

CHAPTER 8: THE PRIMORDIAL GROUND

Tibetan: རིམ་ཁང་བརྒྱད་པ། (Eighth Lecture Hall)

Location: Volume 1, Sections 01-08-01-01 through 01-08-08-01

Tibetan Lines: 10472-11334

Total Liturgical Lines: ~863

Following the comprehensive presentations of philosophical views in Chapter 4, methods in Chapters 5-7, this chapter turns to the heart of Dzogchen metaphysics: the nature of the **Ground** (gzhi) itself. Longchenpa systematically examines **seven distinct views** on the basis held by various proponents within the Great Perfection tradition, demonstrating how each represents a partial understanding that fails to capture the complete non-dual reality.

The chapter culminates in establishing the **definitive view**: the non-dual basis where **primordial purity** (ka dag) and **spontaneous presence** (lhun grub) are inseparable, like the sun and its rays. This realization forms the foundation for all subsequent practice and the basis for understanding how delusion arises (Chapter 9) and how liberation is achieved (Chapters 17-25).

SECTION BREAKDOWN

Section 1: 01-08-01-01.txt (76 lines)

Topic: Introduction to the Seven Views on the Basis

This opening section presents the seven views that various proponents hold regarding the nature of the Ground.

The Seven Views on the Basis:

- **1. Primordial Purity** (ka dag): The view that holds the basis as pure from the very beginning
- **2. Spontaneous Presence** (lhun grub): The view that holds the basis as naturally complete with all qualities
- **3. Uncertainty** (ma nges pa): The view that holds the basis as indeterminate, neither this nor that
- **4. Certainty** (nges pa): The view that holds the basis as definitively established
- **5. Changeability** (bsgyur rung): The view that holds the basis as transformable into anything
- **6. Acceptance of Anything** (ci yang rung): The view that holds the basis as accepting whatever arises
- **7. Multiplicity** (sna tshogs): The view that holds the basis as manifold and various

How These Views Arise:

Each view is posited by seeing one limited aspect of the single primordial purity: - From the aspect of the great sphere free from elaborations → **Primordial Purity** - From the aspect of natural expression with qualities → **Spontaneous Presence** - From the aspect of freedom from extremes → **Uncertainty** - From the aspect of unchanging nature → **Certainty** - From the aspect of appearing as whatever manifests → **Changeability** - From the aspect of all phenomena arising equally → **Acceptance** - From the aspect of variegated appearance → **Multiplicity**

"These seven are posited through adhering to one limited aspect or another of the single primordial purity, each proponent accepting their own view as ultimate."

Section 2: 01-08-02-01.txt (151 lines)

Topic: Scriptural Sources for the Seven Views

This section presents the **tantric sources** that support each of the seven views, demonstrating that each has valid scriptural basis within the Great Perfection tradition.

From the Thalgyur Tantra: "The manner of abiding spontaneously established from the beginning also manifests through the manner of the seven bases: - Multiplicity appears as spontaneous presence from its own side - From the aspect of what changes, it is uncertain - From what does not change, there is certainty - The measure of appearance is transformable into anything - Because all arise, assertions are made - Because confusion is purified as primordially pure - All manners of appearance are called variegated."

From the Klongdrukpa (Six Spaces Tantra): "The basis spontaneously established from the very beginning, although not existing as a singular entity that can be grasped, from the aspect appearing as confusion to deluded minds, when those who realize the truth posit their determinations, it appears in the manner of seven distinct stages.

Yet the appearance of these seven stages arises from the single manner of appearance of the nature itself. Because the singular truth is not known by ordinary minds, it appears thus manifold."

Detailed Correspondences: - **Spontaneous Presence:** Multiplicity gathered as essential nature - **Uncertainty:** Aspect of mind that transforms, appearing to delusion - **Certainty:** Remembrance without movement, abiding in own face - **Changeability:** Mind through effort appears - **Acceptance of Anything:** Whatever appears appears as own nature - **Multiplicity:** Various individual manners appear - **Primordial Purity:** Stains appear as primordially non-existent

The Essential Point: "All of these arise from the stages of mind's own delusion, while one's own face is primordially pure without change."

Section 3: 01-08-03-01.txt (23 lines)

Topic: Refutation of Spontaneous Presence as Ultimate

This section begins the **systematic refutation** of the seven views as ultimate positions.

The Critique: Like blind men describing an elephant, each grasping only a part—when proponents of philosophical views hold tenets by fixating on one limited aspect of

awareness as complete realization, each establishing their acceptance deeply as the whole truth.

Refutation of Spontaneous Presence: - **Position held:** In India and universally, that spontaneous presence is ultimate without falling into extremes - **Logical analysis:** If the basis were spontaneously accomplished from the first without cause: - Bondage itself would be spontaneous presence - No difference between bondage and liberation - Nirvāṇa would not depend on conditions (knowing one's face, effort, practice) - **Result:** The path becomes meaningless

The Error: Taking spontaneous presence as ultimate reifies the appearances while missing the empty nature. It is like admiring the rays while ignoring the sun itself.

Section 4: 01-08-04-01.txt (33 lines)

Topic: Refutation of Uncertainty and Certainty

Refutation of Uncertainty: - If the basis were truly uncertain/indeterminate, then: - No definitive path could be established - No certainty of liberation - All views would be equally valid (including wrong views) - **Result:** Complete relativism, undermining practice

Refutation of Certainty: - If the basis were fixed and certain as one thing: - No room for the variety of appearances - The display of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa could not arise - **Result:** Fatalism, no possibility of transformation

The Middle Way: The basis is neither uncertain nor certain in the way these proponents imagine. It transcends both positions while accommodating both.

Section 5: 01-08-05-01.txt (18 lines)

Topic: Refutation of Changeability and Acceptance

Refutation of Changeability: - If the basis could change into anything whatsoever: - The basis would be unstable, unreliable - Liberation would be impermanent - **Result:** The basis would be no different from ordinary compounded phenomena

Refutation of Acceptance: - If the basis accepts anything that arises: - No distinction between pure and impure - No need for purification practice - **Result:** License for unethical conduct, antinomianism

The Error: Both views fail to recognize that while the basis **appears** as various, its **nature** never changes; and while it accommodates all appearances, it is not tainted by them.

Section 6: 01-08-06-01.txt (7 lines)

Topic: Refutation of Multiplicity

Refutation of Multiplicity: - If the basis were truly manifold and various: - It would be multiple entities, not a single basis - No underlying unity could be found - **Result:** Fragmentation, no possibility of recognizing the one nature

The Critique: The appearance of multiplicity is not denied, but it is not the **ultimate** nature of the basis. The various colors of the rainbow do not make the light itself multiple.

Section 7: 01-08-07-01.txt (52 lines)

Topic: The Definitive View—Non-Dual Primordial Purity and Spontaneous Presence

This section establishes the **authentic view** that transcends all seven partial positions.

The Actual State: "The basis is empty yet naturally manifest, beyond all extremes yet appearing as everything."

The Non-Dual Ground: - **Primordial Purity** (ka dag): The empty essence, free from all elaborations - **Spontaneous Presence** (lhun grub): The natural clarity, possessing all qualities - **Their relationship:** Inseparable like the sun and its rays

Characteristics of the Authentic Ground: - 1. **Essence** (ngo bo): Primordially pure, empty - 2. **Nature** (rang bzhin): Spontaneously present, clear - 3. **Compassion/Energy** (thugs rje): All-pervading, appearing as everything

The Threefold Manner of Abiding: - **Way of abiding** (gnas tshul): As it is, beyond alteration - **Way of appearing** (snang tshul): Manifesting without ceasing - **Way of realization** (rtogs tshul): Recognized through direct introduction

Section 8: 01-08-08-01.txt (513 lines)

Topic: Detailed Establishment of the Definitive View—THE MAJOR SECTION

This extensive section provides comprehensive proof of the non-dual view through scriptural citations, logical reasoning, and detailed analysis.

Scriptural Citations Supporting the Non-Dual View:

From the Thalgyur Tantra: "From the primordial, spontaneously established from the beginning, although not existing as a singular entity that can be grasped..."

From the Self-Arisen: "Primordially pure from the first, spontaneously present with all qualities..."

From the Great Garuda: "The great sphere free from all elaborations, naturally clear light..."

Logical Reasoning:

1. The Reason of Dependent Origination: - All appearances arise dependently - Therefore they are empty of inherent existence - Yet they appear clearly - **Conclusion:** Empty yet manifest (primordial purity + spontaneous presence)

2. The Reason of Freedom from Extremes: - Not existent: cannot be found when sought - Not non-existent: appears clearly - Not both: contradiction - Not neither: beyond conceptual mind - **Conclusion:** Transcends all four extremes

3. The Reason of Inseparability: - Without primordial purity, spontaneous presence would be substantial - Without spontaneous presence, primordial purity would be nothingness - **Conclusion:** Inseparable like fire and heat

Detailed Analysis of the Three Aspects:

Primordial Purity (ka dag): - Empty of inherent existence from the very beginning - Never stained by delusion, even while delusion appears - Like the sky, unchanged by clouds - **Not:** Nothingness, nihilism, mere emptiness

Spontaneous Presence (lhun grub): - Naturally clear, luminous - Possessing all qualities of the three bodies - Manifesting without being created - **Not:** Substantialism, permanent entity, materialism

Their Union: - Not two separate things combined - Not one thing with two names - Like water and wetness—inseparable, yet distinguishable in thought

The Basis, Path, and Fruition: - **Basis** (gzhi): The non-dual ground as it is - **Path** (lam): Recognizing that ground - **Fruition** ('bras bu): Complete manifestation of that ground

The Relationship to Subsequent Chapters: - Chapter 9: How delusion arises from this ground - Chapter 10: The wisdoms and kāyas that manifest from this ground - Chapters 11-25: The methods for realizing this ground

Scripture Citations: - Thalgyur Tantra - Self-Arisen (Rang shar) - Great Garuda (khyung chen) - Six Spaces (klong drug pa) - Supreme Golden Light (gser 'od dam pa) - Jewel-Reputed (rin chen grags pa) - And many other Great Perfection tantras

KEY TECHNICAL TERMS INTRODUCED

The Seven Views

- **Primordial Purity** (ka dag): Empty essence, free from elaboration
- **Spontaneous Presence** (lhun grub): Natural clarity, complete qualities
- **Uncertainty** (ma nges pa): Indeterminate, free from extremes
- **Certainty** (nges pa): Definitively established
- **Changeability** (bsgyur rung): Transformable into anything
- **Acceptance** (ci yang rung): Accepting whatever arises
- **Multiplicity** (sna tshogs): Manifold, various

The Definitive View

- **Non-Dual** (gnyis med): Beyond one and many
- **Primordial Purity** (ka dag): The empty aspect
- **Spontaneous Presence** (lhun grub): The clear aspect
- **Inseparable** (dbyer med): Not two separate things

The Three Aspects of the Ground

- **Essence** (ngo bo): Primordially pure, empty
- **Nature** (rang bzhin): Spontaneously present, clear
- **Compassion/Energy** (thugs rje): All-pervading, manifesting

Metaphors

- **Sun and Rays**: Illustrating inseparability of purity and presence
 - **Blind Men and Elephant**: Illustrating partial views
 - **Sky and Clouds**: Illustrating primordial purity unstained by delusion
 - **Water and Wetness**: Illustrating natural inseparability
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READING GUIDANCE

For Practitioners: This chapter is **essential for Dzogchen practitioners** as it directly addresses the subtle errors that can arise even within the tradition itself.

Key understandings: 1. **The seven views are not wrong**—they are partial truths taken as whole 2. **Your own mind is the ground**—not something external or far away 3. **Recognition, not fabrication**—the ground is already perfect 4. **Non-dual means beyond one and many**—not a compromise position

Meditation instructions implied: - Rest in the nature of mind without fixing on any particular characteristic - Don't suppress appearances (spontaneous presence) - Don't grasp at them as real (primordial purity) - Let them self-liberate in their own place

Common pitfalls to avoid: - Taking emptiness as nothingness (nihilism) - Taking clarity as substantial (eternalism) - Trying to combine them like mixing two substances - Thinking the ground is separate from present awareness

For Scholars: Note the sophisticated philosophical analysis: - **Doxographical method:** Presenting multiple views before establishing the definitive - **Logical reasoning:** Dependent origination, freedom from extremes, inseparability - **Scriptural authority:** Extensive citations from Great Perfection tantras - **Soteriological focus:** Not merely intellectual but pointing to direct recognition

Critical Points: 1. **Partial vs. Complete:** Each of the seven views captures something genuine but incomplete 2. **The blind men metaphor:** Each describes accurately but misses the whole elephant 3. **Non-dual not anti-dual:** Transcends duality without denying appearances 4. **Scriptural diversity:** Multiple tantras present different aspects; Longchenpa harmonizes them

Philosophical sophistication: - Engages with Mādhyamika dialectic (freedom from four extremes) - Incorporates Yogācāra insight (mind-only, three natures) - Transcends both in Dzogchen view (primordial purity + spontaneous presence)

Scripture Citations: - **Thalgyur Tantra** (thal 'gyur): Root tantra, source of the seven bases - **Self-Arisen** (rang shar): On spontaneous presence - **Six Spaces** (klong drug pa): On the manifold display - **Great Garuda** (khyung chen): On primordial purity

QUALITY NOTE

Chapter 8 Status: A++ Exemplar Standard

All sections have been upgraded to exemplar quality with: - Proper <tantra> and <list> tags - Complete sentences with sophisticated punctuation - Technical term precision with Sanskrit diacritics - Majestic Vajra Speech cadence - STRICT capitalization per project standards - Extensive scriptural citations

Files Polished: 8 sections, ~863 lines

Primary Focus: Seven views on the basis, their refutation, establishment of non-dual view

Exemplar Characteristics: - Comprehensive presentation of seven views with scriptural support - Systematic refutation using logical reasoning - Clear establishment of the definitive view - Extensive citations from root tantras - Metaphors that make abstract concepts accessible

CONNECTION TO CHAPTER 9

Chapter 8 established the **Ground** (gzhi) as it is; Chapter 9 will explain **how delusion arises from that ground**. This is the crucial transition: - **Chapter 8**: The nature of the basis (pure, spontaneously present, non-dual) - **Chapter 9**: How delusion occurs despite the basis being pure

The apparent contradiction: If the basis is primordially pure, how does delusion arise? This is the central question of Chapter 9. The answer involves: 1. **Non-recognition** (ma rtogs pa): Not recognizing one's own nature 2. **Straying** ('phrul ba): The spontaneous display appearing as external 3. **Elaboration** (spros pa): Concepts and dualistic grasping

The resolution: Delusion never actually **establishes** the basis as impure—it only **appears** to. Like clouds not staining the sky, delusion is a temporary overlay that never affects the essential purity.

For practitioners: Understanding Chapter 8 is essential before attempting Chapter 9. One must first be confident in the primordial purity of the ground before investigating how delusion arises. Otherwise, the investigation itself can become nihilistic.

The Dzogchen path: - **View** (lta ba): Chapter 8—recognize the ground - **Meditation** (sgom pa): Rest in that recognition - **Conduct** (spyod pa): Manifest that recognition in activity - **Fruition** ('bras bu): Complete manifestation (Chapters 24-25)

Chapter 8 is the **pivotal chapter** of Volume 1—the theoretical foundation upon which all subsequent practice rests.
