



## CHAPTER 3: SAMSARIC PHENOMENA—AGGREGATES AND SENSE-SOURCES

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**Tibetan:** རིམ་ཁང་གསུམ་པ། (Third Lecture Hall)

**Location:** Volume 1, Sections 01-03-01-01 through 01-03-03-01

**Tibetan Lines:** 1128-1581

**Total Liturgical Lines:** ~454

This chapter transitions from the macrocosmic architecture of Chapter 2 to the microcosmic analysis of individual experience. Longchenpa systematically presents the classical Abhidharma framework of **elements**, **aggregates**, and **sense-sources** that form the basis of conditioned existence—while simultaneously preparing the ground for the Dzogchen critique that will emerge in later chapters.

The presentation follows the **standard Buddhist phenomenology** but with a crucial distinction: Longchenpa distinguishes between **contaminated** (zag bcas) and **uncontaminated** (zag med) aggregates, foreshadowing the Dzogchen view that the nature of mind is primordially pure despite the overlay of temporary defilements.

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# SECTION BREAKDOWN

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## *Section 1: 01-03-01-01.txt (89 lines)*

**Topic:** The Five Elements (Byung ba lnga)

The chapter opens with an analysis of the **five great elements** ('byung ba chen po lnga) that serve as the foundation for all form-possessing existence.

### **The Five Elements Defined:**

**1. Earth Element (sa):** - Characteristic: Firm and solid, providing foundation - Function: Supports all that rests upon it - Outer aspect: The physical earth, solidity, stability - Inner aspect: Solidity of body, bones, flesh

**2. Water Element (chu):** - Characteristic: Moist and flowing, cohering - Function: Holds and maintains, allowing cohesion - Outer aspect: Rivers, oceans, fluids - Inner aspect: Blood, lymph, bodily fluids

**3. Fire Element (me):** - Characteristic: Hot and burning, ripening - Function: Transforms, matures, brings to completion - Outer aspect: Sun, fire, heat - Inner aspect: Digestion, metabolism, body heat

**4. Wind Element (rlung):** - Characteristic: Moving and uplifting, animating - Function: Sustains activity, provides vitality - Outer aspect: Wind, air, atmospheric movements - Inner aspect: Breath, vital energy, circulation

**5. Space Element (nam mkha':** - Characteristic: Vast and open, accommodating - Function: Gives room for all phenomena without obstruction - Outer aspect: Physical space, sky - Inner aspect: Cavities of body, mental spaciousness

**The Interdependence of Elements:** "Through the harmonious interaction of these five, vessels and essences are produced and maintained throughout the three realms."

**Elements Gathered by Outer Objects vs. Inner Mind:** - **Outer elements:** Arise from the vast basis of beings' accumulated actions - **Inner elements:** Arise naturally from the luminosity of inner mind itself - **Key distinction:** Outer elements are solid and substantial; inner elements are luminous and dream-like

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## **Section 2: 01-03-02-01.txt (61 lines)**

**Topic:** The Five Aggregates (Phung po lnga)

This section presents the **five skandhas** (phung po lnga)—the heaps or aggregates that constitute the basis of personality.

**The Five Aggregates:**

- 1. Form Aggregate (gzugs kyi phung po):** - Includes the five sense objects and the five sense faculties - The physical basis for experience - Divided into outer (vessels) and inner (bodies)
- 2. Feeling Aggregate (tshor ba'i phung po):** - Three types: pleasant, painful, neutral - The basic hedonic tone of experience - Arises through contact between sense faculty and object
- 3. Discrimination Aggregate ('du shes kyi phung po):** - Recognizes and labels objects - Discriminates: "This is blue," "This is pleasant" - Functions in conjunction with the sixth consciousness
- 4. Formation Aggregate ('du byed kyi phung po):** - Volitional factors and mental formations - Includes all mental factors except feeling and discrimination - The karmic aspect of mind—choices and intentions
- 5. Consciousness Aggregate (rnam shes kyi phung po):** - The six or eight consciousnesses - The basis of knowing - Includes eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mental consciousnesses

**Crucial Distinction: Contaminated vs. Uncontaminated:** - **Contaminated aggregates** (zag bcas kyi phung po): Associated with worldly beings caught in cyclic existence - **Uncontaminated aggregates** (zag med kyi phung po): Associated with noble beings who have transcended the world - **Dzogchen significance:** Even the aggregates are primordially pure in their essential nature

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## **Section 3: 01-03-03-01.txt (304 lines)**

**Topic:** Sense-Sources and Elements (Skye mched dang khams)

This extensive section analyzes the **twelve sense-sources** (skye mched bcu gnyis) and **eighteen elements** (khams bco brgyad) that explain how objects, faculties, and consciousnesses interact to produce experience.

**The Twelve Sense-Sources:**

**The Six Inner Sense-Sources (Faculties):** - 1. Eye sense-source (mig gi skye mched) - 2. Ear sense-source (rna ba'i skye mched) - 3. Nose sense-source (sna'i skye mched) - 4. Tongue sense-source (lce'i skye mched) - 5. Body sense-source (lus kyi skye mched) - 6. Mind sense-source (yid kyi skye mched)

**The Six Outer Sense-Sources (Objects):** - 1. Form sense-source (gzugs kyi skye mched) - 2. Sound sense-source (sgra'i skye mched) - 3. Odor sense-source (dri'i skye mched) - 4. Taste sense-source (ro'i skye mched) - 5. Touch sense-source (reg bya'i skye mched) - 6. Phenomena sense-source (chos kyi skye mched)

**The Eighteen Elements:** The elements (khams) are the combination of: - Six faculties (dbang po) - Six objects (yul) - Six consciousnesses (rnam shes)

**The Mechanism of Perception:** "When three factors assemble—faculty, object, and consciousness—perception occurs."

**The Process:** 1. **Faculty** (sense organ) → potential for perception 2. **Object** → that which is perceived 3. **Consciousness** → the knowing of the object 4. **Contact** (sparsha) → the meeting of these three 5. **Feeling** (vedanā) → the experience of pleasant, painful, or neutral

**The All-Ground Consciousness (Kun gzhi rnam shes):** - The basis or storehouse consciousness - Holds the seeds or latencies of all actions - Projects the appearance of world and beings - **Dzogchen critique:** This is still dualistic; the true basis transcends the all-ground

**The Five Doors of Perception:** The five sense consciousnesses (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body) each have: - Their specific faculty - Their specific object - Their specific mode of knowing

**The Mental Consciousness:** - Knows objects of the five senses - Knows mental objects (concepts, memories) - Functions as the basis for thought and reasoning

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# KEY TECHNICAL TERMS INTRODUCED

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## *The Five Elements*

- **Earth** (sa): Solidity, foundation, support
- **Water** (chu): Cohesion, fluidity, moisture
- **Fire** (me): Heat, transformation, maturation
- **Wind** (rlung): Movement, vitality, animation
- **Space** (nam mkha'): Accommodation, openness, non-obstruction

## *The Five Aggregates*

- **Form** (gzugs): Physical component, sense faculties and objects
- **Feeling** (tshor ba): Hedonic tone—pleasant, painful, neutral
- **Discrimination** ('du shes): Recognition and labeling
- **Formation** ('du byed): Volitional factors, mental formations
- **Consciousness** (rnam shes): The knowing aspect

## *The Twelve Sense-Sources*

- **Six faculties** (dbang po): Eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind
- **Six objects** (yul): Form, sound, odor, taste, touch, phenomena

## *The Eighteen Elements*

- Faculties + Objects + Consciousnesses = 18 elements

## *Key Abhidharma Terms*

- **Contaminated** (zag bcas): Associated with afflictions and cyclic existence
- **Uncontaminated** (zag med): Pure, associated with liberation
- **All-ground consciousness** (kun gzhi rnam shes): Storehouse consciousness (Yogācāra concept)

- **Sense-source** (skye mched): The "entrance" or "door" of perception
  - **Element** (khams): Constituent, component, basic factor
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## READING GUIDANCE

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**For Practitioners:** This chapter provides the **anatomy of delusion**. Understanding these components reveals: - The **impermanence** of all conditioned phenomena—none of these aggregates is a permanent self - The **mechanism of suffering**—how contact leads to feeling leads to craving - The **basis for meditation**—working with the aggregates in practice

**Practice applications:** - **Analytical meditation:** Analyze your experience into these components - **Deconstruction:** See that there is no permanent self within the aggregates - **Impurity meditation:** Recognize the unsatisfactory nature of conditioned existence - **Preparation for Dzogchen:** These are the components that must be transcended, yet their nature is primordially pure

**For Scholars:** Note the sophisticated phenomenological analysis: - **Systematic presentation:** From elements → aggregates → sense-sources → consciousnesses - **Classical framework:** Standard Abhidharma presentation - **Dzogchen foreshadowing:** The distinction between contaminated and uncontaminated - **Integration:** How these factors combine to create the illusion of a self

**Critical Points:** 1. The aggregates are **not the self**—they are the basis for the mistaken imputation of self 2. The elements are not merely physical—they have **inner** and **outer** aspects 3. The sense-sources explain **how** experience occurs, not **why** it is deluded 4. This analysis sets up the **negation** that will lead to Dzogchen affirmation

**Scripture Citations:** - **Abhidharma texts:** Abhidharmakośa, Abhidharmasamuccaya - **Sun-Moon-Union Tantra** (nyi zla kha sbyor): On the elements - **Sūtras:** Various sūtras on the aggregates and sense-sources

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# QUALITY NOTE

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**Chapter 3 Status:** A++ Exemplar Standard

All sections have been upgraded to exemplar quality with: - Complete sentences with proper grammar and punctuation - Technical term precision with appropriate diacritics - Majestic Vajra Speech cadence - STRICT capitalization per project standards - Proper <tantra> and <list> tagging

**Files Polished:** 3 sections, ~454 lines

**Primary Focus:** Five elements, five aggregates, twelve sense-sources, eighteen elements

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## CONNECTION TO CHAPTER 4

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Chapter 3 established **how ordinary experience is constructed**; Chapter 4 will present **how this construction is misinterpreted by various philosophical systems**. The progression: - **Chapter 3**: The building blocks of experience (descriptive) - **Chapter 4**: The mistaken views about those building blocks (critical)

This mirrors the path of wisdom: 1. First understand the **mechanism** of perception (Chapter 3) 2. Then understand the **errors** in interpreting that mechanism (Chapter 4) 3. Finally recognize the **nature beyond both** (later chapters)

**The key connection:** The philosophical systems of Chapter 4 all take some aspect of the aggregates/elements/sense-sources as ultimately real—whether the material elements, the perceiving consciousness, or the objects perceived. The Dzogchen view to be presented later transcends all these partial views by recognizing the **primordial purity** that underlies all appearances.

Understanding the Abhidharma framework of Chapter 3 is **essential** for understanding the refutations of Chapter 4. Longchenpa assumes familiarity with these concepts as he demonstrates how each philosophical system fixates on one aspect while missing the whole.

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