

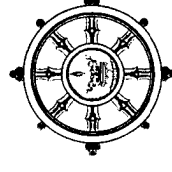
# Wisdom: Two Buddhist Commentaries

ON THE NINTH CHAPTER OF  
SHANTIDEVA'S *BODHICARYAVATARA*

Khenchen Kunzang Palden  
**The Nectar of  
Mañjushri's Speech**

Minyak Kunzang Sönam  
**The Brilliant Torch**

TRANSLATED FROM THE TIBETAN BY  
THE PADMAKARA TRANSLATION GROUP



EDITIONS PADMAKARA

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## TRANSLATORS' INTRODUCTION

For most students of Mahayana Buddhism the 'Ninth' or 'Wisdom Chapter' immediately evokes the Indian pandita Shantideva's masterly conclusion to his *Bodhicaryavatara* (*The Way of the Bodhisattva*). According to legend, when Shantideva delivered this concise and poetic account of the Bodhisattva path to the monastic community at Nalanda in the 8th century, he accompanied his brilliant exposition of Madhyamika philosophy in the ninth chapter by soaring into the air above his throne and finally disappearing altogether, the sound of the last verses descending from the sky onto the ears of his astonished audience. While this may have been visible proof to the sceptics that 'Form is emptiness, emptiness is form,' it is Shantideva's words that have survived, as a comprehensive introduction to the Prasangika view.

In the ninth chapter Shantideva engages in debate with the various philosophical schools of his day, both Buddhist and non-Buddhist, and sets about systematically demolishing each of their arguments in turn. He does this not out any sense of intolerance or triumphalism, but because they collectively summarise the mistaken views entertained by everybody to a greater or lesser extent. Therefore his refutations are still relevant, regardless of whether the tenet systems in question still exist as such. Indian philosophy, for instance, has greatly evolved since Shantideva's time, largely in reaction to Buddhist critique, and it is therefore not surprising to find that ideas currently held by Hindu thinkers are not necessarily the same as those which are the target of Madhyamika debate.

In gradually introducing the Prasangika view to his audience, Shantideva assumes a very considerable knowledge of other philosophical systems. Indeed, the abbots and monks at Nalanda must have been so familiar with these arguments that in his text Shantideva presents the opposition's side in the debate by means of the barest and most oblique references, sometimes not even mentioning the opponents' argument at all.

The ninth chapter is, moreover, written in a highly cryptic style, incomprehensible to anyone not already fully versed in the subject or adept in the intricacies of Buddhist logic. It is hardly surprising therefore that some hundred commentaries have been written on the Bodhicharyavatara, a number of them devoted entirely to the wisdom chapter. These commentaries decode and enlarge upon Shantideva's poem, filling in the gaps and systematising the different subjects touched upon.

Necessary and invaluable though such commentaries are, they are by no means easy to understand, particularly for beginners. To start with, the subject matter is extremely profound and subtle, and takes years of dedicated study and meditation to master. Secondly, such texts cannot be approached in the same way as most ordinary western books. Any serious student in Tibet would never have dreamt of casually picking up a text of this kind and expecting to understand what it was about on first reading. With a work such as the *Bodhicharyavatara* students began by receiving the all-important oral transmission from a qualified lama and learning the root text by heart. They would then listen to a detailed oral commentary from their teacher, who would often refer to a written commentary much in the same way as lecture notes, explaining particular passages to suit the degree of understanding of the students. In the case of the *Bodhicharyavatara*, anyone studying the ninth chapter would already have a thorough grounding in Mahayana Buddhism, gained from the first eight chapters as well as from other texts.

We point out all the above not with any intention to discourage readers in their attempts to understand this complex and highly technical subject, but rather to encourage them to be patient, to reread the commentaries repeatedly, and above all to clear up difficult points with qualified teachers.

The two commentaries presented here were both written around the turn of the twentieth century. The first, taken from Khenpo Kunzang Pelden's complete commentary of the *Bodhicharyavatara*, *The Nectar of Mañjuśrī's Speech*, explores a Nyingmapa approach to understanding the chapter on wisdom. The second, *The Brilliant Torch*, is by Minyak Kunzang Sönam, who offers an explanation of

Shantideva's text along Gelugpa lines, using rather different terminology. In examining the subject matter of the ninth chapter from the points of view of two different traditions, readers will, it is hoped, gain a deeper perspective on this subject.

The translators are well aware of the numerous shortcomings in these translations, particularly as regards that of the commentary by Minyak Kunzang Sönam in which particular difficulties were encountered with the terminology. However we have made this first draft edition available somewhat prematurely in the hope that it might be useful to those attending the Dalai Lama's teachings on the ninth chapter in Lavar this autumn. It is intended that these translations will be revised and improved at a future date, and the translators will welcome any comments and suggestions which this first edition may provoke.

A few footnotes have been provided, but it is generally assumed that readers have some basic knowledge of Mahayana Buddhism, even if they have not been able to study the earlier sections of the *Bodhicharyavatara* in detail. As regards the various philosophical systems refuted in the text, the commentaries mention the aspects of these systems that are relevant to the argument, but readers will need to refer elsewhere for more complete accounts. (It is perhaps worth noting that for the purposes of debate the Prasāngikas sometimes appear to make their opponents state positions which are not actually to be found in the latter's own philosophical tenets.) A chart showing the different schools mentioned is given at the end of the book.

The division of the commentaries into chapters does not strictly follow the highly systematised structure of the Tibetan originals. However, this structure appears as headings in the text, and is again summarised at the end of the book.

The numbers in square brackets after section headings in *The Brilliant Torch* and within the text in the *Nectar of Mañjuśrī's Speech* refer to the relevant verses in the root text, a translation of which precedes the two commentaries.

In general the titles of books quoted in the commentaries have been given in English translation. As yet there are no standard

translations for these, and for this reason a few titles have been left in their more familiar Sanskrit form. Sanskrit and Tibetan titles have, where possible, been supplied in the bibliographical list.

The two commentaries were translated under the guidance of Tsetrul Pema Wangyal Rinpoche, Khetsun Zangpo Rinpoche and Khyentse Jigme Rinpoche by Helena Blankleder, Wulstan Fletcher and Stephen Gethin, with the invaluable help and support of other members of the Padmakara Translation Group.

Dordogne, France  
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## HISTORICAL NOTE

Khenchen Kunzang Palden and Minyak Kunzang Sönam, the authors of the two texts contained in this volume, were both close disciples of Dza Patrul Rinpoche.<sup>1</sup> Together with Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo (1820-1892), Jamgön Kongtrul and Jamgön Ju Mipham<sup>2</sup> and others, this famous master was one of the foremost representatives of the Rimé or non-sectarian movement, which did so much to restore and invigorate Buddhism in Tibet in the course of the 19th century. Patrul Rinpoche has been acknowledged as the greatest authority of his time on the *Bodhicharyavatara*, Shantideva's masterpiece on the stages of the Bodhisattva path, and it is not surprising that many of the commentaries written around the turn of the century bear witness to the pervasive influence of his oral lineage.<sup>3</sup> This is true of Mipham Rinpoche's celebrated exegesis of the ninth chapter,<sup>4</sup> as well as of the two commentaries translated here, which by the unity of their source and the diversity of the style and content, are particularly fine examples of the non-sectarian spirit.

Khenchen Kunzang Palden (c.1870-c.1940), better known as Khenpo Kunkel, was a disciple also of Mipham Rinpoche. His lucid and accessible commentary on the ninth chapter closely follows the interpretation of Mipham Rinpoche which in turn is based on the teachings that Patrul Rinpoche gave at Dzogchen Shri Singha. The text translated here is in fact an excerpt taken from a much larger presentation of the *Bodhicharyavatara*. This, together with similar

1 Patrul Rinpoche, Orgyen Jigme Chökyi Wangpo (1808-1887), also known as Dzogchen Palge Tulku.

2 Mipham Rinpoche (1846-1912), also known as Mipham Jamyang Gyatso and Jampel Gyepai Dorje.

3 As an example of the Rimé attitude, it is interesting to note that Patrul Rinpoche would, according to circumstances, teach commentaries by Gyalse Nguichu Thogme, Sönam Tsemo and Pawo Tsuklag Trengwa, as well as his own oral tradition.

4 This brilliant and profound commentary gave rise to intense debate. Mipham Rinpoche replied to his critics in two further works (see bibliography)

commentaries by Shechen Gyalsab Pena Namgyal and Mewa Sönam Chödrup, also disciples of Patrul Rinpoche, is widely used in Nyingma colleges inside and outside Tibet.

Khenpo Kumpel also wrote a biography of Patrul Rinpoche, and several other important works including a history of the Vinaya and a commentary on Mi-pham Rinpoche's *Torch of Certainty* (*nges shes sgron me*). He was highly respected in eastern Tibet and his disciples included Dzongsar Khyentse Chöknyi Lodrö and many other important masters.

Minyak Kunzang Sönam, also known as Chöknyi Trakpa, was Patrul Rinpoche's closest disciple in the Gelug tradition. He studied with him for over twenty years, with a devotion that knew no bounds. In Kunzang Sönam's time, the interpretation of the *Bodhicharyavatara*'s ninth chapter had already given rise to much philosophical controversy between the various Tibetan Buddhist schools. It is therefore interesting to note that the masters who requested him to write commentaries on this delicate subject were Lungtok Tempai Nyima (Patrul Rinpoche's principal dzogchen disciple) and Lerab Lingpa, or Tertön Sogyal (1856-1926), both followers of the Nyingma school. This illustrates how genuine the non-sectarian movement was, and indeed still is, and how close was the relationship between the masters who took part in it.

Minyak Kunzang Sönam in fact wrote two commentaries on the ninth chapter, *The Brilliant Torch*, a word-by-word commentary on the root text, which has been translated here, and another commentary expounding the general meaning of the Perfection of Transcendent Wisdom. He also composed an extensive commentary on the first eight chapters of the *Bodhicharyavatara*.

In *The Brilliant Torch*, Kunzang Sönam follows the traditional interpretations of the Gelugpa school as set forth by Je Tsongkhapa (1357-1419) and Gyalsab Darma Rinchen (1362-1432).

conceptuality. Therefore it is supreme. The cause of it is listening to the teachings.'

*Explicit commentarium Magistri Omniperfecti Gloriosi in capitulum de profunda sapientia a summo Indorum preceptore Pacisdeo conscriptum, necnon a misero debili anglice versum.*

## Book Two

# THE BRILLIANT TORCH

## Illuminating

## The Ultimate Nature of Profound Interdependent Origination

*The explanatory commentary on the Wisdom Chapter of the  
Bodhicharyavatara (The Way of the Bodhisattva)*

## THE BRILLIANT TORCH

The author's homage and promise to write the text

*Shri Sarasvi Vijayantu*

To him who sees and declares that all interdependent things  
Are beyond all concepts,  
Whose knowledge and eloquence are without compare—  
To the Teacher I submit obeisance.

To Mañjugosha, great treasure of knowledge,  
Nagarjuna, founder of the profound path,  
And Aryadeva who saw the uncontrived state of simplicity—  
To the three sovereigns of speech I bow down.

To Buddhapalita who reached the level of accomplishment,  
Chandrakirti who propagated the excellent path,  
And Shantideva—marvellous are his deeds—  
To the three holders of the doctrine which avoids all  
conceptual extremes I bow down.

To those who, in the supreme land of India, elucidated  
The Prasangika,<sup>1</sup> the best of philosophies,  
And to those who came to the cool land of Tibet,  
Bodhisattvas like Sakya Pandita, Longchenpa and  
Tsongkhapa—Victory!

<sup>1</sup> Prasangika—the Madhyamika method which consists in reducing to absurdity the arguments of the opponent on principles acceptable to the latter.



And homage to the kind Spiritual Friend  
Who spreads in all directions  
The study and practice of the pith instructions  
On how to engage in the supreme acts of the Bodhisattvas.

Apart from the realisation  
Of the nature of profound interdependence—  
This marvel which cuts short the pain of existence,  
Sublime entrance to the road to peace—

There is no other way to pull up the root of samsara,  
And neither any second gateway to peace:  
Therefore, it is this path that should be established,  
Striving through a hundred methods and ways of reasoning.

Accordingly I shall here unravel the text of the Wisdom  
chapter,  
Which, with numerous quotations and arguments,  
Clearly explains the Middle Way,  
Profound and peaceful, free from concepts.

I shall not express here any points  
Not included in the perfect teachings of the learned beings,  
Nor is this an elegant composition  
Full of graceful and euphonious expressions.

However, to strengthen the imprint left on my mind  
From getting used to the profound meaning,  
And as it might help a few  
Less intelligent people like me,

With devotion and enthusiasm I have summoned the  
courage to write this  
So that the requests pressed on me by holy beings,  
Will not have been in vain.  
How fortunate and honoured I am!

Foremost son of Noble Mañjuśri, the great Bodhisattva Shantideva who wrote the ten chapters of the *Bodhicharyavatara* (The Way of the Bodhisattva) began by setting forth how, first of all, to gain

inspiration from knowing the benefits of Bodhichitta. Then he showed how to generate aspiration Bodhichitta. For the practice of application Bodhichitta he taught the ritual for taking the Bodhichitta vow, along with how to train in the general activities of the Bodhisattvas. In particular he described the practice of the last two paramitas in chapters eight and nine.

The explanation of the ninth chapter of the *Bodhicharyavatara*, the chapter on wisdom, has three parts:

- A brief teaching on why it is necessary to develop the wisdom which is the realisation of emptiness.
- A detailed explanation of how to develop this wisdom which is the realisation of emptiness.
- A condensed instruction on making an effort to develop the wisdom which is the realisation of emptiness.

## A brief teaching on why it is necessary to develop the wisdom which is the realisation of emptiness [1]

'All these branches' could be understood as a connection with the previous chapter, and explained simply by the shamatha or mental calm meditation expounded in that eighth chapter. However, here the main point is that the omniscient Buddha taught all these branches, or causes, i.e. the Bodhisatva practices of generosity, moral discipline, patience, endeavour, and meditative concentration, explained previously, so that his disciples belonging to the Great Vehicle could fully develop the wisdom which is the realisation of emptiness, that is, develop the ability to remove the obscurations which veil knowledge.

Moreover, as this wisdom of emptiness is essential for attaining liberation just for oneself, anyone who wishes completely and permanently to remove all the sufferings of samsara for himself and others must cultivate in his own mind the wisdom which is the perfect realisation of the 'subtle' non-substantiality<sup>1</sup> of phenomena, and not simply the negation of the 'gross' substantiality of things. This is essential for accomplishing any liberation or omniscience for oneself and others.

Let us look a little at how it is that the first five paramitas<sup>2</sup> were taught for the sake of wisdom. It is generally said, as we find in the *Compendium*:

1 The Tibetan term *bdag med*, lit. no-self, has been translated throughout as 'no-self' in relation to the individual (*kang zag gi bdag med*) and as 'non-substantiality' in relation to phenomena (*chos kyi bdag med*). Similarly, the 'two types of self' refer to the self in the individual and the substantiality of phenomena.

2 The first five paramitas are generosity, moral discipline, patience, endeavour, and meditative concentration. The sixth paramita is wisdom.

As long as merit is not complete

I will not realise sublime emptiness.

It is indeed true that to realise emptiness one must begin with the accumulation of merit and wisdom. However one does not invariably have to begin with the Bodhisattva practices explained here, i.e. the paramitas of generosity and so on. A simple understanding of the absolute through listening to and reflecting on the teachings does not definitely require that one starts with the Bodhisattva practices of the first five paramitas. The methods for establishing emptiness through listening and reflection respectively are both explained in the *Ornament of the Middle Way*.

Neither is it really necessary to have practised generosity and the other paramitas beforehand to have just a simple experience of emptiness. If this were the case, then these same things would be necessary before one could experience complete confidence in the law of impermanence or the law of karma, for example.

Moreover, it is not invariably necessary to do these Mahayana practices of generosity and so on first in order to achieve the clear insight or vipashyana which comes from meditating on emptiness, as we assert that the exalted beings of the Shravakayana too must certainly have realised the view of emptiness.

Furthermore, the wisdom which is the realisation of emptiness acts as the primary cause for attaining the Wisdom Dharmakaya, with the help of the skilful means aspect, i.e. the five paramitas which are the contributory conditions. Therefore, if we think the first five paramitas are taught for the sake of wisdom, in the same way wisdom too accompanies the five paramitas,<sup>1</sup> and it is therefore equally valid to express this the other way round: wisdom is taught for the sake of the first five paramitas. Accordingly this phrase—all the paramitas were taught for the sake of wisdom—means that this

1 The practices of generosity and so on cannot be termed paramita or transcendent unless they are combined with wisdom.

text and all the other Buddha's teachings on emptiness introduce the absolute in stages.

Without the wisdom which is the realisation of emptiness, it is impossible to destroy the seeds of either of the two kinds of obscuration. And although, to destroy the seed of only the emotional obscurations,<sup>1</sup> it is not necessary that the realisation of emptiness be conjoined with the accumulation of infinite merit, in order to destroy the seed of the obscurations which veil knowledge one has to meditate for a long time upon this wisdom conjoined with the accumulation of infinite merit. So here, all the branches of skilful means, i.e. the first five paramitas, are taught so that this realisation of emptiness in Mahayana practitioners becomes a powerful antidote for dispelling the obscurations veiling knowledge. Those who strive for liberation just for themselves have mainly to get rid of the emotional obscurations which obstruct such liberation, while those who strive for the level of omniscience for the sake of others have to get rid of the obscurations veiling knowledge which prevent them from attaining it.

In our tradition, we are not making a distinction on the realisation of emptiness which the exalted beings of the Greater and Lesser Vehicles might have. Rather, the difference between that wisdom becoming the antidote to the obscurations veiling knowledge or not arises from whether or not it is conjoined with a vast accumulation of merit gained through generosity and the other paramitas. We are distinguishing the Greater and Lesser Vehicles not by their view, but by their skilful means. But if it is true that to remove all the sufferings of others one must attain unsurpassable enlightenment and must therefore realise the 'subtle' non-substantiality of phenomena, why do those who seek to remove only their own suffering need to realise the absolute? You might ask, does one not attain the nirvana of the Shravakayana by realising and becoming accustomed to only the no-self which is the absence of an inde-

1 Throughout the text the word 'emotional' is used in a specific sense to denote the adjectival form of 'negative emotions' (Tib. nyon mongs, Skt. klesha). The obscuration of negative emotions is thus referred to as emotional obscuration. Later on, in verses 44-48, Shantideva speaks of 'emotional' and 'non-emotional' craving.

pendent and substantially existent individual? Yes, this is true. All Buddhist schools up to the Madhyamika Svatantrikas, who assert no-self, agree on this. Here, however, according to glorious Chandrakirti's explanation of the extraordinary view of the master Nagarjuna—where Nagarjuna says in the *Garland of Jewels*:

As long as there is clinging to the aggregates  
They will be considered as 'I'  
And because of clinging to 'I',  
There is birth.

—as long as the aggregates are considered to have true existence, there will be no turning away from the view which assumes an 'I'<sup>1</sup> and holds that 'I' and 'mine' exist by virtue of their own characteristics. Everyone has to agree that even the Arhats of the Shravakayana have rejected the view which assumes an 'I' based on the perishable aggregates. For that it is necessary to destroy the idea of the aggregates as real, and we therefore maintain that the exalted Shravakas and Pratyekabuddhas too have to realise the aggregates as lacking true existence. Shantideva himself agrees with this. He asserts that even to attain mere liberation it is necessary to have a subtle realisation of the absolute. How he does this will be discussed in detail later.

There now follows a detailed explanation of how to develop this wisdom which is the realisation of emptiness.

## Developing wisdom

### I ESTABLISHING THE TWO TRUTHS

#### The distinctive features and definitions of the two truths [2]

The first two lines of this verse show the distinction between the two truths: relative truth, which concerns deceptive phenomena—individuals and aggregates and so forth—whose mode of appearance and mode of being differ; and absolute truth, which concerns phenomena devoid of inherent existence—individuals and aggregates and so forth—whose mode of appearance and mode of being concur. All phenomena, i.e. objects of knowledge, are thus said to be categorised under these two truths.

The 'and' in 'relative and absolute' refers to the fact that these two truths are equal in force. At the time of the ground the two truths necessarily accompany each other. At the time of the path the practice of the two truths necessarily proceeds uniting skilful means and wisdom. And at the time of the fruit the Dharmakaya and Rupakaya, which are the natural result of the two accumulations of merit and wisdom gathered through skilful means and wisdom, are necessarily combined.

The last two lines of this verse mainly indicate the definitions of each of the two truths in turn. Absolute truth is not something that can be grasped directly by the dualistic mind. It is to be perceived in a non-dual way by direct valid cognition which cognizes itself directly. 'The absolute' is what has to be defined, and 'is not within the reach of intellect' is by implication the definition.

Relative truth is that which is perceived in a dualistic way by the dualistic valid cognition which cognizes itself directly. 'Intellect' is the definition, and 'grounded in the relative' is what has to be defined.

<sup>1</sup> Tib. 'jig tshogs la Ita ba—the view that the five perishable aggregates exist as 'I' and 'mine'.

Thus these two lines have to be explained separately. Otherwise, if we were to explain the first line as a thesis ('Absolute truth is not within the reach of the mind') and the second as the proof ('Because if it were within the reach of the mind it would have to be obscured or relative') we would be committing an error such as the unwanted consequence of the absolute truth not being cognizable by any mind whatsoever. If we wish to comment the first and second lines together, I wonder if it is possible to explain them as defining the absolute truth by implication, stating what it is not, and defining the relative truth directly saying what it is: 'Absolute truth is not directly within the scope of the dualistic mind; that which is directly within the scope of the dualistic mind is declared to be relative truth.'

### The different kinds of individual who establish the two truths [3-4ab]

The first two of these lines indicate the individuals who establish the two truths, while the last four explain the difference between their superior and inferior types of intelligence.

Concerning the individuals who set about establishing the two truths, there are two types of individual, who are imputed as such on the basis of the perishable aggregates. These are the Madhyamika meditator who has achieved the profound meditation of mental calm and clear insight united and has direct realisation of emptiness; and the Substantialist<sup>1</sup> who says that things have true existence.

The root text describes these two main categories, but it is said that people who have understanding of emptiness through listening to and reflecting on the teachings can also be included among the Madhyamika meditators, while those persons who have no philosophical inclinations can also be included in the Substantialists. As there exist ordinary and exalted beings, it is taught that

among meditators there are two types, ordinary and exalted; and among the Substantialists there are also two: philosophers and ordinary people.

The philosophical doctrines of the Substantialists are invalidated by the meditators who have realised emptiness, that is, by Madhyamika reasoning. For example, the Chittamatrins' doctrine of a truly existent consciousness is refuted by logical arguments of the Madhyamikas such as the 'neither one nor many' argument.<sup>1</sup> This implies that the higher philosophers among the Substantialists too are able to invalidate the theses of the lower philosophies. The Vaibhashika and Sautrantika theory of indivisible particles is refuted by the reasoning of the Chittamatrins, while the Sautrantikas deny Vaibhashika assertions such as the material existence of non-compounded things. The non-Buddhist theory of the permanent, single and independent individual can be refuted by the reasoning of both the Vaibhashikas and Sautrantikas.

All this shows that mistaken reasonings such as the imputed misconceptions of the inferior philosophers are refuted by the reasonings of the superior ones, but this is not to say that everything in the lower tenets is refuted. Moreover a great many of the systems of assertion of the lower tenets serve as progressive stages on the path to the higher philosophies.

One might wonder whether meditators who have realised emptiness invalidate each other's views. Even the Madhyamikas are differentiated according to different levels of intelligence, and thus those on higher paths and levels, such as those on the path of connection and those on the second level, will outshine and 'invalidate' those on lower paths and levels, such as those on the path of accumulation and on the first level. The difference between them arises from whether or not they have got rid of the respective obscurations on the higher and lower levels and paths, and whether

1 'Neither one nor many'—one of the five kinds of logical argument used by the Madhyamikas (Tib. gtan tshigs Inga). The other four are Diamond Splinters, Great Interdependence, refutation of production of an existent effect and of a non-existent effect, and refutation of production from four extremes.

or not they have attained the particular respective qualities of realisation.

The example is given in texts such as the *Introduction to the Middle Way* that on the first six levels of the Mahayana, the Shravakas and Pratyekabuddhas are outshone by the force of reasoning, and from the seventh level onwards they are outshone through the power of the mind which can, in an instant, enter and leave concentration on emptiness. In fact, in any one individual the seeds of particular obscurations can only be affected by the higher practices related to those obscurations and not by the lower ones.

### Rejecting objections on how the two truths are posited

#### 1 GENERAL REFUTATION OF THE SAUTRANTIKAS AND OTHER SUBSTANTIALISTS

##### a Refuting the assertion that there is no such thing as absence of inherent existence, and that even if there were it would be untenable [4cd-5l]

In these lines of the root text the opponents' arguments are not presented directly, and as it is important to understand them, we shall mention them here:

The Substantialists argue: to say that our philosophical system is invalidated by the Madhyamika meditators through reasoning does not follow. Because although the Madhyamikas propose that all phenomena have no inherent existence they cannot prove it.

Not so. The Madhyamikas can prove it. The Madhyamikas and the Substantialists both use examples such as dreams and reflections in a mirror, which they both agree are unreal. Using these correct examples which they share in common, it is easy for the Madhyamikas to make their opponents understand absence of inherent existence. But the Substantialists are unable to prove true existence

to the Madhyamikas, because they do not have any appropriate examples which are common to them both.

It is said in the *Introduction to the Middle Way*: 'It is as easy to make someone understand that things do not exist as it is impossible to make others comprehend that they do exist.'

And the autocommentary of the same work says: 'Just as the very examples which are valid for us, such as dreams and magical illusions, can enable one to understand that things do not exist inherently, because there is no example which is valid to both parties it is not easy to make certain people consider that things do exist inherently.'

In other words, if, in the arguments which prove absence of true existence, such as the Interdependence argument,<sup>1</sup> there were no example for proving it common to both parties, it would be impossible to ascertain validly the absence of true existence in phenomena.

This shows how the Madhyamika proponents introduce the Madhyamika view to their Substantialist opponents through logical arguments.

Again the Substantialists say: if, as you claim, things did not exist inherently, training in generosity and so on in order to attain Buddhahood would be pointless, because if both the goal and the means for attainment were inherently non-existent, they would necessarily not exist at all. If something exists, it must exist inherently, whereas if it did not exist inherently it would be nothing at all. This is what the Substantialists feel deep down, that to not exist inherently means to be nothing.

In our own Madhyamika tradition, the absence of inherent existence is not necessarily non-existence. All phenomena have no inherent existence: as this does not stand for total non-existence they are not necessarily nothing at all. All phenomena exist on the relative level merely as conceptual imputations: as this stands for existence they necessarily do exist. It is with this essential point that we can answer their argument as follows.

<sup>1</sup> The Interdependence argument is another of the five kinds of logical argument—see note on page 139.

When we train in generosity and the other paramitas for the sake of the goal or result—the level of Buddhahood for instance—if we search for what we call the goal or result, and for the means of attainment or cause, i.e. the first five paramitas, and examine their mode of being, there is nothing that we can find. Without further investigation or analysis, we engage in these paramitas conjoined with wisdom, understanding them to be like deceptive illusions or mirages, mere empty names. When we have the guide dog of the wisdom which has realised the absence of inherent existence of things, generosity and so on merit the name 'paramita,' i.e. transcendent, and become the cause for attaining Buddhahood. If we do not have this guide dog (the wisdom which is the realisation of emptiness), generosity and so on will not merit the name 'paramita' and will not become the cause for attaining Buddhahood.

In the *Compendium* it is said:

Without a guide, how can a million myriad blindmen

Ignorant of the way ever enter the city?

Without wisdom, the five paramitas, like blindmen without a guide,

Will never be able to reach enlightenment.

When they are wholly conjoined with wisdom

They gain their sight and merit their name.

In the *Introduction to the Middle Way* we also find:

Just as a whole host of blind people

Are easily led wherever they wish

By a single sighted person,

Likewise here also the mind takes the eyeless qualities

And leads them to victory.<sup>1</sup>

These two quotations show that for progressing to the level of the result, the paramitas other than wisdom depend on the paramita of wisdom.

<sup>1</sup> If interpreted, these last two lines could read: Likewise here also wisdom takes the first five paramitas and leads them to enlightenment.

Again the Substantialists say: when we assert that things can of their own execute a function and produce a result, we say that they are truly existent. For example, fire is hot and burns. This is not just intellectual pretence: it has to be accepted that fire of its own is warm and burns. To not accept this is nothing but denying the evidence. This is what we call being truly existent. If you accept this, then even if you do not call it being inherently existent, in reality you have accepted it as being so, and therefore it is pointless for us to debate merely on names.

This argument arises from their believing that the two truths are mutually exclusive: if things, such as fire, which have the ability to fulfil a function, were not inherently existent, they would become nothing at all; if they exist, they must be inherently existent!

The answer to this is as follows. People, whether Madhyamikas<sup>1</sup> or Substantialists, cannot deny that fire and other things have the ability to carry out their respective functions; they have seen the evidence for this and acknowledge it. However they only resemble each other on this point. For the Substantialists do not stop there. They assume that such things really and truly exist: they do not understand that they are like magical illusions, without true existence. The Madhyamikas understand that fire and its function of being hot and burning are merely conceptual imputations; apart from this, all phenomena are devoid of any objective ability to carry out functions—they are like illusions, devoid of true existence. Therefore, here the Madhyamika meditators and the Substantialists are arguing because their respective convictions and theories do not agree.

'People' in this passage can also be explained as referring only to the Substantialists (and not to the Madhyamikas). The paragraph would then read: 'The Substantialists see from the evidence that things fulfil a function, and they understand them to be real and truly existent...' and so on; the rest is as above. Although this passage in the root text gives only the Madhyamika answers to the argu-

<sup>1</sup> Madhyamikas refers here to those Madhyamikas who have not yet attained the path of seeing.

ment, it is mainly to indicate the reason for the debate between the Substantialists and the Madhyamikas.

**b Refuting the objection that absence of inherent existence is contrary to evidence [6]**

Substantialists such as the Sautrantikas say: if nothing exists inherently, then this contradicts the fact that the five sensory objects appear to be inherently existent and are directly perceived by the five valid direct sensory cognizers—visual forms, for example, appear to exist inherently and are directly seen by the eye.

No, there is no contradiction: although the existence of the five objects such as visual forms is established through the evidence of the direct sensory cognizers such as the eye, this is only valid on the relative level, in accordance with the general opinion of people who hold that forms exist. But it is not valid for the absolute mode of being of visual forms and other sensory objects. Valid cognizers such as the sense organs cannot ascertain the absolute. If they did, we would have to accept that ordinary people, with their limited perceptions, could actually see and validly ascertain the absolute way of being of phenomena with their five sensory organs and consciousnesses—and this is quite inadmissible.

As we read in the *Sutra of King-like Concentration*:

The eye, the ear and the nose are not valid cognizers,  
Neither the tongue, the body nor the mind:  
If these sense organs were valid cognizers,  
What use to anyone would the Noble Path be?

And in the *Introduction to the Middle Way*:

If ordinary beings were valid perceivers,  
They would see the absolute, so what need would there be  
for Exalted Beings?  
What use would be the Noble Path?  
Fools are not suitable as perceivers of truth!

Such quotations refute the Substantialist arguments, showing up the faults in them with such unwanted consequences as 'if the direct sensory cognizers were evidence for the mode of being of things, there would be no need to develop a Noble Path.'

You might say that if visual forms and so forth do not exist by virtue of their own characteristics, how is it that they exist according to the general consensus of people? And if they exist according to general consensus, how can they be untrue and non-existent?

Take the example of people subject to desire who generally consider that the impure bodies of those they are attracted to are pure. Or take some other examples: the general consensus is that things are permanent when in fact they are impermanent, that there is happiness where there is suffering, and a self where there is no self. But there is no truth in these generally accepted ideas. So too, for things like forms which are generally accepted as being existent, their mode of appearance differs from their mode of being. They are like illusions and deceptions which do not stand up to analysis.

**c Refuting the objection that absence of inherent existence is contrary to scriptural authority.**

*c 1 Showing that the Buddha's instructions on impermanence belong to the teachings of the expedient meaning [7abc]*

You might say that if visual forms and so on do not exist inherently, this contradicts some sutras which say that they do exist even though impermanently.

But this is because the aim or purpose of such sutras was gradually to introduce the meaning of the absolute truth to some people who were strongly attached to the reality of things. The Protector of the World, the Buddha, who was skilled in ways to benefit beings, taught only in the First Turning of the Wheel that phenomena exist inherently. But on the absolute level things do not have momentary existence. If they did exist at that level, it would follow that there would be either one inherently existent phenomenon or many; but this is disproved by the 'neither one nor many' argument.



This shows that the scriptures which teach that compounded things are impermanent belong to the expedient meaning, and thus refutes their referring to the ultimate meaning.

c.2 *Rejecting objections to this:*

- *Rejecting the objection that if things did not exist on the absolute level, in relative truth also they would not exist [7d-8]*

You might say: if on the absolute level compounded things such as visual forms do not have momentary existence, it would be a mistake to posit them as being momentary and impermanent on the relative level, because the general consensus is that things are permanent—people assume that things which are here in the early morning are also here in the evening.

Even though visual forms and so on are generally accepted as being permanent, this can never disprove the fact that they are momentary and impermanent. Relative truths, of any sort, do not have to be posited in dependence on the minds of ordinary people. The impermanence and so on of visual forms is proven according to the relative valid cognitions of the meditators who have realised the sixteen aspects<sup>1</sup> of the Four Noble Truths. As far as they are concerned, this is relative truth. So there is no problem here.

But, you may say, if momentariness and impermanence are included in relative truth, this contradicts the saying that to see the sixteen aspects such as impermanence is to see the absolute.

There is no contradiction here. Ordinary people mistakenly assume that, regarding phenomena, there is purity, happiness, permanence, self, and so on. So when meditators observe impurity, suffering, impermanence, and no-self, it is not incorrect, simply on the relative level, to explain that they are seeing the ultimate nature of things. But regarding the ultimate mode of being of things, to see impermanence is not to see the absolute, because as regards the

1 Sixteen aspects of the Four Noble Truths: 1) the Truth of Suffering: suffering, impermanence, emptiness and lack of true reality; 2) the Truth of the Origin of Suffering: origin of suffering, production, causal basis and conditions; 3) the Truth of Cessation: cessation, pacification, excellence and renunciation; 4) the Truth of the Path: path, knowledge, accomplishment and liberation.

ultimate mode of being of things, they are beyond concepts of permanence or impermanence, happiness or suffering, etc. Their nature is emptiness.

Moreover, the general consensus is that visual forms and so on are permanent, and if all such suppositions were necessarily valid cognitions, then they would necessarily invalidate the impermanence of forms which is validly established by the meditators. In that case it would follow that the understanding of a meditator who meditates on ugliness and sees clearly that people's bodies are something impure could be refuted by people subject to desire who suppose that the bodies of those they are attracted to are pure. This is unacceptable, for two reasons. Firstly because on the relative level there is a difference between these two kinds of understanding, one mistaken and the other unmistaken. And secondly because, as the antidote to desire is generally meditation on ugliness, it is impossible for an antidote to be invalidated by what it is supposed to eliminate.

- *Rejecting the objection that accumulating merit would be impossible [9ab]*

If nothing exists inherently, you might argue, this contradicts the teaching in the scriptures that making offerings to the Buddha and so on results in merit, because things like merit have no inherent existence. This argument, not presented in the root text, is that of the opponents who think: if there is merit, it must exist inherently; if it does not exist inherently, there can be no such thing as merit.

The answer to this is as follows: making offerings to the Buddha, who is like an illusion, devoid of true existence and existing on the relative level merely as a conceptual imputation, results in merit which is like an illusion and devoid of true existence. It is just like your claim that making offerings to the Buddha who exists as something real and true results in merit which also is truly existent. In fact, what matters to us Madhyamikas is that merit is produced in accordance with the object, whether real or not. Merit has no objective existence, but it does exist as a mere conceptual imputa-

tion, which means for us that it exists. This is the key point in our reply to your objection.

- *Rejecting the objection that reincarnation would be impossible [9cd–10]*

If you might say, beings too have no existence objectively and are like illusions, devoid of true existence and merely appearing to the mind, then just as a horse or ox in a magical show does not appear again after disappearing, beings cannot possibly be reborn again once having died.

The answer to this is given in the middle two lines of this passage. Sentient beings are created by karma and negative emotions. As long as negative emotions such as ignorance, which are the cause of the next existence, and motivational factors and so on, which are the karmic conditions, are gathered together, sentient beings will reincarnate and take birth in existence. Furthermore, as long as conditions like the magician's incantations and props are brought together, the illusions created by a magician will appear. Without the conditions being assembled, neither of these two, beings or magical illusions, can appear. In taking magical illusions as an example, we are showing that both illusions and sentient beings are alike only in not having true existence. But we are not saying that illusions and beings are alike in all respects. If you consider that in this respect our assertion is faulty, then note that we can apply the same reasoning to your case and say, 'You also assert that illusions and dreams are unreal, so why can a pebble or stick used to conjure up a horse or an ox in a magical display produce only a horse or ox and not a dog or donkey, for in their being illusions there is no difference whatsoever between them.'<sup>1</sup>

Now, you say, as sentient beings have existed since the beginning of time and last for a long time, while magical illusions appear intermittently and suddenly, and last for a short time, beings and illusions are not comparable as regards their being truly existent or not. So the example of illusion is not appropriate.

<sup>1</sup> The argument here is that a particular prop (cause) can only produce a specific illusion (result).

The answer to this is explained in the last two lines: how can one say that, simply because they are long lasting, sentient beings are truly existent? They are not. If one distinguishes between things being truly existent or not on the basis of their duration, as there are illusions which last a long time and others which last a short time, and dreams in which one can be conscious of a whole aeon or a single instant, it is not appropriate, on the basis of their duration, to distinguish what is truly existent and what is not. For it has to be stated that however long or short illusions and dreams may be, they are all deceptive and unreal.

- *Rejecting the objection that it would be impossible to distinguish between good and evil [11–13a]*

If, you might say, sentient beings are not inherently existent, like magical illusions, then it would follow that just as killing a creature in a show of magic is not a negative act, neither can killing a sentient being be wrong.

When one performs the actual acts of beating and killing creatures such as the men, horses and elephants conjured up in a show of magic, if one thinks that they are real sentient beings and beats them with weapons and so on with the desire to kill them, then the negative karma of application<sup>1</sup> results. For the act of killing to be completed, the vital organs of the victim must cease functioning. If the victim is a creature in a magical illusion and has neither life nor mind, then there is no full achievement aspect of the negative action. Neither is there a negative act when an illusory creature kills or beats

<sup>1</sup> Any karmic action can be divided into four parts: recognition, intention, application and full achievement. The karmic result of the action will depend on how many and which of these parts are fulfilled. To take the example of killing, recognition refers to recognising the victim as a living being which could be killed; intention is the desire to kill that being; application is the actual act of shooting, stabbing, poisoning or otherwise injuring the victim so as to cause death; full achievement refers to the death of the victim, i.e. the successful outcome of the action. Premeditated killing, for instance, in which all four parts are present, will give the fullest karmic result. Attempted murder, where the intended victim does not die, gives a lesser result, as there is no full achievement of the action. Stepping on and killing an insect hidden in the grass again has a different result because recognition and intention are both absent.

another illusory creature, as the killer too has no mind. Both these explanations are applicable.

Thus helping human and other beings who possess minds, albeit illusory ones, through such virtuous actions as giving them food and clothing certainly gives rise to merit, while harming them through wrong actions like beating and killing them definitely results in negative karma. This is because of the fact that they have minds.

You may ask, if sentient beings and illusions are both the same in being not inherently existent, how is it that they are different in having or not having minds?

Neither the incantations which create the illusion of the magical being, nor the pebble or stick acting as the support for the illusion, nor the illusionist himself have the power to produce an illusory being with a mind. There has never been such a thing as an apparitional being which had a mind. But as karma and negative emotions, such as ignorance and motivational factors, do have the power to create mind, the being created by them has a mind. So the reason apparitional beings and sentient beings are different in having or not having minds consists in the different potential of these causes and conditions which produce them.

Because of causes and conditions, these two types of being, sentient and apparitional, are different, with or without minds. Moreover the various incantations and magician's props that comprise the contributory conditions give rise to a variety of deceptive illusions: dwellings, horses and elephants, men and women. Thus various causes and conditions produce various kinds of result. But there has never existed anywhere one cause or condition able to produce all kinds of result.

Concerning how, on the merely relative level, causes and conditions produce results, the *Treasure of Abhidharma* explains how different conditions give rise to different results:

From four conditions come mind and mental events,

From three come the two absorptions,

From the two comes everything else.

If we look for what we mean by conditions producing results, on the absolute level there is nothing that is created of its own, as is explained in the section which examines causes in the *Fundamental Treatise on the Middle Way*.

- *Rejecting the objection that it would be impossible to definitely distinguish samsara and nirvana. [13b-15b]*

The Madhyamikas assert that in absolute truth phenomena are beyond all concepts, and this natural state of emptiness, where there is no birth or old age and so on, is natural nirvana or the nirvana of the perfectly pure nature. And in relative truth there is birth, old age, sickness and death produced by karma and negative emotions, which are samsara.

To this the Sautrantikas and others raise the following objection: if phenomena were by nature in the state of nirvana, they would necessarily be nirvana; samsara, by nature empty, would be the absolute truth or natural nirvana. But as the cycle of birth and death on the relative level turns unceasingly, then samsara and nirvana cannot be mutually exclusive, and therefore even if one attained the absolute nirvana, samsara would not be stopped. In that case, the Buddhas, not to mention ordinary sentient beings, would again circle in samsara, so what would be the point in the Bodhisattvas practising Bodhisattva deeds in order to obtain enlightenment and arrest the continual cycle of birth and death? It would be pointless.

There is no problem in our thesis that can give rise to your objection. You are arguing without seeing the difference between the nirvana of the perfectly pure nature and the nirvana free from adventitious obscurations.

As the natural nirvana is the nature of all phenomena or the ultimate reality, which has nothing to do with meditating on the path and getting rid of obscurations with antidotes, it is not necessarily the real nirvana for us. The nirvana we need to attain is the nirvana free from the adventitious stains, and we attain it through removing specific obscurations on the paths of seeing and meditation by practising the respective antidotes, and thus arresting the continuous cycle of birth and death. If the stream of karmic and

emotional conditions such as motivational factors and ignorance is not cut by means of the antidote, namely practising the path, even though sentient beings are by nature in the state of nirvana, because of karma and negative emotions, which are the cause of all suffering, they circle in samsara. Similarly, if the conditions for a magical illusion, such as the incantations and props, are assembled continuously, even an illusion will not be interrupted. But if the continuity of ignorance and other conditions is cut by practising on the path and one attains the nirvana free from the adventitious stains, not only, on the absolute level, is there no samsara, but on the relative, conventional level also samsara will not appear. Thus your objection is answered by distinguishing between the two types of nirvana. But it would not be correct to answer it by distinguishing between Buddhas and sentient beings, saying that Buddhas do not circle in samsara while sentient beings do. Because this is exactly what you objectors are saying yourselves.

## 2 SPECIFIC REFUTATION OF THE CHITTAMATRA SYSTEM OF THOUGHT

### a Statement of the Chittamatrin thesis [15cd]

The Chittamatrins argue as follows. If all outer and inner phenomena are devoid of true existence, like magical illusions, and the deluded consciousness, i.e. the subject perceiving the illusion-like object, is also not truly existent—in that case, as there is no cognition apprehending the object, what does perceive the illusory object? For if there were no perceiving consciousness, it would follow that even the object would vanish.

### b Refutations of this thesis

#### b 1 Refutation through analogous reasoning [16ab]

You Chittamatrins assert the true existence of the inner consciousness but deny the true existence of the outer object. However, if you affirm that visual forms and other sense objects which are perceived as outer entities exist in the same way as they appear, then the outer entities should exist. If you affirm that they do not exist in the same way as they appear, then the sense objects cannot be truly existent which means, according to you, that they are necessarily non-existent. But if there is no illusory sense object which is perceived as an outer entity, then what object can be perceived by the subject, the consciousness?

#### b 2 Refuting the reply to this refutation

##### • Refuting the Chittamatrins' reply to the above reasoning [16cd-17ab]

The Chittamatrins reply: visual forms and the other sense objects which appear as outer entities do not exist as such, but they do exist in a different way: the outer objects are substantially, or by their nature, the same as consciousness, the subject; visual form, for instance, is, in its substance, the inner visual consciousness.

Here is the Madhyamika refutation: if consciousness, i.e. the subject, appears as the illusory object, then what mind independent of the object will see it, since there is no perceiver? Or, put another way, what object is seen by what subject, since the seer and the seen are not different?

##### • Refuting the self-knowing consciousness posited in answer to the Madhyamikas' objection

—Refuting the self-knowing mind by means of scriptural authority [17cd-18ab]

In answer to our question, 'Who sees and what is seen?', the Chittamatrins and others who assert a self-knowing mind give the following reply. The mind has two aspects: oriented outward it is

the object aspect, i.e. the percept; and oriented inward only it is the subject aspect, i.e. the perceiver. The former aspect is the consciousness cognizing referents, and the latter aspect is the consciousness cognizing itself, which is found in all the consciousnesses (cognizing referents). For instance, in the very consciousness which perceives blue there is a consciousness of blue which, without depending on the assessment of a blue object, knows itself as such in a non-dual way. This is the self-knowing consciousness.

This is not correct. In the *Sutra requested by Crown Jewel*, for instance, the Protector of the World, the Buddha, declared that the mind cannot, as you Chittamatrins assert, see itself in a non-dual way. In the same way that the blade of a sword cannot cut itself, since it cannot be differentiated into the cutter and what is cut, the mind cannot, as you maintain, see itself.

The same sutra also says: 'If the percept<sup>1</sup> and the mind are different, there are two minds.' Yet, if the percept were the mind, how could the mind see the mind? The blade of a sword, for example, cannot cut its own blade... and so on.

Similarly in the *Sutra of the Visit to Lanka* we find:

Just as a sword cannot cut its own blade,  
Nor a finger touch itself,  
So it is for the mind to know itself.

This is not to make criticism in general of the theory of the mind seeing the mind but rather to refute the Chittamatrins' claim that the subject aspect, i.e. the perceiver, is a single independent entity on its own, in which there is not the slightest distinction between the knower and the known. If this were the case it would have to follow that the blade of a sword could cut itself, or that one could measure an object without having anything to do with the object itself. It is unwanted consequences like these that we use to refute the Chittamatrins' thesis.

1 It should be remembered here that the Chittamatrins say that the percept is the mind.

—Refuting the self-knowing consciousness by means of reasoning

Refuting the Chittamatrins' examples

Refuting the example of a candle flame [18cd–19ab]

The Chittamatrins say: the self-knowing mind does exist. Just as a candle flame illumines both itself and others, the mind also knows both itself and others.

This example is not valid. Why? A candle flame does not illumine itself, because it does not need to be illuminated and even if it did need to be, it could not illumine itself. The reason the flame does not need to be illuminated is that it has not previously been obscured by something which has then to be dispelled, and therefore, unlike a vase in a dark room, the flame has no darkness which needs to be dispelled. As it says in the *Replies to Objections*:

This saying is not appropriate:

A flame can light things like a vase in a dark room,  
Which cannot be perceived or seen,  
But it cannot illumine itself.

Again, if it were necessary for a flame to illumine itself, then it would be necessary for darkness to obscure itself, and this is impossible. Why? Because darkness does not obscure darkness. If it did, it would have to follow that, just as a pot covered by a cloth is invisible, darkness too would be invisible.

Moreover, the *Fundamental Treatise on the Middle Way* explains it thus:

If a flame illumined  
Both itself and other things,  
Doubtless darkness too would obscure  
Other things and itself!

Furthermore a flame, as a source of light, cannot be illumined by something else, since a flame is what dispels the darkness of other things. If the flame needed to be lit up by anything else, it could not be by another source of light, for if it were, the resultant lighting of one source by another would continue ad infinitum.

*Refuting the example of a crystal [19cd-20]*

Again, the Chittamatrins give the example of a crystal to prove the self-knowing mind: for a white crystal to appear blue it depends on extraneous conditions such as a blue cloth on which it is placed, or a blue object facing it. However the crystal is not blue in and of itself. By contrast, the blueness of sapphire is blue in and of itself without depending on any extraneous conditions. In the same way, on the one hand we can see some things, like visual forms, which, to be known, depend on consciousnesses cognizing extraneous objects; and on the other we can see the consciousness which, without depending on any other cognizer, is self-knowing.

It is not correct to affirm that the blueness of sapphire does not need to depend on extraneous causes. Its blueness is produced by causes and conditions. It is not that it made itself blue without being produced by causes and conditions. Stated differently—if we follow slight differences in the wording in different editions of the *Bodhicharyavatara*—there is no blue that has made its own blueness. The reason for this is that since it is a compounded thing it is necessarily dependent on causes and conditions.

*Refuting the meaning of these examples [21-22]*

The Madhyamikas continue: it is the mind different from the flame which knows and expresses the statements: 'the flame does not illumine itself yet it is the light' or 'although the flame does not illumine itself, it does illumine other things.' But, then, what mind knows and expresses the statement: 'the mind is self-cognizing'? It is inappropriate to say this. If it is another mind that knows it, there comes the defect of an infinite regress; we both agree on that. And you cannot say that it is known by that very self-cognizing mind, since such a self-cognizing consciousness has been refuted by us. If the mind can be cognized neither by itself nor by another mind, then the unwanted consequence for you is that such a mind cannot be validly proved. In that case to ponder over its particular features, with such musings as 'is it self-illuminating or not?', is as meaningless as to talk about the charms of the daughter of a barren woman

when there cannot possibly be such a thing as the daughter of a barren woman!

If you Chittamatrins claim that the mind cannot be proved by another mind and we Madhyamikas have proved that the mind is not self-cognizing, then, as the mind is seen by neither itself nor others, the unwanted consequence of such a mind being logically unprovable falls on the Chittamatrins. However, you would be mistaken in thinking that, if we Madhyamikas maintain the self-knowing mind cannot prove itself and you Substantialists have proved that the mind cannot be proven by another mind, then the problem is inverted and falls on us, Madhyamikas. The problem falls on you Substantialists who maintain that illumination is necessarily either illumination by itself or by something else. We Madhyamikas assert that as long as we do not investigate something like a candle flame, illumination exists relatively, but when we analyse we do not conclude whether it is illumination by itself or by anything else. Thus this problem cannot be imputed to us.

*—Refuting proofs for a self-knowing mind*

*The example that even without the self-knowing mind existing, memory occurs [23]*

If the self-knowing mind did not exist, declare the Chittamatrins, how could the later consciousness remember the earlier consciousness? It could not. Memory is the proof of the self-knowing mind. How? 'The self-cognizing mind is shown to exist by the subsequent memory.' The memory is given as a proof, yet, in fact, it does not directly prove the self-knowing mind but rather the mental experience (or cognition): 'Memory shows that cognition has occurred.' However, we have already refuted through reasoning that the mind can be known by a separate cognitive agent. Consequently we proved mind's auto-cognition. This is how we prove the self-knowing mind. For instance, the visual consciousness has perceived a blue object and remembers later both the object and the subject: 'I have seen a blue object.' The memory of the object is due to its earlier cognition and its cognizer is the consciousness of blue. The memory

of the subject is due to the cognition of the subject and its cognizer is the self-knowing mind.

In brief, the Chittamatrins say, 'The later consciousness cannot remember the subject, the direct sensory perceiver of blue. Why? because the self-cognizing mind experiencing it (the direct sensory perceiver of blue) does not exist.' They propose this reasoned consequence inverting the meaning of the following consequence: 'The self-cognizing mind experiencing the subject, i.e. the direct sensory perceiver of blue, exists because the subsequent memory of it exists.' They have inverted the proof and made it the thesis and inverted the thesis to make it the proof.

Our Madhyamikas' answer is that both such a consequence and its inversion are necessarily not valid. According to our tradition, the self-cognizing mind does not exist. However memory functions as follows. The self-cognizing mind that you assert does not exist even relatively, and therefore, even though the visual consciousness apprehending blue does not cognize itself, this does not contradict subsequent memory. Memory occurs because of the cognition of a blue object which is different from the subject, the consciousness. It is not that at that time only the object is remembered and not the subject. Through recollecting the subject-object relationship: 'I have seen a blue thing,' the subject is also remembered. But memory does not occur because the subject is self-cognizing. One might object that to say 'through remembering one thing another thing is remembered' is too far fetched, but the words 'through the relationship' show that this is not so. The object and the subject have the same relationship as the basis and its particular features. Because of this, as one remembers the object one also remembers the subject, and this is not contradictory. The relationship does not only apply to the relationship within one mind or the relationship between the past and the future but should be applied, as Shantideva says, to the mutual conjunction or interrelation of the object and the subject.

How does memory occur even though the consciousness is not self-cognizing? Let us take an example. If a person is bitten in winter by a rat, he feels the bite but does not feel the entry of the infection. Later, during the thundery season of spring, the original infection

from the rat takes hold and the person suffers. At that time, he is conscious that he was infected when he was bitten.

Let us now explain the meaning of each element of the example. Perception of a blue object by the consciousness of blue is like the perception of the sensation of being bitten by the rat. The consciousness of blue which is not self-cognizing is like not experiencing the infection at the time of the bite. The subsequent memory of the experience of a blue object is like the subsequent memory of having been bitten by the rat. Through the memory of the blue object one remembers the subject, i.e. the consciousness of blue, even though the consciousness is not self-cognizing: the analogy of this is, when one remembers having been bitten by the rat, one also remembers that one has been infected even though in the past one did not cognize the infection. If in this way we match the meaning with each element of the example we will understand through this extraordinary example and reasoning how memory occurs despite there being no such thing as a self-knowing mind.

#### *Refuting another proof of the self-knowing mind [24]*

The Chittamatrins say, when one attains the principal meditative absorption of mental calm practice one can know that, for instance, in one's own particular body there is a particular sort of mind and in a such and such body there is a such and such a mind. Training thus in different concentrations that lead to clairvoyance of others' minds and so on, one is able to see another person's mind even if it is extremely distant in terms of space. For this reason, one's own mind should illumine, that is, see itself—it is so close. For if one sees extremely subtle forms at a distance, one should see gross forms nearby.

This is not necessarily so. By anointing the eye with an eye lotion which has been prepared with the help of magic spells one can see such things as great treasure vases beneath the earth, but not the eye lotion itself which, applied to one's own eye, is so close. This kind of reasoning—that if one sees distant objects one must be able to see close ones—is not only unsuitable for proving the self-cognizing mind but moreover invalidates its existence!

*Refuting the thesis that without the self-knowing mind it would be impossible to cognize other objects [25]*

Again the Chittamatrins argue: if, as you say, the self-knowing mind does not exist, it would have to follow that the sense consciousnesses would not perceive their objects, and if the objects were not perceived, memory would not occur and one could not say, 'I have seen,' 'I have heard.'

To this Madhyamikas reply: things seen by the visual consciousness, those heard by the auditive consciousness and those known by mental consciousness—all these subjects and objects that only appear conventionally are not to be negated merely on the relative level. What is to be eliminated through perfect reasoning, we assert, is the assumption of the true existence of things, which is the cause of samsara. The ordinary mind, without critically examining them, naturally assumes that all objects and subjects of seeing, hearing and knowing, are objectively existent. It is this assumption that must be rejected. But there is no need to negate phenomena which appear on the relative level only. These alone do not create suffering, and even the Arhats see and hear relative phenomena and so on. Nor would we be able to negate such phenomena because, in order to do so, we would have to refer to scriptures and reasoning, and these, being themselves mere relative appearances, would also become the object of our refutation. And if the objects of seeing, hearing and so on were refuted, there would be no basis on which to posit oneself and others, deed and doer, and there would follow the fault of our view being nihilist.

Through showing that the clinging to the reality of things seen and heard etc. is the root of samsara, Shantideva showed clearly that the exalted beings of the Shrivakayana also realise the absence of true existence of phenomena.

*b 3 Refuting the thesis that the illusory object cannot be said to be either the same or different from the mind [26–27ab]*

The Chittamatrins say: although visual forms and so forth appear to be existing outer objects, they are mere appearances; they do not

exist as external entities since they are not 'substantially' different from the inner perceiving mind.

As we Madhyamikas have already said:

But if the mirage is the mind itself,  
What, then, is perceived by what? [17]

If the inner mind and the outer objects, not substantially different, were truly existent, they would be a single, truly existing entity. This single entity being necessarily completely devoid of all differentiations, it could not exist as the seer and the seen.

Wanting to avoid this criticism from the Madhyamikas, the Chittamatrins say: when we say that the mind and the object are not different, it does not mean that we think that they are of one identical truly existing substance.

If visual forms and so on were truly existent entities, argue the Madhyamikas, they would have to be truly existent in the way they appear. In that case, sense objects appearing as external entities would be truly existent on the appearance level, and would therefore have to be substantially different from the mind, for things existing as outer entities and the inner perceiving mind have different characteristics.

If you say that objects are not substantially different from the mind, then we would have to say that it follows that the visual consciousness of the form is not truly existent, for you affirm that all the sense objects which appear as outer entities are deceptive and believe that the mind is not different from them.

Or, to give an alternative explanation, if you say that the objects are not substantially different from the mind, it follows that sense objects are not truly existent, for being not different from the mind, they are only mental imputations. Just as you believe that the six unreal outer objects, appearing on the relative level like an illusion, can nevertheless be perceived by the mind, why, in the same way, do you not accept that the six inner perceiving but unreal consciousnesses can be, on the relative level only, the perceiver? You should accept it in the same way.



Thus the Madhyamikas demonstrate that the distinction established by the Chittamatrins between the real mind and the unreal object is not correct. According to the Madhyamikas, both the object and consciousness (for example, visual forms and visual consciousness) are the same in being not truly existent and are the same in existing only relatively. The reason for which they can be the seer and the seen, although they do not exist truly, is the following key point: not truly existing does not mean not existing at all, while to exist merely on the relative level does mean to exist. Therefore, you cannot criticize us Madhyamikas, saying, as you did earlier:

‘If that which is deceived does not exist,  
By what are such illusions seen?’ [15]

Moreover it would be better for you Chittamatrins to adhere to our system without distinguishing the object and the consciousness on the basis of whether they are true or not.

*b 4 Refuting the assertion that things that exist through imputation have a truly existent basis. [27cd–29]*

The Chittamatrins say: all the dualistic appearances of samsara and other phenomena artificially imputed by identifying thoughts must have a truly existent basis, the consciousness, i.e. the ‘dependent nature.’ Why? Because all delusions must have a distinct truly existent basis. To take an example, for a scarecrow to be mistaken for a man, or a rope for a snake, there has to be a real scarecrow or a real rope even though there is not actually a man or a snake there. The deluded appearances of samsara depend on a real basis. If samsara were not so based, it would be without any real entity, like the sky, devoid of a truly existent basis, and in that case, nobody would be trapped in samsara or liberated from it.

Here is the Madhyamikas’ reply: if samsara, a deception without any real entity, is based on a truly existent basis, how could there be bondage in it or liberation from it? It would be impossible because a real thing cannot support an unreal thing and because a truly existent basis has not been validly ascertained.

Moreover, according to your Chittamatrin view, the mind free from the deluded dichotomy of subject and object is unaccompanied by anything: it is single and alone, the self-knowing, self-illuminating mind. This is because you assert that, within the dichotomy of the subject and the object, visual form and so forth perceived as the outer entity does not exist as such, and therefore it is non-existent, and we have already refuted that the apparent illusory form is the mind perceiving itself. Another reason is that if the mind is one truly existent entity, as you assert, it has to be an entity totally devoid of all differentiations and thus it would be inadmissible to distinguish it into ‘accompanying’ and ‘accompanied.’ Your assertion that the mind is alone without the company of the dually perceived object and subject is quite absurd. If the mind of all sentient beings were free from the conceptual stains of both object and subject, then all beings would, always and without any effort, be free in the state of Buddhahood. If this is your assertion, there would not be the slightest need or virtue in establishing through scriptures and reasoning, in order to attain Buddhahood, your Chittamatra system of thought which affirms that all outer and inner phenomena are the mind devoid of distinction, in terms of substance, between the subject and the object. What need or benefit would there be in such a system, for beings would always, and with no effort, have been free?

### 3 REJECTING THE OBJECTION THAT THE MADHYAMIKA PATH IS NEITHER NECESSARY NOR EFFECTIVE

#### a The objection [30]

You Madhyamikas, say the Chittamatrins, try to establish that phenomena are without inherent existence, just like magical illusions devoid of true existence. But what is the use of knowing this? There is no need for it, you are wearing yourselves out for nothing. You claim that it is necessary in order to get rid of negative emotions, but this is not so. How could such knowledge eliminate negative

emotions? It is impossible! Why? We can see, for instance, that when a magician conjures up the illusion of a woman, he clearly understands that the apparition he has created is not a real woman in the flesh; nevertheless he, her own creator, might feel desire for her, wondering whether he could take pleasure with her. In the same way the emptiness that you Madhyamikas establish through listening to and reflecting on the teachings is nothing else than a general idea of emptiness.<sup>1</sup>

## b The Madhyamika reply

b 1 *Showing that the magician feels desire because he has not eliminated the assumption of the true existence of things [31]*

With regard to objects of knowledge like the apparitional woman, as the magician who is her creator has not even got rid of the habitual patterns of negative emotion (i.e. the assumption that things exist truly) in their manifest form, he thinks that she is really there, even though he knows that it is not a real woman in the flesh. This is because his familiarity with emptiness is weak: it does not counteract his assuming that things exist truly and his grasping onto them, and it is therefore unable to undermine them. For this reason, when he sees the apparitional woman, he is unable to get rid of the feeling that she is a real woman.

What we call the habitual patterns of negative emotions refer to the seeds which have the potential to give rise to negative emotions of the same kind and also to the obscuration veiling knowledge—the deluded dualistic perception. In this context however, they refer to the very assumption that phenomena exist truly.

One might think that one could also reply that there is a difference between the realization of a minor emptiness<sup>2</sup> which is unable to eliminate negative emotions and the Madhyamikas' realisation of

1 I.e. unable to get rid of negative emotions.

2 Minor emptiness—for example, the understanding that the apparitional woman is not a real woman

the 'universal' emptiness which is able to eliminate negative emotions. But this is not correct.

Merely to understand that the apparitional woman is not a real woman is not even slightly to know emptiness, which results from negating a subtle object of negation. To realize emptiness, one has to realize that the apparitional woman has no true existence. If through valid cognition one has the certainty that the apparitional woman or any other phenomenon do not truly exist, then simply by focussing on another phenomenon and inquiring whether or not it is truly existent, one will be able to realize its absence of reality. But it is impossible that after realizing the irrationality of one phenomenon one will not be able to eliminate the assumption of the reality of everything else. This is declared in the *Four Hundred Verses*:

He who sees the thatness of one thing  
Sees the thatness of all things.

As for the elimination of deluded perception in general: when, as a result of a cataract in the eye for instance, the non-conceptual deluded visual consciousness<sup>1</sup> perceives hairs floating in the air, such a delusion cannot be removed merely by understanding intellectually that there are not any hairs there. To get rid of the delusion it is necessary to remove the cataract.

There are two types of deluded thought: the first one is delusion that arises from momentary and sudden causes, as for example when one thinks that a striped rope is a snake. Simply understanding that it is a rope and that there is no snake there immediately stops this delusion; one does not have to get used to this understanding over a long period of time to get rid of the delusion.

The second type is the deluded thought such as the assumption that things exist truly. This is something that since beginningless time sentient beings have grown more and more accustomed to, and therefore even its manifest form, let alone its seeds, cannot be eliminated just by understanding the absence of the true existence of things. One has to meditate on this understanding over a long period of time. For this reason, different stages on the path are

1 Non-conceptual because it is a purely sensory consciousness

taught: on the path of seeing (on which for the first time one gains the true realization of the irreality of things) one eliminates all the conceptual imputations which have to be rejected, together with their seeds, but one cannot eliminate the coemergent obscurations. Therefore on the nine levels of the path of meditation, through the gradual growth of the antidote, primordial wisdom, obscurations of increasing subtlety are eliminated. Thus, we are not saying that as soon as one realises emptiness all clinging to the reality of things is consumed; but we do assert that, once having realised emptiness, through getting used to such realisation, this clinging will finally be exhausted. So it is meaningless to entertain your criticism that realization of emptiness is neither necessary nor effective.

*b 2 Showing that it is possible to eliminate the assumption of true existence by getting used to the realisation of emptiness [32-34]*

By realizing and getting used to emptiness, which is the negation of a subtle object of negation with regard to the aggregates and other phenomena, one will eliminate the habitual pattern of assuming true existence in phenomena. Then one will come to the conclusion that even the ultimate reality, i.e. the absence of true existence of phenomena, is itself without any reality at all. By getting accustomed to this realisation, after having eliminated the assumption of the true existence of phenomena one will eliminate even the assumption that this absence of true existence of the subject is real. The reason for this is as follows: if, in the beginning, one had refuted only the gross object of negation based on phenomena, and one did not refute the subtle object of negation, one would still have to do so later on. But if one takes existence—the existence which is not just that of the conventional named thing—as the object of negation, there will not be left behind any assumption of the reality of the absence of true existence which refuted existence. It will be eliminated as soon as one realizes that the subject is not truly existent.

All this demonstrates in general how the assumption that things exist truly is eliminated through establishing the view of emptiness. We shall now explain the specific method for eliminating the as-

sumption that things exist truly through meditating and experiencing such a path.

One investigates through reasoning whether any existent thing is truly existent or not, and having failed to find any true existence one says with certainty that it is non-existent. If the object under investigation truly exists it has to be observable. If it is not observable one understands that it is not real. At that time (when one cannot find anything observable), even the emptiness nature, the absence of true existence of things, cannot be the object of the mind which validly ascertained the absence of reality of the object which is the support. There cannot be the emptiness nature without its support; if the emptiness nature, i.e. the absence of true existence, is a reality, it has to be truly existent also in the nature of the support. However, the true existence of the object, had already been refuted through reasoning. This demonstrates that if there is no truly existent object, the non-existence, i.e. emptiness, is without a basis for its reality. When neither truly existent object nor truly existent absence of true existence, i.e. the emptiness nature, are not the object of the intellect which analyses the ultimate mode of being, then as there is no third truly existent alternative besides true existence of things and true existence of emptiness (i.e. absence of true existence of things), one realizes that phenomena do not have a single truly existing atom that would resist analytical reasoning or that could serve as a target for our assumption of true existence. If one realizes this to be so, all objectifying conceptual elaborations come to a complete standstill.

How are conceptual elaborations stilled in the mind of the person who realizes the absence of true existence? In general, before one begins the path, and then on the paths of accumulation and connection, through listening to and reflecting on the teachings, one comes to a conclusion about the fundamental mode of being of things and one meditates on the view beyond all ontological limitations. At the time of the path of accumulation, for the majority (for instance, for those who belong definitely to a particular 'family') the certainty resulting from the realization of the view is generally not yet stabilized. Starting from the experience of meditative warmth on the path of connection, they are able, through the union of mental calm and

clear insight, to rest evenly in the ultimate mode of being beyond all concepts, yet, on account of the dichotomy which appears to exist between the subject, namely primordial wisdom, and the object, emptiness, this is not yet called direct realization of emptiness; for subtle duality has not yet subsided. Then, through the four stages of the path of connection, this duality gradually becomes more subtle, and subject and object mingle into one taste; even the subtle duality vanishes. This is called the direct realization of emptiness, and is the attainment of the path of seeing. For this reason, realization of emptiness is not necessarily the direct realization of emptiness, since it is possible to realise emptiness through inference by establishing it through listening to and reflecting upon the teachings.

Individuals with acute mental faculties are able, on the Mahayana paths of accumulation and connection, to establish correctly all phenomena, from forms up to omniscience. However, being unable to realize emptiness directly, they realize it through inference. At this stage preserving the view is no more than a thought. Nevertheless, this thought has two aspects: the appearance aspect and the certainty aspect. To realize such emptiness through its general meaning means that emptiness manifests in the appearance aspect of the thought. This is called the general idea of emptiness and refers to relative truth because in the appearance aspect duality has not yet been eliminated. When emptiness manifests in the certainty aspect of the thought, this is the authentic emptiness, the absolute truth. In the certainty aspect of the thought, all concepts of reality are completely stilled. It is said that to realise even the general idea of emptiness in such a way is a true realization of emptiness.

Thus, first, the general idea of the mode of being of things will manifest in the appearance aspect of the thought, then through it, the mode of being of things will be realized in the certainty aspect of the thought. Through becoming accustomed to this, one finally realises the mode of being of things, i.e. emptiness, directly.<sup>1</sup> At this point emptiness is not at all veiled by the general idea of emptiness, and in both the appearance and certainty aspects of thought only

the mode of being of things that is beyond all concepts will manifest. The meditation of the superior beings on the path of training, where such emptiness is realized directly, is entirely free from dualistic concepts, while the level of Buddhahood is totally free from the concept of the true existence of things: all movements of thought conceiving true existence cease completely.

b 3 *Showing that the result of eliminating the assumption of true existence is the birth of primordial wisdom free from thoughts.*

• *How the Buddha, without reflecting, fulfils the hopes of beings, together with examples [35–37]*

You might say, if, through practising the path like this, all thoughts are completely consumed when the ultimate result is attained, then the Buddha could have no intentions or thoughts such as 'I shall benefit beings' and 'I shall teach the Dharma.' He would not act for the sake of beings by teaching the Dharma and so forth. At the time of attaining Buddhahood, therefore, he would cease to benefit others.

This is not a problem. For example, when human or celestial beings pray to a wishing jewel or a wish-fulfilling tree, even though the latter do not think 'I shall help them,' they grant all their wishes. In the same way, although the Buddhas do not have discursive thoughts or make efforts, at the time they were on the path of training, for the sake of beings whose completely ripe merit allows them to meet the Dharma and listen to the teachings, they made prayers of aspiration—'When I finally become Buddha, may I, without reflecting, work wholeheartedly for the sake of beings, never moving even for an instant from the Dharmadhatu, and yet never missing the appropriate moment for benefiting beings.' Through the power of these aspirations they appear in the Rupakaya in accordance with the needs of beings and teach the Dharma.

This is reiterated in the *Ornament of the Sutras*:

<sup>1</sup> This stage is the path of seeing.

When the cause is fully ripened,  
 And when it is beneficial to appear  
 In a certain way for a certain being,  
 The Buddha will appear in that way for that being.

And in the *Introduction to the Middle Way* we read that just as the momentum of a potter's wheel causes it to continue turning, so too the Buddha's merit causes him to continue benefiting beings without any concept of helping them or not.

As for how sentient beings whose merit is ripe are established in maturation and liberation, it is said in the sutras:

Just as when the sun rises,  
 The mature lotus bud blossoms,  
 Likewise the Tathagatas come  
 And purify only those minds that are ready.

You might think that if the people who made these prayers of aspiration in the past were Bodhisattvas, since a long time has elapsed since they died it is impossible that their aspirations could bear fruit now. So how is it possible that the Bodhisattvas' prayers can bear fruit when they become Buddhas?

There is no difficulty here. For example, the Brahmin Kila or Shangku, by means of magical mantras, created a Garuda shrine which neutralises poisons. He then died and even though a long time has elapsed since his death, this same shrine still neutralises poisons even today. Similarly the Bodhisattvas have trained in accordance with the practice of the Bodhisattvas' activities and have accomplished the supreme object of offering, i.e. the Rupakaya of the Buddhas. These same Bodhisattvas have realised the nirvana which does not remain in the two extremes of existence and peace, and for them all discursive thoughts have ceased. Nevertheless, at all times, they effortlessly perform the temporary and ultimate good of beings. Their vast activities are constant, universal, and spontaneous. As it says in the *Ornament of the Sutras*:

It is because of his vast deeds  
 That he is truly called the universal Buddha.

And because his deeds are never ending  
 He also is called eternal.

• *Rejecting objections to this [38–39]*

Some 'members'<sup>1</sup> of the Shravaka schools make the following objection: if the Buddhas have no discursive thoughts, when one makes offerings to them they can have no thought of accepting the offerings as theirs, so how can making offerings result in merit?

Although, it is true, the Buddhas have no such thoughts, merit or benefit does accrue from making offerings, for the following reason. Making offerings to a Buddha when he is physically present and making offerings to his bodily relics devoid of consciousness after he has passed into Nirvana both have equal merit, as is explained in the *Sutra requested by Maitri Simhanada*. And in the *Sutra on the Benefits of Circumambulating Stupas* we read:

Whether offerings are made to a Buddha who is present  
 Or to the relics of one who has passed into Nirvana,  
 If they are made with the same devotion  
 There is no difference in the merit.

We will not take into account the logical reasoning for proving the particular theses respectively posited on the relative level by us or on the absolute level by you. Whether the Buddha is not a real entity or whether he is a real entity, in both cases making offerings to him results in corresponding true or untrue merits. This is taught in reliable scriptures, and therefore it is admissible for both of us to make our respective assertions.

You may wonder whether in the context of an untrue world causal relationships are possible. Yes, they are: for example, just as for you there arise truly existent results from making offerings to a truly existent Buddha, in our tradition we can posit causality, and its functioning, within the context of illusoriness and absence of reality.

<sup>1</sup> The Tibetan word *sde pa*, here translated as 'members', refers to those who merely hold the tenets of their particular school, but who are not practising meditators.

The reason we leave aside logical reasoning and use scriptural authority to prove the above is as follows. In general there are three types of object of comprehension: evident, slightly occult and very occult. An object of the first type can be understood through *direct valid cognition* and the second through *inferential valid cognition by the power of the fact*. One does not need to rely on scriptural authority alone to understand anything that can be found by these types of analytical investigation. But as merit accruing from making offerings to the Buddhas, for example, is the third type of object to be comprehended, i.e. the very occult, it cannot be understood by reasoning alone. To understand it one definitely has to depend on *inferential valid cognition through belief or valid cognition through scriptural authority*, relying on the perfectly pure and incontestable scriptures. This is why such theses of merit arising from offerings are mainly established by scriptural authority. As we find in the *Commentary on Logic*:

Who says that the shastras have to be considered  
Whenever one reasons?  
and

When one begins to consider the third type of object  
It is proper to refer to the shastras.

*Valid cognition through scriptural authority and valid scriptures* do not mean the same thing. Valid cognition through scriptural authority means the same as inferential valid cognition through belief: it is a kind of inference which, using the scriptures which have stood up to the three types of investigation as a proof, understands without any mistake the meaning shown by these same scriptures. Valid scriptures mean scriptures which have stood up to the three types of investigation.<sup>1</sup> An example of such scriptures is the *Prajñāparamitā Sūtras*.

1 Tib. dpyad gsum: analysis by three types of reasoning—1 direct evidence, 2 inferential valid cognition by the power of the fact, 3 inferential valid cognition through belief.

## Developing wisdom

### II PROVING THAT EVEN THOSE WHO SEEK MERE LIBERATION NEED TO REALISE EMPTINESS

#### The objection to this proposition [40ab]

The objectors argue as follows: according to the two Abhidharma texts, by gaining realisation of impermanence and the other fifteen aspects of the Four Noble Truths and then repeatedly meditating on these, those who desire liberation will be liberated from saṃsāra and attain the level of Arhat. What is the use then of realising emptiness, of seeing that all phenomena are devoid of inherent existence? It is unnecessary.

It is mainly certain 'members' of the Shravaka schools who make this objection. Not only do they maintain that it is unnecessary to realise emptiness to attain Buddhahood, but, not accepting even the word 'non-substantiality' of phenomena, they say that if something exists it is necessarily substantial. They do not accept that the Mahayana sutras which teach the non-substantiality of phenomena are the teachings of the Buddha. We will show that these sutras are the Buddha's teachings when we reply to these Shravakas and prove the authenticity of the Mahayana. And, incidentally, these texts (i.e. the *Bodhicaryavatāra* and its commentaries) were written to prove that the path for realising emptiness is indispensable for attaining mere liberation; they were written for those, up to the Madhyamika Svatantrikas, who accept the Mahayana sutras as authentic and accept the need to realise emptiness to attain Buddhahood, but who do not accept that to obtain mere liberation, it is necessary to realise the non-substantiality of phenomena.

## Replies to this objection

### 1 PROVING THAT THE WISDOM WHICH IS THE REALISATION OF EMPTINESS IS THE PATH OF LIBERATION

#### a Proving by scriptural authority that the wisdom which is the realisation of emptiness is the path of liberation [40cd]

If one meditates only on the sixteen aspects, such as impermanence, without meditating on emptiness, i.e. the absence of inherent existence, one will not be liberated from samsara. The reason for this is that, according to the *Prajñāparamita Sūtras*, without this path through which one realises that all phenomena are devoid of inherent existence, one cannot attain any of the three types of enlightenment. In the *Prajñāparamita in a Hundred Thousand Verses* we read: 'There is no liberation for those who consider that things are real. Even those who wish to train on the level of the Shravakas will have to practise the paramita of wisdom ...' and so on; all the Perfect Buddhas of the past, present and future, and those from Stream-Enterers to Pratyekabuddhas have reached attainment by meditating on this paramita of wisdom. Here, as in the great commentary on the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* by the Master Prajñākaramati, we quote this passage to show that when Shantideva says enlightenment here, it is the enlightenment of the three vehicles and not only the enlightenment of the Mahayana.

Now for an argument to be sound, you may think, it has to be accepted by all the parties concerned, but while the scriptures can serve as the proof to the few who accept them as a means of valid cognition, in this case proving the point by quoting the scriptures of the Prajñāparamita, for example, to the Shravakas, who do not accept the Mahayana scriptures as authentic, is irrelevant.

In order to refute the wrong view of those who do not accept the Mahayana scriptures as the Buddha's teachings, Shantideva, wishing to demonstrate the argument which proves the authenticity of the Mahayana, opened this debate.

#### b Proving by logic the authenticity of the Mahayana scriptures [41-43]

The objectors continue: though all this is stated in the Mahayana sūtras, we do not accept them as the Buddha's teaching, nor accept them as means of valid cognition, so using quotations from them as a proof does not prove that without realisation of emptiness one cannot even attain mere liberation. This is because you cannot prove something we do not accept with a proof we do not accept.

Madhyamika: Well then, how do you Shravakas establish that your scriptures, the Hinayana Pitaka, are the teaching of Buddha? Shravakas: Our scriptures are authentic because both of us accept them and have established them as authentic.

Madhyamika: Well then, at first, when you were born, and before you had become interested in philosophy or reasoned on the meaning of the scriptures, they were not established for you as being the Buddha's teaching. So we can only conclude that they could not at that time have been the Buddha's teaching! If the reason they were later established for you as the Buddha's teaching is that you believe your scriptures are valid authorities because they are the teachings on the Great Way, on account of their gradually revealing the three trainings—they appear in the Vinaya, refer to the Sūtras, and refer to the unmistakable and true Abhidharma—then the Mahayana is also established as the authentic teaching of the Buddha because the Mahayana Sūtras also teach these three trainings.

In that case, if the difference between their being the Buddha's teaching or not necessarily depends on the meaning expressed by these teachings, the Hinayana and Mahayana scriptures are no different—they are authentic. If the scriptures are not necessarily dependent on the expressed meaning, then a common assertion by any two different individuals or schools becomes true as a valid and authentic teaching. In that case, even the Vedic texts on poetry would be a true and authentic teaching for us Buddhists.

Shravakas: although this reasoning of yours is valid, the Hinayana and Mahayana scriptures are not comparable. Even you accept that the scriptures of the Shravakayana which we assert as

means of valid cognition are the Buddha's teaching. They are established as such for both of us—there is no discussion on this point. But we do not accept the Mahayana scriptures such as the *Prajñāparamitā Sūtras* as the Buddha's teaching, so as there is disagreement concerning them, they must be at fault.

Madhyamika: Well then, even for the scriptures of the Hinayana, you Shravakas dispute with other, Tirthika, schools over whether or not they are pure scriptures. And even if some scriptures are accepted as means of valid cognition by all the eighteen original schools,<sup>1</sup> other scriptures which teach that there is intermediate existence,<sup>2</sup> although accepted as being the Buddha's teaching by some schools, are denied as being so by the Mahasanghika school. And scriptures which teach that there is no independent and substantially existent individual self are not accepted as means of valid cognition by the Vatsīputrīya school. So if the Buddhist schools argue between themselves like this, none of these Shravakayana scriptures can be the word of the Buddha either, and it would follow that they would have to be rejected.

Here it is explained that scriptures which teach the three trainings are called 'teachings on the Great Way,' and that their opposite are called 'teachings on darkness.' This is taught in the commentary on the *Bodhisattva Levels* and other texts. The meaning of these two types of teaching is given in the commentary on the *Ornament of the Sūtras*: 'As the teachings on darkness do not teach meditation on the antidote, those which teach meditation on the antidote are necessarily teachings on the Great Way.' Therefore a teaching which teaches only the cause for wandering in saṃsāra should be classified as a teaching on darkness, and anything teaching the antidote which looses the fetters of saṃsāra should be classified as a teaching on the Great Way.

1 The eighteen original schools came into existence after the Buddha's Parinirvāna. By the 8th century A.D., they had either become obsolete or had evolved into the Shravakayana traditions that Śāntideva knew and debated with.

2 existence between two successive lives.

c **Proving that without the wisdom which is the realisation of emptiness one will not even attain liberation [44-48]**

If among the many bhikṣus described—'nominal bhikṣus' and so forth—the root of the Buddha's doctrine is, according to you, the absolute bhikṣu, i.e. the state of the Shravaka Arhat, then it is *indeed* difficult to define the status of such a bhikṣu: for to attain it, it is necessary to eliminate the negative emotions and their seeds, and to eliminate these it is necessary to meditate on the profound emptiness which is the supreme antidote. But you assert that by realising and repeatedly meditating on the sixteen aspects of the Four Noble Truths one attains liberation; you do not use as the path the wisdom which realises emptiness, the only path through which one can attain liberation. On top of that you ask, what is the use in realising emptiness?

Indeed here indicates that if one does not realise emptiness, not only can one not attain Buddhahood, one cannot even attain the state of Arhat.

Why are the Shravaka Arhats said to be the root of the doctrine? Because the Pratiṃokṣa vows of individual liberation are the root of the doctrine and of all the individuals which practise the Pratiṃokṣa vows the Shravaka Arhats are the most important. Two other explanations are that it is because they heard the Buddha's teachings directly from the Buddha and, as a result of Kashyapa and others compiling the Buddha's teachings, the doctrine has endured a long time; and because the Sixteen Śhāvras and others protect the doctrine.

We shall now prove that without realising emptiness one does not even attain the state of Arhat. If one does not realise emptiness, one assumes that things truly exist, and as logical reasoning cannot eradicate the referent object of this assumption, one cannot free oneself from it. As long as one believes in true existence, it will necessarily remain difficult, indeed impossible, to attain the nirvāna of the Shravakayana, let alone attain Buddhahood.

In this case the last two lines, 'It is hard for minds enmeshed in concepts to pass beyond the bonds of suffering,' refer to the proof



of the 'logical pervasion.' Another explanation would be to say that 'The true monk is the very root of Dharma, but difficult it is to be a monk and true,' is the proposition, and 'It is hard for minds enmeshed in concepts to pass beyond the bonds of suffering,' is the proof, because as long as the mind has concepts it will not even attain mere nirvana.

The objectors say: to attain the state of absolute bhikshu and just nirvana it is not necessary to realise emptiness. But by getting used to the understanding of the sixteen aspects such as impermanence, the negative emotions are completely eliminated and the result, liberation as an Arhat, is thereby attained.

Even if such individuals abandon just the manifest form of the negative emotions temporarily, as is described in the two Abhidharma texts, they do not at all eliminate their seeds. If you believe that this is all you need to be liberated, then you are necessarily saying that as soon as one has got rid temporarily of the manifest negative emotions, one attains liberation from samsara as an Arhat. The reason for this is that you assert that in general, simply through the path of realising the sixteen aspects such as impermanence, one attains liberation. But this reasoning emphasises the problem, which is that however much one repeatedly practises on such a path, one cannot eliminate the seeds of the emotions. Your assertion cannot hold, because even if temporarily there are no manifest negative emotions in the mind of such individuals, in those same minds there is a powerful karmic potential which projects their aggregates into the next life and causes them to be reborn again, as can be seen in the scriptures and through reasoning. So the argument here (in verse 45), that by abandoning negative emotions, one attains liberation is not over whether in general, by abandoning negative emotions, one attains or does not attain liberation, since everyone has to accept that if one eliminates negative emotions, one necessarily attains liberation. But here our Prasangika position argues that the opponents' assertion, that merely by means of the path of realising the sixteen aspects such as impermanence one eliminates the negative emotions and attains liberation, does not follow. We assert that although such a path can eliminate only the manifest negative

emotions, as explained in the Abhidharma, it cannot at all eliminate their seeds. As for the negative emotion which is posited as the emotional obscuration of the assumption of true existence, not only can that path not eliminate the seeds of this emotional obscuration, but it cannot even eliminate its manifest form.

In short, what we are saying is that such a path cannot completely eliminate all the negative emotions, and therefore the attainment of liberation through it is not possible. We are not saying that such a path can eliminate negative emotions but that once the negative emotions are eliminated one does not attain liberation.

Now to discuss what is meant by 'karmic potential.' One explanation is that because of the karmic potential they had accumulated when they were ordinary beings, some Arhats like Maudgalyayana, even though they had become Arhats, experienced suffering while they were alive as Arhats. However, here we should explain that 'karmic potential' does not refer only to suffering in the present life, but mainly to the fact that because the karmic potential which projects one into the next existence is not stopped, it is impossible to attain liberation.

Our opponents reply to this with the following definite assertion: you cannot conclude that 'the karmic potential which propels one into the next life is evident.' Although those who use the path of realising impermanence and so on and attain the level of Arhat still have some impure karma, their elimination of their negative emotions is not just temporary, because they do not at all have craving and grasping, the cooperant conditions which—like moisture making a seed germinate—trigger the karma that propels one into rebirth, and therefore they do not take a next life.

The answer to this is: you say that it is certain that in the minds of those individuals whom you claim to be Arhats there is no craving. But this is not so. Although this craving is not the same as the 'emotional' craving described in the Abhidharma, according to the Abhidharma there are two types of ignorance: one 'emotional' ignorance and 'non-emotional.' You too accept this. In the same way it is correct to distinguish 'emotional' craving which is induced by the belief in an independent and substantially existent individual;

and a 'non-emotional' craving as explained in the Abhidharma, which is induced by the belief in the true existence of the individual existing by way of its characteristics. Although such an Arhat does not have the first, emotional craving in manifest form, he must have the second, non-emotional craving in manifest form.

Here we have explained that the craving which is induced by the belief in true existence is not the emotional craving mentioned in the Shravakayana Abhidharma. However it is not generally taught that there exists a non-emotional craving. In our own Prasangika tradition, as we assert that belief in true existence is an emotional obscuration, how could there be a non-emotional craving? Moreover, in the traditions of other schools, craving is necessarily asserted to be emotional. The craving mentioned here is the craving which is one of the twelve branches of interdependent origination, as we can see throughout this text, so it must be necessarily emotional. As we read in the *Notes*: 'In the two schools of the Shravakayana and generally in the Mahayana it is taught that there is a non-emotional craving, but one should understand that in our tradition we have never asserted two types of craving, one emotional and one not.' If this craving is not emotional, it cannot be an emotional obscuration. In that case, it is either an obscuration veiling knowledge or something which does not have to be eliminated. Therefore, it is irrelevant to say that the individual described above cannot be liberated from samsara because he has this non-emotional craving.

You might think: if craving is necessarily emotional, in that case what is the use of saying 'although this craving is non-emotional' and thus indicating that there are two types of craving, emotional and non-emotional?

In the tradition of our opponents there are two types of ignorance, and because of that it is shown that it is also possible to distinguish similarly two types of craving.

Why does one need to distinguish two types?

Although there is no difference as regards the seeds of both emotional and non-emotional craving in that neither of them are eliminated through the Shravakayana path mentioned above, there

is a difference as regards the manifest craving, and this is why we make this distinction.

The negative emotions that are absent, referred to in 'They have no craving through defiled emotion,' are the ignorance which is the assumption of an independent and substantially existent individual and the manifest craving which derives from it. The reason these are absent is that one has practised the path of realising the sixteen aspects, such as impermanence, as the antidotes to these emotions.

The negative emotions that are present, referred to by the words 'craving born of ignorance?', are the ignorance which is the assumption of true existence, together with the manifest craving which derives from it. The reason they are present is that the wisdom which is the realisation of emptiness as the antidote to these emotions has not been used as the path. Therefore, the path which realises no-self, the absence of an independent and substantially existent individual, is able to eliminate the manifest forms of both the conceptual and innate negative emotions which are explained in the Abhidharma, but unable to eliminate the seeds of either of these two. It cannot eliminate any of the manifest forms and seeds of either the conceptual or innate aspects of the so-called emotional obscuration which is the assumption of true existence. But the path of realising emptiness can eliminate the conceptual and innate emotions mentioned in the Abhidharma, together with the seeds of both, and both the conceptual and innate aspects of the so-called emotional obscuration which is the assumption of true existence along with their seeds. This is how it should be explained, but that is not to say that the first Shravakayana path can eliminate the conceptual emotions and not the innate ones, while the second path (of emptiness) can also eliminate the innate emotions. Here we make a distinction between the gross negative emotions explained in the Abhidharma and the subtle ones asserted by our tradition. It is because of this essential point of considering the assumption of true existence to be an emotional obscuration that we make this distinction.

Besides this, why is it that, in the minds of those individuals whom you claim to be Arhats, there is the craving which triggers

the karma that causes rebirth? If it is feeling, the cause, which leads to craving as the result, then your 'Arhats' also believe that feeling is truly existent. They do not realise that the three aspects<sup>1</sup> of feeling have no true existence, and because they have not eliminated even the slightest ignorance of believing that feeling truly exists, when a pleasurable feeling arises, it results in the craving to not be separated from the pleasurable feeling, and when a painful feeling arises, as a result the craving of wanting to be without the painful feeling arises. This is definitely so, for it is certain that when the conditions favouring a cause are complete and unfavourable conditions are absent, it will give rise to its respective result. Thus, because of the belief that feeling is truly existent, objects are conceptualised as pleasant, unpleasant and neutral, and one is trapped by the arising of attachment, aversion and indifference. How this happens is shown in the sutras:

Pleasant feelings blossom as attachment;

Painful feelings blossom as hatred;

Indifferent feelings blossom as stupidity.

And in the *Treasure of Abhidharma* we read:

Because of feeling there are the three fetters.

Again, without the view of realising emptiness it is impossible to eliminate craving, because as long as the concept of true existence remains manifest in an individual's mind, it will be impossible to stop the manifest craving which derives from it. We could also explain this by saying that if there is the belief in true existence, one will also believe that aspects of the ground, path and fruit are real. It is said that if it finds a single handhold whereby we cling to true existence, it is there that the viper of negative emotions will strike. As we read in the *Sixty Verses of Reasoning*:

If it finds a suitable spot

There the deceitful viper of negative emotions will strike.

The minds of those who are without such weak points

Will not be struck.

Why would the great venom of negative emotions

Not arise in those whose minds have weak points?

In other words, the mind which has no understanding of the absence of true existence and which is fettered by the manifest belief in true existence is the direct cause resulting in poisons like attachment. All this shows that the belief in the true existence of things is ignorance, which is the root of samsara.

Although one may simply practise the path of realising impermanence and so forth without realising emptiness, this only results in temporary cessation in the mind of the manifest aspect of the negative emotions mentioned by the Abhidharma. But as the seeds are not eliminated at all, later, because of circumstances, they appear again in manifest form. For example, although, at the time, gross feeling and thought do not arise manifestly in the mind of an individual resting in perception-less absorption,<sup>1</sup> as soon as he emerges from that absorption, they do appear in their manifest form. Therefore those who strive for mere liberation, not to mention omniscience, should, in order to eliminate craving, meditate on emptiness which negates the subtle object of negation. Once eliminated by this meditation on emptiness, craving cannot possibly come back again.

In our tradition there is a method for eliminating the craving for feeling which derives from the assumption of true existence. This is to stop craving for feeling by repeatedly practising the realisation that the three aspects of feeling are devoid of inherent existence. This will be described below, with verse 98, when we discuss how to meditate on close mindfulness of feelings.

Of all the negative emotions, it is craving whose presence or absence is being discussed here because craving is the principal cause for taking rebirth. There are three sorts of craving: desire craving, fear craving and existence craving. The first is the craving of wanting to not be deprived of pleasurable objects. The second is

<sup>1</sup> Perception-less absorption: Skt. asamjñisamapatti, Tib. 'du shes med pa'i snyoms 'jug

<sup>1</sup> Tib. 'kor gsum: subject, object and action.

the craving of wanting to be separated from unpleasent objects. The last gives rise at the time of death to craving for the aggregates: because of it, one is reborn again. It is therefore this last one that is the most important for us. As we find in the *Commentary on Logic*:

Ignorance is the cause of existence,

But what projects the mental continuum into the next existence

Is what is called 'unexpressed' craving;

It is not karma, as craving is the immediately preceding factor.

And in the *Compendium of the Abhidharma* it is shown that craving is the most important because it is all pervading. Our assertion here that craving is the main cause for taking rebirth is no different from the explanation in these two quotations.

At this point there appear three verses (49–51) which prove the authenticity of the Mahayana. Some great commentators explain that these verses should be inserted before verse 44. Appearing here they are out of place and are not part of Shantideva's original text. Their meaning is as follows.

Any utterances which teach the three trainings, for instance the superior training of concentration which refers to the sutras, and so on, are teachings on the Great Way. If you assert that such a teaching is the teaching of the Buddha, (or, according to other spellings in the root text, if you assert that it was *spoken* by the Buddha), then, as the three trainings are taught in most of the Mahayana sutras, you should accept them as being just as authentic as your sutras.

If because of a single sutra which has all the characteristics of the Buddha's teaching but which you fail to understand as such—or, put another way, if because of a single sutra which you do not accept as being the Buddha's teaching because its characteristics are not the same as those of the sutras you accept—all the Mahayana scriptures are corrupt, then on account of a single Mahayana sutra which is the same as the sutras you accept, all the Mahayana

scriptures should be established as having been spoken by the Conqueror.

You might argue that if the teachings in such texts as the *Extensive Prajñāpāramitā* are the authentic teaching of Buddha, it should be possible to understand their meaning. And yet even such beings as Mahakashyapa could not fathom them. For this reason they cannot be the authentic teaching of Buddha.

As you say, even Mahakashyapa and others did not fathom these teachings. This is because they are extremely profound. You say that they are not authentic because you do not understand them. But who can judge that they are not the Buddha's teaching just because of this?

Expressed differently, you might argue, 'We do not understand the meaning of the *Extensive Prajñāpāramitā* and other such texts, so they cannot be the authentic teaching.'

Even Mahakashyapa and other great Arhats did not fathom all of the teachings in the *Extensive Prajñāpāramitā* and other such texts. So what intelligent person would say that the Mahayana scriptures are not authentic simply because you syllogisers do not understand them?

There are many ways of explaining this verse, but it would be incorrect to assert here that because Mahakashyapa was a Shravaka Arhat he did not understand those sutras which directly reveal emptiness, neither did he accept them as the Buddha's teaching. The verse should be explained as we have done above.

As those who do not accept the authenticity of the Mahayana sutras are 'members of the Shravaka schools' or holders of the Shravakayana tenets, they should not be confused with the individuals who have entered the Shravaka path. In general the Shravakas or individuals who have entered the Shravaka path are those ranging from practitioners on the Shravaka path of accumulation to the Shravaka Arhats. What we call 'members of the Shravaka schools' are the Vaibhashikas and Sautrantikas, in other words, the holders of their tenets. As for those who have entered the path, in the Prasangika tradition we assert that even the exalted beings of the Shravakayana have necessarily realised emptiness. But regard-

ing the holders of the tenets, when we evaluate their tenets with Prasangika reasoning, none of them, up to those of the Madhyamika Svatantrikas, are found to be beyond any of the extremes of eternalism and nihilism, and therefore they cannot lead to the realisation of emptiness which is beyond ontological limitations. It is very important to make this distinction between practitioners and holders of the tenets. That being so, saying that when one declares that the members of the Shrivaka schools have not realised emptiness one means that the Exalted Shrivakas have not realised emptiness leads to much contradiction, as does considering that the tenet-holders of the Shrivakayana and the practitioners of the Shrivakayana mean the same thing. Because it would mistakenly follow that if someone is a Shrivakayana tenet-holder he is invariably a practitioner, and that even the Exalted Shrivakas slander many of the teachings on the Mahayana path and fruit.

## 2 PROVING THAT THE WISDOM WHICH IS THE REALISATION OF EMPTINESS IS THE PATH OF OMNISCIENCE [52]

Now that we have shown that even those who merely desire liberation need to realise emptiness, we shall demonstrate that to attain the nirvana which does not dwell in extremes depends on realising emptiness. Because sentient beings are ignorant as to what to undertake and what to avoid in terms of karma, and because, believing that the individual and the aggregates are real, they know nothing of the Absolute, they are enslaved by karma and negative emotions and wander in the five realms. For the sake of these suffering beings, the Exalted Bodhisattvas are overwhelmed by great compassion and voluntarily remain in samsara. At this time they are not like ordinary beings, who are overpowered by attachment and believe that things are real, and as a result they do not fall into the extreme of an endlessly long samsara. On the other hand, unlike the Shrivakas and Pratyekabuddhas, they do not fear the sufferings of existence and the impure aggregates as one might fear an executioner brandishing a sword, and they do not fall into the

other extreme of a nihilist absorption in nirvana, merely arresting rebirth in samsara. They are free from both these extremes and do not remain in either, and it is in this way that they live in samsara. This is the result of realising emptiness. Without this path, if they stayed in samsara through compassion alone, they would experience the sufferings of samsara concretely and grow weary and sad. Consequently they would fall into the extreme of nirvana, striving only for their own peace and happiness. But if they have the wisdom which realises emptiness, they realise that existence and all the sufferings of existence are without inherent being, like magical illusions, and not only are they unaffected by the sufferings of samsara, but they derive joy from taking birth in existence for the sake of others. With the same delight as a universal emperor strolling from one pleasure grove to another, they never cease to help others.

As it is said in the *Ornament of the Sutras*:

For him who has realised that all phenomena are like magical illusions,

Taking birth is like a stroll in a pleasure grove;

In good times or bad

He has no fear of negative emotions and suffering.

And earlier in the *Bodhicaryavatara* (Ch. VII) we find:

Because they have abandoned wrong-doing they do not suffer,

Because they are wise, they are not unhappy.

While we, with distorted views and evil deeds,

Bring only harm to body and mind. [27]

Through merit they enjoy an ease of body,

Through learning they enjoy a happiness of mind;

Even staying in samsara for the sake of beings,

Why should those with Mercy ever sorrow? [28]

ing the holders of the tenets, when we evaluate their tenets with Prasangika reasoning, none of them, up to those of the Madhyanika Svatantrikas, are found to be beyond any of the extremes of eternalism and nihilism, and therefore they cannot lead to the realisation of emptiness which is beyond ontological limitations. It is very important to make this distinction between practitioners and holders of the tenets. That being so, saying that when one declares that the members of the Shrivakaya schools have not realised emptiness one means that the Exalted Shrivakas have not realised emptiness leads to much contradiction, as does considering that the tenet-holders of the Shrivakaya and the practitioners of the Shrivakaya mean the same thing. Because it would mistakenly follow that if someone is a Shrivakaya tenet-holder he is invariably a practitioner, and that even the Exalted Shrivakas slander many of the teachings on the Mahayana path and fruit.

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Why should those with Mercy ever sorrow? [28]

### 3 ADVISING THOSE WHO STRIVE FOR LIBERATION AND OMNISCIENCE TO MEDITATE ON EMPTINESS [53-56]

According to your tenets, you members of the Shravaka school posit the substantiality of phenomena. You wonder what is the use of realising emptiness, maintaining that to attain liberation it is unnecessary to realise emptiness. Saying, 'The Mahayana sutras which teach emptiness are not the Buddha's teaching,' you appear to reject the aspect of emptiness. None of this follows: it is invalidated by the reasonings shown throughout this text. Therefore, do not entertain the slightest hesitation, wondering whether, simply to attain the enlightenment of the Shravakas and Pratyekabuddhas, it is necessary to realise emptiness or not, or whether one should meditate or not. Meditate on emptiness! For as the root of samsara is the emotional ignorance which assumes true existence, unless one eradicates the referent object of this ignorance it is impossible to be liberated from samsara. There is no other way than to practise the path of realising emptiness.

As Nagarjuna said:

On you, the only path to liberation,  
The Shravakas and Pratyekabuddhas,  
And all the Buddhas have surely relied:  
It is certain they will never say there is another.

And in the *Commentary on Bodhicitta* we read:

On this emptiness which destroys  
Groundless existence, meditate constantly.

and

Those who do not know emptiness  
Lack the basis for liberation.  
These confused people will circle  
In the prison of the six realms of existence.

Moreover, as the wisdom which is the realisation of emptiness is also the antidote to the darkness of the obscurations of negative emotions and their seeds (such as the belief in true existence and the

attachment which derives from it), and to the darkness of the ultimate habitual tendencies left by the negative emotions, and to the darkness of the obscurations veiling knowledge (such as deluded dualistic perception), those who wish to completely eliminate the two obscurations and swiftly attain omniscience should meditate on this emptiness. For without this path, they will not be able to eliminate the seeds of the emotional obscurations, or even most of the manifest emotional obscurations, let alone the obscurations veiling knowledge. As we find in the above mentioned text:

Thus when a practitioner  
Meditates on this emptiness,  
The thought of helping others  
Will arise, there is no doubt.

And in the tantras it is said:

By meditating perfectly on the non-substantiality of  
phenomena,  
One will realise Omniscience.

Let us now summarise the meaning of all this. You might say, 'The idea of emptiness terrifies me—I cannot meditate on it.'

It would be quite right to be terrified of the belief in true existence, which is the root of samsara and the principal cause of all fear and suffering. But instead of fearing that, you are afraid of wisdom, the realisation of emptiness which *eradicates* the belief in true existence, the root of samsara, and which is the principal cause for *relieving* all fear and suffering. This is quite absurd. It is like fearing the brave men escorting you while remaining unafraid of a dangerous enemy.

Furthermore, if, on investigation, one were to find some inherently existent so-called 'I,' then it would be reasonable to be afraid of frightening things, because of attachment to such an 'I.' But there is no such thing as an inherently existent 'I,' so who—what inherently existent 'I' or individual—is there to be afraid? Turn inwards and think! When you understand the true nature of no-self, you will be freed from all fear.

# Developing Wisdom

## III DETAILED EXPLANATION OF THE ARGUMENTS WHICH PROVE EMPTINESS

Detailed explanation of the logical proofs of the no-self in the individual

### 1 THE REASONING WHICH REFUTES THE REFERENT OBJECT OF THE INNATE PROCESS OF SELF-CLINGING [57-59]

This passage shows that the illustrative basis for the self or individual is not to be found among the separate parts of the body which is the basis for imputing the individual.

Neither the teeth, the hair, nor the nails are the self. The illustrative basis for the self is neither the bones, nor the blood. Neither nasal mucus nor phlegm. For they are merely attributed to the self. Lymph and pus are not the illustrative basis for the self either. Nor are the illustrative bases for the self fat or sweat, because they are merely attributed to the self. The lungs and the liver also are not the self. And neither are any of the other inner organs such as the intestines the illustrative basis for the self, because they are merely attributed to the self. Excrement and urine are not the self, neither are the flesh and skin the self, for they are merely attributed to the self. The heat and air in the body are not the self, nor are the hollow parts like the mouth, nostrils and the stomach and intestines the self. And neither are the six consciousnesses *in any way* the self. Because they are merely attributed to the self.

The words 'in any way' refer to the fact that none of the six elements is shown to be the self: the elements of earth and water indicated in the first nine lines, the elements of fire and wind indicated by bodily heat and air, the element of space by the hollow organs, and the element of consciousness by the six consciousnesses.



The refutation of the existence of a permanent self different from the aggregates will be discussed below when the imputed self is refuted.

As the point of refuting the notion that the teeth, nails and so on are the self is to gain liberation from samsara, concerning this, the root of all the problems of existence, we read in the *Introduction to the Middle Way*:

Having understood that all negative emotions and defects

Come from the 'perishable aggregates' view,

And realised that the self is the object of this view,

The meditator refutes the self.

And also in the *Bodhicaryavatara*: (Ch. VIII)

As all the harm,

Fear and suffering in this world

Come from believing in a self,

What am I to do with this great demon? [134]

Accordingly we should refute this belief in 'I' or self, which all beings have, even the tiniest insects or worms. You might think, however, that one cannot refute the 'I' in this way because besides considering that the teeth and nails belong to the 'I,' one does not believe that they are the 'I.'

This is not a problem. The innate view of the perishable aggregates has two aspects. The innate 'I' as *perceived* is simply the 'self-isolate' of the self or I imputed on the basis of the aggregates. The innate 'I' as *experienced*, however, is the assumption that such an I exists naturally. If there were such a thing as a naturally existent 'I,' a referent object of the 'perishable aggregates' view, we ought to be able to find it exemplified in the aggregates taken individually (which together form the ground of imputation). Failing that, we ought to be able to find it in the combination of these aggregates or else in some other entity. There is nothing to be found however, and therefore we deny that even on the relative level these aggregates are the illustrative basis of the 'I.' And these verses of the text have already refuted the idea that the different parts of the aggregate of

the body (out of the five aggregates), like the teeth, hair and nails, are the self or individual.

## 2 THE REASONING WHICH REFUTES THE CONCEPTUALISED SELF IMPUTED BY PHILOSOPHICAL SYSTEMS.

### a Refuting the Samkhyas' theory of a conscious self [60-67]

We shall now refute the substantial existence of a self imputed by non-Buddhist philosophical systems. Although there are many different ways of misconceiving a self, they are all in fact systems asserting either a conscious or an unconscious self. Therefore, if we refute the conscious self posited by the Samkhyas and the unconscious self asserted by the Vaisheshikas, we can also, by adapting the same reasoning, refute all other theories of the self. With this in mind, Shantideva only mentions and refutes these two systems.

Here is how the Samkhyas<sup>1</sup> posit their conscious self, as described in the *Introduction to the Middle Way*:

The experiencing, eternal, non-creating self,

Without universal constituents or activities, is imputed by the Tirthikas.

These are its five particular attributes: as it experiences pleasure and pain, it is an 'experiencing' self; as it is neither born nor deteriorates it is eternal; it is not the creator of modulations; it lacks the three universal constituents, *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas* (luminosity, activity and obscurity); and because it is all pervading it is without action. Furthermore, it is conscious, it is single and indivisible, and infinite. These are some of the particular characteristics it is asserted to have. Such a self is supposed to be generally located in the chest until liberation is attained, and then to be alone on its own when liberation is attained. Of the four possibilities of whether the subject (i.e. the self) and the object (sound, for example) are or are not

1 The various terms used in the Samkhya theory are explained in the discussion of verses 126 and 127 below, pp. 232

asserted to be permanent, the Samkhyas assert that both are permanent.

To refute this: if the object, sound for example, existed permanently, then one would hear it all the time. This is quite sufficient refutation regarding the object. Now for the refutation regarding the subject, we can consider that the first line, 'If the hearing consciousness is permanent,' represents the Samkhyas' proposition—that there exists an eternal *purusha*, a conscious principle or self which experiences the five elementary principles such as sound. This is impossible. You would have to accept that such a *purusha* would apprehend sound all the time, whether there was sound or not, which is impossible. Once one sound has ceased and before the next arises, between them there is no sound. In that case, what object is known by what consciousness? The consciousness would not have any object at all to be conscious of, so you cannot say it is eternal.

Put it another way. For what reason does one speak of consciousness? You might say, even if there is no sound to be conscious of, because the consciousness which apprehends sound is permanent, it exists all the time. In that case, it would follow that even bits of wood and clods of earth could be a consciousness. Because it would be possible for there to be a consciousness which does not necessarily have to be conscious of anything, since you claim that a consciousness which apprehends sound exists even in the absence of sound. But it is quite certain that when there is no object of consciousness such as sound actually present there is no apprehension of the sound. This shows that all subjects have to have an object. Even for the two types of belief in a self, there is an observable object, the aggregates, and the individual imputed in dependence on them, although in fact there is no object to cling to.

Now the Samkhyas say: a subject consciousness existing without an object of consciousness does not present a problem, because when there is no sound the eternal consciousness which apprehends sound is conscious of other objects, such as visual forms.

Well then, when the conscious self apprehends visual forms, why does it not hear sounds as well? It should. Because as you maintain,

the eternal *purusha* experiences the five elementary principles such as sounds whether they are nearby or far away.

When it is apprehending visual forms, reply the Samkhyas, it does not apprehend sounds because the sound which is the object is not close to the subject.

You are asserting, then, that because there is no sound to be apprehended, neither is there a subject of that sound, a sound-apprehending consciousness. This invalidates your theory of an eternal conscious principle which apprehends sound. Moreover, how can the consciousness which apprehends sound become a consciousness which apprehends visual forms? Apprehension of visual forms and apprehension of sounds are two mutually exclusive things.

To this the Samkhyas reply: for example, a single person can be said to be a son in relation to his father, or a father in relation to his son. Similarly, the single consciousness apprehending visual forms can be said to be visual in relation to apprehending the modulation of visual form, and auditive in relation to apprehending the nature of sound. When it apprehends visual forms, although there are no sound *modulations* present, the substance of sound is present, because visual forms and sounds have one and the same substantial nature, and so the single consciousness can be said to be not only apprehending visual forms but also apprehending sound. The same is true for the case of apprehending sounds, and so on. The Samkhyas assertion here is not in the verses of the root text.

Here is the Madhyamika answer. Your example is not apposite. To posit a single person as a father or a son depending on different referents is a mere imputation, but objectively that person does not exist as such. However, you assert that the substance of sound, visual form, and so on is truly existent or absolute, and you affirm that the balanced state of the three constituents of *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas* is the primal substance or *prakriti*, i.e. the absolute truth. In that case, the nature of the sonship is not the son because it is the *prakriti*, and the nature of the fatherhood is not the father because it too is the *prakriti*.

The reason it cannot be the father or the son if it is *prakṛiti* is because you maintain that the direct perception of the father and son and so forth is a deceptive modulation, while the *prakṛiti* or absolute truth is invisible. This is affirmed in the Samkhya texts:

The sublime *prakṛiti* endowed with the universal constituents  
Cannot be seen.

Whatever can be seen

Is false and hollow, like a magical illusion.

Furthermore, if both father and son were one substance, they could not be posited as different states even in dependence on different referents, because this would result in the problem of the father becoming the son, and the son becoming the father, and the creator and created becoming one and the same thing.

Finally, the consciousness which apprehends visual forms does not have the same nature as the sound-apprehending consciousness. If it did, we should be able to perceive it validly. But we cannot. Again the Samkhyas say: the consciousness is like an actor who discards one costume and puts on another. What was previously sound consciousness assumes another aspect, that of perceiving visual forms, and now sees forms.

Well then, your conscious principle cannot be permanent because it changes from one way of being to another.

There is no difficulty here, reply the Samkhyas. Although the aspect of visual consciousness is a different aspect from sound consciousness, their nature is the same. For we maintain that both visual consciousness and sound consciousness are of one and the same substance.

A single substance like this is a singularity which does not exist, nor is it known in any past tradition. Although there is a distinction between earlier and later aspects, you claim it is one and the same substance.

Put another way, it is impossible to assert that the later apprehension of visual forms and the former apprehension of sound are one and the same, because during the earlier apprehension of sound the subsequent apprehension of visual forms did not yet exist.

To this the Samkhyas reply: different modulations which appear as sights and sounds are deceptive. They are not the absolute truth. Then if the different modulations are not real in the way they appear, tell us, what is the true and single nature peculiar to this consciousness?

It is true existence, which is the very nature of the conscious principle.

Then in that case all beings, with their different minds, would be one and the same! For you maintain that the conscious principle is indivisible and single, that it is neither born nor destroyed and therefore eternal, and that it pervades all beings. Moreover, the conscious *puruṣa* and the unconscious *prakṛiti* and the other twenty three principles in your system would also all be one and the same! For they are the same in the fact that they exist, and you claim that this nature is indivisible, eternal and all pervading. If the particular or distinct modulations are untrue deceptions, then what is their common and general basis, this truly existent *prakṛiti* or substantial nature? It does not exist. Because you have already asserted that all the modulations are deceptive, and because you contradict yourselves in asserting that something indivisible is all-pervading, and because you contradict yourselves again in saying that a single entity has a threefold nature. It simply does not stand up to logical investigation, as we find below:

Three natures in a unity are disallowed,

This unity, therefore, does not exist. [128]

## b Refuting the Vaisheshikas' theory of an unconscious self [68–69]

The *Introduction to the Middle Way* says this of the Vaisheshika tradition:

The philosophical systems of the Tirthikas  
Are differentiated on the basis of increasingly fine  
distinctions.

Just as the Samkhya's assert a self which is defined as being an experienter, and so on, other Tirthikas like the Vaisheshikas base their philosophical systems on very fine distinctions. This does not mean however that the individual traditions of the Tirthikas stem from the Samkhya school.

Most of the philosophical theories of the Vaisheshikas, such as the theory of the six 'word-objects,' are shared by the Naiyayikas. These six are: substances, properties, actions, and generality, particularity and coexistence. The first of these, substances, are divided into nine categories, one of which is the self. This is the basis of nine qualities such as the mental which is another substance than the mind associated with the body and sense organs. This self unites these qualities in itself. It is asserted to be unconscious matter, indestructible and pervading everything. *Purusha* and *padgala* (individual) are different names for it.

The second of the six word objects, properties, refers to the twenty four properties of the substances, and of these there are nine qualities of the self: mental consciousnesses, pleasure, pain, desire, hatred, effort, order, disorder and force of action. As long as the nine qualities exist, united in the self, the individual accumulates karma and wanders in the higher and lower realms of samsara. When the self is realised to be a source of error, the mind and the other qualities become separated from it and the self is left alone. At this time liberation is attained.

The Vaisheshikas denote followers of Uluka and Kanada. The Naiyayikas are also referred to as the followers of Akshapada.

Now to refute them. This assertion of the Vaisheshikas and Naiyayikas that the self is unconscious matter does not follow. Why? Because something unconscious cannot be the self. A pot, for instance, cannot be the self.

To this the Vaisheshikas reply: because the self itself is unconscious matter, it cannot know objects—true. Nevertheless, when that self is associated with the contributory condition of the consciousness it becomes conscious of an object.

But this destroys your earlier assertion that the nature of the truly existent self is to be unconscious! Because you subsequently assert

that it becomes conscious because of other conditions. If you maintain that the self, in its own essence, does not undergo the slightest change, how can the contributory condition of consciousness act on the self? How can it make it know an object? Nothing can act upon something that is permanent and unchanging.

In brief, it is easy to understand the irrelevance of the assertion that something which is unconscious and inactive is a self. Because this self would be no different from un-compounded space, and it could do nothing either for good or bad.

Of the philosophical theories of the Tirthikas, those of the Samkhya's, Vaisheshikas and Naiyayikas were propagated to a certain extent, and there are therefore many logical arguments, such as those in the *Seven Treatises on Logic*, for refuting these theories. Accordingly it is these logical arguments for refuting them that have been shown here.

In general, the mere refutation of the philosophically imputed self does not eliminate the referent object of the innate process of clinging to self, which is the root of samsara. However, we have demonstrated here the refutation of the imputed self because if the self existed in the way it is apprehended according to innate self-clinging, then the self imputed by the different philosophical systems would have to exist. And moreover the refutation of the imputed self is an aspect of the refutation of the innate self.

### 3 REJECTING ARGUMENTS AGAINST REFUTATION OF A 'SELF'

#### a **Rejecting the argument that if there were no self, the law of karma could not hold [70-74]**

The opponents argue as follows: if a permanent self which is the basis for bondage and liberation did not exist, as the self or individual would come into being and cease from moment to moment, it would be impossible to establish a causal relationship between positive and negative actions and their results, happiness or suffering. For the doer of any karmic action would vanish the

moment after he has done his positive or negative action. So to whom would that karmic action subsequently be attributed? For when the time came to experience the result, the doer of the action, having vanished, would be no more! Our theory that the self is permanent is the most plausible for the causal relationship between karmic actions and their results.

Here is the Madhyamika answer: the individual imputed on the basis of the aggregates of this life, who accumulates karma, and the individual imputed on the basis of the aggregates of the next life, who experiences the result, are two different individuals. When in the next life the result of a karmic action is experienced, the self or individual of the former life who was the doer accumulating karma no longer exists. On this we are both agreed. So your argument that if there were no permanent self, the law of karma could not hold is meaningless, is it not?

This is because even you have to accept that at the time of accumulating karma the one who experiences the result does not exist, and at the time of experiencing the result the one who accumulated the karma does not exist; so you have the same problem. If it were otherwise, the result, pleasure or pain, would be experienced at the time of accumulating the cause, virtuous or non-virtuous karmic actions. If cause and effect occurred at the same time one would have to see the evidence for this. But to see something like this is impossible, even for the visible results of everyday actions.

You might ask, how do you establish the causal relationship of karmic action and result in your tradition?

It is taught that on the relative level it is possible to say that the one who commits a karmic act is the one who experiences the result because there is a single mental continuum or continuity of aggregates which is the basis of imputation for the two individuals, the former one who committed an action and the later one who experiences its result. But the individual of your theories, which is permanent or inherently existent, could not transfer from this life to others. Karmic actions and their results would never be spent even in a hundred kalpas. This is a subtle point which is difficult to

understand and only within the scope of an Omniscient Buddha. As we find in the *Sutra of King-like Concentration*:

Although one cannot see sentient beings  
Who go to other worlds after death,  
Those who have done karmic actions will not become  
nothing,

Their black and white actions will accordingly ripen as  
the result.

This excellent door of reasoning  
Is subtle and hard to see: it is the domain of the Conquerors.

We consider the continuity of the aggregates of former and later lives as the imputational basis of an individual and impute the individual accordingly, but we do not consider it to be the illustrative basis of the individual.

To summarise, without investigation or analysis it is possible to say simply, such-and-such an individual has done this karmic action and experiences this result. But if we search for that conventionally imputed individual who is the accumulator of karma and experienter of the result, we cannot find anything. If some self were to be found, it could only be, out of the aggregates which are the basis for imputation, the mind or consciousness. But the past or future states of mind cannot be the self, because the past state of mind has already ceased to be and the future one has not yet come into being, and therefore they cannot be the self. Nevertheless, if one thinks that the present state of mind which has come into being and has not yet ceased is the self, as it vanishes in the next instant, or ceases naturally, the self too will be nothing, and so the present state of mind cannot be the self.

In that way, when one searches for the basis of imputation of the mind, one finds nothing. For example, if one separates the trunk of a banana tree into its individual concentric layers, starting from the outer layer, one will find that there is no core at all. Similarly, if, through reasoned analysis, one searches for what is called the self, examining whether it is inherently existent or not, one will never

find a truly existent self: this type of reasoning proves no-self, and if one were to find a self the same reasoning would invalidate it.

**b Rejecting the argument that if there were no self, meditation on compassion would be irrelevant [75–77]**

The opponents say: if sentient beings had no inherent existence, there would be no sentient beings, and in that case, with no object for compassion, to whom would one direct one's meditation on compassion?

Why would there be no object of compassion simply because sentient beings do not exist inherently?

Then what is the object of your compassion?

Without investigating and searching for what is called our commitment for the sake of enlightenment—meditation on compassion for beings and training on the path and so forth—we focus on the beings who exist merely on the relative level and are, in the absence of investigation, imputed through ignorance. The *Introduction to the Middle Way* says of 'through ignorance': 'Unexamined, the general consensus is due to stupidity.' As it is said, the mind is merely relative; it is called ignorance or stupidity because it is just an ordinary mind which does not comprehend no-self.

Again you say, if sentient beings have no inherent existence, who is there to attain the result of perfect enlightenment, because the attainer does not exist?

In Absolute Truth it is true that perfect enlightenment, which is to be attained, and the individual who attains it do not exist—this is the answer from the point of view of Absolute Truth. However, though attainer and attainment do not exist in Absolute Truth, they are not necessarily nothing, since the ignorant mind which engages the relative, conventional world without examination necessarily asserts that they exist, because they are conventionally imputed.

You may argue: now you admit that assertions posited through ignorance are correct, but did you not earlier insist that ignorance and its object are to be refuted?

For the sake of completely relieving one's own and others' suffering, leaving analysis aside, we engage in meditation on compassion for the sake of attaining perfect enlightenment, focussing on beings without specially considering their absence of true existence. This sort of ignorant conventional way of thinking is not an emotional one, and is therefore not the cause of suffering. Moreover, it is an excellent form of skilful means for attaining perfect enlightenment, so it should not be rejected.

Then what ignorance does one have to reject?

As has been explained above,

Our aim is here to undermine the cause of sorrow:

The thought that such phenomena have true existence. [25cd]

In this case, the cause and root of the sufferings of existence is the presumption of self, which is emotional ignorance. Because of this ignorance regarding a self in the individual and substantiality in phenomena, all the sufferings of existence develop, and it is therefore this ignorance regarding the two types of 'self' that the meditator should reject.

Put another way, the presumption of self or innate ego-clinging is due to ignorance with respect to the self in the individual. Because of this ignorance regarding a self in the individual and substantiality in phenomena, all the sufferings of existence develop, and it is therefore this ignorance regarding the two types of 'self' that the meditator should reject.

You might now argue: it is because of the former type of ignorance (that with regard to the thought of true existence) that we have the ignorance regarding the two types of 'self,' and this has been in our minds since time without beginning. Now it has become such a strong habit that there is no getting rid of it—we cannot do it.

Yes, it is possible to get rid of it. The two-fold belief in 'self' is related to a way of perceiving which is contrary to the way things are, and it is therefore weak and inferior. Meditation on absence of 'self' is related to a way of perceiving which is correct regarding the way things are, and as it can eradicate the former it is supremely powerful.

These two ways of perceiving observe the same thing in two contradictory ways. As no-self has been validly demonstrated, the realisation of no-self is backed by logic, while the self, the referent object as apprehended by the process of self-clinging, is invalidated by logic. Thus whoever is in possession of logic will invalidate and defeat the opponent. As it is said:

Whoever is in possession of logic  
Will invalidate others' assertions.

### Detailed explanation on the logical proofs of the non-substantiality of phenomena

#### 1 EXPLANATION OF THE NON-SUBSTANTIALITY OF PHENOMENA BY MEANS OF THE FOUR CLOSE MINDFULNESSES

##### a How to meditate on close mindfulness of the body

a 1 *Establishing that the body, made up of parts, has no inherent being*  
[78–84]

What we call the body does not exist inherently. If it did, then if we looked to see how this thing designated 'body' is objectively, we would have to find the basis for imputation of a body either in individual parts like the feet or in the combination of the limbs or in something else different from them as being the illustrative basis of the body. But we do not find anything.

The visible body of a human being does not exist in any of its parts: the feet and calves are not the human body; neither the thighs nor the hips are the body; nor are the belly or the back the body, for the body is merely imputed on the basis of these. The chest and arms are not the body, nor are the sides of the body or the hands the body. The armpits and shoulders are not the body, nor are the viscera. The head and throat are not the body. In none of these is there an objectively existing human body.

You might think then that the existence of the visible body made up of constituent parts is based on all its parts. In that case, does this visible partible body, whose existence is based on its parts, reside partially in all its parts, one part in the hands, another part in the feet and so on? Or does the gross partible body reside entire in each single part like the hands?

If it were the first case, then the parts of the gross partible body would indeed reside in the parts such as the hands, but where do the parts themselves—like the hands—reside? We could never find where they reside, because the parts like the hands, themselves made up of parts, would necessarily reside in their own fingers. We can continue with this sort of investigation down to the level of the tiniest particles.

Put another way, the parts of the body would indeed reside in each of the individual parts, but where would the partible body itself reside? It is not possible to observe any other basis for its existence than its parts.

The second case is not acceptable either, because if the entire body, complete with all its parts, resided in each of the individual parts such as the hands, there would be as many gross bodies as there are parts like the hands and so on. Again, one would have the problem of never reaching the end of one's investigation.

If one investigates with this sort of reasoning, there is no inherently existent body anywhere, either for the individual which according to Buddhist theory is imputed extrinsically on the basis of the aggregates, or for the intrinsic individual of non-Buddhist theories which is permanent, single and independent, and not related to the aggregates. As this is the case, there is no inherently existent body in the hands or anywhere else.

Furthermore, one should not think that the combination of parts which is the basis of designation of the body is the body. It is not. It is just labelled as a body. If the combination of different parts which is the basis of designation of a body were the body, then it would follow that everything from the combination of fingers which is the basis of designation of a hand down to the aggregation of atoms

would be the body. These remarks on how we impute the body do not appear in the root text—they are explained in a commentary.

If there is no independent body different from the limbs and so on, how can it exist inherently? Even when we look for what is called a body from the point of view of its basis for designation, we do not find anything, and neither does it exist as something different from this basis for designation. So there is no inherently existent body. However when people observe its basis for designation such as the hands, because of the ignorance which assumes true existence in things, they believe that the body exists truly. It is like thinking a man-shaped scarecrow is a man. As long as the circumstances—man-shaped scarecrow will be perceived as a man. Similarly, as long as there are assembled the contributory causes of hands and so forth appearing to be truly existent, the combination of the limbs will be perceived as a body, and as it is perceived there will arise the belief that it is inherently existent.

a 2 *Establishing that the limbs, made up of parts, lack inherent being [85–86]*

What we call the body, as explained above, is merely a label put on an aggregation of limbs, but it has no inherent existence. Similarly, when we consider the basis for designation which is the aggregation of the limbs and fingers, the latter are also merely labels, and therefore not only does the body not exist inherently, neither do the hands. The fingers too depend on their own basis for designation, the aggregation of phalanges. They are conceptual labels and have no inherent existence. If again the phalanges are analysed by being split up into their individual parts, they are found to have no inherent existence. If the parts of the phalanges are split up into minute particles and analysed, they too are seen to lack inherent existence. And if the particles are analysed by being split up into their different directional facets, they too are shown to have no inherent existence. Even these directional facets do not have truly existent parts, and are therefore devoid of inherent existence. They are like space, there is nothing there to touch. Thus the body is just a label stuck onto its parts, and not as much as an atom exists

inherently. If it did, there would have to be such a thing as an partless particle, and this is refuted by the following:

If six particles are joined to a partless particle,

The latter will have six parts.

If these six parts are coextensive

Then even a mass of such particles will only ever amount to a single, infinitely small particle.

This is the Chittamatrin objection to the theory of the Sautrantikas and others that there exist partless particles which make up outer objects: if such an particle is surrounded by six particles together—four in the cardinal directions, and one on top and one underneath—does the central particle have parts which touch the six particles around it or not? If it does, then there will be six parts which touch the six surrounding particles, which contradicts its being partless. If it does not, then as all the particles would occupy one and the same space, even a mass made up of several particles would also be a single 'particle.' This argument is to be found in the *Twenty Verses*. All the other arguments which logically refute the partless particle are similar to our method for invalidating it.

a 3 *Demonstrating that it is improper to be attached to the body which has no true existence and that corporeal beings are also unreal. [87]*

When one investigates the body in this fashion, it is just like the perceptions of horses and oxen and suchlike in a dream. It does not stand up to analysis, even though when we do not examine or analyse it, it appears to be solid, to really exist. No intelligent person who submits the body to ultimate analysis would be attached to it. A body as something pure, which is a misconception stemming from desire, or a truly existent body, which is a misconception stemming from belief in true existence, does not have the slightest existence.

If the body does not have the slightest inherent existence, there can be no individual that exists inherently—neither man nor woman, who are only different in terms of sex. Using the above



mentioned reasoning, this demonstrates that the individual does not exist inherently.

Put another way, if in general the body thus has no inherent existence, then neither can its specific instance, a man's or woman's body, exist inherently. This could also be used as an explanation of the absence of inherent existence in phenomena.

## b How to meditate on close mindedness of feelings

### b 1 Refuting the inherently existent nature of feeling [88-92]

Not only does the body lack inherent reality, so also does feeling. If a feeling such as pain existed on the absolute level, once pain had appeared in the consciousness it would necessarily continue forever without subsequently changing into anything else. In that case, why does it not prevent the arising of intense pleasure—mental or sensory? Having taken up all the place, the pain should prevent the pleasure, and there would therefore not be any room for feelings of pleasure. But this is impossible. Both pleasure and pain usually occur intermittently. If feeling did have inherent existence, it could never change into anything else, as we read in the *Fundamental Treatise on the Middle Way*:

For something inherently existent to change  
Would never be possible.

This shows that feelings of pain do not have inherent existence. Now to demonstrate that feelings of pleasure do not exist inherently, although one can refute the existence of pleasure on the absolute level by adapting the above reasoning, Shantideva here gives some supplementary reasoning, to enable us to refute inherently existent pleasure through different approaches.

If not only pain but also pleasure existed inherently, then why does eating delicious food and wearing beautiful clothes not give delight to someone who is grief-stricken by the death of a child or who is tormented by sickness? If the causal relationship—delicious food and drink giving rise to pleasure—that occurred before existed

inherently, then it would be reasonable to suppose that delicious food would give pleasure at any time. And if pleasure existed inherently, its occurrence would necessarily not be affected by such things as adverse conditions.

To this you might say: when someone is tormented by grief, things like delicious food do give rise to pleasure, but because that pleasure is outweighed by the intense pain, at that time pleasure is not experienced.

If pleasure of this sort is not something experienced, how can it be a pleasurable feeling? If it is a feeling, it must by definition be experienced. As we find in the *Introduction to the Middle Way*: 'Feeling is by definition an experience.' The same answer can be adapted to your suggesting that intense pleasure might outweigh pain.

When intense pleasure arises, you argue, as the feeling of pain is quite slight, it is not experienced very strongly. But it is not that it is not experienced at all.

Then if there is a slight pain, how has the intense pleasure affected the pain since the pain has not been dispelled. How can you say that intense pleasure is experienced?

This intense pleasure affects the pain by dispelling the gross aspect of the pain. The subtle pain also is just a subtle delight different from the pain. Or again, 'Or rather it is felt as mere pleasure', meaning that the subtle pain is a mere subtle delight different from that intense pleasure.

This is not correct. The subtle pleasure too has the same defining characteristics as that pleasure, so even if subtle, it is necessarily pleasure, and it cannot therefore be pain.

Again, the meaning of 'what is subtle...' is explained as follows: when the intense pleasure is experienced, there is no pain, since you assert that what is called 'subtle pain' exists as pleasure.

Furthermore, to resolve the earlier problem of 'if pleasure exists inherently, why does someone who is grieving over the death of a child not enjoy things like eating delicious food?'—you might say that when someone is tormented by grief, conditions which counteract suffering, such as eating delicious food, give rise to happiness, and so at that very moment suffering does not arise and

there is no suffering. But this is merely an imputation. The mind conceptualises feelings of pleasure and pain—'this is pleasurable, that is painful.' But they do not exist objectively. We have already proved this. For because of one's concepts, the same food can be considered as the source of both pleasure and pain. How? For example, when someone suffering from hunger and thirst takes some food and drink, after a short while he begins to feel contented; but if he eats and drinks too much, he experiences pain.

Here now are the instructions on the practice of meditating on the absence of inherent existence of feelings. If one examines the nature of feeling, it lacks any true existence, and therefore the antidote to considering the feelings to be real is the analytic meditation which ascertains their irrationality. Because this is in fact a potent antidote for directly counteracting our belief in the true existence of the feelings and clinging to them.

How should we do this meditation? We should get used to the clear insight which perceives emptiness, and which 'comes from the field' of thorough investigation and discerning analysis of so-called feeling. And, settling evenly and one-pointedly on the result of analysis, we should accustom ourselves to mental calm or concentration on emptiness. As these two practices cause the body of the meditator's realisation to grow and develop, such practice is known as the 'food of the meditator,' just as food which comes from an ordinary field nourishes the body. Also, as concentration nourishes the ordinary body, it can be explained as being food which nourishes the meditator.

In general there are two forms of mental calm, one which observes the nature of phenomena and one which observes the multiplicity of phenomena. There are similarly two forms of clear insight. Here the forms of clear insight and mental calm mentioned above are those which observe the nature of phenomena. This explanation of meditation on mental calm based on clear insight refers to a kind of clear insight which leads to true clear insight. It is also explained as the meditation in which both mental calm and clear insight are mastered. But in general it is said that one has to go through mental calm before authentic clear insight comes: without accomplishing

authentic mental calm one will not accomplish clear insight. For as Shantideva points out in the chapter in the *Bodhicaryavatara* on mediative concentration (Ch. VIII):

The penetrating insight of a mind which calmly rests

Destroys completely all afflicted states;

Knowing this, one must begin by searching for tranquillity,

Found by those who turn with joy their backs upon the

world. [4]

At this point we can refer to the *Short Notes*, where the author quotes from the sutras in the *Compendium of all Practices*: when a Bodhisattva meditates on mindfulness of feelings and so on, it is said that he practises both the absolute and the relative aspects. Regarding the relative practice, when pleasurable feelings occur in a Bodhisattva's mind, compassion for other sentient beings arises.

Why? Even though he experiences pleasurable feelings, his realisation of emptiness destroys all belief in true existence, so that he has no craving for pleasure, whereas he sees that other sentient beings do not have this view, and that because of this they crave pleasure.

It is also said in the *Garland of Jewels* that the mere pleasure that comes from satisfying craving is similar to 'the pleasure from scratching an itch,' it is only ordinary pleasure. Supreme happiness is one where craving has been exhausted, as it is said: 'of all happiness, the supreme one is that where there is no more craving.'

Finally the *Short Notes* mention that we can adapt the above to painful feelings: when a Bodhisattva experiences painful feelings, compassion arises... and so on.

## b 2 Refuting the inherently existent cause of feeling [93–98]

Here we refute the belief in the true existence of feeling by refuting the true existence of contact which is the cause of feeling. On the purely relative level, when the object, sense organ and consciousness all join or meet, the object is assessed, and this is what we call contact. But if we search for what is meant by contact we cannot find anything. It does not exist inherently.

We shall refute first of all any truly existing meeting<sup>1</sup> between the sense organs and their objects. If the meeting of sense organs and their objects did exist inherently, when the particles of a sense organ like the eye met the particles of the object—visual forms for example—would there be any space between them or not? If there were a space, where would the particles meet? They would not meet! Because the supposed space in between would be filled with particles of light during the day and particles of darkness at night. Even if there were no intervening space, such a meeting would be impossible for the following reason. If partless particles as asserted by the lower systems of philosophy did meet, each particle would have two parts, one which met and one which did not, which makes nonsense of the proposal of a partless particle. If there were not two parts, the whole of the particle would have to meet the whole of the other particle, and if the two particles were to meet in this way, they would mingle into a single space and therefore become one single particle. So what meeting particle would meet what met particle? There would be no meeter nor object met that could be observed.

The reason, or proof, that the particles do not meet each other in this way is that one partless particle cannot penetrate or dissolve into another particle, because the particles have no empty volume in which one could penetrate the other, and because they are the same size as each other.

If one particle does penetrate and dissolve into the other particle, the resulting mass must also be just a particle. If the particles do not penetrate and dissolve into each other, they each occupy their own space, so they necessarily cannot intermingle, and for partless particles which cannot intermingle there is necessarily no meeting. How, therefore, is a 'meeting' between things which have no distinct parts possible? The notions of meeting and being partless are mutually contradictory, since no-one has validly observed any evidence for this. If you have seen such a meeting, show it to us! As it cannot be so, you cannot demonstrate it.

1 Throughout this passage the commentary appears to use the word 'meet' as a synonym for 'come into contact' or 'touch'.

Next we shall refute the inherent existence of a meeting with the consciousnesses. You might say that although, as we have investigated, there is no meeting between the two particles of the sense organs and their objects, the particles of the eye consciousness, for example, and those of visual forms do meet.

For a consciousness, which is immaterial, contact with partless particles is impossible, because it is immaterial.

All this refutes any meeting between particles. Now we shall refute a meeting on the gross level. You may argue that although there is no meeting between particles in this way, meeting does occur between the gross things which are aggregations of particles.

Even for gross things which are aggregations of many particles there is no inherently existent meeting with each other, because none of these gross elements have any real existence. For, as we showed above in the passage beginning 'What we call the body is not feet or shins...' through the analysis of what is called the body, the inherent existence of everything from the gross body which is made up of parts down to the parts themselves, the particles, has been refuted.

Thus, if there is no inherently existent meeting between the objects, sense organs and consciousnesses, then there cannot be any inherently existent contact resulting from such a meeting. In which case, as contact, the cause, does not exist inherently, what cause could produce an inherently existent feeling? A cause that is not truly existent cannot give rise to a truly existent result. As the *Garland of Jewels* states:

If the seed of something is unreal  
How can the sprout be real?

Therefore, as feeling does not exist truly, what is the point in exhausting oneself in one's efforts to gather and protect wealth and to quarrel and fight? There is no point at all. You might say that it is to avoid suffering and be happy. But what pain is there to harm which individual? Neither the harmer nor the person harmed exists inherently. We can say the same for pleasure: who is there to profit from what?



which experiences feeling is not truly existent, neither is the feeling which is experienced.

Finally we shall show that the individual who experiences feeling is not truly existent either. Not only does the feeling which is experienced have no true existence, but there does not exist inherently any conscious, feeling individual. The truly existent individual has already been refuted, so for that reason, on the absolute level, feeling does not exist. So how can this collection of aggregates which does not have the slightest existence as an inherent self be gratified by pleasure or harmed by pain? For experiences and experiencers are inherently non-existent.

### c How to meditate on close mindfulness of the mind

#### c 1 *Refuting an inherently existent mental consciousness* [102–103]

The mental, which here is synonymous with mind and consciousness, has no inherently existent location in the six sense organs such as the eye organ. Neither is it located in their six objects, visual forms, sounds and so forth. Neither has it any inherently existent location between the objects and the sense organs, nor in the combination of these two. Here Shantideva only presents the thesis that the mind is not located in these things, but the proof is described in detail in other sources: it is said in the *Notes* that the method of refutation is the seven-fold reasoning with the example of a chariot taught in the *Introduction to the Middle Way*.<sup>1</sup> However, in brief, if we examine whether the mind and its supposed location, for instance, the sense organ, exist truly as the same thing or as different things, neither of these alternatives is feasible. If they are the same thing, there should not be any distinction at all between them, in which case a mind distinct from its location would not be possible. And if they are distinct they would be unrelated and different, in which

1 The seven-fold reasoning with the example of a chariot: a chariot is neither different from its parts, nor the same as them; it does not possess them; it is not dependent on the parts nor are the parts dependent on it; it is not the collection of its parts, nor is it their shape.

case no connection between the mind and its location would be possible. One can refute the inherently existent mind by applying this reasoning alone.

The mind also has no inherently existent location inside, in the heart or lungs, neither outside, in the hands and so forth; nor is a mind to be truly found anywhere else. According to the commentary, 'inside' here refers to a 'creator' asserted by the Tirthikas.

The mind is not the aggregate of form, i.e. the body, neither is the mind to be found in any of the other four aggregates—feeling, perception, motivational factors and consciousness. The mind is not intermingled with the body, as are burning wood and fire, neither does it exist objectively separate from the body. So the mind has not the slightest inherent existence. For this reason, as the nature of the mind of all sentient beings is beyond all concepts of true existence, beings are by nature in the state of nirvana.

#### c 2 *Refuting inherent existence of the five sensory consciousnesses* [104–105ab]

If the eye consciousness or any other of the five sensory consciousnesses exists before visual forms or any other of the five objects of consciousness, then in respect of what perceptual condition does the consciousness come into being? Because if the perceptual condition does not come before the consciousness, the sequence of cause and result will be disrupted.

Even if the eye consciousness, for instance, and the visual forms which are the objects of consciousness exist simultaneously, in respect of what perceptual condition will that sensory consciousness be produced? Until the sensory consciousness comes into being, the perceptual condition, a visual form for example, will not come into being either. And without the visual form (the cause) appearing, the eye consciousness (its result) cannot be produced. When the visual form or other perceptual condition appears, the eye consciousness has also come into being, so there is no need for a perceptual condition to make it come into being. Here the object of consciousness is the cause and the consciousness which perceives is the result, but causal relationships where the thing caused comes

first and the cause comes after, or where cause and caused occur simultaneously, are impossible, even on the relative level. A cause which did not precede the result could not affect the result; neither could it affect the result even afterwards, because all causes have to precede their results. As we find in the *Commentary on Logic*:

Because, if they do not precede the effect, they have no power,

And because even if they follow the result they cannot affect it,

All causes must exist beforehand.

Now if consciousnesses succeeded their objects of consciousness—if, for example the eye consciousness succeeded the visual form—then perceptual conditions could not produce the sensory consciousnesses truly or on the absolute level. Our refutation is aimed at the object of negation, i.e. true existence. But we are not denying the fact that on the merely relative level cause and effect occur in order, with the perceptual condition coming first and the consciousness following after.

How do we make this refutation? We refute true existence by ascertaining what is meant by this kind of origination. Is the consciousness produced by the previous instant where the visual form has already disintegrated or by the instant where the form has not yet disintegrated? The first case is unacceptable: although the disintegrated visual form is, according to this tradition, an existent entity, as it is not the form-source, it cannot produce the eye consciousness. If it could, then a burnt seed would be able to produce a sprout. If the consciousness is produced by the non-disintegrated form, is there an interval in time between them or not? If there is, then it would be impossible for the caused consciousness to actually be produced by the perceptual condition, i.e. the visual form. And if there is no interval at all, the previous and subsequent instants of time would be mixed and become one, in which case it would be impossible for there to be a preceding cause and a succeeding result. If each moment in time had two parts, one connecting and the other non-connecting, it would be divisible, and if analysed by neither

one nor many' reasoning, it would be impossible to establish it as truly existent.

#### d How to meditate on close mindfulness of phenomena [105cd]

We have already established that everything included in the aggregates of body, feeling and consciousness does not in the first place arise of itself, and, by the same token, that there is no inherent existence in its final cessation or its intermediate existing. Similarly, everything included in the aggregates of perception and motivational factors—out of the aggregates of perception, motivational factors and uncompounded phenomena—is without inherently existing origination, existence and cessation. And as the *Fundamental Treatise on the Middle Way* says:

If compounded phenomena do not exist at all  
How could uncompounded phenomena exist?

Thus there is no logical reasoning which could reveal inherently existent uncompounded phenomena.

#### 2 REJECTING THE CRITICISM THAT THE MADHYAMIKA THEORY OF THE TWO TRUTHS IS UNACCEPTABLE

##### a Rejecting the objection that the Madhyamika theory of the two truths is absurd [106–108]

All our opponents, up to and including the Madhyamika Svatantrikas, argue as follows. With such logical reasoning as investigating the sequence of the arising of subject and object, you Prasangikas have earlier refuted phenomena existing by way of their characteristic nature and existing objectively. In that case, there would be no ground on which to posit phenomena, and it would be incorrect to say that things do exist on the merely relative level—they would not exist at all. If they did not exist, then even the true

nature of these relative phenomena, i.e. their ultimate nature or absolute truth, would be nothing. So in your tradition there is a problem with regard to your theory of the two truths. According to you, relatively existing things have never existed objectively. However they exist truly for those whose conventional minds mistakenly assume the true existence of things. But if relative existence is just this, then for instance, even though a rope has never been a snake, if someone apprehends it as a snake, they will be convinced it is a snake. For them there is only a snake. So how, even relatively speaking, can sentient beings attain nirvana? Liberation would be impossible, and it is pointless to establish the Madhyamika view in order to attain liberation.

Here now is the Madhyamika reply. You say that our Prasangka system posits a relative existence which is merely the assumption of true existence by the conceptual mind which mistakenly apprehends its referent object as being truly existent. But that is not how we consider relative existence in our tradition. If it were, when we used reasoning to refute the true existence of a vase, for example, the vase itself would be negated. And this would result in the problem of there being no ground for conventionally positing a snake, for example, on a striped rope.

If you were to ask how does our Prasangka tradition posit a valid relative truth, it is as follows. Once one has found certainty in the view of emptiness which is the realisation that all phenomena and individuals, besides being merely conceptually imputed, do not exist objectively, through that confidence in the emptiness aspect, later on one will unmistakably and validly establish the appearance aspect, i.e. all the relative phenomena characterised by particular functions, arising and cessation, coming and going, and so on, and gain certainty about this. Thus if the two types of certainty in the emptiness aspect and the appearance aspect support each other, relative truth is validly established; this is what we mean by relative existence. If this were not the case, there would be no ground for correctly positing a validly existent relative truth. For with appearance refuted by emptiness, one would subsequently be unable, within emptiness, to posit functioning things; and with emptiness

refuted by appearance, emptiness would then be inadmissible since all these functioning things would exist. In such a tradition it would be impossible to establish, without contradictions, two levels of truth combining both appearance and emptiness on one and the same ground, and it would therefore be impossible to go beyond the fearful abyss of the extremes of eternalism and nihilism. For this reason the subject, the mind, and the object to be analysed both posit each other and are mutually dependent, and therefore they have not the slightest existence in themselves. If they were existent in themselves, this would contradict the fact that the existence of these phenomena necessarily depends on causes and conditions. As we read in the *Fundamental Treatise on the Middle Way*:

It is not possible that an inherently existent thing  
Could result from causes and conditions.

And in the *Clear Words*: 'Whenever one thinks that a vase exists inherently, one should ask what need would there be for clay, or any other causes for such an inherently existent thing.'

For this reason, in the Prasangka tradition we base all our assertions or investigations in respect of phenomena and individuals on the merely relative level given by the ordinary general consensus without investigating their existence on the absolute level.

To say a little more about what this means: when one seeks some understanding of the Prasangka view, because of the certainty regarding the appearance aspect, i.e. interdependence, one necessarily has certainty regarding the emptiness aspect. Thus only an individual who has gained the view will understand that emptiness means interdependent origination. Subsequently, as a sign that one has acquired a full understanding of the view, one gains certainty regarding the emptiness aspect, and this leads to a greater understanding of the appearance aspect. Because one realises that all phenomena are inherently empty, one is all the more able to understand how conventional relative truth works. All this can be studied in detail in the *Fundamental Treatise on the Middle Way* in passages such as, 'For whomever emptiness is possible, everything is pos-

sible' and the objection of the lower philosophical systems, 'If all these are empty...' with the response, 'If all this were not empty...'

As dispelling the extreme of existence through appearance, and appearance leading to certainty regarding emptiness both mean the same thing, this is the method leading to certainty when one first seeks to understand the view. And as dispelling the extreme of non-existence by emptiness, and emptiness leading to certainty regarding appearance also have similar meanings, this is the method leading to certainty when perfect understanding of the view arises. Therefore, the particular feature of the extraordinary Prasangika view is that absence of inherent existence does not mean being nothing at all, and also that emptiness can lead to certainty regarding appearance, and for this reason absence of inherent existence can be explained as meaning interdependent origination. Other philosophical systems consider that absence of inherent existence means complete nothingness, and they think that within voidness nothing can happen. They are thus traditions in which voidness negates appearance.

As for the point at which emptiness is understood to mean interdependent origination: to see all outer and inner phenomena as being nothing at all is not seeing the real nature of interdependent origination. If they were nothing at all, these phenomena would not depend on causes and conditions or on a basis for designation; they would be like flowers growing in the sky. This is not correct, because none of these phenomena can exist, even slightly, without relying on their own causes and conditions or bases for designation. Again, to see phenomena as existing inherently is also not to realise the real nature of interdependent origination. If phenomena did exist inherently, their existence by themselves would be totally in contradiction with their depending on causes and conditions, as has been explained above. Therefore when, firstly, one knows that phenomena are not completely nothing but mere imputations contingent on a mind which does not investigate illusory causal relationships on the relative level, and secondly, one sees, on investigating what is called interdependent origination, that there is not a single truly existing atom in it—when these two facts mutually

support each other and induce certainty regarding the two truths, this is the sign that one knows the real nature of interdependent origination.

Not everyone can understand that emptiness means interdependent origination. It is said that to do so one has to be an individual who has undistracted recognition of the perfect view or an individual who has logically refuted inherent existence. Emptiness means interdependent origination for this sort of person's mind, but not for others. If one analyses things, using correct logical reasoning which refutes true existence, it is not difficult to understand that they do not have the slightest inherent existence. On the other hand, it is said that it is impossible to validly establish as truly existing everything that is posited on the relative level without confusing all the functions of relative truth and without negating interdependent arising appearances as being inherently non-existent. In the *Commentary on Bodhicitta* there are many passages such as:

Once one knows this emptiness of phenomena,

The relationship of cause and effect

Is the most marvellous of marvels.

It is the most extraordinary of all.

**b Rejecting the objection that the reasoned analysis would lead to infinite regress [109–110]**

The objection: When, in considering any phenomena or individuals, the discerning mind which examines whether or not they have true existence finds that they have no inherent existence, at that time, as the analysing mind itself is not included in that object of analysis, does the mind itself have to be analysed by another analyst as to whether or not it is inherently existent? If it does, then the succeeding analysis of the former analyst would also have to be analysed as to its absence of true existence by another analyst, and therefore there would be no end to the analysis. If the contrary were true, it would be equally unnecessary to analyse other



c **Showing that there is no proof that consciousness and its objects truly exist [111-115]**

According to you Substantialists, both the consciousness and its object are asserted to be truly existent. But this is no more than a misconceived hypothesis. It remains extremely difficult to establish such true existence, because there are no correct logical proofs for it and plenty of logical objections.

There is a proof, say the Substantialists: because of the true existence of the eye consciousness and the other consciousnesses, the six objects, such as visual forms, necessarily exist truly.

But what supporting evidence do you have to prove the true existence of consciousnesses like the eye consciousness? There is none, because if the consciousness were to be cognized by another valid cognition, this would result in infinite regress, and the self-aware mind has already been shown to be inadmissible. Let us ask you, what supporting evidence do you have?

The object of consciousness or the object of comprehension is directly established as truly existent, and because of this the eye consciousness and so on truly exist.

But what supporting evidence is there for the true existence of the object of consciousness?

As we said before—it is the consciousness.

In establishing that both object and consciousness exist by virtue of their dependence on each other you are approaching our method of asserting phenomena: neither consciousness nor object exist truly. It is like asking, 'How long is a piece of string?' or talking about here and there. As we read in the *Fundamental Treatise on the Middle Way*:

Something inherently existent is not fabricated,  
Nor is it dependent on anything else.

Anything inherently existent is not fabricated from causes and conditions, nor is it dependent on other things. But anything fabricated and dependent on other things is an interdependent phenomenon. Therefore these two—the inherently existent and the

phenomena, and therefore no valid cognizer could establish that the analysis itself lacks true existence.

The answer to this objection is as follows. The valid cognition which ascertains all phenomena as lacking true existence does not need other valid cognitions to ascertain it as being devoid of true existence. Why? Because when, through logical analytical reasoning, one finds certainty in the irreality of all phenomena, then as long as the mind does not wander from that apprehension, no seemingly true phenomenon which could be the object or basis of that analysis can appear to that mind. Also, the unimpaired strength of the mind which realises validly the absence of true existence of phenomena will know them to be not truly existent as soon as there arises the question in the mind as to whether any observed phenomenon is truly existent. Thus our manifest conceptual belief in the reality of the mind which investigates phenomena will no longer occur because it has been eliminated through the former valid reasoning.

As there is no longer any truly existent object for such a mind, neither true existence which is to be refuted nor the result of the refutation, absence of true existence—or again, neither true existence which is to be refuted nor the mind which refutes it—can come into being in reality. The reason for this has just been explained.

Their not coming into being in reality is natural nirvana, and if one becomes used to the realisation of this, this is called attaining the nirvana free of adventitious stains. We can also explain 'not coming into being' as the fact that the assumption that the analysing mind itself is truly existent does not arise.

It is said that if there had to be another analyser, we would have the problem of the infinite regress of the analysis, and a residue of conceptual belief in true existence would remain; and this is not correct.

fabricated—cannot be put together on a single ground, because of the plain contradiction between fabricated and non-fabricated, dependent and independent, things which are mutually exclusive.

Take this example of establishing something through dependence: without a child, there cannot be such a thing as a parent. To posit a parent necessarily depends on there being a child. If there is no parent, how can a child appear? Positing the child necessarily depends on there being a parent, and without a child there can be no parent. Similarly, as object and consciousness each necessarily depend on the other being posited, they cannot be truly existent. As we read in the *Commentary on Bodhicitta*:

Consciousness reveals the object of consciousness:

Without an object there can be no consciousness.

In that case, why not assert that

What is known and a knower do not exist?

Thus if the object of knowledge and the consciousness are existent they are both equally existent, and if they are non-existent they are both equally non-existent.

You might say, an inherently existing sprout arises as the effect from its cause, a seed, and the evidence of the sprout makes it possible for us to understand the inherent existence of the seed. Similarly the truly existent eye consciousness which arises from visual forms necessarily reveals the true existence of the visual forms.

Your analogy does not hold. It is a consciousness which is different from the sprout itself which observes the sprout and infers that because there is a result there is also a cause. But what valid cognizer will cognize the truly existent consciousness which reveals its object? We have already shown that for the mind to know itself is impossible, and you do not accept or posit any other cognizer.

### 3 EXPLANATION OF THE ARGUMENTS WHICH REFUTE THE OBJECT OF NEGATION.

#### a Explanation of the Diamond Splinters argument<sup>1</sup>

##### a 1 Refuting causeless origination [116–117]

The Charvakas say that there is causeless origination:

The rising of the sun, the downhill flow of water,

The roundness of peas, the irregularity, length and sharpness of thorns,

The beautiful colours of the eye of a peacock feather

—all such things

Were not made by anyone; they arise spontaneously.

As one never sees such things as the roundness of peas being made through the efforts of anyone, they cannot be made by any maker, and must arise spontaneously and without cause.

To refute this there are numerous logical arguments, but here we shall refute it by direct evidence. People can see directly all the various causes there are which produce the majority of animate and inanimate things—the harvest, for example, and they undertake hundreds of activities, such as sowing seed, in order to get results. So not only are there numerous other logical arguments against causeless origination, it is also refuted by direct evidence.

Moreover, the form and colour of something like a lotus flower, the different number of its petals, the different qualities of softness and roughness, the different colours of the eye of a peacock feather—all these various, different types of effect are produced by different types of cause.

What is it then that made all these different types of cause?

They arose from the different potentials of the preceding causes which produced them.

How are the different causes able to produce different results?

<sup>1</sup> One of the five kinds of logical argument used by the Madhyamikas. See note on page 139.

Because of the potential of the preceding causes which produced them, the different individual causes are able to produce their respective different results. When the conditions favouring a cause which has the potential to produce a result are complete, and there are no adverse conditions, no one can prevent the result issuing from that cause. As the *Commentary on Logic* says:

Who can stop the result

Of a cause which is complete?

But show us how a specific result comes from a specific cause without all the infinite individual types of animate and inanimate causes and results that occur being mixed up.

No one other than an Omniscient Buddha is able to reveal this. As it is said:

Even a single eye feather of a peacock,

Has different types of cause.

This cannot be known by one who is not omniscient.

Knowledge of these is the strength of the Omniscient One.

Furthermore, if there were origination without cause, things would either be permanent or nothing at all, or everything could arise from everything, because that which is causeless does not depend on anything. These are the logical arguments used for refutation in the *Introduction to the Middle Way* and its commentary. Also in the *Commentary on Logic* we read:

Because a causeless thing is not dependent on anything,

Things would have to be either permanent or nothing.

Therefore things which originate are never without a cause, for they are observed to arise at certain times and places.

a 2 *Refuting origination from a permanent cause*

• *Refuting origination from an eternal Ishvara*

—*Refutation by asking what Ishvara is [118–120]*

It is claimed by some that in the beginning when this world was formed, the omniscient, self-appearing and mighty Ishvara<sup>1</sup> first had a wish to bring forth this whole universe. Immediately, starting from its base in the nadir, the mandala of wind, the whole of the universe and its inhabitants gradually took shape. For this reason Ishvara is the creator of the universe and its beings.

When you assert that the self-appearing and omniscient Ishvara with premeditation created the whole universe and its inhabitants, and that he is therefore the cause of beings, this may well be so. But let us investigate this. Tell us, who is this someone whom you assert and call Ishvara?

Ishvara is the earth and the other great elements, for from the waxing and waning of the elements such as earth, which are the cause, the resulting things are formed and fluctuate.

We certainly agree with you that the things made from the elements arise from the elements. But in that case, there is no difference in meaning and we are merely arguing over names. Is it reasonable to tire oneself with troublesome refutations simply for the sake of a name—of calling the elements Ishvara? Besides, there is a great difference between them. For instance, the one is permanent, the other impermanent, so the elements cannot be Ishvara.

How do you describe the essential features of Ishvara? You claim that as he is indivisible he is single; as he is not born and does not perish, he is eternal; he has a thinking mind; he is divine; an object of reverence; and that he is pure. On the other hand, the elements are quite the opposite: they are multiple; they arise and perish and are therefore impermanent; they have no mind; they are not divine; they are trodden on by feet and so forth; and they are impure. These elements are not Ishvara—their defining characteristics are completely unlike and plainly contradictory.

1 The name Ishvara (Tib. dbang phyug) refers to a creator god.

Ishvara is the sky, you may say.

Ishvara is not the sky, because the sky is devoid of a creative mind able to produce a result. Neither is Ishvara the eternal self, for both the conscious self and the unconscious self have already been refuted.

Ishvara is the inconceivable Creator, you say, so there are none of these evident contradictions.

Such a creator, Ishvara, who is inconceivable could not be an object of thought, so what is the use in your thinking of and talking about him as the creator of the world? Who is this Ishvara who is unimaginable? Even you yourselves do not know!

—*Showing that if Ishvara were eternal he could not be a Creative Cause.*

[121–125]

What are the phenomena that Ishvara the creator wishes to create?

The self.

But do you not maintain that the eternal self, the earth and the other elements and even Ishvara himself—are eternal by nature? If they are, then the eternal self could not be a created result, neither could the elements nor an eternal Ishvara be a creative cause. A causal relationship is inadmissible for eternal entities. The self could not have been created by Ishvara.

There is also another explanation for this. The eye consciousness and other consciousnesses arise from the sense objects—visual forms and so on. And since time without beginning feelings of pleasure and pain have been repeatedly experienced, brought about by virtuous and non-virtuous actions. So tell us, what result has Ishvara created? You do not have an answer to this. It is impossible that an eternal and really existent Ishvara could create anything.

Moreover, if an eternal Ishvara, this cause that you assert, has no beginning, how is it that there is a beginning for the results that he creates—today's new sprout, for example, since the unobstructed potential which is the direct cause for creation has been Ishvara from time without beginning?

If results occur intermittently, it is necessarily impossible that the cause is permanent. If the cause, Ishvara, is eternal, it is impossible

that results occur from time to time. Why therefore does this Ishvara not create constantly and eternally? He would necessarily have to.

You might argue that one can observe intermittent results even with an eternal cause, i.e, Ishvara, because the necessary contributory conditions are not all present.

Ishvara, as the creative cause, should not depend on other conditions, for two reasons. As there are no other causes or conditions which have not been created by him, his creation could not depend on other conditions. And if it had to depend on other contributory conditions, Ishvara would then have to create those conditions.

As this is not the case, if he had to depend on other causes and conditions that he could not create himself, then he would necessarily and certainly be dependent on these causes and conditions all being present. But in that case, these primary causes and contributory conditions would become the cause of creation, and your 'independent' Ishvara could not be the cause. If the causes and conditions were assembled, even if he did not wish to create, Ishvara would be unable to prevent creation, and, powerless not to create, he would create. Without the causes and conditions being gathered together, even if he wanted to create, he would be powerless to do so and so would create nothing.

If Ishvara, without wishing it, creates results such as the sufferings of of the hell realms, he cannot be independent, but rather, controlled by something else. Even if he does so willingly, he must depend on his will, so his being independent is nonsense. And if he did create those sufferings, what is so holy about Ishvara? Inflicting suffering on others is hardly the act of a holy being.

This last verse (125) can equally well be explained as follows. If Ishvara performs acts without wishing it, he must be controlled by something else. Even if he acts willingly, that must depend on a will, which makes nonsense of his being independent. And if he acts, how can Ishvara be an eternal entity. One cannot be eternal, i.e. changeless, and act.

As for refuting Ishvara as the cause of beings, this is done using such logical arguments as can be found in the *Heart of the Middle Way*:

Therefore, as the beings made by the cause  
Conform with their cause,

They should all have a mind like it.

If Ishvara is the cause,

Then the tiniest insects should have a mind like his.

- *Refuting origination from permanent particles with a reminder of what has already been explained [126ab]*

According to the tradition of Tirthikas like the Vaisheshikas, space is referred to as a permanent and omnipresent substance, and earth, water, fire and air as non-omnipresent substances. The atoms of the four elements are permanent and are the foundation from which the whole universe and all it contains are formed, while the gross things made from the atoms are impermanent.

Those who say this have *also* already been refuted with the logical arguments used to negate partless particles earlier (verse 86): 'Even atoms, then, do not exist, but are like empty space.'

The word 'also' shows that not only are the ideas of those who believe in Ishvara implausible, but the Vaisheshika tradition too is unacceptable.

- *Refuting origination from an eternal primal substance*

—*The Samkhya theory [126cd–127]*

The Samkhyas assert twenty five principles, of which the substantial nature or what is known as the primal substance (or *prakriti*) is characterised by being eternal and so on. It is the cause of the world, which is its various modulations. They maintain that the balanced state of the three *gunas* (universal constituents) called *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas* is spoken of as the primal substance. The unbalanced state of these three is said to be the phenomena of the world or 'modulations.'

The primal substance is invisible and has six particular features: it is what produces all modulations, it is unborn and therefore eternal, it is partless and therefore single, it has no consciousness and is therefore only matter, it pervades the whole of the universe and all it contains, and it is the balanced state of the *gunas*. They say that it is 'invisible' because it does not have any manifest properties such colour, size or shape. *Rajas*, *tamas*, and *sattva* are also called pain, neutrality and pleasure respectively, or again hatred, stupidity and desire. It is said that the essence of *rajas* is to move and engage, that of *tamas* is to be heavy and dark, and that of *sattva* to be light and clear. The substantial nature is the cause and the modulations are the result.

—*Refuting this Samkhya thesis*

*Refuting the eternal prakriti being the nature of all modulations [128–131ab]*

Your assertion that the single *prakriti*, which has no parts at all, has the threefold nature of *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas* is not logical. If it is three it cannot be single, and if it cannot be single it cannot be multiple either, and so, being neither single nor multiple, it would be nothing at all. A single thing with no parts at all and a single thing that has three parts are mutually exclusive. Similarly, it is impossible for visual forms and so on to each have a threefold nature: the same problem applies. For this reason, this single, partless *prakriti*, the balanced state of the three *gunas*, cannot exist. For it to exist contradicts reason. And just as a *prakriti*, the balanced state of the three *gunas*, is untenable, likewise, the three *gunas* of *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas* cannot exist truly as separate, single things, because each of them in turn would have to be divisible into three.

If the three *gunas* do not exist singly, then the *prakriti* which is the balanced state of these three necessarily does not exist. That being the case, the existence of modulations, such as sound, becomes extremely far-fetched, because they are asserted to be modulations within the *prakriti*. It is also impossible for unconscious, inanimate things like clothing to exist as the nature of pleasure and so forth, because they are unconscious. The things that are the modulations,

like clothing and so on, do not exist truly in the nature of the cause, i.e. pleasure, pain and neutrality. If they did, they would necessarily be things which resisted analysis. But they do not, for have we not already logically ascertained that all things are not truly existent? We have. Your assertion that the cause of such modulations as woollen cloth is the *prakriti* (the balanced state of pleasure, pain and neutrality) is inadmissible. A result such as woollen cloth cannot be produced by a cause such as the *prakriti*, for we have already logically negated the cause, the *prakriti*. If the result, i.e. pleasure, pain and neutrality, were to be produced from woollen cloth etc. (the cause), then when the woollen cloth later ceased to be, as it would no longer exist, the result, the *prakriti* which is the balanced state of pleasure and so on, would not exist either, because you assert that cause and effect have the same nature, and in general without a cause there is necessarily no result. If you were to say that when the woollen cloth or other cause ceases to exist the result, *prakriti*, also does not exist, this would contradict your actual thesis that the *prakriti* is eternal.

*Refuting pleasure, pain and neutrality being eternal [131cd–134ab]*

The *prakriti* or primal substance which is the balanced state of pleasure, pain and neutrality is not eternal. If it were, it would necessarily be observed as such by valid cognition. But pleasure and so on are perceived as being intermittent, and they are not validly perceived as being permanent. 'Eternal' condenses the fact that not only is an eternal *prakriti* inadmissible as the nature of all modulations, but its being eternal is also untenable.

The modulations that are the manifestations of pleasure, pain and neutrality do not exist as permanent entities. If they did, why is the experience of pleasure not perceived when pain is experienced? It would have to be.

You might say that when pain is experienced, there is pleasure, but it is not apprehended, because owing to the pain pleasure becomes more subtle.

Then how is pleasure sometimes gross and sometimes subtle? Do you not maintain that pleasure is permanent? When pleasure and so on leave their subtle phase they become gross, and when they

leave their gross phase they become subtle; these gross and subtle pleasures, pains and neutralities are in fact impermanent. So if pleasure and so on are each impermanent, the *prakriti* which is the balanced state of these must be also impermanent. In that case, just as pleasure and so on are impermanent, likewise all things also change from one state to another, so you should admit that they are impermanent.

If this gross state were something different from pleasure, even when the grossness stops, one should necessarily experience pleasure without its becoming more subtle. And if it were not something different from pleasure, this manifest pleasure would be impermanent, because when the grossness ceased the pleasure would also cease and it would change into something else. This line in the root text appears either as 'Manifest pleasure is impermanent,' where 'manifest' refers to pleasure being the modulation of the *prakriti*, or as 'Pleasure is clearly impermanent,' meaning that pleasure too is evidently impermanent—this is another way of explaining it.

*Refuting the idea that it is impossible that the effect which did not exist at the time of the cause could now come into being [134cd–137]*

The Samkhyas continue: we assert that for something to come into being it must exist at the time of the cause, so only things which exist at the time of the cause come into being. Nothing which does not exist at the time of the cause can be produced by a cause and arise newly, because it did not exist at the time of the cause. If something could arise even if it did not exist at the time of the cause, one would have the unwanted consequence of, for example, butter being produced from sand. Let us take the example of the appearance of a shoot: although the nature of the result, the shoot, exists at the time of the cause, the seed, the mind is not aware of it. But through the contributory conditions of water, manure and so on it becomes visible and we can say 'The shoot is sprouting.'

This does not follow. Even you accept that something evident like a shoot sprouts *later* without having existed at the time of the cause, the seed. Therefore, although you do not accept that the result which did not exist before at the time of the cause can arise newly, your

persisting with your assertion is no more than a disagreement on terminology.

The last two lines of this verse (134) can also be explained as follows. Although you do not accept that, as far as the *prakṛiti* is concerned, that which was not there before arises newly, and although you do not accept that, as far as the manifestations or modulations are concerned, that which was not there before is not generated anew, you are obliged to accept it, because your own reasoning leads to this.

Now to refute through evidence that the result exists at the time of the cause. If the result was definitely present in the cause and was indistinguishable from it but not manifest, then it would follow that when one ate food one would be eating excrement. For you assert that the nature of a piece of bread, the cause, and the nature of excrement, the result, are one and the same, and as the excrement aspect that exists in the piece of bread is not actually manifest, it cannot be separated from it.

Moreover, with the money you spend on cotton cloth, buy some cotton seeds and clothe yourselves with them! They too will serve the purpose of cotton cloth, protecting you from the cold and wind, and so on, for, as you maintain, the nature of cotton cloth and the nature of its seed are both one and the same.

You might argue that because people are ignorant, they do not see the result existing at the time of the cause, nor do they see that in a cotton seed there is a large piece of cotton cloth, so they do not dress themselves with cotton seeds.

Well then, you assert that beings such as your teacher, the Rishi Kapila, are omniscient because they knew the truth, i.e. the existence of the result at the time of the cause. You are their followers and you should accept the doctrine that they established, so for you eating food should be eating excrement.

This can also be explained as follows. If your teachers, who are supposed to be knowers of the truth, knew that in a cotton seed there is cotton cloth, they should have worn seeds. But it is evident that they dressed themselves only in cotton cloth, so it is clear therefore that the result does not exist at the time of the cause.

Also it is contradictory for you to say that because people are ignorant they do not see that the result exists at the time of the cause. Why do people, followers of Kapila and others who, according to you, know the truth (i.e. that the result is present in the cause) not also see it, since they accept it according to their teachers' explanations.

You may counter that as the way people see causal relationships is not valid, they do not understand that the result exists in the cause. Then the manifest modulations that people see, such as a shoot, would not be true, because the perceptions of ordinary people are not valid cognitions. This explanation of the reasoning for refuting the existence of results at the time of the cause is also to be found in the *Heart of the Middle Way*:

The Bodhi tree which exists

Inside a Bodhi seed,

The child in the union of man and woman,

The sound dwelling in a drum,

The excrement inside food,

And the blazing fire in wood—

He who says it is thus even though he does not see it

Rejects the evidence.

How can he be telling the truth?

*Showing that the Madhyamikas do not have the same problem [138–140]*

The Samkhyas reply: according to you Madhyamikas, a valid cognition cannot be said to be a valid cognition on the absolute level. But if one assesses an object with such a deceptive valid cognition, as the process of assessment is not true, the assessment will necessarily be deceptive. For that reason your meditation on emptiness also is mistaken and deceptive, because if the valid cognition which assesses emptiness is deceptive, the emptiness assessed by it will not be valid.

In our Madhyamika tradition we admit that both the valid cognition which assesses emptiness and the emptiness which is assessed are deceptive. How is this?

When the root verse says 'the object for analysis' this refers to an object of negation such as a truly existent vase which one examines for its true or untrue existence and which thus becomes the basis of negation. Or, (according to an alternative spelling) when the root verse talks about 'the object imputed' through belief in true existence, it refers to an object of negation, i.e. the true existence of things. When true existence is not apprehended and objectified by such thoughts as, 'This is true existence,' then even the absence of true existence, the negation of the truly existent object, is not apprehended by thought.

Once true existence is negated, there is a validly established certainty in the absence of true existence, as absence of true existence is contingent on the concept of true existence, the object of negation. For example, if one does not imagine a barren woman's child, one cannot imagine its death.

Again, these two lines (139ab) can also be explained thus: if the thought does not apprehend or observe the object of investigation, it cannot apprehend its nature, i.e. its absence of true existence. This shows that if the thought of true existence, i.e. the object of negation, does not manifest, the certainty about emptiness, i.e. the absence of true existence, cannot manifest either. Since to obtain certainty regarding emptiness it is important to have certainty regarding the appearing mode of the object of negation.

Therefore, as deceptive, seemingly truly existent things, i.e. the object of negation, do not exist, then indeed their non-existence, i.e. emptiness which negates true existence, is clearly deceptive as well. Emptiness does not have the slightest true existence either. The object of negation, true existence, and that which negates it, absence of true existence, are both untrue. As it is said in the *Fundamental Treatise on the Middle Way*: 'If there is something which even slightly lacks emptiness...'

Therefore, although the object of refutation, true existence, and the object to be assessed, for example, the emptiness which negates it, and the assessing valid cognition are all alike in being deceptive, it is correct to posit them as the object to be eliminated and the antidote. For example, when in a dream one dreams of a child dying,

the thought 'Now the child is no more,' counteracts the thought that the child in the dream existed until it died. But both the thought of the child's existence in the dream, which was rejected, and the thought of its non-existence, i.e. the antidote, are deceptive: a false object of elimination has been overcome by a false antidote. Therefore for the Madhyamikas there is no contradiction in a false object of assessment being assessed by a false valid cognition, because all objects of knowledge are asserted to be false and without truth, like dreams or magical illusions. By asserting that all objects of knowledge are truly existent, the Samkhyas cannot posit false valid cognitions and this is why they get into difficulties where the Madhyamikas do not.

The *Sutra of King-like Concentration* explains how, taking the example just mentioned, everything that can be an object of elimination or an antidote is untrue:

Just as when a young girl  
Dreams she has a son, and that he dies,  
And is joyful at his birth and grieves on his death,  
So should one know all phenomena.

And in other sutras also the example of an illusory elephant defeating another illusory elephant is used to show that both the object to be eliminated and the antidote are false.

### a 3 Summary of refutation of causeless origination [141ab]

For these reasons, thorough analysis using the correct reasoning explained above shows that not only do things not come into being from unrelated causes such as Ishvara or the *prakṛiti*, but also that there is not a single thing which comes into being without a cause. This then is a summary of the above refutations of causeless origination.

### a 4 Refuting origination from both (itself and something else) [141cd–142ab]

When resultant effects like shoots come into being, to take the example of juniper seeds in a brass tub, the results do not exist



inherently in their causes (seeds) or contributory conditions (water, manure, warmth, moisture) individually, nor in the combination of all these together. Nor do they exist as invisible potentials in the cause as the Samkhyas assert, because as long as the the causes and conditions do not evolve, things like shoots will not be validly perceived. Neither do they come from somewhere else without depending on these causes and conditions, nor do they exist spontaneously. And when they are destroyed, they do not cease of themselves and go somewhere else. Thus when the results, compounded phenomena like shoots, are produced, they do not come from anywhere. Nor when the causes cease, do they go anywhere. Their ultimate nature is beyond notions of permanence and nihilism. As we find in the *Lalitavistara Sutra*:

If there is a seed, what is the shoot like?

Whatever is the seed is not the shoot.

It is neither different from it, nor the same.

Thus the nature of things is neither permanent nor nothing at all.

What this means is, when a shoot grows from a seed neither does the seed transfer into the shoot, nor does the shoot come from somewhere other than the seed. If the seed transferred into the shoot, the seed would be permanent: but this is not the case—at the time the shoot is present the seed does not persist, it perishes. If the shoot came from somewhere other than the seed, the shoot or result would arise without depending on the seed or cause, and the apparent continuity of the seed would therefore be broken: but this is not the case either—the apparent continuity of the seed is not broken. The reason for this is that the shoot is not something inherently existent different from the seed, nor does it have one and the same nature as it.

The *Fundamental Treatise on the Middle Way* explains the above sutra thus:

That which arises dependent on something

Is not in the least that thing,

Neither is it different from it.

Therefore it is neither permanent nor nothing.

Thus, as neither origination nor cessation nor dwelling truly exist, things are not produced from themselves, nor from something else, nor from the combination of these two.

It is said that these four lines in the *Bodhicaryavatara* are a summary of the refutation of origination from these three extremes, or they can be applied to the reasoning which negates origination from both itself or something else.

#### b Explanation of the Great Interdependence Argument [142cd–144]

What is the difference between substantial things such as visual forms which are imputed and made real by the ignorance which assumes that phenomena and individuals exist truly, and things like the horses and oxen which are conjured up by a magician? They both appear to be inherently existent but they have no such existence. Thus, they are both deceptive: their mode of being and their mode of appearance do not concur. This shows that the basis of the Great Interdependence argument is sound.

The illusions such as horses and oxen conjured up by a magician and substantial things such as visual forms which are created through the coming together of different causes and conditions do not have the slightest inherent existence. If they had, when they were produced they would necessarily arise by themselves from somewhere else, and when they ceased to be they would necessarily go somewhere else by themselves. Therefore, phenomena arise solely through the interdependent relationships of causes and conditions. Examine where they come from when they are produced, and where they go when they cease to be. There is no inherently existent coming or going that can be validly observed. This shows that the phenomena of interdependent origination are necessarily devoid of true existence.

One can see that an effect such as a shoot or the interdependent link of motivational factors comes into being from its close associa-

tion with a cause, for example a seed or the interdependent link of ignorance. If these causes were absent or incomplete, these effects could not come into being. Thus interdependently originated phenomena are artificially created or newly fabricated by adventitious causes and conditions. For something to come into being independent of causes and conditions would be like a lotus growing in the sky. There is also a particular Prasangka explanation which says that when the basis of designation of a phenomenon is perceived by the conceptual mind the phenomenon is imputed. With this passage the Great Interdependence argument or reasoning shows that interdependent origination depends on causes and conditions.

Thus all phenomena dependent on causes and conditions do not exist truly; they are like reflections in a mirror. This is a sound example which can be accepted by everyone. Things fabricated from causes and conditions are not truly existent. This shows the statement of the argument.

To summarise all this, let us apply it to the root verse. The subject—visual form and so on—which is the basis for the ignorant assumption that things exist truly, is not truly existent because, as it depends on causes and conditions, it is interdependent, like a reflection in a mirror for example.

Thus the nature of phenomena is beyond all concepts. Their being merely interdependent illusions arising in dependence on causes and conditions is also established by the scriptures which teach the ultimate meaning. As we read in the *Sutra requested by Sagaramati*:

The wise have understood interdependent origination,

They do not rely on extremist views.

They know that things have causes and conditions,

And that nothing is without cause or condition.

How this is established using the example of reflections in a mirror is given in the sutras:

Jonpa, know all phenomena

To be like reflections appearing

In a very clear mirror,  
Devoid of inherent existence.

c Explanation of the argument which refutes production of an existent effect and of a non-existent effect.<sup>1</sup>

c 1 Refuting inherently existent origination by the proof of the argument [145–148]

If something existed inherently, what would be the need for a cause to produce it? An inherently existent thing does not need to be produced by a cause, and even if it did, it could not be so produced.

Moreover, if things did not exist at all, again what need would there be for causes to produce them, because something that does not exist at all cannot be produced by a cause.

One might think that while it is true that something inherently existent does not need to be created, why would something non-existent not need a cause to produce it?

Even with a billion causes, a thing which does not exist at all can never become a something. Such a non-existent thing is like the horn of a rabbit, it cannot possibly be produced by causes and conditions, and therefore cannot be turned into anything by anyone.

To say that something non-existent has no need of a cause to create it means that it is not possible for something that does not exist at all to come into being through causes and conditions. It is this kind of origination that we are refuting, but we are not refuting the production of a result like a shoot which did not exist at the time of the cause or seed. For all things which come into being do not exist at the time of the cause. When we say that we refute the creation of an existent thing we are not refuting the existence of something that has been produced, but we are refuting production of an

<sup>1</sup> One of the five kinds of logical argument used by the Madhyamikas. See note on page 139.

inherently existent thing and the Samkhyas' assertion that the result exists at the time of the cause.

To give a detailed proof of this statement through reasoning, we shall demonstrate that a nothing cannot become a something. Something which does not exist at all cannot be transformed into an existent thing. If it could, then we should examine whether it becomes something without abandoning its state of being nothing or whether it becomes something after it has abandoned that condition. If it became something without abandoning its condition of being nothing, how could that unabandoned state of being nothing be the state of being something? Because a state of existence which can have a function and a state of non-existence are distinctly different and plainly contradictory. If it became something by abandoning the condition of being nothing, at the moment it had abandoned that condition, it would necessarily no longer be nothing, while it would have still to become something. And as it had not yet done so, it would not be anything. So there would have to be a third state, which was neither nothing nor something, from which it would become something. But such a third state is impossible.

Furthermore, if a non-existent thing became something without abandoning the condition of being nothing, it would be impossible for it to exist as something at the time of being nothing, so at what point would it become something? At the time of being nothing, the something would not have come into being, so it would never change from being nothing.

Moreover, if it became something by abandoning the condition of being nothing, as long as its existence had not come into being it would not be separated from the condition of being nothing, and if it had not abandoned the condition of being nothing the condition of being something would be impossible. For two states, of a thing existing and not existing, are mutually exclusive.

Next we shall prove that an inherently existent thing cannot become nothing. Just as a nothing cannot become a something, so also an inherently existent thing cannot become a non-existent thing, because if it could, there would follow the unwanted conse-

quence of two natures existing on one ground which was half existent and half non-existent.

Furthermore, even if there existed an inherently existent thing or an inherently non-existent thing, it could never change its nature. As it says in the *Sutra of the Power of the Elephant*:

If phenomena were inherently existent,  
The Buddhas and Shravakas would know it.  
Things would be unchanging, nothing would go beyond  
suffering,  
The wise would never be free from concepts.

And in the *Fundamental Treatise on the Middle Way*: 'For an inherently existent thing to change into something else would never be possible.'

To summarise all this, a shoot does not come into being on its own, because if it is inherently existent it cannot come into being, and if it is inherently non-existent it cannot come into being either. Take the example of the child of a barren woman.

Again, we read in the *Seventy Verses on Emptiness*:

An existent thing does not come into being because  
it is existent;  
A non-existent thing does not come into being because  
it is non-existent;  
Things are not existent and not non-existent because  
these are incompatible;  
And because there is no origination, there is no dwelling  
or cessation.

In the *Introduction to the Middle Way* we find: 'If it exists, what is the need to create it...' and in the *Lamp on the Path to Enlightenment*, 'It is impossible for an existent thing to come into being.' Such quotations as these show the logical reasoning which at the same time refutes the production of an existent effect and of a non-existent effect and refutes the four extremes.

c 2 *Showing that the above refutes inherently existent cessation* [149]

Regarding phenomena, there is no inherently existent coming into being in the beginning, as has been explained above, and similarly, neither is there inherently existent cessation in the end, and thus nothing which comes into being or ceases to be has any inherent existence. Therefore, for any phenomenon, there is no inherently existent coming into being, dwelling or ceasing to be. For this reason this whole universe has *never* come into being and never ceases to be; from the very beginning it has been the state of peace, the natural nirvana.

'Never' here indicates that phenomena are the same in being non-existent throughout eternity, and not merely from time to time. Thus we find in the *Sutra of the Ornament of the Light of Wisdom*:

Never produced, phenomena are the state of Tathagata,

All things are like the Sugata.

Those of childlike intelligence who believe in substantiality

Are involved in the world with things which do not exist.

And again, in the *Sutra of the Cloud of the Three Jewels*:

When you turn the Wheel of the Dharma,

Protector of the World, you teach that all things

From the very first are peace, they have never come

into being,

They are natural nirvana.

c 3 *Showing the sameness of samsara and nirvana.* [150]

Beings also, who take birth because of karma and negative emotions, are like appearances in a dream, for while, in their mode of appearance, doer and deed appear distinctly without being confused, in their mode of being they do not have the slightest inherent existence. Thus although phenomena which are like a dream appear to be objectively solid, if we analyse what is meant by these things using reasoning which investigates their ultimate nature, it is like searching for the core of a banana tree—there is not the slightest inherently existent essence that can be found. As well as this, on the

ultimate level there is no difference between nirvana, the condition of being liberated from the attachment and so on that traps beings in existence, and its opposite, samsara, the condition of being incarcerated in the prison of cyclic existence with the strong chains of karma and negative emotions which tie beings to existence. For both samsara and nirvana are the same in being devoid of inherent existence.

It is said in the *Sutra of King-like Concentration*:

Beings in existence are like dreams:

In a dream there is no real birth, no real death,

No real beings, human or animal, to be found:

These things are like foam or banana trees.

and:

Know that all phenomena are like

The watery stem of a banana tree,

Which, if split by someone believing it has a core,

Is found to have no core, neither inside nor out.

With regard to the sameness of samsara and nirvana, the *Fundamental Treatise on the Middle Way* has this to say:

Samsara is not in the slightest bit different from nirvana;

Nirvana is not in the slightest bit different from samsara.

The limits of nirvana are the limits of samsara:

Between these two there is not the slightest, not even the most subtle, difference.

## **A condensed instruction on making an effort to develop the wisdom which is the realisation of emptiness.**

### **I SHOWING THE SPACE-LIKE SAMENESS OF PHENOMENA AND ADVISING EFFORT IN THIS REALISATION [151-154ab]**

When we assess things from the point of view of the ultimate level—things which, as we have seen, are devoid of inherent existence—what joy is there to be had in gaining anything? And why be sad if we fail to gain them or even lose them? What joy is there to be had in being praised or honoured by anyone, why be dejected if one is criticised or despised?

Why be happy when the body and mind are comfortable and unhappy when they suffer? Why be depressed if one has a bad reputation? What joy is there to be had if one is famous and well-known? None. The reason there is no joy to be had from gain, pleasure, praise, or fame, and no sadness to be felt from loss, pain, criticism, or infamy is that if we assess things from the point of view of inherent existence, all phenomena are the same, and in this sameness there is no place for any polarity or difference between gain and loss or happiness and sadness as perceived by childlike beings.

This passage shows how depolarising the eight ordinary concerns helps one realise sameness, and while the chapter on Patience showed how to depolarise the eight ordinary concerns by means of the relative practice of reflecting on the defects of gain, pleasure, praise, and fame, and on the advantages of their counterparts, loss, pain, criticism, and infamy, here this is demonstrated from the absolute point of view.

If, with the reasoning which analyses whether things exist or not on the ultimate level or that of the true nature, we search for what

we mean by phenomena, and investigate what craving individual craves, and what object giving rise to craving is craved, we find that the subject, object and action of craving do not exist inherently. If we investigate with the same reasoning, asking what are the people alive now, who are imputed as such on the basis of the perishable aggregates, what are the people who die, the people who appear in the next life, and the people who appeared in the previous lives, none of these—neither the persons who are alive or dead, nor the persons of the previous life and the next life—exist inherently. Who is a beneficent relative, and who an affectionate friend? For neither of these exists inherently.

Thus Shantideva, the author of this text, instructs his followers that people like himself should consider all phenomena as being the same, like space. For it is this path for realising emptiness which cuts the root of existence and is the principal cause for attaining liberation and omniscience. When he says that things have 'the character of space,' he means that just as space is the absence of obstructing contact, the true nature of all phenomena is devoid of inherent existence, the object of our refutation. This demonstrates the need to train in bringing together appearance and emptiness, which allows us to validly establish functioning things on the relative level without having to posit them as being totally empty.

This example of space to show the defining characteristic of phenomena is to be found in the sutras:

The aggregates, sensory spheres and elements  
Are empty inside and empty outside.

They are all devoid of substantiality, and have no dwelling.

The defining characteristic of phenomena is the very essence  
of space.

and also:

The world has the defining characteristic of space:

Space itself has no defining characteristic.

Therefore he who realises this

Is not soiled by the things of the world.

Shantideva says 'like myself' partly to reduce any pride he might have, but mainly because this is an instruction for ordinary beings who have no realisation of emptiness.

## II TEACHING GREAT COMPASSION BY REVEALING THE DEFECTS OF SAMSARA [154cd-165]

Let us begin by showing the defects of the present life. Bound by the fetters of desire and attached to the appearances of this life, people want happiness for themselves in this life, yet they do not know how to achieve such happiness, and consequently all they achieve is suffering. Sometimes, driven by hatred, they quarrel and fight with their enemies, abusing, taunting and beating them. Sometimes, moved by attachment, they enjoy themselves with their friends and relatives, singing and dancing and playing. As a result their minds become more and more agitated or exhilarated. They are miserable when their desires are not fulfilled, and they struggle hopefully to get what they want. To avoid what they do not want and get what they do want, they contend with others. Dominated by their respective desires, they slash, stab and kill one another. They tell lies and greedily eye others' possessions. In short, they commit only negative actions with their body, speech and mind, acting heedlessly and doing nothing to avoid suffering. People who think only of this life, and yet whose life expectancy is so short, are utterly dependent on food and clothing gained through hard grind and the sweat of their brows: they are attached to trifles and seduced by the good things of an existence which has so many defects. But the wise, intending to transcend such a pointless existence, are not attached to the good things of this life.

As for the defects of future lives, some beings may from time to time, through the merit of meeting an authentic spiritual friend, having faith and keeping moral purity, come up to the happier states, such as those of humans and gods in the higher realms, for a time brief as a flash of lightning. But once they have enjoyed, though

Buddha's teachings. In this life, when we have obtained the excellent support of a human body, met a genuine spiritual friend and encountered the Dharma, if we do not firmly grasp the perfect path but instead get carried away in pointless distractions, it will be hard to find again the eight states of freedom, and extremely difficult to have the fortunate conditions of, for instance, the appearance of a Buddha in the world, let alone ever find all such favourable conditions complete. Even if we do gain a human body with all the right conditions, if we are unable to be careful and to make the proper effort, and to generate in our minds the profound realisation of the state beyond concepts, which is the essence of the teachings, it will be extremely difficult to reverse the flood of negative emotions and pull up and eliminate the root of existence, for there is no other antidote which can do this. If we fail to eliminate the root of samsara, alas, the sufferings of existence will succeed each other one after another, like ripples on water, and because of karma and negative emotions we shall circle in the five realms like a bee trapped in a jar. Make an effort therefore to reflect on the defects of existence and on how hard it is to attain liberation.

Next Shantideva shows that, knowing how all beings are tormented by the sufferings of existence, it is right to be sad. Childlike beings wander in existence, and though they suffer terribly, they are convinced that they are happy. These fools, who do not even see how they themselves are tormented by suffering, are drowning in the river of affliction. It is them we should think of. Alas, how they deserve our kindness!

Some non-Buddhists, for example, deceived by the wrong sort of teachers, go down to the riverside and repeatedly bathe and then throw themselves into fires. Although they endure great pain through these ascetic practices and continue to suffer terribly, they are convinced that such penances lead them to higher rebirth and liberation.

Similarly childlike beings, though not free from old age, sickness, death and so on, remain happy and unconcerned, as if they had attained the level of Arhats where there is no ageing or death, or as if old age and death will not necessarily come to them. Taking their

time, they eat, sleep, and chatter away, happy in their idle and carefree existence. Just as they are thinking 'I won't die yet' or have forgotten that death will come, suddenly the heartless and unyielding lord of death snatches their life force away and kills them. It is then that they will surely be struck, as by lightning, by the unbearable suffering of falling into the lower realms.

Thinking in this way, we should meditate on compassion and the remembrance of death.

### III ACQUIRING GREAT COMPASSION RELATED TO SUPERIOR MOTIVATION [166-167]

Considering sentient beings who are tortured by the fires of suffering in the three lower realms, as explained above, we should meditate on great compassion, shouldering responsibility for others' welfare, thinking, 'When, with the rain of the many things which make me happy—food and clothing, medicine, a place to live, and so on—falling plentifully from the great cloud of the immeasurable merit of training in generosity and the other Bodhisattva practices, might I quench these fires of suffering and establish beings in the perfect glory of the higher realms?' And again, we should meditate on great altruistic compassion, thinking, 'When, by means of the wisdom which is able to ascertain that all phenomena which arise interdependently are devoid of true existence, might I accumulate the wisdom which is the realisation that subject, object and action are not inherently existent; when, through this wisdom, and with joy and enthusiasm for relative practices and performing others' good, might I gather the immeasurable accumulation of vast merit; and when, by practising the two accumulations which are the cause for accomplishing others' good, might I reveal the meaning of profound emptiness to sentient beings who, bound by the concepts of belief in reality, are stricken and destitute in the realms of existence—when might I reveal this, the only gateway to liberation

never been satisfied by, the many pleasures of impure desires, which are like the Kimpaka fruit<sup>1</sup> or like honey smeared on a razor's edge, they use up all the result of the positive actions they have accumulated in the past, their vital organs cease to function and they die and are again led away by the karma of negative actions which throws them down to the lower realms where they were before. There they will fall into situations where they experience agonising, protracted and unbearable sufferings. Reflect therefore on the changeability of the higher realms and the defects of the lower realms.

Regarding the defects of existence in general, in this abode of samsara, the fruit of the abundant accumulation of negative actions is the countless abysses of the lower realms into which one tumbles. In this existence, without comprehending the ultimate means for liberation from suffering, one is bound by the noose of the mistaken belief in reality, and in such a state the belief in the self and substantiality, which is the root of samsara, opposes the wisdom which is the realisation of no-self and non-substantiality, and which is the path for attaining nirvana. Therefore in this existence, which is the condition of being bound by belief in true existence, there is no such understanding of the ultimate reality, and against one's will one experiences unbearable sufferings which can only be illustrated as a vast ocean, endless in space and time.

Next we shall show that, even if one is born in the higher realms, it is difficult and unusual to practice the Dharma. In this existence, even though one may occasionally be born in happy states, the mind has little inclination to perform virtuous actions. And even when one has obtained the extraordinary body for accomplishing virtue, because life is short there is no time to practise the Dharma. Even within such a brief life, because one thinks everything is permanent and hopes that one will live for a long time, one gathers, protects and increases the possessions by means of which one can live; one pampers one's body by washing it and massaging it; one takes medicines against illness, and so on. And thus life passes by. One is afflicted by hunger, weariness, sleep and all sorts of outer and inner circumstances. Similarly sometimes, in the company of childlike

<sup>1</sup> The Kimpaka fruit tastes delicious but proves mortally poisonous once eaten.

beings and those given to negative actions, one finds oneself doing actions related to downfalls and non-virtuous actions, and one is distracted in all sorts of pointless things of the moment. Without one having the time to practise the Dharma, which is the means for making full use of one's human body, life quickly passes, with no meaning, and one perishes. It is extremely difficult to find an opportunity for discerning the nature of the profound interdependent origination, and thus for transcending samsara. For this reason, now that we have obtained this tool for practising the profound path, we should develop a firm interest in the ultimate truth, which is the means for cutting the root of existence, and be assiduous in listening to, and reflecting and meditating on the Madhyamika texts through which this ultimate truth can be realised. For it is said that to have an interest in the profound truth and merely to question the nature of existence will tear up the root of existence.

Now Shantideva shows that even if we do obtain a fortunate rebirth, it is difficult to stop samsara. Even now that we have obtained a higher rebirth, as we have become habituated from time without beginning to both belief in true existence and to being completely distracted by ordinary concerns, how could we have the means to suddenly reverse the stream of existence and the torrent of the habitual tendency to evil attitudes? For the conditions favourable to doing so are rare, while adverse conditions are many. Even when we perform a tiny bit of virtuous activity, which is the means for reversing the stream of existence and evil tendencies, the demon of pride and other demons do everything to divert us and to make us turn our efforts to non-virtue, and we fall into the depths of the lower realms. Thus there are many conditions contrary to the practice of Dharma, and they are not easy to avoid.

Here too, through such circumstances as meeting the wrong sort of teacher, there are many wrong paths, like the views of eternalism and nihilism. Even if we encounter the perfectly pure path, because we do not have confidence it is difficult to overcome our doubts. For it is rare to be guided by a Teacher expert in the outer and inner methods which cut doubts, to have great discerning wisdom, and to undertake listening to, reflecting on and meditating on the



from the sufferings of existence and to the attainment of the peace of nirvana?'

Thus the Great Bodhisattvas generate the profound view of the realisation of emptiness and thereby depolarise the eight ordinary concerns for themselves; and thinking of other beings tormented by suffering, they spontaneously develop great compassion free of concepts, as we have just explained. Similarly, for us beginners this is also an instruction on the need to train on the path which combines emptiness and compassion. Should it happen therefore that, through following the inconceivable and wondrous examples of the exalted Bodhisattvas, the two benefits (that of oneself and that of others) are spontaneously accomplished, the principal aim of this text will have been realised.

In accordance with the intention of the Buddhas and

Nagarjuna

I have relied on the text explained by the Bodhisattvas,

And explained it in simple terms

For the sake of beginners.

However the meaning of the text is profound and hard to understand,

And I am poorly trained and of feeble intellect.

Whatever I have corrupted by the stains of my immature mind

I therefore confess from my heart to those who have the eye of Dharma.

If I might have done the slightest good thing

Which has arisen from the strength of my intention,

May it cause all beings to enter this excellent and profound path

And be able to hold, without exception, the sacred

Dharma of the Conquerors.

May I too gain a good support for practice throughout the series of my births,

And, in order to grasp the profound meaning of

Transcendent Wisdom, so difficult to fathom,

May I be able to give up my body and life

And become the equal of the Bodhisattva Sadaprarudita!

May the sun of the Doctrine of transmission and realisation

shine brighter and brighter.

May the supreme holders of the Doctrine of transmission and realisation increase their activities.

May those who hold the jewelled treasure of transmission

and realisation increase the Sangha.

And may all be auspicious for spreading the practice and

study of transmission and realisation!

## Colophon

In response to repeated solicitations from my sublime spiritual friend Lungtok Tenpai Nyima and to the invitations to write this from other saintly and discerning individuals who make great efforts for the Dharma, I, Thubten Chökyi Trakpa, pretending that I had understood what is taught in this tradition, quoted from the Wisdom chapter part of the detailed commentary on the *Bodhicharyavatara*,<sup>1</sup> and from the *Long and Short Notes* on this, and from the writings of holy beings whose explanations are in accord with these, and wrote this down thinking it might help a few unintelligent people like myself. May it be excellent and auspicious!

<sup>1</sup> The commentary on the *Bodhicharyavatara* by Gyaltsab Darma Rinchen (1364-1432), one of Tsongkapa's principal disciples.

from the sufferings of existence and to the attainment of the peace of nirvana?’

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