

MAHĀMUDRĀ  
— THE MOONLIGHT —  
*Quintessence of Mind  
and Meditation*

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### *The Stages of Tranquility and Insight: Part Three, Clearing Doubts Regarding the Methods for Maintaining the View of Reality and Meditative Absorption*

[Clearing doubts has four aspects:]

1. Distinction between analytical meditation and concentrative meditation [fixed attentiveness]
- 62 B 2. Application of analysis and concentration to tranquility and insight
3. Analysis and concentration on the view of reality
4. Elimination of doubts about the essential view of reality

#### *1. Distinction Between Analytical Meditation and Concentrative Meditation [Fixed Attentiveness]*

Some consider the meditation of the learned teachers to be solely analytical and that of the mendicant seekers to be exclusively that of concentration. Others think Buddhist scholars only study and investigate through reliance on doctrinal texts, whereas seekers practice tranquil absorption through the sole reliance on practical instructions. This is not so.

Scholars need the fixed attentiveness of tranquil absorption, which concentrates on the subject of meditation, while seekers need analytical meditation in order to purify their view of distortion and scepticism. Otherwise the view of inherent reality attained solely through analytical investigation reduces that view to an intellectual exercise, whereas the view achieved only through fixed attentiveness is a mere experience of the mind. Without both – fixed attentiveness and analytical investigation – the essence of meditation will be difficult to realize.

- 63 F What are the determining and differentiating factors of fixed attentiveness and analytical investigation? Fixed attentiveness and analytical investigation are designated according to their greater or lesser degree. Analytical investigation is

a meditational stage that seeks to establish the view of inherent reality through inferential examination and authoritative exposition. Fixed attentiveness is a meditational stage in which the view of intrinsic reality is determined essentially through valid cognition leading to meditation on tranquil equipoise of the ultimate reality. The school of analytical investigation concerns itself with the meditational systems based principally upon inferential investigation and the authoritative expositions embodied in the works of Asaṅga and Nāgārjuna. The meditational system of fixed attentiveness seeks perfect view through initial contemplation on the valid cognition and then through main absorptive meditation on the mind's ultimate nature. This system was handed down by the great sages Saraha and Śavari. The perfect view arrived at by these two schools must necessarily be identical, insofar as the void being the ultimate nature is concerned.

63 B Je Götsangpa<sup>59</sup> comments on these systems:

The ultimate object of the analytical school of Buddhist savants and the school of fixed attentiveness of the mendicant yogins is one and the same. The latter is regarded as being the more rapid path.

The realization of perfect view solely through reliance on authoritative exposition and inferential logic is difficult. As master Chandrakīrti reasons, "Investigation through authoritative exposition and inferential logic is analysis through concepts, which is incapable of determining valid cognition." According to the Buddhist tradition many of the great Buddhist savants such as "the two great chariots," Nāgārjuna and Asaṅga, attained liberation through their adherence to the pithy instructions of Buddhist esotericism. Other great savants such as Nāropa and Maitrīpa have achieved liberation by following the pithy instructions of the ultimate truth, though not without having first attempted to do so through the path of authoritative exposition and inferential logic. Most of the great saints of Tibet and ancient India have achieved liberation by following the pithy instructions of Buddhist esotericism.

64 F There are those who hold that perfect view cannot be realized without the general application of authoritative exposition and inferential logic and particularly the application of this logic according to the Madhyamaka of Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva, the spiritual father and son. This view seems to be a personal indulgence and is not quite correct. If this assertion were valid, it would follow that, prior to their composing texts on Madhyamaka logic, Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva had not realized perfect view. Such a view further implies that the Buddha, the Bodhisattvas, and most of the great awakened ones of Tibet had not realized the perfect view either.

From the etymological standpoint, the terms “investigation” and “attentiveness” denote analysis and quietening of the mind. Difficulty would arise if one were to differ from these definitions. Analytical meditation encompasses the entire doctrine – from the rarity of obtaining a blessed human state, to impermanence, and to the determination of the two types of selflessness – as the subject of investigation. Meditation on fixed attentiveness embraces all absorptive meditations on the determination made through preceding investigations. Such concentration is maintained through single-minded attention and vigilance.

64 B

There are some who consider analytical investigation and fixed attentiveness to be mutually exclusive. They contend that the mind cannot be settled in tranquility while concurrently investigating with penetrating intellect. Similarly they hold that analysis is impossible while the mind remains settled in tranquility, which is a nonconceptual state.

The first *Gomrim* (*Bhāvanākrama*) states:

While the mind is settled in tranquility, one investigates it through intellectual discernment. The intellect in absorptive equipoise should examine itself [the nature of mind].

The master Vasubandhu, in his commentary on the *Sūtrālaṃkāra*, refers to the varieties of meditation on insight: meditations with or without both general examination and penetrating analysis, and those engaging only in penetrating analysis. Many of the analytical meditations are to be practiced without disturbing the state of fixed attentiveness. The application of vigilance in a settled tranquility is a form of examination [if only to detect the emergence of sensual incitement or dullness]. Many similar instances exist.

## 2. Application of Analysis and Concentration to Tranquility and Insight

Some people assume that by alternating the meditation of fixed attentiveness with investigation, tranquility cannot possibly be realized. They insist that meditation on tranquility must always be a fixed state and hold that analysis through discerning wisdom – during the meditation on insight – might cause that insight to cease. These views are misconceived.

65 F

If the aforementioned view of fixed attentiveness expressed by some people were correct, such meditations as “exhaustive analysis”<sup>60</sup> and “the inward examination for the elimination of defilement”<sup>61</sup> etc. could not be used as objects of tranquil meditation. By extension, the application of discerning wisdom and strong vigilance in mastering tranquility would be wrong, too. This view of an exponent on insight would contradict the traditional viewpoint that upon com-

pleting the analysis, the analyzing intellect finally quietens itself [into a tranquil state]. According to his position, the nonconceptual and imperturbable insight mentioned in the *Bhāvanākrama* would not be possible. Moreover, he maintains that meditational analysis and tranquility, insight and fixed attentiveness are mutually exclusive. This view assumes analysis to be completely intellectual discrimination, and tranquility to be totally nonconceptual. It holds that the state of insight ceases when meditation on fixed attentiveness progresses. Therefore, insight must always remain attached to the discerning intellect. These assertions would render impossible the integration of tranquility and insight, and would  
 65 B negate the similarity between nonconceptual perception and insight. This is a great fallacy.

How then does one practice? At the stage of tranquility one meditates mainly on fixed attentiveness, according to the methods laid down in the nine stages of settling the mind. Even so, analysis must be applied once tranquil equipoise is stabilized.

The first *Bhāvanākrama* states:

When complete quietude of mind prevails, apply extensive analysis to all the psychophysical aggregates and elements [of one's stream of being].

There are many analytical methods recommended to be practiced during a stage of tranquility. These are contemplation upon ugliness as an antidote to lust, upon love against hatred, and upon the law of interdependent arising against ignorance. Similarly, investigation through three or four methods are predominant  
 66 F in the meditation on insight. Insight is not lost when the analyzing intellect finally quietens itself so that no trace of duality remains. This quietening of the analytical intellect is the stage of pure insight when one remains in nondual awareness.

The *Kāśyapaparivarta-sūtra* says:

Fire produced by rubbing together two sticks of wood  
 Then consumes both sticks;  
 Likewise, discernment of dualism engenders wisdom,  
 Which then destroys the two [dualistic notions].

The *Madhyamakāvatāra* explains:

Human individuals are bound by dualistic conceptions;  
 Yogins who overcome dualism achieve liberation.  
 The fruit of perfect analysis  
 Is the reversal of discrimination.  
 So proclaim the wise ones.

Once integrated tranquility and insight are attained, the principal meditative effort must be on fixed attentiveness, with occasional alternations to analytical investigation.<sup>62</sup> The authoritative expositions will be quoted below. The following methods are recommended for ordinary aspirants: Meditate on tranquility, if overcome by inner diversion<sup>63</sup> arising from excessive analysis; meditate on insight, if overcome by depression due to excessive meditation on fixed attentiveness and tranquility; meditate on effortless equanimity when harmonizing tranquility and insight.

The first *Bhāvanākrama* states:

Dullness, if not eliminated, will completely engulf the mind, turning it into a dark realm devoid of insight. The moment the mind sinks into dullness, it must be cleared. At times the intellect attains great sensitivity through insightful meditation; this causes the mind to become very restless. Its perception of true reality becomes shaky, like a butter lamp flickering in the wind. This mind is not capable of perceiving intrinsic reality. The remedy for this condition is the meditation of tranquility. As this tranquility stabilizes itself, meditation on discerning wisdom must resume.

Once the meditator has harmoniously blended tranquility and insight, he must maintain it without undue exertion for as long as the body and mind can endure it. Once tranquility and insight are unified, the mind must settle in concentrative equipoise, instead of alternating this with investigation.

The *Samdhinirmochana-sūtra* comments:

Maitreya: At what stage do the blending of tranquility and insight and their harmonious union take place?

Buddha: This takes place when the mind is settled in one-pointed concentration.

Maitreya: What is the one-pointed mind?

Buddha: It is a simple awareness of the perceived image of absorption, which is to be sustained.

Master Jñānagarbha,<sup>64</sup> in his commentary on the *Samdhinirmochana*, explains:

The path of tranquility is not separate from the path of insight, since the former is concentration on the mind, which then becomes the object of investigation for the latter. The mind is the only object for both these visualized meditations. When tranquil meditation stabilizes the mind,

insightful meditation analyzes it. Both the visualization and visualizer are just identical characteristics of the mind. Hence they are not separate entities.

### 67 B 3. *Analysis and Concentration on the View of Reality*

Some teachers have expounded the following methods, which I consider to be wrong: To maintain perfect view a meditator should first investigate the ultimate reality, using the authoritative doctrinal expositions and logic. This should bring about a firm determinate awareness of the nonsubstantiality of dualism.<sup>65</sup> The meditator should focus his concentration on it for a short while. They contend that an extended concentration will reduce its determinate awareness to mere tranquility with the resultant loss of insight. Not only is the meditator to practice investigation in this manner, but he is urged to alternate the meditation of fixed attentiveness with that of investigation.

I shall explain why the determinate awareness of nonsubstantial reality, so engendered through the examination of the authoritative doctrinal expositions and logic, is, regardless of the explanations, nothing but the mind grasping at emptiness. Such a view is not endowed with perfect insight, and it cannot be perfected through the meditation of fixed attentiveness either. This system may not result in the attainment of an absorptive equipoise endowed with perfect view, since these teachers hold tranquility to be unattainable through the alternating meditation of fixed attentiveness and investigation. The reason for settling the mind in tranquility and insightful view is the same. To settle the mind in fixed attentiveness after investigation is also wrong, as they maintain insight vanishes once the mind is settled in tranquility. With insight so vanished, a concentration on the perfect view [of reality] cannot render the meditation perfect. It is also incorrect to say that the union of tranquility and insight will degenerate into mere tranquility without the benefit of repeated examinations. When the view of such a union emerges, a single-minded concentration on that view will encompass both tranquility and insight. This is indeed the union of the two. It is incorrect to repeatedly continue the examination after settling the mind in the attained view, because such an examination through authoritative doctrine and logic still remains within the conceptual domain. This is deluded discrimination and is to be eliminated through the dawning of nonconceptual awareness.<sup>66</sup> The reference in the *Kāśyapaparivarta* and the *Bhāvanākrama* to nonconceptual awareness arising from analytical intellect merely indicates the initial need for wisdom to establish the perfect view. They do not show the need for repeated examinations to maintain the attained view.

68 B Since most forms of determinate awareness<sup>67</sup> are nothing more than inferential judgement<sup>68</sup> based on a rational intellect, they cannot be accepted as nonconceptual awareness. It is also incorrect [for these teachers] to assume a concentration on perfect view and a contemplative tranquility as being the same. A vast difference exists between the two. Tranquility merely maintains the stream of nondiscriminating mindfulness<sup>69</sup> of the visualized image,<sup>70</sup> whereas mind focused on the perfect view is the stream of nonconceptual awareness, which is in harmony with the determinate certainty of the void nature [of duality].

How then are analytical investigation and fixed attentiveness to be practiced in order to maintain the perfect view? At first, when seeking the view of reality, development of a determinate awareness can be helped by discarding all doubts and assumptions about the criteria of the individual marks of reality and their generalized marks through the intellect born of acquired knowledge. This is like the training of a new horse on a track. For the realization of perfect view a discerning wisdom<sup>71</sup> arising from meditation is essential. While not dependent  
69 F upon inferential judgement, this wisdom is capable of directly establishing all realities to be devoid of true essence or inborn nature. It will cause the meditator to experience the analytical intellect itself as being without identifiable appearance or essence. This is the fundamental tenet of perfect view. Observations and examinations must be practiced through the contemplative wisdom with unceasing mindfulness of the tranquil meditation, and not through conceptual analysis.

The first *Bhāvanākrama* states:

When the mental focus on the visualized image of tranquility becomes firm, if at that moment one examines it through wisdom, an illumination of pure awareness will emerge, like light clearing the darkness. Pure awareness arises when the harmony between the two [tranquility and insight] is achieved. This harmony arises in the same way as one's eyes and light harmonize to produce a visual perception, without the conflicting characteristics of light and darkness. This absorptive trance is,  
69 B by its nature, devoid of darkness, its essential characteristic being single-mindedness. By such meditational equipoise<sup>72</sup> ultimate reality can be perceived as it is. Not only is this meditation compatible with wisdom, but it is in perfect harmony with it. Therefore, the inconceivable nature of all phenomena, established through analytical wisdom obtained in absorptive meditation, is the ultimate reality beyond conception. It is the criterion of the subliminal purity [of awareness], which is spontaneous perfection. There is nothing more to be observed beyond that.



As discerning intellect finally quietens itself [when primal awareness emerges], all realities are cognized as being empty of absolute self-nature. This is the meaning of perceiving the true reality.

The first *Bhāvanākrama* continues:

What does the perception of ultimate reality signify? It signifies the non-cognition [of any absolute self-nature] of all realities. The term “noncognition of all realities” should not be construed to be the same as the dark void experienced by a blind man, a person with his eyes shut, or someone lacking in mental application.

As the text states:

The inconceivable nature of all phenomena, established through analytical wisdom obtained in absorptive meditation, is the ultimate reality beyond conception.<sup>73</sup>

Therefore, a meditator seeking the perfect view must first settle the mind in absorptive equipoise and then conduct meditational investigation through discerning wisdom. Having attained this view, the meditator should repeat his investigation whenever the mind is overcome by nonvirtuous thoughts caused by its attachment to duality. Once the unerring awareness of perfect view is established, meditation with fixed attentiveness alone, rather than alternating it with investigation, should be the practice followed, until that view is mastered. This will be illustrated through doctrinal expositions later.

#### 4. *Elimination of Doubts About the Essential View of Reality*

There are two sections:

1. Review of other Buddhist schools
2. Establishing the meditational system of our school

##### 1. *Review of Other Buddhist Schools*

It was not correct on the part of some earlier Tibetan teachers to have assumed the view that intrinsic reality consists of abandonment not only of attachment to duality, but also of virtuous thoughts. Some have regarded this line of thought to be identical to that of the Hwashang school,<sup>74</sup> as both are lacking in determinate awareness that comprehends the intrinsic reality. This is considered to be either due to a confused mind or to indifference.

Other earlier Tibetan scholars assumed “perfect view” to be the stream of determinate awareness arising from their recognition of the nonexistence of duality, as a result of expositional and inferential investigation based on the three marks of syllogism.<sup>75</sup> This is incorrect. Master Gampopa described such a system as the abnegated concept of nonarising [void], because it is an intellectualized and superficial void based on inferential judgements.

The *Pramāṇasamucchaya* says:

If one is led to the truth  
Along the path of dialectics,<sup>76</sup>  
It debases the teaching of Buddha.

Master Atiśa says:

Through the two forms of awareness,  
Primal cognition<sup>77</sup> and inferential judgement,  
One will perceive the void.  
So say those people  
Confused by duality.<sup>78</sup>

Still other early Tibetans have assumed intrinsic reality to be the void of absolute nothingness, determined by examining the self and the psychophysical aggregates through the logic of the Madhyamaka. This is also incorrect. The *Kālachakra* places this assumption closer to nihilism. It therefore cannot be accepted as being identical with the void of supreme form.<sup>79</sup>

71 F

Some [teachers] propounded that one can establish an undeviated view, free from any extreme theories, through authoritative exposition, logical inference, or practical instruction, and then settle the mind in a nondiscriminating awareness. Such is the nature of view and meditation. And when the mind is in tranquil equipoise, there emerges a union of awareness and void that is vivid, transparent, and unblemished. This is the nonconceptual awareness of intrinsic reality.

Some others stated that the above-mentioned scholars criticized Hwashang’s contemplative approach, yet practiced a similar contemplation themselves. However, I find that their position with respect to the view of reality and the method of attaining tranquility is in accord with the treatises of the Buddhist scholars and saints. Nonetheless, these very exponents identify blissful experience, gained through control of the complex neuropsychical system<sup>80</sup> and the creative elements, with nonconceptual awareness. This should not be confused with real nonconceptual awareness. No matter how good the awareness, when it is not separated from the moisture of sensations and experiences, it is nothing more than an appearance arising from either a subjective or objective dimension.

Also, some savants – while refuting all other views of intrinsic reality – content themselves with not having any formulation. Such a position is not only hypocritical, but a nonacceptance of the classical treatises of the Madhyamaka of which they are professed followers. It is an expedient substitute for a definite awareness of the “thatness” [of ultimate reality].

Some assume that even though one does not discover the view of intrinsic reality through examination of doctrine and logic, meditation on the meaning of true reality is fulfilled if the mind is settled in its primal state, detached from the notion of objective reality and from the process of discrimination. They assert that since the void of true reality is devoid of all identity, there must be such a method for settling the mind. Others have refuted this approach by identifying it with the nihilistic system of Hwashang. Though such practice is without error, the manner of its description might well be incompetent. My own observation of this system is that a meditator can use this to discover the proper view, provided he is aware of the inherent limitations of nonsubstantial objective reality and the essential significance of the void nature of true reality, which is beyond all identity.

Even without comprehending these essential points, if one begins to settle the mind in a simple, nonconceptual state by first examining it through wisdom, and then maintaining that quietude through vigilance and mindfulness, one is adopting a method prescribed for new meditators to practice tranquility and insight. It is somewhat close to the method for maintaining a view of intrinsic reality, though not the same employed by those competent meditators who have eliminated all doubts and exaggeration. Even a nonconceptual meditation accompanied by mindfulness and vigilance will serve to maintain nonconceptual tranquility. Yet such a tranquil state can be flawed by the lack of mindfulness and vigilance and clouded by a deep dullness and sluggishness. This is recognized as depressed thoughtlessness.

Other exponents, while admitting the need for perfect view through analysis of doctrine and logic, assert that once perfect view is attained, the mind settled in a completely nonconceptual state constitutes the meditation of that perfect view. Opponents of this hold that if this position were true, then all dimensions of thoughtlessness – such as deep sleep or the meditation on simple tranquility – should represent meditation on the perfect view. The question as to whether a meditation deals with perfect view can be answered by determining the presence or absence of vigilance and mindfulness, reinforced by a determinate awareness of that view, in the nonconceptual state in question. My previous comments on the value of simple nonconceptual meditation have application in this instance.

It has been asserted by some that once the true view is achieved, all subsequent meditation should begin with an examination of the view through discerning

73 F

wisdom. After that, the mind should be settled in a nonconceptual state. They hold this to be the meditation on the true view. This has been refuted by some on the same grounds as the preceding case; they argued that the mere settling of the mind in a nonconceptual state is similar to a deep sleep. On the criteria for determining whether a meditation is that of perfect view, I refer to my observations above.

Some exponents do not accept the three above-mentioned meditational systems. To them meditation on the perfect view is forming a determinate awareness of its void nature and then firmly fixing attention on the significance of it. They, however, point out that the first system is not without any intellectual inclination toward the void, and the second does not lack mindfulness of the perfect view when settling the mind in a nonconceptual equipoise. The third system is not without fixed attention on the view of perfect reality after the initial investigation.

However, their approach has drawn criticism on the grounds that the meditation prescribed in contradistinction to the three consists solely of fixing the mental focus on the perfect view through recollection of its previous understanding of that view. It is held by critics to be simply tranquil meditation on the void and therefore lacking in insight that arises from investigation. Holistic meditation must consist of tranquility and insight; this practice is incomplete, as it contains only tranquility. This criticism cannot be valid if the meditation in question is basically a concentration [as these critics pointed out] on insight attained earlier through analysis. Therefore, there is no need to repeat the analysis [in the same practice]. I find the approach to be well presented, though there may be some basis for doubt concerning the existence of attachment to the experience of the view.

73 B

A Tibetan savant asserts that in order to establish the view of reality, the meditator should first eliminate the mind's grasping of dualism born of ignorance and then, as a counterbalance, produce a powerful awareness of the void [nature of mind] through meditation. Merely to master concentration of the mind on the awareness of that view is only to maintain tranquility. Instead, there must be repeated examination and creation of a powerful awareness of certainty. Any comprehension of the meaning of intrinsic reality does not necessarily constitute a clinging to substantive dualism. All nonconceptual states, detached from discerning intellect, are similar to the meditational system of Hwashang.

Followers of this savant hold that in the emptiness of true dualism, established through the logical investigation of the Middle Way [Madhyamaka], lies the meaning of nonselfhood. The powerful certainty of selflessness or emptiness of true reality, produced by an intellect inclined toward that position, is the

definite awareness of the perfect view. Seating that awareness of certainty on the horse of tranquility and thereby settling it in absorptive equipoise is regarded to be the true view in meditation.<sup>81</sup> The rest is as I have said before.

74 F I shall now examine the preceding assertion that creating a powerful awareness of the emptiness of innate nature involves conceptualizing the nonexistent self-nature or nonsubstance; this is not different from clinging to that emptiness. It is similar to the other position following it, according to which the intellectual grasping of the selflessness of phenomena or of the emptiness of true reality is but mental attachment. The greater the grasping, the stronger the clinging. Though the existence of the self is negated, the intellectual grasping of nonselfhood still persists; though clinging to substantive reality is negated, an attachment to that reality still persists. These are recognized as the great fallacies.

The *Bhāvanākrama* explains:

Contemplate all things as devoid of self-nature; abandon even the idea of nonexistent self-nature through transcending wisdom.

The *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā* states:

74 B He who views his nature and that of others  
As being substantive or nihilistic  
Does not perceive the true nature  
According to the Buddha's doctrine.

And the same text adds:

To affirm reality is to concede eternalism;  
To deny reality completely is to accept nihilism.

The *Bodhichittavivaraṇa* expounds:

This is nonarising or emptiness,  
This is nonselfhood.  
Such is the meditation of an inferior mind.  
This is not the meditation on the void.

These expositions contradict the position of the scholars mentioned earlier. The *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā* states:

By their erroneous perceptions of emptiness  
The less intelligent will come to grief.

The *Uma Tshiksel* (*Mūlamadhyamaka-vṛttih Prasannapadā*) explains:

The moment all phenomena are conceived as nihility  
A distortion of the view occurs.

There is a possibility of this risk. However, should such clinging [to nihility] persist, choose a positive view of reality, which is the better of the two evils.

The *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā* asserts:

He who affirms [substantiality] will go to the realm of peace;  
He who denies everything will go to the realm of affliction.<sup>82</sup>

75 F It is incorrect to regard as simple tranquility the state in which the mind is focused on a memory of perfect view. The mind settled in a tranquil state contains insight; thus a union of the two exists. A view without the two cannot be said to be a perfect view. To designate every insight as conceptual and every tranquility as nonconceptual is to deny the harmony between the two. Such designation precludes the possibility of a synthesis of tranquility and insight. In light of this approach, the following might also be incorrect. Concerning the unity of tranquility and insight master Jñānagarbha, in his commentary on the *Samdhi-nirmochana-sūtra*, writes:

Since the path of tranquility concentrates primarily on the mind, which is at the same time the object of insight, the perception and perceiver are not separate entities but the complete state of the mind. With regard to the mind's grasping of emptiness or nihility, no other exponents of the ultimate doctrine, Tibetan or Indian, have accepted this as being valid.

This approach contradicts many authoritative positions. For example, the *Dharmadhātu-stava*<sup>83</sup> states:

75 B Abandon discrimination and conceptualization  
Of all phenomena projected by mind;  
Meditate on the inner expanse of reality  
For in reality they are devoid of innate essence.

The Great Saraha elucidates:

The true essence of reality is unblemished  
By extreme concepts and impurities [prejudices];  
Pure from the beginning, it is beyond determination;  
To discriminate it is to arouse a poisonous snake.

Since conceptual discrimination or investigation is but the exercise of a conditioned and deluded mind, the conceptual discrimination of the ultimate reality is refuted.

Nāgārjuna says:

The ultimate reality is beyond  
The realm of the mind's discrimination,  
For the mind is recognized as being conditioned.

It is incorrect to assume that grasping the true nature of reality does not represent a clinging to conceptual reality.

The *Prajñāpāramitā-samchaya-gāthā* elaborates:

If a Bodhisattva considers  
The psychophysical aggregates as being “void,”  
He is grasping a conceptual reality,<sup>84</sup>  
Thus showing little reverence toward that which is “unborn.”

The *Prajñāpāramitā* comments that to dualize all phenomena, from psychophysical aggregates to perfect knowledge, as being eternal or impermanent, empty or not empty, possessed of self or without a self, is to indulge in conceptual duality.

76 F

Saraha says:

When the mind is enchanted [by the senses]  
And indulges in them with a passionate heart,  
Then even a pain as small as the husk of a sesame seed  
Is sure to cause constant affliction.

And he concludes:

Abandon attachment to objects, whatever they may be.

There have been many statements to the same effect.

It is a little too audacious to say that all nonconceptual states, devoid of analytical investigation, are identical with the meditational system of Hwashang.

The *Bodhichittavivaraṇa* asserts:

Nondiscrimination is emptiness.  
How can there be emptiness  
Where discrimination exists?

The *Madhyamakāvatāra* explains:

Erroneous concepts are the results of discrimination –  
So proclaims the Wise One.

Atiśa, in elucidating the technique of settling the mind according to special Madhyamaka instruction, says:

In the midst of meditation one does not discriminate nor cling to anything.

All such statements, which urge the settling of the mind in a nonconceptual state, might well be the meditational system of Hwashang [according to the critic of nonconceptual meditation].

76 B

The teachings of Maitreya<sup>85</sup> refer to the wisdom that grasps at the emptiness of reality as the concept of eternalism. Since this concept is to be abandoned

through nonconceptual awareness, it cannot be the perfect view. Even if, as advocated, it is seated on the horse of tranquility, it would not be the perfect view in meditation. According to his system, tranquility must necessarily be nonconceptual, whereas the tranquil mind, detached from discrimination, causes the loss of insight. The analogy of a horse and its burden is incompatible. It has been affirmed that analytical investigation itself must finally cease [in samādhi]. When this occurs, [if the critic is right] insight is lost and the meditation becomes similar to that propounded by the Hwashang school. Buddhist logic and doctrine can be used to counter this position; however, I will not elucidate here for fear of overelaboration.

## 2. Establishing the Meditational System of Our School

77 F Much can be understood from the previous explanations on insight, the identification of the view of reality and its maintenance, and also from the commentaries on the doctrine and logic. The realization of the view of the void is said to occur upon achieving the stage of illumination. Here I shall only deal with the view appropriate to the intellectual level of ordinary human beings. It is of the utmost importance to establish the view of the void, whether through analytical or concentrative meditation. The sūtras state that nonrealized view and meditation cannot destroy the roots of existence [saṃsāra].

The *Bodhicittavivaraṇa* remarks:

Those who are ignorant of the void  
Cannot achieve liberation.  
These confused minds wander  
In the prison of the six realms.

It is futile to practice without discovering the unerring view of reality. Nāropa, in his *Dr̥ṣṭisaṃkṣipta*, comments:

77 B Through unerring view,  
Meditation and action well-harmonized,  
Enlightenment is achieved,  
Like a trained horse skillfully negotiating a course.  
If the view is not truly in accord [with intrinsic reality],  
Meditation and action will take the wrong course,  
And nothing of any worth will be achieved.  
That is like the groping of a blind man without a guide.

The attainment of awareness through meditation is essential for a successful determination of the true view. Mere intellectual understanding arising from



hearing and examining will not suffice. All the sūtras, tantras, and illuminating instructions agree that the ultimate meditation is one that concentrates on the mind and culminates in realization.

The *Guhyasamāja-tantra* states:

When fully examined,  
The mind is found to be the source of all realities.  
This phenomenon is the space of indestructibility  
In which the duality of phenomena and their intrinsic nature is absent.

The *Vajrapañjara-tantra* sets forth:

The precious mind is a dynamic force; the mind attuned to meditation  
attains enlightenment.

The *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra* elucidates:

78 F Do not determine the external reality through mere reliance on the mind.  
Transcend the confines of the mind, by focusing on the suchness [of the  
void]. Settle the mind on the unreality of phenomenal appearance.  
A yogin who has realized the unreality of appearance will truly under-  
stand the Great Vehicle.

The *Sūtrālaṅkāra* summarizes:

Know that nothing exists apart from the mind.  
Realize the mind itself is devoid of true reality.

Saraha says:

The mind is in bondage, if tied by attachment;  
If this tie is broken, the source of confusion is eliminated.

Based on the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*, the system of the Two Great Chariots,<sup>86</sup> “the stages of meditation” and “the instructions on the wisdom-gone-beyond” prescribe practices for attaining the nonconceptual state by focusing (1) on the mind, (2) on the awareness of the suchness [of the void], or (3) on the perception of the unreality of phenomena. When establishing the view of reality through meditation according to the sūtras or tantras with elucidating instructions, discerning wisdom is indispensable. This is stated in the third *Bhāvanākrama*:

78 B All realities in their essence are void, which cannot be understood with-  
out analytical intellect.

However, this intellect itself must finally be quietened, ushering in the emergence of a nonconceptual state.

The *Kāśyapaparivarta* states:

Buddha: Kāśyapa, when two wind-blown trees strike each other, fire is produced. This fire then consumes the trees. Similarly, Kāśyapa, from the perfect analytical intellect is born the wisdom of the awakened ones, whose flames then consume the intellect.

The second *Bhāvanākrama* explains:

The fire of the true understanding of ultimate reality emerges from the discerning intellect. This fire consumes the intellect, the way the flames consumed the trees. Such were the words of the Illuminated Conqueror.

79 F Analysis [of insight] – not of conceptual views – should be done while dwelling in a meditative absorption. A sūtra affirms this approach:

Understanding of the pure truth can only be attained through absorptive meditation.

The *Bhāvanākrama* agrees:

Perfect awareness will dawn only when the mind – firmly settled in tranquility – applies wisdom and investigates it.

At this level, the true view of intrinsic reality is the dawning of nonconceptual awareness devoid of any entity. This occurs when the discriminating faculties become quiet. A sūtra says in support:

Perfect insight is the nonperception of all phenomena.

The *Bhāvanākrama* adds:

What is the insight into true reality?

It is the nonperception of all phenomena.

At this stage the mind should be quietened in a nonconceptual, nonperceiving state, free from any dualistic thought or consciousness, undisturbed by the cloud of dullness or sensual incitement.

A sūtra declares:

79 B When the mind with its pristine purity focuses upon intrinsic reality, an indefinable experience will illuminate one. This is described as absorptive equipoise.

Atiśa says:

Settle the mind without discrimination in the nonconceptual expanse of reality.

And he adds:

The infinity of reality is without center or horizon. Observe it with a deep nonconceptual mind, unobscured by any shadow of dullness or sensual incitement.

The *Madhyamakopadeśa* of Atiśa concludes:

Thus, past thought has ceased, the future is yet to emerge, and the present is difficult to penetrate. Being nonsubstantive and spacelike, the mind is colorless and shapeless. It is neither one nor many entities. Its nature is the unborn [void] and luminous awareness. By examining the mind with the weapon of logic, one will comprehend its nonreality.

80 F Neither the twin aspects of the mind [awareness and its void nature] nor the discerning intellect are composed of any essence. For example, the fire that results from the friction of two pieces of wood consumes the wood that begot it; when the wood is burnt, the fire dies. The moment wisdom establishes the unreality of all perceptive and conceptual dualism, the meditator will realize the wisdom itself as being lucid and void, unobscured by perceptive duality and undistracted by dullness or sensual incitement. The mind should be rid of flaws such as dullness, sensual incitement, clinging, memory, and other mental activities. The meditator should maintain a nonconceptual state until interrupted by stealthy thieflike perception or discrimination.

80 B This can be explained in a simpler way. When, at first, the meditator seeks perfect view, he establishes the mind as being the source of all duality. The mind is then discovered to be without essence. These investigations are carried out through logical formulae known as: the three entrances of time; the mutual exclusion of the one and many; the nonexistence of absolute arising, cessation and duration; and the lucid, void nature of the mind. One establishes the mind to be devoid of any substantiality whatsoever through the [above-mentioned] logical investigation. Even the analytical intellect is [established to be] unreal. The analytical intellect dissolves itself finally into the nondual, luminous state in the way wood is consumed by fire.

This is the attainment of the perfect view. Once this occurs, the mind should concentrate totally on the realized view unless interrupted by perceptions or discrimination. During the absorptive period the mind should be cleared of any creeping dullness or sensual incitement. It should not allow discrimination, attachment, consciousness of duality, or other mental activities.

The *Bhāvanākrama* advises:

Contemplate the nonsubstantiality of all phenomena. Eliminate even the very notion of nonsubstantiality through nonconceptual wisdom.

Meditate on such a nonconceptual state that transcends dualism, both existence and nonexistence.

81 F There are those who seek to maintain the view of reality through meditation and who thereby wish to harmonize the tranquil state with analytical insight into the void nature of phenomena, the nonexistence of an essence, or the nonexistence of the self. They will gain a definite understanding by contemplating the meaning of these quotations.

Many discourses refer to the need for nonconceptual meditation once the perfect way has been established. The *Samādhirāja* states:

Wise understanding of the conditioned and unconditioned reality,  
Elimination of all perceptive duality,  
And the quietening of the mind in a nondual state  
Will bring about insight into the void nature of all phenomena.

The *Bhāvanākrama* quotes the *Ārya Ratnamegha*:

81 B A thorough examination of the understanding of the mind will bring about a realization of its emptiness. With this knowledge, the meditator should withdraw into the pure state of nonduality. Understanding the mind's nonexistent essence through analytical insight is absorption in the state of nonduality.

The second *Bhāvanākrama* continues:

When a seeker of the truth fully examines [the mind] through wisdom and refrains from clinging to its intrinsic nature as being the ultimate essence, he then reaches nonconceptual absorption.

Kamalaśīla in his commentary on the *Avikalpapraveśa-dhāraṇī* explains:

At the conclusion of the examination, the mind should be quietened into a nonconceptual state.

The *Bodhipathapradīpa* supports this:

First establish all phenomena  
As being devoid of self-nature and absolute condition  
Through doctrine and logic.  
Then meditate on the perfect nonconceptuality.

This completes the general elucidation on the removal of doubts concerning view and meditation. This has been written as a general exegesis, to serve as a guide for the many methods of realizing the absorptive state in accordance with the sūtras, tantras, and illuminating instructions.