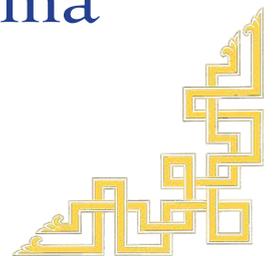
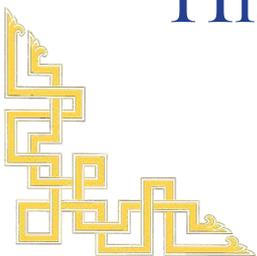


Key to the Middle Way

by

His Holiness, the 14th Dalai Lama



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Homage and Purpose of the Composition

I prostrate to the perfection of wisdom.

*Protector of all sentient beings through boundless compassion,
Mastery of glorious wisdom, and enlightened activities,
But who is only designated by words and thoughts, like an illusion,
To the Conqueror, I respectfully bow.*

*The essence of the ambrosia of his eloquent speech
– The harmony of emptiness and dependent arising –
To increase the intellect of those with burgeoning intelligence,
I will explain here in brief terms.*

The Path to Happiness

We all want happiness and do not want to suffer; and the achievement of happiness and elimination of suffering depends upon the deeds of body, speech and mind. As the actions of body and speech depend upon the mind, we must therefore constructively transform the mind. The ways of constructively transforming the mind are to cause mistaken states of consciousness not to arise and wholesome states of consciousness to be both generated and increased.

What are the determinants, in this context, of unwholesome and wholesome states of consciousness? A state of consciousness once produced, may initially cause ourselves to become unhappy and our previously calm and relaxed state of mind suddenly to become nervously excited or tense. This may then cause our respiration to increase, cause us to sweat nervously, and may even lead to illness. From these, in turn, objectionable deeds of body and speech may well follow, which directly, indirectly or incidentally cause displeasure and hardship for others. All states of consciousness that give rise to such a causal sequence are assigned as harmful.

The determinants of wholesome states of consciousness, on the other hand, are just the opposite. All states of consciousness that cause the bestowal of the results of happiness and peace upon ourselves and others, either now or in future lives, are designated as wholesome.

As for ways of preventing mistaken states of consciousness not to arise, there are such means as undergoing brain surgery, taking various types of tablets, making our awareness dull as if overcome with drowsiness, and making ourselves senseless as if in deep sleep. However, apart from only occasional superficial help, these mostly do more harm than good from the point of view of long-term solutions.

Therefore, the way of beneficially transforming the mind is as follows. First, one must think about the disadvantages of unwholesome states of consciousness, identifying them from personal experience. Then, one must recognise the wholesome states of consciousness.

If familiarity with them is developed through thinking repeatedly about their advantages and their supporting valid cognisers, then through the force of familiarisation, of having valid foundations and of being good qualities that are dependent on the mind, the various types of wholesome states of consciousness will become stronger. Concomitantly, the flawed states of consciousness will naturally decrease in strength; and this is a sign that you can be confident that in time you will be evermore kind-hearted.

Various techniques for transforming the mind have been taught by the many great spiritual guides of this world in accordance with the time, place and individual mental dispositions of their followers. These include many methods for taming the mind that have been taught in the texts of Buddhists. From amongst these, a little will be said here about the view of emptiness.

Refuge

Views of selflessness are taught in both Buddhist vehicles, the Theravada and the Mahayana; and with respect to the Mahayana in both sutra and tantra.

- When a Buddhist and a non-Buddhist are differentiated by way of conduct, the difference is whether or not the person takes refuge in the Three Jewels.
- When they are differentiated by way of view, the difference is whether or not the person asserts the views which are the Four Seals testifying to a doctrine's being the word of the Buddha. The Four Seals are:

All compounded phenomena are impermanent.

All contaminated phenomena are [in the nature of] suffering.

All phenomena are empty and selfless.

Nirvana is peace.

Therefore, every Buddhist asserts that all phenomena are empty and selfless.

Selflessness According to the Various Buddhist Philosophical Tenets

- Concerning the meaning of selflessness, the four philosophical schools of Vaibashika, Sautrantika, Cittamatra and Madhyamaka, all assert that the person lacks self-sufficient substantial existence as the meaning of the selflessness of persons.
- In addition, Cittamatra assert the emptiness of subjects and objects as different entities as the selflessness of phenomena; and
- Madhyamaka assert the emptiness of true existence as the selflessness of phenomena.

The meaning of the views of the lower and higher philosophical tenets differ greatly in coarseness and subtlety. However, if understanding is developed with respect to the lower systems, this serves as a means of deep ascertainment of the higher views; therefore, it

is immensely helpful to do so. Here, the presentation will be in accordance with the Madhyamaka system; and between the division into the Svatantrika-Madhyamaka and Prasangika-Madhyamaka, the Prasangika system will be followed.

Question:

Did the Buddha set forth all these different schools of tenets? If he did, on what sutras do each rely? Also, does the difference of status and depth of the schools of tenets necessarily depend on scriptural authority?

Answer:

The different views of the four schools of tenets were taught by the Buddha himself in accordance with the mental capacities of his followers, whether superior, middling or modest. Some followers were likely to fall into views of nihilism or were in danger of losing faith if taught selflessness. For them, Buddha even taught the existence of a self in some sutras. Also, some followers were likely to go either to the extreme of reification or to the extreme of nihilism if Buddha answered their questions in the positive or negative. For them, Buddha did not say either “exists” or “does not exist”, but remained silent, as in the case of the fourteen unanswered questions. Also, with respect to the systems of selflessness, he set forth several as was briefly explained above.

The sutras upon which each of the schools rely are as follows. The Vaibashika and Sautrantika schools of tenets rely mainly on the sutras of the first wheel of doctrine, such as the *Sutra on the Four Truths (Catuhsatya)*. The Cittamatra school of tenets relies mainly on the sutras of the last wheel of doctrine, such as the *Unravelling of the Thought Sutra (Samdhinirmocana)*. The Madhyamaka school relies mainly on the sutras of the middle wheel of doctrine, such as the *Hundred Thousand Stanza Perfection of Wisdom Sutra (Satasahasrikaprajnaparamita)*. There are also ways of presenting the three series of wheels of doctrine from the point of view of place, time, subject and those present.

If it were necessary to differentiate the status and depth of the schools’ different views in dependence on scriptural authority, then, since the individual sutras each say that the system which it teaches is the superior system, one may wonder which sutra should be held as true. If a particular sutra were held to be true, one would then wonder how the other discordant sutras should be considered. But, if the system of the truth of one sutra and the non-truth of the others were necessarily provable only by scriptural authority, then the process would be endless. Therefore, the differentiation of the superiority and inferiority of views must rely only on reasoning itself. For that reason, the Mahayana sutras set forth that it is necessary to distinguish what requires interpretation and what is definitive. Thinking of this, Buddha says in the *Sutra of Dense Array (Ghanavyuha)*:

*Monks and the wise and learned should,
Like gold is tested by melting, cutting and polishing,
Examine my words well [before] accepting them,
And not merely out of reverence for me.*

In his *Ornament of the Mahayana Sutras (Mahayanasutralamkara)*, Maitreya commented thoroughly on the meaning of Buddha's intention in that statement, and set forth the Four Reliances:

Rely on the teaching, not on the personality.

Rely on the meaning, not on the words.

Rely on the definitive meaning, not the interpretive.

Rely on exalted wisdom, not on a mere conceptual consciousness.

1. One should not rely on the personality of a teacher, but on the tenets or doctrines that he teaches.
2. One should not rely merely on the eloquence and so forth of his words, but on their meaning.
3. With respect to the meaning, [interpretation is required]:
 - if there were some other intended meaning in the Teacher's thought,
 - if there were a purpose for the teaching's [being stated in interpretable form],
 - if the teachings were susceptible to refutation.

And even if the teaching is explicit or literal, if the meaning requires further interpretation of the final reality, and one should not rely on those teachings that require interpretation of the Buddha's intended meaning. One should rely rather on those teachings that have definitive meaning, that is, which do not require interpretation of the Buddha's intent.

4. With respect to the definitive meaning, one should not rely on a dualistic consciousness, but on an exalted wisdom realising non-true existence. Cultivate a mind realising the profound object of non-true existence, namely, a conceptual valid cogniser apprehending the profound. This becomes an exalted wisdom realising non-true existence when a clear appearance of the object of meditation arises.

The Necessity of Reasoning

Moreover, the initial generation of that conceptual consciousness must depend on correct reasoning. Fundamentally, therefore, this process traces back solely to reasoning, which itself must necessarily originate from valid experiences common to ourselves and others. Thus, it is the thought of Dignaga and Dharmakirti, the kings of reasoning, that logical reasoning engaged in the final analysis [of reality] should continue until a direct perception [of emptiness] is reached.

Question:

For the sake of improving the mind, what is the point of using discriminating intelligence to develop valid cognisers and states of consciousness that realise presentations of views? What practitioners need is a virtuous character and to be kind-hearted; it is the scholars who need intelligence and reasoning.

Answer:

There are many stages in the improvement of the mind. There are some in which analysis of reasons is unnecessary, such as when single-pointed concentration is cultivated through the faith of trust alone. Not much strength, however, is achieved by just that alone. Especially for developing the mind's limitless goodness, it is insufficient merely to familiarise the mind with the meaning of its object of meditation. Further, whilst [establishing] the meaning must involve reasoning, it is insufficient for the reasons to be about the meaning in general; the meditator themselves must know them and have found a conviction in them. Therefore, it is impossible for the superior type of practitioner not to have an astute intellect.

Still, if one were forced to choose between a virtuous character and learnedness, a virtuous character would be more important, for one who has this will receive the full benefit. Through being only learned, the untamed mind will instead of becoming happy and peaceful, would become jealous of those more advanced, competitive with peers and conceited, belittling and contemptuous towards those beneath us, and so forth. It is quite likely that one would act nastily towards others and unkindness will spread. It is as if medicine had become poison. Because such danger is great, it is crucial to have a composite of learnedness, a virtuous character and be kind-hearted; without having learnedness destroy the virtuous character or having the virtuous character destroy learnedness.

Identifying the Object of Negation

Concerning the improvement of the mind, in order to ascertain the meaning of selflessness or emptiness, it is necessary to ascertain first the meaning of just what a phenomenon is empty of when one refers to "emptiness". The bodhisattva Shantideva says in his *Way of Life of Bodhisattvas (Bodhisattvacharyavatara, IX. 139)*:

*Without identifying the object to be investigated.
Its non-existence cannot be apprehended.*

Just so, without ascertaining that of which a phenomenon is empty, the object of negation, an understanding of its emptiness does not develop.

Question:

Of what is it that a phenomenon is empty?

Answer:

Since a rainbow is empty of anything tangible, we may speak of an "empty rainbow", but this type of object of negation is not what we have in mind. Similarly, though we may speak of "empty space", since space is empty of anything physical, this too is not an example of what we mean.

- Rather, when we speak of a phenomenon as being empty, we are referring to its being empty of being established by way of its own essence, its own inherent existence.
- Further, it is not that the object of negation formerly existed and is later eliminated, like the forest which existed yesterday and was burned by fire today, with the result that the area is now empty of the forest. Rather, this is an object of negation which since beginningless time has been empty and never been known validly to exist.
- Also, with respect to the way in which a phenomenon is empty of the object of negation, it is not like a tabletop being empty of flowers.
- The meaning is that the base of negation itself does not exist as the object of negation, existence by way of its own essence. Because of this key point, without ascertaining the object of negation of which phenomena are empty, in other words the measure of the establishment of the self, the meaning of emptiness will be nothingness without any sense of this and that, a mere vacuity like a transparent empty sky. This is unequivocally not the case.

The Need to Refute the Object of Negation

Question:

What is the use of going to all the trouble of first understanding what something definitely non-existent would mean if it were existent; and then, after that, viewing it as definitely non-existent?

Answer:

It is common worldly knowledge that by believing untrue information to be true we fall into confusion and are harmed. Likewise, by believing phenomena to be inherently existent when in fact they are not inherently existent, we are also harmed.

- For example, there is a definite difference between the way the “I” is apprehended when attachment, anger, pride and so forth arise based on this “I”, and the way the “I” is apprehended when we are relaxed without any of those attitudes being manifest.
- Similarly, there is the mere consciousness that apprehends an article in a shop before we buy it, and there is the consciousness apprehending that article after it has been bought and grasped with attachment. Both these consciousnesses have the same object, and in both cases the way the article appears is as appearing to be truly existent. However, there is a difference as to whether or not we cling to it as being self-sustaining or truly existent.

Also, when we see ten people, just from merely seeing them it appears to us that ten people exist there; however, there is no certainty that we will cling to this appearance of ten people and posit truth, or a realness, to it.

- [If we were to do so, then] for either correct or mistaken reasons, a discursive consciousness of improper mental engagement would be generated, considering one from among these ten people as decent or depraved. At that time, our intellect will superimpose decency or depravity onto this person that exceeds what actually exists.
- Attachment or anger will arise, and at that moment we will cling to this object tightly from the depths of our heart as absolutely true.

Therefore, preceding and inducing any harmful consciousness and assisting and accompanying many other harmful consciousnesses, is a consciousness grasping at true existence. Thus, if there were no ignorance grasping at true existence, then attachment, anger and so forth would not arise. Accordingly, the object of negation has never been found to exist and has been empty since beginningless time.

Once we have made this identification, it is necessary to generate a conviction in it as well. Through clinging strongly to what doesn't exist as existing, discursive consciousnesses of improper mental engagement, inexhaustible like ripples on an ocean, arise. The purpose of this process is to bring this to an end. As Nagarjuna says in the eighteenth chapter of his *Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way (Prajnana Mulamadhyamakakarika, XVIII. 4-5)*:

*When the two, inner and outer,
Cease being thought of as "I" and "mine",
Grasping is blocked,
And through that ceasing, birth ceases.*

*Karma and afflictions having ceased, there is liberation.
Karma and afflictions come from discursive thoughts.
These come from fabrications.
Fabrications are stopped by emptiness.*

The Two Truths

Establishment by way of its own essence has never been validly known to exist; therefore, it is impossible for there to be any phenomenon that exists through its own power. Mere dependent arisings, which are empty, are established through the experience of their causing all forms of help and harm. Thus, mere dependent arisings do exist.

All samsaric phenomena are not established by way of their own essence but appear within the expanse of this completely non-existent nature. To express this differently, they appear without passing beyond from within this state of having just this nature.

Since the innumerable varieties of dependent arisings appear whilst existing in this their natural state, all objects of knowledge have two entities: one entity that is its superficial way of appearing and the other entity that is its deep way of being. These two are called respectively, conventional truths and ultimate truths.

Arya Nagarjuna says in his *Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way* (XXIV. 8):

*Dharma taught by the buddhas
Is based completely upon the two truths:
A truth of worldly convention
And an ultimate truth.*

Also, the glorious Chandrakirti says in his Supplement to (Nagarjuna's) 'Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way' (Madhyamakavatara, VI. 23):

*All things can be seen correctly or falsely,
Thus, things apprehended have two entities.
Objects correctly seen are emptiness,
Those falsely seen are conventional truths, the Buddha taught.*

The divisions of ultimate truths will be briefly explained below. Conventional truths themselves are divided into the real, or correct and the unreal, or wrong, from the point of view of an ordinary worldly consciousness. Chandrakirti says (*Supplement*, VI. 24-25):

*False perception is asserted to be of two types,
Those having clear and those with impaired sense powers.
A consciousness having an impaired sense power is
Asserted as wrong compared to one with a sound sense power.*

*Everything apprehended by the unimpaired six sense powers
And realised by the world
Are true from the perspective of the world itself.
The remaining are wrong from the stance of the world.*

The purpose of knowing thus the presentation of the two truths is as follows. Since it is absolutely necessary to be involved with these appearances which bring about varieties of beneficial and harmful effects, it is necessary to know the two natures, superficial and deep, of these objects with which we interact.

For example, there may be a cunning and deceptive neighbour with whom it is always necessary for us to interact and to whom we have related by way of an estimation that accords only with their general external appearance. The various losses that we have sustained in this relationship are not due to the fault of our merely having interacted with our neighbour. Rather, the fault lies with our mistaken manner of relating to them. Further, because of not knowing their nature, we have not assessed them properly and have thereby been deceived. Therefore, if our neighbour's external appearance and their

fundamental nature had both been well known, we would have related to them with a reserve appropriate to their nature and with whatever corresponded to their capacities, and so forth. Had we done this we would not have sustained any losses.

Similarly, if phenomena had no deep way of being other than their external or superficial way of abiding, and if thus the way they appeared and the way they existed were in agreement, then it would be sufficient to hold that conventional appearances are true just as they appear, and to place confidence in them. However, this is not so. Though phenomena appear as if true, most true, ultimately they are not true. They are neither truly existent or established by way of their own essence, nor completely non-existent; rather, phenomena abide in the middle. This view, the knowledge of such a way of existing, just as it is – is called the view of the middle way.

With respect to that, the system establishing that there is no inherently existent object of negation or selflessness is as follows. Each object of the sense powers such as form perceived by the eyes, and objects of experience that are cognised by the mental faculty; whatever object appears is the basis of negation for the object of negation, inherent existence. They appear to be existent, existing by way of their own independent essence, existing in their own right. Therefore, an essential point is that except for the exalted wisdom directly realising emptiness, all other consciousnesses are necessarily mistaken.

Question:

In that case, are there no valid cognisers positing phenomena, such as forms, as conventionally existent? If that is so, non-existence would be impossible because the criterion for a phenomenon to exist conventionally would be determined by a mistaken, incorrect awareness?

Answer:

It is not contradictory for a consciousness to be mistaken because objects appear to it as if they truly exist, and for it to be a valid cogniser because it is not deceived with respect to its main object.

- For example, a visual consciousness perceiving a form is indeed a mistaken consciousness because the form appears to it as truly existent.
- However, to the extent that it perceives the form as a form and does not conceive the form to be inherently existent, it is a valid cogniser.
- Not only that, but a visual consciousness perceiving a form is also a valid cogniser with regard to the appearance of the form and even with respect to the appearance of the form appearing to be truly existent. As in the statement, “a consciousness knows its object”, a consciousness is clear and knowing because it is produced in the image of its object through the force of the appearance of its object.
- Hence, the Buddha taught that all dualistic consciousnesses are necessarily direct valid cognisers pertaining to the appearance of their object.

Further, the criterion for a phenomenon to exist conventionally is not merely being established as existing by a mistaken, incorrect awareness. For example, an appearance of falling hairs manifestly appears to the visual consciousness of someone with cataracts.

- As their consciousness has arisen in the image of falling hairs, it is a direct valid cogniser with respect to it.
- However, since the falling hairs, which are the basis of such an appearance, are completely non-existent, the awareness is deceived with respect to its main object.
- Due to the reason of this awareness's way of apprehending its object being discredited by the direct contradiction of another valid cogniser, it is asserted to be a wrong consciousness.
- Thus, being established as existing for a wrong consciousness cannot be the criterion for a phenomenon to exist conventionally. To put it concisely, whilst it is taught by the Buddha that though there is no phenomenon that is not posited by the mind, whatever is posited by the mind is not necessarily existent.

Searching for the Self

When a phenomenon appears to be truly existent, as though existing in the same way as it appears, when this is carefully analysed, its essence would necessarily become clearer. For example, even in terms of what is widely known in the world, if something is true, it becomes clearer and its foundation firmer the more one analyses it. Therefore, when sought, it must definitely be findable. If, on the contrary, it is false, then when it is analysed and sought, it becomes less clear, and in the end, it cannot stand up to such analysis. Nagarjuna's *Precious Garland (Ratnavali, 52-53)* says:

*A form that is viewed from afar
Is seen clearly by those nearby.
If a mirage were actually water,
Why would those nearby not see it?*

*By those from afar, however
Those who have gone beyond the world see correctly.
It is not so seen by those nearby
For whom it is signless like a mirage.*

To present an example, when it is said and thought that "human beings should have happiness", a human appears boldly to our mind. To create human happiness, one must achieve favourable circumstances for physical pleasures such as food, clothing, shelter, medicines and transportation for the body; and the favourable circumstances for mental pleasures such as education, respectability, good disposition and tranquillity of mind. It is necessary to create a human's happiness through physical and mental pleasures.

- That being so, if we search, wondering what the real human is, we find that their body and mind individually are not the human, and there is also no human separate from these two.

Similarly, when we meet an acquaintance named “Tashi”, we say, for instance, “I saw Tashi”, “Tashi has aged,” or “Tashi has gained weight”. Without analysing or examining those statements, seeing Tashi’s body and seeing it as frail and flabby, is said to be seeing Tashi. A consciousness that perceives such without analysis is not a wrong consciousness, and these statements also are not false. However, when analysis is done, a real Tashi himself who is the possessor of the body is not to be perceived, and his ageing and becoming overweight also cannot stand up to analysis.

- Further, it is with respect to the decency or obnoxiousness of Tashi’s mind whether Tashi is conventionally designated as a lovely or unlikable man; but Tashi’s mind itself is not Tashi.
- In brief, there is not the slightest part which is Tashi among the mere collection of Tashi’s mind and body, his continuum, or individual parts. Therefore, dependent on just the collection of Tashi’s body and mind, we merely designate “Tashi”. As Nagarjuna says in his *Precious Garland* (80):

*The person is not earth, nor water,
Not fire, nor wind, nor space,
Not consciousness, nor all of them.
What person is there other than these?*

Also, with respect to the statement, “I saw Tashi’s body”, seeing merely the external skin from among the many parts of the body, such as the flesh, bones and skin, functions as seeing his body. Even if the blood, bones and so forth are not seen, it does not mean that the body is not seen. To see a body, it is not necessary to see all of the body; seeing even a small part can function as seeing the body.

- However, sometimes by the force of general custom, if a certain amount is not seen, it cannot equate to seeing the body.
- As above, if the body is divided into its individual parts, legs, arms and so on, a body is not found. Also, the legs and arms can be divided into toes and fingers, the toes and fingers into joints and the joints into upper and lower portions; these can be divided into small parts and even the smallest parts into parts corresponding with the directions. When they are divided in this way, nothing is findable.
- Also, if the smallest particle were directionally partless, that is, if it had no sides, then no matter how many directionally partless particles were collected, they could never be arranged side by side to form a mass.

Furthermore, Tashi is said to be happy or unhappy according to whether his mind is at ease or not. What is this mind which is the basis of this determination? It does not exist

as anything physical; it lacks anything tangible; it can forbear any object appearing to it, and it exists as an entity of mere knowing.

- Further, it is like this when it is not analysed; but when it is analysed, it is unfindable.
- When Tashi's mind is happy, the essence of that mind is what is to be analysed. If it is divided into individual moments, there is no mass that is a composite of the many former and later moments. At the time of the later moments, the former moments have ceased; therefore, the former ones have gone, and the essence of their consciousness has disappeared. Because the future moments have not yet been produced, they are not existing now. Also, the single present moment is not separate from what has already been produced and what has not yet been produced. Therefore, when it is sought thus, we are unable to establish a present consciousness.
- When the happy mind, which is the object discussed in "His mind is happy", is sought, it is completely unfindable.
- In summary, happy and unhappy minds and so forth are designated to a mere collection of their own former and future moments. Even the shortest moment is imputed to its own parts; it has individual parts of a beginning and an end. If a moment were partless, there could be no continuum composed of them.

Refutation Using the Sevenfold Reasoning

Similarly, when an external object such as a table appears to the mind, an independent table, that is a table established as such by its own particular characteristics appears. In general, the table having been designated on the basis of its qualities, those properties such as shape, colour, material and size can be examined, and its value, quality and so forth can be discussed. For example, when one says, "This table is excellent, but its colour is not good", there is a table that is the base of the estimation of the quality of its colour. Whilst a base of qualities that possesses these characteristics does exist, if the parts and the whole are divided and analysed, the attributes and parts individually are not themselves the base of the qualities. Also, after eliminating the properties and parts, a base of these qualities is not findable. If there is no such base, then since characteristics are necessarily established in dependence on a base of qualities and moreover, since a base of qualities is necessarily established in dependence on attributes, the attributes also will not exist.

Let us illustrate this with the example of a rosary which has 108 beads.

- The whole, the one rosary, has one hundred and eight beads as its parts. The parts and the whole are different; yet, when the parts are eliminated, a rosary cannot be found.
- 1) Because the rosary is one and its parts are many, the rosary and its parts are not one and the same.
 - 2) When the parts are eliminated, there is not a separate rosary; therefore, the rosary does not exist essentially or fundamentally different from its parts.
 - 3) Because the rosary does not exist separate from its parts, the rosary does not depend by way of its own parts.
 - 4) Nor do inherently existent parts depend upon the rosary.
 - 5) Also, the rosary does not possess the beads by way of the bead's own essence.
 - 6) Similarly, since the shape of the rosary is one of its qualities, the shape of the rosary is not the rosary.
 - 7) Also, the collection of the beads and the string form the basis in dependence upon which rosary is imputed; therefore, it is not the rosary.
- If it is sought in this way, a rosary is unfindable as any of the seven extremes.
 - Further, if the individual beads are sought as above, that is, as one with their individual parts, or different from their parts and so forth, they are unfindable as well.
 - Furthermore, since forests, armies, continents and countries are imputed to aggregations of many specific parts, when each is analysed as to whether it is this or not that, it is entirely unfindable.

(Diamond Slivers)

Refutation of Inherently Existent Production from the Perspective of the Cause

- Moreover, it is extremely clear that good and bad, tall and short, big and small, enemy and friend, father and son and so forth are only designated in dependence upon each other.
- Also, earth, water, fire, wind and so on are each imputed in dependence upon their individual parts. Space too is imputed in dependence upon its parts, which pervade the directions. Also, buddhas and sentient beings, samsara and nirvana and so forth are simply merely imputed in dependence upon their parts and their bases of imputation.

Although it is widely known that “a result is produced from causes”, let us analyse the meaning of production.

- 1) If results were produced causelessly, they either would always be produced or would never be produced.
 - 2) If results were produced from themselves, it would be pointless for something with an already established essence to be produced again; and if what had already been produced is produced again, then there is the consequent fault that its reproduction would be endless.
 - 3) If results were produced from something [inherently existent] other than themselves, they would be produced from everything – both from what are considered to be their causes and from what are not. Alternately, it would be contradictory for results to depend on causes.
 - 4) For these reasons, production from both self and others is unfeasible, illogical.
- Thus, if the meaning of the designation “production” is sought, production cannot be established. As Arya Nagarjuna says in his *Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way* (I. 1):

*Neither from itself, nor from another,
Nor from both, nor causelessly,
Does anything whatsoever,
Arise anywhere ever.*

Refutation of Inherently Existent Production from the Perspective of the Result

Although it is widely known that “causes do produce results”, let us analyse this.

- If the produced result inherently existed, how could it be feasible for what already exists to be produced newly, for causes are not needed to create it anew.
- In general, causes are required to create newly that which has not been produced nor created yet. However, if non-produced results were inherently true as non-produced results, it would be no different from being entirely non-existent; therefore, how could it be fit to be created by causes?

As Nagarjuna says in his *Seventy Stanzas on Emptiness (Sunyatasaptan, 4)*:

*Because it exists, the existent is not produced.
Because it does not exist, the non-existent is not produced.*

To be concise, as the existence of something necessarily is dependent on causes and conditions and on others, it is certainly contradictory for it to exist independently. This is because independence and dependence on others are contradictory. *The Questions of The King of Nagas, Anavatapta, Sutra (Anavataptana-garajapariptccha)* says:

*That which is produced from causes is not [inherently] produced.
It does not have an inherent nature of production.
That which depends on causes is taught to be empty.
Whosoever knows emptiness is conscientious.*

Nagarjuna's *Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way* (XXIV. 19) says:

*For that reason, that which is not dependently arisen,
Such phenomena do not exist.
For that reason, that which is not empty,
Such phenomena do not exist.*

Aryadeva says in his *Four Hundred (Catuhsataka, XIV. 23)*:

*Whatever exists dependently
Is not independent.
As everything lacks independence
Consequently, there is no self that exists.*

Contradictions Were Inherent Existence to Be Accepted

- If phenomena were not empty of an underlying basis or of their self-existence, it would be entirely impossible for the multiplicities of phenomena to be transformed in dependence on causes. If they existed by way of their own underlying basis, then no matter what type of entity they were, good, bad and so on, how could they be altered? If a beautiful fruit tree, for instance, were inherently existent by way of its own entity or its own deep basis, how would it be true that it could regularly become ugly and bare like a staff?
- If the present way these things appear to our minds were their own innermost way of being, how could one possibly be deceived? Even in the ordinary world, many discrepancies are well known between what appears and what actually is. Hence, although since beginningless time everything has appeared as if it were truly existent to the mind that is contaminated with the errors of ignorance, if those objects were indeed truly existent, their inner basis would be just as they appear. In that case, when the consciousness searching for the inner basis of a phenomenon performed analysis, that inner basis would necessarily become clearer. What is the cause for phenomena to seemingly disappear when sought but are not found?

Further, if things were self-existent, it would be as the glorious Chandrakirti says in his *Supplement* (VI. 34-36):

*If inherent existence were dependent,
Through denying that, phenomena would be eradicated.
Thus, emptiness would be a cause eradicating phenomena;
But as this makes no sense, phenomena do not [inherently] exist.
For that reason, when phenomena are analysed
Other than having emptiness as their nature
Nothing is found to abide. Thus,
Truths of worldly convention should not be thoroughly analysed.*

*Whilst [analysing] reality, through no logic whatsoever
Is production from self and other ever tenable.
Since the same reasoning is not tenable even in conventional terms,
By what means then is your production postulated?*

Thus, Chandrakirti is saying that,

- (verse 34) A consequence of phenomena existing by way of their own characteristics or essence, is that an arya's meditative equipoise [realising emptiness] would cause the eradication of phenomena.
- (verse 35) Another consequence would be that conventional truths would stand up to a reasoned analysis.
- (verse 36) A further consequence would be that production would not be ultimately refuted.

The Twenty-Five Thousand Stanza Perfection of Wisdom Sutra (Pancavimsati-sahasrika Prajnajnaparamita), a mother sutra, says, "Concerning this, Shariputra, when a bodhisattva, a great being practises the perfection of wisdom, she or he does not see a bodhisattva as real.... Why? Shariputra, it is like this: even a bodhisattva is empty of being an inherently existent bodhisattva. A bodhisattva's name also is empty of being a bodhisattva's name. Why? That is their nature. It is like this: it is not that a form is empty on account of emptiness; emptiness is not separate from a form. A form itself is that which is empty; just that which is empty is also the form."

The Kasyapa Chapter in the Pile of Jewels Sutra (Ratnakuta) says, "Phenomena are not made empty by emptiness, the phenomena themselves are empty."

As a consequence, the numerous sutras which teach that phenomena are empty of their own defining characteristics, empty of themselves, would not be logical. Therefore, all phenomena lack inherent existence or their own underlying basis.

Establishing Conventional Existence

Question:

If an actual person and a dream person, a form and a reflection, an actual thing and a photo are comparable in that they are not found when sought, would it not follow that there would be no differences amongst them? There would also be no differences to their truth, falsity and so forth. Thus, what would be the use of searching into the view of emptiness as the searcher and the view itself would be none other than non-existent?

Answer:

This brings us to a difficult point. There is a grave danger that because of this subtle point those of immature intelligence might fall into the view of nihilism. Therefore, to guard against that, through skilful means,

- the Svatantrika-Madhyamika Bhavaviveka and his spiritual sons used reasoning to refute that phenomena exist from the point of view of their own unique way of existing and without being posited due to appearing to a faultless awareness. However, they asserted existence through their own particular characteristics or own essence conventionally.
- For those whose minds could not cope even with such a lack of true existence, Cittamatrin teachers such as Vasubandu used reasoning to refute external objects yet asserted that the mind does truly exist.
- For those who could not be recipients for a teaching of the selflessness of phenomena, the proponents of truly existing external objects - Vaibashika and Sautrantika - asserted mere selflessness in the place of emptiness, which is the person not existing as a self-sufficient substantial existent.
- Non-Buddhists could not even assert the mere selflessness of persons, and from that, therefore, they derive the necessity of asserting a permanent, partless, independent person.

Question:

If it is asserted that phenomena do not exist by reason of their not being found when the object imputed is sought, that contradicts what is widely known in the world; for it is contrary to direct perception which affirms the existence of these phenomena that are all included within the material world and beings. Our own experience affirms the fact as well that varieties of help, harm, pleasure and pain are produced. Thus, what is the meaning of not being able to find illustrations of these diversities of phenomena – such as self and other, material world and beings – when we seek these varieties of definitely existing phenomena?

Answer:

The Twenty-Five Thousand Stanza Perfection of Wisdom Sutra (Pancavimsatisahasrikaprajnaparamita) says, "It is thus: this 'bodhisattva' is merely labelled; this 'perfection of wisdom' is ; these 'forms', 'feelings', 'discriminations', 'compositional factors', and 'consciousnesses' are merely labelled. It is thus: forms are like illusions. Feelings, discriminations, compositional factors and consciousnesses are like illusions. Illusions are also merely labelled; they do not abide in places; they do not abide in directions. Why? It is thus: labels are contrived and imputed to the individual phenomenon; labels are transiently designated verbal conventions. All those labels are designated verbal conventions. When a bodhisattva, a great being, practices the perfection of wisdom, he or she does not subsequently view labels as real. Not subsequently viewing them as real, he does not manifestly cling to them. Further, O Shariputra, when a bodhisattva, a great being, practices the perfection of wisdom, she sincerely thinks thus: this 'bodhisattva' is merely labelled; these 'feelings' 'discriminations', 'compositional factors' and 'consciousnesses' are merely labelled. Shariputra, it is thus: 'self' for example is called 'self', but this vocal expression, 'self', is not apprehended."

In many sutras and treatises, it is taught that all phenomena are only names. When imputed objects are sought, they . This is a sign that all phenomena do not exist are only established as existing through the force of conceptually designated verbal conventions. Existing in this way functions as existing.

I will now explain this precisely. For something to exist conventionally, it must satisfy three criteria:

1. The object must be generally well known to conventional awareness. Yet, if merely being well known were sufficient, then even the commonly cited 'child of a barren woman' would exist.
2. It must not be contradicted by another conventional valid cogniser.
3. It must not be refuted by a reasoning analysing the ultimate either.

A conventional valid cogniser would necessarily not be able to negate existence by way of its own essence.

Identifying the Object of Negation

Therefore, an object existing from its own side, without existing merely through force of conceptual designation of which phenomena are empty in the expression "emptiness" and is the measure or meaning of what is to be negated. It is also called "self" or "object negated by reasoning".

Since it absolutely has never been known to validly exist, an awareness that clings to it as existent is called ignorance. In general, there are many types of mere ignorance; however, that which is being explained here is the ignorance that is the root of cyclic existence and of the discordant class which is contrary to the wisdom that realises selflessness.

Nagarjuna's *Seventy Stanzas on Emptiness*, 64 says:

*The conception that phenomena produced
From causes and conditions are real,
Was taught by the Buddha to be ignorance;
And from that, the twelve links of dependency arise.*

The mere non-existence of the object of negation, which is the object of the mode of apprehension of that awareness [of ignorance], is called selflessness, not truly existent and emptiness. Just this is the innermost way of existing or the final way of abiding of all phenomena; therefore, it is called an ultimate, or final, truth. An awareness that realises it is called an awareness realising emptiness.

Emptiness of Emptiness

Question:

In that case, since emptiness is an ultimate truth, does emptiness exist by way of its own essence?

Answer:

Emptiness is a way of establishment, or final way of existing, of the phenomenon qualified by it. Therefore, if the phenomenon qualified by emptiness does not exist, there is no emptiness of it. The empty nature of a phenomenon is established in relation to that phenomenon and the phenomenon is established in relation to its empty nature. Just as when a phenomenon qualified by an empty nature is analysed it is not found, so too when this phenomenon's empty nature itself is analysed, it too is not found. Therefore, when one seeks the object designated as "an empty nature", this empty nature is also not found. It merely exists through the force of worldly consensus done without analysis; thus, it does not truly exist. The thirteenth chapter of Nagarjuna's *Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way* (XIII. 7-8) says:

*If the non-empty existed a little,
Emptiness too would exist a little.
If the non-empty doesn't even slightly exist,
How could emptiness exist at all?*

*The victors taught that emptiness is
Certain to release from all views.
And for whomever emptiness is a view,
They will not be able to realise it.*

Also, Nagarjuna's *Praise of Supramundane (Lokatitastava)* says:

*For the purpose of abandoning all misconceptions
The nectar of emptiness was taught by the Buddha.
Whoever clings to it as truly existent
Is sharply reproached by you, the Buddha.*

Therefore, when the way a tree, for instance, exists is analysed, the tree is not found, but its natural state of existing, or emptiness, is found. Then, when the way emptiness exists is analysed, that emptiness itself also is not found, but is rather found to be empty. This is called the emptiness of emptiness. Thus, a tree is a conventional truth, and its natural state of existing is an ultimate truth. Further, when the ultimate truth itself becomes the basis of analysis and when its natural state of existing is posited, ultimate truth itself becomes the basis of analysis in relation to its natural state of existing. Thus, there is even an explanation that emptiness can be viewed as a conventional truth.

It is taught that emptinesses are divided into twenty, eighteen, sixteen, or four types in terms of the bases qualified by emptiness; although, there is no difference in essence between them. To be succinct, all are included within these two categories of selflessness of persons and selflessness of [other] phenomena.

Emptiness, A Non-Affirming Negative

Question:

How does emptiness appear to a mind when it ascertains emptiness?

Answer:

- If one does not have the correct manner of comprehending emptiness, equating it with the appearance of a vacuity which is nothingness, this is not the ascertainment of emptiness. Or, even if one has ascertained the meaning of emptiness, if the refutation of the object of negation is directed at the object of observation, then if one meditates with an ascertaining consciousness but misses the object of negation that is to be refuted, one is in danger of meditating on emptiness as being truly existent. Because of that, emptiness has not been ascertained. The *Condensed Perfection of Wisdom Sutra (Sancayagatha-prajnaparamita)* says, "Even if a bodhisattva realises, 'These aggregates are empty' she or he is acting on signs of conventionalities and does not have trust in the state of non-production."
- Further, "emptiness" is a negative phenomenon which must be ascertained through the elimination of its opposite, the object of negation. Negatives are of two types: affirming negatives in which some other positive phenomenon is implied in place of the object of negation, and non-affirming negatives in which no other positive phenomenon is implied in place of the object of negation. Emptiness is an instance of the latter; therefore, a consciousness realising emptiness necessarily ascertains only the negative or absence of the object of negation. What appears to the mind

is the pure empty state preceded by just the mere thought, “These appearances that ebb and flow do not exist at all.”. The mere lack of the object of the mode of apprehension of this consciousness, inherent or true existence, is emptiness; therefore, such an awareness ascertains emptiness. Shantideva’s *Way of Life of Bodhisattvas* (IX. 33-34) says:

*When it is asserted that nothing at all exists,
The object of investigation, true existence, is not observed.
At that time, non-true existence lacks all support,
How could it abide before the mind?*

*When true existence and non-true existence
Do not abide before the mind;
At that time, since there is nothing else,
It is perfectly at peace without an observed object.*

If emptiness were not a non-affirming negative but were either an affirming negative, implying another phenomenon, or a positive phenomenon itself, then a consciousness realising it would have observations or signs. Thus, the arising of grasping at an observed object as truly existent would not be prevented. In that case, it would not be possible for the exalted wisdom realising emptiness to be the antidote to all awarenesses of true grasping and would be incapable of eliminating the obstructions. Thinking of this, Shantideva says in his *Way of Life of Bodhisattvas* (IX. 109-110):

Question:

*Whenever one comprehensively analyses,
The analyser would also be carefully analysed.
At that time, that meticulous analysis would also be
Thoroughly analysed. Thus, it would be never-ending.*

Answer:

*When that to be analysed is exhaustively analysed,
The support for that detailed analysis no longer exists.
Because the support does not exist, it is not produced.
That too is proclaimed to be nirvana.*

Thus, observing a base ultimately – such as self and other – one ascertains the meaning of being in its very essence at peace. If we become familiar with this, the objects observed – such as self and other – appear as illusion-like or dream-like falsities which, although not existing by way of their own essence, appear to be so.

The Harmony of Emptiness and Dependent Arising

Question:

What is the accomplishment or benefit of that?

Answer:

Nagarjuna's *Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way* (XXIV. 18) says:

*Whatever is a dependent arising,
Is explained to be emptiness.
Being dependent on labelling and
Emptiness is the middle way path.*

Thus, we understand the meaning of dependent arising as the natural lack of inherent existence and understand the meaning of the natural lack of inherent existence as being dependent arising. Then, we ascertain that emptiness and dependent arising assist each other.

Establishing Emptiness as the Antidote to the Ignorance of Self-Grasping

Through the force of this ascertainment, non-erroneous conventional valid cognisers properly engage in that which is to be adopted and cease doing that which is to be discarded within the context of existing as merely labelled.

Erroneous consciousnesses such as attachment and anger produced through the force of clinging to not existing or clinging to existing from the side of the object, become gradually weaker and can be abandoned.

I will explain this a little.

- When a genuine experience of the view of emptiness has arisen, we can identify within our experience that whatever objects presently appear to our consciousnesses appear as being truly existent.
- Whilst awareness is strongly focussed on these objects, we can then know with certainty the manner in which grasping at true existence arises, clinging to the way its object appears as true.
- We will be able to identify through real experience that whatever afflictions arise, such as attachment and anger, grasping at true existence is acting as their foundational cause.
- Grasping at true existence is a mistaken wrong consciousness with regard to its determined object and its way of apprehending is not supported by a valid cogniser. However, its opposite, a consciousness which realises selflessness, is a non-erroneous awareness whose way of apprehending is supported by a valid cogniser. In this, deep certainty will have been gained.

Thus, the glorious Dharmakirti says in his *Commentary on (Dignaga's) "Compendium on Valid Cognisers"* (*Pramanavartika*, Chapter 1):

*An ascertaining mind and a falsely superimposing mind
Are entities of refuter and that which is to be refuted.*

And (Chapter I):

*All decrease and increase dependently
Just due to being together with incompatible factors.
From familiarity with that [antidote] self-grasping is transformed.
As a consequence, finally, the contaminations are removed.*

[A conceiver of inherent existence and a consciousness] that has a directly contradictory manner of apprehension are respectively the refuted and refuter. Therefore, it is natural that as one becomes stronger, the other will become weaker.

Buddha Nature

Nagarjuna's *Praise of the Element of Superior Qualities* (*Dharmadhatustotra*) says:

*Just as armour is cleansed by fire
From the various contaminations staining it;
When placed in a fire
Its contaminations are burnt, but the armour is not.*

*Similarly, the mind of clear light,
Having contaminations such as attachment,
Such contaminations are burnt by the fire of exalted wisdom
But its nature, clear light, is not.*

The conqueror Maitreya's *Sublime Continuum* (*Uttaratantra*) says:

*Because the bodies of perfected buddhas are emanated,
Because emptiness is not differentiated,
Because sentient beings have the lineages,
All sentient beings have buddha potential.*

- Thus, not only is the ultimate nature of the mind unpolluted by contaminations but the conventional entity of the mind, that is, its mere clear and mere knowing, is also unpolluted by contaminations. Therefore, the mind can become either better or worse as it is suitable to be transformed.
- However, no matter how much one cultivates the flawed consciousnesses that provide support for true grasping, they cannot be cultivated limitlessly. On the other hand, the cultivation of the contrary wholesome consciousnesses which

have the support of valid cognition can be cultivated limitlessly. On the basis of this reason, we can ascertain that the contaminations on the mind can be removed. Thus, the final nature of the condition of a mind that has removed its contaminations so that they will never arise again is liberation. Therefore, we can become certain that liberation is attainable.

- Not only that but just as the contaminations of the afflicted minds are removable, so too are their imprints. Therefore, certainty is gained that the final nature of the mind with all contaminations of the afflictions as well as their imprints removed, a state that is called non-abiding nirvana or the truth body, is attainable. Thereby, it is generally established that liberation and omniscience exist.

How the Realisation of Emptiness Deepens One's Refuge and Bodhicitta

Nagarjuna's *Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way* (I. Invocation) says:

*To you who taught that all phenomena arise dependently;
Neither ceasing, nor produced;
Neither severing, nor permanent;
Neither coming, nor going;
Neither different, nor identical;
And that peace is the complete quelling of all fabrications.
To you, best of teachers, supreme Buddha, I prostrate.*

It is due to the reason of dependent arising that all impermanent phenomena are free of the eight extremes, such as cessation, and have a nature of emptiness. The Teacher, the Blessed One, taught this presentation of the teaching on dependent arising from his own insight. If Buddha is thus seen as a valid being whom without error taught definite goodness and the method to achieve it, one will consequently see that the Blessed One was unerring also with respect to teaching high status along with the method to achieve it. "The glorious Dharmakirti says in his *Commentary on Dignaga's "Commentary on Valid Cognisers"* (Chapter I):

*Because of being unerring with regard to the principal meaning,
It can be inferred with regard to others.*

Also, Aryadeva's *Four Hundred* (Chapter XII. 5) says:

*For whomever doubts may arise with regard to
What the Buddha has said about the hidden,
Should depend upon emptiness
And gain conviction solely in him!*

In brief, through coming to know the Conqueror's scriptural compositions as well as their commentaries, which are all aimed at the achievement of high status and definite

goodness, one will attain faith in them. Thereby, induced by valid cognition, heartfelt faith and respect will arise for the teacher of these scriptures, the Blessed Buddha, and his followers, the great masters of India. Similarly, one will be able also to generate firm, unwavering faith and respect for our spiritual mentors who presently teach us the unmistakable paths and for the Sangha who are our friends abiding properly on the paths on which the Teacher himself travelled. The master Chandrakirti says in his *Seventy Stanzas on the Three Refuges (Trisaranasaptati)*:

*The Buddha, his Teachings and the Sangha
Are the protecting refuges of those aspiring for liberation.*

Thus, certainty will easily arise that the Three Jewels are the sole source of refuge for those aspiring for liberation. Those who are sick and tired of suffering will go to the Three Jewels for refuge and a firm, indestructible attitude of aspiring for liberation will arise, thinking "If I could only attain liberation!" Similarly, in proportion to our own experience one will aspire to establish all other sentient beings in liberation, that is, in freedom from suffering, and on the ground of omniscience. In order to achieve this, we will be able to give rise to an extremely stable and immensely powerful bodhicitta, the aspiration actually to become enlightened.

Progressing Along the Paths and Grounds of Sutra and Tantra

The Path Common to the Theravadin

- Similarly, whilst on the path of accumulation, with a motivation of definite emergence, on a foundation of any of the forms of ethics for either the ordained or non-ordained, we familiarise ourselves through repeated study and reflection on the subtle and deep view of emptiness which is of such great value.
- As our view of emptiness develops successively, the path of preparation is attained when emptiness is realised by means of a meaning generality on the basis of the union of calm abiding and meditative insight.
- After further progression, emptiness is seen directly and the path of seeing, the Dharma Jewel and a true path, is attained.
- This then is the direct antidote to true origins such as the acquired afflictive mind of true grasping, and also begins the attainment of true cessations, the complete abandonment of true sufferings, such as rebirth in the lower realms.
- Having seen the truth, through familiarity with the path of meditation, the coarser innate afflictive minds together with their seeds are abandoned entirely through the attainment of a series of true cessations.
- Finally, with the abandonment of the subtlest level, the small of the small, of the afflicted minds together with their seeds, liberation is attained. Now, with the completion of one's own journey, the ground of no-more training of a Theravadin arhat is actualised.

The Uncommon Path of the Mahayana

- Moreover, the motivation of bodhicitta induces the efficacious means of generosity and so forth, assisted by the generation of the sequential wisdoms of hearing, reflecting and meditating directed towards the meaning of emptiness. By such means, the [understanding of the] view of emptiness becomes ever more profound until it is first seen directly and the exalted wisdom of the first mahayana ground is attained and the first accumulation of merit and wisdom amassed over a countless great aeon is completed.
- Thereafter, as explained previously, the realisation of true cessations, the abandonment of afflicted minds such as acquired true grasping, begins.
- Whilst abiding on the seven impure grounds the second accumulation of merit and wisdom is amassed over a second countless great aeon.
- Whilst abiding on the three pure grounds, sequentially the abandonment of obscurations to omniscience, which are the imprints of true grasping and the subtle spontaneous adverse tendencies produced by them, is begun.
- When the third accumulation of merit and wisdom over a countless great aeon is completed, a dharmakaya, which is a true cessation and the state of having entirely abandoned all types of defects, is attained. The three bodies, namely the dharmakaya, sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya, are simultaneously manifested and the state of buddhahood with perfected wisdom, love and power, is attained.

The Path of Secret Mantra

- Through having trained one's mental continuum well by means of definite emergence, bodhicitta and the correct view of emptiness; and in addition, have the fortune of having completed well the causal collections of both merit and wisdom, one will progress through relying on any of the three lower tantric paths of the swift paths of secret mantra. Using the power of the excellent skilful method for accomplishing a rupakaya and through the quick accomplishment of the yoga of calm abiding and meditative insight, and so forth, enlightenment is rapidly attained.
- On the superior path of highest yoga tantra, in addition to the former practices, to differentiate the coarse, subtle and extremely subtle wind-energies and consciousnesses an exceptionally subtle mental consciousness itself is generated into the entity of a path consciousness. Through repeatedly cultivating it, the wisdom realising emptiness becomes extraordinarily powerful, abandoning obscurations particularly quickly. This is a distinctive feature.

How to Cultivate Experience of the Wisdom Understanding Emptiness

I will now briefly present how to internalise the view of emptiness. Meditation on the view of emptiness is done for the sake of abandoning obstructions; therefore, the support of a vast collection of merit is required. Further, to amass such through the rite of the seven branches, such as prostrations, encompasses much and has great purpose. With regard to the field for amassing the collection of merit, it is permissible to do whatever

suits one's own inclinations, either directing your mind to the actual Three Jewels in general or towards any particular object of refuge that is visualised before oneself. Then, after you have appealed to the refuges for help in generating the view of emptiness in your continuum, the way to conduct the actual meditation session is as follows.

- It is taught that it is easier to start with meditating on the crucial object of the selflessness of persons. Therefore, you should ascertain well how the meditator appears to your mind when thinking, "Now I am meditating on the view of emptiness.". Along with ascertaining how the "I" appears to the mind when the "I" experiences pleasure or pain, determining well the way you are clinging to the "I". Based on that, as was explained above, you should investigate the way the "I" exists.
- Progressively your understanding and experience of the view of emptiness becomes ever more profound, and when you engage in analysis at that point, the thought will arise, "The way the 'I' previously appeared, as being independent, is absolutely non-existent.".
- At that time, you should set your mind single-pointedly for a period on just that pure empty state which is the mere refutation of the object of negation and then perform placement meditation without analysis.
- When the way your mind is apprehending [this pure empty state of the negation] loosens slightly, then you should again perform analytical meditation, analysing as before, the way the self actually exists. Alternatively engaging in analytical and placement meditation in this manner serves as a means of transforming the mind.
- When analysing the "I" and a little understanding of it being empty arises, you should then analyse the mental and physical aggregates in dependence on which the "I" is imputed. Whilst in general it is important to analyse the aggregates of material forms, feelings, discrimination and compositional factors, it is of particular importance to analyse carefully the aggregates of primary consciousness.
- Further, it is in general difficult to identify even the conventional way the mind abides. Once the conventional nature of the mind – the mere clear knower - has been identified, then, through analysing its nature, finally you will gradually be able to identify the ultimate entity of the mind. If that is done, there is tremendous progress unlike anything else.

Initially, start by meditating for sessions of about half-an-hour. When you rise from the session and various virtuous and non-virtuous objects appear, benefit and harm are manifestly experienced. Therefore, keep in mind with absolute certainty that whilst these phenomena do not exist in their own right, they appear dependently, like mere illusions.

You should meditate in this way in four formal sessions in the early morning, mid-morning, afternoon and at night. Or, if you are able, you should meditate in six or eight or more sessions, throughout the day and night. If this is not possible, you should

meditate in only two sessions, in the early morning and at night.

When our understanding and experience of the view of emptiness becomes a little stronger, ascertainment of the view will arise spontaneously during all activities, whether we are moving about, sitting or lying down.

Also, since without calm abiding observing emptiness, one will not have given rise to meditative insight realising emptiness, it is definitely necessary to cultivate calm abiding. The technique for this should be learnt from other texts.

If you do not wish your knowledge of the view of emptiness to merely be intellectual, but rather wish to experience it yourself in your own continuum, you should build a foundation for this through what has been explained here. In accordance with your mental ability, you should study and contemplate the sutras and treatises which teach the profound view of emptiness as well as the excellent explanations of them by the experienced Tibetan scholars in their commentaries. As you are doing so, you should train, making your own way of cultivating experiences of emptiness to accord with the authentic advice of an experienced and wise scholar.

Dedication

*Through the collection of virtue arising from my endeavours here
May all sentient beings longing for happiness, myself and others,
Attain the eye which sees reality, free from extremes,
Travelling to and reaching the land of great enlightenment.*

Colophon

This has been written for the sake of helping in general those with burgeoning intellect in the East and West who have a keen interest in Buddhism; and in particular, those who, though they wish to understand the greatly profound and subtle meaning of the emptiness of selflessness, either do not have the time to study the great Madhyamaka texts or cannot read and understand the treatises existing in the Tibetan language. Thus, it has been composed primarily with the intent of easy comprehension and for the sake of simple translation into other languages. May this which has been written by the Buddhist monk, Tenzin Gyatso, bring virtuous goodness.

Translator's Colophon

The original translation by Jeffrey Hopkins (circa.1975) was revised with outlines, paragraphs and bullet-points added, by Venerable Lobsang Dorje, to complement better the oral teaching of Geshe Thubten Rabten (i.e. a translation that is literal is chosen over eloquence) at Atisha Centre, Australia in 2021 to 2022.

Madhyamaka Middle Way School	Svatantrika-Madhyamaka Autonomous Middle Way School	Prasangika-Madhyamaka Prasangika Middle Way School
Cittamatra Mind Only School	Sautrantika Sutra School	Vaibashika Great Exposition School

<p>For Prasangika, the following terms are synonymous: inherent existence, true existence, established through its own entity, established by way of its own defining characteristics</p>
<p>For Svatantrika, the following terms are synonymous: inherent existence, established through its own entity, established by way of its own defining characteristics</p>
<p>For Cittamatra, the following terms are synonymous: true existence, established by way of its own defining characteristics</p>

Dharmakaya Truth Body	Rupakaya Form Body
Jnanadharmakaya Wisdom Truth Body	Nirmanakaya Emanation Body
Svabhavikaya Nature Truth Body	Sambhogakaya Enjoyment Body



Notes

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