Q]: Rinpoche, are you saying that the activities of the Buddha are infinite and unbounded, but because they are based on aspirations that happened during the path, they are necessarily limited even though they may be very great?

[A]: Are the aspirations necessarily limited? You can always escape by arguing that your aspirations are unlimited, that your activities will continue until all sentient beings are enlightened. But that's a very bad way of resolving the problem, don't you think? I'm sure there is something better than that.

[Q]: I am concerned that the Buddha's powers seem very limited in the way that buddhahood is described here. He's supposed to be on the highest level, but he seems almost handicapped. It seems very odd to me that he should have trained on the path, and wished to attain the state in he is best able help beings, but that this state should be one in which he's wholly incapable even of perceiving beings, let alone actually doing anything for them.

[A]: Why?

[Q]: For instance, when we were criticising the Theravada idea of nirvana, you said that this idea of cessation was like the extinguishing of a lamp. One of the arguments against this is if there is nobody there to experience enlightenment, then there is no experience of enlightenment. The description of buddhahood that we have been discussing sounds very similar to me. The Buddha reaches the point at which he somehow goes completely beyond everything, so there's not even an experience of the beings for which he was supposed to have attained buddhahood.

[A]: OK, this is a little tricky here. The problem is this: when we say that Buddha does not have dualistic mind, it does not make Buddha some kind of a vegetable. We don't know what he sees; our logic and analysis can only go so far as to prove that he can't have dualism, but beyond that we don't know.

[Q]: But this idea is totally inadequate to describe the Buddha, so we are left with the inconvenience of our ideas.

[A]: Well, I guess we'll have to bear with this kind of inconvenience until we reach the path of application!

[Q]: We said that the omniscience of the Buddha is two-fold. We have only discussed how he retains one aspect, knowing things as they are. But he also knows things as they appear, and we seem to have forgotten about this.

[A]: Yes, that's true, and it will come in very next sloka!

[H5]

[H6]

[H7]

[H8]

## 2. Explaining the kayas that are attained

### a) Explaining the three kayas and their qualities

#### (1) The three kayas which are the support

##### (a) The dharmakaya in which concepts are completely pacified, 11:17

11:17     *When the dry firewood of everything knowable,  
Is [consumed by the fire of wisdom], the peace of the victorious one's  
dharmakaya [is all there remains]  
At that moment, there is no creation and no cessation;  
When mind ceases, its [enjoyment]-body manifests in actuality.*

*When you apply the vajra-like antidote, you don't become inanimate – but mind stops, i.e. subject and object stop*

*Buddha knows things without using subject and object – which is something beyond us*

This is a very popular sloka. All fabrications and extremes of knowledge are like dry wood that has already been burned by wisdom, by the vajra-like antidote. When the unborn is understood then that is peace, or freedom from extremes, which is called dharmakaya. At that level, there is no arising and cessation. Now there is a tricky concept: *semgak* (*sems 'gag*), which we can translate as “the mind is stopped” or “the ceasing of conceptual thinking”. According to buddhism, the characteristics of mind are *selching rigpa* (*gsal cing rig pa*), clarity and knowing. We cannot really say that wisdom is not *selching rigpa*, clarity and knowing, so when we say that you apply the vajra-like antidote and mind is stopped, this doesn't mean that you become an inanimate thing that does not feel or anything. Rather, what stops is the *mig pa* (*dmigs pa*), object, and *nam pa* (*rnam pa*), the aspect of the object that is described and understood by the subject. Put simply, subject and object stop.

Chandrakirti is saying that the Madhyamika distinguishes between two ways of knowing things: by using subject and object, and by not using subject and object. The Buddha knows things without using the facility, so to speak, of subject and object. That's why it's beyond us, as we are so used to subject and object. But don't ask me how he knows things! On the conventional level we can say that the sambhogakaya, *long ku* (*longs sku*), actualises the dharmakaya.

[Q]: Can we say that the dharmakaya is revealed by the sambhogakaya?

[A]: The word *dze* (*mdzad*) means “done”, but the agent is the sambhogakaya. We can say that the dharmakaya is “achieved” or “understood” or “revealed” by the sambhogakaya.

[Q]: By “revealed”, do you mean that we have dharmakaya on one side, and sambhogakaya on the other, and that the dharmakaya appears to the sambhogakaya?

[A]: I think it's slightly different. In dzogchen, we talk of three kayas, but it's a spontaneous manifestation of all three. It's similar here, but here the sambhogakaya is emphasised, because we are talking about the vajra-like antidote and the last moments of the path. The sambhogakaya comes immediately after this, and it simultaneously accomplishes the dharmakaya. Here the dharmakaya is almost like an attainment, and the one that attains it is referred to as the sambhogakaya.

[Q]: So, does the nirmanakaya appear first and then the sambhogakaya and dharmakaya?

[A]: No, the nirmanakaya is not the central concept here; here it is *gyüütün gyi ku* (*rgyu mthun gyi sku*), the body similar to the cause.

*A brief explanation of the dharmakaya: ji tawa, ji nyépa and yeshe becoming “one taste”*

*The wisdom of the dharmakaya and the wisdom of bodhisattvas on the path*

*Phenomena of meditation and post-meditation do not exist on the 11<sup>th</sup> bhumi, so Buddha does not have time*

[Q]: So, let's say rupakaya, meaning sambhogakaya, appears first, and then dharmakaya. I had always understood it to be the other way round: first, the Buddha attains buddhahood, and then he manifests a form body.

[A]: Perhaps it would help to have an explanation of the dharmakaya, on the Sutrayana level. Let me explain this with three terms: *ji tawa* (*ji lta ba*) is the essence of phenomena (“things as they are”); *ji nyépa* (*ji rnyed pa*) is phenomena as they appear in their diversity and multiplicity (“as many as there appear”); and *yeshe* (*ye shes*) is wisdom. *Ji tawa* and *ji nyépa* are more like objects – and the one that knows these objects is *yeshe*: the wisdom that things as they are and as they appear in their diversity. When these three, *ji tawa*, *ji nyépa* and *yeshe*, become “one taste”, in a very gross way you can say that this is the introduction of the dharmakaya.

We can compare the wisdom of the dharmakaya with the wisdom of bodhisattvas on the path as follows: firstly, they don't completely have the wisdom of knowing things as they are, *ji tawa*. Therefore, they see so-called meditation time and post-meditation time. If we ask why bodhisattvas, pratyekabuddhas and all these people have meditation and post-meditation – not just that they have this distinction, but that they have to have it – it is because they have not yet managed to realise “what it is” and “things in their multiplicity” in one taste. In addition, they do not have the second kind of wisdom, *ji nyépa*, completely. Shravakas, pratyekabuddhas and bodhisattvas of the 1<sup>st</sup> bhumi and beyond don't have *dendzin* (*bden 'dzin*): when they look at and experience phenomena during their post-meditation time, they don't grasp to them as truly existent. Instead they experience phenomena as inherently non-existent, like a mirage, illusion or dream. However, they still see the extremes of birth, exhaustion, existence, non-existence, black, white and so on. They have *ji nyépa* only to this extent.

Buddha, on the other hand, while never departing from understanding the essence of phenomena, simultaneously sees all phenomena in their multiplicity. Therefore, the phenomena of meditation and post-meditation do not exist on the 11<sup>th</sup> bhumi. This is why the Buddha does not have time, the discrimination of time, because there is no birth and exhaustion. But on a conventional level we can still talk in terms of time. For example, we can say that Buddha Shakyamuni was meditating, for example ‘during’ the time of the Heart Sutra. And we can say that ‘after’ the discussion between Shariputra and Avalokiteshvara, he rose from the meditation and said: “you did well”. On the conventional level, we can still say this, based on Buddha's wisdom of understanding things as they are and things in their multiplicity. On the 11<sup>th</sup> bhumi, the Buddha understands *chönyi* (*chos nyid*), the true nature of phenomena: he understands their one essence, which is emptiness. Yet at the same time, he can still see *chö chen* (*chos can*), their phenomenal quality: he can still see all the multiple aspects of phenomena without any confusion. He can still see them in all their multiplicity of different times, states, colours, shapes, languages, and so on: he can see everything. This makes his meditation time far superior to that of all other *aryas*, such as bodhisattvas on the 1<sup>st</sup> bhumi to 10<sup>th</sup> bhumi. Yet, although he sees all phenomena in their diversity without any confusion, he does not see them as having arising, exhaustion or any other dualistic qualities. This makes his post-meditation superior to that of the other *aryas*. Now, in reality, he does not have meditation and post-meditation time, but on the conventional level we can say that he does, such as when he was teaching the Heart Sutra. And even on the conventional level, his meditation and post-meditation time are still far superior to that of the other *aryas*. Now we will do the 18<sup>th</sup> stanza, which is the sambhogakaya.

[H8]

### (b) The sambhogakaya in which merit is spread, 11:18

11:18     *Motionless, yet this [enjoyment]-body illuminates as the wish-granting tree;  
Non-conceptual as the wish-fulfilling jewel;  
Permanent, furnishing comforts until [all] beings are liberated,  
It manifests within simplicity.*

He we are describing someone who is free from this mind and mind factors, and who has obtained the sambhogakaya form, which is not like an ordinary form of blood and flesh. He will arise or appear like a wish-fulfilling tree or wish-fulfilling jewel, as a wealth for this earth until all the sentient beings are liberated. It will appear for those bodhisattvas whose extremes are completely gone or abandoned, i.e. the 10<sup>th</sup> bhumi bodhisattva. There is further clarification of this kaya similar to the cause in the next sloka.

[H8]

[H9]

[H10]

**(c) How both of these can display things consistent with illusions**

**(i) Displaying transformations in a single rupakaya (736)**

**(a) Displaying conduct in samsara, 11:19-20½**

11:19     *Accordingly, the Muni Lord may in an instant  
And in a single body manifest his previous births,  
Although already ceased, and without effort,  
He may display every possible detail.*

This is an introduction. According to the perception of others, Buddha appears as rupakaya. In one instant, without any confusion, he can manifest all the bodhisattva's bodies and activities, from the start when he took the bodhisattva vow, and throughout all his lifetimes during the three countless eons when he was accumulating merit and purifying defilements. This is explained in more detail in slokas 20-22.

[H9]

**(ii) Displaying the lives of himself and others within every pore of his body**

[H10]

**(a) Displaying his own conduct, 11:21½-22**

11:20     *The buddhafields; the buddha;  
His actions and powers;  
The number of shravaka sangha and their nature;  
The bodhisattvas and their forms;*

Within this one body, the kaya that is similar to the cause, the Buddha can demonstrate or exhibit all the buddha realms or buddha fields. He can manifest when he was on the path, such as the first time and place when he took the bodhisattva vow. He can manifest Shakyamuni Buddha's field, which is packed with thorns, stones, cliffs, mountains and rivers. He can manifest as Amitabha's realm, where there are no phenomena such as thorns, stones or cliffs, but where fields are made out of *baidurya*, lapis lazuli jewels, and wherever you walk, it's like soft seed. He can manifest all these and more: the type of buddha from whom he took the bodhisattva vow or received teachings; the appearance of their body and action, and their power; the type and number of their disciples and retinue, such as shravakas or pratyekabuddhas; and the type of bodhisattvas they had as disciplines, whether renounced or lay people.

11:21     *Which Dharma, how he himself was,  
Which conduct he practised [as a result of] hearing the teaching;  
Which offerings he made and how much were offered –  
Without omissions, he can display all these.*

He can also manifest what type of teachings he has received: whether expedient teachings that require interpretation, or also direct teachings. In the time of the present Shakyamuni Buddha there are three vehicles: pratyekabuddha, shravaka, and Mahayana. But some buddhas might only teach one vehicle. He can also manifest what kind of conduct he has applied corresponding to the teachings he has received; what kind of offerings he has made, from a simple offering of a

piece of mud, a flower, or a drop of water – to a kingdom, queens and elephants. He can display all this instantly within one body – the body or kaya similar to the cause – but don't forget that only the 10<sup>th</sup> bhumi bodhisattva can perceive this body.

11:22     *Likewise, his [practice of] discipline, patience, diligence, samadhi  
And wisdom, as he practised them  
Flawlessly – all these actions,  
He also displays within every pore of his body.*

He can also manifest things like what kinds of generosity he engaged in while on the path, or what kinds of discipline – from the *bhikshu's* to the *upasaka's*. He can manifest the many kinds of patience he practiced, from ignoring or not being concerned about his enemies, to caring about them. He can manifest many other things too, such as: what kind of discipline he applied, such as respectful or devotional; and what kinds of samadhis he engaged in, such as isolating himself physically from agitated places, or mentally from all conceptions. He can also manifest whether he practiced to the level that made his own mind completely workable, allowing him to control whether to let his mind go or stay within himself; and he can manifest all the practices he engaged in during the path regarding wisdom. He can display all of these within a single instant, within a single pore of his body.

Until now, we have been describing how he can demonstrate all of his own past lives, when he was on the path. But he can do this not only with his own life, but also with the past lives of other buddhas. The next two slokas explain how he can demonstrate the path time of hundreds and thousands of other buddhas as well.

[H10]

[H11]

**(b) Displaying others' conduct**

**i) Displaying the noble conduct of the Buddhas, 11:23-24**

11:23     *Also [he can display how] the buddhas of the past, those to come,  
And those of the present will as long as the sky lasts,  
With a penetrating voice show the truth so the afflicted  
Beings may be liberated, and [how they themselves] remain in this world,*

11:24     *And from the first developing of bodhicitta until enlightenment,  
How all their actions have a magical display's nature.  
Knowing this and that we are likewise, in their pores  
They will display all this clearly in a single instant.*

He can also display the qualities and activities of the buddhas of the past, future and present: their body, and their speech, their clear ringing voice that comprises all the teachings of the three – or more – vehicles which liberate sentient beings from the clutch of suffering. He can also display how they took the bodhisattva vow, and all that they accomplished for themselves and for others from then until their enlightenment. He can display all this inside a single pore of this body, instantly.

[H11]

**ii) Displaying the conduct of the lesser noble ones, 11:25.1-3½**

11:25:1-2     *Likewise the actions of the three times' bodhisattvas,  
The pratyekabuddhas and all noble shravakas.*

Not only can this buddha display the buddhas' activities and qualities, such as buddha marks and so on, but also those of the lower *aryas*, such as bodhisattvas on the 1<sup>st</sup> bhumi to the 10<sup>th</sup> bhumi, shravakas and pratyekabuddhas. He can display how they have taken the bodhisattva vow, how

they have gone through the path and what kind of teachings they have received or taught. He can display all this instantly within one pore.

[H11]

### iii) Displaying the conduct of ordinary beings, 11:25.3½-4

11:25:3-4 *Beside those of ordinary individuals,  
He can display simultaneously in every pore.*

In addition, instantly within a single pore, he can display the lives of every ignorant sentient being – how they are born, how they get old, and how they torment themselves with all kinds of confusion.

[Q]: When we say that the Buddha can display all these things in his pores, does it mean that when shravakas and pratyekabuddhas go through the path and attain enlightenment that what's actually going on is that the Buddha is displaying it? Or does it mean that his display is a kind of cinema show, in which he can show their lives.

[A]: It's the second one. And remember that this show is reserved only for 10<sup>th</sup> bhumi bodhisattvas, and not even all of them – but only those who are beginning to apply this vajra-like antidote. So, we are talking about three countless aeons to get a seat for this show! Actually, if you ask whether he is displaying what is happening now, or if he is rewinding and showing it again, I think both of the things that you mention are true, but it's a wild guess when we are talking about these things! Sloka 18 states, “these displays can be seen only by those who have managed to exhaust all the extremes”, so the extremes of things happening “now” or “in the past” have already been exhausted! These things are very hard to express. In any case, this body, the kaya that is similar to the cause, is usually categorised within the sambhogakaya. It's not a nirmanakaya manifestation; so don't get confused with that, although Mipham Rinpoche said that it is nirmanakaya, so we can discuss what he meant later.

[H9]  
[H10]

### (iii) Displaying mastery of other transformations simply at his will (a) Mastery of transforming objects, 11:26

11:26 *This Pure One, according to his will,  
May display a single mote of dust as the entire universe,  
And the infinite universe as a mote of dust,  
Without the dust mote becoming any bigger or the universe any smaller.*

He can accomplish whatever he wishes. He can put all the universes that exist within a single atom, and he can make one atom as large as all the universes. Yet, the atom will not become bigger, and the universes will not become smaller. As I was telling you, these things are beyond us!

[H10]

### (b) Mastery of transforming time, 11:27

11:27 *Without thoughts, until the end of [cyclic] existence,  
You can display as many actions as there are instants,  
As infinite as there are worlds,  
And dust motes within in these worlds.*

There is not enough dust in this world to count the numbers of activities that the Buddha manifests within a single instant. Well, I hope that all these slokas increase your devotion towards the infinite qualities of the Buddha!

*If all good things are manifestations of the Buddha, where do bad things like suffering come from?*

[Q]: How does Chandrakirti know all this?

[A]: He has already told us, right at the beginning of the text: he based it on Nagarjuna.

[Q]: How did Nagarjuna know?

[A]: Remember, Nagarjuna is a 1<sup>st</sup> bhumi bodhisattva. This is a very important statement, because he was not a 10<sup>th</sup> bhumi bodhisattva. He was only a 1<sup>st</sup> bhumi bodhisattva when he wrote the *Mulamadhyamaka-karikas*.

[Q]: If the self does not exist, how can it reincarnate?

[A]: When we say self does not exist, we are talking on the ultimate level. And on the ultimate level, even reincarnation does not exist. All these things exist only on the relative level.

[Q]: We have an explanation about how all the good things manifest, where they come from. For example, we are told that a breeze in the desert is a manifestation of the Buddha. But what about all the bad things: where do they come from?

[Rinpoche]: I wonder – where do you think they come from?

[Student]: Well, I suppose the conventional answer is that the bad things come from the results of an individual's past negative actions. It's a bit mysterious, in a way, as when bad things happen, that's supposed to be good for you! So, maybe even the bad things could be a manifestation of the Buddha's compassion. It depends how you take it!

[Rinpoche]: Come on! Debate!

[Student]: It seems to me that we have no more of an explanation than we had before. We have said that the source of all good things is the blessings of the Buddha, this new concept we're invoking. But we're just giving it another name, because we are saying that all good things, and now perhaps all bad things as well, are due to this. Since we have said that everything is due to this, we are just providing a new name, rather than any kind of explanation.

[Student]: I have a related question. Yesterday, as you were explaining the power of a buddha, I was sitting here and asking myself, why is there so much suffering despite this tremendous power. I know it might be a silly question, but I would like to ask it nevertheless.

[Student]: I think he's right – we want to know what the answer is!

[Student]: I have asked the same question, and one of the answers I have been given is what we have already said: that the Buddha's aspirations are the conditions, but that an individual's merit or demerit is the main cause of blessings or suffering. If the Buddha's aspiration had been the main cause, there wouldn't be any more suffering.

[Student]: That is not necessarily true, because a cause also needs conditions to be effective. The sun is shining, but it is not warming up the earth very much right now because there are clouds.

[Rinpoche]: But I feel that the question has not really been answered. For two days, we have been talking about the unimaginable extent of the Buddha's power. If he has so much power, why are sentient beings suffering? Why can't he do something?

[Student]: Rinpoche, I have heard you say many times that from the point of view of the buddhas, there are no suffering sentient beings. I don't quite understand this statement, but I have heard it many times!

[Student]: It seems to me that the question about the origins of good and evil was tainted with deism, and that he was making a classic request for an explanation of why there is evil in the world if God is good.

[Student]: Surely the problem that we are pointing to is why should we drag God or the Buddha into the picture, and say that Buddha is responsible for good things?

[Student]: I would like to answer this from the perspective of the two truths. On the relative level, we are suffering because of our karma, and therefore the Buddha says he can't make us enlightened. He can show us the way, but we have to practice it: we have to purify our own karma. And on the absolute level, Buddha is enlightened and has perfected the paramita of prayers, so he perceives everybody as a buddha.

[Student]: Everything's fine until you say that the cool breeze in the desert is the Buddha's blessing. Why bring the Buddha into it? It's like making the Buddha a god in disguise.

*The discussion of the origins of good and bad is all path language*

*But although we may know it is path language, it is still beneficial to think in terms of blessings while on the path*

*If the Buddha's aspirations on the path are compounded phenomena, what happens if they exhaust?*

*Gorampa's opponents believe that *kayas* and *jñanas* only exist as a projection of other sentient beings*

*They probably fear that if *kayas* and *jñanas* exist after the vajra-like samadhi, we will fall into the eternalist extreme*

*The path must be abandoned when you reach the other shore*

[Student]: I do not have a theoretical answer, but we can view this in a very practical way. If I perceive all that is good as coming from the Buddha, then I receive blessings from the Buddha, and so I progress on the path. In the same way, if I perceive all bad things as coming from my own karma, and I confess them, it's also very good and very appropriate for the path.

[Rinpoche]: That's good! So, that should satisfy you.

[Student]: So, it's path language?

[Rinpoche]: Yes, it's path language.

[Student]: A kind of metaphor?

[Rinpoche]: Yes, very good.

[Tulku Jigme Rinpoche]: I have a question. We have said that this is the vocabulary of the path, but I wonder how beneficial it would be for me to think that it's not really the Buddha's blessings, but that I am obliged to believe it is for path reasons. In that case, could I accumulate as much merit as when I think that blessings are not from the Buddha, but are simply the functioning of nature? If I know that the medicine I'm taking is just a placebo, is all the work of the pharmaceutical laboratories necessary? And although we say it is the vocabulary of the path, I'm not sure to what extent we should remember that it's the vocabulary of the path while we're questioning



## **Understanding enlightened qualities**

[Rinpoche]: We have said that the aspirations of the Buddha when he was on the path are a necessary condition for blessings to be possible. But those aspirations are compounded phenomena, even if they include a motivation such as "until all sentient beings are enlightened". What if they exhaust? What happens then? Is the Buddha in something like a state of cessation where he does not function at all?

[Student]: It sounds like he turns into a brown dwarf, one of those stars that goes out! We seem to have a problem when you pose it in those terms.

[Rinpoche]: Perhaps it was an accidental success, but some of the doubts we raised yesterday brought up some quite important points. For example, when we discussed the 12<sup>th</sup> sloka, we talked about Künkyen Gorampa's refutation of the view that Buddha does not have *kayas*, *jñanas* and activities within his own perception, but that they only exist as a projection of other sentient beings. What Gorampa's opponents are saying here is not something trivial or illogical; it's very profound. They are saying that all the so-called qualities of the Buddha are within the perception of someone else. These opponents are probably early *umapas*, early Madhyamikas, who don't want to fall into the eternalist extreme. As followers of the Prasangika Madhyamika, we are not supposed to fall into the eternalist extreme, *tagpé ta* (*rtag pa'i mtha'*), or the nihilist extreme, *chepé ta* (*chad pa'i mtha'*). The opponents probably fear that if you believe that there are *kayas* and *jñanas* after the vajra-like samadhi, the *nyenpo dorje tawui tingedzin* (*gnyenpo rdo rje lta bu'i ting nge 'dzin*), then you might be falling into the eternalist extreme of believing that these *kayas* and *jñanas* are seemingly permanent, and they have good reason to fear that. But it is interesting to note that these opponents are not completely *rangtongpa*, despite what some of you might think, whereas Gorampa is a *rangtongpa*, and yet he opposes them!

This is a slippery topic, because many Madhyamikas agree that concepts such as *kayas*, *jñanas* and *bhumis* are within the path language, as in ground, path and fruition, *shilam drébu* (*gzhi lam 'bras bu*). But as Dharmakirti said, the path is something that you have to abandon like a boat

*Gorampa's reply: if the Buddha does not have *kayas* and *jñanas*, how can he get rid of the vajra-like samadhi?*

*We may understand dependent arising on a gross level, but it is very hard to understand on a subtle level*

*Study is a beginning, but can only give a vague understanding. True understanding requires merit*

*And to obtain merit, we need to perform seemingly theistic, religious practices!*

when you reach the other shore. This is actually something that buddhists take a lot of pride in saying. Unlike many religions, Buddhism says that the very path to enlightenment that it sets out is the final defilement, so to speak, that must be purified.

[Rinpoche]: Once you reach heaven, are you still a Christian?

[Student]: I don't know.

You should ask buddhist scholars this question – after becoming buddha, are you a buddhist or not?

We have seen that our opponents' argument that the Buddha's qualities only exist as a projection of others is quite impressive. We can't dismiss it out of hand, but Gorampa seems to have a good argument in reply. If the Buddha does not have these qualities, then how can he get rid of the vajra-like samadhi? This is important, because enlightenment is not like the extinction of fire and the extinction of water. It's not as though you attain this state and then, as someone put it yesterday, you suddenly become handicapped. It's not like that at all: you have *kayas, jñanas* and all these immeasurable qualities. We have seen that even the qualities of the 1<sup>st</sup> bhumi bodhisattva are almost beyond us, even though they come within the measurable category. So, we cannot even begin to comprehend the many qualities of an enlightened being.

So, the question of the final samadhi, the vajra-like samadhi *nyenpo dorje tawui tingedzin*, is very important. What comes after that? The word *nyenpo* means "antidote", so there must also be a *pangja* (*spang bya*), something to be abandoned. The 10<sup>th</sup> bhumi bodhisattva is still stained by very subtle *bagchak*, habitual tendencies of *shejé dribpa* (*shes bya'i sgrib pa*), the obscuration to omniscience. But immediately after we apply the antidote, we reach the 11<sup>th</sup> bhumi, and there is no longer anything to be abandoned.

Anyway, the aim of all the buddhas and bodhisattvas is to enable people like us, sentient beings, to understand the truth. That's the aim – seeing the truth, *denpa tong* (*bden pa mthong*), and there are many ways to see that truth, or approach that truth. Remember, right at the beginning of *Uma La Jugpa*, we discussed 20 different kinds of emptiness. Now, with Nagarjuna and Chandrakirti, we are at the stage of establishing the view, *tawa ten mabepé kab*, and for us to understand the truth, Chandrakirti has introduced us to dependent arising. For almost four years, we have discussed how things do not arise from self, other, both or neither – the reality of phenomena is dependent arising. As we said yesterday, perhaps some of us can understand dependent arising on a gross level, such as without left there is no right, or without England there is no French patriotism! But on a more subtle level, dependent arising is very difficult to understand, especially within arising, exhaustion and abiding, *chegag nesum* (*skye 'gag gnas gsum*). It is hard for us to understand the arising aspect on which Chandrakirti has focussed because, from a buddhist point of view, for millions of lifetimes we have had the tendency to fall into the habit or trap of believing that phenomena arise from the self, other, both or neither.

But, as we said last year, you shouldn't think that dependent arising is something that you can understand by sitting down and reading a book about it. That will only give you a very vague idea of dependent arising. Study is a beginning, and it is better than nothing, but it's not going to give you full picture – it will only give you a very small picture, perhaps only a reflection of a reflection. To truly understand this dependent arising, you need a key, *demik* (*de'u mig*), and that you will have to get from your spiritual companion, and which you will need merit to receive. Perhaps you doubt where merit fits in here – why should we need merit to understand dependent arising.

Merit fits in very well because we have the habitual tendency of not understanding dependent arising. So-called merit exists when we have dualism, a dualistic mind. In my very limited interpretation, merit has to do with dismantling these very sophisticated, stubborn, and ongoing habitual patterns of falling into extremes – or at least beginning to create the conditions to dismantle them. And for that, you need to perform all kinds of seemingly theistic, religious

looking practices, such as prostrations and butter-lamp offerings. Or worse, being asked by your spiritual companion to build a nine-storey building, or being pushed from a building, like Naropa. Or being asked to steal some soup! These things happen, but they are beyond me! This is a personal path, and it is not my job here. My job is to go through this outline of the *Madhyamakavatara* a little bit. In addition, I don't have the courage to push someone from a cliff! You need some courage, you know. I'm not talking about the one who falls; I am talking about the one who pushes! And you're supposed to be able to do this without any *namtok (rnam rtog)*, conceptions.

*Nevertheless, the fact that we have heard teachings on dependent arising shows that we have great merit*

Nevertheless, the fact that we have heard even one sentence of a teaching on the subject of dependent arising shows that we have so much merit. We are so fortunate. But as we said yesterday, as we study this subject, we should remember that we only use words like dependent arising, emptiness or unborn for the sake of communications, and because we lack any better terms. The term *shunyata*, emptiness, is possibly the closest thing that we have to describe this so-called truth, so we are using that. But don't limit or deprive your mind – make your mind abundant and open. We saw yesterday how Buddha can make this whole universe fit into one atom, and manifest this one atom as big as this entire universe. That sloka introduced us to the concept of *ronyam (ro myam)*, equal taste - and it tells us that as long as we have this so-called rational thinking, we will never understand the Buddha's qualities. It seems that this experience of *ronyam* only appears when we stop this rational thinking. But I'm not talking about becoming crazy, because that's just another kind of rational thinking; you are still bound by logic.

[H7]

## **(2) The qualities that are supported**

[H8]

### **(a) Dividing them briefly into ten kinds**

[H9]

#### **(i) Summary, 11:28-30**

11:28      *The power of knowing what is and what is not origin; (1)  
Likewise knowing the maturation of actions; (2)  
Comprehension of various aspirations; (3)  
The power of realizing various propensities; (4)*

11:29      *Likewise supreme and non-supreme faculties; (5)  
The [paths of] knowledge and ordinariness; (6)  
Concentrations, liberation, samadhis,  
Absorptions – such mental powers; (7)*

11:30      *Knowledge of remembering the past; (8)  
Knowledge of passing and birth; (9)  
Knowledge of exhausting defilements; (10)  
Such are the ten powers.*

*The ten powers of the Buddha, tobchu*

Now, Chandrakirti will present to us the ten powers of the Buddha, *tobchu (stobs bcu)*. But even in explaining these, he will only take a drop out of the ocean, and even that will be done very briefly. The three slokas 28 –30 are a kind of summary, and example of how the Buddha has so many great qualities that are beyond our rational mind. A more detailed explanation of the first power follows in sloka 31.

[H9]  
[H10]

#### **(ii) Detailed explanation**

##### **(1) The power of knowing what is something's basis and what is not, 11:31**

*Other texts give more detailed explanations of the ten powers*

11:31     *A cause that has created a certain thing,  
The Knowing One has taught as the thing's basis,  
Likewise, there are infinite objects that are not its basis.  
This knowledge removes obstructions and is [the first] power.*

Although this sloka is categorised in the structural outline as a detailed explanation, it's not really a detailed explanation. If you want to know more about the ten powers, I think you'll be better off with the *Ngönpa Küntu* (*mngon pa kun btus*), the *Abhidharma Samuccaya*. You could also read the *Ngönpa Dzö* (*dngon pa mdzod*), the *Abhidharma Kosha*, and Mahayana sutras like *Dodé Gyache Rolpa* (*mdo sde rgya che rol pa*), the *Lalitavistara Sutra*, although the Theravada sutras don't discuss this. Anyway, the 31<sup>st</sup> sloka discusses the first power of understanding the cause – understanding which cause gives which result. At the more subtle level, only the Buddha can perceive and understand this – not even the 10<sup>th</sup> bhumi bodhisattvas understand. For example, through analysis, a scientist might come down to the subtlest level of causation, such as the big bang. But that's about it – that's as far as they can go. But Buddha knows things like why do scientists call it the big bang? There must be a cause for that too! For years and lifetimes, many scientists together have had some kind of group karma, or group habitual tendency, such that they agree to call it a big bang. Only the Buddha understands causation at the level of why this happened, how long these ideas will last, and when – and why – the next ideas will emerge.

[H10]

## (2) The power of knowing the fruition of all actions, 11:32

11:32     *Wanted and unwanted [karma], the opposite—the reality of exhaustion,  
And the myriad of karmic ripening,  
The capacity of unobstructedly knowing each of these objects,  
Throughout the three times is [the second] power.*

*The power of  
understanding karma*

This sloka describes his power of understanding *lé* (*las*), karma and the results of karma. A cause such as a bad karma can give us suffering, which is pain, and a cause that is good karma, good action, gives us happiness. Of course, we understand this much. But when it comes to the very subtle level, such as what makes an action a bad karma or a good karma, only the Buddha can comprehend, and that is the second power. For instance, why was his first teaching an antidote to what that is non-virtuous? And then after that, did he give a teaching that can be used as an antidote to self-clinging or ego? And then why did he teach the third vehicle, the third teaching, which can be used as an antidote to purify all views? That only happened in this earth. Somewhere else in another part of the universe, he could be teachings these in a different order, or perhaps only teaching one of these vehicles. Similarly, how does this subtle path work, such as the paths of accumulation, application and seeing? And what are the corresponding defilements that need to be abandoned by these paths? All these things are the subtlest levels of karma and karmic result, and only the Buddha can comprehend them.

[H10]

## (3) The power of knowing beings' various aspirations (737), 11:33

11:33     *The intentions arisen from the strength of desire and so forth;  
The vast multitude of lower, middling and supreme aspirations;  
And other hidden aspirations – this knowledge  
Covers every being of the three times, is [the third] power.*

*The power of  
understanding motivation*

This sloka describes his power of understanding motivation, which is particularly important in the Vajrayana. If you are a Vajrayana student, and especially if you are a practitioner of *Kalacakra*, then you will know that this is taught a lot. Every sentient being has a different aspiration or motivation; no two beings have the same motivation. These motivations might be aggression-oriented, ignorance-oriented, pride-oriented, doubt-oriented, view-oriented, ideology-

oriented, devotion-oriented, mindfulness-oriented, things like that. And these various types of aspiration are divided into three categories: lesser ones, higher ones and those in between.

Let me illustrate the idea of different motivations. For instance, as I am teaching you now, I shouldn't think for even a second that you all have the same idea of Madhyamika. We might think that what's happening is that we're all going to Madhyamika class, learning the same text, and understanding a little bit of emptiness. But this is a joke! For an ordinary being such as myself, I might think that I am teaching this and that you understand it – but this is my own projection! Who knows what you are getting? By contrast, the best speaker is the Buddha. For example, in this tent, there are about 100 people with their 100 motivations, so Buddha would teach 100 teachings, corresponding to each different motivation, simultaneously in one instant.

Likewise, when I look at this microphone, I think that you are looking at the same microphone, but it is not true. We are looking at totally different things. But somehow, in our ignorant world, we make believe that it works. And this is how we function. From the Buddha's point of view, the way we do things must be like watching the World Wrestling Federation! They fight, and it's a complete fake, but nevertheless there are thousands of people in the audience!

This third line is saying that sentient beings can also have two kinds of motivation at the same time, without knowing that. For example, deep inside, they might have a more aggression-oriented motivation. But their surface motivation might be something completely different, such as a love- or compassion-oriented motivation. In their depths, their motivation might be devotional, while on the surface it might be more like desire. Only the Buddha knows all this – that's his power.

[H10]

#### (4) The power of knowing all the various constituents of things, 11:34

11:34      *The buddhas, knowledgeable about the divisions of constituents,  
Called the nature of the eyes and so forth constituents.  
The infinite knowledge of the perfect buddhas,  
Penetrates all aspects of phenomena. This is [the fourth] power.*

*The power of  
understanding dhatus, the  
constituents of things*

This sloka describes the Buddha's power of understanding *dhatus*. All sentient beings have different *dhatus*, *kam (khams)*, such as *migkam* (*mig khams*, the eye *dhatu*). I don't know how to explain the idea of *dhatu* simply, but it is related to something that can be measured or observed by a subject. Here we are talking about a deluded being's subject, which includes all subjects up to and including the 10<sup>th</sup> bhumi bodhisattva's post-meditation time. Whatever can be measured or observed by such a subject, what is within its domain or scope: that is *kam*. For example, when we say "eye *dhatu*", most of us will just think of the vague concept of "eye", something that sees. But according to the *Abhidharma*, there's much more to it than that: every sentient being has different constituents, so to speak, even within the eye *dhatu*. And although we speak of 18 different *dhatus*, this is just in our own limited view; there are many more *dhatus*. If you want to know more about *kam*, you should read the *Abhidharma Kosha*. This subject is also important in the Vajrayana, especially during *abhishekas*, where we speak of *kam* in terms of the domain or territory upon which this so-called *abhisheka* is bestowed. Furthermore, when you understand the concept of domain, then you will understand why the Vajrayana has methods such as colour, like red for magnetising and yellow for prosperity. But this is not the time to talk about that! Anyway, Buddha knows the essence of all these *dhatus*, and this is only within his comprehension.



## **Understanding karma**

The concept of karma is so popular now; everyone seems to talk about it, even though many of us don't seem to have any idea what we are talking about! We know that sentient beings dwell in, come from and go into many different kinds of karma. But this concept of karma is also related to the concept of *kam*, because sentient beings also dwell, exhaust and arise in many different kinds of domain. And, as we have already discussed, sentient beings have many different kinds of aspiration, even within the course of a single day, and all manner of different kinds of faculties. Only the Buddha can comprehend all these things. When we talk about things like karmic deeds, most of the time, our minds can only fathom this small human realm. Compared to the Buddha's understanding, we are only talking about the bylaws of a small club of society.

For instance, when Buddha taught the Four Noble Truths under the Bodhi tree or in Varanasi, some people had the karma – and also the aspiration, faculties and *kam* – to hear this just as the Four Noble Truths, the common vehicle. But there were many other kinds of students and disciples, such as those in the god realm and the asura realm. Because their elements are different, they heard the teaching as something completely different. To illustrate the idea with another example, although perhaps it's not as good, we are told that when Manjushri taught shunyata, some shravakas in the audience had a heart attack. Of course, Manjushri has been the Buddha throughout beginningless time, but in this case, he was appearing as a 10<sup>th</sup> bhumi bodhisattva. Therefore, he didn't have the Buddha's omniscient capacity of understanding the aspirations, *möpa* (*mos pa*) and *kam* of everyone in the audience. Thus, when he taught, certain people such as the shravakas couldn't get it. Anyway, the next sloka is about how the Buddha has the power of understanding all these kinds of faculties.

[H10]

### **(5) The power of knowing whether faculties are supreme or not supreme, 11:35**

11:35     *Discursive thought and so forth may be supreme for the very sharp,  
Yet not so for the middling and inferior, it was taught.  
Comprehending how the eyes and so forth are established in mutuality,  
Such is [the fifth] power of the desirelessness of omniscience.*

*The power of  
understanding faculties*

The Buddha has the power to understand who has the supreme faculties, and who hasn't. He knows who has the faculty of seeing things as clean, *tsang* (*tshang*); as blissful, *dewa* (*bde ba*); as self, *dag* (*bdag*); and as permanent/eternal *tag* (*rtag*). We are talking about the faculty of *kunné nyönmongpa* (*kun nas nyon mongs pa*). And then who has the faculty that is not defiled, i.e. the opposite of *kunné nyönmongpa*. He knows who has the faculty that is purified from obscurations, and whether it is lesser, greater, or greatest. Although we are talking about different capacities here, we're not talking about a hierarchy, although it might sound like one. For instance, many Nyingmapa masters say that Guru Padmasambhava has the average faculties, not the best. I've discussed this with Nyoshul Khen Rinpoche. Anyway, he has the ability to see which sentient beings have what faculties.

[H10]

### **(6) The power of knowing the paths followed by all, 11:36**

11:36     *The paths of buddhas, of pratyekabuddhas,  
Of shravakas and of bodhisattvas; [the paths of] pretas,  
Animals, gods, humans and the denizens of hell –  
Unlimited and unobstructed knowledge of these is [the sixth] power.*

*The power of  
understanding paths*

Buddha knows what makes a path, and which path can lead to which kind of result, such as the All-Victorious Sugata's stage, the pratyekabuddha's result, the bodhisattva's result, the shravaka's result, or realms such as the god, asura, animal, hungry ghost, and hell realms. Using this power of knowing, he then teaches different vehicles to different beings with different vehicles. Our view of three vehicles is very limited; he could be teaching hundreds of different vehicles to different beings that need different paths.

[H10]

**(7) The power of knowing both affliction and perfection (738), 11:37**

11:37     *The world's various yogin's different meditations  
And eight liberations of shamatha,  
And the single and eightfold absorptions –  
Unobstructed knowledge of these is [the seventh] power.*

*The power of  
understanding affliction  
and its exhaustion*

This is a very special power of knowledge. Only Buddha can comprehend on the subtlest level which path will lead you to the complete exhaustion of affliction, and what path won't. For example, if you don't have this power, you might easily misunderstand some of the results of meditation, such as the four different stages of samadhis or the eight different types of freedom, as the final stage of enlightenment. The third line mentions the absorption of cessation, which here refers to the cessation of *tsorwa* (*tshor ba*) feeling, and *duché* ('*dus byas*), compounding or karmic formation. When you attain the cessation of the feeling and karmic formation, it looks just like enlightenment, because you are not creating karma any more – but it is not necessarily the path that leads to complete exhaustion of affliction.

[H10]

**(8) The power of knowing and remembering (all beings') past lives, 11:38**

11:38     *When he himself was deluded and dwelling in samsara,  
The cyclic existence of other sentient beings,  
As infinite many as they are, their origins and countries,  
Such knowledge and capacity is [the eighth] power.*

*The power of  
remembering past lives of  
all beings*

This is a power that we are probably more familiar with, namely that buddha remembers all his past lives, from the time that he took the bodhisattva vow, through the *lobpé lam* (*slob pa'i lam*), the path of learning, until the final stage of the 10<sup>th</sup> bhumi bodhisattva, when he used the vajra-like antidote. And he not only remembers his own past lives, but also those of every single sentient being, without any confusion.

[H10]

**(9) The power of knowing (all beings') deaths and transmigrations, 11:39**

11:39     *The transmigration of every sentient being,  
Their lives and their worlds, to the very limits of space –  
Knowing the details and perceiving the time  
Such unobstructed perfectly pure, infinite [knowledge] is [the ninth] power.*

*The power of  
understanding death and  
transmigration*

The ninth power of the Buddha is that only he can comprehend when sentient beings end their so-called state of abiding, or living, and then enter the state of death. And only he can understand the subtlest causes and conditions of how they transmigrate to different states after death, and why they take different kinds of rebirth.

[H10]

**(10) The power of knowing how to exhaust all defilements, 11:40**

11:40     *Through the power of omniscience, swiftly the buddha's Kleshas are purified, destroyed together with their habitual patterns, and, The afflictions of the disciples cease through intelligence, Such infinite unobstructed knowledge, [the tenth] power.*

*The power of understanding how beings overcome defilements*

The tenth power of the Buddha is that only he can understand how different beings on the path can defeat their defilements using their various antidotes. For example, he can understand how a 10<sup>th</sup> bhumi bodhisattva uses the vajra-like samadhi to completely defeat all defilements, including the habitual tendency of *shejé dribpa* (*shes bya'i sgrib pa*), the obscuration to omniscience. He can similarly understand how all the Buddha's children, including shravakas, pratyekabuddhas, and bodhisattvas on the path are defeating their defilements at every moment.

[H8]

**(b) The author's inability to express a clear categorization of them, 11:41**

11:41     *It is not because there is no sky that birds turn back – They turn back as their strength exhausts. Likewise, together with their disciples, even the bodhisattvas, Must relinquish describing the sky-like qualities of the buddhas.*

*The indescribability of the Buddha's powers, and the analogy of birds flying in the endless skies*

Chandrakirti is saying that these ten slokas are merely using a tip of grass to take a drop from the ocean of the infinite qualities of the Buddha, and even this is just an example! Here he gives an analogy: if a bird has the energy to fly, there is no end to the sky. It's not as though birds come back because the sky somehow ends; it's because they don't have any more energy to fly. Likewise, even if all the children of the Buddha, including every single shravaka, pratyekabuddha, and bodhisattva from the 1<sup>st</sup> path of accumulation to the 10<sup>th</sup> bhumi all come together to discuss the qualities of a single buddha, they will eventually have to stop. And they won't have reached the end of the Buddha's qualities; it's just that they don't have the energy or the time to talk about it.

[H8]

**(c) He has here described them according to someone else's explanation, 11:42**

11:42     *Therefore, how can someone like me know of your qualities? Or be able to describe them? Yet, as noble Nagarjuna has explained these, I have set aside hesitation to speak briefly on these.*

Here Chandrakirti is demonstrating his humility. He asks: given all these reasons, how can someone like him express the infinite qualities of the Buddha? But he says that he will case aside his doubt, and express some of these qualities with the help of Nagarjuna's words. Here he's referring to the *Tö-tsok* (*bstod tshogs*), Nagarjuna's "Collection of Praises" to the dharmadhatu, the dharmakaya and so on.

[Q]: We talk of thousands of buddhas with different qualities. But for Chandrakirti, buddhahood is one unique state, so how can we talk of such differences?

[A]: Buddha is not one, but he is also not many. It's true. Many people have this concept of Buddha of something singular; perhaps it's something Hindu-oriented, something like Ishvara and all that, merging with a universal god or energy or soul or whatever. Buddhahood is not like that.

*Buddha is not one, and he is not many*

*We can say that the Buddha knows all, but only conventionally*

*If a Buddha looks at a glass of water, what does he see?*

*For lack of words, we speak of his infinite qualities, but in the end, it's beyond us*

[Q]: What should we read to find more on the two wisdoms: the wisdom that knows the nature of things, and the wisdom that knows things in their multiplicity?

[A]: Well, I guess the best would be Prajñaparamita, or the *Abhisamaya Alankara*, “Ornament of Realisation”. And you have my best wishes and good luck if you study that! It is already quite difficult for us to talk about someone else’s point of view, even when that someone else is merely a deluded being. But in the *Abhisamaya Alankara*, you have to study the Buddha’s point of view! Nevertheless, it’s the most important text to study, for example in the Gelugpa and Sakyapa, philosophy schools. In my shedra, they study the *Abhisamaya Alankara* every year for 8 solid years, and they use Chandrakirti’s text as a supplement.

[Q]: Is the Buddha’s faculty of knowing separate from what he knows?

[A]: Are you asking if Buddha is isolating himself from the object? Of course, as soon as we talk about a knower, we are talking about something to be known. We disciples refer to the Buddha as all-knower; we don’t really have a better word than this? When we describe the Buddha and his omniscience, we have no choice but to use words like *tamché chenpa* (*thams cad mkhyen pa*), all knower. But the downfall of subject and object does not occur here. There is no object to be known. As we said a day ago, there is nothing to be known; therefore, even the knower does not exist inherently. That’s what Chandrakirti said. We can only say that Buddha knows everything on the conventional level.

It would be much easier to answer questions like this if we could say, like Gorampa’s opponent, that the so-called all-knowing of the Buddha only exists as projection of us devoted sentient beings. But we can’t really do that any more, because Gorampa has defeated that. However, Chandrakirti and Gorampa have presented something very important to us: a wisdom that is beyond our thinking. You cannot say that Buddha does not have that all-knowing wisdom; that’s only our projection. Otherwise, what’s the point of getting enlightenment? He has to have something, but if you are asking what that something is, we can only attempt to describe it. Remember all those billions and trillions of qualities? And those are only the bodhisattvas’! Chandrakirti has already presented ten of the Buddha’s qualities, and as he continues, he will insist that they are beyond us.

Let’s return to the question of what object the Buddha perceives. If you remember the Cittamatrin’s example, a glass of water is perceived differently by beings of the six realms. So, if a buddha is looking at this, what does he see? If Shakyamuni Buddha is looking at it, then he will see water. I am giving you Gorampa’s perspective here. The Buddha was *kangnyi nam kyi chok* (*rkang gnyis rnams kyi mchog*), the supreme person. There are endless arguments about this, but Shakyamuni Buddha was a nirmanakaya buddha. I don’t like to use the word ‘fake’, but all this is a manifestation. This includes all his actions, according to the Mahayana, everything from the first day when he descended from the Tushita heaven. In fact, it starts even before that, from the day that he had an altruistic thought, like a flash of lightning, when he was a hell being. From then on, until when he passed into parinirvana in Kushinagar (*rtsva mchog grong*) – all of his lives were actions intended to liberate sentient beings, so we are talking about another’s point of view. So, when we say that the Buddha sees this glass of water as water, we are talking about our projection of his projection. That’s why we make offerings of water to the shrine.

[Q]: When you say Shakyamuni Buddha is nirmanakaya, aren’t you referring to his 12 acts, the 12 deeds?

[A]: Yes.

[Q]: But when he had the altruism when he was a hell being, that was before he was Buddha.

[A]: Yes, but even that is included, according to the Mahayana. That’s the tricky part, isn’t it? However, you have to be careful, because what I just told you might seem to be exactly what the opponent was saying – that Buddha does not have wisdom; it’s only the other person’s projection. This is very similar. So, if we ask again, what does Buddha see then, in his view? As an answer, due to our lack of words and phrases, we talk about all of these

*But the Buddha is not isolated and beyond us; the kaya similar to the cause (gyü tün gi ku) provides a bridge*

*In Sri Lanka, they don't even believe Nagarjuna is buddhist*

*Do Asanga and Nagarjuna disagree about definitive and provisional teachings?*

*Maitreya taught exclusively for Mahayana students; Nagarjuna taught for all three vehicles, hence they have different emphases*

infinite qualities – bodies, wisdoms and activities – but then at the end we summarise by saying that it's beyond us.

[Q]: When we speak of Buddha, do we speak of the primordial Buddha?

[A]: That's sort of Dzogchen language! What do you mean by that? If you are asking me what he sees, although *adi-buddha* and all those concepts don't exist in the Mahayana department, you are talking about the dharmakaya here. Remember what Chandrakirti talked about yesterday – the Buddha can put this entire universe on top of a single atom, and he can make one atom as big as the whole universe - yet the atom will not become bigger, and the universe will not become smaller. That's the only way to explain how the Buddha would see a glass of water! It's beyond our rational comprehension. But not everything is lost here; it's not as though the Buddha and everything he is doing is completely isolated and beyond us. There is a very beautiful bridge, the body similar to the cause, *gyü tün gi ku* (*rgyu mthun gyi sku*). Now, only the 10<sup>th</sup> bhumi bodhisattvas are able to perceive this, so we have to trust the 10<sup>th</sup> bhumi bodhisattvas and their perception. But it's the only way! If your best friend went to Paris and saw an opera, and he comes back and tells you that he has seen a very good opera, that's about it! It's about all you can do! He must have seen a good opera, but you can't invoke that opera. All you can do is trust what he tells you. That's what Chandrakirti seems to be doing here. And don't forget, Nagarjuna was only on the 1<sup>st</sup> bhumi only when he wrote the text upon which Chandrakirti is basing the *Madhyamakavatara*.

[Q]: Chandrakirti is speaking on behalf of his master, Nagarjuna. But how can a 1<sup>st</sup> bhumi bodhisattva describe the things perceived by the 10<sup>th</sup> bhumi bodhisattva? In particular, since he is only on the 1<sup>st</sup> bhumi, how can he convince the shravakas? According to the Prasangika, a bodhisattva would need to be on the 7<sup>th</sup> bhumi before he could perfectly refute the shravakas. Nagarjuna himself has said that a 1<sup>st</sup> bhumi bodhisattva's wisdom does not surpass the great wisdom of the shravakas.

[A]: But here we are talking about 10<sup>th</sup> bhumi bodhisattvas, and yet we are not even on the path of accumulation! Like Chandrakirti, we are using someone else's reference. And I'm sure that Nagarjuna in turn referred to someone who's a 10<sup>th</sup> bhumi bodhisattva, and his written work – Manjushri.

[Q]: So Manjushri inspired Nagarjuna?

[A]: All of these guys are responsible! Chandrakirti, Nagarjuna, Manjushri – there's no problem. Let me tell you something. In Sri Lanka, they don't even believe that Nagarjuna is buddhist, and they have some very good reasons. You should really study there and listen to these Sri Lankan monks, and their refutation of why the three other extremes of arising are completely useless. It's a very good argument, although it comes from a different *sam* (*bsam*), attitudes and different *möpa* (*mos pa*), different aspirations.

[Q]: Do we know what bhumi Asanga was on? I ask, because at the beginning of the teaching, you said that the advantage of being a 1<sup>st</sup> bhumi bodhisattva was that you could correctly discern what teaching was definitive, and what was provisional. And that's why Chandrakirti relies on Nagarjuna as a correct interpreter of the scripture. So supposing Asanga is also on the 1<sup>st</sup> bhumi, he presumably also has correct understanding of what is definitive and what is provisional, but he disagrees with Nagarjuna.

[A]: No, not so much. Remember, we talked about this quite a lot, about their different ways of explaining *gangsak gi dag* (*gang zag gi bdag*), the self of the person; *da mé* (*bdag med*), selflessness; and *chökyi da mé* (*chos kyi bdag med*), the selflessness of phenomena. Nagarjuna and Maitreya have different types of emphasis, and it's just because they have different motivations. Maitreya's *Abhisamaya Alankara* is a text exclusively for Mahayana students, whereas this text is supposedly for all three vehicles, and therefore it's laid out like that. So, lord Maitreya insists that shravakas don't have any understanding of the selflessness of phenomena, whereas as you can see, Chandrakirti and Nagarjuna say that they have half, or at least a little bit of understanding. This seeming disagreement is due to their different emphasis, which we talked about before.

*We can always raise doubts about textual accuracy; in the end, only valid cognition can be relied upon*

*Valid cognition can only be developed through practice*

*Why is the kaya similar to the cause a bridge to the Buddha?*

*Only a 10<sup>th</sup> bhumi bodhisattva can see the 11<sup>th</sup> bhumi's manifestation*

*If wisdom has no inherent existence, how is it different from one of our projections?*

[Q]: If Nagarjuna based his arguments on the word of Manjushri, how do we know he did so correctly?

[A]: You are only person who can take responsibility for this, not me! But we have *ngöpo topgyur gyi tsema* (*dngos po stob 'gyur gyi tshad ma*), valid evidence, and *lungi tsema* (*lung gis tshad ma*), valid establishment through scripture (i.e. valid because it was stated by the Buddha). This is where you need to study buddhist *pramana*. But you can argue the same thing when it comes to texts. How do we know whether they were written in Tibetan, Sanskrit or English? Did the translators make any mistakes? People will always raise these doubts, so in the end, the only thing that can be relied upon is *ngöpo topgyur gyi tsema*, the logic or valid cognition.

[Q]: How do we develop this valid cognition?

[A]: Well, for that you need to rely first on discipline, *tsültrim*. Then you have to hear the teachings, then contemplate them, and then meditate. Someone who does not have *shila* does not have the capacity to have valid cognition, which is why people like Vasubandhu emphasise that you require *tsültrim*, *shila*, before everything else. And then you should hear, contemplate, and then meditate. I think it makes sense.

[Q]: Could you say some more about why the body similar to the cause is a bridge?

[A]: The kaya similar to the cause is the only connection that we have to the Buddha, to something that is completely beyond us. Why is it a connection? It is because the 10<sup>th</sup> bhumi bodhisattva is still an object of compassion. You remember, in the first chapter, we talked about three types of compassion, which are differentiated by their three types of object. When we talk about *chö la migpé nyinje* (*chos la dmigs pa'i snying rje*), compassion focussed on phenomena, even the 10<sup>th</sup> bhumi bodhisattvas are objects of compassion. Not only their post-meditation time, but also their meditation time is all-pervasive suffering. So, based on that, we have a thread, which is that only a 10<sup>th</sup> bhumi bodhisattva can see the 11<sup>th</sup> bhumi's manifestation. Then the 9<sup>th</sup> bhumi bodhisattva believes in him, the 8<sup>th</sup> bhumi believes in 9<sup>th</sup>, and that's how it goes. What you ask is actually very important, because without this bridge, then we would be missing a vital basis, *zhi* (*gzhi*), that we need to establish the buddha as the ultimate object of refuge. When we talk about refuge, we have to talk about fear.

[Q]: Don't *tulkus* normally form this bridge?

[A]: But that's a bit shaky. After all, who is the right person to judge who is a *tulku*? We are all a little bit crazy and drunk – we might all say he exists, but we are not really the perfect witnesses. But if you ask me whether we should use *tulkus*, then, of course we should. We can't use anything else.

[Q]: What about whether *tulkus* are good or bad? If there are multiple *tulkus*, rather than a universal *tulku*, then we cannot show it is a good manifestation in every realm.

[A]: This is important. Now you remember how we distinguished between *gyü* (*rgyu*), cause, and *kyen* (*rkyen*), the condition. The real cause of the Buddha's blessing is your own merit, and the condition is the aspirations, *mönlam* (*smon lam*), of this particular Buddha while he was on the path. You have to concentrate on this line, when you study this. Never in the Mahayana sutras and Mahayana shastras would they admit ... of course, poetically there is the buddha's compassion and all that. But when you really drill this philosophy, they will say, when he was on the path, he trained mentally, *shinjang* (*shin sbyang*), engaging in purification and perfecting his aspirations, and all that. Although I have a little problem with this analogy of potter, somehow it bothers me.

[Q]: Returning to this problem of how to purify the last samadhi, Gorampa, who is pure *rangtongpa*, admits that there is some wisdom. But he also admits, as a *rangtongpa*, that it has no inherent existence.

[A]: He will say it is inherently non-existent. For his point of view, you need to read Gorampa's own writings on distinguishing the view, although it's probably a very biased view, because he's very much a *rangtongpa*.

[Q]: But if this wisdom doesn't have inherent existence, how is it different from one of our projections?

*For Gorampa, when we wash a dirty cup, two things happen: the dirt is purified, and a clean cup appears*

*The problem between the rangtongpas and shentongpas is a different one*

[A]: I don't think the argument of Gorampa's opponent is based so much on relative and ultimate truth, whether the wisdom is inherently existent or not. It's a matter of expression. For example, one analogy our opponents always use is that when you wash a cup, you cannot make a clean cup; you can only wash the dirt. That's all that exists. Gorampa would say that when you wash the dirt, the clean cup arises. But our opponent is saying that when you wash the dirt, the so-called clean cup is only other people's projection; it's only how we see it. They would say that the only thing that really happened was purification of dirt. That's all. But Gorampa is saying no, there is also an arising or appearing of a clean cup, otherwise why should we even wash the dirt? In order to become a Buddha, so to speak, two things have to happen. For one's own aim or benefit, one should have complete elimination of all defilements, and for the others' aim or benefit, one should have a complete realisation of everything. According to our opponent's view, the second thing can't happen.

Between *rangtongpas* and *shentongpas*, the problem is slightly different. Here, when they identify ultimate reality, *yongdrup* (*yongs grub*), they embellish this concept with words like *tagpa* (*rtag pa*): permanent, primordially accomplished, things like that. This causes major problems between the *rangtongpas* and the *shentongpas*. Also, *shentongpas* would say the qualities of the Buddha, like the 32 major marks, *tsen zangpo* (*mtshan bzang po*), physical marks such as copper-coloured fingernails, even these cannot be produced: they have always been there. They have a very good support because lord Maitreya said that buddha nature has been manifest all the time. However, the *rangtongpas* would say these things in a different way.

[Q]: But even Gorampa would say... {rest of question audible}

[A]: Only in the conventional level. And, you have to be careful here, when we say "on the conventional level", because there are two types of conventional level here: the first is the conventional conventional, and the second is the conventional used in the process of developing the ultimate. Here we are talking about the second one.

[Q]: Why do we even distinguish in this case between these two kinds of relative truth? In this case, all relative truth is good for enlightenment, so why are we distinguishing between two different kinds?

[A]: Because now we are at the time of establishing the view, and that's the only way.



## An overview of the structure of the *Madhyamakavatara*

*The two kinds of Madhyamika that we are entering*

Traditionally, at various times during a teaching, we recall the *sabché* (*sa bcad*), the structural outline. Perhaps it will help us better understand the Madhyamika that we have been studying over the last four years. Just briefly, the title of this text is *Madhyamakavatara*. *Avatarā* means entering, and there are two kinds of Madhyamika to enter, the *jöja dön gyi uma* (*brjod bya don gyi dbu ma*), the absolute Madhyamika (that which is designated), and *jöjé tsik gi uma* (*brjod byed tshig gi dbu ma*), the word (the one that designates), or the teachings. This text does not enter the absolute Madhyamika directly; it directly enters the words, the scriptures. Within the scriptural Madhyamika, there are also two categories: *sangyé gyi ka* (*sangs rgyas kyi bka'*), the words spoken by the buddha, and *jenjukpé tenchö* (*rje 'jug pa'i bstan bcos*), the shastra spoken by the disciple or follower of the buddha. Chandrakirti's text does not enter the Buddha's words directly; the *Madhyamakavatara* directly enters shastras written by the followers of the Buddha, particularly the works of Nagarjuna. Chandrakirti also uses supporting sutras such as the *Dodé Sa Chupa* (*mdo sde sa bcu pa*), the *Dashabhumika Sutra*.

*The two types of  
Madhyamika: Prasangika  
and Svatantrika*

*Chandrakirti's tradition:  
accepting what ordinary  
people accept*

*Chandrakirti believes all  
non-Madhyamika schools  
are invalid relative truth,  
so they cannot lead us to  
absolute truth*

*The Prasangikas have no  
theses of their own. They  
only accept the path from  
the other's point of view*

*The main subject is  
dependent arising, which  
is taught here in two  
different ways*

*When discussing  
dependent arising, it is  
vital for us to remember  
the aspect of selflessness*

I'm sure I don't need to remind you that this is a Prasangika Madhyamika interpretation of the Madhyamika shastras. The Prasangikas not only accepts that things do not arise from self, other, both, and neither within the ultimate truth, but even in the relative truth. That is what makes them special. In particular, their view differs from that of the Svatantrika Madhyamika, the followers of Bhavaviveka and Shantarakshita, who accept that things arise from others in the conventional level. There are several traditions within Prasangika Madhyamika, including the Yogachara Madhyamika, although Chandrakirti is not a Yogachara. His tradition is (*'jig rten grags der spyod pa'i dbu ma pa*), the followers of Madhyamika who accept what ordinary people accept. This is a very special and unique tradition.

His interpretations leads us to the consequence that all the other schools – perhaps we should not include the Svatantrika Madhyamika, but definitely the Cittamatra school downwards – are not only not valid relative truth, but they are actually invalid relative truth. Remember the example used to illustrate invalid relative truth, how if you have a cataract or some eye disease, you can see hair falling in front of your eyes, even though in reality there is no hair. Similarly, Chandrakirti thinks that the minds of the Cittamatra and the other schools are sick, so it's not only that their views aren't valid relative truth; they are actually invalid relative truth. That's quite a strong statement, because only valid relative truth can be used as a vessel to understand the ultimate truth. The invalid relative truth cannot lead us to the absolute truth.

Because of that, as you recall during his explanation of the 6<sup>th</sup> bhumi, Chandrakirti says that followers of the Prasangika Madhyamika do not have any theses for themselves. In other words, Chandrakirti would of course say that there is the Buddha, there is a path and there is bodhicitta. But all of that – the whole path – he only accepts from the other's point of view, and from the point of view of ordinary people.

Don't forget, he's the guy who milked the painted cow! And milking a painted cow is not something that ordinary people accept. But do you remember, while explaining the 6<sup>th</sup> bhumi, he also said that ordinary people are ignorant. When it comes to establishing the ultimate truth, how can we trust them? He's so tricky, so slippery in this case! When establishing the truth, *tawa ten mabepé kab* (*Ita ba bstan ma 'babs pa'i skabs*), why should we trust ordinary people? He even says to the Cittamatra and the other substantialists, why don't you debate with ordinary people? I will wait until someone wins; and whoever wins, I will follow him.

The main subject of this text is dependent arising, and it is taught here in two very special ways. In Tibetan, we call it *tendrel chökyi da mé* (*rten 'brel chos kyi bdag med*), explaining dependent arising based on the selflessness of phenomena, and *tendrel gangsak gi da mé* (*rten 'brel gang zog gi bdag med*), explaining dependent arising based on the selflessness of a person. It is important for us to understand this. Many people think that things do not come from self, from atoms, or from God, so things are dependent arising – but the danger is that you might create another phenomenon here, that of "dependent arising". Chandrakirti very clearly negates that. He teaches dependent arising based on the selflessness of phenomena and based on the selflessness of ego. That's very special; His Holiness the Dalai Lama really brags about it everywhere! He is very proud of this!

I'm pointing out this to you because at times we hear confused talk from small time buddhists like us. They say, as if they really understand dependent arising, "Yes, I can see why buddhists talk about dependent arising. Because we human beings we eat and then we shit and then it goes to the earth, then the tree grows: everything is dependent". That's a very sweet way of thinking about dependent arising, but there's something very big missing here, and that's the selflessness aspect. As long as you leave out selflessness, there is no dependent arising. That's very important to remember, so make a big multicoloured highlight in your notebook, if you have one.

So, by understanding the two types of selflessness, the result of purification, *jangdré* (*sbyangs 'bras*), is all these stages of the bodhisattva. Over the past few days, we have been talking about the 11<sup>th</sup> bhumi, the Buddha's qualities, which are incredible, infinite, and beyond our

imagination. Now, with sloka 43, Chandrakirti concludes the brief explanation of the qualities of the kaya that is similar to the cause.

[H7]

### (3) Summary of both together, 11:43

11:43     *The profound being emptiness,  
The vast are the other qualities.  
Through knowing the ways of the profound and vast,  
These qualities will be accomplished.*

All the qualities of the Buddha can be included within these two: *sabmo tongpa-nyi* (*zab mo stong pa nyid*), the profound emptiness, and the vast infinite qualities of the Buddha, such as compassion, generosity, patience and so on.

[H6]  
[H7]

### b) Explaining the nirmanakaya and its activity

#### (1) The nirmanakaya provisionally taught the three vehicles, 11:44

11:44     *After achieving the immutable kaya, you returned once again to the three worlds with emanations,  
Descending, taking birth and showing the Dharma of attaining peaceful enlightenment.  
Thus for all those subscribing to the deceits of the world,  
Who are bound by those chains, through your compassion, you lead these beyond suffering.*

This sloka refers to the nirmanakaya. The word *laryang* (*slar yang*), “again”, is important here. What does it mean? After attaining the kaya that is similar to the cause, in the Tushita heaven with the five certainties, again this unmoveable body will manifest in the three worlds as if it has come, taken rebirth, attained enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree, and as a king, as a being surrounded by retinues of dakinis. I’m sorry! I should say “queens” not “dakinis” – only some remote Hindu-influenced so-called Vajrayana people talk about these things! Who knows if they are even buddhists or not? To fulfil the endless hopes and expectations of endless sentient beings, this Buddha emanates endless and infinite manifestations. This sloka also introduces us to why there are three vehicles. It is because of the many different types of sentient beings, and their different types of expectations.

[H7]

#### (2) Ultimately there is only one vehicle, 11:45

11:45     *Therefore, apart from knowing suchness, for removing the various stains  
There is no other method, as phenomena know no divisions of suchness.  
The mind that perceives suchness is also not divided.  
Therefore, you taught sentient beings an undivided single vehicle.*

This sloka tells us that ultimately, the Buddha taught only one vehicle. To completely defeat or purify all the stains, the understanding of selflessness is the only way. Since every phenomenon has only one essence, selflessness, the knower of this selflessness has to be just one. Therefore, all the teachings of the Buddha lead to a single vehicle.

There’s an important quotation that is relevant here: “Methods like love and compassion meditation are actually not contradictory to ignorance – therefore they cannot entirely defeat ignorance. But selflessness is absolutely, in every dimension, a complete contradiction to ignorance”. That’s why selflessness is the only way. Love and compassion will work to a certain extent, but they cannot be complete antagonists to ignorance. Remember, as Chandrakirti

*Love and compassion work to an extent, but only selflessness is a complete contradiction to ego*

said, “Those who have ignorance will engage in bad karma and go to hell. Those who have ignorance will create good karma and go to heaven. Those who are wise will go beyond karma, and attain liberation”.

[H7]

### (3) He taught three vehicles as his wisdom intent, 11:46-47

11:46     *Because sentient beings have the impurities that make them err,  
They do not perceive the profound scope of the buddhas.  
Tathagata, because you possess wisdom together with the means of  
compassion,  
You vowed: "I shall liberate sentient beings."*

11:47     *Just as a wise [captain] will [miraculously] manifest a beautiful city,  
To relieve his crew when voyaging to an island of jewels,  
Likewise, you connected your [shravaka and pratyekabuddha] disciples with  
the [lower] vehicles to give them peace,  
[While] you spoke otherwise to those with trained minds, free [from emotions].*

In these two slokas, Chandrakirti is expressing that all different vehicles, whether three, five, nine or one hundred – it doesn’t matter – have *gongpachen* (*dgongs pa can*), a purpose. Out of compassion, the Buddha created various categories of vehicles, each with a certain purpose. In Tibetan, this is very beautiful and poetic. Sentient beings have suffering caused by five kinds of degeneration: the degeneration of aeons, the degeneration of beings, the degeneration of emotions, the degeneration of view and degeneration of lifespan. Therefore, right from the beginning, sentient beings have never been able to conceive of all these endless qualities of the Buddha and his teachings – the vast and the deep. But you, Buddha, have omniscience and compassion, and you also made a promise. Instead of putting it in a boring way, like *khyentse nūsum* (*mkyen brtse nus gsum*), knowledge, compassion and power, Chandrakirti is very poetic here. He says, “You have omniscience and compassion”, but then he talks about the *nūpa* (*nus pa*) in a different way: he says, “You have made a promise”. Like travellers voyaging to treasure islands in search of treasure, the bodhisattva’s journey is endless, and some who might be faint-hearted could get lonely, bored or depressed after months in the blue oceans. Therefore, you have created intermediate kinds of fruit, like the stages of the shravaka and pratyekabuddha, an island with a city for the voyagers to rest. Then the faint-hearted need to fear that everything is lost, so to speak; they can find some hope. But of course, Buddha will not leave them there for long. He will send lights from his *dzöptü* (*mdzod sru*) or urna, the special hair in the middle of his two eyebrows, and wake up these shravakas and pratyekabuddhas, encouraging them to go further.

[H5]

[H6]

### 3. Extolling the Buddha as supreme, according to time (741)

#### a) At the beginning, when he attains sacred enlightenment, 11:48

11:48     *Sugatas in the buddhafields of all the directions,  
Numerous as the particles and atoms in these –  
For as many aeons will you enter holy supreme enlightenment.  
Yet, this secret of yours should not be told.*

This sloka is very important, and it can answer many of our questions, such as when did Buddha get enlightened. One can only talk of the time when Buddha achieved enlightenment by combining all the dust particles of all the buddha realms, and counting as many years and life spans as the endless atoms and dust particles in the buddhafields. Here we are talking about the beginning of his enlightenment, which sounds like it was an extremely long time ago. But actually, it isn’t, as this quality is all pervasive, and pervades all the buddhas of the three times –

The time of the beginning of Buddha’s enlightenment is a time that pervades all the three times

*Two kinds of buddha, and the analogy of the poor family with a gold mine on their land*

past, present and future. Similarly, millions upon millions of 10<sup>th</sup> bhumi bodhisattvas are achieving enlightenment at this very moment, and the same answer will apply to them.

This sloka is actually introducing us to two things: *rangshin namdak gi sangyé* (*rang bzhing rnam dag gi sangs rgyas*), the primordially pure buddha, and *lobur dreldak gi sangyé* (*glo bur rnam dag gi sangs rgyas*), the buddha discovered upon purification of temporal defilements. But they are same: they are of one essence. So, when a bodhisattva reaches the primordially pure buddha state, that buddha has always been there. This is what he is talking about in this sloka. Nevertheless, conventionally you can say things like, “when he achieved enlightenment” or “when he first achieved enlightenment”. There is a beautiful analogy here. Let’s say there is a poor family who has inherited a plot of land from a long time ago, from some ancient ancestors. But the family is very poor. Then one day, they find there’s a gold mine on their land. You could say that they discovered this gold mine and became rich. But that’s just a conventional way of saying it, as they have always had it.

If we ask when did a particular buddha get enlightened, the answer is a secret of the buddha; it is not something that we can discuss. It cannot be revealed. But for beings that have the merit, different teachings have tried to reveal this secret in different ways. For example, some texts speak of *dangpö sangyé gyü mepa* (*dang po'i sangs rgyas rgyu med pa*): the first buddha does not have a cause. In certain other texts, it says *sangyé togma tama mé* (*sangs rgyas thog ma mtha' ma med*): there is no first buddha, and there is no last buddha. Again, in some other texts, there is mention that before any other buddhas, this buddha was enlightened first. All these are ways for different beings to understand this secret, but it is not something that we can reveal.

So, until now, we have heard a lot about the infinite qualities and activities of the 11<sup>th</sup> bhumi, of the enlightened being, the buddha, the one who has crossed this ocean of samsara and gone to the other shore. He’s just told us that for listeners like us, talking about the qualities of the Buddha, or how he dwells in his enlightenment, or when he reached enlightenment – all these things are beyond us. But now, Chandrakirti reverses things completely. The next three slokas are very beautiful.

[H6]

[H7]

**b) At the end, when he remains in order to benefit beings (744)**

**(1) He remains forever out of supreme wisdom and compassion, 11:49**

11:49      *Victor, as long as the worlds have not attained supreme peace,  
As long as the sky has not disintegrated,  
You, born from the Mother of Wisdom and nursed by her loving kindness,  
How could you enter supreme peace?*

*Until all sentient beings  
attain enlightenment, the  
Buddha will not be  
enlightened*

Chandrakirti is saying that you, the Buddha, were given birth to by wisdom as a mother, and taken care of by compassion as a nurse. But we are not asking you ‘please don’t go to enlightenment’ – instead, Chandrakirti says, how can you have enlightenment? You don’t! Until now, he has been talking about enlightenment, and describing how it’s beyond us, but now, he says that the Buddha can’t even have enlightenment. But he says this in a very profound way: since you were given birth to by wisdom, and taken care of by compassion, until all sentient beings attain enlightenment and the sky stops, there is no enlightenment for you. This is emphasised in sloka 50.

[H7]

[H8]

**(2) Explanation of the nature of the compassion with which he acts**

**(a) Remaining forever because he is without compare, 11:50**

11:50     *As they ignorantly eat the poisonous food of ordinary experience,  
Your care for your family of ordinary individuals,  
[Is greater than] the sufferings of the mother of a poisoned child,  
Thus you, protector, will not enter supreme peace.*

Here he is confirming his own understanding that the Buddha won't dwell in enlightenment, because we know that he is a member of this family of sentient beings. Let's imagine a mother who only has one child, who she loves very much. If this child eats something poisonous, the mother will be very concerned. Here Chandrakirti is saying that this mother's concern doesn't come close to the concern that the Buddha has for all sentient beings that are constantly eating the poisonous five pleasure objects. So, he will not go to enlightenment, and he will not dwell in enlightenment. He emphasises this further in sloka 51.

[H8]

**(b) Remaining forever because the goal is not exhausted, 11:51**

11:51     *Because they are ignorant, fixating on [things as] real or unreal,  
Because they suffer from birth and death, from not achieving the wanted, and  
being struck by the unwanted,  
Because of the destination of the evil, you are moved by tenderness for the  
world,  
Bhagawan, through compassion you have shunned peace and not chosen  
nirvana.*

This is another reason why you, Buddha, don't have enlightenment. There are endless sentient beings, which endlessly fall into the trap of existence and non-existence, and therefore experience the suffering of birth and death. These endless sentient beings are like a net, in which you are trapped because of your compassion. You have no way out, and there is no enlightenment for you. Similarly, the text also speaks of how the Buddha is magnetised by these suffering sentient beings. And that's it! That's the last sloka of the *Madhyamakavatara*. This is how Chandrakirti decided to end his text, by saying that the Buddha has no enlightenment!

I think these last three slokas are among the most important. Although it's beyond our imagination, many of us nevertheless imagine something when we think about enlightenment, and it's typically some kind of place where everything is perfect, where we can rest forever, and where we don't come back into this dirty world. I can understand why many of us think this, because when we read descriptions of the nirmanakaya lands, we read that the ground is covered with *bedurya*, lapis lazuli. And if you press down, it goes down, while if you lift your feet, it goes up. All these kinds of things mislead us into thinking, "oh, enlightenment is some kind of place where we will live happily forever". But people like lord Maitreya have said "with wisdom, you do not dwell in samsara; with compassion, you do not dwell in nirvana". This is a very important statement, as it immediately destroys our concept of enlightenment: not dwelling in samsara, not dwelling in nirvana. Likewise, Chandrakirti chooses to say it here. Just after he says that enlightenment is really beyond us, that Buddha has not revealed this secret to us, he very beautifully says – how can you, of all people, have enlightenment?

[Q]: Are you saying that we should not think about Dewachen?

[A]: Of course, we should always think about it. And when you reach Dewachen, you will realise that with wisdom you do not dwell in samsara, and with compassion, you do not dwell in nirvana. Although Chandrakirti is saying that you can't have enlightenment and so on, he is actually giving us the perfect description of enlightenment – it means beyond samsara and nirvana. I think he's being very clever here, in the way he presents this idea. People who aren't good presenters just present their idea right away, but then more than half the people don't get it. But great presenters build things up for months, and then when they finally tell you their idea, you get it without even realising it! They have given you the

Chandrakirti ends his text  
by saying that the Buddha  
has no enlightenment

Enlightenment is not  
dwelling in samsara and  
not dwelling in nirvana

By saying the Buddha  
can't have enlightenment,  
Chandrakirti is giving the  
perfect description of  
enlightenment

*Without the right view,  
even love and compassion  
will not lead us to the  
right path*

*As Mahayana students,  
we should not practice  
dharma for our own  
enlightenment*

capacity to conceive of what they're saying. Suppose that a Muslim were to ask us, "given that you don't believe in heaven, what are you buddhists aiming for". We couldn't just say, "We're aiming for something that is not samsara, not nirvana; sort of beyond samsara and beyond nirvana". That will sound very confused! So, instead, we have to say that we are aiming for enlightenment – but what this really means is beyond samsara and beyond nirvana.

[Q]: Psychologists tell us that babies learn love and compassion during the first month of their life. But how can these arise, if they don't get them from their parents?

[A]: That's a big question. We can do many things. It's very unfortunate when sentient beings don't get love and compassion, given that many of us do get some sort of love and compassion from our parents. But, strictly, from a buddhist point of view, as long as this love and compassion does not lead to the right view, people like Patrul Rinpoche would say that our parents are not leading us to a right path. But you can do so many things. For example, you could teach parents how to love and have compassion, and why these are important. Not everyone would listen to you, of course, but there's no reason to lose courage. Or, as a bodhisattva, you could aspire to be reborn as a mother for as many times as there are atoms in the three universes – this is my idea, not Chandrakirti's! You could aspire to be a mother who will give love and compassion, and you could have many sets of triplets each time, perhaps twenty children! You could aspire to be an ordinary mother, but having the bodhicitta mind.

[Q]: Should we aspire to be an ordinary mother, or a mother on the 1<sup>st</sup> bhumi?

[A]: Let me tell you something: we are not learning about all these qualities of the buddhas and bodhisattvas so that we can have them. We are supposed to be Mahayana practitioner: who cares about our enlightenment? We should not, even for one minute, practice dharma for our own enlightenment. Everything we do is supposed to be for the enlightenment of sentient beings. That's why we are studying things like what happens on the bhumis. As for us, who cares? As I have told, the Theravada is the most appropriate path that one can practice – Mahayana is difficult! We can practice bodhicitta, yes – but we are always thinking about our own enlightenment. And if that is the case, then Vajrayana is even more difficult! But don't lose heart; some of these Vajrayana methods are supposed to be more effective and quicker in these degenerate times. Nevertheless, I realise why Buddha Shakyamuni chose the Theravada as the common vehicle. It's because there are more common people than uncommon people. But, you know, the Theravada works.

[Q]: Please can you explain once again how the vajra-like samadhi, which is the ultimate purifier, is purified?

[A]: in our own view, this vajra-like samadhi is not really caused by defilements. That is the opponent's view.

[Q]: So, what was Chandrakirti's answer?

[A]: Our opponents say there is no wisdom; wisdom exists only from other person's point of view. But we say that's not good.

[Q]: Which leads us back to inherently existing, which is inexpressible?

[A]: It then leads us to the description of the kaya that is similar to the cause.

[Q]: I would like to ask again whether scientists are qualified to be Chandrakirti's opponents.

[Rinpoche]: What do you think? Do you think scientists are Chandrakirti's opponents? I don't think so, because scientists don't seem to have a thesis, a *damcha* (*dam bca'*). They don't have an ultimate *damcha*; they say that they are always in the process of experimenting, finding results, analysing them and then having a conference about them! They never make decisions, so I don't know if they are qualified. But I have also heard that the scientists like Newton have been so influential that Western scientists have not yet been able to shed that skin. In fact, many prominent Western scientists have already disproved those ideas, and come to a newer conclusion that is much more similar to Buddhism, but the old concept is so popular, that it remains very much alive. But let's get back to the question: are scientists qualified to be Chandrakirti's opponents? Can buddhists genuinely have a dialogue with

*Are scientists qualified to be Chandrakirti's opponents?*

scientists? I sometimes think that they can't agree on some of the central issues about mind and consciousness, because there's no mutual agreement regarding mind. According to an argument from buddhist logic, you and I can't really argue if you're talking about Paris and I'm talking about Rome. Anyway, we have the right person to talk to, Matthieu Ricard!

[Matthieu]: I don't think it's fair to say that scientists themselves are still clinging to the findings of Newton. They now have ample evidence to the contrary, for example, that what we call particle is just a phenomenon – it doesn't have intrinsic properties. In certain conditions, it appears like a wave, which is everywhere. In certain conditions, it appears like a particle. There couldn't be two things more opposite to each other! So, scientists agree on that. The problem is not so much that they disagree over scientific findings, but that they are ordinary beings. Like all of us, they are still influenced by their ordinary perception – that reality is truly existent. So, although they agree that phenomena don't have intrinsic properties, they don't follow up by changing their perception of the whole world. They still cling to reality as being made of things. And although some scientists say that atoms are not made of things, their ordinary daily life perception prevents them from reaching the ultimate truth that reality has no true existence. It's not so much that they're clinging to the old ideas of Newton; it's more that they cannot adequately integrate their findings into their way of being.

*There is no scientific consensus about consciousness, but there is certainly no evidence that a consciousness could exist independently of a physical support*

However, for consciousness, it's more complicated. There is no scientific evidence that consciousness could exist independently of a physical support, like the aggregates. But scientists cannot completely deny this either, so various positions have emerged. At one extreme, reductionists or materialists say that consciousness is nothing other than the functioning of the brain. Then there are people that say that consciousness emerges from the aggregates, but it's not substantial. So somehow, it's different nature from the aggregates, but emerges from them. By way of analogy, there's sum strength or quality that emerges from a society that cannot be found in the many individuals that comprise it. It's more than just adding the properties of each individual, there's something more. Finally there are some, but very few, scientists that still consider the possibility that there is a stream of consciousness that is completely independent from the aggregates. But they are in a very small minority, which is growing smaller every year, and they are strongly criticised. So, in that aspect, there's a strong disagreement between buddhism and science. But when it comes to the aspect of reality, there's no disagreement, although scientists don't use their findings for personal transformation.

[Rinpoche]: I would go along with that. I want to ask some questions. When a scientist says, "Exist", what is their definition of that? Is there something to do with validly existing or truly existing?

[Matthieu]: Philosophers of science have shown that we cannot point to a single position among scientists – there is always a range of positions. In this case, there are some who accept the findings, e.g. about particles not being truly existent, but still try and relate to that in a very materialistic way. But others say that our experiments are just a way of reading phenomena with our consciousness, and we cannot say anything about reality. In particular, the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum physics says that we cannot say anything about phenomena except when we experiment. When we don't experiment, we have no idea. So there are many completely different interpretations, even among physicists.

[Rinpoche]: So how do you validate these experiments?

[Matthieu]: I think that the scientists closest to the Madhyamika position would say that we can only speak about events and relation; we cannot say that there are things that are related to each other.

[Rinpoche]: I don't know, but based on this, I don't think that scientists are qualified to be opponents of Chandrakirti. But on the other hand, it also looks like there's an important cultural difference. In Indian philosophy, such as buddhist philosophy, people are always trying to nail down whether something is truly existent, or not truly existent. The idea of "truly" existing is so important to them, but it seems that it's not that important for scientists. For them, it seems that the experiment is central.

*Does a scientific view of consciousness support the idea of reincarnation?*

[Matthieu]: As people, rather than as scientists, some probably think that reality exists and that they will somehow find it. But when it comes to their own experiments, they just see what happens.

[Rinpoche]: So theory does not decide?

[Student]: No, theory comes from experiment. Of course, scientists have ideas and hypothesis to start with, which lead them to do experiments. But if the experiments contradict their ideas, they give them up and look for something else.

[Student]: I think it is not the business of scientists to speak of the “real”. What is “real” is the concern of mystics and of philosophers, and it is something quite separate. What is “real”, what truly exists, what is illusory – all this is for Kant, for Hegel, for the philosophers. Not for scientists.

[Rinpoche]: Having said this, Chandrakirti is a *jigten drakdér chöpé umapa* (*'jig rten grags der spyod pa'i dbu ma pa*) – remember that he only wants to accept what the cowherds say, but cowherds are not really scientists.

[Matthieu]: He will accept whatever anybody says for relative truth, not only cowherds.

[Rinpoche]: Isn't the purpose of analysis in science to develop an ultimate truth?

[Student]: No, it's a practical truth.

[Rinpoche]: That does not qualify then, because as soon as you enter into the analysis of phenomena, then relative phenomena are dismantled. Therefore, if you analyse relative phenomena, and then use this analysis to make a decision, Chandrakirti will go crazy! Remember, he thinks this is *lokpé kündzop* (*log pa'i kun rdzob*), an invalid relative truth.

I want to come back to the three types of scientific view on consciousness that you mentioned. I like the second one, which is that consciousness is insubstantial and of a different nature from the aggregates, but emerges from them. Based on this, I think reincarnation works. After all, reincarnation is not as gross as one mind following another. Buddhists themselves believe in impermanence, and in your next life, different energies and different aggregates will come together, so you will have different waves, or whatever you want to call it. So, what's the problem?

[Student]: Well, one difficulty is that buddhists hold it as self-evident that the mind is an independent continuum separate from matter. That's one of the buddhist arguments for proving that there's something beyond the world, isn't it?

[Rinpoche]: What's the problem with that?

[Student]: Well, it's not proven. We want proof!

[Rinpoche]: Proof of what?

[Student]: That the mind is a continuum separate from the material continuum, and therefore is in principle separable from it. Buddhists talk about the material body, the aggregates, and they talk about the mental continuum. They say that the cause of a mental moment can never be a material cause, so we are talking about two independent streams.

[Rinpoche]: Not necessarily.

[Student]: If a mental moment can only have another mental moment as its cause, this means it is wholly separate from the stream of material events.

[Rinpoche]: Not necessarily, it is like water; like a river. If you look at today's river, you can say we saw the same river yesterday.

[Student]: We speak of the *bardos*, and it seems that many of us practice in order to recognise the clear light or whatever occurs in the *bardos*, when our bodies are burned or discarded. We seem to say that the knowing should be transported somewhere, and continue elsewhere, as waves, particles or whatever; otherwise there is no point in training, as there would be no mental experience of *bardo* and all this.

[Rinpoche]: The *bardo* example won't work here, because the *bardo* is much more similar to the scientists' view. When we talk about *bardos*, we actually say that there is a form, *sook yö* (*gzugs yod*); something possessing form. That is very similar to what scientists would say, not that scientists would talk about *bardos*!

*Can we prove that mind continues after a person dies?*

*Scientists say that when the brain stops at death, consciousness stops*

[Student]: But you speak of mental form, and as soon as you speak of mental form, you speak of a consciousness separate from the material aggregates.

[Student]: The mind is not the same as the brain. Many scientists think that it is the same.

[Rinpoche]: Mind is not brain.

[Student]: that's the buddhist position – a buddhist would say that the mind is not the same as the brain.

[Rinpoche]: But buddhists say the brain is mind. Of course – everything is mind.

[Student]: That's something else!

[Rinpoche]: Without the five aggregates, there is no self of the person, no *gangsak gi dag* (*gang zag gi bdag*). That's one of the biggest topics that Chandrakirti has debated with his opponents.

[Student]: But that's a different issue. We're not talking about self; we're talking about mind, about the stream of consciousness.

[Student]: What we are requesting is some proof of the absolute existence of mind.

[Rinpoche]: So the main thing you want is some proof that mind continues after you die. I actually wonder about this myself!

[Student]: When we asked you this question before, you said that to be able answer to this question, you have to understand what mind is.

[Rinpoche]: Yes. Then we would have to teach the whole twelve links of interdependent origination. I think we could discuss this, though it's very complex. We would need to break down each word that we use. For example, what do scientists mean by "mind"? What do buddhists mean by "mind"? What do you mean by "independent" or "dependent", or by "continue"? First, we have to reach agreement on these definitions, and only then can we have a discussion. Otherwise, it will be very vague. For example, what do the scientists mean by continue?

[Matthieu]: It's a very general term. If something has no interruption, then it continues. For example, we can say that matter continues, because matter cannot be created and cannot disappear, although it can transform in many ways.

[Rinpoche]: It does not mean "permanent"?

[Matthieu]: Of course not. Matter can transform into energy, and energy into matter, but it cannot altogether disappear into nothingness.

[Rinpoche]: Then what's the problem?

[Matthieu]: Well, for consciousness that's the problem. Because scientists say that when the brain stops, consciousness stops.

[Rinpoche]: But that contradicts about what you have just said, about things not disappearing into nothingness.

[Matthieu]: No, the continuum continues. The energy of consciousness dissolves into earth, and it serves to contribute to global warming or something else, but it's not conscious anymore! It's just like when you turn off the light; it goes somewhere else.

[Student]: What is the buddhist definition of continuum?

[Rinpoche]: When we talk about *gyün machépa* (*rgyun ma chad pa*), it's quite similar to this.

[Student]: When we talked about this two years ago, we said that according to the scientific picture, the brain is like the television, and the mind is like the picture on the television screen. When you turn off the television, the picture goes. So when the brain stops functioning after physical death, the picture – which is the mind – goes. You said yes, but what about the program that's on the television, which struck me as rather suggestive.

[Rinpoche]: I was talking about sentient beings, *semchen* (*sem can*), which literally means one who has mind. *Chen* means "endowed with", and some Nyingmapa scholars conveniently bring this as some sort of excuse, that the *rigpa* or buddha nature has, or is endowed with, the mind. But I would think it's much more difficult to prove that there is mind. I think it's a similar question. But as you said yourself, the idea of continuation, as you yourself said on the second category, is not a problem for scientists. So, what is the problem?

[Student]: They say that consciousness is just a name.

[Rinpoche]: But do they believe that there is a consciousness at all?

[Matthieu]: In essence, no. Scientists in the second category would say that there is an emergent phenomenon that we can call consciousness, which is not substantial. The more hard-line ones say it is just a name, another way of referring to the functioning of the brain.

[Rinpoche]: If consciousness is just a name, what do these scientists say is real, beyond a mere name?

[Matthieu]: The brain, and hence the mind, is made up of the neural connections in the brain, and your interactions with your environment. When you are born, you start with a certain “wiring”, which is modified throughout your life as you interact with your environment. And then when you die, that’s all – it stops.

[Rinpoche]: Somehow, I can’t help thinking that there is a subject. Perhaps it’s my brainwashing. But who knows these things?

[Matthieu]: There is nothing separate that “knows” things; the very knowing is the functioning of the brain. It’s like how a lamp lights up when you pass electricity through it. Consciousness is like the light – it lights up phenomena, but you can’t ask who is lighting. The luminous faculty of the consciousness is the functioning of the brain.

[Rinpoche]: So, are you saying that everything is predetermined? That everything is made and you can’t change it? If everything is materially dependent, what is a motivation, since it cannot be something non-material?

[Matthieu]: The extreme position would say that there are no moral values, as everything is determined by your history and genetics. In fact, you don’t have real free will – it’s an illusion - you only have the impression of free will. You are not actually deciding anything; you are just vaguely aware of the result of some calculations within the brain. And in evolutionary terms, this is an advantage, because all the small things that happen in the brain do not bother the emergent consciousness. It’s not overwhelmed by neurological data, and can stay above that. But, there are obviously problems with this model, as it reduces consciousness to nothing more than voyeurism.

[Rinpoche]: But I don’t even see this as a problem. If the continuity after death is a problem, couldn’t it be resolved if you said that the so-called continuity after this death is very relative? What would a buddhist say?

[Student]: I would like to point out that there’s a slight difference between Chandrakirti’s goal and the scientists’ goal. It is unfair to present the reductionist view as a “belief”, as it’s not quite that. Scientists are very aware that scientific method involves constructing theoretical models, and seeing if they produce any useful predictions of what’s going to happen next, in a certain set of circumstances. In psychology, reductionism came from the behaviourist idea, which was that maybe we don’t need the hypothesis of a separate consciousness. If we just study behaviour, perhaps that would give us enough answers to make a good predictive model. And if it would, then the rest is superfluous. This isn’t the same kind of frame of reference as trying to get at the root of suffering, for example, or things like that.

[Rinpoche]: The only problem with the model that we have been discussing is that everything becomes predetermined, because although you might think you have free will and control, you don’t.

[Matthieu]: The mainstream view is that there is no downward influence, i.e. that the so-called consciousness cannot give orders to the brain – but other scientists contest this. In any case, it cannot be completely predetermined, because there is an infinite number of causes and conditions. For something to be predetermined, you would have to have a finite number of causes and conditions. If there is infinite interdependence, even if there is not really free will, as they suggest, you definitely cannot say what will happen next. There are many possibilities. This is an example of what is called chaos theory.

[Rinpoche]: Maybe the buddhist concept of mind falls into this chaotic infinite condition.

[Matthieu]: In that sense, we come back to interdependence. Interdependence is not that something has no cause, but that its causes are infinite.

[Rinpoche]: Why are scientists so afraid to say that everything is predetermined? I would not be. If you believe that consciousness or mind is nothing other than these atoms, waves and all that, why should they be afraid to say?

[Matthieu]: They are not afraid. Some of them have said that. In the last century, someone said that if you could know all the details of all the causes and conditions, we could read all the

past, and predict all the future. But now modern physics is against that, because there is indeterminism at the level of particles, which allows creativity.

[Rinpoche]: But what if mind cannot exert downward control and everything is programmed?

[Matthieu]: But there are so many causes and conditions; things happen in many different ways.

[Rinpoche]: That's a big loophole, because we can easily insert the mind there, within all those happenings.

[Matthieu]: That's what we say, that mind is part of this interdependence.

[Rinpoche]: Here's what I think: if you believe that every thing is predetermined, that everything is programmed, then as soon as you know that, not only theoretically but practically, that is enlightenment.

[Matthieu]: But scientists don't say that everything is predetermined.

[Rinpoche]: Many of us don't realise we are predetermined, which is why we have fear and insecurity. Not knowing that everything is predetermined, we worry about what will happen if we do this, or don't do this: we have all sorts of hopes and fears, all of which would go if we knew that everything is predetermined.

[Matthieu]: But there is a difference between no free will and things being predetermined. If things are predetermined, it means that everything can be calculated. But scientists say this is not possible, because there is unpredictability at the level of particles. We can only speak in terms of probabilities.

[Rinpoche]: That's a loophole.

[Matthieu]: No, things are not predetermined, but they emerge in many different ways that you cannot predict. But they still say that consciousness cannot influence that.

[Rinpoche]: Why not?

[Matthieu]: They would say that the functioning of the brain happens as a mixture of causes and conditions, and consciousness just occurs at the end, when you are aware of the result. But I think this is wrong, of course!

[Rinpoche]: Where does morality come then?

[Matthieu]: There are some more extreme people, like someone Wilson in America, who say there is no such thing as moral values. There are just rules that evolve over time because it's better for the survival of the species to have some kind of rules, but these don't arise from thinking of good and bad. They are just practical evolutionary tricks.

[Rinpoche]: There's no karma, fine. What I'm saying is that they are talking about ultimate truth, and if you realise that, you are free.

[Student]: I wanted to say two things. Firstly, about the status of science, building on the point that John made. Last year, we talked about the idea of a mechanic, someone who studies your car in order to be able to fix it. We suggested that maybe the role of a scientist is quite similar to that of a mechanic, who wants to understand the way that something works. You said last year that this isn't the same as trying to understand ultimate truth at all, so it isn't a problem. We're not really opponents of Chandrakirti, we're just trying to understand how the car works. The second thing, building on Matthieu's point, is to observe that illusion arises in many very complex systems. Obviously, the brain is one example. We have the illusion of consciousness perhaps. But even at a more simple level, if you have many ants and they work together to form an anthill, you get the illusion that the anthill itself has its own laws and intentions that govern its behaviour, when we know full well that's not the case. We know it's just the individual ants, but if you look at it, you can't help but tell a story which makes you think that the anthill itself is doing something. We create the illusion that it has its own volition, its own intention. So the question is, why couldn't that also be what's going on in our minds when it comes to the illusion of consciousness?

[Student]: When Chandrakirti is arguing with the Charvakas, using their argument, he says that we assert the existence of something based on direct evidence. When you're talking about mind and matter, you have direct evidence of matter, so you can talk about its existence. But he also says that you have direct evidence of mind also, so the mind and the matter are equally given in any experience. Either both are unreal, or both are real. In the present argument, Matthieu has been talking about mind being some kind of separable reality distinct from matter. But this is not as clear as matter, since there could be many explanations for the experience of a separate mind, such as the anthill example we have just

heard. However, the scientists appear to be assuming that matter is somehow more real than mind. Whereas to be logically coherent, we would have to say that matter is just as unreal as mind. As for Wilson's idea that morality is just an evolutionary pattern, this is fine in a sense, but he's missed out something that Buddha doesn't miss out, which is suffering. You see, if he says that everything is equal, that there's no pattern and therefore no morality, then our reactions should be exactly the same: there should be no suffering and no pleasure. Suffering and pleasure should be the same. But all of us, including him, know this is not true from our own experience. So however clever his argument might appear, it doesn't succeed in explaining this.

[Student]: He's talking about evolutionary survival.

[Matthieu]: I want to summarise what a buddhist might say against all that. First, let's examine the duality of matter and consciousness. In the Western debate, matter has always been understood, as Wulstan said, as something seemingly more solid and existent, while consciousness is something insubstantial, almost like something in the sky.

[Rinpoche]: That's why I asked at the beginning about what scientists mean by existence, whether they mean that matter is truly existent.

[Matthieu]: There are two ways to resolve the duality of mind and matter. One is to say that everything is matter, as the reductionists say. Then a separate consciousness doesn't exist, it's just the brain. The other way is the buddhist way, which says that mind and matter are both ultimately unreal, so there's no contradiction. Yet, within a dream, a stone is different from someone who thinks. They're both unreal, but relatively, there is a difference between conscious and unconscious. The other question about free will: buddhists would say that perhaps you could create a sophisticated machine which behaves exactly, in all circumstances, like a human being, and you could not tell from the outside. It could even be aware of whether it's thinking or not, whether it's on or off. But from a buddhist point of view, you can't expect that thing spend years contemplating the nature of consciousness, or trying to look at its own nature. Questions like where do my thoughts come from, or what's going to happen when they turn off the electricity that powers me. The presence of these kinds of questions in humans seems to indicate that there is something else. And it's easy to demonstrate free will: you might simply decide not to get out of bed. All the biological functions of your body could be telling you to get up, because you're hungry, you want to go to the bathroom, and so on, but you can decide to stay in bed for 24 hours just to prove free will, for no other reason. So, where does that come from, if everything was calculated? I realise that these are just a few ideas, and of course, they are not conclusive; they are just something to think about.

[Student]: The physicist Heisenberg showed that the observer must influence what he looks at. Simply by the fact that he looks at something, he changes the system, so the outcome of observation can never be an "objective" reality.

[Matthieu]: His theory is that any measuring instrument, even if it's an unconscious machine, will modify the system it is observing. It doesn't even have to be conscious.

[Rinpoche]: I'm more interested in this wave thing that you are talking about. One could always turn back and say it is the wave, and the wave comes from the materials, therefore mind is just a name of a function of these materials. And that's it, there's nothing else. One could always say this. We have been accustomed to think that mind is more powerful than matter, and that mind can influence matter, e.g. you can look at an object and think, "this is bad", and this object becomes bad.

[Student]: In sloka 56, Chandrakirti talks of the "cobra-head of the mind", which sounds like it is a substantial energy.

[Rinpoche]: No, I don't think so. It does not substantially exist. Chandrakirti does not accept anything that exists substantially.



## Genuine devotion and understanding the teachings

Most of the time, our inspiration and devotion are very emotionally oriented

Devotion is trusting cause, condition and effect

Emotionally oriented devotion can easily fall apart, so it is good to study the teachings as an insurance

Similarly, we need to understand the teachings until we can transform the master into the path

Conceptions are endless; we need to realise the absolute truth of phenomena

[H2]  
[H3]

For the sake of all the sentient beings, one must see the truth, and eliminate this clinging to the self of the person and the self of the phenomena. To do that, one has to have *tsültrim*, discipline, and then one must hear and contemplate teachings like *Madhyamakavatara*. This is even more important in our modern society because, most of the time, our inspiration and devotion are very emotionally oriented. Normally we think devotion is a bit like faith; like believing in something without much reasoning. But Saraha, in one of his Doha, described devotion as *lé gyündré la yi chepa* (*las rgyu 'bras la yid chad pa*), which means trusting cause, condition and effect. If you have the causes and conditions, and if you don't have any obstacles, then the result has to follow. For example, if you have an egg, and enough water and heat, and nobody disturbs it, then the egg will be cooked. That's a fact. You cannot dismantle that sort of logic or law, and according to Saraha, trusting that rule or law of phenomena is what we call devotion.

If you have merit and genuine devotion, of course, we don't have to talk about this. But for most of us beginners, although we might have some fleeting temporary devotion, it's good for us to have a good ground of understanding the teachings through hearing and contemplation, because it will always be like insurance. Emotionally oriented devotion can easily fall apart: we are such weak beings that conditions can easily defeat us. Today we may think that our master or the Buddha is wonderful. Tomorrow, a ridiculous or trivial circumstance could arise, such as your guru not liking onion on his pizza, and just because you like onion so much, you might think, what kind of guru is this? That's so pathetic, but that's what I mean by emotionally oriented devotion.

As in the beginning of this text, we discussed that we should not rely on the teacher, but on his teachings. We should not rely on conception, but on wisdom. We should not rely on expedient teachings, but on absolute teachings. Until we manage to transform the master into the path, we should always have the insurance of having a good ground of understanding the teachings. For most of us, the guru is usually just some kind of big boss, and not a path; taking the lama as the path, *lama lam du chepa* (*bla ma lam du byed pa*), is very difficult. So, until we manage to do that, it is good for us to have a little insurance.

As we discussed yesterday, conceptions have no end. Things like reincarnation or no reincarnation, whether the mind is brain or not, whether things have beginning or not – all these are conceptions. It's endless. What we need to really finalise, or actualise, is *chö tamché gyi zhiluk* (*chos thams cad gyi gshis lugs*), the reality or the absolute truth of all phenomena.

### C. Explaining the closing sections of the text

#### 1. The way in which he has expressed the teachings (745), 11:52

11:52     According to this tradition, the bhikshu Chandrakirti,  
                Here condensed the treatises of Madhyamika.  
                I have based this on the agamas,  
                And according to the [oral] instructions.

Here “this tradition” refers to the tradition of explaining the Madhyamika through the union of the truths. Bhikshu Chandrakirti wrote it based on shastras such as Nagarjuna’s *Mulamadhyamaka-karikas*, Buddha’s scripture such as the *Dashabhumika Sutra*, and *mengak* (*man ngag*), instructions, such as the special method of analysing whether things arise from self, other, both, and neither. These are actually *mengak*, instructions. Also, when we discussed the selflessness of the person, we used the seven-fold analysis of the chariot; out of those seven, the first five are *mengak* and the sixth and seventh are contributions by Chandrakirti.

[H3]

## 2. Showing that the subject-matter expressed is not ordinary, 11:53

11:53     *There are other teachings,  
But they are unlike this.  
Thus, there is nothing comparable to this tradition.  
This has been confirmed by the wise.*

*Apart from shastras such  
as this, no other texts can  
explain emptiness*

Chandrakirti is saying that apart from shastras such as *Mulamadhyamaka-karikas*, no other texts can completely explain emptiness. So likewise, the wise must learn that the analytical way that has been presented here in this text, you will not find elsewhere. Here he is referring to the Cittamattra, the Vaibhashika and all those schools.

[H3]

## 3. Explaining the need to have written such an expression of it

### a) He has written a treatise to teach about suchness, 11:54

11:54     *Frightened by the hue of the great waters of Nagarjuna's mind,  
Individuals remain removed from this good tradition.  
By this arrangement of [Nagarjuna's] words, which are like dew that opens the  
water lily,  
The wishes of Chandrakirti have now been completely fulfilled.*

The mind of Nagarjuna that explains the *mahashunyata*, the great emptiness, is so vast and deep that even the colour of this ocean frightens some people, so they abandon this mind, or this view, from afar. Here he's referring to Vasubandhu (the author of the *Abhidharma Kosha*), Dignaga and Dharmapala – who later became Virupa, the great founder of the *lamdré* (*lam 'bras*), the “path and fruit” teachings of the Sakyapa tradition. There is often confusion here, because certain texts refer to Chandrakirti as Nagarjuna's disciple, and some people thought this meant he was Nagarjuna's direct disciple. But there was actually a long gap in between them, which we can deduce from Chandrakirti's sarcasm towards Vasubandhu, who was Asanga's brother: Asanga was born toward the end of Nagarjuna's life. Nevertheless, we should also realise that Nagarjuna lived for a very long time. In the last two lines, Chandrakirti is being a little metaphorical. There is supposedly a type of flower, the *kumud* flower of the lotus family, which opens when the moon shines. His name, “Chandra”, means “moon”, and he's saying that Nagarjuna's *Mulamadhyamaka-karikas* is like the unopened *kumud* flower, but that when the Chandra-kirti shines in the sky, the flower opens and fulfils the wishes of many people.

[H4]

### b) He therefore advises us to give up (studying) other traditions' texts (749), 11:55

11:55     *Through previous habituation, individuals will realize the terrifying profundity  
of the suchness explained,  
Yet, others will not understand such realization even though they may have  
studied greatly.  
Therefore, seeing [the teachings of] other traditions as merely applying to  
themselves,  
Give up the way of studying the treatises of all traditions, and be content with  
just this.*

*Practical advice: we can  
only understand the  
Madhyamika if we have  
habitual merit, so we  
should give up studying  
the texts of other  
traditions*

This is actually very practical advice. He's saying a person can only understand the Madhyamika if they have some kind of tendency, *bagchak*, or habitual merit of hearing it and understanding it in the past. Otherwise, even if you are a very learned person, you cannot understand. Some commentaries specifically say this refers to Vasubandhu, who was considered

very learned. He was supposedly able to recite nine million, nine hundred thousand slokas from different sutras and shastras. But here Chandrakirti is giving us some advice. He is saying that we should try to abandon delight or longing for fabricated texts or teachings, for example, like Samkhya texts.

[H3]

#### **4. Dedicating the merits of having written the text to the supreme goal, 11:56**

11:56     *May the merit of relating the excellent tradition of Acharya Nagarjuna pervade the limits of space;  
May this morning star light up that dark sky of the afflicted mind,  
And, by acquiring this jewel from the cobra-head of the mind,  
May the entire world through realizing suchness, reach the level of the Sugata.*

This is a dedication. We can not only dedicate the merit of Chandrakirti, for having written this, but also the merit of people like us who are hearing and contemplating the teachings right now. The rest is quite easy to understand. He uses two analogies here. When he mentions the shining planets that illuminate the dark sky, this “dark sky” refers to the emotions, negative emotions. As a second analogy for our emotions, he uses the snake. It was believed in some Indian mythologies that there is a special kind of snake, the King Cobra, which has jewels on its head. And here, he is saying that like planets shining in the dark, and like the jewel on the cobra’s head, may the merit of writing this book, or contemplating, hearing or teaching it, illuminate all the darkness of samsara, and may we all eventually reach the Tathagata’s state.

[H1]

### **THE CONCLUSION**

[H2]

#### **1. The author of the text, colophon**

Author’s Name

*The elucidator of the profound and vast tradition of Madhyamika was that Acharya Chandrakirti, someone immersed in the practice of the supreme vehicle, and endowed with authentic wisdom and compassion, and who milked a painting of a cow to turn back fixation on truth.*

[H2]

#### **2. The translators**

Translator’s Name

*During the reign of the Kashmiri king Sri Aryadeva, the learned Indian Tillaka and the Tibetan monk-lotsawa Patsab Nyima Trak, translated this according to the tradition of Kashmir. Later in the Rasa Ramoche, the learned Indian Kawarma and the same lotsawa arranged and certified [this translation] comparing it with scriptures from [Bengal in] the east.*

And today, Kashmir is filled with terrorists! Well, that’s it!

[Q]: Yesterday, we were debating points of difference between Madhyamika and western philosophy and science. I am interested in studying some of the convergences and divergences in more detail, but sloka 55 says that we should abandon delight in those texts

If your aim is to find the truth, you must study

that are not the perfect view. So, do you see the kind of study I am interested in as more of an intellectual distraction, or something useful that could help understanding?

[A]: That's a good question. We have a concept called *sherab chal* (*shes rab 'chal*), which means your wisdom is scattered everywhere. Then it gets wasted, because you get carried away with too many things. This is something Chandrakirti doesn't want you to go through. But having said that, if your aim is to find the truth, then I think you should study. You must study. Understanding the opponent is very important.

[Q]: Yes, but, yesterday the Western opponent was mostly modern scientific thought.

[A]: I don't know. I think scientists are not really opponents for Chandrakirti. And I don't even know whether western religions, like Judaism or Christianity, can be qualified as opponents.

[Q]: I was more thinking of the Western tradition of impermanence and non-intrinsic existence: in parts of Greek philosophy, western mystic traditions and medieval philosophy, there are things that resemble the Madhyamika.

[A]: There will always be resemblances. In his *Tsema Rigter* (*tshad ma rigs gter*), "The Treasury of Valid Cognition", Sakya Pandita said that every phenomenon is similar to another in some way. But no two phenomena are identical. But I wonder whether western religions like Judaism can be qualified as Chandrakirti's opponent. For most of the Indian philosophies, it's very important not to fall into the extremes of eternalism and nihilism. So, all of these philosophical schools try to build a middle way. But I don't know whether Judaism and Christianity are at all interested in not falling into the extremes; I don't even know if they even have a concept of the extremes. I guess it's not a problem for them, and they are free of these hang-ups. Anyway, in the language of buddhist philosophers, we have two concepts: *lam gyi gagja* (*lam gyi 'gags bya*), what is to be refuted by the path or practice, and *rigpé gagja* (*rigs pas dgag bya*), what is to be refuted by logic, analysis, or reasoning. Perhaps Judaism and Christianity are things that need to be negated by the path. That's very individual. But I don't know – what do you guys think? Is Judaism object of negation of reasoning?

[Student]: You can only reason with somebody who is willing to be reasoned with. If they are open to being refuted, that means you can reason with them. But actually, their position is not based on reasoning, it's based on what they believe is a revelation. The reasoning comes afterwards. They reason afterwards to make it intelligible to themselves, but it's not based on reason.

[Rinpoche]: This is why I asked yesterday what westerners mean by existence. When we study, we are logicians, *tsenyipa* (*mtshan nyid pa*), that like to hear definitions. So, for example, we need the scientists' definition of existence.

[Student]: In this case, that's the job of philosophers.

[Rinpoche]: Also, Alex was saying that the scientists' job is to study how phenomena function. They are more interested in function, and philosophers are more interested in questions of existence. If so, how can we debate? There doesn't seem to be so much ground on which we can debate.

[Student]: But there is a wide spectrum of views within western thought, from Christianity and Judaism to science. Some people say things that sound very much like Buddhism. For example, Aristotelian realism is in many ways very much like the Nyaya-vaiseshehika School. And in the eleventh chapter, it has sounded as though the buddhists were talking about the buddha as if he were a kind of god, using language that is very familiar to Christian religion. But for me, the interesting thing is that the Madhyamika corrects an imperfection in the theistic position I found to be a problem with Christianity, and makes it more fruitful.

[Matthieu]: We could debate with western religions in other areas as well. For example, in the ninth chapter of the *Bodhicharyavatara*, Shantideva refutes the notion of a first causeless immutable cause that creates the world of phenomena. That kind of argument seems to pertain to the notion of an immovable creator.

[Rinpoche]: But the scientists don't seem to be creating any path.

[Matthieu]: Here we weren't addressing scientists, but whether a monotheistic religion would be a suitable opponent to Chandrakirti. And it seems that it might be, when it comes to notions like an unchanging and causeless first cause.

[Rinpoche]: But I have asked some Christians, and perhaps they are not that learned about Christianity, but they said that when Christians say that God is permanent and unchanging, their definition of “permanent” is completely different from ours. They are talking about something that lasts a long time, or lasts forever, and which has always been there. So, their God is still a subject of time. When buddhists talk about permanent, we are talking about something beyond time.

[Matthieu]: That's something we could discuss – but there is certainly something to debate with them.

[Student]: In sloka 26, Chandrakirti says, “by his merest wish, this pure enlightened one could show the galaxies that fill the whole of space, as in a single mote of dust. And show a mote containing all the universe, without the dust enlarging or the universe contracting”. William Blake, a Christian, said something along the lines of “to hold the world in a grain of sand, and hold eternity in the palm of your hand”. From an outsider’s point of view, one could easily draw a correlation.

[Rinpoche]: What are you talking about? Sakya Pandita has already answered that. I totally oppose people who are trying to create some kind of a Baha’i, putting together Buddhism, Christianity and all the rest. And it is not because I have no respect for Christianity or Judaism. I do have respect for them. But it’s like this. If you have a headache, there’s no point having pills for stomach-ache, earache, nose-ache and intestine-ache all together. There’s no point, no necessity. If you have a headache, you just take headache pills. Similarly, Buddhism is for those who are inclined to practice Buddhism, and it should be left like that. Buddhism is totally and absolutely different from Hinduism and all the others. It’s good; it’s unique. Otherwise, buddhism will become degenerated, like when you go to America and buy these CDs of Beethoven’s music mixed with birds singing and the sounds of water. If you mix everything, it’s going to degenerate.

[Student]: I agree that when we have a headache, we need a headache pill. But sometimes I feel like I don’t exactly know what my headache is.

[Rinpoche]: But you should take the pills for different ailments separately. If you take them all together, you will have another disease!

[Student]: Is the truth perceived differently in different realms? Do human and gods see the same truth, or are they seeing it differently? When we get rid of ego and ignorance, do we perceive the same wisdom?

[Rinpoche]: I think so.

[Student]: So beings can attain enlightenment without having to pass through the human realm. This means that when we pray that all beings may achieve enlightenment, it doesn’t necessarily mean that they have to become human beings. They could achieve enlightenment from the state they’re in.

[Rinpoche]: Yes, that’s right.

Because of Tulku Pema Wangyal’s silent yet persistent pressure in requesting these teachings, we have now completed the text. I think this is perhaps an attempt at a first step on this infinite journey of the study and practice of Buddhism. We have been discussing Madhyamika for a few years now, and I think that we have started to gather some materials to study Madhyamika. I’m sure some of you will receive instructions from your masters, and meditate or practice upon them, and you will choose to continue in that way. This is excellent, and it is what you should do; it’s the main aim. Some of you might think that you need some more information about the path, and for you, I would like to say that you shouldn’t have the attitude that this is the end. Instead, have the attitude that this is just the beginning of your study of Madhyamika.

The introduction of buddhism to the West is almost over now, and now buddhism is growing. We talk about *dharmapalas*, the dharma protectors, and in a way, all of you are also *dharmapalas*. Although the spiritual quest is growing rapidly in the West, the genuine authentic dharma seems to be rare, even though there are still so many wonderful teachers coming to the West. So, it’s very important that at least some of us should study these texts, so that at least

*Have the attitude that this is the beginning, not the end, of your study of Madhyamika*

*Authentic dharma in the west is rare, so at least some of us should study these texts*

some of us will know what is authentic and what is not. If we are talking about practice, that's very individual. We can never judge and say that somebody is not a good teacher, or that somebody's practice is wrong. We never know. For example, Zen masters ask their students, what is the sound of one hand clapping, and the students get something, a *satori*. Yet there is no sutra that teaches about the sound of one hand clapping: that is just a method, and that's very individual. When we talk about practice, we cannot analyse so much. But when we are establishing the view, we can use our intellect, reasoning, powers of debate and so on. And it is important for some of us to study these texts and understand what authentic dharma is.

I feel very fortunate, and somewhat relieved, that I have managed to complete these teachings. I must thank Tulku Pema Wangyal Rinpoche and Tulku Jigme Khyentse Rinpoche for forcing me to accumulate some merit. I would like to thank Patrick for the French translation, and also John, Wulstan and everyone here at Chanteloube who has worked so hard. I should also thank you for patiently listening to this endless repetition of arguments! I don't know whether there's any merit, but if there is, we should dedicate it to the longevity of all the lamas, and the enlightenment of all sentient beings.

[Jigme Khyentse Rinpoche]: I have nothing more to add, except to thank Rinpoche for his kindness in continuing to teach us. We have requested Rinpoche to bless us with his presence again next year and in the years to come so, as Rinpoche said, please don't go away thinking that this is the last time that we will open such treatises as the *Madhyamika*. I'm sure that these teachings will continue to inspire us in the way that they have done, although I suppose that we need to continue accumulating a lot of merit for this, but what more merit can we have than continuing to read and study these texts?

[Dedication of Merit]



## Tibetan Words & Phrases

*Abhidharma Kosha* (Sanskrit): see *Ngönpa Dzö*

*Abhidharma Samuccaya* (Sanskrit): see *Ngönpa Küntü*

*Abhisamaya Alankara* (Sanskrit): see *Ngöntok Gyen*

*abhisheka* (Sanskrit): see *wang*

*Akanishta* (Sanskrit): see *Ogmin*

*alaya* (Sanskrit): see *künzhi*

*ayatanas* (Sanskrit): see *kyeché*

*bagchak* ལྷାଙ୍କାଶ (bag chags) = habitual patterns

*baidurya* (Sanskrit) = lapis lazuli

*bhikshu* (Sanskrit): see *gelong*

*Bodhicharyavatara*: see *Chöjug*

*chegag nesum* གྱྭୟାଗ ଗ୍ନାସ ଗୁସୁ (sky 'gag gnas gsum) = arising, abiding, and cessation

*chepé ta* ཀ୍ଷେତ୍ରମ୍ରିଯୁତର (chad pa'i mtha') = nihilist extreme [See also *tagpé ta* = eternalist extreme]

*chinchilapé tulku* ཡିନ ଶ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟବ୍ରାହ୍ମଣ ପ୍ରେସ୍ଲୁପ୍ରୁ (byin gyis rlabs pa'i sprul sku) = “blessed” tulku, a great being whose mind has been blessed by a realized bodhisattva, and is able to carry out the activity of that bodhisattva

*chitsen* ଶ୍ରୀମଦ୍ଭାଗବତ (spyi mtshan) = generally characterised phenomenon [See also *rangtsen* = specially characterised phenomenon]

*chö* କ୍ଷର (chos) = (Sanskrit: *dharma*) signifies in general a phenomenon, and specifically the Buddhist teaching. Traditionally Buddhists enumerate ten definitions for this term

*chöchen* କ୍ଷରତର (chos can) = subject or phenomenal entity.

*Chöjug* ଶ୍ରୀଜ୍ଞାନ (spyod 'jug) = *Bodhicharyavatara*, “The Way of the Bodhisattva” [by Shantideva, 8<sup>th</sup> Century]

*chökyi dag* ཁେ ག୍ରୀ མଦନ (chos kyi bdag) = the self of phenomena

*chökyi dagdzin* ཁେ ག୍ରୀ མଦନ କେହିଏ (chos kyi bdag 'dzin) = clinging to the self of phenomena.

*chökyi da mé* ཁେ ག୍ରୀ མଦନ ମେ (chos kyi bdag med) = selflessness of phenomena

*chö la migpé nyinje* ཁେ ଲା ଡମିଗ ପା'ଇ ସ୍ନ୍ୟିଙ୍ ର୍ଜେ (chos la dmigs pa'i snying rje) = compassion focussed on phenomena

*chö ngönpa* ཁେ ମଣ୍ଡତ୍ସମ୍ବାଦ (chos mngon pa) = (Sanskrit: *abhidharma*) one of the ‘Three Baskets’ of teachings, or ‘tripitaka’. Abhidharma contains the buddhist scriptures concerned with wisdom, philosophy and psychology. The *prajñaparamita* falls in to this category, and by extension, also the *Madhyamakavatara*.

*chönyi* ཁେ ନ୍ୟିଦ (chos nyid) = (Sanskrit: *dharma*) the innate or true nature of phenomena

*chö tamché gyi zhiluk* ཁେ ତମ୍ଚେ ଗ୍ୟି ଝିଲୁକ (chos thams cad gyi gshis lugs) = the reality, natural condition, or absolute truth of all phenomena

*dag* ମନ୍ଦନ (bdag) = self [See also *da me* = selflessness]

*dagchö* ମନ୍ଦନ କେହି (btags chos) = phenomenon as labelled

*dagdzin* ମନ୍ଦନ କେହି (bdag 'dzin) = clinging or grasping to the self

*dagshi* ମନ୍ଦନ ମାନ୍ଦି (gdags gzhi) = ground or basis of labelling

*dakpé sa sum* ମାନ୍ଦି ମାନ୍ଦି ମାନ୍ଦି (dag pa'i sa gsum) = the “three pure levels” [referring to the eighth, ninth and tenth bhumis]

*dakpé zhenwong* ମାନ୍ଦି ମାନ୍ଦି ମାନ୍ଦି (dag pa'i gzhan dbang) = pure dependent reality [See also *madakpé zhenwong* = impure dependent reality]

*dak yö* ମନ୍ଦନ ପିନ୍ଦ (btags yod) = imputedly existing; existing only as an imputation.

*damcha* ମାନ୍ଦନ କା (dam bca') = thesis.

*da mé* ମନ୍ଦନ ମନ୍ଦନ (bdag med) = selflessness [See also *dag* = self]

*dangpö sangyé gyü mepa* ମାନ୍ଦି ମାନ୍ଦି ମାନ୍ଦି ମାନ୍ଦି (dang po'i sangs rgyas rgyu med pa) = the uncaused primordial buddha

*Dashabhumika Sutra* (Sanskrit): see *Dodé Sa Chupa*

*demik* རྒྱྲྩྰྭླྷ (lde'u mig) = key [to unlock understanding]

*dendrup* རྡ୍ୱ୚୮୧୮ (bden grub) = truly existent or truly established.

*dendzin* རྡ୍ୱ୚୮୯୯୯ (bden 'dzin) = clinging to or perceiving phenomena as truly existent

*denmé* རྡ୍ୱ୚୮୩୯ (bden med) = not truly existent

*denpa* རྡ୍ୱ୚୮୮ (bden pa) = true, truth

*denpa nyi* རྡ୍ୱ୚୮୮ ལ୍ୟିସ (bden pa gnyis) = the two truths [absolute and relative]

*denpa tongwa* རྡ୍ୱ୚୮୮ མ୍ତୋଙ୍ଗ ବା (bden pa mthong ba) = seeing the truth

*dewa* རྡ୍ୱ୚୮ (bde ba) = bliss

*dewar shekpa* རྡ୍ୱ୚୮ ສର୍ବଶୀଳବାଦ (bde bar gshergs pa) = (Sanskrit: *sugata*) a buddha [literally: one who has gone to bliss]

*deshin shekpa* རྡ୍ୱ୚୮ ତଥାଗତବାଦ (de bzhin gshergs pa) = (Sanskrit: *tathagata*) a buddha [literally: gone to suchness]

*dharmata* (Sanskrit): see *chönyi*

*Dodé Gyache Rolpa* ཡྠୋ ସେ ର୍ଗ୍ୟା ଚେର ରୋଲ ପା (mdo sde rgya cher rol pa) = (Sanskrit: *Lalitavistara Sutra*) “Sutra of the Vast Display”

*dodépa* ཡྠୋସ୍ତେ (mdo sde pa) = Sautrantika [CDD: a Theravada school of philosophy and the second of the four major Buddhist Schools, known for its reliance on the sutras rather than abhidharma]

*Dodé Sa Chupa* ཡྠୋସ୍ତେ ଶତ୍ରୁପା (mdo sde sa bcu pa) = (Sanskrit: *Dashabhumika Sutra*) “Sutra of the Ten Bhumiś”, a central source of reference for Chandrakirti.

*Doha Khorsum* དୋ ହା ସ୍କୋର ଗୁମ (do ha skor gsum) = the three main “Songs of Realization” of the mahasiddha Saraha: the Doha for the King, the Doha for the Queen, and the Doha for the Subjects

*döndam* དୋନ୍ ଦମ (don dam) = absolute [absolute truth, in conjunction with *kunzöb*, relative truth]

*döndam chöché kyi rigpa* ཎ ད ཉ ན མ ཁ ཉ ད ཉ པ ཝ ཉ དྷ ཉ ཕ ཉ དྷ ཉ ཕ (don dam dpyod byed kyi rigs pa) = the reasoning that investigates the ultimate

*döndampar grubpa* ཎ ད ཉ ན མ ཉ བ ཉ ད ཉ པ ཝ ཉ དྷ ཉ ཕ (don dam par grub pa) = absolutely existent

*döndam tenla bepé kab* ཎ ད ཉ ན མ ཉ ད ཉ ད ཉ ད ཉ དྷ ཉ ཕ ཉ དྷ ཉ ཕ (don dam gtan la 'bebs pa'i skabs) = the time of establishing the absolute truth

*dradön drezin gyi lo* ཟ ཉ ད ཉ ན ཉ ད ཉ ད ཉ དྷ ཉ ཕ ཉ དྷ ཉ ཕ (sgra don dres 'dzin gyi blo) = “thinking that the term and the object are one” or “mind that combines the word with the object and grasping” [the buddhist definition of *tokpa* = “concept”]

*drangchenpa* ལ ཉ ད ཉ ན མ ཉ (grangs can pa) = follower of the *Samkhya* school, "enumerator," [founded by the *rishi* Kapila. Hinduism is practically synonymous with Samkhya philosophy, according to R.D. Radhakrishnan]

*drangdön* ཎ ད ཉ ན ཉ (drang don) = (Sanskrit: *neyartha*) (teachings of) provisional or expedient meaning [See also: *ngé dön* = (teachings of) ultimate or certain meaning]

*drangmé* ལ ཉ ད ཉ ན མ ཉ (grangs med) = countless

*dreldré* ལ ཉ ད ཉ ད ཉ (bral 'bras) = result of absence

*drumta* ལ ཉ ད ཉ ན མ (grub mtha') = (Sanskrit: *siddhanta*) philosophical tenets

*duché* འ ད ཉ ན མ (‘dus byas) = compounding; karmic formation

*Dükyi Korlo* ཤ ཉ ད ཉ ན བྷ ཉ ཕ (dus kyi 'khor lo) = (Sanskrit: *Kalacakra*) “Wheel of Time” [CDD: a tantra of the non-dual class taught by Buddha Shakyamuni himself, showing the interrelationship between the external phenomenal world, the inner physical body, and the mind]

*düpa* འ ད ཉ ན མ (‘dus pa) = assemblage

*dze* ག ཉ (mdzad) = done

*dze yö* ག ཉ ཡ ཉ (rdzas yod) = substantially existing

*dzinpa* ག ཉ ད ཉ (‘dzin pa) = grasping, perception of subject

*dzokpé sangyé* ག ཉ ད ཉ ན ཉ ད ཉ ན ཉ ད ཉ (rdzogs pa'i sang rgyas) = (Sanskrit: *samyaksambuddha*) perfect buddhahood, complete omniscience

*dzöpü* ཡོན་සྔ (mdzod sru) = (Sanskrit: *urna*) the special hair in the middle of Buddha's two eyebrows [one of the 32 marks of a great being, see: *kyebu chenpö tsen sumchu tsanyi*]

*Ganden* དགའ་ལྡན (dga' ldan) = (Sanskrit: *Tushita*) [CDD: literally, "The Joyous", name of the Pure Land of the thousand Buddhas of this aeon, inhabited only by bodhisattvas and buddhas. The heavenly realm in which lord Maitreya resides, awaiting his appearance in this world as the next buddha]

*gangsak dagdzin* ຍັດະກຳ ດັດຊັນ (gang zag bdag 'dzin) = clinging to the self

*gangsak gi dag* ຍັດະກຳ ອີດາ (gang zag gi bdag) = self of the person

*gelong* ད්ධිභික (dge slong) = (Sanskrit: *bhikshu*) [CDD: a practitioner who has renounced worldly life and taken the pledge to observe the 253 precepts of a fully ordained monk in order to attain liberation from samsara]

*genyen* ད්ධීඛ්ණ (dge bsnyen) = (Sanskrit: *upasaka*, feminine: *upasika*) a buddhist layman [CDD: who is bound by the five vows to avoid killing, stealing, lying, sexual misconduct, and intoxicating liquor]

*gokpa* ཉිරාච (‘gog pa) = (Sanskrit: *nirodha*) cessation

*gom pang* ཁ්ෂාස්න (sgom spang) = defilements to be purified through meditation [in the context of the path of meditation. *See also tong pang*]

*gongpachen* ད්ධීඛ්ණ ພක (dgongs pa can) = purpose

*göpa* ཉිරාච (dgos pa) = purpose; necessity

*Guru Rinpoche* ལුද් རින්පොචේ = the great tantric master who was key to the establishment of Buddhism in Tibet [also known as Padmasambhava or Padmakara, 'The Lotus-Born']

*gyalsé* རියාල්ස (rgyal sras) = prince or bodhisattva

*gyü* རු (rgyu) = cause [*See also kyen* = condition]

*gyün* རු ສ (rgyun) = continuity or stream

*gyün machepa* རු ສ ພ ຕ ພ (rgyun ma chad pa) = an uninterrupted continuum

*gyütün gyi ku* རු ສ ສ ສ ສ (rgyu mthun gyi sku) = kaya or body that is similar to the cause

*jangdré* རྒྱଙྦୟ བྲସ (sbyangs 'bras) = result of purification

*jénang* རྒྱྲୟ ཁྱଂ (rjes gnang) = empowerment, blessing

*jépak* རྒྱྲୟ ད୍ୡାଗ (rjes dpag) = (Sanskrit: *anumana*) inference, a category of valid cognition.

*jépak tsema* རྒྱྲୟ ད୍ୡାଗ ຕ୍ଷାଦ ମା (rjes dpag tshad ma) = valid cognition based on inferential cognition,  
e.g. ‘There must be fire if there is smoke’ [See also *ngönsum tsema* = direct valid cognition]

*jétop* རྒྱྲୟ ཁୋବ (rjes thob) = post-meditation [See also *nyamshak* = meditation]

*jigten drakdér chôpé umapa* རྒྱିତେ རྩକ୍ରେ ཚୋପେ ଉମାପା (jig rten grags sde spyod pa'i dbu ma pa) = a follower of Madhyamika who accepts what is accepted by ordinary people.  
Chandrakirti is regarded as such

*ji nyépa* རྒྱି ནନ୍ୟେଦ ପା (ji rnyed pa) = things as they appear in their diversity [See also *ji tawa* = things as they are]

*jinyépé kyenpa* རྒྱି ནନ୍ୟେଦ କ୍ୟେନ ପା (ji snyed pa'i mkhyen pa) = the understanding of things as they appear in their diversity

*ji tawa* རྒྱି ଲ୍ତା ବା (ji lta ba) = things as they are [in conjunction with: *ji nyepa* = things as they appear in their diversity. See also *jitawé kyenpa*]

*jitawé kyenpa* རྒྱି ଲ୍ତା ବା'ଇ ମକ୍ଷ୍ୟେନ ପା (ji lta ba'i mkhyen pa) = the understanding of things as they are

*jöja dön gyi uma* ବ୍ରଜ୍ଜ ଦୋନ ଗ୍ଯି ଉମା (brjod bya don gyi dbu ma) = the absolute Madhyamika  
[literally: the Madhyamika that is the object of explanation]

*jöjé tsik gi uma* ବ୍ରଜ୍ଜ ପ୍ରକ୍ଷଣଶୀଳ୍ୟମା (brjod byed tshig gi dbu ma) = the expressed Madhyamika  
[literally: the Madhyamika of words, the instruction]

*jorlam* རྒྱྲୟ ଲାମ (sbyor lam) = path of application, the second of the five paths according to the Mahayana

*Kalacakra* (Sanskrit): see *Dükyi Korlo*

*kam* କହମ (khams) = (Sanskrit: *dhatu*) definitions include: elements, basic nature, capacity, and disposition.

*kamsum* କହମ ଗ୍ସୁମ (khams gsum) = the three realms that constitute samsara: the realm of desire, the realm of form, and the realm of formlessness.

*kangnyi nam kyi chok* རྒଙ୍ གྙି ལମ ອ୍ୟି ཕ୍ୟା କୋଖ (rkang gnyis rnams kyi mchog) = lit. “Supreme among bipeds”; the supreme of all humans [i.e. Buddha Shakyamuni]

*khyentse nüsum* ཡ୍ୱେନ ས୍ୱେତ དୁସ ཁୁସ (mkhyen brtse nus gsum) = knowledge, compassion and power, three qualities of an enlightened being, and embodied in the buddhas Manjushri, Avalokiteshvara, and Vajrapani.

*khyentse nüpa*: see *khyentse nüsum*

*kog na mo* གୋ ନା ମୋ (lkog na mo) = hidden

*küntü jorwa sum* ཀୁ ନୁ ତୁ ଶ୍ଵେତ ବା ଗୁସ (kun tu sbyor ba gsum, also *kun sbyor gsum*) = three fetters that keep sentient beings in samsara:

- *tawa chokdzin* (lta ba mchog 'dzin) = holding a certain view as supreme
- *tulshuk chokdzin* (tshul brtul mchog 'dzin) = thinking your discipline or ethic is supreme
- *té tsom* (the tshom) = doubt.

*Kiinkhyen Gorampa* ཀୁ ନୁ ମକ୍ଷ୍ୟେ ଗୋ ରାମ ପା (kun mkhyen go ram pa) = omniscient Gorampa [CDD: 1429-1489, Sakya philosopher]

*küntak* ཀୁ ନୁ ମହାତ୍ମା (kun brtags) = imaginary nature; imputed reality; conceptual imputation; labelling [one of the three natures, the *ngowo sum* (*ngo bo gsum*). See also *zhenwong* and *yongdrub*]

*küntak kyi dak* ཀୁ ନୁ ମହାତ୍ମା ଶ୍ରୀ ମହାଦ୍ୱା (kun brtags kyi bdag) = imputed or labelled self

*künzhi* ཀୁ ନୁ ମାତ୍ରି (kun gzhi) = alaya, the base of everything, all-ground

*künzob* ཀୁ ନୁ ତ୍ୱରା (kun rdzob) = relative truth [See also *döndam*, absolute truth]

*Kushinagar* କୁଶିନାଗର (rtsva mchog grong) = the village where Buddha Shakyamuni attained parinirvana

*kyébu chenpö tsen sumchu tsanyi* ଶ୍ରୀ ଚେନ ପୋ ଇ ମତଶନ ସମ୍ମାନକାନ୍ତିର (skyes bu chen po'i mtshan sum bcu rtsa gnyis) = the 32 marks of a great being [See also *tsen zangpo* = the 32 marks]

*kyeché* ଶ୍ରୀ ମହେଦ (sky e mched) = the sense fields; the twelve sources of perception

*kyen* ଶ୍ରୀ କ୍ରୀତ (rkyen) = condition, secondary cause [See also *gyü* = cause, primary cause]

*kyéwa mepa* ଶ୍ରୀ ସାମେଦା (sky e ba med pa) = unborn, uncreated, unproduced

*kyewa tulku* གྱྭେ ବା ସ୍ପ୍ରୁଲ ସ୍କୁ (skyeb a sprul sku) = (Sanskrit: *nirmanakaya*) incarnation, the emanation body of a buddha by birth. One of the *sprul sku rnam gsum*, the 3 types of emanation body

*lama lam du chepa* བ୍ଲା ମା ଲାମ ଦୁ ବ୍ୟେଦ ପା (bla ma lam du byed pa) = taking the guru as the path

*lam dang drébu* ལାମ ଦଙ୍ଗ ବ୍ରେବୁ (lam dang 'bras bu) = path and fruit [See also *lamdré*]

*lamdré* (lam 'bras) = “path and fruit”, the profound Vajrayana instructions of the Sakya tradition

*lam gyi gagja* ལାମ ଗ୍ୟି ଗାଗ୍ଜା (lam gyi 'gags bya) = what is to be refuted by the path or practice

[See also *rigpé gagja* = what is to be refuted by logic or reasoning]

*lé* ଲେ (las) = karma; action

*lé gyündré la yi chepa* ལାମ ଗ୍ୟନ୍ଦ୍ରେ ଲା ଯି ଚେପା (las rgyu 'bras la yid ches pa) = to trust that an action inevitably will cause an effect

*lé tünpa* ଲେ ତୁନ୍ପା (las mthun pa) = commonly shared karma

*lhenkyé* ଲହନ୍ ଶ୍ୟେ (lhan skyes) = (Sanskrit: *sahaja*) co-emergent, innate, spontaneous [aspect of conventional reality]

*lhenkyé kyi dak* ଲହନ୍ ଶ୍ୟେ କ୍ୟି ଦାକ (lhan skyes kyi bdag) = co-emergent self or innate self

*lhündrup kyi nangcha* ଲୁନ୍ ଶ୍ୟୁମ ଶ୍ୟାଙ୍କା (lhun grub kyi snang cha) = spontaneous aspect of appearance, a vajrayana term

*lobpé lam* ଲୋବପେ ଲାମ (slob pa'i lam) = path of learning [See also *mi lobpé lam* = path of no more learning]

*lobur dreldak gi sangyé* ଲୋବର ଦ୍ରେଳକ ଗି ସଙ୍ଗ୍ୟେ (glo bur rnam dag gi sangs rgyas) = the buddha discovered upon purification of the temporal defilements. In conjunction with *rangshin namdak gi sangyé*, these two are known as the two purities of a buddha (*dag pa gnyis ldan*)

*lokpar tokpa* ଲୋକପାର ଟୋକପା (log par rtog pa) = wrong view

*lokpé kiindzop* ଲୋକପାର କିନ୍ଦ୍ଜୋପ (log pa'i kun rdzob) = invalid relative truth; erroneous or superficial reality.

*longku* ଲଙ୍ଗୁ ଶ୍ୟକୁ (longs sku) = (Sanskrit: *sambhogakaya*) the enjoyment body of wisdom's compassionate clarity; one of the three kayas or bodies of enlightenment.

*lungi tsema* རླུང་གིས་ཚད་མ (lung gis tshad ma) = valid establishment through scripture

*machépa* ມାଦ୍ୟାପା (ma dpyad pa) = unanalysed

*madakpé zhenwong* ມାଦାକପେ ଜେନ୍‌ଓଙ୍ଗ (ma dakpé zhen wong) = impure dependent reality, a subdivision of one of the three natures [See also *dakpé zhen wong* = pure dependent reality]

*Madhyamika* (Sanskrit): see *uma*

*Madhyamakavatara* (Sanskrit): see *Uma La Jugpa*

*mangpö kurwa* ມାଙ୍ଗପୋ କୁର୍‌ବା (mang pos bkur ba) = the Sammitiyas, a buddhist school that believes that the self and the aggregates are one [See also *nemapuwa*]

*marigpa* ມାରିଗପା (ma rig pa) = (Sanskrit: *avidya*) ignorance, the original cause of confusion and samsara, and the first of the twelve dependent links of origination.

*matakpa machepa* ມାତାକପା ମାଦ୍ୟାପା (ma brtags pa ma dpyad pa) = un-investigated and un-analysed

*mengak* ມାନ୍‌ନଗ (man ngag) = (Sanskrit: *upadesha*) instructions

*migkam* ມିଗ୍‌ଖାମ (mig khams) = eye dhatu or eye element

*migpa* ດମିଶାମା (dmigs pa) = (Sanskrit: *alambana*) object or object of focus [See also *nam pa* = aspect of the object that is described and understood by the subject]

*mikyéwa* ມିକ୍‌ଷୀର୍ଣ୍ଣା (mi skye ba) = unborn, uncreated

*milobpé lam* ມିଲ୍‌ଲୋବିଏଲାମ (mi slob pa'i lam) = path of no more learning [the fifth of the five paths; See also *lobpé lam* = path of learning]

*mönlam* ଶ୍ଵର୍ଦ୍ଧମା (smon lam) = (Sanskrit: *pranidhana*) aspiration, prayer

*möpa* ମୋପା (mos pa) = aspiration, prayer

*namjang* ର୍ନାମସ୍ବ୍ୟାଙ୍ଗ (rnam sbyangs) = perfectly purified [generally referring to *rnam byang gi sa* = the level of perfect purification or enlightenment]

*nampa* ର୍ନାମା (rnam pa) = entity; aspect of the object that is described and understood by the subject [See also *migpa* = object]

*nampa töpa* རୂପାଶତ୍ରଦ୍ୱା (rnam pa gtod pa) = casting its aspect

*namshé* རୂପଶେ (rnam shes) = (Sanskrit: *vijñana*) consciousness; continuity of mind [the fifth skandha, the skandha of consciousness]

*namtok* རୂପର୍ତ୍ତି (rnam rtog) = (Sanskrit: *vikalpa*) conceptions, thought

*nangtsam* ལୁଙ୍ ତ୍ସାମ (snang tsam) = mere appearance, indicating the perception of appearance without the overlay of confused labelling

*nemapuwa* ଶବ୍ଦମାନୁଷ୍ଟାନ୍ତେ (gnas ma bu ba'i sde) = (Sanskrit: *Vatsiputriya*) one of the three sub-schools of the *mangpö kurwa* [the other two are *Kaurukullaka* (*sa sgron ril gnang pa'i sde*) and *Avantava* (*rung ba pa'i sde*)]

*ngédön* ନିତର୍ଥ (nges don) = (Sanskrit: *nitartha*) (teachings of) ultimate or certain meaning [See also *drangdön* = (teachings of) provisional or expedient meaning]

*ngönpa* ମଙ୍ଗନ୍ ପା (mngon pa): see *chö ngönpa*

*Ngönpa Dzö* ମଙ୍ଗନ୍ ପା ମଦ୍ଜୋଡ (mngon pa mdzod) = (Sanskrit: *Abhidharma Kosha*) “Treasury of Abhidharma” [by Vasubandhu, 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> century]

*Ngönpa Kūntī* ମଙ୍ଗନ୍ ପା କୁନ୍ ବ୍ତୁସ (mngon pa kun btus) = (Sanskrit: *Abhidharma Samuccaya*) “Compendium of the Abhidharma” [by Asanga, 4<sup>th</sup> century]

*ngönsum* ମଙ୍ଗନ୍ ସୁମ (mngon sum) = (Sanskrit: *pratyaksha*) direct perception

*ngönsum tsema* ମଙ୍ଗନ୍ ସୁମ ତ୍ସେମ (mngon sum tshad ma) = direct perception as a valid cognition.

Generally defined as a non-mistaken knower that is free from conceptuality [See also *jépak tsema* = inference]

*Ngöntok Gyen* ମଙ୍ଗନ୍ ର୍ତ୍ତିଶାତ୍ରା (mngon rtogs rgyan) = (Sanskrit: *Abhisamaya Alankara*) “Ornament of Realisation” [by Maitreya]

*ngöpo mepa* ଦଙ୍ଗୋ ପୋ ମେଦ ପା (dngos po med pa) = non-entity or non-thing; something insubstantial

*ngowo sum* ଦଙ୍ଗୋ ଗୁମ (ngo bo gsum) = three natures [See also *küntak*, *zhenwong* and *yongdrub*]

*nüpa* ରୂପ (nus pa) = power; capacity; ability

*nyam* ଜ୍ଞାନ (nyams) = experience

*nyamshak* ཤ່ມାସଙ୍ଗ (mnyam bzhag) = meditation, leaving the mind in equanimity

*nyamshak dang jetop* ཤ່ມାସଙ୍ଗ དଙ୍ଗ ରେଷ ଥୋବ (mnyam bzhag dang rjes thob) = meditation and post-meditation

*nyenpo* ལ୍ଯେନ ପୋ (gnyen po) = antidote

*nyenpo dorje tawu tingedzin* ལ୍ଯେନ ପୋ ର୍ଦୋ ର୍ଜେ ଲ୍ତା ବୁ ି ଟିଙ ନେ ଡ୍ଜିନ (gnyen po rdo rje lta bu 'i ting nge 'dzin) = the vajra-like samadhi necessary for the 10<sup>th</sup> bhumi bodhisattva to break the final obscurations [literally: ‘the antidote of the vajra-like samadhi’]

*nyentö* ལ୍ୟାନ ଥୋସ (nyan thos) = (Sanskrit: *shravaka*) [literally: hearer; listener. However the ‘*tö*’ implies *tödrak*, which means someone who both hears and proclaims, the latter referring to the fact that the shravakas are essential in the teaching and propagation of what the buddha taught]

*nyidzin* ལ୍ୟିସ ଡ୍ଜିନ (gnyis 'dzin) = dualism, dualistic perception or grasping

*nyinang* ལ୍ୟିନ ସନ୍ଗ (gnyis snang) = mere apprehension [a form of dualistic perception that remains at the eighth bhumi]

*nyinjé* ଶ୍ଲେଷେ (snying rje) = (Sanskrit: *karuna*) compassion

*nyöndrip* ଶ୍ଵେଷୀନ (nyon srib) = emotional obscurations [*See also she drip* = obscuration to omniscience]

*nyönmongpa* ଶ୍ଵେଷୀନାମ (nyon mongs pa) = (Sanskrit: *klesha*) emotions

*Ogmin* ଔଗମିନ୍ ('og min) = (Sanskrit: *Akanishta*) a buddhafield [associated with the highest Vajrayana teachings]

*Padmasambhava* (Sanskrit): see *Guru Rinpoche* (Tibetan)

*papgé denpa shi* ପାଗ୍ପେ ଦେନପା ଶି (phags pa'i bden pa bzhi) = the Four Noble Truths [the truths of suffering, origin, path, and cessation]

*pangja* ପାଙ୍ଗ୍ଜା (spang bya) = that which is to be abandoned

*Patrul Orgyen Jigme Chökyi Wangpo* ପାତ୍ରୁଲ ଓର୍ଗ୍ୟେନ ଜିଗ୍ମେ ଚୋକ୍ୟି ଓଙ୍ଗ୍ପୋ (dpal sprul o rgyan jigs med chos kyi dbang po) = Patrul Rinpoche [1808-1887, also known as Dzogchen Palge Tulku (rdzogs chen dpal dge sprul sku)]

*Patrul Rinpoche*: see: *Patrul Orgyen Jigme Chökyi Wangpo*

*pramana* (Sanskrit): see *tsema*

*rangi yül shepé chewa* རང་གි་ཡුල් සේපේ තෙව (rangi yul shes pa'i che ba) = “dignity of knowing the object”; “superior understanding of one’s own object”

*rangrig* རང་ རිග (rang rig) = natural awareness (dzogchen); self-awareness (a valid means of cognition in the Mahayana)

*rangshin* རང་ བංහින (rang bzhin) = nature

*rangshin namdak gi sangyé* རང་ བංහින ຮාම ཀ ສං ຮෝ ພය (rang bzhin rnam dag gi sangs rgyas) = the primordially pure buddha. In conjunction with *lobur dreldak gi sangyé* (glo bur rnam dag gi sangs rgyas) = the buddha discovered upon purification of the temporal defilements, these two are known as the two purities of a buddha (*dag pa gnyis ldan*)

*rangtsen* རང ມෑත්සන (rang mtshan) = specially characterised phenomenon [See also *chitsen* = generally characterised phenomenon]

*rangtsen kyi drup pa* རං ມෑත්සන කි දු ප (rang mtshan kyis grub pa) = established by its own characteristics

*rigpé gagja* ຮිග් පස දශාග ය (rigs pas dgag bya) = what is to be refuted by logic or reasoning [See also *lam gyi gagja* = what is to be refuted by the path or practice]

*rigpé nyépé nyédön* ຮිග් පස නියේද නියේද දොන (rigs pas rnyed pa'i rnyed don) = the findings of logic and analysis

*rik* ຮික (rigs) = (Sanskrit: *gotra*) race, family, nature, prosperity

*rimé* ຮිෂ ເමධ (ris med) = non-sectarian, literally ‘without borders’

*rochik* ຮො ກිඹ (ro gcig) = one taste [See also *ronyam* = equal taste]. The absence of ego’s judgment and confused conceptual labelling

*ronyam* ຮො ມ්‍යාම (ro mnyam) = equal taste [See also *rochik* = one taste]

*sabché* ສා බච (sa bcad) = structural or textual outline

*sabmo tongpanyi* ສ ລ ມ ຕ ວ ປ ນ ຍ ຩ (zab mo stong pa nyid) = profound emptiness. It is called ‘profound’ as it is beyond the scope of ordinary superficial mind.

*Sakya Pandita, Kunga Gyalsen* བླུ ཟଫ୍ଫ དି རୁ རୁ རୁ རୁ རୁ རୁ རୁ (sa skyā paN Di ta kun dga' rgyal mtshan) = Sakya Pandita [1182-1251. CDD: One of the Five Sakya Forefathers; grandson of Kunga Nyingpo, 13<sup>th</sup> century Tibetan master and scholar]

*Samkhya* (Sanskrit): see *drangchenpa*

*sampa* ལୁ ལୁ (bsam pa) = thought, thinking, aspiration, intention

*sangyé* ལୁ ལୁ (sang rgyas) = (Sanskrit: *buddha*) literally “purified and developed”

*sangyé gyi ka* ལୁ ལୁ ལୁ ལୁ (sangs rgyas kyi bka') = the words spoken by the Buddha

*sangyé togma tama mé* ལୁ ལୁ ལୁ ལୁ ལୁ ལୁ (sangs rgyas thog ma mtha' ma med) = there is no first buddha, and there is no last buddha

*satsam* ལୁ ལୁ ལୁ (sa mtshams) = border

*Sautrantika* (Sanskrit): see *do de pa*

*sawapo* ལୁ ལୁ (za ba po) = “experiencer”, the first of the five qualities of self, according to the Samkhyas

*selche* ལୁ ལୁ (gsal byed) = the illuminator

*selching rigpa* ལୁ ལୁ ལୁ ལୁ (gsal cing rig pa) = clarity and knowing [the characteristics of mind, according to Buddhism]

*selja* ལୁ ལୁ (gsal bya) = (that which is) illuminated

*seltsam rigtsam* ལୁ ལୁ ལୁ ལୁ (gsal tsam rig tsam) = mere clarity; mere awareness

*semchen* ལୁ ལୁ ལୁ (sem can) = sentient being [literally: endowed with a mind]

*semgak* ལୁ ལୁ ལୁ (sems 'gag) = mind is stopped; the ceasing of conceptual thinking

*shedrip* ལୁ ལୁ ལୁ (shes sgrub) = obscurations to omniscience; “cognitive obscurations” [See also *nyön drip*, emotional obscurations]

*shejé dribpa* ལୁ ལୁ ལୁ ལୁ (shes bya'i sgrub pa): see *shedrip*

*shen*: see *zhen*

*shengyi ngöpo* ལྷན་ଶ୍ରୀଦୂର୍ବଲା (gzhan gyi dngos po) = the thing that is other

*shenpé yül* དେନ୍ପେ རୁୱୁ (zhen pa'i yul) = perceived or grasped object

*sherab* ສମ୍ବନ୍ଧ (shes rab) = (Sanskrit: *prajñā*) wisdom

*shila* (Sanskrit): see *tsultrim*

*shilam drébu* ສବ୍ଦିତମାରସନ୍ତୁ (gzhi lam 'bras bu) = ground, path and fruit. A contextual way of presenting any buddhist teaching

*shimépa la ngao nyampa* ສବ୍ଦିମେଦଶବ୍ଦର୍କଳ୍ପମାତ୍ର (gzhi med pa la nga'o snyam pa) = "Although there is no basis, there is the thought 'I am'" [alternatively: "a thought of me or I, even though there is no basis"]

*Shiwalha* ཚିହ୍ନଙ୍କ (zhi ba lha) = Shantideva [CDD: 685-763, the great Indian scholar, siddha, and author of the *Bodhicharyavatara*]

*shinjang* ଶିନ୍ବ୍ୟାଙ୍କ (shin sbyang) = mentally trained, degree of mind training

*shunyata* (Sanskrit): see *tongpa-nyi*

*sipa* ଶ୍ରୀଦା (srid pa) = (Sanskrit: *bhava*) cyclic existence, equivalent to *samsara*

*sönam* ସନ୍ଦର୍ଭମାତ୍ର (bsod nams) = (Sanskrit: *punya*) merit, virtue

*sook yö* ଗୁରୁତ୍ବମାତ୍ର (gzugs yod) = possessing form

*sugata*: see *dewar shekpa*

*tagpa* ର୍ତ୍ତାମାତ୍ର (rtag pa) or *tag* = permanent; eternal; lasting forever

*tagpé ta* ର୍ତ୍ତାମରିମାତ୍ର (rtag pa'i mtha') = eternalist extreme [See also *chepé ta* = nihilist extreme]

*talgyur* ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧମାତ୍ର (thal 'gyur pa) = (Sanskrit: *prasangika*) the philosophical approach of demonstrating the consequences [consequentialist; the Prasangika Madhyamika school, founded by Buddhpalita and Chandrakirti]

*tamché kyenpa* ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧମାତ୍ରମାତ୍ର (thams cad mkhyen pa) = all-knower = the Buddha

*tanyé* ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧ (tha snyad) = convention; conventional truth

*tanyé chöché kyi rigpa* ཐ་སྙය་ດཔྍୟོད བྺୟେ ཁୀ རିଗ୍ པ (tha snyad dpyod byed kyi rigs pa) = reasoning by conventional analysis

*tanyé tsedrup* ཐ་ສྙය་ བྺୟେ ཀ୍ୱର୍ତ୍ତନ ན ནସ୍ତୁ (tha snyad tshad grub) = validly existent during conventional truth

*tawa ten mabepé kab* ཐା ବା ବ୍ସନ୍ତମା ବ୍ସନ୍ତମା ପ୍ରେଷି କ୍ଲାବ୍ (ita ba bstan ma 'bebs pa'i skabs) = before the view has been (completely) established

*ten* ཁୀ ଶବ୍ଦ (rten) = support; container

*tendrel* ཁୀ ପ୍ରେଷି ଏଥିବା (rten 'brel) = (Sanskrit: *pratityasamutpada*) connection; abbreviation for *rten cing brel bar byung ba* = dependent arising; interdependent origination

*tendrel chökyi da mé* ཁୀ ପ୍ରେଷି ଏଥିବା ଶୁଣ୍ଯବିଦ୍ୟାମ୍ବଦ (rten 'brel chos kyi bdag med) = dependent arising based on the selflessness of phenomena

*tendrel gangsak gi da mé* ཁୀ ପ୍ରେଷି ଏଥିବା ଶବ୍ଦଶିଳ୍ପି ଏନ୍ଦାମ୍ବଦ (rten 'brel gang zag gi bdag med) = dependent arising based on the selflessness of a person

*tendrel yenlag chunyi* ཁୀ ପ୍ରେଷି ଏଥିବା ସ୍ତୁଷତିଷ୍ଠା (rten 'brel yan lag bcu gnyis) = twelve links of interdependent origination

*tenpa* ཁୀ ଶବ୍ଦ (brten pa) = supported, contained

*té tsom* ଶିକ୍ଷେଣ (the tshoms) = doubt [one of the *kün tu jor wa sum* = fetters that hold beings in samsara]

*tob chu* ଶହୁରାମ୍ବୁ (stobs bcu) = ten powers [of the Buddha]

*tokmé* ଶିକ୍ଷେଣ (rtog med) = non-conceptual, without thought

*tokpa* ଶିକ୍ଷେଣ (rtog pa) = concept, thinking

*tong* ଶହୁରାମ୍ବୁ (stong) = one thousand

*tonglam* ଶିକ୍ଷେଣ ଲାମ (mthong lam) = path of seeing [third of the five Mahayana paths]

*tonglam gyi yön ten gyadrak chunyi* ଶିକ୍ଷେଣ ଏଥିବା ପ୍ରଚାର ମନ୍ତ୍ରମାତ୍ରାଶବ୍ଦିଷ୍ଠା (mthong lam gyi yon tan brgya phrag bcu gnyis) = the twelve hundred different qualities of the path of seeing

*tong-nang* ଶିକ୍ଷେଣ ଶୂନ୍ୟ (mthong snang) = visual perception

*tongpang* ཡོང་སྤང (mthong spang) = the defilement that is purified by the path of seeing.

*tongpa-nyi* ཡོང་པ་નીડ (stong pa nyid) = (Sanskrit: *shunyata*) emptiness: the absence or emptiness of true, solid existence in any given phenomenon (emptiness does not mean nothingness)

*tongsum* ཡོང་શત્રુમ (stong gsum) = the three thousand-fold universe [i.e.  $1000^3 = 10^9$ , one billion]; also called trichiliocosm

*Tö-tsok* རྩୋ-ਤ୍ସୋਗ (bstod tshogs) = Nagarjuna's "Collection of Praises"

*toyor* ས୍ତୋର (tho yor) = scarecrow

*triulpa* ལྷୂଳା (sprul pa) = manifestation, emanation

*tsedrup* ཕ୍ରେଦ୍ରୁପ (tshad grub) = logically or validly established

*tsema* ཕ୍ରେମା (tshad ma) = (Sanskrit: *pramana*) the study of what is true, or valid; valid cognition. Often referred to as buddhist logic or epistemology.

*Tsema Rigter* ཕ୍ରେମର୍ରେଶାରାଣ୍ଟର (tshad ma rigs gter) = "The Treasury of Valid Cognition" by Sakya Pandita, a presentation of valid cognition.

*tsemé chöké* ཕ୍ରେମେ ཕ୍ରେଚୋଙ୍କା (tshad ma'i chos skad) = the expressions or vocabulary of *pramana*

*tsemé drupa* ཕ୍ରେମାસ୍ତୁରା (tshad mas grub pa) = establishment through valid cognition

*tsendzin* མକ୍ଷନ୍ତେଙ୍କ (mtshan 'dzin) = fixation on characteristics

*tsenma* མକ୍ଷନ୍ମା (mtshan ma) = mark; characteristic

*tsenma mépa* མକ୍ଷନ୍ମାମେଦା (mtshan ma med pa) = absence of grasping to characteristics

*tsenyipa* མକ୍ଷନ୍ତେଙ୍କା (mtshan nyid pa) = logician

*tsen zangpo* མକ୍ଷନ୍ମାବ୍ଜାଙ୍ପ (mtshan bzang po) = 32 major marks [literally: 'the excellent signs'. See also *kyebu chenpō tsen sumchu tsanyi* = the 32 marks of a great being]

*tsölmé* རୁଲ୍ଲମେ (rtsol med) = effortless

*tsorwa* རୋରା (tshor ba) = feeling

*tsorwa mépa* བྲ୍ରୋ ମେଦ ପା (tshor ba med pa) = without feeling

*tsülsüm* བྲୁ ଶୁଳସୁମ (tshul gsum) = the “three ways of proving” [the three characteristics that have to be present in a buddhist syllogism]

*tsültrim* བྲୁ ଶିଳାମିତ୍ତମ (tshul khrims) = (Sanskrit: *shila*) discipline, ethical conduct, morality [one of the *parchin drug* (*phar phyin drug*) = the six paramitas; also one of the *labpa sum* (*bslabs pa gsum*), three trainings (*shiksha*), the other two being *samadhi* (*ting nge 'dzin*) and *prajña* (*shes rab*)]

*tung wa* ལୁଙ୍ ବା (ltung ba) = downfall, in terms of the vows.

*Tushita*: see *Ganden*

*uma* ଦ୍ଵ୍ୟାମ (dbu ma) = Madhyamika; the madhyamika or middle way view [the middle way means not holding any conceptual or extreme views]

*Uma La Jugpa* ଦ୍ଵ୍ୟାମାତ୍ରକାଵତାରା (dbu ma la 'jug pa) = *Madhyamakavatara*, Chandrakirti's “Introduction to the Middle Way”

*umapa* ଦ୍ଵ୍ୟାମା (dbu ma pa) = a Madhyamika, follower of the Madhyamika

*Uma Rigtso* ଦ୍ଵ୍ୟାମାରିଗ୍ରହକ୍ଷଣ (dbu ma rigs tshogs) = the “Treatises of Reasoning” [by Nagarjuna]

*upasaka* (Sanskrit): see *genyen*

*wang* ଦ୍ଵାଙ୍ଗ (dbang) = (Sanskrit: *abhisheka*) empowerment.

*Wangchuk* ଦ୍ଵାଙ୍ଗକ୍ଷୁମ (dbang phyug) = (Sanskrit: *Ishvara*) “Lord” [CDD: Hindu non-sectarian term for “God”, but sometimes treated as synonymous with Shiva]

*wangpo* ଦ୍ଵାଙ୍ଗପୋ (dbang po) = the sense faculties

*wangpo nonpo* ଦ୍ଵାଙ୍ଗନୋକ୍ଷମ (dbang po rnon po) = sharp faculties, intelligent

*yenlag chunyi* ଯନ୍ତ୍ରମାଧ୍ୟମାନ୍ତ୍ରିମ (yan lag bcu gnyis) = twelve links

*yeshe* ଯେ ଶେଷ (ye shes) = (Sanskrit: *jñana*) wisdom, primal awareness

*yip* ଦ୍ଵିମା (dbyibs) = shape

*yongdrup* རྒྱଂଘྲୁପ (yongs grub) = ultimate reality; thoroughly established nature [See also *küntak* and *zhenwong*]

*yonten sum* རྩେନ ཀସୁମ (yon tan gsum) = according to Samkhya school, the three *gunas*: *rajas*, *tamas* and *sattva* [*dül* ຮୁଲ (rdul), *münpa* ສୁନ୍ପା (mun pa), and *nyingtop* ສୈଙ୍ଗ୍ତୋବ (snying stobs)]

*zhen* ສାଣ୍ଠ (gzhan) = different ; other

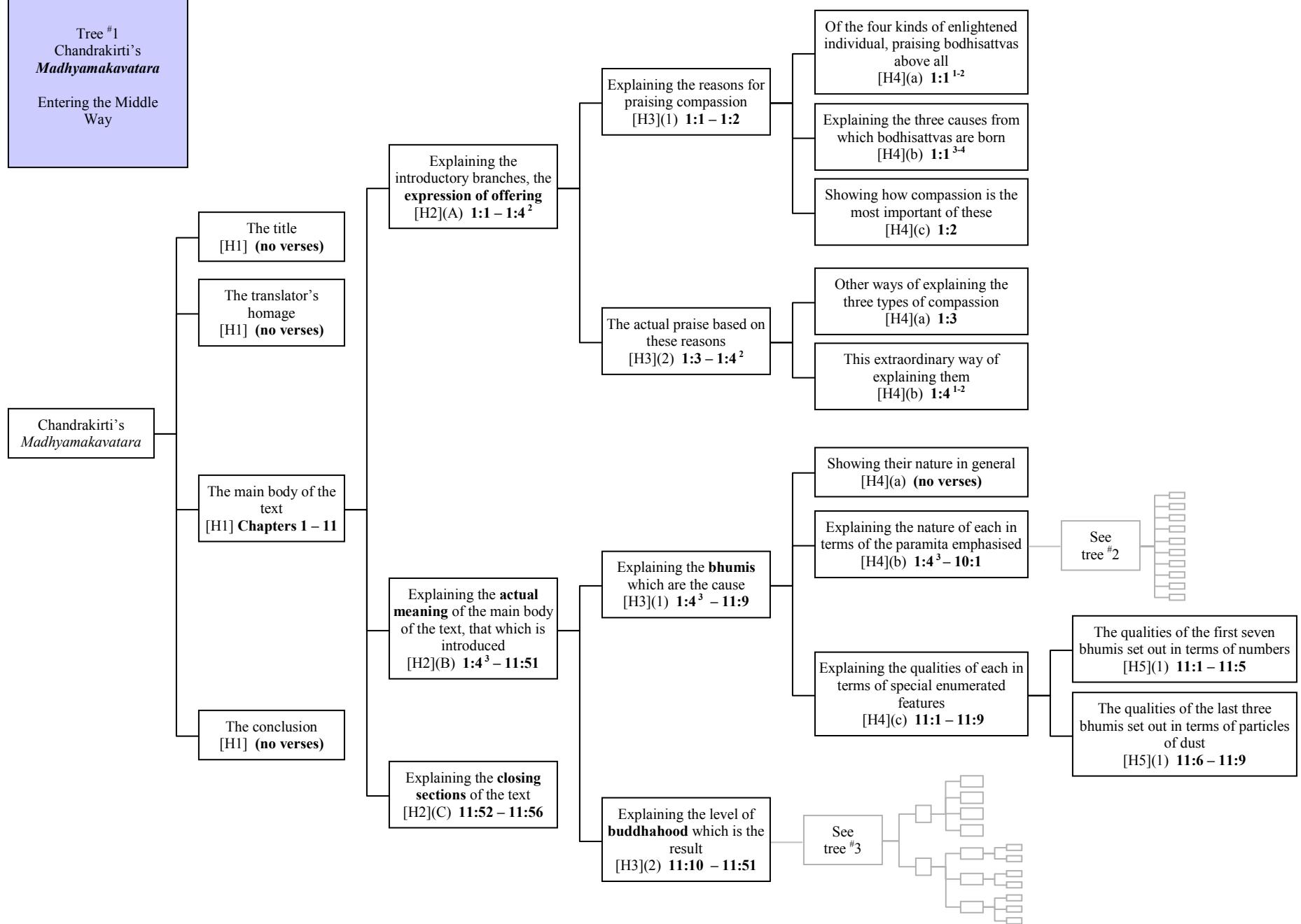
*zhenwong* ສାଣ୍ଠଦଙ୍ବ (gzhan dbang) = dependent nature [See also *küntak* and *yongdrub*]

*zhi* ສାଣ୍ଠି (gzhi) = basis; ground; substratum

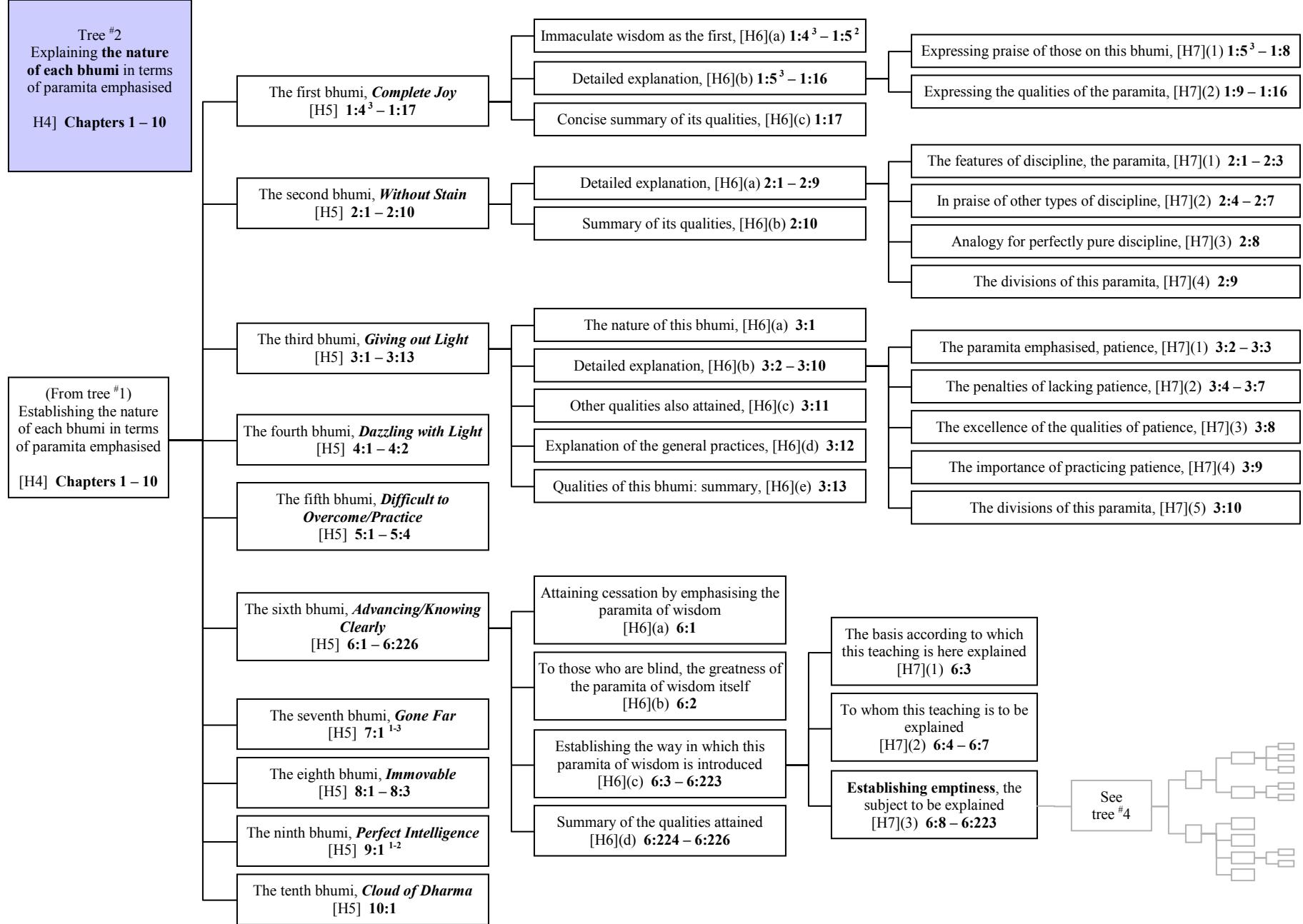
*zhi mé* ສାଣ୍ଠିମେଦ (gzhi med) = baseless

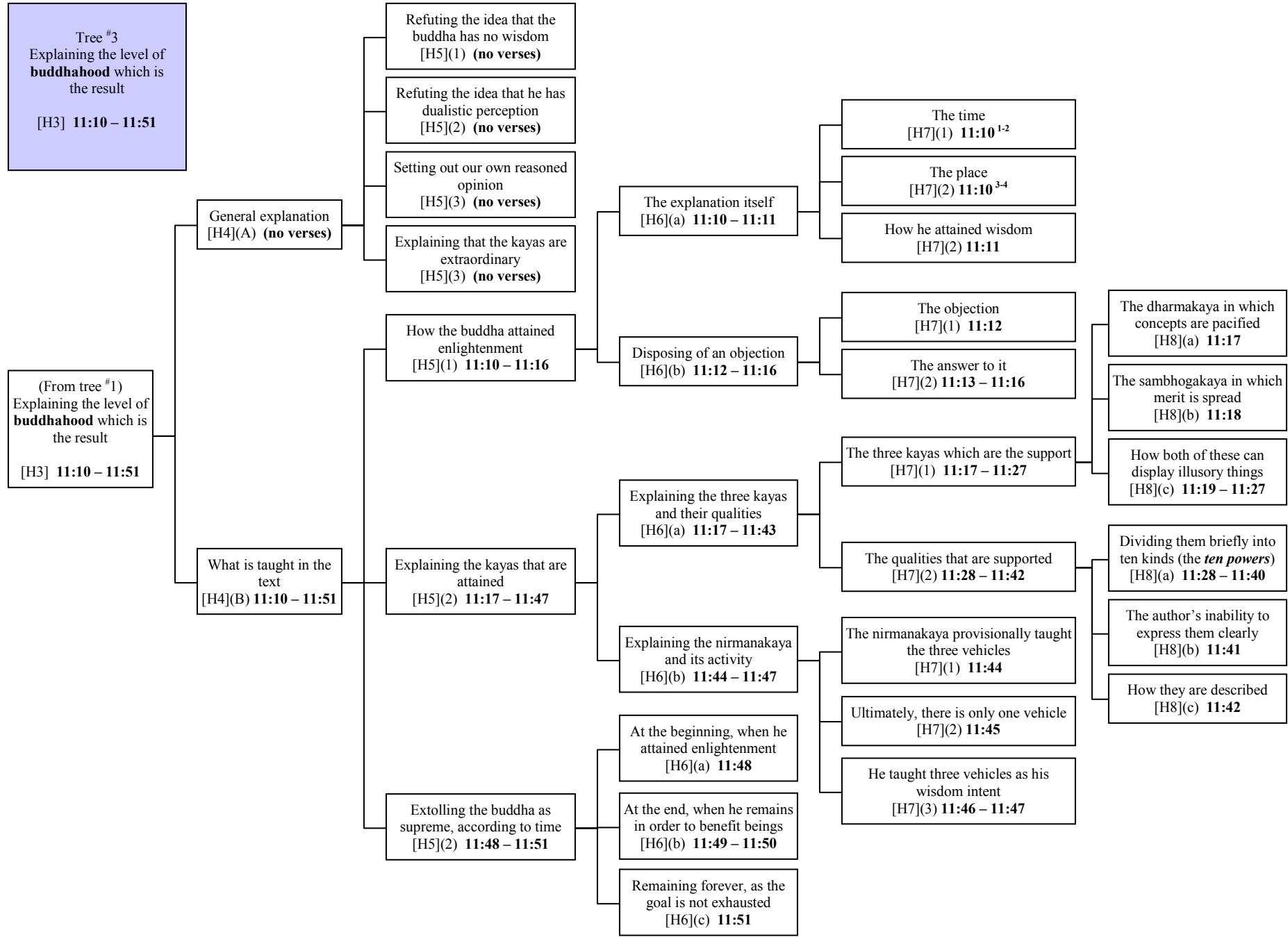
*zowé tulku* དୋଁ བା ໃ ສ୍ରୁଲ ສ୍କୁ (bzo ba'i sprul sku) = form manifestation, one of the ways a buddha may manifest: emanation of artistry; created nirmanakaya. It is held that a buddha may manifest even as inanimate objects such as cooling waters, winds, bridges, etc. in order to alleviate the sufferings of sentient beings.

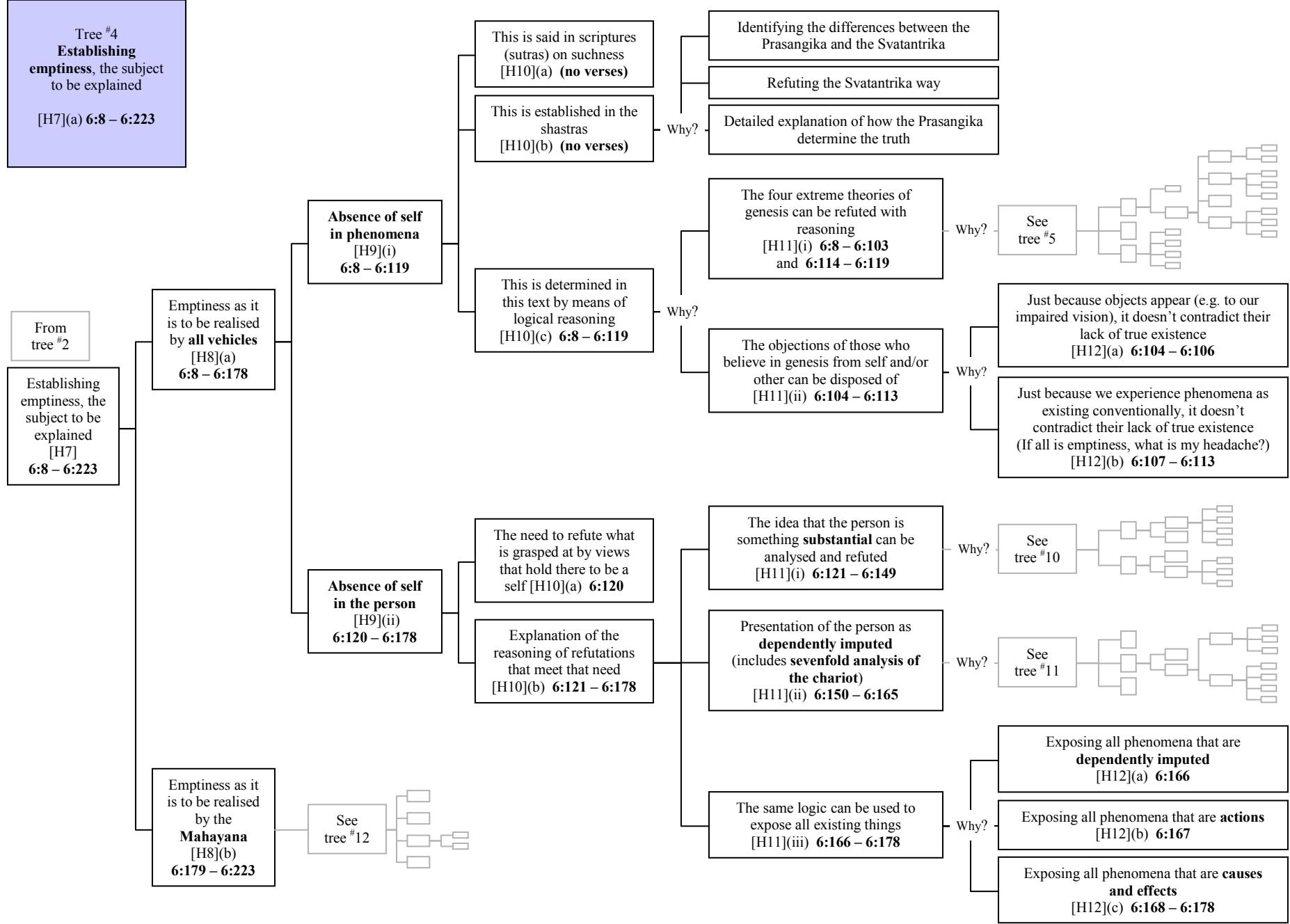
[Note: ‘CDD’ refers to the Concise Dharma Dictionary, ©Rangjung Yeshe Publications]

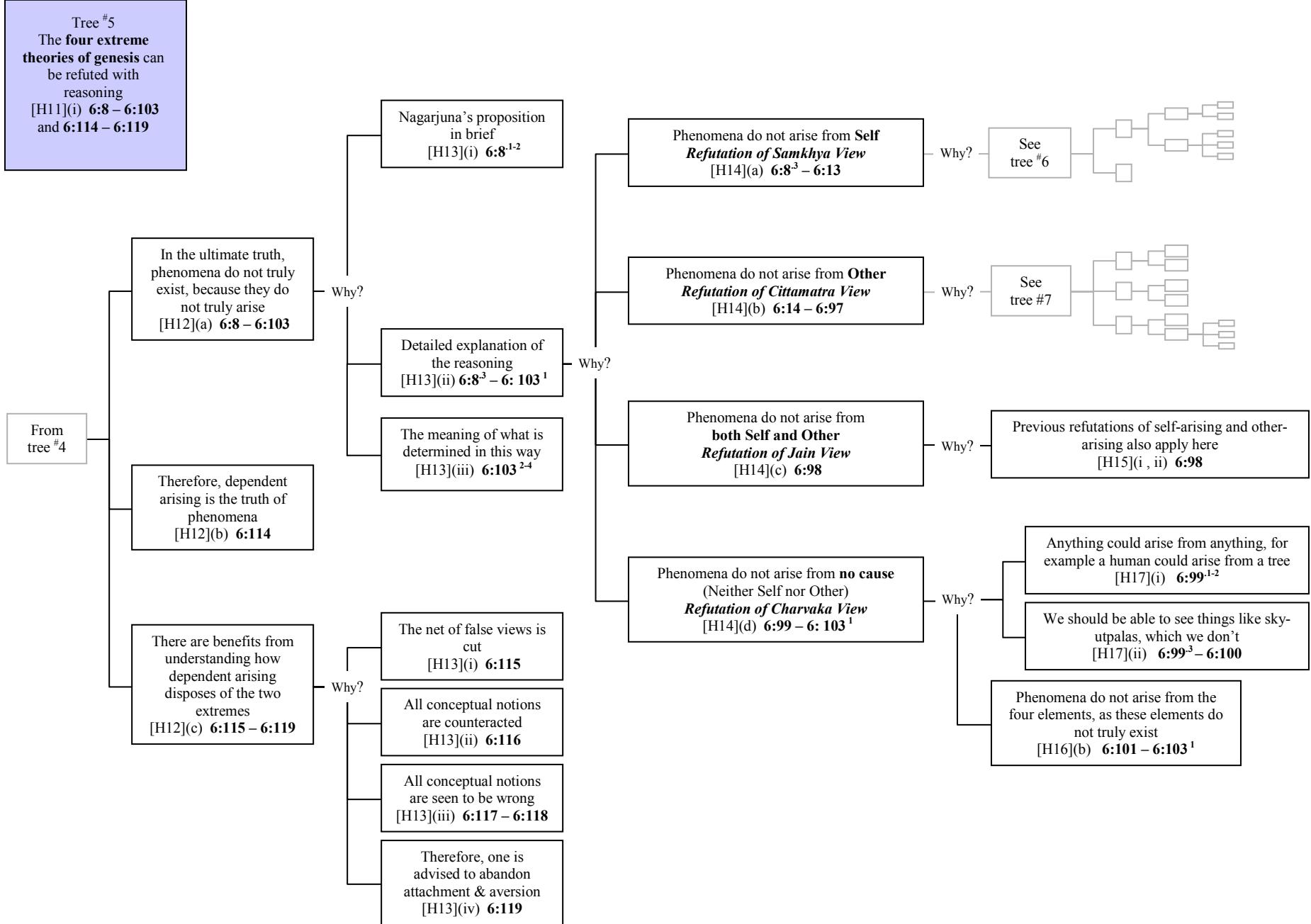


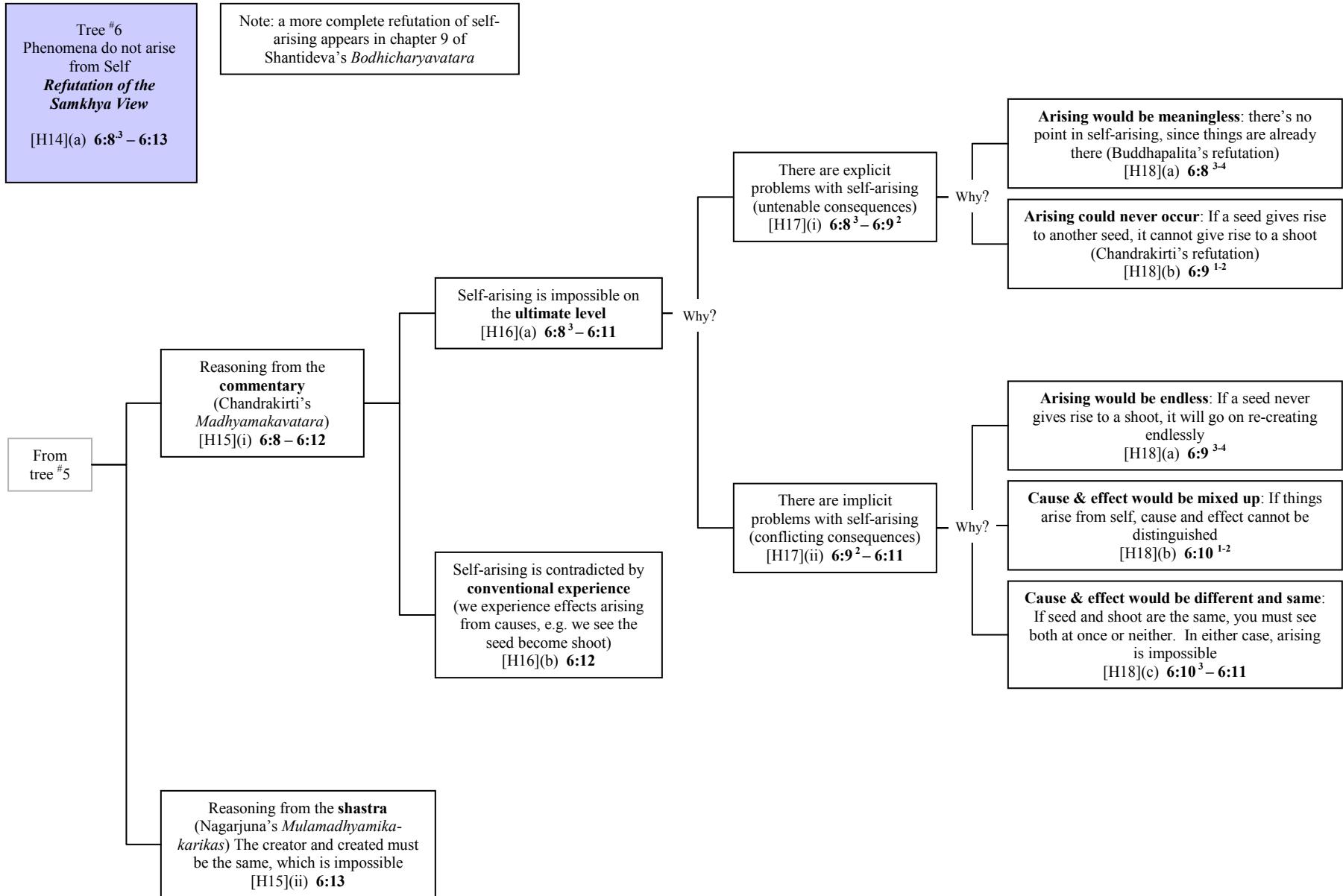
Tree #1: Chandrakirti's *Madhyamakavatara* – Structural outline arranged according to Gorampa's commentary

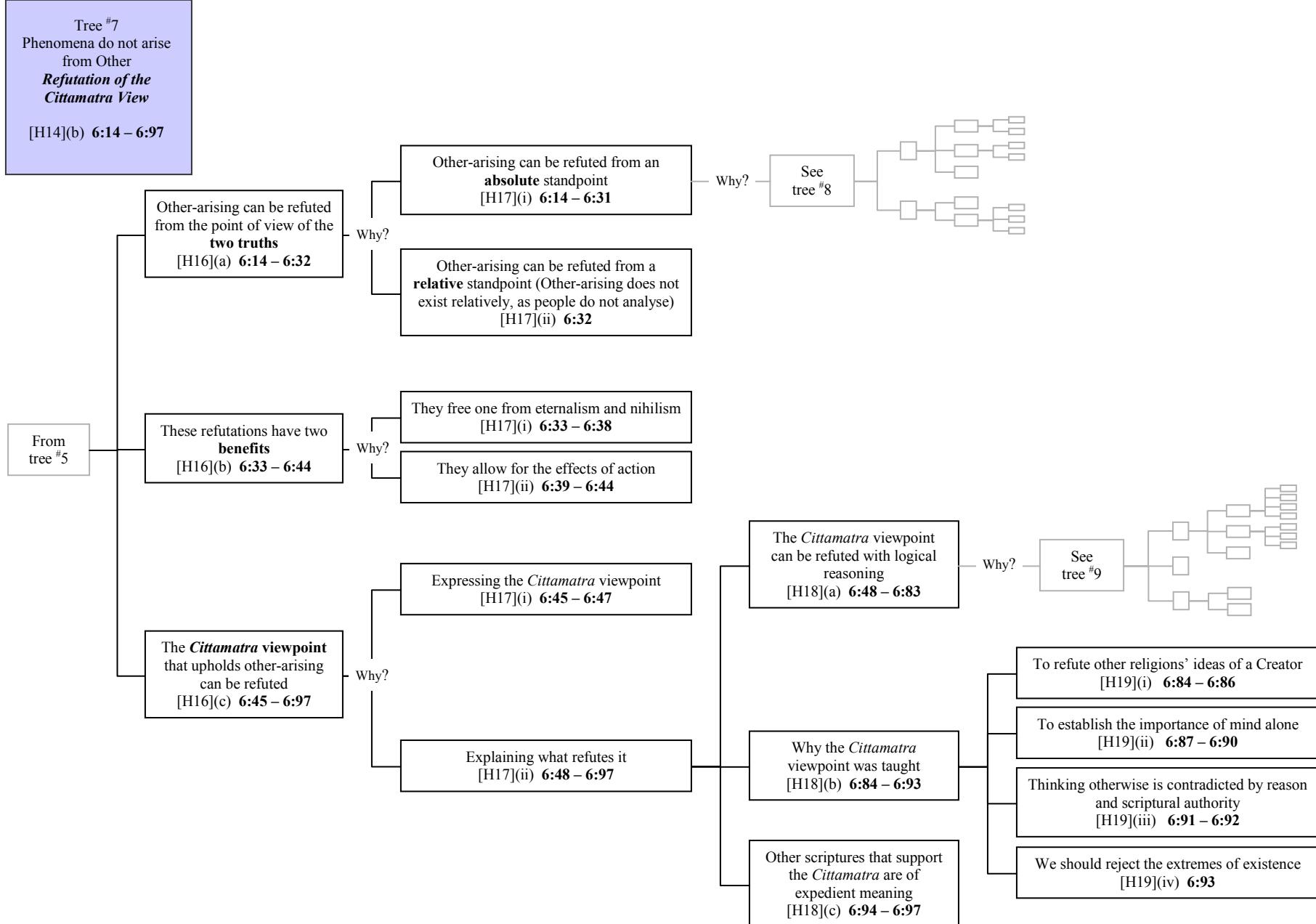


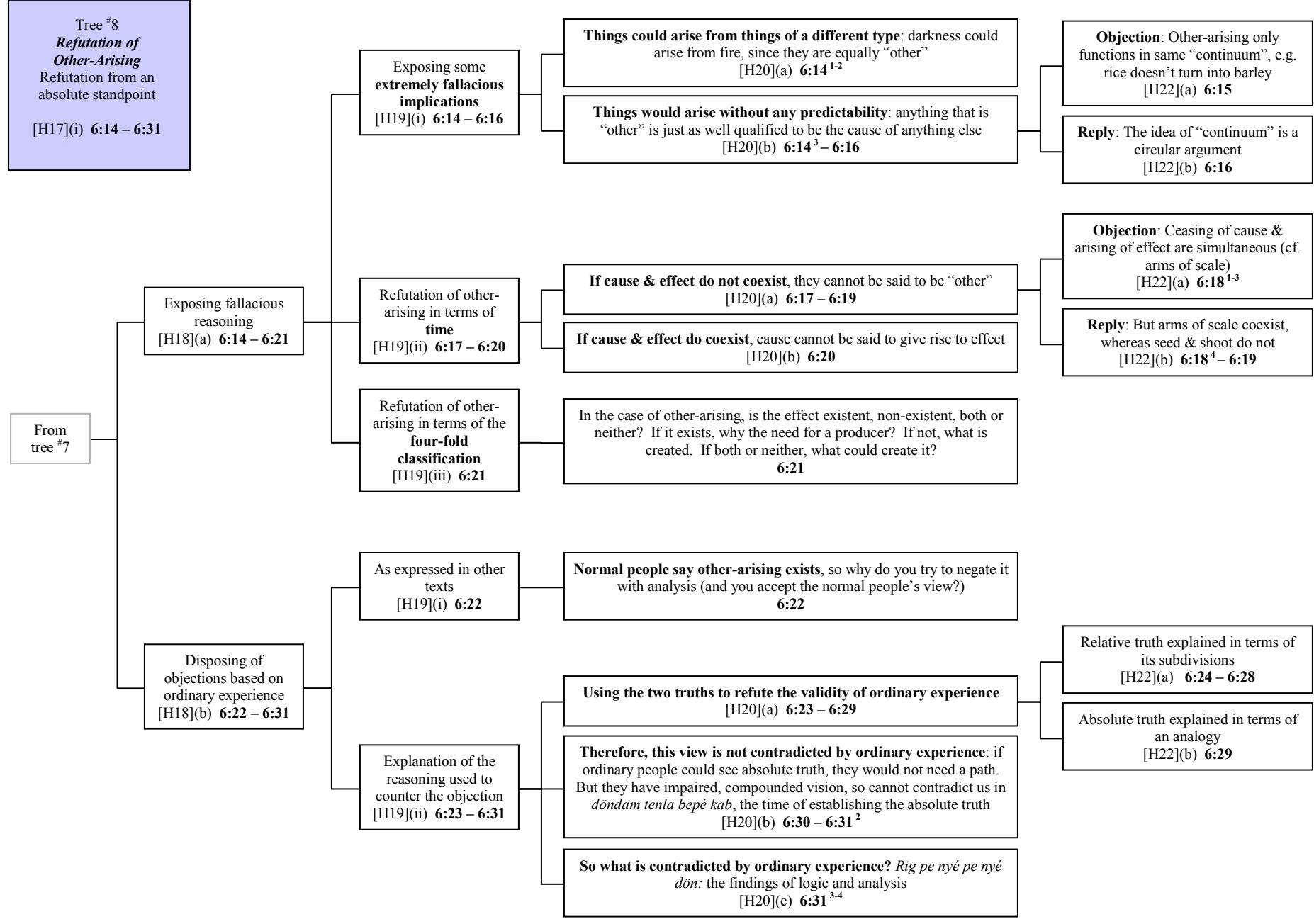


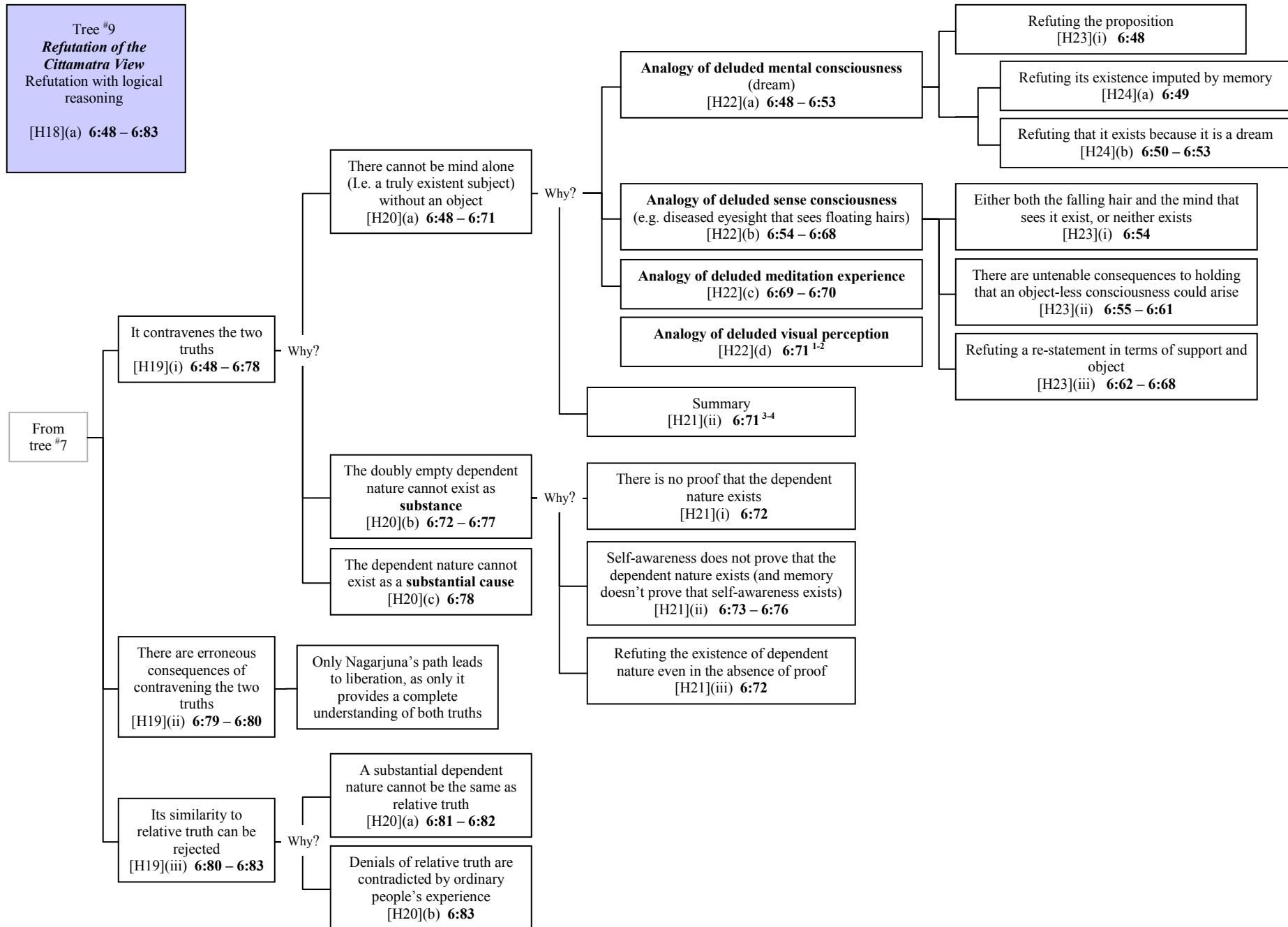


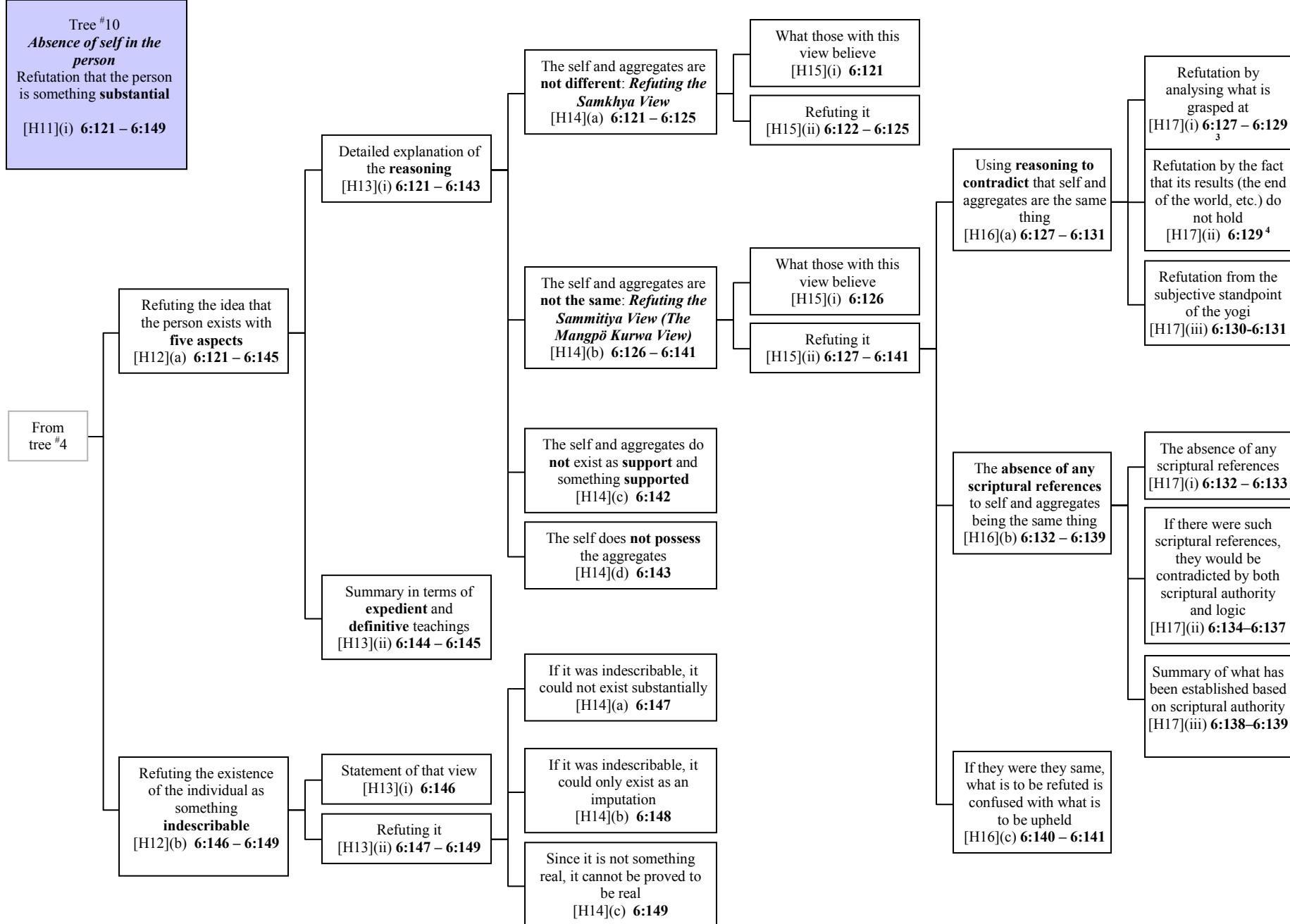


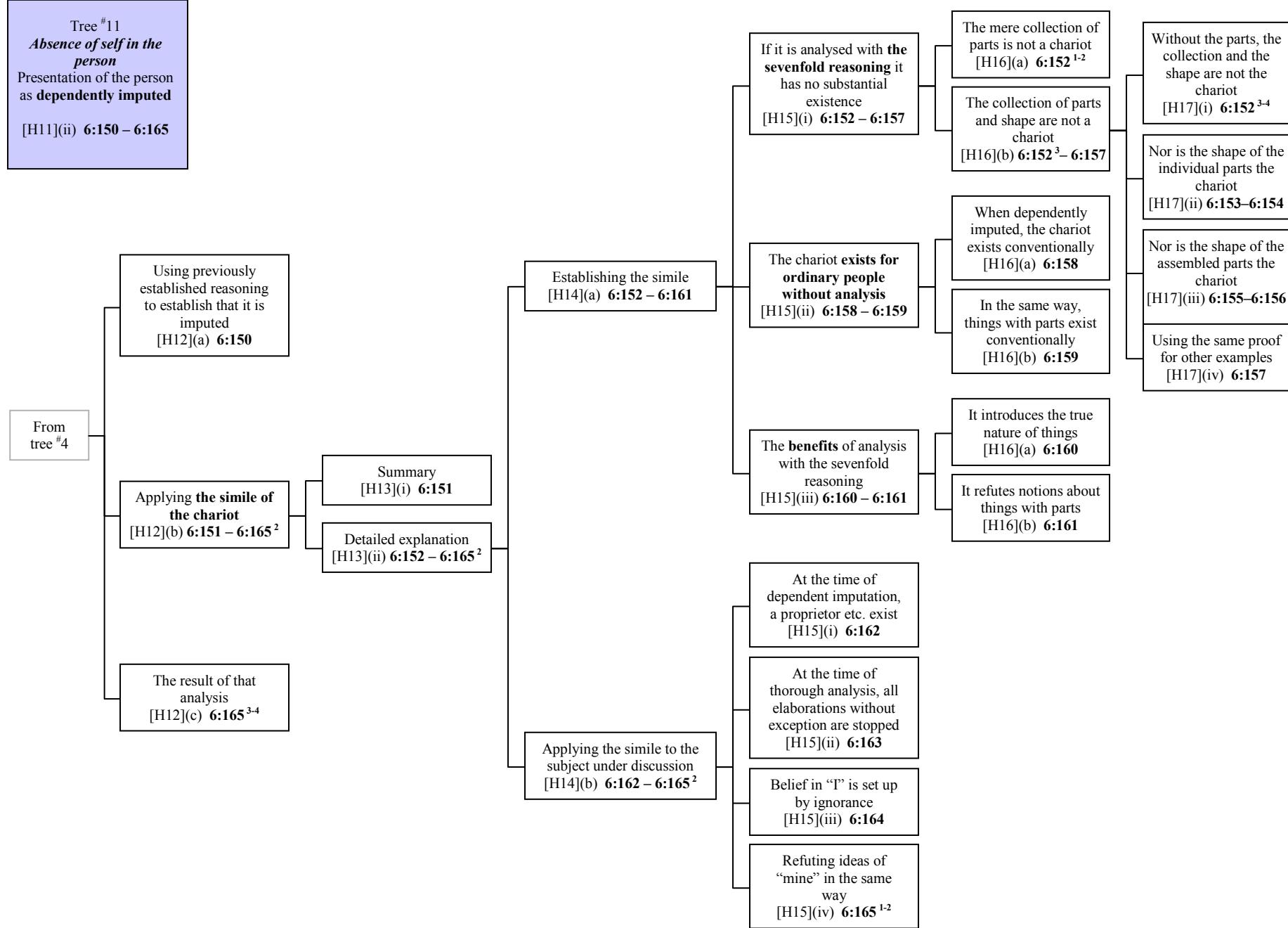


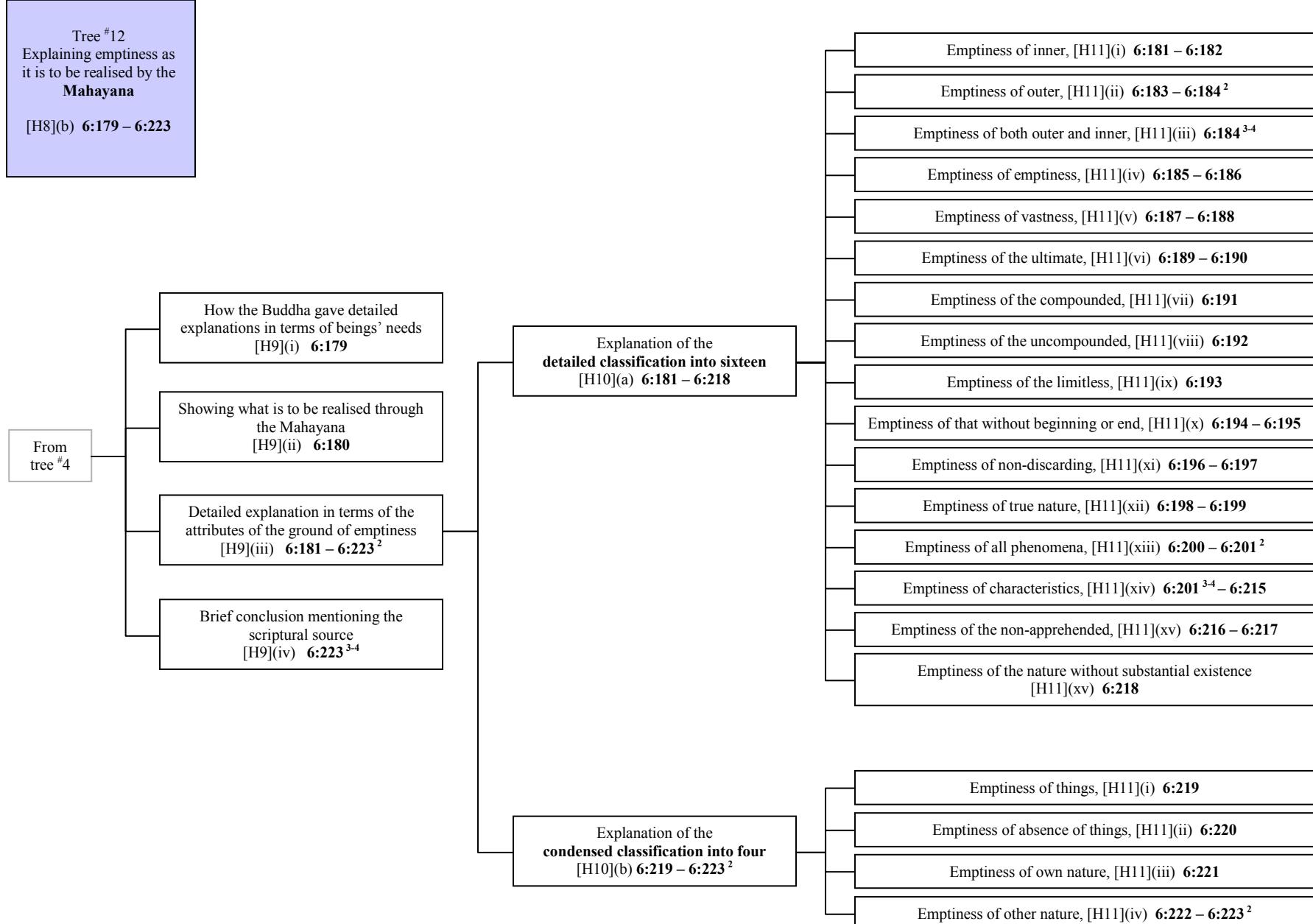












## Chandrakirti's Opponents

In Madhyamika we speak of finding the middle way beyond extremes. What is meant by an ‘extreme’? It is an attachment to a belief that is contrary to the nature of reality, and which will therefore cause us suffering. Such beliefs may be questioned, opposed, and refuted. They should be seen for what they are and discarded. Chandrakirti, like Nagarjuna before him and the Buddha himself, does not provide us with a system that we can use to pigeon-hole reality, but he does teach us how to see through the deceptions that apparently sophisticated systems of thought can provide. These deceptions may be embodied in ancient or contemporary schools of thought, but as Rinpoche points out in his teaching, such thoughts are inherent to our own ignorance, so we should not hold them as external to ourselves. Nor should we use Chandrakirti’s refutations to develop sectarian arrogance. As the Tibetan masters say, “Once the fearless garuda has slain a venomous snake, it takes no great courage on the part of the common crow to prance around with the corpse in its beak.”

This note provides a very brief overview of the main schools that are Chandrakirti’s opponents in the *Madhyamakavatara*. For more detailed information on the history and beliefs of some of the principal Indian philosophical systems and their relationship to Madhyamika thought, the interested reader is invited to consult the sources listed in the references & bibliography. Within the *Madhyamakavatara*, Chandrakirti refutes these schools as follows:

### Emptiness of phenomena:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Phenomena arise from self</li><li>- Phenomena arise from other</li><li>- Phenomena arise from both</li><li>- Phenomena arise from neither</li></ul> | <p>Samkhya (Hindu), <b>6:8<sup>3</sup> – 6:13</b><br/>Vaibhashika, Sautrantika (Buddhist), <b>6:14 – 6:44</b><br/>Cittamatra (Buddhist), <b>6:45 – 6:97</b><br/>Jain (ancient Indian, non-Hindu), <b>6:98</b><br/>Charvaka (ancient Indian atheist), <b>6:99 – 6: 103<sup>1</sup></b></p> |
|---|---|

### Emptiness of self:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Self and aggregates are different</li><li>- Self and aggregates are the same</li><li>- Self is indescribable</li></ul> | <p>Samkhya (Hindu), <b>6:121 – 6:125</b><br/>Sammitiya (Buddhist), <b>6:126 – 6:141</b><br/>Vatsiputriya (Buddhist), <b>6:146 – 6:149</b></p> |
|--|---|

### Charvaka (ancient Indian atheist), “Phenomena arise from no cause”

*Overview:* The Charvakas believe in truly existent arising, but without any cause. They were a small minority in India, where Hindus and Buddhists believed in karma, so there is not a detailed refutation of the theory. One of the chief protagonists of this school, Ajita Kesakamabali, was a contemporary of the Buddha. He recognized only four elements and declared that their combination produced certain vitality called life, a view which is very much in tune with modern theories of creation of life on earth. At the time of death these four elements would return to their respective sources, earth to earth, air to air and so on. According to the Charvakas there was no soul, death was the end of all existence, and enjoyment of this life in the bodily form should be the chief purpose of life. Whatever was within the field of perception was true and it alone existed. Anything beyond the senses was false, a mere illusion or self induced delusion. In their own texts they say things like, “Who rolled the peas? Nobody rolled them. Who sharpened

the thorns? Who made the lotus petal so smooth? Who painted the shade? Nobody, these things just come because they come". Rinpoche cautioned that we "should not underestimate this way of thinking. This habit of the Charvakas exists within us all. For one thing, we do not believe in reincarnation, past life and future life. Anyone who cannot accept future and past lives falls among the Charvakas". This has implications for extreme modern scientific materialists.

**Refutation:** 6:99 – 6: 103<sup>1</sup>, part of refutation of four extreme theories of genesis

### **Cittamattra** (Buddhist), "Phenomena arise from other"

**Overview:** The Cittamatrin school believes that everything is mind, and that this mind truly exists. Because they hold that all phenomena arise from mind, the Cittamatrins are categorised as believers in 'other-arising'. The school includes great buddhist masters such as Asanga, Vasubandhu, Dharmakirti and Shantarakshita; even Shantideva has Cittamatrin tendencies, as does the *Yogachara-Madhyamika* school. The Cittamatrins believe that everything is mind, because an object cannot exist without a subject (hence they do not accept ideas like atman or a creator). After the sixth bhumi bodhisattva meditates for a long time, the dualistic division between subject and object ceases to exist for him, and he realises that only mind exists. This truly existent mind is the cause or base of all phenomena. They support their beliefs with Buddha's words in the sutras, e.g. "Oh bodhisattvas, the three realms are just mind", and also by our experience of clarity and awareness. They believe that all phenomena, including subject and object, are imputed labels, *kūntak*, that we project onto a base called dependent reality, *zhenwong*, a single nature also referred to as *alaya*. They illustrate this with the analogy that waves (dualistic phenomena) appear when the ocean (*alaya*) is agitated by the wind (causes that activate our habitual patterns), but in reality these waves are none other than the ocean. Likewise, all phenomena are mind, *alaya*, which has three characteristics: (i) it exists inherently, independent of duality (just as a striped rope exists independently of our mistakenly thinking it is a snake); (ii) it cannot be expressed or perceived by an ordinary dualistic mind; (iii) it exists substantially. It is called 'dependent reality' as a person with dualistic perception will never perceive it as it is, but only dependently. *Alaya* itself is ultimate truth. It is *seltsam riktsam*, 'mere clarity, mere awareness' that does not depend on an object. However, the entire external world of dualistic phenomena is mere labelling that is projected onto the *alaya*, and does not truly exist. The Madhyamikas also accept that all is just *alaya*, 'mere clarity, mere awareness', but only in the conventional truth, and they hold that the Buddha taught "all is mind" not as an teaching of ultimate meaning, but in order to dispel wrong views such as a truly existing creator.

**Refutation:** 6:14 – 6:97, part of refutation of four extreme theories of genesis (note: other-arising in general is refuted from 6:14 – 6:44, and the Cittamatrin view in particular from 6:45 – 6:97)

### **Jain** (ancient Indian, non-Hindu), "Phenomena arise from both self and other"

**Overview:** Jainism is one of the most ancient religions, and it is still practiced by millions today, despite its uncompromising emphasis on austerities and self mortification. It was popularised by Mahavira (599 BC), the 24<sup>th</sup> Thirthankara of Jainism, who was a contemporary of the Buddha. Jains believe in the presence of soul in every animate and inanimate object of the universe, including the elements earth, water, wind, fire and air. The individual soul remains after liberation, but in the highest state of purity. Karma is not merely a result of action, but a real substance that enters the body where it remains until it is removed through good conduct and self purification. Jainism is not explored in detail by Chandrakirti, but he gives the example of making a vase out of clay. The clay is not separate from the vase, so there is self-arising. But the vase also depends on the potter and various kinds of equipment, so there is other-arising as well. Similarly, when a being reincarnates, the same soul or mind reincarnates. Therefore, there is self-arising. But there are also many other conditions like father, mother, culture, food and so on, and these causes are "other", so there is other-arising. These are just examples, and Rinpoche cautions that we should not think that Jainism is as simple as this. Murti explains that "Jainism is

un-Brahmanical, as it accepts a changing atman, but also un-Buddhist, as it accepts a permanent atman, besides change". As such, although Jainism attempted to synthesise the views of Buddhism and Hinduism, it found favour with neither. It had comparatively little influence on Indian philosophy, and has remained practically stationary down the ages.

**Refutation:** 6:98, part of refutation of four extreme theories of genesis

**Samkhya** (Hindu), "Phenomena arise from self" and "Self and aggregates are different"

**Overview:** Founded by Kapila, 7<sup>th</sup> century BC, the Samkhyas believe the universe is made of two fundamental constituents, *purusha* (spirit, being, awareness) and *prakriti* (matter), both of which are truly existent, i.e. ultimately real. *Purusha* activates the three states of *prakriti* (the three *gunas*): activity (*rajas*), inactivity (*tamas*) and transparency (*sattva*). As *prakriti* is activated, it becomes *buddhi* (intellect), out of which individual egos evolve. Liberation occurs at death, when the bonds between *purusha* and *prakriti* are dissolved, and individuals no longer confuse their ego with their true self. The Samkhyas also believe strongly in causation and the indestructibility of matter. Their *theory of existent effect* holds that the effect already exists in the cause of all things, although they are distinct. For example, a clay pot is somehow in the clay, but it is not the lump of clay. What is there cannot be changed into something else, what is not there cannot be born. The Samkhyas also have a very sophisticated notion of self. They say that there is a base that underlies attachment to self, and this base, the *purusha* or so-called 'self', has five qualities: (1) it experiences things, e.g. the results of karma; (2) it is permanent; (3) it is not a creator (that is done by *prakriti*); (4) it has no qualities (i.e. none of the three qualities of *prakriti*, i.e. *rajas*, *tamas* and *sattva*); (5) it does nothing, i.e. it is inactive, and our experiences of the six realms are merely *prakriti* changing its expression. There are minor differences among Hindu schools, e.g. the Vaisheshikas say that the self has some additional qualities, totalling nine different kinds of qualities, and when these nine qualities have exhausted completely, that is what they call 'nirvana'. Some other minor schools believe that the self actually does something, that it is active. The Samkhyas, the main school, believe that the self is animate, conscious. But some schools believe that the self is inanimate, unconscious. Finally, some schools have very similar beliefs to those of the Samkhyas, but they think that all sentient beings share only one self, but they all have different *prakriti*. However, all these schools share the belief that the self (*purusha*) is different from the aggregates (which are part of *prakriti*).

**Refutation:** 6:8<sup>3</sup> – 6:13, as part of refutation of four extreme theories of genesis, and also in 6:121 – 6:125, where the Samkhya view that the self and the aggregates are different is refuted.

**Sammitiya** (Buddhist), "Self and aggregates are the same"

**Overview:** Originating in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, the Sammitiyas (*mang pos bkur ba*) were the most widespread of the four sub-schools of the Vatsiputriyas, a Theravadin Buddhist school (the other three sub-schools are: Dharmottariya, Bhadrayaniya and Sannagarika). Among the 18 different schools coming from the Vaibhashika and the Sautrantika, some believe that all five aggregates are the base to which attachment to the self can occur, while others believe that only one aggregate, mind, is the base. The Sammitiyas accept the impermanence of material composites yet believe in the self as an entity which can be distinguished from the 5 skandhas but not exist independently of them. This self serves as the carrier of the 5 skandhas through the cycle of births and rebirths of beings.

**Refutation:** 6:126 – 6:141, while establishing emptiness of the self.

**Sautrantika** (Buddhist), "Phenomena arise from other" (See also Vaibhashika)

**Overview:** The Sautrantikas refine the Vaibhashika division of the two truths (see below) and associate them with a valid way of knowing specific to each. Valid conceptual cognition (*rtog-*

*pa tshad-ma*) cognizes its object through an idea that conceals something deeper (i.e. the object on which it is imputed and which it resembles). Valid non-conceptual bare cognition (*mngon-sum tshad-ma*) cognizes its object without such a medium. Thus relative truths are mental constructs or projections which are apprehended by valid conceptual cognition, and which are based on the conventions (*tha-snyad*) of concepts and ideas. Ultimate truth is what appears directly to valid non-conceptual cognition (*r tog-med tshad-ma*) i.e. valid bare perception. The Vaibhashika theory of other-arising also applies for the Sautrantika.

**Refutation:** 6:14 – 6:44, as part of refutation of four extreme theories of genesis.

### **Vaibhashika** (Buddhist), “Phenomena arise from other” (See also Sautrantika)

**Overview:** Buddhism has four main philosophical schools: Madhyamika and Cittamatra (the Mahayana schools), and Sautrantika and Vaibhashika (the Hinayana schools). The schools differ as regards to how they define the two truths, i.e. relative and ultimate truth. The Vaibhashikas define the two in terms of entities and their parts: for example, a vase and the tiniest particles comprising the vase. Relative truth comprises phenomena whose conventional identity (*tha-snyad-du yod-pa'i bdag*) when we can no longer cognize we dissect them physically or analyse them mentally. Relative truth includes phenomena such as physical forms, the stream of mental activity, and abstractions such as an hour made up of many seconds. Ultimate truth comprises phenomena whose conventional identity we can still cognize when dissecting or analyzing them, specifically (i) the partless particle, the smallest unit of matter; (ii) the partless moment/mind, the smallest unit of change. Hence the school is named ‘Vaibhashika’, which means ‘proponent of discrete entities’ (*bye brag smra ba*). The name ‘Vaibhashika’ is also explained as ‘those who follow the *Mahavibhasa*’, a great encyclopedia of abhidharma which exists in Chinese (translated from the Sanskrit, which is no longer extant). This was the background for Vasubandhu’s thought which he learned in Kashmir. The more proper name for this school, reflecting their philosophical position, is ‘*sarvastivadin*’: those who follow (*vadin*) the doctrine that dharmas actually exist (*asti*) in all three temporal modes of past, present and future (*sarvam*). The Vaibhashikas are believers in other-arising because all phenomena arise from these truly existing particles or moments that are different from the phenomena themselves (i.e. ‘other’). The Sautrantika view is similar (see above), and the Cittamatra school has extensively defeated the ideas of both the Vaibhashikas and Sautrantikas.

**Refutation:** 6:14 – 6:44, as part of refutation of four extreme theories of genesis.

### **Vatsiputriya** (Buddhist), “Self is indescribable”

**Overview:** The Vatsiputriyas (*Nemapuwa*) originated in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, when Vatsiputra prepared a version the abhidharma in 9 sections which he claimed to have received from Shariputra and Rahula. Early buddhists were divided over whether the concept of ‘person’ should be considered a real principle or whether it is merely a word used in conventional language, like ‘being’ or ‘soul’. In response, Vatsiputra formulated his theory of the *pudgala*, the permanent substance of an individual, that is neither the same as nor different from the skandhas. Like all Buddhists the Vatsiputriyas rejected the Hindu concept of an eternal soul, but they also rejected the orthodox Theravadin theory that a living being is nothing but the five groups with the senses. They found it difficult to define what a ‘person’ could be, as a subject that continued and transmigrated, and decided that it could not be said what it was, like the undetermined questions to which there was no answer. The Vatsiputriyas believe that we cannot say that the self and the aggregates are the same, separate, permanent or impermanent. Their view is that this is inexpressible. But at the same time, they say that the aggregates and the self do exist substantially. They hold belief that this inexpressible thing can be perceived by the six kinds of consciousness, and that it is the ground when grasping to the self arises. This school is similar to the Prasangika Madhyamika in one way, in that they say that the base of this grasping to the self is the self, not the aggregates. But they are unlike some of the other substantialist

schools, who believe that the ground exists substantially, but the label exists only as something imputed. By contrast, the Vatsiputriyas believe that both ground and label exist substantially. **Refutation:** 6:146 – 6:149, while establishing emptiness of the self.

**Vaisheshika** (Hindu), a sub-school of the Samkhyas (see: Samkhya)

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