

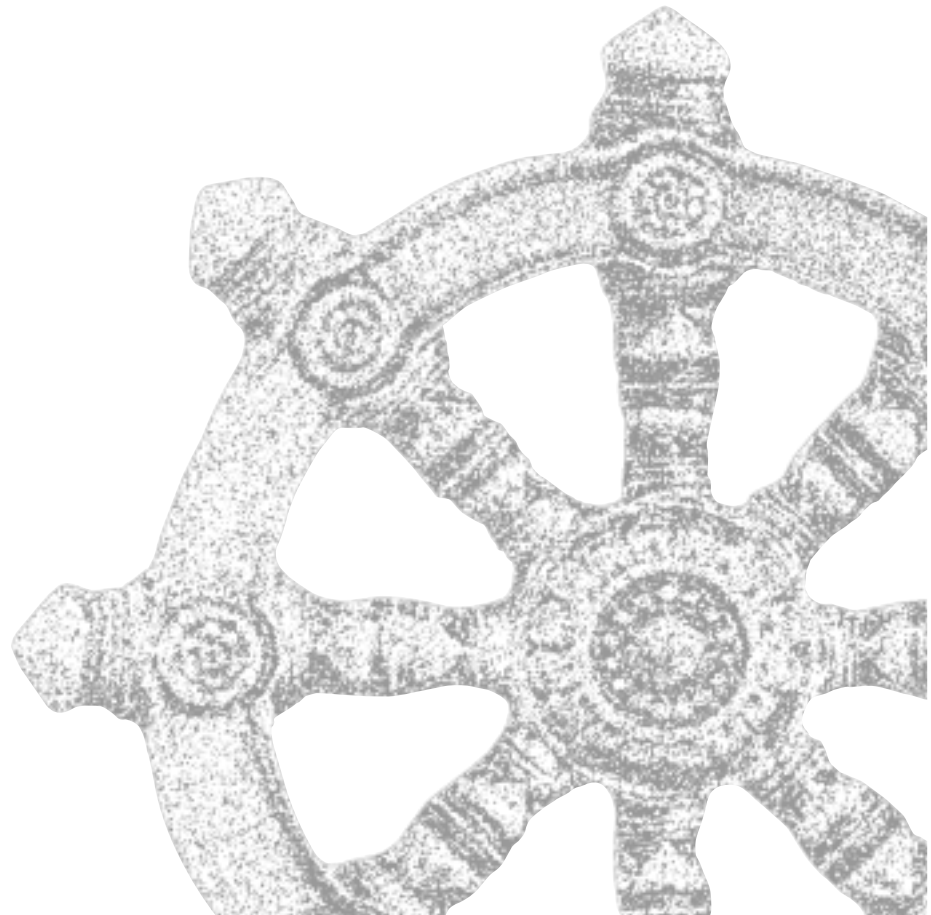


**15**

COURSE

## WHAT THE BUDDHA REALLY MEANT

Level 2 of The Perfection of Wisdom (*Prajna Paramita*)





# THE ASIAN CLASSICS

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## INSTITUTE

Thank you for your interest in the Asian Classics Institute's Correspondence Courses. A complete Formal Study Course consists of audio recordings from the original class series in New York, along with the supporting text materials from each class. The text and audio may be downloaded (see [www.world-view.org](http://www.world-view.org) in the on-line teachings section), or ordered by mail (see the Courses by mail section of the web site).

This Course consists of eleven classes, each of which has approximately two hours of audio, along with corresponding written materials. The audio can be ordered by mail, listened to on-line as streaming Real Audio, or downloaded onto your computer in mp3 or RA format for playback later. The written materials for this Course are contained in nine on-line files which can be downloaded, printed and assembled into a three-ring binder.

A complete Course binder contains the following sections in this order: a binder cover and spine, an overview of the teacher training program, prayers, a course syllabus, readings, class notes, homework, quizzes, a final examination, answer keys and Tibetan study materials. (The class notes were taken by a student in the original live classes, and you'll need these for reference as what's written on the board isn't always spoken.) For ease of binder assembly, be sure to print the files on three hole paper.

Each class lecture has a corresponding homework, quiz, meditation, and class notes. Most classes have readings, although not every class does. After listening to the audio from a class, the homework, quiz and meditation should be completed for that class before continuing on to the next class. The homework can be completed using your class notes, open book style. The quizzes should be completed from memory only, without the aid of notes or other materials. (A good approach is to look at an answer key *after* you have finished that homework, and to use that answer key to study for that quiz.) A final exam is given at the end of the Course.

You may grade your own papers using the supplied answer keys or, if you wish to do so, you may mail your quizzes, homework and final examination to the Asian Classics Institute to be graded. All of the quiz and final exam questions come from the homework, so the homework answer keys are also used to grade the quizzes and the final exam.

If you use the answer keys to complete your homework or quizzes by copying, please do not mail your papers to the Institute for grading. If you do mail your papers in, upon successfully passing, you will be presented with a certificate of proficiency from the Institute.

If you choose to have your papers graded by the Institute (this is completely optional), please mail all of the homework, quizzes and the final for the Course together – **DO NOT** mail papers from individual classes, or a partially completed Course. Once you have completed the entire Course, mail it to: The Asian Classics Institute, Correspondence Courses, 7055 Juniper Drive, Colorado Springs, CO 80908. Please make a copy of all materials that you send to us, in case they are lost in the mail. **Be sure to provide a self-addressed, stamped envelope of appropriate size and postage to have your papers returned.**

We would like to emphasize finally that, although recordings and written materials can be extremely helpful, it is essential for serious Buddhist practitioners to meet and study directly with a qualified Teacher who can give the necessary guidance and personal instructions of the lineage.

The wisdom of Enlightened Beings has been passed down in an unbroken lineage in these teachings. May you put them into practice in your life, gain every realization, and benefit all. May every goodness grow and spread in all directions right now!



### Overview of the Formal Study Course Teacher Training Program

The Six Great Books of Buddhism outlined below are the subject of a geshe's eighteen year program of monastic study. The Asian Classics Institute condenses these Six Great Books of Buddhism into a series of 15 Formal Study Courses.

#### **Book One**

**Geshe Study Subject:** The Perfection of Wisdom (Prajnya Paramita)

**School of Buddhism Studied:** Beginning Middle-Way (Madhyamika Svatantrika); also includes some material from Mind-Only (Chitta Matra)

**Main Root Text:** *The Jewel of Realization (Abhisamaya Alamkara)*

**Written by:** Maitreya (the Future Buddha) as related to Master Asanga, circa 350 AD

**Traditional period to cover this subject:** Six years in a Tibetan monastery

**Summarized in ACI Courses:**

Course II: Buddhist Refuge

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

**Principal monastic textbooks used for ACI Courses:** *Analysis of the Perfection of Wisdom, Overview of the Art of Interpretation, Overview of the Twenty Practitioners, Overview of Dependent Origination, Overview of the Form and Formless*

**Written by:** Kedrup Tenpa Dargye (1493-1568); Gyalwang Trinley Namgyal (fl. 1850)

**Typical Subjects:** The three kinds of refuge; The wish for enlightenment; What is nirvana?; The proofs for emptiness; Who is Maitreya?; The twelve links of dependent origination in the Wheel of Life; Deep levels of meditation; How do we know when the Buddha was speaking figuratively?; A flow-chart for liberation.

#### **Book Two**

**Geshe Study Subject:** The Middle Way (Madhyamika)

**School of Buddhism Studied:** Advanced Middle Way (Madhyamika Prasangika); also includes some material from the Mind-Only School (Chitta Matra)

**Main Root Texts:** *Entering the Middle Way (Madhyamaka Avatara)* and *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life (Bodhisattva Charya Avatara)*

**Written by:** The first by Master Chandrakirti, circa 650 AD in explanation of Master Nagarjuna, about 200 AD; and the second by Master Shantideva, circa 700 AD

**Traditional period to cover this subject:** Four years in a Tibetan monastery

**Summarized in ACI Courses:**

Course VI: The Diamond-Cutter Sutra

Course VII: The Vows of the Bodhisattva

Courses X, XI, XII: A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life

## Overview of the ACI Teacher Training Program

**Principal monastic textbooks used for ACI Courses:** *Overview of the Middle Way; A Commentary on the Diamond-Cutter Sutra; The String of Shining Jewels, on the Three Sets of Vows; The Point of Entry for Bodhisattvas, a Commentary to the "Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life"*

**Written by:** Gyaltsab Je Darma Rinchen (1364-1432); Kedrup Tenpa Dargye (1493-1568); Choney Lama Drakpa Shedrup (1675-1748); Geshe Tsewang Samdrup (c. 1830)

**Typical Subjects:** Emptiness and the Wish for enlightenment; Emptiness and the bodies of a Buddha; The future of the Buddha's teaching; Emptiness and karma; The direct perception of emptiness; Emptiness and paradise; How empty things still work; The root and secondary vows of a bodhisattva; How to keep the vows; How to purify bad deeds; Taking joy; How to fight mental afflictions; The perfection of giving; How anger destroys good karma; The nature of anger; Where bad things really come from; Dealing with jealousy; Quietude; Stopping attachment; On the joys of solitude; Devoting oneself to meditation; On the need to see emptiness; The two realities; The emptiness of feelings; The sliver of Diamond.

### **Book Three**

**Geshe Study Subject:** Higher Knowledge (Abhidharma)

**School of Buddhism Studied:** Detailist (Vaibhashika)

**Main Root Text:** *The Treasure House of Higher Knowledge (Abhidharma Kosha)*

**Written by:** Master Vasubandhu, circa 350 AD

**Traditional period to cover this subject:** Two years in a Tibetan monastery

**Summarized in ACI Courses:**

Course V: How Karma Works

Course VIII: Death and the Realms of Existence

**Principal monastic textbooks used for ACI Courses:** *Light on the Path to Freedom, a Commentary to the Treasure House*

**Written by:** Gyalwa Gendun Drup, the First Dalai Lama (1391-1474)

**Typical Subjects:** The nature of karma; The role of motivation; The correlation of deeds and their results; How karma is carried; The relative severity of deeds; The three realms of existence; The nature of the *bardo* (intermediate state between birth and death); A description of time and space; The destruction of the world; How to do death meditation

### **Book Four**

**Geshe Study Subject:** Vowed Morality (Vinaya)

**School of Buddhism Studied:** Detailist (Vaibhashika)

**Main Root Text:** *A Summary of Vowed Morality (Vinaya Sutra)*

**Written by:** Master Gunaprabha, circa 500 AD

**Traditional period to cover this subject:** Two years in a Tibetan monastery

**Summarized in ACI Course:**

Course IX: The Ethical Life

**Principal monastic textbooks used for ACI Course:** *Essence of the Ocean of Discipline; Daymaker--A commentary on the "Essence of the Ocean"*

**Written by:** Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419), Master Ngulchu Dharma Bhadra (1772-1851)

**Typical Subjects:** The nature of the vows of freedom; Their divisions; The specific vows (note: nuns and monks' vows are presented only to those with ordination); Who can take vows; How vows are lost; The benefits of keeping vows.

**Book Five**

**Geshe Study Subject:** Buddhist Logic (Pramana)

**School of Buddhism Studied:** Sutrist (Sautrantika)

**Main Root Text:** *The Commentary on Valid Perception (Pramana Varttika)*

**Written by:** Master Dharmakirti, circa 650 AD, on Master Dignaga, circa 450 AD

**Traditional period to cover this subject:** Three months per year for 15 years in a Tibetan monastery

**Summarized in ACI Courses:**

Course IV: The Proof of Future Lives

Course XIII: The Art of Reasoning

**Principal monastic textbooks used for ACI Courses:** *The Four Reasonings; Light on the Path to Freedom, An Explanation of the "Commentary on Valid Perception"; Jewel of the True Thought; An Explanation of the Art of Reasoning; An Explanation of the Path of Reasoning; The Collected Topics of the Spiritual Son; The Collected Topics of Rato; A Clear Exposition upon Mind and Mental Functions*

**Written by:** Khen Rinpoche Geshe Lobsang Tharchin (b. 1921); Gyaltsab Je Darma Rinchen (1364-1432); The First Panchen Lama, Lobsang Chukyi Gyaltsen (1567?-1662); Geshe Yeshe Wangchuk (1928-1997); Master Tutor Purbuchok Jampa Tsultrim Gyatso (1825-1901); Master Ngawang Trashin (c. 1700); Master Chok-hla U-ser (c. 1500)

**Typical Subjects:** The meaning of valid perception; The nature of omniscience; Proofs for past and future lives; The qualities of a Buddha; Why study the art of reasoning?; The definition of a reason; How to do Buddhist debate; The parts of a logical statement; Cause and effect; The nature of the subject mind; The concept of negatives and positives; The nature of definitions; The concept of time.

**Book Six**

**Geshe Study Subject:** The Steps to Buddhahood (Lam Rim)

**School of Buddhism Studied:** Advanced Middle Way (Madhyamika Prasangika)

**Main Root Text:** *The Great Book on the Steps to Buddhahood (Lam Rim Chenmo)*

**Written by:** Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419)

**Traditional period to cover this subject:** Intermittently over a period of 15 years in a Tibetan monastery

## Overview of the ACI Teacher Training Program

### **Summarized in ACI Courses:**

Course I: The Principal Teachings of Buddhism

Course III: Applied Meditation

Course XIV: Lojong, Developing the Good Heart

**Principal monastic textbooks used for ACI Courses:** *A Gift of Liberation, Thrust into Our Hands; The Principal Teachings of Buddhism; A Commentary on the Principal Teachings of Buddhism; A Thousand Angels of the Heaven of Bliss (Ganden Hlagyama); Preparing for Tantra (The "Source of All My Good" and its Commentary); A Collection of Lojong Texts; Offering of the Mandala; How to Offer the Mandala in Thirty-Seven Parts*

**Written by:** Khen Rinpoche Geshe Lobsang Tharchin (b. 1921); Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419); Pabongka Rinpoche (1878-1941); Master Ngulchu Dharma Bhadra (1772-1851)

**Typical Subjects:** The Meaning of Rennciation, the Wish for enlightenment, and correct world view; How to do a daily practice; How to meditate; What to meditate on; How to practice at work and other everyday situations; How to offer the mandala; How to practice love and compassion; Brief presentations of the entire path to Enlightenment; How to prepare for the secret teachings.

༄༅། །མཇུག། །

*mandel*

།ས་གཞི་སྔོས་ཀྱིས་བྱུགས་ཤིང་མེ་ཏོག་བཟམ།

*sashi pukyi jukshing metok tram,*

།རི་རབ་སྤིང་བཞི་ཉི་ལྷས་བརྒྱན་པ་འདི།

*rirab lingshi nyinde gyenpa di,*

།སངས་རྒྱས་ཞིང་དུ་དམིགས་ཏེ་དབུལ་བར་བསྐྱེ།

*sangye shingdu mikte ulwar gyi,*

།འབྲོ་ཀུན་རྣམ་དག་ཞིང་ལ་སྦྱོད་པར་ཤོག །།

*drokun namdak shingla chupar shok.*

།ཨི་དྲི་གུ་རུ་རྩ་མཇུག་ལ་ཀེ་རྩུ་ཏ་ཡ་མི། །

*Idam guru ratna mandalakam niryatayami.*

## Offering the Mandala

Here is the great Earth,  
Filled with the smell of incense,  
Covered with a blanket of flowers,

The Great Mountain,  
The Four Continents,  
Wearing a jewel  
Of the Sun, and Moon.

In my mind I make them  
The Paradise of a Buddha,  
And offer it all to You.

By this deed  
May every living being  
Experience  
The Pure World.

*Idam guru ratna mandalakam niryatayami.*

༄༅། །སྐབས་འགྲོ་སེམས་བསྐྱེད། །  
*kyabdro semkye*

།སངས་རྒྱས་ཚེས་དང་ཚོགས་ཀྱི་མཚོག་རྣམས་ལ།  
*sangye chudang tsokyi choknam la,*

།བྲང་རྒྱལ་བར་དུ་བདག་ནི་སྐབས་སུ་མཆིས།  
*jangchub bardu dakni kyabsu chi,*

།བདག་གིས་སྤྱིན་སོགས་བགྱིས་པའི་བསོད་ནམས་ཀྱིས།  
*dakki jinsok gyipay sunam kyi,*

།འགྲོ་ལ་ཕན་ཕྱིར་སངས་རྒྱས་འགྲུབ་པར་ཤོག །།  
*drola penchir sangye druppar shok.*

### Refuge and The Wish

I go for refuge  
To the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha  
Until I achieve enlightenment.

By the power  
Of the goodness that I do  
In giving and the rest,

May I reach Buddhahood  
For the sake  
Of every living being.



༄༅། །བཟླ་བ། །

*ngowa*

།དགེ་བ་འདི་ཡིས་སྐྱེ་བོ་ཀུན།

*gewa diyi kyewo kun,*

།བསོད་ནམས་ཡེ་ཤེས་ཚོགས་ཚྲིགས་ཤིང་།

*sunam yeshe tsok-dzok shing,*

།བསོད་ནམས་ཡེ་ཤེས་ལས་བྱུང་བའི།

*sunam yeshe lejung way,*

།དམ་པ་སྐྱུ་གཉིས་འཕྲོ་བ་པར་ཤོག །།

*dampa kunyi topar shok.*

### **Dedication of the Goodness of a Deed**

By the goodness  
Of what I have just done  
May all beings

Complete the collection  
Of merit and wisdom,

And thus gain the two  
Ultimate bodies  
That merit and wisdom make.

ལྷོ། །མཚོད་པ། །  
*chupa*

།སྟོན་པ་སྣ་མེད་སངས་རྒྱལ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།  
*tonpa lame sanggye rinpoche,*

།སྐྱོབ་པ་སྣ་མེད་དམ་ཚེས་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།  
*kyoppa lame damchu rinpoche,*

།འདྲེན་པ་སྣ་མེད་དགའ་འདུན་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།  
*drenpa lame gendun rinpoche,*

།སྐྱབས་གནས་དཀོན་མཚོག་གསུམ་ལ་མཚོད་པ་འབྲུལ།  
*kyabne konchok sumla chupa bul.*

**A Buddhist Grace**

I offer this  
To the Teacher  
Higher than any other,  
The precious Buddha.

I offer this  
To the protection  
Higher than any other,  
The precious Dharma.

I offer this  
To the guides  
Higher than any other,  
The precious Sangha.

I offer this  
To the places of refuge,  
To the Three Jewels,  
Rare and supreme.



## The Asian Classics Institute

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

*Level Two of the Perfection of Wisdom (Prajna Paramita)*

## Course Syllabus

### Reading One

Subject: The Bodhisattva's Question

Reading: *The Essence of Eloquence, a Classical Commentary on Distinguishing between the Figurative and the Literal (Drang-ba dang nges-pa'i don rnam-par 'byed-pa'i bstan-bcos Legs-bshad snying-po)*, by Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419); folios 1A-3B in the ACIP digital edition (catalog number S5396), and pp. 1-7 in the ACIP Indian paper edition. The translation is based upon an oral teaching of the text by Geshe Tupten Rinchen of Sera Mey Tibetan Monastery.

### Reading Two

Subject: Lord Buddha's Answer—The Three Kinds of No-Self-Nature

Reading: *The Essence of Eloquence*, folios 3B-8A in the ACIP digital edition, and pp. 7-18 in the ACIP Indian paper edition, with translation based upon oral teachings by Geshe Tupten Rinchen.

### Reading Three

Subject: The Latter Four Characterizations

Reading: *The Essence of Eloquence*, folios 8A-9B in the ACIP digital edition, and pp. 18-22 in the ACIP Indian paper edition, with translation based upon oral teachings by Geshe Tupten Rinchen.

### Reading Four

Subject: An Identification of the Three Attributes

Reading: *The Essence of Eloquence*, folios 9B-11A in the ACIP digital edition, and pp. 22-26 in the ACIP Indian paper edition, with translation based upon oral teachings by Geshe Tupten Rinchen.

**Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant**  
**Course Syllabus**

**Reading Five**

Subject: The Outcome of the Exchange

Reading: *The Essence of Eloquence*, folios 11A-13A in the ACIP digital edition, and pp. 26-31 in the ACIP Indian paper edition, with translation based upon oral teachings by Geshe Tupten Rinchen.

**Reading Six**

Subject: On the Different Methods of Interpretation

Reading: *The Essence of Eloquence*, folios 13A-14A in the ACIP digital edition, and pp. 31-34 in the ACIP Indian paper edition, with translation based upon oral teachings by Geshe Tupten Rinchen.

**Reading Seven**

Subject: Master Asanga on Avoiding the Two Extremes

Reading: *The Essence of Eloquence*, folios 14A-18A in the ACIP digital edition, and pp. 34-44 in the ACIP Indian paper edition, with translation based upon oral teachings by Geshe Tupten Rinchen.

**Reading Eight**

Subject: On the Meaning of "Ultimate" and "Deceptive" Reality

Reading: *The Essence of Eloquence*, folios 18A-21A in the ACIP digital edition, and pp. 44-51 in the ACIP Indian paper edition, with translation based upon oral teachings by Geshe Tupten Rinchen.

**Reading Nine**

Subject: Interpretations of the Independent Group of the Middle-Way School

Reading: Selection from the *Overview of the Perfection of Wisdom (Phar-phyin spyi-don)* of Master Kedrup Tenpa Dargye (1493-1568), from Sera Mey Tibetan Monastery (ACIP electronic text catalog number SL0009, Part One), folios 12a-13b.

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**Reading Ten**

Subject: Interpretations of the Consequence Group, and What Je  
Tsongkapa Himself Believes

Reading: *Overview of the Middle Way (dBu-ma spyi-don)* by Kedrup Tenpa  
Dargye (1493-1568), folios 125A-130A, (ACIP electronic text  
number S0021).

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**Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant**

**Reading One: The Bodhisattva's Question**

*The following selection is taken from the Essence of Eloquence, a Classical Commentary on Distinguishing between the Figurative and the Literal (Drang-ba dang nges-pa'i don rnam-par 'byed-pa'i bstan-bcos Legs-bshad snying-po), by Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419); ff. 1a-3b in the ACIP digital edition (catalog number S5396), and pp. 1-7 in the ACIP Indian paper edition. The translation is based upon an oral teaching of the text by Geshe Tupten Rinchen of Sera Mey Tibetan Monastery. Please note that Je Tsongkapa's root text is extremely difficult, and is best studied with the accompanying ACI tapes.*

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༄༅། །དྲུང་བ་དང་ངེས་པའི་དོན་རྣམ་པར་འབྱེད་པའི་བསྟན་བཅོས་  
ལེགས་བཤད་སློང་པོ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

*Herein contained is the Essence of Eloquence, a Classical  
Commentary upon the Subject of Distinguishing between the  
Figurative and the Literal*

།ན་མོ་གུ་རུ་སྒྲུབ་སྟོ་ཕྱེ་ཡ།

I bow down to Gentle Voice, my Lama.

།བདེ་འབྱུང་སློན་ལ་ཞོན་དང་གསེར་གྱི་མངལ།

།ལུས་མེད་བདག་པོ་ཐ་གུའི་ལྟོ་ལ་སོགས།

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant  
Reading One

།སྲིད་ན་དྲིགས་པའི་ང་རོ་ཆེར་སྣོགས་པའི།  
།སྣོམ་པས་འགྲིང་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་ཀྱང་གང་གི་སྐྱ།  
།མཐོང་བའི་མོད་ལ་ཉི་མས་མི་བྱིར་བཞིན།  
།མཇོད་པར་གྱུར་ཚེ་མཇོས་པའི་ཅོད་པན་གྱིས།  
།གང་གི་ཞབས་པད་གུས་པས་སྟེན་བྱེད་པ།  
།ཐུབ་དབང་ལྷ་ཡི་ལྷ་ལ་ཕྱག་འཚལ་ལོ།

Their roar of arrogance covers the world,  
And they strut with imagined self-importance:  
Source of Happiness, Rider on the Cloud,  
Child of the Golden Womb, Lord of Those  
Who Have No Body, Belly String, and the rest.  
But the minute they lay their eyes on your form  
It does to them what the sun does to a firefly,  
And they throw themselves at your feet,  
Touching them with their lovely crowns.  
I bow down to you, Lord of the Able,  
God of all the gods.

།མ་བྱེན་བརྩེའི་གཏིང་མཐའ་ཤིན་ཏུ་དཔག་པར་དགྲ།  
།བྱང་ཚུབ་སྟོད་པའི་སྐབས་ཆེན་ཆལ་ཆེལ་ཡོ།  
།ལེགས་བཤད་རིན་ཆེན་གཏིར་གྱུར་འཇམ་པའི་དབྱངས།  
།རྒྱལ་ཚབ་རྒྱ་མཚོ་ཆེལ་གུས་ཕྱག་འཚལ།

I bow to the sea,  
To Gentle Voice and the Regent;  
The breadth and the depth of your knowledge  
And your compassion are something  
Ever so hard to fathom,  
And the great powerful waves  
Of your bodhisattva deeds  
Wash to the shore unceasing—

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You are truly a treasure trove of jewels,  
Of eloquence itself.

།བདེར་གཤེགས་གསུང་རབ་རྒྱལ་གཉིས་ཤིང་རྟའི་སྲོལ།

།ལེགས་པར་བྱེ་བས་རྒྱལ་བའི་བསྟན་པ་མཚོག

།ས་གསུམ་འགྲོ་ན་ཉི་ལྟར་གསལ་མཛད་པ།

།ལྷུ་སྐྱབ་ཐོགས་མིད་ཞབས་ལ་སྦྱི་བོས་འདུད།

I bow and touch my head  
To the feet of Nagarjuna, and Asanga;  
You are like the sun itself,  
Illuminating those ultimate teachings  
Of Victors among all beings  
In all three of the realms,  
For you are the ones who have blazed the paths,  
The two ways of that highest speech  
Of Those Gone to Bliss:  
The systems of the innovators.

།ཤིང་རྟ་ཆེན་པོའི་སྲོལ་གཉིས་ལེགས་བརྒྱུང་ནས།

།འཛམ་གླིང་གློ་གསལ་བྱེ་བའི་མིག་འབྱེད་པ།

།འཕགས་པ་ལྷ་དང་དཔའ་བོ་སངས་རྒྱས་བསྐྱུངས།

།ལེགས་ལྡན་འབྱེད་དང་རྒྱ་བ་གྲགས་པའི་ཞབས།

།དབྱིག་གཉིན་ཞབས་དང་གློ་བཟན་ཕྱོགས་གྲང་དང་།

།ཆོས་ཀྱི་གྲགས་པའི་ཞབས་སོགས་འཛམ་གླིང་རྒྱན།

།ཐུབ་བསྟན་མི་རུབ་རྒྱལ་མཚན་འཛིན་པའི་མཚོག

།མཁས་པའི་དབང་པོ་རྣམས་ལ་གྲུས་པས་འདུད།



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With great respect I bow  
To those lords among all masters,  
To those highest beings who hold on high  
The banner of the teachings  
Of the Able Ones, and prevent them  
From sinking from the sky;  
To those who've opened the eyes of a trillion  
Thoughtful ones here in this world  
By keeping faithfully those two systems  
Of those two great innovators:  
I mean here the magnificent Aryadeva,  
Aryashura, Buddhapalita,  
Bhavaviveka, Chandrakirti,  
Vasubandhu, Stiramati,  
Dignaga, and Dharmakirti too.

།གཞུང་ལུགས་མང་ཐོས་རིགས་པའི་ལམ་དུའང་།  
།ངལ་བ་མང་བསྟེན་མངོན་པར་རྟོགས་པ་ཡི།  
།ཡོན་ཏན་ཚོགས་གྱིས་མི་དམན་དུ་མས་གྱང་།  
།འབད་གྱང་རྟོགས་པར་མ་གྱུར་གནས་དེ་ནི།  
།འཇམ་མགོན་ལྷ་མའི་བྱིན་གྱིས་ལེགས་མཐོང་ནས།  
།ཤིན་ཏུ་བརྗེ་བའི་བསམ་པས་བདག་གིས་བཤད།

These are points that many with no little  
Mass of spiritual qualities—  
Filled with realizations won  
With much learning of great holy books  
And much pain spent in the ways  
Of reaching conclusions with reason—  
Have tried their best, but nonetheless  
Have failed to realize.  
Here though I will explain them,  
With thoughts of purest love,  
For I have seen them perfectly  
Through the kindness of my Lama,  
The Protector, the Gentle One.

།བསྐྱེད་པའི་དེ་ཉིད་རྟོགས་པའི་རྣམ་དཔྱོད་ཀྱིས།

།སློབ་བླ་མེད་འདོད་རྣམས་གུས་པས་ཉོན།

Please lend your ear then, those  
Who hope to become themselves  
Matchless teachers of the way  
With deep insights that realize  
The real nature revealed  
In the teachings of the Buddha.

།རི་སྐད་དུ་འཕགས་པ་ཡུལ་འཁོར་སྐྱོད་གིས་ལུས་པ་ལས།

།སྐྱོད་པ་ཞི་བ་སྐྱེ་བ་མེད་པའི་ཚུལ།

།མི་ཤེས་པས་ནི་འགྲོ་བ་འབྱུངས་གྱུར་པ།

།དེ་དག་སྐྱབས་ཇེ་མངའ་བས་ཐབས་ཚུལ་དང་།

།རིགས་པ་བརྒྱ་དག་གིས་ནི་འཇུག་པར་མཇུག།

Now the *Sutra Requested by the Realized Being Rashtrapala* says,

Different beings must wander here  
Because they have no knowledge  
Of the ways of emptiness,  
Of peace, and of things that never began.  
Those with compassion use skillful means  
And millions of different reasonings  
To bring them into it.

།ཅེས་ཚེས་རྣམས་ཀྱི་དེ་བཞིན་ཉིད་ནི་ཤིན་ཏུ་རྟོགས་པར་དགའ་བ་དང་། མ་རྟོགས་ན་  
འཁོར་བ་ལས་མི་གྲོལ་བར་གཞིགས་ནས་སྐྱབས་ཇེ་ཅན་གྱི་སྟོན་པས་ཐབས་ཀྱི་ཚུལ་  
དང་རིགས་པའི་སྐོད་དུ་མ་ཞིག་གིས་དེ་ཁོང་དུ་ཚུད་བ་ལ་འཇུག་པར་གསུངས་སོ།།

What these lines are saying is that the real nature of all things is something which is extremely difficult to perceive; and that if one fails to perceive it, one can never be freed from the circle of suffering. Our compassionate Teacher has

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seen these things clearly, and thus undertakes to bring beings on to a grasp of this real nature, using a great many skillful means, and a great many different types of reasoning.

དེའི་ཕྱིར་རྣམ་དཔྱོད་དང་ལྡན་པ་དག་གིས་དེ་ཉིད་ཇི་ལྟར་ཡིན་ཁོང་དུ་རྒྱུད་པའི་ཐབས་  
ལ་འབད་དགོས་ལ་དེ་ཡང་རྒྱལ་བའི་གསུང་རབ་ཀྱི་དྲང་བ་དང་ངེས་པའི་དོན་རྣམ་  
པར་ཕྱེད་པ་ལ་རག་ལས་ཤིང་།

For this reason, those with the capacity of insight should make great efforts in the various means of coming to a grasp of just what the real nature of things is. This, in turn, depends upon the ability to distinguish between what is figurative and what is literal among that highest of all spoken words—the speech of the victorious Buddhas.

དེ་གཉིས་རྣམ་པར་འབྱེད་པ་ཡང་འདི་ནི་དྲང་བའི་དོན་ནོ་འདི་ནི་ངེས་པའི་དོན་ནོ་ཞེས་  
གསུངས་པའི་ལུང་ཙམ་གྱིས་རྣམ་པ་མ་ཡིན་ཏེ། གཞན་དུ་ན་ཤིང་རྟ་ཆེན་པོ་དག་གིས་  
དྲང་ངེས་འབྱེད་བའི་དགོངས་འགྲེལ་བརྩམས་པ་དོན་མེད་པར་འགྱུར་བའི་ཕྱིར་དང་།  
གསུང་རབ་ལས་དྲང་ངེས་ཀྱི་འཛོག་རྒྱུ་མི་མཐུན་པ་དུ་མ་གསུངས་པའི་ཕྱིར་དང་།

The distinction between these two is not something that words themselves have the power to draw, saying "This part is figurative, and this part is literal." Otherwise it would have been a useless exercise for the great innovators to compose commentaries exploring the true intent of the teachings, undertaking to make distinctions between what was figurative and what was literal. Neither would there have been spoken, in that highest of spoken words itself, so many conflicting versions of how we decide what is figurative and what is literal.

འདི་ནི་འདི་ལོ་ཞེས་གསུངས་པ་ཙམ་གྱི་ལུང་གིས་དེ་ལྟར་གཞག་པར་ནི་མི་རྣམས་ལ་དེའི་  
ཆོ་སྤྱི་ལ་དེ་ལྟར་མ་ཁྲལ་པ་ན་བྱེ་བྲག་དྲང་ངེས་ལ་ཡང་འདི་འདི་ལོ་ཞེས་གསུངས་པ་  
ཙམ་གྱིས་ཀྱང་སྐྱབ་པར་མི་རྣམས་པའི་ཕྱིར་རོ།།

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And look finally at the fact that—even if a scripture does say that "This is this way, and that is that way"—this still does not enable us to decide that it really is. If it is thus the case, throughout the teachings in general, that we cannot draw any unquestionable conclusions from such statements, then why should it be true—in this more particular case—that we can conclusively establish the distinction between the figurative and the literal from any particular reference that says, "This is the one, and this the other"?

དེའི་སྤྱིར་གསུང་རབ་ཀྱི་དྲང་ངེས་འབྱེད་པར་ལུང་བསྟན་པའི་ཤིང་རྟ་ཆེན་པོ་དག་གིས་  
དྲང་ངེས་ཀྱི་དགོངས་པ་བཀའ་ཞིང་དེ་ཡང་ངེས་དོན་གྱི་གསུང་རབ་ཀྱི་དོན་གཞན་དུ་  
འབྲེན་པ་ལ་གཞོན་གྱེད་དང་། གཞན་དུ་དྲུ་མི་རུང་བར་དོན་དེར་ངེས་པའི་སྐྱབ་  
གྱེད་ཀྱི་རིགས་པས་ལེགས་པར་གཏན་ལ་ཐབ་པ་ཞིག་གི་ཇིས་སུ་འབྲངས་ནས་  
དགོངས་པ་འཚོལ་དགོས་པས་མཐར་གཏུགས་ན་ངོ་མ་མེད་པའི་རིགས་པ་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་  
དབྱེ་དགོས་ཏེ།

Therefore we must go about our search for the true intent of the teachings by following the two great innovators—those who the scriptures foretold would be able to draw the distinction between the figurative and the literal. It is they who have unravelled for us the idea behind the figurative and the literal; it is they who have used true reasoning to establish, in a perfect way, those teachings which are literal—by finding proofs against any attempt to interpret them in some other light; and proofs in support of their being something literal, not something figurative, not something we could say refers to something else. In the end, we must learn to make this distinction through immaculate reasoning alone.

རིགས་པ་དང་འགལ་བའི་གྲུབ་མཐའ་ཁས་ལེན་ན་སྐྱབ་པོ་ཚད་མའི་སྐྱེས་བུར་མི་རུང་  
བའི་སྤྱིར་དང་། དངོས་པོའི་དེ་ལོ་ན་ཉིད་ཀྱང་འཐད་པས་སྐྱབ་པའི་རིགས་པའི་སྐྱབ་  
གྱེད་དང་ལྷན་པའི་སྤྱིར་རོ།།

And this is true because anyone who espouses some philosophical system that contradicts reason could never be called a perfectly credible person; and because the very nature of things is, moreover, something that must be established by reason grounded in accurate perception.

དོན་གྱི་དབང་འདི་གཟིགས་ནས།  
།དགོ་སྤོང་དག་གམ་མཁས་རྣམས་ཀྱིས།  
།བསྐྱོགས་བཅད་བརྟུན་བའི་གསེར་བཞིན་དུ།  
།ལེགས་པར་བརྟགས་ལ་ང་ཡི་བཀའ།  
།སྤང་བར་བྱ་ཡི་གུས་སྤྱིར་མིན།།

ཞེས་གསུངས་སོ།།

Lord Buddha himself saw the truth of this highest form of meaning, and thus spoke the following:

Whether you are a monk or some other thinker,  
You must accept my words only after you've finished  
A careful examination of them, testing them like gold—  
In the fire, by cutting, and using the touchstone too.

དེ་ལྟར་ན་དང་ངེས་འབྱེད་པ་ལ་གཉིས། མདོ་སྤེ་དགོངས་འགྲེལ་ལ་བརྟུན་པའི་ཕྱོགས་  
དང་། སྤོ་གོས་མི་ཟད་པས་བརྟུན་པ་ལ་བརྟུན་པའི་ཕྱོགས་སོ།།

And so it is that we proceed, in our task of distinguishing between the figurative and the literal, in two steps, presenting first the ideas of the side that uses the *Commentary on the True Intent of the Sutras* to help draw this distinction, and secondly the ideas of the side that uses the *Sutra Taught at the Request of Never-Ending Wisdom* to do so.

དང་པོ་ལ་གཉིས། མདོ་སྤེ་ནས་ཇི་ལྟར་གསུངས་པ་དགོངས་པ་དང་། དེའི་དོན་ཇི་ལྟར་  
བཀའ་བའི་རྒྱལ་ལོ།།

The first step has two parts of its own: setting forth what the sutra says, and showing how its meaning is commented upon.

དང་པོ་ལ་བཞི། མདོ་སྤེ་ལ་འགལ་སྤོང་གི་དྲི་བ། འགལ་བ་དེ་སྤོང་བའི་ལན། ངོ་བོ་

ཉིད་གསུམ་གྱི་ངོ་བོ་ངོས་གཟུང་བ། དེ་དག་གིས་གྲུབ་པའི་དོན་ལུས་པའོ།།

The first of these parts has four further divisions: a question meant to clarify apparent contradictions in the sutras; an answer that clarifies these apparent contradictions; an identification of the nature of the three real natures; and a statement, offered by the bodhisattva, of the conclusion reached by these points.

དང་པོ་ནི་དགོངས་འབྲེལ་ལས། བཅོམ་ལུན་འདས་ཀྱིས་རྣམ་གྲངས་དུ་མར་ལུང་པོ་  
རྣམས་ཀྱི་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱང་བཀའ་སྤྲུལ། སྐྱེ་བའི་མཚན་ཉིད་དང་། འཇིག་པའི་  
མཚན་ཉིད་དང་། སྤང་བ་དང་ཡོངས་སུ་ཤེས་པ་ཡང་བཀའ་སྤྲུལ།

Here is the first. We find the following in the *Commentary on the True Intent*:

O Conqueror, you have in many of your presentations made statements that the heaps have some definitive characteristics of their own. You have also spoken of their characteristic of beginning, and their characteristic of being destroyed, and of eliminating and comprehending.

ལུང་པོ་རྣམས་ཀྱི་རི་ལྟ་བུ་དེ་བཞིན་དུ་སྐྱེ་མཆེད་རྣམས་དང་ཉེན་ཅིང་འབྲེལ་པར་འབྱུང་  
བ་དང་ཟས་རྣམས་ཀྱི་བར་ཡང་བཀའ་སྤྲུལ།

You also stated that the way in which the heaps exist is the same for the doors of sense, and for things that occur through interdependence, and for everything up to the different kinds of sustenance.

དེ་བཞིན་དུ་སྐྱུར་ནས་བདེན་པ་རྣམས་ཀྱི་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་དང་ཡོངས་སུ་ཤེས་པ་དང་  
སྤང་བ་དང་མངོན་དུ་བཞིན་པ་དང་བསྐྱོམ་པ་དང་ཁམས་རྣམས་ཀྱི་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་  
དང་ཁམས་སྣ་ཚོ་གས་པ་དང་ཁམས་དུ་མ་དང་སྤང་བ་དང་ཡོངས་སུ་ཤེས་པ་དང་།

The question continues in the same pattern through the truths:

. . .And you stated that these truths were something that had definitive characteristics of their own, and were something which

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we should comprehend, and something we should eliminate, and something to bring about, and something to practice. And then you spoke of the categories as having some definitive characteristics of their own, and so too did you speak of the various categories, and the many categories, and of eliminating and comprehending.

བྱང་ཕྱོགས་སོ་བདུན་གྱི་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་དང་མི་མཐུན་པ་དང་གཉིན་པོ་དང་མ་སྐྱེས་  
པ་སྐྱེ་བ་དང་སྐྱེས་པ་གནས་པ་དང་མི་བསྐྱུད་པ་དང་སྐྱར་ཞིང་འབྱུང་བ་དང་འཕེལ་ཞིང་  
ཡངས་པ་ཉིད་ཀྱང་བཀའ་སྩལ་ལ།

The question turns too through the different groups among the 37 qualities of enlightenment:

. . . You spoke too of these qualities as having some definitive characteristics of their own, and you spoke of their nature of being inconsistent, and of being an antidote, and of the growth of what has not grown, and of the staying of what has grown, and of there being no separation, and of coming back, and of increasing, and of spreading.

བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས་ཀྱིས་ཚེས་ཐམས་ཅད་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མ་མཚིས་པ་ཚེས་ཐམས་ཅད་མ་  
སྐྱེས་པ་མ་འགགས་པ་གཟེངས་མ་ནས་ཞི་བ་རང་བཞིན་གྱིས་ཡོངས་སུ་སྐྱུང་ན་ལས་  
འདས་པ་ཞེས་ཀྱང་བཀའ་སྩལ་ལགས་ན།

And you said, O Conqueror, that no existing thing could have any nature of its own; you said that no existing thing ever began, or stopped; you said that they were, from the very beginning, in a state of peace; you said that they were, by nature, something that was completely beyond all grief.

བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས་ཀྱིས་ཅི་ལ་དགོངས་ནས་ཚེས་ཐམས་ཅད་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མ་མཚིས་པ་  
ཚེས་ཐམས་ཅད་མ་སྐྱེས་པ་མ་འགགས་པ་གཟེངས་མ་ནས་ཞི་བ་རང་བཞིན་གྱིས་ཡོངས་  
སུ་སྐྱུང་ན་ལས་འདས་པ་ཞེས་བཀའ་སྩལ་སྟེ་བགྱིད་ལགས་ཏེ།

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What was it, O Conquering One, that you were truly thinking of when you said that no existing thing could have any nature of its own, and said that no existing thing ever began, or stopped; when you said that they were, from the very beginning, in a state of peace; when you said that they were, by nature, something that was completely beyond all grief?

བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས་གྱིས་ཅི་ལ་དགོངས་ནས་ཚོས་ཐམས་ཅད་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མ་མཆིས་པ་  
ཚོས་ཐམས་ཅད་མ་སྐྱེས་པ་མ་འགགས་པ་གཞིན་མ་ནས་ཞི་བ་རང་བཞིན་གྱིས་ཡོངས་  
སྤྱོད་ལས་འདས་པ་ཞེས་ཀྱང་བཀའ་སྤྱུལ་བའི་དོན་དེ་ཉིད་བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས་ལ་  
བདག་ཡོངས་སུ་ཞུ་ལགས་སོ། །ཞེས་གསུངས་སོ། །

And so this is what I ask of you, O Conquering One: was it really that which the Conqueror had in mind when you said that no existing thing could have any nature of its own, and said that no existing thing ever began, or stopped; when you said that they were, from the very beginning, in a state of peace; when you said that they were, by nature, something that was completely beyond all grief?

འདིས་ནི་མདོ་སྡེ་ཁ་ཅིག་ཏུ་ཚོས་ཐམས་ཅད་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་སོགས་སུ་གསུངས་པ་  
དང་། ཁ་ཅིག་ཏུ་ཕུང་པོ་ལ་སོགས་པའི་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ལ་སོགས་པ་ཡོད་པར་  
གསུངས་པ་གཉིས་སྒྲིལ་བཞག་ན་འགལ་ནའང་འགལ་བ་མེད་དགོས་པས་ཅི་ལ་  
དགོངས་ནས་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་སོགས་སུ་གསུངས་ཞེས་དྲིས་ཏེ། དེས་ནི་རང་གི་  
མཚན་ཉིད་ཡོད་པ་སོགས་སུ་གསུངས་པ་ཡང་ཅི་ལ་དགོངས་ནས་གསུངས་པ་དོན་  
གྱིས་ཞུས་སོ། །

The point of this question is as follows. In some sutras, Lord Buddha said that no existing thing had any nature of its own, and so on. In other sutras though he said that the heaps and so on did have their own definitive characteristics, and so on. The bodhisattva knows that—if we take these two types of statements on face value—then they contradict each other; but that it cannot



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be the case that they do. Therefore he is asking Lord Buddha what he really had in mind when he said that no existing thing could have any nature of its own, and so on. The bodhisattva is, by implication, asking just what Lord Buddha meant by phrases such as "existing by definition" and the like.

འདིར་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཅེས་པ་རྒྱ་ནག་གི་འབྲེལ་ཆེན་སོགས་ལས་ཐུན་མོང་མ་ཡིན་  
པའི་མཚན་ཉིད་ལ་བཤད་པ་ནི་རིགས་པ་མ་ཡིན་ཏེ། མདོ་ཉིད་ལས་ཀུན་བརྟགས་ཀྱི་  
སྐབས་སུ་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་གྲིས་གྲུབ་པ་ལ་གསལ་བར་གསུངས་པའི་ཕྱིར་དང་།  
ཀུན་བརྟགས་ལའང་ཐུན་མོང་མ་ཡིན་པའི་མཚན་བྱེད་ཡོད་པས་མཚན་ཉིད་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་  
མིད་པ་ཀུན་བརྟགས་ལ་བཤད་དུ་མི་རུང་བའི་སྐྱོན་དུ་འགྱུར་བའི་ཕྱིར་རོ།།

The term here "definitive characteristic" or "definition" [in "having definitive characteristics" or "existing by definition"] has been explained in the great Chinese commentary and elsewhere as referring to the particular verbal definition of a thing. This idea though is incorrect, since—for one thing—the sutra itself clearly refers to the idea of existing *by definition* in the parts where it talks about constructs. Furthermore, even constructs have their own particular verbal descriptions which are used to define them; so if this were the meaning of "definition" here then there would be a problem if we went on to describe them as not having any nature or definitive characteristics of their own.

ཁམས་སྣ་ཚོགས་པ་དང་དུ་མ་ལ་འབྲེལ་པ་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་གཞན་དུ་བཤད་ཀྱང་འོག་ནས་  
འབྲུང་བའི་མདོ་དང་སྐུར་ན་ཁམས་བཅོ་བརྒྱད་དང་ཁམས་དུག་ལ་བྱའོ། །མི་བསྐྱུད་  
པ་ནི་མི་བཞེད་པའོ།།

Various commentaries have described the phrases "various categories" and "many categories" otherwise, but if we refer down to what comes later in the sutra itself then we should take them to mean the eighteen categories and the six categories, respectively. The phrase "being no separation" refers to not losing something.

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**Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant**

**Reading Two: Lord Buddha's Answer—The Three Kinds of No-Self-Nature**

*The following selection is taken from the Essence of Eloquence, a Classical Commentary on Distinguishing between the Figurative and the Literal (Drang-ba dang nges-pa'i don rnam-par 'byed-pa'i bstan-bcos Legs-bshad snying-po), by Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419); ff. 3b-8a in the ACIP digital edition (catalog number S5396), and pp. 7-18 in the ACIP Indian paper edition. The translation is based upon an oral teaching of the text by Geshe Tupten Rinchen of Sera Mey Tibetan Monastery. Please note that Je Tsongkapa's root text is extremely difficult, and is best studied with the accompanying ACI tapes.*

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གཉིས་པ་ལ་གཉིས། རོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་ཚུལ་གང་ལ་དགོངས་ནས་རོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པར་  
གསུངས་པ་བཤད་པ་དང་། གང་ལ་དགོངས་ནས་མ་སྐྱེས་པ་སོགས་སུ་གསུངས་པ་  
བཤད་པའོ། །དང་པོ་ལ་གསུམ། མདོར་བསྟན་པ་དང་། རྒྱས་པར་བཤད་པ་དང་།  
དེ་དག་གི་དཔེ་བསྟན་པའོ། ། དང་པོ་ནི།

The second division, an answer that clarifies apparent contradictions in the sutras, has two further sections of its own: an explanation of just what "lack of a self nature" it was that Lord Buddha had in mind when he said that nothing had any nature of its own; and what it was that he had in mind when he said "nothing grows" and the like.

We cover the first section in three steps: a brief presentation, an expanded explanation, and illustrations for the points covered. Here is the first.

དགོངས་འགྲུལ་ལས། དོན་དམ་ཡང་དག་འཕགས། ངས་ཚོས་རྣམས་གྱི་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་  
མེད་པ་ཉིད་རྣམ་པ་གསུམ་པོ་འདི་ལྟ་སྟེ། མཚན་ཉིད་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ཉིད་དང་སྐྱེ་བ་  
ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ཉིད་དང་དོན་དམ་པ་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ཉིད་ལ་དགོངས་ནས་ཚོས་  
ཐམས་ཅད་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པའོ། །ཞེས་བསྟན་ཏེ་ཞེས་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་གསུམ་ག་ལ་  
དགོངས་ནས་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པར་གསུངས་སོ།

Lord Buddha replies by saying that, when he stated that nothing had any nature of its own, he was actually referring to all three lacks of a self nature; as the *True Intent of the Sutras* itself reads,

Listen, Paramarta Samudgata. When I said that no existing object at all had any nature of its own, what I was referring to was three different lacks of a self nature that existing things exhibit. These three are the quality of lacking any definitive nature, the quality of lacking any nature of growing, and the quality of lacking any nature of being ultimate.

།བསྐྱེ་བ་ལས་ཀྱང་། བཅོམ་ལྡན་འདས་གྱིས་ཅི་ལ་དགོངས་ནས་ཚོས་ཐམས་ཅད་ངོ་བོ་  
ཉིད་མེད་པ་ཞེས་གསུངས་ཤིང་། སྐྱེས་པ་འདུལ་བའི་དབང་གིས་དེ་དང་དེར་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་  
མེད་པ་ཉིད་རྣམ་པ་གསུམ་ལ་དགོངས་ནས་གསུངས་ཏེ་ཞེས་གསུངས་ཤིང་།

The *Abbreviation* also says:

What was it that the Conqueror had in mind when he said that no existing thing had any nature of its own? I will tell you; he spoke of that to disciples of varying capacities, and what he had in mind was the three different kinds of a lack of self-nature. . .

སུམ་ཅུ་པ་ལས་ཀྱང་། ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་ནི་རྣམ་གསུམ་གྱི། །ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་རྣམ་གསུམ་པ།  
།དགོངས་ནས་ཚོས་རྣམས་ཐམས་ཅད་ནི། །ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་བསྟན་པ་ཡིན། །ཞེས་  
གསུངས་པས་གང་དག་ཤིང་ཕྱིན་ལ་སོགས་པའི་མདོ་རྣམས་ལས་ཚོས་ཐམས་ཅད་ངོ་

བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པར་གསུངས་པ་ཀུན་རྫོབ་ཀྱི་ཚེས་ཐམས་ཅད་ལ་དགོངས་ཀྱི་དོན་དམ་པ་ལ་  
དགོངས་པ་མིན་ནོ་ཞེས་འཆད་པ་ནི་དགོངས་འགྲེལ་དང་ཐོགས་མེད་སྐྱེ་མཆེད་ཀྱི་  
གཞུང་དང་འགལ་ཞིང་འཕགས་པ་ཡབ་སྲས་ལ་སོགས་པའི་ལུགས་ལས་ཀྱང་སྤྱི་  
རོལ་ཏུ་གྱུར་པའོ།།

The *Thirty Verses* says as well:

There are three different forms of this self-nature;  
And what Lord Buddha had in mind  
When he said that no existing object  
Had any nature of its own  
Was that there were on the other hand  
Three different lacks of a self-nature too.

Let us consider, in light of these different references, the explanation by certain people that—when Lord Buddha stated, in sutras such as those on the perfection of wisdom, that no existing object had any nature of its own—he was thinking only of every existing object belonging to the deceptive type, and not of those belonging to the ultimate type. Anyone who holds this position thus contradicts both the *Commentary on the True Intent* and the classics of Master Asanga and his brother; they have moreover left behind them the system followed by the realized father and his spiritual son [the realized being Nagarjuna, and Master Aryadeva], and all the others as well.

འདི་ལྟར་ཅི་ལ་དགོངས་ནས་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པར་གསུངས་པ་དྲིས་པ་ནི་ཅི་ལ་བསམས་  
ནས་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པར་བསྐྱན་པ་དང་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་ཚུལ་དྲིས་པ་ཡིན་ལ་ལན་གྱིས་  
ཀྱང་དེ་གཉིས་རིམ་པ་བཞིན་སྟོན་པ་ལས་དང་པོ་འཆད་པ་ནི།

When the bodhisattva asks Lord Buddha what he had in mind when he said that objects had no nature of their own, he is really asking two different things: what Lord Buddha meant by the expression "no-self-nature," and how it is that nothing has any such nature. The answer by Lord Buddha addresses both of these points as well, one after the other. We begin by explaining the first.

གཟུགས་ནས་རྣམ་མཁྲིན་གྱི་བར་གྱི་ཚེས་རྣམས་ཀྱི་གསལ་བའི་དབྱེ་བ་མཐའ་ཡས་པ་

ལ་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་དམ་རང་བཞིན་མེད་དོ་ཞེས་གསུངས་པ་རྣམས་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་གསུམ་  
དུ་འདུ་ཞིང་དེའི་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་ཚུལ་བཤད་ན་གོ་སླ་བར་དགོངས་ནས་ངོ་བོ་མེད་པ་  
གསུམ་དུ་བསྟུས་ཏེ། དོན་དམ་པ་དང་ཀུན་རྫོབ་པའི་ཚོས་ཐམས་ཅད་དེ་གསུམ་གྱིས་  
བསྟུས་སོ།།

Consider all the infinite variety of objects that Lord Buddha was referring to when he said that none of the existing things from physical matter up to the omniscience of an enlightened being had any nature or quality of its own. Lord Buddha grouped them into three different types of things with no nature of their own, for two reasons: first because they are all subsumed by these three types of things with no nature of their own, and secondly because it would then be easier to teach disciples how it was that they lacked any nature of their own. And this is because every existing object, whether it be something of the ultimate kind or the deceptive kind, is included within one of these three types.

དེ་ལྟར་མཇུག་དགོས་པ་ཡང་ཡུམ་གྱི་མདོ་ལ་སོགས་པར་ཕུང་པོ་ལྔ་ཁམས་བཅོ་བརྒྱད་  
སྐྱེ་མཆེད་བཅུ་གཉིས་ཀྱི་ཚོས་ཐམས་ཅད་ལ་རེ་རེ་ནས་དངོས་པོ་མེད་པ་དང་རང་བཞིན་  
མེད་པ་དང་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པར་གསུངས་ཤིང་། བྱུང་པར་དུ་སྣོད་པ་ཉིད་དང་ཚོས་ཀྱི་  
དབྱིངས་དང་དེ་བཞིན་ཉིད་ལ་སོགས་པ་དོན་དམ་པའི་རྣམ་གྲངས་ཐམས་ཅད་སྟོོས་  
ནས་དེ་དག་ལ་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པར་གསུངས་པས་མདོ་སྡེ་དེ་དག་ལས་ཚོས་རྣམས་ངོ་བོ་  
ཉིད་མེད་པར་གསུངས་པའི་ཚོས་ཀྱི་ནང་ན་དོན་དམ་མེད་དོ་ཞེས་སེམས་དང་ལྡན་པ་སུ་  
ཞིག་སྟེ།

Here's another reason why this is true. Lord Buddha stated, in the sutras of the Mother and others as well, that none of the individual members of the following groups had any nature of being a thing: neither the five heaps, nor the eighteen categories, nor the twelve doors of sense. He said none of them had any nature of being a thing, none had any quality of its own, and none had any nature of its own. More specifically, he mentioned by name all the different versions of the ultimate: emptiness, the sphere of being, the way

things are, and so on—and then he went on to say that none of them had any nature of its own. What person in their right mind then could ever say that there were no things of the ultimate type among those objects of which Lord Buddha spoke?

གཉིས་པ་ནི། གལ་ཏེ་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པར་གསུངས་པའི་ཚོས་རྣམས་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་  
གསུམ་དུ་སྐྱད་ན་དེ་གསུམ་གང་ཡིན་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་ཚུལ་ཇི་ལྟར་ཡིན་སྟུང་ན་ངོ་བོ་  
ཉིད་མེད་པ་དང་པོ་བཤད་པ་ནི་དགོངས་འགྲུལ་ལས། དེ་ལ་ཚོས་རྣམས་ཀྱི་མཚན་ཉིད་  
ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ཉིད་གང་ཞེ་ན། གཏུན་བརྟགས་པའི་མཚན་ཉིད་གང་ཡིན་པའོ།།

Here next is the second step: the expanded explanation. Now you might think to yourself,

Consider all those things that Lord Buddha was talking about when he said that nothing had any nature of its own. Suppose they are all included within the three different types of things that have no nature of their own. What then are these three types of things, and how is it that they lack any nature of their own?

Let's begin by explaining the first type of thing that has no nature of its own. The *Commentary on the True Intent* says,

Suppose you ask what we mean when we speak of the quality of being a thing that "lacks any definitive nature." Here we are referring to those things that display the attribute of being a construct.

དེ་ཅིའི་སྤྱིར་ཞེ་ན། འདི་ལྟར་དེ་ནི་མིང་དང་བདམས་རྣམ་པར་བཞག་པའི་མཚན་ཉིད་  
ཡིན་གྱི་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་རྣམ་པར་གནས་པ་ནི་མ་ཡིན་པས་དེའི་སྤྱིར་དེ་ནི་  
མཚན་ཉིད་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ཉིད་ཅེས་བྱའོ་ཞེས་གསུངས་ཏེ།

And why do we speak of them as such? It is because of the fact that these things display the attribute of being established through names and terms; they are not things which abide by definition; thus can we say of them that they "lack any definitive nature."

ཚིག་དང་པོ་གཉིས་ཀྱི་དྲིས་ལན་གྱིས་ཀུན་བརྟགས་མཚན་ཉིད་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པར་  
བཤད་ནས། དེ་ཅིའི་སྤྱིར་ཞེ་ན་ཞེས་པས་དེའི་རྒྱ་མཚན་དྲིས་པའི་ལན་དུ་དགག་ཕྱོགས་  
ནས་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་མ་གྲུབ་པ་དང་སྐྱབ་ཕྱོགས་ནས་མིང་དང་བརྟན་བཞག་པ་  
ཡིན་པའི་རྒྱ་མཚན་གསུངས་སོ། །མདོ་ཡི་དམིགས་འབྲེད་པ་འདིས་འོག་མ་གཉིས་  
ཀྱང་ཤེས་པར་བྱའོ།།

The question and answer that appear in the first two sentences serve to identify constructs as what are being referred to when we speak of "things that lack any definitive nature." The part that begins with "And why do we speak of them as such?" serves as an answer to the question of what reason there is for us to describe them as such. Then Lord Buddha answers by giving us two reasons: one from the negative point of view, where he says that these things do not exist by definition; and one from the positive point of view, where he says that they are established through names and terms. The way in which the sutra approaches the question from these two different aspects can be understood to apply to the latter two attributes as well.

ཀུན་བརྟགས་ལ་མེད་རྒྱུའི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱི་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་ནི་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་  
པའམ་གནས་པ་ལ་བྱའོ།།

The definitive nature of their own which constructs lack refers to their existing, or abiding, by definition.

འདིར་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་ཡོད་མེད་བརྟན་ཚོད་ནི་མིང་དང་བརྟན་ལ་སྟོས་ནས་  
བཞག་མ་བཞག་ཡིན་ལ། བཞག་པ་ལ་ཡང་ཡོད་པས་མ་བྱུང་ཅིང་འཇོག་ལུགས་ཀྱང་  
ཐལ་འགྱུར་བས་ཡོད་པ་རྣམས་མིང་གི་ཐ་སྐྱད་ཀྱི་དབང་གིས་བཞག་པ་དང་ཆེས་མི་  
མཐུན་པས་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་ཡོད་མེད་ཀྱི་དོན་ཡང་མི་མཐུན་ནོ།།

Here the question of whether something is said to exist by definition or not hinges on whether or not it is established through names and terms; and it is not necessarily the case that those things which are so established even exist at all. What is meant by this "establishing" is furthermore quite different from

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Reading Two

what the Consequence group means when it says that all existing objects are established by virtue of terms that are names; and what it means then to exist by definition or not is also something different.

འོན་ཀྱང་འདིའི་རང་མཚན་གྱིས་ཡོད་པར་འཛིན་པ་ཡོད་ན་ཐལ་འགྱུར་བའི་རང་  
མཚན་གྱིས་གྲུབ་པར་འཛིན་པ་ཡང་ཡོད་ལ་གཞི་འགའ་ཞིག་སྐྱ་མ་ལྟར་མི་འཛིན་ཀྱང་  
སྤྱི་མ་ལྟར་འཛིན་པ་ནི་ཡོད་དོ།།

It is however the case that—if one is holding things to exist definitively as it is described in this school—one is also holding things to exist by definition as it is described by the Consequence group; whereas with a certain number of objects one may still hold them in the latter way yet still not hold them in the former way.

ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མིད་པ་གཉིས་པ་ནི་དགོངས་འགྲུལ་ལས། ཚོས་རྣམས་ཀྱི་སྐྱེ་བ་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་  
མིད་པ་ཉིད་གང་ཞེ་ན། ཚོས་རྣམས་ཀྱི་གཞན་གྱི་དབང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་གང་ཡིན་པའོ།།

Here is what the second lack of a self-nature refers to. *The Commentary on the True Intent of the Sutras* says:

Suppose you ask what we mean when we speak of the quality of being a thing that "lacks any nature of growing." Here we are referring to those things that display the attribute of being a dependent thing.

དེ་ཅིའི་ཕྱིར་ཞེ་ན། འདི་ལྟར་དེ་ནི་རྒྱན་གཞན་གྱི་སྟོབས་གྱིས་བྱུང་བ་ཡིན་གྱི་བདག་  
ཉིད་གྱིས་མ་ཡིན་པས་དེའི་ཕྱིར་དེ་ནི་སྐྱེ་བ་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མིད་པ་ཉིད་ཅེས་བུའོ་ཞེས་  
གསུངས་སོ།།

And why do we speak of them as such? It is because of the fact that these things have occurred by virtue of other factors, and not all by themselves, that we say of them that they "lack any nature of growing."

གཞན་དབང་ལ་མིད་རྒྱུའི་སྐྱེ་བའི་ངོ་བོ་འཕམ་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་གྱིས་སྐྱེ་བ་ནི་བདག་ཉིད་གྱིས་མ་



ཡིན་པས་ཞེས་གསུངས་པས་བདག་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་སྐྱེ་བའོ།།

Given the phrase about "not all by themselves," the nature of growing that dependent things lack, or their growing through some nature of their own, refers to their growing all by themselves.

དེ་ནི་རང་དབང་གིས་སྐྱེ་བ་ཡིན་ཏེ། བསྐྱེ་བ་ལས། འདུ་བྱེད་རྣམས་ནི་རྟེན་ཅིང་  
འབྲེལ་པར་འབྱུང་བ་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར་རྐྱེན་གྱི་སྒོ་བས་ཀྱིས་སྐྱེ་བ་ཡིན་གྱི་རང་གི་སྐྱེ་བ་ནི་  
སྐྱེ་བ་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ཉིད་ཅིས་བྱའོ། །ཞེས་གསུངས་པ་ལྟར་རོ།།

This would be a kind of growing where they grew independently, for as the *Abbreviation* says,

Because things which are factors occur through interdependence, we say that they grow by virtue of their conditions; when we say that these are the type that "lack any nature of growing," we are talking about their growing on their own.

གཞན་དབང་ལ་རང་བཞིན་གྱིས་སྐྱེ་བ་དེ་འདྲ་བའི་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པས་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་  
པར་གསུངས་ཀྱི་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པ་མེད་པས་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པར་  
གསུངས་པ་མིན་པའི་ལུགས་སོ།།

Remember, this is a system which says that dependent things were spoken to lack any nature of their own because they have no nature of growing in this way; that is, through some quality of their own. They do not though say that something has no nature of its own just because it does not exist by definition.

ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་གསུམ་པ་ལ་འཇོག་ཚུལ་གཉིས་ལས་གཞན་དབང་ལ་དོན་དམ་པ་ངོ་  
བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པར་བཞག་པ་ནི་དགོངས་འབྲེལ་ལས། ཚོས་རྣམས་ཀྱི་དོན་དམ་པ་ངོ་བོ་  
ཉིད་མེད་པ་གང་ཞེ་ན། རྟེན་ཅིང་འབྲེལ་པར་འབྱུང་བའི་ཚོས་གང་དག་སྐྱེ་བ་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་  
མེད་པ་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་དེ་དག་ནི་དོན་དམ་པ་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་ངོ་

བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ཡང་ཡིན་ནོ།།

There are two different ways of establishing the third lack of a self-nature; here is how we establish the fact that dependent things have no nature of being ultimate. The *Commentary on the True Intent* says:

Suppose you ask what we mean when we say that things "lack any nature of being ultimate." Consider those things which occur through interdependence; those which lack any nature in the sense that they lack any nature of growing. These are as well that which lacks any nature in the sense of lacking any nature of being ultimate.

དེ་ཅིའི་ཕྱིར་ཞེ་ན། དོན་དམ་ཡང་དག་འཕགས། ཚོས་རྣམས་ལ་རྣམ་པར་དག་པའི་  
དམིགས་པ་གང་ཡིན་པ་དེ་ནི་དོན་དམ་པ་ཡིན་པར་ཡོངས་སུ་བསྟན་ལ། གཞན་གྱི་  
དབང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་དེ་རྣམ་པར་དག་པའི་དམིགས་པ་མ་ཡིན་པས་དེའི་ཕྱིར་དོན་དམ་  
པ་དེ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ཉིད་ཅེས་བྱའོ། །ཞེས་གསུངས་སོ།།

And why do we speak of them as such? Listen, Paramarta Samudgata. What I have professed so thoroughly is that the "ultimate" refers to the part of things which is the object of [the path of] total purity. Because those that display the attribute of being a dependent thing are not the object of [the path of] total purity, we can speak of them as that one that lacks any nature of being ultimate.

གཞན་དབང་ནི་དོན་དམ་པའི་དེ་བོ་ཉིད་དུ་མེད་པས་དོན་དམ་པ་དེ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ཞེས་  
བྱ་སྟེ། དོན་དམ་པ་ནི་གང་ལ་དམིགས་ནས་གོམས་ན་སྒྲིབ་པ་ཟད་པར་འགྱུར་བ་ཡིན་  
ན་གཞན་དབང་ལ་དམིགས་ནས་གོམས་པས་སྒྲིབ་པ་དག་པར་བྱེད་མི་རུས་པའི་ཕྱིར་  
དོ།།

It is because dependent things do not exist as things which have any nature of being ultimate that we can speak of that which does not have any nature of being ultimate. The point here is that "ultimate" refers to anything which, when you focus on and meditate upon it, your spiritual obstacles are brought

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to an end. Dependent things though cannot be described as such, since they do not have the power to help you purify yourself of your spiritual obstacles if you focus on and meditate upon them.

འོན་ཀྱང་བརྟགས་ཀྱང་དོན་དམ་པ་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པར་ཅིའི་སྲིད་མི་གཞག་ཅི་ན། རྣམ་  
པར་དག་པའི་དམིགས་པ་མ་ཡིན་པ་ཙམ་གྱིས་འཇོག་ན་བདེན་ཡང་འོག་ཏུ་དག་པ་  
པ་ལ་སློམ་ནས་གཞན་དབང་རྣམ་པར་དག་པའི་དམིགས་པ་མིན་པས་དོན་དམ་ངོ་བོ་  
ཉིད་མེད་པར་བཞག་གི་ཀུན་བརྟགས་མ་བཞག་གོ།

"Now why," one may ask, "do you not also establish constructs as being something which has no nature of being ultimate?" It's true that—if we were to establish something as being such solely on the basis of its not being an object of [the path of] total purity—then we would have to do so. It is due to the fact that we are attempting to stop wrong ideas though that we do establish dependent things as things which—because they are not objects of [the path] of total purity—have no nature of being ultimate; but do not establish constructs as things which are this way.

ངི་སྣང་ཞེ་ན། གཞན་དབང་ཀུན་བརྟགས་གྱིས་སྣོང་པ་ལ་དམིགས་ནས་བསྐྱོམས་པས་  
སྐྱིབ་པ་དག་བར་འགྱུར་བར་ཤེས་པ་ན། དེ་སྣ་ན་ཚོས་ཅན་གཞན་དབང་ལ་ཡང་  
དམིགས་དགོས་པས་དེ་ཡང་རྣམ་པར་དག་པའི་དམིགས་པར་འགྱུར་བས་དོན་དམ་  
པར་འགྱུར་རོ་སྣམ་དུ་དོགས་པ་སྐྱེ་ལ་ཀུན་བརྟགས་ལ་དེ་འདྲ་བའི་དོགས་པ་མེད་པའི་  
སྲིད་རོ།

Why is this the case? Suppose that a person came to an understanding that they could purify themselves of their spiritual obstacles by focussing on, and then meditating upon, the fact that dependent things are empty of [certain] constructs. It is possible then that they might entertain the thought that—because to go through this process they had to focus upon dependent things as an example—then these same dependent things would be objects of [the path of] total purity. This in turn would mean that these dependent things were ultimate. A person would not though entertain this same thought about constructs.

དོགས་པ་དེའི་སྐྱོན་ནི་མེད་དེ་སྐྱེ་མི་ཏྟག་པར་ངེས་པས་སྐྱེ་ཏྟག་འཛིན་སྐྱོབ་ཀྱང་སྐྱེ་ལ་  
དམིགས་པས་ཏྟག་འཛིན་མི་སྐྱོབ་པ་མི་འགལ་བ་བཞིན་ནོ།།

There is in actuality by the way no problem that this particular thought might be correct. It's similar to the case where a person is able to stop his tendency of believing that sound is an unchanging thing once he has perceived that it is a changing thing. There is no contradiction in this example if one were to say though that you would not stop your tendency of believing that sound is an unchanging thing [simply] by focussing on sound.

གཞན་དབང་རྣམ་པར་དག་པའི་དམིགས་པ་ལ་དོན་དམ་དུ་བྱས་པའི་དོན་དམ་དེར་མ་  
བྱུང་ཀྱང་དོན་དམ་གཞན་དུ་བྱུང་མ་བྱུང་ནི་འཆད་པར་འགྱུར་རོ།།

Despite the fact that dependent things do not exist as something ultimate in the sense of being ultimate by virtue of being the object of [the path of] total purity, there still remains the question of whether they exist as something ultimate in other senses; we will cover this further on.

དོན་དམ་པ་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པའི་འཛོལ་ཚུལ་གཉིས་པ་ཡང་དགོངས་འབྲེལ་ལས།  
གཞན་ཡང་ཚོས་རྣམས་ཀྱི་ཡོངས་སུ་བྱུང་པའི་མཚན་ཉིད་གང་ཡིན་པ་དེ་ཡང་དོན་  
དམ་པ་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ཉིད་ཅེས་བྱའོ།།

This second way of establishing something as a thing that lacks any nature of being ultimate is, further, described as follows in the *Commentary on the True Intent*:

Moreover, we also refer to that attribute of totality which things have as being their "quality of lacking any nature of being ultimate."

དེ་ཅིའི་ཕྱིར་ཞེ་ན། དོན་དམ་ཡང་དག་འཕགས། ཚོས་རྣམས་ཀྱི་ཚོས་བདག་མེད་པ་  
གང་ཡིན་པ་དེ་ནི། དེ་དག་གི་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ཉིད་ཅེས་བྱ་སྟེ་དེ་ནི་དོན་དམ་པ་ཡིན་  
ལ་དོན་དམ་པ་ནི་ཚོས་ཐམས་ཅད་ཀྱི་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་རབ་ཏུ་བྱེ་བ་ཡིན་པས་

དེའི་སྤྱིར་དོན་དམ་པ་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ཉིད་ཅེས་བྱའོ། །ཞེས་གསུངས་སོ།།

And why do we speak of them as such? Listen, Paramarta Samudgata. We refer to that lack of a self-nature of objects which all things have as being their "lack of a nature of their own." The "ultimate" is delineated by being that simple lack that every existing thing has of any nature of its own; and this is why we can speak of the quality of lacking any nature of being ultimate.

ཚོས་རྣམས་ཀྱི་ཚོས་ཀྱི་བདག་མེད་ཡོངས་གྲུབ་ནི་རྣམ་པར་དག་པའི་དམིགས་པ་ཡིན་  
པས་དོན་དམ་པ་ཡང་ཡིན་ལ། ཚོས་རྣམས་ཀྱི་བདག་གི་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པས་རབ་ཏུ་སྤྱི་  
བ་སྣེ་དེ་ཙམ་གྱིས་བཞག་པ་ཡིན་པའི་སྤྱིར་ཚོས་རྣམས་ཀྱི་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ཞེས་གྲུང་བྱ་  
བས་དོན་དམ་པ་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ཞེས་བྱའོ།།

Totality in the sense of the lack of a self-nature of objects which all things exhibit is an object of [the path of] total purity, and is thus on one count something ultimate. But it is also delineated by the lack that things have of any self-nature of the person, by this simple absence of something; and this is why we can speak of all things as "lacking any nature of their own." This too is a reason why we can say that things "lack any nature of being ultimate."

ཡང་དགོངས་འགྲུལ་ལས། གལ་ཏེ་འདུ་བྱེད་ཀྱི་མཚན་ཉིད་དང་དོན་དམ་པའི་མཚན་  
ཉིད་ཐ་དད་པ་ཡིན་པར་གྱུར་ན་ནི། དེས་ན་འདུ་བྱེད་རྣམས་ཀྱི་བདག་མེད་པ་ཙམ་དང་  
ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ཙམ་ཉིད་དོན་དམ་པའི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཡིན་པར་ཡང་མི་འགྱུར། ཞེས་  
གསུངས་ཤིང་།

This point is supported by the *Commentary on the True Intent* where it says,

If the characteristic of being a factor and the characteristic of being ultimate were unconnected, then there is no way that the simple lack of a self-nature to factors and their simple lack of a nature of their own could be their attribute of being ultimate.

དཔེའི་སྐབས་སུ་ཡང་ནམ་མཁའ་གཟུགས་མེད་པ་ཙམ་ལ་འཛོག་པ་བཞིན་དུ་བདག་  
མེད་འཛོག་པར་གསུངས་པས། ཚེས་ཅན་འདུས་བྱས་ལ་ཚེས་ཀྱི་བདག་རྣམ་པར་  
བཅད་ཙམ་གྱི་སྣོས་པ་མེད་དགག་ལ་ཚེས་ཀྱི་བདག་མེད་གྱི་ཡོངས་གྲུབ་འཛོག་པར་  
ཤིན་ཏུ་གསལ་བའི་ཕྱིར།

The point is also supported by the fact that, in the sections where an illustration is used, it is stated that the lack of a self-nature is established in the same way as we establish empty space; that is, as being the simple lack of any physical matter. It is therefore extremely clear that totality, in the form of the lack of a self-nature to objects, is established for produced things as being the simple absence of their imagined self-existence: the raw exclusion of some self-nature to objects.

མདོ་འདིའི་དེ་ཁོ་ན་ཉིད་ཀྱི་དོན་བསྟན་པ་ངེས་པའི་དོན་དུ་འདོད་བཞིན་དུ་འགྱུར་མེད་  
ཡོངས་གྲུབ་དགག་བྱ་བཅད་ཙམ་གྱི་བཅད་སྣོག་ནས་མི་འཛོག་པར་སྣོའི་ཡུལ་དུ་  
འཆར་བ་དགག་བྱ་བཅད་པ་ལ་མི་སྣོས་པར་སྐྱབ་པ་རང་དབང་བ་ལ་འདོད་པ་ནི་  
འགལ་བའོ།།

It is a complete contradiction on this subject to assert, on the one hand, that the descriptions of thusness in this sutra are to be taken as literal; and on the other hand to assert that this changeless totality is a self-standing, positive object: one which is not established simply as the result of a process of exclusion—the simple exclusion of what we deny when we speak of "no-self," and something which we picture as an object in our minds only by relying on the act of excluding what we deny by "no-self."

ཡོངས་གྲུབ་འདི་ནི་ཚེས་རྣམས་ཀྱི་བདག་གི་ངོ་བོ་རྣམ་པར་བཅད་པ་ཙམ་ཡིན་པས་  
ཚེས་རྣམས་ཀྱི་དོན་དམ་པ་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ཞེས་གསུངས་ཀྱི་དགག་པའི་རང་གི་ངོ་བོ་  
ལ་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པ་མེད་པས་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པར་མི་བཞེད་པའི་ལུགས་  
སོ།།

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Remember that this is a school where we say that totality is the simple exclusion of a self-nature with regard to all things; and this is why Lord Buddha spoke of the "lack of a nature of being ultimate." It is not though the case that the school asserts that this absence has no nature of its own for the reason that it has a nature that lacks any quality of existing by definition.

གསུམ་པ་ནི། རོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་གསུམ་པོ་དེ་དབེ་དི་དང་འབྲ་བ་ནི་དགོངས་འགྲེལ་  
ལས། དེ་ལ་འདི་ལྟ་སྟེ་དབེར་ན་ནམ་ཁའི་མེ་ཏོག་ཇི་ལྟ་བུ་དེ་ལྟ་བུར་ནི་མཚན་ཉིད་  
བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ཉིད་བལྟ་བར་བྱའོ།།

Here finally is the third step: illustrations for the points covered. These three lacks of a self-nature can be described with three different illustrations. The *Commentary on the True Intent* begins by saying,

You can view the quality of lacking any definitive nature as being like the illustration of a flower that grows in mid-air.

དོན་དམ་ཡང་དག་འཕགས། དེ་ལ་འདི་ལྟ་སྟེ་དབེར་ན་སྐྱུ་མ་བྱས་པ་ཇི་ལྟ་བུ་  
བྱར་ནི་སྟེ་བུ་རོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ཉིད་བལྟ་བར་བྱའོ། །དོན་དམ་པ་རོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ཉིད་  
དེ་ལས་ཀྱང་གཅིག་ཀྱང་བལྟ་བར་བྱའོ།།

It is, O Paramarta Samudgata, like this: you can view the quality of not having any nature of growing as being like the illustration of a magic show. And as for the quality of not having any nature of being ultimate, you can view it in yet a different way from those.

དོན་དམ་ཡང་དག་འཕགས། དེ་ལ་འདི་ལྟ་སྟེ་དབེར་ན་ནམ་ཁའའི་གཟུགས་ཀྱི་  
བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ཅམ་གྱིས་རབ་ཏུ་སྐྱེ་བ་དང་ཐམས་ཅད་དུ་སོང་བ་ཇི་ལྟ་བུ་དེ་ལྟ་བུར་ནི་དོན་  
དམ་པ་རོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་དེ་ལས་ཚོས་བདག་མེད་པས་རབ་ཏུ་སྐྱེ་བ་དང་ཐམས་ཅད་དུ་  
སོང་བ་གཅིག་བལྟ་བར་བྱ་སྟེ། ཞེས་སོ།།

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It is, O Paramarta Samudgata, like this: you can view this quality as being like the illustration of empty space, which is delineated by being a simple lack of anything with a physical nature, and which extends to all things. The lack of having any nature of being ultimate is the same: this particular quality is, in a way different from those others, delineated by being a lack of any self-nature to objects, and also extends to all things.

ཀུན་བཏགས་ནམ་ཁའི་མེ་ཏོག་དང་འདྲ་བ་ནི་ཏོག་པས་བཏགས་པ་ཙམ་གྱི་དཔེ་ཡིན་  
གྱི་ཤེས་བྱ་ལ་མི་སྲིད་པའི་དཔེ་མིན་ནོ། །གཞན་དབང་སྐྱུ་མ་དང་འདྲ་ཚུལ་ནི་འཆད་  
པར་འགྱུར་ལ་ཡོངས་གྲུབ་གྱི་དཔེ་དོན་ནི་དཀྱུས་ན་གསལ་ལོ།།

Saying that constructs are similar to a flower that grows in mid-air is only meant to illustrate how they exist merely in the imagination; the point is not to give an example of something that doesn't exist in the universe. The way in which dependent things are similar to a magic trick we will explain later on, and the point of the illustration used for totality is clear from the context in which it appears.

ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པར་གསུངས་པའི་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་ཚུལ་ནི་དེ་ལྟར་དུ་བཤད་གྱི་དེ་ལྟ་མིན་  
པར་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་གསུམ་ག་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་མ་གྲུབ་པ་ལ་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པར་  
བཤད་ན་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པར་གསུངས་པའི་མདོ་སྡེ་ལ་སྐྱེ་བཞིན་པར་ཞེན་པ་ཡིན་ལ།  
དེ་ལྟ་ན་མེད་ ལྟའམ་ཆད་པར་ལྟ་བ་ཐོབ་པར་འགྱུར་ཏེ་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་གསུམ་ག་ལ་སྐྱུར་བ་  
འདེབས་པས་མཚན་ཉིད་མེད་པར་ལྟ་བ་ཅན་དུ་འགྱུར་བའི་སྲིད་རོ།།

This is the way one should explain how it is that things lack any nature of their own when the sutra speaks of a "lack of any nature of their own." If on the other hand one were to say that "lacking any nature of their own" meant that none of the three natures existed by definition, then you would be expressing the belief that the sutras which state that nothing has any nature of its own are to be taken to mean exactly what they say. This would amount to espousing the view that nothing exists, or the view that everything has discontinued. This in turn would be discounting the existence of all three of the natures; and we could say then that you had turned into one of those people who holds the view that nothing has any definitive characteristics at all.



འདི་ལྟར་གཞན་དབང་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་བྱུང་བ་མེད་ན་སྐྱེ་བ་དང་འགག་བ་མི་  
རུང་བས་དེ་ལ་སྐྱར་བ་འདེབས་པ་ཡིན་ལ་ཡོངས་བྱུང་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་མེད་ན་  
དངོས་པོའི་གཤིས་སུ་མི་འགྱུར་བའི་ལྷགས་སོ།།

How this works, according to this school, is the following: if it were not the case that there were any dependent things that existed by definition, then they could never grow or stop—and one would thus be discounting their existence. If there were no examples of totality that existed by definition, then this could never be the core nature of every functional thing.

གལ་ཏེ་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་མ་བྱུང་བར་ལྟ་བུ་དོ་བོ་ཉིད་གཞན་གཉིས་ལ་སྐྱར་  
འདེབས་ཡིན་དུ་རྒྱུག་ཀྱང་ཀུན་བརྟགས་ལ་སྐྱར་འདེབས་སུ་ཇི་ལྟར་འགྱུར་སྐྱམ་ན།

Suppose, on this point, one were to raise the following question:

I can see how—if one were to hold the viewpoint that they did not exist by definition—one would be discounting the existence of the two natures. How is it though that you would be discounting the existence of constructs?

དོ་བོ་ཉིད་གཞན་གཉིས་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་མེད་ན་དེ་གཉིས་མེད་པར་འགྱུར་ལ་དེ་  
ལྟར་ཀུན་བརྟགས་འདོགས་པའི་གཞི་དང་འདོགས་པ་པོའི་ཐ་སྐྱད་ཀྱང་མེད་པས་ཀུན་  
བརྟགས་ཡི་མེད་དུ་འགྱུར་བའི་ཕྱིར་རོ།།

The point is that, if it were the case that the two natures did not exist by definition, then they could never exist at all. And if they did not exist, then there would be no object towards which we apply the constructs, and none of the terms that the one who applies the constructs uses. Constructs themselves then would become something that did not exist at all.

དེ་ལྟར་ཡང་དགོངས་འགྲེལ་ལས། ངའི་དགོངས་ཏེ་བཤད་པ་ཟབ་མོ་ཡང་དག་པ་ཇི་  
ལྟར་བཞིན་ཏུ་རབ་ཏུ་མི་ཤེས་ཏེ་ཚོས་དེ་ལ་མོས་ཀྱང་ཚོས་འདི་དག་ཐམས་ཅད་ནི་དོ་བོ་

ཉིད་མེད་པ་ཁོ་ན་ཡིན་ནོ། །ཚོས་འདི་དག་ཐམས་ཅད་ནི་མ་སྐྱེས་པ་ཁོ་ནའོ། །མ་  
འགགས་པ་ཁོ་ནའོ། །གཞོན་མ་ནས་ཞི་བ་ཁོ་ནའོ། །རང་བཞིན་གྱིས་ཡོངས་སུ་སྐྱེ་  
ངན་ལས་འདས་པ་ཁོ་ནའོ། །ཞེས་ཚོས་ཀྱི་དོན་ལ་སྐྱེ་ཇི་བཞིན་ཁོ་ནར་མངོན་པར་ཞིན་  
པར་བྱེད་དོ།།

In this same vein, the *Commentary on the True Intent* says:

I will explain to you my true intent. It may be the case that you believe in things, that you fail to grasp fully the profound and pure way that things really are. And then you will come to believe, firmly, that I only meant exactly what I said about the nature of all things when I said the following:

None of these things at all has any nature of its own; and they are no other way. None of these things at all ever grows; and they are no other way. None of them ever stops; and they are no other way. They are extinct, and have been so from the very beginning; and they are no other way. They have, by their very nature, gone completely beyond the state of grief; and they are no other way.

དེ་དག་གཞི་དེས་ན་ཚོས་ཐམས་ཅད་ལ་མེད་པར་ལྟ་བ་དང་མཚན་ཉིད་མེད་པར་ལྟ་བ་  
འཕྲོབ་པར་འགྱུར་ཏེ། མེད་པར་ལྟ་བ་དང་མཚན་ཉིད་མེད་པར་ལྟ་བ་ཕྲོབ་ནས་ཀྱང་  
ཚོས་ཐམས་ཅད་ལ་མཚན་ཉིད་ཐམས་ཅད་ཀྱིས་སྐྱར་པ་འདེབས་ཏེ། ཚོས་རྣམས་ཀྱི་  
ཀུན་བརྟགས་པའི་མཚན་ཉིད་ལ་ཡང་སྐྱར་པ་འདེབས་ཚོས་རྣམས་ཀྱི་གཞན་གྱི་དབང་  
གི་མཚན་ཉིད་དང་ཡོངས་སུ་གྲུབ་པའི་མཚན་ཉིད་ལ་ཡང་སྐྱར་པ་འདེབས་སོ།།

If one were to start from this point, it would amount to espousing the view that nothing exists at all, and the view that nothing has any definitive characteristics at all. And once one reached the point of espousing the view that nothing exists, or that nothing has any definitive characteristics, then one would be discounting the existence of all things, from the point of view

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of each and every one of their attributes. This is true because one would then be discounting the existence of the attribute of having constructs for every existing thing; and one would also be discounting the existence of the attributes of having dependent things and having totality.

དེ་ཅི་འདྲི་སྤྱིར་ཞེ་ན། དོན་དམ་ཡང་དག་འཕགས། འདི་ལྟར་གཞན་གྱི་དབང་གི་མཚན་  
ཉིད་དང་ཡོངས་སུ་གྲུབ་པའི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཡོད་ན་ནི་ཀུན་བརྟགས་པའི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱང་  
རབ་ཏུ་ཤེས་པར་འགྱུར་ན། དེ་ལ་གང་དག་གཞན་གྱི་དབང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་དང་ཡོངས་  
སུ་གྲུབ་པའི་མཚན་ཉིད་ལ་མཚན་ཉིད་མེད་པར་མཐོང་བ་དེ་དག་གིས་ནི་ཀུན་བརྟགས་  
པའི་མཚན་ཉིད་ལ་ཡང་སྐྱར་པ་བཏབ་པ་ཡིན་པའི་སྤྱིར་ཏེ། དེ་ལྟར་བས་ན་དེ་དག་ནི་  
མཚན་ཉིད་རྣམ་པ་གསུམ་ཆར་ལ་ཡང་སྐྱར་པ་འདེབས་པ་ཞེས་བྱའོ། །ཞེས་སོ།།

And why would this be the case? Listen, Paramarta Samudgata. The point is that—if something displays the attribute of having a dependent thing, and the attribute of having totality—then we can understand it to display the attribute of having constructs. This being the case, anyone who holds the opinion that the attribute of having a dependent thing and the attribute of having totality have no definitive characteristics at all would also be discounting the existence of the attribute of having constructs. Such a person, we would then have to say, would be discounting the existence of all three of the attributes.

དོན་ལ་སྐྱ་ཇི་བཞིན་དུ་ཞེན་ཞེས་པའི་སྐྱ་ནི་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པར་སྟོན་པའི་མདོ་སྡེ་ལས་  
ཚོས་ཐམས་ཅད་དོན་དམ་པར་རང་བཞིན་གྱིས་སྟོང་པ་དང་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་དང་རང་གི་  
མཚན་ཉིད་གྱིས་སྟོང་ཞེས་གསུངས་པ་རྣམས་ཡིན་ལ་དེ་དག་ལ་ཇི་ལྟར་བརྟན་པ་ལྟར་  
འཇིན་པ་ནི་སྐྱ་ཇི་བཞིན་པར་འདོད་པའི་ལུགས་སོ།།

What does the "what I said" refer to in the sentence about "believing that I meant exactly what I said"? It refers to statements in the sutras where Lord Buddha taught that nothing has any nature of its own: where he stated that all

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existing things are devoid of any nature which they have; void of any nature of their own; void of any nature of existing by definition. Any school that believed that these were to be taken just as they were spoken would be, in this context, a school that "believed that I meant exactly what I said."

གཞན་དབང་དང་ཡོངས་གྲུབ་ཀྱི་མཚན་ཉིད་ལ་མཚན་ཉིད་མེད་པར་མཐོང་བ་ནི་དེ་  
གཉིས་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་མ་གྲུབ་པར་ལྟ་བུ་སྟེ། དེ་ཅིའི་ཕྱིར་ཞེ་ན། ཞེས་པ་མན་  
ཚད་ཀྱིས་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་གསུམ་ག་ལ་སྐྱར་འདེབས་སུ་འགྲོ་བའི་རྒྱ་མཚན་སྟོན་ནོ།།

"The opinion that the attributes of having a dependent thing and having totality have no definitive characteristics at all" refers to the opinion that neither of these two exists by definition. And everything from "Why would this be the case?" on down is meant to present the rationale for saying that one would be discounting the existence of all three of the natures.

རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་སྐྱེ་བ་དང་འགག་པ་མེད་པར་གསུངས་པ་ལྟར་བརྒྱུང་ན་ཡང་  
གཞན་དབང་ལ་སྐྱར་འདེབས་སུ་འགྲུར་བའི་ཕྱིར་གཞན་གཉིས་ལ་ཡང་སྐྱར་འདེབས་  
སུ་འགྲོ་བ་ཤེས་པར་བྱ་སྟེ། སྐྱེ་འགག་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་མ་གྲུབ་ན་སྐྱེ་འགག་  
མེད་པར་འགྲུར་བའི་ལུགས་སོ།།

You should further understand the point that—if one were to take on face value Lord Buddha's statements that neither the growth of things nor their stopping exists by definition—then one would be discounting the existence of dependent things. This being the case, one would effectively be discounting the existence of the other two attributes as well. And this is because—in this school at least—growing and stopping themselves could never exist at all if they did not exist by definition.

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**Reading Three: The Latter Four Characterizations**

*The following selection is taken from the Essence of Eloquence, a Classical Commentary on Distinguishing between the Figurative and the Literal (Drang-ba dang nges-pa'i don rnam-par 'byed-pa'i bstan-bcos Legs-bshad snying-po), by Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419); ff. 8a-9b in the ACIP digital edition (catalog number S5396), and pp. 18-22 in the ACIP Indian paper edition. The translation is based upon an oral teaching of the text by Geshe Tupten Rinchen of Sera Mey Tibetan Monastery. Please note that Je Tsongkapa's root text is extremely difficult, and is best studied with the accompanying ACI tapes.*

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གཉིས་པ་ནི། རོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པའི་རྩལ་དེ་ལྟར་ཡིན་ན་སྐྱེ་བ་མེད་པ་སོགས་གང་ལ་  
དགོངས་ནས་གསུངས་ཤིང་།

Here next is the second of the two sections on the answer. One may ask the following question: "If that's what Lord Buddha had in mind when he said that nothing had any nature of its own, then what was it he had in mind when he said 'nothing grows' and the like?

འདི་ནི་རོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་དང་ཕོ་དང་ཐུ་མ་ལ་དགོངས་ནས་གསུངས་ཏེ། དེ་ཡང་དང་  
ཕོ་ནི་དགོངས་འགྲེལ་ལས། དེ་ལ་མཚན་ཉིད་རོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ཉིད་ལ་དགོངས་ནས་  
ངས་ཚོས་ཐམས་ཅད་མ་སྐྱེས་པ་མ་འགགས་པ་གཟོད་མ་ནས་ཞི་བ་རང་བཞིན་གྱིས་

ཡོངས་སུ་སྲུ་སྲུ་ངན་ལས་འདས་པའོ་ཞེས་བསྟན་ཏོ།།

What Lord Buddha had in mind when he mentioned those was the first and the last of the three kinds of a lack of any nature. The first is mentioned in the *Commentary on the True Intent* as follows:

I did say that nothing that exists ever grows, or stops; that they are all extinct, and have been so from the very beginning; and that they have, by their very nature, gone completely beyond the state of grief. What I had in mind when I said so was the quality of lacking any definitive nature.

དེ་ཅིའི་ཕྱིར་ཞེ་ན། དོན་དམ་ཡང་དག་འཕགས། འདི་ལྟར་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་གྱིས་  
མེད་པ་གང་ཡིན་པ་དེ་ནི་མ་སྐྱེས་པ་ཡིན་མ་སྐྱེས་པ་གང་ཡིན་པ་དེ་ནི་མ་འགགས་པ་  
ཡིན་ན། མ་སྐྱེས་པ་དང་མ་འགགས་པ་གང་ཡིན་པ་དེ་དག་ནི་གཟེང་མ་ནས་ཞི་བ་  
ཡིན་གཟེང་མ་ནས་ཞི་བ་གང་ཡིན་པ་དེ་ནི་རང་བཞིན་གྱིས་ཡོངས་སུ་སྲུ་སྲུ་ངན་ལས་  
འདས་པ་ཡིན། རང་བཞིན་གྱིས་ཡོངས་སུ་སྲུ་སྲུ་ངན་ལས་འདས་པ་གང་ཡིན་པ་དེ་ལ་  
ནི་ཡོངས་སུ་སྲུ་སྲུ་ངན་ལས་བསྐྱེད་བར་བྱ་བ་ཅུང་ཟད་ཀྱང་མེད་དེ། ཞེས་གསུངས་སོ།།

Why is that? This is how it works, Paramarta Samudgata. Those things which do not exist by definition are things that never grow. Those things that never grow are things that never stop. Those things that never grow nor stop are things which are extinct, and which have been so from the very beginning. Those things that are extinct, and which have been so from the very beginning, are things that have, by their very nature, gone completely beyond the state of grief. And those things which have, by their very nature, gone completely beyond the state of grief have nothing at all about them which is gone completely beyond the state of grief.

ཀུན་བརྟགས་ལ་སྐྱེ་འགག་མེད་པའི་རྒྱ་མཚན་དུ་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་གྱིས་མ་གྲུབ་པ་  
བཤོད་པའི་ཕྱིར་སྐྱེ་འགག་ཡོད་ན་རང་མཚན་གྱིས་གྲུབ་པ་དང་གཞན་དབང་ལ་རང་གི་

མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པའི་སྐྱེ་འགག་ཡོད་པར་ཡང་བསྟན་ནོ།།

The reason given here for saying that constructs never grow or stop is that they are things which do not exist by definition. The text is thereby also indicating that—if something did exhibit growing or stopping—then it would exist by definition; and that dependent things do exhibit growing and stopping which exist by definition.

སྐྱེ་འགག་དང་བྲལ་བ་ནི་འདུས་མ་བྱས་ཡིན་པས་ཀུན་ནས་ཉོན་མོངས་ཀྱི་ཚེས་སུ་མི་  
རུང་བའི་སྤྱིར་གཞོན་མ་ནས་ཞི་བ་དང་རང་བཞིན་གྱིས་སྤྱང་ན་ལས་འདས་པར་བསྟན་  
ཏེ་སྤྱང་ན་ནི་འདིར་ཀུན་ཉོན་ཡིན་པའི་སྤྱིར་རོ།།

Objects of the kind that are bereft of any growing or stopping are unproduced things; and these are not the types of things that can belong to the mentally-afflicted side of things. This is why they are spoken of as "extinct, from the very beginning," and "gone, by their very nature, completely beyond grief"; for the meaning of "grief" here is the mentally-afflicted side of things.

གཉིས་པ་ཡང་དགོངས་འགྲུལ་ལས། ཡང་དོན་དམ་པ་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ཉིད་ཚེས་  
བདག་མེད་པས་རབ་ཏུ་སྤྱི་བ་ལ་དགོངས་ནས་ངས་ཚེས་ཐམས་ཅད་མ་སྐྱེས་པ་མ་  
འགགས་པ་གཞོན་མ་ནས་ཞི་བ་རང་བཞིན་གྱིས་ཡོངས་སུ་སྤྱང་ན་ལས་འདས་པའོ་  
ཞེས་བསྟན་ནོ།།

The second of the three lacks treated here is described in the *Commentary on the True Intent* as follows:

And from another point of view did I say that nothing that exists ever grows, or stops; that they are all extinct, and have been so from the very beginning; and that they have, by their very nature, gone completely beyond the state of grief. What I had in mind when I said so was the quality of lacking any nature of being ultimate: that which is delineated by the absence of a self-nature to objects.

དེ་ཅི་འདྲི་སྤྱིར་ཞེ་ན། འདི་ལྟར་དོན་དམ་པ་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ཉིད་ཚོས་བདག་མེད་པས་  
རབ་ཏུ་སྤྱི་བ་ནི་ཏྲག་པ་ཏྲག་པའི་དུས་དང་ཐེར་བྱུག་ཐེར་བྱུག་གི་དུས་སུ་རྣམ་པར་  
གནས་པ་ཁོ་ན་ཡིན་ལ། དེ་ནི་ཚོས་རྣམས་ཀྱི་ཚོས་ཉིད་འདུས་མ་བྱས་པ་ཉོན་མོངས་  
པ་ཐམས་ཅད་དང་བྲལ་བ་ཡིན་ཏེ།

Why is that? This is how it works. The quality of lacking any nature of being ultimate—that which is delineated by the absence of a self-nature to objects—is something that only continues, in the time of changeless changelessness, and in the time of unshaking unshakability. This is that unproduced thing which is the real nature of all existing things, and it is free of everything mentally afflicted.

ཏྲག་པ་ཏྲག་པའི་དུས་དང་ཐེར་བྱུག་ཐེར་བྱུག་གི་དུས་སུ་ཚོས་ཉིད་དེ་ཉིད་ཀྱི་རྣམ་པར་  
གནས་པ་འདུས་མ་བྱས་པ་གང་ཡིན་པ་དེ་ནི་འདུས་མ་བྱས་པའི་སྤྱིར་མ་སྤྱོས་པ་དང་  
མ་འགགས་པ་ཡིན་ལ། དེ་ནི་ཉོན་མོངས་པ་ཐམས་ཅད་དང་བྲལ་བའི་སྤྱིར་གཟོད་མ་  
ནས་ཞི་བ་དང་རང་བཞིན་གྱིས་ཡོངས་སུ་སྤངས་ལས་འདས་པ་ཡིན་ཏེ། ཞེས་  
གསུངས་སོ།།

Think about this thing, that real nature of things, an unproduced thing that continues in the time of changeless changelessness, and in the time of unshaking unshakability. Because it is an unproduced thing, it neither grows nor stops. And because it is free of any of the mentally afflicted things, then it is also extinct, from the very beginning, and something which is, by its very nature, gone completely beyond the state of grief. . .

ཏྲག་པ་ཏྲག་པའི་དུས་ནི་སྤྱི་མ་སྤྱི་མའི་དུས་དང་ཐེར་བྱུག་ཐེར་བྱུག་གི་དུས་ནི་སྤྱི་མ་སྤྱི་  
མའི་དུས་ལ་རྒྱ་ནག་གི་འགྲེལ་ཆེན་ལས་བཤད་དོ།།



The *Great Commentary* explains the expression "time of changeless changelessness" as referring to all the time that has gone before, and the expression "time of unshaking unshakability" as meaning all the time that will come afterwards.

འོ་ན་འདིར་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པའི་གཞི་གསུམ་ག་ལ་མཛད་ནས་སྐྱེ་བ་སོགས་མེད་པའི་  
གཞི་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་བར་པ་ལ་མི་མཛད་པ་དང།

One might raise the following question:

When they talked about what it was that lacked any self nature, they referred to all three kinds of lacking a self-nature. But then when they talked about what it was that lacked any growing or the rest, they failed to refer to the middle kind of a lack of a self-nature. Why is that?

ཀུན་ལས་བརྟམ་ལས་ཀྱང་ཀུན་བརྟགས་པའི་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་ལ་མཚན་ཉིད་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་  
དང་གཞན་གྱི་དབང་ལ་སྐྱེ་བ་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་དང་ཡོངས་སུ་བྱུང་བ་ལ་དོན་དམ་པ་ངོ་  
བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པའི་ཕྱིར་རོ། །མ་སྐྱེས་པ་མ་འགགས་པ་གཞོན་མ་ནས་ཞི་བ་རང་བཞིན་  
གྱིས་སྤྱང་ན་ལས་འདས་པ་ཞེས་འབྱུང་བའི་དགོངས་པ་གང་ཡིན་ཞེ་ན། ཇི་ལྟར་ངོ་བོ་  
ཉིད་མེད་པ་དེ་ལྟར་མ་སྐྱེས་སོ། ཇི་ལྟར་མ་སྐྱེས་པ་དེ་ལྟར་མ་འགགས་སོ། ཇི་ལྟར་  
མ་སྐྱེས་པ་དང་མ་འགགས་པ་དེ་ལྟར་གཞོན་མ་ནས་ཞི་ལོ། །དེ་ལྟར་རང་བཞིན་གྱིས་  
ཡོངས་སུ་སྤྱང་ན་ལས་འདས་སོ། །ཞེས་མཚན་ཉིད་གསུམ་གའི་དབང་དུ་བྱས་ནས་  
མ་སྐྱེས་པ་སོགས་སུ་བཤད་པའི་དོན་ཅི་ཡིན་ཞེ་ན།

And why too does the *Compendium* explain the lack of any growing, and the rest, with reference to all three of the attributes where it says,

. . . Because the lack of any definitive nature refers to the nature of constructs; and the lack of any nature of growing refers to dependent things; and

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the lack of any nature of being ultimate refers to totality. And what did Lord Buddha have in mind when he spoke of things that "never grow," "never stop," are "extinct from the very beginning," and "gone—by their very nature—beyond all grief"? Things that "never grow" do so exactly as those things that have no nature of their own lack their nature. Things that "never stop" do so exactly as those things that never grow never grow. Things that are "extinct from the very beginning" are that way just as those things that never grow and never stop are those ways. And that in turn is exactly how things are, by their very nature, beyond all grief.

འདི་ལ་རྒྱ་ནག་གི་འབྲེལ་ཆེན་ལས། མདོ་ལས་གཞན་དབང་སྐྱེ་བ་མེད་པ་སོགས་ཀྱི་  
དགོངས་གཞིར་མ་གསུངས་པ་ནི་རྟོན་ཅིང་འབྲེལ་པར་འབྱུང་བའི་དོན་མེད་པ་མིན་པར་  
བསྟན་པའི་ཕྱིར་ཡིན་ལ། ཀུན་ལས་བརྟུས་ལས་བཤད་པ་ནི་བདག་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་སྐྱེ་བ་  
དང་རྒྱ་མེད་ལས་སྐྱེ་བ་མེད་པའི་དབང་དུ་བྱས་པར་བཤད་དོ།།

The *Great Commentary* from China says on this point that the reason why dependent things are not mentioned in the sutra as being what Lord Buddha was referring to with the expressions "never grow" and so on is that the sutra means to indicate that these are not things of the kind which lack any nature of occurring through dependent origination.

གཞན་དབང་ལ་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་སྐྱེ་བ་དང་འགག་པ་ཡོད་པས་སྐྱེ་འགག་མེད་  
པར་གསུངས་པ་གཞན་དབང་ལ་དགོངས་པ་མིན་ལ་གཞན་དབང་པལ་ཆེར་ཀུན་ཉོན་  
ཀྱིས་བསྟུས་པས་ཚིག་ཕྱི་མ་གཉིས་ཀྱི་གཞིར་མ་མཇད་པ་ནི་མདོ་འདིའི་དགོངས་པའོ།།

The real point of the sutra though is as follows. Dependent things do exhibit growing and stopping, of a kind that exist by definition. Therefore these dependent things are not what Lord Buddha had in mind when he spoke of "never growing" or "never stopping." Moreover, the vast majority of dependent things are taken in by the mentally-afflicted side of things; and so this is why the dependent things are not described as something that Lord Buddha has in mind when he mentions the latter two expressions.

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ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་གསུམ་གྱི་རང་རང་གི་སྐབས་ཀྱི་ངོ་བོ་མེད་སྟུང་འི་དབང་དུ་བྱས་ནས་ཇི་ལྟར་  
ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་དེ་ལྟར་མ་སྐྱེས་པ་དང་མ་འགགས་ལ་གཞོན་མ་ནས་ཞི་བ་དང་།  
གཏོད་ནས་མྱ་ངན་ལས་འདས་པ་ཡང་ཡིན་པ་ལ་དགོངས་ནས་ཀུན་ལས་བརྟུས་ལས་  
དེ་ལྟར་བཤད་དོ།།

And here is what the *Compendium* is referring to when it says that things never grow the same way they have no nature; and that this is too how they never stop, and how they are extinct from the very beginning, and how they are, by their very nature, completely beyond all grief: the point is that we are to refer, in each case, to that particular nature which each one of the three natures, respectively, is said to lack when we describe it.

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**Reading Four: An Identification of the Three Attributes**

*The following selection is taken from the Essence of Eloquence, a Classical Commentary on Distinguishing between the Figurative and the Literal (Drang-ba dang nges-pa'i don rnam-par 'byed-pa'i bstan-bcos Legs-bshad snying-po), by Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419); ff. 9b-11a in the ACIP digital edition (catalog number S5396), and pp. 22-26 in the ACIP Indian paper edition. The translation is based upon an oral teaching of the text by Geshe Tupten Rinchen of Sera Mey Tibetan Monastery. Please note that Je Tsongkapa's root text is extremely difficult, and is best studied with the accompanying ACI tapes.*

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གསུམ་པ་ནི། གུན་བརྟགས་མཚན་ཉིད་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ཡིན་ན་གུན་བརྟགས་ཉིད་  
གང་ཡིན་སྟུང་ན། དེ་ནི་དགོངས་འགྲེལ་ལས། རྣམ་པར་རྟོག་པའི་སྒྲིབ་ཡུལ་གུན་  
བརྟགས་པའི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱི་གནས་འདུ་བྱེད་ཀྱི་མཚན་མ་ལ་གཟུགས་ཀྱི་ཕུང་པོ་ཞེས་  
ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་དམ་བྱེ་བྲག་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་དུ་མིང་དང་བརྟན་རྣམ་པར་བཞག་པ་དང་།  
གཟུགས་ཀྱི་ཕུང་པོ་སྐྱེའོ་ཞེས་འགག་པ་ཞེས་གཟུགས་ཀྱི་ཕུང་པོ་སྤང་བ་དང་  
ཡོངས་སུ་ཤེས་པ་ཞེས་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་ཀྱི་མཚན་ཉིད་དམ་བྱེ་བྲག་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་དུ་མིང་དང་  
བརྟན་རྣམ་པར་བཞག་པ་གང་ལགས་པ་དེ་ནི་གུན་བརྟགས་པའི་མཚན་ཉིད་ལགས་ཏེ།  
ཞེས་གསུངས་སོ།།

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Here is the third division from above: an identification of the nature of the three real natures. "You have said," one may begin, "that the 'lack of a definitive nature' refers to constructs. But just what are these constructs themselves?" Our answer is drawn from the *Commentary on the True Intent*:

Consider that thing which is established through names and terms as either the attribute that relates to the very essence, or the attribute that relates to some particular, when we focus on something which is (1) the arena in which the constructing state of mind acts; (2) the object of the attribute of constructs; and (3) that which exhibits the typical features of a factor; and speak of it as "the heap of physical matter."

Consider as well that thing which is established through names and terms as either the attribute that relates to the very essence, or the attribute that relates to some particular, when we focus on the same thing and speak of "the growing of the heap of physical matter," or its "stopping," or "eliminating" or "grasping" this heap of physical matter.

This thing is what we refer to as "the attribute of constructs."

དེ་ལ་ཚིག་དང་པོ་གསུམ་གྱིས་ནི་ཀུན་བརྟགས་འདོགས་པའི་གཞི་བསྟན་ལ་དེ་མན་  
ཆད་གྱིས་ཀུན་ཏུ་བརྟགས་ཚུལ་སྟོན་ཏེ། འདི་གཟུགས་ལྷུང་ངོ་ཞེས་ངོ་བོ་དང་གཟུགས་  
ལྷུང་སྐྱེའོ་ཞེས་སོགས་སུ་བརྟགས་པ་ནི་བྱེ་བྲག་གམ་བྱུང་པར་དུ་བརྟགས་ཚུལ་ཡིན་ཏེ་  
ཞིབ་ཏུ་འཆད་པར་འགྱུར་རོ།།

Now the three numbered items are descriptions of the object towards which a construct is applied. The rest is a description of how the application of the construct is carried out: you either apply a construct about the general essence of an object by saying this is the "heap of physical matter," or you apply a construct about the particulars or features of the same object by saying, "the heap of physical matter is growing," or one of the others. We will be examining this point in further detail.

གཞན་དབང་སྐྱེ་བ་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ཡིན་ན་གཞན་དབང་གང་ཡིན་སྟུང་ན། དེ་ནི་  
དགོངས་འགྲུལ་ལས། རྣམ་པར་རྟོག་པའི་སྟོན་ཡུལ་ཀུན་བརྟགས་པའི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱི་

གནས་འདུ་བྱེད་གྱི་མཚན་མ་གང་ལགས་པ་དེ་ནི་གཞན་གྱི་དབང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་  
ལགས་ཏེ་ཞེས་གསུངས་ཏེ། དང་པོས་གང་གི་ཡུལ་ཡིན་པ་དང་གཉིས་པས་ཀུན་  
བརྟགས་གྱི་གདགས་གཞི་དང་གསུམ་པས་རང་གི་ངོ་བོ་བསྟན་ཏོ།།

"And you have said," one may continue, "that the 'lack of a nature of growing' refers to dependent things. But just what are these dependent things?" Again we turn to the *Commentary on the True Intent*:

Consider that thing which is (1) the arena in which the constructing state of mind acts; (2) the object of the attribute of constructs; and (3) that which exhibits the typical features of a factor. This thing is what we refer to as "the attribute of dependent things."

The first term indicates what it is that takes dependent things as its object; the second indicates that dependent things are the basis towards which the constructs are applied; and the third indicates the very nature of dependent things.

ཡོངས་གྲུབ་དོན་དམ་པ་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ཡིན་ན་དེ་ཉིད་གང་ཡིན་སྟེ་ན། དེ་ནི་  
དགོངས་འགྲུལ་ལས། རྣམ་པར་རྟོག་པའི་སྡོད་ཡུལ་ཀུན་བརྟགས་པའི་མཚན་ཉིད་གྱི་  
གནས་འདུ་བྱེད་གྱི་མཚན་མ་དེ་ཉིད། ཀུན་བརྟགས་པའི་མཚན་ཉིད་དེར་ཡོངས་སུ་མ་  
གྲུབ་ཅིང་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་དེ་ཁོ་ནས་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མ་མཆིས་པ་ཉིད་ཚོས་ལ་བདག་མ་མཆིས་པ།  
དེ་བཞིན་ཉིད་རྣམ་པར་དག་པའི་དམིགས་པ་གང་ལགས་པ་དེ་ནི་ཡོངས་སུ་གྲུབ་པའི་  
མཚན་ཉིད་ལགས་ཏེ་ཞེས་གསུངས་སོ།།

"You have finally said," one may conclude, "that the 'lack of a nature of being ultimate' refers to totality. But just what is totality?" Again, the *Commentary on the True Intent* says:

Consider the fact that the thing which is (1) the arena in which the constructing state of mind acts; (2) the object of the attribute of constructs; and (3) that which exhibits the typical features of a factor itself is—in its totality—free of the attribute of constructs.

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Consider the fact that it is impossible for it to have any nature of having that one specific nature. Consider the fact that it is impossible for it to display any self-nature of objects. And consider that essential nature which is the object perceived by [the path of] purity. This is what we refer to as "the attribute of totality."

ཚོས་ལ་ཞེས་སོགས་ཀྱིས་ཚོས་ཀྱི་བདག་མིང་དེ་བཞིན་ཉིད་ཅེས་བརྗོད་པ་གང་ལ་  
དམིགས་ནས་བསྐྱོམས་པས་སྐྱིབ་པ་དག་པར་འགྱུར་བ་དེ་ཉིད་ཡོངས་གྲུབ་ཏུ་ངོས་  
བཟུང་ངོ།།

The phrasing around the words "of objects" is saying, "that thing we talk about as the lack of any self-nature of objects, or the essential nature of things." Totality is being identified as that one thing which—if you focus on it and then meditate upon it—your spiritual obstacles are cleaned away.

ཚོས་ཀྱི་བདག་མིང་དེ་གང་ཞེ་ན་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མ་མཚིས་པ་ཉིད་དེ་ཉིད་ནི་དེ་ཁོ་ན་ཞེས་པའི་  
དོན་ནོ།།

And what is the lack of a self-nature to objects? It is, as the text says, the fact that it is impossible for these things to have any nature, a nature of having that one specific nature.

གང་གི་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མིང་པ་ཡིན་སྐྱེམ་པ་ལ། ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་དེ་ཁོ་ནས་ཞེས་ཀུན་བརྟགས་ཀྱི་  
ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་གོང་དུ་སྐྱོམ་པ་ལ་གསུངས་ནས་ཁོ་ནས་ཞེས་པས་ནི་གཞན་གཅོད་པས་ངོ་བོ་  
ཉིད་གཞན་གཉིས་ཀྱི་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མ་མཚིས་པ་ལ་མི་བྱེད་ཀྱི་ཀུན་བརྟགས་ཁོ་ནའི་ངོ་བོ་  
མིང་པ་ལ་ཡོངས་གྲུབ་ཏུ་བྱེད་ཅེས་པའི་དོན་ནོ།།

One may ask just what kind of a nature it is that these things lack. The "nature of having that one specific nature" is referring to the nature that was just mentioned; that is, that of constructs. The words "that one" are meant to exclude the others, meaning the other two natures. Therefore the point here is not to say that it is impossible for these two to have any nature. The word "totality," the text is saying, refers to that one lack of a nature: the lack of a nature to constructs.

དེ་ཉིད་གོང་མས་བཤད་པ་ནི་རྣམ་པར་རྟོག་པ་ཞེས་པ་ནས་དེ་ཉིད་ཅེས་པའི་བར་གྱིས་  
གཞན་དབང་སྣོང་གཞིར་བསྟན་ནས་ཀུན་བརྟགས་ཀྱི་མཚན་ཉིད་དུ་མ་གྲུབ་ཅེས་པས་  
དེ་ཉིད་ཀུན་བརྟགས་ཀྱིས་སྣོང་པ་ལ་ཡོངས་གྲུབ་ཏུ་ཤིན་ཏུ་གསལ་བས། མདོ་འདིས་  
སྣོང་ཚུལ་བསྟན་པ་ངེས་དོན་དུ་འདོད་པ་དང་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་ཐ་མ་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་དང་པོ་གཉིས་  
ཀྱིས་སྣོང་པ་ཡོངས་གྲུབ་ཏུ་འདོད་པ་ཡང་འགལ་བའོ།།

Here is what the words "the thing" that come first refer to. Everything from the words "consider the fact" down to "a factor itself" is meant to indicate that dependent things are the thing which has the emptiness. The words "free of the attribute of constructs" is a very clear statement that totality is something which refers to the fact that *these things* are empty or devoid of constructs. It is therefore a further contradiction to assert, on the one hand, that the manner in which this sutra teaches emptiness is literal, and then to assert at the same time that totality consists of the fact that the last of the three natures is empty or devoid of the first two.

སྣོང་ལུགས་ཀྱང་ས་ཕྱོགས་བུམ་པས་སྣོང་པ་ལྟར་དོན་གཞན་དུ་ཡོད་པ་བཀག་པ་མིན་  
གྱི་གང་ཟག་རྣམས་སུ་མིད་པ་ལྟར་གཞན་དབང་ཀུན་བརྟགས་ཀྱི་ངོ་བོར་གྲུབ་པས་སྣོང་  
པ་ཡིན་ལོ།།

The emptiness or voidness here, moreover, is not the kind you have when a specific spot is empty or devoid of a water pitcher; not just the denial of some other thing. Dependent things, rather, are empty or devoid of any nature where they exist *as* the constructs—in the same way that a person does not exist as a substantial thing.

དེ་ཉིད་ཀྱི་ཕྱིར་མདོ་ལས། དེ་ཉིད་ཀུན་བརྟགས་པའི་མཚན་ཉིད་དེར་ཡོངས་སུ་མ་གྲུབ་  
ཅིང་། ཞེས་གསུངས་སོ།།

It is for this exact reason that the sutra says that "the thing" is, "in its totality, free of the attribute of constructs."



གང་གིས་སྣོད་པའི་ཀུན་བརྟགས་ནི་མདོ་འདིའི་ཀུན་བརྟགས་ངོས་བརྒྱུད་བའི་སྐབས་  
གཉིས་ཀར་ངོ་བོ་དང་བྱུང་པར་དུ་བརྟགས་པ་ཙམ་མིན་པའི་ཀུན་བརྟགས་གཞན་མ་  
གསུངས་པའི་རྒྱ་མཚན་ནི་འཆད་པར་འགྱུར་རོ།།

What are the kinds of constructs that these things are devoid or empty of? The sutra, in these two places where it undertakes to identify the nature of a construct, makes no mention of any other constructs beyond the sole two: those applied towards the very essence of an object and those applied towards its features. I will explain why the sutra fails to mention the others later on.

དེ་ལྟར་གཟུགས་སྤུང་ལ་ཇི་ལྟར་སྐྱར་བ་བཞིན་དུ་སྤུང་པོ་ལྷག་མ་བཞི་དང་སྐྱེ་མཆེད་  
བཅུ་གཉིས་དང་ཉེན་འབྲེལ་བཅུ་གཉིས་དང་ཟས་བཞི་དང་ཁམས་དུག་དང་བཙོ་བརྒྱད་  
པོ་རེ་རེ་ལ་ཡང་མཚན་ཉིད་གསུམ་གསུམ་སྐྱར་བར་གསུངས་སོ།།

We have thus shown how the three attributes can be applied to the heap of physical matter; similar sets of three can be applied as well to the four remaining heaps; to the twelve doors of sense; to the twelve links of dependent origination; to the four types of sustenance; to the six elements; and to the eighteen categories.

སྐྱབ་བདེན་ལ་ནི་གདགས་གཞི་སྐྱར་བཞིན་ལ་སྐྱབ་བསྐྱེལ་གྱི་བདེན་པའོ་ཞེས་ངོ་བོ་  
དང་སྐྱབ་བདེན་ཡོངས་སུ་ཤེས་པ་ཞེས་བྱི་བྲག་ཏུ་མིང་དང་བདམས་བཞག་པ་ཀུན་  
བརྟགས་དང་། གཞན་དབང་སྐྱར་བཞིན་དང་ཡོངས་གྲུབ་ཀྱང་སྐྱར་དང་འདྲ་ལ་ངོ་བོ་  
ཉིད་དེ་ཁོ་ནས་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མ་མཆིས་པ་ཞེས་གསུངས་ཤིང་། དེ་བཞིན་དུ་བདེན་པ་ལྷག་  
མ་ལ་ཡང་སྐྱར་རོ།།

Let's take for example the truth of suffering. The constructs here are those things that are established through names and terms when you focus on the object of your construct and think to yourself either of its very essence—with the words "truth of suffering"—or of its particulars, in wording such as "The truth of suffering is something that a person should realize is happening to them." The dependent thing here is just the same as we described it above,

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and so is the totality; you can even use the same expression and say it is "impossible for it to have any nature of having that one specific nature." Use this same pattern for the other truths.

བྱང་ཕྱོགས་སྡེ་ཚན་བདུན་ལ་ཡང་སྐྱུར་ཏེ་གདགས་གཞི་སྐྱར་བཞིན་ལ་ཡང་དག་པའི་  
ཉིང་ངེ་འཇིག་ཞེས་ངོ་བོ་དང་དེའི་མི་མཐུན་ཕྱོགས་དང་གཉིན་པོ་སོགས་སྐྱར་བཤད་པ་  
རྣམས་ལ་དེ་དང་དེའི་འོ་ཞེས་བྱུང་པར་དུ་བཏགས་པའི་ཀུན་བརྟགས་དང་། ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་  
གཞན་གཉིས་སྐྱབ་བདེན་བཞིན་གསུངས་སོ།།

The pattern applies as well to all seven groups within the elements of enlightenment. Again you are, as before, choosing a basis to receive the label, and then applying constructs either to its essence (in the words, for example, that "this is a pure state of concentration") or to its features (by speaking about the this or that that it has; speaking, as we mentioned before, about the things that work against it, or the spiritual antidote involved, or anything of the like). Then you go into the other two natures, just as we did with the truth of suffering.

དེ་དག་ནི་སྐྱར་འགལ་སྡོང་དྲིས་པའི་སྐྱབས་སུ་བཤད་པའི་གཟུགས་མུང་ནས་ལམ་གྱི་  
ཡན་ལག་གི་བར་གྱི་རེ་རེ་ལ་ཡང་མཚན་ཉིད་གསུམ་གསུམ་གྱི་འཇོག་ལུགས་བྱས་  
ནས་དེ་ལ་དགོངས་ནས་སྟོན་པས་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་གསུམ་དུ་བཤད་པར་བདག་གིས་  
གོའོ་ཞེས་དོན་དམ་ཡང་དག་འཕགས་ཀྱིས་སྟོན་པ་ལ་གསོལ་བའོ།།

All this then shows how it is that we can establish three attributes each for every one of the items mentioned in the original question meant to clarify those apparent inconsistencies: for everything from the heap of physical matter up to the various elements of the path. And Paramarta Samudgata respectfully says to the Teacher, "Now I understand why you taught the different kinds of a lack of self-nature as being three, for you were thinking of how we establish the three attributes this way."

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**Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant**

**Reading Five: The Outcome of the Exchange**

*The following selection is taken from the Essence of Eloquence, a Classical Commentary on Distinguishing between the Figurative and the Literal (Drang-ba dang nges-pa'i don rnam-par 'byed-pa'i bstan-bcos Legs-bshad snying-po), by Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419); ff. 11a-13a in the ACIP digital edition (catalog number S5396), and pp. 26-31 in the ACIP Indian paper edition. The translation is based upon an oral teaching of the text by Geshe Tupten Rinchen of Sera Mey Tibetan Monastery. Please note that Je Tsongkapa's root text is extremely difficult, and is best studied with the accompanying ACI tapes.*

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བཞི་པ་ལ་གཉིས། མདོ་དགོད་པ་དང་། དེའི་དོན་ཅུང་ཟད་བཤད་པའོ། །དང་པོ་ནི།

Here now is the fourth division from above: a statement, offered by the bodhisattva, of the conclusion reached through the preceding points. We proceed in two steps: a presentation of the relevant passage of the sutra, and then a brief explanation of its meaning. Here is the first.

དེ་ལྟར་ན་གསུང་རབ་ལ་ཚོས་རྣམས་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་ཡོད་པ་དང་ཚོས་རྣམས་  
རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་མ་གྲུབ་པར་སྟོན་པ་དང་། རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་མ་  
གྲུབ་ལེགས་པར་སྟེ་བའི་མདོ་སྡེ་གསུམ་གྱི་ཞིང་དེ་དག་གྱང་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་ཡོད་མེད་  
ལེགས་པར་སྟེ་མ་སྟེ་གཉིས་སུ་འགྱུར་ལ་སྟེ་བ་ནི་དོན་གཞན་དུ་བར་མི་བྱ་བས་  
ངེས་པའི་དོན་དང་། མ་སྟེ་བ་ནི་དོན་གཞན་དུ་བར་དགོས་པས་བའི་དོན་ཡིན་ལ།

དེ་ལ་ཡང་གཉིས་ཡོད་པས་མདོ་ལྷོ་གཉིས་དང་དོན་དང་གཅིག་ངེས་དོན་དུ་སྒྲུབ་པའདད་  
བ་རྣམས་ཀྱི་ཤུགས་ཀྱིས་ཤེས་པར་འགྱུར་རོ། །

We see then that Lord Buddha has taught, in his highest of all spoken words, three different groups of sutra: one in which he said that every existing thing does exist by definition; one in which he said that no existing thing exists by definition; and a third in which he made fine distinctions between things, saying that some exist by definition, and some do not.

We see further that these various sutras can be grouped into two categories: those that do and those that do not make fine distinctions between the different ways in which things have no nature of their own at all. Those that do make these distinctions do not need to be interpreted further, and are therefore considered literal. Those that do not make these distinctions must be interpreted further, and so are considered figurative. There are two groups of the latter, and so we can say that two of the groups of sutra are figurative, and one is literal. All this we can understand by implication, from the discussions that have appeared earlier.

ཤུགས་ལ་གནས་པའི་དོན་དེ་ཉིད་དུས་ཀྱི་རིམ་པའི་སློབ་ནས་འཁོར་ལོ་གསུམ་དང་སྒྲུབ་  
བའི་དང་ངེས་སུ་འགྱུར་ཚུལ་དོན་དམ་ཡང་དག་འཕགས་ཀྱིས་སྟོན་པ་ལ་ཉུས་པ་ནི་  
དགོངས་འགྲུལ་ལས། བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས་ཀྱིས་དང་པོར་ཡུལ་བ་ར་རྒྱ་སིར་དང་སྲོང་  
སྒྲུབ་པའི་དུགས་ཀྱི་ནགས་སུ་ཉན་ཐོས་ཀྱི་ཐེག་པ་ལ་ཡང་དག་པར་ཉུགས་པ་རྣམས་ལ་  
འཕགས་པའི་བདེན་པ་བཞིའི་རྣམ་པ་བསྟན་པས་ཚོས་ཀྱི་འཁོར་ལོ་ངོ་མཚར་ཆད་དུ་  
བྱུང་བ་སྟོན་ལྟར་གྱུར་པའམ་མིར་གྱུར་པ་སུས་ཀྱང་མཐུན་པར་འཇིག་རྟེན་དུ་མ་བསྐྱོར་  
བ་གཅིག་རབ་དུ་བསྐྱོར་ཏེ། བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས་ཀྱིས་ཚོས་ཀྱི་འཁོར་ལོ་རབ་དུ་བསྐྱོར་  
བ་དེ་ཡང་སློན་མཆིས་པ་སྐབས་མཆིས་པ་དང་བའི་དོན་རྩོད་པའི་གཞིའི་གནས་སུ་  
གྱུར་པ་ལགས།

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This way in which we speak of the three historical turnings of the wheel as being either figurative or literal, this point that we arrive at through implication from what has come before, is expressed to the Teacher by the bodhisattva Paramarta Samudgata in the following words from the *Commentary on the True Intent*:

O Conqueror, you taught first in the land of Varanasi, in the forest full of wild animals, the wood of the saints; you imparted a teaching on the subject of the four realized truths to those who had entered, perfectly, the way of the listeners. And in doing so you turned, perfectly, a wheel of the Dharma which was amazing, and awe-inspiring; one which no being—neither god nor man—had ever turned accurately in this world ever before.

And Conqueror, this perfect turning of the wheel of the Dharma was one which had something higher; it was one which left an opening; it was one which had to be interpreted further; and it was one which could serve as a basis for contention.

བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས་ཀྱིས་ཚེས་རྣམས་ཀྱི་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མ་མཆིས་པ་ཉིད་ལས་བརྩམས། རྒྱུ་  
བ་མ་མཆིས་པ་དང་འགག་པ་མ་མཆིས་པ་དང་གཞོན་མ་ནས་ཞི་བ་དང་རང་བཞིན་  
ཀྱིས་ཡོངས་སུ་སྲུང་ན་ལས་འདས་པ་ཉིད་ལས་བརྩམས་ནས་ཐེག་པ་ཆེན་པོ་ལ་ཡང་  
དག་པར་ཞུགས་པ་རྣམས་ལ་སློང་པ་ཉིད་སློབ་པའི་རྣམ་པས་ཆེས་ངོ་མཚར་ཆུད་དུ་  
བྱུང་བའི་ཚེས་ཀྱི་འཁོར་ལོ་གཉིས་པ་བསྐྱོར་ཏེ། བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས་ཀྱིས་ཚེས་ཀྱི་  
འཁོར་ལོ་བསྐྱོར་བ་དེ་ཡང་སླ་ན་མཆིས་པ་སྐབས་མཆིས་པ་དང་བའི་དོན་ཚུད་པའི་  
གཞིའི་གནས་སུ་བྱུང་བ་ལགས་ཀྱི།

And then, O Conqueror, you turned the wheel of the Dharma a second time, for the benefit of those who had entered, perfectly, the greater way. This time you took an appearance of speaking of emptiness, doing so by bringing up first the fact that no existing thing could ever have any nature of its own—and then going on to the facts that nothing could ever grow; and that nothing could ever stop; and that everything was extinct from the

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very beginning, and that everything was, by its very nature, completely beyond all grief.

This turning of the wheel of the Dharma was one which was ever so amazing, and ever so awe-inspiring. And Conqueror, this turning of the wheel of the Dharma as well was one which had something higher; it was one which left an opening; it was one which had to be interpreted further; and it was one which could serve as a basis for contention.

བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས་ཀྱིས་ཚོས་རྣམས་ཀྱི་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མ་མཆིས་པ་ཉིད་ལས་བརྩམས། རྐྱེ་  
བ་མ་མཆིས་པ་དང་འགག་པ་མ་མཆིས་པ་དང་གཞོན་མ་ནས་ཞི་བ་དང་རང་བཞིན་  
ཀྱིས་ཡོངས་སུ་སྲུང་ན་ལས་འདས་པ་ཉིད་ལས་བརྩམས་ནས་ཐེག་པ་ཐམས་ཅད་ལ་  
ཡང་དག་པར་ཉུགས་པ་རྣམས་ལ་ལེགས་པར་རྣམ་པར་བྱི་བ་དང་ལྷན་པ་ངོ་མཚར་  
མཛད་དུ་བྱུང་བའི་ཚོས་ཀྱི་འཁོར་ལོ་གསུམ་པ་བསྐྱོར་ཏེ།

And then, O Conqueror, you turned the wheel of the Dharma a third time, imparting a teaching to those who had entered, perfectly, every one of the different ways: you spoke to them of how to make the fine distinctions. And you did this by bringing up first the fact that no existing thing could ever have any nature of its own—and then going on to the facts that nothing could ever grow; and that nothing could ever stop; and that everything was extinct from the very beginning, and that everything was, by its very nature, completely beyond all grief. This too was a turning of the wheel which was amazing, and awe-inspiring.

བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས་ཀྱིས་ཚོས་ཀྱི་འཁོར་ལོ་བསྐྱོར་བ་འདི་ནི་སྐྱ་ན་མ་མཆིས་པ་སྐྱབས་མ་  
མཆིས་པ་ངེས་པའི་དོན་ལགས་ཏེ་རྩོད་པའི་གཞིའི་གནས་སུ་གྱུར་པ་མ་ལགས་སོ།  
ཞེས་གསུངས་སོ།།

But Conqueror, this turning of the wheel of the Dharma was one which had nothing higher; it was one which left no opening; it was one which could be taken literally; and it was one which could never serve as a basis for contention.

གཉིས་པ་ལ་གཉིས། མདོའི་ཚིག་དོན་ཅུང་ཟད་བཤད་པ་དང་། བྱང་ངེས་ཀྱི་ཚུལ་ཅུང་  
ཟད་བཤད་པ་ལོ།།

Here secondly is our brief explanation of the meaning of the sutra. Here too there are two parts: a brief explanation of the meaning of the wording of the sutra, and a brief explanation of the distinction between teaching which is figurative and teaching which is literal.

དང་པོ་ནི། དེ་ལ་འཁོར་ལོ་དང་པོ་བསྐྱོར་བ་ལ་གནས་ནི་ཚིག་དང་པོས་བསྟན་ལ་  
གདུལ་བྱ་ནི་གཉིས་པས་སོ། །འཕགས་པའི་ཞེས་པ་ནས་བསྐྱོར་ཏེ་ཞེས་པའི་བར་གྱིས་  
འཁོར་ལོའི་ངོ་བོ་བསྟན་ནོ། །བདེན་པ་བཞིའི་རྣམ་པ་བསྟན་ཞེས་པ་ནི་བརྗོད་བྱ་གང་  
ལས་བརྩམས་ནས་བསྟན་པ་ལོ། །ངོ་མཚར་སོགས་ནི་དེའི་བསྟན་གསུངས་པ་ལོ། །དེ་ཡང་  
ཞེས་སོགས་ནི་ངེས་དོན་མིན་པར་སྟོན་པ་ལོ། །དེ་ལ་སྣ་ན་མཚིས་པ་ནི་འདིའི་གོང་ན་  
ཁྱད་པར་ཅན་གྱི་བསྟན་པ་ཡོད་པ་ལོ། །སྐབས་མཚིས་པ་ནི་འདི་ལས་སྐབས་ཁྱད་པར་  
ཅན་གྱི་བསྟན་པ་ཡོད་པ་ལོ། །སྟོང་པ་ཉིད་མི་སྟོན་ཞིང་ཡོད་པར་སྟོན་པས་བྱང་བའི་  
དོན་ནོ། །ཚོད་པ་དང་བཅས་པ་ནི་གཞན་གྱིས་གཞིག་པར་བྱ་བ་དང་ཉན་ཐོས་སྡེ་པ་  
རྣམས་ཀྱི་ཚོད་པ་སྣ་བའི་གནས་སུ་གྱུར་པ་ལོ། །ཞེས་ལྟར་ཚིག་གིས་བཤད་དོ།

Here is the first. Wentsek explains the wording of this citation from the sutra as follows. The first part of the quotation about the first turning of the wheel of the Dharma is meant to indicate where this wheel was turned; then the second part is meant to indicate the types of disciples for whom it was turned. The part about "imparting a teaching" in a wheel "never turned before" on the subject of the "four realized truths" is meant to convey the very nature of this turning of the wheel.

The part about "imparting a teaching on the subject of the four realized truths" is intended to convey the subject matter which Lord Buddha brought up in this turning of the wheel. The phrase with "amazing" and so on is intended as a praise of this turning. The wording "this turning as well" is meant to indicate that this second turning was not something we could take literally.

"Having something higher" means that this particular turning of the wheel does have another one which is above it, in the sense of being more extraordinary. The word "opening" is to be taken as "occasion," meaning that there does exist a teaching which was imparted on an even more extraordinary occasion. We say a teaching is "something that we have to interpret further" when it either fails to teach emptiness or does have this teaching. Teachings involve "contention" in the sense that they are something that others may question, and because they provide a basis of contention for those of the Listener way.

མདོའི་དོན་ནི་དང་པོ་ནི་སྒྲ་ན་སྟེ་འདིའི་གོང་ན་ངེས་དོན་གཞན་ཡོད་པའོ།།

The point of the first sutra reference at this juncture is to say that certain teachings have something "higher than them" in the sense that there are other teachings that are "above" them, since they can be taken literally.

གཉིས་པ་ནི། འདིའི་དོན་རི་ལྟར་བསྟན་པ་ལྟར་ཁས་སྒྲངས་པ་ལ་སྐོལ་བ་གཞན་གྱི་  
སྐོན་གྱི་སྐྱབས་མཆིས་པའོ། །འདི་ལ་རྒྱ་ནག་གི་འགྲེལ་པ་ལས་སྐོལ་བ་དང་བཅས་པ་  
ཞེས་ཀྱང་བསྟུན་བས་དོན་དེ་ལྟར་རོ།།

The point of the second reference is that people who accept certain teachings as saying what they mean thereby leave an "opening" for philosophical opponents to attack them. This is in fact what the reference actually means, given the fact that we also see the wording from the Chinese commentary translated as "involving attacks from opponents."

གསུམ་པ་ནི་འདིའི་དོན་གཞན་དུ་དང་དགོས་པའོ།།

The point of the third reference is that one cannot accept certain teachings on face value, and must interpret them further.

བཞི་པ་ནི་དོན་འདི་ལྟར་ཡིན་སྟོན་པས་གསལ་པོར་མ་བྱེ་བས་དོན་ལ་མི་མཐུན་པར་  
ཚོད་པའོ།།

The point of the fourth reference is that—if the Teacher has failed to make certain distinctions about a particular teaching clearly, if he has failed to say "This is what it really means"—then it is possible that contention may arise, with some people saying that it meant something different.



འཁོར་ལོ་གཉིས་པ་ལ་ཚོས་རྣམས་ཀྱི་ཞེས་པ་ནས་བརྩམས་ནས་ཞེས་པའི་བར་ནི་  
བརྗོད་བྱ་གང་ལས་བརྩམས་པའོ། བྲིག་པ་ཞེས་སོགས་ནི་གང་ལ་བསྐྱོར་བའི་གདུལ་  
བྱའོ།།

Consider the part of the sutra reference to the second turning of the Wheel, from the place where it mentions "bringing up first," all the way down to "completely beyond all grief." This is meant to describe what subject matter is brought up for the teaching to proceed. The part about those of a certain "way" and so on constitutes a description of the kinds of disciples for whom the particular wheel was turned.

སྣོད་པ་ཉིད་སྣོས་པའི་རྣམ་པས་ཞེས་པའི་དོན་ཚོས་ཀྱི་བདག་མེད་བསྟན་པ་ལ་འགྲེལ་  
པ་ཁ་ཅིག་གིས་བཤད་ལ། རྒྱ་ནག་གི་འགྲེལ་ཆེན་ལས། མི་མངོན་པའི་རྣམ་པས་  
ཞེས་ཀྱང་འབྲུང་ལ་དེའི་དོན་ཡོད་པ་མཁྱུད་པ་ལ་བཤད་དོ།།

The part about "an appearance of teaching emptiness" has been explained in some commentaries as referring to the lack of a self-nature to objects. We also see though in the great Chinese commentary the expression "in a way that was not evident," and this is explained as meaning "it does have this teaching, but in a concealed way."

འགྲུར་ནི་དེ་ལོགས་ལ་དོན་ནི་འཁོར་ལོ་ཕྱི་མ་གཉིས་བརྗོད་བྱ་དོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ལས་  
བརྩམས་ནས་སྟོན་པར་འདྲ་བ་ལ་སྟོན་ཚུལ་གྱི་བྱུང་པར་ནི་བར་པས་དོ་བོ་ཉིད་ཡོད་  
མེད་སྟར་ལྟར་མ་ཕྱེ་བས་མི་མངོན་པའི་རྣམ་པས་ཞེས་གསུངས་ལ་ཐ་མས་ཕྱེ་བས་  
ལོགས་པར་རྣམ་པར་ཕྱེ་བ་ཞེས་གསུངས་སོ།།

As far as a translation of the original, this one is better; the point of it is that the latter two turnings of the wheel are similar in that Lord Buddha gives his teaching by bringing up the fact that nothing has any nature of its own. There is however a difference between the two in how they make their presentation: the middle turning teaches its subject matter in a way which is not "evident," meaning without making the distinction between things having a nature of their own or not as explained above; whereas the final turning is referred to the "one of fine distinctions" precisely because it does make this distinction.

སྡེ་སྡོད་གསུམ་པ་ལྟེན་ཚེག་གིས་གསུམ་པ་ལ་སྟོན་ནས་སྤྲོད་པ་སོགས་ལས་མ་  
བཤད་ཅིང་། རྒྱ་གར་གྱི་མཁན་པོ་ཡང་དག་བདེན་པའི་བཤད་པ་བཤོད་མེད་ཀྱང་  
ལེགས་པར་མི་སྤྲོད་བས་མ་བྲིས་ལ་རང་གི་ལུགས་ནི་སྤྲོ་མ་ལྟར་རོ།།

That master of the three collections of teachings, Wentsek, says nothing more about the idea of "having something higher" than to describe it as "something higher relative to the third" turning of the wheel, and such. The Indian preceptor Yangdak Denpa has admittedly offered an explanation of this point in his work, but since it does not appear to be a good one I will not repeat it here; our own position is that already expressed.

འཁོར་ལོ་གསུམ་པ་ལ་བརྗོད་བྱ་གང་ལས་བརྩམས་པ་བར་པ་དང་འབྲེལ་བྱེད་ཀྱི་  
བྱ་ནི་ཐེག་པ་ཐམས་ཅད་ལ་ཡང་དག་པར་ཞུགས་པ་སྟེ་སྤྲོ་མ་གཉིས་ནི་ཐེག་པ་ཆེ་ཆུང་  
སོ་སོ་བ་ཡིན་ལ་འདི་ནི་གཉི་གའི་དབང་དུ་བྱས་པའོ།།

The subject matter that Lord Buddha brings up in the third turning of the wheel is similar to that of the middle turning. The disciples for the third turning are "those who have entered, perfectly, every one of the different ways"; the point being that, whereas the disciples for the previous two turnings of the wheel belong one to the greater way and one to the lesser, this third turning was meant to relate to both.

ལེགས་པར་སྤྱོད་པ་ནི་སྤྲོད་བཤད་པ་ལྟར་གཟུགས་ལ་སོགས་པའི་ཚོས་རེ་རེ་ལ་མཚན་  
ཉིད་གསུམ་གསུམ་གྱི་རྣམ་གཞག་དང་དེ་ལ་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་ཚུལ་གསུམ་གསུམ་དུ་སྤྱོད་  
བའོ།།

The phrase "fine distinctions" here refers to the fact that all three of the various attributes can be established, as mentioned above, for each of the various objects of existence—for physical matter or any of the rest; it also refers to the fact that the lack of a nature to objects is distinguished into three different types relating to these three.

ཚོས་གྱི་འཁོར་ལོ་བསྐྱོར་བ་འདི་ནི་ཞེས་ཉི་བའི་ཚེག་གིས་སྟོན་པ་ནི་དེ་མ་ཐག་དུ་སྟོན་

པའི་ལེགས་པར་རྣམ་པར་སྐྱེ་བའི་འཁོར་ལོ་དགོངས་འགྲེལ་དང་དེ་བཞིན་དུ་སྐྱེ་བ་  
རྣམས་ལ་ཟེར་བ་ཡིན་གྱི། དུས་ཐ་མར་གསུངས་ཀྱང་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་ཡོད་མེད་ཀྱི་ཚུལ་འདི་  
བཞིན་དུ་སྐྱེ་བའི་མདོ་སྡེ་རྣམས་ལ་ཟེར་བ་མིན་ནོ།།

The expression "this turning of the wheel of the Dharma" includes that pronoun of relative proximity: "this." It applies to the turning of the wheel of the Dharma in which the fine distinctions were made—that turning of the wheel which is spoken of immediately afterwards. And this refers to the *Commentary on the True Intent*, as well as to other teachings that make similar distinctions. We do not however refer to those sutras which do not make this kind of distinction—between something's having a nature of its own or not—as being this particular turning of the wheel, even if they were spoken by Lord Buddha during the final period of his teaching.

འཁོར་ལོ་དེའི་ཆེ་བ་ནི་སླ་ན་མ་མཆིས་པ་སོགས་ཀྱིས་སྟོན་ཏེ། འདི་མཚོག་ཏུ་མད་དུ་  
བྱུང་ཞིང་དེ་ལས་ལྷག་པ་གཞན་མེད་པས་སླ་ན་མ་མཆིས་པ་དང་། སྤྱིས་མཚོག་ཏུ་  
འགྱུར་པའི་སྐབས་དང་གཞིག་པའི་སྐབས་མེད་པས་སྐབས་མ་མཆིས་པ་དང་། ཡོད་  
མེད་རྩོགས་པར་བསྟན་པས་ངེས་པའི་དོན་དང་། ཚུད་པ་སྐྱེ་བའི་གཞིའི་གནས་མིན་  
པའོ། །ཞེས་སྟེན་ཚོག་གིས་བཤད་པ་ནི་སྐབས་མེད་པའི་སྲུ་མ་མ་གཏོགས་པ་སྤར་  
བདག་གིས་སླ་ན་ཡོད་པ་སོགས་ཀྱི་དོན་བཤད་པ་ལས་བསྐྱོག་པ་དང་དོན་འདྲའོ།།

The greatness of this last turning of the wheel is indicated in the various expressions such as "one which has nothing higher." Because this particular turning of the wheel is supremely awe-inspiring, and because there is no teaching which is any greater, it "has nothing higher." Because there will be no later occasion upon which some more supreme teaching is imparted, and also because with this turning of the wheel there is no opening for others to raise any questions, it "leaves no opening." Because it definitively relates what does exist and what does not, it is a turning of the wheel "which can be taken literally," and which is not a teaching that could serve as a "basis" for someone to raise any "contention."

This is how Wentsek gives his commentary; except for the former of the two explanations of the expression "leaves no opening" or "occasion," the basic

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meaning of the rest corresponds to the opposite of the meanings I have already listed for the various expressions beginning with "does have something higher."

མདོ་སྡེ་སྡེ་མ་གཉིས་ཀྱི་སྐྱེ་ཇི་བཞིན་པའི་དོན་ལ་སྐྱོན་གྱི་སྐྱབས་ཡོད་ལ་འདི་ལ་མེད་པ་  
ནི་སྐྱེ་ཇི་བཞིན་པའི་དོན་དེ་ལས་གཞན་དུ་བྱང་དགོས་མི་དགོས་ཀྱི་རྒྱ་མཚན་གྱིས་ཡིན་  
ལ། ཚུད་པ་ཡོད་མེད་ནི་མདོ་སྡེའི་དོན་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་ཡོད་མེད་སྟོན་པས་དེ་ལྟར་གཏན་ལ་  
ཕབ་པ་ཡིན་མིན་ལ་མཁུལ་པས་བརྟགས་ན་ཚུད་ས་མེད་པ་ལ་བྱའི་ཚུད་པ་གཞན་མེད་  
པར་སྟོན་པ་མིན་ལོ།།

There is an opening or opportunity for criticizing the meaning of the first two groups of sutra, if you take it on face value. The reason that there is no such opening or opportunity in this group is that one may take the words on face value; they need not be interpreted further. Whether or not there is contention relates to whether or not the point taught by the particular group of sutras is that things do or do not have a nature of their own. Therefore a lack of "contention" here refers to whether, when a real thinker examines a teaching that does or does not make the presentation this way, he will find any point of contention. "Contention" here though is not meant to refer to just anything that anyone might find to argue about with regard to the teaching.

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**Supplement to Reading Five**

	First turning of the wheel of the Dharma—	Second turning of the wheel of the Dharma—	Third turning of the wheel of the Dharma—
<b>Name</b>	The Turning of the Wheel on the Four Truths བདེན་བཞིའི་ཚས་འཁོར། DENSHIY CHUNKOR	The Turning of the Wheel on How Nothing Exists by Definition མཚན་ཉིད་མེད་པའི་ཚས་འཁོར། TSENNYI MEPAY CHUNKOR	The Turning of the Wheel on Fine Distinctions ལེགས་ལྗོད་ཚས་འཁོར། LEKCHEY CHUNKOR
<b>Period</b>	First period དུས་དང་པོ། DU DANGPO	Second period དུས་བར་པ། DU BARPA	Final period དུས་མཐའ་མ། DU TAMA

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	First turning of the wheel of the Dharma—	Second turning of the wheel of the Dharma—	Third turning of the wheel of the Dharma—
<b>Place</b>	Sarnath, near Varanasi སྐ་ར་རྩ་སྲི་ WARANASI	Vulture's Peak, in Rajagirha རྩ་རྟོག་ལུང་ཤེང་རི། JAGU PUNGPOY RI	Vaishali ཡེངས་པ་ཅན། YANGPACHEN
<b>Disciples</b>	Those of the lower way ཉན་ཐོས་བྲིག་པ། NYENTU TEKPA	Those of the greater way ཐོག་ཆེན། TEKCHEN	Those of all ways (meaning certain ones of the higher way) ཐོག་པ་ཐམས་ཅད། TEKPA TAMCHE
<b>Basic subject matter</b>	The four realized truths འཕགས་པའི་བདེན་པ་བཞི། PAKPAY DENPA SHI	Emptiness ལྷོང་པ་ཉིད། TONGPA NYI	The three attributes མཚན་ཉིད་གསུམ། TSENNYI SUM

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	First turning of the wheel of the Dharma—	Second turning of the wheel of the Dharma—	Third turning of the wheel of the Dharma—
<b>View</b>	<p>Every existing thing exists by definition</p> <p>ཚུས་རྒྱུས་རང་གི་མཚན་            ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པ།            CHUNAM RANGGI            TSENNYI KYI DRUPPA</p>	<p>No existing thing exists by definition</p> <p>ཚུས་རྒྱུས་རང་གི་མཚན་            ཉིད་ཀྱིས་མ་གྲུབ་པ།            CHUNAM RANGGI            TSENNYI KYI MA            DRUPPA</p>	<p>Some things exist by definition, and some do not, and we must make fine distinctions between them</p> <p>ཚུས་རྒྱུས་ལ་རང་གི་མཚན་            ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་མ་གྲུབ་ལེགས་            པར་ལྟ།            CHU NAM LA RANGGI            TSENNYI KYI DRUP            MADRUP LEKPAR</p>
<b>Figurative or literal according to the Mind-Only School</b>	Figurative	Figurative	Literal
<b>Figurative or literal according to the Middle-Way School</b>	Figurative	Literal	Figurative

**The Asian Classics Institute**  
**Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant**

**Reading Six: On the Different Methods of Interpretation**

*The following selection is taken from the Essence of Eloquence, a Classical Commentary on Distinguishing between the Figurative and the Literal (Drang-ba dang nges-pa'i don rnam-par 'byed-pa'i bstan-bcos Legs-bshad snying-po), by Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419); ff. 13a-14a in the ACIP digital edition (catalog number S5396), and pp. 31-34 in the ACIP Indian paper edition. The translation is based upon an oral teaching of the text by Geshe Tupten Rinchen of Sera Mey Tibetan Monastery. Please note that Je Tsongkapa's root text is extremely difficult, and is best studied with the accompanying ACI tapes.*

གཉིས་པ་ནི། དེ་འདྲ་བའི་འཁོར་ལོ་དང་པོ་ལ་བདེན་བཞིའི་ཚོས་འཁོར་དང་གཉིས་པ་  
ལ་མཚན་ཉིད་མེད་པ་དང་། གསུམ་པ་ལ་དོན་དམ་རྣམ་པར་ངེས་བའི་འཁོར་ལོ་ཞེས་  
རྒྱ་ནག་གི་འགྲེལ་ཆེན་ལས་བཏགས་ལ། མདོ་འདི་ཉིད་ཀྱི་ཚིག་དང་བསྟུན་ན་གསུམ་  
པ་ལ་ལེགས་པར་རྣམ་པར་བྱེ་བའི་འཁོར་ལོ་ཞེས་བྱའོ།།

Here is the second part from above: a brief explanation of the distinction between teaching which is figurative and teaching which is literal. The Chinese commentary refers to these different turnings of the wheel as follows. The first is the "Turning of the Wheel on the Four Truths," and the second is the "Turning of the Wheel on How Nothing Exists by Definition." The third is called the "Turning of the Wheel on Ascertaining the Ultimate." If we follow the actual wording of the sutra itself though we would refer to the third one as the "Turning of the Wheel on Fine Distinctions."

དེ་ལ་མདོ་འདིས་དྲང་ངེས་སུ་འཇོག་པའི་རྒྱལ་ནི་ལེགས་པར་བྱེ་མ་བྱེ་གཉིས་ཡིན་ལ།  
དྲང་ངེས་སུ་འཇོག་པའི་གཞི་ནི་ཚོས་རྣམས་ལ་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པའི་ངོ་བོ་



ཉིད་ཡོད་མཉམ་དུ་གསུངས་པ་དང་མིད་མཉམ་དུ་གསུངས་པ་དང་ཡོད་མིད་ལེགས་  
པར་སྐྱེ་བ་གསུམ་ཡིན་པ་ནི། མདོ་སྡེ་ལ་འགལ་སྟོང་གི་དྲི་བ་དང་དེའི་ལན་བཏབ་པ་  
དང་། ཚོས་རེ་རེ་ལ་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་གསུམ་གསུམ་གྱི་རྣམ་གཞག་བྱས་ནས་དེ་ལ་དགོངས་  
ནས་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མིད་པར་བཤད་ཚུལ་ལྟས་པ་དང་། དེ་དག་ལ་བརྟེན་ནས་དུས་སྡེ་སྤྱིར་  
གསུངས་པའི་འཁོར་ལོ་གསུམ་གྱི་དྲང་ངེས་ལྟས་པ་ལས་ཤིན་ཏུ་གསལ་བ་ཡིན་ལོ།།

Now the way in which this particular sutra decides whether a teaching is figurative or literal hinges on the two of whether it makes certain fine distinctions or not. What it is that we are trying to decide is figurative or literal consists of all three of the teachings: the one in which it was stated equally for all existing objects that they have some nature of their own, one which exists by definition; the one in which it was stated equally for all existing objects that they have no such nature; and the one in which fine distinctions were made between them, stating that some did and some did not have such a nature.

The fact that these three are what we are trying to decide is figurative or not is extremely clear from the following:

- 1) from the fact that the question in which the bodhisattva is trying to rule out any apparent inconsistencies, and the answer that is given, relate to the various groups of sutra;
- 2) from the way in which three lacks of a self nature are set forth for every existing thing, and the statement about nothing having any nature of its own explained in terms of this treatment; and
- 3) from the way in which the three turnings of the wheel, delivered as they were during specific periods, are thereby understood as being either figurative or literal.

དེའི་སྤྱིར་དུས་དང་ཕོར་བདེན་པ་བཞི་ལ་བརྟེན་ནས་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཡོད་པ་  
སོགས་སུ་གསུངས་པའི་འཁོར་ལོ་དང་ཕོ་དྲང་དོན་དུ་སྟོན་པ་ཡིན་གྱི་དུས་དང་ཕོར་  
གསུངས་ཚད་གྱི་གསུང་རབ་ཐམས་ཅད་ལ་མིན་ཏེ། དཔེར་ན་དུས་དང་ཕོར་གླ་ར་རྩ་

སིར་ལྷ་སྒྲིལ་ཤམ་ཐབས་རྒྱུ་པོར་བགོ་བར་བྱའོ། །ཞེས་པ་ལ་སོགས་པའི་བསྐབ་བྱ་  
གསུངས་པ་ལ་འདིར་དོགས་པ་གཙོད་མི་དགོས་པ་བཞིན་ནོ།།

Therefore what is being indicated as figurative with regard to the first wheel is that teaching which relates to the initial period, and which starts off from the four realized truths to make statements such as that all existing things exist by definition; it is not though the case that we are referring to everything that Lord Buddha ever spoke during this initial period. Remember that he did, for example, make statements during this initial period such as his advice to the Group of Five at Varanasi urging them to "be sure to wear your lower robes in a neat circle." This is not the kind of teaching that we are concerned with here, the kind that we have to analyze to find out what it means.

དེ་བཞིན་དུ་གཉིས་པ་ཡང་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་སོགས་སུ་གསུངས་པ་ལ་བྱའི། དུས་  
གཉིས་པར་གསུངས་ཀྱང་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་སོགས་ལས་མ་བརྩམས་པའི་མདོ་སྒྲིལ་  
འགལ་སྟོང་དྲིས་པ་ལྟར་གྱི་དོགས་པ་མེད་པས་དེ་འདིར་བྱང་དོན་དུ་སྟོན་མི་དགོས་སོ།།

Just so, the second turning of the wheel is defined here according to whether Lord Buddha made statements such as the one about nothing having any nature of its own. There are other groups of sutras that do also relate to the second period of Lord Buddha's teaching, but which are not taught from the point of view of things not having any nature of their own, or the like. But since these are not the kinds of teachings about which one might have questions of the kind that arise in the section of the sutra where the bodhisattva tries to clarify some apparent inconsistencies, they need not be clarified here as teachings which are figurative.

འཁོར་ལོ་གསུམ་པ་ངེས་དོན་དུ་བཤད་པ་ཡང་སྐར་བཤད་པ་ལྟར་ལེགས་པར་སྦྱིབ་  
རྣམས་ཡིན་གྱི་ཐམས་ཅད་མིན་པ་ནི་མདོ་ཉིད་ལས་ཀྱང་ཤིན་ཏུ་གསལ་ལ། དཔེར་ན་  
སྤྱི་ངན་ལས་འདའ་ཁར་འདུལ་བ་མདོར་བསྐྱུས་ཞེས་བྱ་བ་རུང་མཐུན་དུ་བྲགས་པ་  
གསུངས་ཀྱང་དེ་མདོ་འདིས་ངེས་དོན་དུ་སྟོན་པ་མིན་པ་བཞིན་ནོ།།

The third turning of the wheel that is explained as being literal too is the one mentioned before: the teachings in which those fine distinctions are made, and not just everything that was spoken. This fact is made exceedingly clear in the

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sutra itself. Lord Buddha, for example, did as he was just about to enter his final nirvana give a teaching on what he declared would be appropriate monastic behavior entitled the *Summary of Vowed Morality*. This is not though a teaching which this sutra is explaining as being a literal teaching.

མདོ་འདིས་ཅི་ཞིག་འགྲུབ་པར་འདོད་ནས་ཚེས་འཁོར་གྱི་བྱང་ངེས་ཕྱི་བ་ཡིན་སྟེ་མ་ཉམ་ན།  
ཚེས་རྣམས་ལ་སོ་སོར་མ་ཕྱི་བར་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པ་དང་མ་གྲུབ་པར་  
བརྟན་པ་སྐྱེ་བཞིན་དུ་འཇིན་པ་བརྒྱུག་ནས་ཀུན་བརྟགས་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་མ་  
གྲུབ་ཅིང་། རོ་བོ་ཉིད་གཞན་གཉིས་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པ་དང་གཞན་དབང་  
ལ་ཀུན་བརྟགས་ཀྱིས་སྟོང་པའི་སྟོང་ཉིད་ལམ་གྱི་དམིགས་པའི་དོན་དམ་མཐར་ཐུག་དུ་  
དེའི་གདུལ་བྱ་ལ་བརྟན་པར་བཞིན་ནས་ཡིན་ནོ། །དེའི་ཕྱིར་འཁོར་ལོ་དང་པོ་གཉིས་  
བྱང་དོན་དང་ཐ་མ་ངེས་དོན་དུ་གསུངས་སོ།།

One may ask the following question:

What is it that this particular sutra hopes to accomplish by distinguishing the various turnings of the wheel into those that are figurative and those that are literal?

The sutra first seeks to prevent us from taking on face value those teachings which state either that all existing objects exist by definition, or that none exist by definition, without making any attempt to distinguish them into parts. It seeks to inform us that constructs do not exist by definition, but that the other two natures do exist by definition. It finally seeks to teach us that that form of emptiness represented by the absence of those constructs in dependent things is the ultimate object perceived by the path. This then is why the sutra states that the first two turnings of the wheel are figurative, and the final turning literal.

དེའི་ཕྱིར་ཁ་ཅིག་གིས་མདོ་འདི་ལ་བརྟན་ནས་དུས་གསུམ་པར་གསུངས་པའི་མདོ་  
ཐམས་ཅད་ངེས་དོན་དུ་བརྟུན་པས་ནས་གཞན་སྟེ་འི་རིགས་ཅན་བདག་དུ་སྐྱེ་བ་ལ་ཞེན་པ་

མཁས་དང་བའི་ཕྱིར་དུ་གསུངས་པ་འགའ་ཞིག་སྐྱེ་ཇི་བཞིན་པར་འདོད་ཅིང་། ཚོས་  
ཉིད་མ་གཏོགས་པའི་ཚོས་ཅན་ཐམས་ཅད་འབྲུལ་པའི་སྒོས་སྒོམ་པ་མ་གཏོགས་པ་རང་  
གི་ངོ་བོ་གྲུབ་པ་ཅུང་ཟད་ཀྱང་མེད་ཅིང་ཚོས་ཉིད་བདེན་པར་གྲུབ་པའི་བདེན་མི་བདེན་  
རྣམ་པར་སྤྱོད་པའི་སྤྱར་བཤད་པའི་ལོགས་པར་རྣམ་པར་སྤྱོད་པའི་དོན་དུ་འདོད་དོ།།

Given all this, some have used the wording of this sutra to go on and claim that it proves that everything which Lord Buddha taught during all the periods is meant to be taken literally. These people would then have to say that certain statements which the Buddha made to attract those of other religions who still believed that things could have some self-nature are teachings that we are meant to take on face value. They also say that no object but the real nature of things is anything more than the simple delusion of a mistaken state of mind; these other things have not the slightest bit of an existing nature to them. They say finally that the meaning of "fine distinctions" is the distinction between what exists in truth or not, in the sense of being this one true thing: the real nature of things.

དེ་ལ་གཞན་དག་གིས་ནི་མདོ་འདིས་དང་ངེས་སྤྱོད་བ་ལྟར་ཡིན་ན་སྤྱོད་པ་སྤྱོད་པ་སྤྱོད་པ་  
ལྟར་འགྲུར་རོ་སྤྱོད་ནས་དང་ངེས་ཀྱི་ཚུལ་དེ་སྐྱེ་ཇི་བཞིན་པ་མིན་ལོ་ཞེས་འགོག་གོ

Others have had the concern that—if they were to make the distinction between the figurative and the literal in the way in which this particular sutra does so—then they would be forced to make the same claims as the group just mentioned. Therefore they deny this aspect of the sutra, saying that this method of distinguishing between the figurative and the literal cannot be something meant to be taken on face value.

དེ་གཉིས་ཀས་ཀྱང་མདོ་འདིར་མདོ་སྤྱོད་ལ་འགའ་སྤོང་གི་དྲི་བ་བྱུང་ལུགས་དང་དེ་ལ་  
སྤོན་པས་ལན་བཏབ་ལུགས་དང་དེ་ལ་བརྟེན་ནས་དང་ངེས་སུ་ཞག་ལུགས་རྣམས་ལ་  
ཞིབ་དུ་མ་བརྟགས་པར་དང་ངེས་ཀྱི་རྣམ་དབྱེ་བྱས་པའི་སྐབས་ཅམ་ཞིག་ལ་རྩོད་པར་  
སྤྱང་དོ།།

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Neither of these two positions seems to have examined carefully how, in this sutra, the bodhisattva raises questions seeking to explain apparent inconsistencies in the sutras; or how the Teacher gives his answer; or how, based on this exchange, certain teachings are said to be figurative, and others literal. They simply seem to be different arguments about the period represented by the teachings which make the distinction between the figurative and the literal.

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*The following selection is taken from An Analysis of the Distinction between the Figurative and the Literal, a textbook used at Sera Mey Tibetan Monastery for the study of this subject. It was written by Kedrup Tenpa Dargye (1493-1568), and gives both a good sense of the detail in which the monastic textbooks treat their topics, and also a great deal more information on the three turnings of the wheel in relation to interpreting what the Buddha has stated. Several typical dialectic sections are presented here (from folios 1a-5a of the original text), followed by a brief resolution of the questions raised (from folios 9a-10a). The text that is used is the edition with ACIP electronic catalog number S0011.*

༄༅། །མཁམ་གྲུབ་སྣ་བའི་བྱ་མཚན་དག་འདུན་བསྟན་དར་བ་ཆེན་པོའི་གསུང་  
བྱང་ངེས་རྣམ་འབྲེད་ཀྱི་མཐའ་དཔྱད་བཞུགས་སོ། །།

Herein contained is "An Analysis of the Distinction between the Figurative and the Literal," a Work by the Illustrious Gendun Tendarwa, Wise One, Accomplished One, and a Great Bull who Walks at the Head of a Vast Herd of Masters of the Dharma

༄༅། །རྒྱལ་བའི་རྒྱལ་ཚབ་བྱམས་མགོན་ཚེས་ཀྱི་རྗེ།  
།རྒྱལ་སྐས་གཞོན་ལུང་ལུས་འཆང་འཇམ་དཔལ་དབྱངས།  
།རྒྱལ་བའི་སྐས་པོ་སྐྱ་གྲུབ་ཐོགས་མེད་སོགས།  
།རྒྱལ་བ་ཡབ་སྐས་བཅས་ལ་གྲུས་ཕྱག་འཚལ།།

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I bow down to the Victorious Buddhas, and bow down too  
to the sons they have;  
To the Lord of the Dharma, our Loving Protector, the one who stands  
in the Victors' place;  
To the Victors' son, to Gentle Voice, the glorious one  
in youthful form;  
To those sons of the Victors, to Nagarjuna, and to Asanga  
and the rest.

༄ །།འདིར་གཉིས་པ་ལུང་གི་ཚོས་འཁོར་གྱི་དང་ངེས་འགྲེལ་རྒྱལ་བྱེ་བྲག་ཏུ་བཤད་པ་  
ལ། སེམས་ཅམ་པའི་ལུགས་བཤད་པ་དང་། དབྱུ་མ་པའི་ལུགས་བཤད་པ་དང་  
གཉིས་ལས། །དང་པོ་ལ་གསུམ་ལས། དང་པོ་ལ།

Here is the second part [of the traditional presentation on the art of interpretation]: a more detailed treatment of how we comment upon the turning of the wheel of the Dharma in the sense of the physical teachings; that is, how we decide which teachings were literal, and which were figurative.

This part itself has two divisions: an explanation of the system of the Mind-Only School, and an explanation of the system of the Middle-Way School. The first of these has three sections of its own; here is the first of them.

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ཁ་ཅིག་ན་རེ། འཁོར་ལོ་གསུམ་པོ་དེ་གཅིག་ཅར་དང་རིམ་ཅན་གང་རུང་དུ་མ་བསྐྱོར་  
ཟེར་ན།

Suppose someone comes and makes the following claim:

The wheel of the Dharma was turned three times; but these three  
times occurred neither one after the other, nor all at once.

འོ་ན། འཁོར་ལོ་གསུམ་པོ་ཅིག་ཅར་དང་རིམ་ཅན་གང་རུང་དུ་མ་གྲུབ་པར་ཐལ།  
ཁྱོད་གྱི་དམ་བཅའ་འཐད་པའི་ཕྱིར།

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Well then, are you saying that the three turnings of the wheel are neither successive nor simultaneous events?

[Why do you say that?]

Because your own assertion is correct.

འདོད་མི་རྣམས་ཏེ། དེ་གསུམ་ཅིག་ཅར་དང་རིམ་ཅན་གང་རུང་གི་དོན་བྱེད་རྣམས་པ་ཡིན་  
པའི་ཕྱིར།

[Then I agree to our original statement: the three turnings of the wheel are neither successive nor simultaneous events.]

But you can't agree, because they are capable of performing a function either successively or simultaneously.

མ་གྲུབ་ན། དེ་གསུམ་པོ་ཚོས་ཅན། དོན་བྱེད་རྣམས་སྟོང་ཡིན་པར་ཐལ། ཅིག་ཅར་  
རིམ་ཅན་གང་རུང་གི་དོན་བྱེད་རྣམས་སྟོང་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར། རྟགས་ཁས།

[It's not true that they are capable of performing a function either successively or simultaneously.]

Suppose you say that it's not true.

Consider these three.

Do they then lack any capacity to perform a function?

Because they lack any capacity to perform a function, whether it be successively, or simultaneously.

[It's not true that they lack any such capacity.]

But you just agreed that it was true.

འདོད་མི་རྣམས་ཏེ། དོན་བྱེད་རྣམས་པ་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར།

[Then I agree that they do lack any capacity to perform a function, whether it be successively, or simultaneously.]

But you can't agree, because they do perform a function.

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ཁ་ཅིག །སྟོན་པས་འཁོར་ལོ་གསུམ་པོ་དེ་ཅིག་ཅར་དུ་བསྐྱོར་ཟེར་ན།

Suppose someone comes and makes the following claim:

When our Teacher turned the wheel of the Dharma three times,  
he did so all at once.

འོ་ན། སྟོན་པས་དག་སྟོང་དག་འདི་ནི་སྐྱུག་བསྐྱེལ་འཕགས་པའི་བདེན་པའོ། །ཞེས་  
སོགས་ཀྱི་མདོ་དང་། རྒྱས་འབྲིང་བསྐྱེལ་གསུམ་དང་། བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའ་དོན་  
དམ་ཡང་དག་འཕགས་ཉུས་ཀྱི་ལེན་ལྷན་ཅིག་ཅར་དུ་བསྐྱོར་བར་ཐལ། །ཁྱོད་ཀྱི་  
དམ་བཅའ་འཐད་པའི་ཕྱིར།

Well, is it then the case that our Teacher turned the wheel by teaching each of  
the following at the same time?

- (1) The sutra in which he made those statements that begin with, "This is the realized truth of suffering";
- (2) The long, the medium, and the brief presentations of the perfection of wisdom; and
- (3) The "Chapter Requested by the Bodhisattva Named Paramarta Samudgata."

[Why do you say that?]

Because your own assertion is correct.

འདོད་མི་རྣམས་ཏེ། དག་སྟོང་དག་འདི་ནི་སྐྱུག་བསྐྱེལ་འཕགས་པའི་བདེན་པའོ།  
ཞེས་སོགས་ཀྱི་མདོ་སྟོན་པ་མངོན་པར་རྗེ་གསུང་བར་སངས་རྒྱས་པའི་ཆུལ་བསྐྱེལ་ནས་  
ཞག་བཞི་བཅུ་ཅུ་དགུ་ལོན་པའི་རྗེས་སུ་གསུངས་པ་དང་། རྒྱས་འབྲིང་བསྐྱེལ་གསུམ་  
སྟོན་པ་མངོན་པར་རྗེ་གསུང་བར་སངས་རྒྱས་པའི་ཆུལ་བསྐྱེལ་པའི་ཕྱི་དེ་ལོ་བྱ་གོད་ཕུང་  
པའི་རི་ལ་གསུངས་པ་སོགས་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར།



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[Then I agree that those three were taught at the same time.]

But you can't agree. The sutra in which Lord Buddha made those statements that begin with "This is the realized truth of suffering" was spoken 49 days after our Teacher pretended to reach his total enlightenment. And the long, the medium, and the brief presentations of the perfection of wisdom—these three—were spoken on Vulture Peak the year after our Teacher pretended to reach this total enlightenment; and so on.

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ཁ་ཅིག །བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས་གྱིས་དུས་དང་པོར་གསུངས་པའི་མདོ་ལ་བདེན་བཞིན་  
ཚོས་འཁོར་གྱིས་བྱུང་པ་དང་། དུས་བར་པར་གསུངས་པའི་མདོ་ལ་མཚན་ཉིད་མེད་  
པའི་ཚོས་འཁོར་གྱིས་བྱུང་པ་དང་། དུས་ཐ་མར་གསུངས་པའི་མདོ་ལ་ལེགས་སྤྱེད་  
ཚོས་འཁོར་གྱིས་བྱུང་པ་ཡིན་ཅོ་ཟེར་ན།

Suppose someone comes and makes the following claim:

Any sutra that the Conqueror spoke during the initial period necessarily belongs to the turning of the wheel where he taught the four realized truths.

Any sutra that he spoke during the middle period necessarily belongs to the turning of the wheel where he taught that nothing exists by definition.

Any sutra that he spoke during the final period necessarily belongs to the turning of the wheel where he made fine distinctions.

འོ་ན། བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས་གྱིས་དུས་དང་པོར་གསུངས་པའི་མདོ་ལ། དགོངས་འགྲེལ་  
ནས་དངོས་སུ་གསུངས་པའི་བཀའ་དང་པོ་བདེན་བཞིན་ཚོས་འཁོར་སོགས་གྱིས་བྱུང་  
པར་ཐལ། བྱོད་གྱི་དམ་བཅའ་འཐད་པའི་སྤྱིར།

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Well then, is it the case that—if something is a sutra that the Conqueror spoke during the initial period—it necessarily belongs to the turning of the wheel, as described explicitly in the *Commentary on the True Intent*, where he taught the four realized truths, and so on?

[Why do you say that?]

Because your own assertion is correct.

འདོད་མི་རྣམས་ཏེ། དགོངས་འགྲེལ་ནས་དངོས་སུ་གསུངས་པའི་འཁོར་ལོ་གསུམ་པོ་  
དེ་དུས་ཙམ་གྱི་སྐོར་ནས་འཇོག་པ་མ་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར།

[I agree that it is the case that—if something is a sutra that the Conqueror spoke during the initial period—it necessarily belongs to the turning of the wheel, as described explicitly in the *Commentary on the True Intent*, where he taught the four realized truths, and so on.]

But you can't agree, because the times when Lord Buddha turned the wheel of the Dharma, as described in the *Commentary on the True Intent*, are not defined solely on the basis of the period in which they occurred.

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ཁ་ཅིག །བཙེམ་ལྷན་འདས་གྱིས་དུས་དང་པོར་གསུངས་པའི་གསུང་རབ་ཐམས་ཅད་  
ལ་འཁོར་ལོ་དང་པོས་བྲུབ་པ་དང་། །དུས་བར་པར་གསུངས་པའི་གསུང་རབ་ཐམས་  
ཅད་ལ་འཁོར་ལོ་བར་པས་བྲུབ་བ་དང་། །དུས་ཐ་མར་གསུངས་པའི་གསུང་རབ་  
ཐམས་ཅད་ལ་འཁོར་ལོ་ཐ་མས་བྲུབ་པ་ཡིན་ནོ་ཟེར་ན།

Suppose someone comes and makes the following claim:

It is necessarily the case that—

Any of those highest of teachings that the Conqueror spoke during the initial period belongs to the first turning of the wheel;

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Any of those highest of teachings that he spoke during the middle period belongs to the middle turning of the wheel; and

Any of those highest of teachings that he spoke during the final period belongs to the final turning of the wheel.

འོ་ན། བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས་ཀྱིས་དུས་དང་པོར་གསུངས་པའི་མདོ་ཡིན་ན། དགོངས་  
འགྲེལ་ནས་དངོས་སུ་གསུངས་པའི་འཁོར་ལོ་དང་པོ་ཡིན་པས་བྱུང་བར་ཐལ།  
བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས་ཀྱིས་དུས་དང་པོར་གསུངས་པའི་གསུང་རབ་ཐམས་ཅད་ལ་འཁོར་  
ལོ་དང་པོས་བྱུང་བའི་ཕྱིར།

Well then, is it necessarily the case that, if something is one of the sutras that Lord Buddha spoke during the initial period, it belongs to the first turning of the wheel as described explicitly in the *Commentary on the True Intent*?

[Why do you say that?]

Because any of those highest of teachings that the Conqueror spoke during the initial period necessarily belongs to the first turning of the wheel.

འདོད་ན། དགོ་སློང་དག་ལམ་ཐབས་དང་ཚོས་གོས་རྒྱུ་པོར་བགོ་བ་ལ་བསྐབ་པར་  
བྱའོ། །ཞེས་པའི་མདོ་ཚོས་ཅན། དེར་ཐལ། དེའི་ཕྱིར།

Suppose you agree [that it is necessarily the case that, if something is one of the sutras that Lord Buddha spoke during the initial period, it belongs to the first turning of the wheel as described explicitly in the *Commentary on the True Intent*.]

Consider the sutra where Lord Buddha says, "O monks! You should keep to the rule of wearing a lower robe and upper robe that wrap neatly around your body."

Is it then [a sutra that belongs to the first turning of the wheel]?

[Why do you say that?]

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Because it is [one of the sutras that Lord Buddha spoke during the initial period].

འདོད་ན། བདེན་བཞི་གང་ཡང་རུང་བ་དངོས་བསྟན་བསྟན་གྱི་གཙོ་བོར་གྱས་ནས་  
བསྟན་པའི་མདོ་ཡིན་པར་ཐལ། འདོད་པའི་ཕྱིར།

I agree [that the sutra where Lord Buddha says, "O monks! You should keep to the rule of wearing a lower robe and upper robe that wrap neatly around your body" is a sutra that belongs to the first turning of the wheel].

Is it then a sutra which expresses its message by taking, as its principal subject matter, some one or more of the four realized truths?

འདོད་མི་རྣམས་ཏེ། བསྟན་གྱི་ཙམ་བསྟན་པའི་མདོ་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར།།

I agree [that the sutra where Lord Buddha says, "O monks! You should keep to the rule of wearing a lower robe and upper robe that wrap neatly around your body" is a sutra which expresses its message by taking, as its principal subject matter, some one or more of the four realized truths].

But you can't agree, because it is a sutra which expresses only certain rules.

གལ་ཏེ་རྩ་བའི་ཐལ་འགྲུར་ལ་མ་ཁྲུབ་ན། འོ་ན། གཟུངས་རྒྱལ་ནས་བཤད་པའི་  
འཁོར་ལོ་དང་པོ་ལ་འཁོར་ལོ་དང་པོས་ཁྲུབ་པར་ཐལ། མ་ཁྲུབ་པ་དེའི་ཕྱིར།

Now suppose you reply "It's not necessarily the case" to our original statement of necessity; [that is, you reply, "It's not necessarily the case that the sutra where Lord Buddha says, 'O monks! You should keep to the rule of wearing a lower robe and upper robe that wrap neatly around your body' is a sutra which expresses its message by taking, as its principal subject matter, some one or more of the four realized truths"].

Are you saying then that—if something belongs to the first turning of the wheel as it is described in the *King of Mystic Words*—it necessarily belongs to the first turning of the wheel?

[Why do you say that?]

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Because, according to you, it's not necessarily the case [that the sutra where Lord Buddha says, 'O monks! You should keep to the rule of wearing a lower robe and upper robe that wrap neatly around your body' is a sutra which expresses its message by taking, as its principal subject matter, some one or more of the four realized truths].

འདོད་ན། ཡུམ་རྒྱས་པའི་ནང་ཚན་དུ་གྱུར་པའི་གཟུགས་ནི་དགྲར་ཡིད་ལ་བྱའོ།  
ཁྱིམ་སོགས་འཁོར་བ་ལ་སྐྱོ་བ་བསྐྱེད་པའི་མདོ་ཚུལ་ཅན། འཁོར་ལོ་དང་པོ་ཡིན་  
པར་ཐལ། གཟུངས་རྒྱལ་ནས་བཤད་པའི་འཁོར་ལོ་དང་པོ་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར།

[Then I agree that—if something belongs to the first turning of the wheel as it is described in the *King of Mystic Words*—it necessarily belongs to the first turning of the wheel.]

Suppose you do agree.

Consider then the following words of sutra, found in the longer Mother of the Buddhas and meant to inspire disgust for the circle of suffering: "Think of your body as the enemy."

Are you saying then that they belong to the first turning of the wheel?

[Why do you say that?]

Because they do belong to the first turning of the wheel as it is described in the *King of Mystic Words*.

འདོད་ཐལ། ཚུལ་ཅན་དེ་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར།

[It's not correct to say that those words of sutra belong to the first turning of the wheel as it is described in the *King of Mystic Words*.]

But it is so correct, because our example is what it is.

འདོད་མི་རྣམས་ཏེ། ཡུམ་རྒྱས་པའི་མདོ་ཚིག་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར།

[Then I do agree that these words of sutra belong to the first turning of the wheel as it is described in the *King of Mystic Words*.]

But you can't agree, because they are words of sutra that come from the longer Mother of the Buddhas.

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ཁ་ཅིག །ཆེད་དུ་བུ་བའི་གདུལ་བུ་ཐེག་དམན་གྱི་རིགས་ཅན་ལ་གཙོ་བོར་དགོངས་  
ནས་གསུངས་པའི་མདོ། བཀའ་དང་པོ་བདེན་བཞིའི་ཚོས་འཁོར་གྱི་མཚན་ཉིད། ཆེད་  
དུ་བུ་བའི་གདུལ་བུ་ཐེག་ཆེན་གྱི་རིགས་ཅན་དབང་རྣམས་ལ་གཙོ་བོར་དགོངས་ནས་  
གསུངས་པའི་མདོ། བཀའ་བར་པ་མཚན་ཉིད་མེད་པའི་ཚོས་འཁོར་གྱི་མཚན་ཉིད།  
ཆེད་དུ་བུ་བའི་འདུལ་བུ་ཐེག་ཆེན་གྱི་རིགས་ཅན་དབང་རྣམས་ལ་གཙོ་བོར་དགོངས་ནས་  
གསུངས་པའི་མདོ། བཀའ་ཐ་མ་ལེགས་ཤུའི་ཚོས་འཁོར་གྱི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཟེར་ན།

Suppose someone comes and makes the following claim:

The definition of the first stage of teachings, the turning of the wheel where Lord Buddha taught the four realized truths, is: "Those sutras that Lord Buddha spoke intended primarily for a specific type of disciple—for those belonging to the lower way.

The definition of the middle stage of teachings, the turning of the wheel where Lord Buddha taught that nothing exists by definition, is: "Those sutras that Lord Buddha spoke intended primarily for a specific type of disciple—for those belonging to the greater way, and possessed of higher powers."

The definition of the final stage of teachings, the turning of the wheel where Lord Buddha taught the fine distinctions between the three qualities, is: "Those sutras that Lord Buddha spoke intended primarily for a specific type of disciple—for those belonging to the higher way, and possessed of lesser powers."

བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས་ཀྱིས་ལྷ་ལྷེ་ལ་དགོ་སྤོང་དག་ཤམ་ཐབས་རྒྱུ་པོར་བགོ་བ་ལ་བསྐབ་  
པར་བུའོ། །ཞེས་པའི་མདོ་ཚོས་ཅན། མཚན་བུ་དང་པོ་དེར་ཐལ། མཚན་ཉིད་དང་པོ་  
དེའི་ལྱིར།

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Consider then the sutra where the Conqueror says to the Group of Five, "O monks! You should keep to the rule of wearing a lower robe that wraps neatly around your body."

Are you saying that this is an example of what you are defining in the first instance above?

[Why do you say that?]

Because it is an example of something that fits your first definition.

དེར་ཐལ། ཐེག་དམན་གྱི་མདོ་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར།

[It's not correct to say that this sutra is an example of something that fits our first definition.]

It is so, because it is a sutra of the lower way.

འདོད་ན། བདེན་བཞི་གང་ཡང་རུང་བ་དངོས་བསྟན་བསྟན་བྱའི་གཙོ་བོར་བྱས་ནས་  
བསྟན་པའི་མདོ་ཡིན་པར་ཐལ། །འདོད་པའི་ཕྱིར།

[Then I agree that this sutra is an example of something that fits our first definition.]

Suppose you do agree.

Is this then a sutra which expresses its message by taking, as its principal subject matter, some one or more of the four realized truths?

[Why do you say that?]

Because you agreed.

འདོད་མི་རྣམས་ཏེ། གོང་དུ་བཀག་ཟིན་པའི་ཕྱིར།

But you can't agree, because we have already disproved this idea earlier.

གཞན་ཡང་། བྱང་རྒྱུ་སེམས་དཔའ་དོན་དམ་ཡང་དག་འཕགས་ལུས་ཀྱི་ལེན་ཚོས་  
ཅན། མཚོན་བྱ་བར་པ་དེར་ཐལ། མཚན་ཉིད་བར་པ་དེའི་ཕྱིར།

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Consider, as a further example, the "Chapter Requested by the Bodhisattva Paramarta Samudgata."

Are you saying that this is an example of what you are defining in the middle instance above?

[Why do you say that?]

Because it is an example of something that fits your middle definition.

དེར་ཐལ། དེའི་ཆེད་དུ་བྱ་བའི་གདུལ་བྱ་དེ་ཐེག་ཆེན་གྱི་རིགས་ཅན་དབང་རྣམ་ཡིན་པའི་སྤྱིར།

[It's not correct to say that this work is an example of something that fits our middle definition.]

It is so correct, because the specific disciples which this particular teaching was meant for were those belonging to the greater way, and possessed of higher powers.

མ་གྲུབ་ན། དེའི་ཆེད་དུ་བྱ་བའི་གདུལ་བྱ་ཆོས་ཅན། བྱོད་ཐེག་ཆེན་གྱི་རིགས་ཅན་དབང་རྣམ་ཡིན་པར་ཐལ། བྱོད་སེམས་ཙམ་པའི་རིགས་ཅན་ཡིན་པའི་སྤྱིར།

[It's not correct to say that the specific disciples that this particular teaching was meant for were those belonging to the greater way, and possessed of higher powers.]

Suppose you say it's not correct.

Consider the specific disciples for whom this teaching was meant.

They are so disciples belonging to the greater way, and possessed of higher powers,

Because they belong to the Mind-Only School.

མ་གྲུབ་ན། བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའ་དོན་དམ་ཡང་དག་འཕགས་ལུས་གྱི་ལཱ་ཆོས་ཅན། བྱོད་གྱི་ཆེད་དུ་བྱ་བའི་གདུལ་བྱ་སེམས་ཙམ་པའི་རིགས་ཅན་ཡིན་པར་ཐལ།



བྱོད་སེམས་ཙམ་པའི་མདོ་ཡིན་པའི་བྱིར།

[It's not correct to say that the specific disciples for whom this work was meant belong to the Middle-Way School.]

Suppose you say it's not correct.

Consider then the "Chapter Requested by the Bodhisattva Paramarta Samudgata."

The specific disciples for whom this teaching was meant do so belong to the Mind-Only School,  
Because it is a sutra of the Mind-Only School.

རྩ་བར་འདོད་མི་རྣམས་ཏེ། དཀའ་ཐ་མ་ལེགས་སྤྱིའི་ཚེས་འཁོར་ཡིན་པའི་བྱིར།

[Then I agree to your original statement: the "Chapter Requested by the Bodhisattva Paramarta Samudgata" is an example of what we were defining in the middle instance above.]

But you can't agree, because it belongs to the final stage of teachings, the turning of the wheel where Lord Buddha taught the fine distinctions.

གཞན་ཡང་། དེ་ཚེས་ཙན། མཚན་ཉིད་བྱི་མ་དེར་ཐལ། མཚོན་བྱ་བྱི་མ་དེའི་བྱིར།

རྟགས་སྒྲུབ།

Consider moreover this same thing.  
Are you saying that the last of the definitions fits it?  
Because it is an example of last thing you were trying to define.

The reasoning here is easy.

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ཁ་ཅིག །དགོངས་འགྲེལ་ནས་དངོས་སུ་གསུང་པའི་འཁོར་ལོ་གསུམ་པོ་དེ་དུས་ཀྱི་སྒོ་  
ནས་མི་འཇོག་ཟེར་ན།

Suppose someone comes and makes the following claim:

The three occasions of the turning of the wheel explicitly described in the *Commentary on the True Intent* are not established according to the period in which they were taught.

དེ་འཇོག་པར་ཐལ། དག་སྟོང་དག་འདི་ནི་སྤྱག་བསྐྱེལ་འཕགས་པའི་བདེན་པའོ།  
ཞེས་སོགས་གྱི་མདོ་འདི་འཁོར་ལོ་དང་ཕོར་འཇོག་གྱི་དུས་ཅིག་ཡོད་པ་གང་ཞེས།  
འབདེན་བཞི་དངོས་བསྟན་བསྟན་གྱི་གཙོ་བོར་བྱས་ནས་བསྟན་པའི་མདོ་ཡིན་པ་ཙམ་  
གྱིས་ཀྱང་འཁོར་ལོ་དང་ཕོར་མི་འཇོག། སྟོང་ཉིད་དངོས་བསྟན་བསྟན་གྱི་གཙོ་བོར་  
བྱས་ནས་བསྟན་པའི་མདོ་ཡིན་པ་ཙམ་གྱིས་ཀྱང་བཀའ་བར་པ་མཚན་ཉིད་མེད་པའི་  
ཚོས་འཁོར་དུ་ཡང་མི་འཇོག་པའི་ཕྱིར།

But they are so established in this way, because:

- (1) there is something which enables us to establish the sutra which includes the line "O monks, this is the realized truth of suffering" as belonging to the first turning of the wheel; and
- (2) it is not the case that we establish something as belonging to the first turning of the wheel solely on the basis of its being a sutra which takes—as the principal subject matter which it expresses directly—the four realized truths; and neither is it the case that we establish something as belonging to the middle turning of the wheel, where Lord Buddha taught that nothing exists by definition, solely on the basis of its being a sutra which takes—as the principal subject matter which is express directly—the idea of emptiness.

དང་ཕོ་དེར་ཐལ། དེ་འཁོར་ལོ་དང་ཕོ་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར།

[Your first reason above is not correct: it's not correct to say that there is something which enables us to establish the sutra which includes the line "O monks, this is the realized truth of suffering" as belonging to the first turning of the wheel.]

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Our first reason is so correct, because that sutra is an actual example of the first turning of the wheel.

ཕྱི་མ་གཉིས་མ་གྲུབ་ན། ཡུམ་བར་མའི་ནང་ཚན་དུ་གྱུར་པའི་གཟུགས་མི་རྟག་པ་ཉིད་  
དུ་ཡིད་ལ་བྱའོ། །གཟུགས་སྣོང་པ་དང་བདག་མེད་པ་ཉིད་དུ་ཡིད་ལ་བྱའོ། ཞེས་སོགས་  
ཀྱི་མདོ་ཚིག་ཚོས་ཅན། བཀའ་དང་པོ་བདེན་བཞིའི་ཚོས་འཁོར་ཡིན་པར་ཐལ།  
བདེན་བཞི་དངོས་བསྟན་བསྟན་གྱའི་གཙོ་བོར་བྱས་ནས་བསྟན་པའི་མདོ་ཡིན་པའི་  
སྟེན།

[Then your second reason above is not correct: it's not correct to say that it is not the case that we establish something as belonging to the first turning of the wheel solely on the basis of its being a sutra which takes—as the principal subject matter which it expresses directly—the four realized truths; and it is neither the case that we do not establish something as belonging to the middle turning of the wheel solely on the basis of its being a sutra which takes—as the principal subject matter which it express directly—the idea of emptiness.]

Suppose you say that our second reason above is not correct.

Consider the following words of sutra, which are found in the *Medium-Length Mother of the Buddhas*:

Think of physical matter as a thing which is changing, and only changing. Think of physical matter as a thing which is empty, and only empty; think of it as a thing which cannot exist by itself, and only as something which cannot exist by itself. . .

Do they then belong to the first stage of the teachings, to the turning of the wheel where Lord Buddha taught the four realized truths?

[Why do you say that?]

Because they are words of sutra which take—as the principal subject matter which they express directly—the four realized truths.

དེར་ཐལ། མངོན་རྟོགས་རྒྱན་གྱི་ནང་ཚན་དུ་གྱུར་པའི། ལམ་ཤེས་ཉིད་ཀྱི་རྒྱུ་ལ་ནི།  
འཕགས་པའི་བདེན་པ་བཞི་དག་གི། རྣམ་པ་མི་དམིགས་སྒྲོ་ནས་ནི། །ཉན་ཐོས་ལམ་  
འདི་ཤེས་པར་བྱ། །ཞེས་པའི་གཞུང་འདི་བདེན་བཞི་དངོས་བསྟན་བསྟན་བྱའི་གཙོ་  
བོར་བྱས་ནས་བསྟན་པའི་བསྟན་བཅོས་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར།

[It's not correct to say that these are words of sutra which take—as the principal subject matter which they express directly—the four realized truths.]

It is so correct, because the following words of classical commentary from the *Ornament of Realizations* take—as the principal subject matter which they express directly—the four realized truths:

Understand the way of this knowledge  
Of the path as being like the path  
Of the listeners, where those four truths  
Of the realized are perceived  
While seeing their lack of self-existence.

དེར་ཐལ། མངོན་རྟོགས་རྒྱན་གྱི་ནང་ཚན་དུ་གྱུར་པའི་བདེན་བཞི་དངོས་བསྟན་བསྟན་  
བྱའི་གཙོ་བོར་བྱས་ནས་བསྟན་པའི་གཞུང་ཚིག་གཅིག་ཡོད་པའི་ཕྱིར།

[It's not correct to say that these words of classical commentary take—as the principal subject matter which they express directly—the four realized truths.]

It is so correct, because there does exist a section of words that is part of the *Ornament of Realizations* and which takes—as the principal subject matter which it expresses directly—the four realized truths.

དེར་ཐལ། མངོན་རྟོགས་རྒྱན་གྱིས་བདེན་བཞི་དངོས་བསྟན་བསྟན་བྱའི་གཙོ་བོར་བྱས་  
ནས་བསྟན་པའི་ཕྱིར།

[It's not correct to say that there does exist a section of words that is part of the *Ornament of Realizations* and which takes—as the principal subject matter which it expresses directly—the four realized truths.]

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It is so correct, because the *Ornament of Realizations* takes—as the principal subject matter which it expresses directly—the four realized truths.

མ་བྱུང་ན། འགལ་ལོ།

[It doesn't necessarily follow that, if the *Ornament of Realizations* takes—as the principal subject matter which it expresses directly—the four realized truths, then there does exist a section of words that is part of this same work and which takes—as the principal subject matter which it expresses directly—the four realized truths.]

Suppose you say that it doesn't necessarily follow; that in itself would be a contradiction.

རྩ་བར་འདོད་མི་རྣམས་ཏེ། ཡུམ་བར་མའི་མདོ་ཚིག་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར།

[Then I agree to your original statement: those words of sutra from the *Medium-Length Mother of the Buddhas* do belong to the first stage of the teachings, to the turning of the wheel where Lord Buddha taught the four realized truths.]

But you can't agree to our original statement,

Because they are words of sutra from the *Medium-Length Mother of the Buddhas*.

གཞན་ཡང་། བྱང་རྒྱུ་བ་སེམས་དཔའ་དོན་དམ་ཡང་དག་འཕགས་ལུས་ཀྱི་ལཱ་ཚོས་  
ཅན། བཀའ་བར་པ་མཚན་ཉིད་མེད་པའི་ཚོས་འཁོར་ཡིན་པར་གྲུབ། ལྷོང་ཉིད་དངོས་  
བསྟན་བསྟན་བྱའི་གཙོ་བོར་བྱས་ནས་བསྟན་པའི་མདོ་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར།

Consider, moreover, the "Chapter Requested by the Bodhisattva Paramarta Samudgata."

Does it then belong to the middle stage, to the turning of the wheel where Lord Buddha taught that nothing exists by definition?

Because it is a sutra which takes—as the principal subject matter which it expresses directly—the concept of emptiness.

དེར་ཐལ། རོ་བོ་དང་བྱུང་པར་ལ་ཀུན་བཏགས་པའི་ཀུན་བཏགས་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་  
གྱིས་མ་གྲུབ་པ་དངོས་བསྟན་བསྟན་བྱའི་གཙོ་བོར་བྱས་ནས་བསྟན་པའི་མདོ་ཡིན་པའི་  
ཕྱིར།

[It's not correct to say that the "Chapter Requested by the Bodhisattva  
Paramarta Samudgata" is a sutra which takes—as the principal  
subject matter which it expresses directly—the concept of  
emptiness.]

It is so correct, because it is a sutra which takes, as the principal subject matter  
which it expresses directly, the fact that constructs—whether they be constructs  
relating to the basic nature of a thing or constructs relating to some detail of  
the thing—do not exist by definition.

དེར་ཐལ། དེས་རོ་བོ་དང་བྱུང་པར་ལ་ཀུན་བཏགས་པའི་ཀུན་བཏགས་རང་གི་མཚན་  
ཉིད་གྱིས་མ་གྲུབ་པ་དེ་རྒྱས་འབྲིང་བསྟུས་གསུམ་ལས་ཚོས་ཐམས་ཅད་ཕྱོགས་གཅིག་  
ཏུ་རོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པར་བསྟན་པའི་དགོངས་གཞིར་དངོས་བསྟན་བསྟན་བྱའི་གཙོ་བོར་  
བྱས་ནས་བསྟན་པའི་ཕྱིར།

[It's not correct to say that the "Chapter Requested by the Bodhisattva  
Paramarta Samudgata" is a sutra which takes, as the principal  
subject matter which it expresses directly, the fact that  
constructs—whether they be constructs relating to the basic  
nature of a thing or constructs relating to some detail of the  
thing—do not exist by definition.]

It is so correct, because this is a sutra which takes, as the principal subject  
matter which it expresses directly, demonstrating that the fact that  
constructs—whether they be constructs relating to the basic nature of a thing  
or constructs relating to some detail of the thing—do not exist by definition is  
what Lord Buddha's true thought is when he states, in the longer, medium,  
and briefer versions of the *Mother of the Buddhas*, that all existing things are,  
exclusively, such that they have no nature of their own.

དེར་ཐལ། དེས་རྒྱས་འབྲིང་བསྟུས་གསུམ་ལས་ཚོས་ཐམས་ཅད་ཕྱོགས་གཅིག་ཏུ་རོ་

བོ་ཉིད་མེད་མཉམ་དུ་གསུངས་པའི་དགོངས་གཞི་གཅིག་དངོས་སུ་བསྟན་པའི་ཕྱིར།

[It's not correct to say that.]

It is so correct, because that particular sutra does express, in a direct way, some true thought that Lord Buddha had when stated—in the longer, medium, and briefer versions of the *Mother of the Buddhas*—that all existing things are, exclusively, such that they have no nature of their own.

རྩ་བར་འདོད་མི་རྣམས་ཏེ། བཀའ་ཐ་མ་ལེགས་ཕྱིའི་ཚེས་འཁོར་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར།

[Then I agree to your original statement: it is correct to say that the "Chapter Requested by the Bodhisattva Paramarta Samudgata" belongs to the middle stage, to the turning of the wheel where Lord Buddha taught that nothing exists by definition.]

But you can't agree, because it belongs to the final stage of teachings, the turning of the wheel where Lord Buddha taught the fine distinctions.

རང་རིས། དགོངས་འགྲེལ་ནས་དངོས་སུ་གསུངས་པའི་འཁོར་ལོ་གསུམ་པོ་དེ་དུས་  
དང་། ཆེད་དུ་བྱ་བའི་གདུལ་བྱ་དང་། བརྗོད་བྱ་གསུམ་ཀའི་སྒོ་ནས་འཛོག་བྱས་པ་ལ།  
ཁོ་ན་རེ།

When we come and state our position that the three turnings of the wheel, as described directly in the *Commentary on the True Thought*, are established by all three criteria—by the period in which they were taught, by the disciples for whom the teaching was meant, and by the subject matter which they treat—then someone else comes and makes the following claim:

དེ་གསུམ་པོ་དུས་ཀྱི་སྒོ་ནས་མི་འཛོག་པར་ཐལ། ལེགས་བཤད་སྒྲིང་པོ་ལས།  
དགོངས་འགྲེལ་ནས་འཁོར་ལོ་རིམ་པ་གསུམ་གསུངས་པ་ནི་འཁོར་གྱི་འདུ་ཐེབས་  
དང་སྟོན་པའི་སྐུ་ཚེའི་ཚིགས་ལ་སོགས་པས་འཛོག་པ་མིན་གྱི་བརྗོད་བྱའི་ངོས་ནས་  
ཡིན་ནོ། །དེ་ཡང་བདག་མེད་པའི་དོན་གཏན་ལ་འབབས་པའི་དབང་དུ་བྱས་པ་སྟེ།

ཞེས་གསུངས་པའི་ཕྱིར།

But isn't it the case that these three are not established by the period in which they were taught?

[Why do you say that?]

Because the *Essence of Eloquence* states the following:

When the *Commentary on the True Intent* speaks of the three stages of the turning of the wheel, it establishes them neither by the circle of disciples which had assembled for the teaching, nor by the period of his life in which the Teacher gave the teaching, nor by the rest; rather, it establishes them through the subject matter of the particular teaching. Now all this relates to setting forth what it means when we say that nothing has any nature of its own . . .

ཟེར་ན་སྐྱོན་མེད་དེ། དེའི་དོན་ནི། དུས་ཁོ་ན་དང་། ཆེད་དུ་བྱ་བའི་གདུལ་བྱ་ཁོ་ན་  
དང་། བཟོད་བྱ་ཁོ་ནའི་སློན་ནས་མི་འཛོག་ཞེས་པའི་དོན་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར།

Yet there is no such problem, because the meaning of that particular section in the *Essence* is to say that these stages are established neither by period alone, nor by the disciple for whom they were meant alone, nor by the subject matter which they treat alone.

དེ་ལྟར་མ་ཡིན་ན་དགོངས་འགྲུལ་ལས་དངོས་སུ་གསུངས་པའི་འཁོར་ལོ་གསུམ་པོ་དེ་  
དུས་ཀྱི་སློན་ནས་འཛོག་པར་ཐལ། ལེགས་བཤད་སྟིང་པོ་ལས། ལུགས་ལ་གནས་པའི་  
དོན་དེ་ཉིད་དུས་ཀྱི་རིམ་པའི་སློན་ནས་འཁོར་ལོ་གསུམ་དང་སྐྱུར་བའི་བྲང་ངེས་སུ་  
འགྱུར་ཚུལ་དོན་དམ་ཡང་དག་འཕགས་ཀྱིས་སྟོན་པ་ལ་ཉུས་པ་ནི། ཞེས་གསུངས་  
པའི་ཕྱིར།

Suppose this were not the case. Are you saying then that the three turnings of the wheel, as they are described directly in the *Commentary on the True Intent*, are established by the period in which they were taught?



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[Why do you say that?]

Because the *Essence of Eloquence* states the following:

This way in which we speak of the three historical turnings of the wheel as being either figurative or literal, this point that we arrive at through implication from what has come before, is expressed to the Teacher by the bodhisattva Paramarta Samudgata in the following words from the *Commentary on the True Intent* . . .

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ཁ་ཅིག་ལེགས་ལུང་སྒྲིང་པོ་ལས། དང་པོར་ལྟ་ར་ཏ་སེར་གང་ཟེག་གི་བདག་མེད་པ་  
གསུངས་ཤིང་། སྤང་པོ་ལ་སོགས་པའི་ཚོས་ལ་རྩེད་ལས་གཅིག་མ་གཏོགས་བདེན་  
པར་གྲུབ་པ་མ་བཞག་ཅིང་། བདེན་པར་གྲུབ་པ་མང་དུ་གསུངས་པའི་སྐོར་གཅིག་གོ་  
།དེ་ནས་རྣམ་དབྱེ་མ་མཛད་པར་སྤང་སོགས་ཀྱི་ཚོས་ཐམས་ཅད་བདེན་པར་གྲུབ་པ་  
བཞག་བའི་སྐོར་གཅིག་གོ། །ཞེས་སོགས་ཀྱིས་ཐལ་འགྱུར་བའི་ལུགས་ཀྱི་དྲང་ངེས་  
འགྲེལ་ཚུལ་གཏན་ལ་འབབས་པ་ཡིན་ནོ། །ཟེར་ན།

Suppose someone comes and makes the following claim:

The following section from the *Essence of Eloquence* is setting forth the way in which the Consequence section of the Middle-Way School explains how to decide whether something Lord Buddha taught was literal, or whether it was figurative:

There is one set of teachings where, at the beginning, in Varanasi, Lord Buddha said that the individual had no self-nature; and then denied that something could exist in truth with no more than a very few objects, such as the parts of a person and so on; and then made many statements that something could exist in truth.

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There is another set of teachings where he made none of these distinctions, and denied that any existing object, whether it be the parts of a person or anything else, could have any true existence of its own. . .

དེ་མི་འཐད་པར་ཐལ། སྐབས་འདིར་སེམས་ཅམ་པའི་བྱམ་མོང་མ་ཡིན་པའི་དྲང་ངེས་  
འགྲེལ་ཚུལ་གཏན་ལ་འབབས་པའི་སྐབས་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར།

But that cannot be correct,

Because this is a section where Je Tsongkapa is describing the unique position of the Mind-Only School on how to decide whether something Lord Buddha taught was literal, or whether it was figurative.

འབྲུག་པ་ཡོད་པར་ཐལ། སེམས་ཅམ་པའི་བྱམ་མོང་མ་ཡིན་པའི་དྲང་ངེས་འགྲེལ་ཚུལ་  
གཏན་ལ་འབབས་པའི་སྐབས་སུ། ཐལ་འགྲུར་བའི་ལུགས་ཀྱི་དྲང་ངེས་འགྲེལ་ཚུལ་  
གཏན་ལ་ཐབ་ན་སྐབས་དོན་འཚོལ་བའི་སྐྱོན་ཡོད་པའི་ཕྱིར།

[It's not necessarily the case that—if this is a section where Je Tsongkapa is describing the unique beliefs of the Mind-Only School on how to decide whether something Lord Buddha taught was literal or figurative—then it cannot be the section where he sets forth how the Consequence group of the Middle-Way School decides this same question.]

But this is so necessarily the case,

Because if Je Tsongkapa were to set forth how the Consequence group decides the question of what is literal and what is figurative in the very same section in which he is setting forth the unique position of Mind-Only School on this same question, then he would be making the mistake of confusing his sections.

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ཁ་ཅིག །གསུང་དེ་ཐལ་འགྲུར་བའི་དཀྱིལ་ཤོར་བ་ཡིན་ཟེར་ན།

Suppose someone counters with the following claim:

In this particular section, Je Tsongkapa has slipped back into the position of the Consequence group.

དེ་མི་འཐད་པར་ཐལ། དྲང་ངེས་རྣམ་འབྱེད་དེ་རྒྱལ་བའི་གསུང་རབ་ལ་དབྱེད་པ་དག་  
པའི་རྒྱལ་བསྟན་པའི་རྗེས་སུ་རྩོམ་པ་གང་ཞིག །རྒྱལ་བའི་གསུང་རབ་ལ་དབྱེད་པ་  
རྗེས་སུ་ཤིང་ཏྟ་ཆེན་པོ་རྣམས་ཀྱི་ལུགས་འཆད་པ་ན་སྐབས་དོན་འཚོལ་བ་མི་སྲིད་  
པའི་ཕྱིར།

But that can't be correct, because (1) the *Essence, on How to Distinguish the Literal and the Figurative*, was composed in such a way as to explain how we examine the high word of the victorious Buddhas and come to a conclusion of its total accuracy; whereas (2) it would be impossible for a person to undertake a perfect, exhaustive examination of this high word and then confuse his sections when he got to the part where he explained the positions of the schools of the higher way.

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ཁ་ཅིག་གསུང་དེའི་དོན་ནི། བྱུང་དོན་དང་པོའི་སྐབས་ནས་དངོས་སུ་བསྟན་པའི་  
བཀའ་དང་པོ་བདེན་བཞིའི་ཚེས་འཁོར་དེས་འདུས་བྱས་ཀྱི་ཚེས་ཐམས་ཅད་བདེན་བྱུང་  
ཏུ་དངོས་སུ་བསྟན། འདུས་མ་བྱས་ཀྱི་ཚེས་ཐམས་ཅད་བདེན་མེད་ཏུ་དངོས་སུ་བསྟན་  
པས་དེ་ལ་དགོངས་པ་ཡིན་ཅོ་ཟེར་ན།

Suppose someone comes and makes the following claim:

Here is what Je Tsongkapa really intended to say in that particular section of his work. In the first stage of the teachings as it is described explicitly in the first of the outcomes—in the turning of the wheel where he taught the four realized truths—Lord Buddha explicitly expressed the fact that all caused things exist in truth; he also expressed, explicitly, the fact that no thing which is not caused has any true existence.

འོ་ན། བྱུང་དོན་དང་པོའི་སྐབས་ནས་དངོས་སུ་བསྟན་པའི་བཀའ་དང་པོ་བདེན་བཞིའི་  
ཚོས་འཁོར་དེས། གཟུགས་གཟུགས་ཞེས་པའི་ཐ་སྐད་འཇུག་པའི་འཇུག་བཞི་ཡིན་པ་  
དེ་བདེན་མེད་དུ་དངོས་སུ་བསྟན་པར་ཐལ། དེས་འདུས་མ་བྱས་ཀྱི་ཚོས་ཐམས་ཅད་  
བདེན་མེད་དུ་དངོས་སུ་བསྟན་པའི་ཕྱིར། རྟགས་ཁས།

Well then, is it necessarily the case that in the first stage of the teachings as it is described explicitly in the first of the outcomes—in the turning of the wheel where he taught the four realized truths—Lord Buddha explicitly expressed the fact that the fact that physical matter is what the term "physical matter" refers to was something that had no true existence?

[Why do you say that?]

Because, according to you, he expressed—explicitly—the fact that no thing which is not caused has any true existence.

འདོད་ན། དེས་རང་གི་ཚེད་དུ་བྱ་བའི་གདུལ་བྱ་མདོ་སྡེ་པ་ལ་དེ་ལྟར་བསྟན་པར་ཐལ།  
འདོད་པ་དེའི་ཕྱིར།

[Then I agree that it is necessarily the case that in the first stage of the teachings as it is described explicitly in the first of the outcomes—in the turning of the wheel where he taught the four realized truths—Lord Buddha explicitly expressed the fact that the fact that physical matter is what the term "physical matter" refers to was something that had no true existence]

Suppose you do agree.

Is it then the case that Lord Buddha described things this way directing his explanation to specific disciples—to those who were members of the Sutrists school?

[Why do you say that?]

Because you agreed.

འདོད་ན། དེའི་ཆེད་དུ་བྱ་བའི་གཏུལ་བྱ་མདོ་སྡེ་པས་དེ་བདེན་མེད་དུ་འདོད་པར་ཐལ།  
འདོད་པའི་ཕྱིར།

[Then I agree that Lord Buddha did describe things this way directing his explanation to specific disciples—to those who were members of the Sutrists school.]

Suppose you do agree.

Is it then the case that the disciples to whom this explanation was supposedly directed—the Sutrists—believe that this fact is something that has no true existence?

འདོད་མི་རུས་ཏེ། དེས་དེ་བདེན་གྲུབ་ཏུ་འདོད་པའི་ཕྱིར།

[I agree that the disciples to whom this explanation was directed—the Sutrists—do believe that this fact is something that has no true existence.]

But you can't agree, because they believe that this fact is something that does have true existence.

དེར་ཐལ། དེས་གཟུགས་གཟུགས་ཞེས་པའི་ཐ་སྐད་འཇུག་པའི་འཇུག་གཞིར་རང་གི་  
མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པར་འདོད་པའི་ཕྱིར།

[It's not correct to say that the Sutrists believe that this fact is something that has true existence.]

It is so correct, because they believe that the fact that physical form is what the term "physical form" refers to exists by definition.

དེར་ཐལ། ལེགས་བཤད་སྤིང་པོ་ལས། དེའི་ཕྱིར་འདིའི་བརྗོད་པའི་གྲུབ་པའི་  
འདོགས་པོ་བོ་དང་བྱུང་པར་དུ་མིང་གིས་བཏགས་པ་དེར་གཟུགས་སོགས་རང་གི་  
མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པར་འཇིག་པའི་གྲུབ་མཐའི་ཁས་ལེན་ཀྱང་ཉན་ཐོས་སྡེ་པ་ལ་ཡོད་  
དོ། ཞེས་གསུངས་པའི་ཕྱིར།

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant  
Reading Six

[It's not correct to say that the Sutrists believe that the fact that physical form is what the term "physical form" refers to exists by definition.]

It is so correct, because the *Essence of Eloquence* itself states,

Therefore this same belief exists among those of the Listener groups as well; an idea which is the opposite of that other one, an idea that attributes a quality which is not in actuality there: which says that what are actually only constructed to be the primary form and various expressions of physical matter and the rest exist as such by definition.

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ཁ་ཅིག །བདག་མིང་སྤྱོད་པ་གསུངས་པའི་སྤྱོད་པའི་མདོ་རྣམས་དང་  
ངེས་འབྱེད་པའི་གཞིར་མི་རུང་ཟེར་ན།

Suppose someone comes and makes the following claim:

No sutra which fails to teach some one or more of the three degrees of a lack of self-nature could ever serve as one of those teachings that we examine to see if it is literal or figurative.

དེ་རུང་བར་ཐལ། དེ་སྤྱོད་སྤྱོད་མི་ཟད་པའི་མདོ་ལས་གསུངས་པའི་དང་ངེས་འབྱེད་  
པའི་གཞིར་རུང་བའི་སྤྱིར།

But a sutra that failed to teach this subject could so serve as one of these types of teachings,

Because it could serve as one of these types of teachings as they are described in the *Sutra Requested by Never-Ending Wisdom*.

དེར་ཐལ། དེ་དག་སྤྱོད་སྤྱོད་མི་ཟད་པའི་མདོ་ལས་གསུངས་པའི་དང་དོན་གྱི་མདོ་ཡིན་  
པའི་སྤྱིར།

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant  
Reading Six

[It's not correct to say that it could serve as one of these types of teachings as they are described in the *Sutra of Never-Ending Wisdom*.]

It is so correct, because these types of teachings are sutras which are described in the *Sutra of Never-Ending Wisdom* as being figurative.

དེར་ཐལ། ལྷོ་གྲོས་མི་ཟད་པའི་མདོ་དེས། དོན་དམ་བདེན་པ་དངོས་བསྟན་བསྟན་  
བྱའི་གཙོ་བོར་བྱས་ནས་མི་སྟོན་པའི་མདོ་རྣམས་དང་དོན་གྱི་མདོར་གསུངས་པའི་ཕྱིར།

[It's not correct to say that these types of teachings are sutras which are described in the *Sutra of Never-Ending Wisdom* as being figurative.]

It is so correct, because the *Sutra of Never-Ending Wisdom* states that sutras which do not express their message by taking—as the principal subject matter which they describe explicitly—ultimate truth are figurative.

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*We now jump ahead to the position our own school holds on these questions:*

གཉིས་པ་རང་གི་ལུགས་བཞག་པ་ལ། བཙམ་ལུན་འདས་གྱིས་དུས་དང་པོར་ཆེད་དུ་  
བྱ་བའི་གཏུལ་བྱ་ཐེག་དམན་གྱི་རིགས་ཅན་ལ་གཙོ་བོར་དགོངས་ནས་བདེན་བཞི་  
དངོས་བསྟན་བསྟན་བྱའི་གཙོ་བོར་བྱས་ནས་སྟོན་པའི་ཐེག་དམན་གྱི་མདོ། བཀའ་དང་  
པོ་བདེན་བཞིའི་ཚེས་འཁོར་གྱི་མཚན་ཉིད།

Here secondly is the position held by our own school. The definition of the first stage of the teachings, the turning of the wheel of the Dharma where Lord Buddha taught the four realized truths, is:

Those sutras of the lower way which were taught during the initial period, and in which the Conqueror expressed his message by taking—as the principal subject matter which he described explicitly—the four realized truths, intending the teaching for specific disciples belonging to the lower way.

མཚན་གཞི་ནི། དག་སྒོང་དག་འདི་ནི་སྐྱབ་བསྐྱལ་འཕགས་པའི་བདེན་པའོ། །འདི་ནི་  
ཀུན་འབྱུང་འཕགས་པའི་བདེན་པའོ། །འདི་ནི་འགོག་པ་འཕགས་པའི་བདེན་པའོ།  
།འདི་ནི་ལམ་འཕགས་པའི་བདེན་པའོ།།

A prime example of this turning of the wheel would be something like the following words of sutra:

O monks, this is the realized truth of suffering. This is the realized truth of the source of suffering. This is the realized truth of the end of suffering. This is the realized truth of the path to the end of suffering.

སྐྱབ་བསྐྱལ་ཤེས་པར་བྱ། ཀུན་འབྱུང་སྐྱང་བར་བྱ། འགོག་པ་མངོན་དུ་བྱ། ལམ་  
བསྐྱོམ་པར་བྱ།

Suffering is something you have to become aware is happening. The source is something you have to eliminate. The end is something you have to bring about. The path is something you have to practice.

སྐྱབ་བསྐྱལ་ཤེས་པར་བྱ། སྐྱར་ཡང་ཤེས་པར་བྱར་མེད། ཀུན་འབྱུང་སྐྱང་བར་བྱ།  
སྐྱར་ཡང་སྐྱང་བར་བྱར་མེད། འགོག་པ་མངོན་དུ་བྱ། སྐྱར་ཡང་མངོན་དུ་བྱར་མེད།  
ལམ་བསྐྱོམ་པར་བྱ། སྐྱར་ཡང་བསྐྱོམ་པར་བྱར་མེད། ཞེས་པའི་མདོ་ལྟ་བུ་ཡིན།

Suffering is something you have to be aware is happening; then there will be nothing left to be aware of. The source is something you have to eliminate; then there will be nothing left to eliminate. The end is something you have to bring about; then there will be nothing left to bring about. The path is something you have to practice; then there will be nothing left to practice.

བཅོམ་ལྡན་འདས་ཀྱིས་དུས་བར་པར་ཆེད་དུ་བྱ་བའི་གདུལ་བྱ་ཐེག་ཆེན་གྱི་རིགས་ཅན་  
དབང་རྗེས་ལ་སྒོང་ཉིད་སྤྲོ་མོ་བསྐྱུན་བྱའི་གཙོ་བོར་བྱས་ནས་བསྐྱུན་པའི་ཐེག་ཆེན་གྱི་



མདོ། བཀའ་བར་པ་མཚན་ཉིད་མེད་པའི་ཚོས་འཁོར་གྱི་མཚན་ཉིད།

The definition of the middle stage of the teachings, the turning of the wheel of the Dharma where Lord Buddha taught that nothing exists by definition, is:

Those sutras of the higher way which were taught during the middle period, and in which the Conqueror expressed his message by taking—as the principal subject matter which he described—the subtle object of emptiness, intending the teaching for specific disciples belonging to the higher way, and possessed of higher powers.

མཚན་གཞི་ནི། རྒྱས་འབྲིང་བསྐྱུས་གསུམ་དང་། ལྷུང་པ་ཤེས་རབ་སྣོང་པོ་དང་  
བཅས་པ་ཡིན།

A prime example of this turning of the wheel would be the longer, medium, and briefer versions of the *Mother of the Buddhas*; their abbreviation; and the *Heart of Wisdom*.

བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས་གྱིས་དུས་ཐ་མར་ཆེད་དུ་བྱ་བའི་གདུལ་བྱ་ཐེག་ཆེན་གྱི་རིགས་ཅན་  
ལ་ཚོས་གྱི་བདག་མེད་ཕྱ་རགས་ཅི་རིགས་བསྐྱུས་བྱའི་གཙོ་བོར་བྱས་ནས་བསྐྱུས་པའི་  
ཐེག་ཆེན་གྱི་མདོ། །བཀའ་ཐ་མ་ལེགས་ལྟའི་ཚོས་འཁོར་གྱི་མཚན་ཉིད།

Those sutras of the higher way which were taught during the final period, and in which the Conqueror expressed his message by taking—as the principal subject matter which he described—either the subtle form of a lack of a self-nature to objects, the grosser form, or both, intending the teaching for specific disciples belonging to the higher way.

མཚན་གཞི་ནི། བྱང་རྒྱལ་སེམས་དཔའ་དོན་དམ་ཡང་དག་འཕགས་ལྷུས་གྱི་ལེའུ་  
དང་། དགོངས་འགྲེལ་གྱི་བུམས་ལྷུས་གྱི་ལེའུའི་ནང་ཚན་དུ་གྱུར་པའི་བུམས་པ་ཉིང་  
ངེ་འཛིན་གྱི་སྟོད་ཡུལ་གྱི་གཟུགས་བརྟན། ཞེས་སོགས་གྱི་མདོ་ལྟ་བུ་ཡིན།

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A prime example of this turning of the wheel would be sutras such as the "Chapter Requested by the Bodhisattva Paramarta Samudgata"; the section of the "Chapter Requested by Maitreya" from the *Commentary on the True Intent* known as "Maitreya and the Reflection in which Single-Pointed Concentration Plays."

དེ་དག་ནི་གོ་བ་གཙོ་བོར་བྱས་པ་ཡིན་ལ། ཚིག་སྐྱོན་བཅད་དེ་ཞིབ་པར་སྒྲུས་ན་འཁོར་  
ལོ་གསུམ་པོ་གང་རུང་དུ་གྱུར་པའི་ཐེག་དམན་གྱི་མདོ། བཀའ་དང་པོ་བདེན་བཞིའི་  
ཚུལ་འཁོར་གྱི་མཚན་ཉིད།

The above are, by the way, only primary descriptions; if one were to eliminate all the problematic wording in them carefully, then the definition of the first stage of the teachings, the turning of the wheel of the Dharma where Lord Buddha taught the four realized truths, would be:

A sutra of the lower way, whichever of the three turnings of the wheel it belongs to.

དགོངས་འགྲུལ་ནས་གསུངས་པའི་འཁོར་ལོ་གསུམ་པོ་གང་རུང་གང་ཞིག་། ཁྱེད་  
དུ་བྱ་བའི་གདུལ་བྱ་བྱང་རྒྱལ་སེམས་དཔའ་དོན་དམ་ཡང་དག་འཕགས་ལྷུས་གྱི་ལཱུ་  
ལྷ་བྱས་འཁོར་ལོ་བར་པའི་དགོངས་པ་བཀའ་བ་ལ་ལྷོས་མི་དགོས་པའི་ཐེག་ཚེན་གྱི་  
རིགས་ཅན་ལ་གཙོ་བོར་དགོངས་ནས་གསུངས་པའི་མདོ། བཀའ་བར་པ་མཚན་ཉིད་  
མེད་པའི་ཚུལ་འཁོར་གྱི་མཚན་ཉིད།

The definition of the middle stage of the teachings, the turning of the wheel of the Dharma where Lord Buddha taught that nothing exists by definition, would be:

A sutra that (1) belongs to some one of the three turnings of the wheel as described in the *Commentary on the True Intent*, and which (2) was intended primarily for disciples belonging to the greater way, but of the kind who did not require a re-interpretation of the middle turning of the wheel through some teaching like the "Chapter Requested by the Bodhisattva Parmarta Samudgata."

དགོངས་འགྲུལ་ནས་གསུངས་པའི་འཁོར་ལོ་གསུམ་པོ་གང་རུང་གང་ཞིག །ཆེད་  
དུ་བུ་བའི་གདུལ་བུ་བྱུང་རྒྱུ་སེམས་དཔའ་དོན་དམ་ཡང་དག་འཕགས་ལུས་ཀྱི་ལེན་  
ལྷ་བུས་འཁོར་ལོ་བར་པའི་དགོངས་པ་བཀའ་བ་ལ་ལྷོས་དགོས་པའི་ཐེག་ཆེན་གྱི་  
རིགས་ཅན་ལ་གཙོ་བོར་དགོངས་ནས་གསུངས་པའི་མདོ། བཀའ་ཐ་མ་ལེགས་ལྟེན་  
ཆོས་འཁོར་གྱི་མཚན་ཉིད། མཚན་གཞི་ནི་སྤར་ལྟར་ཡིན།

The definition of the final stage of the teachings, the turning of the wheel of the Dharma where the fine distinctions were made, would then be:

A sutra that (1) belongs to some one of the three turnings of the wheel as described in the *Commentary on the True Intent*, and which (2) was intended primarily for disciples belonging to the greater way, and of the kind who did require a re-interpretation of the middle turning of the wheel through some teaching like the "Chapter Requested by the Bodhisattva Parmarta Samudgata."

Prime examples would be the same as above.

བཀའ་ཐ་མ་ལེགས་ལྟེན་ཆོས་འཁོར་གྱི་ཆེད་དུ་བུ་བའི་གདུལ་བུ་དེ་ལ་ཐེག་པ་ཐམས་  
ཅད་ལ་ཡང་དག་པར་ལྷགས་པ་ཞེས་འཆད་པའི་རྒྱ་མཚན་ཡོད་དེ། འཁོར་ལོ་དང་  
པོའི་ཆེད་དུ་བུ་བའི་གདུལ་བུ་དེས་འཁོར་ལོ་དང་པོས་བསྟན་ཚོད་ཀྱི་གང་ཟེག་གི་  
བདག་མེད་གྱི་དབང་དུ་བྱས་པའི་མཚན་ཉིད་གསུམ་གྱི་རྣམ་བཞག་ཅམ་ཞིག་གོ་བར་  
རུས། འཁོར་ལོ་བར་པའི་བརྗོད་བྱར་གྱུར་པའི་ཆོས་ཀྱི་བདག་མེད་གྱི་དབང་དུ་བྱས་  
པའི་མཚན་ཉིད་གསུམ་གྱི་རྣམ་བཞག་གོ་མི་རུས།

Now there is a reason why the sutra says that the specific disciples for whom the final stage of the teachings, the turning of the wheel of the Dharma where fine distinctions were made, were "those who had entered, perfectly, every one of the different ways." The point is that the specific disciples for whom the first wheel was turned are capable only of grasping the system of the three attributes with regard to the version of the lack of a self-nature of persons that

was presented during the first turning of the wheel. They are not capable of grasping the system of the three attributes with regard to the lack of a self-nature of objects treated by the middle turning of the wheel.

འཁོར་ལོ་བར་པའི་ཆེད་དུ་བྱ་བའི་གདུལ་བྱ་དེས་མདོ་གཞན་གྱིས་འཁོར་ལོ་བར་པའི་  
དགོངས་པ་བཀའ་བ་ལ་མ་ལྟོས་པར་འཁོར་ལོ་བར་པའི་བཟོད་བྱར་གྱུར་པའི་ཚོས་གྱི་  
བདག་མེད་གྱི་དབང་དུ་བྱས་པའི་མཚན་ཉིད་གསུམ་གྱི་རྣམ་བཞག་གོ་རྣམ།

Specific disciples for whom the middle wheel was turned are capable of grasping the system of the three attributes with regard to the lack of a self-nature of objects treated by the middle turning of the wheel with requiring any re-interpretation of this middle turning by any other sutra.

འཁོར་ལོ་ཐ་མའི་ཆེད་དུ་བྱ་བའི་གདུལ་བྱ་དེས་བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའ་དོན་དམ་ཡང་  
དག་འཕགས་ལྷུས་གྱི་ལེན་ལྟ་བུས་འཁོར་ལོ་བར་པའི་དགོངས་པ་མ་བཀའ་བར་  
འཁོར་ལོ་བར་པའི་བཟོད་བྱར་གྱུར་པའི་ཚོས་གྱི་བདག་མེད་གྱི་དབང་དུ་བྱས་པའི་  
མཚན་ཉིད་གསུམ་གྱི་རྣམ་བཞག་གོ་བར་མི་རྣམ།

Specific disciples for whom the final wheel was turned are not capable of grasping the system of the three attributes with regard to the lack of a self-nature of objects treated by the middle turning of the wheel without a re-interpretation of this middle turning of the wheel through some teaching like the "Chapter Requested by the Bodhisattva Paramarta Samudgata."

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའ་དོན་དམ་ཡང་དག་འཕགས་ལྷུས་གྱི་ལེན་ལྟ་བུས་འཁོར་ལོ་  
བར་པའི་དགོངས་པ་དངོས་སུ་བཀའ་བ་ལ་བརྟེན་ནས་འཁོར་ལོ་བར་པའི་བཟོད་བྱར་  
གྱུར་པའི་ཚོས་གྱི་བདག་མེད་གྱི་དབང་དུ་བྱས་པའི་མཚན་ཉིད་གསུམ་གྱི་རྣམ་བཞག་  
དངོས་སུ་གོ་བའི་ཤུགས་ལ། འཁོར་ལོ་དང་པོའི་བཟོད་བྱར་གྱུར་པའི་གང་ཟག་གི་  
བདག་མེད་གྱི་དབང་དུ་བྱས་པའི་མཚན་ཉིད་གསུམ་གྱི་རྣམ་བཞག་གོ་བར་འགྱུར་བའི་

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གདུལ་བྱ་ཞིག་ཡིན་པའི་རྒྱ་མཚན་གྱིས་དེ་ལྟར་བཤད་པའི་ཕྱིར།

When we say that they "are immediately capable of grasping the system of the three attributes with regard to the lack of a self-nature of objects treated by the middle turning of the wheel if they do rely on a re-interpretation of this middle turning of the wheel through some teaching like the "Chapter Requested by the Bodhisattva Paramarta Samudgata," the implication is that they are already a disciple who understands the system of the three attributes with regard to the lack of a self-nature of the person presented during the first turning of the wheel. And this is why the sutra speaks of those of "every one of the different ways."

**The Asian Classics Institute**  
**Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant**

**Reading Seven: Master Asanga on Avoiding the Two Extremes**

*The following selection is taken from the Essence of Eloquence, a Classical Commentary on Distinguishing between the Figurative and the Literal (Drang-ba dang nges-pa'i don rnam-par 'byed-pa'i bstan-bcos Legs-bshad snying-po), by Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419); ff. 14a-18a in the ACIP digital edition (catalog number S5396), and pp. 34-44 in the ACIP Indian paper edition. The translation is based upon an oral teaching of the text by Geshe Tupten Rinchen of Sera Mey Tibetan Monastery. Please note that Je Tsongkapa's root text is extremely difficult, and is best studied with the accompanying ACI tapes.*

གཉིས་པ་ལ་གཉིས། ལྷོབ་དཔོན་ཐོགས་མེད་ཀྱིས་གཙོ་བོར་དགོངས་འགྲེལ་ལ་བརྟེན་  
ཚུལ་དང་། དེ་ལ་བརྟེན་ནས་དེ་ལོ་ན་ཉིད་གཏན་ལ་ཕབ་པའི་ཚུལ་ལོ།།

Here begins the second major part in our discussion of the art of interpretation according to the *Commentary on the True Intent*; that is, an explanation of how this sutra is commented upon. We proceed in two steps: a description of how Master Asanga relies, primarily, on the *Commentary*; and a description of how he sets forth the meaning of thusness, based on this approach.

དང་པོ་ནི། བསྐྱབ་ལས། དོན་དམ་པ་མཚན་ཉིད་ལྡན་དང་ལྡན་པ་ཡང་དགོངས་འགྲེལ་  
ལས་འབྱུང་བ་བཞིན་ཤེས་པར་བྱའོ། །ཞེས་དགོངས་འགྲེལ་གྱི་དོན་དམ་པའི་ལེའུ་  
རྣམས་བྲངས་ཤིང་། ཚོས་རྣམས་ཀྱི་མཚན་ཉིད་ནི་དགོངས་འགྲེལ་ལས་འབྱུང་བ་  
བཞིན་བལྟ་བར་བྱའོ། །ཞེས་མཚན་ཉིད་གསུམ་སྟོན་པའི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱི་ལེའུ་རྣམས་

བྱངས་ལ། ཚོས་རྣམས་ཀྱི་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པའི་མཚན་ཉིད་ནི་དགོངས་འགྲེལ་ལས་  
འབྱུང་བ་བཞིན་བལྟ་བར་བྱའོ། །ཞེས་མདོ་སྡེ་ལ་འགལ་སྡོང་གི་དྲིས་ལན་དང་བྱང་  
ངས་ལ་སོགས་པ་རྣམས་སྟོན་པའི་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པའི་ལུ་རྣམས་བྱངས་སོ།། གཉིས་  
པ་ལ་གཉིས། སྟོབ་དཔོན་ཐོགས་མེད་ཀྱིས་གཙོ་བོར་དགོངས་འགྲེལ་ལ་བརྟེན་ཚུལ་  
དང་། དེ་ལ་བརྟེན་ནས་དེ་ལོ་ན་ཉིད་གཏན་ལ་ཕབ་པའི་ཚུལ་ལོ།།

Here is the first. In the *Compendium*, Master Asanga cites the chapters on the ultimate from the *Commentary on the True Intent*, saying—

You should understand the ultimate as having five characteristics, as described in the *Commentary on the True Intent*.

He also cites the chapters that treat the three attributes, in the words:

You should view the attributes of all existing things as these are described in the *Commentary on the True Intent*.

He further cites the chapters on how things lack any nature of their very own, the ones that relate topics like the question and the answer about apparent inconsistencies in the sutras, and the distinction between teachings that are figurative and those that are literal, like this:

You should view, for every existing thing, the characteristic of lacking any nature of its own as described in the *Commentary on the True Intent*.

དེ་བཞིན་དུ་རྣམ་ཤེས་ཚོགས་བརྒྱད་དང་མཐར་ཐུག་རིགས་ངེས་པ་ཡང་དགོངས་  
འགྲེལ་ནས་གསུངས་པ་རྣམས་བྱངས་སོ།།

Master Asanga further refers to the idea of the group of eight different kinds of consciousness, and the idea that—ultimately—there are three fixed tracks, both as they are spoken in the *Commentary on the True Intent*.

བྱང་སའི་དེ་ལོ་ནའི་ལུ་དང་དེའི་རྣམ་པར་གཏན་ལ་དབབ་པ་དང་ཐེག་བསྐྱུས་ལས་

ཀྱང་དགོངས་འགྲེལ་ལས་གཞན་དབང་ངོ་བོ་དང་བྱུང་པར་དུ་བཏགས་པའི་ཀུན་  
བཏགས་ཀྱིས་སྣོང་པ་ཡོངས་བྱུབ་ཏུ་གསུངས་པ་ཉིད་བཤད་པའི་རྣམས་བྱངས་མང་  
པོས་གཏན་ལ་འབེབས་པར་མཛད་དོ།།

In others of his works—in the "Chapter on Thusness" from the *Levels of the Bodhisattvas*, in the treatise upon it, and in the *Compendium* as well—he makes his presentation using a great number of explanations which come from the *Commentary on the True Intent*: explanations which show how Lord Buddha stated that totality consists of the absence of constructs relating to the basic object and to its details, with regard to dependent things.

མདོ་སྡེ་རྒྱན་དང་དབུས་མཐའ་ལ་སོགས་པར་དེ་ཁོ་ནའི་དོན་བཤད་པ་དང་དེ་དག་གི་  
འགྲེལ་པ་རྣམས་སུ་བསྟན་པའི་གནད་རྣམས་ཀྱང་མདོ་སྡེ་འདིའི་དོན་དང་ཤིན་ཏུ་མཐུན་  
པས་ལུགས་འདི་ལ་མདོ་སྡེ་འདིའི་དོན་གཏན་ལ་འབེབས་པ་ནི་རྩ་བར་སྒྲུང་ངོ་།།

Consider too the presentations of thusness found in the *Jewel of the Sutras*, in *Distinguishing the Middle from the Extremes*, and the various crucial points found in the commentaries upon these texts. They also are in very close agreement with the explanations found in our sutra, and so we can say that it appears that setting forth the meaning of this sutra forms the very foundation of this [Mind-Only] system.

གཉིས་པ་ལ་གསུམ། མཐའ་གཉིས་སྣོང་རྒྱུ་སྤྱིར་བསྟན་པ། སྣོང་འདོགས་ཀྱི་མཐའ་  
བྱི་བྲག་ཏུ་དགག་པ། དེས་གསུང་རབ་ཀྱི་དྲང་ངེས་འབྱེད་པའི་རྒྱུ་ལོ།།

Here secondly is our description of how Master Asanga sets forth the meaning of thusness, based on this approach of relying primarily upon the *Commentary on the True Intent*. Here there are three steps: a general presentation of how one avoids the two extremes; a more detailed refutation of the extreme of concocting things; and how here the distinction between the literal and figurative teachings of Lord Buddha is drawn.

དང་པོ་ལ་གསུམ། བྱང་ས་ནས་བཤད་པའི་རྒྱུ་དང་། བསྟུ་བ་ནས་བཤད་པའི་རྒྱུ་



དང་། དེ་དག་ལས་གཞན་པའི་གཞུང་ནས་བཤད་ཚུལ་ལོ། །དང་པོ་ལ་གཉིས། ལྔ་  
སྐར་དུ་ལྟ་བའི་ཚུལ་དང་། དེ་གཉིས་འགོག་པའི་ཚུལ་ལོ།།

The first of these has three further sections: the way in which the *Levels of the Bodhisattva* explains the point; the way in which the *Compendium* explains the point; and how other texts explain it. The first of these has two parts of its own: how a person who is concocting or discounting things views things, and how we refute them.

དང་པོ་ནི། བྱང་ས་ལས། ཇི་ལྟར་ཡོད་ཅེ་ན་ཡོད་པ་མ་ཡིན་པ་ལ་སྒྲོ་བཏགས་པའི་  
ལེགས་པར་མ་ཟེན་པ་སྤངས་པ་དང་ཡང་དག་པ་ལ་སྐྱར་པ་བཏབ་པའི་ལེགས་པར་མ་  
ཟེན་པ་སྤངས་པ་ཡོད་དོ། ཞེས་སྒྲོ་སྐྱར་སྤངས་པའི་ཚུལ་གྱིས་ཡོད་དོ་ཞེས་གསུངས་  
པའི་སྒྲོ་འདོགས་དང་སྐྱར་འདོགས་ནི་ཇི་ལྟ་བུ་ཞིག་ཡིན་ཞེ་ན།

Here is the first of these two parts. One may begin with the following question:

The *Levels of the Bodhisattva* makes the following statement:

How then do things exist? They exist in a certain way—in which they are free of the object of a mistaken tendency to concoct things, a tendency directed at something which doesn't in reality exist; and in which they are free of the object of a mistaken tendency to discount things, a tendency directed at things which are in reality pure.

Can you explain what "concocting things" and "discounting things" mean in this description that things exist in a way free of concocting and discounting?

དེ་གཉིས་ནི་བྱང་ས་ལས། གཟུགས་ལ་སོགས་པའི་ཚོས་རྣམས་དང་གཟུགས་ལ་  
སོགས་པའི་དངོས་པོ་ལ་འདོགས་པའི་ཚིག་གི་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་ཀྱི་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཡོད་པ་  
མ་ཡིན་པ་ལ་སྒྲོ་བཏགས་ནས་མངོན་པར་ཞེན་པ་གང་ཡིན་པ་དང་། ཞེས་པ་འདིས་སྒྲོ་

# འདོགས་ཚུལ་གསུངས་ལ།

These two are explained in the *Levels of the Bodhisattva* as follows.

The way in which concocting things works was spoken to be like this: it is that belief in which you concoct something about the very nature of the words that are used to make constructions concerning physical matter and all other existing objects, and concerning physical matter and all other functioning things; about words that are, in fact, things which do not exist by definition.

བདག་པའི་ཚིག་གི་མཚན་མའི་གཞི་བདག་པའི་ཚིག་གི་མཚན་མའི་རྟེན་དུ་གྱུར་  
པ། བརྗོད་དུ་མེད་པའི་བདག་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་དོན་དམ་པར་ཡོད་པ་ཡང་དག་པའི་དངོས་པོ་  
ལ་ཐམས་ཅད་ཀྱི་ཐམས་ཅད་དུ་མེད་དོ་ཞེས་སྐྱར་བ་འདེབས་ཤིང་ཚུད་གཞོན་པར་བྱེད་  
པ་གང་ཡིན་པ་འདི་གཉིས་ནི་ཚོས་འདུལ་བ་འདི་ལས་རབ་དུ་ཉམས་པ་ཡིན་པར་རིག་  
པར་བྱའོ། །ཞེས་པ་སྣ་མས་ནི་སྐྱར་བ་འདེབས་ཚུལ་བསྟན་ལ་ཚུད་གཞོན་ཞེས་པ་མན་  
ཆད་ཀྱིས་ནི་ཐེག་པ་ཆེན་པོའི་ཚོས་ཟབ་མོ་ལས་ཉམས་པར་བསྟན་ནོ། །

Discounting things is like this; it is saying that the following do not, all in all, exist:

that which is the foundation, with the typical features, of the words used to make constructs —that which provides the basis, with the characteristics, of the words used to make constructs;

that which exists ultimately, through an identity beyond all expression; and

that which is a pure, functioning thing.

They are, in short, things that waste one's opportunity; you should understand that these two will cause you to fall from this spiritual way of discipline.

The beginning part of this second section constitutes a description of what it is to discount something; and the part including the words "waste one's opportunity" on down is describing how a person would then fall from the profound teaching of the greater way.

གཟུགས་ཞེས་པ་ནས་དངོས་པོ་ལ་ཞེས་པའི་བར་གྱིས་ཀུན་བཏགས་འདོགས་པའི་གཞི་  
བསྟན་ཏེ། དེ་ལ་འདོགས་པའི་ཚིག་གི་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་ཅེས་པ་ནི་ཚིག་གིས་བཏགས་པའི་ངོ་  
བོ་ཉིད་ལ་བྱའི། འདོགས་བྱེད་གྱི་ཚིག་ལ་མི་བྱ་སྟེ་བསྟུ་བ་ལ་སོགས་པ་ནས་གསལ་  
བར་བཤད་དོ། །བྱང་སའི་སྐབས་གཞན་དུ་བྱང་བ་རྣམས་ཀྱང་དེ་ལྟར་ཤེས་པར་བྱའོ། །

The part that talks about "physical matter," continuing down to "functional things," is describing the object towards which a construct is directed. The part about "the very nature of the words that are used to make constructions" should be understood as referring to the nature [or attribute] of constructs, rather than to the words used in applying the constructs themselves; this point is made quite clear in works like the *Compendium*. You should keep in mind that—when this phrasing is used elsewhere in the *Compendium* as well—it should be read this same way.

ཚིག་གིས་བཏགས་པའི་ངོ་བོ་དེ་ཉིད་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་གྱིས་ཡོད་པ་མིན་པ་ལ་དེའི་  
རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཡོད་དོ་ཞེས་ཞུ་བ་ནི་སྟོ་འདོགས་སོ། །

The act of concocting things then consists of a believing that this nature constructed through the use of words—something which in fact does not exist by definition—does exist by definition.

བཏགས་པའི་ཚིག་གི་མཚན་མའི་གཞི་ནི་བཏགས་པའི་ཚིག་གི་མཚན་མའི་རྟེན་ཞེས་  
པས་བཤད་དེ་ཀུན་བཏགས་གྱི་གདགས་གཞིའོ། །

The expression "that which is the foundation, with the typical features, of the words used to make constructs" is explained by the expression "that which provides the basis, with the typical features, of the words used to make constructs": the point is that we are talking about the object towards which the construct is directed.

དེ་ཉིད་བཟོད་དུ་མེད་པའི་ཚུལ་གྱི་དོན་དམ་པར་ཡོད་པ་ལ་ཐམས་ཅད་གྱི་ཐམས་ཅད་དུ་  
མེད་དོ་ཞེས་འཇིན་པ་ནི་སྐྱུར་འདེབས་སོ།།

And the act of discounting things then consists of holding the idea that this thing—which "exists ultimately," in a way which is "beyond all expression"—"does not, all in all, exist."

དེ་ལྟར་བྱས་ན་ཀུན་བརྟགས་དོན་དམ་པར་ཡོད་དོ། །ཞེས་པ་ནི་སྐྱོ་འདོགས་དང་ངོ་བོ་  
ཉིད་གཞན་གཉིས་དོན་དམ་པར་མེད་དོ་ཞེས་པ་ནི་སྐྱུར་འདེབས་ཡིན་ཏེ། དང་པོ་ཀུན་  
ཚོ་བ་དང་གཞན་གཉིས་དོན་དམ་པར་ཡོད་པའི་ཕྱིར་རོ།།

Given all this, concocting things is where you say, "Constructs exist ultimately"; and discounting things is something where you say, "The other two natures do not exist ultimately." This is because the first of the three actually only exists deceptively, whereas the other two exist ultimately.

དོན་དམ་པར་ཡོད་པ་ལ་མེད་པར་ལྟ་བསྐྱུར་འདེབས་སུ་བཤད་པའི་ལྟས་དངས་ན་དོན་  
དམ་པར་མེད་པ་ལ་ཡོད་པར་ལྟ་བ་སྐྱོ་འདོགས་སུ་བཤད་དགོས་ལ་སྐབས་འདིར་ཀུན་  
བརྟགས་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་ཡོད་པར་འཇིན་པ་ལ་སྐྱོ་འདོགས་སུ་གསུངས་ཀྱིས་  
དེ་དོན་དམ་པར་ཡོད་པར་འཇིན་པ་ཚིག་གིས་གསལ་བར་མ་བསྟན་ཀྱང་རང་གི་མཚན་  
ཉིད་ཀྱིས་ཡོད་ན་དོན་དམ་པར་ཡོད་པ་གཞུང་གི་དོན་ཡིན་པས་ཀུན་བརྟགས་དོན་དམ་  
པར་ཡོད་པ་སྐྱོ་འདོགས་སུ་འགྲོ་བའི་ཕྱོགས་སོ།།

If we explain discounting things as being the view that something which in actuality does exist ultimately doesn't exist at all, then it would seem that we'd have to explain concocting things as being the converse; that is, as the view that something which in actuality does not exist ultimately, does exist. The position stated at this point though is that concocting things consists of holding that constructs exist by definition—which means holding them to exist ultimately. So although it's not stated clearly in the actual wording, the point of the text here is that—if something exists by definition—then it exists ultimately. Holding that constructs exist ultimately then, according to this view, constitutes the act of concocting things.

དགོངས་འབྲེལ་ལས། ཀུན་བརྟགས་པའི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱི་གནས་འདུ་བྱེད་ཀྱི་མཚན་མ་  
ངོ་བོ་དང་བྱུང་པར་དུ་འདོགས་པའི་གཞི་གཞན་དབང་ལ་གསུངས་པས། གཞུང་  
འདིས་བརྟགས་པའི་ཚིག་གི་མཚན་མའི་གཞི་དོན་དམ་པར་ཡོད་པ་ལ་མིད་ཅེས་  
གསུངས་པའི་དངོས་བསྟན་གཞན་དབང་ཡིན་མོད་ཀྱང་། དེ་དོན་དམ་པར་མིད་ན་  
ཡོངས་གྲུབ་ཀྱང་དོན་དམ་དུ་མིད་པར་འགྱུར་བས་གཉིས་ཀ་ལ་བཤད་པ་ལ་སྐྱོན་མིད་  
དེ་...

Remember that the *Commentary on the True Intent* describes dependent things as "the object of the attribute of constructs; that which exhibits the typical features of a factor; and the object for applying constructs about the basic nature and the other features of a thing." We would have to admit, therefore, that when this text mentions holding that the "foundation, with the typical features, of the words used to make constructs" (something which in truth exists ultimately) doesn't exist, then what it is referring to explicitly is dependent things. There's no problem though if we say that the text is in effect speaking both of dependent things and totality, since—if dependent things were something that didn't exist ultimately—then totality would have to be something that didn't exist ultimately either.

“བྱུང་ས་ལས། གཞུགས་ལ་སོགས་པའི་ཚོས་རྣམས་ཀྱི་དངོས་པོ་ཅམ་ལ་སྐྱར་པ་  
འདེབས་པ་ལ་ནི་དེ་ཁོ་ན་ཡང་མིད་ལ་འདོགས་པ་ཡང་མིད་དེ་དེ་གཉིས་ཀ་ཡང་མི་  
དིགས་སོ། །ཞེས་གསུངས་པའི་ཕྱིར་ཉེ་དངོས་པོ་གཞན་དབང་ལ་སྐྱར་པ་འདེབས་  
རྒྱུ་ལ་ནི་ཐ་སྙད་དུ་མིད་དོ་ཞེས་པའམ་སྤྱིར་མིད་དོ་ཞེས་པ་མིན་གྱི་སྤར་གོང་དུ་དོན་དམ་  
པར་ཡོད་པ་ལ་མིད་ཅེས་པ་སྐྱར་འདེབས་སུ་གསུངས་པ་ལྟར་རོ། །

This idea is supported by the *Levels of the Bodhisattva*, where it says:

If you discount objects like physical matter and other such objects that are functional things in themselves, you are still relegating thusness as well to the realm of non-existence, and it too would be something that didn't exist at all. And both these views would be equally wrong.

Thus we can say that the way in which a person discounts functional things, dependent things, is not where they say "They don't exist in a normal way" or "They don't exist at all," but rather where they say, as described above, that something which does in fact exist ultimately does not.

གཉིས་པ་ནི། གལ་ཏེ་སྐྱུར་བྱེད་ཚུལ་དེ་ལྟར་ཡིན་ན་དེ་གཉིས་སྟོང་ཚུལ་ཇི་ལྟར་  
ཡིན་སྟུང་ན། དེ་ལ་སྐྱོ་འདོགས་ཀྱི་མཐའ་ནི་ཚོས་གང་ལ་ཡང་དེའི་ངོ་བོ་དང་ཁྱད་  
པར་དུ་བཏགས་པ་དེས་དེ་དོན་དམ་པར་སྟོང་པར་བསྟན་པས་འགོག་སྟེ་ཞིབ་ཏུ་འཆད་  
པར་འགྱུར་རོ།།

Here is the second point, on how we refute the views in which a person either concocts things or discounts things. One may begin with the following question:

If that's what it means to either concoct things or to discount things, how then do we avoid falling into these views?

The extreme of concocting things is prevented by demonstrating how any object you choose to take at all is devoid of having a construct about it (either one about its basic nature or one about its various features) that could exist ultimately. We will cover this in greater detail later on.

སྐྱུར་འདེབས་ནི་བྱང་ས་ལས། དེ་མ་ཐག་ཏུ་དྲངས་པའི་ལུང་དེ་དང་དེའི་རྗེས་ཐོགས་  
སུ་འདི་ལྟ་སྟེ་དཔེར་ན་གཟུགས་ལ་སོགས་པའི་ཡུང་པོ་རྣམས་ཡོད་ན་གང་ཟག་  
གདགས་སུ་རུང་གི་མེད་དུ་ཟེན་ན་ནི་དངོས་པོ་མེད་པ་ལ་གང་ཟག་གདགས་སུ་མེད་དོ།  
།དེ་བཞིན་དུ་གཟུགས་ལ་སོགས་པའི་ཚོས་རྣམས་ཀྱི་དངོས་པོ་ཅམ་ཡོད་ན་གཟུགས་ལ་  
སོགས་པའི་ཚོས་འདོགས་པའི་ཚིག་ཉི་བར་གདགས་སུ་རུང་གི་ །མེད་དུ་ཟེན་ན་  
དངོས་པོ་མེད་པ་ལ་གདགས་པའི་ཚིག་གིས་ཉི་བར་འདོགས་པ་མེད་དོ། །དེ་ལ་  
འདོགས་པའི་གཞི་མེད་དུ་ཟེན་ན་ནི་གཞི་མེད་པར་འགྱུར་བས་འདོགས་པ་ཡང་མེད་

པར་འགྲུར་རོ་ཞེས་གསུངས་པས་བཀག་གོ།

Preventing the view in which you discount things is accomplished through the following words of the *Levels of the Bodhisattva*:

The citation given just after that, and the one immediately subsequent, make the following point. If for example the various heaps of physical matter and the rest do exist, then it is appropriate for us to apply the construct of person to them. If however you believed that they did not exist, then we could never apply the construct of person to them, since one could hardly speak this way of something that was not a thing.

By the same token, whenever the objects of physical matter and the like—functional things in themselves—do exist, then it is appropriate for us to apply the labels of "physical matter" and such to them. If however one believed that they did not exist, then we could never apply a construct to them with some constructing kinds of words; they would be something that was not a thing. If one thus held that there existed no basis to apply a construct to, then—since there were no basis for construction—there would be no constructs either.

དེ་ལ་འདིར་སྐྱར་འདེབས་འགོག་པའི་ཕྱོགས་སྡུ་ཁས་ལེན་མཁན་ནི་གཞན་སྡེར་འོང་  
དོན་མེད་ལ་རང་སྡེ་ཡང་ཉན་ཐོས་སྡེ་པ་ལ་མིང་དང་བཅས་ཐ་སྙད་འདོགས་པའི་གཞིའི་  
གཟུགས་སོགས་ཀྱི་དངོས་པོ་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་མེད་ཅེས་ཁས་ལེན་པ་ཡང་མེད་  
དོ།

Who is the opponent in this case; who is it that would even accept the idea of discounting things that we are disproving here? There's no reason why it would be some non-Buddhist school, nor would it be one of the listener groups, since none of them would ever assert that the functional things of physical matter and the rest that provide the foundation for applying expressions—both in names and terms—did not exist by definition.

དེས་ན་བསྐྱུ་བ་ལས་བཤད་པ་ལྟར་ཐེག་པ་ཆེན་པོའི་བྱུང་མཐའ་སྐྱུ་བ་ཡིན་ལ་དེ་ཡང་

ཚོས་རྣམས་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་མ་གྲུབ་ཅིས་སྒྲིབ་པའི་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པར་སྒྲིབ་  
རྣམས་སོ།།

Therefore they are, as explained in the *Compendium*, a school that professes the tenets of the greater way; and are moreover the ones who assert that nothing that exists exists by definition. In short, we are talking about the "school that says nothing has any nature"; [that is, the Middle-Way School.]

དེ་དག་གིས་ནི་གཞན་དབང་ལ་སོགས་པའི་ཚོས་རྣམས་སྒྱིར་མི་སྲིད་པ་དང་ཐ་སྙད་དུ་  
མེད་ཅིས་འདོད་པ་གཏན་མིན་པས་དོན་དམ་པར་མ་གྲུབ་ཅིས་སྒྲིབ་པའོ།།

This school, by the way, in no way believes that the objects represented by dependent things and the like cannot exist, or that they do not exist in a nominal way. What they do say is that none of these things exists in an ultimate way.

དེས་ན་དངོས་པོ་ཅི་མེད་ན་ཞེས་འགོག་པ་ནི་སྒྲིབ་བཤད་པ་ལྟར་དོན་དམ་པར་ཡོད་  
པའི་ཡང་དག་གི་དངོས་པོ་མི་སྲིད་ཅིས་འགོག་པ་ཡིན་ཏེ། འདིའི་ལུགས་ཀྱིས་ཀུན་  
བརྟགས་ལ་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་མ་གྲུབ་པ་དང་དོན་དམ་པར་མེད་ན་མེད་མི་  
དགོས་ཀྱང་། ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་གཞན་གཉིས་དོན་དམ་པར་རམ་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་མ་  
གྲུབ་ན་མེད་པ་ཡིན་ནོ།།

Therefore the denial contained in the words "if functional things in themselves did not exist" is, as explained before, a denial of the idea that pure functional things, which do exist ultimately, could never exist. And this is true because, in this system, it is not the case that—just because they do not exist by definition and do not exist ultimately—constructs cannot exist at all. It is though the case here that if any of the other two natures were something that did not exist ultimately, or something that did not exist by definition, then they could not exist at all.

གཞན་དབང་སེམས་སེམས་བྱུང་རང་གི་རྒྱ་རྒྱུན་ལ་བརྟེན་ནས་སྒྱིབ་པའི་རང་གི་རང་



མཚན་གྱིས་གྲུབ་པའི་སྐྱེ་བ་ཡིན་ན་དོན་དམ་པའི་སྐྱེ་བར་འགྱུར་ལ། དེ་མིན་ན་སྐྱོས་  
སྐྱེ་བར་སྐྱོམས་ནས་སྐྱེ་འོ་ཞེས་བཏགས་པ་ཙམ་དུ་ཟད་གྱི་སེམས་སེམས་བྱུང་གི་དངོས་  
པོ་ལ་སྐྱེ་བ་ཡོད་པར་མི་འགྱུར་རོ་སྐྱམ་དུ་ལྷུགས་འདེས་བསམས་སོ།།

The way this system thinks about it is as follows. Consider the growing of several dependent things: mind and mental functions, arising as they do from their particular causes and conditions. If their growth is thus something that exists by definition, then it is an ultimate kind of growth. If this were not the case, then their growth would merely be something constructed in the mind, something where you just made it up in your own thoughts and said "they grow." And in this case, the growth of the functional things represented by mind and mental functions wouldn't be something that existed at all.

དེས་ན་གཞན་དབང་གི་སྐྱེ་འགག་སྐྱོ་འབྱུང་པས་སྐྱེ་འགག་ཏུ་ཞེན་པ་ཙམ་གྱི་ངོར་ཡིན་  
པས་ཀུན་རྫོབ་ཏུ་སྐྱེ་འགག་ཡོད་པས་སྐྱུར་འདེབས་སུ་མི་འགྱུར་རོ་ཞེས་པས་ལན་མི་  
ཐེབས་ཏེ།

Don't respond to us then by saying that—since the growing and stopping of dependent things is only something that exists to a mistaken state of mind which is imagining that things are growing and stopping—growing and stopping are things that exist, in a deceptive way; and that therefore there is no discounting of these things occurring here.

ཐག་པ་ལ་སྐྱུལ་དུ་ཞེན་པའི་འབྱུང་ངོར་ཐག་པ་སྐྱུལ་ཡིན་ལ་སྐྱིར་ཐག་པ་སྐྱུལ་དུ་གྲུབ་  
མ་སྐྱོང་ཞེས་པ་དང་འདྲ་བར་གཞན་དབང་གི་རྐྱེ་འབྱས་ཀྱང་རྐྱེ་འབྱས་བདེན་འཛིན་གྱི་  
འབྱུང་ངོར་རྐྱེ་འབྱས་ཡིན་གྱི། གཞན་དབང་ཁོ་རང་རྐྱེ་འབྱས་སུ་མ་གྲུབ་ཅིས་འདོད་  
ན་ནི་དེ་འདྲ་ཁས་སྒྲངས་ཀྱང་དགོ་སྲིད་ལས་བདེ་སྐྱུག་སྐྱེ་བའི་ལས་འབྱས་གཞག་ས་  
མིད་པར་སོང་བས་སྐྱུར་འདེབས་སྐྱོང་མི་རུས་ལ།

Suppose you said something like "A rope is a snake to a mistaken state of mind which is imagining the rope to be a snake, but generally speaking there's never been a rope that was a snake." This is exactly what you're saying here

too: "The causes and effects involved in dependent things are causes and effects to a mistaken state of mind, to the state of mind in which you hold causes and effects to exist truly, but they are not causes and effects for dependent things as such." You may say this is what you believe, but it doesn't release you from the charge of discounting things; there is no way then you can set forth the laws of karma and its consequences: the fact that pleasure and pain, respectively, come from good and bad deeds.

དེ་འདྲ་མིན་པའི་རྒྱ་འབྲས་འདོད་ན་ནི་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་གྲིས་གྲུབ་པའི་རྒྱ་འབྲས་ཡིན་  
པས་དོན་དམ་པར་ཡོད་པའི་དོན་གྲུབ་པ་ཡིན་ནོ་སྟེ་མ་དུ་བསམས་ནས། གདགས་  
གཞི་མིད་ན་འདོགས་པ་ཡང་མིད་པས་ཚོས་ཐམས་ཅད་བཏགས་པ་ཅམ་ཡིན་པ་དང་དེ་  
ཉིད་དེ་ཁོ་ནའི་དོན་དུ་བྱེད་པ་གཉིས་ཀ་མི་སྲིད་པས་ཆད་ལྟའི་གཙོ་བོར་འགྱུར་རོ་ཞེས་  
བཤད་དེ།

And if you believe in the other kind of cause and effect, they think in this school, then it has to be cause and effect which exists by definition, and which is then something which exists ultimately. They say therefore that—since if there's no constructing if there's nothing to apply the construct to—then neither of these two ideas could ever be true: that every existing object is simply a construct of the mind, and that this is the point behind the meaning of thusness. They would therefore explain these ideas as being the most dangerous of all versions of the viewpoint that everything must have stopped altogether.

བྱུང་ས་ལས། དེ་བས་ན་གང་ཟག་ཁ་ཅིག་ཤེས་པར་དཀའ་བའི་མདོ་སྡེ་ཐེག་པ་ཆེན་པོ་  
དང་ལྷན་པ་ཟབ་མོ་སྟོང་པ་ཉིད་དང་ལྷན་པ་དགོངས་པའི་དོན་བསྟན་པ་དག་ཐོས་ནས་  
བཤད་པའི་དོན་ཡང་དག་པ་ཇི་ལྟ་བ་བཞིན་དུ་མ་ཤེས་ནས་རྩལ་བཞིན་མ་ཡིན་པར་  
རྣམ་པར་བཏགས་ཏེ་རིགས་པ་མ་ཡིན་པས་བསྐྱེད་པའི་རྟོག་པ་ཅམ་གྲིས་འདི་ཐམས་  
ཅད་ནི་བཏགས་པ་ཅམ་དུ་ཟད་དེ། འདི་ནི་དེ་ཁོ་ན་ཡིན་ནོ་སུ་འདི་ལྟར་ལྟ་བ་དེ་ནི་ཡང་  
དག་པར་ལྟ་བ་ཡིན་ནོ་ཞེས་དེ་ལྟར་ལྟ་ཞིང་དེ་རྐྱད་སྟོལ།

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant  
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As the *Levels of the Bodhisattvas* says,

As such there are certain people who, first of all, listened to these sutras—difficult to grasp as they are; sutras which are tied to the greater way, and which describe the true intent of that profound object, emptiness. But they failed to understand the points explained in these sutras properly, correctly. And then they made up something, they got some idea that was inspired by wrong reasoning, and said that all these things were nothing more than something constructed by the mind. Then they went on and explained this as the meaning of thusness. So the ones we are talking about are anyone who says that seeing things this way is the right way to see things; anyone who actually thinks this way, and anyone who teaches it this way.

དེ་དག་གི་ལྟར་ན་འདོགས་པའི་གཞིའི་དངོས་པོ་ཙམ་ཡང་མེད་པས་འདོགས་པ་དེ་ཉིད་  
ཀྱང་ཐམས་ཅད་གྱི་ཐམས་ཅད་དུ་མེད་པར་འགྱུར་ན་གདགས་པ་ཙམ་གྱི་དེ་ལོ་ན་ལྟ་  
ཡོད་པར་ག་ལ་འགྱུར་ཏེ། དེ་བས་ན་རྣམ་གྲངས་དེས་ན་དེ་དག་གིས་ནི་དེ་ལོ་ན་དང་  
བཏགས་པ་དེ་གཉིས་ཀ་ལ་ཡང་སྐྱར་པ་བཏབ་པར་འགྱུར་ཏེ། བཏགས་པ་དང་དེ་ལོ་  
ན་ལ་སྐྱར་བ་བཏབ་པས་ན་མེད་པར་ལྟ་བའི་གཙོ་བོ་ཡིན་པར་རིག་པར་བྱའོ་ཞེས་  
གསུངས་ཤིང་།

According to them, not even the very foundation to which we apply our constructs — functional things in themselves — is something that exists. And constructing itself then would be something that didn't, all in all, exist either. How on earth then could suchness, in the form of everything being a construct, exist either? As such those who purport this idea are, according to their own beliefs, guilty of discounting both thusness and the idea of constructs. And you should understand that—since their viewpoint is one which discounts both the idea of concepts and thusness—it is the most dangerous of all those views that nothing exists.

དེ་ལ་དགོངས་ནས་གང་ཟག་ཏུ་ལྟ་བ་ནི་སྒྲིའི་སྟོང་ཉིད་ལ་ལོག་པར་ཟེན་པ་དེ་ནི་དེ་ལྟ་

མིན་ནོ་ཞེས་གསུངས་ཏེ། ལྷ་མ་ནི་ཤེས་བྱ་ལ་སྤོངས་པ་ཅམ་ཡིན་གྱི་ཤེས་བྱ་ཐམས་  
ཅད་ལ་སྐྱར་པ་མི་འདེབས་ཤིང་གཞི་དེས་དཔྱུལ་བར་མི་སྐྱེ་ལ། གཞན་ཚོས་འདོད་པ་  
ཡང་སྤང་བར་མི་བྱེད་བསྐྱབ་པའི་གཞི་ལ་ཡང་གཡེལ་བར་མི་འགྱུར་ལ། ལྷ་མ་ནི་དེ་  
དག་ལས་བརྗོད་པར་འགྱུར་བས་སོ་ཞེས་བྱང་ས་ལས་གསུངས་སོ།།

It's with this fact in mind that the *Levels of the Bodhisattvas* has said that:

It's been said that "believing in a self-existent person is no problem compared to having a wrong idea about emptiness." The point here is that the former is simply a lack of awareness about knowable things; it does not represent a view in which you discount every knowable object—it is not an act that would throw you to a birth in the hell realms. The other kind of view is not one which would destroy your spiritual aspirations; nor is it one which would cause you to stray from the foundation of the rules. The latter though functions in the exact opposite way.

དེ་ལྟར་བྱས་ན་གང་ལ་གང་མེད་པ་དེ་ནི་དེས་སྤོང་ཞིང་ལྷ་གམ་གང་ཡིན་པ་དེ་ནི་ཡོད་  
པ་ཡིན་ལ་དེ་ལྟར་མཐོང་བ་ནི་སྤོང་ཉིད་ལ་སྐྱེན་ཅི་མ་ལོག་པར་ལྷགས་པ་ཡིན་ཏེ།

As such, we can say that whatever a thing lacks, that thing is empty of; and whatever's left over is something that exists. And when you see things this way, it means that you are engaged in an unerring understanding of emptiness.

གཟུགས་ལ་སོགས་པའི་དངོས་པོ་རྣམས་དེ་དག་ཏུ་ཚིག་གིས་བཏགས་པའི་ངོ་བོས་  
སྤོང་པ་ནི་ཚིག་སྐྱ་མའི་དོན་ཡིན་ལ། ལྷ་གམ་ཡོད་པ་ནི་གདགས་གཞིའི་དངོས་པོ་  
ཅམ་དང་འདོགས་པ་ཅམ་ཡོད་པར་བྱང་ས་ལས་གསུངས་ཏེ། གང་གིས་སྤོང་པ་ནི་  
ཀུན་བཏགས་དང་གང་སྤོང་པའི་གཞི་གཞན་དབང་དང་སྐྱ་མས་སྐྱི་མ་སྤོང་པའི་སྤོང་པ་  
ཡོངས་བྱུང་ཡིན་ལ་དེ་དག་གི་ཡོད་མེད་ཀྱི་དོན་ནི་སྐྱར་བཤད་པ་ལྟར་རོ།།

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Reading Seven

The meaning of the first part of the statement just given, says the *Levels of the Bodhisattvas*, is that all functional things—physical matter and the rest—are devoid or empty of any essential nature of being constructed by words. "Whatever's left over is something that exists" refers to the existence of those functional things in themselves which act as the foundation to which constructs are applied, and the constructing itself. The thing which things are empty of is constructs; the basis or object which is empty is dependent things; and the fact that the latter is empty of the former is totality. Saying that these things either do or do not exist has the meaning described before.

དེ་ལྟར་སྣོད་འདོགས་ཀྱི་མཐའ་སྤངས་པས་ནི་ཡོད་པའི་མཐའ་དང་སྐྱར་འདོགས་སྤངས་  
པས་མེད་པའི་མཐའ་སྤངས་པས་གཉིས་སུ་མེད་པར་རབ་ཏུ་བྱ་བ་ཡང་ཡིན་ཞིང་།

When you are able to avoid this extreme view of concocting things, then you are able to avoid the extreme view of "thinking that things exist." When you are able to avoid the extreme view of discounting things, then you are able to avoid the extreme view of "thinking that things don't exist." And then you will have also delineated "indivisibility" [or emptiness].

འདི་འདྲ་བའི་སྣོད་ཉིད་ནི་དོན་དམ་པའི་མཐའ་བྱུག་ཏུ་བཤད་དེ། བྱང་ས་ལས་དངོས་  
པོ་སྣ་མ་གང་ཡིན་པ་དང་དངོས་པོ་མེད་པ་འདི་གཉིས་ཀྱི་ཡོད་པ་དང་མེད་པ་ལས་རྣམ་  
པར་གྲོལ་བའི་ཚོས་ཀྱི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་བསྐྱུས་པའི་དངོས་པོ་དེ་ནི་གཉིས་སུ་མེད་པ་  
ཡིན་ནོ། །གཉིས་སུ་མེད་པ་གང་ཡིན་པ་དེ་ནི་དབྱུ་མའི་ལམ་མཐའ་གཉིས་སྤངས་པ་  
སྣ་ན་མེད་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་སྟེ་ཞེས་སོ། །

And it is just this kind of emptiness which is explained as being the final form of the ultimate: the *Levels of the Bodhisattva* says that—

"Indivisibility" is that object which is incorporated in the nature of phenomena which is free of the existence and lack of existence of the two: of the object of the former thing [of concocting things] and of asserting that things don't exist [of discounting things]. And this kind of indivisibility is what we call the "matchless" object of the path of the middle way, the way which avoids both the extremes.

**The Asian Classics Institute**  
**Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant**

**Reading Eight: On the Meaning of "Ultimate" and "Deceptive"  
Reality**

*The following selection is taken from the Essence of Eloquence, a Classical Commentary on Distinguishing between the Figurative and the Literal (Drang-ba dang nges-pa'i don rnam-par 'byed-pa'i bstan-bcos Legs-bshad snying-po), by Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419); ff. 18a-21a in the ACIP digital edition (catalog number S5396), and pp. 44-51 in the ACIP Indian paper edition. The translation is based upon an oral teaching of the text by Geshe Tupten Rinchen of Sera Mey Tibetan Monastery. Please note that Je Tsongkapa's root text is extremely difficult, and is best studied with the accompanying ACI tapes.*

གཉིས་པ་ལ་གཉིས། ལྷོགས་སྣ་མ་དགོད་ཅིང་དེའི་དོན་ལ་དྲིས་ལན་བྱ་བ་དང་། ལན་  
བཏབ་པའི་ལྷོགས་དགག་པའོ།།

Here next is how the *Compendium* explains the point of how to avoid the two extremes. We proceed in three steps: a presentation of the opponent position, some questions and answers concerning this position, and a refutation of these answers.

དང་པོ་ནི། བསྐྱུ་བ་ལས། ཐེག་པ་ཆེན་པོ་པ་ལ་ལ་རང་གིས་ཉེས་པར་བརྒྱུང་བས་འདི་  
སྐད་ཅེས་ཀུན་རྫོབ་ཏུ་ནི་ཐམས་ཅད་ཡོད་ལ་དོན་དམ་པར་ནི་ཐམས་ཅད་མེད་དོ་ཞེས་  
ཟེར་རོ། ཞེས་གསུངས་ཏེ། ཆོས་ཀུན་དོན་དམ་པར་ནི་མེད་ལ་ཐ་སྐད་དུ་ཡོད་པའོ་  
ཞེས་སྐྱེ་བའི་དབུ་མ་པ་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་ཆོས་རྣམས་ཀྱི་ཡོད་མེད་ཀྱི་བྱུང་པར་སྤྱོད་བ་བརྗོད་  
པའོ།།

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Reading Eight

Here is the first. The *Compendium* includes a section that says:

Some followers of the greater way, intent on continuing to hold to their errors, make this claim:

In a deceptive way, it is true that all things exist.  
Ultimately though nothing exists.

These are the followers of the Middle Way, who speak of some distinction between different ways in which all things both do exist and don't exist, saying, "No single existing thing exists ultimately; and every one of them does exist nominally."

དེ་ནས་དེ་ལ་འདི་སྐད་ཅེས་ཚེ་དང་ལྷན་པ་དོན་དམ་པ་ནི་གང་ཡིན་ཀུན་རྫོབ་ནི་གང་  
ཡིན་ཞེས་བརྗོད་པར་བྱའོ།།

And when they say this we reply to them with the following question:

Then we ask you, venerable sirs, what does it mean to be "ultimate"? And what does it mean to be "deceptive"?

དེ་སྐད་དེས་པ་ན་གལ་ཏེ་འདི་སྐད་ཅེས་ཚེས་ཐམས་ཅད་ཀྱི་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་གང་ཡིན་  
པ་དེ་ནི་དོན་དམ་པ་ཡིན་ལ། ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པའི་ཚེས་དེ་དག་ལ་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་དུ་དམིགས་  
པ་གང་ཡིན་པ་དེ་ནི་ཀུན་རྫོབ་ཡིན་ནོ།།

And suppose they answer like this—

"Ultimate" refers to that thing which is the lack of a self-nature that every existing object exhibits. "Deceptive" refers to that thing which is the tendency to see all these objects—which in truth have no nature of their own—as having some nature of their own.

དེ་ཅིའི་ཕྱིར་ཞེ་ན། འདི་ལྟར་དེ་ནི་ཡོད་པ་མ་ཡིན་པ་དག་ལ་ཀུན་རྫོབ་ཏུ་བྱེད་པ་དང་

འདོགས་པ་དང་མངོན་པར་བརྗོད་པ་དང་ཐ་སྐད་དུ་བྱེད་པའི་སྲིད་རོ་ཞེས་ལན་འདེབས་  
པར་གྱུར་ན། ཞེས་པ་ནི་བདེན་གཉིས་གང་ཡིན་དྲིས་ནས་དེའི་ལན་བཏབ་པ་སྲོགས་  
སྲར་མཛད་པའོ།།

And why is that? Because this tendency focuses on things that don't even exist and creates a deception, and makes up something, and declares something to be, and creates an expression.

This would describe how our opponents would answer if you asked them what the two truths were.

དེ་ལ་འདྲིར་དོན་དམ་གང་ཡིན་དྲིས་པ་ནི་དོན་དམ་བདེན་པའི་མཚན་གཞི་དྲིས་པ་ཡིན་  
གྱི་དོན་དམ་པར་མེད་ཅེས་པའི་ཇི་འདྲ་ཞེས་ཏུ་མེད་པས་དོན་དམ་དུ་མེད་པའི་མེད་ས་  
དྲིས་པ་མིན་ཏེ། གཞན་དུ་ན་ཚོས་རྣམས་ཀྱི་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་དོན་དམ་མོ་ཞེས་སྒྲིབ་  
མི་རིགས་ཏེ། དབྱུ་མ་པས་དོན་དམ་དུ་འདོད་པའི་ཚོས་ཀྱི་བདག་མེད་དུ་ཡོད་པས་དོན་  
དམ་དུ་ཡོད་པར་མི་འཇོག་པའི་སྲིད་རོ།།

Here the question that is posed—"What does 'ultimate' mean?"—is one in which we are asking for a typical example of ultimate truth. It is not though a question about the "ultimate" that we say doesn't exist when we say that nothing existing ultimately; not a question about how something isn't. If it were, then it would be a mistake to answer that "ultimate" referred to the fact that no existing thing has a self-nature; and this is because, when those of the Middle Way say that something exists "as the ultimate," meaning "as the lack of self-existence exhibited by all things," this is not at all what they mean when they talk about something that could exist ultimately.

ཀུན་རྗོབ་གང་ཡིན་དྲིས་པ་ཡང་ཀུན་རྗོབ་བདེན་པ་ཞེས་པ་གང་གི་ངོར་བདེན་པ་འཇོག་  
པའི་ཀུན་རྗོབ་དྲིས་པ་ཡིན་གྱི་ཐ་སྐད་དུ་ཡོད་པའི་ཡོད་སའི་ཐ་སྐད་དེ་གང་ཡིན་ཞེས་  
དྲིས་པ་མིན་ཏེ། གཞན་དུ་ན་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ལ་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་དུ་འཇོག་པ་ཀུན་རྗོབ་བོ་



ཞེས་སྒྲིབ་མི་རིགས་ཏེ། དེ་ནི་བདེན་འཛིན་ཡིན་པས་དེའི་ཞེན་ཡུལ་ཐ་སྙད་དུ་ཡང་  
མེད་པར་དབྱེ་མ་པས་འདོད་པའི་སྤྱིར་ཏེ་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་ཅེས་པའི་མེད་སྤྱིའི་ངོ་བོ་ནི་  
བདེན་པའི་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་ལ་བྱུང་གོས་པའི་སྤྱིར་རོ།།

The question about "What does it mean to be 'deceptive'?" is as well a question about the state of mind to which something can be established as what we call "deceptive truth"; it is not a question about the "nominal" we speak of when we say that things exist "nominally." If it were, then it would be incorrect to speak of the "deceptive" where you hold that things have some nature of their own when—in fact—they have no such nature. Remember, this is the tendency to hold things as being true: and those of the Middle Way would say that the thing it believes in doesn't even have any nominal existence. And this is because, when you speak of things "not having any self-nature," the self-nature that you say things don't have has to be referring to a kind of self-nature which is absent: to a self-nature that existed truly.

གཉིས་པ་ལ་གཉིས། གཞན་གྱི་གྲུབ་མཐའ་ལ་འགལ་བ་བསྟན་པ་དང་། རང་གི་གྲུབ་  
མཐའ་ལ་འགལ་བ་སྤང་བའོ།།

Here secondly are some questions and answers concerning the position stated. We begin with a demonstration of inconsistencies in the other school's positions, and go on to a demonstration that our own positions are free of any inconsistency.

དང་པོ་ནི། དེ་ལ་ཐོག་མར་ཀུན་རྫོབ་གྱི་ངོས་འཛིན་འགོག་པ་ནི་བསྟུ་བ་ལས། དེ་ལ་  
འདི་སྐད་ཅེས་བརྗོད་པར་བྱ་སྟེ་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་དུ་དམིགས་པ་དེ་མངོན་པར་བརྗོད་པ་དང་ཀུན་  
རྫོབ་གྱི་རྒྱུ་ལས་བྱུང་བ་ཡིན་པར་འདོད་དམ། འོན་ཏེ་མངོན་པར་བརྗོད་པ་དང་ཀུན་  
རྫོབ་ཅམ་ཞིག་ཡིན་པར་འདོད།

Here is the first. This next section starts with a refutation of how the other school has identified the idea of the "deceptive." On this point, the *Compendium* says:

And then we would say to them the following:

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Consider this tendency to see things as having some nature of their own. Are you asserting that it is something which comes from certain causes which are a "declaration" and which are deceptive? Or are you asserting that it is something which is a declaration itself, or a deceptive object itself?

གཤམ་ཉི་མངོན་པར་བརྗོད་པ་དང་ཀུན་རྫོབ་ཀྱི་རྒྱ་ལས་བྱུང་བ་ཡིན་ན་ནི་དེས་ན་མངོན་  
པར་བརྗོད་པ་དང་ཀུན་རྫོབ་ཀྱི་རྒྱ་ལས་བྱུང་བ་ཡིན་པས་ཡོད་པ་མ་ཡིན་ནོ་ཞེས་བྱུར་མི་  
རུང་ངོ་།།

If your answer is that it is something which comes from certain cases which are a "declaration" and which are deceptive, then it would be wrong for you to state that "Because it is something which comes from certain causes which are a declaration and which are deceptive, it is not something which exists."

གཤམ་ཉི་མངོན་པར་བརྗོད་པ་དང་ཀུན་རྫོབ་ཅམ་ཞིག་ཡིན་ན་ནི་དེས་ན་གཞི་མེད་པར་  
མངོན་པར་བརྗོད་པ་དང་ཀུན་རྫོབ་ཅེས་བྱུར་མི་རུང་ངོ་ཞེས་གསུངས་སོ།།

And if your answer is that it is a declaration itself, a deceptive object itself, then since there would be nothing to call them we could never even speak of something being a "declaration" or "deceptive."

དེའི་དོན་ནི་འདི་ཡིན་ཉེ་དོན་དམ་པར་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ལ་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་ཡོད་དོ་སྐྱེམ་དུ་  
འཇོན་པའི་ཀུན་རྫོབ་དེ་ནང་གི་མངོན་པར་བརྗོད་པར་ཡང་འགྱུར་ལ་དེའི་ཚོ་རང་གི་  
རིགས་འདྲ་སྲུ་མའི་རྒྱས་བསྐྱེད་པ་ཡིན་ནམ། ཀུན་རྫོབ་པ་དང་མངོན་པར་བརྗོད་པའི་  
ནམ་རྟོག་གིས་བཏགས་པ་ཅམ་ཞིག་ཡིན།

Here is the meaning of the citation. Consider the deceptive which focusses on things which ultimately have no nature of their own and thinks to itself "they

do have some nature of their own." It too becomes a declaration within you—and when it does, the question is whether it is something which has grown out of a similar, previous case; or whether it is something which is merely constructed by ideas which are deceptive and declarations.

དང་པོ་ལྟར་ན་རྒྱུས་བསྐྱེད་པས་ཡོད་པ་མིན་ཞེས་པ་མི་རུང་ཞེས་པ་ནི་དོན་དམ་པར་  
ཡོད་པ་མིན་ཞེས་པ་ཡིན་ཏེ་འདིར་དོན་དམ་དུ་ཡོད་མེད་ཚུད་པའི་སྐབས་ཡིན་པའི་  
ཕྱིར་དང་། པ་དོལ་པོས་དོན་དམ་དུ་མེད་པར་ཁས་སྐྱེས་ཀྱི་སྤྱིར་མེད་ཅེས་མ་སྐྱེས་  
པའི་ཕྱིར་རོ།།

Suppose you say that the first is the case. The part about "It would be wrong to state that, because it is something which comes from certain causes, it is not something which exists" means "it is not something which exists ultimately," since in the context here the argument is over whether or not things exist ultimately, and because the opponent has never said that, in general, nothing exists—but rather accepts the position that nothing exists ultimately.

གཉིས་པ་ལྟར་ན་རྟོག་པས་བཏགས་པ་ཅམ་དུ་མི་རུང་སྟེ། འདོགས་པའི་གཞི་མེད་  
པའི་ཕྱིར་ཏེ་ཀུན་རྫོབ་དང་མངོན་པར་བརྗོད་པ་རྟོག་པས་བཏགས་ཅམ་ཡིན་ན་གཞན་  
རྣམས་ཀྱང་དེ་ཅམ་དུ་འགྱུར་བའི་ཕྱིར་རོ།།

Suppose you say that the second is the way it is; in this case then it would be wrong to say that things were just constructs of our projections. And this would be true because there would nothing to which they could refer: if the deceptive and declaration were merely constructs of our projections, then the rest would become that way as well.

དོན་དམ་པའི་ངོས་འཛིན་འགོག་པ་ནི་དེ་ཉིད་ལས། དེ་ལ་འདི་སྐད་ཅེས་ཚེ་དང་ལྡན་པ་  
ཅིའི་ཕྱིར་ན་གང་དམིགས་པ་དེ་མེད་པ་ཡིན་ཞེས་ཀྱང་བརྗོད་པར་བྱའོ། །དེ་སྐད་ཅེས་  
བྲིས་པ་ན་གལ་ཏེ་དེ་འདི་སྐད་ཅེས་ཕྱིན་ཅི་ལོག་གི་དངོས་པོ་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར་རོ་ཞེས་ལན་  
འདེབས་པར་གྱུར་ན། དེ་ལ་འདི་སྐད་ཅེས་བརྗོད་པར་བྱ་སྟེ་ཕྱིན་ཅི་ལོག་དེ་ཡོད་པར་

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འདོད་དམ་འོན་ཏེ་མིད་པར་འདོད།

Here next is the refutation of how the other school has identified the idea of the "ultimate." On this, the same work states:

And then we say to them,

And why is it, venerable sirs, that what we see  
doesn't exist?

And suppose they answer like this—

Because it is something which is mistaken.

We would then continue on and ask them:

Are you asserting that this mistaken thing is  
something which exists, or is it something which  
does not exist?

གཤམ་ཏེ་ཡོད་ན་ནི་དེས་ན་ཚོས་ཐམས་ཅད་ཀྱི་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ཉིད་ནི་དོན་དམ་པའོ་  
ཞེས་བྱར་མི་རུང་ངོ། །གཤམ་ཏེ་མེད་ན་ནི་དེས་ན་ཕྱིན་ཅི་ལོག་གི་དངོས་པོ་ཡིན་པའི་  
ཕྱིར་གང་དམིགས་པ་དེ་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་དོ་ཞེས་བྱར་མི་རུང་ངོ། །ཞེས་གསུངས་སོ། །

If you say that it does exist, then it would be wrong  
for you to say that "the fact that no existing thing  
has any nature of its own is the ultimate." If you  
say that it does not exist, then it would be wrong  
for you to say that "because it is something which  
is mistaken, what it sees doesn't have any nature of  
its own."

དེའི་དོན་ནི་ཚོས་འདི་དག་ལ་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་བྱུང་པའི་རང་མཚན་དམིགས་  
བཞིན་དུ་དེ་མེད་ཅེས་ཇི་ལྟར་རིགས་ཏེ། དེ་ལ་ནི་དེ་ལྟར་དམིགས་པའི་ཚད་མས་  
གཞོན་པའི་ཕྱིར་རོ། །

The point being expressed here is the following:

How could it ever be correct to say—even as you observe examples of things which exist by definition—that they don't? This is disproved by our own valid perception that these same things exist in this very way.

གཤམ་ཉི་དེ་ལྟར་དམིགས་པའི་སྒོ་ས་མི་གཞོན་དེ་སྒོ་དེ་ཉིད་འབྲུལ་པའི་དངོས་པོ་ཡིན་  
པའི་ཕྱིར་རོ། །ཞེ་ན།

And suppose you say that "our position is not disproved by a state of mind which sees things this way, for it is itself a mistaken thing."

འོ་ན་འབྲུལ་པ་དེ་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་ཡོད་ན་ནི་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་དོན་དམ་དུ་མི་  
རུང་ལ། མེད་ན་ནི་འབྲུལ་པའི་ཕྱིར་དམིགས་ཀྱང་མེད་དོ། །ཞེས་པ་དེ་མི་འཐད་དོ། །

Our answer then would be,

Well now, if this mistaken thing is itself something which exists by definition, then it would be wrong to say that the fact that nothing has its own nature is what the "ultimate" refers to. And if on the other hand it didn't exist, then it would be incorrect to say "Because it is mistaken, then what it sees doesn't exist."

འདིར་ཡང་དོན་དམ་དུ་ཡོད་མེད་ཀྱི་བརྟག་པ་བྱ་དགོས་མོད་ཀྱང་དོན་འདྲ་ཞིང་བརྟག་  
པ་སྒྲ་མ་གོ་སྒྲ་བས་དེ་ལྟར་བཤད་དོ། །

We should admittedly in this case too go through the exercise of examining whether we are talking about existing or not existing, or doing so ultimately; but because the meaning is the same and because the point is easily understood from the previous examination, the section is written this way.

དེ་ལྟར་ན་འདིར་ཀུན་བརྟགས་དང་ཡོངས་བྱུང་གཉིས་དོན་དམ་པར་མེད་ཅིང་ཐ་སྐད་དུ་

ཡོད་པ་ལ་སྐྱོན་མ་བསྟན་པར་ཀུན་རྫོབ་པའི་ཤེས་པ་དང་འབྲུལ་པའི་ཤེས་པ་དོན་དམ་  
པར་ཡོད་མེད་ལ་བརྟགས་ནས་སྐྱོན་བསྟན་པ་ནི། གཞན་དབང་དོན་དམ་པར་མེད་ལ་  
ཀུན་རྫོབ་ཏུ་ཡོད་པ་བཀག་པ་ཡིན་ཏེ། འདི་ཉིད་ཡོངས་གྲུབ་ཀྱི་ཚེས་ཅན་དང་ཀུན་  
བརྟགས་ཀྱི་འདོགས་པ་པོ་དང་གདགས་གཞི་ཡིན་པས་མཁས་པ་རྣམས་གཙོ་བོར་འདི་  
ཉིད་དོན་དམ་པར་ཡོད་མེད་ལ་རྩོད་པ་ཡིན་ཞོ།།

Consider the fact that, in this particular citation, no statement is made criticizing the idea that the pair of constructs and totality are not things which exist ultimately, but do exist nominally. The criticism is rather made through examining the question of whether a deceptive state of mind, and a mistaken state of mind, exist ultimately or not. The point of this approach is to refute the idea that dependent things could be something which did not exist ultimately, but which did exist deceptively. These dependent things are the things that exhibit the quality of totality; they are the ones that apply the constructs; and they too are what the constructs are applied to. And so these are what real thinkers take, primarily, as their subject when they argue about whether things exist ultimately or not.

གཞན་ཡང་བསྟན་བཤམས། དེ་ལ་གཞན་གྱི་དབང་གི་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་དང་ཡོངས་སུ་གྲུབ་པ་  
ལ་ཀུན་བརྟགས་པའི་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་ཏུ་མངོན་པར་ཞེན་པ་གང་ཡིན་པ་དེ་ནི་སྐྱོ་འདོགས་པའི་  
མཐའ་ཡིན་པར་རིག་པར་བྱའོ་ཞེས་དང་།

Moreover, the *Compendium* says:

You should understand that any tendency where you focus on the nature known as "dependent things" and the nature known as "totality" and imagine them to be the nature known as "constructs" constitutes the extreme view of concocting things.

སྐྱར་པ་འདེབས་པའི་མཐའ་ནི་གཞན་གྱི་དབང་གི་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་དང་ཡོངས་སུ་གྲུབ་པའི་ངོ་  
བོ་ཉིད་ཡོད་པ་ལ་མེད་དོ་ཞེས་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ལ་སྐྱར་པ་འདེབས་པ་གང་ཡིན་པ་སྟེ་

དེ་ལྟར་མཐའ་གཉིས་རྣམ་པར་སྤངས་པའི་ཚུལ་གྱིས་དེ་ཁོ་ནའི་དོན་གྱི་ཚུལ་ཁོང་དུ་  
ཚུད་པར་བྱའོ།།

And the extreme view of discounting things consists of any tendency where you focus on the nature known as "dependent things" and the nature known as "totality"—things that actually do exist—and say that they don't; this is discounting all those things which exist by definition. And so it is that you must come to a grasp of the actual meaning of thusness: by means of avoiding these two extreme views.

ཞེས་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་ཐ་མ་གཉིས་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་གྱིས་ཡོད་པ་ལ་དེར་མ་གྲུབ་བོ་ཞེས་པ་  
རང་མཚན་ལ་སྐྱར་འདེབས་སུ་གསུངས་ཏེ། བྱང་ས་དང་འདི་གཉིས་སྒོ་སྐྱར་གྱི་  
མཐའ་དང་དེ་སྒོང་ཚུལ་གཅིག་གོ། །

The point of this citation is that—when you focus on the first and final two of the three natures, on the two that exist by definition, and say that they do not exist this way—then you are discounting all the actual examples of things that exist by definition. This text and the *Levels of the Bodhisattva* are exactly the same on the question of what the extreme views of concocting things and discounting things consist of, and on how we go about avoiding them.

ཀུན་བརྟགས་མེད་པ་ཡང་དོན་དམ་དུ་ཡིན་གི་ཐ་སྐད་དུ་མེད་པ་མིན་ཏེ། བསྐྱེད་པ་ལས།  
མངོན་པར་རྟོག་པ་དེ་དག་མིང་གང་དང་མངོན་པར་བརྗོད་པ་གང་གིས་རྣམ་པར་  
འཇོག་པ་དེའི་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་ཡིན་པར་བརྗོད་པར་བྱའམ་འོན་ཏེ་དེའི་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མ་ཡིན་པར་  
བརྗོད་པར་བྱ་ཞེ་ན། སྐྱུ་ས་པ། ཐ་སྐད་ལས་ནི་དེའི་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་ཡིན་པར་བརྗོད་པར་  
བྱའོ།། དོན་དམ་པར་ནི་དེའི་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མ་ཡིན་པར་བརྗོད་པར་བྱའོ། །ཞེས་དང་།

When we say that constructs don't exist we're talking about constructs that exist ultimately, not those that exist nominally. As the *Compendium* says,

One may ask the following question:

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Consider constructed ideas, whether they are put together with names or with verbalizations. Are you saying that they have some existing nature, or are you rather saying that they have no existing nature?

And we answer with the following:

What we are saying is that—from a nominal point of view—they do have an existing nature. And what we are saying is that—ultimately speaking—they have no existing nature.

དེ་ལ་མངོན་པར་བརྗོད་པ་ལ་ཡོངས་སུ་གོམས་པའི་མིང་ལ་བརྟེན་པའི་རྣམ་པར་ཤེས་  
པའི་དམིགས་པ་ཀུན་བརྟགས་པའི་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་གང་ཡིན་པ་དེ་ནི་ཞེས་གསུངས་ནས་འདི་  
ལྟར་དེ་ནི་བརྟགས་པའི་ཡོད་པ་ཡིན་གྱི་དོན་དམ་པར་ཡོད་པ་མ་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར་རོ་ཞེས་  
གསུངས་སོ།།

It also speaks of "that thing which is the nature that we call 'constructs': the object of that consciousness which relies on names coming from a state of habituation with the declarations"; and then goes on to say that "these do have a constructed existence, but are not things that exist ultimately."

དེས་ན་བདག་གཉིས་གྱི་ཀུན་བརྟགས་ལྟ་བུ་ཤེས་བྱ་ལ་མི་སྲིད་ཀྱང་དེ་ཅུ་གྱིས་ཀུན་  
བརྟགས་ཐམས་ཅད་མི་སྲིད་པ་མིན་པས་རྗེས་སུ་ཡོད་པ་དང་དོན་དམ་པར་ཡོད་པ་  
དགག་ལ་བརྟགས་ཡོད་དང་ཐ་སྐད་དུ་ཡོད་པར་གཞག་གོ། །

And so—despite the fact that the constructs represented by the two kinds of "self-nature" are something which is a total impossibility—it doesn't necessarily follow that all constructs are impossibilities. Therefore we can at one moment deny that things could exist substantially or that they could exist ultimately, and yet still posit that they do exist in a projected way, in a nominal way.

དེའི་ཕྱིར་དགོངས་འགྲེལ་གྱི་འགྲེལ་ཆེན་ཁ་ཅིག་ལས་ཀུན་བརྟགས་བདེན་པ་གཉིས་



ཀར་མིད་ལ་གཟུང་འཇིན་གཉིས་ཀྱི་གཞན་དབང་གི་རྟེན་ཅིང་འབྲེལ་པར་འབྱུང་བ་སྐྱུ་  
མ་བྱས་པ་དང་འབྲེལ་བར་ཀུན་རྫོབ་ཏུ་ཡོད་པ་དང་། ཡོངས་བྱུབ་དོན་དམ་པ་ཡང་ཡིན་  
ལ་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མིད་པའི་ཚུལ་དུ་ཡོད་པ་དོན་དམ་པར་ཡོད་པ་ཡིན་ནོ། །ཞེས་བཤད་པ་  
ནི་མདོ་དའི་དགོངས་པ་མིན་ནོ།།

As such the following ideas, presented in a number of major commentaries to the *Commentary on the True Intent*, do not represent the true intent of this sutra:

the idea that constructs are something which exist with regard to neither of the two truths;

the idea that dependent things—whether represented by objects of the mind or by the states of mind which perceive these objects—are something that exists only in a deceptive way, given the fact that their dependent origination is something which has been compared to an illusion; and

the idea that totality is something ultimate, but something ultimate in the sense of existing as a thing that has no self-nature.

ཐོག་བསྐྱུས་སུ་དགོངས་འབྲེལ་བྱངས་ཏེ་ཕྱི་རོལ་མིད་པར་བསྐྱུབས་ནས་ཕྱི་ནང་གི་  
གཟུང་འཇིན་ཀུན་བརྟགས་སུ་བཤད་པ་དང་འགལ་ཞིང་། བྱངས་དང་བསྐྱུབ་དང་  
ཡང་འགལ་ལ་དེར་རྣམ་ངེས་ཀྱི་ལུང་ཡང་བྱངས་པས། །ཁ་ཅིག་དེ་ཐོགས་མིད་ཀྱིས་  
མཇེད་ཟེར་བ་ནི་མ་བརྟགས་པ་ཆེན་པོའོ།།

These ideas contradict the presentation in the *Summary of the Greater Way* which quotes the *Commentary on the True Intent* to show that external objects don't exist, and then goes on to explain that the idea of outer and inner things—seeing things as objects and subjects—is a construct. They also contradict both the *Levels of the Bodhisattva* and the *Compendium*; moreover, the fact that they quote lines from *Gaining a True Understanding of Valid Perception* [written by Master Dharmakirti hundreds of years later] shows that the claim made by some that they were written by Master Asanga is a gross failure to check the facts.

བསྐྱུ་བར་དགོངས་འགྲེལ་གྱི་སྒྲིང་གཞིའི་ལེན་མ་གཏོགས་པ་ལེན་ལྷག་མ་རྣམས་ཕལ་  
མོ་ཆེ་དངས་ཤིང་དཀའ་གནས་རྣམས་ལེགས་པར་གཏན་ལ་ཕབ་འདུག་པས་སློབ་  
དཔོན་འདིས་འགྲེལ་བ་བྱུང་དུ་མཇུག་དགོས་པར་ཡང་མི་སྣང་ངོ་།།

Moreover, the great majority of the chapters in the *Commentary on the True Intent*—all except for the chapter on the circumstances of the teaching—are quoted directly in the *Compendium*, and difficult points in them resolved quite thoroughly. And so there wouldn't appear any great need for the Master to have composed another, separate commentary.

ཕྱིས་ཀྱི་ཁ་ཅིག་ཀྱང་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་དང་པོ་ཐ་སྙད་དུ་ཡང་མེད། བར་པ་ཐ་སྙད་དུ་ཡོད་ཀྱང་  
དོན་དམ་པར་མེད། ཐ་མ་དོན་དམ་པར་ཡོད་པ་ཐོགས་མེད་སྐྱེ་མཆེད་ཀྱི་དགོངས་པར་  
འཆད་པ་ཡང་ལུགས་འདི་ལས་སྤྱི་ངོ་ལ་ཏུ་གྱུར་བ་ཡིན་ལ།

There have been others later on too who explained the true intent of the pair—of Master Asanga and his brother—in the following way:

- The first of the three natures doesn't even exist nominally.
- The middle one of the three natures exists nominally, but doesn't exist ultimately.
- The last of the three natures exists ultimately.

People like this too have wandered out of this system.

འབྲུང་པར་དུ་གཞན་དབང་ཐ་སྙད་དུ་ཡོད་པའི་དོན་འབྲུལ་པའི་སློབ་དེ་ལ་སྐྱེ་འགག་  
སོགས་ཡོད་པར་ཞེན་པ་ཅམ་ཡིན་གྱི། དངོས་པོ་ལ་སྐྱེ་འགག་སོགས་མེད་དོ་ཞེས་  
འདོད་པ་ནི། གཞན་དབང་ལ་སྐྱུར་འདེབས་ཀྱི་མཐར་ཐུག་དེའི་རྒྱ་མཚན་གྱིས་ངོ་བོ་  
ཉིད་གཞན་གཉིས་ལ་ཡང་སྐྱུར་བ་བཏབ་པས་མཚན་ཉིད་གསུམ་ག་ལ་སྐྱུར་འདེབས་  
ཆད་ལྟའི་གཙོ་བོར་སྐྱུར་བྱང་ས་ལས་བཤད་པ་དེ་ཡིན་ཞིང་། མདོ་སྡེ་དགོངས་འགྲེལ་

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant  
Reading Eight

ངེས་དོན་ཡིན་པར་འདོད་པའི་སྤོགས་ལ་སྤང་དུ་མེད་པའི་འགལ་བར་ཤེས་པར་གྱིས་  
ཤེས། །

Consider especially the position that—when we speak of dependent things as existing nominally—what we mean is that a mistaken state of mind merely imagines that growing and stopping apply to them; and that qualities like growing and stopping don't even exist with functional things. This is the most extreme possible version of discounting dependent things, and for this reason it moreover constitutes discounting the other two natures as well. Being therefore a discounting of all three of the attributes, it is exactly the viewpoint which the *Levels of the Bodhisattva* mentioned above as being the primary form of the view that all things have stopped. You should finally understand that this is idea would be an inescapable contradiction for anyone who held the position that the *Commentary on the True Thought* was meant literally.

**The Asian Classics Institute**  
**Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant**

**Reading Nine: Interpretations of the Independent Group of the Middle-Way School**

*There is no one section of Je Tsongkapa's root text on the Essence of Eloquence that easily presents all the concepts of the Independent group of the Middle-Way School on the subjects covered in the course so far. We therefore begin a group of selections, many from monastic textbooks, which together give us a good overview of the relevant ideas.*

*The first part of the reading helps understand the differences between the Independent group, the Mind-Only School, and the Consequence group on the question of whether things exist from their own sides, with their own unique identities. The selection is taken from the Overview of the Perfection of Wisdom (Phar-phyin spyi-don) of Master Kedrup Tenpa Dargye (1493-1568), from the glorious Sera Mey Tibetan Monastery (ACIP electronic text catalog number SL0009, Part One, folios 12a-13b). Remember that most of the descriptions of "our own system" refer to that of the Independent group!*

དེས་ན་སློབ་གཞི་དམིགས་ལ་སྐྱེས་བའི་དབང་གིས་བཞག་པ་མ་ཡིན་པར་ཡུལ་རང་གི་སྐྱེས་  
མོང་མ་ཡིན་པའི་བསྐྱེད་ལུགས་ཀྱི་ངོས་ནས་གྲུབ་པ་དེ།      དོན་དམ་ལ་དཔྱོད་པའི་  
རྟོགས་ཀྱི་དགག་ཚེས་མཐར་ཐུག་ཡིན་ཏེ།

Therefore the following is the final form of the idea denied by the reasoning which examines the ultimate:

Anything which existed from its own side with its own unique identity, rather than being simply established as existing by appearing to an unaffected state of mind.

གཞུགས་སོགས་ཀྱི་ཚེས་རྣམས་འཕྲུལ་གྱི་འབྲུལ་རྒྱུའི་གཞོན་མེད་ཀྱི་སློབ་དབང་གིས་  
བཞག་པ་དེ་གཞུགས་སོགས་ཀྱི་ཚེས་རྣམས་ཀྱི་ཀུན་རྫོབ་པའི་ཡོད་ཚུལ་མཐར་ཐུག་  
ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར།

And this is true because the final form of the way in which physical matter and all other existing objects exist deceptively is through their being established as existing by a state of mind which is unaffected by short-term circumstances that would cause it to make an error.

གཞུགས་སོགས་ཀྱི་ཚེས་རྣམས་འཛོག་བྱེད་ཀྱི་སློབ་འཕྲུལ་གྱི་འབྲུལ་རྒྱུས་མ་བསྐྱད་པ་  
དགོས་ཤིང་ཕྱགས་ཀྱི་འབྲུལ་རྒྱུས་མ་བསྐྱད་པ་ནི་མི་དགོས་ཏེ།

When we describe the state of mind which can establish that physical matter and all other existing objects exist, it is necessarily one which is not affected by some short-term circumstances which would cause it to make an error; it is not the case though that it would have to be a state of mind which was not affected by some long-term circumstances.

གཞུགས་སོགས་ཀྱི་ཚེས་རྣམས་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པར་སྐྱང་བ་དེ་ནི་འཕྲུལ་  
ཕྱགས་གང་གི་རང་འབྲུལ་རྒྱུས་མ་བསྐྱད་པའི་སྐྱང་བ་མ་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར་དང་། དེ་ལ་  
བདེན་འཛིན་ལྟན་སྐྱེས་ཀྱི་བསྐྱད་པ་ཡོད་པའི་ཕྱིར།

And this is because it is not the case that—when physical matter and other such existing objects appear to be things that exist by definition—this appearance is not something which is affected neither by short-term nor by long-term circumstances; and because it involves being affected by the innate form of the tendency to hold things as existing truly.

ལྷགས་འདིའི་བདེན་གཉིས་འཛོག་ཚུལ་དཔེ་དང་བཅས་པ་འཆད་པ་ལ། གཞུགས་  
སོགས་ཀྱི་ཚེས་འདི་རྣམས་སྐྱང་ཕྱོགས་ནས་སློབ་གཞོན་མེད་ལ་སྐྱང་བའི་དབང་གིས་  
ཕར་བཞག་པ་ཅམ་དང་། སློབ་ཕྱོགས་ནས་སློབ་གཞོན་མེད་ལ་སྐྱང་བའི་དབང་གིས་

བཞག་པ་མ་ཡིན་པར་ཡུལ་རང་གི་སྐྱེན་མོང་མ་ཡིན་པའི་བསྐྱོད་ལུགས་ཀྱི་ངོས་ནས་  
གྲུབ་པས་སྣང་བ་གཅིག་དགོས་ཏེ།

Here we will explain how this school decides what the two realities are, using some metaphors as well. Two things have to be present with all of these objects: with physical matter and every other existing thing. From the point of view of what appears in the world, they must be established as existing from our side—merely by virtue of their appearing to an unaffected state of mind. From the point of view of emptiness, they must be void of any kind of existence where the object exists from its own side through its own unique identity, rather than by virtue of its appearing to an unaffected state of mind.

སྐྱ་གུ་ལྟ་བུའི་དངོས་པོ་ཡང་སློབ་གཞོན་མིད་ལ་སྣང་བའི་དབང་གིས་བཞག་པ་དང་།  
སྐྱ་གུ་རང་གི་བསྐྱོད་ལུགས་ཀྱི་ངོས་ནས་གྲུབ་པའི་གཉིས་ཚོགས་དགོས་པའི་སྤྱིར།

And so two things have to come together for a functional thing like a sprout: it must be established as existing by virtue of appearing to an unaffected state of mind; and the sprout should exist from its own side through some identity.

དང་པོ་དགོས་ཏེ། དེ་མི་དགོས་ན། སྐྱ་གུ་ལ་སྐྱ་གུ་ཞེས་པའི་མིང་མ་ཐོགས་པའི་གང་  
ཟག་གི་ངོར་ཡང་། སྐྱ་གུ་སྐྱ་གུར་གྲུབ་དགོས་པའི་སྤྱིར།

The first is necessary since—if it were not—then a sprout would have to be a sprout even to a person who had never been introduced to the idea that the sprout was called a "sprout."

སྤྱི་མ་དགོས་ཏེ། དེ་མི་དགོས་ན། རི་བོང་གི་རྩ་ཞེས་པའི་མིང་གིས་བཞག་པ་ཙམ་  
དང་། རི་བོང་གི་རྩ་ཞེས་ཚོགས་པས་བབྱང་བ་ཙམ་དང་མཚུངས་པར་འགྲུར་བའི་སྤྱིར།

The latter is necessary since—if it were not—then a sprout would be a sprout in exactly the same way as the horn of a rabbit is the horn of a rabbit: merely because we called it the "horn of a rabbit," or just because we imagined something called the "horn of a rabbit."

གཟུགས་སོགས་ཀྱི་ཚོས་རྣམས་སློབ་གཞོན་མིད་ལ་སྣང་བའི་དབང་གིས་བཞག་ཙམ་དུ་

གསུངས་པའི་ཅམ་སྐྱུས་ཀྱང་། དེའི་དབང་གིས་བཞག་པ་མ་ཡིན་པར་ཡུལ་རང་གི་  
སྐྱུ་མོང་མ་ཡིན་པའི་བསྐྱོད་ལུགས་ཀྱི་དབང་གིས་གྲུབ་པ་གཅོད་ཀྱང་། མིང་བདམས་  
བཞག་ཅམ་མ་ཡིན་པར་གྲུབ་པ་མི་གཅོད་དེ།

Consider, by the way, the word "merely" when we speak of physical matter and all other existing objects as being "things which are established as existing merely by virtue of their appearing to an unaffected state of mind." Its use is meant to disallow the idea that these things could be established by virtue of some unique identity of the object itself, rather than being established as existing by virtue of this appearing. It is not however meant to disallow the idea that things do not exist merely through names and terms.

རྣམ་བཤད་དགོངས་པ་རབ་གསལ་ལས། གཟུགས་སོགས་ཀྱི་ཚོས་རྣམས་མིང་  
བདམས་བཞག་ཅམ་མ་ཡིན་པའི་བསྐྱོད་ལུགས་གཅིག་ཡོད་པར་འདི་པས་འདོད་པས།  
ཞེས་གསུངས་པའི་ཕྱིར།

And this is true because, as the *Perfect Explanation, an Illumination of the True Thought*, has a part where it states—

Given the fact that those who belong to this school accept the idea that physical matter and all other existing objects do possess an identity that is not established merely through names and terms . . .

གཟུགས་སོགས་ཀྱི་ཚོས་རྣམས་སློ་གཞོད་མིང་ལ་སྐྱུང་བའི་དབང་གིས་ཕར་བཞག་པ་  
དང་། ཡུལ་གྱི་བསྐྱོད་ལུགས་ཀྱི་ངོས་ནས་གྲུབ་པའི་དབེ་ཡང་ཡོད་དེ།

Now there is a metaphor which we can use for the idea that physical matter and all other existing objects are established as existing from our side—merely by virtue of their appearing to an unaffected state of mind, and for the idea that these objects exist through some identity of their own.

སྐྱུ་མ་མཁའ་གྱིས་རྗེ་ཤིང་རྟ་སྐྱང་དུ་སྐྱུལ་པ་དེའི་ཚེ། རྗེ་ཤིང་གི་སྐྱེང་གི་རྟ་སྐྱང་གི་སྐྱུང་

བ་དེ་སྐྱབས་རྗེས་ཀྱིས་མིག་བསྐྱད་པའི་སྒྲོའི་དབང་གིས་ཕར་བཞག་པ་དང་། དེ་ཤིང་གི་ངོས་ནས་སྤང་བ་ཡིན་པའི་གཉེས་ཚོགས་དགོས་པ་ལྟ་བུ་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར།

Think of a case where a magician makes a stick of wood appear as a horse or cow. Two things have to be present here. First of all, the appearance of a horse or cow there around the stick is something that is established as existing by virtue of the minds of the people whose eyes are affected by the magic words and powder, from their side. Secondly, an appearance must also be something coming from the side of the stick.

སྐྱབས་རྗེས་ཀྱིས་མིག་བསྐྱད་པའི་སྒྲོའི་དབང་གིས་བཞག་པ་ནི་དགོས་ཏེ། དེ་མི་དགོས་ན། སྐྱབས་རྗེས་ཀྱིས་མིག་མ་བསྐྱད་པའི་ལྷན་མོ་བས་ཀྱང་སྤང་བ་དེ་མཐོང་དགོས་པ་ལ་མ་མཐོང་བའི་ཕྱིར།

The first requirement, being established as existing by virtue of the minds of the people whose eyes are affected by the magic words and powder, is necessary since—if it were not—then those in the audience whose eyes were not affected by the magic words and powder would have to see this appearance, whereas they do not.

དེའི་ཚེ་དེ་ཤིང་གི་ངོས་ནས་ཏ་སྤང་བུ་སྤང་བ་ཡང་དགོས་ཏེ། མི་དགོས་ན་དེ་ཤིང་མེད་པའི་གཞིར་ཡང་དེ་ཤིང་གི་སྤང་གི་ཏ་སྤང་གི་སྤང་བ་འཆར་དགོས་པ་ལ་དེ་མི་འཆར་བའི་ཕྱིར།

In this same situation it is also necessary for the horse or cow to be appearing from the stick's side as well, since—if they were not—then the appearance of a horse or cow would have to occur even in a place where there were no stick; whereas it does not.

དེ་བཞིན་དུ་གཟུགས་སོགས་ཀྱི་ཚོས་རྣམས་སྒྲོ་གནོད་མེད་ཀྱི་དབང་གིས་བཞག་པ་ཡིན་ཏེ། སྒྲོ་གནོད་མེད་དང་མིང་དོན་མཐུན་ཀྱི་མིང་གི་དབང་གིས་བཞགས་པ་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར།



Physical matter—and all other existing objects—are similar, in that they are established as existing by an unaffected state of mind; and this is because they are constructed by virtue of an unaffected state of mind and names that fit.

སྒོ་གནོད་མེད་ལ་སྒྲུང་བའི་དབང་གིས་བཞག་པ་མ་ཡིན་པར་ཡུལ་རང་གི་ཐུན་མོང་མ་  
ཡིན་པའི་བསྐྱོད་ལུགས་ཀྱི་ངོས་ནས་མ་གྲུབ་སྟེ། དེ་གྲུབ་ན། གནས་ལུགས་མཐར་  
ཐུག་ཏུ་གྲུབ་དགོས། དེར་གྲུབ་ན། སྒོ་མ་ལུགས་བ་གནས་ལུགས་མངོན་སུམ་དུ་  
རྟོགས་པའི་སྒོ་བ་པ་འཕགས་པའི་མཉམ་བཞག་ཡེ་ཤེས་ཀྱིས་མངོན་སུམ་དུ་རྟོགས་  
དགོས་པ་ལ་མངོན་སུམ་དུ་མ་རྟོགས་པའི་ཕྱིར།

They do not, however, exist from their own side through some unique identity of their own, without being established as existing by virtue of appearing to an unaffected state of mind. This is because—if they were to exist this way—then they would have to be some ultimate nature. And if they were some ultimate nature, then they would have to be something which is perceived directly by a certain unmistakable state of mind: that meditative wisdom of a realized being who is not yet a Buddha, and who perceives the real nature of things directly. The fact is though that they are not.

སྐྱུ་མ་མཁམ་གྱིས་དེ་ཤིང་རྟ་སྒྲུང་དུ་སྒྲུལ་པའི་ཚེ། སྐྱུ་གསུམ་གྱིས་མིག་བསྐྱེད་པའི་  
རྟ་མོ་བ་རྣམས་ལ་དེ་ཤིང་རྟ་སྒྲུང་དུ་སྒྲུང་བ་དང་ཞེན་པ་གཉིས་ཡོད།

In this situation, where a magician makes a stick appear as a horse or cow, two things apply to the members of the audience whose eyes are affected by the magic words and powder: the stick is appearing as a horse or cow, and they believe that it is.

སྐྱུ་མ་མཁམ་རང་ཉིད་ལ་རྟ་སྒྲུང་དུ་སྒྲུང་བ་ཅུ་ཡོད་ཀྱང་། ཞེན་པ་མེད་སྐྱུ་གསུམ་གྱིས་  
མིག་བསྐྱེད་པའི་ཕྱིས་ཀྱི་རྟ་མོ་བ་ལ་དེ་ཤིང་རྟ་སྒྲུང་དུ་སྒྲུང་ཞེན་གཉིས་ཀ་མེད་  
པ་དེ་བཞིན་དུ་གཟུགས་སོགས་ཀྱི་ཚོས་རྣམས་ཀྱི་སྒྲིང་དུ་སྒྲུང་ཞེན་མི་འདྲ་བ་གསུམ་  
འབྱུང་སྟེ།

The only condition that applies to the magician himself is that a horse or cow is appearing to him; he does not believe in them. And those members of the audience who showed up later—those whose eyes were not affected by the magic words or powder—have neither the horse or cow appearing to them, nor any belief in the horse or cow. These same three different permutations apply as well to physical matter and all the other existing objects.

སྒྲོང་ཉིད་རྟོགས་མ་སྒྲོང་བའི་སོ་སོ་སྐྱེ་བོ་རྣམས་ལ། གཟུགས་སོགས་ཀྱི་ཚོས་རྣམས་  
བདེན་གྲུབ་ཏུ་སྣང་བ་དང་ཞེན་པ་གཉིས་ཀ་ཡོད།

Consider "common" people: those who have not yet had their first experience of the perception of emptiness. Both situations apply to them for physical matter and all other existing objects: these things appear to them to exist truly, and they believe in the way they appear.

དག་ས་ལ་གནས་པའི་བྱང་སེམས་རྣམས་ཀྱི་རྗེས་ཐོབ་ཀྱི་ངོར་ཚོས་རྣམས་བདེན་གྲུབ་  
ཏུ་སྣང་བ་ཡོད་ཀྱང་ཞེན་པ་མེད་དེ། གནས་ལུགས་མངོན་སུམ་དུ་རྟོགས་པའི་སྒྲོབ་པ་  
འཕགས་པ་རྣམས་ལ། གཟུགས་སོགས་ཀྱི་ཚོས་རྣམས་ལ་བདེན་གྲུབ་ཀྱི་སྣང་ཞེན་  
གཉིས་ཀ་མེད་པའི་ཕྱིར།

Consider now bodhisattvas who have reached one of the pure levels. Even though objects appear to their minds, during what we call the "subsequent period," as something which exists truly, they have no belief in them this way. And this is because neither situation applies to realized beings who are not yet Buddhas and who are perceiving the real nature of things directly; that is, physical matter and other objects do not appear to them as if they existed truly, and they do not believe that these objects exist that way.

བདེན་པར་གྲུབ་པ། ཡང་དག་པར་གྲུབ་པ། དེ་ལོ་ན་ཉིད་དུ་གྲུབ་པ། དོན་དམ་པར་  
གྲུབ་པ། དེ་ལྟར་གྲུབ་པར་འཇིན་པའི་རྟོག་པ་དང་བཅས་པ་རྣམས་དོན་དམ་ལ་དཔྱོད་  
པའི་རྟོགས་ཀྱི་དགག་བྱུང་འདོད་པར་དབྱུ་མ་ཐལ་རང་གཉིས་ཀ་མཚུངས་ཀྱང་།

The Consequence and Independent groups of the Middle-Way School hold the same belief about the following things; both schools hold them to be what is denied by the reasoning which examines the ultimate:

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Reading Nine

a thing that could exist truly;  
a thing that could exist purely;  
a thing that could exist as thusness;  
a thing that could exist ultimately; and  
the thought where you hold that anything could exist  
in any of these ways.

རང་རྒྱུད་པ་རྣམས་རང་ངོས་ནས་གྲུབ་པ། རང་བཞིན་གྲིས་གྲུབ་པ། རྗེས་སུ་གྲུབ་པ།  
རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་གྲིས་གྲུབ་པ། གཟུགས་སོགས་ཀྱི་ཚོས་རྣམས་དེ་དག་ཏུ་གྲུབ་པར་  
འཛིན་པའི་ཚློག་པ་དང་བཅས་པ་རྣམས་དོན་དམ་པ་དཔྱེད་པའི་ཏྲགས་ཀྱི་དགག་བྱར་མི་  
འདོད་དེ།

The Independent group does not however agree that the following are what is denied by the reasoning which examines the ultimate:

a thing that existed from its own side;  
a thing that existed by nature;  
a thing that existed as a substantial thing;  
a thing that existed by definition; and  
the thought where you hold that anything like physical matter or the  
rest could exist this way.

གཞི་གྲུབ་ན་རྗེས་སུ་གྲུབ་པ་མ་གཏོགས་པའི་གཞན་གསུམ་ཏུ་གྲུབ་པས་བྱུང་། ཀྱུན་  
བཏགས་ལ་དོགས་པ་ཅུང་ཟད་ཡོད། དངོས་པོ་ཡིན་ན་རྗེས་སུ་གྲུབ་པར་འདོད་པས་  
བྱུབ་པའི་ཕྱིར།

And this is true because they believe that—if something exists—it must necessarily exist as the three left over after you exclude a thing that existed as a substantial thing. There is some discussion about the status of constructs; but they believe that, if something is a functional thing, it must exist as a substantial thing.

ཐལ་རང་གཉིས་ཀའི་ལྷགས་ལ་གནས་ལྷགས་སུ་གྲུབ་པ། དོན་དམ་བདེན་པར་གྲུབ་  
པ། ཚོས་ཉིད་ཏུ་གྲུབ་པ་རྣམས་དོན་དམ་ལ་དཔྱེད་པའི་ཏྲགས་ཀྱི་དགག་བྱར་མཐར་ཐུག་

ཏུ་མི་བཞེད་དེ།

Neither those who follow the Consequence system, nor those who follow the Independent system, accept that any of the following could be the final form of the idea denied by the reasoning which examines the ultimate:

- a thing that existed as the way things really are;
- a thing that existed as ultimate reality; and
- a thing that existed as the real nature of things.

དོན་དམ་བདེན་པ་ཡིན་ན་དེ་གསུམ་དུ་གྲུབ་པས་བྱུང་བའི་ཕྱིར་ཏེ།

And this is true because—if something is ultimate reality—it must always exist as these three as well.

རྣམ་བཤད་དགོངས་པ་རབ་གསལ་ལས། རིགས་པ་དུག་ཅུ་པའི་འགྲེལ་པར་སྤང་  
 འདས་ཀུན་རྫོབ་བདེན་པར་གསུངས་པའི་དོན། སྤང་འདས་དོན་དམ་པའི་བདེན་པར་  
 ཡོད་པ་སློ་ཀུན་རྫོབ་པ་ལ་བལྟོས་ནས་འཇོག་དགོས་པའི་དོན་དུ་གསུངས་པ་དང་།  
 བྱང་ངེས་རྣམ་འབྱེད་ལས་ཀྱང་ཚོས་ཉིད་ཚོས་ཉིད་དུ་གྲུབ་པར་གསུངས་པ་དང་།  
 བསྐྱལ་བཟང་མིག་འབྱེད་ལས་ཀྱང་གནས་ལུགས་སུ་གྲུབ་པ་ཅམ་གྱིས་དོན་དམ་པར་  
 གྲུབ་མི་དགོས་པར་གསུངས་པའི་ཕྱིར།

And this is true first of all because the *Perfect Explanation, an Illumination of the True Thought*, states that—when the commentary to the *Sixty Verses of Reasoning* describes nirvana as deceptive reality—what it means is that nirvana must be established as existing as ultimate reality with reference to a deceived state of mind. *Distinguishing between the Figurative and the Literal* also states that the real nature of things exists as the real nature of things; and *Opening the Eyes of the Good and Fortune* states that it doesn't automatically mean that something exists ultimately just because it exists as the real nature of things.

ཐལ་རང་གཉིས་ལ་དོན་དམ་ལ་དཔྱོད་པའི་རྟགས་ཀྱི་དགག་བྱ་མཐར་ཐུག་ལ་ཕྱ་  
 རགས་ཀྱི་བྱུང་པར་དེ་ལྟར་ཡོད་པར་འཐད་དེ། རང་རྒྱུད་པ་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་རང་རྒྱུད་ཀྱི་

གཏན་ཚིགས་བཞེད་པ། གཞན་སྐྱེ་བཞེད་པ། རྗེས་སུ་གྲུབ་པ་བཞེད་པ་རྣམས་ལས་  
རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པ་ཡོད་པར་བཞེད་པའི་ཕྱིར་དང་།

It would be correct to say then that there is a difference in subtlety between the Consequence and Independent versions of the final form of the idea denied by the reasoning which examines the ultimate. This is true first of all because the Independent group accepts the concept that things can exist by definition, through their accepting the concepts of an independent logical reason; of something that could grow from something other than itself; and of something that could exist as a substantial thing.

སློབ་དཔོན་ལེགས་ལཱ་འབྲེད་ཀྱིས་ཀུན་བཏགས་རང་གིས་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་མ་གྲུབ་པ་  
སེམས་ཅམ་པས་འཁོར་ལོ་བར་པའི་དགོངས་པར་བཤད་པ་ལ་དགག་པ་རྒྱས་པར་  
བརྗོད་པ་དང་། ཞི་འཚོ་ཡབ་སྐུས་གཉིས་ཀྱིས་འཁོར་ལོ་བར་པའི་དགོངས་པ་  
འགྲུལ་བའི་ཚེ། ཀུན་བཏགས་དོན་དམ་པར་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་མ་གྲུབ་ཅིང་།  
ཐ་སྐད་དུ་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པར་གསུངས་པའི་དྲང་ངེས་འགྲུལ་ཚུལ་མཛད་  
པ་ལས་ཀྱང་གྲུབ་པའི་ཕྱིར།

The idea is moreover supported by the manner in which the schools explain the concept of what is literal and what is figurative. Master Bhavaviveka denies extensively the idea that the Mind-Only School explains the true intent of the middle turning of the wheel to be the concept that constructs do not exist by definition. And when Shantarakshita and his spiritual son explain the way in which the final turning of the wheel comments upon the middle turning, they explain it as meaning that constructs do not exist by definition in an ultimate way, but do exist by definition in a nominal way.

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*The following selection is drawn from the same text, the Overview of the Perfection of Wisdom (Part Five, ff. 9a-10a). It gives an idea of how valid the Consequence group considers the division of selflessness into three differing degrees of subtlety:*

དབྱུང་མ་ཐལ་འགྱུར་བ་རྣམས་ནི་གང་ཟག་དང་ཚོས་ཀྱི་བདག་མེད་གཉིས་དག་སྟོང་  
གཞི་ཁོ་ནའི་སློབ་ལུ་འཇོག་གིས་དགག་བྱ་ཕྱ་རགས་ཀྱི་སློབ་ལུ་མི་འཇོག་ །འདིར་ནི་  
གཉིས་ཀའི་སློབ་ལུ་འཇོག་ །

The Consequence group of the Middle-Way School draws a distinction between the lack of a self-nature of persons and of things, but only relative to the thing it is which is empty of them; they do not however make any distinction between more or less subtle versions of what it is we deny by the reasoning which examines the ultimate. Here in the Independent School though they recognize both these distinctions.

དེའི་དབང་དུ་བྱས་ན། རྒྱུ་འཇིག་ཅན་ཡིན་ན་རང་རྒྱ་བྱུང་པའི་རྣམ་ཡོད་ཀྱིས་སྟོང་བས་  
མ་བྱུང་ཅིང་། གང་ཟག་ཡིན་ན་དེས་སྟོང་བས་མ་བྱུང་སྟེ། གཉིས་ཀའི་ཡིད་ཀྱི་རྣམ་  
པར་ཤེས་པས་མ་ངེས་པའི་ཕྱིར།

And it is relative to this fact that they can say it's not necessarily the case that something is devoid of existing as a self-standing, substantial object if it exhibits the qualities of growing and stopping. They would also say that, just because something is a person, it's not necessarily the case that it is then devoid of this same kind of existence. And this is because both are disproved by the example of consciousness of the thought.

ཡིད་ཀྱི་རྣམ་པར་ཤེས་པ་གང་ཟག་ནི་ཡིན་ཏེ། ལེགས་ལྡན་འབྱེད་ཀྱི་ལུང་རིགས་  
གཉིས་ཀས་བསྐྱབས་ཤིང་། སློབ་དཔོན་འདི་ཡང་དེ་དང་མཐུན་པར་བཞེད་པའི་ཕྱིར།

Consciousness of the thought is [considered to be] the person: Master Bhavaviveka proves this through both scriptural authority and reasoning, and the master we are dealing with here concurs with him.

དེ་ལྟར་ན་དེ་གཏན་ལ་འབྲེལ་པ་ལ་བསམ་བྱུང་གི་རིགས་པ། སློབ་བྱུང་གི་རྣམ་  
འབྱོར། བསྐྱོམས་པའི་འབྲས་བུ་གསུམ་ལས།

We can discuss this question in terms of three divisions: reasoning based on contemplation; deep practice based on meditation; and the result of this meditation.

དང་པོ་ནི། ཉེར་ལེན་གྱི་སྤང་བོ་ཚོས་ཅན། བྱོན་གང་ཟླུག་རང་རྒྱ་སྤྱབ་པའི་རྗེས་ཡོད་  
གྱིས་སྤོང་སྟེ། སྐྱེ་འཇིག་ཅན་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར། དཔེར་ན། ཤིང་རྩ་བཞིན།

Here is the first.

Consider the heaps that we have taken on.

They are something which is devoid of being a person  
who exists as a self-standing, substantial object;

Because they exhibit the qualities of growing and  
stopping.

They are, for example, like a wagon.

སྐྱེ་འཇིག་ཅན་ཡིན་ན། གང་ཟླུག་རང་རྒྱ་སྤྱབ་པའི་རྗེས་ཡོད་མིན་དགོས་ཏེ། གང་  
ཟླུག་གི་བདག་ཡིན་ན་སྐྱེ་འཇིག་ཅན་མིན་དགོས་པའི་ཕྱིར། དེ་ཡིན་ན་རྟག་གཅིག་  
རང་དབང་ཅན་ཡིན་དགོས་པའི་ཕྱིར།

If something exhibits the qualities of growing and  
stopping, it cannot be something which exists as a  
self-standing, substantial object;

Because if something were the self-nature of a person it  
could never be something which exhibited the  
qualities of growing and stopping.

And this is true because, if something were this kind of a  
self-nature, it would have to be something which  
were unchanging, singular, and independent.

དེ་ལྟ་བུའི་རྟགས་ལ་བརྟེན་ནས་གང་ཟླུག་རང་རྒྱ་སྤྱབ་པའི་རྗེས་ཡོད་གྱིས་སྤོང་བའི་  
སྤོང་ཉིད་ལ་གསལ་དུ་མི་སྐྱེ་བའི་རིག་པ་དེ་ཉིད་གང་ཟླུག་གི་བདག་མེད་རྟོགས་པའི་  
རྗེས་དཔག་ཚད་མ་དང་། དེ་རྟོགས་པའི་བསམ་བློང་གི་རིག་པར་འཇོག་གོ། །

Consider the fresh, unerring state of mind which grows from this type of reasoning, and which perceives a kind of emptiness which is the fact that the person is devoid of being a self-standing, substantial object. This is a deductive form of valid perception which has realized the lack of a self-nature to the person, and we describe it as being a realization of an emptiness which has grown from contemplation.

གཉིས་པ་ལ། དེ་ཉོག་པ་པའི་སྒྲོམ་བྱུང་གི་རྣལ་འབྱོར་གྱི་དོན་དེ་ཉིད་གཙོ་བོར་ཞི་ལྷག་  
བྱུང་འབྲེལ་གྱི་སྒྲོ་ནས་ཅེ་གཅིག་ཏུ་སྒྲོམ་པ་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར།

Here is the second division, concerning deep practice based on meditation; we describe it as a kind of realization which grows from meditation: one in which a person engaged in deep practice meditates single-pointedly on this same object, utilizing primarily a combination of quietude and vision.

གསུམ་པ་བསྒྲོམས་པའི་འབྲས་བུ་ཡོད་དེ། དེ་ལྟར་བསྒྲོམས་པས་དངོས་སུ་གང་ཟག་  
གི་བདག་འཛིན་ཀུན་བཏགས་མངོན་གྱུར་བ་སྣོད། ལྷན་སྐྱེས་ཀྱི་ཡང་རྣམ་པ་རགས་  
པ་ཉམས་པར་བྱེད་པའི་ཕྱིར།

Now for the third division, the result of this meditation. There is such a result, because directly speaking one eliminates the manifest form of the learned tendency to hold to a self-nature of persons. The meditation also acts to lower the gross power of the innate tendency.

རྣལ་འབྱོར་གྱི་ས་གཉིས་པ་ལ་ཡང་བསམ་བྱུང་གི་རིགས་པ་སོགས་གསུམ་ལས།  
དང་པོ་ནི། ལྷོན་པོ་ཚོས་ཅན། བྱོད་བྱོད་འཛིན་ཚད་མ་དང་རྗེས་གཞན་གྱིས་སྣོད་སྟེ།  
བྱོད་དེ་དང་ལྷན་ཅིག་དམིགས་པ་ངས་པ་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར། དཔེར་ན་མི་ལམ་གྱི་ཤེས་པ་  
དང་དེའི་སྣང་བ་ལྷ་བུ། རྗེས་དཔག་སོགས་ནི་གོང་གི་ཤེས།

We have the same three divisions, of reasoning based on contemplation and so on, for the second level of deep practice. Here is the first.

Consider the color blue.



Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant  
Reading Nine

It is something which is devoid of being of a separate substance from the valid perception which perceives it;

Because it is invariably found in combination with it.

They are, for example, like your awareness in a dream and anger that you may feel during the dream.

You can understand the remaining details, of the deductive perception and so on, from the preceding presentation.

གཉིས་པ་སྒྲོམ་བྱུང་གི་ནལ་འབྱོར་ཡོད་དེ། དོན་དེ་ཉིད་ཞི་ལྷག་བྱུང་འབྲེལ་གྱི་ཕྱི་  
གཉིས་པ་སྒྲོམ་པ་ཡིན་པའི་སྟེང་།

As for the second, there is a deep practice here that grows from meditation—for it would be the single-pointed meditation, combining both quietude and vision, focussed on this particular object.

གསུམ་པ་བསྒྲོམས་པའི་འབྲས་བུ་ཡོད་དེ། ལས་སུ་གཟུང་འཇིན་རྗེས་ཐ་དད་དུ་འཇིན་  
པའི་ཉོག་པ་མངོན་གྱུར་སྤངས་ཏེ། གཉིས་སྣང་འཁྲུལ་བར་ཁོང་དུ་རྒྱུད་བར་བྱེད་པའི་  
སྟེང་།

The third, the result of the meditation, is also here: for its work,\* it eliminates the manifest form of the thought that objects and the subject states of mind which perceive them are of a separate substance; and this is the case because one has grasped the fact that the state of mind that perceives a disparity is mistaken.

[\*The Tibetan reading here may be a mistake for DNGOS SU, or "directly speaking."]

གསུམ་པ་སྣང་ཉིད་ཉོག་པའི་ནལ་འབྱོར་གྱི་ས་ལ་གསུམ་ལས། དང་པོ་ནི། གཉིས་  
སྣང་གི་ཤེས་པ་ཚོས་ཅན། བདེན་པར་མེད་དེ། རྟོན་འབྲེལ་ཡིན་པའི་སྟེང་། དཔེར་ན་  
སྤྲུམ་བཞིན། སྟེང་གཉིས་གོ །

The third—that is, the level of deep practice in which one perceives emptiness itself—also comes in three divisions. Here is the first.

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Consider the state of mind which is "free of the two."

It is not something which exists truly,

Because it is an example of dependent origination.

It is, for example, like an illusion.

The latter two details follow.

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*The next selection is also taken from the Overview (Part Five, f. 3b), and gives an insight into how the Independent group views the function of meditating upon the three degrees of selflessness.*

འོ་ན་རང་ལུགས་ལ་སྐྱིབ་གཉིས་ཀྱི་དྲི་མ་སྟོང་ཚུལ་ཇི་ལྟར་བྱེད་སྟུང་ན། བདག་མེད་  
སྤྱོད་གས་གསུམ་རིམ་པ་བཞིན་དུ་ཐོས་བསམ་གྱིས་གཏན་ལ་ཕབ་ནས་སྟོང་བྱུང་གིས་  
བསྐྱོམས་པས་མངོན་སུམ་དུ་མཐོང་བ་ན་ཉོན་མོངས་པའི་སྐྱིབ་པ་དང་། ཤེས་སྐྱིབ་  
རགས་པ་དང་། ཤེས་སྐྱིབ་སྤོ་མོ་གསུམ་རྩ་བ་ནས་ཟད་པར་བྱེད་ལུས་ཞེས་སྟོན་པ་ཡིན་  
པས། དངོས་སྐྱོབ་ལ་འདོད་པ་ལྟར་དྲི་མ་བདེན་གྲུབ་ཁས་སྤངས་ནས་སྟོང་བ་མིན་གྱི།  
དྲི་མ་བདེན་མེད་བསྐྱོམས་ནས་དྲི་མ་སྟོང་བ་ཡིན་ཅེ་ཞེས་རང་ལུགས་ཀྱི་སྐྱིབ་གཉིས་  
སྟོང་ཚུལ་གཙོ་བོར་སྟོན་པ་ཡིན།

"Well then," you may think to yourself, "how do we in our own position describe the process by which one eliminates the various impurities?" It has been taught that:

One can gain the ability to put a total end to the three—that is, to the obstacles of the mental afflictions, to the gross obstacles to omniscience, and to the subtle obstacles to omniscience—if one meditates with that wisdom which grows from meditation and which sees directly the three degrees of the lack of a self-nature; this itself grows from following the practices of study and meditation to come to an understanding of these three.

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Given this statement, it is not the case that in our own position we believe—as do those who assert the existence of functional things which exist truly—that one can eliminate impurities that one asserts exist in truth. The citation rather is demonstrating the principal tenet of how our own system describes the process of eliminating the two obstacles; that is, that we eliminate impurities by meditating upon how these same impurities lack any true existence.

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*The next selection introduces, briefly, the concept of the three levels of deep practice that correlate to the three degrees of selflessness. It is taken from The "Cloud of Offerings, which Pleases the Wise, and Illuminates the True Thought of the Treatise known as the 'Ornament of Realizations,'" being a Combined Word Commentary and Dialectical Analysis of the Fifth Chapter of the Treatise, by Choney Lama Drakpa Shedrup (1675-1748), also an illustrious author of textbooks for Sera Mey Tibetan Monastery (ACIP electronic text S0195, Part Five, ff. 11b-12a).*

།གཉིས་པ་རང་གི་ལུགས་ལ། ཞི་ལྷག་ཟུང་འབྲེལ་གྱི་རྟོན་བྱེད་པའི་རིགས་སུ་གནས་  
པའི་ལྷ་སྟོན་གཉིས་སུ་བྱེ་བའི་ལྷ་བའི་ཆར་གཏོགས་པའི་མཁྲེན་པ། རྣལ་འབྱོར་གྱིས་  
སའི་ངོ་བོ་དང་།

Here secondly is the position of our own school. The essential nature of a level of deep practice can be defined as follows:

It is that state of knowledge which is of the type that provides a foundation for the combination of quietude and vision, and which can be classified as a viewpoint in the dichotomy between actions and viewpoints.

དེ་ལ་གསུམ་དུ་དབྱེར་ཡོད་དེ། བཤང་ཟག་གི་བདག་མེད་རྟོགས་པའི་རྣལ་འབྱོར་གྱི་ས།  
ཚོས་གྱི་བདག་མེད་རགས་པ་རྟོགས་པའི་རྣལ་འབྱོར་གྱི་ས། སྟོང་ཉིད་རྟོགས་པའི་  
རྣལ་འབྱོར་གྱི་ས་དང་གསུམ་ཡོད་པའི་བྱིར།

Levels of this kind can be divided into three: the level of deep practice wherein you realize the selflessness of the person; the level of deep practice wherein you realize the gross selflessness of objects; and the level of deep practice wherein you realize emptiness itself.

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*We return next to Master Kedrup Tenpa Dargye's work, for more detail on the function of the realizations of the three degrees of selflessness (Part Five, f. 8b):*

འདིར་སྒྲོག་པའི་སྒྲོ་ནས་བཞིར་གསུངས་ཀྱང་ངོ་བོའི་སྒྲོ་ནས་རྣལ་འབྱོར་ས་ལ་གསུམ་  
དུ་གྲངས་ངེས་པ་ཡིན་ཏེ། རྗེ་བྱེད་བཀའི་དབང་དུ་བྱས་ན་ཡང་གསུམ་དུ་གྲངས་ངེས།  
བསྐྱོམ་བྱ་བར་ཆད་མེད་ལམ་གྱི་དབང་དུ་བྱས་ན་ཡང་གསུམ་དུ་གྲངས་ངེས། རྗེས་སུ་  
གཟུང་བྱའི་གདུལ་བྱའི་དབང་དུ་བྱས་ན་ཡང་གསུམ་དུ་གྲངས་ངེས། ལག་རྗེས་གྱི་  
དབང་དུ་བྱས་ན་ཡང་གསུམ་དུ་གྲངས་ངེས་པའི་སྤྱིར།

In terms of their identities, the various levels of deep practice are stated to be four; but from the point of view of their actual nature, their number is exactly three, for the following reasons. Relative to the teachings which express them, the word of the Buddha, the number is precisely three. Relative to what you meditate upon—that is, the uninterrupted path—the count is also three. Relative to the disciple who is meant to be lead with them, the number is three, and so it is with the mark they leave: exactly three.

དང་པོ་དེ་ལྟར་ཡིན་ཏེ། འཁོར་ལོ་རིམ་པ་གསུམ་པོ་དེས་རིམ་པ་བཞིན་དུ་བདག་མེད་  
སྤྱིར་གསུམ་གསུམ་གཏན་ལ་འབབས། འདིར་དེ་གསུམ་སྒྲོམ་པའི་རིམ་པ་འཆད་པའི་  
སྤྱིར།

The first of these reasons is correct because the three stages of the turning of the wheel set forth, one by one, the three degrees of selflessness; and what is being explained here are the stages by which one meditates upon these three.

གཉིས་པ་དེ་ལྟར་ཡིན་ཏེ། འདིའི་རྣལ་འབྱོར་གྱི་ས་གསུམ་པོ་དེ་བདག་མེད་སྤྱིར་གསུམ་  
ཉེ་གསུམ་པའི་སྤྱིར་བའི་རིམ་པར་འཛོག་པའི་སྤྱིར།

The second of the reasons is correct because the three levels of deep practice here are set forth according to the order of the views of reality which perceive the three degrees of selflessness.

གསུམ་པ་དེར་ཐལ། རིགས་ཅན་གསུམ་པོ་དེས་རྣལ་འབྱོར་གྱི་ས་གསུམ་པོ་དེ་རིམ་པ་  
བཞིན་དུ་བསྐྱོམ་བྱའི་གཙོ་བོར་བྱས་ནས་སྐྱོམ་པའི་ཕྱིར།

The third reason is correct because disciples of the three types do their meditation by taking, as their principal object of meditation, these same three levels of deep practice, respectively.

བཞི་པ་དེ་ལྟར་ཡིན་ཏེ། རྣལ་འབྱོར་གྱི་ས་གསུམ་བསྐྱོམས་པས་ལམ་ཤེས་གསུམ་  
འཕྲོལ་པར་འགྱུར་བའི་ཕྱིར། མདོར་ན་རྣལ་འབྱོར་ས་ལ་གསུམ་དུ་གངས་ངེས་ཏེ།  
འབྲས་བུ་བྱང་རྒྱུ་ཆེན་པོ་ཐོབ་པ་ལ་ས་གསུམ་པོ་དེ་ངེས་པར་སྐྱོམ་དགོས། སྐྱིབ་  
གཉིས་སྟོང་བའི་ལྷ་བའི་ཆ་ལ་དེ་ལས་མང་མི་དགོས། ཉུང་ན་མི་འདུ་བའི་ཕྱིར།

The fourth is correct because one attains the three knowledges of the path through meditating upon these three levels of deep practice. In sum, the levels of deep practice number exactly three, since you must definitely meditate upon these three levels to attain the goal of the great enlightenment; no more than these three are required as parts of the view which allows one to eliminate the two obstacles, and these can not be abbreviated into fewer groups.

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*The same work gives an insight into the relationship between the three types of selflessness (Part One, f. 117a):*

དེ་ཡང་མི་འཐད་དེ། འདིར་རྟོགས་པ་ཡི་ནི་ཚོས་དུག་དང་། ཞེས་སོགས་གྱི་སྐབས་  
སྤྱི་སྐབ་པ་བཅུ་གསུམ་བདེན་པས་སྟོང་པ་ཐེག་ཆེན་སྐབ་པའི་རྟོན་རང་བཞིན་གནས་  
རིགས་སུ་བསྟན་པ་ལ། གནས་སྐབས་རིགས་གསུམ་དང་རིགས་ཅན་གསུམ་གྱི་དབྱེ་  
བ་མི་འཐད་པའི་རྩོད་ལན་མཇུག་པ་གང་ཞིག། །ཁྱོད་གྱི་དེ་ལ་འབྲེལ་མེད་པའི་ཕྱིར།

This too would be incorrect, because at the point where the text makes the statement beginning with "Here the six objects of realization and. . ." it

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is demonstrating that the fact that the thirteen practices are empty of any true existence constitutes the resident nature which is the foundation of the practice of the greater way; at this juncture (1) a rebuttal is being directed to reject the idea that the division into the three types and those who belong to these three types is incorrect. And (2) your point has no connection here.

རྟོགས་ཀྱི་མ་དེར་ཐལ། བདག་མིད་ཕྱ་རགས་གསུམ་འགལ་བའི་ཕྱིར།

The second part of our reason is correct, because the three degrees of selflessness are all mutually exclusive.

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*We return to Choney Lama's treatise for the next selection, which comments on whether the lower degrees of selflessness are true emptiness:*

།ཁ་ཅིག། །རྒྱན་མཐའི་བར་ཆད་མིད་ལམ་གྱིས་གཟུགས་དང་གཟུགས་འཛིན་པའི་  
ཚད་མ་ཇུས་གཞན་གྱིས་སྣོང་པའི་སྣོང་ཉིད་མངོན་སུམ་དུ་རྟོགས་པར་ཐལ། དེས་དེ་  
བྱེད་ཀྱི་སྐད་ཅིག་མ་གཅིག་ལ་མངོན་སུམ་དུ་རྟོགས་པའི་ཕྱིར།

Suppose someone comes and makes the following claim:

It must too be the case that the uninterrupted path in the mind of a person at the end of the process realizes, directly, the form of emptiness which is the absence of a separate substance to physical matter and the valid perception which perceives this physical matter,

Because it perceives this fact directly in a single briefest instant of action.

དེར་ཐལ། དེས་དེ་དེ་ལྟར་རྟོགས་རུས་པའི་ཕྱིར། ཟེར་ན། མ་ཁྱེད།

[We disagree with your reason.]

But you can't, because it does have the capacity to do so.

Our answer would be that it doesn't necessarily follow.

འདོད་མི་རྣམས་ཏེ། ཐེག་ཆེན་གྱི་བར་ཆད་མེད་ལམ་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར།

And one could never agree with your position, because we are talking about the uninterrupted path in the higher way.

འབྲུག་སྟེ། གཞུགས་དང་གཞུགས་འཛིན་པའི་ཚད་མ་ཇུས་གཞན་གྱིས་སྟོང་པའི་སྟོང་  
ཉིད་དེ་ཀུན་རྫོབ་བདེན་པ་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར།

[It doesn't necessarily follow.]

But it does necessarily follow, because that emptiness represented by the absence of a separate substance to physical matter and the valid perception which perceives this physical matter is deceptive reality.

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*We turn next to a discussion of the distinction between the three tracks mentioned above and the three scopes as described in the teachings on the steps of the path to enlightenment (the lam-rim). The following selection is taken from the Great Book on the Steps of the Path (the Lam-rim chen-mo) of Je Tsongkapa (ACIP electronic text S5392, f. 58b):*

།དེ་ལ་ཉན་ཐོས་དང་རང་སངས་རྒྱས་ཀྱི་ཐེག་པ་ལས་བརྩམས་ཏེ་ཇི་སྟེད་ཅིག་གསུངས་  
པ་ཐམས་ཅད་ནི་སྐྱེས་བུ་འབྲིང་དངོས་སམ་འབྲིང་དང་ཐུན་མོང་བའི་ཚོས་སྐོར་དུ་འདུ་  
སྟེ། སྐྱེས་བུ་འབྲིང་ནི་སྲིད་པ་མཐའ་དག་ལ་སྐྱོབ་བ་བསྐྱེད་ནས་སྲིད་པ་ལས་གྲོལ་བའི་  
ཐར་པ་རང་གི་དོན་དུ་ཐོབ་བུར་བུས་ཏེ་དེའི་ཐབས་ལམ་བསྐྱབ་པ་གསུམ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་  
ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར་ཏེ།

All those teachings that were given from the point of view of the tracks of the Listeners and the Self-Made Buddhas can be classified either as teachings that belong to the medium scope itself, or as teachings which are shared with the medium scope. This is because a person of the medium scope reaches a feeling of disgust for every form of this suffering circle of life, and works towards the goal of achieving—for his own sake—the goal of a freedom in which he is freed from the circle.

ལམ་སྐྱོན་ལས། སྲིད་པའི་བདེ་ལ་རྒྱབ་ཕྱོགས་ཤིང་། །སྲིག་པའི་ལས་ལས་སྐྱོག་  
བདག་ཉིད། །གང་ཞིག་རང་ཞི་ཙམ་དོན་གཉེར། ། །སྐྱེས་བུ་དེ་ནི་འབྲིང་ཞེས་བྱ།  
།ཞེས་གསུངས་པའི་ཕྱིར་རོ།

And this is so because the *Lamp for the Path* says,

Consider a person who has turned away  
From pleasures of the circle of life,  
And who has at this very same time turned back  
From actions which are negative.  
A person who thus is aspiring to  
A state of peace for themselves  
Is the one that we refer to  
As one of the "medium scope."

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*Here finally is a note on the concept of being "substantial," since it is important in the Independent group's description of the gross form of a self-nature to persons. The following selection is taken from Master Changkya Rolpay Dorje's classic Presentation of the Schools of Philosophy (ACIP electronic text S0062, Part Three, ff. 26a-26b).*

སྐྱིད་རྗེས་བཏགས་ཀྱི་ཐ་སྐྱད་གཞུང་ཆེན་མོ་རྣམས་ལས་བུང་བ་ནི་མང་དུ་ཡོད་དོ།  
སྐྱིད་ཡོད་པ་ཙམ་ལ་རྗེས་ཡོད་དུ་བྱ་བ་ནི་གང་ཅི་ཡང་རུང་སྟེ་ཡོད་ན་ནི་ཐམས་ཅད་  
རྗེས་སུ་ཡོད་པ་ཁོ་ནའོ་ཞེས་པ་ལྟ་བུ་སྟེ་འདིའི་བསྐྱོག་ཕྱོགས་ཀྱི་བཏགས་ཡོད་ནི་བདག་  
གཉེས་ལྟ་བུ་ཀུན་རྟོག་གིས་ཡོད་པར་བབྱུང་ཡང་ཡོད་པ་མིན་པ་རྣམས་སོ།།

Generally speaking, there are a great many occurrences of the terms "substantial" and "constructed" in the great works of philosophy. In a general sense, there is no problem in applying the word "substantial" to anything that exists at all, and this is the sense in the phrase, "Once something exists, it can only be substantial." The opposite of this would be something that was constructed; something like the two kinds of a self-nature, which—even though they are held to exist by the imagination—are not something which actually exists.



དོན་བྱེད་ལུས་པའི་རྗེས་ཡོད་ནི་དངོས་པོ་རྣམས་ཏེ། འདིའི་བརྗོད་པ་ལྟོགས་ཀྱི་བཏགས་  
ཡོད་ནི་སྤྱི་མཚན་རྣམས་སོ།།

"Substantial" in the sense of being able to perform a function refers to functional things; the opposite of this one would be "constructed" things in the sense of general identities.

བརྟན་པ་མི་འགྲུར་བའི་རྗེས་ཡོད་ནི་འདུས་མ་བྱས་ཀྱི་ནམ་མཁའ་དང་སོ་སོར་  
བརྟགས་འགོག་དང་སོ་སོར་བརྟགས་པ་མ་ཡིན་པའི་འགོག་པ་རྣམས་ཏེ། འདིའི་  
བརྗོད་པ་ལྟོགས་ཀྱི་བཏགས་ཡོད་ནི་མི་རྟག་པ་རྣམས་སོ།།

"Substantial" in the sense of being something stable, unchanging, refers to things like unproduced, empty space; a cessation of undesirable objects due to the separate analysis [of the four realized truths during the path of seeing]; and a cessation of undesirable objects not due to such an analysis. The "constructed" things that were the opposite of these would be changing things.

རང་རྒྱུ་ལྷན་པའི་རྗེས་ཡོད་ནི་དབང་ཤེས་ཀྱི་གཟུང་བྱུང་བྱུང་པའི་གཟུགས་དང་ཚུགས་  
ལྷན་ཀྱི་ཤེས་པ་རྣམས་སོ།། །འདིའི་བརྗོད་པ་ལྟོགས་ཀྱི་བཏགས་ཡོད་ནི་ལྷན་མིན་འདུ་  
བྱེད་དང་ཀུན་བརྟགས་ཀྱི་ཚོས་རྣམས་སོ།།

"Substantial" in the sense of being self-standing refers to things like the objects that are held by sense consciousnesses, or self-supporting states of mind. The opposite of this kind of substantial would be "constructed" things in the form of changing things which are neither physical nor mental, as well as constructs of the mind.

དེ་ལྟར་ན་སྤྱི་མ་འདི་ནི་རྗེས་བཏགས་མཚན་ཉིད་པ་དང་སྤྱི་མའི་རྗེས་ཡོད་རྣམས་ནི་རྣམ་  
གྲངས་ཀྱི་རྗེས་ཡོད་དོ།།

As such, only the last version of "substantial" is the actual one; the previous types are all only "substantial" in name.

ཕྱི་མའི་རྗེས་ཡོད་ཀྱི་དོན་ནི། ཚོས་གང་ཞིག་རང་ཉིད་སློབ་ཡུལ་དུ་འཆར་བ་རང་ལས་  
གཞན་པའི་ཚོས་ཀྱི་རྣམ་པ་སློབ་ཡུལ་དུ་འཆར་བ་ལ་ལྟོས་མི་དགོས་པར་རང་དབང་དུ་  
འཆར་བའི་ཚུགས་སྐབ་བོ།།

Here is the real meaning of this last sense of "substantial":

Anything which is (1) an existing object; and which (2) is self-supporting, in the sense of being able to appear in the mind independently, without relying on the process of appearing in the mind only through the appearance in the mind of other objects first.

བཏགས་པར་ཡོད་པའི་དོན་ནི། ཚོས་གང་ཞིག་རང་ཉིད་སློབ་ཡུལ་དུ་འཆར་བ་རང་  
ལས་གཞན་པའི་ཚོས་ཀྱི་རྣམ་པ་སློབ་ཡུལ་དུ་འཆར་བ་ལ་ངེས་པར་ལྟོས་དགོས་པའོ།།

And here is the real meaning of this last sense of "constructed":

Anything which is (1) an existing object; and which (2) is something which must rely on the process of appearing in the mind only through the appearance in the mind of other objects first.

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*Further clarification of this point appears in the same text (Part Three, ff. 26b-27a):*

འདིའི་རང་རྒྱ་སྐབ་པའི་རྗེས་ཡོད་དང་གང་ཟག་གི་བདག་མེད་ཀྱི་སྐབས་ཀྱི་རང་རྒྱ་སྐབ་  
པའི་རྗེས་ཡོད་གཉིས་དོན་མི་གཅིག་སྟེ། འདི་ལ་ནི་རང་གི་ངོ་བོ་སློབ་ཡུལ་དུ་འཆར་བ་  
ཚོས་གཞན་གཟུང་བ་ལ་ལྟོས་མི་དགོས་པར་རང་དབང་དུ་འཆར་བ་ཅམ་ལ་བྱེད་ཅིང་།  
ཅིག་ཤོས་ནི་དབང་བསྐྱར་བྱའི་ཡུང་པོ་རྣམས་ལ་མ་ལྟོས་པར་དེ་དག་ལ་དབང་སྐྱར་

བྱེད་ཇི་བོ་ལྟ་བུར་རང་རྒྱ་བར་བྱུབ་པ་ཞིག་དགོས་པའི་ཕྱིར་ཞེས་མཁས་པ་དག་གསུང་  
རོ།།

The meaning of "substantial in the sense of self-standing" here, and the meaning "substantial in the sense of self-standing" when we speak of the lack of a self-nature to the person, are not the same—great thinkers distinguish between them as follows. The phrase here is used only to describe something which can appear in the mind in an independent way, without relying on the process of appearing in the mind only after some other objects have appeared in it first. That other use of the phrase describes a controller of the heaps of a particular person who is at the same time independent of the same heaps being controlled: a kind of a director who is self-standing.

གང་ཟག་གི་བདག་འགོག་པའི་རིགས་པ་ལ་བརྟེན་ནས་གང་ཟག་རྗེས་སུ་ཡོད་པ་  
བཀག་པ་ན་གང་ཟག་བཏགས་ཡོད་དུ་ངེས་པར་འགྱུར་བ་དང་། དེའི་ཚེ་བཏགས་  
ཡོད་དུ་ངེས་ཚུལ་ཡང་དེ་འདྲའི་རང་རྒྱ་བར་མེད་པར་རིགས་པས་བསྐྱབས་པའི་  
ཤྱགས་ཀྱིས་གང་ཟག་ནི་ཚོགས་པ་དང་རྒྱན་ལ་བཏགས་པ་ཙམ་དུ་རྟོགས་པར་འགྱུར་  
རོ།།

If you use the reasoning that helps you deny the possibility that a self-nature of persons could exist, and thereby deny that the person could exist substantially, then the person must beyond doubt become something which is constructed. At this point then you must establish a way to verify that a person is constructed. This is done first by establishing that there could be no person of this type that could be a self-standing object; by implication then, one comes to realize that the person is something only constructed, on the basis of a composite or a stream of parts.

དེ་ལྟ་བུའི་གང་ཟག་བཏགས་པ་ཙམ་ཡིན་ལུགས་ཀྱང་གདགས་གཞི་ཕྱང་པོ་དང་སྐྱ་  
རྟོག་སོགས་ལ་མ་ལྟོས་པར་གང་ཟག་གི་རང་ལྗོད་སྟོ་ཡུལ་དུ་འཆར་མི་རུས་ཤིང་།  
དེ་དག་ཤར་བ་ལ་བརྟེན་ནས་གང་ཟག་གི་རང་ལྗོད་སྟོ་ཡུལ་དུ་འཆར་དགོས་པ་ཉིད་

གང་ཟག་བཏགས་པར་ཡོད་པའི་དོན་དུ་སོང་བས་གང་ཟག་བཏགས་ཡོད་ཡིན་པའི་  
དོན་ནི་སྐབས་འདིའི་བཏགས་ཡོད་དང་དོན་གཅིག་ཏུ་ཡོད་དོ།།

The way in which we say that a person like this is just a construct is that the specific identity of the person cannot appear in the mind without relying on a basis for the construct (the heaps)—along with words, concepts, and so on. The meaning of what it is for the person to be constructed is that the specific identity of the person can only appear in the mind through these other things appearing first. Therefore what it means when we say that a person is "something constructed" is the same as what we mean when we speak of things that are constructed here at this point in the present text.

རྒྱ་མཚན་དེའི་སྤྱིར་འགོག་རྒྱུའི་གང་ཟག་རྗེས་ཡོད་ཀྱང་བཏགས་ཡོད་དེའི་བརྗོན་  
ཕྱོགས་སུ་གྱུར་པའི་རྗེས་ཡོད་ལ་བྱ་དགོས་པ་ནི་མཐའ་གཞན་འགོག་པའི་རིགས་པས་  
གྲུབ་པས་འདིའི་རྗེས་ཡོད་དང་གཞན་གཅིག་གོ། །

For this reason, the meaning of the word "substantial" as we use it with the "substantial" person whose existence we are refuting should be understood as referring to that "substantial" which is the opposite of this same "constructed"—this is something proven through the reasoning which denies other extremes. As such, the essential point is the same as with the "substantial" you find here.

**The Asian Classics Institute**  
**Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant**

**Reading Ten: Interpretations of the Consequence Group, and  
What Je Tsongkapa Himself Believes**

*The following selection gives a brief but exquisite description of how the concept of emptiness is explained by followers of the Consequence group of the Middle-Way School of Buddhism (the Madhyamika Prasangika). It is taken from the Overview of the Middle Way (dBu-ma spyi-don) by Kedrup Tenpa Dargye (1493-1568), an eminent author of textbooks for Sera Mey Tibetan Monastery (ACIP electronic text number S0021, ff. 125a-130a).*

ལྷོ་འབབ་སྐྱུང་ལ་ཡི་དྲགས་ནག་སྒོ་ཡང་། །ཞེས་སོགས་ཀྱི་སྐབས་སུ་མཐའ་དབྱེད་པ་  
ལ། ལྷོ་སྐྱུང་ནག་ཁྲག་ཏུ་སྐྱང་བའི་ཡི་དྲགས་ཀྱི་མིག་ཤེས་དང་། བསེ་རུའི་ནང་དུ་སྐྱ་  
ཤད་འཇོག་པར་སྐྱང་བའི་རབ་རིབ་ཅན་གྱི་མིག་ཤེས་དང་། ས་གཞི་ཀའང་རུས་ཀྱིས་  
སྐྱབ་པར་སྐྱང་བའི་ཀའང་རུས་གསལ་སྐྱང་ཅན་གྱི་ཉིང་ངེ་འཇོན་དང་བཅས་པ་རྣམས་ཀྱི་  
ཡུལ་དེ་དང་། དེར་ཡོད་མེད་རྣམ་པ་ཀུན་དུ་མཚུངས་སམ་མི་མཚུངས་ཞེ་ན།

Here we will analyze the statement [from *Entering the Middle Way*, by Master Chandrakirti (650 AD)] where it says, "...The mind of a craving spirit as well, which sees a stream of water as pus." One may begin with the following question:

Let's consider the objects of the following states of mind: the visual consciousness of a craving spirit where a river of water looks like pus and blood; the visual consciousness of a person with a kind of cataract where a clean white porcelain basin looks like a hair has fallen into it; and that kind of meditation where

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you visualize skeletons—where you imagine that the entire surface of the earth is covered with the bones of corpses. Are all these objects completely equivalent, as far as being something that exists or doesn't exist?

དེ་ལ་བཤད་བྱའི་ལུང་འགོད་པ་དང་། ལུང་གི་དོན་བཤད་པ་གཉིས། དང་པོ་ལ།  
ཐོག་བསྐྱུས་ལས། ཡི་དྲགས་དུད་འགོ་མི་རྣམས་དང་། །རྩ་རྣམས་ཇི་ལྟར་རིགས་  
རིགས་སུ། །དངོས་གཅིག་ཡིད་ནི་ཐ་དད་ཕྱིར། །དོན་མ་གྲུབ་པར་འདོད་པ་ཡིན།  
ཞེས་དང་། དེའི་བཤད་སྐྱར་དག་བསྐྱེན་བཅུན་པ་དེ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པས་མཇེད་པ་ལས།

In reply we will first set forth a relevant passage, and then we will explain the passage. Here is the first. The text called *The Abbreviation of the Greater Way* says,

Insofar as craving spirits, animals,  
Humans, and pleasure beings, each according  
To their class, have differing perceptions  
Of a single thing, we say it has no reality.

Asvabhava, the holy layman with lifetime vows, has explained the passage. His words include the following:

When they look at *a single thing*, a stream of water, each one sees what the ripening of his particular karma forces him to see. A *craving spirit* sees the river full of pus and blood and the like.

དེ་ཉིད་ལ་དུད་འགོ་ལ་སོགས་པས་གནས་ཀྱི་སྒོས་གནས་པར་བྱེད་པ་དང་།

An *animal* or such, on the other hand, thinks of this same water as a place to stay, and makes his home there.

མི་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་ནི་མངར་བ་དང་། དུངས་པ་དང་། བསིལ་བའི་རྒྱར་རྩོགས་ཤིང་  
འཕྱང་ངོ། །ཁྱུས་བྱེད་དོ། །དེར་འཇུག་གོ།

Humans look at the same thing and perceive it as water—sweet, clear, and cool. They drink of it, they wash themselves with it, and they swim in it.

ཀློང་མཁའ་མཐའ་ཡས་སྐྱེ་མཆེད་ལ་སྣོ་མས་པར་ཞུགས་པའི་ལྷ་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་ནམ་  
མཁའ་མཐོང་སྟེ། གཟུགས་ཀྱི་འདུ་ཤེས་རྣམ་པར་བཞིག་པའི་སྤྱིར་རོ། །ཞེས་  
གསུངས་པའི་སྤྱིར།

Those pleasure beings who are wrapped in deep meditation at the level we call the "realm of limitless space" see the water as empty space, for their ability to conceptualize physical matter has dissolved altogether.

གཉིས་པ་ལུང་གི་དོན་བཤད་པ་ལ། གཞན་ལུགས་དག་གི་ །རང་ལུགས་བཞག་  
ཚུན་པ་སྟོང་བ་དང་གསུམ་ལས། དང་པོ་ལ།

Here secondly we will explain the meaning of the text we quoted first. We proceed in three steps: disproving the position of others, establishing our own position, and then refuting their rebuttal. Here is the first.

ཁ་ཅིག་ན་རེ། རྒྱ་མཚན་དེ་ཉིད་ཀྱི་སྤྱིར་ན། ཚོས་ཐམས་ཅད་ལ་འདི་ཡིན་འདི་མིན་  
གང་དུ་ཡང་བབུང་དུ་མེད་དོ། །ཞེས་ཟེར་ན། སངས་རྒྱས་པའི་གྲུབ་མཐའ་དང་། སྤྱི་  
རོལ་པའི་གྲུབ་མཐའ་ལ་བབུང་ངན་དང་། བདག་ཅག་གི་སྟོན་པ་དང་། སྤྱི་རོལ་པའི་  
སྟོན་པ་ལ་མཚོག་དམན་སོགས་མེད་པར་ཐལ།

Someone may make the following claim:

Given the statements that have come above, the fact is that we should never again consider anything as being one way or the other.

Well then, you must be suggesting that the system of the Buddha is all the same as the system of every non-Buddhist belief, that there is no difference in their correctness at all. And you must be saying too that we could never state that our Teacher was the highest teacher, and that the teachers of the non-Buddhists are lesser.

ཚོས་ཐམས་ཅད་ལ་འདི་ཡིན་འདི་མིན་གང་དུ་ཡང་བབུང་དུ་མེད་པའི་སྤྱིར། འདོད་ན།

ཡོད་པར་ཐལ། བདག་ནི་སྟོན་པ་གཞན་སྤངས་ནས། །སྲོད་ལ་སྐྱབས་སུ་མཆི་  
ལགས་གྱི། །ཅི་སྤྲད་ཅི་ན་སྲིད་ཉིད་ནི། །སྟོན་མི་མངའ་ཞིང་ཡོན་ཏན་རྗེས་སུ། །ཞེས་  
གསུངས་པའི་ཕྱིར།

And you must be suggesting all this, for you have claimed that we should never again consider anything as being one way or the other.

Now if you should agree that none of the differences mentioned above exist, we must reply that they do, for as the verse says:

All other teachers now I've given up,  
And go for refuge now to only You;  
Why? Because it's You alone who has  
No fault, and perfected every good.

ཡང་ཁ་ཅིག། །བརྟན་ཞིང་གཤེར་བ་རྒྱ་ཕོར་པ་གང་ལ། །ལྷ་མི་ཡི་དུགས་གསུམ་  
གྱིས་ཅིག་ཅར་དུ་བལྟས་པ་དེའི་ཚེ་ན། །འགྲོ་བ་རང་རང་གི་ངོ་བོར་ཐད་ཀ་ཐད་ཀར་  
བདེན་པས། །བརྟན་ཞིང་གཤེར་བ་རྒྱ་ཕོར་པ་གང་པོ་དེ། །ཡི་དུགས་གྱི་ངོ་བོར་ནག་  
ཁྲག་ཏུ་བདེན། །མིའི་ངོ་བོར་རྒྱ་བདེན་ལྷའི་ངོ་བོར་བདུད་རྩིར་བདེན་པ་ཡིན་ནོ།  
།ཟེར་ན།

Someone else might make the following claim:

Suppose a pleasure being, a human, and a craving spirit sit down together and look at a glass filled with water: the thing that we define as "wet and flowing." Since to the perceptions of each different type of being it is real, the glass full of wet and flowing water is in reality pus and blood to the eyes of the craving spirit, and in reality water to the eyes of the human, and in reality ambrosia to the eyes of the pleasure being.

དེའི་ཚེ་ན་འགྲོ་བ་གསུམ་པོ་དེའི་མིག་ཤེས་ཐམས་ཅད་ཚད་མ་ཡིན་ནམ། །འགའ་ཞིག་



ཚད་མ་ཡིན་པ་དག་ལས་གང་ཡིན། དང་པོ་ལྟར་ན་བརྒྱན་ཞིང་གཤེར་བ་རྒྱ་ཕོར་པ་  
གང་པོ་དེ་རྣམས་ལ་སོགས་པའི་དངོས་པོ་གསུམ་ག་ཡིན་པ་དང་། འགལ་བ་ལ་མ་  
འབྲུལ་བའི་ཚད་མ་ཡོད་པ་དང་། ཕོར་པ་གང་པོ་དེ་རྒྱ་ཡིན་པ་དང་རྒྱ་མ་ཡིན་པ་  
གཉིས་ཀར་ཚད་མས་རྟོགས་པར་ཐལ། དེའི་ཚེ་ན་འགྲོ་བ་གསུམ་པོ་དེའི་མིག་ཤེས་  
ཐམས་ཅད་ཚད་མ་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར།

We ask you then a question: in the situation you've just described, is it that the visual consciousness of all three beings are a valid perception, or is it that only one or two of them are a valid perception?

Suppose you say all three are valid. Well then, the glass of something wet and flowing, of water, must be full of something that is all three different things: pus and blood, and each of the others. And then too it must be possible for there to be multiple and yet still valid perceptions which see one thing in two completely incompatible ways. And finally there must be such a thing as a valid perception which correctly perceives that the glass is filled with something which is simultaneously water and yet not water.

Why so? Because, according to your view, the three differing cases of visual consciousness possessed by the three different beings would all have to be valid perception.

འདོད་ན་མི་འཐད་པར་ཐལ། རྣམས་ལ་སོགས་པའི་དངོས་པོ་གསུམ་པོ་འགལ་  
བའི་ཕྱིར་དང་། རྒྱ་ཡིན་མིན་གཉིས་པོ་དེ་ཕན་རྒྱན་སྤངས་འགལ་གྱི་དངོས་འགལ་  
ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར།

And if you try to agree to these absurdities, you are wrong, for the quality of being pus and blood is incompatible with the quality of being either one of the other two substances mentioned. Moreover, the quality of being water and the quality of not being water are directly incompatible in such a way that, if something exists and lacks one of these qualities, it must then possess the other.

དེ་ལ་ཁོ་ན་རེ། མིའི་མིག་ཤེས་ཚད་མ་ཡིན་གྱི། འགྲོ་བ་གཞན་གཉིས་ཀྱི་མིག་ཤེས་

ཚད་མ་མ་ཡིན་ཏེ། དེ་གཉིས་ལས་བཟང་ངན་གྱི་དབང་གིས་ནྟག་ཐྲག་དང་། བདུད་  
ཕྱི་སོགས་སྲུ་མཐོང་བ་ཙམ་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར། ཟེར་ན།

Someone may answer with the following claim:

In the case mentioned, the visual consciousness of the human is a valid perception, but the visual consciousnesses of the other two types of beings are not valid perception. These latter two see something like the pus and blood, and the ambrosia, only because their karma (which is good in one case, and bad in the other) forces them to.

འོ་ན་མིའི་མིག་ཤེས་ཚད་མ་མ་ཡིན་པར་ཐལ། མི་ལས་འབྲིང་པའི་དབང་གིས་རྒྱར་  
མཐོང་བ་ཙམ་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར། གཞན་ཡང་། མི་མ་ཡིན་པའི་འགྲོ་བའི་རྒྱུད་ལ་ལྷས་  
ཤེས་ཚད་མ་དང་། ཉན་ཤེས་ཚད་མ་ཡང་མེད་པར་ཐལ། དེའི་རྒྱུད་ལ་མིག་ཤེས་ཚད་  
མ་མེད་པའི་ཕྱིར། དེར་ཐལ། བྱོད་ཀྱི་རྩ་བའི་དམ་བཅའ་འཐད་པའི་ཕྱིར། འདོད་ན།

Well then, according to you, the visual consciousness of the human wouldn't be valid perception either. Because isn't it true that the human sees the water only because his karma (which in this case is halfway between the good and the bad just mentioned) forces him to?

Moreover, aren't you implying then that there is no such thing as a valid tactile consciousness, or a valid auditory consciousness, in the mental stream of any being who is not a human? Because aren't you saying that there's no such thing as a valid visual consciousness in the mental stream of any such being?

Certainly you are, for you believe your original position to be correct. And suppose now that you do agree that such beings can have no such valid consciousnesses.

འགྲོ་བ་དེ་དག་གིས་ངེས་ཤེས་རྫོངས་པ་དང་། རྣོ་འདོགས་ཚོད་པ་ཡང་མེད་པར་ཐལ།  
འདོད་པའི་ཕྱིར། འདོད་ན། དེ་དག་ཕན་རྒྱུན་གཅིག་གིས་གཅིག་ངོ་ཤེས་པ་ཡང་མེད་  
པར་ཐལ། འདོད་པའི་ཕྱིར།

Aren't you then implying that these beings never have any case where they are able to reach a definite conclusion about something, or to analyze an object? And if so, aren't you implying that there could never be a case where one of these beings could recognize another? Of course you are, given your position.

༥ བཞིས་པ་རང་ལུགས་བཞག་པ་ལ། བརྒྱན་ཞིང་གཤེར་བ་རྒྱ་ཕོར་པ་གང་ལ།  
ལས་ཅན་གྱི་ལྷ་མི་ཡི་དྲགས་གསུམ་གྱིས་ཅིག་ཅར་དུ་བལྟས་པ་དེའི་ཚེ། རྒྱ་ཕོར་པ་  
གང་པོ་དེ་དངོས་པོ་གསུམ་གྱི་གཞི་མཐུན་པ་མ་ཡིན་པ་དང་། དེའི་ཚེ་ཚད་མཚུངས་  
གསུམ་ངེས་པར་མི་དགོས་ཤིང་། བརྒྱན་ཞིང་གཤེར་བ་རྒྱ་ཕོར་པ་གང་པོ་དེ་ཆ་ཤས་  
གསུམ་ལྡན་དུ་སྐྱེ་བ་དང་།

Here secondly is the section where we establish our own position. Now suppose three different types of beings—a pleasure being, a human, and a craving spirit, each with their own karma—sit down together and look upon a glass filled with water, the thing we define as "wet and flowing." The glass of water is not at this point one thing which is simultaneously three different objects. Neither is it necessary in this situation for there to be three identical valid perceptions. And when the glass full of wet and flowing water occurs, it occurs with three different, distinct parts to it.

[Translator's note: When the phrase "wet and flowing" (the definition of the element of water) is used here, it should be understood as emphasizing the more general concept of a liquid, rather than the water which the human perceives.]

དེ་ཡང་དང་པོར་གྲུབ་ཅུ་ནས་ཆ་ཤས་གསུམ་ལྡན་དུ་གྲུབ་ཅིང་། མཐར་མ་ཞིག་གི་  
བར་དུ་ཆ་ཤས་གསུམ་ལྡན་དུ་གནས་པ་མ་ཡིན་ཏེ། བརྒྱན་ཞིང་གཤེར་བ་རྒྱ་ཕོར་པ་  
གང་པོ་དེའི་ཆ་ཤས་གཅིག་གིས་ཉེར་ལེན་དང་། ཡི་དྲགས་གྱི་ལས་གྱིས་ལྷན་ཅིག་  
བྱེད་རྒྱུ་བྱས་པ་ལ་བརྟེན་ནས་དེའི་ཆ་ཤས་གཅིག་གི་རིགས་འདྲ་སྤྱི་མ་རྣམས་ལྷན་དུ་སྐྱེ་  
བ་དང་།

It is not though the case that, from the time it first started, the glass of water came with the three different parts, or that they stay with the glass of water

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until it eventually ends. What happens is that one of the parts of the glass filled with wet and flowing water provides a material cause, and the karma of the craving spirit provides a contributing factor; and then based on both of these the later continuation of one part of the glass of water starts being blood and pus.

དེའི་ཆ་ཤས་གཅིག་གིས་ཉེར་ལེན་དང་། མིའི་ལས་ཀྱིས་ལྷན་ཅིག་བྱེད་རྒྱུ་གྲུས་པ་  
ལ་བརྟེན་ནས་དེའི་ཆ་ཤས་གཅིག་གི་རིགས་འདྲ་སྤྱི་མ་རྒྱུ་བྱེད་དང་།

Another part of the glass of water again provides a material cause, and the karma of the human provides a contributing factor; and then based on both of these the later continuation of one part of the glass of water starts being water.

ཡང་དེའི་ཆ་ཤས་གཅིག་གིས་ཉེར་ལེན་དང་། ལྷའི་ལས་ཀྱིས་ལྷན་ཅིག་བྱེད་རྒྱུ་གྲུས་  
པ་ལ་བརྟེན་ནས། དེའི་ཆ་ཤས་གཅིག་གི་རིགས་འདྲ་སྤྱི་མ་བདུད་རྩིས་སྤྱི་བ་སོགས་  
ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར།

Yet another part of the glass of water provides a material cause, and the karma of the pleasure being provides a contributing factor; and then based on both of these the later continuation of one part of the glass of water starts being ambrosia, and so on.

དེའི་ཚེ་ན་བརྟེན་ཞིང་གཤེར་བ་རྒྱ་ཕོར་པ་གང་པོ་དེ་ཆ་ཤས་གསུམ་ལྷན་དུ་ཡོད་ཀྱང་།  
གསུམ་གསུམ་གསུམ་ག་མཐོང་བ་མ་ཡིན་ཏེ། ཡི་དུགས་ཀྱི་ལས་ངན་པ་བསགས་པའི་  
དབང་གིས་རྣམས་ལྟོ་མཐོང་། དངོས་པོ་གཞན་གཉིས་མ་མཐོང་བ་དང་། དེ་བཞིན་  
དུ་འགྲོ་བ་འོག་མ་གཉིས་ལ་ཡང་ཤེས་པར་བྱ་བ་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར།

At this point, the glass full of wet and flowing water is something with three different parts. Nonetheless, it is not the case that all three different beings see all three parts. The craving spirit is forced by the bad karma he has collected to see the glass of water as pus and blood; and he doesn't see the other two things. One should understand that a similar case holds with the latter two types of beings.

དེ་ལྟར་འབྱུང་བ་དེ་ཡང་བརྒྱན་ཞིང་གཤེར་བ་ཕྱོར་བ་གང་པོ་དེ་བལྟ་བུ་ཐུན་མོང་བ་  
ཡིན་པའི་དབང་དུ་བྱས་པ་ཡིན་གྱི། ཡི་དྲགས་ཀྱིས་ལག་ཏུ་སྤངས་ནས་ལོངས་སྤྱོད་  
པར་བརྩམས་པ་དེའི་ཚེ་ན་བྱད་ཚོས་གསུམ་ལྡན་དུ་སྐྱེ་བ་མ་ཡིན་ཏེ། དེའི་ཚེ་ན་ཡི་  
དྲགས་ཀྱི་ཐུན་མོང་མ་ཡིན་པའི་ལོངས་སྤྱོད་བྱ་ཡིན་པས། རིགས་འབྲུ་མ་ནག་བྲག་  
ཏུ་སྐྱེ་བ་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར།

What we just described as happening is only with reference to where a glass of something wet and flowing is an object shared by the three different beings, as they look at it together. When the craving spirit himself though picks up the glass in his hand and begins to partake of its contents, the glass of liquid is no longer something that exists with three different parts. Since at this point it is something that the craving spirit is experiencing exclusively, its continuation starts being pus and blood.

དང་ཕྱོར་གང་དུ་གནས་པ་དེ་ཡང་འགྲོ་བ་གསུམ་པོ་དེའི་རང་རང་གི་ཐུན་མོང་མ་ཡིན་  
པའི་ལས་ལ་བརྟེན་ནས་གྲུབ་པའི་སྤོད་ཀྱི་འཇིག་རྟེན་གང་ནས་སྤངས་པ་དེ་ཉིད་དུ་གྲུབ་  
པ་ཡིན་ཏེ། མིའི་ཐུན་མོང་མ་ཡིན་པའི་ལས་ལ་བརྟེན་ནས་གྲུབ་པས་མིའི་འཇིག་རྟེན་  
ཀྱི་ཚུ་དངས་ཤིང་བསིལ་བ་ནས་སྤངས་ན་དེ་ཉིད་དུ་གནས་པ་སོགས་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར།

How the glass of liquid exists originally all depends on the particular outer world from where it has been taken, for each of the three different beings has a different outer world, depending on the specific karma he himself has collected. If the glass of liquid were sweet, cool water taken from the world of humans—a world created by the specific karma of the human in the group—then that would be its original condition, and so on.

ཡི་དྲགས་ཀྱིས་ཚུ་སྐྱུང་ལ་བལྟས་པ་ན་ནག་བྲག་མཐོང་བ་དེ་ཡང་ཡི་དྲགས་འགའ་  
ཞིག་ལ་ཡིན་གྱི། ཡི་དྲགས་ཐམས་ཅད་ལ་མ་ཡིན་ཏེ། ཡི་དྲགས་ལ་སྤྱིའི་སྐྱིབ་པ་  
ཅན། རང་གི་སྐྱིབ་པ་ཅན། ཟས་སྐོམ་ཉིད་ལ་ཡོད་པའི་སྐྱིབ་པ་ཅན་དུ་མ་ཡོད་པའི་

ཕྱིར།

When we say that a craving spirit looks at a stream of water and sees pus and blood, by the way, we are only talking about some kinds of craving spirits, and not all of them. This is because there are many kinds of craving spirits: some with obstacles in the world around them that prevent them from relieving their craving; some with obstacles that are parts of their bodies; and some with obstacles that relate to the food or drink itself.

བརྒྱན་ཞིང་གཤེར་བ་ཕྱོད་པ་གང་ལ་ལས་ཅན་གྱི་འགྲོ་བ་གསུམ་གྱིས་ཅིག་ཅར་དུ་  
བརྟམས་པ་དེའི་ཚེ་ན་དངོས་པོ་ཚད་མས་གྲུབ་པ་གསུམ་སྐྱེ་བའི་དཔེ་ཡང་ཡོད་དེ།  
ལྷགས་གོང་དམར་འབར་བའི་ཆ་ཤས་གཅིག་གིས་ཉེར་ལེན་དང་ལྷགས་སྐྱགས་གྱིས་  
ལྷན་ཅིག་བྱེད་རྒྱུན་བྱས་པ་ལ་བརྟེན་ནས། ལྷགས་སྐྱགས་བཏབ་པའི་ལག་པས་རིག་  
པ་དེའི་ཚེ་ན་ཚ་བའི་རིག་བྱ་མི་སྤྱོད་རིག་བྱ་གཞན་ཞིག་སྤྱོད་བ་དང་། ལྷགས་སྐྱགས་  
མ་བཏབ་པའི་ལག་པས་རིག་པ་དེའི་ཚེ་ན། ཚ་བའི་རིག་བྱ་སྤྱོད་རིག་བྱ་གཞན་མི་སྤྱོད་  
བ་དང་།

There is, moreover, an example we can use for how, when the three different types of beings with their three karmas look all together at a glass full of something wet and flowing, there start to be three different objects, each confirmed by a valid perception. Suppose there is a ball of red-hot steel; one piece of this ball provides the material cause, and the "mantra of steel" provides a contributing factor. Due to these two, a person who has used the mantra of steel on his hand can touch the ball, but he doesn't undergo any sensation of heat; instead, he feels some other sensation. A person who has not used the mantra on his hand touches the ball and does feel a sensation of heat, and no other kind of sensation.

སོས་ཀའི་དུས་སུ་སྐྱབས་པའི་རིག་བྱའི་ཆ་ཤས་གཅིག་གིས་ཉེར་ལེན་དང་། ཡི་དུགས་གྱི་  
ལས་གྱིས་ལྷན་ཅིག་བྱེད་རྒྱུན་བྱས་པ་ལ་བརྟེན་ནས། དེའི་ལུས་ཤེས་གྱི་སྤྱོད་བྱར་གྱུར་  
པའི་ཚ་བའི་རིག་བྱ་སྐྱེ་བ་དང་། དགུན་དུས་སུ་ཉི་མའི་རིག་བྱའི་ཆ་ཤས་གཅིག་གིས་

ཉིན་ལོན་དང་། ཡི་དྲགས་ཀྱི་ལས་ཀྱིས་སྣན་ཅིག་བྱེད་ཀྱིན་བྱས་པ་ལ་བརྟེན་ནས།  
དེའི་ལུས་ཤེས་ཀྱི་སྤོང་བྱར་གྱུར་པའི་གང་བའི་རིག་བྱ་སྐྱེ་བ་ཡོད་པ་ལྟ་བུ་ཡིན་པའི་  
ཕྱིར།

Another example would be the moon in springtime; one part of the feel of its rays on the body provides the material cause, and then the karma of a craving spirit provides a contributing factor. Based on these two, the spirit gets a sensation of heat, which is experienced by the consciousness of the body.

So too with the wintertime sun; one part of the feel of its rays on the body provides the material cause, and then the karma of the craving spirit provides a contributing factor. Based on these two, the spirit gets a sensation cold, which is experienced by the consciousness of the body.

དེ་ལྟར་སྐྱེ་བ་ཡིན་ཏེ། བཤེས་སྤོང་ལས། ཡི་དྲགས་རྣམས་ལ་སོས་ཀའི་དུས་སུ་ནི།  
ལྷ་བའང་ཚ་ལ་དགུན་ནི་ཉི་མའང་གང་། ཞེས་གསུངས་པའི་ཕྱིར།

It is a fact that they get this kind of sensation, for [Arya Nagarjuna's] *Letter to a Friend* states:

For craving spirits, even the light of the moon  
In the spring is hot, and even the winter sun cold.

དེ་ཡང་ཡུལ་དུས་བྱུང་པར་ཅན་དེ་དག་གི་དབང་གིས་སྐྱེ་བ་ཡིན་གྱི་སྤྱིར་དེ་ལྟར་སྐྱེ་བ་  
མ་ཡིན་ཏེ། ཉི་མའི་སྤོང་དུ་གང་བའི་རིག་བྱ་ཡང་མེད། ལྷ་བའི་སྤོང་དུ་ཚ་བའི་རིག་  
བྱ་ཡང་མེད་པའི་ཕྱིར། དེར་ཐལ། ཉི་མའི་སྤོང་དུ་སྣན་པའི་རྣམས་མེད་པའི་ཕྱིར།

All of this is caused by the extraordinary circumstances of the particular time and place, for generally speaking it never happens this way: there is nothing at all about the sun that can feel cold, and nothing about the moon that can feel hot. This too is a fact, for there does not exist on the sun any case of that substance we call "covered space."

གསུམ་པ་དེ་ལ་རྩོད་པ་སྤོང་བ་ལ། བརྟན་ཞིང་གཤེར་བ་ཕོར་པ་གང་པོ་ལ། ལས་

ཅན་གྱི་འགོ་བ་གསུམ་གྱིས་ཅིག་ཅར་དུ་བལྟས་པ་དེའི་ཚོ། བརྒྱན་ཞིང་གཤེར་བ་ཕོར་  
བ་གང་པོ་དེ། ཚེས་གསུམ་ལྷན་གྱི་ཚེས་དུ་སྐྱེས་ཀྱང་། འགོ་བ་གསུམ་པོ་དེས་  
རང་རང་གི་སྐྱུན་མོང་མ་ཡིན་པའི་ལས་ཀྱི་དབང་གིས། འགོ་བ་དེ་དེས་དངོས་པོ་  
གསུམ་ག་མ་མཐོང་བར་ཁས་སྤངས་པ་ལ།

Here is the third part of our presentation, where we refute the rebuttal of representatives of other views. You will recall that our own position is describing a situation where beings of three different types, each with their own karma, are sitting together and looking at a glass filled with something that is wet and flowing. The glass filled with something wet and flowing exists, at this point, as something with three distinct parts. Nonetheless, no one of the beings is able to see all three things there, for they are each at the mercy of the particular karma that they themselves have collected. Representatives of other viewpoints now come to attack this position.

ཁ་ཅིག། དེ་ལྟར་འདོད་པ་དེ་མི་འཐད་པར་ཐལ། དཔལ་ལྷན་ཚོས་ཀྱི་བྲགས་པའི་  
ལུང་དང་འགལ་བའི་སྤྱིར། དེར་ཐལ། དེའི་གཞུང་ལས། གལ་ཏེ་དེ་ཡང་མཐོང་  
མིད་ལ། །བརྟེན་ནས་གཟུགས་གཞན་འབྱུང་འབྱུར་ན། །ཞེས་དབྱ་གཉེན་གཉེས་  
གྱིས་སྐྱེས་བུ་གཅིག་གི་གཟུགས་ལ་བལྟས་པ་དེའི་ཚོ་ན། །སྐྱེས་བུ་དེའི་གཟུགས་  
མངོས་མི་མངོས་གཉེས་སུ་གནས་ཀྱང་། གཟུགས་དེ་དང་དབྱ་གཉེན་གཉེས་ཀྱི་བར་  
དུ་ལས་གཟུགས་སྐྱེས་པས། དབྱ་གཉེན་གཉེས་པོ་དེས་གཟུགས་མངོས་མི་མངོས་  
གཉེས་ཀ་མ་མཐོང་བ། བྲངས་ཅན་གྱིས་ཁས་སྤངས་པ་དེ་འགོག་བྱེད་ཀྱི་རིགས་པ་ཁ་  
སྐྱོས་པས་སྤོད་ཀྱི་དེ་ལ་གཞོད་པའི་སྤྱིར་ཟེར་ན།

One comes and makes the following claim:

Your position, as just explained, is mistaken, for it goes against a statement of the glorious Dharmakirti. This is quite surely the case, for in his major work [entitled *The Commentary on Valid Perception*] he says,



Suppose you say that they don't see it,  
And circumstances cause another form.

What he's talking about here is a belief of the [non-Buddhist] Numerist School. They give the case of a single person whose physical form is looked upon at the same time by his enemy, and also by his friend. In reality, the person's physical form is both attractive and ugly at the same time. Something happens where yet another physical form, one from karma, grows up between the person's true physical form and the enemy and friend looking at it. Because of this neither the enemy nor the friend sees both the attractiveness and the ugliness together.

Master Dharmakirti uses logic to refute this concept, and this same logic can be used against the position you have taken, to prove that you are wrong.

དེ་མི་འཐད་པར་ཐལ། དེ་ལྟར་འདོད་པ་དེ་ནི་ཚོས་ཀྱི་གྲགས་པའི་ལུང་དོན་དང་།  
ཕྱོགས་སྔ་སྔ་བ་པོའི་འདོད་པ་གཉིས་ཀ་ཁོང་དུ་མ་རྒྱུད་པའི་སྐྱོན་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར།

Your reasoning here is though incorrect, for the belief you have expressed shows that you have failed to understand both the meaning of Master Dharmakirti's statement, and the whole position expressed above.

དེར་ཐལ། ཚོས་ཀྱི་གྲགས་པའི་ལུང་དོན་ནི། བྱངས་ཅན་གྱིས་རྒྱུད་རིང་ཐུང་གི་  
གཟུགས་ལ་བརྟུན་པ་དེའི་ཚེ་ན། རྒྱུད་རིང་ཐུང་གི་གཟུགས་དང་། མིག་ཤེས་གཉིས་  
ཀྱི་བར་དུ། ལས་གཟུགས་གསལ་མི་གསལ་སྐྱེ་བའི་དབང་གིས། གཟུགས་གསལ་  
བར་སྐྱུང་མི་སྐྱུང་འཇོག་པ་ཡིན་གྱི། གཟུགས་ཀྱི་རྣམ་པ་ཤར་བའི་སྐོར་ནས་གཟུགས་  
གསལ་བར་སྐྱུང་མི་སྐྱུང་འཇོག་པ་མ་ཡིན་ཞེས་ཁས་སྤངས་པ་ལ། དེ་ལྟ་བུའི་ལས་  
གཟུགས་གཉིས་པོ་དེས་རྒྱུད་རིང་ཐུང་གི་གཟུགས་གཉིས་པོ་དེ་བརྒྱུ་བས་སམ་མ་  
བརྒྱུ་བས། བརྒྱུ་བས་ན་མིག་ཤེས་ཀྱིས་གཟུགས་གཉིས་པོ་དེ་མ་མཐོང་བར་ཐལ།

དེས་དེ་སྐྱིབ་པའི་ཕྱིར།

This is a fact, for the actual meaning of Master Dharmakirti's statement is as follows. The Numerist School is describing a situation where you are looking at a physical form either from far away, or from up close. They say that, depending on the distance between you and the object, another physical form which is the result of karma, and which stands between your visual consciousness and the original form, is either clear or not. This then determines whether the original form appears to you distinctly or not. It is not the case though, they say, that what determines whether the original form appears clearly or not is whether or not you have a clear impression of this form.

In reply then Master Dharmakirti is asking the Numerists:

Let's consider these two cases of some intermediate physical form that comes from karma. Do they, or do they not, function to obscure the two original forms, the one at a distance, and the other close by? If they were to obscure them, then your visual consciousness could never see the two original forms, since they would have been obscured by the others.

མ་བསྐྱིབས་ན། མིག་ཤེས་དེས་ལས་གཟུགས་གཉིས་དང་རྒྱང་རིང་གི་གཟུགས་  
གཉིས་པོ་དེ་ཅིག་ཅར་དུ་མཐོང་བར་ཐལ། དེས་དེ་མ་བསྐྱིབས་པའི་ཕྱིར་ཞེས་བཀག་  
པའི་དོན་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར།

And suppose you say that they do not obscure them. Wouldn't your visual consciousness then see both the two intermediate forms created by karma, and the two original forms, the near one and the far one, all at the same time? They would have to because, according to you, the intermediate forms do not obscure the original ones.

This is the real point of the Master's statement, wherein he refutes that belief of the Numerists.

གཉིས་པ་དེར་ཐལ། ལྷོགས་སྲུ་མས་བརྒྱན་ཞིང་གཤེར་བ་ཕོར་པ་གང་ལ། འགྲོ་བ་  
གསུམ་གྱིས་ཅིག་ཅར་དུ་བལྟས་པ་དེའི་ཚེ་ན། བརྒྱན་ཞིང་གཤེར་བ་ཕོར་པ་གང་པོ་དེ།

དངོས་པོ་གསུམ་གྱི་གཞི་མཐུན་དུ་ཡང་ཁས་མ་སྐྱབས། སྐྱེས་བུ་གཅིག་གི་གཟུགས་  
མངོས་མི་མངོས་གཉིས་ཀ་ཡིན་པར་ཡང་ཁས་མ་སྐྱབས། ཡི་དྲགས་ཀྱིས་མིག་ཤེས་  
དང་རྩ་ལྷུང་གི་བར་དུ་རྣལ་ཞབས་གི་ལས་གཟུགས་སྐྱེ་བར་ཁས་མ་སྐྱབས། ཡི་དྲགས་  
ཀྱི་མིག་གིས་རྣལ་ཞབས་གི་ལས་གཟུགས་དང་རྩ་ལྷུང་གཉིས་ཀ་མཐོང་བར་ཡང་ཁས་  
མ་སྐྱབས། ལས་ཀྱི་དབང་གིས་ཡི་དྲགས་ཀྱི་རྩ་ལྷུང་མ་མཐོང་བར་ཁས་སྐྱབས་པའི་  
ཕྱིར།

Our second point [that you have failed to comprehend the position we expressed above] is also quite true. Our original position was describing a situation where three different kinds of beings were sitting together and looking at a glass full of something wet and flowing. It is not our position that the glass full of something wet and flowing is one thing that is three different things. And it is not our position that there is such a thing as the physical appearance of a person which is at once both attractive and ugly.

It is furthermore not our position that the blood and pus represent some kind of physical form which results from karma and grows up between the visual consciousness of the craving spirit and the stream of water. And it is not our position that the craving spirit's eyes see both this blood and pus as some kind of physical form resulting from karma, and the river of water at the same time. It *is* our position that, by force of his karma, the craving spirit is not able to see the stream of water.

གཞན་ཡང་། དཔལ་ཚོས་ཀྱི་གཟུགས་པའི་ལུང་དང་ཁྲོད་འགལ་བ་ཡིན་ཏེ། ཁྲོད་ཀྱི་  
ནད་ལྗང་དང་། འབྲུང་བ་ལྗང་དང་། གདོན་ལྗང་དང་བཅས་པ་རྣམས། ཉོན་མོངས་པ་དུག་  
ལྷའི་དངོས་འབྲས་སུ་ཁས་སྐྱབས། ལྷ་སྟེགས་བྱེད་ཀྱི་བད་ཀན་དང་འདོད་ཆགས་རྩ་  
འབྲས། མཁྲིས་པ་དང་ཞེ་སྤང་རྩ་འབྲས་སོགས་སུ་ཁས་སྐྱབས་པ་ལ། བད་ཀན་དང་  
འདོད་ཆགས་རྗེས་སུ་འགྲོ་ལྡོག་འབྲུལ། མཁྲིས་པ་དང་ཞེ་སྤང་རྗེས་སུ་འགྲོ་ལྡོག་

འབྲུལ་པས་དེ་འགོག་བྱེད་གྱི། འབྲུལ་ཕྱིར་རླུང་སོགས་ཚོས་མ་ཡིན། །ཞེས་པའི་  
གཞུང་འདོན་པ་སྐྱུར་བའི་སློལ་སྤོང་ལ་གཞོན་པའི་ཕྱིར་དང་། འདུས་མ་གུས་གྱི་  
ནམ་མཁའ་ཕྲག་དོག་གི་དངོས་འབྲས་སུ་འདོད་པ་མི་རིགས་པའི་ཕྱིར།

And anyway, maybe it's you who have contradicted a statement of the glorious Dharmakirti. You have taken the position that the five sicknesses, and the five elements, and the five demons are all the direct result of the five poisons—the five bad thoughts. But when the non-Buddhists take the position that phlegm and desire have a cause-and-effect relationship, and that bile and anger have the same kind of relationship, and so on, then Master Dharmakirti refutes them by showing that desire doesn't always come and go according to the phlegm, and anger doesn't always come and go according to the bile. To do so he makes the statement that says, "It's not a fact that wind and the rest are such, for the relationship doesn't always hold." We could twist around this statement too and say that it disproved your position; and add as well how wrong it is to assert that uncreated space could ever be the direct result of jealousy.

[Translator's note: The point seems to be that, although your position about the bad thoughts, and our original position on the nature of the three beings' perceptions, are both correct, you could always twist around some quotation by a master, take it out of context or misinterpret it, and try to show they were wrong.]

ཡང་ཁ་ཅིག་ན་རེ། དངོས་གཅིག་ཡིད་ནི་ཐ་དད་ཕྱིར། །དོན་མ་གྲུབ་པར་འདོད་པ་  
ཡིན། །ཞེས་དངོས་པོ་གཅིག་ལ་སྐྱང་རྩལ་མི་འདྲ་བ་གསུམ་འབྱུང་བར་གསུངས་པ་  
མི་འཐད་པར་ཐལ། །སྤོང་ལྟར་ན་དངོས་པོ་གསུམ་ལ་སྐྱང་རྩལ་མི་འདྲ་བ་གསུམ་  
འབྱུང་བའི་ཕྱིར། དེར་ཐལ། འགོ་བ་གསུམ་གྱིས་བརྒྱན་ཞིང་གཤེར་བ་ཕོར་པ་གང་  
ལ་ཅིག་ཅར་དུ་བལྟས་པ་དེའི་ཚོ་ན། དངོས་པོ་ཚད་གྲུབ་པ་གསུམ་ལ་སྐྱང་རྩལ་མི་  
འདྲ་བ་གསུམ་འབྱུང་བའི་ཕྱིར། ཟེར་ན།

Someone else might come and make yet another claim:

Let's talk about that quotation above, where it said:

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant  
Reading Ten

Insofar as [these different beings] have  
differing perceptions  
Of a single thing, we say it has no reality.

The idea being expressed here is that a single object can be appearing in three different ways. This is incorrect because, according to you, what's happening is that three different objects are appearing in three different ways. And this certainly is your position; remember, you were describing a situation where three different kinds of beings sit down together and look at a glass full of something that's wet and flowing. You said that there were three different objects, each confirmed by a valid perception, and that they were appearing in three different ways.

འོ་ན། རྐྱེས་བྱ་གཅིག་གིས་ཡན་ལག་མི་འདྲ་བ་ལྔ་སྲུང་བ་མི་འདྲ་བ་ལྔ་བྱས་པ་དེའི་  
ཚོ་ན། རྐྱེས་བྱ་གཅིག་གིས་བྱ་བ་མི་འདྲ་བ་ལྔ་བྱས་པ་མ་ཡིན་པར་ཐལ། ཡན་ལག་  
མི་འདྲ་བ་ལྔ་སྲུང་བ་མི་འདྲ་བ་ལྔ་བྱས་པའི་ཕྱིར།

Well now, suppose a person is using all four of his limbs, and his head, to perform five different actions. According to you, it wouldn't be one person performing five different actions, because five different protuberances of his body are performing five different actions.

བྱས་པ་ལ་ཁོ་ན་རེ། རྐྱེན་མེད་དེ། ཡན་ལག་ལྔ་པོ་དེ་རྐྱེས་བྱ་དེའི་ཆ་ཤས་ཡིན་པས།  
དེས་བྱ་བ་བྱས་པས་རྐྱེས་བྱ་དེས་བྱ་བ་བྱས་པར་འཇོག་དགོས་པའི་ཕྱིར། ཟེར་ན།

In response to this line of reasoning, someone responds:

No, there's no such problem here. The five protuberances are all parts of the one person, so we have to say that—when the five are performing some actions—the person is performing some actions.

སྲ་མ་ཡང་དེ་དང་མཚུངས་ཏེ། རྣམས་ལ་སོགས་པའི་དངོས་པོ་གསུམ་པོ་དེ།  
བརྒྱན་ཞིང་གཤེར་བ་ཕོར་པ་གང་པོ་དེའི་ཆ་ཤས་ཡིན་པས་དེ་གསུམ་སྐྱང་བ་ན།

བརྗེན་ཞིང་གཤེར་བ་ཕོར་པ་གང་པོ་དེའི་སྟེང་དུ་སྦྲང་རྩུལ་མི་འདྲ་བ་གསུམ་སྦྲང་བར་  
འཇོག་པའི་ཕྱིར།

Well the case above is exactly the same! The three things mentioned, the blood and pus and the other two, are all parts of the glass full of something wet and flowing. When the three appear then we can say that the glass full of a thing which is wet and flowing is acting as a basis, and that three different ways of appearing are being displayed upon it.

ཡང་ཁ་ཅིག་ན་རེ། རྗེན་བྲག་ལ་སོགས་པའི་དངོས་པོ་གསུམ་པོ་དེ་ཕན་རྩུན་གོ་ས་  
འགོག་པའི་དངོས་པོ་མ་ཡིན་པར་ཐལ། ལས་ཅན་གྱི་འགོ་བ་གསུམ་གྱི་རྩུ་ཕོར་པ་  
གང་ལ་ཅིག་ཅར་དུ་བརྗེན་པ་དེའི་ཚེ་ན། དངོས་པོ་ཚད་གྲུབ་པ་གསུམ་སྟོན་པར་ཁས་  
སྦྲངས་པ་ལ།

Someone else may come now and make yet another argument:

Let's talk about these three things: the pus and blood, and the other two. Are you implying then that these are not types of objects which would block each other from entering the space that each one occupies? After all, you were talking about a situation where those three types of beings, each with their own karma, sit down together and look at a glass full of water. And you said that your position was that it was possible for there to be three different objects there, each one confirmed by a valid perception.

དངོས་པོ་གསུམ་ཕན་རྩུན་གོ་ས་འགོག་པའི་དངོས་པོ་མ་ཡིན་པར་ཐལ་བའི་རིགས་  
པས་མི་གཞོན་དེ། དེའི་ཚེ་ན་བརྗེན་ཞིང་གཤེར་བ་ཕོར་པ་གང་པོ་དེ། དངོས་པོ་  
གསུམ་གྱི་གཞི་མཐུན་དུ་ཡང་ཁས་མ་སྦྲངས། ཚད་མཚུངས་ངེས་པར་དགོས་པར་  
ཡང་ཁས་མ་སྦྲངས་པའི་ཕྱིར།

This kind of reasoning, where you attempt to show that we are implying that the three objects are not the kinds that block each other from entering the space

that each one occupies, cannot disprove our position. It is not our belief that in this situation the glass full of something which is wet and flowing is one thing which is three different things. Neither did we ever say that there definitely had to be identical valid perceptions here.

ཡང་ཁ་ཅིག་ན་རེ། ཉི་ཤུ་པའི་འགྲེལ་བཤད་སློབ་དཔོན་དུལ་བ་ལྷ་ས་མཇུག་པ་ལས།  
དེ་ལ་རྣམ་གཤིས་གསལ་པ་འགའ་ཡང་མེད་ན་རྣམ་གཤིས་གང་བའི་སྐྱེད་ལྷ་ག་ལ་ཡོད།  
ལས་ཀྱི་རྣམ་པར་སྣོན་པའི་དབང་གིས་དེ་དག་གིས་དེ་མཐོང་ངོ་། །ཞེས་གསུངས་པ་  
དེ་མི་འཐད་པར་ཐལ། འགྲོ་བ་གསུམ་གྱིས་བརྒྱན་ཞིང་གཤེར་བ་ཕོར་བ་གང་ལ་ཅིག་  
ཅར་དུ་བལྟས་པ་དེའི་ཚེ་ན། ཡི་དུགས་ཀྱི་མིག་ཤེས་ཚད་མར་སོང་བའི་རྣམ་དངོས་  
གནས་པ་ཡོད་པའི་ཕྱིར་ཟེར་ན།

Someone might make the following claim:

In his *Commentary to the Twenty Verses*, Master Vinitadeva makes this statement—

If there was not a single drop of pus there, then how could there ever be a whole river of pus? They are forced to see it, through the ripening of their karma.

According to you, this statement would have to be mistaken, because when the three different kinds of beings sit down together and look at the glass full of something wet and flowing, the visual consciousness of the craving spirit is a valid perception, and the pus is real pus.

སྐྱོན་མེད་དེ། དེ་ལྟ་བུའི་བཀའ་ལན་རི་སྟོན་ཅིག་བྱས་པ་ཐམས་ཅད་སྤྱི་དོན་འགོག་  
པའི་དབང་དུ་བྱས་པའི་ཕྱིར། སྤྱི་དོན་འགོག་པའི་རྒྱལ་ཡང་ཡོད་དེ། སྐྱོན་པོ་སྤྱི་རོལ་  
དོན་དུ་བྱུང་ན། རྒྱུ་མཐོང་གི་རྒྱུད་ཀྱི་སྐྱོན་འཛིན་དབང་པོའི་མངོན་སུམ་ལ། སྐྱོན་པོ་

སྒྲུང་བ་ན་སྒྲོན་འཛིན་སྒྲུ་མ་འགགས་པའི་ཚོ། སྒྲོན་འཛིན་ཕྱི་མ་སྐྱེ་བའི་བག་ཆགས་  
བཞག་པ་སྒྲིན་པ་ལ་བརྟེན་ནས། སྒྲུང་བ་མ་ཡིན་པར་སྒྲོན་པོ་ཕྱི་རོལ་ནས་རང་འདྲའི་  
རྣམ་པ་གཏད་པའི་སྒྲོ་ནས་སྒྲུང་བ་ཡིན་ན། འགྲོ་བ་གསུམ་གྱིས་བརྟེན་ཞིང་གཤེར་བ་  
ཕོར་པ་གང་ལ་ཅིག་ཅར་དུ་བརྟུས་ནས། དངོས་པོ་གསུམ་སྒྲུང་བ་དེའི་ཚོ་ན། རང་  
རང་གི་ལས་གྱིས་བག་ཆགས་བཞག་པ་སྒྲིན་པ་ལ་མ་བརྟེན་པར། དངོས་པོ་གསུམ་  
པོ་དེ་རང་འདྲའི་རྣམ་པ་གཏད་པའི་སྒྲོ་ནས་སྒྲུང་དགོས།

And yet there is no such problem. No matter how many arguments of this kind you want to present, they are all made from the point of view of denying the existence of external objects. The way these arguments go is as follows. If the color blue were to exist as an external object, then the following would occur when this color appeared directly to a sense perception grasping blue; that is, with such a perception found in the mental stream of one of those who "only sees this side" [which is another name for those who have not yet perceived emptiness directly].

When an earlier instance of the perception of blue ends, what actually happens is that it plants a mental seed which eventually grows into a later instance of the same perception of blue, when the seed ripens. Suppose the blue were not just this kind of appearance, but rather an appearance where blue as an outer object were transmitting a likeness of itself and thereby appearing to one's perceptions. Something else then would be happening when the three different beings sit down together and look at the glass full of something wet and flowing. The three different objects would be appearing to them because each of the objects was transmitting a likeness of itself to their perception. All of this would be happening independent of any process where each being's karma planted a mental seed, which later ripened and produced the appearance of the object.

དེ་ལྟར་སྒྲུང་ན་འགྲོ་བ་གསུམ་པོ་དེས་རང་རང་གི་ཐུན་མོང་མ་ཡིན་པའི་ལས་གྱིས་  
བག་ཆགས་བཞག་པ་སྒྲིན་པ་ལ་བརྟེན་ནས། དངོས་པོ་གསུམ་པོ་དེ་སྒྲུང་བ་མ་ཡིན་  
པས། གང་ཟག་རེ་རེས་དངོས་པོ་གསུམ་གཉིས་དགོས་པ་ལས་མ་རྟོགས་པའི་ཕྱིར་



### ཞེས་བཀའ་པའི་ཕྱིར།

If this were how the three objects were appearing, then they would not be appearing through a process where the specific and different karma that each of the three beings had collected had planted a seed in their mind which later ripened. As such each of the beings involved would have to be perceiving all three of the objects, whereas the fact is that they do not.

All this is an argument attempting to refute those who refuse to accept the denial of outer objects.

དེས་ན་ལུང་དེའི་དོན་ཡོད་དེ། ཡི་དྲགས་ལ་ཇི་ལྟར་སྤང་བ་ལྟར་གྱི་སྤྱི་རོལ་དོན་དུ་  
གྲུབ་པའི་རྣམ་གཤིས་གི་ཐིགས་པ་འགའ་ཡང་མེད་ན། སྤྱི་རོལ་དོན་དུ་གྲུབ་པའི་རྣམ་གཤིས་  
གང་བའི་སྤང་ལྟ་གཤིས་ཡོད། འོན་ཀྱང་། འགྲོ་བ་དེ་དག་གི་ལས་ཀྱི་དབང་གིས་རྣམ་  
སོགས་མཐོང་ངོ་ཞེས་བསྟན་པའི་ཕྱིར།

The real meaning of the quotation by Master Vinitadeva is therefore the following:

Suppose there didn't exist a single drop of pus that existed as it appeared to exist to the craving spirit; that is, which existed as an outer object. How then could there exist a whole river full of pus which existed as an outer object? These beings do though see the pus and so on, for they are forced to do so by their karma.

དེར་ཐལ། དེའི་འོག་དུ་རྣམ་ཐོག་སྤྱི་རོལ་དོན་དུ་མ་གྲུབ་ཅིང་། སེམས་ཅམ་གྱི་བདག་  
ཉིད་ཡིན་ན། དེས་བཟུང་བཏུང་གི་བྱ་བ་མི་རྣམས་པར་ཚོད་པའི་ལན་དུ། བྱ་བྱེད་མི་  
ལམ་གཞོད་པ་འདྲ། །ཞེས་དེ་སྤྱི་རོལ་དོན་དུ་མ་གྲུབ་ཀྱང་བཟུང་བཏུང་གི་བྱ་བ་བྱེད་  
རྣམས་པ་མི་ལམ་སོགས་དཔེ་དུ་མས་སྐྱབ་པར་མཛད་པའི་ཕྱིར།

And this is certainly the case, for later on in the text someone argues that—if the pus and blood did not exist as outer objects, and if they were only a part of the mind itself— then they could never provide the function of being something to eat or drink. And in response, Master Vinitadeva says "Actions and their objects are like an injury in a dream." He is saying that, even though

the pus and blood do not exist as outer objects, nonetheless they can perform the function of being something to eat or drink. He proves his point by using a great many examples, such as a dream.

དེ་ལྟར་མ་ཡིན་ན་གཟུགས་ལ་སོགས་པའི་སྐྱེ་མཆེད་རྣམས་མེད་པར་ཐལ། དེ་ཡོད་  
པར་སྟོན་པའི་མདོ་དྲང་དོན་དགོངས་པ་ཅན་གྱི་མདོ་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར། དེར་ཐལ། ཉི་ཤུ་  
པའི་རང་འགྲུལ་ལས། དེ་བཞིན་དུ་བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས་ཀྱི་གཟུགས་ལ་སོགས་པའི་སྐྱེ་  
མཆེད་ཡོད་པར་གསུངས་པ་ཡང་དེ་སྟོན་པས་འདུལ་བའི་སྐྱེ་བའི་ཆེད་དུ་སྟེ་བཀའ་དེ་  
ནི་དགོངས་པ་ཅན་ལོ། །ཞེས་གསུངས་པའི་ཕྱིར།

If this were not the case, then one would have to say that form and other such doorways through which perceptions grow did not even exist at all. Why? Because you would be saying that all the sutras which state that they do exist are sutras which do not mean what they say; sutras which you have to interpret to understand their true meaning. And this too is certainly the case, for the autocommentary to the *Twenty Verses* states that:

In the same way, statements by the victorious Buddha where He says that form and other such doors of perception do exist would be examples of His word that must be interpreted to establish their real meaning; statements that are only spoken figuratively, for the benefit of disciples who might require such explanations.

བྱས་པ་ལ་ཁོ་ན་རེ། སྟོན་མེད་དེ། ཕྱི་རོལ་དོན་དུ་གྲུབ་པའི་གཟུགས་སོགས་སྐྱེ་  
མཆེད་ཡོད་པར་སྟོན་པའི་མདོ་དྲང་དོན་དགོངས་པ་ཅན་ཡིན་པའི་དོན་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར།  
ཟེར་ན། ལུང་སྒྲ་མའི་དོན་ཡང་མཚུངས་ཏེ། ཕྱི་རོལ་དོན་དུ་གྲུབ་པའི་རྣམ་ཐག་གི་  
ཐོགས་པ་འགྲུལ་ཡང་མེད་ཅེས་པའི་དོན་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར།

In response to this someone might claim:

There's no problem; the point of this statement is to say that sutras which explain form and similar doors of perception as actually existing as outer objects are only spoken figuratively, and must be interpreted to establish their true meaning.

Well then, the meaning of the original statement then is just the same: it is saying that "there does not exist even a drop of pus and blood which exists as an outer object."

ཡང་ཁ་ཅིག །ཡི་དྲགས་ཀྱིས་རྩ་ལྷུང་ལ་བལྟས་པ་དེའི་ཚེ། རྩ་ལྷུང་བསྐྱམས་པ་ལ་  
ཚད་མར་སོང་བའི་དེའི་མིག་ཤེས་དང་། འབྲས་བུ་ཅན་གྱི་སྣོན་པ་ལ་བལྟས་པ་དེའི་ཚེ།  
འབྲས་བུ་མེད་པ་ལ་ཚད་མར་སོང་བའི་དེའི་མིག་ཤེས་ཚད་མ་ཡོད་པར་ཐལ། འགྲོ་བ་  
གསུམ་གྱིས་བརྒྱན་ཞིང་གཤེས་བ་ཕོར་པ་གང་ལ་བལྟས་པ་དེའི་ཚེ། རྣམ་ཐྲག་དངོས་  
གནས་པ་ལ་ཚད་མར་སོང་བའི་ཡི་དྲགས་ཀྱི་མིག་ཤེས་ཚད་མ་ཡོད་པའི་ཕྱིར།

Yet again, another argument might be made:

Let's take the case of one of those craving spirits that looks at a river of water, and sees it as a dry riverbed, genuinely so. Or consider one that looks at a tree loaded with fruit, but sees it as nothing but bare limbs, genuinely so. The visual consciousness of both of these beings then must be a valid perception. Why? Remember the case of the three different beings looking at a glass full of something wet and flowing; according to you, the pus and blood was actual pus and blood, and the perception of them by the craving spirit was genuine: his visual consciousness was a valid perception.

ཟེར་ན་མ་ཐུབ་སྟེ། དང་ཕོར་ཡི་དྲགས་ཀྱིས་རྩ་མ་མཐོང་ན་སྣོན་གསུང་དེར་ལོངས་སྤྱོད་  
པའི་ཕྱིར། འགྲོ་བ་ཡང་མི་འཐད་པས་དང་ཕོར་རྩ་མཐོང་ཡང་། ཕྱིས་ལས་ཀྱི་དབང་  
གིས་རྩ་མ་མཐོང་བར་འོག་གཞི་གམ་སྟེག་ཅམ་ཞིག་མཐོང་ཞིང་། དེའི་རྗེས་སུ་རྟོག་  
པས་རྩ་བསྐྱམས་པར་ཞེན་པ་དང་། དེ་བཞིན་དུ་དང་ཕོར་སྣོན་ཤིང་གི་འབྲས་བུ་མཐོང་  
ཡང་ཕྱིས་ལས་ཀྱི་དབང་གིས་འབྲས་བུ་མ་མཐོང་བར་ཡལ་ག་ཅམ་ཞིག་མཐོང་ཞིང་།  
དེའི་རྗེས་སུ་རྟོག་པས་འབྲས་བུ་མེད་པར་ཞེན་པའི་ཕྱིར།

Just because we said that about the other case doesn't mean that it's true in every case. If the craving spirit hadn't seen any water in that area in the first place, it wouldn't have made any sense for him to go over in that direction to try to enjoy some of the water. Therefore what happened was that, at first, he saw some water. Later on, he was forced by his karma to stop seeing water and saw only bare, parched earth. Then he had an impression where he thought the water had dried up.

The case with the fruit tree is the same. Although at first the craving spirit sees a tree loaded with fruit, later on his karma forces him to stop seeing fruit, and all he sees is bare branches. Then he has an impression where he thinks that the tree has no fruit any more.

དེའི་ཚེ་ན། ཡི་དྲུག་ས་ཀྱི་མིག་ཤེས་ཀྱི་སྐྱིབ་བྱེད་ཀྱིས་ཚུ་གླུང་མ་མཐོང་བས། འོག་གཞི་གྲམ་སྲིག་མཐོང་བ་ཡིན་ཏེ། མིའི་མིག་ཤེས་ཀྱིས་ཀྱང་སྐྱིབ་བྱེད་ཀྱིས་ཚུ་གླུང་མ་མཐོང་ན། འོག་གཞི་གྲམ་སྲིག་མཐོང་དགོས་པ་ལྟ་བུ་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར།

When all this is happening, the obstacle in the visual consciousness of the craving spirit prevents him from seeing the river of water, and so he sees a dry, parched riverbed. The same is true for the visual consciousness of a human: if the obstacle were there, it would prevent him from seeing the river of water, and then he would have to see a dry, parched riverbed.

རྣམ་པ་གཅིག་ཏུ་ན། ཡི་དྲུག་ས་ཀྱིས་ཚུ་གླུང་ལ་བལྟས་པ་དེའི་ཚེ་ན་དེ་མ་བསྐྱམས་ཀྱང་། རང་གི་བལྟ་བུར་གྱུར་པའི་ཚུ་གླུང་དང་། འོངས་སྐྱོད་བུར་གྱུར་པའི་ཚུ་གླུང་བསྐྱམས་པ་ཡོད་དེ། འགོ་བ་གསུམ་གྱིས་བརྒྱན་ཞིང་གཤེས་བ་ཕོར་པ་གང་ལ་ཅིག་ཅར་དུ་བལྟས་པ་དེའི་ཚེ་ན། ལས་ཀྱི་དབང་གིས་རྣམ་ཐྲག་སྲིག་སོགས་དངོས་པོ་རྣམ་པ་གསུམ་ཅིག་ཅར་དུ་གྲུབ་པ་ཞིག་ཡོད་པའི་ཕྱིར།

From one point of view, the river of water hasn't dried up when the craving spirit looks at it; but there *is* a river which has dried up, if you're talking about a river of water *that the spirit can see*, or a river of water *that the spirit can drink from*. This follows because when the three different types of beings sit down together and look at a glass full of something wet and flowing, it is true that, due to the force of karma, three different kinds of objects exist there at the same time: the pus and blood, and the other two.

དེ་ལྟར་བྱས་ན། ཟས་སྐོམ་ཉིད་ལ་ཡོད་པའི་སྐྱིབ་པ་ཅན་གྱི་ཡི་དྲགས་གྱིས་ལོངས་  
སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་མ་བརྩམས་གྱི་བར་དུ་བཟའ་བཏུང་དངོས་ཡིན་ཀྱང་། དེས་ལོངས་སྤྱོད་  
པར་བརྩམས་པ་ན། ཟས་དེའི་རིགས་འདྲ་ཕྱི་མ་རྣམས་ལྷན་དུ་སྐྱེ་བ་ཡིན་གྱི། རྣམ་  
ལྷན་དུ་སྐྱང་བའི་སྐྱང་བ་ཅན་གྱིས་བཟའ་བཏུང་གི་བྱ་བ་བྱེད་པ་མ་ཡིན་ཏེ། དེ་ཡིན་ན་  
ལས་འབྲས་ལ་སྐྱར་བ་བཏབ་པར་འགྱུར་བའི་ཕྱིར། དེར་ཐལ། དེ་ལྟ་བུའི་ཡི་དྲགས་  
གྱིས་ལས་འབྲས་ལ་སྐྱར་བ་བཏབ་པར་འགྱུར་བའི་ཕྱིར།

Given all this, consider craving spirits that have obstacles that relate to their food and drink itself. The food and drink there really *is* food and drink, until such time as the spirit starts trying to eat or drink it. When he does try to do so, then the continuum of the food into the next moment starts becoming pus and blood. It is not though that it is the simple appearance of something as pus and blood that could ever function as something to eat or drink. If this were the case, then the rules of karma and its consequences would have to be less than what they really are. And this is true, for if a craving spirit like this ever existed it would represent a failure of the laws of karma and its consequences.

གཞན་ཡང་། སྐྱང་གཞིར་གྱུར་པའི་རྣམས་ལྷན་མེད་ཅིང་དེར་སྐྱང་བའི་སྐྱང་བ་ཅན་  
གྱིས་བཟའ་བཏུང་གི་བྱ་བ་བྱེད་ན། རབ་རིབ་ཅན་ལ་བསེ་རུའི་ནང་དུ་སྐྱེ་ཤད་སྐྱང་བས་  
འཆིང་བ་དང་། དེ་ལ་སྐྱང་བའི་སྐྱང་བྱས་ལུས་ཟ་བ་དང་། སྐྱིག་རྒྱུའི་རྩམ་རྩའི་བྱ་བ་  
བྱེད་རྣམས་པ་སོགས་ཡིན་པར་ཐལ། སྐྱང་གཞིར་གྱུར་པའི་རྣམས་ལྷན་མེད་ཀྱང་། རྣམ་  
ལྷན་དུ་སྐྱང་བའི་སྐྱང་བ་ཅན་གྱིས་བཟའ་བཏུང་གི་བྱ་བ་བྱེད་རྣམས་པའི་ཕྱིར།

Suppose moreover that there were no pus and blood out there to appear as the pus and blood, and suppose that the mere appearance of something looking like pus and blood could ever function as something to eat or drink. Well then, you would also have to be able to use a comb on the hair that appears to exist on a porcelain sink to a person with cataracts. And a horsefly that appeared to the same person would have to be able to give him a bite. And the water of a mirage would have to provide all the normal functions of water, and so

on. Why so? Well because, according to you, there is no pus and blood out there to appear as pus and blood; according to you, the mere appearance of something looking like pus and blood can provide all the functions of things that you eat and drink.

བརྒྱན་ཞིང་གཤེར་བ་ཕོར་པ་གང་ལ་ལྷ་མི་ཡི་དྲགས་དུད་འགྲོ་སོགས་ཀྱིས་ཅིག་ཅར་དུ་  
བལྟས་པ་དེའི་ཚེ་ན། ལྷ་ཡི་བདུད་ཚི་སྒྲུང་བའི་སྒྲུང་བ་ལ་ཚད་མར་སོང་བ་དང་། ཡི་  
དྲགས་ལ་རྣག་ཁྲག་སྒྲུང་བའི་སྒྲུང་བ་ལ་ཚད་མར་སོང་བ་ཡོད་ཀྱང་། སྒྲུང་གཞིར་  
གྱུར་པའི་རྣག་ཁྲག་སོགས་མེད་ན། སེམས་ཅན་དཔྱལ་བའི་མིག་ཤེས་དེས། དཔྱལ་  
བའི་ལྷགས་སྲིག་དང་། རལ་གྱི་རི་ནགས་ཚལ་དང་། མི་ཚོགས་ལ་སོགས་པ་སྒྲུང་  
བའི་སྒྲུང་བ་ཅམ་ལ་ཚད་མར་སོང་བ་ཡོད་ཀྱི། དེ་དག་དངོས་གནས་པ་ལ་ཚད་མར་  
སོང་བ་མེད་པར་ཐལ། བྲོད་ཀྱི་དམ་བཅའ་འཐད་པ་གང་ཞིག །རྒྱ་མཚན་མཚུངས་  
པའི་ཕྱིར།

And consider again this case where a pleasure being and a human and a craving spirit and an animal or the like all sit down together and look at a glass full of something wet and flowing. According to you, it would have to be genuine when something that just looked like ambrosia appeared to the pleasure being, and it would have to be genuine when something that just looked like pus and blood appeared to the craving spirit, but there couldn't be any pus and blood out there to appear as pus and blood. And if this were the case, then consider the visual consciousness of a being in the hells. It would then have to be a valid perception towards something appearing to it that just looked like the burning steel of the hells, and towards something that just looked like the forest of swords, and towards something that just looked like a mass of fire, and so on. Finally, this person would not have any valid perceptions at all towards any of these things as actual objects. Why would this all have to be so? If your idea were correct, it would have to be, for the logic here is identical to your own.

འདོད་ན། ལྷགས་སྲིག་ལ་སོགས་པས། དེར་སྐྱེས་པའི་འགྲོ་བའི་ལྷས་སྲིག་པ་དང་།

གཏུབ་པ་ལ་སོགས་པ་དངོས་གནས་པ་ཞིག་མེད་པར་ཐལ། འདོད་པ་དེའི་ཕྱིར།  
འདོད་ན། དམུལ་བའི་སྐྱུག་བསྐྱལ་མེད་པར་ཐལ། འདོད་པ་དེའི་ཕྱིར། གཞན་ཡང་  
དེ་ལྟར་ཅིག་ཅར་དུ་བལྟས་པ་དེའི་ཚེ་ན། མིའི་མིག་ཤེས་ཚད་མར་སོང་བའི་ཚུ་དངོས་  
གནས་པ་མེད་པར་ཐལ། དེའི་ཚེ་ན་རྣལ་ལྡན་དངོས་གནས་པ་མེད་པའི་ཕྱིར།

And suppose you agree that this hell being could have no valid perceptions of the type we mentioned. Well then, the burning steel and other objects could never perform any real actions: they could never burn the bodies of the people born there, they could never chop them up, and so on. Why? Well because of what you just agreed to. And suppose you agree to this; that they could never perform any real actions. Well then, the torment of the hells itself then must not even exist, by your own admission. And remember too that case where the beings all sit down and look at the same thing. You must be saying then that the actual water, the thing towards which the visual consciousness of the human is a valid perception, doesn't exist at all. Why? Well because, according to you, no actual pus and blood exists either in the same situation.

ཁོ་ན་རེ། དེའི་ཚེ་ན་ཚུ་དངོས་གནས་པ་ཡོད་དེ། ཚུས་ལུས་འབྲུད་པ་དང་འཚོད་པར་  
བྱེད་པ་མི་རང་གིས་སྤྱོད་བས་འགྲུབ་པའི་ཕྱིར་ཟེར་ན། འོ་ན། དེའི་ཚེ་ན། རྣལ་ལྡན་  
དངོས་གནས་ཡོད་པར་ཐལ། དེའི་ཚེ་ན། རྣལ་ལྡན་ལ་ལོངས་སྤྱོད་པ་དང་། ལྟོ་བ་  
དང་མགོན་པ་ལ་སོགས་པ་འཚོག་པ་ཡི་དུགས་རང་གིས་སྤྱོད་བས་འགྲུབ་པའི་ཕྱིར།

Someone might now make the following claim:

In this situation, there *does* exist some real water there. This is because the human can confirm the water with his own experience, as it performs all the functions of water—as he uses it to wash himself, or as he uses it to cook something.

Well then, in the same situation there must exist some real pus and blood there as well, because in this same situation the craving spirit can confirm the pus and blood with his own experience as they perform their functions—as he drinks them, and then as the sizzle in his throat and stomach, and so on.

གུས་པ་ལ་ཁོ་ན་རེ། མི་མཚུངས་ཏེ། ཡི་དྲགས་ལ་དེ་ལྟར་འབྱུང་བ་དེ། ཡི་དྲགས་  
རང་གི་སློམ་སློམ་པ་ཅམ་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར། ཟེར་ན། དེས་ན་མི་ལ་ཡང་དེ་ལྟར་འབྱུང་  
བ་མེད་དེ། དེ་མི་རང་གི་སློམ་སློམ་པ་ཅམ་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར།

Someone may respond to this argument with the following claim:

The two cases are not the same. When all this happens to the  
craving spirit, it's nothing more than his own imagination.

Well then, what happens to the human can't be happening to him either,  
because it's nothing more than *his* imagination.

གུས་པ་ལ་ཁོ་ན་རེ། མི་ལ་ལུས་འབྲུད་པ་སོགས་དངོས་གནས་པ་མེད་པར་ཐལ། དེ་  
མི་རང་གི་སློམ་སློམ་པ་ཅམ་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར། ཟེར་ན།

Someone may respond to this with another claim:

When the human washes himself with the water and so on, it  
must not be something real, because it's nothing more than his  
own imagination.

ཡི་དྲགས་ལ་ཡང་ལྟོ་བསྐྱེད་པ་སོགས་དངོས་གནས་པ་མེད་པར་ཐལ། དེ་ཡི་དྲགས་  
རང་གི་སློམ་སློམ་པ་ཅམ་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར། འདོད་ན། ཡི་དྲགས་ཀྱི་སྐྱུག་བསྐྱེད་མེད་  
པར་ཐལ།

Are you saying then that when the pus and blood sizzle in the stomach of the  
craving spirit, and so on, it can't be something real? For that too is nothing  
more than his own imagination. You agree? Well then, the suffering of  
craving spirits must not exist at all.

ཁོ་ན་རེ། དེ་ལྟར་ཅིག་ཅར་དུ་བལྟས་པའི་ཚེ། རྣམ་ཐྱབས་དངོས་གནས་པ་མེད་པར་  
ཐལ། རབ་རིབ་ཅན་གྱིས་བསེ་རུ་ལ་བལྟས་པ་དེའི་ཚེ་བསེ་རུའི་ནང་དུ་སྐྱེ་ཤད་མེད་པ་



གང་ཞིག་ །རབ་རིབ་དང་ལྡན་དབང་པོ་ཅན་མཚུངས་པ། །རྩ་འབབ་གྲུང་ལ་ཡི་  
དྲགས་རྣམས་སློ་ཡང་། །ཞེས་གསུངས་པའི་སྤྱིར། ཟེར་ན།

Someone might make the following claim:

Isn't it true that when all those beings sit down together and look at something, there isn't any actual pus and blood at all? Because isn't it true first of all that, when a person with cataracts looks into a porcelain basin, there is no strand of hair in the basin at all? And, secondly, doesn't [Master Dharmakirti's] text itself say,

Identical to the case of someone where his sense power has a cataract,  
Is the mind of a craving spirit as well, which sees a stream of water as pus.

སྤྱོད་མེད་དེ། དབྱ་སེམས་གཉིས་དོན་ཤེས་ཡོད་མེད་མཚུངས་མི་མཚུངས་དཔྱོད་པའི་  
སྐབས་ཡིན་པའི་སྤྱིར་དང་། ཡི་དྲགས་ཀྱི་མིག་ཤེས་ལ་རྩ་གྲུང་རྣམས་ལྷ་སྒྲུང་བའི་  
ཚོ་ན། དེ་སྒྲུང་སྒྲུང་བའི་མིག་ཤེས་ཚད་མ་མ་ཡིན་པ་དང་། རྩ་གྲུང་ལ་བལྟས་པ་དེའི་  
ཚོ་ན། རྣམས་ལྷ་སྒྲུང་དངོས་གནས་པ་ཞིག་ཡོད་པ་མི་འགལ་བའི་སྤྱིར།

And yet there is no such problem, for this quotation appears in the section where we are examining the question of whether, in the schools of the Middle Way and the Mind-Only, an object and the perception of it must be equivalent in either both existing or both not existing. Moreover, there is another fact about this situation, where the stream of water appears as pus and blood to the visual consciousness of the craving spirit. It is no inconsistency to say that the visual consciousness that sees things this way is not a valid perception, and to say at the same time that—when the craving spirit looks at the stream of water—there does exist there actual pus and blood.

ཡང་ཁ་ཅིག་ །འགྲོ་བ་གསུམ་གྱིས་བརྒྱན་ཞིང་གཤེར་བ་ཕོར་བ་གང་ལ་ཅིག་ཅར་དུ་  
བལྟས་པའི་ཚོ་ན། རྣམས་ལྷ་སྒྲུང་དངོས་གནས་པ་མེད་པར་ཐལ། དཔྱུལ་བའི་ལྷགས་  
སྤྱིག་ལ་སོགས་པ་དེར་སྤྱིས་པའི་སེམས་ཅན་གྱི་སྒྲུང་བ་ཅམ་ཡིན་གྱི། དངོས་གནས་

སྐྱུ་གྲུབ་པ་མེད་པའི་ཕྱིར། དེར་ཐལ། དེ་འདྲའི་བྱེད་པ་པོ་སྐྱུ་ཡང་མེད་པའི་ཕྱིར།  
དེར་ཐལ། ལྷོད་འཇུག་ལས། ལྷགས་སྲིག་ས་གཞི་སྐྱུ་ཡིས་བྱས། །མེ་ཚོགས་དེ་  
དག་ཅི་ལས་བྱུང་། །དེ་འདྲ་དེ་དག་ཐམས་ཅད་ཀྱང་། སྲིག་སེམས་ཡིན་པར་བྱབ་  
པས་གསུངས། །ཞེས་གསུངས་པའི་ཕྱིར། ཟེར་ན།

Someone again may come and claim the following:

Let's consider once more this situation where three different types of beings sit down together and look at a glass full of something wet and flowing. Isn't it true that there is no actual pus and blood there? Because isn't it true that the burning steel and so on in the hells is only something that appears to a person who is born there, but that there is nothing there which actually is these objects? Because isn't it true that there is no one at all who went and made all these kinds of things? And isn't this a fact, because doesn't the text of *The Bodhisattva's Way of Life* say:

Who made the burning steel that acts  
As the floor of the world of hell?  
Where did all the mass of flames  
You find there all come from?

The Able Ones have spoken that  
Everything there like this  
Is nothing at all other than  
The mind of what's non-virtue.

སྐྱོན་མེད་དེ། དེའི་དོན་ལྷགས་སྲིག་ལ་སོགས་པ་དེ་དག་དབང་ཕྱུག་རྟག་པ་སོགས་  
ཀྱིས་སྲོའི་གཡོ་བ་སྐྱོན་དུ་བཏང་ནས་བྱས་པ་མ་ཡིན་པར་དེར་སྐྱེས་པའི་འགྲོ་བའི་སྲིག་  
སེམས་བྱེད་པ་པོར་བསྟན་པའི་ཕྱིར།

Yet there is no such problem. The point of this quotation is to say that the burning steel and so on are not something that was created by some unchanging creator being or something like that; by someone who thought it over first and then created them. The lines are meant to show us that what really made all these things is the non-virtuous states of mind had by the beings who have to take birth there.

དེ་ལྟར་མ་ཡིན་ན། དགོ་བ་བཅུ་ལ་སྐྱོད་པའི་སྐྱེས་བུ་དམ་པ་མཐོ་རིས་སུ་སྐྱེས་ནས་  
དེའི་བདེ་བ་སྐྱོད་བ་དང་། མི་དགོ་བཅུ་ལ་སྐྱོད་པའི་སེམས་ཅན་དམན་པ་ངན་སོང་དུ་  
སྐྱེས་ནས་དེའི་སྐྱུག་བསྐྱེད་སྐྱོད་བ་གཉིས་ལ། འབྲུལ་སྤང་བཟང་ངན་ཅམ་མ་  
གཏོགས་ལུས་ཀྱིས་བདེ་སྐྱུག་སྐྱོད་མི་སྐྱོད་གི་བྱེད་པར་མེད་པར་ཐལ། བྱོད་ཀྱི་རིགས་  
པ་དེ་འབྲེད་པའི་ཕྱིར།

Suppose this were not the case; consider then those holy people who lead their lives following the ten virtues, and who are then born into the higher realms, and then experience the pleasures of these realms. And consider too those miserable people who lead their lives following the ten non-virtues, and who are then born into the lower realms, and then experience the sufferings of these realms. Is the difference between them just that they are having some better or worse kind of misperception, and not whether they are experiencing pleasure or pain? This would have to be the case, if your reasoning were correct.

འདོད་ན། མཐོ་རིས་ཀྱི་བདེ་བ་དང་། ངན་སོང་གི་སྐྱུག་བསྐྱེད་མེད་པར་ཐལ། འདོད་  
པ་དེའི་ཕྱིར།

Suppose you agree that it is only a matter of better or worse misperceptions. Are you saying then that the pleasures of the higher realms don't even exist, and that the pains of the lower realms don't even exist? You must be, if you agree this way.

དེས་ན། ལས་ཅན་གྱི་འགྲོ་བ་གསུམ་གྱིས་བརྒྱན་ཞིང་གཤེར་བ་ཕོར་པ་གང་ལ་ཅིག་  
ཅར་དུ་བལྟས་པ་དེའི་ཚེ། ཚད་མཚུངས་ངེས་པར་དགོས་པ་མ་ཡིན་ཏེ། དགོས་ན།  
ཕོར་པ་གང་ཕོ་དེའི་ནང་དུ་གནས་ཀྱི་སྒོས་གནས་ཤིང་། ཐ་མལ་གྱི་མིག་ཤེས་ཀྱིས་མི་  
བཟོད་པའི་སྒོ་གཞགས་ཕྱ་མེད་མིག་ཤེས་ཀྱིས་ཀྱང་། དེའི་ཚད་མར་འགྲོ་དགོས་པ་  
དང་། རྒྱ་མཚོའི་ནང་ན་གནས་པའི་སྒོ་གཞགས་ཕྱ་མེད་མིག་ཤེས་ཀྱིས་ཀྱང་། རྒྱ་

མཚོའི་ཚད་ལ་ཚད་མར་འགོ་དགོས་པ་དང་། ལྷ་མ་ཡིན་འགའ་ཞིག་ལ། མཚོན་ཆ་  
ཕོར་གང་སྐྱང་དགོས་པ་ལ་སོགས་པའི་སྐྱེན་ཡོད་པའི་ཕྱིར།

In conclusion now, let us consider again these three kinds of beings, each with their different karma, as they sit down together and look at a glass full of something wet and flowing. It's not necessarily true that they must all have valid perceptions which are identical. If they did, then the three beings looking at the glass of water would have to think of the water as a place to live, in the way that a creature living in water would. The three beings as well would have to see the water in the same way that microscopic organisms living in the water, little beings imperceptible to normal visual consciousness, see it with their own visual consciousness. Then too the visual consciousness of microscopic organisms living in the depths of the ocean would have to be a valid perception towards the entire extent of the sea. And certain kinds of near-gods too would have to see weapons as glasses of water, and on and on; the problems raised would be many.

དེའི་ཚེ་ན། ཚད་མཚུངས་ངེས་པར་མི་དགོས་ཀྱང་། ཚད་མཚུངས་གསུམ་ཡོད་པ་  
སྲིད་པ་ཡིན་ཏེ། ལས་ཀྱི་དབང་གིས་དངོས་པོ་ཚད་གྲུབ་པ་གསུམ་བསྐྱེད་རྣམས་པ་སྲར་  
གྱི་རིགས་པས་འགྲུབ། དེ་བསྐྱེད་རྣམས་ན། ལས་ཀྱི་དབང་གིས་སྣོད་ཚད་མཚུངས་  
གསུམ་སྐྱེ་བ་ཡོད་པར་ཡང་མཚུངས་པའི་ཕྱིར།

Again consider this same situation. Even though it is not necessarily true that the valid perceptions are identical, it is possible for there to be three valid perceptions here which happen to be identical. This is because, as we have already established logically, there can be a case where by the force of karma three different objects, each one confirmed by a valid perception, start to exist. And since this is possible, then it is equally possible that, by the force of karma, three equivalent valid perceptions of a vessel could start to exist as well.

རྣག་ལ་སོགས་པའི་དངོས་པོ་གསུམ་པོ་དེ་སྤྱིར་གོ་ས་འགོག་རྣམས་ཀྱི་དངོས་པོ་ཡིན་  
ཀྱང་། དེ་ལྟར་བལྟས་པ་དེའི་ཚེ་ན་གོ་ས་འགོག་བྱེད་ཀྱི་དངོས་པོ་མ་ཡིན་པ་མི་འགའ་  
ཏེ། རི་རབ་གྲུ་བཞི་དང་། ལྷུ་མ་པོ་ལ་སོགས་པ་ཕན་ཚུན་གོ་ས་འགོག་རྣམས་ཀྱི་དངོས་

པོ་ཡིན་ཀྱང་། རི་རབ་གཅིག་གི་གོ་ས་ན། དེ་གཉིས་ཀ་ཡོད་པ་སྲིད་པ་ལྟ་བུ་ཡིན་  
པའི་ཕྱིར། ལྷགས་གོང་དམར་འབར་བ་ཚ་བ་ཡིན་ཀྱང་། ལྷགས་སྒྲགས་བཏབ་  
པའི་ལག་པས་རིག་པའི་ཚེ། དེའི་སྲོང་བྱར་གྱུར་པའི་རིག་བྱ་དེ་ཚ་བའི་རིག་བྱ་མ་  
ཡིན་ཏེ། ཚ་བ་མ་ཡིན་པའི་རིག་བྱ་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར།

Generally speaking, each of the three objects mentioned—the pus and the other two—are things of the type that block other objects from entering into the space which they themselves occupy. It is no contradiction though to say that, in this situation where the beings are looking this way, they are not objects such that they block other things from entering into the space they occupy. This is true for the following reason.

A central mountain of the world which is square in shape, and a central mountain of the world which is round in shape, and the like, are objects such that they block other things from entering the space they occupy. Nevertheless, it is possible for both these things to occupy the space taken up by a single central mountain of the world. A red-hot ball of steel is something that's hot, but consider what happens when a person touches it after he has used the mantra of steel on his hand. The sensation that he feels is not a sensation of heat; on the contrary, it is a sensation of something not heat.

[This concludes the section of the text entitled "The Stream."]

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*When the text of the Essence of Eloquence was taught by Geshe Tupten Rinchen, he took great pains to point out that it is not correct—as some Western scholars have stated—that Je Tsongkapa himself adhered to the tenets of the Mind-Only School. The following selection to show that he follows, of course, the beliefs of the Consequence group is taken the concluding pages of our root text [ACIP electronic text S5396, ff. 112a-112b].*

།ད་ནི་འདི་དྲི་བར་བྱ་སྟེ་ཅི་ཤིང་རྟ་ཆེན་པོའི་ཚུལ་གཉིས་ཀྱིས་གསུང་རབ་ཀྱི་དྲང་བ་དང་  
ངེས་པའི་དོན་རྣམས་པར་སྐྱེ་བ་དང་། དེ་དག་གི་དགོངས་པ་མཁའ་སྐྱོད་པའི་དབང་པོ་རྣམས་

གྱིས་སོ་སོར་བཀའ་བའི་སྒོ་མང་དུ་སྒྲུང་ན་ཁྱོད་ཅག་དེ་གཉིས་ཀྱི་དགོངས་འབྲེལ་  
མཁན་པོ་གང་གི་ཇིས་སུ་འབྲངས་ནས། ངེས་པའི་དོན་དུ་བཞག་པ་གང་ལ་མཐར་  
ཐུག་པའི་དོན་དུ་འདོད་པ་བརྗོད་པར་གྱིས་ལྷིག་ཅིས་འདྲི་ན།

Now suppose you come and ask the following:

We have a question for you. You have shown us how the systems of the two great innovators make the distinction between those parts of the highest of all spoken words which are figurative, and those which are literal. And there are a great variety of ways in which the different kings of all great thinkers have commented upon the true intent of these two. Tell us now—which of these master commentators do you follow; how is it that you yourself decide on what is literal, and what is it that you believe is the ultimate?

།འཇམ་གླིང་མཁས་པའི་རྒྱན་གྱུར་འདི་ནམས་ཀྱི།  
།ལྷིགས་བཤད་ཀུན་ལ་སྒྲིང་ནས་གྲུས་མོད་ཀྱང་།  
།འཁོར་འདས་རྟེན་འབྲུང་མི་སྐྱུའི་གཏན་ཚིགས་ཀྱིས།  
།མཚན་འཛིན་དམིགས་གཏད་ཐམས་ཅད་འཇིག་བྱེད་པ།

We answer with the following lines:

I can't deny that I feel respect from the bottom of my  
heart  
For all the fine words ever taught by the jewels among this  
world's sages;  
The reasoning though of dependence, invariable, for the  
cycle and what's beyond  
Acts to destroy our tendency to see things to be by the  
features they have.

།རྒྱ་བ་ལས་འོངས་ལྷིགས་བཤད་འོད་དཀར་གྱིས།  
།སྒོ་མིག་ཀུན་ཏའི་ཚལ་རབ་ཕྱེ་བའི་ཚོ།

།སངས་རྒྱལ་བསྐྱེད་སྤྱོད་ཀྱིས་བསྟན་པའི་ལམ་མཐོང་ནས།།

།ལྷོ་སྐྱབ་ལུགས་བཟང་གཙོ་བོར་མི་འཛིན་སུ།།

།ཞེས་ཁོ་བོ་ཅག་ནི་དེ་སྐད་དུ་སྒྲུའོ།།

And when this pure white light of the Moon,\* this  
excellent explanation,  
Has opened wide the night-blooming lotus, the eyes of the  
intellect,  
And we finally see that path set before us by  
Buddhapalita,  
Who then would fail to hold as their core Nagarjuna's  
excellent way?

[\*Translator's note: The "Moon" here (chandra in Sanskrit) is an allusion to Master Chandrakirti.]

དེ་ལྟར་སྒྲུབ་བཤད་པའི་རྒྱལ་གྱིས་གསུང་རབ་ཀྱི་དྲང་ངེས་ཕྱོད་ནས་དེ་ཁོ་ན་ཉིད་གཏན་  
ལ་འབེབས་པའི་ཤིང་རྟའི་སྒོལ་གཉིས་པོ་འདི་ནི་པ་རོལ་ཏུ་ཕྱིན་པའི་ཐེག་པའི་སྐབས་  
སུ་རྒྱལ་མོད་ཀྱང་། གསང་སྐབས་ཀྱི་གཞུང་འགྲེལ་བའི་པརྱེ་ཏ་དང་། ལྷོ་སྐྱབ་  
རྣམས་ཀྱིས་ཀྱང་དེ་གཉིས་གང་རུང་ཅིག་དང་མཐུན་པར་དེ་ཁོ་ན་ཉིད་ཀྱི་དོན་གཏན་ལ་  
འབེབས་པ་ལས་གཞན་པའི་ཕྱང་གསུམ་མེད་པས་རྒྱལ་འདི་ནི་གསུང་རབ་མདོ་  
སྐབས་མཐའ་དག་གི་དེ་ཁོ་ན་ཉིད་གཏན་ལ་འབེབས་པའི་ལམ་དུ་ཤེས་པར་བྱའོ།།

And so—in the context of the way of the perfections—it is the systems of the  
two great innovators that have spread widely; systems by which, in the ways  
we have described above, the meaning of that highest of spoken words is  
divided into the literal and the figurative, to determine what thusness really  
is. But it is also the case that those wise men who have commented upon the  
great works of the way of the secret word, and the eminent practitioners of this  
way, have set forth the meaning of thusness in keeping with one or the other  
of these very two systems; there is no third system between the two. You  
should understand then that this method is the path for determining the  
meaning of thusness for each and every one of the works of the highest of  
speech, whether we are talking of the open or the secret teachings.

དོན་གྱི་གནད་ཆེ་ལོང་ཅམ་དུ་མ་ཞིག་མཐོང་ཡང་ཡིད་མི་ཚོམ་པར་ཤིང་རྟ་ཆེན་པོ་  
རྣམས་ཀྱིས་གསུང་རབ་ལྟ་བུའི་མིག་དུ་སྤྱོན་པའི་རིགས་པའི་གནད་ཕྱ་རགས་རྣམས་  
ལ་ལེགས་པར་འདྲིས་པར་བྱས་ནས། གསུང་རབ་ཀྱི་རྒྱ་ཆེ་བ་དང་ཟབ་པ་དང་ཟབ་པ་  
ལས་ཀྱང་ཆེས་ཟབ་པའི་ཟབ་གནས་རྣམས་གཏན་ལ་འབབས་པ་ལ་བརྩོན་པ་རྒྱ་བའི་  
རྒྱན་ལྟར་ཚོམ་ཞིང་།

And so imagine a person who tried to find the meaning of thusness without relying on a system taught by one of the great innovators of the two methods. They would be like a blind person without a guide for the blind, racing towards some very dangerous place.

ཇི་ཅམ་ཤེས་པ་དེ་ཅམ་དུ་སྐྱབ་པ་སྣང་པོར་བྱས་ཏེ་རྒྱལ་བའི་བསྟན་པ་རིང་དུ་གནས་  
པར་འདོད་པའི་རྣམ་དཔྱོད་ཅན་རྣམས་ལ་ཁོ་བོས་ལེགས་པར་བཤད་པའི་སྣང་པོ་འདི་  
གཏམ་དུ་བྱས་སོ།།

And suppose that a person did want to rely on one of these systems, but had not spent a good deal of time acquainting themselves with their great books. Suppose, in particular, that they were relying only on a few short descriptions to determine the difference between those teachings of the Buddha which were figurative, and those which were literal—without having a proper understanding of the subtle, crucial points of reasoning involved. People like this would be taking refuge in words only; and even if they were to attempt to talk about thusness, it would be only words, without any essence.

དོན་གྱི་གནད་ཆེ་ལོང་ཅམ་དུ་མ་ཞིག་མཐོང་ཡང་ཡིད་མི་ཚོམ་པར་ཤིང་རྟ་ཆེན་པོ་  
རྣམས་ཀྱིས་གསུང་རབ་ལྟ་བུའི་མིག་དུ་སྤྱོན་པའི་རིགས་པའི་གནད་ཕྱ་རགས་རྣམས་  
ལ་ལེགས་པར་འདྲིས་པར་བྱས་ནས། གསུང་རབ་ཀྱི་རྒྱ་ཆེ་བ་དང་ཟབ་པ་དང་ཟབ་པ་  
ལས་ཀྱང་ཆེས་ཟབ་པའི་ཟབ་གནས་རྣམས་གཏན་ལ་འབབས་པ་ལ་བརྩོན་པ་རྒྱ་བའི་



ལྷན་ལྟར་རྩོམ་ཞིང་།

Try to see how this is true, and never be satisfied with seeing even some great number of the more obvious crucial points on these questions. Make the effort to acquaint yourself well with both the gross and more subtle keys of reasoning that the two great innovators have given us as eyes to see into the Buddha's teaching. And then let your labors continue to flow, like some great stream, coming to an understanding of the profound points of the far-reaching traditions, and the profound traditions, and the more-profound-than-profound traditions, in the teachings of the Buddha.

ཇི་ཙམ་ཤེས་པ་དེ་ཙམ་དུ་སྐྱབ་པ་སྟིང་པོར་བྱས་ཏེ་རྒྱལ་བའི་བསྟན་པ་རིང་དུ་གནས་  
པར་འདོད་པའི་རྣམ་དཔྱོད་ཅན་རྣམས་ལ་ཁོ་བོས་ལེགས་པར་བཤད་པའི་སྟིང་པོ་འདི་  
གཏམ་དུ་བྱས་སོ།།

Take then lastly whatever you have understood and make it the very heart of your own personal spiritual practice: it is for the likes of you, for those of intelligence who hope to see the teachings of the Victorious Ones remain long in our world, that I have set down into words this *Essence of Eloquence*.



Name:

Date:

Grade:

*Homework, Class One*

1) Give the title of the primary text we will be reading for our study of the art of interpretation; name its author, and give his dates. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

2) Our text compares and contrasts the beliefs of two of the great schools of classical Indian Buddhism—the Mind-Only School and the Middle-Way School—about what Lord Buddha really meant, and how to determine what Lord Buddha really meant, when he turned the wheel of the Dharma. Name the important source that each school uses to make their presentation, and the author of each. (Tibetan track name source, and also each school, in Tibetan.)

a) Mind-Only School:

b) Middle-Way School:

3) Nowadays some people say that a knowledge of emptiness is not the main point of Buddhism, while others say that emptiness is something known only intuitively, and not from a foundation of determined, organized study. Describe a quotation by Lord Buddha himself that disproves these ideas.

4) Why do we have to learn to distinguish between the literal and figurative; why do we have to learn to interpret what the Buddha said, in order to find out what he really meant?

5) Describe three different levels of the terms "literal" and "figurative."

a)

b)

c)

6) Je Tsongkapa points out that—if what the Buddha said must be divided into what he said that was figurative and what he said that was literal—then the Buddha's own statements about when he was being figurative and when he was being literal cannot necessarily be taken literally. Rather, we must in the end rely on what is logical and makes sense to us. Describe the three logical tests recommended by Lord Buddha, and state the source for them.

7) If many of the beliefs of schools like the Mind-Only are actually wrong, then why is it so important for us to study them carefully?

8) How can the principle of "figurative and literal" be useful to us in our daily lives?

*Meditation assignment:* 15 minutes per day, do an analytical meditation focussing on one or two people in your world who irritate you, checking to see if there is some way we could interpret their actions as secretly intended to help us or bring us further along our spiritual path.

*Meditation dates and times (must be filled in, or homework will not be accepted):*



Name:
Date:
Grade:

*Homework, Class Two*

1) In his answer to the bodhisattva in the *Commentary on the True Intent of the Sutras*, Lord Buddha states that he was referring to three different lacks of things when he said that no existing object at all had any nature of its own. Name these three. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

a)

b)

c)

2) Name the famous three attributes which form the cornerstone of the beliefs of the Mind-Only School, and which relate to the three different lacks of things mentioned in question one. After naming them, describe them briefly. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

a)

b)

c)

3) Constructs are said to "lack any definitive nature." Explain what it means in the Mind-Only School when we say this; and then contrast it to what we mean in the Middle-Way School when we say this.

a) Mind-Only School:

b) Middle-Way School:

4) Explain, for each of these three attributes, *why* it is that they can be described as the corresponding lack of a self-nature. (Don't forget to keep on your Mind-Only School hat!)

a)

b)

c)

5) Describe briefly Je Tsongkapa's refutation of the idea of the Jonangpa school of Tibet that changeless totality, or emptiness, is a self-standing, positive object.

6) Give an illustration for each of these three lacks of a self-nature, or attributes. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

a)

b)

c)

*Meditation assignment:* 15 minutes a day, alternate in meditation between seeing how a water glass *does* exist by definition as the Mind-Only School teaches it, and *doesn't* exist by definition as the Middle-Way School teaches it.

*Meditation dates and times (must be filled in, or homework will not be accepted):*



Name:
Date:
Grade:

*Homework, Class Three*

1) The second time he turned the wheel of the Dharma, Lord Buddha characterized all existing objects in five apparently very extreme ways. We have finished discussing the first; list the latter four. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

a)

b)

c)

d)

2) Why is it we can say that constructs neither grow nor stop?

3) Why are constructs themselves free of the mentally-afflicted side of things?



4) Why, according to the sutra, can we say that totality neither grows nor stops?

5) Why does the sutra called *Commentary on the True Intent* explain the latter four characterizations only with regard to the first and last of the three lacks of a self-nature, and not with regard to the middle one? (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

6) If we do take the latter four characterizations as applying to dependent things as well, then how must we interpret them? (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

*Meditation assignment:* 15 minutes per day, careful analytical meditation on what the Mind-Only School means when they say that dependent things do grow and stop by definition, and what they mean when they say that constructs do not grow or stop by definition.

*Meditation dates and times (must be filled in, or homework will not be accepted):*



Name:
Date:
Grade:

*Homework, Class Four*

1) The sutra called the *Commentary on the True Intent* next turns to the question of how we identify the three attributes. It helps us understand the attribute of constructs by showing how they relate to dependent things. List the three ways in which the sutra says that constructs relate to dependent things. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

a)

b)

c)

2) In explanations of the process of making constructs that follow from the sutra references just mentioned, a distinction is made between the dependent thing that is the object of the constructing state of mind; the constructing state of mind itself; and the construct that "lies between" them. Explain these three as they occur in the example of the boy named Tashi.

3) In the illustration of the boy named "Tashi," what is the indication that (according to the Mind-Only School) the construct does not exist by definition?

4) The sutra goes on to use the three expressions "arena in which the constructing state of mind acts" and so on as a basis for describing dependent things and totality (or emptiness) as well as constructs. In other words, these three expressions are being used to get at the real meaning of the three attributes in the Mind-Only School; and more especially how they relate to each other. Describe this interrelation of the three attributes.

5) The text states that this principle of establishing the three attributes with different objects applies to a whole list of different objects. Name some of them. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

6) Describe two ways in which something could be "empty" or "devoid" of something; then state which of these two ways is more relevant here when we say that totality (or emptiness) is "empty" of certain constructs. (Tibetan track also give two different Tibetan verbs that help illustrate the difference.)

7) Constructs can be applied either to the essence of an object or to some feature of an object. Give an example of each of these for the first of the four arya truths. (Tibetan track also name this principle in Tibetan.)

*Meditation assignment:* 15 minutes per day, careful analytical meditation on what the Mind-Only School means when they say that dependent things do grow and stop by definition, and what they mean when they say that constructs do not grow or stop by definition.

*Meditation dates and times (must be filled in, or homework will not be accepted):*



Name:
Date:
Grade:

*Homework, Class Five*

1) What does the expression "the outcome of the exchange" refer to? (Tibetan track also give the Tibetan for this expression.)

2) Name the three famous turnings of the wheel of the Dharma, the three great convocations, and state (a) when they were primarily taught; (b) where they were primarily taught; (c) for whom they were primarily taught; (d) their basic subject matter; and (e) what, from the point of view of the "outcome of the exchange," their view was on whether things have their own nature or not. (Tibetan track all in Tibetan!)

(1) First turning of the wheel of the Dharma—

Name:

Period:

Place:

Disciples:

Basic subject matter:

View:

(2) Second turning of the wheel of the Dharma—

Name:

Period:

Place:

Disciples:

Basic subject matter:

View:

(3) Third turning of the wheel of the Dharma—

Name:

Period:

Place:

Disciples:

Basic subject matter:

View:

3) According to the Mind-Only School, which of these three turnings of the wheel (also called "groups of sutra") were spoken literally, and which are figurative, or something we must interpret further? According to the Middle-Way School, which are to be taken on face value, and which are not? Why so, in each case?

a) Mind-Only School:

b) Middle-Way School:

4) Give, in English, the four expressions that the bodhisattva Paramarta Samudgata uses to express the fact that (according to the Mind-Only School) the first two turnings of the wheel are figurative.

5) What, in the context of the *Commentary on the True Intent*, is the real criterion that decides whether a person belongs to the "lower way" (Hinayana) or the "higher way" (Mahayana)?

6) Name and explain the image that is being referred to in the expression "wheel of the Dharma"? (Tibetan track name in Tibetan and explain in English.)

7) Name the two classical types of "wheels of the Dharma." (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

a)

b)

8) What does it mean to "turn" the wheel of the Dharma?

*Meditation assignment:* 15 minutes per day, analytical meditation in which you alternate going through the three turnings of the wheel as a Mind-Only thinker and then as a Middle-Way thinker, evaluating each wheel to see if it should be taken on face value or not.

*Meditation dates and times (must be filled in, or homework will not be accepted):*





Name:
Date:
Grade:

*Homework, Class Six*

1) When we refer to the first turning of the wheel as something which is either figurative or literal, are we speaking about any teaching that Lord Buddha gave during the initial period of his teaching career? Give an example to explain why or why not. (Tibetan track answer in English and give the example in Tibetan.)

2) When we speak of the final turning of the wheel as being "literal," are we talking about anything that was taught during the final period of Lord Buddha's teaching career? Give an example to explain why or why not. (Tibetan track answer in English and give the example in Tibetan.)

3) Name three goals that the *Commentary on the True Intent* has in mind for us when it takes the trouble to divide the three turnings of the wheel into the categories of figurative or literal.

a)

b)

c)

4) Je Tsongkapa takes pains to disprove the idea of some Tibetan thinkers that all three turnings of the wheel were meant literally. These thinkers would even say that Lord Buddha was speaking literally when he said (actually in order to attract some non-Buddhist groups) that things do have some kind of self-nature. What object do they say that Lord Buddha was referring to, and how is this object sometimes misinterpreted? (Tibetan track name the object in Tibetan and explain the misinterpretation in English.)

5) What is the position of the sutra called the *King of Mystic Words* on the actual order of the three turnings of the wheel? (Tibetan track name the sutra and give the order in Tibetan.)

6) Is there a difference between the "final period of the teaching" and "final turning of the wheel"?

7) After deciding that other more extensive definitions may be problematic, the great textbook writer of Sera Mey Tibetan Monastery, Kedrup Tenpa Dargye (1493-1568), gives a very revealing general definition of the first turning of the wheel of the Dharma. Write it here. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

8) How does Kedrup Tenpa Dargye then distinguish between the disciples for whom the second wheel was turned, and the disciples for whom the third was turned?

9) The main sutra of the Mind-Only School, called the *Commentary on the True Intent*, says that the specific disciples for whom the third turning of the wheel was taught are "those who have entered, perfectly, every one of the different ways." This seems to imply that it was taught for students of both the higher and lower ways, which would seem like a contradiction; how does Kedrup Tenpa Dargye clarify this point for us?

*Meditation assignment:* 15 minutes per day, analytical meditation in which you practice alternating between the way the Middle-Way School thinks of the content of the second turning of the wheel, and the way the Mind-Only School thinks of it (with their three attributes).

*Meditation dates and times (must be filled in, or homework will not be accepted):*



Name:
Date:
Grade:

*Homework, Class Seven*

1) Who was the innovator who revived the Mind-Only School system in this world; what book did he base this work on; how do we know that this was the book?

2) This innovator sets forth the meaning of thusness largely through a description of the two extremes, and how to avoid them. Name the two states of mind that hold to these two extremes. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

a)

b)

3) Describe the difference between an extreme and the view which holds to the extreme. (Tibetan track also give the Tibetan name for "extreme.")

4) Describe the specific idea which, according to the Mind-Only School, is held by the view of "concocting" something. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

5) How, according to the Mind-Only School, would you help someone get over the extreme view of concocting something?

6) According to the Mind-Only School, what causes the extreme of concocting things?

7) Describe the idea which, according to the Mind-Only School, is held by the view of "discounting" something. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

8) How, according to the Mind-Only School, would you help someone get over the extreme view of discounting something?

9) Who, according to the Mind-Only School, is guilty of the extreme of discounting things?

10) Describe, in a brief sentence, the Middle-Way idea about these two extreme views. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

*Meditation assignment:* 15 minutes per day, analytical meditation, practice alternating between the Mind-Only and the Middle-Way versions of the two extreme views. (These comparisons are exactly why learning Mind-Only is so useful!)

*Meditation dates and times (must be filled in, or homework will not be accepted):*



Name:
Date:
Grade:

*Homework, Class Eight*

1) What, according to the Middle-Way School, is "the ultimate" (also called "ultimate truth" or "ultimate reality")? (Tibetan track answer in Tibetan.)

2) Is there a difference, in the Middle-Way School, between something being "the ultimate" and something existing "ultimately"? Why or why not? (Tibetan track use Tibetan to answer.)

3) How does the Middle-Way School describe deceptive reality? (Tibetan track name in Tibetan and describe in English.)

4) Now how does the Mind-Only School draw the difference between "ultimate reality" and "deceptive reality"?

5) Explain how the Consequence part of the Middle-Way School describes what it means to "exist as an external object."

6) Explain how the lower two schools—the Higher-Knowledge (Abhidharma) School and the Sutrists School—describe what it means to "exist as an external object."

7) The followers of the lower half of the Middle-Way School (the "Independent" or Svatantrika group) may be divided into two philosophical camps. Name them. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

8) One of these camps describes in yet a different way what it means to "exist as an external object." Name them, and state their belief.



9) This question has two separate parts. (a) What do the members of the Mind-Only School (and those of the Independent part of the Middle-Way School who lean towards them on points such as these) have in mind when they say that "nothing exists as an external object"? (b) What do the Consequence group and the Independents who lean the other way have in mind when they say that they are wrong?

a)

b)

10) What does the Mind-Only School mean when they say that the valid perception which is the subject that perceives a physical object, and the physical object which it perceives, are "of the same substance"? (Tibetan track also give the Tibetan for this concept.)

11) Explain where the name of the Mind-Only School comes from.

*Meditation assignment:* Try to alternate, in 15 minutes of analytical meditation per day, between identifying the things around you that fit the Middle-Way idea of what is ultimate or deceptive, and those that fit the Mind-Only idea of what is ultimate or deceptive. Very good for perceiving emptiness directly later!

*Meditation dates and times (must be filled in, or homework will not be accepted):*



Name:

Date:

Grade:

*Homework, Class Nine*

1) Now that we have examined how the Mind-Only School thinks that Lord Buddha taught emptiness, we turn to what the Independent group in the Middle-Way School thinks—which hinges on an idea of multiple levels of selflessness. Name this concept in general, and list its three parts. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

2) Name the even grosser idea of the self of a person which relates to this Independent-group concept. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

3) Name the kinds of practitioners on the first track; state the "vehicle" or way they belong to; and name the type of "self" that they come to realize does not exist. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

4) Name the kinds of practitioners on the second track; state the "vehicle" or way they belong to; and name the type of "self" that they come to realize does not exist. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

5) Name the kinds of practitioners on the third track; state the "vehicle" or way they belong to; and name the type of "self" that they come to realize does not exist. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

6) In the Independent group of the Middle-Way School, what does it mean to say that a thing "exists truly"? (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

7) The word "substantial" (as opposed to "constructed") in the great books of Buddhism has five distinct meanings. Name and describe each one briefly. (Tibetan track also give the Tibetan for "substantial" and "constructed.")

a)

b)

c)

d)

e)

8) It's easy to confuse the idea of "persons of three scopes" in the teachings on the steps of the path to enlightenment (*lam-rim*) with the idea of people on the three tracks mentioned above. Describe the difference between the two. (Tibetan track give the name for each in Tibetan, and then describe the difference in English.)

9) It's also easy to confuse the three tracks with the three different ways mentioned in scripture, especially since the Tibetan for both is the same. State the difference. (Tibetan track name and clarify the three ways in Tibetan.)

*Meditation assignment:* 15 minutes of analytical meditation per day, going through the three supposed degrees of selflessness mentally and trying to appreciate why the Independent group would teach them.

*Meditation dates and times (must be filled in, or homework will not be accepted):*



Name:

Date:

Grade:

*Homework, Class Ten*

1) When three different types of being look at the same object, they see three different objects. Are each of them having a valid perception, or not?

2) The *Abbreviation of the Greater Way* says that "each being, according to their class, has differing perceptions of a single thing," and that therefore "we can say that these things have no reality." Does this mean then that we should never consider anything one way or the other? Why or why not?

3) The Mind-Only School has asserted that there are things that can exist from their own side, through some unique identity of their own. The Independent part of the Middle-Way School has asserted that the perception of things depends on their appearing from their own side to a state of mind which, from its side, is unerring. How does the Consequence part of the Middle-Way School assert that things exist? (Tibetan track answer in Tibetan.)

4) What does Je Tsongkapa say his own position in this regard is? (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

5) When we say that things are only projections, does that mean that we can make anything anything we want it to be?

6) Does the fact that things are only projections mean that leading an ethical way of life is unimportant?

7) Why does the Consequence presentation of the meaning of emptiness have especially important implications for our own search for enlightenment?

8) The *Heart Sutra* says that the real goal of Buddhism is to "stop the process of aging and death" through "stopping our ignorance." Is this a literal or a figurative statement? If it is literal, then why have we not seen any person who stopped the process of aging and death?

*Meditation assignment:* 15 minutes per day, analytical meditation on the difference between the Mind-Only, Independent, and Consequence versions of how the reality of something like a pen works.

*Meditation dates and times (must be filled in, or homework will not be accepted):*



Name:

Date:

Grade:

*Quiz, Class One*

1) Give the title of the primary text we will be reading for our study of the art of interpretation; name its author, and give his dates. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

2) Nowadays some people say that a knowledge of emptiness is not the main point of Buddhism, while others say that emptiness is something known only intuitively, and not from a foundation of determined, organized study. Describe a quotation by Lord Buddha himself that disproves these ideas.

3) Why do we have to learn to distinguish between the literal and figurative; why do we have to learn to interpret what the Buddha said, in order to find out what he really meant?

4) Je Tsongkapa points out that—if what the Buddha said must be divided into what he said that was figurative and what he said that was literal—then the Buddha's own statements about when he was being figurative and when he was being literal cannot necessarily be taken literally. Rather, we must in the end rely on what is logical and makes sense to us. Describe the three logical tests recommended by Lord Buddha, and state the source for them.



Name:
Date:
Grade:

*Quiz, Class Two*

1) In his answer to the bodhisattva in the *Commentary on the True Intent of the Sutras*, Lord Buddha states that he was referring to three different lacks of things when he said that no existing object at all had any nature of its own. Name these three. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

- a)
- b)
- c)

2) Name the famous three attributes which form the cornerstone of the beliefs of the Mind-Only School, and which relate to the three different lacks of things mentioned in question one. After naming them, describe them briefly. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

- a)
- b)
- c)

3) Constructs are said to "lack any definitive nature." Explain what it means in the Mind-Only School when we say this; and then contrast it to what we mean in the Middle-Way School when we say this.

- a)
- b)





Name:
Date:
Grade:

*Quiz, Class Three*

1) The second time he turned the wheel of the Dharma, Lord Buddha characterized all existing objects in five apparently very extreme ways. We have finished discussing the first; list the latter four. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

a)

b)

c)

d)

2) Why is it we can say that constructs neither grow nor stop?

3) Why are constructs themselves free of the mentally-afflicted side of things?

4) Why does the sutra called *Commentary on the True Intent* explain the latter four characterizations only with regard to the first and last of the three lacks of a self-nature, and not with regard to the middle one? (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)



Name:
Date:
Grade:

*Quiz, Class Four*

1) The sutra called the *Commentary on the True Intent* next turns to the question of how we identify the three attributes. It helps us understand the attribute of constructs by showing how they relate to dependent things. List the three ways in which the sutra says that constructs relate to dependent things. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

a)

b)

c)

2) In explanations of the process of making constructs that follow from the sutra references just mentioned, a distinction is made between the dependent thing that is the object of the constructing state of mind; the constructing state of mind itself; and the construct that "lies between" them. Explain these three as they occur in the example of the boy named Tashi.

3) The sutra goes on to use the three expressions "arena in which the constructing state of mind acts" and so on as a basis for describing dependent things and totality (or emptiness) as well as constructs. In other words, these three expressions are being used to get at the real meaning of the three attributes in the Mind-Only School; and more especially how they relate to each other. Describe this interrelation of the three attributes.

4) Describe two ways in which something could be "empty" or "devoid" of something; then state which of these two ways is more relevant here when we say that totality (or emptiness) is "empty" of certain constructs. (Tibetan track also give two different Tibetan verbs that help illustrate the difference.)



Name:
Date:
Grade:

*Quiz, Class Five*

1) Name the three famous turnings of the wheel of the Dharma, the three great convocations, and state (a) when they were primarily taught; (b) where they were primarily taught; (c) for whom they were primarily taught; (d) their basic subject matter; and (e) what, from the point of view of the "outcome of the exchange," their view was on whether things have their own nature or not. (Tibetan track all in Tibetan!)

(1) First turning of the wheel of the Dharma—

Name:

Period:

Place:

Disciples:

Basic subject matter:

View:

(2) Second turning of the wheel of the Dharma—

Name:

Period:

Place:

Disciples:

Basic subject matter:

View:

(3) Third turning of the wheel of the Dharma—

Name:

Period:

Place:

Disciples:

Basic subject matter:

View:

2) According to the Mind-Only School, which of these three turnings of the wheel (also called "groups of sutra") were spoken literally, and which are figurative, or something we must interpret further? According to the Middle-Way School, which are to be taken on face value, and which are not? Why so, in each case?

a) Mind-Only School:

b) Middle-Way School:

3) What, in the context of the *Commentary on the True Intent*, is the real criterion that decides whether a person belongs to the "lower way" (Hinayana) or the "higher way" (Mahayana)?

4) What does it mean to "turn" the wheel of the Dharma?



Name:
Date:
Grade:

*Quiz, Class Six*

1) When we refer to the first turning of the wheel as something which is either figurative or literal, are we speaking about any teaching that Lord Buddha gave during the initial period of his teaching career? Give an example to explain why or why not. (Tibetan track answer in English and give the example in Tibetan.)

2) Name three goals that the *Commentary on the True Intent* has in mind for us when it takes the trouble to divide the three turnings of the wheel into the categories of figurative or literal.

a)

b)

c)

3) Je Tsongkapa takes pains to disprove the idea of some Tibetan thinkers that all three turnings of the wheel were meant literally. These thinkers would even say that Lord Buddha was speaking literally when he said (actually in order to attract some non-Buddhist groups) that things do have some kind of self-nature. What object do they say that Lord Buddha was referring to, and how is this object sometimes misinterpreted? (Tibetan track name the object in Tibetan and explain the misinterpretation in English.)

4) After deciding that other more extensive definitions may be problematic, the great textbook writer of Sera Mey Tibetan Monastery, Kedrup Tenpa Dargye (1493-1568), gives a very revealing general definition of the first turning of the wheel of the Dharma. Write it here. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

5) How does Kedrup Tenpa Dargye then distinguish between the disciples for whom the second wheel was turned, and the disciples for whom the third was turned?



Name:
Date:
Grade:

*Quiz, Class Seven*

1) Who was the innovator who revived the Mind-Only School system in this world; what book did he base this work on; how do we know that this was the book?

2) This innovator sets forth the meaning of thusness largely through a description of the two extremes, and how to avoid them. Name the two states of mind that hold to these two extremes. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

a)

b)

3) Describe the specific idea which, according to the Mind-Only School, is held by the view of "concocting" something. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

4) Describe the idea which, according to the Mind-Only School, is held by the view of "discounting" something. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

5) Describe, in a brief sentence, the Middle-Way idea about these two extreme views. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)





Name:

Date:

Grade:

*Quiz, Class Eight*

1) What, according to the Middle-Way School, is "the ultimate" (also called "ultimate truth" or "ultimate reality")? (Tibetan track answer in Tibetan.)

2) Is there a difference, in the Middle-Way School, between something being "the ultimate" and something existing "ultimately"? Why or why not? (Tibetan track use Tibetan to answer.)

3) How does the Middle-Way School describe deceptive reality? (Tibetan track name in Tibetan and describe in English.)

4) Now how does the Mind-Only School draw the difference between "ultimate reality" and "deceptive reality"?

5) This question has two separate parts. (a) What do the members of the Mind-Only School (and those of the Independent part of the Middle-Way School who lean towards them on points such as these) have in mind when they say that "nothing exists as an external object"? (b) What do the Consequence group and the Independents who lean the other way have in mind when they say that they are wrong?

a)

b)

6) What does the Mind-Only School mean when they say that the valid perception which is the subject that perceives a physical object, and the physical object which it perceives, are "of the same substance"? (Tibetan track also give the Tibetan for this concept.)

7) Explain where the name of the Mind-Only School comes from.



Name:

Date:

Grade:

*Quiz, Class Nine*

1) Now that we have examined how the Mind-Only School thinks that Lord Buddha taught emptiness, we turn to what the Independent group in the Middle-Way School thinks—which hinges on an idea of multiple levels of selflessness. Name this concept in general, and list its three parts. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

2) Name the even grosser idea of the self of a person which relates to this Independent-group concept. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

3) Name the kinds of practitioners on the first track; state the "vehicle" or way they belong to; and name the type of "self" that they come to realize does not exist. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

4) Name the kinds of practitioners on the second track; state the "vehicle" or way they belong to; and name the type of "self" that they come to realize does not exist. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

5) Name the kinds of practitioners on the third track; state the "vehicle" or way they belong to; and name the type of "self" that they come to realize does not exist. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

6) It's easy to confuse the three tracks with the three different ways mentioned in scripture, especially since the Tibetan for both is the same. State the difference. (Tibetan track name and clarify the three ways in Tibetan.)



Name:

Date:

Grade:

*Quiz, Class Ten*

1) The Mind-Only School has asserted that there are things that can exist from their own side, through some unique identity of their own. The Independent part of the Middle-Way School has asserted that the perception of things depends on their appearing from their own side to a state of mind which, from its side, is unerring. How does the Consequence part of the Middle-Way School assert that things exist? (Tibetan track answer in Tibetan.)

2) When we say that things are only projections, does that mean that we can make anything anything we want it to be?

3) Does the fact that things are only projections mean that leading an ethical way of life is unimportant?

4) Why does the Consequence presentation of the meaning of emptiness have especially important implications for our own search for enlightenment?

5) The *Heart Sutra* says that the real goal of Buddhism is to "stop the process of aging and death" through "stopping our ignorance." Is this a literal or a figurative statement? If it is literal, then why have we not seen any person who stopped the process of aging and death?



Name:
Date:
Grade:

*Final Examination*

1) Give the title of the primary text used for our study of the art of interpretation; name its author, and give his dates. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

2) Nowadays some people say that a knowledge of emptiness is not the main point of Buddhism, while others say that emptiness is something known only intuitively, and not from a foundation of determined, organized study. Describe a quotation by Lord Buddha himself that disproves these ideas.

3) Why do we have to learn to distinguish between the literal and figurative; why do we have to learn to interpret what the Buddha said, in order to find out what he really meant?

4) Je Tsongkapa points out that—if what the Buddha said must be divided into what he said that was figurative and what he said that was literal—then the Buddha's own statements about when he was being figurative and when he was being literal cannot necessarily be taken literally. Rather, we must in the end rely on what is logical and makes sense to us. Describe the three logical tests recommended by Lord Buddha, and state the source for them.

5) Name the famous three attributes which form the cornerstone of the beliefs of the Mind-Only School, and which relate to the three different lacks of things regarding no existing object having any nature of its own. After naming them, describe them briefly. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

a)

b)

c)

6) Constructs are said to "lack any definitive nature." Explain what it means in the Mind-Only School when we say this; and then contrast it to what we mean in the Middle-Way School when we say this.

a)

b)

7) In explanations of the process of making constructs that follow from the *Commentary on the True Intent*, a distinction is made between the dependent thing that is the object of the constructing state of mind; the constructing state of mind itself; and the construct that "lies between" them. Explain these three as they occur in the example of the boy named Tashi.

8) The sutra goes on to use the three expressions "arena in which the constructing state of mind acts" and so on as a basis for describing dependent things and totality (or emptiness) as well as constructs. In other words, these three expressions are being used to get at the real meaning of the three attributes in the Mind-Only School; and more especially how they relate to each other. Describe this interrelation of the three attributes.

9) Name the three famous turnings of the wheel of the Dharma, the three great convocations, and state (a) when they were primarily taught; (b) where they were primarily taught; (c) for whom they were primarily taught; (d) their basic subject matter; and (e) what, from the point of view of the "outcome of the exchange," their view was on whether things have their own nature or not. (Tibetan track all in Tibetan!)

**(1) First turning of the wheel of the Dharma—**

**Name:**

**Period:**

**Place:**

**Disciples:**

**Basic subject matter:**

**View:**

**2) Second turning of the wheel of the Dharma—**

**Name:**

**Period:**

**Place:**

**Disciples:**

**Basic subject matter:**

**View:**



**(3) Third turning of the wheel of the Dharma—**

**Name:**

**Period:**

**Place:**

**Disciples:**

**Basic subject matter:**

**View:**

10) According to the Mind-Only School, which of these three turnings of the wheel (also called "groups of sutra") were spoken literally, and which are figurative, or something we must interpret further? According to the Middle-Way School, which are to be taken on face value, and which are not? Why so, in each case?

a)

b)

11) What, in the context of the *Commentary on the True Intent*, is the real criterion that decides whether a person belongs to the "lower way" (Hinayana) or the "higher way" (Mahayana)?

12) What does it mean to "turn" the wheel of the Dharma?

13) Name three goals that the *Commentary on the True Intent* has in mind for us when it takes the trouble to divide the three turnings of the wheel into the categories of figurative or literal.

a)

b)

c)

14) Je Tsongkapa takes pains to disprove the idea of some Tibetan thinkers that all three turnings of the wheel were meant literally. These thinkers would even say that Lord Buddha was speaking literally when he said (actually in order to attract some non-Buddhist groups) that things do have some kind of self-nature. What object do they say that Lord Buddha was referring to, and how is this object sometimes misinterpreted? (Tibetan track name the object in Tibetan and explain the misinterpretation in English.)

15) Who was the innovator who revived the Mind-Only School system in this world; what book did he base this work on; on how do we know that this was the book?

16) This innovator sets forth the meaning of thusness largely through a description of the two extremes, and how to avoid them. Name the two states of mind that hold to these two extremes. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

a)

b)

17) Describe, in a brief sentence, the Middle-Way idea about these two extreme views. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

18) What, according to the Middle-Way School, is "the ultimate" (also called "ultimate truth" or "ultimate reality")? (Tibetan track answer in Tibetan.)

19) How does the Middle-Way School describe deceptive reality? (Tibetan track name in Tibetan and describe in English.)

20) Now how does the Mind-Only School draw the difference between "ultimate reality" and "deceptive reality"?

21) Explain how the Consequence part of the Middle-Way School describes what it means to "exist as an external object."

22) This question has two separate parts. (a) What do the members of the Mind-Only School (and those of the Independent part of the Middle-Way School who lean towards them on points such as these) have in mind when they say that "nothing exists as an external object"? (b) What do the Consequence group and the Independents who lean the other way have in mind when they say that they are wrong?

a)

b)

23) What does the Mind-Only School mean when they say that the valid perception which is the subject that perceives a physical object, and the physical object which it perceives, are "of the same substance"? (Tibetan track also give the Tibetan for this concept.)

24) Explain where the name of the Mind-Only School comes from.

25) Now that we have examined how the Mind-Only School thinks that Lord Buddha taught emptiness, we turn to what the Independent group in the Middle-Way School thinks—which hinges on an idea of multiple levels of selflessness. Name this concept in general, and list its three parts. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

26) It's easy to confuse the three tracks with the three different ways mentioned in scripture, especially since the Tibetan for both is the same. State the difference. (Tibetan track name and clarify the three ways in Tibetan.)

27) The Mind-Only School has asserted that there are things that can exist from their own side, through some unique identity of their own. The Independent part of the Middle-Way School has asserted that the perception of things depends on their appearing from their own side to a state of mind which, from its side, is unerring. How does the Consequence part of the Middle-Way School assert that things exist? (Tibetan track answer in Tibetan.)

28) When we say that things are only projections, does that mean that we can make anything anything we want it to be?

29) Does the fact that things are only projections mean that leading an ethical way of life is unimportant?

30) Why does the Consequence presentation of the meaning of emptiness have especially important implications for our own search for enlightenment?

31) The *Heart Sutra* says that the real goal of Buddhism is to "stop the process of aging and death" through "stopping our ignorance." Is this a literal or a figurative statement? If it is literal, then why have we not seen any person who stopped the process of aging and death?

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Please PRINT your name clearly, exactly as you would like it to appear on your certificate, and the address to which the certificate should be sent.

*Please circle one or specify other:*

Mr.            Ms.            Mrs.            Miss            Venerable

Name as you would like it to appear on the certificate: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing name, if different: \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip code \_\_\_\_\_

Country \_\_\_\_\_

**These notes were taken by a student in class and should be used for reference only. Please check them against the audio for accuracy of content.**



## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class One: Testing the Buddha's Word

This course is from the point of view of the Mind-Only School. They have a different view of emptiness than the Middle-Way School, and studying their views clarifies the correct view of emptiness.

དང་ངེས།

**DRANG NGE**      **The study of how to interpret what the Buddha really meant.**  
figurative   literal

དང་དུས།

**DRANG DUN**      **Figurative.** The words spoken are intended to be taken figuratively. For example, Lord Buddha once said, "Kill your mother and your father." He didn't mean it literally. He was exaggerating for effect, and really meant that if your home life strongly distracts you from your spiritual goals, you should leave.  
figurative   truth

ངེས་དུས།

**NGE DUN**      **Literal.** The words spoken are intended to be taken literally.  
literal   truth

### Three Meanings of Literal versus Figurative

1. **Expressions.** Words can express either the literal intended meaning of the speaker, or the figurative meaning. If speaking literally, then the words and the intended meaning match each other. If speaking figuratively, the words don't correspond to the real meaning. For example, in the first turning of the wheel of the Dharma, Lord Buddha said, "All the things around you that you see, exists from their own side, with their own nature." Then a few years later on Vultures Peak he said, "Actually, nothing has its own nature; nothing exists from its own side, with any quality of its own." Then in the third turning of the wheel he said something that contradicted both of these earlier statements. So he must have been speaking figuratively in two of these cases. Most of this course will focus on the expressions of Lord Buddha and whether they should be taken literally or figuratively.
2. **Reality.** Does the way an object appears to us and the way it really is match? This is on the level of reality. Figurative reality is where the object is lying to you, appearing in a way that is different from the way it really is; this is the deceptive reality all around us.
3. **Understanding.** This refers to two states of mind:

ཚད་མ།

**TSEMA**      A **valid perception** (*skt., pramana*), roughly a correct or accurate perception. For example, seeing five fingers on your normal hand. Virtually all of your perceptions are valid perceptions. Valid perceptions are on the level of literal perceptions, meaning that your understanding validly matches the way things really exist.  
valid perception

## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class One, continued

ཡི་དབྱེད།

YI CHU  
approximation

**Approximate understanding.** This is on the figurative level, meaning that your understanding only roughly matches how things are.

### The Bodhisattva's Question

དོན་དམ་ཡང་དག་འཕགས་ལུ་པའི་ལཱུ།

DUNDAM YANGDAK PAK SHUPAY LEU  
bodhisattva Paramarta Samutgata proffer chapter

**The chapter of the bodhisattva's question.** This is *the* source for the Mind-Only School. It appears in the

*Sutra on the True Intent*. This chapter was spoken by Lord Buddha in response to the question proffered by the bodhisattva Dundam Yangdak Pak. In the third part of Lord Buddha's life, the bodhisattva approached Him and asked "Lord Buddha, in the first turning of the wheel you taught seven great subjects – like the five heaps, the four arya truths, the eight-fold arya path, the eighteen parts of a human being, the twelve doors of sense, and all these beautiful ways of looking at the world – and you always said that these things existed from their own side, that they had some nature or reality of their own. Then on Vulture's Peak you started saying that nothing exists from its own side, nothing has any nature, nothing has any definition from its own side, the things around you don't exist the way you think they do. So what did you really mean? We know that you are infallible, so please tell me which statement is true, or do some things exist by definition and some things don't exist by definition?"

### The Four Great School of Ancient India

1. **Middle Way.** This is the highest school.
2. **Mind Only.** This school forms the main basis of this course.
3. **Sutrist.** This school includes logic and perceptual theory.
4. **Higher Knowledge,** or *Abhidharma*.

Traditionally, Middle-Way and Mind-Only Schools are mahayana (higher way), and Sutrist and Higher Knowledge schools are Theravada or hinayana (lower way). The thing that most distinguishes the four schools is the way they explain emptiness. Lord Buddha taught all four schools, but three and a half of them are wrong about emptiness. You need to understand all the views of emptiness because in any human audience in any time in human history, when emptiness is explained, approximately one part of the audience will naturally latch onto one of each of these four views. These are the four personality types or ways of thinking about emptiness that people have before they even hear about Buddhism. So if you know the four schools, you will be able to help people who are at any particular level of understanding.



## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class One, continued

ང་ཡི་བཀའ་བསྐྱེགས་བཅད་བདར་གསེར་བཞིན་གུས་ཕྱིར་མིན།།

NGA YI KA SEK CHE DAR SER SHIN GU CHIR MIN  
my words melt it cut it rub it gold treat it like believe it don't

Lord Buddha himself said, **Don't just believe what I teach; treat it like gold: melt it, cut it, rub it.** Buddhists have to examine and test all of the teachings to see if they are worthy to be followed:

--**Melt it**, *sek*, means to test it against your own direct experience.

--**Cut it**, *che*, means test it against your own logical analysis, and whether or not the Buddha's words are internally consistent.

--**Rub it**, *dar*, means do his words contradict an authority who you reasonably believe to be speaking the truth. For example, you build up a relationship with a great Lama over a period of years and you realize that they would never intentionally mislead you or claim something that they didn't know to be true. Do the words of the scripture contradict what you believe from this authoritative source?

### Don't Judge Others

The three turnings of the wheel generally correspond to three historical periods of Lord Buddha's teachings, but the turnings of the wheel are really defined in terms of the content of the teaching. For example, when he taught that all things exist by definition it was a teaching of the first turning of the wheel, regardless of when it was taught. He taught all of the lower school beliefs for the benefit of people who weren't ready for the highest teaching on emptiness. You can even consider that a teaching on emptiness that accords with the lower school's understanding is correct in the sense that it is the right level of teaching to suit that particular audience. Therefore, you should never criticize another Dharma teacher or group – if you're a normal person you don't know that it isn't just a case of the Buddha emanating as a teacher who is attracting students to the Dharma by teaching a simplified version that these students can handle. It doesn't mean that you shouldn't debate them when the time is right. However, the bodhisattva vows require you to avoid criticizing and judging other people. If Lord Buddha can pretend to believe four different views of emptiness during his lifetime, then why can't Buddhas be doing it today?

### The Texts for this Course

དང་ངེས་ལེགས་བཤད་སྣང་པོ།

DRANG NGE LEKSHE NYINGPO  
interpretation well-spoken essence

*The Essence of Eloquence on the Art of Interpretation.* It was written by...

## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class One, continued

## ཇེ་ཙོང་ཁ་པ་པ།

### JE TSONGKAPA

**Je Tsongkapa** (1357-1419) was the greatest Tibetan monk and thinker who ever lived, and was the teacher of the first Dalai Lama. He wrote 10,000 pages of amazing teachings. They say he was taking dictation from Manjushri, or that he was Manjushri. *The Essence of Eloquence on the Art of Interpretation* is the very heart of his writings.

The two sutras taught by Lord Buddha, which are commented on by Je Tsongkapa as well as by the early Indian teachers, are:

## མདོ་སྡེ་དགོངས་འགྲེལ།

1. **DO DE GONG DREL** *Commentary on the True Intent of the Sutras.* This is the primary source for the teachings of the Mind-Only School. "Sutra" means a brief sermon spoken by the Buddha, and this book is his commentary on his own sutras. This is the sutra where Lord Buddha answered the bodhisattva's question about the contradictions between the first turning and the second turning of the wheel.

## འཕགས་པ་སྣོ་གྲོས་མི་ཟད་པས་ལུས་པའི་མདོ།

2. **PAKPA LODRU MI - SEPE SHUPAY DO**  
realized being wisdom never-ending requested sutra

*The Sutra Requested by the Arya Named Never-Ending Wisdom.* This is the source for the Middle-Way School's explanation of when Lord Buddha was speaking literally or figuratively.

## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class Two: The Three Attributes of the Mind-Only School

### The Bodhisattva's Question

In the third turning of the wheel, in the tenth chapter of the *Sutra of the True Intent*, the bodhisattva says, "Lord Buddha, in the first turning of the wheel you taught us about the four arya truths, the five heaps, the twelve doors of sense, the six elements, the eighteen categories, the thirty-seven categories of enlightenment, including the eight fold arya path, etc. and all these things exist by definition. Then in the second turning of the wheel you basically said that nothing has any nature of its own, nothing starts, nothing stops, everything is in a state of peace and everything is in a state of nirvana. So what did you mean when you said nothing has a nature of its own?"

### Lord Buddha's Answer

Lord Buddha responds by making fine distinctions about things, explaining that some things do have a nature of their own and some things don't have a nature of its own.

ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད།

NGOWO NYI ME      **Nothing has a nature of its own.** The Middle-Way School says  
nature of its own    no      that this is literally true – everything is a projection of your mind.  
But Lord Buddha here gives the bodhisattva a response, and says  
that he didn't literally mean that nothing has a nature of its own. He said that this statement  
really refers to three things which make up the content of tonight's class.

Lord Buddha's answer to the bodhisattva's question is not literally true. The fact that Lord Buddha could intentionally respond in this incorrect way has two implications:

1. When you explain Buddhism to other people, it may be necessary to make simplifications which might be technically wrong. This is okay if it keeps your audience engaged and is for the purpose of bring them up to a higher level when they are ready.
2. You never know whether or not any spiritual teacher is speaking figuratively on purpose in order to attract students of lesser capacity – so you should never judge other teachers. You can evaluate the truth of their statements, but never criticize other teachers. His Holiness, the Dalai Lama frequently adjusts his message to fit the audience, so you can't be sure that some other teacher isn't also adjusting their message to suit a particular audience's capacity.

### Three Meanings of No Self-Nature

#### 1. Nothing Has a Definitive Nature: Constructs

མཚན་ཉིད་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད།

TSEN NYI NGOWO NYI ME  
definitive nature of its own no

**Nothing has a *definitive* nature of its own.**

If you say "fire is hot by definition," it doesn't mean that the definition of fire is to be hot. It means that the very nature of fire is to be hot.

## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class Two, continued

## ཀུན་བརྟགས།

**KUN-TAK**     **A construct.** It means an imaginary thing or a construct of the mind.  
construct     A construct can apply to something that doesn't exist, like a rabbit's horns, or a flower that could grow in mid air without any water or soil; or it can apply to something that does exist, like our boy Tashi. Several days after a baby boy is born, the parents decide to name him Tashi, and from then on they think of him as "our boy Tashi," which is a construct. You must distinguish between the three things involved:

1. The little blob of flesh that is the **object** out there.
2. The parents' **minds** that are thinking of the boy in a certain way. Their constructing minds are applying names (let's call him Tashi) and thoughts (he's our little baby Tashi).
3. The **construct** "that's our boy Tashi" which rests between the little baby and the parents' minds.

## 2. Nothing Grows Through Its Own Nature: Dependent Things

## སྐྱེ་བ་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ།

**KYewa NGowo Nyi MePa**     **Nothing grows through of its own nature.** This grow     nature of its own     no     statement refers to things that grow, or dependent things, and its meaning can be stated in two ways:

1. **Positively:** anything that grows, must have a nature of growing from its own causes and conditions.
2. **Negatively:** nothing has a nature of growing without its causes and conditions.

The biggest example is the suffering of your life. It has causes which you can figure out and stop. Negatively, nothing bad that happens to you just happens by itself without specific causes. This phrase refers to the second of the three attributes:

## གཞན་དབང།

**SHEN - WANG**     **Dependent things.** Things that have a nature of growing from other     power     causes and conditions, and don't have a nature of growing on their own. For example, your aging and death are at the mercy of your ignorance. Dependent things are changing and caused things, but they don't have a nature of growing by themselves; they can only grow from other causes.

## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class Two, continued

### 3. Nothing Has a Nature of Being Ultimate: Totality

དོན་དམ་པ་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ།

DUNDAMPA NGOWO NYI MEPA      **Nothing has a nature of being ultimate.**  
ultimate    nature of its own    no      This has two meanings:

1. **Constructs are not ultimate**, because they are just imaginary things; they don't have any existence from their own side.
2. **Dependent things are not ultimate**, because when you are perceiving ultimate reality directly you are not perceiving a changing thing – you are perceiving emptiness, which is unchanging. Emptiness is just the absence of a self-existent thing. A changing thing isn't ultimate because it is changing and comes from other causes. This phrase refers to the third of the three attributes:

ཡོང་གྲུབ།

YONG - DRUP      **Total existence, or totality.** This is the Mind-Only School's term for emptiness. Literally, *yongdrup* means "everything exists," and it means that the minute an object exists it is 100% empty.

### Existing by Definition

རང་གི།མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པ།

RANG GI TSEN NYI KYI DRUPPA      **Exists by definition.** It means to have some self-nature    definition    by    exists    nature of existing from its own side through some unique way of being. Negatively, it's not just made up from your mind. According to the Mind-Only School:

- **Constructs** don't exist by definition because they're just made up with your mind. So they don't have a definitive nature of their own.
- **Dependent things** do exist by definition because they aren't just imagined things; rather, they are coming from their own side through a unique nature of their own. Further, because they come from other things, they don't have a nature of growing without their causes and conditions.
- **Emptiness** does exist by definition because it's not something that you just make up with your mind; every object has emptiness and emptiness has its own nature from its own side.

According to the Middle-Way School, dependent things like a pen don't exist by definition because when you eliminate the name and thought of a pen, which is forced on you by your past karma, there is no pen there. This is why a dog sees it as a chewable object. Nothing exists by definition according to the Middle-Way School. This means that your aging and death are only a projection and therefore they can be changed.



CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Two, continued

Classical Metaphors for the Three Attributes

ཡོངས་གྲུབ་ནམ་མཁའ་དང་འདྲ།

1. YONGDRUP NAMKA DANG DRA      **Emptiness is just like empty space**, because  
 emptiness      empty space      just like      it is an absence of something (a physical  
 obstruction). Emptiness is also an absence of  
 something: a self-existent thing. Empty space means the place in which something is located  
 which is free of having a physical obstruction. It's an example of an unchanging thing.  
 There was a school in Tibet which believed that emptiness is a positive thing rather than an  
 absence of a self-existent thing. Je Tsongkapa points out the error of this belief in his text.

ཀུན་བརྟགས་ནམ་མཁའི་མི་ཉོག་དང་འདྲ།

2. KUNTAK NAMKAY METOK DANG DRA      **Constructs are just like a flower**  
 construct      in mid air      flower      just like      **that grows in mid-air** because  
 they are just imaginary things  
 that are made up by your mind. The objects that constructs refer to can either exist (like the  
 boy Tashi) or not exist (like a sky flower). In either case, the construct is still made up.

གཞན་དབང་སྐྱུ་མ་དང་འདྲ།

3. SHENWANG GYUMA DANG DRA      **Dependent things are just like an illusion**,  
 caused things      illusion      just like      because in reality they are coming from the  
 same karmic seed that your eye perceiving  
 them is coming from, but they seem to be coming from a separate karmic seed. They are  
 just like a movie because they trick you into thinking that they come from a different energy  
 than your eye which perceives them. The pen seems to have come from a pen factory and  
 your eye seems to have come from the biological causes of your body, but this is an illusion  
 – the pen and my eye come from the same single karma.

MING DE SHAK      **A name and a term.** A construct can be either a name or a term,  
 name      term      **or both.**

## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class Three: Five Statements About Emptiness

### Jonangba's View

A viewpoint proposed by Jonangba and his followers in Tibet held these two contradictory beliefs:

1. Lord Buddha was speaking literally when he spoke the third turning of the wheel.
2. Emptiness is a positive thing.

It is contradictory to believe these two views together, because in the third turning of the wheel Lord Buddha compared emptiness to empty space, meaning that it is the absence of something – in the case of this metaphor, the absence of an obstructing object. So emptiness cannot be a positive self-standing thing like a ball of white light, or the pure thoughts going on in your mind, or “the opposite of all that it is not,” because these are all positive things, and emptiness is really just the absence of a self-existent thing.

### A Summary of the Three Turnings of the Wheel

In the first turning of the wheel, Lord Buddha said that things such as the four arya truths, the five heaps, etc., have a nature of their own and they exist by definition from their own side. Then in the second turning of the wheel, Lord Buddha said that nothing has any nature of its own. In the third turning of the wheel, Lord Buddha made fine distinctions.

ལེགས་པར་སྐྱེ་བའི་བེལ་འཁོར།

**LEKPAR CHEWAY KILNKOR** The turning of the wheel of fine distinctions. In the third fine distinctions wheel of turning of the wheel Lord Buddha made fine distinctions about what things exist by definition. He said three things:

1. Constructs, which are just imaginary things, *don't* exist by definition, they don't have a nature of their own, they don't come from their own side with their own unique way of being.
2. Dependent things *do* exist by definition from their own side, but they don't grow without their causes and conditions.
3. Emptiness *does* exist by definition from its own side. Here Lord Buddha said, “Nothing is ultimate,” which means that a) things don't have a nature of being self-existent and b) most things don't have a nature of being what you see when you see emptiness directly.

### The Importance of Understanding Emptiness Correctly

You must study and struggle with the different views about emptiness held by the different schools of ancient India. These schools of thought represent views that we naturally hold today as we try to figure out the correct view of emptiness. One important test for which view is correct is your own logic and direct experience, which will lead to correct realizations about emptiness. The importance of understanding emptiness correctly intellectually is that it will lead you to perceiving emptiness directly which is the only energy in the universe that can remove your suffering forever and make you totally happy.

## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class Three, continued

You must realize that: a self-existent thing doesn't exist, that mental constructs don't have any nature of their own, and that the changing things in your life come from causes and conditions. When you mistakenly think that imaginary things – like a self-existent screaming boss or a nasty friend or spouse – come from their own side you perpetuate the ignorance and bad karma that causes the suffering to continue in your life, and actually causes your aging and death. If you could realize that your image of these things is just a mental projection that comes from your past karma you could reverse all of these problems and actually eliminate your aging and death. But you must understand emptiness correctly and stop seeing things as self-existent.

### The Five Statements

In the second turning of the wheel Lord Buddha made five radical statements. Firstly, he said, **nothing has any nature of its own**, and we clarified what he meant in the last class and above. Now we will identify and clarify the four remaining radical statements Lord Buddha made in the second turning of the wheel, according to the Mind-Only School.

མ་སྐྱེས་པ།

**MA KYEPA**      **Nothing has a nature of growing or starting.** For example, the sun nothing grows doesn't come up in the morning. In the Middle-Way School this statement means nothing happens that is not caused by your mental projections forced on you by your past karma. The Mind-Only School says that the sun *does* come up from its own side, and when Lord Buddha said nothing has a nature of growing he meant three things:

- Constructs don't grow because they are not changing things.
- Emptiness doesn't grow because it is not a changing thing.
- Lord Buddha didn't mention dependent things here because they do grow, and they even grow by definition, not as merely a projection.

མ་རྒྱུག་པ།

**MA GAKPA**      **Nothing has a nature of ending.** For example, you don't die. In the nothing stops Middle-Way School this statement means that nothing stops that is not a mental projection forced on you by your past karma. This means that it's possible to stop your own death because it's only a mental projection and it doesn't have any reality of its own. To the Mind-Only School this statement means:

- Construct don't end because they are just imaginary things.
- Emptiness doesn't wear out; it only goes out of existence, but it doesn't slowly fade out because it's an unchanging thing as long as it exists.
- Lord Buddha didn't mention changing things because they do end, and they end by definition, because their causes stop, and it's not just your projection.

## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class Three, continued

What's the difference between saying, "the pen, my eyeball, and the eye consciousness that sees the pen come from the same karmic seed," and saying, "the pen is just a projection of my karma?" You must work on this question. One of these is the real meaning of emptiness and one is slightly incorrect.

### གཞོན་མ་ནས་ཞི་བ།

**SUMA NE SHIWA**      **Everything is peace, or extinction, from the beginning.**  
beginningless    peace, extinct      This means free from the mentally afflicted side of things, which means mental afflictions, their causes and their results. The vast majority of your life is tied up with mentally afflicted things. The exceptions are your Dharma studies, renunciation, compassion, and an understanding of emptiness. With this statement, Lord Buddha meant:

- Constructs are free from the mentally afflicted side of things because they are unchanging.
- Emptiness also is peace from the beginning because it's unchanging.
- Lord Buddha didn't refer to changing things because generally they are suffering things.

### རང་བཞིན་གྱིས་ཡོངས་སུ་བྱ་ངན་ལས་འདས་པ།

**RANGSHIN GYI YONG SU NYA-NGEN LE DEPA**  
its very nature    by    completely      grief      gone beyond

**Everything is gone beyond grief.** Grief is a code word for the suffering side of things. This one is very similar to the previous one. Lord Buddha meant:

- Constructs are free from suffering.
- Emptiness also is devoid of mentally afflicted stuff.
- Lord Buddha again skips changing things, because they are not gone beyond grief.

### Master Asanga's Clarification

### རང་གི་རྒྱ་རྒྱུ་མེད་ནས་མ་སྐྱེ་བ་དང་མ་འགག་པ།

**RANGGI GYU      KYEN ME NE MA KYEWA DANG MA GAKPA**  
its own    main    cooperative    not    if    nothing    grows      and    nothing    stops  
cause      conditions

**Nothing starts and nothing stops without their main causes and cooperative conditions.** Je Tsongkapa quotes Master Asanga as saying that Lord Buddha *did* mean to apply the above "latter four" characteristics to dependent things: they don't stop, they don't end, they are peace from the beginning and they are gone beyond grief. Master Asanga meant that changing things don't start without their causes, and changing things don't stop without

## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class Three, continued

their causes. Also, they aren't mixed up with mentally afflicted things without their causes. So Master Asanga, posing as the spokesman for the Mind-Only School, says that Lord Buddha was implying that the latter four characteristics do apply to changing things, but only when you include their causes and conditions.

#### **A Very Obtuse Statement from the Sutra**

The sutra now says, "Emptiness doesn't grow and emptiness doesn't stop, because it continues in the time of changeless changelessness and up to the time of unshaking unshakeability." Je Tsongkapa explains these two phrases as meaning that the emptiness of the pen, for example, has existed as an unchanging thing since the pen began; and the emptiness of the pen will continue for as long as the pen exists.

## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class Four: The Three Attributes

### Three Qualities of Dependent Things

In the third turning of the wheel Lord Buddha explains, in the *Commentary of the True Intent of the Sutras*, that all of reality can be divided into the three attributes. These three attributes explain everything in the universe. They are very important and they relate in an interdependent way.

There are three qualities of dependent things that relate to constructs in three specific ways:

ནམ་པར་རྟོག་པའི་སྐྱོད་ཡུལ།

NAMPAR TOKPAY CHUYUL  
mentally construct arena

**Dependent things are the arena where you create your constructs.** The Mind-Only School says that you never really see the pen itself. You almost never get beyond the curtain of your images. There is a real pen out there that exists by definition from its own side, but it is merely the playground where your mind invents its constructs.

ཀུན་བརྟགས་པའི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱི་གནས།

KUNTAKPAY TSENNYI KYI NE  
imagined thing attribute of place

**Dependent things are the place where the constructs stay.** For example, the baby boy is the place where the construct “Tashi” stays.

- The constructing state of mind is represented by the mom and dad that name him “Tashi.”
- The dependent thing is the little blob of baby boy out there.
- The construct is “Tashi,” the name and the thought in the parents’ mind.

The evidence that the construct “Tashi” doesn’t exist by definition is that no one called him Tashi until the parents made their mental images and started to name him Tashi. The key point is that each of the three attributes depend on the other two; they stand like a tripod and support each other. Lord Buddha is defining changing things by showing how imaginary things relate to them. These are not just three random groups of things. They tie together and define each other in a beautiful way.

Ignorance is not realizing that the construct Tashi is only something that you made up. It is thinking that Tashi must be Tashi from the beginning from its own side. This self-existent Tashi is the *gakja* – the thing we deny that never could have existed in the first place.

འདུ་བྱེད་ཀྱི་མཚན་མ།

DU-JE KYI TSENMA  
causal factor of characteristics

**Dependent things exhibit the quality of making things happen.** They are caused themselves and cause other things.

## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class Four, continued

In summary, according to the third turning of the wheel, Lord Buddha said dependent things are:

1. Those things that you *imagine* as a changing thing, that you think about as being “pen.”
2. Those things that *get imagined* as a changing thing, that are thought about as being “pen.”
3. Those things that change, that function as a pen.

Why didn't Lord Buddha just define dependent things simply as those things that change? He expressed the relationship between changing things and constructs in this way, because **he's trying to force you to see that in reality changing things are actually just constructs of your mind.** You need to understand that the boy named Tashi wasn't Tashi from the very beginning, and the pen wasn't a pen from the very beginning – you are actually creating the thing called pen, and you have an idea called pen that's standing like a curtain between you and the pen; you get mixed up and mistake your idea of the pen for the real pen. There really is a pen out there and there is a boy out there, according to the Mind-Only School, but the construct Tashi is only an idea between you and the boy, and pen is only an idea between you and the pen that is out there. You're never really seeing a pen or Tashi; all you're ever really seeing is a baby that you're thinking of as Tashi. There is no Tashi that exists from his own side by definition.

The point is that when you encounter other people you tend to mistakenly think of them as if they existed by definition and are not just constructs of your imagination. Then you begin to think that they are good or bad from their own side by definition, rather than just being something that your mind is creating.

**DA JANG GYI KYEBU** The person who knows the name for the thing. If a word knower of person constructing state of mind is that which gives a certain name to an object and thinks about it in a certain way, then how can an infant experience their world through constructs? From his past life, an infant thinks about things in a certain way based on his karma from past lives. For example, to the baby Kieran, the name for everything is “Dah.” He doesn't speak names for things, but he does already think of things in certain ways through his constructs. You are thinking of a pen as a pen because of millions of years of past karma that makes you predisposed to see pen when you look at a pen. You're just returning to what you always knew in past lives. An animal has collected lousy karma and doesn't have that recent memory that would force it to recognize the cylinder as a pen, and it goes on thinking of it as a chewable object. In other words, nothing in your life is new. The reason Mozart could play piano beautifully from such a young age is that he was remembering what he already knew for millions of years.

You see all the objects in the world around you the way you do merely from the habit of millions of past lives. So to change the world around you, especially to move up to a higher tantric level, is a very big and difficult job, but it's much easier if you understand how you're making up the names for everything. This is the clue; this is the perfection of wisdom.

## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class Four, continued

If you understand this lesson, you are eligible to move up to tantra. Right now you are restricted to everything you remember from your past lives, and you are perceiving or inventing your world on the basis of seeds that have been there for thousands and thousands of years. You're not inherently smarter than animals – you just have the habit for thousands of lifetimes of seeing this cylinder as a pen so that in this life you recognize it fairly quickly as being a pen. So to move up to seeing the world in a new way has to happen through the door called the perfection of wisdom, which is to understand how you are inventing pen. You have to understand the relationship between constructs, changing things, and emptiness. This is knowledge. Making that leap between what you knew from your past lives to what you are capable of being – a tantric deity – is accomplished through the perfection of wisdom. You have to know how you are creating your world around you.

But don't forget that according to the Mind-Only School, dependent things *do* exist from their own side, even though your constructs of the changing object are made up in your head. The changing things are believed to have some existence from their own side, to exist by definition. We believe this naturally, and the reason we're studying Mind-Only view is that we're trying to overcome our instinctive belief that the objects in the world around us exist from their own side.

According to Mind-Only School, a tantric angel is a tantric angel from their own side, and a normal person is a normal person from their own side, because they are changing things that exist by definition and have characteristics that aren't just your mental projection. According to Middle-Way view, a person's nature is nothing but a mental projection, so if you collect the right karma all of the things in the world around you can become holy.

### Two Types of Constructs

There are two ways that you create mental images or form constructs about things:

ངོ་བོ་ལ་གུན་བརྟགས་པའི་གུན་བརྟགས།

NGOWO LA KUNTAKPAY KUNTAK  
its essence about to construct a construct

**A construct you construct about the essence of a thing.** For example, "pen" or "car." It is a verbalization and/or a conceptualization.

ཁྱད་པར་ལ་གུན་བརྟགས་པའི་གུན་བརྟགས།

KYEPAR LA KUNTAKPAY KUNTAK  
its features about to construct a construct

**A construct you construct about the features about a thing.** For example, "blue," "long," or "sharp" relative to a pen, or the "chubbiness" of the baby boy.



## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class Four, continued

So you can construct a construct relative to the basic nature of an object (“pen”) or relative to the specific features or characteristics of an object (“long and blue”). These are correct non-mistaken constructs.

**A third kind of construct is mistaken:** to think that the pen is what we call “pen” from its own side. This kind of construct is ignorance itself according to the Mind-Only School – the fact that it is “pen” by definition, from its own side, not merely as a nominal thing – which doesn’t exist at all. A pen is not the thing you call “pen,” from its own side. Emptiness is the fact that there doesn’t exist anywhere in the universe a pen that could be called “pen” from its own side.

So the two correct types of concepts are: 1) a concept about an essence or basic identity, like the category “pen”, and 2) a concept about features or details about the pen, like “blue”. There are also ignorant constructs like seeing the pen as existing from its own side.

### The Interdependence of the Three Attributes

Each one of the three attributes supports the existence of the other two. They are like a tripod or three corners of a triangle. Lord Buddha doesn’t just describe dependent things in isolation as things that change or things that are caused. He describes them in terms of their relation to constructs, as explained above. Dependent things are the basis of constructs, and they are mainly suffering and the cause of suffering. The three attributes are:

**Shenwang**

dependent thing

**Kuntak**

construct

**Yongdrup**

emptiness

**Emptiness** (Yongdrup) = **Dependent Thing** (Shenwang’s) - **Constructs** (Kuntaks)

The Emptiness of a changing thing is the absence of a construct about it that exists from its own side.

To think “my boss is angry” is a correct construct, but to think “my angry boss must be an angry boss because he is so from his own side” is an incorrect construct, because this construct only exists nominally as something that the mind focuses on. “Dandruff that is bad from its own side” is an incorrect construct because it leads you to emphasize on shopping for cosmetics and to ignore the monks at Sera monastery in India who need food. Dandruff does exist, but dandruff that is bad by definition doesn’t exist. When you think that things are self-existent, you commit bad karma by hurting someone to get the things you want or avoid the things you don’t want, and your suffering continues.

## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class Four, continued

In the Middle-Way School all of these phrases are the same, but the Mind-Only School makes some distinctions between these phrases (for example, some things exist by definition but are not self-existent):

- exists naturally
- exists from its own side
- exists by definition
- exists truly
- exists self-existent

### Existence versus Identity

When you think of a pen as being a pen naturally (which is incorrect), are you thinking of something as being there which is not there (thinking about whether or not it *exists* at all), or are you thinking of something in a way in which it is not (thinking about what its *identity* is). In English the verb *to be* is used to describe both existence and identity, but in Tibetan two different words are used.

མེད། ཡོད།

ME YU  
is not it is

**It is not and it is.** For example, there is a table in the hallway, or there isn't a table in the hallway. You could say, there doesn't *exist* a table in the hallway.

མིན། ཡིན།

MIN YIN  
is not it is

**It is not and it is.** For example, that speckled rope is not a snake. There certainly does exist something there, but what is its *identity*? Is it a rope or is it a snake?

When you are mistakenly focusing on the kind of constructs that don't exist – constructs that exist from their own side that are not just imaginary things – you are mainly mis-identifying the nature of the construct. The construct you are focusing on does *exist*, but its *identity* is that of not existing by definition and merely being an invention of your imagination. The fact that a pen is what we call pen is something that exists, but is not something that has the identity of existing by definition. Your construct that focuses on the essence, "this is a pen," does exist; your construct that focuses on the features, "this is a blue pen," also exists; but your construct that focuses on a pen that is what we call pen from its own side is something that doesn't exist. Consider the two phrases:

1. The fact that the pen is what we call pen from its own side doesn't *exist*.
2. The fact that the pen doesn't have an *identity* of having a construct related to it that exists by definition.

The second way of looking at the emptiness of the pen is more important because we are not disputing the *existence* of the construct called "the fact that this pen is what we call pen;" we are disputing that the *identity* of the construct "the fact that this pen is what we call pen" exists by definition from its own side.

## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class Four, continued

Until you graduate to Middle-Way thinking, seeing your own body and mind as a construct, you can never become a Buddha. Tantra will not work for you if you only get as far as Mind-Only thinking, because you still believe that your body and mind exist by definition from their own side. This would mean that you have to get old and die because aging and death would not be just projections.

#### The Three Attributes in the First Turning of the Wheel

Lord Buddha up to this point has been talking about physical matter which is the first heap. In the sutra, he now says that this same relationship between the three attributes can be established with regard to all of the other things he taught in the first turning of the wheel. **Every one of these things has their own dependent thing, construct, and emptiness:**

- The remaining five heaps
- The four arya truths
- The twelve doors of sense
- The eighteen divisions of the universe
- The six elements

The point of all of this analysis is to realize that all of the problems in your life are coming from your own constructs which you hold to be existing from their own side. Because of this wrong view you react against them and collect bad karma which causes all of your suffering. According to tantra, every time that you have a single thought of a single object as existing from its own side you have damaged your winds and your body, and moved closer to death. The thought that things are self-existent is killing you literally. To the Middle-Way School, **ignorance itself is a mental affliction – just misunderstanding your world, even if you didn't get upset at anyone, is enough to kill you.** As the mind goes so goes the physical constituents. The point of Buddhism is to stop this ignorance of seeing things as self-existent and to use this wisdom to stop your own death and to help others to do the same. It takes almost as much good karma to see someone reach tantric enlightenment as to do it yourself, so don't be surprised if you're not seeing it happen at this point in your practice.

The name for *kye-rim* visualizations is *dakpay nelnjor* – *nelnjor* means yoga and *dakpay* means *kuntak* which means imaginary. The karma of having certain attitudes about a holy being is what makes them happen. This is as much detail as is appropriate in a public teaching.

## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class Five: The Three Turnings of the Wheel

གྲུབ་དོན།

**DRUP**      **DUN**  
to accomplish    the meaning

The Outcome of the Exchange Between the  
Bodhisattva and the Buddha

The outcome is something like a business deal. They haggle a bit, and then come up with an agreement. The Bodhisattva says, "Aha, I learned something." The outcome is very important in *trangne*. Here, the Buddha says the first turning and the second turning were not literal. He gives the third turning, that nothing exists by definition. Here, "by definition" means from its own side with its own unique way of being. In the Mind-Only school the third turning of the wheel is literal, and should be taken at face value. In the Middle Way school, any teaching which primarily addresses emptiness is literal, and any teaching which does not is figurative, and was taught to bring the disciple closer to the correct view. In Middle Way, a teaching taught at "face value" may be taken as the wording says.

### Four Expressions that Describe the First and Second Turnings of the Wheel

The *Sutra on the True Intent* makes four statements that characterize the first and second turnings of the wheel. These statements all boil down to the fact that the first and second turnings are only meant figuratively and are not the highest truth. The third turning, by contrast, was spoken literally and is the highest truth, according to the Mind-Only School.

1. **They have something higher.** There is some higher truth (the third turning of the wheel).
2. **They leave an opening** for dispute.
3. **They have to be interpreted further.** They are not meant to be taken literally.
4. **They serve as a basis of contention.** Someone will fight about it.

The text then says that the third turning of the wheel is the opposite of these four characteristics: it has nothing higher, it doesn't leave an opening for dispute, it doesn't need to be interpreted further, and it doesn't present a basis of contention for someone who is thinking correctly.

ཚུས་འཁོར།

**CHUN KOR**  
Dharma wheel

**Wheel of the Dharma.** This is a separate subject in itself. For each of the three turnings of the wheel we will identify its name, time period, place taught, disciples, main subject matter, viewpoint expressed. For each turning of the wheel, generally speaking, there was a huge convocation taught to a particular audience, in a particular locale, with a particular viewpoint expressed.

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Five, continued

The First Turning of the Wheel of Dharma

བདེན་བཞིའི་ཚོས་འཁོར།

Name: DEN SHIY CHUN KOR      **Turning of the wheel on the four arya truths.**  
truth   four   Dharma wheel

Period: Taught primarily during the early part of Lord Buddha’s teaching on this planet.

ལྷ་ར་རྒྱ་སི

Place: WARANASI      **Varanasi.** The general area in Bengal, India where the town Sarnath, or Deer Park, is located.  
Varanasi

ཉན་ཐོས་ཐེག་པ།

Disciples: NYENTU TEKPA      **Listeners.** Students of the hinayana school. This refers to people who think with the philosophically immature viewpoint that things are self-existent. This viewpoint corresponds to the two lower schools of ancient India: *Abhidharma* and *Sutrist*.  
Listeners   vehicle

འཕགས་པའི་བདེན་པ་བཞི།

Subject: PAYKPAY DENPA SHI      **Four arya truths.** Lord Buddha taught this lesson originally to his first five disciples.  
arya   truths   four

ཚོས་རྣམས་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པ།

Viewpoint: CHU NAM RANG GI TSEN NYI KYI DRUPPA  
Dharma plural nature of definition by exists

**Everything has a nature of existing by definition.** Everything has its own identity from its own side.

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Five, continued

The Second Turning of the Wheel of Dharma

མཚན་ཉིད་མེད་པའི་ཚེས་འཁོར།

Name: TSEN NYI MEPAY CHUN KOR      Turning of the wheel on how  
definition nothing Dharma wheel      nothing exists by definition.

Period: Taught primarily during the middle part of Lord Buddha’s teaching on this planet.

བྱ་སྔོན་ཕུང་པོའི་རི།

Place: JAGU PUNGPOY RI      Vulture’s peak. This area of Bengal still exists and  
vulture shaped like peak      is now called Rajighira.

ཐེག་ཆེན།

Disciples: TEK CHEN      Greater way (*mahayana*) practitioners. (Mind-Only also  
vehicle greater      says for Mind-Only practitioners, because they know it is  
figurative.)

སྟོང་པ་ཉིད།

Subject: TONGPA NYI      Emptiness. Emptiness is the fact that nothing has a nature  
emptiness      existing from its own side.

ཚེས་རྣམས་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་མ་གྲུབ་པ།

Viewpoint: CHU NAM RANG GI TSEN NYI KYI MA DRUPPA  
Dharma plural nature of definition by nothing exists

No existing thing has a nature of existing by definition.

The Third Turning of the Wheel of Dharma

ལེགས་སྤྱིའི་ཚེས་འཁོར།

Name: LEKCHEY CHUN KOR      Turning of the wheel of fine distinctions.  
fine distinction Dharma wheel

Period: Taught primarily during the latter part of Lord Buddha’s teaching on this planet.

## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class Five, continued

ཡངས་པ་ཅན།

Place: YANGPACHEN  
great convocation

Vaishali.

ཐེག་པ་ཐམས་ཅད།

Disciples: TEKPA TAMCHE  
vehicle all of them

People of all ways, hinayana and mahayana.

མཚན་ཉིད་གསུམ།

Subject: TSENNYI SUM  
attributes three

The three attributes.

ཚོས་རྣམས་ལ་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་མ་གྲུབ་ལེགས་པར་བྱ།

Viewpoint: CHU NAM LA RANG GI TSENNYI KYI DRUP MADRUP LEKPAR CHE  
All existing plural nature of definition by exists doesn't exist fine distinctions  
objects

**We must make fine distinctions about all existing objects which either do or don't have a nature of existing by definition.**

## Turning the Wheel of Dharma

འཁོར་ལོས་བསྐྱར་བའི་རྒྱལ་པོའི་འཁོར་ལོ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།

KORLU GYURWAY GYALPOY KORLO RINPOCHE Precious wheel owned by the  
wheel gets his power king wheel precious wheel-empowered emperor.

This idea comes mainly from the Abhidharma School and from the perfection of wisdom, but it is accepted by all of the schools. A *Chakravartan* (he who rules by the wheel) is an emperor who get his or her power from the wheel. These rulers can control the entire universe through their gold or silver wheel. They are close to enlightenment and have some but not all of the marks of a Buddha. The most powerful *Charkravartan*'s are begged by the people to be the ruler, and less powerful ones have to fight to maintain their power.

The precious wheel is a spaceship or flying disk with a diameter of 2,000 miles and can travel half a million miles a day. Its function is to carry the emperor and his four forces

## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class Five, continued

all over his empire in order to conquer unconquered spiritual territory. The Dharma wheel enables you to achieve spiritual realizations and goals, especially the path of seeing. After you see emptiness directly you can understand the entire contents of all Buddhist scriptures immediately. It is also said that the eight spokes of a wheel represent the eight fold path of an arya. The two deer represent Deer Park where Lord Buddha first turned the wheel of Dharma. Turning the wheel of Dharma can occur at two different levels.

ལུང་གི་ཚོས་འཁོར།

LUNG GI CHUN KOR  
speech of Dharma wheel

**Speech.** The physical Dharma in the form of lectures, books, CDs, woodblock prints, etc.

ཏོགས་པའི་ཚོས་འཁོར།

TOKPAY CHUN KOR  
realizations Dharma wheel

**Spiritual realizations** where your mind undergoes a permanent change.

Dharma in the form of spiritual realizations will die out first, where there are still books in the libraries and on the computers which no one understands any more.

Spiritual realizations are triggered by the speech of a teacher that catches a student's heart. The student is then able to go and speak the Dharma to a new student, who in turn reaches realizations, and it moves on and on from student to student through this perpetuating process of teachers speaking and offering spiritual realizations to students who themselves become teachers.



## CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Six: Defining the Three Turnings of the Wheel

### What Is Included in the First Turning of the Wheel?

The reading for this week comes from the monastic textbook on the Mind-Only School and the third turning of the wheel. It addresses the question of how the three turnings of the wheel are defined. Is it according to historical period, content taught, order of import or accuracy, some, or all of the above?

ལྔ་སྡེ་ལ་ཤམ་ཐབས་ལྷུ་མ་པོར་བགོ་བར་བྱའོ། །ཞེས།

NGA DE LA SHAMTAP DUMPOR GOWAR JAO, SHE  
five group monk's robe circular, neatly you should wear spoke thus

**Lord Buddha spoke to the group of five disciples that you should wear your robes neatly.**

This quote is from the *Sutra of the Tigress*, part of the *Golden Light Sutra* which we studied in the first year of classes. Lord Buddha gave his life to a tigress and her cubs who then become his disciples later. Lord Buddha is describing to his first disciples, shortly after his very first teaching which covered the four arya truths, that they should wear their robes neatly in order to attract others to the Dharma. This teaching is not considered by the Mind-Only School to be part of the first turning of the wheel because it's not related to the bodhisattva's question about whether or not certain kinds of things exist by definition.

### The Middle Way's Ordering of the Three Turnings

གཟུངས་རྒྱལ་གྱི་མདོ།

SUNG GYAL GYI DO Sutra Requested by the King of Mystic Words. This  
mantra king of sutra sutra says that the order of the three turnings of the  
wheel should be according to profundity or correctness,  
as follows:

བདེན་བཞིའི་ཚོས་འཁོར།

DEN SHI CHUNKOR Turning of the wheel on the four arya truths.  
truth four turning of wheel The Mind-Only School agrees that this should be  
first.

ལེགས་པར་སྤྱེ་བའི་ཚོས་འཁོར།

LEKPAR CHEWAY CHUNKOR Turning of the wheel of fine distinctions  
fine distinctions turning of wheel is second.

མཚན་ཉིད་མེད་པའི་ཚོས་འཁོར།

TSENNYI MEPAY CHUNKOR Turning of the wheel of nothing exists by  
by definition not exist turning of wheel definition is third.

## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class Six, continued

The *Sutra of the King of Mystic Words* says that the turning of the wheel that explains that nothing exists by definition should be last, because then the three turnings are ordered according to increasing correctness. This is the Middle-Way view.

### The Three Turnings of the Wheel Defined by Disciple

Kedrup Denpa Dargye from Sera Mey monastery presents a clarification of the disciples for whom each of the three turnings of the wheel were presented.

1. The **first turning** of the wheel is defined as “that turning designed for students who could understand that the three attributes applied to the emptiness of a *person*, as that is adjusted in a version that lesser capacity students could understand.” Anyone who could grasp the simple understanding of emptiness of persons are disciples of the first turning.
2. The **second turning** of the wheel is defined as “that turning designed for disciples of the greater way who can understand the emptiness of *objects* presented in the second turning of the wheel without hearing the outcome of the exchange presented in the third turning of the wheel.
3. The **third turning** of the wheel is defined as “that turning designed for disciples of the greater way who can’t understand the emptiness of objects presented in the second turning of the wheel until they hear the outcome of the exchange presented in the third turning of the wheel about how constructs don’t exist by definition, and dependent things and emptiness do exist by definition.

So when we say that the third turning of the wheel was designed by students who have entered all three ways, it means that they have grasped both the lower way (*hinayana*) and greater way (*mahayana*).

### What Is Included in the Third Turning of the Wheel?

Only those teachings where Lord Buddha clearly taught about emptiness are defined as the **second turning of the wheel**, in terms of the outcome of the exchange. The third turning of the wheel is defined, in terms of the outcome of the exchange, as those teachings where Lord Buddha makes fine distinctions about whether or not certain things exist by definition; so not everything that Lord Buddha taught in the latter period of his life qualifies as the third turning of the wheel.

འདུལ་བ་མདོར་བསྡུས་རུང་མཐུན་དུ་གྲགས་པ།

DULWA DORDU RUNGTUN DU DRAKPA  
vowed abbreviation acceptable to do Buddha stated  
morality

Lord Buddha stated in the  
*Abbreviation on Vowed  
Morality* what is okay to do.

## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class Six, continued

Just before leaving this planet, Lord Buddha gave a summary presentation of vowed morality. He described those activities that you are required to do, those activities that you are not supposed to do, and those activities that are acceptable to do but are not required. Lord Buddha then said, "Take these principles and apply them to the culture and country in which you live."

Note that the accepted Middle-Way view is that the third turning of the wheel is not literal because Lord Buddha didn't clearly explain emptiness, although he did talk about how certain things exist by definition or not. In class we study and accept the Middle-Way viewpoint, but at work we are instinctively Mind-Only because we think that the angry boss is coming from his own side and is not just a projection of our past karma.

### Three Goals of the Third Turning of the Wheel

Lord Buddha had three goals in mind when he taught the third turning of the wheel.

1. He wanted us to learn to **not take literally** his two blanket statements: that everything exists by definition in the first turning, and that nothing exists by definition in the second turning.
2. He wanted us to **understand the nature of the three attributes**: constructs don't exist by definition but dependent things and emptiness do exist by definition. Note that all schools of Buddhism accept the three attributes, but each school would interpret them differently.
3. He wanted to give us a **really good way of understanding emptiness**, as the fact that a construct about a dependent thing doesn't exist by definition. It is the fact that separate karmic seeds are not producing a person who irritates me and my mind that is irritated. The emptiness of the irritating person is the fact that my mental image of her doesn't exist by definition.

### Buddha Nature

དེ་བཞིན་གཤེགས་པའི་སྣིང་པོ།

DESHIN SHEKPAY NYINGPO  
like that gone thus essence

**Essence of those gone thus, or Buddha nature.**

For the sake of some non-Buddhists, Lord Buddha once taught that people do have a self-nature, and

he called it your Buddha nature. Then in Tibet some people (certain followers of Jonangba) latched onto the belief that all three turnings of the wheel were to be taken literally and that when Lord Buddha said in the first turning of the wheel that you have a Buddha nature he meant that you have a little Buddha inside of you that will be revealed if you just peel

## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class Six, continued

away the covering. This idea is totally wrong and it isn't what Buddha nature means. There is no little buddha inside of you, but you do have a **Buddha nature** and it is **the emptiness of your mind**. Because your mind is empty you have the capacity or potential to become a Buddha. If you collect enough good karma you will be forced to see your mind as totally pure. Aryas and Arhats are not self-existent realized beings; their minds are blank and they have just collected the karma to see themselves as special beings. The emptiness of your mind is the only enlightened thing about you right now. There is no positive thing inside you that is hiding behind a veil. Your nature right now is mentally afflicted and you misperceive everything around you every second of the day; but this state is changeable because your mind is empty. When you become a Buddha, the emptiness of your mind is the *only* thing that you have today that will still be with you. *Tatagata* is the Sanskrit word, which means "ones gone thus," and refers to Buddhas.

### A Clear Definition of the First Turning of the Wheel

འཁོར་ལོ་གསུམ་པོ་གང་རུང་དུ་གྱུར་པའི་ཐོག་དམན་གྱི་མདོ།

KORLO SUMPO GANG RUNG DU GYURPAY TEK MEN GYI DO  
turning of all 3 which belongs to any one lower way of sutra  
the wheel

**A sutra of the lower way that belongs to any one of the three turnings** [historical periods] **of the wheel**. This is the ultimate definition of the first turning of the wheel, offered by Kedrup Tenpa Dargye. We can accept this definition as the best one. "Lower way" refers to a sutra that expresses simplified version of emptiness intended for those of lesser capacity – it doesn't refer to Theraveda practitioners who may have an excellent understanding of emptiness.

The **second turning of the wheel** is then considered to be "any sutra taught for those greater way disciples who could understand emptiness without having to hear the explanations given in the *Sutra on the True Intent*."

And the **third turning of the wheel** is considered to be "any sutra taught for those greater way disciples who needed to hear the explanations given in the *Sutra on the True Intent* in order to understand emptiness correctly." In the third turning Lord Buddha is repackaging emptiness for those who couldn't understand what he meant when he taught the second turning of the wheel.

The beauty of this point is that Kedrup Tenpa Dargye is repackaging the message to suit the particular audience, and as teachers you will have to do this also. Americans have heard ridiculous explanations of emptiness and you will have to retrain them. You have to judge the level of your audience to the best of your ability and suit the message to their capacity. You must immediately link karma and morality to your explanation of emptiness. The relationship between emptiness and your projections forced on you by your morality must be linked in your explanations.

## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class Seven: The Two Extremes

We have finished directly studying the *Sutra on the True Intent*, in which the Buddha explained the meaning of his other sutras, and are now moving on to the commentaries from ancient India written over a thousand years of time in which the great pandits explained the meaning of the sutra.

## འཕགས་པ་ཐོགས་མེད།

PAKPA TOKME  
Arya Asanga

**Arya Asanga.** He went to Maitreya's paradise and was taking dictation from Maitreya to record these books. If your karma was good enough, Maitreya would be sitting in this class and you would just ask if you could copy his notes. The five great books of Maitreya form much of the curriculum of a Tibetan monastery. Two of them are written from the Middle-Way point of view and three of them are written by the Mind-Only point of view. Even the two Middle-Way books use the *Sutra on the True Intent*. Master Asanga has been called the one of the two great innovators who began the Mind-Only School, but it was really Lord Buddha who first taught the Mind-Only School. Arya Asanga re-awakened interest in the *Sutra on the True Intent*, and he reported the views of the Mind-Only School, but actually believed the view of the Middle-Way School. By understanding the Mind-Only School's subtle errors, you will be better equipped to teach others.

DE KONA NYI Arya Asanga describes thusness as being that thing which is free or devoid of two extremes which are false.

## མཐའ།

TA  
edge

**Edge.** It means an extreme in the sense of the edge of a cliff which if you wander too close to it you will fall off. If you get too close to this viewpoint you will fall into hell.

## མཐའ་འཛིན།

TARN DZIN  
extreme to hold

**To hold to an extreme view** – believing in a dangerous wrong view. It's important to see that the extreme idea to which this state of mind holds doesn't even exist. It's like a purple two-headed elephant in this classroom which could never exist. The extreme is a thing that doesn't exist and never could exist but the state of mind that holds to it could exist. All of your suffering comes from believing in something that could never even exist. You're not just misunderstanding something – you're believing in something that never did exist in the first place.

## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class Seven, continued

### The Two Extremes

#### སྒྲོ་འདོགས།

1. DRON DOK      **To concoct things.** This means to see something as being there which never existed at all and never could exist. It means to make up or fabricate something where nothing exists. Literally, *dro* means a feather, like a bird's feather, and *dok* means to apply, so *dron dok* means to attach or apply a feather to a bamboo shoot and make an arrow when there was no arrow previously.

#### བསྐྱར་འདོགས།

2. KURN DEP      **To discount things.** This means to say that something doesn't exist when it really does exist. It's like saying someone really isn't an arya or a bodhisattva when they really are.

### Concocting According to the Middle-Way School

In the Mind-Only School, changing objects exist by definition from their own side – a pen is a pen no matter who is looking at it. According to the Middle-Way, a pen has an identity of being a pen, but it comes from your own projection, which depends on your karma. So to the Middle-Way when you think there is a pen that is coming from its own side and not from your karmic projection, you are concocting (*dron dok*) something that doesn't really exist. Your mental image of the pen which comes from your karma does exist, but the pen that has its own identity from its own side doesn't exist. You are grasping to something that doesn't exist; you are making up something that really isn't there. This is holding a wrong view (*tarn dzin*). Concocting things means to think that your angry boss, taxes, bad weather, your job and your health are coming from their own side. Your mind and thoughts, your body, everything in your environment, and even physical laws like gravity itself come from your projections which are forced on you by your karma.

The concocting state of mind is focused upon the *gakja* – an imagined self-existent thing that never could have existed in the first place.

### Discounting According to the Middle-Way School

Discounting (*kurn dep*) according to the Middle-Way School means to deny the laws of karma and its consequences because you heard that everything is empty and is just a projection so you can do whatever you want – if things are empty then nothing matters and I can do anything bad that I want to and not experience any harmful results.

## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class Seven, continued

### The Two Extremes According to the Middle-Way School

ཡུང་ན་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་གྱིས་གྲུབ་དགོས།

YU NA RANGGI TSENNYI KYI DRUP GU      If something exists, it must exist if self-nature definition by exist it should **exist by definition**, the way it appears to me now. This is concocting something that doesn't really exist – a thing that exists from its own side. When you believe this, you react to bad things with anger or retribution, and by doing so you perpetuate these negative things in your life.

རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་གྱིས་མ་གྲུབ་ན་མེད་དགོས།

RANGGI TSENNYI KYI MA DRUP NA ME GU      If something doesn't exist by self-nature definition by not exist if it shouldn't **definition, then it doesn't exist at all.** This viewpoint mainly applies to the laws of karma, which is the ultimate misunderstanding of emptiness – if it's an illusion it doesn't matter. Actually, because karma and its consequences are an illusion you must obey the laws of karma. It means that your hand is empty and it could become a dog's paw to you in five minutes. Nihilism is a pretty good translation here for discounting things.

The two extremes are sometimes called "things exist" and "things don't exist," which means that they are so by definition. They are also sometimes called "everything is unchanging" (because things come from their own side) and "everything has stopped" (because they don't exist at all).

### The Two Extremes According to the Mind-Only School

The Mind-Only School believes that an object *does* come from its own side with its own unique way of being with its own identity. If you had a mental affliction today you must have held to this belief – you can't call yourself a real Middle-Way person if you had a mental affliction today.

ཀུན་བརྟགས་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་གྱིས་ཡོད་པར་འཛིན་པ།

1. KUNTAK RANGGI TSENNYI KYI YUPAR DZINPA  
constructs self-nature definition by exist holding

**Believing that constructs could have a nature of existing by definition.** Certain constructs do exist, like "this is a pen," or "this pen is blue," or "the fact that Robyn is called Robyn," but these constructs don't exist by definition from their own side. This point would be

## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class Seven, continued

accepted by the Middle-Way School and flirting with it can serve to throw you up into Middle-Way. Thinking that “pen” could exist by definition is concocting something that doesn’t exist. This wrong view is the basis of prejudice and intolerance because you think that your opinion of things is the way that they really do exist. Your ignorant state of mind is the culprit here. This is thinking that the word “bad” applies from its own side to a situation that you are in. By thinking in this way you perpetuate all of your problems. The Middle-Way School would also say that constructs don’t exist by definition, but when they say this, they mean something slightly different.

གཞན་དབང་ཡོངས་གྲུབ་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་མ་གྲུབ་པ།

2. SHENWANG YONGDRUP RANGGI TSENNYI KYI MA DRUPPA  
dependent thing emptiness self-nature definition by don’t exist

**Dependent things and emptiness don’t have a nature of existing by definition.** Because changing things come from a sequence of causes and conditions, they must exist from their own side. Likewise, emptiness is not just a fabrication of your mind; it really exists by definition from its own side. So discounting things means to say that dependent things and emptiness don’t come from their own side. Thinking that my mind and the pen that it sees are coming from different karmic seeds is what ignorance believes.

The Mind-Only School tries to say that because Middle-Way people don’t believe that an object exists by definition, they are saying that it doesn’t exist at all. So they accuse the Middle-Way School of being nihilistic.

### Concocting According to the Mind-Only School

To the Mind-Only School, concocting means to think that mental constructs exist from their own side. The Middle-Way School also says that constructs don’t exist by definition. The reason that you suffer is that you think that constructs do exist by definition all day long. You think that a person or situation is bad from their own side and you react in such a way that you create more of the same kind of problems, and this is the meaning of samsara, or the vicious circle of suffering.

In the Mind-Only School, the pen’s emptiness is the fact that it doesn’t have a god-given right to be called a pen, meaning that the construct that is applied to it doesn’t exist from its own side; it is just an arbitrary way of looking at the pen which comes from your karma.

The Mind-Only School says that the mind of ignorance concocts constructs that it takes to exist by definition. This ignorant state of mind looks at a pen and thinks it should be called “pen” from its own side. It looks at a pen and thinks that pen wasn’t created by the same karma that is making me perceive it as a pen right now. The Middle-Way School agrees with this point, but they don’t say that it is the ultimate meaning of emptiness.



## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class Seven, continued

#### Discounting According to the Mind-Only School

To the Mind-Only School, the extreme of discounting is to think that dependent things and emptiness don't exist by definition. They define dependent things as those things that are at the mercy of other things – if the causes don't show up, the dependent thing can't exist. They try to say that the Middle-Way School believes that nothing exists, because they say that dependent things and emptiness don't exist by definition. The Mind-Only school says, "If you Middle-Way people think that everything is a projection and that the pen doesn't exist from its own side, then what are you projecting onto? What is it that you are calling pen? If there's no pen there, then toward what can you make your projection? You guys must not believe in cause and effect because you think that nothing exists." This is how the Mind-Only School tries to convince Middle-Way people that they are discounting things that actually do exist: dependent things and emptiness which exist by definition. The Middle-Way School would respond, "We never said the pen doesn't exist. We only said that it doesn't exist by definition."

## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class Eight: Important Clarifications of the Mind-Only School

### What It Means to Exist Ultimately

ཅེས་ཚེ་དང་ལྷན་པ

**TSE DANG DENPA** “Oh, venerable sir...” The Mind-Only School sarcastically challenges the Middle-Way School by saying, “Oh venerable sirs, if a dependent thing doesn’t exist by definition, would you please be so kind as to tell me how it *does* exist?” The Middle-Way School responds that it is merely a projection, as a mental construct is merely a projection. The Mind-Only School counters, “Pray tell, if dependent things don’t exist then what are you projecting onto?” Middle-Way School responds, “We didn’t say it didn’t exist; we just said it didn’t exist *by definition*.”

དོན་དམ་མ་དུ་མེད་ཀྱང་། བྱ་ཉན་དུ་ཡོད།

**DUNDAM DU ME KYANG TA-NYE DU YU** Things don’t exist ultimately, ultimately exist doesn’t but... nominally it exists **but they do exist nominally.**

Things don’t exist from their own side, but they *do* exist nominally through your impressions which are imprinted on your mind through your past deeds. When you remove your projection and try to find the object, you don’t find anything. If you don’t think of the cylinder as a pen, there is no pen there. So to the Middle-Way School “ultimately” means “independent of your projections.” The *Diamond Cutter Sutra* says that arhats, who have reached nirvana, haven’t removed their mental afflictions ultimately – but when they focus on their own mind they are forced to see it as having no mental afflictions due to their past good karma. This is the only way you can reach nirvana.

### Ultimate Reality According to the Middle-Way School

The Middle-Way School says that nothing exists ultimately, but that doesn’t mean that ultimate reality doesn’t exist. In fact, ultimate reality is the fact that an object doesn’t exist ultimately, independent of your projections, which is its emptiness. Every existing object has its own ultimate reality.

དོན་དམ་བདེན་པ།

**DUNDAM DENPA** **Ultimate reality.** Ultimate reality is synonymous with emptiness ultimate truth – the fact that nothing has any nature of its own, according to the Middle-Way School.

དོན་དམ་པར། དོན་དམ་དུ།

**DUNDAMPAR** or **DUNDAMDU** To exist **ultimately**. Nothing exists ultimately according to the Middle-Way School. Even ultimate

## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class Eight, continued

reality or emptiness itself doesn't exist ultimately. If emptiness existed ultimately, then you could perceive it independent of your karmic projections, which is not the case.

ཚེས་ཐམས་ཅད་ཀྱི་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ནི་དོན་དམ་བདེན་པ་ཡིན།

CHU TAMCHE KYI NGOWO NYI MEPAN NI DUNDAM DENPA YIN  
existing all of nature of their own don't if ultimate reality it is  
object have

**Ultimate reality is the fact that nothing has any nature of its own.** According to the Middle Way, a pen doesn't have any nature of being a pen from its own side, independent of your karmic projections. When you look closer, it doesn't even have a nature of being a cylinder on its own, and as you look closer and closer you will find that it doesn't have any nature at all from its own side. Everything is just your perception onto a blank screen. When you look for the thing that gets the name you'll never find anything (*ta-nye takpay takdun tselway tse-ne mepay chir*). The immediate implication is that you had better straighten out your karma because everything is empty and therefore everything in your world is just a projection. This world view will lead to a community of enlightened beings living together happily.

### Deceptive Reality According to the Middle-Way School

ཀུན་ཚོ་བ་བདེན་པ།

**KUNDZOB DENPA Deceptive reality.** Deceptive truth, is a poor translation because deceptive reality it is not truth; it is fake, it is a lie, it is deceiving you. It also shouldn't be translated as relative truth. You can call it nominal reality (*tanye du yupa*). "Deceptive" is *samvrti* in Sanskrit. There is a state of mind which is deceived because it thinks that the pen is coming from its own side. Everything that exists in the universe is either ultimate reality or deceptive reality. However, Buddhas don't get faked out by deceptive reality, so a more complete definition is "that reality which deceives a deceived state of mind." It is the reality that fakes out a deceived state of mind. It is the mind that is deceived, not the reality that is deceptive. Deceptive reality only exists with reference to a deceived state of mind. It is the fact that things are not the way that they appear that makes it deceptive.

The implication is that the annoying person at work who seems to a deceived state of mind to be coming from their own side, is actually just your karmic projection. When, based on this deceived state of mind, you react with anger or some other unethical deed, you perpetuate this kind of annoying person. The only way to remove the problems in your life is to remove your projections by changing your karma, not by changing the external things self-existently. For example, if you want your wife to stop lying to you, you have to stop lying to other people. The irony is that the natural reaction to a negative thing in your life is exactly what maintains these negative things.

## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class Eight, continued

If you react with wisdom for long enough you will be forced to see yourself as a tantric deity living in Vajrayogini's paradise. Buddhas know the things they are seeing are illusions in a way, only karmic projections, and they happily maintain them.

Do Buddha's perceive suffering? The standard answer is that they perceive you perceiving suffering, but they don't suffer themselves because they don't have the karma to suffer. They are sweetly sad in a compassionate kind of way that feels good to them.

If you strip away the mental construct of the pen, the dependent thing that exists out there and is not your mental construct is still something that your karma is creating.

### **Deceptive and Ultimate Reality According to the Mind-Only School**

The Mind-Only School would say that mental constructs are deceptive reality, because they are just made up in your mind and don't really exist from their own side; whereas dependent things and emptiness are ultimate reality because they aren't just made up in your mind. **If something exists by definition it is ultimate reality, and if something doesn't exist by definition it is deceptive reality.**

The Mind-Only School challenges middle way through the following debate:

Mind-Only: "What state of mind is it that perceives deceptive reality?"

Middle-Way: "It is a deceived state of mind that perceives deceptive reality and thinks that it exists by definition."

Mind-Only: "Does that deceived state of mind think that the object exists?"

Middle-Way: "Yes."

Mind-Only: "So you are saying that nothing exists, you nasty nihilists! And you would probably say that karma and its consequences don't exist so you don't have to keep your morality."

Middle-Way: "The deceived state is deceived about the object existing by definition, but it is *not* mistaken in thinking that the object exists at all."

### **Four Great Schools of Ancient Indian Buddhism**

1. **Abhidharma** or **Detailist** school. (*vaibhashika*) They follow an ancient book called the *Detailed Explanation*. They are lower way (*hinayana*) because they explain emptiness in a certain way.
2. **Sutrist** (*sautrantika*) school, also called logic and perceptual theory schools. They love to quote certain sutras. They are also *hinayana*.
3. **Mind-Only** (*chittamatra*) or Deep Practice (*yogachara* or *neln'jor chupa*) school. They are greater way (*mahayana*).

## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class Eight, continued

4a. **Middle-Way** (*madhyamika*) **Independent** (*svatantrika* or *rang gyurpa*) school. They believe in a logical approach that has some kind of *independent* effectiveness, which the consequence school doesn't accept.

4b. **Middle-Way Consequence** school. They are called consequence (*prasangika* or *teln-gyur*), or "absurd consequence" because they debate in such a way as to bring opponents to a correct understanding by pointing out the absurd consequences of their wrong views.

The two lower schools, **Detailist** and **Sutrist**, believe that external objects do exist and they are made of atomic particles that cannot be divided in space or time. There are particles that are infinitely small such that they don't have any sides (like a top or a bottom), and there are instances of time that are infinitely short that they can't be divided. In fact, the detailist school believes that these infinitely small particles or instances *are* ultimate reality. This is the stuff that everything in the universe is made of. This is a little bit like the Western scientific world view – if we can understand this kind of reality we can manipulate our world and make ourselves happy.

The **Mind-Only** School believes that external objects don't exist as constructed by atomic particles (which can't possibly exist). They say there is no such thing as a partless atom or indivisible instant of time, so there can't be any external objects that exist as aggregates of these non-existent building blocks. This doesn't mean that they believe that external objects are part of your mind or that everything is mind. They believe that external objects are built of building blocks, but this is not their ultimate nature.

The **Middle-Way Independent** school can be divided into two groups:

1. Those who **lean toward the Sutrists' view** believe that things exist as external objects, but they think that external objects are made of building blocks that are not indivisible – they are just so small that you can't perceive their sides, but they do have sides. This is actually more like an intelligent Western scientific view.
2. Those who **lean towards the Mind-Only School's view** believe that in the final analysis things don't exist as external objects, much as the Mind-Only School says.

The **Middle-Way Consequence** School also believes in external objects, but they mean something totally different than what the two lower schools believe. They simply believe that external objects are those things that exist outside of your mind and body, like a thing that wouldn't cause you pain if you stuck it with a pin. Empty space or emptiness are not included in the category of external objects, because external objects only include physical objects of the senses.

## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class Eight, continued

### Call Them the *Mainly-Mind-School*

The Mind-Only School takes their name from a sutra called the *Sutra of the Tenth Bodhisattva Level (Sa Chupay Do)* which says, “All the three realms are *nothing more than mind*” (*chittamatra* or *sem tsam*). Je Tsongkapa’s incredible explanation of emptiness (*gompa rabdse*) says: This quote doesn’t mean that everything is mind. Who do you think made the golden palaces of Vajrayogini’s paradise, and who do you think made the torture instruments of hell? They are only created by your mind because you hurt other people and collected the bad karma that is now forcing you to see these negative things.

They should have been called Only-Mind-is-the-main-thing school, or the mainly-mind-school, or the Mind-Only-is-the-main-thing-school. When the Only-Mind-is-the-main-thing school called themselves Mind-Only, they meant three things:

1. **Physical causes are not the main causes of things.** Asphalt and steel is not what mainly made New York City. The mind is what mainly made New York City. What mainly create New York City is only-mind or mind alone. The physical causes contribute to its creation.
2. **This world was not created by some kind of creator being.** Only mind is the main maker of this world. The sun coming up and down is a projection of each person’s individual karma from their past deeds. The Mind-Only School does believe that external objects exist, but not in the way that the lower schools believe; it’s just that they mainly come from your perceptions.
3. **Everything is of the same stuff**

གཟུགས་དང་གཟུགས་འཛིན་གྱི་ཚད་མ་རྗེས་གཞན་གྱིས་སྣོང་པ།

SUK DANG SUKDZIN GYI TSEMA DZESHEN GYI TONGPA

Physical matter and the correct perception that grasps onto that physical matter are the same substance. This doesn’t mean that physical matter is actually mental stuff. It means that form and its perception come from the same karmic seed. The middle way agrees with this point but they don’t think that it is the true explanation of emptiness.

## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class Nine: Emptiness According to the Independent Group

Tonight's class covers the Middle-Way Independent's School whose beliefs are the least evident through scriptures alone. It is hard to derive their beliefs only from scriptures. It was mainly Je Tsongkapa who clarified the distinctions between the Middle-Way Independence School and the Middle-Way Consequence School. The reading for this class is from the later textbooks on the Independent's view which is clearer for Westerners than is Je Tsongkapa's *Essence of Eloquence*. The Independence school says that emptiness or selflessness can be divided into three degrees of selflessness which correspond to three correspondingly higher capacity of the practitioners. Only the highest of the three degrees is actual emptiness. The lower two degrees of selflessness are not true emptiness although they are helpful to study because they correspond to views that many people hold. This presentation comes from the monastic studies of the Independent School, *rang gyupa*, and the Perfection of Wisdom scriptures.

### Three Degrees of Selflessness

བདག་མེད་ལྷ་རགས་གསུམ།

DAKME TRA - RAK SUM  
selflessness subtle gross three

**Three degrees of selflessness.** This division is unique to the Independent school.

གང་ཟག་གི་བདག་མེད་ལྷ་མོ།

1. GANGSAK GI DAKME TRAMO  
person of selflessness subtle

**Subtle lack of a self-nature of persons.**

This is the least subtle of the three degrees.

This refers to the selflessness of a whole

person, like that fact that there is no self nature to Michael Roach. It is contrasted to the selflessness of the parts of a person which is presented in the next two degrees.

The gross (obvious or easy to perceive) lack of a self-nature of a person is too coarse of an idea to even include here, but we'll cover it later tonight.

ཚཱ་གྱི་བདག་མེད་རགས་པ།

2. CHU KYI DAKME RAKPA  
person's of selflessness gross parts

**Gross lack of a self-nature of objects.**

Objects means the parts of a person, as opposed to the whole person.

ཚཱ་གྱི་བདག་མེད་ལྷ་མོ།

3. CHU KYI DAKME TRAMO  
person's of selflessness subtle parts

**Subtle lack of a self-nature of objects.**

This is real emptiness according to the Independent school. They may use the term "devoid of..." to describe the lower two degrees of selflessness, but it's not really emptiness.

## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class Nine, continued

### Gross Lack of a Self-Nature of Persons

རྟམ་གཅིག་རང་དབང་ཅན་གྱི་བདག་

**TAK CHIK RANG WANGCHEN GYI DAK**    **An independent self-contained, unchanging one self powered of self unchanging soul.** This gross self-nature of a person doesn't even qualify in Buddhism as something that we need to deny because it is so obviously non-existent. It is like a child's idea of a clear, eternal, unchanging soul that flies away and goes up to heaven when you die. *Tak* means unchanging. *Chik* means one whole compact thing. *Rang wangchen* means totally independent, something that can't be affected by causes and conditions. The fact that this kind of supposed self doesn't exist is called the gross lack of a self-nature of persons. This would be the self that carries around the five heaps, like the soul that contains but is independent from your body and mind. This is a "so-called" self that never existed in the first place. Note that *Dak*, self, doesn't necessarily refer to a sentient being, because it is also applied to the parts of a person (like your hand), as in the lack of a self-nature of objects.

### The Three Tracks

ཐེག་པ་གསུམ།

**TEKPA SUM**    **The three tracks.** You will travel along the five paths (attitudes or tracks    three spiritual stages) of Buddhism on one or more of the three tracks. The study of the flow chart of twenty permutations is called *genden nyishu*.

### The Subtle Lack of a Self-Nature of Persons

ཉན་ཐོས།

**NYENTU**    **Listener,** (skt, *shravaka*; *shru* means to listen). This terms refers to the listener    fact that they can listen to mahayana teachings and report them to other people, but they don't have the ability to practice it, so they're just listening. This happens when people get sweet holy tantric teachings but are not mature enough to practice it. This is sometimes translated as hearers.

ཐེག་དམན།

**TEK MEN**    **Lower way, hinayana** (*hina* even in Hindi means small or inferior). way    lower These people theoretically don't have bodhichitta yet, and they can't perceive real emptiness in the correct way.



## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class Nine, continued

## རང་རྒྱུ་ཐུབ་པའི་རྗེས་ཡིན་དུ་གྲུབ་པ།

**RANG KYA TUPPAY DZEYU DU DRUPPA** To exist as a self-standing substantial thing. This term describes the version of ignorance which sees the subtle self-

nature of a person. It represents the lowest form of selflessness and the easiest to perceive, according to the Independent school. To this group of people, selflessness is the absence of this self-standing substantial thing. *Dzeyu du druppa* means that you are a director, controller, or driver of your body and mind which are supposedly separate from “you.” At some point in your life you will realize that there is no such thing as an independent driver, like the Wizard of Oz directing the show from behind the curtain. So when Listeners perceive this emptiness directly, they directly perceive that there is no independent guy running your body and mind. Then they use this realization to stop their mental afflictions and reach nirvana. Listeners do believe that there is a self that exists – which is the one who is listening to your thoughts.

The highest school in Buddhism, madhyamika prasangika, agrees that these disciples can see emptiness directly and can reach nirvana, but to do so they have to see real emptiness, as defined by the highest school, which in actuality is the only kind of emptiness there is.

### The Gross Lack of a Self-Nature of Objects

## རང་རྒྱུ།

**RANG GYEL** Self-made Buddha. Literally, the name means that they became a Buddha without a teacher, but this is totally impossible. You can't get anywhere in Buddhism without a completely qualified teacher. The text clearly says they didn't have teacher in this life, but in the past they had literally millions of teachers. They also are not full Buddhas, but have achieved a lower nirvana. So a self-made Buddha is someone who has achieved a lower nirvana without a teacher in this life – and all the scriptures say this.

## ཐེག་མཉམ་ལ།

**TEK MEN** Lower way, hinayana.  
way lower

## གཞུགས་དང་གཞུགས་འཛིན་གྱི་ཚད་མ་རྗེས་གཞན་གྱིས་སྣོང་པ།

**SUK DANG SUK NDZIN GYI TSEMA DZE - SHEN GYI TONGPA**  
physical and perceiver of valid substance different of devoid  
matter perception

## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class Nine, continued

Physical matter and the mind that validly perceives it are devoid of coming from a separate substance – these two things don't come from different karmic seeds. This means that the karma that causes the objects and situations in your world, and the karma that causes your perception of those things are the same karmas. The fact that objects and your perception of them don't come from different karmic seeds is a kind of emptiness which is harder to see than the (Listeners') subtle lack of a self nature of persons. When these disciples realize selflessness, they are seeing the *obvious* form of the lack of a self-nature to objects (the parts of a person). According to the Mind-Only School this is the highest form of emptiness.

### The Subtle Lack of a Self-Nature of Objects

གུང་སེམས།

JANG SEM Bodhisattvas.  
enlightenment wish

སྟོང་པ་ཉིད།

TONGPA NYI Emptiness, (skt., *shunyata*). Disciples at this level perceive the subtle lack of a self-nature to *things*.  
emptiness

ཚེས་ཐམས་ཅད་བདེན་པས་སྟོང་པ།

CHU TAMCHE DENPE TONGPA No existing thing in the universe has any  
existing all true devoid **real existence.** This is the actual meaning  
things existence of emptiness according to the Middle-Way  
Independent School.

སྟོ་གཞོན་མིང་ལ་སྐྱང་བའི་དབང་གིས་བཞག་པ་མ་ཡིན་པར་ཡུལ།

LO NU ME LA NANGWAY WANG GI SHAKPA MA YINPAR YUL  
state affected not to appearing power of established not it is object  
of mind as existing

རང་གི་ཐུན་མོང་མ་ཡིན་པའི་བསྟོན་ལུགས་ཀྱི་ངོས་ནས་གྲུབ་པ།

RANG GI TUNMONG MA YINPAY DULUK KYI NGU NE DRUPPA  
its own side its own identity not it is it existed

If there *could* be a thing that *could* exist from its own side through its own unique identity, without being simply established as existing by virtue of its appearing to an unaffected state of mind, that would be something that *truly* existed.

## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class Nine, continued

This is the ultimate thing denied – the *gakja* – in this school. If a pen appears to an undistorted state of mind it can be said to exist. This sentence means that for a pen to exist two things must be present:

1. It has to be appearing from its own side as a pen.
2. I have to be perceiving it as a pen with a clear state of mind.

The metaphor of a magic trick is used to explain this view of emptiness according to the Middle-Way Independent School. A magician sprinkles magic powder on the audience and the stick they saw a minute ago now appears to them as a horse. Then a late-comer who was not charmed by the spell looks on and simply sees a stick.

1. The magician sees a horse but knows it's really a stick. The magician represents a person who has just seen emptiness directly but comes out of that direct perception and sees things as self-existent but knows that he's wrong and that they are really empty.
2. People in the original crowd see a horse and think it's a horse. These people represent someone who hasn't seen emptiness directly yet, who sees things as self-existent and believes things to be self-existent.
3. The late-comer doesn't see a horse and doesn't believe there's a horse. The late-comer represents a person on the eighth bodhisattva bhumi or higher to whom things don't even appear as self-existent due to working on their own mind and their understanding of emptiness.

This Middle-Way Independent School is a beautiful bridge or transition to take you from the Mind-Only School's view – that objects do exist from their own side through their own unique way of being – to the Middle-Way Consequence School (of Arya Nagarjuna, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Khen Rinpoche) who say that there is nothing out there that has any nature of being pen from its own side – it's nothing more than a karmic projection. To the Independent school, objects do exist from their own side, but not uniquely, because to exist they require that your mind thinks of them. Lord Buddha has set up this graded series of explanations of emptiness so people can progress in their understanding up to the highest view which is the real explanation of emptiness held by the Middle-Way Consequence School. They believe that there is a basis of imputation, like the cylinder onto which you project your image of a pen, but the cylinder doesn't have a nature of being a pen. If you don't look any further (*matak machepar*) this is okay, but if you want to discuss the emptiness of the cylinder you will see that there is no cylinder from its own side and it is merely imputed onto the basis of the parts of the cylinder, etc.

Understanding all of these views, most of which are incorrect, will help you to know where your students are coming from and to explain emptiness to them at their level of capacity. Many ideas floating around in America today don't even qualify as being the lowest Buddhist explanation of emptiness – such as “emptiness means that everything is changing and we have to adapt to change.”

## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class Nine, continued

### The Three Scopes and the Three Vehicles

You should understand the difference between three divisions.

#### སྐྱེས་བུ་གསུམ།

**KYEBU SUM**  
people three

**Three scopes.** These are three kinds of people described in Lam Rim.

1. Those who want to stay out of the lower realms, for their own benefit.
2. Those who want to escape suffering and permanently eliminate their mental afflictions, for their own benefit.
3. Those who want to reach total enlightenment, so they can teach other people to do the same.

#### ཐེག་པ་གསུམ།

**TEKPA SUM**  
vehicles three

**Three vehicles.** There are two applications of the term:

1. Three progressively higher degrees of understanding emptiness:
  - a. Listeners, who like the four arya truths.
  - b. Self-made Buddhas, who like the twelve links of the wheel of life.
  - c. Bodhisattvas, who like the perfection of wisdom.
2. Three Ways – which are actually two ways, hinayana and mahayana, with tantrayana being subset of mahayana rather than a separate third way. The word tekpa literally means vehicular capacity as in the amount of weight that a pillar in a building can support, and it refers to whether or not you can carry the load of taking care of many other people as well as yourself.

#### ཐེག་དམན།

a. **TEK MEN**  
way lower

**Lower way, hinayana.** Philosophically, they don't understand emptiness according to Mind-Only or Middle-Way presentations; and motivationally they don't have bodhichitta.

#### ཐེག་ཆེན།

b. **TEK CHEN**  
way greater

**Greater way, mahayana.** Philosophically, they have a Mind-Only or Middle-Way understanding of emptiness and motivationally they have the capacity and desire to take care of an infinite number of sentient beings.

#### དོར་ཇེ་ཐེག་པ།

c. **DORJE TEKPA**  
diamond way

**Diamond way, vadzrayana,** is a secret mahayana practice. It's a common misconception that vadzrayana is a separate way from mahayana. The definitions of these two are:

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Nine, continued

ཕར་ཕྱིན་གྱི་ཐེག་པ་ཆེན་པོ།

PAR CHIN GYI TEKPA CHENPO  
six perfections of way greater

The mahayana of the six perfections. This is the code name given to the open teachings. It is only a code name because tantra also totally requires practice of the six perfections

གསང་སྔགས་གྱི་ཐེག་པ་ཆེན་པོ།

SANG NGAK KYI TEKPA CHENPO  
secret words of way greater

Mahayana teachings of the secret words, or mantra. This is tantra.

## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class Ten: The Ultimate Viewpoint

### A Review of the Three Degrees of Selflessness

According to the Middle-Way Independent School, emptiness is the lack of existing truly, which would mean that things could exist from their own side through their own unique identity, without requiring that they appear a certain way to an unaffected mind. The Mind-Only School would say that some things do exist uniquely from their own side. To the Independent group this kind of absence is emptiness: the subtle lack of a self-nature of things.

According to the Mind-Only School, selflessness is the lack of my perceptions and the things they are perceiving coming from different karmic seeds. The Independent Schools calls this the gross lack of a self-nature of things, and says that this lack is a kind of dependent origination rather than real emptiness.

According to the two lower schools, it is the fact that people are devoid of having a nature of being self-supporting or self-standing and of having a substantial existence.

The gross lack of a self-nature of persons is an even coarser view that hardly any Buddhist school would accept as being what selflessness is. This is the lack of a self that could be unchanging, unitary or whole, and independent.

### Five Flavors of Substantial vs. Constructed Reality

This material technically goes with class nine, and the reading for class nine is from Changya Rinpa Dorje who lived about three hundred years ago. He wrote an incredible long book that compared all the different systems of philosophy. He presents five different flavor of what it means for something to be substantial versus to be constructed. The Changya lineage served as teachers to the emperors of China, and Pabongka Rinpoche was actually in the Changya lineage.

ཇེས་ཡིད།

DZE YU  
substance it is

**Substantial.**

བཏགས་ཡིད།

TAK YU  
nominal it is

**Constructed, nominal, not substantial or natural.**

## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class Ten, continued

ཡོད་པ།      མེད་པ།

1. YUPA vs. MEPA      **Existing versus non-existing things.** A thing that exists, like a pen, is substantial; and a thing that doesn't exist; for example, a mental image such as a flower that grows in mid-air is just imaginary. The self-nature of persons and the self-nature of objects also doesn't exist and therefore is merely constructed, for example a friend that gets you angry from their side. The irony of our suffering is that it comes from things that don't exist in the first place like a person who is nasty from their own side.

དངོས་པོ།      དངོས་མེད།

2. NGUPO vs. NGUME      **Functioning thing versus non-functioning existing thing.** functioning existing thing that A thing that functions or can do something, which is a thing doesn't function synonym for a changing thing, is considered by some to be a substantial thing. In the Sutrists School they distinguish between *chi-tsen* which refers to "a pen, this pen, the pen," and *rang-tsen* which refers to "pen" as a concept, idealization, or archetype, which is considered to be an unchanging thing that doesn't function. The concept pen isn't something that can run out of ink. *Ngume* means an existing thing that doesn't function, so it doesn't include non-existent objects which are not functioning things (such as empty space and permanent cessations).

བརྟན་པ་མི་འགྱུར་བ།      མི་རྟག་པ།

3. TENPA MIN GYURWA vs. MITAKPA      **Stable unchanging versus changing.** stable not altering changing Mitakpa doesn't mean "impermanent" because the emptiness of the pen is unchanging, but it is not permanent because it will go out of existence. This distinction is almost the same as number two above, because a changing thing is always a functioning thing and an unchanging thing never performs a function.

རང་རྒྱུ་བཅུ་བ།      ལྷན་མིན་འདུ་བྱེད།

4. RANG KYA TUPPA vs. DEN - MIN DUJE      **Self-standing versus other factors.** self-standing physical, not factor mental Self-standing refers to mental and physical things which are substantial. Changing factors (*duje*) refers to changing things which are neither physical nor mental, such as Marie, the changing person which is neither Marie's body nor mind. It doesn't refer to the conceptualization Marie, which would be an unchanging thing.

## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class Ten, continued



#### 5. WANG GYURWAPO vs. not that

For example, to think of an American Guy, you first have to perceive the guy's physical composite parts, and then form the image American Guy. This would be a thing which is constructed, or not substantial. A substantial thing would be, for example, colors which can be perceived without first perceiving the parts of the object; it doesn't require any conceptualization to be perceived.

The text by Changya Rinpa Dorje says that *wang gyurwapo* is what they really mean when they say self-standing vs. other factors (which is division number four above). He says the *real* meaning of substantial (*dzeyu*) is that the thing can stand on its own; which means that to perceive it you don't have to first perceive other composite parts of it the object. Conversely, a merely constructed thing (*takyu*) is a thing which, in order to perceive it, you must first perceive its composite parts.

### The Middle-Way Independent School's Definition of Substantial

When Middle-Way Independent School says, "no substantial person exists," and that this is the gross lack of a self-nature of person. They have an entirely different meaning of being non-substantial.

KE GYUR Translator.  
Tibetan changer

WANG GYURWAPO vs. not power to be empowered      **The person who directs things**, the person in charge. This refers to the driver, the one who controls your body and mind, which is something that doesn't exist.

### A Review of the Different Flavors of Selflessness

1. **Not called itself by definition.** This is emptiness according to the Mind-Only School.
2. **Subject and object don't come from the same karmic seed.** The lack of a person whose mind could be coming from a separate karmic seed from everything that mind is perceiving. This is real emptiness according to the Mind-Only School, but not according to the Middle-Way Independent School.
3. **No unchanging little ball of self.** The lack of an eternal, unchanging, solitary whole self, like your soul that exists after you die. This is the obvious selflessness of a person, according to the Middle-Way Independent School.
4. **No substantial self-standing self (driver).** The lack of a director who is independent of your body and mind who is driving them around. This is the subtle lack of a self to people, according to the Middle-Way Independent School.



## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class Ten, continued

5. **Same as number 2 above.** This is the gross lack of a self to things, according to the Middle-Way Independent School.
6. **Doesn't exist from its own side without unaffected mind.** The lack of a self-nature of a pen that has its own unique identity from its own side independent of your perceptions of it as being a pen. For example, to see the horse, the stick has to be appearing as a horse and your mind must be under that spell. Unaffected state of mind means unaffected by temporary causes of error like drugs, alcohol, strong emotions or perceptual trick. It doesn't mean unaffected by the ignorance that sees things as self-existent.

According to the Mind-Only School, a tree does fall in the forest even if no one is there to hear it. According to the Middle-Way Independent School, the tree has to fall from its own side, and you have to perceive it. According to the Middle-Way Consequence School, there were some decibels and you turned it into the sound of the tree falling; but when you focus on the decibels they are also just a projection. To exist substantially is the thing we deny in the highest school.

ཐལ་འགྲུར་བ།

TELN GYURWA

**Sarcastic Absurdity.** This is the name for the **Middle-Way Consequence School**. The name comes from their belief that by responding to people's wrong beliefs with a sarcastic rejoinder, you can help them to realize the true nature of emptiness. This is the only literally true viewpoint of emptiness. It is the literal belief of Lord Buddha, Arya Nagarjuna, Master Chandrakirti, Je Tsongkapa, all the Dalai Lamas, and Khen Rinpoche – and it is the view that tantric practice is based upon. If you want to reach a tantric deity's body and mind in this lifetime, this viewpoint is very compelling, and you can prove it to yourself logically.

### The Water Analysis

ལྷུ་འབབ།

CHU BAP  
water to fall

**Waterfall.** This comes from a section of Master Chandrakirti's text on Arya Nagarjuna's Root Wisdom. It explains that if a craving spirit sees some running water, when they go up to it for a drink, it turns into disgusting puss and blood and their thirst is unquenched. Because they have been stingy in past lives, their karma forces them to see the liquid as puss and blood. If you picture three beings from three different realms sitting around a table – a human, a craving spirit, and a deity – and someone brings them a glass of liquid. One being sees water, and this is what makes them a human. The craving spirit sees blood and puss in this same glass. The third being, the deity, sees in this glass the nectar of immortality. Each being is seeing the liquid validly because it functions quite well as water, pus, and nectar to the three beings, respectively.

## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class Ten, continued

The metaphor of the pen comes from this Middle-Way Consequence School's water analysis. This is the correct understanding of emptiness, and when you actually see emptiness directly this is what you are perceiving. There actually are no degrees of emptiness. There are different objects which each have their own emptiness, but everything has exactly the same emptiness and everything is one hundred percent empty.

The fact that everything exists only the way that you see it doesn't mean that everything functions in an equally desirable or useful way. If you look at the world as full of creepy people that are out to get you, your world will function like this. You can also validly create a world of people who are trying to help you all the time, even if they seem to be trying to hurt you, and this is much more useful, gives you better karma, and can actually lead you to enlightenment. The whole point of Buddhism is to escape pain and constantly see things in a positive light. If someone followed a perfect moral code for non-Buddhist reasons such as to please an almighty god, they probably would not be able to sustain it. Really understanding how things work gives you the ability to sustain your behavior until the end. You must have the *prasangika* viewpoint to reach tantric enlightenment. If you are purposely acting purely because you understand how the process works, it gives you the extra energy to keep your morality in a way that no one else would be able to.

Just like a car engine, there are some philosophical and religious attitudes that really don't work in the end. You must have all of the critical concepts of a correct world view to reach your goals. Spiritual mechanisms work just like a car engine in this sense. There are many sweet and interesting paths that are useful and beautiful but won't get you to the final goal. Compassion and wisdom are they keys. From the tantric point of view, the sutrist path is so slow that you can almost say that it doesn't work. To get out of the wheel of suffering life you *must* see emptiness directly. There is no other way.

### Dependent Origination in the Middle-Way Consequence School

ཏོཀཔེ་པར་ཏཀ་ཏམ་

TOKPE    PAR    TAK    TSAM  
by your    from your    merely    labeled  
projections    side

**All things exist as merely labeled from your side by your projections.** This is the real meaning of dependent origination. If you don't look too closely there is a cylinder out there, nominally speaking, and your karma is forcing you to project a pen from your side.

The fact that things are just projections doesn't mean that you can do anything you want without any implications. Your karma is forcing you to project certain things based on your past actions, and therefore you must act ethically. Both your karma and the emptiness of the objects in your world have their own emptiness and are only projections. Living an ethical way of life is critical *because* everything is empty.

## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class Ten, continued

The Middle-Way Consequence School's presentation of emptiness is especially important in your own search for enlightenment because the lower schools' viewpoints are not really emptiness. If these explanations of emptiness are true, and things have the least bit of existence from their own side then we are stuck with our aging bodies and minds and we are in trouble. The *prasangika* view of emptiness is the only one that could ever work. You can't change something if it is coming from its own side. By living an extraordinarily ethical way of life we can actually put an end to the processes of aging and death, become a tantric angel, and enter a tantric paradise in this very life.

**The *Heart Sutra* says that the real goal of Buddhism is to stop our aging and death by eliminating our ignorance.** American Buddhism has somehow left out this most important point. In order to see someone who has achieved this goal, you have to have collected the karma to be very close to it yourself. If all the dogs in the world swore that there were no pens in the world, would that be good evidence that they are right?

### Je Tsongkapa's Final Word on Interpreting Lord Buddha's Speech

LU DRUP    LUK    SANG    TSOWOR    MIN    DZIN    SU  
Naga-Arjuna   beautiful   system   very best   not considered   who?

**Who on earth would not consider the beautiful system of Arya Nagarjuna to be the very best?**

At the end of his *Essence of Eloquence on the Art of Interpretation*, Je Tsongkapa makes this comment to clarify his actual view of Lord Buddha's teachings. He says that all of the other lower schools are very useful and beautiful, but only the system of Master Nagarjuna tells the whole story perfectly. The way things exist is as a projection forced on you by past karma, and if you want to get to heaven, you just have to clean up your karma. Therefore, you must study and keep your vows. The only way to do this in practice is to stop every hour or two and check your vows very consistently. You have to keep your vows with your family, friends and co-workers. This is how you get enlightened, because everything is a projection. It's the little things that make the difference.

## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class Eleven: Class Review

When you look for the thing that got the label, like the cylinder that gets the label “pen,” you’ll never find anything. There is no pen there independent of the label “pen.” There is no such thing as the pen that existed before you thought of the cylinder as a pen. This is Je Tsongkapa’s explanation of the real nature of things which is held by the highest school of Buddhism.

Emptiness consists of the fact that certain non-existent constructs (that could exist by definition or that could be coming from a separate karmic seed) don’t apply to dependent things. The emptiness (*yongdrup*) of the pen (*shenwang*) is the fact that two kinds of wrong ideas (*kuntak*) don’t apply to it:

1. The pen could be the thing named “pen” by definition.
2. The forces that brought this pen into this room for me to look at, and the forces that are causing me to be standing here with an eye and eye consciousness looking at the pen, are totally unrelated.

Neither one of these ideas is correct.

According to the Mind-Only School, there were Greater-Way students listening to the second turning of the wheel who were very sharp and for whom the teaching that nothing exists by definition was intended, meaning for those Mind-Only students who realized that when Lord Buddha said that nothing exists by definition it really means that constructs don’t exist by definition but dependent things and emptiness do exist by definition. Saying that the third turning was intended for students who “have entered all the ways” refers to people of the greater who would have necessarily have already grasped the presentation of emptiness according to the lower way.

According to the Middle-Way School emptiness is ultimately reality, but nothing exists from its own side, meaning that nothing exists independent of your projections which are forced upon you by your past karma. Deceptive reality is the kind of reality where a deceived state of mind sees things as self-existent, but they are really empty. Any time you have a mental affliction toward anything you are having this deceived state of mind. According to the Mind-Only School, dependent things and constructs are deceptive reality and totality is ultimate reality; but dependent things do exist ultimately in this school because they exist by definition from their own side.

To the Middle-Way School, external objects are objects that are not subsumed by your consciousness, meaning that if you poke a pen with a pin you don’t say “ouch.” The Mind-Only School, and others who tend to agree with them, believe that nothing exists as an external object in the way that the lower schools believe – that external objects are composed of atomic particles and instances of time that have no sides or are indivisible. However, the Mind-Only School does believe in external objects if they are described as things that are coming from the same karmic seed as your perceptions of them. The Middle-Way Consequence School and those in the Middle-Way Independent School who lean toward the Sutrist School disagree with the Mind-Only School because you don’t have to believe in partless atoms in order to believe that there are external objects out there.

## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class Eleven, continued

According to the Mind-Only School the pen as an object and the valid perception which is the subject which perceives the pen come from the same karmic seed, because there are no coincidences. There is no such thing as “an encounter,” like the pen is coming from the pen factory to the store and to this school, and then you come to this school for class, and you and the pen bump into each other. Both the pen and you as perceiver are growing and being sustained from the same karmic seed, and emptiness is the fact that no other view is true.

The Mind-Only School does believe in external objects and doesn't believe that the pen is coming only from your mind. They are called Mind-Only because the *Sutra of the Tenth Bodhisattva Level (sa chupey do)* says “these three realms of existence are mind only,” meaning that the mind is the main thing regarding the creation of your reality. Je Tsongkapa explains this in his *gomba rabdzel* as meaning that your world is not coming from some creator god; it is mainly coming from your mind.

The Mind-Only School says that *things exist from their own side with some unique identity of their own*. This statement mainly refers to the fact that because the pen exists as a dependent object that is produced by causes that exist externally, then the external object that they produce must also exist out there and not merely as a nominal thing. If the pen is something that you are only projecting with your mental constructs, then you don't need a pen factory and petroleum to have a pen, which is not the case according to the Mind-Only School. External causes are producing the pen.

In contrast, according to the Middle-Way School, your karma is producing your mental perception of a pen which is the real cause of the pen. Therefore, the way to change your reality is to change your morality and create better karmic projections. Ultimately, your financial success comes from whether or not you were generous in the past rather than from the quality of your proposal. Things are not created by external causes. The only thing that creates a successful grant is that you gave things away in the past; if the dog ate the proposal and you don't get the grant, the reason is that you were not generous in the past. Aspirin doesn't take away your headache because of some chemical composition in the aspirin. So why should you ever take aspirin if the only thing that can remove a headache is the creation of good karma in the past – such as working to relieve others' pain? You have to work on this question. Some people call the good karma the *cause* and the aspirin is the *factor* or cooperative condition, and believe that fifty percent of your world comes from your karma and fifty percent comes from external conditions. This is wrong view because it would mean that the aspirin has some kind of independent power from its own side to cure your headache. The karma to be able to afford a good doctor is very similar to the karma to be cured of a disease – but that doesn't mean that the doctor is what's curing you because people in the care of good doctors often die. If you take aspirin and your headache goes away, it would have gone away without the aspirin, but that doesn't mean that you shouldn't take aspirin.

## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class Eleven, continued

The Buddha said that if you give away your money you will get rich and if you keep your morality you will be happy. However, the relationship between creating good karma and the pleasurable results that follow is not self-existent. The laws of good karma themselves are empty and are merely projections. When you see the fact that good deeds cause pleasure and bad deeds cause pain is still a projection, but the invariance of the consistency between causes and results doesn't mean that it's not just a projection, due to the nature of perception. It's true that fruit trees grow from their seeds *and* that they don't grow from self-existent causes, because the causes are also just projections, even when they are always required to produce a tree. But if you go down to hell, there are trees with knives for leaves that cut you badly, and these trees didn't grow from seeds or water.

The Middle Way Independent School are called *svatantrika* or "independent" because they believe that certain kinds of reasons have an independent existence, or certain reasons are independently effective for arguing emptiness. They believe in three degrees of selfless, but only the last one is considered to be real emptiness.

It is a Dharma rumor to say that there are three *tekpa's, yana's* or ways: hinayana, mahayana and vajrayana. There are really only two ways: hinyana and mahayana, and mahayana includes *open* mahayana (the way of the perfections) and *secret* mahayana (the way of the diamond, or the way of the secret word -- tantra).

The Mind-Only School says that one hundred percent of the object is coming from its own side. The Middle-Way Independents School says, in a sense, that about fifty percent of the object is coming from its own side and the other fifty percent is coming from my mind; the object has to be appearing and your unaffected, undistorted mind has to perceive it.

According to the Middle-Way Consequence School, *madhyamika prasangika*, there is no pen coming from the objects side. There is a cylinder there that is suggesting pen but there is no pen-ness out there. All of the pen-ness is imposed on the cylinder by your perceptions which are forced upon you by your past karma. If the pen had *any* small existence from its own side, then you are stuck here and won't be able to get enlightened because you won't be able to perceive your arm as Manjushri's arm and you won't be able to perceive your mind as an enlightened mind. If even one percent of the pen comes from its own side you can't become a Buddha.

If your Buddha nature existed from its own side then the thing covering it would also have to exist from its own side, and it could never be removed. If an object were changed because of externally self-existent causes then you could do it. In kids class we call it the difference between the *how* and the *why*. If you die in a car crash the *how* may be your head going through a windshield, but the *why* is that you hurt somebody in the past. *How* describes the circumstances that seem to be causing the thing. But the *how* is just an expression of the *why*. If windshields are what really kills people we are in trouble. What really kills people is their karma.

## CLASS NOTES

### Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Class Eleven, continued

So where does the *cylinder* come from? When you examine the existence of the pen, you talk about the cylinder as if it were there from its own side – you leave it as if it existed *a priori* from the beginning. Then when you examine the cylinder, you see that it is a projection onto the parts of the cylinder. You can keep going down into lower levels endlessly and never find anything. You must always point out the implication of this emptiness in terms of karma. Things *do* exist as projections, and they are determined by your level of goodness and how well you keep your vows. Time itself is also just a projection according to the Middle-Way Consequence School. They see time as a concept which is a changing thing. Empty space is an unchanging thing but the concept “empty space” is a changing thing.

Your projections are forced upon you by your past karma, and that is why the fact that things are empty means that you must be moral if you want to be happy. You must practice the six perfections and you must track your vows six times a day. It’s a good sign if you start laughing when some teacher stands up and says that because things are empty you can engage in any kind of monkey business that you want to. *Because* things are empty you must keep your vows and you must practice the highest kinds of practices there are. The Middle-Way Consequence viewpoint is the only way to get enlightened. Whether or not you ever wake up and get to view your mind as being totally pure is also just a projection. People who have just reached nirvana are projecting a mind-state that is totally pure and has no more mental afflictions. Their virtue is forcing upon them an experience of their own thoughts as being totally pure. To hear your mind be this way is also just a projection and can only come from keeping your vows.

**The *Heart Sutra* says that the real goal of Buddhism is to stop the process of aging and death, through stopping our ignorance (*marikpa sepa mepa ne gashi me, gashi sepay pardu yang me do*). This is a literal statement.**



Course XV  
What the Buddha Really Meant

*Answer Key, Class One*

1) Give the title of the primary text we will be reading for our study of the art of interpretation; name its author, and give his dates. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

**Our study will be based on the *Essence of Eloquence, on the Art of Interpretation*, written by Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419).**

དྲང་ཇེས་ལེགས་བཤད་སྣིང་པོ།

*drange lekshe nyingpo*

ཇེ་ཙོང་ཁ་པ།

*je tsongkapa*

2) Our text compares and contrasts the beliefs of two of the great schools of classical Indian Buddhism—the Mind-Only School and the Middle-Way School—about what Lord Buddha really meant, and how to determine what Lord Buddha really meant, when he turned the wheel of the Dharma. Name the important source that each school uses to make their presentation, and the author of each. (Tibetan track name source, and also each school, in Tibetan.)

**a) Mind-Only School:**

**The Mind-Only School makes their presentation based on the *Commentary on the True Intent of the Sutras (Samdhinirmochana Sutra)*, an explanation by Lord Buddha of his own teachings. More specifically, they rely on the *Chapter Requested by the Bodhisattva Paramarta Samudgata* which is the seventh of the work's ten chapters.**

མདོ་སྡེ་དགོངས་འགྲེལ།

*dode gongdrel*



གུང་སེམས་དོན་དམ་ཡང་དག་འཕགས་ལྷ་པའི་ལེན།

*jangsem dundam yangdak pak shupay leu*

**b) Middle-Way School:**

**The Middle-Way School makes their presentation based on the Sutra Taught at the Request of the Realized Being named "Never-Ending Wisdom"**

འཕགས་པ་སློབ་གྲོས་མི་ཟད་པས་ལྷ་པའི་མདོ།

*pakpa lodru misepe shupay do*

3) Nowadays some people say that a knowledge of emptiness is not the main point of Buddhism, while others say that emptiness is something known only intuitively, and not from a foundation of determined, organized study. Describe a quotation by Lord Buddha himself that disproves these ideas.

**Je Tsongkapa himself gives a quotation from the Sutra Requested by the Realized Being Rashtrapala which says that "beings must wander here" in suffering life "because they have no knowledge of the ways of emptiness," and that "those with compassion" (meaning the Buddhas and others) "use skillful means and millions of different reasonings to bring them into it."**

4) Why do we have to learn to distinguish between the literal and figurative; why do we have to learn to interpret what the Buddha said, in order to find out what he really meant?

**This is primarily to learn the true meaning of emptiness, which was described in the three different turnings of the wheel of the Dharma in apparently contradictory terms by Lord Buddha himself.**

5) Describe three different levels of the terms "literal" and "figurative."

**a) On the level of expression: do the words a person speaks and their intended meaning match each other (literal), or not (figurative)?**

**b) On the level of reality: does the way which an object appears to be and the way the object is match each other (literal), or not (figurative)?**

**c) On the level of understanding: do we understand the two realities with an accurate state of perception (*tsad-ma* or *pramana*) that sees what they are (literal), or do we understand them with only an approximate understanding (*yid-dpyod*) that only has a rough understanding of what they are (figurative)?**

6) Je Tsongkapa points out that—if what the Buddha said must be divided into what he said that was figurative and what he said that was literal—then the Buddha's own statements about when he was being figurative and when he was being literal cannot necessarily be taken literally. Rather, we must in the end rely on what is logical and makes sense to us. Describe the three logical tests recommended by Lord Buddha, and state the source for them.

**Lord Buddha advises us to accept his words only after we've finished a careful examination of them, testing them like gold—in the fire, by cutting, and by using a touchstone. These three tests refer, respectively, to checking whether the particular statement or belief in question contradicts our own direct, accurate experience; our own deductive, accurate perceptions; or the words of a being whom we have established correctly as being infallible.**

7) If many of the beliefs of schools like the Mind-Only are actually wrong, then why is it so important for us to study them carefully?

**Lord Buddha taught the various schools of ancient India for the very reason that their beliefs were helpful in bringing people of various capacities and personalities further along the Buddhist path. Many beliefs of the Mind-Only school, although technically incorrect, nonetheless function to help get us thinking clearly about emptiness, and the idea of the world and its inhabitants being a projection of our minds.**

8) How can the principle of "figurative and literal" be useful to us in our daily lives?

**We can come to a better understanding that—if the Buddha himself spoke figuratively when it was helpful to students to do so—then we must be very careful in judging the people around us, who could well be special beings who are trying to bring us and others further along in our thinking.**



Course XV  
What the Buddha Really Meant

*Answer Key, Class Two*

1) In his answer to the bodhisattva in the *Commentary on the True Intent of the Sutras*, Lord Buddha states that he was referring to three different lacks of things when he said that no existing object at all had any nature of its own. Name these three. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

**a) A lack of any definitive nature**

མཚན་ཉིད་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ།

*tsennyi ngowo nyi mepa*

**b) A lack of any nature of growing**

སྐྱེ་བ་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ།

*kyewa ngowo nyi mepa*

**c) A lack of any nature of being ultimate**

དོན་དམ་པ་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ།

*dundampa ngowo nyi mepa*

2) Name the famous three attributes which form the cornerstone of the beliefs of the Mind-Only School, and which relate to the three different lacks of things mentioned in question one. After naming them, describe them briefly. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

- a) **Constructs.** The creations of words or mental images through which we perceive the world; these creations can correspond to existing or to non-existing things.

གཏུན་བརྟན་གསལ།

*kuntak*

- b) **Dependent things.** Changing things, which come from causes and conditions.

གཞན་དབང་།

*shenwang*

- c) **Totality, meaning emptiness.** The lack of self-existence (a particular non-existing form of constructs) that applies to all objects, especially to dependent things.

ཡོངས་གྲུབ།

*yongdrup*

3) Constructs are said to "lack any definitive nature." Explain what it means in the Mind-Only School when we say this; and then contrast it to what we mean in the Middle-Way School when we say this.

- a) **Mind-Only School:** A thing lacks any definitive nature when it is only a construct of "names and terms" (words and mental pictures); when it does not exist from its own side through some unique nature of its own. Of all the things taken in by the three attributes, the fact that things lack any definitive nature only applies to constructs; those in dependent things and totality do exist by definition.

- b) **Middle-Way School:** An object lacks any definitive nature when you look for it independent of its mental label or name and cannot find anything. No object in the universe has any definitive nature.

4) Explain, for each of these three attributes, *why* it is that they can be described as the corresponding lack of a self-nature. (Don't forget to keep on your Mind-Only School hat!)

- a) **Constructs don't have any definitive nature because they are only constructs of names and terms (words and mental pictures); they do not exist from their own side through some unique nature of their own.**
- b) **Dependent things don't have any nature of growing because they never grow by themselves, but rather by virtue of other factors.**
- c) **Totality is the lack that both dependent things and totality itself has of being ultimate. Dependent things are not the thing perceived by the direct perception of emptiness, and so are not an unchanging ultimate. Totality is the precise lack of an ultimate in the sense of a self-nature, a lack of what emptiness denies. Constructs also lack a nature of being ultimate but are not delved into much here since few people who understood them as imaginary would mistake them for ultimate.**

5) Describe briefly Je Tsongkapa's refutation of the idea of the Jonangpa school of Tibet that changeless totality, or emptiness, is a self-standing, positive object.

**He says it is a complete contradiction to say (1) that the wording of the sutra (the *Commentary on the True Intent*) is to be taken completely literally (Lord Buddha says in several ways that emptiness is a simple absence of something that does not exist), and at the same time say (2) emptiness is not the simple exclusion of what we deny when we speak of "no-self."**

6) Give finally an illustration for each of these three lacks of a self-nature, or attributes. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

- a) **Constructs are like a flower that grows in mid-air. (Not that it doesn't exist by the way, only that it is only imaginary or an object in the mind.)**

ཀུན་བརྟགས་ནམ་མཁའི་མེ་ཏོག་དང་འདྲ།

*kuntak namkay metok dang dra*

- b) Dependent things are like a magic show; it doesn't appear to us that a pot and our perception of the pot are "of the same substance" in the sense of growing from the same karmic seed, but they are, so there is the sense of an illusion.

གཞན་དབང་སྐྱེ་མ་དང་འདྲ།  
*shenwang gyuma dang dra*

- c) Totality is like empty space, a simple lack of physical matter, in the sense of being the simple lack of a non-existent self-nature.

ཡོངས་གྲུབ་ནམ་མཁའ་དང་འདྲ།  
*yongdrup namka dang dra*



Course XV  
What the Buddha Really Meant

*Answer Key, Class Three*

1) The second time he turned the wheel of the Dharma, Lord Buddha characterized all existing objects in five apparently very extreme ways. We have finished discussing the first; list here the latter four. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

**a) Nothing that exists ever grows**

མ་སྐྱེས་པ།  
*ma kyepa*

**b) Nothing that exists ever stops**

མ་འགགས་པ།  
*ma gakpa*

**c) All existing things are extinct, and have been so from the very beginning**

གཞོན་མ་ནས་ཞི་བ།  
*suma ne shiwa*

**d) All existing things have, by their very nature, gone completely beyond the state of grief**

རང་བཞིན་གྱིས་ཡོངས་སུ་སྤངས་ལས་འདས་པ།  
*rang shin gyi yong su nya-ngen le depa*

2) Why is it we can say that constructs neither grow nor stop?

**They do not exist by definition, and so they can neither grow nor stop, since growing and stopping are events that must exist by definition in order to happen at all; conversely, if something does grow or stop, it must do so by definition (in the Mind-Only School).**

3) Why are constructs themselves free of the mentally-afflicted side of things?

**Constructs are "extinct" or free—from the beginning—of the mentally-afflicted side of things, and also in a state beyond all grief (or involvement with mentally-afflicted things) because they are unproduced things.**

4) Why, according to the sutra, can we say that totality neither grows nor stops?

**Because it is "an unproduced thing that continues in the time of changeless changelessness, and in the time of unshaking unshakability"; meaning it neither changes in the time back to the beginning, nor in the time up to the end, of it.**

5) Why does the sutra called *Commentary on the True Intent* explain the latter four characterizations only with regard to the first and last of the three lacks of a self-nature, and not with regard to the middle one? (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

**Dependent things do exhibit growing and stopping, and they do so by definition. And the vast majority of dependent things are taken in by the mentally-afflicted side of things, so they could not be referred to as "extinct" or free of this mentally-afflicted side of things, nor also "beyond" the "grief" that it represents.**

གཞན་དབང་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་གྱིས་སྐྱེ་འགག

*shenwang ranggi tsennyi kyi kye gak*

གཞན་དབང་ཕལ་ཆེར་ཀུན་ཉོན་གྱིས་བསྐྱུས།

*shenwang pelcher kunnyon gyi du*



6) If we do take the latter four characterizations as applying to dependent things as well, then how must we interpret them? (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

**We have to take the "growing" and "stopping" to refer to "by definition," but *in the specific sense of* growing and stopping without the appropriate causes and conditions. We can then interpret being "extinct" or "beyond grief" as beyond the state of existing without these causes and conditions.**

རང་གི་རྒྱ་རྒྱུན་མེད་ནས་མ་སྐྱེ་བ་དང་མ་འགག་པ།  
*ranggi gyukyen mene makyewa dang magakpa*



Course XV  
What the Buddha Really Meant

*Answer Key, Class Four*

1) The sutra called the *Commentary on the True Intent* next turns to the question of how we identify the three attributes. It helps us understand the attribute of constructs by showing how they relate to dependent things. List the three ways in which the sutra says that constructs relate to dependent things. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

- a) **Dependent things are the "arena" in which the constructing state of mind acts. They are the thing you are thinking of with a construct such as "this is a stick."**

ནམ་བར་རྟོག་པའི་སྐྱོད་ཡུལ།  
*nampar tokpay chuyul*

- b) **Dependent things are the object towards which the attribute of constructs is applied; they are what you apply your words or thoughts towards. They are what receives the labels.**

ཀུན་བརྟགས་པའི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱི་གནས།  
*kuntakpay tsennyi kyi ne*

- c) **Dependent things display the typical features of a factor, or a changing thing**

འདུ་བྱེད་ཀྱི་མཚན་མ།  
*duje kyi tsenma*

2) In explanations of the process of making constructs that follow from the sutra references just mentioned, a distinction is made between the dependent thing that is the object of the constructing state of mind; the constructing state of mind itself; and the construct that "lies between" them. Explain these three as they occur in the example of the boy named Tashi.

**A man and his wife have a baby boy. About a day later, the father chooses the name "Tashi" for the boy. "Tashi the boy" is a construct that lies between the object it is applied to (the boy that was born) and the constructing state of mind (the father thinking of the boy as "Tashi" and naming him "Tashi").**

3) In the illustration of the boy named "Tashi," what is the indication that (according to the Mind-Only School) the construct does not exist by definition?

**If the idea or construct of "the boy named Tashi" existed by definition, he would exist from his own side through his own unique way of being. This means then that, even before the constructing state of mind (his father's decision to name him "Tashi") did its thing a day later, everyone would have said "Oh! Tashi is born!" the minute the boy-child came out of the womb; but in fact they cannot do so until they start thinking of him as Tashi, later.**

4) The sutra goes on to use the three expressions "arena in which the constructing state of mind acts" and so on as a basis for describing dependent things and totality (or emptiness) as well as constructs. In other words, these three expressions are being used to get at the real meaning of the three attributes in the Mind-Only School; and more especially how they relate to each other. Describe this interrelation of the three attributes.

**The function of these three expressions at this point in the sutra is to explain how the three attributes help define each other. We create in our minds certain constructs about, for example, a boy named Tashi. Some of these constructs are true; for example, "Tashi is a boy." Some of the constructs are false; for example, "The fact that Tashi is called 'Tashi' is something that exists naturally, by definition." In either case, the constructs are applied towards a dependent thing: the boy that came out of his mother's womb. The fact that the false constructs are not true of the dependent thing—the fact that the dependent thing or boy is free or empty of any such quality—is the totality or emptiness of Tashi. The true constructs are helpful in establishing what Tashi *is*, as opposed to what he is not.**

5) The text states that this principle of establishing the three attributes with different objects applies to a whole list of different objects. Name some of them. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

The principle is said to apply to all the different subject matter of the first turning of the wheel of the Dharma: to the five heaps; the twelve doors of sense; the twelve links of dependent origination; the four types of sustenance; the six elements; and the eighteen categories.

ཕུང་པོ་ལྔ་།

*pungpo nga*

སྐྱེ་མཆིད་བཅུ་གཉིས་།

*kyeche chunyi*

ཉིན་འབྲེལ་ཡན་ལའག་བཅུ་གཉིས་།

*tendrel yenlak chunyi*

ཟས་བཞི་།

*se shi*

ཁམས་དྲུག་།

*kam druk*

ཁམས་བཅོ་བརྒྱད་།

*kam chopgye*

6) Describe two ways in which something could be "empty" or "devoid" of something; then state which of these two ways is more relevant here when we say that totality (or emptiness) is "empty" of certain constructs. (Tibetan track also give two different Tibetan verbs that help illustrate the difference.)

The distinction is between the *absence* of something in another place (the fact that there is no chair in a certain room) and the *fact that something is not* another thing (the fact that a checkered rope is not a snake). Here the latter is more the sense: dependent things are not the self-existent things that our constructs impute them to be. The Tibetan verb for the first concept is *mepa* (the opposite of "to exist" or *yupa*.) and the Tibetan verb for the second concept is *minpa* (the opposite of "to be something" or *yinpa*).

མེད་པ།	ཡོད་པ།
<i>mepa</i>	<i>yupa</i>
མིན་པ།	ཡིན་པ།
<i>minpa</i>	<i>yinpa</i>

7) Constructs can be applied either to the essence of an object or to some feature of an object. Give an example of each of these for the first of the four arya truths. (Tibetan track also name this principle in Tibetan.)

When you are applying a construct simply to the essence of the first of the four arya truths you are saying about it simply, "truth of suffering." Then you are applying a construct to the main feature of this truth when you say, "The truth of suffering is something that a person should realize is happening to them."

ངོ་བོ་ལ་ཀུན་བཏགས་པའི་ཀུན་བརྟགས།  
*ngowo la kuntakpay kuntak*

བྱུང་པར་ལ་ཀུན་བཏགས་པའི་ཀུན་བརྟགས།  
*kyapar la kuntakpay kuntak*



Course XV

What the Buddha Really Meant

*Answer Key, Class Five*

1) What does the expression "the outcome of the exchange" refer to? (Tibetan track also give the Tibetan for this expression.)

The "outcome of the exchange" refers to the "profit" or "conclusion" that the bodhisattva Parmarta Samudgata gains from his verbal exchange with Lord Buddha, asking him what he meant when he seemed to contradict himself especially during the second turning of the wheel. The outcome is that the bodhisattva comes to understand that Lord Buddha was being figurative during the first and second turnings of the wheel, and literal during the third.

གྲུབ་དོན།

*drupdun*

2) Name the three famous turnings of the wheel of the Dharma, the three great convocations, and state (a) when they were primarily taught; (b) where they were primarily taught; (c) for whom they were primarily taught; (d) their basic subject matter; and (e) what, from the point of view of the "outcome of the exchange," their view was on whether things have their own nature or not. (Tibetan track all in Tibetan!)

**(1) First turning of the wheel of the Dharma—**

**Period:** Primarily during the early part of Lord Buddha's teaching.

**Name:** The Turning of the Wheel on the Four Truths

བདེན་བཞིའི་ཚུལ་འཁོར།

*denshiy chunkor*

**Place:** Sarnath, near Varanasi

འཕྲ་རྒྱ་སི

*varanasi*

**Disciples: Those of the lower way**

ཉན་ཐོས་ཐེག་པ།

*nyentu tekpa*

**Basic subject matter: The four realized truths**

འཕགས་པའི་བདེན་པ་བཞི།

*pakpay denpa shi*

**View: Every existing thing exists by definition**

ཚོས་རྣམས་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པ།

*chunam ranggi tsennyi kyi druppa*

**(2) Second turning of the wheel of the Dharma—**

**Period: Primarily during the middle part of Lord Buddha's teaching.**

**Name: The Turning of the Wheel on How Nothing Exists  
by Definition**

མཚན་ཉིད་མེད་པའི་ཚོས་འཁོར།

*tsennyi mepay chunkor*

**Place: Vulture's Peak, in Rajagirha**

བྱ་ཚོད་ཡུང་པོའི་རི།

*jagu pungpoy ri*

**Disciples: Those of the greater way**

ཐེག་ཆེན།

*tekchen*

**Basic subject matter: Emptiness**

སྟོང་པ་ཉིད།

*tongpa nyi*

**View: No existing thing exists by definition**

ཚོས་རྣམས་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་མ་གྲུབ་པ།

*chunam ranggi tsennyi kyi ma druppa*

**(3) Third turning of the wheel of the Dharma—**

**Period: Primarily during the latter part of Lord Buddha's teaching.**

**Name: The Turning of the Wheel on Fine Distinctions**

ལེགས་སྤྱིའི་ཚོས་འཁོར།

*lekchey chunkor*

**Place: Vaishali**

ཡངས་པ་ཅན།

*yangpachen*

**Disciples: Those of all ways**

སྟོན་པ་ཐམས་ཅད།

*tekpa tamche*

**Basic subject matter: The three attributes**

མཚན་ཉིད་གསུམ།

*tsennyi sum*



**View: Some things exist by definition, and some do not, and we must make fine distinctions between them**

ཚོས་རྣམས་ལ་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་གྲིས་གྲུབ་མ་གྲུབ་ལེགས་པར་བྱེ།

*chu nam la ranggi tsennyi kyi drup madrup lekpar che*

3) According to the Mind-Only School, which of these three turnings of the wheel (also called "groups of sutra") were spoken literally, and which are figurative, or something we must interpret further? According to the Middle-Way School, which are to be taken on face value, and which are not? Why so, in each case?

a) **Mind-Only School: The first two are figurative, and the last one literal, because it is neither true that all things exist by definition, nor that nothing exists by definition; some are one and some are the other, and the only literal teaching is the one (the third turning of the wheel) where Lord Buddha made these distinctions.**

b) **Middle-Way School: The first and the last are not to be taken on face value, but the middle one is, because it is true that nothing exists by definition (as stated in the middle one), and not true that everything exists by definition (as stated in the first) or that some things do and some things do not exist by definition (as stated in the last). But remember that, in this school, "literal" means any teaching in which Lord Buddha referred clearly to emptiness; and "figurative" means any teaching in which he did not.**

4) Give, in English, the four expressions that the bodhisattva Paramarta Samudgata uses to express the fact that (according to the Mind-Only School) the first two turnings of the wheel are figurative.

**He says that they have something higher; that they leave an opening; that they have to be interpreted further; and that they can serve as a basis for contention.**

5) What, in the context of the *Commentary on the True Intent*, is the real criterion that decides whether a person belongs to the "lower way" (Hinayana) or the "higher way" (Mahayana)?

**The question is whether or not their views on emptiness belong to the lower two ancient schools of India (the Abhidharma or Higher-Knowledge School and the Sutrists or logic and perceptual-theory school) or the higher two schools (Mind-Only and Middle-Way).**

6) Name and explain the image that is being referred to in the expression "wheel of the Dharma"? (Tibetan track name in Tibetan and explain in English.)

The Dharma is being compared to the Precious Wheel of the Wheel-Empowered King or Chakravartin. In commentaries to the mandala offering, this wheel is described as some 2,000 miles in diameter; it is like a spaceship that can travel half a million miles a day, and carries the King and his four armed forces to the four continents, thus giving him power to rule. Just so, the spiritual realizations we get when we are taught the Dharma—especially the path of seeing or direct realization of emptiness—allow us to conquer new spiritual territory quickly and effectively. The parts of the wheel are also compared to the eight-fold path of realized beings.

འཁོར་ལོས་བསྐྱར་བའི་རྒྱལ་པོའི་འཁོར་ལོ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།  
*korlu gyurway gyalpoy korlo rinpoche*

7) Name the two classical types of "wheels of the Dharma." (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

The "wheel of the Dharma that is teachings" refers to physical teachings, whether verbal or written. The "wheel of the Dharma that is realizations" refers to the spiritual realizations we gain from learning the Dharma, especially the direct perception of emptiness during the path of seeing.

ལྷུང་གི་ཚོས་འཁོར།  
*lunggi chunkor*

ཏོགས་པའི་ཚོས་འཁོར།  
*tokpay chunkor*

8) What does it mean to "turn" the wheel of the Dharma?

Lord Buddha or any other holy teacher speaks the wheel of the Dharma which is teachings, and thereby triggers in the disciple the wheel of the Dharma which is realizations, and this continues from generation to generation.



Course XV

What the Buddha Really Meant

*Answer Key, Class Six*

1) When we refer to the first turning of the wheel as something which is either figurative or literal, are we speaking about any teaching that Lord Buddha gave during the initial period of his teaching career? Give an example to explain why or why not. (Tibetan track answer in English and give the example in Tibetan.)

**We are not talking about any teaching that Lord Buddha gave during the initial period of his teaching career, because there are teachings that he gave during this time that we do not have to examine as to their true meaning. An example would be his advice to the Group of Five at Varanasi urging them to "be sure to wear your lower robes in a neat circle."**

ལྷ་སྡེ་ལ་ཤམ་ཐབས་ལྷུ་མ་པོར་བགོ་བར་བྱའོ། །ཞེས།

*nga dela shamtab lumpor gowar jao, shey*

2) When we speak of the final turning of the wheel as being "literal," are we talking about anything that was taught during the final period of Lord Buddha's teaching career? Give an example to explain why or why not. (Tibetan track answer in English and give the example in Tibetan.)

**Again we are not, because not everything taught during the final period of Lord Buddha's teaching addressed the fine distinctions between what exists by definition and what does not. An example would be the teaching Lord Buddha gave, just before entering his final nirvana, on appropriate monastic behavior, entitled the *Summary of Vowed Morality*.**

འདུལ་བ་མདོར་བསྡུས་རུང་མཐུན་དུ་གྲགས་པ།

*dulwa dordurung tundu drakpa*

3) Name three goals that the *Commentary on the True Intent* has in mind for us when it takes the trouble to divide the three turnings of the wheel into the categories of figurative or literal.

- a) **The sutra wants to prevent us from taking on face value the blanket statements that either all things exist by definition, or no things exist by definition.**
- b) **The sutra wants us to learn that constructs do not exist by definition, but that dependent things and totality do exist by definition.**
- c) **The sutra wants to provide us with an effective way of understanding emptiness, by using the three attributes: the fact that dependent things lack certain non-existent types of constructs is the emptiness or totality of things.**

4) Je Tsongkapa takes pains to disprove the idea of some Tibetan thinkers that all three turnings of the wheel were meant literally. These thinkers would even say that Lord Buddha was speaking literally when he said (actually in order to attract some non-Buddhist groups) that things do have some kind of self-nature. What object do they say that Lord Buddha was referring to, and how is this object sometimes misinterpreted? (Tibetan track name the object in Tibetan and explain the misinterpretation in English.)

**These thinkers believe that Lord Buddha was referring to the "essence of the Ones who have Gone That Way," or the Buddha nature that each being possesses. This is actually primarily the emptiness of our minds, which provides the potential for us to see our minds one day as enlightened. This nature or potential is frequently misinterpreted as referring to some Buddha within us that somehow already exists, and which we must simply reveal. From here it is easy to go on to the error of believing that we do have some self-existent self-nature.**

དེ་བཞིན་གཤམ་པའི་སྣང་པོ།

*deshin shekpay nyingpo*

5) What is the position of the sutra called the *King of Mystic Words* on the actual order of the three turnings of the wheel? (Tibetan track name the sutra and give the order in Tibetan.)

Proceeding from the idea that the three turnings of the wheel must each be higher than the preceding, the system of this sutra is to order the three as (1) the turning of the wheel where Lord Buddha taught the four realized truths; (2) the turning of the wheel where Lord Buddha made fine distinctions between what does and does not exist by definition; and (3) the turning of the wheel in which Lord Buddha taught that nothing exists by definition.

གཟུངས་རྒྱལ་གྱི་མདོ།

*sunggyel gyi do*

བདེན་བཞིའི་ཚེས་འཁོར།

*denshiy chunkor*

ལེགས་པར་བྱེ་བའི་ཚེས་འཁོར།

*lekpar cheway chunkor*

མཚན་ཉིད་མེད་པའི་ཚེས་འཁོར།

*tsennyi mepay chunkor*

6) Is there a difference between the "final period of the teaching" and "final turning of the wheel"?

**Yes:** the "final turning of the wheel" is defined primarily by subject matter, and not by period.

7) After deciding that other more extensive definitions may be problematic, the great textbook writer of Sera Mey Tibetan Monastery, Kedrup Tenpa Dargye (1493-1568), gives a very revealing general definition of the first turning of the wheel of the Dharma. Write it here. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

**He gives the definition as, "A sutra of the lower way, whichever of the three turnings of the wheel it belongs to." We must interpret "three turnings" in the definition as referring to the three historical turnings; and "lower way" as referring to "for those who can only understand selflessness in a more simple interpretation."**

འཁོར་ལོ་གསུམ་པོ་གང་རུང་དུ་གྱུར་བའི་ཐེག་དམན་གྱི་མདོ།

*korlo sumpo gang rung du gyurpay tekmen gyi do*

8) How does Kedrup Tenpa Dargye then distinguish between the disciples for whom the second wheel was turned, and the disciples for whom the third was turned?

**He does so on the basis of whether or not they need to re-interpret the meaning of selflessness, as taught in the second turning of the wheel, through relying on works such as the "Chapter Requested by the Bodhisattva Paramarta Samudgata."**

9) The main sutra of the Mind-Only School, called the *Commentary on the True Intent*, says that the specific disciples for whom the third turning of the wheel was taught are "those who have entered, perfectly, every one of the different ways." This seems to imply that it was taught for students of both the higher and lower ways, which would seem like a contradiction; how does Kedrup Tenpa Dargye clarify this point for us?

**He divides the three intended audiences as follows:**

- a) Those who can only grasp the system of the three attributes with regard to the lack of a self-nature to persons, as presented in the first turning of the wheel;
- b) Those who can grasp the system of the three attributes with regard to the lack of a self-nature to objects as presented in the second turning of the wheel, without requiring any re-interpretation such as that given in the "Chapter Requested by the Bodhisattva Paramarta Samudgata"; and

- c) Those who can grasp the system of the three attributes with regard to the lack of a self-nature to objects as presented in the second turning of the wheel, but only if they rely on a re-interpretation such as that given in the "Chapter Requested by the Bodhisattva Paramarta Samudgata." Since those in this category *can* understand the content of the second wheel with help, then by implication they can also obviously understand the content of the third wheel; and have in this sense entered then both the higher and the lower ways.



Course XV

What the Buddha Really Meant

*Answer Key, Class Seven*

1) Who was the innovator who revived the Mind-Only School system in this world; what book did he base this work on; how do we know that this was the book?

**The great innovator of the Mind-Only School was Master Asanga; he used the *Commentary on the True Intent*; and we know this because of at least five references to the work in his *Compendium*, as well as in the *Levels of the Bodhisattva* and his other works.**

2) This innovator sets forth the meaning of thusness largely through a description of the two extremes, and how to avoid them. Name the two states of mind that hold to these two extremes. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

**a) The act of "concocting things," which means holding that something exists or has a particular quality when in fact it does not at all.**

སྒྲོ་འདོགས།

*dron dok*

**b) The act of "discounting things," meaning holding that something which really does exist or really does have a particular quality does not at all.**

བསྐྱར་འདོགས།

*kurndep*



- 3) Describe the difference between an extreme and the view which holds to the extreme. (Tibetan track also give the Tibetan name for "extreme.")

**Technically speaking, an "extreme" represents the thing which either concocting things or discounting things is grasping on to—and therefore does not exist at all. In the Mind-Only School, for example, the two non-existent extremes would be represented by a construct that existed by definition, or a dependent thing that did not exist by definition. The view which holds to the extreme would believe in either or both of these.**

མཐའ།

*ta*

- 4) Describe the specific idea which, according to the Mind-Only School, is held by the view of "concocting" something. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

**It is believing that a construct (such as the fact that the boy Tashi is what the name "Tashi" refers to) could exist by definition—from its own side, through its own unique identity.**

ཀུན་བརྟགས་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་ཡོད་པར་འཇོན་པ།

*kuntak ranggi tsennyi kyi yupar dzinpa*

- 5) How, according to the Mind-Only School, would you help someone get over the extreme view of concocting something?

**You would demonstrate to them how any object you could choose to take at all is devoid of constructs that existed ultimately.**

- 6) According to the Mind-Only School, what causes the extreme of concocting things?

**It is, to put it briefly, the tendency to hold things as having a self-nature: ignorance.**

7) Describe the idea which, according to the Mind-Only School, is held by the view of "discounting" something. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

**It is believing that a dependent thing, or totality, could ever fail to exist by definition.**

གཞན་དབང་ཡོངས་གྲུབ་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་མ་གྲུབ་པ།

*shenwang yongdrup ranggi tsennyi kyi madruppa*

8) How, according to the Mind-Only School, would you help someone get over the extreme view of discounting something?

**Demonstrate to them that, if dependent things for example did not exist by definition, then they could not exist at all; and if they did not exist at all, then there would be nothing to apply constructs to, and no constructs either.**

9) Who, according to the Mind-Only School, is guilty of the extreme of discounting things?

**They say it is the Middle-Way School, who claim that nothing exists by definition, and who are thereby effectively denying the existence of dependent things and totality.**

10) Describe, in a brief sentence, the Middle-Way idea about these two extreme views. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

**Concocting something is to say that—if something exists—it must exist by definition; and if something did not exist by definition, then it could not exist at all.**

ཡོད་ན་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་དགོས།

*yu na ranggi tsennyi drup gu*

རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་མ་གྲུབ་ན་མིད་དགོས།

*ranggi tsennyi kyi madrup na me gu*



Course XV  
What the Buddha Really Meant

*Answer Key, Class Eight*

1) What, according to the Middle-Way School, is "the ultimate" (also called "ultimate truth" or "ultimate reality")? (Tibetan track answer in Tibetan.)

**They say that "the ultimate" or "ultimate truth" refers to emptiness, which is described as the fact that no existing object has a self-nature.**

ཚཱ་མ་ཐམ་ཅད་ཀྱི་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ནི་དོན་དམ་བདེན་པ་ཡིན།

*chu tamche kyi ngowonyi mepa ni dundam denpa yin*

2) Is there a difference, in the Middle-Way School, between something being "the ultimate" and something existing "ultimately"? Why or why not? (Tibetan track use Tibetan to answer.)

**When they say something is "the ultimate," they mean that it exists "as ultimate reality or truth." When they say that something exists "ultimately," they mean that it exists from its own side, or by definition: which means that it cannot exist at all.**

དོན་དམ་བདེན་པར་ཡོད་པ།

*dundam denpar yupa*

དོན་དམ་པར་ཡོད་པ།

*dundampar yupa*

3) How does the Middle-Way School describe deceptive reality? (Tibetan track name in Tibetan and describe in English.)

**They say that deceptive reality is that reality which deceives a certain state of mind (which is itself called "the deceived"). This reality is called "deceptive" because it seems to be one way (self-existent) but is really something else (a projection forced on us by our karma).**

ཀུན་རྫོབ་བདེན་པ།

*kundzob denpa*

ཀུན་རྫོབ།

*kundzob*

4) Now how does the Mind-Only School draw the difference between "ultimate reality" and "deceptive reality"?

**They say that anything which exists by definition (meaning dependent things and totality) is an example of ultimate reality. They say that anything that doesn't exist by definition (meaning constructs) is an example of deceptive reality.**

5) Explain how the Consequence part of the Middle-Way School describes what it means to "exist as an external object."

**They say that physical objects which are not subsumed within our being (such as trees and outside sounds) exist as external objects; things like our arms are not external objects, because they are physical things subsumed within our being.**

6) Explain how the lower two schools—the Higher-Knowledge (Abhidharma) School and the Sutrists School—describe what it means to "exist as an external object."

**They say that something exists as an external object if it is something which consists of tiny, partless particles: physical particles with no sides. They extend "partless" to mean something which can not be divided any further mentally, and something which is indivisible in terms of time—something of inconceivably small duration.**

7) The followers of the lower half of the Middle-Way School (the "Independent" or Svatantrika group) may be divided into two philosophical camps. Name them. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

**They may be divided into those who are, in certain of their beliefs, closer to the Sutrists School (these are the Sutrists-Leaning Independents) or closer to the Mind-Only School (also called the Deep-Practice School) (these are the Practice-Leaning Independents).**

མདོ་ལྗེ་སྟོན་པ་དབུ་མ་རང་རྒྱུད་པ།

*dode chupa uma rang-gyupa*

རྣལ་འབྱོར་སྟོན་པའི་དབུ་མ་རང་རྒྱུད་པ།

*nelnkor chupay uma rang-gyupa*

8) One of these camps describes in yet a different way what it means to "exist as an external object." Name them, and state their belief.

**The Sutrists-Leaning Independents say that something exists as an external object if it is something which consists of tiny physical particles with no identifiable or perceptible sides.**

9) This question has two separate parts. (a) What do the members of the Mind-Only School (and those of the Independent part of the Middle-Way School who lean towards them on points such as these) have in mind when they say that "nothing exists as an external object"? (b) What do the Consequence group and the Independents who lean the other way have in mind when they say that they are wrong?

**a) All they are saying is that things don't exist as external objects in the way that the lower two schools describe an external object. They are *not* saying that there are not objects which are external to our being.**

**b) These two schools say that when we speak of external objects existing or not we don't have to address the idea of "external" as it is presented in the two lower schools.**

10) What does the Mind-Only School mean when they say that the valid perception which is the subject that perceives a physical object, and the physical object which it perceives, are "of the same substance"? (Tibetan track also give the Tibetan for this concept.)

**They do *not* mean that the physical object is made of the same stuff as the mind; rather, they mean that the subject and the object have grown from a single karmic seed.**

གཟུགས་དང་གཟུགས་འཛིན་གྱི་ཚད་མ་རྫས་གཞན་གྱིས་སྣོང་བ།

*suk dang sukdzin gyi tsema dzeshen gyi tongpa*

11) Explain where the name of the Mind-Only School comes from.

**Je Tsongkapa explains this point in his *Illumination of the True Thought*. He first quotes the *Sutra of the Tenth Level*, which says that "these three realms of existence are mind only." He goes on to explain that the real meaning of "mind only" here is that "the mind is the main thing" that creates the world, and not something physical, or some creator god. He says that the expression "mind only" is therefore only an abbreviation for the expression "mind alone is the main thing." The way that the mind creates the world is by causing us to collect karma; the point is not that we just make up the world with our mind.**



Course XV  
What the Buddha Really Meant

*Answer Key, Class Nine*

1) Now that we have examined how the Mind-Only School thinks that Lord Buddha taught emptiness, we turn to what the Independent group in the Middle-Way School thinks—which hinges on an idea of multiple levels of selflessness. Name this concept in general, and list its three parts. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

**They stress the idea of three degrees of selflessness: the subtle lack of a self to persons; the gross lack of a self to things; and the subtle lack of a self to things, this last being real "emptiness."**

བདག་མེད་ལྷ་རགས་གསུམ།

*dakme trarak sum*

གང་ཟག་གི་བདག་མེད་ལྷ་མོ།

*kangsak gi dakme tramo*

ཚོས་ཀྱི་བདག་མེད་རགས་པ།

*chu kyi dakme rakpa*

ཚོས་ཀྱི་བདག་མེད་ལྷ་མོ།

*chu kyi dakme tramo*

སྟོང་ཉིད།

*tongnyi*

2) Name the even grosser idea of the self of a person which relates to this Independent-group concept. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

**A self or person which is an unchanging, independent whole; this can be described as what is denied when we speak of the gross lack of a self.**

རྟོག་གཅིག་རང་དབང་ཅན་གྱི་བདག་

*takchik rangwangchen gyi dak*

3) Name the kinds of practitioners on the first track; state the "vehicle" or way they belong to; and name the type of "self" that they come to realize does not exist. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

**Those of the "Listener" track, who belong to the lower vehicle or way come to see that there exists no self-nature of a person where the person is a self-standing, substantial thing. This, according to the Independent group, describes the non-existent object whose emptiness is the subtle lack of a self-nature to the person, which is the first of the three degrees of selflessness mentioned above.**

ཉན་ཐོས་།

*nyentu*

ཐོག་དམན་།

*tekmen*

རང་རྒྱ་ཐུབ་པའི་རྗེས་ཡོད་དུ་གྲུབ་པ།

*rang kyapay dzeyu du druppa*



4) Name the kinds of practitioners on the second track; state the "vehicle" or way they belong to; and name the type of "self" that they come to realize does not exist. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

Those of the "Self-Made Buddha" track, who also belong to the lower vehicle or way, come to see that there exists no self-nature of things wherein a valid perception of a physical object and the physical object which the perception holds are empty of any separate substance (meaning, that they do come from the same karmic seed.) This is the second degree of selflessness: the gross lack of a self to things. This kind of "being empty" by the way is not "real" emptiness according to the Independents; and "Self-Made Buddhas" of course means those who can reach a lower nirvana in this life without depending on a spiritual guide, but only because they have had many thousands of teachers in their past lives.

རང་རྒྱལ།

*rang-gyel*

ཐེག་དམན།

*tekmen*

སུ་དང་སུ་དཔེ་གི་ཚད་མ་རྫས་བཞུགས་གྱིས་སྣོད་པ།

*suk dang suk dzin gyi tsema dze shen gyi tongpa*

5) Name the kinds of practitioners on the third track; state the "vehicle" or way they belong to; and name the type of "self" that they come to realize does not exist. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

**Those of the Bodhisattva track, who belong to the higher vehicle or way, come to see real emptiness or the fact that every existing object is empty of any true existence. This is the third degree of selflessness: the subtle lack of a self to things.**

གུང་སེམས།

*jangsem*

སྣོང་པ་ཉིད།

*tongpanyi*

ཚེས་ཐམས་ཅད་བདེན་པས་སྣོང་པ།

*chu tamche denpe tongpa*

6) In the Independent group of the Middle-Way School, what does it mean to say that a thing "exists truly"? (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

**In this school, an object exists truly when it exists from its own side through some unique identity of its own, rather than simply being established as existing by having appeared to an unaffected state of mind. Objects like this don't exist, and this is the ultimate meaning of "emptiness."**

སྣོ་གཞོན་མིད་ལ་སྣང་བའི་དབང་གིས་བཞག་པ་མ་ཡིན་པར་ཡུལ་རང་གི་སྣོན་

མོང་མ་ཡིན་པའི་བསྣོད་ལུགས་ཀྱི་ངོས་ནས་གྲུབ་པ།

*lo nume la nangway wang gi shakpa mayinpar yul rang gi tunmong ma yinpay du luk kyi ngu ne druppa*

7) The word "substantial" (as opposed to "constructed") in the great books of Buddhism has five distinct meanings. Name and describe each one briefly. (Tibetan track also give the Tibetan for "substantial" and "constructed.")

- a) **"Substantial" in the sense of actually existing: any actually existing object, as opposed to the non-existent "self-natures" that the two tendencies of holding to a self-nature think exist.**
- b) **"Substantial" in the sense of doing something: functional things (an actual Chevrolet car), as opposed to general, unchanging identities of things (the idea "car").**
- c) **"Substantial" in the sense of being stable and unchanging: unproduced empty space, as opposed to changing things.**
- d) **"Substantial" in the sense of being self-standing: the physical things that a state of mind perceives and the state of mind that perceives them, as opposed to concepts or constructs. This ultimately refers to things that can come into our mind without first having to think of their parts and synthesizing them (say, colors like red, or our awareness of red), as opposed to things that can only come into our mind if we first think of their parts and synthesize them (say, something like the idea of "an American person," which can only come into our mind if we first think of his head, arms, legs, etc).**
- e) **"Substantial" in the sense of being the kind of self-standing we deny when we speak of no "self-standing self": a person who is independent of the five heaps or parts of the person, and who directs or controls them.**

The Tibetan for "substantial" is *dzeyu*; and for "constructed" is *takyu*.

རྗེས་ཡོད།

*dzeyu*

བརྗེས་ཡོད།

*takyu*

8) It's easy to confuse the idea of "persons of three scopes" in the teachings on the steps of the path to enlightenment (*lam-rim*) with the idea of people on the three tracks mentioned above. Describe the difference between the two. (Tibetan track give the name for each in Tibetan, and then describe the difference in English.)

"Persons of the three scopes" in the teachings on the steps of the path to enlightenment refers to a persons spiritual capacity or motivation, and includes: (1) people who want to avoid the three lower realms, only for their own sakes; (2) people who want to avoid all three realms of the circle of suffering life, and reach their own nirvana only; and (3) people who want to avoid the three lower realms and avoid all three realms and reach total enlightenment, so they can help all beings reach this same enlightenment. "People on the three tracks" refers to a persons ability to understand emptiness, and includes: (1) those on the Listener track, who hope to reach the nirvana of this track and who (according to the Independents) can see only up to the subtle lack of a self-nature to the person; (2) those of the Self-Made Buddha track, who hope to reach the nirvana of this track and who can see only up to the gross lack of a self-nature to things; and (3) those of the Bodhisattva or Mahayana track, who hope to reach total enlightenment for the sake of all beings, and who can see real emptiness. Je Tsongkapa notes, in the *Great Book on the Steps to Enlightenment (Lamrim Chenmo)* that those on the first two tracks are both people of the second or medium scope.

ལྷོས་བུ་གསུམ།

*kyebu sum*

ཐེག་པ་གསུམ།

*tekpa sum*

9) It's also easy to confuse the three tracks with the three different ways mentioned in scripture, especially since the Tibetan for both is the same. State the difference. (Tibetan track name and clarify the three ways in Tibetan.)

The "three tracks" refers to the Listener, Self-Made Buddha, and Bodhisattva (or Mahayana) tracks mentioned above. The "three ways" mentioned are the Lower Way, the Higher Way, and the Diamond Way (also called "Way of the Secret Word"); although technically the Diamond Way is just a part of the Higher Way, which is more correctly divided into the "Perfection Part of the Higher Way" and the "Diamond Part of the Higher Way"

ཐེག་དམན།

*tekmen*

ཐེག་ཆེན།

*tekchen*

དོར་ཇེ་ཐེག་པ།

*dorje tekpa*

གསང་སྤྲུགས་ཀྱི་ཐེག་པ།

*sangngak kyi tekpa*

ཕར་ཕྱིན་གྱི་ཐེག་པ་ཆེན་པོ།

*parchin gyi tekpa chenpo*

གསང་སྤྲུགས་ཀྱི་ཐེག་པ་ཆེན་པོ།

*sangngak kyi tekpa chenpo*



Course XV  
What the Buddha Really Meant

*Answer Key, Class Ten*

1) When three different types of being look at the same object, they see three different objects. Are each of them having a valid perception, or not?

**They are all having a valid perception, given their karmic circumstances.**

2) The *Abbreviation of the Greater Way* says that "each being, according to their class, has differing perceptions of a single thing," and that therefore "we can say that these things have no reality." Does this mean then that we should never consider anything one way or the other? Why or why not?

**As the text of the *Overview of the Middle Way* points out, we cannot draw this conclusion. This is because, for example, certain systems of spiritual teaching do give definite results, whereas others do not.**

3) The Mind-Only School has asserted that there are things that can exist from their own side, through some unique identity of their own. The Independent part of the Middle-Way School has asserted that the perception of things depends on their appearing from their own side to a state of mind which, from its side, is unerring. How does the Consequence part of the Middle-Way School assert that things exist? (Tibetan track answer in Tibetan.)

**They say that things exist only as projections, from our side**

རྫོག་པས་པར་བཏགས་ཅོམ།

*tokpe par taktsam*

4) What does Je Tsongkapa say his own position in this regard is? (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

**At the end of his text on the art of interpretation, he openly declares that he follows the teaching of the Consequence group of the Middle-Way School: "Who on earth who understood these things would fail to take the system of the realized being Nagarjuna as their own?"**

ལཱ་ལྷུབ་ལུགས་བཟང་གཙོ་བོར་མི་འཛིན་སུ།

*ludrup luksang tsowor mindzin su*

5) When we say that things are only projections, does that mean that we can make anything anything we want it to be?

**No it does not, because we only have those projections that are forced upon us by our karma.**

6) Does the fact that things are only projections mean that leading an ethical way of life is unimportant?

**No, it becomes more important, because our projections are forced on us by our past deeds, good or bad. Someone who really understands emptiness immediately understands that it is absolutely essential to lead an ethical life.**

7) Why does the Consequence presentation of the meaning of emptiness have especially important implications for our own search for enlightenment?

**Given that things are creations of our projections forced on us by our past karma, then we can—by leading an extraordinarily virtuous way of life—actually put an end to the projections of aging and death, become a tantric angel, and enter a tantric paradise in this very life.**

8) The *Heart Sutra* says that the real goal of Buddhism is to "stop the process of aging and death" through "stopping our ignorance." Is this a literal or a figurative statement? If it is literal, then why have we not seen any person who stopped the process of aging and death?

**It is literal, and we have not seen these people because we are like the human who sees the cup of liquid as water: we do not yet have sufficient good karma to see someone else achieving this goal.**



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Class One

བྱང་ངེས་ལེགས་བཤད་སྣིང་པོ།

*drange lekshe nyingpo*

ཇེ་ཙོང་ཁ་པ།

*je tsongkapa*

མདོ་སྡེ་དགོངས་འབྲེལ།

*dode gongdrel*

བྱང་སེམས་དོན་དམ་ཡང་དག་འཕགས་ལུ་པའི་ལཱུ།

*jangsem dundam yangdak pak shupay leu*

འཕགས་པ་སྐོ་གོས་མི་ཟད་པས་ལུས་པའི་མདོ།

*pakpa lodru misepe shupay do*

Class Two

མཚན་ཉིད་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ།

*tsennyi ngowo nyi mepa*

སྐྱེ་བ་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ།

*kyewa ngowo nyi mepa*



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དོན་དམ་པ་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ།  
*dundampa ngowo nyi mepa*

ཀུན་བརྟགས།  
*kuntak*

གཞན་དབང་།  
*shenwang*

ཡོངས་གྲུབ།  
*yongdrup*

ཀུན་བརྟགས་ནམ་མཁའ་མི་མོ་ཉིད་དང་འདྲ།  
*kuntak namkay metok dang dra*

གཞན་དབང་སྐྱུ་མ་དང་འདྲ།  
*shenwang gyuma dang dra*

ཡོངས་གྲུབ་ནམ་མཁའ་དང་འདྲ།  
*yongdrup namka dang dra*

Class Three

མ་རླེས་པ།  
*ma kyepa*

མ་འགགས་པ།

*ma gakpa*

གཟོད་མ་ནས་ཞི་བ།

*suma ne shiwa*

རང་བཞིན་གྱིས་ཡོངས་སུ་བྱ་ངན་ལས་འདས་པ།

*rang shin gyi yong su nya-ngen le depa*

གཞན་དབང་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་སྐྱེ་འགག

*shenwang ranggi tsennyi kyi kye gak*

གཞན་དབང་ཕལ་ཆེར་ཀུན་ཉོན་གྱིས་བསྐྱུས།

*shenwang pelcher kunnyon gyi du*

རང་གི་རྒྱ་རྒྱུན་མེད་ནས་མ་སྐྱེ་བ་དང་མ་འགག་པ།

*ranggi gyukyen mene makyewa dang magakpa*

Class Four

ནམ་པར་རྟོག་པའི་སྐྱོད་ཡུལ།

*nampar tokpay chuyul*

ཀུན་བརྟགས་པའི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱི་གནས།

*kuntakpay tsennyi kyi ne*

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འདུ་བྱེད་ཀྱི་མཚན་མ།  
*duje kyi tsenma*

ཕུང་པོ་ལྔ།  
*pungpo nga*

སྐྱེ་མཆེད་བཅུ་གཉིས།  
*kyeche chunyi*

རྟིན་འབྲེལ་ཡན་ལག་བཅུ་གཉིས།  
*tendrel yenlak chunyi*

ཟས་བཞི།  
*se shi*

ཁམས་རྩལ།  
*kam druk*

ཁམས་བཅོ་བརྒྱད།  
*kam chopgye*

མེད་པ།  
*mepa*

ཡོད་པ།  
*yupa*

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མིན་པ།

*minpa*

ཡིན་པ།

*yinpa*

ངོ་བོ་ལ་ཀུན་བཏགས་པའི་ཀུན་བཏགས།

*ngowo la kuntakpay kuntak*

ཁྱད་པར་ལ་ཀུན་བཏགས་པའི་ཀུན་བཏགས།

*kyapar la kuntakpay kuntak*

Class Five

གྲུབ་དོན།

*drupdun*

བདེན་བཞིའི་ཚེས་འཁོར།

*denshiy chunkor*

ལྷ་ར་ཏུ་སི

*waranasi*

ཉན་ཐོས་ཐེག་པ།

*nyentu tekpa*

འཕགས་པའི་བདེན་པ་བཞི།

*pakpay denpa shi*

ཚོས་རྣམས་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པ།  
*chunam ranggi tsennyi kyi druppa*

མཚན་ཉིད་མེད་པའི་ཚོས་འཁོར།  
*tsennyi mepay chunkor*

བྱ་གོད་ཕུང་པོའི་རི།  
*jagu pungpoy ri*

ཐེག་ཆེན།  
*tekchen*

སྟོང་པ་ཉིད།  
*tongpa nyi*

ཚོས་རྣམས་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་མ་གྲུབ་པ།  
*chunam ranggi tsennyi kyi ma druppa*

ལེགས་ཕྱེད་ཚོས་འཁོར།  
*lekchey chunkor*

ཡངས་པ་ཅན།  
*yangpachen*

ཐེག་པ་ཐམས་ཅད།

*tekpa tamche*

མཚན་ཉིད་གསུམ།

*tsennyi sum*

ཚོས་རྣམས་ལ་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་མ་གྲུབ་ལེགས་པར་སྟེ།

*chu nam la ranggi tsennyi kyi drup madrup lekpar che*

འཁོར་ལོས་བསྐྱར་བའི་རྒྱལ་པོའི་འཁོར་ལོ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།

*korlu gyurway gyalpoy korlo rinpoche*

ལུང་གི་ཚོས་འཁོར།

*lunggi chunkor*

ཏོགས་པའི་ཚོས་འཁོར།

*tokpay chunkor*

Class Six

ལྷ་སྡེ་ལ་ཤམ་ཐབས་རླུམ་པོར་བགོ་བར་བྱའོ། །ཞེས།

*nga dela shamtab lumpor gowar jao, shey*

འདྲུལ་བ་མདོར་བསྐྱས་རུང་མཐུན་དུ་གྲགས་པ།

*dulwa dordurung tundu drakpa*

དེ་བཞིན་གཤེགས་པའི་སྣང་པོ།  
*deshin shekpay nyingpo*

གཟུངས་རྒྱལ་གྱི་མདོ།  
*sunggyel gyi do*

བདེན་བཞིའི་ཚེས་འཁོར།  
*denshiy chunkor*

ལེགས་པར་བྱེ་བའི་ཚེས་འཁོར།  
*lekpar cheway chunkor*

མཚན་ཉིད་མེད་པའི་ཚེས་འཁོར།  
*tsennyi mepay chunkor*

འཁོར་ལོ་གསུམ་པོ་གང་རུང་དུ་གྱུར་པའི་ཐེག་དམན་གྱི་མདོ།  
*korlo sumpo gang rung du gyurpay tekmen gyi do*

Class Seven

སྒྲོ་འདོགས།  
*dron dok*

བསྐྱར་འདོགས།  
*kurndep*

མཐའ།

*ta*

ཀུན་བརྟགས་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་གྲིས་ཡོད་པར་འཇིན་པ།

*kuntak ranggi tsennyi kyi yupar dzinpa*

གཞན་དབང་ཡོངས་གྲུབ་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་གྲིས་མ་གྲུབ་པ།

*shenwang yongdrup ranggi tsennyi kyi madruppa*

ཡོད་ན་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་གྲིས་གྲུབ་དགོས།

*yu na ranggi tsennyi drup gu*

རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་གྲིས་མ་གྲུབ་ན་མིང་དགོས།

*ranggi tsennyi kyi madrup na me gu*

Class Eight

ཚུམ་ཐམས་ཅད་གྱི་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མིང་པ་ནི་དོན་དམ་བདེན་པ་ཡིན།

*chu tamche kyi ngowonyi mepa ni dundam denpa yin*

དོན་དམ་བདེན་པར་ཡོད་པ།

*dundam denpar yupa*

དོན་དམ་པར་ཡོད་པ།

*dundampar yupa*



ཀུན་ཚོ་བ་བདེན་པ།  
*kundzob denpa*

ཀུན་ཚོ་བ།  
*kundzob*

མདོ་མྱེ་སྐྱོད་པ་དབུ་མ་རང་རྒྱུད་པ།  
*dode chupa uma rang-gyupa*

ནལ་འབྱོར་སྐྱོད་པའི་དབུ་མ་རང་རྒྱུད་པ།  
*nelnjor chupay uma rang-gyupa*

གཟུགས་དང་གཟུགས་འཛིན་གྱི་ཚད་མ་རྗེས་གཞན་གྱིས་སྟོང་པ།  
*suk dang sukdzin gyi tsema dzeshen gyi tongpa*

Class Nine

བདག་མེད་ཕྱ་རགས་གསུམ།  
*dakme trarak sum*

གང་ཟག་གི་བདག་མེད་ཕྱ་མོ།  
*kangsak gi dakme tramo*

ཚོས་ཀྱི་བདག་མེད་རགས་པ།  
*chu kyi dakme rakpa*

ཚོས་གྱི་བདག་མིང་ཕྱ་མོ།

*chu kyi dakme tramo*

སྟོང་ཉིད།

*tongnyi*

རྟོག་གཅིག་རང་དབང་ཅན་གྱི་བདག་

*takchik rangwangchen gyi dak*

ཉན་ཐོས།

*nyentu*

ཐོག་དམན།

*tekmen*

རང་རྒྱ་ཐུབ་པའི་རྗེས་ཡིད་དུ་གྲུབ་པ།

*rang kyapay dzeyu du druppa*

རང་རྒྱལ།

*rang-gyel*

ཐོག་དམན།

*tekmen*

གཟུགས་དང་གཟུགས་འཛིན་གྱི་ཚད་མ་རྗེས་གཞན་གྱིས་སྟོང་པ།

*suk dang suk dzin gyi tsema dze shen gyi tongpa*

བྱང་སེམས།

*jangsem*

སྟོང་པ་ཉིད།

*tongpanyi*

ཚོས་ཐམས་ཅད་བདེན་པས་སྟོང་པ།

*chu tamche denpe tongpa*

སྟོ་གཞོན་མེད་ལ་སྐྱང་བའི་དབང་གིས་བཞག་པ་མ་ཡིན་པར་ཡུལ་རང་གི་ཐུན་

མོང་མ་ཡིན་པའི་བསྟོན་ལུགས་ཀྱི་ངོས་ནས་གྲུབ་པ།

*lo nume la nangway wang gi shakpa mayinpar yul rang gi tunmong ma  
yinpai du luk kyi ngu ne druppa*

རྗེས་ཡོད།

*dzeyu*

བཏགས་ཡོད།

*takyu*

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ཀླེས་བྱ་གསུམ།

*kyebu sum*

ཐེག་པ་གསུམ།

*tekpa sum*

ཐེག་དམན།

*tekmen*

ཐེག་ཆེན།

*tekchen*

དོར་ཇེ་ཐེག་པ།

*dorje tekpa*

གསང་སྤྲུགས་ཀྱི་ཐེག་པ།

*sangngak kyi tekpa*

ཕར་ཕྱིན་གྱི་ཐེག་པ་ཆེན་པོ།

*parchin gyi tekpa chenpo*

གསང་སྤྲུགས་ཀྱི་ཐེག་པ་ཆེན་པོ།

*sangngak kyi tekpa chenpo*

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ཏོག་པས་པར་བཏགས་ཙམ།

*tokpe par taktsam*

ལུ་ལྷུ་བ་ལུགས་བཟང་གཙོ་བོར་མི་འཇིན་སུ།

*ludrup luksang tsowor mindzin su*



The  
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**WHAT THE BUDDHA REALLY MEANT**

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**15**



15

COURSE

## WHAT THE BUDDHA REALLY MEANT

Level 2 of The Perfection of Wisdom (*Prajna Paramita*)

