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Butön's History of Buddhism in India and Its Spread to Tibet

A Treasury of Priceless Scripture

Butön Rinchen Drup

TRANSLATED BY

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Further,

> Present it coherently and in order.

Such instructions express the Buddha's authorization.

ii. The Treatises

This section has three parts: (1) characteristics of a treatise, (2) etymology of the word "treatise," and (3) categories of treatises.

a. Characteristics of a Treatise

Authors whose minds are without distraction explain the canon's meaning consistent with the path to attaining freedom. *The Highest Continuity* states:

> Place on the crown of your head, as you would the Seer's canon,
> [The teachings of] whoever teaches referring exclusively to the Victor's doctrine
> With a mind free from distraction,
> And [whose teachings] concur with the path to the attainment of freedom.

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b. Etymology of the Word "Treatise"

The Sanskrit word for treatise is *shastra*. *Shasana* means "to refine." [Treatises] refine [the reader, changing one] from [the state of an individual immersed in] emotional afflictions and the three poisons to someone endowed with the three trainings. *Tayi*, or *tarana*, means "to protect." [Treatises] protect from [undesired] results—the miserable realms and the sufferings of existence. This etymology can also be found in the canon. *The Rational System of Exposition* states:

> A treatise is proven by its characteristic, the Buddha's speech.
> According to its etymology, it refines (*shas*) and protects (*tra*);
> thus, it is a treatise.

> Texts that refine every afflictive emotion—our enemies—
> And protect us from the miserable existences are treatises,
> Since they have these qualities of refinement and protection.
> These two qualities cannot be found in other systems.

Therefore, because treatises provide the ultimate commentary exclusively on the speech of the Buddha and therefore possess the qualities of refining and protection, strive diligently to retain their meaning.

c. Categories of Treatises

This section has five parts: categories of treatises according to their (1) quality, (2) function, (3) subject matter, (4) what part of the canon they teach, and (5) a summary of kinds of treatises.

aa. Treatises Classified by Quality

The Main Stages of Awakening: The Bodhisattvas' Stages presents [treatises] in nine categories. The first three are treatises that are meaningless or have the wrong meaning as opposed to those that are meaningful. The second three are treatises that are misleading or hollow as opposed to those that are effective in relieving suffering. The third three are treatises that stress study or debate as opposed to those that emphasize spiritual accomplishment. Among these nine, the final one in each group is sublime; the first two, inferior.

Some* count treatises that stress study and debate as a fifth sublime category, but this is incorrect, for *Reaching a Definitive Conclusion: A Summary* states that these both consist of non-Buddhist treatises. Therefore, only the final one in each group is sublime since they are tanght in the Buddha's canon.

bb. Treatises Classified by Function

In terms of function, treatises have three categories: treatises that synthesize a vast [wealth of information], treatises that reveal the profound, and trea-

*A note in the text identifies one of these as "Lhopa."

tises that rectify order. *The Discourse on Monastic Discipline* is an example of the first; *The Ornament of Manifest Realization*, of the second; and *The Ornament of the Discourses* or *The Compendium of Training*, of the third.

cc. Treatises Classified by Subject Matter

According to subject matter, there are three types of treatise: (1) treatises that present the multiplicity of phenomena [empirical reality], (2) treatises that present the nature of phenomena [absolute reality], and (3) treatises that present freedom and omniscience.

1' Treatises on Empirical Reality

This section has two parts: (1) treatises on ordinary topics and (2) treatises on special topics.

a' Treatises on Ordinary Topics

Treatises on ordinary topics include those that address worldly matters and the eighteen kinds of judgment [of humans, animals, and so forth]. Such texts include *One Hundred Verses on Knowledge*, *A Drop of Nourishment for Individuals*, and *A Treasury of Verse*. These works constitute the cause for states of uplift and can possibly become the basis for freedom. *One Hundred Verses on Knowledge* states:

> If you act well in human life,
> The road to the heavens will not be long.
> When you ascend the stairways of gods and humans,
> Freedom will lie nearby.

[Treatises for] judging human beings, horses, elephants, and so forth belong to this category.

b' Treatises on Special Topics

Treatises on special topics are works that address the principal fields of knowledge. *The Ornament of the Discourses* states:

> Without diligence in the five fields of knowledge
> Even the noblest person cannot attain omniscience.
> Therefore, to defeat [challenges], to care for others,
> And for complete understanding, persevere [in those fields].

Grammar and logic pertain to defeating others' [challenges]; medicine and art pertain to caring for others; and the study of Buddhism pertains to gaining full understanding.

Treatises on Logic

Treatises on logic contain examinations of direct and inferential logic, exclusion, examples, and the reasoning of refutation. These were synthesized into six [chapters in] *A Compendium of All Discourses on Logic* and commentaries on its intent, including the seven treatises on logic, seven analyses, eight proofs, and seven following texts.

Among treatises on logic, three treatises represent the main work, like a body; four treatises grow from them, like limbs. The first three—commentaries to *A Drop of Reasoning*—present techniques for those of the sharpest, middle, or lowest degree of acuity to easily realize correct understanding. The Kashmiri master Jnanashri did not believe *Ascertainment of Dignaga's "Compendium of Logic"* to be a commentary to *A Compendium of All Discourses on Logic*, yet he wrote, "I will elucidate its system." Master Dharmottara considered it to be a commentary to *A Compendium of All Discourses on Logic*, which is correct.

Among the four auxiliary treatises, none enlarge upon the chapter of direct perception. Two works enlarge upon inferential reasoning (done for one's own benefit): *Drops of Reasons*, which defines logical entailments of a subject's qualities in general; and *Analysis of Relations*, which defines difficult logical entailments or proofs. *Reasoning for Debate* enlarges upon the chapter on aiding others and presents the subjects of the proponent and opponent in debate, and victory, defeat, and conclusion. *Establishing Other Continuums* presents that other minds can be understood from [their] speech and that this convention does not contradict the mind-only [perspective]. As that text states:

> Seeing one's own body's acts
> Preceded by the mind,

One can perceive this in others, and know their minds.
Mind-only has a similar method [of reasoning].

Tibetans who claim that these and other intellectual treatises belong to the collection of observed phenomena are incorrect since intellectual reasoning is found in treatises on logic, whereas observed phenomena are found in treatises on Buddhist knowledge. *The Rational System of Exposition* states:

Therefore, due to conceptual analysis,
Previous [lifetimes'] familiarization, not having performed [nonvirtuous acts],
And not relying on scriptural transmission, [an individual becomes an intellectual].
The five excellent attributes of intellectuals
Are believed to be diligence, concentration,
Previous propensity, complete retention,
And thorough training.

Thus, it is said, "not relying on scriptural transmission. . . " *The Ornament of the Discourses* states:

Reliance on intellectual and uncertain [reasoning]
Is not comprehensive, [and is] relative and distressing—
The spiritually immature rely upon it.

The collection of observed phenomena is the basic source text, which such texts contradict. *A Compendium of All Discourses on Logic* states:

This [text] was written to express logic and principles, thus [showing] non-Buddhist beliefs to be hollow, [to encourage] those attached to them to reject them. Nevertheless, it was not intended by itself to have [non-Buddhists] enter the Transcendent Buddha's doctrine since his teachings do not belong to the domain of intellectual theories. Yet, once [such individuals] have rejected [their wrong views], they can hear the Teacher's teachings and effortlessly understand them since they have no impediment to [such understanding].

The same text states:

Who leads [others] to the teachings on the path of intellectual theories
Has distanced themselves far from the Sage's doctrine and has been ruined.
Nevertheless, should the characteristics of the Transcendent Buddha's teachings be altered,
It is reasonable to examine that case.

Treatises on Sanskrit Grammar

The presentation [of Sanskrit grammar] gathered into three subjects—stems, affixes, and morphological changes—is found in *A Discourse on Grammar* and its ancillary texts. Stems are verbal roots and nouns. Among affixes, active affixes create nouns from verbal roots, and secondary affixes create a noun from another noun. These latter affixes have three kinds: general, unlimited plurality, and material. Tense terminations form words from verbal roots, specifying a tense. Case terminations form words from nouns, specifying a meaning. Augments are inserted between stems and affixes. Prefixes change the verbal roots and are considered to belong to the stem. Morphological changes occur due to euphonic rules, and so forth: letters are erased or changed, or words are contracted.

This constitutes the subject of grammar in a concise form. Another such presentation explains that four subjects—euphonic rules, nouns, verbs, and suffixes—form *A Discourse on Grammar*'s main subjects and that verbal roots, prefixes, *unadi* [terminations], and other subjects are ancillary. These are taught in *The Kalapa Discourse: A Treatise on Grammar. Gateway to Articulate Speech Like a Sword* teaches these subjects in three topics: groups of letters, groups of nouns, and groups of words.

These and other grammatical treatises should be studied since they constitute the cause for the attainment of four forms of individual correct knowledge; nevertheless they do not belong to any of the three Buddhist collections.

Treatises on Prosody, Synonymics, and Poetic Forms

Treatises on prosody, such as *The Source of Jewels*, present subjects related to those in grammatical treatises—how to combine heavy and light letters, and

their arrangement in lines of set numbers of syllables. Treatises on synonymics, such as *The Treasury of Immortality*, present such topics as synonyms, differences in the three genders of words, and many definitions of the same word. Treatises on poetic forms, such as *The Mirror of Poetics*, present such topics as the characteristics of poetry, the different schools of poetry, the thirty-five poetic adornments, difficult forms, and innuendo. Other treatises, such as those on drama, employ these forms.

Poetic forms and the rest can be considered either a branch of grammar or of the Vedas. *The Treasury of Immortality* states:

> These three—poetic forms, synonymics, and presenting offerings—
> Constitute the third Veda.

Treatises on Medicine and the Arts

[Medical] treatises present four subjects: illnesses, their basis, their medicinal cures, and the conduct of treatment. Or they present them under eight headings:

> Where medical examination is based
> These eight branches are taught:
> The body, childhood, demons, the upper body,
> [Wounds from] weapons and [poisonous] bites; and [remedies for] aging and sterility.

This refers to eight topic headings: pregnancy; infancy; [infants'] demons and diseases; the body—the upper inner body or the trunk and upper body; the head; wounds from weapons; wounds from [poisonous] bites; and examination. Such treatises gather their subjects under these eight headings.

Treatises on the arts present such subjects as alchemical methods and the proportions of sacred images.

Treatises on Buddhist Studies

Any number of treatises, such as *The Compendium of Observed Phenomena* and *A Compendium of Characteristics*, present the classifications or specific details of psycho-physical aggregates, sense constituents, and sense bases.

2' Treatises That Present the Nature of Phenomena

[This category includes treatises] such as *Ascertaining the Two Truths*, *The Thirty Verses*, and *The Ornament of the Middle Way*, which present the sixteen aspects of the four noble truths, or the subject of freedom from dualistic experience, or the subject of the absence of an intrinsic nature [in phenomena].

3' Treatises That Present the Path to Freedom and Omniscience

[This category includes treatises] such as *The Main Stages of Awakening: The Bodhisattvas' Stages*, *The Main Stages of Awakening: The Pious Attendants' Stages*, and *Entering the Conduct of Bodhisattvas*. Some contend that these texts present just partial aspects [of the path] and are therefore subdivisions [of a larger whole], whereas those that present the entire path are major treatises, such as *The Compendium of Observed Phenomena* and *The Treasury of Observed Phenomena*.

dd. Treatises Classified by What Part of the Canon They Teach

This section has two parts: (1) commentaries to the general canon and (2) commentaries to specific parts of the canon.

1' Commentaries to the General Canon

It is said that, in relation to the canon in general, treatises on linguistics and grammar elucidate its verbal aspect, whereas treatises on reasoning in debate elucidate its meaning. As for me, I think otherwise.

2' Commentaries to Specific Parts of the Canon

This section has three parts: (1) commentaries to the first turning of the wheel, (2) commentaries to the middle turning of the wheel, and (3) commentaries to the final turning of the wheel.

a' Commentaries to the First Turning of the Wheel

This section has two parts: (1) treatises that elucidate its view and (2) treatises that elucidate its conduct.

i' Treatises That Elucidate the View of the First Turning of the Wheel

The seven treatises on observed phenomena are these:

The Aggregates of Phenomena by Shariputra
A Treatise on Designation by Maudgalyayana
The Collection of Constituent Elements by Purna
The Collection of Consciousnesses by Devasharman
The Entrance to Wisdom by Katyayana
Discernment by Vasumitra
An Enumeration of Beings by Mahakastila

According to the Kashmiri particularist school, "These seven texts belong in the canon. They consist of teachings the Teacher spoke unsystematically at different locations and times, to different individuals, that have been compiled by pious attendant arhats, just as was the case for *The Composition of Purposeful Speech*. Without these texts, the [three] collections are not complete within the canon."

The discourse school and others say, "The fundamental source texts [for the collection of observed phenomena] are included in a complete manner in general and in specific instances both in the [collections of] discourses and monastic discipline; nothing is deficient [in the canon]. We believe these seven texts to be treatises."

The Great Treasury of Detailed Explanations consists of an abridged form of these seven texts' subjects, while *The Treasury of Observed Phenomena* and other treatises present a concise version of the latter text's subjects.

ii' Treatises That Elucidate the Conduct of the First Turning of the Wheel

The Root Discourse on Monastic Discipline first presents the basis of renunciants' vows from among *The Basic Scripture on Monastic Discipline*'s seventeen bases. Then, on the foundation of a presentation of the two scriptures on ascertaining [monks' and nuns' vows] and the [remaining] sixteen bases, this treatise explains monastic discipline by drawing as appropriate from [chapters of] the sacred text [*The Highest Scripture on Monastic Discipline*] (such as chapters of questions and of directives for discipline) and material from sections of *The Minor Scripture on Monastic Discipline*.

The Continual Flower Garland and three hundred verses on monastic discipline [that is, *Words of Novice Vows*] use *The Scripture of Distinctions* as their basis and draw from other texts as appropriate to present renunciants' vows.

b' Commentaries to the Middle Turning of the Wheel

This section has two parts: (1) treatises that elucidate its view and (2) treatises that elucidate its conduct.

i' Treatises That Elucidate the View of the Middle Turning of the Wheel

Four groundbreaking treatises are noted. [First,] a group of six middle way treatises presents the meaning of what the discourses explicitly express or their essential meaning:

1. *Seventy Verses on Emptiness* presents the nature of all phenomena: emptiness, free from all extremes of the elaborations of interdependent arising.
2. *The Fundamental Verses on Sublime Insight* denies the existence of birth, and so forth, arising from that [emptiness].

These two texts are the fundamental or principal ones.

3. *Sixty Verses on Reasoning* proves [the first two texts' premises] by reasoning.
4. *A Refutation of Arguments* rejects others' faulty challenges.
5. *Crushed to Powder* presents how to debate with intellectuals.
6. *Establishing the Validity of Designations* presents how, although the ultimate has no intrinsic nature, on a relative level mundane designations are proved and are existent.

[Second,] *The Ornament of Manifest Realization* mainly presents the implicit meaning [of the perfection of sublime insight] or the meaning of [its] manifest realization. Its content is presented concisely in eight parts: three on knowledge of the object of engagement—knowledge of aspects [of phenomena], knowledge of the path, and knowledge of the basis; four facets of application entered—[application of] complete realization of all aspects of phenomena, peak [application], culmination [of application], and instantaneous [application]; and the result entered, the body of ultimate enlightenment.

[Third,] *The Concise Meaning of "The Perfection of Sublime Insight in Eight Thousand Verses"* presents the thirty-two principal topics [of *The Perfection of Sublime Insight*]. The text states:

> The support, the intended [recipient],
> Acts, meditation and related topics,
> Classification, signs, downfall, and benefits
> Are correctly expressed.

The "support" is the Teacher, the Buddha. The "intended ones" are the circle of disciples. The "acts" are the correct performance of the ten forms of spiritual conduct [described] within the mother [that is, the perfection of sublime insight]. "Meditation" refers to ten meditations that remedy ten forms of distraction: [meditations on] the intangible and the tangible, imputation and deprecation, singular and multiple, essence and particularity, and meaning that corresponds to words and words that correspond to meaning. "Classification" refers to the sixteen classifications of emptiness, from inner emptiness to intangible, essential emptiness. There are two "signs": signs of demons' activity and signs of [bodhisattvas'] nonreturn. The "downfall" is to fall to the miserable existences after having relinquished the perfection of sublime insight. The "benefits" include that there is more merit in engaging in the perfection of sublime insight than to having filled the three-thousand-fold universe or other galaxies with gems and having given it away. It is believed that these thirty-two topics summarize everything [in the discourse], which is repeated when necessary in the text's exposition.

[Fourth,] *The Perfection of Sublime Insight in One Hundred Thousand Verses: A Commentary* presents three gateways and eleven categories.

At the beginning of this text, referred to as Mother of the Victors, the introduction opens [the discourse]. Then, for disciples of great acuity, the

teaching is summarized in four topics—the individual who teaches, why he teaches, to whom he teaches, and how [the disciple] trains—as follows, "Shariputra, great bodhisattvas who wish to attain perfect, manifest enlightenment within the appearing aspect of all phenomena should be diligent in the transcendent perfection of sublime insight." This summary of the doctrine is the doctrine's [first] gateway. The text from that point until the end of the first section makes np the doctrine's [second] gateway, presented for those of middle acuity. The text from that point until its conclusion makes up an extensive presentation, the doctrine's [third] gateway.

The eleven categories are as follows: Initially, one teaching given to Shariputra; then, one taught by Subhuti; then, two teachings given to [the god] Shakra; four teachings given to Subhuti; two teachings given to Maitreya; and one teaching and the enttustment of the discourse given to Ananda.

It is reported that Damshtrasena composed this work, but it is reasonable to ascribe this commentary to Vasubandhu. This treatise and *The Concise Meaning of "The Perfection of Sublime Insight in Eight Thousand Verses"* present their subjects from the perspective of the mind-only school.

ii' Treatises That Elucidate the Conduct of the Middle Turning of the Wheel

This category includes *The Compendium of Training* and *The Compendium of the Discourses*, as well as treatises that present the view and conduct together, such as *Entering the Conduct of Bodhisattvas* and the three texts on stages of meditation [by Kamalashila].

c' Commentaries to the Final Turning of the Wheel

This section has two parts: (1) treatises that elucidate its view and (2) treatises that elucidate its conduct.

i' Treatises That Elucidate the View of the Final Turning of the Wheel

Four treatises by exalted Bodhisattva Maitreya are *The Ornament of the Discourses*, *Distinguishing Between the Middle and the Extremes*, *Distinguishing Between Phenomena and the Nature of Reality*, and *The Highest Continuity*. Some teach that the first two belong to the collection of observed phenomena, the last two to the collection of discourses, and *The Ornament of*

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Manifest Realization to the collection of monastic discipline, but I have not seen what leads to this conclusion.

The Ornament of the Discourses presents all great way teachings in a summary of five points:

> Like wrought gold, like a blossomed lotus,
> Like a well-cooked meal eaten by those who were close to starving,
> Like hearing good news, like opening a box of gems:
> Such teachings are explained here. Be supremely joyful.

In *Distinguishing Between the Middle and the Extremes*, "extremes" refers to the views of existence and nonexistence, or eternalism and nihilism. "Middle" refers to the path of the middle way, having rejected those two [extremes], thus *Distinguishing Between the Middle and the Extremes*. It presents its subject in seven points:

> This is the highest way:
> The characteristics, obscurations, the absolute,
> Antidotes, meditation,
> Its subjects, and the attainment of the result.

In *Distinguishing Between Phenomena and the Nature of Reality*, "phenomena" refers to the wheel of life's phenomena, the thoroughly afflictive emotions. "The nature of reality" refers to the phenomena of transcendent states. This treatise presents the difference between them, thus *Distinguishing Between Phenomena and the Nature of Reality*.

The Highest Continuity refers to the highest phenomena of the great way's continuity or continual stream. It is given this title because these are the foremost among phenomena. Otherwise, [in the Sanskrit title,] *uttara* can mean "later," thus its title refers to its being a commentary on the final turning of the wheel in the great way's continuity [of instruction]. It presents seven subjects: the three jewels [as separate subjects]; their underlying cause, the enlightened constituent; the result, awakening; the sixty-four qualities of enlightenment; and enlightened activity. As the text states:

> The whole body of the treatise can be resumed
> In these seven vajra points:
> Buddha, the Teachings, the Spiritual Community, the constituent, awakening, and qualities.
> Enlightened activity is the final point.

When *The Ornament of Manifest Realization* is added to these four, those treatises make up Maitreya's five teachings.

Treatises that follow these include the exalted master Asanga's extensive treatises, his five works on awakening's stages; his concise treatises, the two summary works; and Vasubandhu's eight dissertations.

Asanga's Five Treatises on the Stages of Awakening

Among Asanga's five treatises on awakening's stages, the principal treatise is *The Main Stages of Awakening*, which presents a summary as seventeen stages. It states:

> In brief, they are
> (1) The stage that has the five consciousnesses,
> (2) The stage of the mental function, (3–5) and that of these other three:
> Examination with analysis and the others [that is, analysis without examination, and with neither examination nor analysis];
> (6) The stage accompanied by a meditative state, (7) that without it;
> (8) The stage with mind, (9) that which is without mind;
> (10) The stage with listening, (11) with contemplation, and (12) with meditation;
> Likewise, (13–15) those with the three ways,
> (16) The stage with psycho-physical aggregates, and (17) the other stage without the aggregates.

Moreover, the seventeen topics are presented in the contexts of the support, conduct, and the result. Among these, the support has three parts: The stage with the five consciousnesses and the stage of the mental function constitute the nature of the support. Three stages—examination and analysis, analysis without examination, and with neither examination nor analysis—show how the support is entered. Four stages—settling in evenness, not settling, with mind, and without mind—are the circumstances of the support. In relation to engagement, there are three stages: listening, contemplation, and meditation. In relation to the result, the temporary results are three stages—of pious attendants, solitary sages, and bodhisattvas; and the ultimate result—the

result accompanied by the psycho-physical aggregates as a remainder or without this remainder.

[Asanga's second treatise of this series,] *Reaching a Definitive Conclusion: A Summary*, is like a commentary to this first treatise. It presents definitions of *The Main Stages of Awakening*'s words and meanings in relation to such criteria as the four parameters.* It contains summary definitions [to all stages] except for those of the solitary sages. These two treatises present the meaning of the scriptures.

[Third,] *A Summary of the Basis* presents how the latter texts are compiled within the three collections. In a brief presentation, he states that they belong to all three collections; then in an extensive explanation, he mentions nothing apart from [how they belong within] the collections of discourses and on monastic discipline since these five treatises on awakening's stages form part of the fundamental collection [on observed phenomena] and are not presented separately [in this case]. To define the stages of the pious attendants, *A Summary of the Basis* states, "What is compiled within the fundamental texts [of the collection of observed phenomena] includes the seventeen stages and the four means to gather [disciples]."

[Fourth,] *A Summary of Enumerations* presents synonyms for the words that express the content [of treatises], with a specific presentation of synonyms for afflictive emotions and purification. These last two treatises are texts on Buddhist studies.

[Fifth,] *A Summary of Avenues of Explanation* presents those [four] texts' teaching systems.

Thus these five texts are gathered as the five treatises on awakening's stages due to their [explanation of] the scriptures' meaning, Buddhist studies, and teaching systems.

Asanga's Two Summary Treatises

The summary of the Buddhist ways in common is *The Compendium of Observed Phenomena*. Its content is presented under five headings: a compendium of characteristics, certainty in relation to the truths, certainty in relation to the teachings, certainty in relation to attainment, and certainty in relation to discussion.

*The four parameters are different angles that allow one to determine the characteristics of substance: its arising or cessation, duration or ending, existence or nonexistence, appearance or emptiness.

The summary of the great way is *The Compendium of the Great Way*, which presents a summary of the great way in ten subjects, including the subjects of knowledge.

Vasubandhu's Eight Dissertations

Vasubandhu's eight dissertations are as follows: (1) *The Thirty Verses* presents all phenomena to be mind only; (2) *The Twenty Verses* uses reasoning to prove [all phenomena to be mind only]; (3) *A Dissertation on the Five Aggregates* validates the five aggregates as the basis for [all phenomena]; (4) *A Rational System of Exposition* validates that study and teaching; (5) *The Accomplishment of Actions* validates the actions of the three avenues of [body, speech, and mind]. Those five are independent works. (6) *A Commentary on "The Ornament of the Discourses,"* (7) *A Commentary on "The Discourse on Interdependent Arising,"* and (8) *A Commentary on "Distinguishing Between the Middle and the Extremes,"* the three commentaries on others' works, validate the six transcendent perfections and other aspects of vast conduct, the twelve links of interdependent causality, and the three characteristics [of knowable things: imagined, dependent, and consummate]. So it is said.

Some state that since this master wrote many works, such as "*The Ten Stages of Awakening Discourse": A Commentary*, such a set of eight texts cannot be definitely ascertained. They further claim the number of texts related to Maitreya's teachings cannot be delineated as twenty. Those who have settled on a definite number believe the twenty to be these: [Asanga's] five treatises on awakening's stages, [Asanga's] two summaries [of the lesser and great way], Maitreya's five treatises, and [Vasubandhu's] eight dissertations.

ii' Treatises That Elucidate the Conduct of the Final Turning of the Wheel

These treatises include *The Twenty Vows*.

ee. A Summary of the Kinds of Treatises

This section has two parts: (1) treatises that do not rely on the canon* and (2) treatises that rely on the canon.

*Butön writes nothing on this first subject.

include] the first of the first set [of letters] and the fourth of the seventh, according to the alphabetical structure given by Ramana. This somewhat youthful sublime being will achieve the eight major accomplishments.

In these words, Khanapa or Krishnacharya, was foretold. Further,

Six of his disciples will attain Great Seal's accomplishment in which the physical body's substance is abandoned.

And further,

The foremost among pandits, known as Dharmakirti, along with six other [scholars], will continually aid the doctrine, live pure lives, and attain accomplishments. Later, universal guardians named Mahila, Shamkara, Bhavyaghosa, and Sahasrakarna will attain accomplishments after thirteen years.

And,

In the south, the city called Ajarayogini will appear, and there the yogi Nagarjuna will enthrone [as king] one called "Gopala Who Sits atop a Shala Tree." After Gopala's son dies, the nephew of Vahana and other kings will appear.

The Latter Wheel of Time Tantra states:

The monk Master Nagarjuna, source of all noble qualities and aid to all sentient beings;
Master Stiramati; those who cut through, with ten thousand who have accomplished the power over longevity;
Those who have attained accomplishments through the path of the ten virtuous acts: Aryadeva, Kambala, Ashvaghosa,
Dignaga, Parahitashaya, Chandrapadma, Padmankura, Avigraha, Ashesakrisha, the king of Bhasalakalpa, and King Indrabhuti—

And continuing on,

He named Jnana, Vajraghanta, and Kuntha, likewise, those who drink wine from skull-cups,
And those who bear tridents, bone ornaments, wine cups, and hand-drums—such as one named Krishnalavala.

Thus, as stated, these foretold individuals upheld the doctrine. Some say that no prophecies were made concerning those who bear a [tantric] yogic adept's implements. This is refuted, however, by the passages just quoted.

In general, the teaching and practice that preserves the Buddha's doctrine, and the specific guarding, compiling, and protecting of the thousand buddhas' doctrine will be done by Vajrapani. This Sage's doctrine is preserved by Manjushri, Vajrapani, Brahma, Indra, and others. *The Gentle Splendor Root Tantra* states:

In order to preserve the holy doctrine,
When the King of Sages has transcended sorrow,
Its unfailing guardian shall appear
In the form of Manjushri.

In particular, [this Buddha's] doctrine will be preserved by the sixteen elders: (1) Panthaka in Heaven of the Thirty-Three, (2) Abhedya in the Himalayas, (3) Kanaka in the western continent, Bountiful Cattle, (4) Bakula in the northern continent, Ominous Sound, (5) Bharadvaja in the eastern continent, Exalted Body, (6) Mahakalika in Tamradvipa, (7) Vajriputra in Singha Island, (8) Rahula in Priyangudvipa, (9) Shribhadra in Yamunadvipa, (10) Gopaka on Mount Bihula, (11) Nagasena on Mount Urumunda, (12) Vanavasin on Mount Saptaparna, (13) Kshudrapanthaka on Vulture Peak, (14) Kanakavatsa in Kashmir, (15) Angiraja on Mount Kailash, and (16) Ajita in the Crystal Forest of Seers.

Many arhats circle each of the sixteen. Without transcending sorrow, they practice the Sage's speech and preserve the doctrine.

c' How Those Foretold Individuals Acted to Preserve the Doctrine

Nagarjuna

Four hundred years after the Buddha passed away, in the southern country of Vidarbha, there lived a prosperous Brahmin who was childless. In a dream,

gods foretold that if he invited one hundred Brahmins to a religious festival, a son would be born to him. He did as he was told, made prayers, and ten months later a son was born. When he showed the child's distinguishing marks to one who could discern omens, he was told that though the child had excellent marks, he would not live more than one week. [The father] then asked what could help his son. He was instructed that if he invited one hundred Brahmins to a religious festival, his son would live seven months, and if he invited one hundred monks to such an event, the child would live seven years, yet it was impossible for him to live longer than that.

The father did as he was told. When the seven-year period drew near, the parents, who couldn't bear the thought of seeing their son's dead body, sent him off to travel, accompanied by a servant. On his travels, the child saw the face of [Bodhisattva] Khasarpana and later arrived at the gates of glorious Nalanda Monastery. There, he recited aloud the poetry of the Vedas, which was heard by the resident Brahmin Saraha. Saraha brought him inside, where the boy related his circumstances. Master [Saraha] said, "If you are able take ordination as a monk, I have the means [to prolong your life]." Thus he took ordination. [Saraha] granted him empowerment within the sacred circle of Buddha of Infinite Life, Conqueror of the Lord of Death, and had him recite the mantra. In particular, the child recited the mantra during the evening and night of the final day of his seventh year and was freed from the Lord of Death. Then he was reunited with his parents, who were overjoyed.

Following that, he requested from Brahmin Saraha [empowerment and teaching in] texts along with the meditative instructions for such deities as Matrix of Mystery. He requested Rahulabhadra, the abbot of Nalanda, to be his preceptor and became fully ordained, known as the monk Shriman.

While he served as an advisor to Nalanda's spiritual community, a great famine struck. Shriman obtained from Ling-bar [a place] an alchemical elixir that could produce gold, and having used it to make gold, he was able to acquire [enough food to provide for] the monastic community's midday meals: they were able to complete their monsoon-season retreat. The monks [leaving retreat] saw starving people and death and asked him, "How have you produced our midday meals during a famine?" When Shriman explained how he had done so, they replied, "Without asking the community, you had us [accept food gained from] wrong means of livelihood. We expel you and order you to construct ten million temples and stupas."

Thereafter, he gained, through meditation practice, the attainment of both mundane and transcendent accomplishments. During this time, a monk named Shamkara composed a work entitled *The Ornament of Awareness* in 1,200,000 verses and disputed with everyone. To subdue [this challenge, Shriman] taught at Nalanda. Two boys listened to his teaching and left afterward, going underground. He asked who they were, and, when the boys told him, "We're nagas," he asked them to bring him clay from [the realm of] noxious spirits. They reported this to the naga king, who told them to invite the teacher. [Shriman] knew it would be beneficial [to accept] the invitation and went to the nagas' realm, where he taught the doctrine.

The nagas asked him to stay with them, but he replied, "I have come seeking clay with which to build ten million stupas and to take *The Perfection of Sublime Insight in One Hundred Thousand Verses* back [to the human realm]. I have no time to stay now, but it is possible that I will later return." He [departed,] taking with him a large amount of clay, as well as *The Perfection of Sublime Insight in One Hundred Thousand Verses* and *The Perfection of Sublime Insight in a Few Words*. It is said that the nagas did not give him a portion of the end part of *The Perfection of Sublime Insight in One Hundred Thousand Verses*. Thereafter, he used the clay to build the ten million stupas and other sacred supports and was assisted by most nagas, of whom some did not return to the naga realm and of whom he became their "mother." Thus, he became known by the name "Nagarjuna," Propitiator of Nagas.

Thereafter, having used alchemy to produce gold in Pundravardhana, Nagarjuna distributed generous gifts. At that time, an old Brahmin couple, to whom he had given much gold, became faithful to Nagarjuna. The old man served as [Nagarjuna's] attendant and heard his teachings. After death, the man was reborn as the master Nagabodhi.

Nagarjuna then went to the eastern region of Patavesha, where he built many temples, and did likewise in the country of Radha. There was a particular rock that resembled a bell that he hoped to change to gold, but the gods prevented him from doing so. After that he went to the northern continent of Ominous Sound. On the way there, in the city of Salama, he met a young boy named Jitaka, and, from the lines on the boy's palm, [Nagarjuna] foretold that he would become a king. Having arrived at Ominous Sound, [Nagarjuna] hung his clothes on a tree and washed himself. While he did so, [the people of that continent] carried away his clothes. "Those are mine," he protested. They said, "He has an 'I,' a self!" and stared at him. Then, after he had fulfilled his purposes there, he left. Meanwhile, the boy he had met

had become a king and offered Nagarjuna many precious gems. In return, Nagarjuna gave him the precious teaching *The Jewel Garland*.

This master served as teacher to the monastic community, built numerous stupas and monasteries, encircled Vajra Seat with a stone lattice fence, and constructed the setting of the glorious Dhanya-kataka Stupa. His treatises in the field of Buddhist inner knowledge include texts that emphasize the view, presenting the middle way beyond extremes from the perspective of the scriptures—*A Collection of Praises*—and those that present it from the perspective of reasoning—*A Collection on Reasoning*. Among his treatises that emphasize conduct, *The Compendium of the Discourses* presents it from the perspective of scripture; *Training of the Mind in the Great Way*, the perspective of reasoning; and *Wish-Fulfilling Counsel on Dreams*, which causes the awakening of affinity [with the conduct] of pious attendants. *A Letter from a Friend* emphasizes conduct for those whose support is [the vows of a] householder; *The Awakened Assembly*, the conduct of renunciants.

Among his treatises concerned with [secret] mantra, *A Compendium of Tantras* provides a brief exposition of [tantra's] view and conduct. *Awakened Mind: A Commentary* establishes the view. To present the phase of creation, he wrote *Matrix of Mystery: Meditation Technique*, a concise version of this, *Matrix of Mystery: Blended with the Discourses*, and *Matrix of Mystery: Twenty-Part Sacred Circle Ritual. The Five Stages* teaches the phase of completion.

His treatises on medicine include *One Hundred Prescriptions*. Among his works on secular customs, *A Drop of Nourishment for Individuals* contains advice for common people, *One Hundred Verses on Knowledge* contains advice for officials, and *The Jewel Garland*, written for a king, presents the integration of the great way's view and conduct. His many other original works include *The Absolute Nature of the Science of Interdependent Arising*, *Aroma Prescriptions*, and *Transmutation into Gold*. Those identified as his commentaries on others' texts include *Matrix of Mystery Tantra: A Commentary* and *The Rice Province Discourse: A Commentary*.

As for *The Four Seals: A Presentation, Sheaves of Pith Instructions* declares, "Nagarjuna did not write that text." Master Prajnakaramati states in *Entering the Conduct of Bodhisattvas: A Major Commentary* that Master Nagarjuna composed a text *The Compendium of Training* [as had Shantideva].

In these ways, Nagarjuna worked on behalf of the doctrine for six hundred years.

During that time, King Antivahana or Udayanabhadra had a son, Prince Shaktiman. When his mother gave him a fine seamless mantle, the boy said, "I will need this when I rule the kingdom." His mother replied, however, "You shall never rule the kingdom. Your father and Master Nagarjuna used longevity practice and extracting the essence of matter to gain accomplishment: [your father's] life shall be as long as the Master's." The prince then went to Master Nagarjuna's residence on Shriparvata Mountain. Raising his head, [Nagarjuna] ordered the prince to cut it off, but his sword could not sever his neck. The master said, "I have the ripened karma of having cut an insect with a blade of kusha grass and caused its death. Cut with kusha grass." [The prince] cut off [Nagarjuna's head]; this verse issued from the base of his neck:

I have gone to Blissful Realm,
But I will once again enter this body.

As the prince left carrying the head, a female noxious spirit snatched it from him and threw it one league away [from the body]. Neither the head nor the body decay, but with each passing year draw nearer to one another. It is said that when they eventually rejoin, Nagarjuna will work for the benefit of the doctrine and of beings.

[In the name] Nagarjuna, *naga* signifies birth from the basic space of phenomena, abiding in neither the extreme of eternalism or nihilism, mastery over the vault of precious scriptures, and being endowed with the view that burns and illuminates. *Arjuna* signifies one who has procured worldly power. Thus, he is named Arjuna because he governs the kingdom of the doctrine and subdues the hosts of faulty enemies. Taken together, these two parts form the name "Nagarjuna." *The Fundamental Verses on Sublime Insight—A Commentary: Clear Words* states:

I bow to Nagarjuna,
He who has eliminated resting in either of the two extremes
And who gained birth in the ocean of the perfect Buddha's intellect;
Who compassionately teaches according to his realization
Of the treasury of the sacred doctrine's profundity as it is;
Whose view is a blazing mass of fire
That now consumes the firewood

Of opposing scriptural traditions,
And overcomes the world's mental darkness.
His quiver of arrows, nondual wisdom speech,
Unleashed in this world of his disciples, including the gods,
Perfectly accomplishes his sovereignty in the three realms,
And triumphs over all legions of mundane enemies.

And,

Composed by the Bodhisattva Nagarjuna who departed to the Realm of Bliss,
Having, out of compassion, severed his head and bestowed it to he who came seeking it.

Some contend that *The Great Cloud Discourse* states, "Four hundred years after I have passed away, this Licchavi [clan member] will become a monk called Naga. He will cause my doctrine to flourish and ultimately become Buddha Light of the Source of Wisdom in a world called Light of Purity." *The Great Cloud Discourse* states:

In the southern region of Rishila, a king named Repairing Decline will appear. During his reign, when the king reaches eighty years of age, the sacred doctrine will be destroyed, leaving but a few remnants behind. At that time, on the northern shore of the mountain stream called Beautiful Wealth in the meritorious town known as Mahavaluka, in the vicinity of the land that belonged to the aristocrat Drago-chen, a young Licchavi [clan member] bearing my name, the sight of whom delights the entire world, will be born to spread the doctrine. In the presence of Transcendent Buddha Lamp of the Naga Family, this youth will vow to forsake his life on behalf of the doctrine and the Buddha's teachings. It is he who will propagate the doctrine.

So it reads. While it can be said that Nagarjuna is not explicitly mentioned, it must be examined based on some persons' belief that Nagarjuna's [formal Buddhist name] was Shakyamitra. It is also said that Nagarjuna's life is extensively foretold in *The Great Drum Discourse*, but this too must be researched.

Aryadeva

Master Aryadeva, Nagarjuna's spiritual heir, was miraculously born in the bud of a lotus flower on Singala Island and was adopted by that land's king. When Aryadeva grew older, he went to study with Master Nagarjuna and became knowledgeable in all subjects of culture and Buddhist and non-Buddhist philosophical systems.

A non-Buddhist teacher at that time named Matrceta had gained accomplishment of the god Maheshvara, who granted him the supreme boon that no womb-born being could match him. This teacher harmed the Buddha's doctrine and converted most people to Hinduism. When he came to Nalanda, the residents there summoned Nagarjuna from his residence on Shriparvata Mountain. Master Aryadeva promised that he would subdue [Matrceta] and went to Nalanda. On the way, a tree goddess begged him for an eye, which he gave her. After he had defeated the Hindu teacher, [the monks asked] "How is it that you have but one eye?" Aryadeva replied,

Shiva has three eyes yet cannot see the true nature of reality.
Shakra has one thousand eyes and likewise has never seen the true nature.
But Aryadeva, with his single eye,
Perceives the reality of all three planes of existence.

With those words, he used Buddhist teachings to defeat [his challenger], who converted to Buddhism and became a great pandit.

While Master [Aryadeva] is said to have attained awakening's eighth stage, *The Gentle Splendor Root Tantra* states, "Though not an exalted being [*arya*], he will bear that name." Therefore, this [claim] is something to be examined.

[Aryadeva's] works include the following: *Four Hundred Verses on the Middle Way*, which gives an extensive presentation of the meaning of the absence of an intrinsic nature; and *The Middle Way in a Handspan*, which presents [the same subject] in a concise form. *Reversal of Delusion: Proofs of Axioms*, refutes [opponents'] objections to those texts. *A Compendium of the Essence of Wisdom* presents an outline of the philosophical systems of the dialectical and mantra approaches. On the subject of mantra, *The Lamp of Concise Conduct* establishes the mantra way's view and conduct, using a blend of scriptures belonging to both the discourses and tantras. *Cleansing*

the Mind's Veils establishes the same through logic. *Four Seats—Sacred Circle Ritual: Brief Collection of the Essence* is a ritual of tantric empowerment that brings its recipient to spiritual maturity. His works that present the phase of creation are *Powerful Queen of Wisdom: Meditation Technique, with Torma Ritual. The Single Tree: Commentary on the Difficult Points* and other texts present the phase of completion.

Aryadeva is claimed to be the author of *The Radiant Lamp Commentary*, but whether or not this text dates from his era must be investigated.

Nagabodhi

Nagabodhi, a disciple of Master Nagarjuna, was learned in all the Buddhist and non-Buddhist philosophical systems, saw his wisdom deity [in visions], and attained the accomplishment of long life. Thus it is said that he lives today on Mount Shriparvata. Among the many works he composed are *Matrix of Mystery: Sacred Circle Ritual* and *The Five Stages—Commentary: A Garland of Gems.*

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Chandragomi

Master Chandragomi was born in Bengal, eastern [India], and became learned at a young age. He wed Tara, daughter of the king of Varendra, and [they] lived [together]. One day, a maid called, "Tara!" and [Chandragomi] thought that it was inappropriate for his wife and his wisdom deity to have the same name. He begged [Tara the deity] for forgiveness and prepared to leave. His circle [of friends] stopped him and asked why he was going; Chandragomi explained his reasons. The king heard of this and declared, "If he will not live with my daughter, throw him into the Ganges!" When the king's henchmen threw him into the river, Chandragomi recited praises to Tara. She emanated an island in the middle of the river, revealed herself, and granted her blessings. Even to this day, that island is known as "Chandra's Island." Thereafter, a fisherman rescued Chandragomi, and even the king of Varendra had faith in him and made him his chaplain.

Chandragomi went to Nalanda, where he was asked what knowledge and skills he possessed. He replied that he knew three subjects: Panini's grammar, *The Full Litany of the Names of Gentle Splendor*, and *150 Verses in Praise [Praise of Risen Confidence in Faith].* [The monks of Nalanda] recognized him to be a great scholar, welcomed him, and showed him immense respect.

During that time he composed many minor treatises on such topics as medical treatment. Then noble Lord of the World ordered him, "Write many treatises on the great way!" and so it was that he composed *A Commentary on "The Moon Lamp Discourse," Comprehending the Three Bodies of Enlightenment*, and many other such works.

At that time, a monk-disciple of the royal caste had committed downfalls and various negative acts. To subdue him, Chandragomi wrote *A Letter to a Disciple*, as well as *Chandra's Grammar* (consisting of seven hundred stanzas in thirty-two chapters), in accordance with Panini's grammar. Ancillary texts to that work include *A Discourse on Verbal Roots*, *A Discourse on Transformation of Letters' Particles*, *A Discourse on Letters*, and *A Discourse on Unadi, and so forth*, as well as rules concerning case and tense terminations, and so forth. He thus subdued [the monk].

When he sang praises to Gentle Glorious Melody, the statue of that bodhisattva bent its head to listen, and thus his praises became known as *Blessed Praise of Gentle Melody with a Tilted Head.*

During that time, Chandragomi read Master Chandrakirti's superb grammatical work in verse form entitled *The Ever-Excellent Grammar Discourse.* Thinking, "What I have written is not good and should not be circulated," he threw it down a well. Lord of the World countered, "You have written this work with a noble intention: it will therefore become very useful. Draw it back out." Chandragomi did so. That well became known as "Chandra's well"; those who drink from it gain acute intelligence, so it is said.

Thereafter Chandragomi debated with Chandrakirti. He asked Lord of the World what answers he should give to one day's challenges and used them the next. Chandrakirti became suspicious, followed Chandragomi, and saw Lord of the World coaching [Chandragomi]. "O Noble One, don't take sides!" he begged, and with that the bodhisattva was left without having bent his finger [back to its common position]. To this day [that statue] is known as "The Supremely Compassionate One with Forefinger Raised."

In such ways Chandragomi, endowed with great noble qualities, upheld the doctrine.

Chandrakirti

Chandrakirti was born in Samana, south India. He trained in the subjects of the discourses and tantras and became a great scholar by relying on the words of the spiritual father and heir, Nagarjuna and Aryadeva. For five

hundred births he had received the blessings of Gentle Splendor: he could milk a picture of a cow and could throw a stone *kapala* [skull-cup] without taking it in his hand.

Chandrakirti composed commentaries on [Nagarjuna's] *A Collection on Reasoning* and Aryadeva's *Four Hundred Verses on the Middle Way*, and wrote the root text and commentary *Entering the Middle Way*. Most notably, he was responsible for the commentaries known as "those resembling the sun and moon": *The Fundamental Verses on Sublime Insight—A Commentary: Clear Words* and *Matrix of Mystery—Commentary: Clear Lamp*. Together they are known as "the two manifestations of clarity."

Accordingly, Buddhapalita and Chandrakirti belong to the middle way consequentialist school or the middle way school that accepts worldly conventions. Master Bhava[viveka] and others represent the middle way discourse school. Jnanagarbha, Shrigupta, Shantirakshita, Kamalashila, Haribhadra, and others belong to the middle way experientialist school. The intent of the exalted spiritual father and his heir has been explained [according to these different branches of the middle way]. *Clear Words* states:

> What Nagarjuna received in the presence of Rahulabhadra, and that which Aryadeva reflected in his writing
> Became a system that lasted over a long period and elucidated the doctrine.
> Their disciples fully analyzed their treatises, becoming endowed with confident intelligence.
> They defeated every non-Buddhist and long expounded the doctrine of the sublime sage.

Aryadeva's disciple Matrceta likewise composed many treatises and served the doctrine, but I have not written his many stories for fear of writing too much.

Asanga

On three occasions, enemies beset the teachings on observed phenomena. First, an elderly Hindu woman said, "The word 'Crush!' is audible from the sound of the Buddhists' gong. It would be wise for us to determine whether or not this is harmful." An investigation led to understanding this:

> By beating this highest kind of drum of the three jewels
> Who are worshipped by gods, nagas, and noxious spirits,
> May the skulls of confused non-Buddhists be crushed!

They waged war [upon Buddhists] and caused [the doctrine's] decline.

When [the doctrine] had been restored to some degree, a king of central India sent a garment of fine cloth as a gift to the Persian king. As there was something resembling a footprint at the garment's middle, this was said to be an evil spell: war was waged and [the doctrine again] declined.

After the doctrine had once more begun to prosper, two non-Buddhist vagabonds came to a Buddhist temple, begging for alms. They were sprinkled with bath water, and they became enraged. They accomplished the sun['s power] and burned down many Buddhist temples along with the sacred texts within. [The doctrine again] declined.

At that time, a Brahmin woman named Prasannashila thought, "Three times now, enemies have caused the decline of the doctrine's foundation, the study of observed phenomena, and no one else capable of spreading it has appeared. Having been born a woman, I am unable to do so, but I will ensure that a son born from this body spreads the doctrine." Thus, Asanga was born from her union with a member of the royal caste; Vasubandhu, from her union with a Brahmin. When the two were newborns, she drew on their tongues with elephant bile the letter *Ah*, and performed other rituals [to foster their] acute intellectual faculties. When they had grown older, they asked about their fathers' professions, but their mother responded, "This is not the reason you were born. You must train your minds and spread the doctrine." Thus it was that the younger son left for Kashmir to be with the Master Sanghabhadra, while the elder son resolved to accomplish Bodhisattva Loving-Kindness (Maitreya) and to help the doctrine flourish. He went to a cave on Mount Kukkutapada to engage in meditation practice.

When three years had passed without the sight of even a small sign of accomplishment, he became discouraged. He left retreat and saw an elderly woman making needles from an iron pole and a piece of cotton. "How were these needles made?" he asked. The old woman replied,

> There is nothing a courageous person
> Cannot do if she applies herself.
> Difficult though it may be, if she does not give up,
> Even mountains can be crushed to dust.

Thus, [Asanga] continued his meditation for six more years, nine in all. When he left retreat and saw how water drops and feathers wore down cliffs, [he continued in his meditation practice]. When twelve years passed without visible signs, he left retreat disheartened. On his way, he saw a female dog whose lower body was being eaten by maggots and whose upper body was painful and itching. Extreme compassion arose within him when he saw the creature. It seemed that if he removed the maggots, they would die, but if he didn't, the dog would die. He resolved to remove the maggots by cutting flesh from his own body [and attracting them from the dog]. He went to a town called Achinta and there, having placed his mendicant's staff under his arm, he borrowed a gold razor and cut a piece of flesh from his body. Then, fearing that [the insects] would die if he lifted them up with his hand, he closed his eyes and thought to pick them up with his tongue. At that, the dog disappeared, and he beheld the noble [Loving-Kindness] in a mass of light.

> Alas!
> My sole father, my refuge,
> I have persevered through a hundred hardships without result.
> Why does an ocean of billowing rain clouds
> [Only now arrive when,] scorched in torment, I reach the extremes of thirst?

"I practiced that much, but yet no signs arose: how weak is your compassion!" In response to his bitterness, noble [Loving-Kindness] replied,

> Even if the king of the gods sends down showers,
> A bad seed will not grow.
> Likewise, though buddhas appear,
> Unfortunate beings do not experience their excellence.

"I have been here from the beginning, but your obscurations prevented you from seeing me. Now supreme compassion has arisen in you and purified your obscurations: now you see me. To prove this, put me on your shoulder and show me [to others]."

[Asanga] did as he was instructed, displaying [Bodhisattva Loving-Kindness on his shoulders]. When no one else was able to see him, [Asanga] became convinced [of the truth of the bodhisattva's words].

[Bodhisattva Loving-Kindness] asked Asanga what it was he desired; Asanga replied that he sought to spread the great way doctrine. "Take hold of my robes," [said Loving-Kindness], and they departed for Joyful Heaven. [Asanga] remained there for one instant according to the gods' time, equal to fifty or fifty-three human years, so it is taught. The original notes to [Asanga's] *The Five Stages* state that he stayed there for six months and received [the bodhisattva's teachings]. In that place, he heard [different] versions of discourses of the mother [of all buddhas, the perfection of sublime insight], the major stages of contemplative practice, and many great way discourses.

Master Haribhadra and others believe that he asked [Bodhisattva Loving-Kindness] to compose treatises elucidating the meaning of these teachings, and thus the bodhisattva composed five treatises. On this subject, *Moonbeam of the Essential Point* states:

> When the canon was compiled, it contained extremely profound topics, difficult to comprehend, impossible to understand. Thus, in compassion, to make them understood, exalted Bodhisattva Loving-Kindness elucidated them in the words organized into chapters of the treatise *The Ornament of Manifest Realization*. The claim that it was composed later at exalted Asanga's request represents Haribhadra's and others' error. Others state that [the bodhisattva] taught it from what he had composed earlier.

It is said that Master Ratnakarashanti believes that Bodhisattva Loving-Kindness likewise composed *The Compendium of Observed Phenomena*. Nevertheless, the prevalent view is that Asanga received the bodhisattva's five treatises and returned to the human world and then composed collections of the great way, including the major work, *The Stages of Contemplative Practice*. Or, [his works can be delineated as] the five treatises on awakening's stages, lengthy treatises that define the three collections, and two summaries, which present those subjects in brief.

[Among those two summaries,] *The Compendium of Observed Phenomena* summarizes the common way. Some say that, since Master Abhayakaragupta refers to *The Compendium of Observed Phenomena* as a great way treatise, it is not fitting to consider it a work on the common way. He is not mistaken, however. It is a great way treatise, but this does not contradict the fact that it presents the meaning of all three ways, as does *The Stages of Contemplative Practice*.

Asanga transcribed the five treatises, then composed *Certainty in Relation to the Ultimate* to present the import of *The Ornament of Manifest Realization* and *The Perfection of Sublime Insight*. His works include *The Highest Continuity: A Commentary* and *A Definitive Commentary on "The Buddha's Intent Discourse": A Short Commentary*. He attained the third stage of awakening and thus served the doctrine.

An Explanatory Commentary on Elucidating the Meaning: Perfectly Clear Words, an explanation of *The Short Commentary*, states:

> Although Master Asanga attained awakening's third stage, called Illuminating, he taught according to the mind-only school to train Vasubandhu.

The Ornament of the Mind-Only System states:

> The subject matter here is the two truths
> Expressed by Maitreya and Asanga,
> And validated by Nagarjuna's thought
> With reasoning and scripture.

A commentary [to this passage] states that Loving-Kindness was a bodhisattva of awakening's tenth stage; Asanga, a bodhisattva of the third stage; and Nagarjuna, a bodhisattva of the first stage. Some claim that since *Praises of the Stages: A Commentary* states:

> For the good of all worlds, the one called Asanga
> Used the strength of the meditative state of the teachings' stream to draw the nectar of the doctrine
> As it poured from the vase of exalted Bodhisattva Invincible's mouth,
> And drank it with his opened ears: to him I bow,

and since the conclusion of *The Concise Explanation* states:

> Exalted Asanga, having crossed the seas of his own and others' philosophical systems, attained the special meditative state of the teachings' stream and thus placed the exalted Bodhisattva Invincible's untainted lotus feet upon the crown of his head,

they contend that it is taught that Asanga dwelled within the meditative state of the teachings' stream, which is situated on the path of accumulation, and therefore he is not an exalted being but merely referred to as an exalted being, [a case of] a cause named by its result. This claim is unsuitable. Although Master Haribhadra teaches that the meditative state of the teachings' stream is attained on the path of accumulation, he has not said that it ceases to exist after this path. Thus, these passages do not prove that Asanga is an ordinary being.

The Ornament of the Discourses: Great Explanatory Commentary states that the meditative state of the teachings' stream constitutes the culmination of the stage of conduct based on interest. Noble Layperson Asvabhava's *The Compendium of the Great Way: An Explanatory Commentary* states, "The meditative state of the teachings' stream is the most sublime worldly experience." Since the most sublime worldly experience and the path of seeing arise on the same seat, it is exceedingly clear that Asanga was an exalted being.

Though it is said he lived 500 years, he actually lived 150 years, during which he spread the great way.

Vasubandhu

Many solitary sages once prayed for the doctrine of the study of observed phenomena to flourish [in Kashmir]. In the scriptures [on monastic discipline], in the section on medicine, Kashmir was foretold to be the most sublime place conducive to the practice of insight meditation. Previously, in the presence of Master Sanghabhadra there, many arhats, including Shantiman and Kubjita, composed a treatise called *Detailed Explanations*, which spans one hundred thousand texts in a summary of the seven treatises on observed phenomena and the content of the scriptures [on monastic discipline]. According to *Radiant Discipline*, the text was composed by Upagupta. In a commentary to this text [by] Yashomitra, it is referred to as *An Ocean of Detailed Explanation*. In this case, the word "ocean" is used as a metaphorical adornment for "detailed explanation," not as a title. The same applies to the title "*The Treasury of Detailed Explanation*," which is incorrect.

Vasubandhu studied and easily understood *Detailed Explanations*, the seven treatises on observed phenomena, and other texts, then decided to travel to India. At that time, the customs official confiscated Vasubandhu's

statue of his protective noxious spirit and forced him three times to turn back. [Finally,] since Vasubandhu possessed no wealth apart from the teachings stored in his mind, which could not be taken from him, he was allowed to pass, and he went to Nalanda. There, Vasubandhu listened to the many treatises his older brother had written and commented,

> Alas!
> For twelve years
> Asanga practiced meditation in the forest
> Without success and has written a philosophical system
> Only an elephant can carry.

Thus he criticized the great way's doctrine and its representative. When his elder brother heard this, he knew that [Vasubandhu's] wrong act would be detrimental and determined to change [his mind]. He instructed two disciples to memorize *The Discourse on Awakening's Ten Stages* and *The Teaching of Akshayamati* and to go to his younger brother and recite them at dusk and at daybreak. They did as they were told: at dusk, [Vasubandhu] allowed, "This great way has good potential, but its result is faulty." But by dawn, he averred, "The cause and result are both sublime. My tongue should be taken and cut out for my slander [of such a doctrine]." He looked for a razor, but the two disciples said, "You needn't take your tongue! Your brother has mastered skillful means to purify obscurations—go to him!"

Thus Vasubandhu went and received [from Asanga] many teachings. When they discussed many subjects, the younger brother's [intellectual] self-confidence allowed him [to think and figure things out] rapidly, while the older brother was slower but produced better replies. "What is the reason for this?" [asked Vasubandhu]. [Asanga replied,] "During five hundred successive rebirths, you have been a scholar, thus you have considerable innate knowledge. This is not the case for me, so I must first ask a wisdom deity before replying." [Vasubandhu] asked, "Please show me this deity!" Asanga replied, "I will ask the noble [Bodhisattva Loving-Kindness]," and having done so, he reported, "You are an ordinary being. You first disdained the great way and so do not have the fortune to see [the bodhisattva] in this lifetime. To purify those obscurations, compose many commentaries on the great way discourses and recite [the mantra of the female Buddha] Victorious Topknot. In your next life you will meet [Loving-Kindness]." Thereafter, Vasubandhu had special faith in his older brother and said,

> My brother is like a naga,
> And I am like a bird who yearns for rain.
> Though the naga king sends a downpour,
> It does not reach the bird's throat.

Thus he practiced meditation on the wisdom speech of Bodhisattva Loving-Kindness and composed the verses of *The Treasury of Observed Phenomena* and sent it to Sanghabhadra accompanied by gifts.

[Having read the text,] Sanghabhadra's disciples said, "Words such as 'allegedly' and 'so they say' [that cite our texts]" [to deliberately designate those statements as nonauthoritative] "insult our philosophical system." [Their teacher] replied that Vasubandhu was an accomplished writer of treatises and had used these words with poetic license. He was very pleased [with the text] and composed his own commentary to it consistent with the discourses.

Later [Vasubandhu] wrote his own commentary and sent it [to Sanghabhadra], who said, "This commentary refutes the root text and can be overcome by means of scripture and logic. I should defeat him [in debate] and have him destroy it with his own hands." Thus, he composed the treatise *A Mound of Replies* and prepared to set out for India. When Vasubandhu heard about this, he thought, "The teacher Sanghabhadra has mastered the philosophical system of the particularists. Therefore it is difficult to refute him and, moreover, there is no need for me to defeat him [in debate]. I will announce that I am going to see Swyambunat Stupa: I will go to Nepal." Thus he left. Thereafter, Master Sanghbhadra set off with a circle of many monks, so numerous that the radiance of their saffron robes turned the sky red. He reached Nalanda, where he passed into the state of perfect peace.

While in Nepal, Master Vasubandhu saw a monk called Hangdu who, though he kept all the appearances of a monk, failed to observe the monastic regulations and carried a bottle of alcohol. "The doctrine is declining!" Vasubandhu declared and was filled with grief. He recited Victorious Topknot's [mantra] backward, then passed away. A stupa was erected on that place and is said to still stand today.

In short, Vasubandhu became ordained as a renunciant monk after having been born a Brahmin of the highest caste. A scholar during five hundred previous lifetimes, he realized and mastered the meanings of ninety-nine or eighty sections of *The Perfection of Sublime Insight in One Hundred Thousand Verses*. He chanted them aloud for twelve days while confined to [a tub

of] butter that held him. He was thus endowed with the riches [*vasu*] of sublime insight and spread the doctrine out of loving-kindness, becoming a friend [*bandhu*] to living beings. It is said,

Supreme among the intelligent, described as like
a second buddha
By the world—he,
A true friend to living beings
Named Vasubandhu—wrote this text.

Moreover, *Praises of the Stages: A Commentary* states:

From exalted Asanga, the Sage's wish-fulfilling tree,
Branches of terms grow flowers of words
In rains that produce a treasury of wisdom decked with
magnificent qualities—
To Asanga's glorious younger brother, I bow.

The Master thus praised composed the following works: In presenting the initial cycle of teachings as the basis of the doctrine and analyzing it with the sharp weapon of reasoning, Vasubandhu wrote the root text and commentary to *The Treasury of Observed Phenomena*. To present the middle cycle of teachings as mind only, he wrote a commentary to discourses on the perfection of sublime insight. To present the final cycle of teachings as the definitive meaning, he wrote eight dissertations. Moreover, he composed commentaries to the discourses, such as *The Discourse on Awakening's Ten Stages*, *The Teaching of Akshayamati*, *Mount Gayashirsa Discourse*, *The Six Gate Formula*, and *The Four Instructions Discourse*, and he wrote many treatises, including *Distinguishing Between Phenomena and the Nature of Reality: A Commentary*. *The Perfection of Sublime Insight in Eight Thousand Verses: A Commentary* states:

The one known as exalted Asanga, luminous and supreme among
the wise,
Composed a definitive explanation of the true nature.
Inspired by his work, Master Vasubandhu, skillful in discriminating
between the material and the immaterial and exalted in his
confident knowledge,

Explains the meaning in his commentaries. [Such a one as he]
has appeared.

Four disciples of this master are said to be even more learned than he. These four are presented below.

Stiramati

Master Stiramati was even more learned than Vasubandhu in the study of observed phenomena.

When Master Vasubandhu was in Bhagavihara and sat in a copper tub full of butter as he recited the eighty sections of *The Perfection of Sublime Insight in One Hundred Thousand Verses*, a dove listened to him continually. At some point, this dove died and was reborn as a child of the common castes in [a town] called Dandakaranya. At birth, the boy asked, "Where is my master?" "Who is your master?" "Vasubandhu," [answered the child]. The boy's father, having inquired among the merchants who were going to India, learned that the teacher was alive and, when his son was a little older, took him to Master Vasubandhu.

The master began by teaching him the basics of the written language and continued until he was proficient in all branches of knowledge. When he was young, the boy made an offering of the choicest peas to the statue of Tara at Nalanda. Thinking she would eat the peas if he placed them in her hand, he made his offering, but the peas rolled down. Again he offered them, and again they rolled down. Thinking that he could not eat them if the goddess hadn't, he tried again and again to make his offering: they rolled down, and the child began to cry. Then exalted [Tara] revealed herself to him and said, "Don't cry. I have blessed you, now you can go home." Thereafter, he came to possess unimpeded sublime insight; that statue became known as "Tara with the Peas."

This teacher mastered *The Mound of Jewels Discourse* up to its forty-ninth chapter, and it is said that he composed a commentary to it. At that time, the fame of Stiramati's learning became widespread. King Shriharsa, Master Gunaprabha's patron, once asked who, among those renowned for the doctrine at that time, was the most learned. [The reply was]

Though royal status has made a scholar
Of Venerable Gunaprabha,

[Knowledge of] one text among all treatises has done so
For Master Stiramati.

This master composed a commentary to *The Treasury of Observed Phenomena* entitled *Meteorite Thunderbolt*, a commentary to *The Compendium of Observed Phenomena*, commentaries to the eight dissertations [of Vasubandhu], and many other treatises.

Some Tibetans recount the following story. A vagabond accomplished the powers of the sun and used them to burn sacred texts. Afterward, Master Stiramati recited *The Mound of Jewels Discourse* by heart and said,

If you place my intellect on one side
And others' minds on the other
And weigh them, mine will be the heavier.

Due to his pride, he was reborn a pig. Examining the sound of his own grunting, he thought,

I was once the scholar Stiramati.
My pride has me now reborn in a sow's belly.
When I die, I shall go immediately to Joyful Heaven.

So they say, yet the chronology is contradictory, and I think individuals foretold by the Buddha as upholders of the doctrine cannot fall into lower births as a result of their actions. Stiramati's disciple was Purnavardhana, and it is said that his disciples were Jinamitra, Shilendrabodhi, and others. This, however, must be researched.

Dignaga

Vasubandhu's disciple more learned than he in the field of logic was the illustrious Dignaga.

Dignaga belonged to the Brahmin caste and received monastic ordination from a preceptor of the Vastiputra order. He trained well in the conventional sciences, including grammar, and then requested from his preceptor the pith instructions for the meditative concentration of renunciation. He was told to meditate on a self that can be expressed neither as the aggregates themselves nor as other than the aggregates. He meditated and could not

find a self. Then, thinking, "Am I veiled by outer or inner obscurations?" he lit large lamps in the four directions and stripped his body naked. Opening his eyes wide, he searched for a self in the ten directions but found nothing.

While he was engaged in this practice, some friends observed him and told their preceptor. The teacher asked Dignaga, "Why are you doing this?" "I am searching for a self," he replied. "You have disowned our own philosophical system! You must leave!" Dignaga thought to himself, "I could refute the preceptor himself with reasoning, but that would be inappropriate." Thus he left and eventually met Master Vasubandhu, with whom he trained to proficiency in the three Buddhist ways, and he became particularly learned in the idealist philosophical system and in logic.

Then, to eliminate the cause of living beings' suffering, ignorance of the correct meaning, and to foster its antidote, sublime insight, Master [Dignaga] wrote a commentary to *The Treasury of Observed Phenomena*, a commentary to *The Honored One's Infinite Qualities Praise*, *Analysis of the Object*, and other miscellaneous treatises, over one hundred in all. As these could become scattered, he decided to compile them into a single work, *A Compendium of All Discourses on Logic*. Thus, in "Dignaga's Cave," he wrote with chalk on a rock face:

To the authority, who wishes to aid beings—
Teacher, Joyful Buddha, and refuge—I bow.
To establish a logical system, I will gather all my works
And unite their scattered fragments into a single text.

As he wrote this homage and resolve [that traditionally opens most classic Buddhist texts], the earth trembled, light shone, and a great sound was heard. The calves of non-Buddhist teachers stiffened like wood, and many other such extraordinary omens appeared.

At that time, a Hindu teacher named Krishnamuniraja lived nearby. He peered with minor clairvoyance and knew of Dignaga's power. Overcome with envy, when the master left to beg alms, Krishnamuniraja twice went to his empty dwelling and erased the verse. The master wrote the verse down a third time and at the end added, "Who has erased this? If you did this in jest and senselessly, do not erase this verse since it has a vast purpose. If you have done so from jealousy, I have the verse in my mind: none can erase it. If I am mistaken, however, and you consent to debate, show yourself and we will debate!"

Writing this, omens appeared as before. The Hindu returned, and seeing the words "We will debate!" he stayed. When the master returned from a round of alms begging, he met his challenger, and they placed their respective doctrines as the prize for victory in debate. The Hindu was defeated three times in debate.

"You must now adopt Buddhism," said Dignaga. At this, the other became enraged and shot flames from his mouth that consumed all the master's possessions. Nearly burnt by the flames, Dignaga was filled with despair and thought, "How certain was I that I could aid all sentient beings, but here I am, incapable of helping even this one single Hindu! I should help myself and realize the bliss of ultimate peace." Thinking that, he decided, "I will throw this chalk into the sky. The moment it hits the ground, I will give up my [bodhisattva] intention."

With that, he threw the chalk into the sky, but it never fell. Instead, Gentle Splendor himself visibly appeared. "My child, don't do this, don't do this. You have met with the lesser way, and ignoble thoughts have arisen. Know that these Hindu groups can cause no harm to your treatise. Until you have attained a stage of awakening, I serve as your spiritual mentor. In the future, this work will be the sole eye for all treatises." In this way, [Gentle Splendor] accepted him as his disciple. So some teach.

Dharmottara's *Ascertainment of Dignaga's "Compendium of Logic": A Commentary—Great Validity* states:

> When Master Dignaga lived in an isolated mountain cave meditating diligently, he sometimes became disgusted with the wheel of life and turned away from aiding sentient beings toward desire for liberation for himself alone. At that moment, exalted Gentle Splendor appeared and said to him, "My child, like evil beings, you are overcome by other previous mental states. Now that you have a mind that can aid sentient beings, why are you complacent?" In reply he said, "O Lord, this wheel of life has myriad unbearable sufferings: I cannot stand it. So, when my mind becomes unstable due to my love for these impure beings, and you see that, how is it that you do not bless me?" [Gentle Splendor] answered him, "My child, until you have attained a stage of awakening, I myself will be your spiritual mentor." Having thus spoken, he vanished.

In the Kashmiri Jnanashri's commentary, [this passage] reads, "Until you have reached the state of enlightenment. . . "

Master [Dignaga] composed *A Compendium of All Discourses on Logic* with an autocommentary and, having subdued all Hindu [challengers], spread the doctrine.

Dharmakirti

Ishvarasena, [Dignaga's] disciple, an expert in the subjects of Buddhist culture, composed *A Commentary on Dignaga's "Compendium of Logic."*

His disciple Dharmakirti was born in south India in the kingdom of Chudamani to a Brahmin Hindu family. As a child, he was well educated in grammar and later went on to assume the attire of an ordained non-Buddhist Brahmin [having received such ordination] from a maternal uncle, a Hindu teacher named Kumarila. When his uncle criticized him harshly and expelled him, the master [Dharmakirti] thought to himself, "May I defeat all Hindus!"

He took monastic ordination in the Buddhist doctrine, became educated, and then made the vow to study *A Compendium of All Discourses on Logic* three times with the master Ishvarasena. Having listened [to its exposition] once, he understood it according to Ishvarasena's realization. On the second time, he understood it according to Dignaga's realization and, knowing that Ishvarasena's view was incorrect, he requested a third teaching. "Dignaga had no disciple who compared to me," [said Ishvarasena] "and I, too, have no disciple who compares to you. It is not customary to give an explanation after the completion [of a teaching]. I have taught [the entire text] twice. There is no point for me to teach just this. There are other things a scholar must attend to, so prepare cloth and oil [for a lamp], and I will teach tonight." [Dharmakirti] did so and then, having fully realized that results correspond to their specific causes, he repeated his lessons to his teacher. His teacher was delighted and said to him, "Now take the role of challenger of the mistaken points of my philosophical system and compose a commentary to *A Compendium of All Discourses on Logic*." Thus, he gave his consent [for the composition of a commentary].

Thereafter, to understand the secret terms of the Samkhya philosophical system, the master posed as a servant and became an attendant for his maternal uncle's wife. Having pleased her, he told her he needed to ask about the key points [of the philosophical system]. She replied, "I'll ask while making

love [with my husband]: you must remember the answers." Dharmakirti tied a cord around her leg and pulled on it when difficult subjects were broached. After he understood thoroughly, he left. In this way Dharmakirti learned the key points of that system and knew that he could defeat all challenges. He proclaimed, "If there be any learned persons, they should debate with me!" Most of [the non-Buddhist teachers] fled to other regions. Those who did debate were trounced by the doctrine and entered its path. As Dharmakirti himself declared,

> If the sun of Dharmakirti's speech
> Were to set,
> Buddhist teachings would slumber or die,
> And the non-Buddhist teachings would rise again!

And those who praised him said,

> Homage to the guru
> Named Dharmakirti,
> Expert in logic and language,
> Who trounces his Hindu opponents and rises in the sky.

Thereafter, the master traveled through towns and provinces, arriving finally at the gates of King Utpullapushpa's [palace]. The king asked, "Who presently is a scholar?" [The master replied]:

> Dignaga has sublime insight,
> Chandragomi expresses himself with perfect purity,
> The poet Shura produces fine compositions,
> Utpullapushpa is endowed with wealth,
> As to he who is victorious in every direction, if it is not me,
> then who?

"Are you Dharmakirti?" asked the king.

"So I am called," replied [Dharmakirti]. The king invited him in and became his benefactor. Dharmakirti then composed his seven treatises on logic and, in conclusion, *A Commentary on Dignaga's "Compendium of Logic": Autocommentary of the First Chapter*. Although these works made their way into scholars' teaching schools, the majority [of scholars] did not

understand them. A few did comprehend the treatises but, moved by envy, proclaimed them to be faulty and bound them to dogs' tails. The master commented, "Like dogs circulating in all villages and towns, my treatises will spread." He included the following at the beginning of *A Commentary on Dignaga's "Compendium of Logic"*:

> Most people are attached to the mundane and lack the energy
> of sublime insight:
> Not only do fine words just tire them, the taints of envy make
> them hostile.
> That being the case, I harbor no thought that this work will be
> useful to others.
> In my mind, since I have long devoted myself to becoming
> familiar with excellent sayings, this work brings me joy.

So it is said.

Thereafter, he appointed Pandit Devendrabuddhi to compose a commentary [to *A Commentary on Dignaga's "Compendium of Logic"*]. Devendrabuddhi did so once and offered it [to the teacher] for review, but [Dharmakirti] washed it away in water. Again he wrote, but this time [the master] burned it. After he had composed [yet another commentary] he said,

> Most beings do not have good fortune [to understand],
> And further, time does not wait.
> For those reasons, and having developed some familiarity [with
> this subject],
> I have summarized [the text] and composed here a commentary
> to the difficult points.

With that, he gave it [to Dharmakirti] who said, "Ancillary points and meanings that were illustrated indirectly do not appear here, but the words' evident meanings do." He thought however, "My reasoning will never be understood correctly by others." So it is said that at the conclusion of *A Commentary on Dignaga's "Compendium of Logic"* he added,

> Like a river flowing into the sea, [my logic] will dissolve into my
> body and vanish.

Devendrabuddhi's disciple was Shakyamati, who composed an explanatory commentary [to his master's work]. It is said that Shakyamati's disciple was Prabhabuddhi. Some say that Jamari was a direct disciple of Dharmakirti. Alamkara received transmission from [the master's] physical remains. [That master's] disciple was Vinitadéva; his disciple was Dharmottara. So it is said. Nevertheless, the major commentary states that Dharmottara was a disciple of Dharmakaradatta and Kalyanarakshita. It is said that Jamari taught an explanatory commentary to Alamkata and that Vinitadéva and Shankarananda wrote commentaries to [Dharmakirti's] seven treatises on logic.

Vimuktasena

Vasubandhu's disciple more learned than he in the field of the perfection of sublime insight was exalted Vimuktasena.

Vimuktasena presided over many temples. He belonged to the Kaurukulla order [among the eighteen] and was the nephew of the master Buddhadasa. He attained the [first] stage of awakening, Joyful, and listened directly to [the words of] the Buddha. Thereafter, he wrote *Illuminating "The Perfection of Sublime Insight in Twenty-Five Thousand Verses,"* which presents the subjects of the perfection of sublime insight. The text is a commentary on *The Ornament of Manifest Realization*, relating it to *The Perfection of Sublime Insight in Twenty-Five Thousand Verses*. Venetable Vimuktasena composed *The Perfection of Sublime Insight in Twenty-Five Thousand Verses: Full Commentary*; some believe [the author of this text instead to be] a disciple of exalted Vimuktasena.

Haribhadra

In particular, the story of Master Haribhadra is as follows.

In the eastern Khadira forest inside a large tree trunk, there once lived a tree god. A herdsman of that country died, and his wife, who was very beautiful in body and face, went to tend the cattle. The tree god united in pleasure with her, and [from their union] an extraordinary son was born, named Gopala. His father gave him precious gems, and by virtue of his noble qualities, he emerged as a leader throughout the entire country. It was he who erected the monastery of Nalanda.

One of Gopala's queens who had little power asked a Brahmin master for an awareness-initiation to gain control over the king. The Brahmin brought a medicinal herb from the Himalayas, sealed it, and sent it with the queen's servant girl. [On her way back, however,] the servant girl lost her footing while crossing a bridge and fell. The medicine was carried away by the river until it reached the ocean, where it was caught and eaten by a naga king. Thus, the naga king, Ruler of the Ocean, fell under the queen's power. The two met and [from their union] a son named Shrimad Dharmapala was born.

On an auspicious day when offerings were made, a serpent reared its head. The king was enraged and set out to punish the serpent, but as he did so, [the snake] showed him a ring, on which he saw the letters of the naga language. He then resumed his worship and thereafter [devoted himself to] raising the child.

[When the child was older,] he wanted to construct a temple superior to all others and consulted an oracle. The oracle instructed him to make a wick from the fabric of clothes of renunciants and Brahmins, to gather butter from the homes of kings and merchants, and to get a vessel [in which to burn them] from a holy place of ascetic [Brahmins], then to place the lit butter lamp before a wisdom deity. When he prayed, an emanation of the doctrine's protectors would throw the butter lamp: on the spot [where it landed, the temple] must be built. He did so, but a raven appeared and threw the lamp into a lake. [The youth] was distraught, but that night a naga king with five serpent heads appeared and said, "I am your father. I shall dry the lake so that you can build there. You must make great offerings for seven weeks." He did accordingly, and on the twenty-first day, the lake dried up, and there he built Odantapuri Temple.

This king had four sons: a king, a scholar, a spiritual adept, and an evil king. The last son feared he would be without wealth and was given a gem. He had a son named Devapala who possessed the power [to achieve his] aspirations and developed faith in the mother [of all buddhas, *The Perfection of Sublime Insight*]. [Devapala] stole his father's gem and offered it to a monk who taught the perfection of sublime insight. His father came to know this and said, "Jewels are allowed to kings, but renunciants should have few desires and be content. You are not like that!" He strangled [the monk] and confiscated the gem. The monk prayed that immediately after death he might be reborn to his own disciple, Prince [Devapala]. Reborn in

that manner, he was known as king Mahipala who had faith in the mother [of all buddhas, *The Perfection of Sublime Insight*,] and he searched everywhere for teachers of it.

At that time, a master named Haribhadra had left the royal caste to take monastic ordination and became an expert in all Buddhist and non-Buddhist philosophical systems. In particular, he had long familiarized himself with the meaning of the perfection of sublime insight. From his preceptor, Vairochanabhadra, he asked for the meditation technique of Bodhisattva Loving-Kindness. He practiced it and dreamed of a saffron-colored monk with admirable conduct who advised, "Go east, to Kharsapana." When he woke, he went there and for three days he performed fasting practice and watched his dreams. At dawn he dreamed that in the sky above Odantapuri Temple's *gandhola*, amid a dense cloud bank, he saw a god's upper body rising from the clouds; the god was making many types of beautiful offerings.

"What are you doing?" asked Haribhadra.

"Noble Bodhisattva Loving-Kindness is teaching *The Perfection of Sublime Insight in Eight Thousand Verses*: I am making offerings," he replied.

After gazing for some time, Haribhadra beheld the bodhisattva, whose face was the color of gold. The crown of his head was ornamented with a stupa, and his right hand made the gesture of teaching. After offering homage and gifts, Haribhadra addressed him: "These days there are many commentaries to your treatises. Which of them should I follow?"

[Bodhisattva Loving-Kindness replied], "You must gain a thorough understanding of all those works and then synthesize what is correct and write it in a single work." With that, he obtained authorization [to compose treatises]. [Haribhadra] awoke and made offerings, then went from east to west looking for a patron who would sponsor the treatise. King Mahipala, having heard that Master Haribhadra was expert in expounding the perfection of sublime insight, sent a messenger who met and invited him.

Haribhadra composed *The Concise Meaning of the Eighth Chapter of "The Perfection of Sublime Insight in Twenty-Five Thousand Verses,"* consistent with exalted [Vimuktasena's] commentary. [Haribhadra] also wrote such treatises as *Illuminating "The Ornament of Manifest Realization": A Commentary on the Eight Thousand Verses*; *The Ornament of Manifest Realization—A Commentary: Elucidating the Meaning*; *The Abridged Version of the Perfection of Sublime Insight: An Easily Understood Commentary*; and *Meditation on the Perfection of Sublime Insight*. So it is said.

Illuminating "The Ornament of Manifest Realization": A Commentary on the Eight Thousand Verses states that it was composed at Trikatuka Monastery under the sponsorship of Shrimad Dharmapala. Master Prajnakaramati states:

> Master Haribhadra turned toward the good of beings and saw that in the presentation of the perfection of sublime insight, many beliefs were expressed in many works and that the authors' explanations contradicted one another. He became distraught at this. While Haribhadra dwelt in that extreme [state of mind], compassionate Lord Bodhisattva Loving-Kindness again expounded the female transcendent conqueror [the perfection of sublime insight], along with [the teachings on] manifest realization, to ease his grief. Such is what I have heard.

Master Dharmamitra says that Haribhadra served his spiritual mentor for seventeen years and then in a dream Maitreya accepted him as a disciple. Nevertheless, Master [Haribhadra] himself reports that he acquired [the material for his works] from the four major commentaries and, particularly, based [his work] upon the commentaries by the two exalted masters [Asanga and Vimuktasena]. *Illuminating "The Ornament of Manifest Realization": A Commentary on the Eight Thousand Verses* states:

> Written here are the explanations given by those such as exalted Asanga. It is therefore to be regarded as authoritative.

And,

> Exalted Vimuktasena's power
> Allows me to perceive the meaning.

Buddhajnana

[Haribhadra's] disciple, known as Venerable Buddhajnana, received empowerment from Bodhisattva Gentle Melody. When he once concealed himself from his master in a crowd, his eyes were torn out [as punishment]. Buddhajnanapada begged forgiveness and was then granted eyes that could see both day and night.

At the request of his disciple Gunamitra, he composed *The Abridged*

Version of the Perfection of Sublime Insight: The Difficult Points. It is said that he wrote fourteen texts foretold in *The Matrix of Mystery Tantra*, including *Gentle Splendor's Oral Transmission*, *Matrix of Mystery—Meditation Technique: Ever-Excellent*, *Female Ever-Excellent—Meditation Technique*, *The Source of Personal Accomplishment*, *The Multifaceted Wheel*, *A Blazing Jewel*, *Fundamental Supreme Wisdom*, *A Treasury of Verse*, *The Vital Essence of Liberation*, *The Vital Essence of Awakened Mind*, *The Auspicious Explanation*, *Introduction to the Four Mudras*, works on torma offerings, fire offerings, rituals of offering, rituals for sacred circles, and the method to accomplish water empowerment.

Gunaprabha

Vasubandhu's disciple more learned than he in the field of monastic discipline was Gunaprabha. *Illuminating "The Ornament of Manifest Realization": A Commentary on the Eight Thousand Verses* states:

> Noble Gunaprabha, a Brahmin master, was the supreme upholder of the substantialist order's system of monastic discipline. He crossed oceans of his own and others' philosophical systems, his wisdom power was magnified by the nectarlike essence of the Joyful Buddha's monastic discipline, and he earnestly practiced the heart essence of the Transcendent Buddha's doctrine.

This teacher, endowed with such noble qualities, composed *The Root Discourse on Monastic Discipline*, *One Hundred Activities*, *The Bodhisattvas' Stages: A Commentary on the Ethics Chapter*, *The Root Discourse on Monastic Discipline: An Autocommentary*, and other treatises. Some believe *One Hundred Activities* to be Vinitadeva's work.

Some believe this master to have been Upagupta's disciple; others, Sudarshana's disciple. Those [masters] were not his contemporaries, and these beliefs should be regarded as mistaken. Followers of [Tibet's] upper monastic discipline state that [the code of monastic discipline was transmitted] from Sudarshana to Anagamin, and from Anagamin to Anivartitabuddhi, who passed it to Gunaprabha. This must be researched. It is said that Gunaprabha reached four hundred years of age and that his student was Shakyaprabha, but this is untrue. *Radiant Discipline* [by Shakyaprabha] states:

> My preceptor who dwelt in Magadha was the ornament [of that country] and achieved great fame.
> From him, Punyakirti, I received teachings and now, based on the three proofs, I expound my detailed explanation
> Of formal procedures of monastic discipline, which should serve as the foundation for the teachings.

And further,

> May my teacher, the masterful Shantiprabha who lives far away and whose fame is widespread, remember and turn his attention to me. With this in mind, I elucidate the subjects of this commentary.

Thus, [Shakyaprabha] himself says that he was a disciple of Punyakirti and Shantiprabha. *Three Hundred Verses on Monastic Discipline* states that Shakyamitra was Shakyaprabha's disciple.

Shakyaprabha composed *Advice for Novice Monks* in three hundred verses and its commentary called *Radiant Discipline*. Dharmamitra (whom some believe to have been Gunaprabha's disciple) wrote *The Root Discourse on Monastic Discipline: Extensive Commentary*. It is further said that Singhamukha was Shakyaprabha's disciple; and Jinamitra, [Simhamukha's] disciple, but this must be researched.

Shantideva

Seven marvelous tales are told concerning the history of the Victor's heir Shantideva:

> (1) How Shantideva met his personal deity,
> (2) His activities in Nalanda, (3) refutation of opponents,
> (4) Conversion of Pasandaka proponents, (5) feeding beggars,
> (6) Helping a king, and (7) subduing Hindus.

1. How Shantideva Met His Personal Deity

In Saurastra, south India, King Kalyanavarman was borne a son named Shantivarman. While [this prince] was young, he studied many different

subjects. In particular, having requested from a renunciant adept the technique to accomplish the sword of Gentle Splendor, he practiced it and came to behold [the bodhisattva's] face.

Sometime later, his father passed away, and the prince was to be enthroned the following morning. That night he had a dream in which noble [Gentle Splendor], seated on the throne that he was to occupy the next day, said to him,

> My only son, this seat belongs to me.
> I am your spiritual mentor.
> For you and I to share this one throne
> Is by no means right.

The prince awoke from his dream and knew that it was impossible for him to assume the throne. So he fled and went to Nalanda, where he took ordination from Jayadeva, foremost among five hundred scholars, and became known as Shantideva.

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2. His Activities in Nalanda

As for his inner conduct, Shantideva received Noble [Bodhisattva Gentle Splendor's] teachings, settled his mind in a state of meditative evenness, and wrote profound treatises. Outwardly however, no one was aware of his conduct apart from his eating, sleeping, and moving about. As a result, he became known by the name "Bhusuku who has only three concerns."

Others judged his outward behavior and thought, "Monastic life involves three cycles of activity—[renunciation, meditation, and activity]—but this [monk] engages in none of them. It is not right that he partake of the offerings given by the faithful: we must expel him. When it becomes his turn to recite the discourses, he will decide to leave on his own."

When ordered to recite the discourses, he replied that he was unable to. He asked his preceptor to give him the order and, when the preceptor did so, he consented. Some guessed that he knew nothing whatsoever and regarded him skeptically; in order to expose what was in his mind, they arranged a high throne in the midst of a large crowd. It was not obvious how he could get upon it, but he pressed down with his hands [on the throne] and [easily] ascended. At that, most began to have second thoughts.

Then he asked, "Am I to recite something previously heard, or what has not been heard before?" They asked that he recite something new and

unknown. Because [his treatises] *The Compendium of Training* was too long and *The Compendium of the Discourses* too short, he recited *Entering the Conduct of Bodhisattvas*, conveying vast meaning in few words. As he recited the chapter on sublime insight, with the words "when everything substantial and insubstantial," he rose higher and higher into space until his form finally disappeared altogether. His voice, however, continued to resound until the recitation was complete, then he departed.

Those with perfect retention compiled [the teaching] according to what they had heard, but differing versions arose, some with seven hundred, some with one thousand, and some with over one thousand verses, so doubts arose. [Shantideva] had said,

> *The Compendium of Training*
> Must be consulted again and again.

And further,

> Consult the abridged summary—
> *The Compendium of the Discourses.*

Since they did not recognize [these works] and had heard that [Shantideva] was residing in the south at the stupa of Glorious Qualities, two monks were sent to extend an invitation to him. When they met him, they asked [about the texts]. He informed them that *The Compendium of Training* and *The Compendium of the Discourses* were to be found in his storeroom's pillar, written in small Sanskrit letters, and advised them that the version of *Entering the Conduct of Bodhisattvas* in a full one thousand verses was the [correct] one. He gave the transmission on how to teach and practice the texts.

3. Refutation of Opponents

After that, Shantideva traveled to the east where he disputed in a large debate. Through his miraculous ability, he reconciled everyone and brought happiness to all.

4. Conversion of Pasandaka Proponents

In a country not far to the west from Magadha, [Shantideva] lived in the vicinity of five hundred adherents of the Pasandaka view. On one occasion,

a great disaster struck, exhausting all their food and water. Miserable, the people searched for someone able to acquire [food] who could serve as their leader and whom they would obey. The master, having gotten a begging bowl of rice, blessed it and was able to satisfy everyone [with the single bowl]. After that he turned them away from the Pasandaka view and converted them to the Sage's doctrine.

5. Feeding Beggars

Once, a great famine struck: about one thousand beggars were starving and near death. The master provided them with nourishment and taught the doctrine, establishing them in a state of happiness.

6. Helping a King

Then in the east, the king of Arivishana was surrounded by indigent persons, intending to attack him.* Since it was possible that he could be killed, it was imperative to offer them money. [Shantideva] stood guard to protect the king, but the master had nothing more than a wooden sword bound with the seal of Noble [Bodhisattva Gentle Splendor]. The [king's] companions saw this and entreated the king, "This man is a fraud! Look at his weapon!"

The enraged king said, "Draw your sword!"

"O Lord, this may harm you," begged [Shantideva], but the king replied, "May I be harmed then! Draw it out nonetheless!"

"In that case, please Lord, close one eye and look with the other," pleaded Shantideva. When the king did so, [Shantideva] drew the sword. Its radiance was so unbearable that it blinded the king's exposed eye. He begged forgiveness, took refuge, and converted to Buddhism.

7. Subduing Hindus

Following that, the master went south to Glorious Mountain, where he lived as did the followers of Ucchusman, with the possessions of a vagabond, naked, and subsisting on discarded remains cleaned from food pots.

*There is a word in the text here, *ma tsa la*, which has confounded my erudite authorities, who suspect that it is not a Tibetan word.

Kacalaha, a female servant of the king of Khatavihara, saw that the washing water she had thrown out boiled when it touched the master. At that time a Hindu teacher named Shankaradeva entreated the king, saying, "The day after tomorrow I will draw Maheshvara's sacred circle in the sky, and if you are unable to destroy it, you must burn all the Buddhist texts and images and adopt non-Buddhist doctrines."

The king convened the monastic community and related the matter to them. When no one promised that he could destroy the sacred circle, the king became troubled. The servant girl then related what she had seen, and the king gave the order to search [for Shantideva]. After looking everywhere, they finally discovered him sitting under a tree and told him about the situation. "I am able [to destroy it]," he said, and told them to prepare an urn of water, two pieces of clothing, and fire, which they did.

The next evening [Shankaradeva] drew the first lines [of the sacred circle], filling everyone around with doubt. On the morning of the second day, he drew the sacred circle. Just as the eastern gate was finished, the master [Shantideva] entered a meditative state and caused a great cyclone to rise, blowing away [the mandala] and wrecking or almost wrecking everything—all plants, trees, and villages. The people gathered there were carried away, and the Hindu teachers were scattered, swept off in every direction like tiny birds in the wind. A great darkness fell [upon the area]. But then, from between his eyebrows, the master radiated light that showed the path for the king and queen. They were naked and caked with dust: he [provided] washing water, and they put on the new clothes, warmed themselves by the fire, and were comfortable.

Thereafter, the Hindu temples were destroyed and [their followers] were converted to Buddhism. That place is known even to this day as "the land where non-Buddhists were vanquished."

This master speaks of himself as an ordinary person, but Master Prajnakaramati refers to him as an exalted being. Krishnacharya states furthermore that [Shantideva] touched the lotuses of Gentle Melody's feet with the crown of his head. This master composed three works: *The Compendium of Training*, a comprehensive teaching; *The Compendium of the Discourses*, an abridged presentation; and *Entering the Conduct of Bodhisattvas*, a concise presentation of vast meanings. It is said that more than one hundred commentaries to *Entering the Conduct of Bodhisattvas* existed in India, but only eight were translated into Tibetan.

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Tsong Khapa's Speech of Gold in the *Essence of True Eloquence*

Reason and Enlightenment in the Central Philosophy of Tibet

TRANSLATED WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
Robert A. F. Thurman

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he was born himself a warrior, and his name means "Ascetic of the Shakya" (warrior clan). Maitreya's name is derived from *maitrī*, "love" related to *mātr* "mother," and *mitra* "friend". The world in his time will be politically centralized, and therefore the warrior class and its martial virtues will be obsolete. Thus he will be born among the intellectuals, the religious Brahmins; his teaching will bring the gentler emotions to the fore, and he will not need to reserve the more advanced techniques for cultivating the emotions known as "Tantras" for an esoteric elite but can teach them publicly with the integration of Sutra and Tantra. Thus, that his teaching lacks a separate Tantra might be a quality of its excellence, and not a sign of incompleteness.

Maitreya also often figures among the great bodhisattvas in the assemblies gathered around Shakyamuni to listen to his teaching of the Universal Vehicle discourses. He and Manjushri are often paired there in dialogues, or in alternating interlocution of the Buddha. Whereas the Individual Vehicle scriptures are collected by Ananda, Shariputra, and so forth, the Universal Vehicle Scriptures are collected by Maitreya, Manjushri, and Vajrapani. Furthermore, although presently considered to reside in Tushita heaven, he does not fail to work through miraculous means in this world to help living beings mature toward his eventual Buddha-mission. It is considered (especially in the Tibetan tradition, with the Chinese and Japanese agreeing in general, although differing in particulars), that Maitreya authored five great treatises, using saint Asanga as a scribe, that serve as the basis of the idealistic school of Universal Vehicle philosophy, the Experientialist (*Yogācāra*), or Idealist (*Vijñānavāda*) school.

One of the most common icons in Tibet is called the "refuge field,"[19] which presents the Buddha Shakyamuni in the center of a host of Indian, Tibetan, and supernatural teachers. To Shakyamuni's left is Manjushri, at the head of the lineage of the "profound view" stage of the path of enlightenment, and to his right is Maitreya, at the head of the lineage of the "magnificent deeds" stage of the path of enlightenment. Beneath Manjushri sit Nagarjuna and Aryadeva, at the head of the historical teachers who maintained the unbroken succession of this tradition of critical philosophy. Beneath Maitreya sit Asanga and Vasubandhu at the head of the succession of ethically oriented philosophers. The Buddha in the center of this icon represents the unification of both these lineages, so no ultimate dichotomy is intended by the separation of the two. There are, however, different persons on different stages of the path at different times, and different teachings are elaborated for their benefit that emphasize either wisdom or compassion.

[19] See the example of "refuge field," illustration 12, with Tsong Khapa in center.

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The team of Maitreya and Manjushri, heading the two main branches of the great tree of this philosophical tradition, assure that the balance never goes too far in either direction, either toward the sentimental and mystical extreme that Maitreya himself favors, as recorded in the Universal Vehicle scriptures, or toward the cold and skeptical extreme that Manjushri might seem to manifest in his single-minded pursuit of the transcendent wisdom of selflessness. Indeed, it may be that Berkeley and Hegel and Heidegger and so on will someday be claimed by Europe as representatives of the Maitreya lineage of magnificence, as Hume and Kant and Nietzsche and Wittgenstein and so on may be claimed to represent the Manjushri lineage of the profound. I do myself so perceive them, especially since this *Essence of Eloquence* would not be intelligible and could not even have been translated in our far-western culture, were it not for their extraordinary works and profound teachings. They should be included in the refuge-field icon we are constructing under which to read this *Essence*. It must be remembered, of course, that this division into two lineages is only for emphasis and for dealing with differing tendencies and different times, and there is no essential conflict between critical reason and reasonable faith. The balance between the two is necessary to maintain the central way that leads to and, apparently, from enlightenment.

IV

I bow my head to the feet of Nagarjuna and Asanga,
Who pioneered the ways for Champions of philosophy,
With two interpretations of Sugata's sacred discourse,
And made that superb doctrine of that Victor
Shine like sunlight throughout the triple world!

Coming to the human plane, we encounter the two "Great-Charioted Ones" (*Mahāratha*), or "Champions" in the battle of philosophy against misknowledge, those founders of the branches of Universal Vehicle philosophy who fashioned systems to serve as vehicles for later thinkers and practitioners to ride upon. The metaphor is interesting, in that the Mahayana itself is a "universal vehicle," that is, a mode of transport that takes everyone to the destination of freedom and enlightenment. The two great masters, then, are those who furnished a method of coming to a profound and extensive understanding of that Vehicle, in a sense enabling beings to use it in the proper manner. They are thus like "drivers" of the Vehicle; with them holding the reins, the Vehicle moves swiftly and

unerringly to its goal. In another sense, the struggle with misknowledge and the sufferings of birth, sickness, decay, and death is like a battle, and the Universal Vehicle a war-chariot. The two are thus "Great Champions," leading to victory in the war on misknowledge.

1. Nagarjuna

Nagarjuna's life is aglow with legends. He has been properly "demythologized" by "modern" scholarship, and his exploits over the centuries have been broken into the separate careers of three different Nagarjunas, one living around the time of the origin of the Universal Vehicle, one living in the second century (the "philosopher"), and one living in the 8th or 9th century C.E. (so late because of the modern preconception about the lateness of the Tantra system).[20] Be this as it may, I will render the legendary account, since the mythic Nagarjuna is the one Tsong Khapa has in mind when he refers to him as "Champion" (*Mahāratha*), "Holy Father" (*Āryapitā*), "Savior" (*Nātha*), or "Great Master" (*Mahācārya*), one whose philosophical profundity is integrated indivisibly with his religious sanctity, and even with the magical prowess of his enlightened compassion.

Chandrakirti himself (ca. seventh century C.E.) shows his vision of his master Nagarjuna at the beginning of his famous work, *Lucid Exposition*, likening him to his namesake the *nāgas*, or great sea-dragons, and to Arjuna, the archer-hero.

> I bow to that Nagarjuna,
> Who lives to dispel the dwelling in extremism,
> Being born in the ocean of the genius of the Buddhas,
> Who compassionately taught from his own realization
> The profundities of the treasury of Holy Dharma;
> The blaze of whose insight is kindled by opinions of opponents,
> And burns away the darkness from their minds;
> Matchless in intuition, the showers of arrows of his words
> Win him the glory of sovereignty over the three realms
> Of this world of disciples including the gods,
> And completely conquer the enemy army of cyclic life.[21]

[20] Modern scholars have much debated the "historicity" of Nagarjuna. The tradition has him live for five hundred sixty years, due to his alchemical prowess, and hails him as a great Tantricist as well as a philosopher and an alchemist. Modern scholars therefore consider there to have been at least three different famous Nagarjunas.

[21] The Sanskrit of these verses is found PPMMV, p. 1. *yo antadvayāvāsavidhūtavāsaḥ saṃbuddhadhīsāgaralabdhajanma / saddharmatoyasya gambhīrabhāvaṃ yathānubuddhaṃ kṛpāyā jagāda // yasya darśanatejāṃsi paravādimatendhanaṃ / dahantyadyāpi lokasya manasāni tamāṃsi ca // yasya asamajñānavacaḥśaraughā nighnanti niḥśeṣabhāvā-*

1. Tsong Khapa and main disciples receiving mystic revelation from Manjushri.

4. Maitreya Bodhisattva, the future Buddha in his Tushita heaven mansion, in his role as inspirer of the "magnificent deeds" lineage of Buddhist philosophers.

According to legend,[22] Nagarjuna was in his former life the Licchavi youth Priyadarshana, who figured as one of the members of the assembly at Vimalakirti's house in Vaishali, during the Buddha's own time. There he pronounced a version of the teaching of non-duality, quite remarkable considering his later career, concerning the non-duality of form and emptiness, and he witnessed Vimalakirti's famous silence and attained the tolerance of inconceivability.[23] Shakyamuni himself prophesied that, four hundred years after his Nirvana, a mendicant would appear in the south of India who would spread his central way teaching far and wide, and then go on to the Sukhavati pure land; and that he would be called "Naga."[24] It seems that Nagarjuna was born in south India, in a town called Vidarbha, in a Brahmin family. His parents were, of course, delighted with him, but an astrologer predicted that he would definitely die before his seventh year was finished. So, during his seventh year, his parents released him to enter the mendicant order of the Buddhists. He wandered from teacher to teacher, until he came to the great monastery in the Ganges plain, Nalanda, where he met his main teacher, Rahulabhadra, known esoterically as the Adept Saraha. The boy was ordained as the monk Shriman, and soon he became a master of the Buddhist teaching, as well as an adept at medicine and alchemy. His fame as a teacher spread so widely that he attracted several *nāgas*, mythic dragon-like beings from the depths of the ocean, whose magic powers included the ability to assume human form when visiting among humans. When

risenaṃ / tridhāturājyaśriyam adadhāna vineyalokasya sadevakasya // nāgārjunāya pranipatya tasmai.

[22] Principal sources for the legendary accounts of the great philosophers of Buddhist India that follow are N. Roerich, trans., *The Blue Annals* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1976); Bu-ston, *History of Buddhism*, translated by E. Obermiller (Heidelberg, 1931-1932); A. Chattopadhyaya and L. Chimpa, *Tārānātha's History of Buddhism in India* (Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1970); and the Tibetan *Garland of Perfect Gems, Biographies of the Succession Gurus of the Path of Enlightenment Teachings* (Dharamsala block print; two chapters translated by G. Mullin (with L. Tsonawa), *Lives of the Six Ornaments* (Mundgod: Drepung Monastery Press, Dreloma, 1979-1980).

[23] Tsong Khapa (RG, p. 4) notes a statement from the *Golden Light Scripture* that identifies the Licchavi bodhisattva Priyadarshana as the former life of Nagarjuna. This fits very intriguingly with that bodhisattva's pronouncement on nonduality in the famous chapter nine of the *Vimalakīrti*. "The Bodhisattva Priyadarshana declared, 'Form itself is empty. Emptiness does not result from the destruction of form, but the nature of form is itself emptiness. Therefore, to speak of emptiness on the one hand, and of form, or of sensation, or of intellect, or of motivation, or of consciousness on the other—is entirely dualistic. Consciousness itself is emptiness. Emptiness does not result from the destruction of consciousness, but the nature of consciousness is itself emptiness. Such understanding of the five compulsive aggregates and the knowledge of them as such by means of intuitive wisdom is the entrance into nonduality' " (Thurman, R. A. F., "*Holy Teaching of Vimalakīrti* (University Park; Penn State University Press, 1977), p. 75.

[24] Tsong Khapa (RG, pp. 3ff.) quotes the LAS, the *Golden Light*, the *Mahāmegha*, the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, and the *Mahāḍuṇḍubhi* Scriptures.

Shriman recognized them, they acknowledged themselves as *nāgas* from the ocean kingdom. They then told him of the great treasury of scriptures they had kept there from the Buddha's time, among which were the *100,000 Verse Transcendent Wisdom Scripture*, the *100,000 Verse Garland Scripture*, and the *Jewel Heap Scripture*.[25] Shriman accepted their invitation to visit, and spent fifty years in the *nāga* kingdom, whence he eventually returned bringing numerous scriptures of the Universal Vehicle, which was all but unknown in India at that time—just as Shakyamuni had prophesied.

From this he became known as "Nagarjuna," "one who has achieved [his goal] with the aid of the dragons," and he published numerous scriptures of the Universal Vehicle, which spread throughout the land. He also fashioned the main teachings of these scriptures into a systematic philosophical vehicle, the "central way" (*madhyamaka*), or "Centrist" system, for the benefit of his colleagues and disciples, who found the oceanic teaching of the Universal Vehicle overwhelming, and who had become hardened into substantivistic habits of thought due to an overly realistic understanding of reality.

Although his own interest was unwaveringly existential and transformative, he wished to liberate beings from the traps of views and false notions that kept them from realizing their true potential. He was no sophist delighting in argument for argument's sake, yet he did not hesitate to enter the most abstruse and technical system of thought with his critical and penetrative vision. In Buddhist thought of his day, the refined science of the Abhidharma (itself merely a systematization of the Buddha's critique of the naive realists) had ossified into a more subtle form of realism, a kind of reductionistic pluralism that took an atomistic form with the Vaibhashikas, the "Analysts," and a nominalistic form with the Sautrantikas, the "Traditionists." These philosophers had analyzed the universe, categorizing mind and mental phenomena together with form and matter, and including uncreated noumena such as space and the various types of cessations or Nirvanas along with created phenomena, into a fixed number of categories, the most popular number being seventy-five, but with some schools having up to one hundred and eight. The basic idea was that the illusion of combination was the cause of the sufferings of life, and that if you could separate things analytically back into their primary components, you could control them, lay them to rest, become free of their effects. Especially since you would then discover that there was no permanent stuff of any sort, including no self and no unchanging individuality, your sense of alienated self would become transformed into the cessation, the bliss of Nirvana. Thus, the goal of the contemplative

[25] *Prajñāpāramitā*, *Avataṃsaka*, and *Ratnakūta Sūtras*.

monastic philosopher—and this philosophy was very much the province of a professional elite, not usually the province of the layman—was to use his critical wisdom (*prajñā*) defined as the "analysis of things" (*dharmapravicaya*) literally to "see his way through ordinary reality" and attain liberation. He would then come to understand that his ordinary reality was merely established by his own conceptual and perceptual habits, its apparent inevitability merely illusory, and this understanding would bring him the peace he sought.

The problem with this system was that it was not immune to the reificatory mental habits that plague people and philosophers everywhere. Thus, their at first extraordinary reality in which the transcendent noumenon of Nirvana reduced the everyday world to a mere cocoon to be escaped as soon as possible became reconstituted as an ordinary reality of an extreme spiritualistic dualism, in which a "real samsara" filled with "real phenomena" stood on one side, and a real noumenal Nirvana, a resting place without remainder, stood on the other. This reality was of course rather cold—if not totally frozen—depreciative of the world and the other people in it, and it naturally led one to seek permanent association with the transcendent to the exclusion of the transcended. It became escapist. That is to say, the naive realism with which all living beings build up their worlds had here been transposed by the early systematizers of the Abhidharma into a conceptual scheme that preserved the remarkable and transformative new spiritual dimension of the transcendent, but still lacked the final cure for the self-destructive habit of naive realism itself.

This cure had been taught from the very beginning by the Buddha, of course, but it was a message that was hard for simple country folk to assimilate, with their unquestioning acceptance of culturally inculcated realities, as it so went against the grain of their habits of thought and experience. So, as the Buddha himself had said, it took the culture some centuries of "pluralization of the life world" (in Berger's phrase) before they could come to grips with the constructed nature of reality. By Nagarjuna's time, apparently, enough people were ready for his teaching to have considerable impact.[26]

Thus, Nagarjuna, like Kant against the rationalists of medieval theology, and like Wittgenstein against the logical atomists, had to wield the sword of analysis against the Analysts, non-Buddhist as well as Buddhist; he had to level a complete critique against their absolutisms, either spiritualistic dualism or atomistic pluralism. This he did in a series of

[26] "Pluralization of the life-world" comes from Berger et al.'s *Homeless Mind*. For an interesting comparison between the Abhidharmikas and western logical atomists, such as Russell, see C. Gudmunsen, *Wittgenstein and Buddhism* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1979).

works, whose critical thought patterns are effective for releasing us from almost any trap of dogmatism. His main works are known as the *Sixfold Canon of Philosophy* (*rigs tshogs drug*), including the major treatises called *Wisdom* (PM), the *Rebuttal of Objections* (VV), the *Finely Woven* (VP), the *Philosophical Sixty* (YṢ), the *Emptiness Seventy* (ŚS), and the *Jewel Garland* (RA). These works have stood largely unrefuted for the duration, now almost two thousand years, of the constant battles of Indian philosophy. A number of writers have made deprecatory comments about Nagarjuna's central way, calling him a "no-good nihilist," and other names, but no one has taken up his position point by point and rejected it in a cogent and persuasive manner. Indeed, even the great Asanga, who later found Nagarjuna's system to be too negativistic and warned people away from it, offering them the gentler Experientialist system, did not criticize it in detail. And the great Brahmin philosopher Shankaracarya tacitly admitted its unassailability by merely dismissing Nagarjuna as unworthy of consideration, after having just leveled a Nagarjunian critique against every other opponent in the field.[27]

The central gist of the Universal Vehicle and therefore of Nagarjuna's own philosophy is the spirit of enlightenment of love and compassion for all living beings. Although Shakyamuni Buddha had taught in the same spirit, the love aspect of his teaching was not so easily put into practice as the wisdom aspect, especially by the monastic community, and therefore its importance waned and the Universal Vehicle was forgotten. However, after four centuries, in the first century B.C.E., the civilized world was ripe for mass religious movements that stressed the solidarity of brotherhood and universal love and compassion in place of the older militaristic values of hierarchy, fatherhood, and tribal distinctiveness. The time was ripe for the Universal Vehicle. According to the legend, the great stream of love and compassion was brought up out of the *nāga* kingdom deep in the ocean onto the shores of India, and from there in a few centuries it spread throughout central Asia into China and eventually even into Tibet, Japan, and Mongolia. It is interesting that, at about the same time, Jesus brought another great stream of love and compassion to the West, whence in a few centuries it spread West into Europe and North Africa, and eventually even to Russia, Scandinavia, and Britain.

After his first round of teaching the Universal Vehicle and the Centrist philosophy, Nagarjuna again went off with the *nāgas* to the northern land, Uttarakuru, where the wild maize grows abundantly, and the people

[27] See G. Thibault, *The Vedāntasūtras of Bādārāyana*, translated with Shankara's commentary, (New York: Dover, 1968), I: 344ff.

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are rich in cattle and game and live long and peaceful lives like gods. He spent two hundred fifty years there, before returning to India with a new batch of scriptures from the *nāga* libraries, the Idealist scriptures such as the *Elucidation of the Intention* and the *Mission to Lanka*,[28] which were of great influence in inspiring Aryasanga's philosophy. During this third sojourn in India, Nagarjuna also began to teach more openly the esoteric Tantras that, in the traditional view, he had been practicing in secret all along, as he had received them from the Great Brahmin Saraha, his early teacher. He composed the *Five Stages of the Perfection Stage of the Esoteric Communion* and other important Tantric commentaries, systematizing what later became known as the Arya Lineage of the Esoteric Communion Tantra (*Guhyasamāja*).[29]

Because of his youthful mastery of alchemy, this legendary Nagarjuna had the power of longevity, never eating coarse food, but subsisting on a magic pill he took daily, staying longer and longer to continue his work of benefiting living beings. He had a royal friend, King Antivahana, sometimes called Udayi, of the Shatavahana dynasty of south central India, whom he kept alive with him, to fund his projects of building monuments, monasteries, libraries, universities, hospitals, and welfare houses. But, as the legend concludes, the king's son finally became impatient, wanting his own turn at the throne, so he went to Nagarjuna and asked him for his head, calling upon him to live up to the bodhisattva ideal of transcendent generosity. Nagarjuna took this opportunity to conclude his work for the time, remembered a time when he had once killed some bugs by being in too much of a hurry to get some kusha grass for his meditation mat, and so handed the prince a blade of kusha grass and let him cut off his head. When the head rolled to the floor, it did not bleed but turned, along with the trunk, to alabaster, and spoke out clearly to the prince: "Now my head has left my body, but it will not be destroyed and later they will rejoin, when it is time for me to speak out again and bring the central way between the extremisms of absolutism and nihilism back to prominence in the world!"

Nagarjuna is also counted as a patriarch in the succession of "wordless

[28] SN and LAS.

[29] Even though I have said I am giving the "legendary" account, historically minded colleagues are no doubt appalled by the extravagance of the Indian hagiographic imagination. In my forthcoming work on Nagarjuna's Tantric writings, I argue that evidence internal to the texts supports the traditional claim that one person wrote both the philosophical and Tantric books. As we cannot accept the longevity this entails under our present system of dating the emergence of Tantrism, we should revise that patchwork of inferences. We date from the rare mention of texts or from their translation into Chinese and Tibetan, whereas the Tantrics themselves claim that they prevented these teachings from being published in any form for seven centuries, the better to preserve their secrecy.

enlightenment" teaching that descended from Shakyamuni to Bodhidharma and thence through the several major Ch'an and Zen lineages. The eloquent Nagarjuna, who wrote many books himself, discovered many more, and did more than almost anyone to spread the Universal Vehicle scriptures throughout the world, is claimed as a pivot of the "scriptureless tradition" of direct enlightenment through "Mind-Seal Transmission!"

2. Asanga

Asanga's dates are no better known than those of Nagarjuna, although his hagiographers had him live a mere one hundred fifty years, from approximately 300 C.E. to 450 C.E. Legend has it that his mother was a Buddhist nun who despaired of the state of Buddhism in the India of that time, and decided to renounce her nunhood to bear sons who would renew its energies. First, from a warrior father, she gave birth to Asanga; then from a Brahmin, Vasubandhu; and third, from a merchant, a son called Virinchavatsa. Asanga was first a member of the Vatsiputriya branch of the Sarvastivada school, and became a great teacher of the Individual Vehicle. He then heard of the Universal Vehicle teaching, and became interested in the teaching of great compassion and transcendent wisdom. Here he recognized the saving doctrine that could bring Indian Buddhism into its glory. He received initiation into the *Māyājāla Tantra*, and then set forth to contemplate great compassion, seeking to enlist the mystic aid of the supernal bodhisattva Maitreyanatha. He reasoned that, since the teaching of Shakyamuni Buddha was so poorly understood and practiced throughout the land, the future Buddha, believed to reside in the Tushita heaven, should be requested to make an anticipatory visit to the planet to revive the Dharma.

Leaving his home monastery in Takshashila, near present-day Peshawar, Asanga meditated on compassion and on the invocation of the bodhisattva Maitreya for twelve long years. At last, frustrated by failure, he abandoned the quest. His faith and his sense of self-worth utterly shattered, he wandered forth from the cave a broken man. He stopped near the first town at the sight of an old female dog who was suffering terribly from a suppurating wound in her hindquarters. He became absorbed involuntarily in the relatively simple task of trying to help at least this one sentient being. If only he could bring even temporary relief to one other being, perhaps his life would have served some purpose. As he was about to clean her wound, he noticed her live flesh was already crawling with maggots, so he could not help her without harming them.

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After a moment's thought, he took a jagged shard and cut a piece of flesh from his own meagre thigh, shrunken by his long asceticism, and placed it on the ground next to the dog. He resolved to pick off the maggots one by one and place them on the fresh flesh. Unable to grasp them with his fingers, he put out his tongue to lick them off. As he neared the foul-smelling dog, he felt overwhelmed by revulsion, and, closing his eyes, had to force himself to go through the operation. Suddenly there was a kind of electronic explosion in front of his face, and as he started back and opened his eyes, he beheld the bodhisattva Maitreya standing before him, radiant, enhaloed in a rainbow aura. Overwhelmed with faith and joy, he prostrated himself at the Lord's feet over and over again. Finally, recovering his composure, he ventured to question Maitreya as to why he had been so long in responding. Maitreya replied that he had always been right with him, but that, as Asanga himself had persistently been caught up in self-involvement and had not yet generated great compassion, he had been unable to see him. After all, Maitreya is the incarnation of love (*maitrī*), and only those with great compassion can perceive love, even when it is right before them. Asanga was not convinced by this explanation, so Maitreya shrunk himself into a small globe of light and permitted Asanga to carry him through the town to show him to the populace. Asanga, heedless of his gaunt appearance and even his mangled thigh, did as he was told and ran joyfully through the town proclaiming the advent of the future Buddha. The townspeople looked wonderingly at what they saw as a crazed yogi from a cave, bleeding and tattered, running around with a contemptible, sick dog on his shoulder shouting about the future Buddha. Finally they drove him from the town.

The bodhisattva, however, used his supernatural power to take Asanga with him to the Tushita heaven, where he instructed him in the Universal Vehicle doctrines. He received then and there, in the altered time frame of that heaven, five important texts, known subsequently as the "Five Teachings of Maitreya": the *Ornament of Realizations (Abhisamayālaṃkāra)*, the *Ornament of the Universal Vehicle Scriptures (Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra)*, the *Analysis of the Jewel Matrix (Ratnagotravibhāga)*, the *Discrimination between Center and Extremes (Madhyāntavibhāga)*, and the *Discrimination between Phenomenon and Noumenon (Dharmadharmatāvibhaṅga)*.[30]

[30] Hereafter AA, MSA, RGV, MAV, and DDV. Modern scholars have debated the issue of Asanga and Maitreyanatha for over fifty years. The supernaturalism of the traditional account runs counter to the penchant for "demythologizing," what Demiéville called *la manie historiciste*. Further, the Chinese and Tibetan traditions differ as to who wrote which books, who lived when, and so forth. The Chinese accounts even differ with each other on some points. Is Maitreyanatha an historical person? Is he a religious fiction? Is he

Asanga brought these five books back to earth with him, and built a new monastery at the sacred grove Veluvana, in Magadha. A circle formed around him to learn the new synthesis of the Universal Vehicle teachings. He was at first unable to explain fully some of the more abstruse doctrines of the new idealistic system that Maitreyanatha taught, so he persuaded the bodhisattva to come down in person to the great lecture hall of the monastery during the nights, where, invisible to all but Asanga, the bodhisattva would directly teach his own doctrines. In time, Asanga went on to write a compendium of the new teachings, a massive and comprehensive synthesis of Buddhist doctrines and practices known as *The Stages of Yoga Practice (Yogācārabhūmi)*, as well as five analytic commentaries on that work. Toward the end of his life, Asanga wrote a commentary on the *Jewel Matrix* that affirmed his own Centrist viewpoint, according to the Tibetan tradition, as his elaboration of the Idealist system had been in terms of the needs of the disciples of his day, and not really an expression of his own final understanding.

At the time of Asanga, Nagarjuna's teachings had spread in India for about two hundred years. The Individual Vehicle Abhidharma teachings were widely studied and practiced. The Kushan dynasties had had their day, their power had waned, and the vacuum had not yet been filled by the Guptas, who were not to come to power until the end of the fourth century. It was a time of uncertainty and creativity in Indian civilization, and a prescient thinker might well have foreseen a resurgence of Indian nationalistic feeling, and wished to formulate Buddhist thought in such a way as to enable it to take its place near the center of the coming "classical" culture. The major forms of Buddhist thought then available were not suited to fulfill that function. Individual Vehicle monasticism with its refined psychological scholasticism, and central way critical thought with its razor-sharp dialectic, both were too remote from the needs of the rising middle classes, having little explicit emphasis on social philosophy, little devotionalism or ritualism to involve the masses, and few connections with the Brahminical culture other than critical opposition. The Universal Vehicle scriptures were still well ensconced in the popular imagination of the southern kingdoms that enjoyed the prosperity and peace inherited from the Shatavahana dynasty that had supported Nagarjuna. But on the intellectual level, the philosophy of Nagarjuna was

Asanga's mystic inspirer? Does his teaching represent the influence of Iranian or Greek ideas in Indian religion? It has been a fertile issue, indeed. See J. Takakusu, "Life of Vasubandhu," *Toung-Pao*, V (1904), 271-293; S. Levi, "Maitreya le consolateur," *Mélanges Linossier*, III, 369-384; E. Obermiller, "Sublime Science of Maitreya," *Acta Orientalia*, IX (1932); G. Tucci, *On Some Aspects of the Doctrines of Maitreya(natha) and Asanga* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta Press, 1944); E. Frauwallner, *On the Date of the Buddhist Master of the Law Vasubandhu*, Rome: Serie Orientale Roma III, 1951.

too abstruse and difficult for many educated middle-class thinkers, its uncompromising central doctrine of emptiness too easily confused with a nihilism sanctioning complete withdrawal from social concerns. In sum, a new synthesis of Brahminical culture and the Universal Vehicle scriptures was required, a synthesis that could make Buddhism accessible as a lay religion, with philosophical appeal for the educated elite. There was no departure from the spirit of Nagarjuna's own breakthroughs in epistemology and metaphysics, as well as his practical systematization of the trove of scriptures he discovered. It was rather a matter of shifting the emphasis from the profound aspect, the teaching of the absolute reality, to the magnificent aspect, the elaboration of the far-reaching paths of bodhisattva practices, including the magnificent panorama of the activities of the supernal bodhisattvas in the far-flung Buddha-lands throughout the universes of the multiverse. This was Asanga's mission, and it was in executing this mission that he received the supernatural aid of the bodhisattva Maitreyanatha.

The new philosophy relates to the Nagarjunian system much as Hegel relates to Kant, to make an analogy that will make it understandable to modern thinkers (but bearing in mind that it is only an analogy). Kant's great sword of critical reason began the work of cutting away the confusions of both absolutist rationalists and nihilistic skeptics of his day, and released the energies of critical reason needed for the task of acknowledging the real transcendentality of the transcendent, thereby freeing the realm of practical reason for truly empirical investigation. Upon this foundation, Hegel built up a more positive philosophical system that reintroduced the transcendental into the workings of the relative, but no longer in a mechanistic or naive way. Kant's greatness lay in his thrust toward freedom from both rationalistic complacency and skeptical despair. Hegel's lay in his courageous exploration of the possibilities of reinvesting that freedom in vistas of harmonious structures of living, of society, and of history.

Similarly, Nagarjuna, having discovered the Universal Vehicle scriptures, wherein transcendent freedom and immanent involvement were explicitly stated by the Buddha, related that most profound teaching to the doctrines of the Abhidharmists. In their rigid scholasticism, they had banished the absolute into a neat set of categories, off with space, somewhere "beyond" the formless realms of trance. Nagarjuna rightfully exploded this rationalistic dualism by leveling his "critique of pure reason," as it were, which de-reified the absolute and returned it to its place as the very fabric of the ineluctable relativity of the conventional world. His philosophical tool par excellence came from the Universal Vehicle scriptures, namely the doctrine of the two realities (*satyadvaya*), the

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absolute and the conventional, or ultimate and superficial. These two are only superficially opposite; ultimately they are the same. The absolute is equated with transcendent wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*), and the superficial with great compassion (*mahākaruṇā*). Thus, the most throughgoing transcendentalism, instead of robbing the relative world of value, emerged to reinforce the relative commitment to great compassion, in its quest to benefit living beings and transform their world into a pure land of enlightenment.

The difficulty of this teaching for Asanga's purposes was that the two-edged sword cut so devastatingly through all pretensions of the conceptual mind that it left lesser minds feeling as if they had no ground to stand on. Indeed, the stance of the *Transcendent Wisdom Scripture* itself was that the ground of the bodhisattva is groundlessness. So, Asanga, to provide a more solid footing, came up with a system of scriptural hermeneutics that could reconcile a less insecure stance with the scriptural basis. He discovered the key he needed in the *Elucidation of the Intention Scripture*, with its theory of the "three wheels of Dharma," and its theory of the "three realities." This enabled him to provide the ground he felt people needed, and that ground he located in the mind.

The three wheels of Dharma doctrine was a way to elaborate the new doctrine without giving up allegiance to the *Transcendent Wisdom Scripture*, the Mother of All Buddhas. Thus, in the first wheel of Dharma, said Shakyamuni in the *Elucidation of the Intention*, the Buddha took for granted the apparent reality of both "samsara" and "nirvana," the wheel of the four holy truths. In the second wheel of Dharma, he taught the teaching of *Transcendent Wisdom*, stressing the universal emptiness of all things, to remove the disciples' attachment to existence, and introducing them to ultimate non-existence. Finally, in the third wheel of Dharma, he taught the existence of some things and the non-existence of other things, for those disciples of sharp discrimination. This third wheel of Dharma taught the three-reality theory, as a refinement of the basic two-reality theory taught in the second wheel, adding a central "relative reality" to serve as a ground of both the absolute and the superficial. Tsong Khapa elaborates this fully at the beginning of the *Essence* below.[31]

Maitreyanatha and Asanga, in emphasizing the paths of the bodhisattva, the magnificent deeds of great compassion and universal love that move the universe and bring sentient beings to perfection in the course of evolution, thus provided the religious ground on which the Universal Vehicle became accessible to the nascent "classical culture" of India, the culture that was coming to flower in the Gupta era with its

[31] See the great *Essence*, Ch. I.

great artists, poets, playwrights, and religious and philosophical geniuses. Just as Augustine of Hippo forged a new universe of discourse out of classical Greco-Roman culture and Christian spiritual vision (at about the same time), so Asanga followed Maitreyanatha's inspiration and made the Universal Vehicle literarily, philosophically, and religiously available to the classical Indian culture, bringing the Buddhist teaching out of the rarefied monastic atmosphere in which it had existed from its beginnings into the mainstream of the society.

So Tsong Khapa salutes these two Great Champions of humankind's battle against misknowledge, and thanks them for ensuring that the sunlight of the Victor's teaching still shines brightly in the minds of thoughtful people. We shall soon see whether, as the works of Nagarjuna and Asanga are properly translated into modern languages, that same sun will dawn again today.

V

Respectfully I bow to those Master Scholars,
Best Heralds of the non-decline of Buddha's Teaching,
Who upheld those two systems of the Champions,
And opened the eyes of millions of geniuses—
To the ornaments of the Holy Land of India,
Aryadeva, brave Buddhapalita, Bhavya, Chandrakirti,
Vasubandhu, Sthiramati, Dignaga, and Dharmakirti!

One of the modern prejudices about Indian philosophy is that it is not true philosophy, because it is so involved with religious concerns, and hence too dogmatic. Yet here Tsong Khapa praises the great masters of Buddhist India as "master scholars," and appreciates them for opening the eyes of "geniuses," that is, for their feats of scholarship and intellectual lucidity, not for religious piety. Within Indian philosophy, Indologists have followed Brahmin writers in taking "Bauddha" thought as one of the "heterodox" systems, a "negativist" system, due to the fact that the Buddhists did not affirm the Vedas and Upanishads, repudiated the caste system, and did not worship the national gods. But the Buddhist critical, anti-authoritarian, individualistic, and rationalistic approach is exactly what is meant by "philosophy," that is, an unprejudiced quest of truth. And therefore the Buddhist thinkers, far from being peripheral to the mainstream, were the main figures in Indian philosophy from approximately 500 B.C.E. to 1000 C.E.

First there is Shakyamuni Buddha himself, who is the most famous

and influential of all the great figures of the Shramanic period, which includes the Upanishadic sages as well as the Jain Viras, the Charvaka materialists, and so on. Second, there are the great Elders, beginning with Shariputra and including the great Nagasena and many others like him, as the monastic communities refined and developed the scientific physics, ethics, and psychology of the Abhidharma "matrices" (*Mātrka*) of human knowledge. The style of systematic liberative education that they cultivated clearly influenced the whole development in the lay Brahmin community of the "Sutra" system employed in linguistics, medicine, logic, theology, and philosophy.

Thus, this period contains most of the Brahmin Sutra writers, who were stimulated by the success of the Buddhist monastic academies to formulate their own "matrices" for their "orthodox" styles of thought: that is, Jaimini's *Mīmāṃsāsūtra*, Badarayana's *Brahmasūtra*, Kapila's *Saṃkhyākārikā*, Patanjali's *Yogasūtra*, Kanada's *Vaiśeṣikasūtra*, and Gotama's *Nyāyasūtra* were probably worked out during this period, about 400 B.C.E. to 200 C.E., although the actual texts were codified by commentators somewhat later.

Third, there are Nagarjuna, Maitreya-Asanga, and their many colleagues in related fields, who shattered the insularity of the monastic universe and opened up the first great universities in India early in the first millennium. Their philosophical edifice accommodated the whole society, built on the foundation of the nondualist metaphysics of Nagarjuna's *Wisdom* and Maitreya's *Five Books*. The Universal Vehicle scriptures were rediscovered and promulgated at the popular level, the Buddha's story and evolutionary background were told in a new type of mass literature and drama (by Ashvaghosha and Aryashura, for example), and a newly humanistic political ethics was promoted (by Nagarjuna in his *Precious Garland*; Aryadeva in the *Four Hundred*; Maitreya in the *Ornament of Universal Vehicle Scriptures*). A new popular art arose, presenting the transcendent and exalted in forms suitable for the devotion of the masses, who found in Amitabha and in his sons, the great bodhisattvas such as Avalokiteshvara, sustaining hope in the outreaching dynamism of great compassion. This movement was completed by Aryasanga, who synthesized its great depth and magnificence into a form thoroughly connected to the national character. After his time, from about 500 C.E., the Brahmin philosophers emerged in a creative dialogue with the Buddhist "master scholars."

Thus, the pioneering activity of the Buddhist Champions provided the undergirding of the Brahmin elaboration of mass culture through the codification of the *Mahābhārata*, including the syncretic *Gīta*, the development of the great *kavyas*, the dramas of Kalidasa and others, and the broad cultural synthesis of the Gupta dynasty. In short, the "classical

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Hindu" culture was formed, and clearly could be described as the synthesis between Brahmin traditional particularism and Buddhist radical universalism, the confluence of Brahmana and Shramana that has come to be called Hinduism.[32]

The brilliant elaboration of this great classical synthesis over the next centuries culminated in the baroque magnificence of the post-Gupta dynasties in Bihar and the Pala dynasty of Bengal. The leading figures of the philosophical development of these times are the "Great Ornaments" listed above. Their lives are legendary, both in the sense of being somewhat fantastic in tenor and in the sense of providing models for thousands of outstanding thinkers and creative artists who flourished in this most sophisticated era of Indian history. They were participants in the mainstream of the pluralistic culture, stimulating the greatest Hindu philosophers, who themselves rose to prominence in their brilliant efforts to answer the Buddhist challenge, seeking to match its sophistication of thought, while tempering the radical nature of its results in order to incorporate them within the hierarchical tradition of Brahmin culture. Prashastapada, Gaudapada, Uddyotakara, Prabhakara, Kumarila, Shankara, Vacaspatimisra, and so forth, all of them worked in direct interaction with Buddhist thought, in the intellectual and contemplative atmosphere emanating from the Buddhist universities from the fifth to the tenth centuries C.E. They developed their "Six Philosophical Visions" (*darśana*) in clear parallel to the Buddhist refinement of the "Four Philosophies" (*siddhānta*). It was surely their intellectual contest that spurred

[32] Medieval Brahmin scholars such as Madhva (1199-1276) and modern Brahmin followers of the neo-Hindu revival led by Swami Vivekananda, such as Dr. Radhakrishnan, present a very different version of Indian intellectual history. They seem determined to avert their gaze from the Buddhist, or more inclusively, Shramanic (including Jainas and Ajivakas, etc.) contribution to Hindu culture. For example, Professor Raju writes that the Buddhist tendency in thought was only a passing phase, a momentary diversion from the mainstream of Indian philosophy; and on the same page of his book, in a table of dates of major philosophers, there is a gap of one thousand years between the Brahminical Sutra writers (c. 400 B.C.E.) to Kumarila (c. 600 C.E.)! (P. T. Raju, *Philosophical Traditions of India*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1971, pp. 30-33.) This curious blind spot in historical perspective can only be explained by the low-caste (which means ritually unclean) connotation of "Buddhism" for these highly educated and intelligent men. In fact, it is no accident that it is the Buddhist thought of India that has long been of worldwide interest in both ancient and modern times. I therefore dwell on these accounts of the Buddhist thinkers in the hope that modern Indian intellectuals may come themselves to rediscover and lay claim to these gems of their intellectual history, emulating the generous salutation by Professor D. N. Shastri, who opened his fine book, *Critique of Indian Realism* (Agra: Agra University Press, 1964), by saluting the Master Dignaga—about whom he learned from the great Russian scholar Stcherbatski, as Dignaga was hardly known by the modern pandits of India. The modern Indian historian of Buddhism who has done most to redress this distortion of perspective is Professor L. M. Joshi, whose *Studies in the Buddhistic Culture of India* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1980), is a milestone.

both traditions to ever greater heights of creativity. Let us now review the mythic stories of the "master scholars" who were the vital forces on the Buddhist side of this tradition.

1. Aryadeva

Aryadeva was born as the son of the king of Shri Lanka in about the third century C.E., miraculously appearing in a lotus in the garden, according to legend. Although placed on the throne at an early age, he felt dissatisfied with royal life and soon renounced his role in society and wandered off to South India to study the Dharma, taking ordination from the great teacher Nagarjuna himself. He soon became the master's foremost disciple, even surpassing his master in some respects, as conveyed in the legends of his Tantric *persona*, Karnaripa. This is only startling if we fail to recognize the basic anti-authoritarian and progressive stance of Buddhism, even in those ancient times.

The most famous story about Aryadeva is his debate with the great Pandit Matrcheta, later known as Aryashura according to Tibetan sources, though not by modern scholars.[33] This Matrcheta was a Shaivite, a great logician as well as a great sorcerer, and no one could withstand him in disputation. Eventually he conquered the monastic university of Nalanda, as in those days a school had to defend its philosophical positions against all comers if it was to retain its endowment and control over its curriculum. He was lording it over all the monks, forcibly converting them to his own theism and making them participate in his chosen rites. The monks were desperate and secretly performed a ceremony to the Dharma-Protector Mahakala, the Terrible One. They wrote a plea for help on a piece of paper and placed it on the altar, and, legend has it, a crow flew out of the Mahakala image and carried the message off toward the south. Whatever the source, Nagarjuna did hear of the plight of his colleagues, but did not feel like going himself. Aryadeva volunteered to go, but first Nagarjuna tested him by arguing the positions Matrcheta would be likely to take. He argued these so forcibly, he eventually enraged Aryadeva, who dropped all deference and, attacking the master with all his force, succeeded in toppling his arguments. Nagarjuna was delighted that Aryadeva had so forgotten himself in the heat of debate that he had taken his own teacher for a theist. He pronounced him capable of winning the victory over Matrcheta. He warned Aryadeva that he would have to

[33] See A. K. Warder, *Indian Buddhism*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1970), pp. 389ff; A. Chattopadhyaya and L. Chimpa, *Taranatha's History of Buddhism*, p. 132.

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make a sacrifice on the way, but that if he did not regret it, it would be restored to him.

Sure enough, a beggar came to Aryadeva as he traveled through the forest to the north, and asked him for the gift of one of his eyes. The bodhisattva gave it unhesitatingly, pulling it from its socket, and proceeded on his way. He could not restrain his curiosity, however, and when he looked back he saw that the beggar, unable to implant the eye in his own head, was furiously pounding it to bits on a tree stump. Aryadeva felt a twinge of regret at this total waste, and therefore, it is said, his eye was never restored. For this reason, he is also known as Kanadeva, the One-Eyed Lord. He continued to Nalanda, and met his opponent.

The account of their contest is amusing. When Matrcheta first noticed Aryadeva, he said, "Where has this extra shaved head come from?" Aryadeva replied, "It has come from this neck!" clapping himself on the back of the neck. Matrcheta took note that a worthy adversary had arrived. Another time, Aryadeva went down to the Ganges riverbank with Matrcheta and his followers. When they were performing ritual ablutions, Aryadeva entered the water holding a golden pot filled with excrement, officiously washing the outside of it. Matrcheta said, "Why wash the outside if the inside is filled with excrement?" Aryadeva said, "How can you purify your bodies with Ganges water on the outside when the inside is full of defilements?" Another time, Matrcheta stood in a doorway and asked, "Am I going out or coming in?" Aryadeva said, "That depends on your motivation." Matrcheta then held up a bird in his hand, "Am I going to kill this bird or not?" Aryadeva replied, "That depends on your compassion." Later Matrcheta was performing an ancestral sacrifice at the fire altar, and Aryadeva came there with some dry kusha grass and began sprinkling it with water. Matrcheta asked, "What are you doing?" Aryadeva said, "I am watering a withered tree on Shri Parvata." "How can you water a tree there by sprinkling water here?" "Then how can you offer food to your long-dead, far-away ancestors by burning it up here?" When the debate itself began, Aryadeva put a bag of excrement on Matrcheta's parasol to keep away Shiva, threw oil on the magic slate where the god would write the arguments, manifested a cat to kill Shiva's parrot-emanation who would whisper Matrcheta the answers, and made obscene gestures at Parvati to prevent her from coaching his opponent. Matrcheta said, "How dare you challenge me, with your one eye, to debate?" Aryadeva replied, "Ishvara with his three eyes cannot see the nature of reality, but I see it very clearly with my one. Why then should I not defeat you?" And Aryadeva won.

After his defeat, Matrcheta was so mortified he flew off into space.

Aryadeva followed him and saved his life by warning him at the last minute that he would die if he left the atmosphere. Thus tamed, the pandit returned with Aryadeva. Aryadeva shut him up in the library, where he began to read the Buddhist literature. Finally, Matrcheta came upon a prophecy of himself, how he was defeated by Aryadeva, and how he became a great teacher of the Universal Vehicle tradition. He was so amazed that he became a sincere student of the Buddha Dharma, and eventually one of its greatest writers.

It is interesting that Aryadeva, like Nagarjuna, is claimed as a patriarch by the Ch'an/Zen school of the Far East, whose version of his defeat of the theist stands in interesting parallel to the Indo-Tibetan one:

> In Kanadeva's day, the heretics impounded the drum and bell in the Buddhist community temple in a purge. At this time the honorable Kanadeva knew that the Buddhist teaching was in trouble, so he made use of his supernatural powers to ascend the bell tower and ring the bell, for he wanted to drive out the heretics. Soon one of the heretics called out, "Who is up in the tower ringing the bell?" Kanadeva said, "A deva." The heretic asked, "Who is the deva?" Kanadeva said, "I." The heretic said, "Who is 'I'?" Kanadeva said, " 'You' is a dog." The heretic asked, "Who is the dog?" Kanadeva said, "The dog is you." After seven go-rounds like this, the heretic realized he was beaten, so he submitted and himself opened the door of the bell tower, whereupon Kanadeva came down from the tower holding the red flag (the convention for the victor). The heretic said, "Why do you not follow?" Kanadeva said, "Why do you not precede?" The heretic said, "You're a knave." Kanadeva said, "You're a free man!"[34]

Aryadeva's principal works often explicitly apply the Centrist critique to the various Brahmin schools of thought, whereas Nagarjuna had mainly confined himself to refuting the Individual Vehicle Abhidharma masters. Aryadeva's greatest work of critical philosophy was the *Experientialist Four Hundred*,[35] which begins with a systematic arrangement of the Universal Vehicle path, and continues with a devastating critique of all the extremist ideologies existent in India during his time. His major work in the Tantric field, the *Lamp of Concentrated Practice*, is remarkable for its lucidity and comprehensiveness.[36] In spite of the modern insistence that there was no Tantra in his time, the Indo-Tibetan tradition itself is unanimous that the same Aryadeva wrote both philosophic and yogic works, quite in keeping with Indian tradition, wherein any philosopher worth the name is inevitably a master yogi.

[34] T. and J. C. Cleary, *Blue Cliff Record*, p. 89.
[35] CŚ.
[36] *Cāryāmelāpakapradīpa*, considered by modern scholars to be written by Aryadeva the Second, as the *Pañcakrama* is considered to be written by Nagarjuna the Third!

2. Buddhapalita

Buddhapalita was born of a Brahmin family in approximately 470 C.E. in the Tambala region of south India, in a town called Prasannamula, and studied under Master Sangharakshita, who was himself a disciple of Nagamitra, according to some traditions. The legendary tradition would make him a direct disciple of Nagarjuna, as well as a mystic who achieved communication with the supernal bodhisattva Manjushri. His great achievement was the elucidation of Nagarjuna's *Wisdom*,[37] and his commentary became the foundational work for the Dialecticist interpretation of the Centrist philosophy (*Prāsañgikamādhyamika*). In elucidating Nagarjuna's critiques, he avoided putting forth formal syllogisms in a dogmatic manner, preferring to use consequential inferences in a dialectical manner to demonstrate the inherent contradictions in the opponent's positions. Tsong Khapa always felt deeply his debt to this great master, as it was while reading Buddhapalita's book that he attained his highest enlightenment experience. There is a Tibetan tradition that holds Buddhapalita to be the reincarnation of the Licchavi Vimalakirti, famous wise layman of the Buddha's time. Buddhapalita was also considered an adept (*siddha*), and to have passed away to the realm of the Mystic Sages (*Vidyādhara*) around 550 C.E.

3. Bhavaviveka

Bhavaviveka (also Bhavya) was a younger contemporary of Buddhapalita, apparently born in Andhra, near Dhanyakataka, around 500 C.E., not far from the center of Buddhist learning in the south of India. He was evidently of Brahmin lineage, as witnessed by the mastery of Brahminical philosophical systems displayed in his voluminous work of comparative ideologies, the *Heart of the Central Way* and its commentary *Blaze of Argument*.[38] This is one of the earliest systematic works on the "history of philosophy" in the world, wherein he studies the Individual Vehicle, the Idealists, the Centrists, the Mimamsaka, the Nyaya, the Vaisheshika, the Vedanta, and the Samkhya, as well as other lesser schools of the time. He traveled to the Magadha area of north India to visit the great teacher Dharmapala, who, like Shankara later, died very young, but Dharmapala

[37] BMMV.
[38] MH and TJ.

was in retreat at Bodhgaya and refused to debate with Bhavya. Bhavya returned to the south, where he studied the great commentary of Devasharma, *Sītābhyudaya*[39] *(White Exaltation)*, with full approval, and the works of Buddhapalita, which he found too radical and unsystematic for his taste. In his commentary on the *Wisdom*, the *Lamp of Wisdom*,[40] he found fault with Buddhapalita at every turn, especially from the point of view of methodology. He elaborated the method of proving the Centrist position with positive, private, dogmaticist syllogisms, thus becoming the source of the Dogmaticist Centrist school (*Svātantrikamādhyamika*).[41] After Chandrakirti and the refinement of the Dialecticist Centrism, and especially after its transplantation into Tibet after Atisha, Bhavaviveka came to be the butt of ridicule as the example par excellence of a self-contradictory Centrist. Chandrakirti himself may have been somewhat responsible for this by employing some strong language and humorous teasing in his critique of Bhavya's critique of Buddhapalita's elucidation of Nagarjuna's critique of the Samkhya position on production. Chandra said, "Master Bhavya likes to show off his expertise in logic!" and so forth. But most of his critique is serious, taking Bhavya seriously, and there is no suggestion that he thinks Bhavya ridiculous. Tsong Khapa himself is very critical of the Dogmaticist Centrist position, and refutes Bhavya on certain points incisively. However, he makes a point of accepting many of Bhavya's definitions and insights on other matters as authoritative, of saluting him in this introduction, and of praising him on his deep knowledge of many issues.

4. Chandrakirti

Chandrakirti was also from south India, born probably in the latter part of the sixth century C.E. in a place called Samanta, according to Tibetan sources. He was ordained and studied under Buddhapalita's disciple Kamalabuddhi. After becoming an expert himself, he went to Nalanda in the north, and eventually became abbot. At the time, the ruling post-Gupta monarch was somewhat opposed to Buddhist scholars, and so they were restricting their teaching activities to the monastic university proper. Chandrakirti changed that, and began again to teach the Universal Vehicle and the Centrist philosophy widely. He had a famous debate that lasted for seven years with the master grammarian and Idealist philosopher, Chandragomin, who, it was later revealed, managed to stand up to Chandrakirti only through daily consultations with the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, through a famous statue standing in a courtyard at the monastery. When Chandrakirti complained to the bodhisattva that he was showing favoritism, he was told, "You don't need me, you have Manjushri helping you! So I just thought to help this fellow along a little."

According to the Tibetan tradition, Chandrakirti was the "ultimate" disciple of Nagarjuna himself, at the end of the latter's long life, to whom he taught his "ultimate" teaching, that of the uncreated. Whatever this may mean historically, it indicates a sense of Chandrakirti's destiny as elucidator of the essence of Nagarjuna's message, as does his mystic connection with Manjushri. Other legendary events of his life are that he milked the picture of a cow to feed the monks of Nalanda during a famine; rode a stone lion to frighten away a barbarian Turkish army that was threatening the monastery; and survived a forest fire while meditating in retreat, his rescuers finding him in the middle of an unburnt circle on his grass mat, saying, "My master Nagarjuna burnt entirely the fuel of phenomena with the fire of the uncreated; my abbot has done so, and I have done so; so how can the phenomenal fire burn me?" Many other such signs are recounted. A final interesting story about him was his interaction with Avalokiteshvara, after he discovered that the bodhisattva had been helping his adversary Chandragomin in the debate. Avalokiteshvara said that he was always there to help everyone, but that people couldn't see him. Chandra carried him around town on his head, but most people saw nothing: some saw a dead dog, and one prostitute saw a foot of the Lord Avalokiteshvara, whereby she instantly attained numerous powers. It is interesting that a story so similar to the legend of Saint Asanga should be attached to this paragon of the deep wisdom lineage. Chandrakirti's greatest works were his *Introduction to the Middle Way*,[42] his commentary on Nagarjuna's *Wisdom*, the *Lucid Exposition*,[43] and his commentary on the *Perfection Stage Five Stages* of Nagarjuna, the *Luminous Lamp*.[44] These latter two are known as the sun and moon, lighting up the worlds of Sutra and Tantra, respectively. The Tibetans consider him also to be one of the "Eighty-four Adepts."

5. Vasubandhu

After much scholarly discussion, there is as yet no unanimity about the dates of Vasubandhu, due both to the complexities arising from the

[39] This work is lost, though Tsong Khapa mentions it as the model for Bhavya's own commentary on the *Wisdom*, the PrPr.

[40] PrPr.

[41] For the English terms I use for Svatantrika and Prasangika, see the great *Essence*, Ch. V. n. 98.

[42] MA.

[43] PPMMV.

[44] Again, supposed to be written by Chandrakirti the Second.

differences between the Chinese and Tibetan histories, and the fact that there probably really were two well-known Vasubandhus.[45] Our Vasubandhu the Great, author of the great *Treasury*, the *Twenty*, and the *Thirty*,[46] as well as numerous commentaries on works of Asanga and Maitreya and on Universal Vehicle scriptures, was the younger brother of Asanga, at first a great scholar of Individual Vehicle philosophies, and, after his conversion by Asanga, a great teacher of Universal Vehicle thought, especially the Idealist school. His dates can be given as ca. 385-480 C.E. His mother, Prakashashila, bore him by a Brahmin father one year after Asanga's ordination as a Buddhist monk. She charged him sternly to devote himself to Buddhism, so he was ordained at Nalanda around 400 C.E. He traveled to Kashmir and studied the Abhidharma extensively under the great master Samghabhadra, becoming so proficient in the subtleties of the Individual Vehicle Analytical schools that legend has it he was not allowed to leave the country, lest that area lose its monopoly on expertise in the Abhidharma. He managed to outwit his captors, however, and made his way to Nalanda. There he flourished as a teacher of Abhidharma, displaying his remarkable critical and expositional skill in drafting the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, one of the great works of world philosophy. In its verses he presents the Analysts' version of the Abhidharma, using an ambiguous exclamation "Indeed!" (*kila*, emphatic or ironic) to set them up for the refutation he presents in the commentary, from the Traditionists' perspective. His subtle way of going about his critique was occasioned by his reluctance to offend his teacher, Samghabhadra, an Analyst. In spite of his reverence, his independent critical thinking could not rest content with the Analysts' somewhat dogmatic method of presenting reality in a rigid set of categories supposed to correspond to objective reality. To this Vasubandhu preferred the Traditionists' more nominalistic understanding of the program of analytic wisdom.

After this, he chanced to read through Asanga's massive work, *Stages of Yoga Practice*,[47] a compendium of Individual and Universal Vehicle teachings presented as an independent, synthetic treatise. Taranatha reports that he remarked, "Alas! Though Asanga meditated for twelve years in the forest, instead of attaining success in his meditation he has composed a work like an elephant's load!" Hearing of this, Asanga decided it was time to open his brother's eyes to the Universal Vehicle. He pretended to be near death and called for his brother to visit him. Vasubandhu came, and Asanga commissioned two monks to recite for

[45] See references above, n. 30.
[46] AK, Vim., and Trim.
[47] YBh.

him the two scriptures, the *Teaching of Akshayamati* and the *Ten Stages*, from the *Heap of Jewels* and the *Garland* collections, respectively.[48] From the first, Vasubandhu was forced to concede the superiority of the Universal Vehicle in philosophical theory, and from the second, he became inspired by its glory in terms of extensive practice. He began to feel remorse about having previously denigrated the Universal Vehicle. He felt so bad that he wished to cut out his tongue. Asanga is said to have instructed him that he should rather turn his tongue to the benefit of living beings by teaching far and wide the Universal Vehicle doctrine. He then set himself to memorize the entire *Heap of Jewels* (forty-nine scriptures) and *Garland* collections, on top of numerous Individual Vehicle scriptures. He also recited a number of wisdom-spells (*dhāraṇī*), at least according to the Tibetans, becoming proficient in Tantric meditation as well as Universal Vehicle philosophy. When he converted to the Universal Vehicle, it is said that about five hundred of his formerly Individualist disciples converted him. From then until the Nirvana of Asanga, he spent most of his time learning and reciting scriptures. There is a legend that he used to spend a fortnight of each year soaking in a tub of sesame oil reciting the *Transcendent Wisdom Scriptures* and other works. During that time he would complete as many scriptures as an ordinary person might recite throughout a whole year.

After Asanga had passed on, Vasubandhu became the abbot of Nalanda, and worked twenty hours a day, teaching and ordaining monks in the morning, teaching Universal Vehicle philosophy during the afternoon, sometimes for twelve hours at a stretch, and dividing the night between a short sleep and periods of meditation. He stayed mostly in Magadha, but his impact was enormous in spreading the system of monastic education throughout India, and he personally made triumphal teaching journeys into Bengal and Orissa. Taranatha records the tradition that he founded six hundred fifty-four schools during his tenure as abbot of Nalanda. His teaching was particularly appealing since he combined overwhelming expertise in the Individual Vehicle teachings with inspired enthusiasm for the Universal Vehicle. Thus he was able to teach the numerous Buddhist monks in terms familiar to them. He taught the Universal Vehicle teaching in integration with the Individual Vehicle. His collected writings on Universalist subjects are traditionally given as fifty scriptural commentaries and eight original treatises, but Taranatha makes the point that he also wrote important commentaries on the treatises of his brother, which formed a third voluminous category. He also converted numerous Brahmins to Buddhism, persuading them through his lucid

[48] AMN, DBS; *Ratnakūta*, and *Avataṃsaka Sūtras*.

argumentation and sincerity of purpose. At the end of his life, he visited Nepal to teach there. In that Himalayan country, he was distressed by the condition of the Dharma, and was particularly disturbed by the Nepali monks who worked their own fields, having adapted to the non-Indian situation in that way. Vasubandhu died in Nepal at an age of almost one hundred years. The Tibetans revere him as a "Second Victor." His *Treasury of Abhidharma*, combined with Asanga's *Abhidharma Synthesis*,[49] forms the basis of their "science curriculum"; his commentaries on the Maitreya and Asanga works are regularly studied in their Transcendent Wisdom curriculum, and his *Twenty Verses* and *Thirty Verses* are important in their hermeneutical studies.[50]

6. Sthiramati

Legend has it that Sthiramati's just previous life was that of a dove who lived in the rafters of the residence where Vasubandhu memorized and recited scriptures and spells after his conversion by Asanga. Dying as a dove, he was reborn as the son of a merchant in the south, in a place whose name is reconstructed as Dandakaranya. From youth he began to ask for Vasubandhu, the master of Magadha, so he was sent to him as a disciple at the age of seven. He was then said to have obtained the tutelage of the goddess Tara: one day he refused to eat his beans because her stone statue would not accept his offering of a portion, and he wept bitterly; the statue is said thereupon to have blessed him and taken the beans, and after that his studies became effortless and he soon mastered all the scriptures and treatises. He became the leader of the Order after Master Vasubandhu passed on, and is credited, along with the great Gunamati, with opening a monastic university in Vallabhi in western India, under the Maitraka kings in Kathiawar, which became the Nalanda of the west. He wrote numerous subcommentaries on Vasubandhu's treatises, as well as a number of treatises of his own.

7. Dignaga

Dignaga was born in Simhavaktra, near Kanchi in the south, around the beginning of the fifth century. He was ordained under a master of the Vatsiputriya school of the Individual Vehicle, Nagadatta, who was also

[49] AS.
[50] Tib. *mNgon pa*, *Phar phyin*, and *Drang nges*, respectively, three of the important branches of study in the Tibetan philosophical curriculum.

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renowned for his knowledge of the Brahminical philosophical traditions, the Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Samkhya, and Mimamsa. The Vatsiputriyas asserted a special theory of self, claiming that there was such a self, but that it was inexpressible—reminiscent of the later claims of the Uttaramimamsa, or Vedanta school. In his quest for this self, Dignaga was said to have meditated naked with all the windows open by day and with lamps and fires burning at night to find the "inexpressible self," only to report his failure to do so to his teacher. His teacher took this as an indirect criticism, and so he sent Dignaga away to study elsewhere.

Tradition has it that Dignaga studied with Vasubandhu at Nalanda, which may mean that he became the student of Sthiramati or another of Vasubandhu's successors, when the school was still energetic with the recent impact of the great master. At any rate, Dignaga mastered all the scriptures of Individual and Universal Vehicles, as well as all the important treatises. He even practiced Tantric meditation, and is said to have obtained the special mystic gift of frequent visitation and revelations directly from Manjushri himself. He retired to Orissa for forest meditation for some years, but returned to Nalanda to defend the monastery from learned Brahmin challengers who were skilled in logic and epistemology. Dignaga became famous by defeating the great Brahmin logician, Sudurjaya, converting him and his numerous disciples. But rather than stay on as leader of the school, he preferred to return to Orissa and his contemplative life. After some time, he resolved to write a *Synthesis of Validating Cognition*,[51] to put forward a reliable system of epistemology and logic, built out of a critique of the various methods prevalent in philosophical circles of the day. On a rock outside his cave hermitage, he first wrote the extraordinary verse of salutation that we have discussed above:

> I bow to the Teacher, the Blissful, the Savior,
> Who wills the good of all, personifying reason!
> To expound validating cognition, I gather here
> A synthesis of all my fragmentary treatises.[52]

When he wrote this, it is said, the earth quaked, a dazzling light burst forth, and thunder rolled in the clear sky. A Brahmin ascetic called Krishnamuni observed all this, and he came to the cave while Dignaga was out on alms-rounds, and erased the verse. Dignaga wrote it again; again it was erased. The third time Dignaga left an additional note, "This is an important verse, so please don't erase it just for fun. If you disagree

[51] PS.
[52] RGV, I, v. 4.

with it, you are only wiping out the chalk and not the idea. You should show yourself, and we'll debate." Krishnamuni was waiting for him when he returned this time. They debated, and Dignaga defeated him three times. He said, "Now you have lost! You must embrace the Buddha Dharma!" Instead, Krishnamuni became furious, creating magical flames that burned down the hermitage and almost killed Dignaga. Dignaga became depressed, feeling that if he could not help this one highly intelligent Brahmin, what would be the use of writing his *Synthesis*? He threw his chalk up in the air, saying, "When it falls down, I will give up the spirit of universal enlightenment!" Suddenly, Manjushri appeared and caught the chalk in the air. "Don't do this, my son! Your intelligence will deteriorate if you seek personal peace alone in the Individual Vehicle. None of the Brahmin pandits will ever harm your treatise. I'll be your spiritual friend until you reach the stage yourself. And in the future, your treatise will become the sole eye of all living beings!" Thus encouraged, Dignaga continued the work. This *Synthesis* of his has been continuously studied, along with its important elaborations by Dharmakirti, from then until modern times, at first widely in India, and subsequently in Tibet and Mongolia. Recently, it has begun to exert influence in Japan and the West, initially through the work of the Russian translator and philosopher, Theodor Stcherbatski.[53]

After finishing the work, Dignaga began to travel around Orissa, debating and converting Brahmins and Individual Vehicle monks, eventually gaining the patronage of the king. He then rebuilt sixteen monasteries, which had been founded earlier but had been neglected and had fallen into disrepair. He was also renowned as a Tantric adept, and performed numerous miracles, as well as enjoying many mystic *samadhis* and experiences due to the special blessings of Manjushri.

As Stcherbatski himself so eloquently and accurately pointed out, Dignaga's pivotal accomplishment was the critical separation of the realms of sense and reason. All previous Indian formal systems of logic had failed to overcome the reificatory habit-pattern of projecting human concepts into perceptual reality, and hence always fell short of true empiricism. Shakyamuni Buddha, Nagarjuna, and many others had of course personally transcended this, and had devastatingly criticized naive realism. It was left to Dignaga, however, to elaborate this crucial insight of the absolute unconstructedness of pure experience in epistemological terms, critically isolating the omnipresent world-constructive activity of the imagination—thereby anticipating Hume—yet subtly understanding the role of conceptualizing imagination and language in the process of

[53] BL, I and II; Stcherbatsky used Dharmakirti's NB as his main source.

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construction itself—thus anticipating Kant and Wittgenstein. So his achievement is significant not only in the context of Buddhism or of Indian thought, but must be appreciated as a major landmark in the history of world philosophy.[54]

8. Dharmakirti

Dharmakirti was born of a high Brahmin family in Tirumalai in the Chudamani kingdom of Tamilnadu, in about 580 C.E. Until sixteen he was trained in the Brahminical traditional lore, excelling all his classmates from the earliest age. After that, he read some Buddhist scriptures and became so enthusiastic he changed his dress to the Buddhist style. The Brahmins were annoyed by this and drove him away. So he went to Nalanda and studied extensively under Master Dharmapala. He then went to Master Ishvarasena, a direct disciple of Dignaga, and studied the *Synthesis*, in the understanding of which he almost immediately surpassed his teacher. The teacher was delighted, and commissioned him to write a new commentary on the work. He also studied the *Heruka Tantra*, and is said to have attained the vision and blessing of Shri Heruka. He then composed his major philosophical work, the *Treatise on Validating Cognition*,[55] ostensibly a commentary on the *Synthesis*, but actually more like an independent treatise on the subject, which brings Dignaga's insight to the fullest degree of subtlety and profundity. It stands today as perhaps the greatest work on logic and epistemology in Indian philosophical history, leaving its impact on all schools of thought. He wrote six other works, two of them abridgments of the *Treatise*, and four other treatises on separate issues: on logic, debate, theory of relations, and solipsism.[56] He also wrote Tantric commentaries, literary criticism, and even excellent erotic poetry.

The legends of his debates with numerous non-Buddhist Brahmins are delightfully colorful. He wished to learn the Brahmin ideas thoroughly, as the story goes, so he went to the estate of the great Mimamsaka philosopher Kumarila, and served him as student and servant for a number of years, pretending not to be a Buddhist. After a year or two, he had mastered all the doctrines of this master, getting the secret points through the family, though the master himself also liked him a great deal for his prodigious intellect. He then left, went to a nearby city, and began

[54] BL, I.
[55] PV.
[56] *Pramāṇaviniścaya, Nyāyabindu, Hetubindu, Vādanyāya, Saṃbandhaparīkṣa, Saṃtānāntarasiddhi.*

his missionary work by nailing up a challenge to all comers for debate. He began to defeat everyone from all schools, ultimately even Kumarila himself, though he did not claim anyone's life, as was previously the custom in that region. Instead, he converted the Brahmins to Buddhism, built many new schools and temples, and traveled far and wide. Taranatha's account even records that he encountered the great Shankaracharya three times, defeating him every time, although he could win his conversion only in the third debate in the third lifetime. The first two times Shankara lost, he drowned himself in the Ganges rather than become a Buddhist, vowing to reincarnate as the son of one of his disciples in order to return to the contest anew. Finally, the third reincarnation was converted to Buddhism after the debate, and Dharmakirti's mission was proclaimed a success from Kashmir to Tamilnadu.[57] Dharmakirti died after establishing a new school and temple in Kalinga, and a stupa was erected to enshrine the crystal ball that miraculously appeared as the residue of his pyre. He was said to have been a contemporary of King Songzen Gambo (Srong-btsan sGam-po, r. 627-651), who began the process of importing Buddhism into Tibet.

Whatever the truth of the legends about his activity, which are obversely mirrored in the Hindu legends about Shankaracharya, he seems to have been connected with a great flourishing of Buddhism during the seventh century. This gave its institutions the momentum needed for their continued vitality right up to the Turkish invasions of the tenth through twelfth centuries, when their devastation was completed. Through the tremendous impact of these "Great Ornaments" of India, the Brahminical philosophies and religious schools incorporated much of the essential import of the Buddhist Dharma. But once the great universities were gone, there was no more social loophole in the caste system, no way for the low-caste person to achieve education and high status, and no more of that ferment of new ideas that requires ideological openness and social mobility. Hence, under the Muslim rulers, the Brahminical conservatism and hierarchicalism of the medieval period set in, to last until the twentieth century without any serious challenge. And the philosophy of this period is marked by a trend toward doctrinal conservatism and dogmatism, most creativity being channeled into technical and theological refinements. Indeed, it was not long before the *bhakti* conservatives, Ramanuja (twelfth century C.E.) and Madhva (thirteenth century C.E.), threw out even Shankara's Vedantic nondualism as a vestige of Universal Vehicle Buddhism, calling Shankara himself a "crypto-Buddhist," and reinstated theistic "dualistic nondualism," or just plain dualism, as the

[57] A. Chattopadhyaya and Chimpa, *Taranatha's History of Buddhism in India*, pp. 233-37.

orthodox understanding of the Vedanta. In logic and epistemology, the New Nyaya school after Gangesha (twelfth to thirteenth century) wound itself tightly in a tangle of subtleties, reducing its extreme realism to formalism, among the most intricate ever developed anywhere. Indian philosophy is perhaps only just beginning to awaken now, with the rediscovery of its own ancient "tradition of originality."

The first phase of this awakening has come from Swami Vivekananda and other great figures of the neo-Hindu renaissance, with the bringing of Shankara back into international prominence. The second phase, now beginning, may well arise from Indian philosophers' taking inspiration from the "Great Ornaments," whose major works are being restored from the treasuries long preserved in Tibet.[58]

VI

There have been many who did not realize That Place,
Although they strived, were not lowly in accomplishments
From direct experience, were learned in the Doctrine,
And even dedicated themselves to the path of philosophy!

Now Tsong Khapa wishes to give his own reason for writing the *Essence*, having saluted the authors of the many profound and crucial works that elaborate the philosophies of the Great Champions. Immediately he brings up the transcendental matter, "That Place," the exalted stage of unexcelled perfect enlightenment, including phenomenal omniscience as well as noumenal omniscience.[59] He calls it "Place" since it is, finally, only a perfectly Enlightened One who really knows where he is, both in ultimate actuality and in relative coordinates on various levels.

In this verse Tsong Khapa refers to his predecessors and some contemporaries in Tibet, as those "who did not realize That Place." He then proceeds to praise them for what they did accomplish, to indicate that his critical concern on this occasion is very specific, lest it be thought that his purpose is merely polemical or sectarian. He is critical of these predecessors for their not having attained Buddhahood, perfect enlightenment. He does not challenge their genuine attainment of bodhisattvahood, of high stages of enlightenment, of great erudition, and he is ap-

[58] The work in Shantiniketan, Nalanda, Delhi University, Andhra, and Madras is beginning this process. The most significant recent development is the Indian Goverment project in Saranath, at the Central Institute for Higher Tibetan Studies, under the Venerable Samdong Rinpoche, to translate the major lost Indian works from the Tibetan canon back into modern scholarly Sanskrit.

[59] Tib. *ji snyed mkhyen pai ye shes, ji lta mkhyen pai ye shes.*

INTRODUCTION
to the
MIDDLE WAY

Chandrakirti's Madhyamakavatara

with commentary by
Jamgön Mipham

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eration to be possible.

The Development of the Madhyamika School

In the final stanza of the *karikas*, Nagarjuna wrote: "I bow to Gautama, who out of compassion set forth the sacred Dharma for the rejection of all theories." The self-confessed mission of Madhyamika is to undermine the misrepresentations of philosophy and religion, the fruit of the discursive mind's deep-rooted tendency to elaborate theories in an attempt to explain phenomena, both of the outer world of things and the inner world of thought and emotion. In the hands of Nagarjuna, it is primarily a critique of other Buddhist tenet systems and secondarily, by implication, of the Hindu schools of ancient India. In the centuries that followed the Buddha's passing away, perfectly valid attempts were made to synthesize his teachings and facilitate their practice. But all of them, from the Madhyamika point of view, fall short to a greater or lesser degree, on the one all-important issue: the ultimate status of phenomena. All of them, in one way or another, affirm something to which they attribute real and ultimate existence.

In itself, therefore, Madhyamika is not a philosophy so much as a critique of philosophy. Its task is to examine the attempts of reason to give an account, in terms of thought and word, of "the way things really are" and to demonstrate its failure, showing that it is not in words and concepts that the nature of reality can be expressed. In this respect (but in this respect only) Madhyamika has been accurately compared with the philosophy of Kant.

In being a system of pure criticism, Madhyamika has no positive content of its own. Its evolution therefore cannot be assessed in terms of doctrinal elaboration and change. The history of Madhyamika is consequently no more than the account of the system's relationship with other philosophies. This is why the presentations of Madhyamika found in texts like the Wisdom chapter of Shantideva's *Bodhicharyavatara* and in the *Madhyamakavatara* itself, instead of being formal philosophical expositions, consist of a list of arguments with which other systems have been refuted. As Murti has observed, a study of the Madhyamika "shows the stresses and strains to which philosophy was subject in India down the ages."[11]

The development of the Madhyamika system, from its appearance

in the second century C.E. till the disappearance of Buddhism from India in the twelfth, falls into three or four periods. The first is that of systematic exposition, achieved by Nagarjuna and his immediate disciple Aryadeva. The second stage (in the course of the sixth century) is marked by the appearance of two subschools, or rather tendencies, the Prasangika and Svatantrika, occasioned by the divergence of the masters Buddhapalita and Bhavaviveka in their approach to debate procedure and other connected issues. This period was brought to an end, or rather another period was inaugurated, about a hundred years afterward by Chandrakirti, who, in defending Buddhapalita and refuting Bhavaviveka, endeavored to establish *prasanga*, or consequential arguments, as the normative procedure in Madhyamika debate when defining the view. As we shall see, this entailed a quite specific attitude both to the position and the role of logic in such procedures as well as to a presentation of the conventional truth. Finally, the last important development in the Madhyamika, and of Indian Buddhist philosophy generally, was brought about by the great abbot Shantarakshita and his disciple Kamalashila. This consisted of a synthesis of the two great tenet systems of the Mahayana, namely, the Madhyamika and Chittamatra (Yogachara), as ways of presenting the ultimate and relative truth respectively. It was Shantarakshita and Kamalashila who established the Buddhist sutra teachings in Tibet in the eighth century, and it was their brand of Madhyamika that was to prevail there until the translation of Chandrakirti's work by Patsap Nyima Drak and others at the beginning of the twelfth century. Long extinct in its country of origin, Madhyamika has remained a living tradition in Tibetan Buddhism until the present day.

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Nagarjuna and Aryadeva

Nagarjuna, the founder of Madhyamika, "elucidated the sutras of ultimate meaning through the sheer strength of his own genius, without recourse to other commentaries."* His work marks a new departure in the history of Buddhism. His name is inseparably linked with the teachings of the Mahayana and especially with the Prajñaparamita sutras, which, according to tradition, he recovered from the land of the Nagas where they had been preserved from decline until a time more propitious for their effective propagation. The Prajñaparamita literature is enormous; Madhyamika may be regarded as its essential and systematic expression.

* See Longchen Yeshe Dorje, *Treasury of Precious Qualities* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2001), pp. 257–58.

Nagarjuna is said to have been a prolific writer, and his total output was no doubt far greater than the works that have survived and can be attributed to him with certainty. Following the conventions of Tibetan scholarship, his writings are collected into three main groups: the texts on reasoning (*rigs tshogs*), the collection of hymns (*bstod tshogs*), and the collection of discourses (*gtam tshogs*). Of these, the most important in the present context are the six texts of reasoning. These are the *Mulamadhyamaka-karikas*, or *The Root Stanzas on the Middle Way*; the *Yuktishastika*, sixty stanzas dealing with the principles of logic; the *Shunyatasaptati*, seventy stanzas on the doctrine of emptiness; the *Vigrahavyavartani*, a defense in verse of the Madhyamika method and a refutation of objections; the *Vaidalya-sutra*, a prose work delimiting the use of logical categories; and the *Vyavaharasiddhi*, which is a discussion of the conventional truth.

Nagarjuna's masterpiece, the work in which he laid the foundations of his system, is of course the *Mulamadhyamaka-karikas*. Here, his principal task is to analyze and undermine the categories and assumptions implicit in the earlier Buddhist tenet systems. By this is meant the Vaibhashika and Sautrantika schools, which, although they differ in certain important respects, display, from Nagarjuna's point of view, the same kinds of faults and may in the present context be grouped together as the Abhidharmika system. In brief, Nagarjuna represents these earlier schools as having misunderstood, or only partially understood, the meaning of the Buddha's teaching.

When, as we have seen, the Buddha heeded the entreaty of Brahma and began to teach, he did not, of course, immediately set forth the truth in all its purity according to the level of his own understanding. He realized that this would have been far beyond the capacity of his hearers. Out of compassion, he set forth a doctrine suited to their powers, which was designed to draw them onto the path and foster their spiritual growth. His first task was to wean them away from the gross, naïve understanding of worldly beings: their unquestioning belief in the personal self and the reality of substances—physical objects ex-

tended in space and psychic experiences extended in time. He therefore spoke about the five aggregates, the six senses, and their objects and associated consciousnesses, showing, for example, how the human person can be analyzed without residue into form, feelings, perceptions, conditioning factors, and consciousness. Despite the ingrained tendency of all sentient beings to assume the existence of a self and to cling to it, analysis shows that, no matter how hard one searches, no self can ever be found. In the same way, by observing the impermanence of physical things and mental events, one can come to an understanding that phenomena, however solid and unchanging they may appear, are in a state of constant, momentary flux. On the basis of this insight, one can begin to dissolve the attachment one has to things and loosen the fetters that bind one in the round of suffering.

In creating the first synthesis of the Buddha's teaching, the Abhidharmika schools took his teaching about the aggregates and so on at its face value. Of course, they correctly grasped his primary message, namely, the denial of the personal self, but insofar as the Buddha had indeed spoken of the aggregates, *ayatana*s, and so forth, they understood him to imply that these were real. On this basis, incorporating the ideas of gross and subtle impermanence, but overlooking the Buddha's admittedly less frequent but nevertheless significant statements that the aggregates and so forth are themselves illusory, they elaborated a theory of really existing, partless particles of matter and instants of consciousness. And it was within this framework that they understood the doctrine of the two truths. Broadly speaking, the relative or conventional truth refers to the gross, physical objects, together with the thoughts and emotional states that we encounter in waking life, while the ultimate truth consists of the momentary but irreducible particles of matter and instants of consciousness. As a method for undermining naïve commonsense assumptions, the Abhidharmika embodies a profound and sophisticated tool.

Nevertheless, Nagarjuna's primary objective in the *karikas* is to show that the Abhidharmika synthesis is fatally flawed and in fact misrepresents the Buddha's meaning. Step by step, the various categories (production, movement, the sense powers, aggregates, elements, and so on), so crucial to the coherent structure of the Abhidharmika tenets, are relentlessly dismantled and shown to be empty of real existence, while the arguments adduced to support belief in them are refuted as

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untenable absurdities. Chandrakirti comments that the twenty-seven chapters of the *karikas* are in fact a continuous, ongoing debate. Each successive chapter embodies an answer to a possible objection that could be raised in defense of the position demolished in the preceding section.

It is obviously not possible to discuss the *karikas* in any great detail here, but it is of some interest to review, however cursorily, a few of the text's most salient features, since this throws light on the work of Chandrakirti and the later tradition generally. In what was to become the standard procedure in Madhyamika literature, the work begins with a discussion about causation. It is, however, important to bear in mind that, in this context, causes are understood exclusively in a substantial or material sense.[12] The discussion, in other words, is about how things come into being and evolve.

Nagarjuna begins by showing that, appearances to the contrary, the everyday notion that real effects are produced by real causes is mistaken; it cannot possibly be true. Causes and effects, so much a feature of existence, are, he says, essentially definable only in terms of mutual dependence; they are not real things in themselves. To say that something has real existence in itself is to say that it is an autonomous, circumscribed entity, separate in all respects from other things. This is, as a matter of fact, how we habitually view things in the ordinary transactions of everyday life. We feel that we are self-contained individuals and relate to other self-contained individuals. We encounter objects, some pleasant, some unpleasant, which we try to acquire or avoid accordingly. More or less complicated situations arise, which themselves seem individual and real. We are happy and we suffer. To the uncritical observer, life consists of blocks; it is a collection of individual, discrete realities. But this is an illusion. In its anxiety for reassurance and security, the mind reifies situations and things, which it clings to and manipulates in its hopeless quest for lasting satisfaction. In order to expose this procedure as the false trail that it is, Nagarjuna relentlessly demonstrates the inconsistencies inherent in what ordinarily passes for common sense; he shows that the normal "worldview" is in fact riddled with contradiction. It is important to understand, however, that he is not trying to deny our experience of production and change, or of anything else in the phenomenal world. That would be absurd; the world-process is all around us constantly, undeniably. The objects of his critique are

not the empirical facts of existence that inescapably appear to us but the assumptions that we make about these facts. We think that real things give rise to real things; that real things come into being and pass away. But this notion of real, individual, self-contained entity is something that we impose on the raw material of experience. It is a figment of our imagination; in fact there are no real things in this sense. Self-contained entities can never change and can never enter into relation with other entities. The notions of coming into being or passing away cannot be meaningfully applied to them. Thus the first stanza announces: "No things are produced anywhere at any time, either from themselves, from something else, from both, or from neither." The mere fact of "coming into being" excludes real entity and vice versa. The true status of the phenomena that we experience is not, therefore, to be found in their supposed real entity, but in their relatedness, their interdependence with all other phenomena. This is Nagarjuna's interpretation of the doctrine of dependent arising, understood not in the sense of a temporal sequence (as in the Hinayana interpretation of the doctrine of the twelvefold chain of dependent production), but in the *essential dependence* of phenomena. This interdependence undermines the notion of individual, intrinsic reality in things; it is the very antithesis of "thingness." Phenomena, being the interplay of interdependent factors, are unreal. Their interdependence (*pratityasamutpada*) is their emptiness (*shunyata*) of inherent existence.

Production or change, in the sense of the inner transformation of things, gives way, in the second chapter, to a consideration of change in the sense of movement. Compared with the more or less subtle processes involved in physical change, one might have thought that so obvious a fact as physical movement would be easy enough to describe. And yet, by a process of ingenious arguments, Nagarjuna shows that this too is beyond rational explanation. By a minute examination of the categories of space traversed, space yet to be traversed, moving body, and so forth—understood as real according to the common view of things—he demonstrates that reason is powerless to account for even the simplest of events, the displacement of a thing from one location to another. The whole of the second chapter of the *karikas* is an astonishing and disconcerting performance, and the reader is forced to acknowledge that what had previously been taken as the straightforward certainties of existence is nothing but a tissue of naïve and ultimately untenable assumptions. The entire worldview of common sense is shown to be completely incoherent.

If we follow Nagarjuna's arguments carefully, we can see—we are unable to deny—that they make sense. Nagarjuna is saying that if we think that the things of the world (ourselves included) are as they appear, self-existent and solid, we are not in touch with reality; we are living in a world of mirages. Phenomena appear to be real, but they are insubstantial, dreamlike. Given, however, that our perceptions are commonly shared, we might be tempted to dismiss Nagarjuna's ideas as no more than a curious paradox with little relevance to the facts of experience. Life, after all, goes on regardless of the theories of philosophers. Nagarjuna could be right, we may say, but since we all concur in our dreamlike experiences, why question them? What, finally, is wrong with the way we perceive things?

The answer is that there is nothing "wrong" with it; the issue is not a moral one. We are not condemned for being in samsara. To believe that phenomena are solid, real entities is not a "sin"; it is only a mistake. But it is a mistake with unfortunate consequences. In his first teaching following his enlightenment, the Buddha did not speak, though he could have done so, about the dreamlike nature of samsaric existence. Instead, he referred to a more pressing, less deniable problem, namely, that existence—the samsaric dream—is, as a matter of fact, painful. Beings suffer; they are not satisfied. Whatever may be the true nature of phenomena, we cannot deny that our lives are plagued by the ills of birth, sickness, old age, and death, the inescapable accompaniments of existence. It is true that suffering may be suspended by moments of happiness. But these turn out to be fragile and are marked by a transience so intrinsic as to render them, in the larger view, meaningless. Caught in the dream, unaware that they are dreaming, ordinary worldly beings endlessly try to manipulate phenomena in the interests of security and fulfillment. They do this by trying to create the conditions of material and emotional satisfaction and, if they are religious, by striving to create the causes of happiness in the hereafter, whether in terms of "going to heaven" or of securing a favorable rebirth in their future existences. Undoubtedly, the happiness thus produced is both good and necessary, but it is still samsara. It is still part of the dream; it is not the final answer, not liberation. For samsara to disappear, its cause must be identified and arrested. The Buddha is saying that a last-

ing solution cannot possibly lie in the reorganization of the dream, in a mere rearrangement of the furniture. A better plan is to recognize our state of deception—the fact that we are dreaming—and to wake up. And to wake from the dream, it is necessary to understand the nature of phenomena.

Throughout the *karikas*, Nagarjuna's critique is directed at the categories adopted by the Abhidharmika schools: the sense powers, aggregates, ayatanas, and so on. These too are shown to be hollow and dreamlike. To the non-Madhyamika, this is highly disturbing, for Nagarjuna seems to be undermining the doctrine itself. Everything is denied. Nothing is real; nothing makes sense. It is not surprising that in both ancient and modern times, Madhyamika has been stigmatized as philosophical and moral nihilism. The twenty-fourth chapter (perhaps the most important of the *karikas*) therefore opens with an expression of these qualms. If everything is empty, there is neither arising nor destruction. It follows that there is no such thing as the Four Noble Truths. Without the Four Noble Truths, there can be no wisdom, and the qualities of elimination and realization are impossible. Therefore the spiritual path is fruitless and meaningless. Attainment is out of the question. There is no such thing as liberation and enlightenment. There are no enlightened beings. There is no Doctrine and no Spiritual Community. The teaching on emptiness is therefore a rejection of the Three Jewels. Emptiness is the destruction of the Dharma. Good and evil and all the conventions of ordinary life are utterly negated and without significance.

These are the objections that Nagarjuna has been expecting and wanting. The whole gist of the *karikas* in the previous chapters in fact leads to this and is the cue for Nagarjuna to turn the objection on its head and show not only that emptiness is compatible with the spiritual path, but that it is precisely the factor that makes spiritual growth possible. In order to do this, he must expound his own teaching on the two truths, the single most important element in the Madhyamika. It is impossible, he says, to grasp the teaching of the Buddha without a correct understanding of the way the two truths are differentiated. There is no liberation without the realization of emptiness, the ultimate truth; there is no approach to the ultimate without correctly relying on the conventional. The doctrine of emptiness, however, is a double-edged sword, and Nagarjuna is the first to speak of its dangers.

Understood correctly, it leads to liberation; understood wrongly, it can be a source of spiritual and moral degeneration—as dangerous as a poisonous snake badly handled or a powerful spell ineptly applied. The teaching on the two truths is indeed profound and subtle, and it is important for the reader to reflect upon the explanations of an authoritative source.[13] For the purpose of this introduction, it will perhaps be helpful to advert to the following important point.

We have seen already how, in the Abhidharmika system, the awareness of the impermanence of extended phenomena and mental events had implied a theory of indivisible particles of matter and instants of consciousness. This involved a distinction between two levels of reality: the gross, extended objects that populate our perceptions and constitute the phenomenal world, and the "real" entities that underlie appearance but are not experienced. All philosophy of any degree of sophistication is obliged to make a distinction between fact and appearance; intelligent reflection necessarily leads to the awareness that phenomena cannot actually be the way they seem.[14] From the Madhyamika point of view, conventional truth comprises the things and transactions of everyday life—or, to use an expression more in line with Sanskrit and Tibetan usage, the things and events of the phenomenal world are themselves "conventional truths." When analyzed, these same phenomena are found to be empty of unitary, intrinsic being. This is their ultimate truth. We have seen that emptiness, the ultimate status of things, the middle position beyond the categories of "is" and "is not," is by definition inexpressible in thought and word. "The ultimate," as Shantideva said, "lies not within the reach of intellect, for intellect is grounded in the relative."[15] This does not mean, however, that the ultimate is somehow remote from phenomena, floating free, as it were, in an absolute dimension of its own. The ultimate is said to be beyond the world only because it is veiled by the appearances of the world—and for ordinary beings, appearances *are* the world. In fact, the ultimate is not separate from phenomena; it is the very nature of phenomena. The ultimate is what the conventional really is; the conventional is the way the ultimate appears. The two truths are never separate; they merge and coincide in phenomena. The difference is not ontological but epistemic. According to Madhyamika, the distinction is not in the object; it is a matter of recognition within the cognizing subject. The objective dis-

tinction of the two truths corresponds to the views of other systems, which by a process of reasoning, beyond the possibility of experience, arrive at some putative entity considered to be ultimately real (*prakriti*, for instance, or the indivisible particle, the *alaya*, *atman*, God, the first cause, and so on). For these systems, the two truths are two separate entities.

Thus far, we have been considering Nagarjuna. We have seen that the focus of his attention had been mainly the tenets of the Abhidharmika schools. It was left to his foremost disciple and successor, Aryadeva, to apply the same dialectic to the refutation of the Samkhya and Vaisheshika schools of Hinduism, which he does in his chief work *The Four Hundred Stanzas*.[16] Aryadeva was formidable in debate, and it was in large measure thanks to him that the position of the Madhyamika system was consolidated in the face of opposition both Buddhist and non-Buddhist. Chandrakirti remarks that in their view, Nagarjuna and Aryadeva agree in all respects. Tibetan scholarship refers to them as "Madhyamikas of the founding texts,"* for it is in relation to their writings that the later Madhyamika subschools defined themselves.

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A Difference of Method: Buddhapalita, Bhavaviveka, and Chandrakirti

Around the turn of the sixth century, an important disagreement occurred about the method whereby the Madhyamika view was to be established in debate. This question had important ramifications concerning the manner in which the relative truth was to be explained and how, within that context, the ultimate truth was to be presented. One side of the debate was represented by Buddhapalita, who had confined himself to the exclusive use of consequential arguments (*prasanga*). He was opposed by Bhavaviveka, who maintained that, in debate with non-Madhyamikas about the ultimate nature of phenomena and in order to establish one's view beyond doubt, the adduction of mere consequences was insufficient. It was both possible and necessary to prove one's point positively by means of independent inferences (*svatantra-anumana*) adduced in syllogistic form. The fact that

* *gzhung phyi mo'i dbu ma pa.*

Buddhapalita returned no answer to this critique gave rise to the story that he had been intimidated by Bhavaviveka's princely rank. However, there are reasons for believing that he was already dead by the time the latter launched his attack.

Bhavaviveka was a famous scholar with an encyclopedic knowledge of the different philosophical and religious schools of his time, both Buddhist and non-Buddhist. It is evident, too, that he was deeply interested in questions of formal logic, the study of which had been developing in India from the third century onward. And it has been suggested that the movement Bhavaviveka inaugurated was an attempt to create a bridge between the Madhyamika and the philosophical movement that reached its climax in the logical reforms of Dignaga and Dharmakirti.[17]

The division between the Prasangikas and the Svatantrikas is a large question and in certain respects highly technical. Fortunately, there exist a number of learned studies in English on this subject, and the interested reader is invited to refer to them.[18] For the present purposes, we will attempt a summary of the main issues.

To begin with, it is useful to bear in mind that the final aim of Madhyamika, as of all other Buddhist teachings, is soteriological. Its sole purpose is to lead beings to ultimate freedom. As Nagarjuna said, it is only through the understanding and realization of the ultimate truth that freedom from suffering can be gained. Impelled by their vows of bodhichitta, Nagarjuna and the great Madhyamika masters who followed him were concerned, therefore, not only with the realization of the truth for themselves, but also with the communication of this truth to others. The disagreement between the Prasangikas and the Svatantrikas turns on precisely this question: how is the view to be established and what is the best and most effective way of indicating it to others?

The disagreement between Bhavaviveka and Buddhapalita arose out of the interpretation of the very first stanza of the *karikas*: "No things are produced anywhere at any time, either from themselves, from something else, from both, or from neither." Cast in a form that harks back, it will be remembered, to the fourteen unanswered questions, the primary dilemma between the first two alternatives (production from self and production from other) is expanded into a tetralemma (*catuskoti*) by the addition of two more alternatives intended to exhaust the entire

range of possibilities. These four alternatives, which provide the framework for Chandrakirti's later discussion of phenomenal emptiness in the *Madhyamakavatara*, were usually associated, emblematically, with four schools of Indian philosophy: the Samkhya, the Buddhist Abhidharmika, the Jaina, and the Charvaka respectively. We are to imagine a discussion between a Madhyamika and the representatives of four types of philosophical realism, who believe that there is at least something, the intrinsic existence of which must be accepted. The purpose of the Madhyamika critique is to demonstrate their mistake and to produce in their minds an understanding of the emptiness of all phenomena. How is one to go about this? The Prasangikas and Svatantrikas disagree as to the best approach.

Buddhapalita refuted the Samkhya theory simply by pointing out that it entailed an absurd consequence. His argument, which is reiterated exactly in the *Madhyamakavatara*, runs roughly as follows. The Samkhyas believed that everything arises through modulations occurring in the primal substance, prakriti. All effects are therefore, in the most fundamental sense, identical with their causes. Buddhapalita argued that this assertion is untenable. To say that things arise "from themselves" is absurd, because if they already exist (being identical with their causes), no further coming into existence is needed. If, on the other hand, "coming into existence" is part and parcel of the supposedly produced thing, its production must be as unending as the produced thing itself. The Samkhya account is therefore incompatible with causality, either in theory or in fact. It is not necessary, at this stage, to enter into the details of Buddhapalita's argument. The point is that he disposes of the Samkhya claim simply by showing that it involves contradictions and is therefore unviable. In refuting the Samkhya view, he does not substitute a theory of his own.

Bhavaviveka objected that Buddhapalita's procedure was logically deficient. The latter, he said, should have supported his contention by supplying a reason and an example. He complained, moreover, that the Samkhyas were being dealt with too summarily. They had their own arguments against the Buddhist critique, which Buddhapalita was failing to address. Finally, the simple negation of the Samkhya view by showing its untenable consequences was too open-ended. It could be taken to imply that Buddhapalita entertained an alternative position, which, since he was a Madhyamika, was not the case. Simply to adduce

a consequence, therefore, leaves room for doubt in the opponent's mind. In order to remedy these defects, Bhavaviveka argued that when refuting the Samkhya, it was both possible and necessary to prove Nagarjuna's proposition (as given in the first stanza of the *karikas*) in terms of a syllogism—an independent syllogism, indeed, that expressed the contention in a self-contained manner, without reference to the opinion of the interlocutor. Bhavaviveka evidently thought that this kind of approach would be more effective in convincing the opponent and helping him accept the Madhyamika view. The kind of formulation he proposed took the standard form of a syllogism as laid down in Indian logic: subject, predicate, reason, and so on.[19] When used in debate, the syllogism is, or should be, founded on commonly accepted elements established by valid cognition, thereby deriving its cogency from basic premises shared by both parties. Such an argument is intended to convey real knowledge and induce conviction. To this standard format, Bhavaviveka added a touch of his own, namely, the rider "on the ultimate level" or "ultimately."* The reasons for this addition will become clear in due course.

Buddhapalita no doubt represented a conservative element in the Madhyamika tradition.[20] In confining himself to consequences, and in being evidently reluctant to involve himself in the sophistications of logic and epistemology as these were developing at his time, he emulated Nagarjuna, who had employed consequential reasoning very often (though not exclusively) in the *karikas*, and who, in the *Vigrahavyavartani*, had been careful to confine the use of logic to the level of conventional truth, implying the illegitimacy of using it to establish anything transcending that sphere. Unlike Bhavaviveka, who was a popular and influential teacher, Buddhapalita appears to have had few disciples. It was left to Chandrakirti in the following century to defend him and to stem the Svatantrika tide.

As we have seen, the purpose of prasanga is to refute a position, not by stating a more plausible counterposition but by exposing a consequence unwanted by the proponents—on the basis of arguments that the proponents themselves accept. In adopting this strategy, the Prasangika debater is not committed either to the immediate conclusion of the argument or to the principles invoked in the course of the

*Skt *paramarthatah*, Tib *don dam par* or *yang dag par*.

investigation. It is only necessary for the proponents to accept them, the only object being to enable them to see for themselves the falsity of their position and to abandon it. The position of the adversary is not destroyed, as it were, from outside, by arguments adduced independently by the Madhyamika. It is shown instead to be intrinsically absurd, so that it collapses, so to speak, under its own weight. By using this technique in discussions concerning the ultimate status of phenomena, the Prasangikas are able to undermine the false notions of their opponents and to indicate the truth indirectly, without having to verbalize a position of their own.

Why is this last point so important? In order to answer this question, we must digress slightly. We have already seen that the Buddha himself had declared the ultimate truth to be beyond the scope of the ordinary mind. But though the ultimate is not to be expressed in thought and word, it can be indirectly indicated by demarcating the limits of conceptual construction and suggesting that there is, nevertheless, "something" beyond. In this procedure, logical arguments are used to demonstrate that when reason attempts to give an accurate account, in absolute terms, of "the way things are," it leads to antinomies and contradiction. This is the method of Nagarjuna and of Chandrakirti. Even if reason is unable to encompass reality, it can at least convince itself that it is unequal to the task and that the ultimate is to be approached and realized by means other than philosophical cogitation. Reason understands, inferentially, that the ultimate truth exceeds its powers of comprehension and expression. The Madhyamika approach is, in other words, a *via remotionis*, to borrow a term from Christian theology: the dialectic approaches its goal by showing all that the ultimate is not; its purpose is to demolish the theories produced by the ordinary mind and to reveal the hollowness of their pretensions. The use of reasoning to demonstrate its own inadequacy is not, to be sure, an attractive prospect for the rationalist. In one sense, it is a bewildering discovery, and it did indeed prove the sticking point for Kant. Having understood the limitations of pure reason, he found of course that this purely intellectual achievement was unable to remove what he called the transcendental illusion: the impression, and therefore the constant temptation to think, that thought is able to lay hold of perfectly perspectiveless objectivity. He doubted that it could ever be removed, that the mind could ever pass beyond it.[21] He could never

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countenance the possibility of *jñana*, the nondual wisdom in which the ultimate is known directly without the mediation of thought.[22] He failed, in other words, to appreciate the immense spiritual significance of his discovery and, as Murti aptly observes, ended by putting it to a trivial purpose.[23] This was a mistake that Nagarjuna and the Madhyamikas did not make. And they did not make it because they had at their disposal not just the intellectual tools of their own brilliant minds but also their spiritual training on the Buddhist path and the realization of the masters who had transmitted it to them.

A perception of the limitations of thought may seem, as we have said, a sorry conclusion to the philosophical enterprise—until one notices that the implications for the mind that reaches this conclusion are immense. The very fact that the discovery is possible points to something beyond the ordinary intellect. To realize, by thought, that there is an ultimate truth that is not the object of thought is no ordinary finding. It is not just the negative conclusion of dialectical analysis, but also the discovery of a wholly new dimension in the mind itself. When the mind realizes emptiness, it overcomes the subject-object dichotomy. It does not just break through the appearances that conceal the ultimate status of phenomena; it also penetrates the veils of mental construction that had concealed its own true nature and had made the misperception of phenomena possible. When the true nature of phenomena is discovered, the mind's nature also stands revealed, for the realization of emptiness is the experience of nondual wisdom. Looked at from this point of view, the final outcome of Madhyamika analysis is not a negative but a profoundly positive experience.

Chandrakirti's defense of Buddhapalita and his refutation of Bhavaviveka are to be found in his detailed commentary on the *karikas* entitled the *Prasannapada*.[24] Here he considers each of the objections brought against Buddhapalita by Bhavaviveka and refutes them all on technical grounds.[25] To begin with, he rejects as unfounded the charge that Buddhapalita's use of consequences is inadequate because it fails to supply a reason and example. In fact a consequential argument can be restated in the form of what is technically known as an inference accepted by the opponent,* whereby the import of the consequence can be expressed in a syllogism in which both reason and example are pres-

* *gzhan la grags pa'i rjes dpag.*

ent by implication. In being an extension of the consequence, the inference accepted by the opponent is based on elements that need only be agreeable to the opponent, not to the proponent, in the debate. It is thus not to be confused with an independent inference in the terms of which the acceptance of the proponent is implied. Like the consequence, the inference accepted by the opponent does not compromise the proponent in the way that an independent inference does.

This fact, Chandrakirti argues, also acquits Buddhapalita of the second charge brought by Bhavaviveka, namely, that he fails to address the objections advanced by the Samkhyas. In fact, these objections are of necessity only advanced against a position positively expressed, that is, in an independent argument. This does not occur in the case of the inference accepted by the opponent.[26]

Finally, that Buddhapalita's consequential argument implies a contrary position that inadvertently undermines his Madhyamika stance is categorically denied. The meaning and purpose of the consequence are clear from the context, and Buddhapalita's words are to be understood according to his evident intention.[27] A consequential argument, Chandrakirti insists, is perfectly adequate to the task of refuting the false position. If the adversary refuses to accept defeat even after it has been shown, on principles already acceptable to him, that his view is untenable, it is clear that the further adduction of an independent argument would serve no purpose. If the opponent still maintains his position even after its incoherence is laid bare, it is clear that he does so for motives that cannot be rational. Either he is too dull to understand the refutation or he clings to his position out of prejudice. This being so, it is futile to discuss further.

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These are undoubtedly complex questions. The point to retain, however, is that Chandrakirti's objective is to defend a method of communication whereby proponents of Madhyamika can debate on matters concerning the ultimate truth without having to verbalize positions of their own, thereby betraying the Madhyamika's most important principle, namely, that the ultimate status of things is ineffable.

Having vindicated Buddhapalita, Chandrakirti turns to his assailant. "Bhavaviveka wishes only to parade his knowledge of the logical treatises. He adduces independent syllogisms, despite the fact that he claims to hold the Madhyamika view. The Madhyamika system, to be sure, creates lots of difficulties for such a would-be logician. He

makes one mistake after another."[28] According to the rules of logic, when an independent syllogism is framed, its validity depends on the fact that its terms denote exactly the same thing for both parties in the debate. This, Chandrakirti argued, is impossible in any discussion between a Madhyamika and a realist philosopher (such as the Samkhya) when the subject of discussion is the ultimate status of phenomena. A viable independent syllogism presupposes the existence of objects that both sides accept. But the whole purpose of the Madhyamika is to show that no such objects exist. In situations of this kind, therefore, the Madhyamika debater cannot use independent syllogisms without being fatally compromised. The Madhyamika teaching on the two truths, which is not accepted by the opponent, necessarily excludes any community of understanding with the realist concerning the existential status of phenomena. This being so, the Madhyamika is unable to advance an independent syllogism, without the syllogism itself, according to the rules of logic, being defective. If the two parties use the same terms but in effect mean different things by them, it is obvious that they are talking at cross-purposes; common understanding is ruled out. In brief, therefore, Chandrakirti castigates Bhavaviveka not only for compromising his Madhyamika principles but also for being an incompetent logician.

In defense of Bhavaviveka, it may be said that he was not unaware of the difficulties involved in his position, and it seems clear that the characteristic orientation of the Svatantrikas with regard to logic and the conventional truth is adopted with a view to consistency. The fundamental teaching of Madhyamika is the rejection of the ultimate existence of all entities. Like the Prasangikas, the Svatantrikas are concerned to communicate this view to non-Madhyamikas. Unlike the Prasangikas, they seek to do this not by consequences alone but by the use of logic and the making of positive statements—adducing, as we have seen, independent syllogisms that are based on elements commonly acceptable, on the conventional level, to both parties. In so doing, the Svatantrikas take a conciliatory step toward the opponent. In other words, they introduce the Madhyamika view in terms easier for ordinary people to understand. The motivation, as we have seen, is a good one, but the step cannot be made without compromise, and this consists in the creation of a provisional separation of the two truths.

Bhavaviveka and those who followed him say that whereas, on the ul-

timate level, phenomena have no reality whatever, on the conventional level, they do possess a certain existence (though not a true existence), and this is proved by the operation of conventional reasoning. Common sense can, for instance, distinguish a "real" object from an optical illusion. It does so on the basis of functionality (real water is drinkable, mirage water is not, and so on). Therefore, when phenomena are said to be without inherent existence, the Svatantrikas add the proviso "on the ultimate level." Conventionally, for the Svatantrikas (at least those who follow Bhavaviveka), phenomena do have a kind of "natural existence according to their characteristics."* When investigated by conventional reasoning, they are "found"; one can discuss them and entertain theories about them. For Bhavaviveka, therefore, meaningful discourse is still possible on the level of the conventional truth. Although ultimately empty, conventional phenomena can nevertheless be talked about without absurdity. It is still possible to philosophize, and this can be utilized to good purpose, in giving disciples a correct orientation and leading them gradually on the path. Thus the theory of partless particles, as presented in the Abhidharmika schools, is provisionally accepted. What the Abhidharmikas had taken to be ultimate truth remains valid, but only conventionally valid, for the Svatantrikas.

Chandrakirti and the Prasangikas will have none of this. For them no compromise is possible. The ultimate, being ineffable, is falsified by any attempt to express it. To separate the two truths is to deviate from Nagarjuna's meaning. Therefore, *when establishing the view and in debate,* the Prasangikas express no position, no thesis. In debate, they confine themselves to consequential arguments, the reduction to absurdity of the opponent's position; the ultimate truth is indicated only indirectly by the demolition of theories. For the Prasangikas, therefore, it is neither desirable nor possible to elaborate a theory of the conventional truth. Unlike Bhavaviveka, who discusses along Sautrantika lines, and unlike Shantarakshita, who presents the conventional truth in terms of the Yogachara view, Chandrakirti refers to the conventional as being simply the unexamined phenomena of ordinary experience, accepted as true by the common consensus. The Prasangikas do not care to theorize about the conventional. They do not philosophize. This does not,

**rang mtshan nyid kyis sgrub pa.*

of course, mean that they acquiesce in the ignorant opinions of worldly people, who believe firmly in the reality of the phenomenal and personal selves. It does mean, however, that, as a method of approach to the ultimate truth and as a medium with which to communicate with worldly people, the Prasangikas simply accept, without analysis, the things and events occurring in everyday experience.

As forms of philosophy, the four theories of production given in the tetralemma all claim to give an accurate account of conventional experience. All can be shown to be logically incoherent and are, the Prasangikas say, a source of confusion. Far from giving a sensible explanation of the world, their solutions are obscure and far-fetched. In Chandrakirti's opinion, they are quite irrelevant (as philosophy often is) to the perceptions and concerns of ordinary folk. No ordinary person consciously advocates either the theory of the Samkhyas or that of the Buddhist Abhidharmika—production explained in terms either of identity or difference of material causes and effects. A man who deposits a drop of semen in the womb of his wife will point to the baby nine months later and say, "I produced this child." The difference between baby and semen is routinely overlooked. In the same way a gardener points to the flowers that "he planted," whereas in actual fact he planted only seeds. In practice, therefore, people do not acknowledge a separation between material cause and material effect. On the other hand, if you ask someone whether the food they eat and the feces they excrete are the same, they will certainly say that there is a difference. They are very far from accepting the Samkhya theory. On the level of *what actually happens,* it is impossible to say that cause and effect are either the same or different. The only thing one can and must allow is that, in experience, production does occur. Everyone is agreed about this and, as an account of the conventional, this is, for the Prasangikas, quite sufficient.

Indeed, in situations where one is trying to penetrate to the ultimate status of phenomena, the introduction of theories as a means of explaining the working of the phenomenal world fogs the issue and actually undermines the correct approach to the conventional truth. Far from elucidating the conventional, Chandrakirti says, theories actually undermine it. It is the conventional itself—what actually happens—that is the means of entering the ultimate. To create a theory as a way of explaining the mechanics of the conventional does not help to in-

troduce the ultimate; it merely complicates the matter. Therefore theories are dangerous, for they obscure the conventional; they hinder the procedure whereby one can "see through" the conventional appearance of phenomena and perceive their lack of intrinsic "thingness." Chandrakirti says that to create a theory about the conventional is in a sense to "destroy" the conventional; it produces an account that, however coherent it may be, is always at variance with what we actually experience. As such, it is at best irrelevant to the task in hand, namely, to perceive the true nature of phenomenal appearance. At worst it is a hindrance and a trap. The image often evoked is that of a man climbing a tree. Before he has caught hold of the branch above, it is inadvisable for him to move off the one below. In weaving their theories, this is precisely what philosophers do. To create a theory about the conventional is in a sense to move away from the conventional as experienced (which alone is the gateway to the ultimate). The progression from the conventional to the ultimate is rendered more difficult by the invention of ill-conceived hypotheses.

The following parable, borrowed from Bertrand Russell, may further illustrate this important point.[29] If I go up to a nuclear physicist and ask him to describe for me the physical constitution of a table, I will receive a long and learned answer, all about magnetic fields and atomic and subatomic particles moving around at great speed. These, he assures me, are the real constituents of the table; the object in the corner is little more than an optical illusion. On the other hand, if I approach the same scientist unannounced and simply ask whether there is a table in the room, he will, without a moment's hesitation, point and say: "It's over there, can't you see it?" However accurate the scientist's earlier description may be, it has clearly not interfered with his perceptions. But now let us extend the parable further and imagine the same physicist trying to use his bank card to get money from a cash machine outside a bank, and let us suppose that there is something wrong with the card, with the result that the machine swallows it and produces no money. Before long he will become annoyed and start beating on the machine with the same degree of frustration as any ordinary nonscientist. And I would be ill advised, at this point, to try to comfort him by reminding him that, after all, the bank card he has lost and the bank notes he has failed to receive are no more than a mass of subatomic particles. Sophisticated as the physicist's theory may be, it

has done nothing to free him from the suffering and perturbation always liable to manifest in the course of conventional transactions. In the same way, the propounding of theories about the conventional does nothing to remove the tyranny of phenomenal appearance. And the use of independent syllogisms, and the acceptance of conventionally existent entities, which this entails, necessarily implies a theoretical explanation of the conventional—of the kind that, in the above example, seemed only to intensify (when mentioned inappropriately) the impotent fury of the frustrated scientist.

Therefore, in discussions about the reality or otherwise of phenomena, the Prasangikas restrict the terms of discussion to the position propounded by the non-Madhyamika opponent. They do not allow themselves, by the use of logical arguments, to become involved in an exchange that might give the impression that they believe in the real existence of the topic under discussion. It must be stressed that in the debates between the Madhyamika and other philosophies, the only point of issue is real existence. The opponents, Samkhya, Buddhist, and so on, all contend in one way or other that something exists. The Madhyamikas deny this. Therefore, for Madhyamikas to discourse about phenomena as if they believed in their real existence would, the Prasangikas say, necessarily weaken the force of their argument.

It is important to be aware that a discussion about a thing's existence is radically different from a discussion about a thing's attributes. The standard example used to illustrate this point is the debate about the nature of sound. Buddhists find themselves in disagreement with certain Hindus who believe that sound is permanent, part of the primordial structure of the universe, and so on. The two positions are in total opposition. But in the discussion, both parties are agreed on one thing, namely, sound itself. Sound as a phenomenon can be observed by Buddhist and Hindu alike, irrespective of the ideas they have about it. However complicated the discussion may become, the situation is clear: both parties are referring to *sound*; they are disagreeing about its properties.

Discussions about existence, by contrast, are much less straightforward. And it may be observed in passing that the problem at hand evidently concerns the question of whether existence is a predicate. This topic has had a long and interesting career in the history of Western philosophy, and the matter is still not settled. But since Western Bud-

dhist scholars never seem to advert to it, and since the traditional texts formulate the matter differently, it would perhaps be hazardous to insist upon it too much in the present context. Briefly, the point is that when two people are debating the qualities of sound, for instance, they can both accept sound as the basis of the discussion without preempting the issue and committing themselves to conclusions that are yet to be established. Whatever the facts of the case, no illogicality is involved in saying, "Sound is either permanent or impermanent." It must be one or the other, of course, but this remains to be demonstrated. There is nothing, however, in the notion of sound itself that logically excludes either permanence or impermanence; and in an inquiry of this kind, one may analytically separate a subject from its properties, even though they are not separable in experience. One might suppose that the situation is exactly parallel in the statement "Sound is either existent or nonexistent." But this is an illusion created by the verbal structure of the sentence. Whereas sound, as a fact of experience, can be considered separately from its permanence or impermanence, it cannot be considered, with the same propriety and in the same way, in isolation from its existence. We may conceivably have a permanent sound, or an impermanent sound. But we cannot conceivably have a nonexistent sound—that is, a sound that has no existence—since a nonexistent sound is not a sound; it is just nothing. On the other hand, as soon as an object is consciously indicated, existence, or belief in existence, is logically implied.

Consequently, the Prasangikas conclude, in a debate about the existence of phenomena, if instead of confining oneself to an examination of the validity of the opponent's view, one makes an assertion about the phenomenon in question, this very fact is liable to imply that one acquiesces in the thing's existence. In such debates, therefore, the Prasangikas say that one must abstain from expressing an independent position of one's own on pain of already falsifying one's own position and misrepresenting the case.

Madhyamika in Tibet

However effective Chandrakirti may have been in vindicating the method of Buddhapalita and refuting Bhavaviveka, it is clear that he did not succeed in convincing all his contemporaries. There is no

doubt that the Svatantrika method remained popular. Shantarakshita himself, who in his synthesis of the Madhyamika and Yogachara schools represents the last great stage in the development of Buddhist philosophy in India, made use of independent syllogisms as Bhavaviveka had done several centuries before. He is therefore classified as a Svatantrika, although, as we shall see, this question is more complex than it appears. It was, in any case, Shantarakshita and his disciple Kamalashila who, at the invitation of King Trisong Detsen, carried the Buddhist sutra teachings to Tibet, with the result that the Madhyamika doctrine first established there was Yogachara-Svatantrika, in which form it was to flourish for approximately four hundred years. Only in the twelfth century, when Patsap Nyima Drak translated the works of Chandrakirti, did the Prasangika really take hold in Tibet.

According to *The Blue Annals*, Patsap was born in Penyul but left Tibet while still a child. He grew up in Kashmir and India, where he studied at the feet of numerous famous and important scholars. He returned to Tibet around 1160 and embarked on a career of translation and teaching. He expounded in particular the six logical treatises (*rigs tshogs*) of Nagarjuna and, in collaboration with the Indian pandita Kanakavarman, translated Chandrakirti's *Prasannapada* and the *Madhyamakavatara*, together with its autocommentary, as well as the commentary on the *Yuktishastika* by the same author. From slender beginnings he became an influential teacher, and his return home marked a turning point in the study of Madhyamika in Tibet.

The introduction of Prasangika ideas was the focus of intense interest. Convinced that they were in possession of a more accurate and profound understanding of Nagarjuna's doctrine, the early Tibetan Prasangikas attacked the Svatantrika establishment with the enthusiasm of missionaries. They encountered a sturdy resistance. The period of persecution inflicted by King Langdarma (836–841) had been followed by an intense religious and scholastic renewal. And in the intervening period, before the return of Patsap, the Madhyamika had been closely studied, mainly according to the tradition laid down by Shantarakshita and Kamalashila, but also following the works of Bhavaviveka, which had also been translated in the early period. A number of great scholars had been involved in this enterprise, and by the twelfth century the Svatantrika view was well able to resist, at least for the time being, the wave of novelty. The master Chapa Chökyi Senge, for exam-

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ple, whose interpretation of Dignaga and Dharmakirti was to form the basis of the logic tradition still upheld by the Gelugpa school, was a formidable debater and defended with brilliance the Svatantrika view against Prasangika innovation. He composed several expositions of the Madhyamika system and numerous refutations of Chandrakirti. It is recorded that, on one occasion, he encountered in debate, and defeated, the celebrated Indian Prasangika master Jayananda.[30]

Be that as it may, the Prasangika view gained ground in Tibet and eventually triumphed. Even before the translation of Chandrakirti by Patsap, the Prasangika view was advocated by Atisha, whose role in the development of Tibetan Buddhism can scarcely be exaggerated; and it became intimately associated with the mind-training teaching of the Kadampas, which exerted a pervasive influence throughout the tradition. In their different ways, all four schools of Tibetan Buddhism have adopted the Prasangika approach—the teaching of Nagarjuna, as interpreted by Chandrakirti—as the highest view on the sutra level. Svatantrika was driven into the shade, and nowadays, especially in the New Translation schools, it is relegated to the doxographical literature, in the context of which it is studied largely as a lower view to be examined and surmounted by students on their way to mastery of the Prasangika system. It is comparatively rare for the original writings of Svatantrika authors—even of Shantarakshita—to be studied at first hand.

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Mipham Rinpoche and the Prasangika-Svatantrika Distinction

It is therefore of some interest, before finishing with this topic, to advert to the attitude of Mipham Rinpoche toward the Svatantrika teaching, specifically in the form advocated by Shantarakshita. Naturally, this finds its full expression in the great commentary on the *Madhyamakalankara*, which is one of Mipham's great masterpieces, but it is appropriate to mention it briefly here, since not only does the view of Shantarakshita represent the final development of Madhyamika in India, but it also profoundly qualifies the Nyingma understanding of the relationship between Prasangika and Svatantrika, and of Madhyamika in general.

In the context of modern Madhyamika scholarship, dominated as it is by the Gelugpa and Sakyapa schools, the position of Mipham

Rinpoche is liable to appear unusual, certainly unfamiliar. It is not, however, a personal eccentricity. One of the main reasons for Mipham's scholarly work was to revive and reexpress the teachings characteristic of the Nyingma school; his understanding of Madhyamika is rooted in the tradition of the Old Translations. Without going into excessive detail, it is possible to summarize the Nyingma attitude (as expressed by Mipham Rinpoche) toward Madhyamika by saying that it accommodates the Prasangika approach current in Tibet after the translation of Chandrakirti's works, without betraying its original allegiance to the teaching of Shantarakshita. And in this connection, one may advert to the paradox, with regard to the works of these two masters, occasioned by the fact that chronologically the order of translation in Tibet was the reverse of the order of composition in India. After Patsap, Chandrakirti seemed "new" in Tibet and Shantarakshita seemed "old," whereas it was the teaching of the latter that represented the final development of Madhyamika in India at a time when Buddhism was still at its zenith.

So far in this introduction, in distinguishing the teachings of Buddhapalita, Bhavaviveka, and Chandrakirti and their followers, we have followed the common convention of speaking about Svatantrikas and Prasangikas. These terms are the Sanskrit renditions, contrived by Western scholars, of two Tibetan terms (*rang rgyud pa* and *thal 'gyur pa* respectively). It is important to realize that the Svatantrika-Prasangika distinction, as such, is the invention of Tibetan scholarship, created as a convenient method for cataloging the different viewpoints evident in Madhyamika authors subsequent to Chandrakirti's critique of Bhavaviveka. There is no evidence that these two terms were ever used by the ancient Indian Madhyamikas to refer either to themselves or to their opponents. Moreover, although the Svatantrika and Prasangika viewpoints differ on a number of interconnected issues, the actual terminology refers, as we have seen, to the characteristic method of debate adopted when the question of the ultimate status of phenomena is at issue. This divergence was emphasized by Chandrakirti in the first chapter of the *Prasannapada*, from which it follows that the terminological distinction "Svatantrika-Prasangika" became current in Tibet only from the twelfth century onward. Convenient as it may be, it is not without its difficulties.

If the Madhyamikas are differentiated solely according to

whether they use independent syllogisms or confine themselves to consequences, a twofold division results, with Buddhapalita and Chandrakirti on one side and Bhavaviveka and Shantarakshita on the other. The identification of the view of Chandrakirti and Buddhapalita is natural, but the placing of Bhavaviveka and Shantarakshita in one undifferentiated category is problematic. Historically, Bhavaviveka and Shantarakshita are separated by a period of about two hundred years, while Chandrakirti appeared approximately midway between them. Given that these three masters were scholars of the first magnitude, and given Shantarakshita's knowledge of the entire philosophical and religious field, as evidenced in the *Tattvasamgraha*, it is difficult to explain how, if Shantarakshita is merely continuing the Svatantrika stance of Bhavaviveka, he should have been so oblivious of Chandrakirti's critique—a development in the history of Madhyamika of which he could not conceivably have been ignorant. However convenient, the Svatantrika-Prasangika distinction, made exclusively in terms of debate procedure, is not wholly adequate as an account of the evolution of Madhyamika or as a general description.

There is, however, another set of criteria for distinguishing between the approaches of these three Madhyamika masters, namely, their way of speaking about the conventional truth. We have seen that one of the reasons Chandrakirti objected to Bhavaviveka's innovation was that, according to the rules of logic, independent syllogisms commit their user to an implicit and compromising acquiescence in the existence of the elements referred to. Bhavaviveka was apparently aware of this, and we have seen that, in the interests of consistency, his use of the independent syllogism went hand in hand with a view that, on the conventional level, phenomena do indeed enjoy a certain existence "according to their characteristics." By contrast, Chandrakirti's quite different attitude toward the role of *pramana* in establishing emptiness reflects his rejection of any kind of existence at any level. In the doxologies written in Tibet during the earlier period—that is, before the discovery of the teaching of Chandrakirti—the two kinds of Madhyamika known to Tibetans at that time were defined not according to debate procedure but on the basis of the attitude evinced toward the conventional truth, namely, the Sautrantika-Madhyamika and the Yogachara-Madhyamika.[31] This method of classification could theoretically be enlarged to accommodate the position of Chandrakirti, namely, that of the Madhyamika that accepts the common consensus as the conventional truth.*

The conventional truth corresponds to the world of everyday experience. It is the dimension, the field of perception, so to speak, in which ordinary beings live and interact. Viewed in the light of their soteriological aims, the attitude of Madhyamikas toward the conventional is largely a matter of communication. In trying to introduce beings to the Middle Way (the wisdom of the Buddha as expressed by Nagarjuna, by which alone samsara is destroyed and liberation gained), different approaches are both possible and necessary. This is what we would expect of any Buddhist system. Beings differ in their capacities and requirements; the form in which the teachings are expressed varies accordingly.

The characteristic approach of Chandrakirti and Buddhapalita is clear. When debating the final status of phenomena, they are content merely to deconstruct the false opinion; they refrain from verbalizing a position of their own. In the same way, they abstain from elaborating a theory of the conventional. Ultimately, phenomena are empty by their nature; conventionally, they appear by the force of dependent arising. The appearances of the common consensus are accepted, without analysis, as the conventional truth. No theory is advocated as to the nature of phenomena, and no sort of existence is attributed to them on a provisional basis. This approach seems simple and straightforward. In practice, it is less so.

A realist may hold to the view, let us say, that phenomena truly exist in the way that they appear. But in undermining this notion, the Prasangika does not intend to show that phenomena do not exist. On the contrary, the true status of phenomena lies wholly beyond both existence and nonexistence. It is subtle, inexpressible in thought and word. The Prasangika method, whereby the consequence is adduced without further comment, offers few concessions to the slow-witted and is obviously not without an element of risk. Admittedly, the de-

* Respectively *mdo sde spyod pa'i dbu ma pa*, *rnal 'byor spyod pa'i dbu ma pa*, and *'jig rten grags pa'i dbu ma pa*.

struction of one position, by reduction to absurdity, is not taken in isolation; it is accompanied by the negation of the other alternatives of the tetralemma. Nevertheless, the Prasangika does no more than expose the inadequacy of the opponent's position. The effectiveness of the consequential method depends as much on the acuity and honesty of the opponent as it does on the accuracy and cogency of the argument. Whether or not the opponent "gets it" and realizes the point that the Madhyamika is making, and whether or not he or she is then able to apply it to good purpose, depends not only on intelligence but also on merit, the positive orientation and receptiveness of the mind, which is the result of training in virtue on the path. It is merit that empowers the mind and renders it apt not only to understand in an intellectual sense, but also to progress into the direct experience of wisdom itself. It is therefore said that the Prasangika approach, which, by a process of austere annulment of all intellectual positions, constitutes a direct introduction to the ultimate truth in itself, is appropriate for persons of the highest spiritual faculties, a qualification, incidentally, that is not to be confused with mere intellectual acumen.

By contrast, the Svatantrikas make use of independent syllogisms and thus adopt a "position" with which to interpret conventional experience (Sautrantika in the case of Bhavaviveka, Yogachara in the case of Shantarakshita). Their approach is gradual; it makes allowances for the needs of beings who must be led along the path. In such a context, the two truths must be distinguished, unpacked, and presented in terms of words and concepts. In the nature of things, this distinction, whereby the conventional is contrasted with the ultimate is—can only be—confined to the level of conventional truth. From the ultimate point of view, no distinctions of any kind can be made; it is only on the conventional level that the analytical investigation of phenomena takes place. Furthermore, two kinds of analysis are differentiated, depending on their object. On the one hand, there is ultimate or absolutist reasoning, which investigates and establishes the ultimate status or emptiness of phenomena. On the other hand, there is conventional reasoning, which determines whether a given object is "real" or "illusory" according to the general scheme of things accepted in the common consensus.

It is on the conventional level also that a further important distinction is made, this time with regard to the ultimate truth. In itself, the ultimate is utterly ineffable. It is beyond the ordinary mind and cannot become the object of a cognition in which there is a separation between subject and object. This is the "ultimate in itself."* It is experienced by nondual wisdom and can never be expressed in thought and word, themselves the preserve of the conventional. The ordinary mind can, however, point to the ultimate indirectly, describing it, for example, as the counterpart of the conventional. This is the approximate ultimate.† It is the concordant image of, or gateway to, the ultimate truth in itself.

As methods of introduction to emptiness, the ultimate condition of phenomena and of the mind, the Prasangika and Svatantrika approaches are adapted to two kinds of beings: those who are able to enter into the ultimate truth in itself directly, without the intermediary step of the approximate ultimate truth (*cig char pa*), and those who must progress toward it gradually (*rim bskyed pa*). It may be thought that Prasangika is superior to Svatantrika, but if there is a hierarchy of levels, this refers only to the respective capacities of the disciples concerned, where the difference is one of merit. It is not a reflection on the quality of the approaches themselves, which, Mipham Rinpoche argues, are both indispensable and equally valuable. Neither are they interchangeable. The direct approach is useless for someone who must progress gradually; the gradualist approach is unnecessary for one who is able to perceive directly.

Furthermore, the adoption of these different methods reflects the compassionate activity of the masters concerned, not their own personal realization. With regard to the ultimate truth, all Madhyamikas, of whatever complexion, are in full agreement. Mipham Rinpoche observes that the ultimate in itself, beyond the domain of words or concepts, is what the Aryas see by stainless wisdom in their meditative equipoise; on this level, neither Prasangikas nor Svatantrikas make assertions of any kind, and there is no differentiating them. The distinction comes only with regard to the conventional, for it is here alone that the Svatantrikas make their statements about the ultimate (the approx-

* *rnam grangs ma yin pa'i don dam.*
† *rnam grangs pa'i don dam.*

imate ultimate). "A person who, by dint of practice, thus attains the experience of the ultimate truth in itself may be called either Prasangika or Svatantrika depending on the way he or she makes assertions with regard to the postmeditation period. But one should know that in the ultimate realization there is no difference between them. They both enjoy the wisdom of the Aryas."[32] It is thus meaningless to place the Madhyamika masters themselves in a hierarchy according to the manner in which they instruct beings. In their own right, Buddhapalita, Bhavaviveka, Chandrakirti, Shantarakshita and so on are all equal—they are all, we might say, Prasangikas, possessed of the highest view.

For Mipham, therefore, Prasangika and Svatantrika are two approaches to be understood in harmony; they are not diverging views. This point is brought out very clearly in the introduction to his commentary on the *Madhyamakalankara*, which has been described as one of the most profound texts on Madhyamika ever written. Having referred to the eighty-ninth stanza in the sixth chapter of the *Madhyamakavatara*, where Chandrakirti says that the source of phenomenal experience is the mind itself, Mipham Rinpoche comments:

> To say [on the contrary] that the phenomenal world does not arise from one's mind necessarily implies the belief that it is caused by something else. And since this involves the assertion that beings are bound in samsara or delivered from it through causes other than their own minds, it will doubtless cause one to fall into non-Buddhist tenet systems. It is therefore established step by step that if there is no external creator and no external world, extramental objects are but the mind's projection. This assertion that conventionalities are "only the mind" exists in all the Mahayana schools.
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> Why is it then that glorious Chandrakirti and others do not posit the conventional level in this way? As was explained above, when he establishes the ultimate in itself, which accords with the field of wisdom of Aryas while they are in meditative equipoise, it is sufficient for him to have, as the object of assessment, the phenomena of samsara and nirvana as they appear and are referred to on the empirical level, without examining them. Since, from the very beginning, these phenomena are beyond the four conceptual extremes, it is not necessary for him to enter into a close philosophical investigation of the way phenomena appear on the conventional level. When one assesses appearances with words and concepts, one may, for instance, say that phenomena exist or do not exist, that phenomena are or are not the mind. But however one may assert them, they do not exist in that way on the ultimate level. Therefore, with the consequences of the Prasanga reasoning, which investigates the ultimate, Chandrakirti is merely refuting the incorrect ideas of the opponents. And given that his own stance is free from every conceptual reference, how could he assert a theory? He does not. In this way, he can refute, without needing to separate the two truths, whatever assertions are made as to existence and nonexistence. In the present Svatantrika context, since assessments are made with the reasoning specific to each of the two truths, one cannot refute or establish anything *without* separating these same two truths. But in Chandrakirti's tradition, assessment is made using the valid reasoning, which investigates the ultimate nature of the two truths—the ultimate in itself. As Chandrakirti quotes from a scripture in his autocommentary to the *Madhyamakavatara*: "On the ultimate level, O monks, there are no two truths. This ultimate truth is one."
>
> Therefore from the beginning, the honorable Chandrakirti emphasizes and establishes the ultimate in itself. He does not do away with mere appearances, for these are the ground for his absolutist type of investigation, the means or gateway to the ultimate. He therefore takes them as a basis of debate and establishes them as being beyond all conceptual extremes. Then, in the postmeditation period, he establishes or refutes all the propositions concerning the path and result in accordance with the way they are assessed by the two kinds of reasoning. And thus even the Prasangikas do not invalidate the conventional level. They assert conventional phenomena as mere appearances (*rkyen nyid 'di pa*) or simply as dependent arisings. If, with regard to these mere appearances, an investigation is made using conventional reasoning, the Prasangikas do not deny the manner in which samsara and nirvana are produced through the forward and backward progression of the twelve interdependent links of existence. They show that phenomena arise dependently through the power of the pure or impure mind. And in this way they clearly express the tenet of mind-only.
>
> In the present text (*Madhyamakalankara*) by the great abbot Shantarakshita, emphasis is placed on the approximate ultimate. The two truths are, to begin with, distinguished; each of them is assessed with the appropriate kind of valid cognition and each is established as having assertions proper to it. Finally, the ultimate truth in itself, which is completely free from all assertion, is reached. These two approaches (Svatantrika and Prasangika) belong respectively to those who follow

the gradual path and those whose realization is not gradual but immediate. And since the essence of Shantarakshita's approach is the ultimate-in-itself, he does indeed possess the ultimate and essential view of the Prasangikas. And what he says in the text itself is in perfect agreement with the view of the glorious Chandrakirti.[33]

Mipham Rinpoche and The Word of Chandra

Mipham Rinpoche was born in 1846 into an aristocratic family in the east of Tibet. His father belonged to the Ju clan, and the ancestors of both his parents had been ministers to the kings of Derge.[34] The circumstances of his birth entailed the advantage of material independence. And although Mipham Rinpoche was eventually to be acknowledged as an undeniable, indeed spectacular embodiment of Manjushri himself, he was never recognized as a *tulku*. He was therefore unhampered by the responsibilities and ties, both political and economic, that are often associated with that prestigious rank. He was able to devote himself exclusively to the pursuit of the Dharma in both study and practice.

He took his first monastic vows at the age of twelve at Jumo Horsang Ngakchö Ling, which was a dependency of the great monastery of Shechen Tennyi Dargye Ling in Kham. Conspicuous intelligence and aptitude for study soon distinguished him. An eighteen-month retreat on Manjushri, begun at the age of fifteen, marked a turning point in his intellectual and spiritual development. His practice was attended by signs of unusual accomplishment, and it is said that from that moment he was able to assimilate easily and without labor the entire range of Buddhist learning. The troubles provoked by the war in Nyarong obliged him to leave home. He traveled first to Golok in eastern Tibet and thence, on pilgrimage, to Lhasa, during which he spent a month at the great monastic university of Ganden. There, he was able to observe at first hand the scholastic methods of the Gelugpas, for which he acquired a lasting admiration. This was the first of many travels in the course of which he received instructions from many great masters. Mipham's most important teachers were Patrul Rinpoche, Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo, and Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Thayé, the founding fathers and principal exponents of a new and vigorous movement that was to revitalize the Dharma in the east of Tibet and beyond. This was the so-called Rimé (*ris med*) movement, the

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THE ADORNMENT OF THE MIDDLE WAY

Shantarakshita's
Madhyamakalankara

with commentary by
Jamgön Mipham

TRANSLATED BY THE
PADMAKARA TRANSLATION GROUP

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Mipham and the Svatantrika-Prasangika Distinction

For the first four centuries after the introduction of Buddhism to Tibet, the Madhyamaka teachings were upheld principally according to the tradition of Shantarakshita. Bhavaviveka's commentary on Nagarjuna, together with its extensive subcommentary by Avalokitavrata,[7] were also translated in the early period, and this gave rise, in the early doxographical literature, to the perception of two Madhyamaka traditions, differentiated according to the way they discuss conventional phenomena in terms of other, non-Madhyamaka, tenet systems. In his *lta ba'i khyad par*, therefore, Shantarakshita's disciple Yeshe De describes the view of Bhavaviveka (Bhavya for short) as Sautrantika-Madhyamaka (*mdo sde spyod pa'i dbu ma pa*) and refers to that of Shantarakshita and Kamalashila as Yogachara-Madhyamaka (*rnal 'byor spyod pa'i dbu ma pa*). The principal difference between these two views concerns the acceptance or rejection of extramental phenomena on the conventional level.[8] Considering that, on the conventional level, phenomena are material and outside the mind, Bhavya explains them in terms of the Sautrantika tenet. Finding such a view to be philosophically untenable, Shantarakshita and his followers adopted the Yogachara position and denied the extramental status of phenomena appearing within the sphere of conventional truth. For them, conventional phenomena are the display of the mind and have no existence apart from the consciousness that observes them.

The general popularity of Shantarakshita's view no doubt owed something to the original impetus given to it by its founder—as well as to its acknowledged sophistication and the fact that it was more closely in line with the view expounded in the tantras. In any case, by the turn of the twelfth century, the Yogachara-Madhyamaka tradition was well established and counted among its adherents such important figures as the translator Ngok Loden Sherab (1059–1109) and the great logician Chapa Chökyi Senge (1109–1169).[9] This situation began to change in the first half of the twelfth century when important works by Chandrakirti were for the first time translated into Tibetan by Patsap Nyima Drak (1055–1145).

When studying the history of Madhyamaka, it is important to resist the impression of timelessness created by the generally ahistorical character of the doxographical literature. For example, one often reads about the "dis-

agreement" between Chandrakirti and Bhavya, and one might almost imagine that these two masters contended face to face. Similarly, the fact that Bhavya and Shantarakshita are commonly referred to as Svatantrikas could give the impression that both these masters were the object of Chandrakirti's critique. It is easy to overlook the fact that, for the most part, the main protagonists in the history of Indian Madhyamaka were separated by long periods of time. Although Buddhapalita and Bhavya were historically quite close (both lived in the sixth century), there is no evidence that they ever met. The fact that Buddhapalita returned no answer to Bhavya's criticism gave rise to the legend that he was intimidated by the latter's princely rank. But there are reasons for thinking that by the time Bhavya composed his critique, Buddhapalita was no longer alive. Chandrakirti (seventh century), for his part, wrote his defense of Buddhapalita and critique of Bhavya at a distance of over a hundred years, and he himself was dead at least a century before Shantarakshita composed his works. The historical perspective is obviously crucial for an accurate understanding of the quite complex way in which the Madhyamaka tradition developed. It is important to be aware of the order in which the great Madhyamaka texts were composed in India and also of the quite different order in which they were translated in Tibet. For it is only by knowing what texts were available to the Tibetans, and when, that we can have some idea of the manner in which their understanding of Madhyamaka evolved.

Before the twelfth century, the Tibetan scholars who studied Bhavya's *Prajnapradipa* and its subcommentary would have been well aware of the fact that he had criticized an otherwise little-known master by the name of Buddhapalita,[10] whose own commentary had also been translated in the early period. The reading of these works would have revealed that Bhavya had—no doubt as a means of underlining the correctness of his own approach—attacked Buddhapalita for what he considered to be the latter's unsatisfactory method of expounding Nagarjuna's text. It is worth considering this matter in some detail, since an awareness of what Bhavya was doing (and what he thought he was doing) is helpful in gaining a balanced understanding of the Svatantrika-Prasangika distinction.[11]

It will be remembered that in the *Mulamadhyamaka-karika* (*Root Stanzas on the Middle Way*), Nagarjuna had subjected other Buddhist tenet systems to a searching critique. His aim was to show that despite their efforts to systematize the Buddha's teachings and facilitate their implementation, they had fallen short in their understanding of the nature of phenomena. In

making their assertions and negations in terms of phenomenal existence, they had failed to penetrate the heart of the Buddha's insight that ultimate truth lies beyond the expression of thought and word and is known only when the mind has transcended every conceptual extreme, whether of existence, nonexistence, both, or neither (this is the famous tetralemma). In pointing out this truth, it was obviously impossible for Nagarjuna to define, by any kind of positive statement, what he himself believed to be ineffable. When subjecting the imperfect view to critical analysis, therefore, Nagarjuna abstained from making any kind of positive assertion that could itself be taken as a description of the ultimate. Instead, his favorite method was not to contradict a defective position outright but to press it to its logical conclusions in accordance with principles acceptable to the opponent, thereby revealing its implicit absurdity by drawing out unwanted consequences that the opponent could not deny. By such a technique, theories are refuted not by being overwhelmed by some other, more cogent formulation but by being subjected to such a strain that they collapse under their own weight. When every possible position is thus annihilated, it is as if the mind is rendered speechless. For the implication is irresistible that the nature of phenomena—which, regardless of any theory, undeniably appear—lies beyond the range of the discursive intellect.

Bhavya was fully aware of Nagarjuna's intentions in adopting such a strategy. The use of consequential arguments had served Nagarjuna well. One could even say that given his evident objective—namely, to indicate the inexpressible nature of the ultimate truth—such a debate procedure was indispensable. Bhavya certainly had nothing to say against it. He nevertheless objected strenuously to the fact that, in his own commentary, Buddhapalita had done no more than follow Nagarjuna's example and confined himself likewise to the exclusive use of prasanga, or consequential arguments. Bhavya severely castigated Buddhapalita for what he had accepted in Nagarjuna without demur. What could be the reason for such a flagrant double standard? Bhavya has been accused of unfairness, but further reflection suggests that his criticism of Buddhapalita was consistent with what he apparently considered to be the role of commentary.

We have seen that the very nature of Nagarjuna's intentions had necessitated the use of consequential arguments, the purpose of which was not simply to demolish the imperfect position but to suggest an insight that, by definition, remained unstated. Bhavya, on the other hand, seems to have thought that a technique that was both appropriate and inevitable in the

original text was quite out of place at the commentarial level. Commentary is after all a form of mediation. Its role is not to repeat verbatim the message of the original author but to elucidate it and to render its meaning accessible to a remote and uncomprehending audience. Now, the success of the kind of consequential argument just described depends not only on the cogency of the reasoning advanced but also on the ability of the interlocutor to understand the (unstated) point that is being made. As a result, there remains an inescapable element of doubt, which the exclusive use of consequentialist arguments necessarily leaves unresolved. For this reason, in Bhavya's view, the use of consequences—quite admissible in the original text—is undesirable in commentary because consequences leave the kind of uncertainty that it is precisely the role of commentary to remove. The task of the commentator, as mediator and teacher, is to assist the reader and to ensure, by the use of positive statements, that he or she understands what Nagarjuna means.[12]

In other words, it seems that Bhavya believed that Buddhapalita was failing in his duties. As commentator, it was his responsibility to explain Nagarjuna's procedure, not merely to duplicate it. Nagarjuna had intended, by the indirect method of consequential arguments, to bring the mind to the limits of rational discourse and to point out the ultimate nature that lies beyond. By contrast, the commentator's role is not to repeat Nagarjuna's already superlative performance but to discuss it and to present it skillfully. The task at hand is to resolve the element of doubt intrinsic to the consequentialist method, to deal with possible objections, and generally to facilitate the intellectual comprehension of those who require explanation and who cannot as yet penetrate, directly and unaided, the profound message of the original author. To that extent, it is both necessary and fitting to make positive, explanatory statements. These do not of course perform the same function as Nagarjuna's arguments, which is to indicate the ineffable truth, but they at least have the merit of explaining what Nagarjuna is actually doing. Commentary therefore has an essentially secondary and ancillary role. It is a pedagogical tool, its modest purpose being to unpack the meaning, and remove the obscurities, of the original text.

Throughout his own commentary, therefore, Bhavya makes extensive use of formal logic, which, in the wake of Dignaga's important and still recent work, was very much in vogue at Bhavya's time. He devotes much energy to recasting, or rather "reversing," Nagarjuna's consequentialist arguments (*thal ldog*) in the form of independent inferential statements, in

other words, syllogisms or probative arguments consisting of (1) a subject, (2) a probandum, (3) an evidential sign endowed with forward and reverse pervasion or concomitance, and (4) an example. Following this enthusiastic lead, logic came to be closely associated with the kind of commentarial exposition of Nagarjuna's teaching of which Bhavya himself could be regarded as a pioneer. It is important to notice that at no time does Bhavya give the slightest suggestion that he is in any way questioning Nagarjuna's essential message about the ineffability of the ultimate truth. Nagarjuna himself had severely restricted the use of logic to the conventional level. Insight into the state beyond conceptual extremes obviously cannot be the conclusion of reasoned argument but arises only when the mind enters a state of silence that is free from all discursive activity. Similarly, although Bhavya, for his part, was greatly interested in logic as a means of producing intellectual certainty, he too seems to have been well aware of the provisional nature of its role in the Madhyamaka context. This becomes evident when one considers how the use of logic obliged Bhavya to make certain important adjustments in his presentation of the two truths.

Nagarjuna had emphasized that the two truths coincide and are perfectly united in phenomena. The ultimate truth of phenomena is their emptiness of intrinsic existence; their relative truth is the fact that they ineluctably appear through the play of interdependence. Bhavya does not deny this. Nevertheless, he made a provisional division between the two truths in a move that reflected his essentially pedagogical concerns. The aim of this division was to create a basis for debate between Madhyamikas and non-Madhyamikas on the subject of the nature of phenomena.

Meaningful communication demands at least a modicum of shared premises. The participants in any debate must agree on what it is they are talking about. Let us take the stock example. Buddhists and Hindus disagree about the nature of sound. The former believe that sound is impermanent, the latter that it is permanent. They both accept, however, that what they are proposing to talk about is sound: the phenomenon that everyone experiences regardless of whatever properties they may ascribe to it. On the basis of this agreement, the debate can proceed, and both Buddhists and Hindus can go on to propound their own theories and respective arguments. By contrast, in matters where there is no shared ground, no meaningful exchange can take place. If, for instance, a Hindu were to approach a Buddhist wishing to discuss the various aspects attributed in the Vedas to "permanent sound," no debate is possible. Since the Buddhist con-

siders that there is no such thing as permanent sound, he or she has nothing to say about its supposed properties.

Turning to the question of the inherent existence of phenomena, it would seem that, since Madhyamikas deny this and non-Madhyamikas assert it, there is no shared ground. The two positions are at loggerheads and there is no room for discussion. From the Madhyamaka point of view, on the other hand, compassion demands that some effort be made to communicate the truth about the nature of phenomena (in other words, the view of the Buddha and of Nagarjuna). For it is only by the realization of this truth that the sufferings of samsara can be brought to an end. A bridge has to be created between the two sides; it is necessary to find a premise that they both share. Once this is done, the whole apparatus of reasoning can be brought into play and the non-Madhyamika can be induced, through logical argument, to see the error of believing in substantial existence. It is undoubtedly in this spirit that Bhavya adopts his important strategy. He divides the two truths on a temporary basis and accepts, for the sake of argument with his opponent, that phenomena exist "according to their characteristics." As a result, discussion between the Madhyamika and the non-Madhyamika can get under way. They are talking about phenomena, the characteristics of which they both perceive. They can now debate about whether or not such phenomena exist inherently in the way that they appear.

This division between the two truths and the implied necessity of defining them in relation to each other makes necessary a further distinction, this time in relation to the ultimate truth. In the *Tarkajvala*,[13] Bhavya considered the important objection that since the ultimate truth transcends the discursive intellect, it follows that no verbal formulation can possibly express it. How therefore is it possible even to talk about the two truths, distinguishing ultimate truth in opposition to the relative? If the ultimate cannot be talked about, how can it be distinguished from anything at all? In response, Bhavya draws a distinction between two kinds of ultimate truth. On the one hand, he says, there is the ultimate that is "world-transcending" (*'jig rten las 'das pa*). This is the ultimate truth in itself, the completely ineffable state beyond conceptual elaboration, which can only be experienced but never expressed. On the other hand, there is an ultimate that Bhavya describes as "pure worldly wisdom" (*dag pa 'jig rten pa'i ye shes*), which, in the context of the division of the two truths, is the counterpart of the relative and is the object of thought and word. It is "the ultimate that can be talked

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about." These expressions run parallel to another, better-known distinction, which first appears in another text also attributed to Bhavya,[14] between the "ultimate truth in itself" (*rnam grangs ma yin pa'i don dam*) and the "approximate ultimate" (*rnam grangs pa'i don dam*) or "concordant ultimate" (*mthun pa'i don dam*).

All these points serve to demonstrate the close association, established quite early between Madhyamaka and the use of logic within a commentarial tradition inaugurated by Bhavya, that in all probability constituted the mainstream presentation of Madhyamaka in India up to the time of Shantarakshita and beyond. As the inheritors of this tradition, the Tibetan Madhyamikas between the eighth and twelfth centuries would have been perfectly conversant with the expository methods and terminological distinctions just described. In other words, the logico-epistemological tradition of Dignaga and Dharmakirti was primarily and intimately linked with the kind of Madhyamaka that was dominant in both India and Tibet until the twelfth century—that is to say, the view that, after Patsap's translations of Chandrakirti's works, would be referred to as Svatantrika.

One is tempted to wonder how much the Tibetans before Patsap were aware of the importance of Chandrakirti. It seems inconceivable that Shantarakshita could have been ignorant of his illustrious predecessor, a confrere indeed of the same monastic center. But to what extent he enlarged upon Chandrakirti's view to his Tibetan disciples is something we shall never know. What we do know, however, is that a text by Chandrakirti—his commentary on Nagarjuna's *Yuktishashtika*—was translated in the early period by Jinamitra, Danashila, Shilendrabodhi, and Shantarakshita's disciple Yeshe De. Thus, although Chandrakirti was known in Tibet as early as the eighth century, this was specifically in connection with the logical tradition. Approximately four hundred years were to pass before he was identified as a great master of Madhyamaka. It is worth noting too that even in India, and despite the excellence of his writings, Chandrakirti seems to have attracted almost no following and made no impact on the development of the Madhyamaka tradition there. The first known commentary on the *Madhyamakavatara*, for example, was composed by Jayananda, no earlier than the eleventh century, over three hundred years after Chandrakirti's death.

One can well imagine therefore that the translation of Chandrakirti's works, especially the *Prasannapada* (his detailed commentary on Nagarjuna's *Mulamadhyamaka-karika*) must have caused a sensation in Tibet. For the first time, Tibetan scholars were confronted with a new and important

fact, namely, that the hitherto obscure victim of Bhavya's critique had been powerfully vindicated, and that Bhavya had himself been subjected to withering criticism, by a commentator who was evidently of the highest capacity. Chandrakirti refuted Bhavya's criticism of Buddhapalita point by point, vindicated the use of consequential arguments as the best means of establishing the view, and rejected Bhavya's use of independent arguments as being wholly out of place in the Madhyamaka context. "Bhavaviveka," he says in the *Prasannapada*, "wishes only to parade his knowledge of the logical treatises. He adduces independent arguments, despite the fact that he claims to be a Madhyamika. The Madhyamaka system, to be sure, creates lots of difficulties for such a would-be logician. He makes one mistake after another."[15] Chandrakirti's criticism of Bhavya's use of autonomous inferences was part of a wider rejection of the logico-epistemological tradition of Dignaga, which he regarded as a misguided attempt to find "philosophical completeness" and a sense of intellectual security that is antithetical to the fundamental insight of Madhyamaka.[16] For Chandrakirti, Bhavya's division between the two truths was neither necessary nor desirable and was in any case a thorough misrepresentation of Nagarjuna's approach. This is not to say that Chandrakirti rejected the use of reasoning, but for him its purpose, as with Nagarjuna and Buddhapalita, was to mark the limits of the discursive inquiry. It is perfectly true that in debate about the true existence of phenomena, there is no shared ground between the Madhyamika and the substantialist. Therefore, in Chandrakirti's view, consequences (*prasanga*) are the only kind of argument appropriate for Madhyamikas, for it is only by such means that they can indicate the ultimate without making statements that of necessity compromise, or at any rate obscure, their own position. The use of autonomous arguments, for the very reason that they imply the acceptance (however provisional) of entities, is ruled out. In reply to Bhavya's thesis that such arguments are demanded by the very nature of commentary, Chandrakirti could and did point out that in the autocommentary on the *Vigrahavyavartani* (his defense of Madhyamaka method), Nagarjuna himself had abstained from using independent probative arguments.[17] For Chandrakirti, it serves no purpose to divide the two truths or to explain the relative in philosophical terms. For such explanations do violence to the relative truth, in the sense that they produce theories that are more or less far-fetched in relation to the phenomena that are actually experienced. On the contrary, Chandrakirti says, the relative truth consists simply of

phenomena as we observe them, the unanalyzed constituents of the common consensus.

Following the work of Patsap, a new doxographical distinction came into being. It was now possible to differentiate Madhyamikas not, as previously, by the way they discussed conventionalities but according to the type of arguments they used to establish the ultimate truth. On one side are the Prasangikas, who in debate make no assertion of their own but seek to demolish the opponent's position by the adduction of unwanted consequences. On the other side, there are the Svatantrikas, who, not content with mere refutation, make their own positive assertions, independently of the views of their opponents. On the basis, therefore, of the critique laid out in the *Prasannapada*, it became customary to describe Buddhapalita and Chandrakirti as Prasangikas and Bhavya as Svatantrika. And given the fact that Shantarakshita and Kamalashila also made use of autonomous inferences, they too are classified in the doxographical literature as belonging, despite important philosophical differences, to the same group as Bhavya. Henceforth, an unwieldy terminological difference came into being between Sautrantika-Svatantrika-Madhyamaka and Yogachara-Svatantrika-Madhyamaka.

Once again it is important to emphasize the close connection between the Svatantrika school and logico-epistemological tradition (that is, the teachings on pramana) to which Shantarakshita himself made important contributions and in which the followers of his tradition, namely, the early Tibetan Madhyamikas, showed a keen interest. This was especially true of the school of Sangpu, founded by Ngok Loden Sherab and continued by Chapa Chökyi Senge. The latter composed the first Tibetan summary of Dharmakirti's thought and played a crucial role in the founding of Tibetan scholasticism.[18] This is in contrast with the radical Prasangika distrust of "philosophy" (at least as far as Chandrakirti was concerned) and in particular of logic and epistemology as being relevant to the establishment of the view. Given the degree to which the earlier tradition of Madhyamaka was entrenched in Tibet and also the intellectual tools and debating skills already at their disposal, it is not surprising that, despite the intrinsic quality of Chandrakirti's texts, the introduction of Prasangika to Tibet met with a powerful resistance. Chapa, for example, who was reputedly formidable in debate, is said to have brilliantly defended the Svatantrika view against Prasangika innovation and to have composed several refutations of Chandrakirti. In the interesting story of the encounter between him and

the Indian master Jayananda, it was perhaps to be expected that the victory should go to the Svatantrika master of logic and not to his Prasangika opponent.[19]

Despite such opposition, the Prasangika approach gained in popularity and received powerful support from Tsongkhapa (1357–1419), the founder of the Gelugpa school, who greatly emphasized its superiority. For him, the two subschools of Madhyamaka are divided by a significant difference of view. The misguided use of autonomous inferences by Bhavya, Shantarakshita, Kamalashila, and others indicated important, if residual, ontological commitments that resulted in an imperfect understanding of emptiness. The Svatantrika view is hence considered a lower tenet. It presents a path that of itself is unable to lead to liberation, something that only the Prasangika approach can achieve. For Tsongkhapa, one of the criteria for having a correct understanding of Madhyamaka is precisely the ability to distinguish correctly between the Prasangika and Svatantrika views and to understand that they do not have the same object of negation. It is said therefore that the Prasangikas refute the reality of phenomena on both the ultimate and conventional levels but that the Svatantrikas, in claiming that phenomena exist conventionally according to their characteristics, only manage to do so on the ultimate level. Since the Svatantrika view retains a certain clinging to substantiality, it is to be classified as the highest of the lower views, ranked beneath Prasangika, the supremacy of which Tsongkhapa threw into even sharper relief by the formulation of eight special features: his so-called eight difficult points.

The brilliance of Tsongkhapa's teaching, his qualities as a leader, his emphasis on monastic discipline, and the purity of his example attracted an immense following. Admiration, however, was not unanimous, and his presentation of Madhyamaka in particular provoked a fierce backlash, mainly from the Sakya school, to which Tsongkhapa and his early disciples originally belonged. These critics included Tsongkhapa's contemporaries Rongtön Shakya Gyaltsen (1367–1449) and Taktsang Lotsawa (1405–?), followed in the next two generations by Gorampa Sonam Senge (1429–1487), Serdog Panchen Shakya Chokden (1428–1509), and the eighth Karmapa, Mikyö Dorje (1505–1557). All of them rejected Tsongkhapa's interpretation as inadequate, newfangled, and unsupported by tradition. Although they recognized certain differences between the Prasangika and Svatantrika approaches,[20] they considered that Tsongkhapa had greatly exaggerated the divergence of view. They believed that the difference between the two

subschools was largely a question of methodology and did not amount to a disagreement on ontological matters.

Not surprisingly, these objections provoked a counterattack, and they were vigorously refuted by Tsongkhapa's disciples. In due course, however, the most effective means of silencing such criticisms came with the ideological proscriptions imposed at the beginning of the seventeenth century. These followed the military intervention of Gusri Khan, who put an end to the civil war in central Tibet, placed temporal authority in the hands of the Fifth Dalai Lama, and ensured the rise to political power of the Gelugpa school. Subsequently, the writings of all the most strident of Tsongkhapa's critics ceased to be available and were almost lost. It was, for example, only at the beginning of the twentieth century that Gorampa's works could be fully reassembled, whereas Shakya Chokden's works, long thought to be irretrievably lost, were discovered only recently in Bhutan and published as late as 1975.[21]

The only reason for alluding to these unfortunate events is to make the simple point that by the time Mipham came to write his commentary on Shantarakshita, the general understanding of Madhyamaka in Tibet was defined by the Gelugpa interpretation to the point where no other assessment could be seriously entertained. The hierarchy of views, which exalted the Prasangika approach and relegated the Svatantrika to an inferior rank, was so well entrenched as to appear practically self-evident. Placed indiscriminately in the same category, Bhavaviveka and Shantarakshita were dwarfed by the towering figure of Chandrakirti, and their works had long since ceased to be the object of serious study. Their views were reduced to a few salient points preserved in the doxographical literature—little more than philosophical museum pieces—to be cursorily reviewed and refuted with stock arguments by students on their way to understanding and establishing the Prasangika view as the pinnacle of all tenets.

In view of these generally held assumptions, it is obvious that, in representing Shantarakshita's *Madhyamakalankara*, Mipham could not proceed without first redefining the notions of Svatantrika and Prasangika. To advocate Shantarakshita's view without justification would have been automatically self-defeating. For in the intellectual climate that then predominated, it would have meant adopting a view that was universally held to be inferior. As one modern scholar has remarked, it would have been as bizarre and unintelligible as propounding the supremacy of Newtonian physics in the present century.[22] No one who held such a view could hope

to be taken seriously. Mipham therefore prefaces his commentary with a long and important introduction in which he presents in fine detail an alternative and extremely refined interpretation of the Svatantrika-Prasangika distinction. He integrates them into a workable synthesis. He reformulates them, shows how they relate to each other, and affirms the necessity of both.

When discussing the two Madhyamaka approaches, Mipham of course uses the terms "Svatantrika" and "Prasangika." In his day, it would have been confusing and counterproductive to do otherwise. On the other hand, the question of dialectical preferences (the use of consequences as opposed to autonomous inferences) to which these terms allude is for him of only secondary importance.[23] For Mipham, the key to understanding the difference between Prasangika and Svatantrika lies in the distinction between the two kinds of ultimate truth: the actual ultimate truth in itself (*rnam grangs ma yin pa'i don dam*) and the approximate or concordant ultimate (*rnam grangs pa'i don dam* or *mthun pa'i don dam*). The first to make this distinction was, as we have seen, Bhavya; it was part of his general pedagogical strategy of dividing the two truths. Given the importance of this distinction for Mipham, it is worth considering it a little further.

Chandrakirti says in the *Prasannapada* that the aim of the consequentialist dialectic is to bring the mind to a state of silence. This silence is not of course a state of mental paralysis. It is the silence of the wise, the silence of nonconceptual wisdom. For Chandrakirti, the purpose of the exclusive use of consequential arguments is to introduce the mind to the direct knowledge of emptiness, not to an intellectual understanding of it, however subtle. But here there is an obvious practical problem.

If the ultimate truth is ineffable, how can it be communicated to those who are without realization? How is one to avoid misunderstanding? What is to prevent one from taking Nagarjuna's message at face value and assuming that the ultimate is a mere negation, a kind of nihilism that undermines moral action? We know of course that Chandrakirti, like any other Buddhist teacher, must have expounded the doctrine and guided beings on the path, from the four noble truths onward. And, by milking the painting of a cow, he might have given his disciples a little help in calling into question their deeply held conviction of the solid reality of phenomena.[24] But when establishing the view, he makes no assertion and gives no description. From the very beginning, he presents the two truths as undivided: Phenomena appear yet are empty; they are empty and yet they appear. And

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either we are able to understand this and immediately perceive the unreal, dreamlike quality of phenomenal appearance—grasping at once that "form is emptiness, emptiness is form"—or we are not. It is clear that the Prasangika approach makes no concessions to the spiritually unprepared. Its success depends not only on the skill of the teacher but also on the aptitude and merit of the disciple.

In contrast with this, the Svatantrika approach, while not denying that the ultimate is completely mind-transcending, seems devised to meet the needs of beings of more ordinary capacity. This being so, it is not surprising that for so many centuries it should have remained the dominant tradition. It accepts, on a provisional basis, that the phenomenal world is to all intents and purposes real—real according to the characteristics that appear in the common consensus of unenlightened beings, who have an ingrained tendency to apprehend as truly existent whatever appears to their senses. *On the ultimate level*, however, these phenomena do not exist, for ultimately phenomena are empty. For the purposes of explanation therefore, the two truths are separated, and the ultimate truth, understood in terms of this division, is, as we have said, the *approximate ultimate*. It is the negation of the real existence of phenomena and is not to be mistaken for the *actual ultimate in itself*, which refers to an insight that transcends not only the existence but also the nonexistence of phenomena.

For Mipham, it is in relation to the distinction between the approximate and actual ultimates that the difference between the Prasangika and Svatantrika approaches is most clearly seen. "It should be understood," he says, "that the authentic Svatantrika is the approach that emphasizes the approximate ultimate, while the Prasangika approach emphasizes the ultimate in itself, beyond all assertions." Chandrakirti's Prasangika method aims to place the mind immediately and directly in the state of freedom from conceptual elaboration (as experienced in the meditation of those who have attained the path of seeing and beyond). To this end, consequential reasoning is used only in order to abolish the attempts of reason to account for the true status of things. By contrast, the Svatantrika method is gradual. It begins with the phenomena of which the world seems to be composed and which impinge upon our senses. These phenomena—which ineluctably appear to us whether we think them real or not—are provisionally accorded a certain existence. This creates the space for debate and the reasoned demonstration that phenomena cannot possibly exist in the way that they appear. By this means, the (approximate) ultimate truth is

posited, in contrast with the conventional truth of appearance. "Finally," Mipham says, "the ultimate truth in itself, which is completely free from all assertion, is reached." The ultimate truth that the Svatantrikas expound and demonstrate by rational means is but a distant if concordant image, "no more than a conceptual reflection" of the ultimate truth in itself. And with regard to the latter—which is what noble beings on the Bodhisattva grounds "see with the utterly stainless primordial wisdom of meditative equipoise"—the Svatantrikas, like the Prasangikas, make no assertion. The final goal of the Svatantrika and Prasangika approaches is therefore the same. The difference lies only in the pedagogical methods adopted. Obviously, these reflect the needs of the disciples, not the level of realization of the teacher. Consequently, it is inappropriate to classify the great masters of Madhyamaka as higher or lower on the scale of views. If a hierarchical distinction does exist between the Prasangika and Svatantrika methods, it can only be in terms of the qualities and aptitudes of the disciples for whose sake they are expounded. "The two approaches, Svatantrika and Prasangika, belong respectively to those who follow the gradual path and those whose realization is not gradual (*rim skyed*) but immediate (*cig car*)."[25] Both approaches are therefore to be prized—especially the Prasangika, for "this profound view resembles the manner in which primordial purity is established in the texts of the Great Perfection."[26] Finally, whereas the *Madhyamakalankara* embodies for the most part the Svatantrika method, brief but perfectly clear passages indicate that, on his own account, Shantarakshita "indeed possesses the ultimate and essential view of the Prasangikas." Consequently, Mipham roundly declares, his view "is in perfect agreement with the view of the glorious Chandrakirti."[27]

Mipham's point therefore is that, in addition to bringing together both the Middle Way and Mind Only teachings, the *Madhyamakalankara* also embodies a synthesis of the Prasangika and Svatantrika approaches. It is consequently an ornament for the entire Madhyamaka and not just for one subschool. By elaborating such a synthesis, Mipham's aim is to recover the work of Shantarakshita and the Svatantrikas generally as objects of respectable study. And he shows at some length that the neglect of their teachings, encouraged by imperfect and superficial doxographical classifications, leads to a distorted understanding of the entire tradition and constitutes an important hindrance to the realization of the Madhyamaka view.

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Chittamatra

The four tenet systems familiar from the doxographical literature are arranged in a hierarchy of views according to the way in which they define the ultimate nature of phenomena, an ascending scale that culminates in Madhyamaka, which shows that the ultimate status of phenomena is beyond the reach of conceptual and verbal formulation.

According to the usual description, the Chittamatra, or Mind Only, school defines as the relative truth the field of phenomena that appears to the deluded mind as divided between perceived objects and the perceiving mind. In reality, however, phenomena are not separate from the consciousness that observes them. Furthermore, the mind that underlies the impression of subject and object but transcends them, being "empty" of both (*gnyis stong gi shes pa*), constitutes for the Chittamatra the ultimate ground or truth. Because the Chittamatra view establishes this ultimate as a specific entity, namely, the mind itself, it is refuted by Madhyamaka and is assigned a position lower down the doxographical scale.

The adequacy of this description of Chittamatra has been questioned. In the opinion of some modern scholars,[40] the Madhyamaka refutation is directed only against what was in effect a later distortion of the original teachings. This negative development had come about through the mistaken interpretation of certain passages, found in the writings of Asanga and Vasubandhu (400–480) to the effect that "All is consciousness." Instead of understanding such expressions in the sense in which they were intended, namely, as descriptions of meditative experiences, some later philosophers, notably Dharmapala (530–561), had interpreted them literally in an ontological sense. This led to the mistaken impression that Asanga and Vasubandhu had propounded a philosophically idealist position that "All is mind." The term "Chittamatra" has therefore been called into question as an appropriate name for the teachings of Asanga and Vasubandhu, preference being given to "Yogachara," a name that more obviously evokes the meditative context in which these teachings were first formulated.

Attractive as this thesis may be, the fact remains that no distinction is to be found in the doxographical literature between an original doctrine of Yogachara as opposed to a later idealist philosophy of Chittamatra. And in

his commentary, Mipham has no qualms in using the term "Chittamatra" (*sems tsam*) on all occasions and in a manner that is evidently synonymous with the term "Yogachara" occurring in the well-established expression "Yogachara-Madhyamaka." This is not to say, however, that the distinction just mentioned is imaginary. On the contrary, it appears to be corroborated by oral tradition, which recognizes a similar, if not identical, division between (1) the scriptural Chittamatra, that is, the Mind Only teachings found in the sutras (*bka'i sems tsam*), and (2) the Chittamatra regarded as a tenet system (*grub mtha'i sems tsam*). The point of difference between these two forms of Mind Only doctrine is precisely the matter of whether the mind is considered to be a truly existent, ultimate reality. Only Chittamatra as a tenet system affirms this, and consequently it is only the tenet system that is the proper object of Madhyamaka refutation. By contrast, as recorded in the *Lankavatara-sutra* and the other scriptures that expound the Mind Only doctrine, the Buddha himself never said that the mind is truly and ultimately existent.

Without going into the question of how Chittamatra as a tenet system could have evolved from the Buddha's actual teachings and whether it constitutes a deformation of the original doctrine, the important point to bear in mind in the present instance is that, in Shantarakshita's synthesis, the adoption of the Madhyamaka view on the ultimate level necessarily implies a rejection of the fundamental position of the Chittamatra system, namely, that the mind is ultimately real. When therefore it is said that Shantarakshita accepts the Chittamatra on the conventional level, the view in question is identified as the scriptural Chittamatra (*bka'i sems tsam*) and not Chittamatra as a tenet system. It diverges from the doctrine expounded, for example, by Dharmapala, but it is nevertheless in perfect harmony with the statements of the Mind Only sutras, and this is specifically identified by Mipham as the authentic tradition of Asanga and Vasubandhu. The point is made furthermore that only the Chittamatra as a tenet system asserts the ultimate existence of the mind, and therefore it is only the tenet system that figures in the doxographical hierarchy of views, being assigned a subordinate position beneath Madhyamaka. By implication, the scriptural Chittamatra, insofar as it does not make such an assertion, escapes such a classification and need not be considered inferior to, or at variance with, the Madhyamaka view. This placing of Madhyamaka and Chittamatra (understood as *bka'i sems tsam*) on a comparable level is typical of the Nyingma approach, which resists the tendency to distinguish hierarchically the

scriptures of the second and third turnings of the wheel of Dharma (placing the second above the third, or vice versa). Instead, the teachings of the two turnings are accepted as complementary. The tradition of vast activities deriving from Maitreya and Asanga and the tradition of the profound view of Manjushri and Nagarjuna are regarded as equally important. Neither should it be thought that Shantarakshita's association of the Chittamatra with the relative, and the Madhyamaka with the ultimate, truth is meant to suggest that the latter is more important than the former. For the relative and ultimate coincide in phenomena and are of equal significance. All this is a reminder that there are limits to the usefulness of doxographical classifications. The latter are summary, simplified accounts of a reality that must have been far more complex and interesting.

It is important to recall that each of the four tenet systems presents its own version of the two truths. When defining the ultimate truth of phenomena (as the partless particle, the nondual, self-knowing mind, or the emptiness of intrinsic existence), each system is in effect formulating an ontology, informing us of what phenomena actually are. When, on the other hand, these systems go on to consider the relative or conventional truth, that is, the things appearing to the senses and with which we interact (defined as, for example, gross extended phenomena, or in terms of the duality of subject and object), the point of interest is not so much what phenomena are but how they are perceived and known. Ontology gives way to epistemology. In the context of Svatantrika-Madhyamaka, this parallel association between ontology and ultimate truth, and epistemology and conventional truth, is of particular importance. In both Svatantrika subschools, the ontological question of the ultimate nature of phenomena is settled in terms of Madhyamaka. This necessarily implies that the ontological component specific to each of the non-Madhyamaka tenet systems adopted with a view to explaining the conventional truth is annulled. The Sautrantika and Chittamatra tenets are refuted on the point of their ontology but retained for what is essentially their epistemological usefulness. Bhavya, for example, does not believe in the ultimate existence of the partless particle, but finding the theory of an extramental world to be plausible on the relative level, he uses the atomic theory of the Sautrantikas as a convenient means to undermine the belief in the reality of gross extended phenomena, and as a stepping-stone to an understanding of the Madhyamaka view. Likewise, Shantarakshita does not believe in the ultimate existence of the mind, but being well aware of the philosophical difficulties involved in claiming that we can have knowledge of an objective and extramental

world, he opts to present the conventional according to the much more subtle model of Mind Only. This will become clearer when we consider the role of the pramana tradition in Shantarakshita's synthesis. For the moment, it is important to keep in mind the essentially epistemological thrust of the Svatantrikas' respective explanations of the conventional truth, because it brings into focus the fact that in Svatantrika-Madhyamaka, non-Madhyamaka tenet systems are never adopted in toto on the conventional level. This would be an obvious absurdity. A "relatively true ontology" is a contradiction in terms.

What are the advantages of using the Mind Only teaching as a means to understanding phenomenal experience? Perhaps the most important effect of the Mind Only approach is to remove the enormous gulf that appears to separate the subjective observer from the "objective fact." This facilitates an understanding of the doctrine of karma, since it is understood that perceptions and experiences—even when they appear to impinge upon us from outside—are a matter of our own creation. And once one understands that experience, good or bad, happy or miserable, is the result of former action, one acquires the key to the creation of happy and wholesome states and the removal of misery. This knowledge is, for Buddhists, a source of meaning and freedom, the complete antithesis of a hopeless Heideggerian "thrownness" according to which the objective situations of life—the fact that, for instance, one is American or Iraqi, strong or weak, affluent or destitute, talented, cruel, good-natured, or whatever—are as unintelligible and uncontrollable as the chance throwing of a dice.

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The Chittamatra approach emphasizes the fact that no matter how real and solid external objects may seem, all experience of them—including our knowledge about them and their apparently objective constitution—occurs wholly within the sphere of consciousness. This carries the important implication that even if one accepts the objective existence of phenomena separate from the mind, their extramental mode of existence, if such there is, is by definition unknowable. To reach beyond the mind and to experience phenomena exclusively from their side, in a complete self-contained objectivity, is as impossible as it is for us to climb out of our own skin. Indeed, the very suppositions that there is a "mind" and that there is a "world," and that there is a separation between the two, are themselves mental events.

Philosophically, Chittamatra provides us with an interesting and perhaps more cogent explanation of shared experience than realist theories do. The latter can only explain the apparently parallel perceptions of several observers by an appeal to extramental objectivity, the knowledge of which,

as we have just suggested, is problematic. Let us imagine that several people are looking at the same thing, a tree, for example. Their common experience is possible, the realist says, because there *really* is a tree endowed with objective existence, separate from the people observing it. It is assumed that the tree has a specific location, size, shape, color, texture, and so on. But what grounds have we for believing this commonsense assumption? A closer inspection reveals that so-called shared experiences are, at best, only approximate and never identical. There is no certainty that coexistent observers see exactly the same things. All knowledge about the tree, for example, even the understanding that there is a tree at all, must derive from perception. And perception generally depends on the kind and constitution of the sense powers available. We may assume, for instance, that humans and mosquitoes inhabit the same world, but given the very different organization of their respective sensory apparatus, it is unlikely that what they perceive is the same or even remotely similar. "Yes, of course," the realist will object. "Perceptions differ, but there must be an objective basis that gives rise to perception." This is the general assumption. But who is to say which set of perceptions—ours or the mosquito's—correspond more closely with the "real world." Even among humans, the physical considerations of location and perspective dictate that the simultaneous observation of a single thing must result in different sensory perceptions, none of which can claim to represent the object as it actually is. Because they must observe it from several locations, when different people see the "same tree," they cannot actually have the same visual experience. They see different shapes and colors according to the tree's remoteness or proximity, the angle from which it is seen, the way the light falls, and so on. Analogous sets of variables can be found for all the sense powers, and it is clear that the kind and quality of our perceptions of a given thing are imposed by factors that have nothing to do with the thing itself. Any perception of a thing is partial and inexact, and no perception corresponds to what we suppose the thing actually is. In other words, the belief that there really is an extramental object involves an assumption that goes beyond the data that are actually available to the observing mind. On a more general psychological level too, experience of a thing by different individuals varies according to their levels of interest and sensitivity. For these dictate the strength with which different aspects of things emerge. Certain characteristics of a tree, for instance, will be immediately apparent to a botanist but may completely escape the attention of the artist painting it, the civil engineer wishing to remove it, or the hurrying commuter who does not even notice it.

All such paradoxes, which emerge from a realist account of perception, are avoided by the Chittamatra view, which denies that observed objects exist in separation from the consciousness observing them. According to the Chittamatrins, the sort of world that we perceive and the phenomena that we encounter within that world are entirely a matter of the fructification of karmic seeds and tendencies lodged within the mind. Our perceptions of the world and its contents coincide (but not exactly) with the similar perceptions of other beings to the extent that the ripening of their karmic seeds resembles our own. The experience of beings is increasingly similar in proportion as their "karmic constitution" converges. It is unnecessary to go into further details at this point, but it is worth emphasizing that, from the point of view of spiritual training, the Chittamatra account of experience has, as we have already suggested, a practical application of obvious importance. Insofar as the experience of beings is explained entirely in terms of the mind, it follows that this same experience can be manipulated and transformed to the extent that the mind is understood and brought under control. The adoption of a Mind Only account in this sense consequently forms a useful basis for ethics, as also for meditative training, since it prepares the way for the tantric view of phenomena as the display of the mind. On the other hand, as Mipham mentions, the contrasting view set forth in the lower tenet systems is highly problematic. The view that there is an extramental world consisting of extended objects that may be broken down into real indivisible particles is difficult to reconcile with fundamental Buddhist ideas such as karma. If the indivisible particles that make up the universe exist separate from the mind, how are they to be accounted for? They cannot be the product of karma because, as Chandrakirti observes, karma is mind-dependent. If therefore the particles exist, they must either arise uncaused or be the product of a creator, whether purusha or some divine entity. Neither view is acceptable. By contrast, to say that the world has arisen through the power of the mind "is none other than the teaching of the entire Mahayana."[41]

This brief outline of the Chittamatra view emphasizes its psychological and pragmatic aspects. It is found to give a more satisfactory account of perception than realist theories and has a practical appeal in the sense that it focuses attention on the role of the mind in the understanding and transformation of experience.

As we have said, the Yogachara-Madhyamaka synthesis does not incorporate the Mind Only view as a complete philosophical system. Shantarakshita makes no claim that the phenomenal world *is* the mind alone, and it

would be incorrect, in fact absurd, to describe Shantarakshita as a philosophical idealist on the conventional level. For according to Madhyamaka, the true status of phenomena lies beyond conceptual and verbal qualification. Nevertheless, on the conventional level, Mind Only is an epistemological account—in fact the best and most profitable account—of phenomenal appearance. Viewed in this way, as Mipham points out, Shantarakshita's understanding of Mind Only is not different from the view expressed by Chandrakirti in the *Madhyamakavatara*.[42]

The Madhyamakalankara and the Pramana Tradition

One of the features of the *Madhyamakalankara* most likely to cause trouble for the nonspecialist reader is the frequent reference to the logico-epistemological tradition of Dignaga (fifth century) and Dharmakirti (530–600)[43]—a tradition to which Shantarakshita himself made important contributions.[44] Undoubtedly the full appreciation of Mipham's commentary would require an extensive knowledge of this difficult and complex subject. This is certainly not the place to attempt even a summary exposition of these theories, but the following reflections may help the general reader to gain an overall impression of the tradition's salient features and its relevance to the *Madhyamakalankara*.

Doxographically, Dignaga and Dharmakirti are usually referred to as "Sautrantikas following reasoning" (*rigs pa rjes 'brang gi mdo sde pa*). This classification identifies them as philosophical realists (who accept the existence of an extramental world) but distinguishes them from the position of the Vaibhashikas and the "Sautrantikas following scripture" (*lung gi rjes 'brang gi mdo sde pa*), owing to, among other things, their complex and sophisticated theory of perception. Dharmakirti, whose view for present purposes will be identified with that of Dignaga, refutes the naïvely commonsense approach of the Vaibhashika system, according to which nonmental objects are known directly by the sense organs. Taking as axiomatic the essential difference between mind and matter, the Sautrantikas following reasoning explain the process of perception by positing the existence of mental aspects. These are understood to bridge the gap between the inner consciousness and the outer world. Being of a radically different nature from matter, the mind cannot enter into direct contact with physical entities but detects them indirectly via the aspects, or mental images, that these same entities are said to cast upon it, in the same way that things

cause their reflections to appear in a mirror. The aspect, which is considered to be an accurate representation of the nonmental object that causes it, does not constitute a discrete entity within the mind but is best understood as a configuration of consciousness whereby consciousness itself assumes the form of the external thing. Being consciousness, this configuration is said to be automatically self-cognizant and does not require additional conscious activity for knowledge of the object (or more directly the aspect) to take place.[45] The impression that we have of being directly in touch with an external world is therefore an illusion. The mind is in direct contact only with the mental aspect, which is therefore said both to reveal and to veil phenomena. Mipham concludes his general presentation of this view with the remark that for those who posit the existence of an external world, no epistemology is "more coherent than this, and more tenable."

Attractive as it seems, the theory of aspects, or sakaravada (which resembles the representationalist theories of certain Western philosophers), turns out to be problematic when subjected to close scrutiny. And the insuperable problems that emerge oblige Dharmakirti to adopt a procedure that is of great interest, especially in relation to Shantarakshita's Yogachara-Madhyamaka synthesis. As a means of explaining perception, the mental aspect had been posited as a connecting link between material things and the nonmaterial mind. This solution, however, is only apparent; the problem is not removed but only displaced. The aspect seems to throw a bridge across the mind-matter divide. But since the aspect is itself a feature of consciousness, a new and unexplained gulf now opens between the external object, which is material, and the aspect itself, which is mental. This difficulty is the inevitable result of positing two radically different entities and then trying to connect them in terms of only one of these entities. The aspect theory tries to explain the link between consciousness and matter, but it does so exclusively in terms of consciousness. The difficulties of explaining perception within the parameters of the Sautrantika tenet system are thus insuperable. Only two solutions are possible, and both involve a rejection of Sautrantika presuppositions. Either one must posit a third principle, which is neither mind nor matter but somehow encompasses both, or one must decide that the separation between mind and matter is itself unreal. Dharmakirti adopts the second solution. When confronted by the ultimately unworkable nature of the aspect theory, he does not attempt to devise a solution in terms of Sautrantika but instead shifts his position to a Yogachara framework. This enables him to evade the difficulty rather than

answer it. According to Yogachara, the aspects are produced not by external objects but by latent tendencies in the mind. Since there are no objects outside consciousness, the problem of the relation between aspects and external objects does not arise.[46]

This willingness to retreat to a more idealistic position is an important feature of Dharmakirti's system. It is also disquieting, since Dharmakirti appears to be contradicting himself on fundamental issues. His procedure, however, was essentially pragmatic and closely linked to the general strategy of defending Buddhism against its Hindu opponents, who for their part were strong believers in the reality of the external world. For his defense to be viable, Dharmakirti was obliged to present his view in terms that, at least to begin with, were acceptable to his mainly Nyaya opponents. Within the context of the philosophical confrontation, it would have served no purpose to advocate an idealist position from the outset, for this would have been rejected by the Hindus out of hand. Therefore, since his opponents were realists, Dharmakirti began by adopting the realist stance of the Sautrantika tenet system, thus creating a commonly acceptable basis for discussion. And the fact that he expresses himself in Sautrantika terms throughout most of his work does not alter the essentially provisional nature of this move. The Sautrantika position thus adopted did not, however, reflect Dharmakirti's own view. His references to Yogachara, although comparatively rare, are enough to show that he believed that it provided a more accurate and profound insight into the nature of reality. "It is well known," Mipham observes, "that Dharmakirti said, 'When I investigate outer phenomena, I take the Sautrantika as my starting point.'"[47] But in the long run, it is clear that Dharmakirti himself found this view to be inadequate, and he therefore adopted what has been called a strategy of an ascending scale of analysis, according to which "commonsensical views are subsumed by more critical but more counterintuitive views."[48] A Sautrantika approach is adopted as a point of departure, but when, in the course of investigation, problems emerge that are unanswerable in Sautrantika terms, the conclusion is inevitable that answers can be found only by adopting a more elevated, less realist view. The purpose here is not merely apologetic. For Dharmakirti, reasoning demonstrates that it is impossible to formulate a coherent theory of perception in terms of a belief in the existence of external, nonmental objects. Some form of idealism is logically inevitable. The entire thrust of his exposition therefore is to prove to his Hindu opponents that philosophical

consistency demands that they abandon their belief in the real existence of entities and adopt the Buddhist position.

This logically induced progression of ideas is paralleled in the historical development of the Svatantrika-Madhyamaka tradition. Coming after Dignaga but before Dharmakirti, Bhavya had adopted the Sautrantika tenet in his presentation of the conventional truth. But as Dharmakirti shows, epistemology, if it is to be consistent, is forced to retreat from a comparatively unsophisticated acceptance of external phenomena into a more idealist position. Set against this background, Shantarakshita's acceptance of Mind Only on the conventional level, which is, as Mipham remarks, "in agreement with the view of the glorious Dharmakirti," is both natural and inevitable. Based on the principles of logic and epistemology, Shantarakshita's Yogachara-Madhyamaka synthesis is therefore shown to be superior to the Sautrantika-Madhyamaka solution of Bhavya.

Universals and Exclusions

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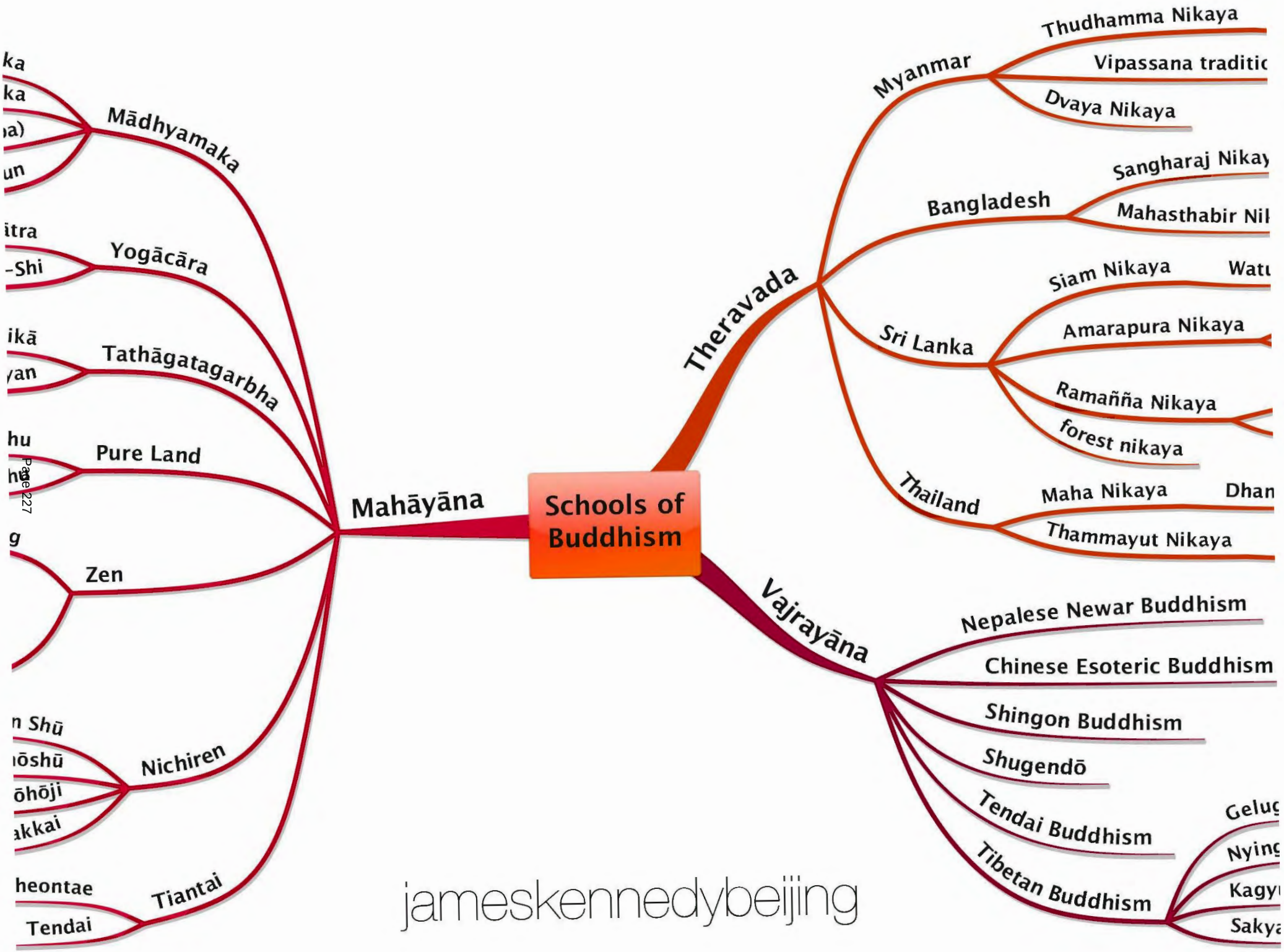
In addition to the theory of mental aspects and the complex discussions provoked thereby, the reader of Mipham's commentary will have to contend with the question of universals. This is a large and difficult field. Basically, and once again in terms of the Sautrantika tenet as he interpreted it, Dharmakirti made a radical distinction between two kinds of phenomena. On the one hand, there are the causally efficient entities that we encounter through sense perception. These are described as *specifically characterized* (*rang mtshan*), meaning that they are things (*dngos po*) located in a given time and place and endowed with specific properties. They are impermanent, are produced by causes, and are themselves causally effective (*don byed nus pa*). These are the things that populate the "real," as distinct from the imaginary, world. Contrasted with such entities are abstract thoughts, such as the general ideas that enable us to identify and classify things, and the illusory (from the Buddhist point of view) notions of whole and separate thingness that we impute to collections of elements. These phenomena are described as *generally characterized* (*spyi mtshan*); they are nonthings (*dngos med*) and cannot be specifically pinpointed in space and time. They are static, causally ineffective, conceptually constructed entities. Above all, they are unreal.

This distinction led Dharmakirti to a wholesale rejection of philosophical realism, especially in the extreme form advocated by the Hindu Nyaya.



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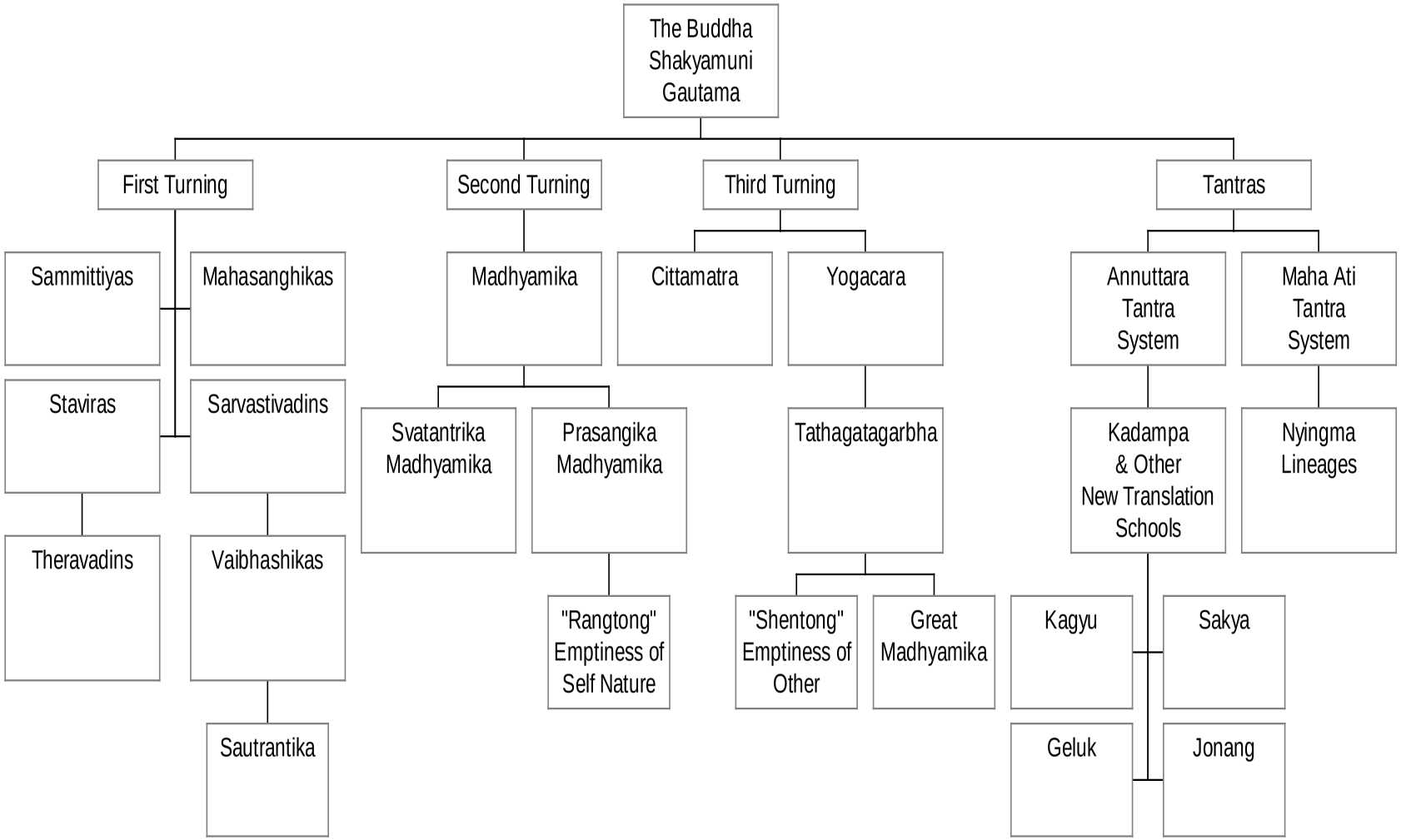

TIMELINE OF THE HISTORY OF BUDDHISM

DATE	CENTURY	ERA	PERSONS
566		**bce**	Birth of the Buddha at Lumbini
537		**bce**	Buddha's renunciation
531		**bce**	Buddha's Enlightenment at Bodh Gaya
528		**bce**	Buddha's First teaching at Benares
486		**bce**	Buddha's Parinirvana
486		**bce**	First Council
386		**bce**	Second Council
	Third-Fourth	**bce**	Development of the “Eighteen” Schools
265		**bce**	King Asoka
247		**bce**	Third Council
100		**bce**	Appearance of Mahayana in India
150		**ce**	Nagarjuna
200		**ce**	Aryadeva
	Third-Fourth	**ce**	Asanga
	Fourth	**ce**	Vasubandhu
425		**ce**	Nalanda Flourishing
475		**ce**	Dignaga
625		**ce**	Dharmakirti
	Seventh	**ce**	Appearance of Vajrayana in India
638		**ce**	Buddhism enters Tibet
609		**ce**	King Songtsen Gampo
675		**ce**	Candrakirti
700		**ce**	Santideva
	Eighth	**ce**	84 Mahasiddhas in India/Saraha
754		**ce**	King Trisong Detsen
	Eighth	**ce**	Santaraksita in Tibet
	Eighth	**ce**	Padmasambhava in Tibet
	Eighth	**ce**	Vimalamitra in Tibet
775		**ce**	Samye Monastery Built
792		**ce**	Debate at Samye
836		**ce**	King Lang Darma’s persecution of Buddhism
842		**ce**	King Lang Darma is assassinated
958		**ce**	Rinchen Zangpo

TIMELINE OF THE HISTORY OF BUDDHISM

DATE	CENTURY	ERA	PERSONS
982		**ce**	Atisha born (d. 1054)
988		**ce**	Tilopa born (d. 1069)
993		**ce**	Drogmi, founder of Sakya
		ce	Maitripa
1012		**ce**	Marpa born (d. 1096)
1016		**ce**	Naropa born (d. 1100)
1052		**ce**	Milarepa born (d. 1135)
1071		**ce**	Sakya and Sangpu Monastery founded
1079		**ce**	Gampopa born (d. 1153)
1110		**ce**	Karmapa I Tusum Khyenpa born (d. 1193)
1182		**ce**	Sakya Pandita born
1195		**ce**	Buddhism in India completely destroyed
		ce	Nalanda destroyed
1207		**ce**	Tibet surrenders to Genghis Khan
1284		**ce**	Karmapa Ill Rangjung Dorje born (d. 1339)
1308		**ce**	Longchenpa born (d. 1363)
1357		**ce**	Tsongkhapa born (d. 1417)
1391		**ce**	Gendun Druppa, Dalai Lama I (d. 1475)
1617		**ce**	Dalai Lama V (d. 1682)
1573		**ce**	Taranatha born
1643		**ce**	Potala built
1730		**ce**	Jigme Lingpa (d. 1798)
1813		**ce**	Jamgon Kongtrul Lodro Thaye born (d. 1899)
1825		**ce**	Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo born (d. 1892)
1829		**ce**	Terton Chokgyur Lingpa born (d. 1870)
1848		**ce**	Mipam Gyatso born (d. 1912)
1924		**ce**	Karmapa XVI born (d. 1981)
1934		**ce**	Dalai Lama XIV born
1939		**ce**	Trungpa XI born
1959		**ce**	Cinese take control of Tibet
1970		**ce**	Trungpa XI in North America
1987		**ce**	Trungpa XI dies

HISTORY OF BUDDHISM IN INDIA
Outline of Topics

1. **<u>Introduction, Overview & Context</u>**
   a. **Introduction:**
      i) Purpose of studying history of buddhism
      ii) Practicalities of the course
   b. Two Views of Buddhist History:
      i) Western scholars point of view
      ii) Traditional View – Chojung "Development of the Dharma"
   c. Major Theme – diversity & synthesis
      i) **Trend towards diversity:** As the expression of upaya –
         (1) View/Ground – existence of suffering vs emptiness
         (2) Paths – sravaka vs bodhisattva
         (3) Activity - householder vs monk
         (4) Goals – Arhat vs Buddha
      ii) **Problem:** What did the Buddha teach? What is the true path? What is the true goal? What is the real nature of reality? Who was the Buddha?
      iii) **Unifying Principles:** Accepting all received teachings as originating from the Buddha. Evaluating all teachings using the Four Reliances. Accepting all of the Buddha's teachings as true/valid.
      iv) **Solution - Synthesis:** Developing a ranking of teachings based upon level
         (1) View/Ground - relative and ultimate truths.
         (2) Paths – the lamrim or gradual path approach
         (3) Activity – the three levels of vows
         (4) Goal – the trikaya
      v) Conclusions:
         (1) History of Buddhism as gradual publicizing of teachings which were all presented by the Buddha
         (2) This gradual unfolding (chojung) is as a mirror of one's personal experience on the path
   d. Overview of the course:
      i) Life of the Buddha
      ii) Early Developments and Schools
      iii) Development of Mahayana
      iv) Nagarjuna and Madhayamaka
      v) Asanga and Yogacara and Tathagathagarba
      vi) Saraha and Vajrayana

2. **<u>The Life & Teachings of the Buddha</u>:**

   a. Ordinary Life of the Buddha:
      1. Cultural, social, economic context in India
      2. Birth at Lumbini; youth, marriage
      3. Renunciation and the four visions

4. **Studies, practices and asceticism**
5. **Enlightenment at Bodhi Gaya**
    a. Victory over the Four Maras
        i. Skandha – taking the skandhas as a self
        ii. Klesha – indulgence in emotionality
        iii. Devaputra – indulgence in pleasure
        iv. Yama – fear of death
    b. Understanding of causation
    c. Three types of knowledge
        i. Former births
        ii. Karma and rebirthing of all beings
        iii. Nidanas
    d. Vajra like samadhi
6. **After Enlightenment:**
    a. First teaching at Sarnath, first members of the Sangha
    b. Admitting women to the order
    c. Major Disciples:
        i. Shariputra & Maudgalyayana - "Om hetu prabhava…."
        ii. Ananda – personal attendent; did not clarify what were minor offences, did not request Buddha to live forever
7. **Parinirvana at Kushinagara**
    a. Last meal, last words, last act
    b. No successor, only the dharma
    c. Cremation and relics/stupas

B. The Teachings of the Buddha:

i) The First Turning
(1) The Four Noble Truths
(2) 8 Fold Path, sorted into the three wheels (shila, samadhi and prajna)
(3) 3 Marks & 5 Aggregates
(4) Dependent origination & the 12 Nidanas
(5) Five paths and 37 factors

ii) The Second Turning
(1) Expansion of the notion of Buddhahoodinitial notion of Trikaya
(2) The Bodhisattva Ideal & Path
(3) Shunyata/emptiness and the Two truths
(4) Ten Bodhisattva bhumis added to the path

iii) The Third Turning
(1) Buddhanature
    (a) Three reasons all beings possess this
    (b) Appears covered by adventitious faults but really empty of them
    (c) Natural possession of buddha qualities
(2) Three natures
    (a) Imaginary – parikalpita
    (b) Dependent – paratantra

(c) Completely Perfected - parinispanna

iv) The Tantras

(1) Sacred world - result as path; full engagement in world

(2) Skillful means:

(a) Method – creation and completion stage practices

(b) Liberation – mahamudra and maha ati

(3) Culmination of three turnings philosophically and practically

3. <u>Early Buddhism & the Development of Mahayana</u>:

a. **The Early Schools**

i) Historical Overview

(1) Councils and schisms

(a) First Council - 483 bce, sponsored by King Ajatashatru:

(i) Recitation of the Tripitika; Decision to retain all the rules

(b) Second Council – 383 bce, sponsored by King Ashoka:

(i) Yashas and the 10 practices prohibited in the Vinaya

(c) Third Council – 250 bce, sponsored by King Kanishka:

(i) Five points of Mahadeva regarding Arhants

(2) Development of Monastic and Lay Communities

(a) Monastic: transition from wandering to settled – extension of rainy season retreat; biweekly poshada ritual

(b) Lay Buddhists: aspiration for better rebirth, supporters of the monks

(3) Later Developments:

(a) Division into the 4 and then 18 Schools

(b) Royal support: King Ashoka.

(c) Missionary efforts, expansion, Sri Lanka, Silk Route

(d) Stupa and relic worship

ii) Major figures

(1) Kasyapa and Ananda, "patriarchs"

(2) King Ashoka and pillar edicts

(3) Buddhagosha in Sri Lanka – Visudhimagga/Path of Purification

iii) Philosophy & Practice

(1) Highest attainment is Arhatship (not Buddhahood!)

(2) Two types of dualistic nirvana/cessation – with and without remainder

(3) Primacy of consciousness, perception, mind, experience

(4) Abhidharma Realism - dharmas as the elements of existence

iv) Root Texts

(1) Tripitika/Pali Cannon – vinaya, sutras, abhidharma

(2) Commentaries on these

b. The Development of the Mahayana

i) Historical Overview

(1) Factors in development of Mahayana:

(a) Need for inclusion of lay Buddhists as genuine practitioners

(b) Geographic and Cultural expansion

(c) Natural philosophical and practical developments
(d) Distance in time from historical Buddha

(2) The emergence of Mahayana texts, views and practices
(3) Major monastic centers; intermingling of "HY" and "MY" practitioners
(4) Stupa worship develops into Sevenfold Offering – Prostration, Confession,

ii) Major figures – Six Ornaments

(1) Nagarjuna, Aryadeva – profound tradition of emptiness
(2) Asanga, Vasubandhu – vast tradition of skillfull means/compassionate activity
(3) Dignaga, Dharmakirti – logical tradition of fine analysis

iii) Philosophy & Practice

(1) Ground
(a) Emptiness of self as the skandhas
(b) Bodhicitta – aspiration for complete Buddhahood
(2) Path – the two wings of wisdom and compassion
(a) Wisdom – sees egolessness of self and phenomena
(b) Compassion – aspiration/vow and carrying out the bodhisattva path
(3) Fruition
(a) All can become Buddhas - only one true path, others are merely upaya
(b) Expanded version of Buddhahood – the immeasurable life of the Buddha, the two bodies of Buddha, etc.
(c) Non-dualistic nirvana, not cessation by destruction, surpasses Arhats

iv) Root Texts

(1) New Mahayana Sutras
(2) Shastras - commentaries

4. <u>Mahayana Schools of Thought</u>:

a. Madhyamaka – The Middle Way

i) Major Figures

(1) Nagarjuna & Aryadeva
(2) Buddhapalita and Bhavaviveka
(3) Chandrakirti & Shantideva

ii) Philosophy & Practice

(1) Ground
(a) Dependent Origination
(b) Emptiness of self
(2) Path
(a) Use of reason, language, dialectical method, non-implicative negation
(b) Four Skills – causes, results, one or many, interdependence
(c) Vipashyana - analytical (jegom)
(3) Fruition
(a) Emptiness of self and phenomena

(b) Two Truths
(c) Non conceptuality

iii) Root Texts

(1) Prajnaparamita & Other Second Turning Sutras
(2) Nagarjuna's Six Texts on Reason – MMKarikas, etc.
(3) Other commentaries and path texts

b. Cittamatra/Vijnanavada – Mind or Consciousness Only

i) Historical overview

(1) Early thread vs later thread
(2) Development from the Abhidharma realism

ii) Major Figures

(1) Early – Avitarka, etc.(pre-Nagarjuna)
(2) Later – Maitreya, Asanga, Vasubandhu

iii) Philosophy & Practice

(1) Ground:
(a) Universality of the dharmas, experience, mental activity
(b) Interdependence
(2) Path
(a) Analysis of the eight consciousnesses, alayavijnana
(b) Enlightenment by revulsion in the alaya
(c) Shamatha and resting vipashyana (jokgom)
(3) Fruition
(a) Triple world as Mind Only
(b) The Three Natures

iv) Root Texts

(1) Lankavatara and other Mind Only Sutras
(2) Texts by Maitreya, Asanga, Vasubhandu

5. <u>Later Developments In India</u>:

a. Great Madhyamaka/Tathagatagarbha

i) Historical Overview

(1) Refinement of Nagarjuna to avoid misunderstanding of emptiness
(2) Mahayana is wanning, defend against outsiders and Hinayana
(3) More sutras keep appearing!

ii) Philosophy & Practice

(1) Ground - Buddha Nature/Tathagatagarbha –
(a) In ordinary beings it is covered in defilements
(b) In Buddhas it is fully manifest
(2) Path
(a) Buddhanature possess two aspects:
(i) Appears covered by adventitious faults but really empty of them
(ii) But it is not empty of Buddha Dharmas/qualities
(b) Shamatha and Vipashyana (both types), graded path
(3) Fruition

(a) Tathagathagarbha Shentong (empty of other) - Beyond the extremes of eternalism/nihilism by fully understanding madhyamika emptiness
(b) Refined version of the three natures

iii) Major Figures:

(1) Maitreya & Asanga
(2) Vasubhandu & Sthiramati
(3) Dignaga & Dharmakirti
(4) Shantarakshita, Kamalashila

iv) Root Texts

(1) Lion's Roar of Queen Srimala and other Tathagatagarbha Sutras
(2) The Five Dharmas (texts) of Maitreya
(3) Commentary texts by Asanga
(4) Vasubandhu's Trimshika, Vimshatika, Trisvabhavanirdesha
(5) Treatises on logic of Dignaga and Dharmakirit

b. The Vajrayana

i) Historical Overview

(1) Monastic universities
(2) Hinduism, Hindu yoga
(3) Yogis, Siddhas
(4) Muslim invasions
(5) Disappearance in India

ii) Philosophy & Practice

(1) Ground
(a) Vajra Nature – indestructibility of Buddhanature and its qualities
(2) Path
(a) The Four Tantras/Six Yanas and the Nine yanas
(b) Three types of practices
(i) Creation stage - Yidam practices, visualization, recitation, union
(ii) Completion stage – inner yoga
(iii) Formless practices – mahamudra, maha ati
(3) Fruition
(a) Sacred world - result as path; full engagement in world
(b) Culmination of three turnings philosophically and practically
(c) Mahasiddha – complete transformation of confusion into wisdom

iii) Major Figures

(1) 84 Mahasiddhas
(2) Saraha

iv) Root Texts

(1) Tantras – Hevajra, Guhyagarbha; root, expanded, commentarial, Mother, Father and Non dual tantras, etc
(2) Numerous commentaries
(3) Dohas – vajra songs of the Siddhas