

Unweaving the Web: Four Possibilities

From *The Excellent Path of Total Virtue, which Leads to Liberation: Lecture Notes on the Practice of the Great Seal (Mahamudra), in the Tradition of the Oral Lineage of the Virtuous Ones* by Keutsang Rinpoche Lobsang Jamyang Munlam of Sera Mey Tibetan Monastery (born 1689).

སྤྱིར་བུམ་པ་ལྟ་བུ་ལ་དམིགས་ནས་འཛིན་ཚུལ་འདི་ལྟར་ཡོད་དེ། བུམ་པར་སྤྲང་ཞིང་འཛིན་པ། བུམ་པ་བདེན་གྲུབ་ཏུ་སྤྲང་ཞིང་འཛིན་པ། བུམ་པ་བདེན་མིད་དུ་སྤྲང་ཞིང་འཛིན་པ། བུམ་པ་མིང་རྒྱང་བཏགས་ཡོད་ཙམ་དུ་སྤྲང་ཞིང་འཛིན་པ་བཅས་བཞི་ཡོད།

Generally speaking, we can look at something like a water pitcher and take it in four different ways:

- (1) The water pitcher can appear to be a water pitcher, and we can take it to be a water pitcher.
- (2) The water pitcher can appear to be coming from its own side, and we can take it to be coming from its own side.
- (3) The water pitcher can appear not to be coming from its own side, and we can take it not to be coming from its own side.
- (4) The water pitcher can appear to be coming from a tiny image which has popped out of a karmic seed inside of our own mind, and we can take it to be that way.

སྟོང་ཉིད་མ་ཉོགས་བར་དུ་རང་རྒྱུད་ལ་དང་པོ་གཉིས་ཡོད་ཕྱི་མ་གཉིས་མེད།

Until a person perceives emptiness, they can have the first two modes of perception in their mind, but not the second two.

སྟོང་ཉིད་ཉོགས་ནས་དགའ་བཅོམ་དང་ས་བརྒྱུད་པ་མ་ཐོབ་བར་དུ་བཞི་ཀ་ཡོད།

A person who has perceived emptiness—but who has not yet reached enemy destroyer, or the eighth bodhisattva level—can have all four.

དགའ་བཅོམ་པ་དང་ས་བརྒྱུད་པ་ཡན་ལ་བདེན་སྣང་ཡོད་ཀྱང་བདེན་འཛིན་མེད་པས་གཉིས་པ་མེད་གཞན་
ཐམས་ཅད་ཡོད།

From enemy destroyer—or the eighth bodhisattva level—on up, things can appear to be coming from their own side, but we don't take them to be that way. Therefore these beings no longer have the second, but do have all the rest.

སངས་རྒྱས་ནས་གང་ཡང་བདེན་གྲུབ་ཏུ་སྣང་མི་སྲིད་པས་བདེན་སྣང་ཡང་མེད།

Once we have reached enlightenment though, it's no longer possible for anything to appear to be coming from its own side. And so Enlightened Beings further lack any case where things are appearing to come from their own side.

འོན་ཀྱང་སེམས་ཅན་གཞན་ལ་བདེན་གྲུབ་ཏུ་སྐྱང་བའི་ཆ་སངས་རྒྱས་ལ་སྐྱང་དགོས་པས་བདེན་སྐྱང་སངས་
རྒྱས་ལ་སྐྱང་བ་ཡང་མི་འགལ་བར་ཤེས་པར་བྱའོ།།

You should understand though that there does appear to an Enlightened Being the way in which things appear to be coming from their own side to people who are not enlightened. As such it is no contradiction to say that a way in which things appear to come from their own side can also appear to an Enlightened Being.