Shentong & Rangtong

Two Views of Emptiness

KHENCHEN THRANGU RINPOCHE

Two Views of Emptiness: Shentong and Rangtong

Two Views of Emptiness: Shentong and Rangtong

by

Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche
Geshe Lharampa

A Commentary on the View
as Presented in Chapter 7 of
The Compendium of Knowledge
***by* Jamgon Kongtrul Lodro Thaye**
(Tib. *Shes-bya Kun-khyab-Mdzod*)

Translated by

Peter Roberts

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Notes

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Tibetan words are given as they are pronounced, not spelled in Tibetan. Their Tibetan spelling can be found in the Glossary of Tibetan Terms.

We use BCE (Before Current Era) for B.C. and CE (Current Era) for A.D.

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Editor's Foreword

In this text Thrangu Rinpoche has taken a very complicated topic in Buddhism and provided a lucid and comprehensive description of the tenets of the four main schools of Buddhism and the two major ways of viewing emptiness. Thrangu Rinpoche based this book on a section of Jamgon Kongtrul's famous *Encyclopedia of Knowledge* on the View. It would be impossible to give a better summary of this topic than Rinpoche's so this foreword will present some background information that Rinpoche was not able to include in this particular book.

To understand Shentong and Rangtong it helps to know some history about the development of Buddhism. While the Buddha was teaching in the fourth century BCE, he had tens of thousands of followers and as he taught his teachings were memorized by highly developed practitioners known as arhats. The passing of religious teachings from teacher to pupil through memorization was a well-practiced art in India and we find that the accuracy of these teachings was vastly greater than, say, the passing on of Greek myths. Myths were often passed on by common people and as they were retold and retold, they changed and transformed much like messages in the game of "telephone" played by children. The religious teachings in India were not greatly changed because they were passed on by monks specially trained in memory techniques who believed that altering even one word of the Buddha was a great sin.

When the teachings of the Buddha were first written down in the first century of our era, they made up a corpus of about 80

full-length books known as the sutras. These teachings became the core of the Foundation vehicle and are called the "first turning of the wheel of dharma" in this book. As the Foundation teachings were studied, disputes which seem very minor to us arose among the Foundation vehicle practitioners. For example, one dispute was whether a practitioner who had reached the level of arhat could fall back to being an ordinary being or not. This text describes two prominent Foundation schools—the Great Exposition school also known by its Sanskrit name Vaibashika and the Sutra followers or Sutrantika school.

In the first century CE there were a number of major changes in Buddhism in India. First of all, the sutras and commentaries were written down so the major task of memorizing the sutras and passing them on was replaced by classrooms in monasteries in which great scholars expounded on the teaching of Buddhism and students began to study the texts, taking notes, receiving lectures, and debating their points. Nalanda, one of the larger monastic colleges, had students from India, China, Kashmir, and Tibet who learned and debated Hindu philosophy, Foundation Buddhism, the newer Middle-way philosophies, as well as technical subjects such as Indian dialectics, grammar, and logic. Also we know that outside these monasteries there were many wandering male and female yogis who were not studying the texts, but were developing their spiritual practice by practicing meditation and engaging in tantric practices.

The first century also produced an outstanding scholar and practitioner, Nagarjuna, who is credited with founding the Middle-way school. Nagarjuna is said to have gone to the naga realm and to have brought back the Prajnaparamita teachings. These Prajnaparamita teachings were mainly on the topic of emptiness and Nagarjuna wrote a number of important treatises which logically showed that our self and outer phenomena that we all believe to be solid and real are in fact more like an illusion made up by mind.

In particular, Nagarjuna wrote a series of treatises on emptiness using logical inference. Rinpoche gives a number of illustrations of these such as whether a "hand" is a real solid object or a concept of mind. These treatises were not merely philosophical discussions of whether phenomena were solid and real, but they became important for guiding a bodhisattva working towards enlightenment. For example, in *The Way of the Bodhisattva*, an outstanding treatise on Buddhist conduct, the emptiness of phenomena is implied as the basis for engaging in many enlightened behaviors. Why was it important to realize that the trees, rocks, and persons outside us have no objective reality? The answer lies in the fact that if all external phenomena and experiences are real and solid, it is much, much easier to become attached to them. Since it is attachment to these outer pleasures and situation that causes suffering, it is harder to renounce samsara and gain liberation. One high lama once told me, "You know the job of being a Rinpoche (high lama) is a very boring one. People come night and day with all their problems, their anxieties, their troubling thoughts and expect us to solve them all. Yet when you see the Rinpoches, they are full of good humor and don't seem to mind this great burden. The reason they are so joyful is that they realize the emptiness of samsara and it is this emptiness which allows them to go on and see the humor of the situation."

The great Indian masters were able to demonstrate that outer phenomena are indeed empty and even today we know that outer phenomena, in fact our entire universe as we know it, is merely millions of combinations of the 92 elements which we call atoms. But when scientists examine atoms in detail, they find that they are not solid, but rather complex interconnected waves of energy following the paradoxical laws of quantum physics. Of course, there were no electron microscopes or atom smashers in the first century so these masters relied on observations of the world around them and the deep introspection of their minds in meditation as well as the words of the Buddha.

Nagarjuna wrote a number of important treatises which systematically presented the argument that we and all outer phenomena we believe to be solid and real are more like illusions made up by mind. The Prajnaparamita and Nagarjuna's writings became the foundation of the third major philosophical school of Buddhist philosophy, the Middle-way school, and this emphasis on emptiness became known as the second turning of the wheel of dharma.

Several centuries later, in the fourth century CE, another major development attributed to two brothers, Asanga and Vasubandu, occurred in Buddhism. Asanga went into solitary retreat to seek answers to his questions about the dharma from the Maitreya Buddha. After twelve years of difficult practice Asanga had cleared his mind of obstacles and developed such great spontaneous compassion that he was actually able to come face-to-face with Maitreya Buddha and receive teachings from him. Asanga wrote down these teachings along with commentaries and they have been preserved to this present time as the *Five Works of Maitreya*. One of the most important of these five works was the *Ratna-gotta-vibhaga* (as it it is known in Sanskrit) or the *Uttaratantra Shastra* (as it is known in Tibetan). The *Uttaratantra* is an explanation of Buddha-nature (Skt. *tathagata-garbha*) which is a quality possessed by all sentient beings that allows them to reach enlightenment. To greatly simplify, the *Uttaratantra* states that Buddha-nature is "permanent, all-pervasive, and eternal." This statement basically contradicts the teachings of Nagarjuna that hold that nothing is permanent or eternal.

As will be explained in much greater detail in Thrangu Rinpoche's commentary, we can think of the emptiness of phenomena suggested by Asanga as having an added quality of clarity or luminosity. To simplify, this means that emptiness is not a vacuum or voidness as we imagine empty space to be, but it has the possibility for things to happen in it and has a knowing. A simple illustration of this is if we examine our mind carefully in med-

itation, we find that it is empty of anything substantial—our thoughts don't come from anywhere, they don't dwell anywhere, and they don't go anywhere. In other words, they don't have any real substantiality, yet there is clearly a stream of awareness that is always there which we can call a clarity or knowing aspect of mind. This luminous clarity as it is called in the text is there while we are awake, while we are asleep (when we dream), and actually has been there in our previous life times. These teachings of Asanga and Vasubandhu concerning Buddha-nature and luminous clarity have become what is now called the third turning of the wheel of dharma.

During the time of Asanga and Vasubandu there also developed a fourth major school of Buddhist philosophy called the Mind-only school. This school holds that everything—external phenomena and internal thoughts and feeling are basically created by mind. It is hard to believe that everything is created by mind and their position is described in great detail in Thrangu Rinpoche's commentary on *Distinguishing Consciousness from Wisdom.*

Young children learn to talk quickly and readily no matter what language they are learning. After being told that an object is, for example, "a chair," they will automatically recognize a chair whether it has 3 legs or 4 legs, is functional to sit on or just a decoration, made of wood or of rocks, whether it has a back or not, whether it is for a prisoner or a king, and so on. The three and four year old child can do this for "man," "woman," "boat," "house," "mountain," and so on while the most sophisticated computer or the science of linguistics cannot explain how this happens. The Mind-only adherents suggest that this is possible because the child is not simply a blank *tabula rasa*, but has had many, many lifetimes before in which the child interacted with these objects so the child has the concept of many objects already stored in his or her eighth "store-house" consciousness.

Taking another example of how mind is so important is the example of when we dream. While we are dreaming, the sensory

consciousnesses are shut down and the seventh consciousness which is the "self" begins to receive perceptual information from the storehouse consciousness and this input is so vivid that we believe it is really happening to us even though we may be dreaming that we are doing something fantastic such as flying. Throughout a dream we have one part of our mind which is an awareness, a self or I, which is perceiving what is going on and there must also be another part of our mind which is creating the dream. Sometimes these two functions of mind are quite distinct so we actually don't know how the dream will turn out and at other times these two functions bleed together and we either know what is going to happen in the dream or have an ability to change the "script" or outcome of the dream. The Mind-only view is that when we are awake, the outside sensory information is so vivid that we believe that it is real and how we are interpreting what is happening to us is based on what is stored in our store-house eighth consciousness.

Karl Brunnholzl has done a careful survey of the Mind-only school and shown that there are many misconceptions about this school. First, the name "mind-only" correctly indicates that this school holds that everything we perceive outside us is actually based on our mind. To give a rather crude example, when we walk our dog, we see and understand it is summer because there are bright colored flowers and the weather is warm, but we can't tell anything about who was on the path even a half an hour ago. Our dog, however, sees only shades of gray, doesn't perceive the season, but by smelling the grass and bushes knows what dogs have been there, how long ago they were there and where they went. Clearly, our dog walking along the exact same landscape has a reality completely different from ours based on the dog's karma, way of perceiving, interests, and conceptualizations.

According to Brunnholzl in his comprehensive *The Center of the Sunlit Sky* there are no texts of this fourth Mind-only school existent beyond those of Asanga and Vasubandhu. So he suggests that it is more appropriate to call this school the "School of Vast

Conduct" and the Middle-way school the "School of Profound View." This helps because later on in history the Tibetans who held the teachings of Nagarjuna and the second turning (the Rangtong school) usually dismissed the Shentong view by saying that the Shentong was just "mere mind" meaning an incorrect Mind-only school view.

By the thirteenth century of our era, the great monastic colleges of Northern India were being attacked and burned to the ground by invading Moslem armies. Buddhism was disappearing rapidly from its country of origin—India—and everything we know about the second and third turnings would have been lost had it not been for numerous Indian and Chinese religious pilgrims who came to India from the first to thirteenth century and took back vast quantities of religious texts. At this time the Tibetans had built small and large monasteries housing monks who studied and practiced Buddhism and had actually started writing their own commentaries on the words of the Buddha. During this time the Middle-way teachings of Nagarjuna were extensively analyzed and taught along with many of the Mind-only teachings. The actual meditation practice also flourished at this time, but was not based on the sutra teachings on emptiness, but on the tantras. This is still the trend in Tibetan monasteries so that when the monks reach college age, they apply to the monastic college or shedra and there they often spend 12 hours a day doing academic work and memorizing large treatises such as those of Nagarjuna and Chandrakirti while doing little practice beyond the required sadhanas of the day. It is only after they have completed the 5 or 7 or 12 years of shedra, that they begin serious meditation based on the tantras by doing the equivalent of a three-year retreat.

Hookham in his pioneering work on the Shentong, *The Buddha Within*, makes a compelling case that when Buddhism was first introduced into Tibet in the seventh century, the second turning put forth by the scholars of the monastic colleges was accepted as correct thus bolstering the Rangtong position, while the

Mind-only teachings of the third turning were deemed to be inferior. However, when it came to actual meditation and spiritual practice, the tantric methods and texts and the oral instructions which were more aligned with the third turning and the Shentong teachings were ultimately practiced. For example, Naropa, a great Madhyamaka scholar, left a high position at Nalanda Monastic college to study under the mystic siddha Tilopa living in the forest. The great Kadampa scholar Atisha threw out the siddha Maitripa from his monastery for practicing tantric practices and then later actually went and received teachings from him. It was the siddha Maitripa who found the *Uttaratantra* and its commentary by Asanga in a crack in a stupa in the eleventh century in India. So in Tibet one had the Rangtong view represented by academic study of the second turning and the Shentong view based on the third turning teachings which support the actual Vajrayana practices and meditation of tantra.

Also in the 13th century in Tibet, a remarkable man—Dolpopa—was born who not only studied the traditional Middle-way texts, but also did extensive practice of the Kalachakra tantra and the Six Yogas. It is said that during this extensive practice he went to Shambhala, met with the King of Shambhala, the Kalkin, and returned with new insights into the Buddhist teachings. While building the largest stupa in Tibet in 1313, he fully developed his understanding and began writing his major work, *Mountain Doctrine*. In *Mountain Doctrine* Dolpopa not only included a vast number of quotations from the sutras and Middle-way texts, but also quoted many of the tantras and their commentaries. He stated that the traditional Middle-way approach, which he coined the word "Rangtong" (self-empty), was incorrect and reality should be looked at from a new approach for which he coined the word "Shentong" (empty of other). He argued that the Buddha prophesied the future coming of both Nagarjuna and Asanga and clearly the Shakyamuni Buddha and the Maitreya Buddha were of equal authenticity. Therefore one could not say that Nagarjuna's works were "definitive" and Asanga's

works were "provisional." So when the *Uttaratantra Shastra* says that Buddha-nature is all-pervasive and eternal, it should be taken at face value and not relegated to some mistaken "provisional" doctrine.

Stearns in his *Buddha from Dolpopa* presented the first English language book discussing Dolpopa's controversial position in the Shentong lineage. He traced Dolpopa's influence on Longchenpa of the Nyingma lineage and the Third Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje, of the Kagyu lineage who wrote *Distinguishing Consciousness and Wisdom* and *On Buddha Essence* to explain the Shentong view.

Hookham in *The Buddha Within* states, "The distinction between self-emptiness (Rangtong) and Emptiness-of-other (Shentong) is not merely, nor indeed primarily, of academic interest. It has implications of profound proportions for the Buddhist practitioner, touching on his whole attitude to himself, the world, the Guru and others, the path, and above all meditation practice."

What are the implications to how one practices Buddhism? Taking a simple example, the Rangtong position is that Buddha-nature is like a seed that must grow and be nurtured to develop into full-blown enlightenment. The Shentong position is that Buddha-nature is already fully developed and one must eliminate the adventitious stains or disturbing emotions which cover it. So the whole path to how we actually reach enlightenment can be the technique to nurture the seed of enlightenment or it can be a path of removing the stains hiding the enlightenment which is already fully blossomed. Thrangu Rinpoche once told the story that when he was young and studying emptiness intensively, he thought that he didn't need to make offering to the protectors. Things did not go well for him and when he started making offering at the suggestion of his tutor, things began to go much better. He used this example to show that we can't think of everything as merely emptiness (as suggested by the Rangtong), but must also consider the luminous clarity of emptiness (as suggested in the Shentong). If we are using Vajrayana techniques

such as deity practice to achieve enlightenment, the question becomes, "Are the deities just creations of the mind as suggested by the Rangtong?" or "Are they real and part of ultimate reality as suggested by Dolpopa in the Shentong?" What we believe the answer to this question to be is of profound importance in how we actually do our spiritual practice. For this reason we are very fortunate to have this valuable text which gives an impartial and understandable overview of this topic.

Clark Johnson
Boulder, Colorado

The Preface

When it comes to Buddhist philosophy and the Rangtong and Shentong in particular, many students have rather interesting reactions. Some people feel trepidation that they will not be able to understand and thus might not even want to begin to study and contemplate. Some people might wonder how this could possibly help their practice and would rather just sit and meditate. For others, one view or the other piques their interest and excitement, and they are smitten. Out of attachment to their favorite view, they might think that the Rangtong must be the ultimate and the Shentong just a provisional teaching tinged with clinging, or that the Shentong teaches the true, great middle way and that the Rangtong is only a partial truth. Oftentimes you cannot blame someone for reacting in such a way: if you read many Buddhist books, you will soon come across words that on the surface support or even encourage any of these reactions.

But they are all somewhat limited. Of course we all have different inclinations and capabilities and should practice the dharma which best suits our own natures, but we should not dismiss any of the other teachings of the Buddha out of fear, ignorance, or attachment. The Buddha taught the views that later came to be called the *rangtong* and *shentong* for the simple reason that contemplating and understanding them can help us in our meditation practice. If we have misconceptions about the na-

ture of reality we will not be able to progress in our meditation, so it is important to contemplate both the Rangtong and Shentong views. And despite their fearsome reputation, the Rangtong and Shentong are something that we can contemplate and come to understand.

In the following pages, Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche describes the meaning and significance of both of these views in simple and clear language. Whenever Rinpoche discusses the Rangtong and Shentong, he stresses how important they both are: they both teach the ultimate nature of reality. The Rangtong view stresses the emptiness of all phenomena so that we do not cling to things as being solid and real. The Shentong view stresses the clear wisdom, inherently full of qualities and potential, so that we do not think that the true nature is mere nothingness. Although in words these two may sound like different things, in reality they are inseparable. The clear nature of the mind is not a solid thing that we can find or establish, but it is not a mere inanimate emptiness, devoid of anything at all. This is what we call the union of wisdom and emptiness, the union of clarity and emptiness, the union of wisdom and emptiness. By studying emptiness and the Rangtong and Shentong views, we can come to understand the reasons why the nature of mind is the way it is and develop certainty in it.

Even though this is just a conceptual understanding and certainty, it will help us in our meditation practice. Whether we are meditating on a yidam deity or practicing Mahamudra or Dzogchen, we need to know why it is that we are meditating and why it is that meditation can work. Then when we have experiences in our practice, we can remember, "Oh, *this* is what they mean when they say the mind is emptiness. *That* is what they mean by clarity and luminosity." We will be better able to recognize signs of progress for what they are and better able to see through whatever deceptive temporary experiences might happen. This is why it is important for us to read and contemplate books such as this.

Above all, we must always remember our good fortune to be alive and human now at a time when Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche and other masters are giving us these precious teachings and they are being made available in languages we can understand. Rinpoche has spent decades traveling the globe and explaining the view and meditation out of the simple wish to help all of us achieve stable and long-lasting happiness. We owe Rinpoche a great deal of gratitude for this kindness. But it takes more than just Rinpoche's efforts alone to bring these teachings to us; it also takes the hard work and diligence of devoted students. Over the last three decades, Clark Johnson has spent all of his free time working to support Rinpoche's projects and publish his teachings. It is largely because of his unwearying efforts that so many of Rinpoche's teachings are available in English now. This book is could only have been published because of his initiative and diligence, so I would like to thank him for all his service. I would also like to thank Carole Lamarche for her devotion and willingness to proofread and edit the manuscript. This has been an indispensable help.

Rinpoche has said that when we call a teaching *profound,* what we really mean is *helpful.* I sincerely hope that you find the teachings in this book helpful not only in your dharma practice but also in how you see the things that happen in your daily life. I pray that whatever small efforts have gone into this book help Rinpoche's teachings bring you happiness now and in the future. May joy and goodness fill the entire world!

The *śramanera* Karma Lodrö Choephel
Boudhanath, Nepal
February 10, 2008

Jamgon Kongtrul, Lodro Thaye **(1813-1899)**

One of the most famous Tibetan teachers of the 19th century. He is known as one of the Eclectic (*reme*) teachers who collected teachings from many traditions including those on the verge of extinction. His main work was the *Five Treasures* or *The Compendium of Knowledge*.

1

The Correct View of Buddha-dharma

The reason we practice the Buddhist dharma is to attain liberation. To gain this, we must engage in meditation and if we want our meditation to be effective, we need to have the correct philosophical view.

Jamgon Kongtrul Lodro Thaye's book, *The Compendium of Knowledge,* consists of ten chapters, each of which is subdivided into four parts. This teaching is based on the seventh chapter, which deals with the topic of wisdom. The seventh chapter is divided into four subdivisions, with the third subdivision explaining the correct view. This view gives us a foundation for understanding dharma practice, including how to practice and achieve the result.

Phenomena have two distinct aspects: the conventional or relative level of reality and the ultimate or absolute level of reality.[1] The conventional or relative nature of phenomena is suffering, difficulties, problems, and obstacles. On the ultimate or absolute level, the true nature of phenomena is the cessation of suffering and its obstacles. To become free of the conventional view we must realize the true nature first. The true nature[2] is actually experiencing the emptiness of phenomena. The study of this view of emptiness of phenomena comes from the Middle-

way,[3] (Skt. *Madhyamaka*) school of Buddhism. Within the Middle-way school there are two main views of emptiness: the Rangtong and the Shentong view.

The Buddha, born a prince, abandoned his samsaric life. He endured many hardships through ascetic practices, but then attained Buddhahood at the foot of a bodhi tree. Having attained awakening, enlightenment, the Buddha thought, "I have attained this very profound clarity, and beneficial condition through my meditation and perseverance. If I were to try to explain how to meditate and practice, others would not understand. Therefore it is best to remain in meditation." The Buddha then remained in meditation for seven weeks, believing that there was no way to transmit his realization to others. It was only through Brahma and Indra supplicating and pleading with the Buddha, that the Buddha set the wheel of dharma in motion and began to teach the profound Dharma.

Turning the Three Wheels of Dharma

Because the Buddha had many students at different levels of understanding, he did not give the same teachings to everyone. To those with lesser wisdom and diligence, he gave easier teachings and to those with superior wisdom and diligence, he gave the more complex teachings. To those students with lesser wisdom and diligence, he offered the Foundation vehicle which involved teaching that the nature of samsara is suffering and that one can attain personal liberation from suffering through one's own efforts. The cause of this suffering in cyclic existence or samsara is our disturbing emotions (Skt. *klesha*),[4] which we cannot eliminate through force. To gain liberation from samsara, we must destroy the root cause of our disturbing emotions, which is the belief in and attachment to a self.

There is a method by which we can eliminate this belief in a self which is the attachment to "I" or "me." If we examine the self

carefully and try to discover what and where it is, we will not be able to find anything that is "I." It cannot be logically established. Through this careful reasoning process, we will come to understand that the thought "I" has no inherent reality. There is no "I." It is only a delusion. This understanding undermines the belief in a self and thus cuts the root of the disturbing emotions. The Buddha taught this method of analysis in the Foundation vehicle and showed how to attain liberation from samsara by realizing the "selflessness or egolessness of the individual."[5]

In the second turning of the wheel of dharma, the Buddha taught the methods of the Mahayana (the greater vehicle). The scope of the Mahayana is deeper than the Foundation because here we are concerned with not only helping ourselves, but also with helping all other sentient beings. In the first turning we may fear the suffering of samsara as long as we believe that it has true existence. However, in the second turning, the Buddha taught that phenomena of samsara are also empty of any inherent true nature. Realizing the emptiness of phenomena,[6] the belief and attachment to a self will be finally eliminated.

The teachings of the Mahayana were called "the middle turning" (the second of the three vehicles), in which the Buddha taught that all phenomena (whether body, mind, or material things) have no inherent nature of their own. All phenomena are devoid of a true nature and are therefore empty. By seeing the emptiness of all phenomena, we can become free from the belief in and attachment to a personal self and of phenomena's illusion. We also become free from fear of suffering as well as from actual suffering. Having freedom from suffering and the fear of suffering, we are in a position to truly help other beings. The Buddha's teaching on emptiness in the second turning was in the *Prajnaparamita* sutra of 100,000 verses, in the medium-sized *Prajnaparamita* sutra of 25,000, in a shorter *Prajnaparamita of* 8,000 verses, down to a very short *Heart Sutra* of a few hundred words. In these sutras he taught that there is no form, no sound,

no taste, no smell, and no tangible existence; nothing has a true nature of its own and thus the nature of all things is empty.

The first and second turnings, however, are not complete teachings because we still must understand emptiness in its correct profundity. We might think that emptiness[7] is like empty space, that it is like the vacuum of space or like a corpse being empty of life. Emptiness (Skt. *shunyata*, Tib. *tong pa nyi*) is neither like empty space nor like a corpse, because emptiness actually possesses the wisdom and luminous clarity (Tib. *salwa*)[8] of mind. If we make the error of thinking that emptiness is an absence or voidness of things, we will not understand emptiness properly. So the Buddha turned the wheel of dharma a third time in which he taught that emptiness is not just voidness, but rather emptiness is the foundation or basis from which all the qualities and wisdom of a Buddha arise. In the third turning, the Buddha explained that emptiness has the transcendent qualities of Buddha-nature (Skt. *tathagata-garbha*)[9] and luminosity.

The Tibetan Tradition

The Buddha turned the wheel of the dharma three times. The words of the Buddha in these three turnings were collected into the sutras which were not always self-explanatory nor easy to comprehend. As a result, the great masters and scholars of India wrote commentaries called shastras on the Buddha's teachings. The shastras explained the meaning of what the Buddha taught. By compiling these treatises, the masters clarified the sutras and gave logical reasons elucidating the Buddha's words. Two main masters who composed shastras on emptiness were Nagarjuna and Asanga. Nagarjuna concentrated on the teachings of the second turning of the wheel of dharma while Asanga concentrated on the teachings of the third turning of the wheel of dharma.

Many of the Buddha's teachings were translated into Tibetan in the Kangyur. In Tibet there is a tradition of studying these trea-

tises or shastras composed by great Indian Buddhist masters, rather than studying the Buddha's actual words. The reason Tibetan scholars studied the Tengyur (which contains many of the shastras) rather than the Kangyur (containing the actual words of the Buddha) is that at times the Buddha gave students who had great understanding very profound teachings and at other times he taught students with little understanding simplified and less difficult teachings. Sometimes he presented very extensive teachings and sometimes he presented condensed teachings. The great Indian Buddhist masters were able to simplify the extensive teachings and to expound and clarify the concise meaning. This is why the shastras are studied in the Tibetan tradition and not in the original words of the Buddha.

The Tibetan scholars and masters classified the teachings into the three turnings of the wheel of dharma. They showed that the middle turning of the wheel of dharma emphasized the view of the Middle-way school. These teachings were then called the "Rangtong" view ("empty of itself"). The third turning of the wheel of dharma emphasized luminous clarity and Buddha-nature, and the Tibetan scholars called these the "Shentong" view ("empty of other"). Some Tibetan scholars emphasized and practiced the Rangtong view, while other Tibetan scholars emphasized and practiced the Shentong view. For example, Tsongkhapa wrote many commentaries on the second turning of the wheel of dharma putting forth the Rangtong view while the Eighth Karmapa Mikyo Dorje wrote texts refuting Tsongkapa's conclusions and put forward the Shentong view. Taranatha wrote texts on the Shentong view and other scholars wrote texts refuting his view. All of this doesn't mean, however, that one view is better than the other because each view is important in itself.

Questions

Question: Could Rinpoche explain the words Rangtong and Shentong?
Rinpoche: The Tibetan word *Rang* means "self" and *tong* means "empty." meaning that phenomena are empty and devoid of their own nature. Relative phenomena have no true reality; they are devoid of a nature of their own, of a self-nature.

The Tibetan word *shen* means "other" and *tong* means "empty" meaning devoid of that which is other, with "other" being the impurities. The essence of Shentong emptiness is luminous clarity, not voidness. That is the teaching of emptiness as taught by the Shentong.

Question: Most of the time when I read texts, unless it is talking about the Buddha-nature, I am not actually aware of whether it is Rangtong or Shentong. But I also recognize, especially when reading the Gelug texts, that there is an underlying trend that is leading me into some direction. Is Rinpoche saying that it is quite important to make an analysis so that one can place that in Rangtong or Shentong?
Rinpoche: In this text, Rangtong and Shentong are explained specifically. However, when reading Buddhist books, it is not important to wonder whether it is the Rangtong or Shentong view. Just read Buddhist books without thinking about Rangtong and Shentong.

Question: I was wondering about the Buddha-nature. Is it the sense of a self-existing as an entity?
Rinpoche: People believe that the self exists as an entity and they don't examine what it is as long as they believe this. However, Buddha-nature is different from the belief in a self.

Question: Is clarity or luminosity Shentong?
Rinpoche: Yes, the nature of emptiness is luminosity in the Shentong.

Questions: How can Rangtong practitioners achieve Buddhahood since they are only realizing non-reality?
Rinpoche: Practitioners of the Rangtong view attain Buddhahood because what prevents us from achieving Buddhahood is attachment to the self as an individual and attachment to the self of phenomena. If one realizes emptiness, then attachment to a reality of the self and phenomena is eliminated. Once that belief in reality is dispelled, one can attain Buddhahood. There is a difference, though, in terms of how easy meditation is or isn't.

Question: Would the Rangtong school then have an incorrect view?
Rinpoche: No, because they have realized the absence of the reality in phenomena. Having seen the true nature of reality, one is led to that point in the Rangtong view; one is gradually brought to that state through the path of examining, analyzing, and seeing the absence of reality of phenomena. If one does not meditate properly, it can be an obstacle to one's practice. Nagarjuna said that it is worse to believe in non-existence than in existence. The correct view in meditation is necessary in order to achieve a right result.

Shentong

by

Thrangu Rinpoche

2

Why A Correct View Is Necessary

I. Why the Correct View is Necessary

This text of Jamgon Kongtrul has seven major points. The first main point explains why it is necessary to have the correct view and that it is not beneficial to practice without the correct view; this would be like walking around in darkness. Why is a correct view necessary? Although we wish to achieve Buddhahood, something prevents us from achieving liberation from samsara. What prevents us from achieving liberation is the arising of the disturbing emotions in the mind. The source of disturbing emotions is ignorance, the state of not knowing and of not understanding. It is necessary to eliminate the state of ignorance so that the root of the disturbing emotions will be removed. Ignorance[10] is eliminated by the correct view. By having clarity and confidence in how things truly are, ignorance is dispelled, the disturbing emotions cease, and liberation from samsara and suffering is attained. This is the reason why the view is so very important.

The correct view is the understanding of the ultimate nature of all phenomena, of the true nature of things. It is necessary to

have correct conduct, with the word "correct" meaning "in harmony with the view." Conduct exists within the realm of the conventional nature of phenomena. Conduct must therefore be correct in relation to conventional truth because in the view of the ultimate truth there is no such thing as killing, stealing, and negative conduct. Does this imply that it is all right to kill? No, because if one kills, on the relative level this will be a crime and this act will cause negative karma. Does this mean that it is all right to steal? No, because if one steals, then on the relative level the law is broken. Therefore, one needs to have correct conduct both in terms of conventional truth and in terms of ultimate truth. If one can develop the view of the ultimate truth, then one will have wisdom that will eliminate ignorance. This wisdom eliminates ignorance and becomes the cause of liberation.

Correct conduct must always be accompanied by the correct view. We develop correct conduct by avoiding negative actions and by practicing positive actions within the realm of conventional truth. All correct conduct must be accompanied by the view of emptiness because correct conduct alone will not bring about the state of meditation, or the attainment of the general and supreme siddhis, or the goal of Buddhahood. Anything we are doing must be accompanied by the profound view of emptiness. Similarly our meditation should always be accompanied by the view of emptiness; otherwise that meditation will be nothing more than a relaxed mental state.

The dharmadhatu (the true nature of all phenomena) is the basis for all of the Buddha's teachings, whether it is the teachings on the egolessness of the individual (as taught in the Foundation vehicle) or the teachings on the emptiness of phenomena (as taught in the Mahayana). When contemplating the teachings on emptiness, we should not conclude, "Oh, all things are empty and void." Rather we need to have a strong understanding of the true nature of phenomena, to the degree that we think, "Oh, this is what the Buddha meant. This is what the Buddha taught."

The teachings of the Buddha can be divided into the sutra and the tantra teachings. We analyze and contemplate while studying the sutras so that we can attain a very definite understanding of the nature of phenomena. Some Tibetan scholars have said that developing definite certainty in a teaching should not rely on what others have said was true. For example, we shouldn't believe in something because somebody proclaims, "This is what the Buddha said." Furthermore, we shouldn't conclude, "It must be true because my guru said so." Rather, we should gain certainty by understanding exactly how things or phenomena truly are and not be swayed by what other people think. We should not doubt our certainty and allow our belief to be undermined by thinking, "Well, that person is right and I am wrong," when someone says we are incorrect. Instead, we need to develop a definite conviction inside us based on our own understanding without being influenced one way or another by other people. The sutra approach is gaining an understanding about reality through inference and logical deduction; we contemplate and think about the teachings and through this process develop a certainty about their validity.

In the tantra or Vajrayana tradition, there is not much emphasis on logical reasoning. Instead there is emphasis on direct understanding which the texts call, "the mind looking at itself and seeing itself directly."[11] If the mind is something that exists, then we will see it directly, that is, we will have a direct understanding which does not depend upon thoughts and deduction. A direct understanding of emptiness gained through meditation is the approach in the Vajrayana.

In the section on the view, however, Jamgon Kongtrul describes the understanding that is gained through analysis and deduction. We do not need to have direct experience and knowledge through meditation at this point but meditation becomes more stable if there is definite understanding gained through analysis and deduction. This is the reason why Jamgon Kongtrul presents the view through the process of the intellect in this chapter.

To gain a definite understanding of emptiness, it is necessary first to receive the teachings from a teacher, to read the texts of great masters, or to study the sutras taught by the Buddha, so that one can have a strong foundation of the Buddha's teachings. Thus, there is the wisdom or prajna that comes from studying (literally "from hearing the teachings"). It is not sufficient to simply know what the Buddha taught; one needs also to contemplate the teachings in order to understand why the teachings are correct. Then one gains the wisdom or prajna that comes from contemplating the teachings. Both wisdoms are necessary, the wisdom arising from learning and the wisdom arising from contemplating the teachings.

3

Developing the Wisdom that Realizes Egolessness

II. Developing Wisdom that Realizes Egolessness

Jamgon Kongtrul said that it is necessary to have the correct view in order to eliminate the source of the disturbing emotions in the mind that prevent liberation. That is why we need to have the correct view and understand the reasons for having the correct view which were discussed in the previous chapter. The second section of this text on the view deals with the need for developing wisdom that realizes egolessness.

A. Egolessness of the Individual

The basis of the view is egolessness which is called in the sutras "the view of what will be destroyed." This view explains the aggregates (Skt. *skandha*) which continually change, are accumulated, and are destroyed. All of the aggregates are impermanent, undergo change, and are eventually destroyed. What is new eventually decays, becomes old, and finally ends. We are not a single entity but rather a coming together of the five aggregates (form, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness). These various components will change and eventually

come to an end. The components are also not single. For example, a form (such as the body) does not consist of one single unit but is made up of components that are continually changing and being destroyed. The view of the self also is called "the view of that which will be destroyed" because it is a view founded upon the aggregates coming together and then dispersing.

Even though elements come together and make up an entity composed of many different things, we think of them as a single entity. For example, our body is composed of many parts and yet we consider ourselves to be a single individual. We see ourselves as "one being," as an "I" or a "self" who took birth, has grown older and will die. But, in fact, the self is a composite of changing aggregates that come together, undergo change, and will finally end. As babies we had a small body and the thoughts of a baby. As a grown-up we have another body and the thoughts of an adult. As long as we are not aware of the changes that take place from childhood through adolescence to old age, we think of ourselves as a single individual. If we examine this closely, however, we discover that there is no place where the self exists and that the view of a self is nothing but a delusion. This is the delusion based on ignorance that must be eliminated.

B. The Egolessness of Phenomena

Because attachment to a self is a delusion, the object of attachment varies and is not one definite thing. We may want to distinguish between "I" and a "mind," in which case we see the mind as "my mind," with "I" owning the separate "mind." Or we can see the body as "my body," in which case the "I" which seems to own the "body" which is seen as "I" and "mind" together. Or we can think of clothes as "my clothes," in which case the "I" seems to own the clothes, that is, the body and mind together with these clothes. Or we can generalize even further and think of a larger context such as "my house," "my district," "my country," and so on. In these cases the "my" has the same shift-

ing relationship of ownership which has little reality to the phenomena themselves. Furthermore, when we think of "my house," our mind automatically distinguishes between "my" and "other" houses. This is a false belief because if we look for "mine" and "other" in the houses themselves, they cannot actually be discovered.

When the mind identifies things as being something they are not, this state of cognition is called "confusion" or "ignorance." Believing something that has no self (i.e. as empty) as being a self (i.e. being solid and real) is the state of ignorance. The nature of ignorance is delusion, an incorrect understanding. We have attachment to a self in the state of delusion. As long as there is attachment to a self one holds four incorrect views, views which are erroneously held as being true.

C. The Four Incorrect Views

There are four incorrect views that interfere with realization of the true nature of reality. The first incorrect view is that if we examine the body from the top of the head to the soles of the feet, we will not find a precious substance but will find only blood, flesh, and bones, which are impure things. The body is composed of impure substances, but because we identify it with the self, we consider it very precious, very pure, and invaluable. We fail to see that it is composed of impure substances and so we conclude, "Since this body is my very own self, it is of great importance." That is the first incorrect view, seeing the impure as pure. The sutras list thirty-six impure substances that make up the physical body—skin, flesh, bile, mucous, and other substances. There isn't a single thing that is of any value or can be called "precious" among these thirty-six components. But because we identify the body with the self, we have great attachment to our body and identify the impure as being pure.

The second incorrect view is seeing suffering as happiness. We experience illness, problems, misery, and suffering in life but

where do all of these difficulties and obstacles come from? They come from attachment to the self. As long as we mistakenly perceive the world, we think that pain and misery come from outside ourselves. By failing to understand the source of suffering, we think others bring pain and affliction upon us. We do not realize that attachment to the self is the source of all our suffering.

There is a story about Patrul Rinpoche from Kham who traveled to Central Tibet with an attendant in order to make an offering of one hundred units of money. He and his attendant had so much money that they worried about being robbed. Therefore, while one person slept, the other stayed awake to be on the guard so nobody would rob and kill them. They also feared being attacked by robbers during the day, so one kept watch behind while the other ran ahead and held lookout. They had a terrible time and Patrul Rinpoche thought, "This is awful. We can't sleep at night and can hardly move during the day. The only reason we are having so much trouble is because of the money." He threw the money into the river and told his attendant, "Now we are fine. We can carry on without any worries and there is nobody to be afraid of. The enemy was the money and it caused all the trouble." He continued, "We had such an attachment to the money and that was the source of our suffering."

The third incorrect view is seeing impermanent objects as being permanent. At birth we are very small and then we grow and eventually become old, so there is a change in our body as well as in our mind. In spite of the change that takes place, we think of ourselves as a single unchanging entity. We think, "This is me from the time of birth until now." We identify impermanent things as "mine" such as "my body, my clothes, my house, my money" and so on. This incorrect view of what is permanent and impermanent comes about because of our attachment to the self that causes anger, desire, pride, and the other disturbing emotions to arise. If we have this attachment to the belief in a self, then we will have all four incorrect views or perceptions. If we can eliminate attachment to a self, then all four incorrect views

will be eliminated.

The fourth incorrect view is to see phenomena as solid and real and not as empty. The Sanskrit term for "the self," is *atman*. It can be applied in its wider sense to all external phenomena. We can hold the belief in a self or in the solid entity of all external phenomena. Instead of seeing all phenomena as they truly are, we think of them as having a reality of their own. Even though all things are composed of many factors that are continually changing, we think of all things as having substantial reality which is attachment to the ego or self of phenomena. Atman can be applied to all phenomena. In a subtler way, atman applies to the five aggregates that make up an individual (form, sensation, recognition, mental formations, and consciousness). Each aggregate is indefinite and continually changing. The body consists of many factors that continually undergo a process of change. Even though all the aggregates that make up an individual continually change, we think of them as being a self of an individual and have attachment to that idea. In this way we can apply the term "self" as in selflessness (Tib. *dakme*) to all phenomena. Ignorance is dullness and obscuration of the mind; we cannot understand things properly. We need to examine and clearly see the nature of things so that we can see what is impure is impure, what is impermanent is impermanent, what is suffering is suffering, and that the absence of a self is the absence of a self. If we can analyze phenomena clearly, then we can have the correct view, but if we cannot analyze clearly, then we will remain in the state of ignorance and fail to understand the Four Noble Truths. If we cannot comprehend the Four Noble Truths, then we will never be able to eliminate ignorance from our mind.

First, we need to eliminate the ignorance of attachment to a self. We eliminate this ignorance by developing the wisdom of egolessness. If we can develop the wisdom of egolessness, then we can eliminate the belief in a self. We develop this wisdom by analyzing and examining the nature of samsaric phenomena. By examining the nature of phenomena and the aggregates, we learn

that there is no self. That is how we develop the wisdom of egolessness. We need to apply the remedy of removing ignorance, the remedy being the wisdom that knows egolessness.

As long as we do not have the wisdom of egolessness, we will not be able to eliminate our attachment to a self. As long as we are attached to a self, we will believe the four misconceptions and consequently experience an unbroken continuity of samsaric suffering. That is why it is essential to develop the wisdom that realizes egolessness. We develop the wisdom that realizes egolessness by hearing (or studying), contemplating, and meditating on the teachings of the nonexistence of self.

Great masters have given examples for this process: It is like being in a darkened room where a rope lies on the floor. Because it is dark, one thinks that the rope is a snake. As a result, one is very frightened and suffers. How can one become free from this fear and suffering? Remedies such as arming oneself with a weapon are of no help. The only thing that will really help is examining what one sees and thus discovering that what one saw in the dark was in fact just a rope. Once one sees that the rope isn't a snake, the fear of a snake naturally ceases and all suffering ends. If one does not examine the rope and calls friends to help kill the snake, this will be of no help. In the same way, if one continues believing in the self of an individual and of phenomena, then one experiences the fear and suffering of samsara. As long as one does not discover that there is no self, nothing can free us from the consequences of misconceptions. Once one realizes egolessness, our samsaric suffering ends. As long as one adheres to the belief in a self, no other method or weapon can free us from suffering because belief in a self is the cause of all suffering. Only the wisdom of realizing egolessness can bring freedom from all suffering.

Questions

Question: Is this the same emptiness as debating the emptiness of a subject and the emptiness of an object when we are talking about self and other or is there a difference? I can't quite understand why you can debate emptiness because you can't have a subject without an object. So why do you have two schools of thought when they are both interdependent?"
Rinpoche: The Rangtong and Shentong present the same teachings on subject and object. In the Rangtong both subject and object are taught to be empty and in the Shentong tradition this is also taught. When the Rangtong position states that the subject and object are empty, they just teach emptiness and say, "Things are unreal, unreal, unreal, unreal ... and things are just empty." The Shentong tradition states that things are in truth empty, but this isn't just an empty voidness. In that emptiness there is clarity and wisdom, which is Buddha-nature. So, that emptiness has an essence of its own. While things are in reality empty, there is an essence of clarity and wisdom in the emptiness.

Question: I am not sure about the object of ignorance.
Rinpoche: In the description on developing the realization of egolessness, the text speaks about the view of "that which is destroyed." This is the belief in a self, viewing the aggregates (which can be destroyed) as being a self. The text describes that this belief in a self has the quality of clarity; there is no doubt that "this is 'me.'" Ignorance is dull and full of doubt; it doesn't see with clarity. The perception of the belief in a self is very clear, so it differs from ignorance. The one belief has clarity and the other has dullness. The definite and clear perception of a self does not give rise to the dull state of ignorance. However, by being habituated to the belief in a self, our mind becomes used to these mistaken beliefs. Due to the power of that habit of thinking of

ourselves as being a solid self, ignorance is created; this eventually develops into disturbing emotions.

Question: I have a question about the three kinds of suffering, especially about the suffering of change and the pervasive suffering. What is the difference between the two?
Rinpoche: The difference between the suffering of change and the all-pervasive suffering is that the suffering of change means happiness will naturally change into suffering. For example, if someone who earns 500 dollars a month receives a raise of 200 dollars a month, he feels very happy. If someone else who earns 700 dollars a month is cut down to 500 dollars a month, he will feel very unhappy. Both now receive 500 dollars, but this made one person happy, while the other is unhappy because previously the second person had earned more each month. Thus, 500 dollars for this individual has become the cause of his suffering. This shows the suffering of change. The all-pervasive suffering refers to the continuous change going on all the time.

4
The Four Seals

III. The Four Seals

In the third part of this text on the view, Jamgon Kongtrul describes the process by which one develops the wisdom that realizes egolessness. The four seals are preliminaries. The word "seal" is used in analogy to the decree of a king, who seals a document to prove that it is the word of the ruler. The four seals are the signs that they are authentic teachings of the Buddha. If any of the four seals are missing, then they are not the teachings of the Buddha. These four seals are: (a) Whatever is composite is impermanent; (b) Everything that is impure is suffering; (c) All phenomena are empty and without a self, and (d) Nirvana is peace.

A. Whatever is composite is impermanent

First, if something doesn't exist, then it doesn't exist, but whatever does exist is composite and not a single, indivisible entity. This is the first seal. All things are made up of various ingredients and these ingredients form existing things. Therefore, all phenomena that exist are composed of various ingredients and as a result are impermanent. Living beings die, objects wear out and disintegrate. At this coarse or obvious

level of impermanence, everything changes over time, and this is obvious and can be understood by everyone. The subtle level of impermanence is the main concern here; it is the momentary impermanence of every instant.

When looking at momentary impermanence on a gross level, we can see that a person changes from childhood to adulthood. One may think that there is continuity in the change that takes place. One may wonder when this change takes place and conclude that every year, everybody is different. However, a change doesn't automatically take place at a certain point each year. One may conclude that every month, everybody is different, but the change doesn't automatically take place at a certain point in each month either. One may conclude that every day or every hour, everybody changes. We follow this reasoning down to every single instant in which a change takes place, so there is impermanence in every instant. This is the subtle level of impermanence. It is easy to see changes that take place over the years, but, in fact, changes are taking place in every instant. Chandrakirti said that even a solid-looking diamond, which is as large as a boulder, changes every single instant.

B. Everything that is Impure is Suffering

All phenomena entail different kinds of suffering. This is the second seal. There are three kinds of suffering: ordinary suffering, the suffering of change, and pervasive suffering.

The first kind of suffering, which is most obvious, includes illness, old age, and pain. It is not necessary to contemplate or meditate upon ordinary suffering because even animals can identify physical suffering for what it is. It need not be analyzed and logically proved that this suffering is suffering.

Even though there is happiness, it will eventually change and come to an end and be replaced by the second form of suf-

fering, which is the suffering of change. Everyone can perceive the suffering of change because happiness cannot last; all happiness is going to come to an end and change into suffering. Therefore everything that arises must fall and everything that joins must separate. In this way, everything is bound to decline and come to an end.

The third type of suffering isn't very obvious. Because all things in samsara are composite phenomena, made up of different things, changing every single instant, samsaric beings experience this third type of suffering. Whether or not they are experiencing happiness or suffering, all living beings experience this subtle suffering called the "suffering of the composite."

C. All phenomena are empty

Whatever phenomena we can perceive are empty like water bubbles. Although we can hear and see things, nothing has a true reality in itself; there is no true self in the individual and no true existence of phenomena. In spite of the fact that they appear, phenomena have no substantial or true reality of their own. Thus it is said that all phenomena are empty and have no self.

D. Nirvana is Peace

The fourth seal is nirvana or peace. Since there is no self of the individual or of phenomena, it is taught that all phenomena are empty and devoid of a true existence. If we realize the absence of a self or egolessness of all things, we will eliminate the four incorrect views and consequently become free from samsara. We will then attain nirvana. But while in our world of samsara, we do not find any true happiness or peace, but experience suffering. Having realized the absence of a self, having become free from samsara and having attained the state of liberation, will result in having attained the supreme happiness of the ultimate goal, which is nirvana, a state of peace.

By realizing the first two seals (the composite is impermanent and all which is polluted is suffering) we gain non-attachment to the world and to samsara and turn our mind towards liberation. We seek refuge and place our hopes in the Buddha and in his teachings. Through the practice of meditation and the realization of the third seal (that phenomena are without a self and empty) we are liberated from samsara.

Once we understand the first three seals, we attain true happiness and peace, which is only found in nirvana. No true happiness and peace can be found in the world of samsara because its nature is suffering. This is the basis of the Buddha's teachings; therefore these four points are called "the seals of the Buddha's teachings."

5

How to Abandon the Two Extremes

IV. Not Falling into the Two Extremes

There are seven sections in Jamgon Kongtrul's text related to the explanation on the view of the Middle-way school. This fourth section deals with how we follow the path that keeps us from falling into the two extremes. The Middle-way is *Madhyamaka* in Sanskrit which means that one is "going directly down the middle," straying neither to the left nor to the right. In terms of the view of realizing the true nature of phenomena, the middle path means not straying into what is called "the view of eternalism" or straying into what is called "the view of nihilism."[12] By avoiding these two extremes, we can go down the Middle-way to reach the realization of the actual nature of phenomena.

We should be able to see the true nature of phenomena in meditation by not straying into either of the two extremes, which can be avoided by having a correct understanding of conventional and ultimate truth. Conventional truth refers to the delusory appearances that we experience. Even though delusory, our conduct should accord with the conventional level of the way things appear.

The Buddha turned the wheel of the dharma three times. First, he presented the teachings of the Four Noble Truths; second, he presented the teachings on emptiness; third, he presented the teachings on the true nature of the mind, the teachings on Buddha-nature. After the Buddha passed away, the Indian masters and scholars presented the Buddha's teachings in a definitive manner and thus four Buddhist traditions developed in India: the tradition of the Great Exposition (Skt. *Vaibhashika*), the Sutra-school (Skt. *Sautrantika*) the Mind-only (Skt. *Chittamatra*), and the Middle-way (Skt. *Madhyamaka*) school.

The Buddha gave teachings in a particular order for a reason. He began with teachings on meritorious conduct, which obviously involves assuming there is a self. In the second turning he gave the teachings on emptiness to turn people away from the belief in a self. In the third turning, he gave teachings on Buddha-nature that taught the correct view of emptiness.

A. The Two extremes in the Four Traditions

1. The Great Exposition (Vaibhashika) Tradition

First the Buddha taught the Foundation vehicle on how to turn away from unvirtuous actions. This was taught in terms of the conventional level of existence. Had the Buddha first taught about emptiness, his students would not have turned away from negative actions because they would have heard that nothing exists so why make an effort to do good. Instead, the Buddha taught that things do exist: the mind exists, the body exists, previous lives exist, future lives exist, that virtuous actions lead to good karma, that negative actions result in bad karma, that there is a self, and there are others. He was teaching on the reality of all appearances. When we believe all these things are real, we realize that we should avoid negative actions because they create suffering and that we should practice positive actions because they bring about merit. So, first the Buddha's teachings assumed that

all appearances do exist and are real. The tradition of the Sarvastivadins arose from these teachings; and they believed that all phenomena do actually exist; much like the Great Exposition (Skt. *Vaibhashika*) school.

There is a difference between the way things appear and the way things truly are. Even though there is a difference between apparent nature and true nature, the first teaching emphasizes the apparent nature of phenomena and so, for example, the teachings affirmed that there is such a thing as killing and terrible consequences for doing this act. Because things appear to exist, the first set of teachings accepts things as they appear. Thus, when we kill, we certainly harm someone, and consequently this will harm us through the law of karma. There are negative actions which cause negative results and there are good actions, which cause good results. This is the reason why we should do what is beneficial to others which in turn will bring a good consequence to ourselves, and this is the reason why we should not do harmful actions to others which will bring a bad consequence to ourselves. If we are able to do good actions and avoid bad actions, then we will attain merit. If we do not do positive actions and do not avoid negative actions, then we will harm ourselves.

From the viewpoint of the apparent nature of things the Great Exposition tradition asserts the existence of phenomena and the existence of cause and effect, thus presenting the teachings of the different kinds of negative actions and their results and the different kinds of positive actions and their results.

2. The Sutra-school (Sautrantika) Tradition

The second tradition is the Sautrantikas, which means "the followers of the sutras." This school as well as the Great Exposition followers are members of the Foundation vehicle. The Sutra-school teaches that matter does exist (for example, there is a body, there is sound from speech, etc.), but concepts created by the mind do not have any existence. They believe, for example,

that the body does exist from the crown of the head to the soles of the feet. The actions accomplished by the body and speech do have their results. But, what we call "the mind" (or "me") has no existence. If asked, "Where is the body?" a Sutra-school follower would point to it and reply, "That is my body which exists." They would not say the same for the self because it cannot be pointed to; it is merely a concept of the mind. Therefore, the self has no existence. This is how the Sutra-school presents their teachings using this viewpoint to avoid the two extreme views of nihilism and eternalism.

The first two traditions, then, are the Great Exposition and the Sutra-school. Although the Sutra-school teaches the egolessness of the individual, it does not teach the egolessness of phenomena. These two schools of the Great Exposition and Sutra-school are principally Foundation schools. The other two traditions, the Mind-only school and the Middle-way schools are Mahayana schools.

3. The Mind-only (Chittamatra) Tradition

The Mind-only (Skt. *Chittamatra*) followers teach that all external appearances, including one's own body, are created by and are part of the mind. Objects do appear and we do perceive them, but none of the things that appear have any external existence; they all arise within the mind itself. How can this be? They give the example of when we are asleep and we dream of a mountain, a house, animals, people, friends, enemies, and so forth, we see various things exactly as we would see them while awake. But, none of these things actually exist; they are all appearances arising from our mind. In the same way, all appearances that we normally perceive while awake also arise in the mind. They are nothing else but mind. This is why this tradition is called "Chittamatra," which in Sanskrit means "mind-only," that is, everything is "only" mind.

First, there are tendencies or latencies (Tib. *bag chag*)[13] that are created in the mind. If the mind is habituated to something

that is positive, gradually the mind gets better and better and one's thoughts become more and more virtuous. If, on the other hand, the mind becomes habituated to something that is negative, gradually the mind gets worse and worse and one's thoughts become more and more unvirtuous. For example, slight anger may arise within us. If we take control of that anger and get rid of it, then it will not remain in our mind as a latency. If, on the other hand, we do not take control of that anger, it will become stronger and stronger. In the beginning we are stronger than the anger, but if we don't control it, the anger becomes stronger and we cannot get rid of it. In this process, what the mind allows to become a habitual pattern becomes more and more powerful. This applies as well to positive emotions such as love, compassion, and the wish to benefit others. These thoughts can be small in the beginning, but if we cultivate them and habituate ourselves to them, they will increase and become more and more powerful.

The mind is therefore said to be dependent upon these latencies within it. In the Mind-only view, this mind is said to really exist, whereas appearances both in the outer world and in the mind itself are "imaginary," or, we could say, are creations of the mind or delusions.

The followers of the Mind-only school describe rebirth in hell, for example, through the same process; it occurs due to the power of anger. By becoming habituated to anger, this anger increases so much that what you experience or see is people being harmed and killed and wishing to harm you. The mind becomes accustomed to this malevolence and intention to harm which therefore grows stronger and stronger. The teachings say that through the power of anger the individual will be reborn in the hell realms. Due to the strong tendency created in mind that resulted from cultivating anger, after death one experiences a rebirth where one sees people being burned in fire and chopped up and all other kinds of tortures. In the same way, during daily life, if we look at people maliciously and wish to harm them, we habituate ourselves to this malice within which grows quite powerful. Then we will have disturbing dreams and nightmares while asleep at night and will see unpleasant things. If, on the other

hand, we develop a peaceful state of mind that loves and wishes to help others during the day, we will have pleasant dreams and see nice things while we sleep at night. In the same way, through developing love, compassion, and the wish to help others throughout our lifetime, the power of that habituation will also influence what we experience after death and in the next life. Instead of taking rebirth in hell, we can have rebirth in a pure realm.

4. The Middle-way (Madhyamaka) Tradition

The fourth tradition, which is the highest of the traditions, is the Middle-way (Skt. *Madhyamaka*). Both Rangtong and Shentong are branches of the Middle-way school. The Middle-way tradition teaches that we need to pay attention to both the view of emptiness and also be concerned about our conduct. The conduct relates to our functioning on the conventional level of reality. The conventional truth is that everything is not a delusion or without any true existence. While the ultimate truth states that everything is a delusion, this doesn't mean that conventional truth is false. The conventional truth is a truth. It is called a "conventional truth," because if one plants a seed, it is not going to wither but will grow into a flower or fruit when given compost, watered regularly, and nourished by the sun.

In the same way, a good action will be the cause for a good result and a bad action will be the cause for a bad result. Therefore, in the context of conventional truth, one's conduct must accord with the laws of cause and effect; one should avoid what is negative and try to adopt all the positive qualities in one's conduct. In the Mahayana tradition, good conduct means practicing the six perfections (generosity, patience, discipline, enthusiastic effort, meditation, and wisdom). By practicing the six perfections, one will gain a good result due to the law of conventional truth.

The ultimate truth is realizing the truth of emptiness; it means recognizing that all appearances are without any reality and are merely illusory. Realization of the emptiness of phenomena will eliminate one's suffering and fear of samsara.

Chart 1
The Four Major Schools

The Great Exposition School
(Skt. *Vaibhashika*)

1. A Foundation school relying on the sutras with goal of self-liberation.
2. They believe that outer phenomena are real and solid and made up of indestructible atoms.
3. They believe that there is no solid self.
4. They believe that time is made up of irreducible small units.
5. Works mostly on the conventional level, believing in the existence of karma (cause and effect), and in conducting oneself by engaging only in positive actions.
6. They believe that mind is made up of six consciousnesses (the five sensory consciousnesses and the mental consciousness)
7. One of principle works is Vasubandhu's *Abhidharma-kosha*

The Sutra-school
(Skt. *Sautrantika*)

1. A Foundation school with the goal of self-liberation.
2. They believe that external phenomena, space, and time exist, but that the self ("mind" or "me") does not exist.
3. Works mostly on the conventional level and on realizing the egolessness of self.
4. They believe that mind is made up of six consciousnesses.
5. They believe in taking the sutras literally, thus the name.

Chart 1 (continued)

The Mind-only School
(Skt. *Chittamatra*)

1. A Mahayana school with goal of liberating all sentient beings.
2. They believe that all external phenomena as well as the body do not inherently exist but are created by the mind.
3. They believe that the mind is real, while phenomena are created by mind.
4. They believe that the mind is made up of six consciousnesses plus the seventh afflicted consciousness and the eighth alaya consciousness.
5. Believe that there are karmic latencies that enter the eighth consciousness that influence behavior.
6. They follow Asanga as basis of their theory

The Middle-way School
(Skt. *Madhyamaka*)

1. A Mahayana school with goal of liberating all sentient beings, not just oneself.
2. They believe that both internal phenomena and all external phenomena are empty.
3. They believe that on the conventional level positive and negative actions lead to positive and negative karma.
4. This school was divided in Tibet into two sub-schools: the Rangtong and Shentong subschools. These are described in more detail on page 68.

6

The Middle-way School

The fourth point on dealing with the two extremes is divided into two parts. The first part, given in the previous chapter, discussed how the four traditions avoid falling into the error of the two extremes. The second part of the fourth point then focuses on the Middle-way school. This section on the Middle-way School is divided into three parts with the first subsection defining emptiness.

IV. Not Falling into the Two Extremes
B. The Middle-way School
1. The Main Characteristic of the Middle-way

Jamgon Kongtrul in the root text says, "The object of its view is emptiness." What is meant by emptiness? How does one identify the emptiness that the Middle-way teaches? What is it that is empty? What are phenomena empty of? This emptiness relates to the egolessness of the individual and the egolessness of phenomena. The self is the thought "I" and "me," which is empty; this is called the egolessness or selflessness of self. The egolessness of phenomena is the belief that outside phenomena are devoid of that inherent self also. This is what is meant by emptiness. It is being empty of the self or ego of the individual and the self

or ego of phenomena.

That was the first part of this part explaining the Middle-way tradition. The other two subsections are an explanation of the difference between the Rangtong philosophy and the Shentong philosophy.

2. The Rangtong Tradition of the Middle-way

The Rangtong tradition teaches that all phenomena are without any reality. The way the Buddha taught emptiness in the sutras was by presenting sixteen different kinds of emptiness. *Rang* means "self" and *tong* means "empty," i.e. phenomena are empty or devoid of an own nature, so all things are devoid of themselves. Relative phenomena have no true inherent reality; they are devoid of a nature of their own, of a self-nature. That is the teaching of emptiness taught by the Rangtong school.

In Rangtong, one can examine the nature of phenomena and gain knowledge of emptiness of phenomena using intellectual arguments. When it comes to meditation, one needs the Shentong approach because the view of emptiness alone leads to an uncomfortable meditation. One can think, "Am I supposed to see everything as non-existent?" Then the meditation can become awkward. In terms of meditation practice, the Shentong is the union of the sutra and tantra approach and is therefore very important; it is without the thought of "just" being emptiness.

a. Sixteen Emptinesses

Jamgon Kongtrul next lists the sixteen emptinesses which are:

1. *External emptiness*. The first of the sixteen emptinesses is called "external emptiness." It refers to all external appearances, such as mountains, forests, houses and everything that we see as external objects. We perceive external things through our senses and through our sensory consciousnesses. For example, the eye

has the visual consciousness which perceives a visual image. This visual image is an external phenomenon. These external phenomena of visual forms have no true reality. They are therefore empty. Similarly, the aural consciousness of the ear perceives sounds, which have no true reality either. This applies to the consciousness of the nose, the tongue, and physical body which perceive smells, tastes, and tactile objects respectively. The mental consciousness experiences a vast range of mental phenomena. These are the six external objects perceived by the six inner consciousnesses. All these outer objects that are perceived are without any reality and are called "external emptiness."

When we hear that all external phenomena have no reality and that their nature is emptiness, it is difficult to believe this at first because we think, "Well, I can see all these things. There are mountains, rivers, forests, houses and so many things that I can perceive. They do exist." But, in fact, if we examine carefully, we discover that they have no inherent or real existence. For example, I am holding a two-inch and a four-inch stick of incense; the four-inch one is long and the two-inch one is short. We think, "There is no mistake in that. We can't deny that the one is long and the other is short." But, this thought is simply a fabrication or creation of the mind because by placing the "long" stick next to six-inch stick of incense, the stick that was previously "long" becomes the shorter one and this new one becomes the "long" one. Phenomena are empty of being "long" or "short"; there is simply no long and short as such. It is the same for the other things created by the mind. There is no big or small, beautiful or ugly, good or bad. All these thoughts are merely creations of the mind; they have no reality. This is what is called "external emptiness."

One might accept this and think, "There is no reality to the ideas of long and short, but nonetheless, things do exist." One has a general impression that there are these things and that they do have an existence. But, in fact, we can examine them and see that this is not so; things do not have any real existence of their

own. By examining phenomena, we find that phenomena are neither unitary nor multiple; they are neither one thing nor many things. For example, when we see a hand, we think, "This is a hand." If we ask anybody else, they will agree, "Yes, that is a hand." But, then if we point to the thumb and ask if it is a hand, the reply will be, "No, it's a thumb." Further, if we point to the index finger and ask whether it is a hand, the reply will be, "No, it's an index-finger." If we point to the middle finger, the ring-finger, the skin, the flesh, the bones and so on and ask, "Is this the hand?" The answer is "No." Where then is the hand? We cannot point to any spot and define it as "the hand" and we cannot find what is called "hand" by investigating the parts of the hand either. In fact, the hand is a collection of many different components and there is no such thing as a "hand" that exists of itself. It is a creation of the mind.

The same is true with a house. We can go through all parts of a house and discover that the pillar is not the house; the beams are not the house, and so on. There is no "house." Just as a house has no existence, similarly mountains don't exist, people don't exist, etc. Nothing will ever be found to truly exist. This is what is meant by "external emptiness."

2. *Internal emptiness.* The second of the sixteen emptinesses is internal emptiness. When objects such as a hand are seen, we do so with the visual consciousness. There is the perception of the hand in the visual consciousness. If a hand does not exist, then the visual consciousness that perceives the hand cannot have any existence either. This applies to all sensory consciousnesses. No consciousness has a reality of its own because the object of the consciousness is empty. This is what is meant by "internal emptiness."

3. *External and internal emptiness.* The third emptiness is external and internal emptiness. If the external objects and the perceiving consciousnesses have no existence, then how can

perceptions take place? How is it possible to see something if there is no visual consciousness perceiving it? The same is true for hearing and so on. This process of the connection between the object and the consciousness is called "external and internal emptiness." It is the lack of reality of the process of seeing, hearing, and so on.

4. *Emptiness of emptiness.* We have established the emptiness of external phenomena the inner consciousnesses and the connection between external phenomena, and the inner consciousnesses. Therefore, we might conclude, "Well, then emptiness exists." In fact, this emptiness does not exist. This emptiness itself has no real existence of its own. This is the fourth emptiness, which is called "the emptiness of emptiness."

5. *Great emptiness.* The fifth kind of emptiness is called "the great emptiness" or "the vast emptiness." When we think of directions (north, south, east, and west), we think of these directions as being something real. We think they have reality and that there is a north, east, south, and west. But, in fact, they are merely creations of the mind. Here in England we can think that we are presently in the west, but in terms of America we are in the east. Therefore, directions are simply mental creations and are devoid of any reality. This is the great emptiness.

6. *Emptiness of the ultimate.* The sixth is called "the emptiness of the ultimate." So far we have shown that all relative phenomena are empty. If we try to prove that the ultimate exists, it cannot be done. This is the emptiness of the ultimate.

7. *Emptiness of the composite.* The seventh emptiness is the emptiness of the composite. All external and internal phenomena (everything that appears) have no reality. So all composites of these phenomena are also without reality. This lack of reality is the emptiness of the composite.

8. *Emptiness of the non-composite.* If composites have no reality, then the non-composite or the absence of things has no reality either. That is the emptiness of the non-composite, which is the eighth emptiness.

9. *Emptiness of the transcendence of extremes.* The two extremes are the extremes of eternalism and nihilism. Both eternalism and nihilism are devoid of any reality. Therefore, the transcendence of these two extremes is also devoid of any reality. Transcending eternalism and nihilism doesn't transcend emptiness. So this is the emptiness of the transcendence of extremes.

10. *Emptiness of phenomena which is beginningless and endless.* The tenth emptiness is the emptiness of phenomena which have no beginning and no end. The very ideas "beginning" and "end" have no reality. For instance, we could say that the middle of the night is the end of the day or we could say that it is the beginning of the day. There is no actual reality to the terms "beginning" and "end." Also, it is said that samsara is without a beginning and without an end. Yet samsara is without any true reality of its own. Therefore, phenomena which have no beginning or end are empty also.

11. *Emptiness of that which is not discarded.* The eleventh emptiness is the emptiness of that which is not eliminated or cast aside. We wish to eliminate samsara and all of the faults of samsara and as a result attain liberation or nirvana. Samsara and all its faults have no reality; therefore, after we have discarded this, the result which is nirvana or liberation also has no reality either and is empty.

12. *Emptiness of nature.* The twelfth emptiness is the emptiness of essence. We might think that there is something that is real in all phenomena and that it is that they have a nature or essence.

There is no reality to that nature. That is the emptiness of nature.

13. *Emptiness of all dharmas (phenomena).* The thirteenth emptiness is that everything (every phenomenon) is empty. Therefore, there is the emptiness of all phenomena.

14. *Emptiness of specific characteristics.* Things have their own natural characteristics, but these characteristics have no reality either.

15. *Emptiness of non-perception.* Non-perception refers to the state in which nothing is being perceived or experienced. That, too, has no reality. That is the emptiness of non-perception.

16. *Emptiness of the essence of the non-existence of things.* The sixteenth emptiness is the emptiness of the absence of phenomena. It has been established that phenomena are empty, so the absence of phenomena, i.e., voidness or a complete blankness must also be empty.

These sixteen emptinesses were taught by the Buddha in the *Prajnaparamita* sutra ("The Perfection of Wisdom Sutra") in order to establish that all conventional phenomena which arise through interdependent origination[14] have no reality of their own, and are empty of any nature of their own. This is the view of the Rangtong tradition, which teaches that all things are empty of themselves.

b. Summary of the Four Emptinesses

These aspects of emptiness are then summarized into four basic types: (1) The emptiness of phenomena, (2) the emptiness of the non-existence of phenomena, (3) the emptiness of the nature of phenomena, and (4) the emptiness of the phenomena which is other.

We have examined the importance of the two kinds of emptiness in relation to the Middle-way school. Up to now we have used the Rangtong analysis of emptiness. Next we will examine emptiness from the Shentong view which is slightly different from the Rangtong view.

3. The Shentong Tradition of the Middle-way School

Many texts discuss topics such as emptiness in terms of the view, meditation, and conduct. What is being emphasized in this chapter is in relation to the view.

In the previous section we had been looking into the importance of the egolessness of persons and the egolessness of phenomena according to the Rangtong tradition. Now we will examine emptiness from the point of view of the Shentong tradition which presents the list of emptinesses in a way slightly different from the Rangtong tradition. *Shen* means "other" and *tong* means "empty, i.e. devoid of that which is other," with "other" being the impurities. The essence of emptiness in the Shentong is clarity (and not a thing or voidness). That is the teaching of emptiness taught by the Shentong.

The Importance of Good Conduct[15]

Many people study and practice the dharma diligently, but they do not achieve any positive results. Many lamas are unhappy that they have not been able to engender realization in their pupils; the pupils are also unhappy, thinking, "I haven't been able to gain realization." The reason for this is that many lamas emphasize view and meditation but do not emphasize conduct. The lamas pass this attitude on to their pupils, who also see view and meditation as important and conduct as not so important. When these lamas teach the accumulation of wisdom and the accumulation of merit, the accumulation of wisdom is emphasized and given much attention, while the accumulation of merit is regarded

as insignificant. This is the reason why results in meditation are not achieved.

For example, three years ago I went to South America and my interpreter gave me advice on what I should teach. He said, "There are three subjects that you can teach. People do not like to hear about karma, about the suffering of lower existences, nor about samsara; is it better not to mention these things. People will not object to the topic of love, compassion, and bodhichitta, but there is nothing special about it; it is okay as a subject. A third possible subject is emptiness and egolessness. People really like that and will be astonished and surprised by the topic. Even though many people do not understand it, they still like it because they think it is really profound." I gave the talk on emptiness and egolessness and the next day somebody remarked, "I didn't sleep all night because I was wondering what emptiness is." It is important to have teachings on conduct and the view. If one doesn't have the practice of proper conduct, then the practice of dharma will not bring a beneficial result.

I am teaching the view in this book, but we should not forget about the practice of conduct. We should keep the practice of good physical actions and good speech in mind from day to day and from month to month, and not forget them throughout our life. We should practice good actions of the body, use good speech, and use our possessions to accumulate good actions. We should avoid negative actions with our body and speech and our resources. If we keep that in mind all the time and put it into practice, we will accumulate merit. If it is possible to accumulate merit in this way, then it will be impossible not to achieve beneficial results when it comes to meditation practice and learning about the view.

We should remember good conduct at all times; whether we are meditating, working, or doing something else. When we are learning, contemplating, and meditating, we should always think of accumulating merit through our actions. We should never ignore the accumulation of positive karma with our actions and

speech and never regard these positive actions as being unimportant. We should always try to avoid negative actions and remember the necessity of accumulating merit. This will make our practice fruitful.

a. The Three Natures

What is another difference between the Rangtong and the Shentong view? One major view is that in the Shentong view phenomena are described in terms of three characteristics or natures: The imaginary nature (Skt. *pankalpita*), the dependent nature (Skt. *paratantra*), and the completely perfect nature (Skt. *parinishpanna*).[16]

1. *The imaginary nature.* The first characteristic of phenomena is called "the imaginary" phenomena. This means that objects are merely a result of the attachment of the mind. The mind thinks, "This is what this is; this is real." But, what the mind perceives as "real" is purely a fabrication of the mind.

2. *The dependent nature.* Although appearances are delusory in nature, these appearances still rise in the mind. These appearances do actually occur to the mind. Even though these appearances are empty, they arise in the mind due to the power of the latencies that were created in a previous lifetime, as described in the Mind-only school. These appearances arise dependent on these latencies or tendencies. Although these appearances arise, they have no reality and their essence is empty. The second characteristic of mind is that experience, the arising of appearances to the mind, called "the dependent." Attachment to those appearances (thinking that they are real) is the characteristic of "the imaginary" or "mentally fabricated."

3. *The completely perfect nature.* The first characteristic of phe-

nomena is the imaginary phenomena. The second is dependent appearances, and the third is the completely perfect nature. The first two (the mentally fabricated and the dependent arising of appearances) are both empty. This emptiness is the third characteristic, called the "complete perfection" or the "dharmadhatu" (the expanse of phenomena). *Dhatu* or "expanse" is like space, where one can move around in any direction without encountering any obstacles. The dharmadhatu (the nature of phenomena, where "dharma" means "phenomena") is the expanse in which all qualities or appearances can arise and develop; it is like the foundation for all phenomena. Although the dharmadhatu is likened to space, it is not like "dead space," which is only a vacuum. Inanimate or physical space means that it is without mind. The dharmadhatu, on the other hand, is expanse that has a mind, which thinks, and in which all qualities of the mind can develop. It is the nature of phenomena. There are conceptual fabrications, the dependent characteristics (the arising of appearances) of phenomena, and the true nature (dharmadhatu) of phenomena. Here "dharma" means that all things are able to change, to develop, and to progress. Here "expanse" means it is like a container out of which things can manifest.

Dharmadhatu is also called *parinishpanna* in Sanskrit which means "the state of complete perfection." Complete perfection is the source of all positive qualities, which can only arise from the dharmadhatu. Complete perfection also is not like empty space, devoid of mind. Some great masters call it "the supreme emptiness which has all aspects," because everything (good and bad) can arise in it. Where do ordinary beings come from? They arise from the emptiness that contains all aspects. Therefore, everything can arise from the true nature of phenomena, from dharmadhatu. The body of a Buddha, the pure realms, all qualities of Buddhahood can manifest from this perfection, which is the nature of all phenomena.

Dharmadhatu also has wisdom, clarity, and knowing, so it is

called "the union of space and wisdom." There is the expanse of space in which everything can flourish and there is also the presence of wisdom. Space here does not refer to physical space, but to mental space, which has wisdom and positive qualities. The dharmadhatu is the source of all qualities and wisdom; everything arises from the true nature of phenomena.

The Rangtong tradition teaches that all phenomena of conventional truth arise due to interdependent origination and have no reality of their own, so they are devoid of a nature of their own. The difference between the Rangtong and Shentong viewpoints is that in the Shentong view there is a discussion of the conceptual fabrications and the state of dependence, which form delusory or impure appearances. Conceptual fabrications and dependence are empty of their own nature, as is emphasized by the Rangtong, but they are separate and distinct from the basic state of complete perfection. The state of complete perfection is "devoid of other," with "other" being conceptual fabrications and interdependence—the impure and delusory appearances that arise.

The Shentong tradition affirms that the state of perfection is the union of wisdom and space, which is distinct from the illusory appearances of mental fabrications and interdependence. The state of complete perfection is devoid of those impurities, i.e. the impurities which are "other" than complete perfection. Thus this tradition is called "Shentong" ("devoid of everything other than itself").

b. The Fourteen Emptinesses

The Shentong tradition presents an emptiness slightly different from the Rangtong presentation of the sixteen emptinesses. First, a group of fourteen and then a group of two emptinesses are presented in the Shentong teachings. The fourteen emptinesses are (1) Internal emptiness; (2) External emptiness; (3) Internal and external emptiness; (4) Great emptiness; (5) Emptiness of

emptiness; (6) Emptiness of the ultimate; (7) Emptiness of the composite; (8) Emptiness of the non-composite; (9) Emptiness of the transcendence of extremes; (10) Emptiness of that which is beginningless and endless; (11) Emptiness of that which is not eliminated; (12) the Emptiness of nature;(13) the Emptiness of characteristics; and (14) the Emptiness of all dharmas (qualities). These are the first fourteen emptinesses presented in the previous Rangtong section.

The first six emptinesses relate to conventional and ultimate phenomena, with the first four emptinesses being concerned with conventional phenomena and the fifth and sixth emptinesses being concerned with ultimate phenomena.

Emptiness of Conventional Phenomena

1. *Internal emptiness*. As described before, internal emptiness pertains to the internal sensory consciousnesses that experience perceptions such as thoughts and dreams. They are without any reality of their own and are thus empty.

2. *External emptiness* refers to the emptiness of the objects that are experienced by the sensory consciousnesses.

3. *Internal and external emptiness* refers to the physical basis in which perceptions take place (the body, skin, sensory organs, etc.). This is referred to as outward and inner emptiness. Sensory perception takes place within this basis. The physical location of sensory perception has no reality of its own.

There isn't much difference between the Rangtong and Shentong explanation of this third emptiness; they are about the same. In the Rangtong explanation, it is the physical bases of the sensory faculties, which are concealed. You have the external appearances that are perceived; they are "external emptiness." You have the internal consciousnesses that are empty and are "internal emptiness." Then there is the subtle physical basis for the sen-

sory organ to function. That subtle basis is empty and is called "external and internal emptiness." In the Shentong tradition it is called "the concealed or hidden part related to the outer and inner phenomenon" i.e. the physical basis for the sensory faculty. It is the third emptiness, because it is neither included in external phenomena nor in internal consciousnesses; it is in-between. Therefore, there is the emptiness for the bases for the sensory faculties; their emptiness is external and internal emptiness.

4. *Great emptiness* concerns the external world, the outer phenomena which appear to be outside us, but are actually located in our inner consciousnesses. This also is empty.

Emptiness of Ultimate Phenomena

5. *Emptiness of emptiness.* The emptiness of emptiness is taught to eliminate attachment to emptiness as being solid and real. It emphasizes the expanse of emptiness.

6. *Emptiness of the ultimate.* On the ultimate level, the true nature of phenomena is luminous clarity. The emptiness of the ultimate nature is taught in order to prevent attachment to luminous clarity as having a solid reality of its own. It emphasizes the expanse of clarity.

The next eight emptinesses are concerned with specific phenomena that have no reality or true nature of their own. The first four of the eight emptinesses have to do with the practices of accumulating merit, accumulating wisdom, avoiding the extremes of existence and nonexistence, and working for the benefit of all sentient beings.

Emptiness of Practices on the Path

7. & 8. *Emptiness of the composite* and *Emptiness of the noncomposite.* A bodhisattva practices developing what is compos-

ite in nature and this refers to the accumulation of merit. It is composite because it is the accumulation of many different things making it a composite. What is non-composite in nature refers to the accumulation of wisdom which isn't a composite of many things. But the bodhisattva isn't attached to either of them as having a true nature or being real. Therefore, it is taught that the emptiness of the composite and non-composite do not have any true existence.

9. & 10. *Emptiness of the transcendence of extremes* and *Emptiness of that which is beginningless and endless*. When we practice meditation in the space of the dharmadhatu which is beyond the extreme of existence and non-existence, we should not think of it as something that truly exists. There is no object of our practice of meditation that has a reality of its own. To prevent that attachment, there is the teaching of the dharmadhatu, emptiness which is beyond. This practice is done for our own benefit. The next emptiness is concerned with something that benefits others, the *emptiness of that which is beginningless and endless*.[17] This refers to sentient beings, who are beginningless and endless. Bodhisattvas must work for the benefit of all sentient beings, but in doing so, bodhisattvas must not become attached to the practice of helping all sentient beings as having a true existence in itself. Therefore, there are the two kinds of emptinesses in relation to these two kinds of practices: avoiding the two extremes of existence and nonexistence and the practice of working to benefit all beings. In order to not become attached to the existence of or the nonexistence of objects as real (which gives rise to delusory appearances), these two emptinesses are taught.

In summary, four types of emptiness have just been discussed: (1) the emptiness of the composite and (2) the emptiness of the non-composite, (3) the emptiness of that which is beginningless and endless, and (4) the emptiness of that which is beyond extremes. These four emptinesses relate to the path and are applicable to both the Foundation vehicle and the Mahayana ve-

hicle of practice.

Emptinesses Specific to the Mahayana

These next four emptinesses are specific to the Mahayana, starting with the emptiness of that which is not discarded.

11. *Emptiness of that which is not discarded.* When we attain the state of Buddhahood, we have gathered the accumulation of wisdom that realizes the true nature of phenomena. Once we have attained this state of realization we are at a level that is inexhaustible and cannot be eradicated. At this point, all the negative qualities have been discarded and a vast amount of wisdom has been accumulated. But the wisdom accumulated when we have reached Buddhahood is not a solid, real entity or state. Therefore, to understand even though this state is inexhaustible, this wisdom has no reality of its own, that even the nature of this inexhaustible state is emptiness, we have to realize the emptiness of this state.

12. *Emptiness of the true nature.* The emptiness of true nature refers to the pure essence, which is free of all adventitious stains and impurities. This pure nature is within all beings, but it does not exist as a solid or real thing within beings. Its nature is also emptiness. The Rangtong tradition criticizes the Shentong tradition by suggesting that the Shentong school makes the same error as the Brahmanical tradition when they describe an enduring "self" (Skt. *atman*). The Rangtong argument is that the Shentong teaching about this "pure nature as devoid of all impurities" in other words, Buddha-nature, is the same enduring quality as has been ascribed to a self (or *atman*). If Buddha-nature (Skt. *tathagata-garbha*) is believed to be eternal and real, then this view is definitely a mistaken view. If the Shentong tradition believes Buddha-essence is permanent, then the Shentong view is indeed in error. However, the Shentong tradition teaches that Buddha-

nature is actually this emptiness and therefore has no reality of its own. This is the why this twelfth point on the emptiness of Buddha-essence is so important.

13. *Emptiness of characteristics.* The emptiness of characteristics concerns the effect or the result. There is the true nature or Buddha-essence, which is the union of space and wisdom. Although this Buddha-essence is the nature of all beings, it is not recognized by ordinary individuals. This true essence is the source of all the characteristics or qualities an individual gains at the time of the final result (or Buddhahood). When it is seen and directly understood, all the qualities of this true nature manifest. At that time, everything that needs to be eliminated will be eliminated and the characteristics of the Buddha's mind and body will manifest from this pure nature, which is said to be the union of wisdom and emptiness. A Buddha's body has 32 major characteristics and 80 secondary characteristics. All of these characteristics manifest from this pure nature, but even this pure nature should not be seen as a truly existing entity. If we see this pure nature as existing, then we have mistaken the nature of the source of the 32 major and 80 secondary characteristics. By recognizing the emptiness of these characteristics, we realize that the source of all the 32 major and 80 secondary characteristics of a Buddha's body has no reality of its own. The nature of that source is emptiness.

14. *Emptiness of all dharmas (qualities).* This last emptiness refers to the qualities of the Buddha's mind. We may categorize the qualities of a Buddha into the qualities of the Buddha's body and the qualities of the Buddha's mind. The qualities of the Buddha's body are called the "form body" (Skt. *rupakaya*) and the qualities of the Buddha's mind are called the "truth body" (Skt. *dharmakaya*).[18] This emptiness refers only to the level of the dharmakaya. The sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya which together comprise the rupakaya possess the 32 major and 80 sec-

ondary characteristics of a Buddha's body, whereas the dharmakaya has the qualities such as the ten powers, the four fearlessnesses, and so on. The Buddha's mind has the qualities of wisdom, compassion, and power. These qualities do manifest, but they should not be seen as truly existing entities. Therefore, this last emptiness speaks about the lack of reality of the Buddha's mind, the emptiness of dharmas.

These last four emptinesses are specific to the Mahayana and refer to the path and the fruition of the path. The first two relate to benefiting oneself and benefiting others at the level of the path. The last two relate to benefitting others and oneself at the level of the fruition.

In summary, the teachings on the fourteen emptinesses show how all phenomena are empty. It is important that these teachings are understood, because if they aren't understood, then people could think that samsara is real and they would not want to go beyond samsara, that is, they would engage in the extreme of nihilism. On the other hand, if the state of Buddhahood and the qualities of a Buddha are perceived as truly existent, then people would fall into the extreme of eternalism. If they believe in the reality of the sufferings of samsara and of the liberation and qualities of Buddhahood, they would follow the Foundation vehicle path of the shravakas and pratyekabuddhas, who strive to help only themselves. The fourteen emptinesses were taught by the Buddha to prevent this from happening.

c. The Emptinesses of the nonexistence of phenomena

In addition to the fourteen emptinesses already presented, two more emptinesses are presented in the Shentong view.. The first of these, the emptiness of the non-existence of things, is given to refute the reality of mentally fabricated phenomena ("imaginary nature") and to refute the reality of the dependent state of the mind ("the dependent nature"). These have no true existence of their own. Second, because the state of complete perfection also

has no reality of its own, so the emptiness of the essence of the absence of entities is given. In this way, these two emptinesses refute any attachment to a reality of the three natures—of mentally fabricated phenomena, of the dependent appearances, or of the completely perfect. All three characteristics are taught as having no reality of their own.

15. *Emptiness of the non-existence of phenomena.* There are three characteristics of phenomena presented by the Shentong school. The first two characteristics of phenomena, "the completely fabricated or imagined" and "that which is dependent" are established as empty of any nature of their own. This emptiness is based on the nonexistence of things. The emptiness of the nonexistence of phenomena is taught due to the absence of reality of the mentally fabricated and the dependent appearances.

16. *Emptiness of the essence of the non-existence of phenomena.* This emptiness refers to the third characteristic of phenomena in the Shentong view or the "completely perfect." This is the true nature, which is also said to have no reality of its own; it too is devoid of a nature of its own.

These two emptinesses demonstrate the non-reality of all three characteristics of phenomena as described in the Shentong tradition: the imaginary, the dependent, and the perfect. This is why the last two emptinesses—the emptiness of the non-existence of phenomena and the emptiness of the essence of the nonexistence of phenomena—are presented making sixteen kinds of emptiness in all.

Questions

Question: Would Rinpoche say something about the sequence in this text, about the four seals.
Rinpoche: One must first have the correct view. Then how one

gains realization of egolessness is taught. One starts with the preliminaries of the four seals and knows that all that is composite is impermanent, all that is impure or polluted is suffering, all phenomena are without a self, and nirvana is peace. One goes through the preliminaries in the practice of realizing that there is no self. Having done the preliminaries, one enters onto the path of going beyond the extremes of existence and non-existence.

This is presented in terms of the Rangtong and Shentong teachings discussing the sixteen emptinesses. It is a progressive text; there is a general description of the correct view, a general explanation of how to develop the realization of egolessness, starting on the preliminary path of the four seals and going on the path of understanding the sixteen emptinesses (which are summarized into the two kinds of egolessnesses). That is how the subject is developed.

Question: If you had realization of non-self on that path, surely you could never really separate that realization from bodhichitta. In that case, how can one make a separation between Foundation and Mahayana realization? Is realization of Foundation vehicle the first bodhisattva level?

Rinpoche: The first bodhisattva level is not reached with the realization of egolessness of the individual in the Great Exposition and Sutra-followers traditions. The first bodhisattva level is superior when it comes to certain qualities and it is inferior when it comes to other qualities. One is progressing on the path in the first bodhisattva level and is meditating both on the egolessness of the individual and the egolessness of phenomena. The Great Exposition followers and Sautrantikas do not have the complete path, yet they go to the limit of their path. They have realized the egolessness of the individual completely, but ignore the egolessness of phenomena. Their realization of the egolessness of the individual is superior to those on the first bodhisattva level, but their realization of the egolessness of phenomena is inferior to those on the first bodhisattva level. They have removed the obscurations of the disturbing emotions completely. Therefore, they are superior to those on the first bodhisattva level, but they are in-

ferior to those on the first bodhisattva level because they are not working to eliminate the obscuration of knowledge. They have completely removed only the obscurations of the disturbing emotions. They don't have bodhichitta, the intention to benefit all beings throughout space, because they are only working for their own liberation. This is why they are referred to as "Hinayana" in Sanskrit. In fact, the definition of the Hinayana is "the path that is without bodhichitta."

Question: I still cannot understand why realization of non-self in the Foundation vehicle doesn't spontaneously give rise to compassion or a wish to benefit others. The nature of phenomena has to be realized as being empty. There must be a relationship where they see that the nature of phenomena has to be dealt with and therefore compassion would naturally and spontaneously arise.
Rinpoche: Followers of the Foundation vehicle meditate on the egolessness of the individual in order to remove the disturbing emotions. They do realize the obvious egolessness of phenomena; otherwise they could not realize the egolessness of the individual. But there is the subtle egolessness of phenomena, which they do not realize. The reason they practice is to benefit themselves, in which case they don't need compassion. Compassion means doing something for the benefit of others.

Question: But surely once you realize some emptiness and non-self, you would realize that everybody is in the same boat and compassion would naturally arise.
Rinpoche: Some compassion. It is not that they have no compassion, but they practice because they want to get out of samsara; this is their goal. They want to achieve that for themselves, so they don't have the non-dualistic compassion of a bodhisattva for everyone.

A. Rangtong Madhyamaka

1. They believe that on the ultimate and on the conventional level all phenomena are empty.
2. They believe that the passages in the *Uttaratantra Shastra* and other Mahayana scriptures that say Buddha-nature is permanent, eternal, and all pervasive gives only the provisional meaning.
3. They follow the teachings of Nagarjuna closely and rely greatly on conceptual analysis of emptiness.
4. Because of the work of Tsonkhapa and his immediate disciples, the Rangtong school is emphasized by the Gelugpa Tibetan sect.

B. Shentong Madyamaka

1. They belive that on the relative level, but not the ultimate level everything is empty of self nature.
2. They believe that on the ultimate level all phenomena are not empty. They believe that on the ultimate level, emptiness has a knowing, luminous quality.
3. They believe the *Uttaratantra Shastra* and other Mahayana scriptures that say Buddha-nature is permanent, eternal, and all pervasive state the definitive meaning.
4. These teachings are emphasized in the Kagyu and Nyingma sects of Tibetan Buddhism.
5. They follow the teachings of the Mind-only school closely.
6. They rely on the works of Asanga and the experience in meditation to establish their view.

7

The Two Kinds of Egolessness

V. Analysis of the Two Egolessnesses

The fifth major topic of the root text by Jamgon Kongtrul presents a simplified and condensed view of emptiness. The detailed explanation describes the sixteen emptinesses; the simplified version teaches the two kinds of egolessness. It is divided into two sections: the purpose for teaching egolessness and an analysis of egolessness.

A. The Purpose for Teaching Egolessness

We practice dharma to reach Buddhahood. The *siddhis* or the powers acquired from intense meditation are attained from the Vajrayana way of practicing. In India, for example, great Buddhist masters and siddhas such as Tilopa and Naropa attained the goal of the Vajrayana path. With the attainment of siddhis they were able to perform miracles and to have clairvoyant knowledge. The ability to have siddhis is an external sign of attainment of realization on the tantric path. The internal signs of these siddhis are the realization and experience attained, which appear only in the mind. Siddhis were not confined to India; there were masters and siddhas in Tibet such as Marpa and Milarepa who

also attained siddhis as a result of practicing the Vajrayana path.

The goal of the sutra path is achievement of Buddhahood. The sutra path can be explained by examining the etymology of the word for "Buddha," which was translated into Tibetan as "*sang gye*" essentially meaning "one who has developed wisdom."

Samsara is characterized by suffering and difficulties. For example, countries can have economic problems and their inhabitants then experience suffering because wealth has declined and poverty is high. Political difficulties can cause the pain of war or strife among groups. People think, "If we can be free of poverty, political intrigues, and strife between us, then there will no longer be suffering." This is not true, however, because it is the nature of samsara that conflicts and suffering are always present. Therefore, we must free ourselves from samsara in order to be freed from all suffering. As long as there is no freedom from samsara, there will always be uncountable sufferings, difficulties, and problems.

The final result of the Buddhist path is usually called "liberation." This denotes liberation from all suffering, difficulties, problems, and disturbing emotions. The ultimate result of the Buddhist path is "nirvana," which was translated into Tibetan *nyang de* and translated as "transcendence of suffering." It was translated in this way because in nirvana one passes beyond all suffering of the body and mind and becomes free from all suffering and difficulties. The ultimate result can also be called "Buddhahood," which means "the development of wisdom." In translating the word "Buddha" into Tibetan as *sang gye* the translators used the first syllable *sang* which means purified and the second syllable *gye* which means "to increase." The meaning of the syllable *sang* indicates that all the causes of the suffering in samsara (negative tendencies and negative thoughts which arise in the mind) have been purified. A beginning practitioner has purified only a few negativities; he or she practices becoming more and more purified until Buddhahood is attained. At that level, all

negative tendencies and thoughts have been eliminated.

In addition to purifying negativities, a practitioner must also have realization, which comes from the increase (*gye*) of positive qualities. While we practice the dharma, we still have many faults because we have few positive qualities and very little purification. Therefore, we need to work on developing both the positive qualities and on reducing our negative qualities. Developing positive qualities helps reduce faults and reducing faults helps develop the good qualities. Thus eliminating faults and attaining realization mutually assist each other until we reach the state of Buddhahood. At that point, all faults are completely eliminated and all qualities are completely developed or realized. At Buddhahood, all the causes of suffering have been eliminated and therefore the result is suffering that no longer exists.

We have to attain the ultimate goal of Buddhahood, which means that we have to develop the qualities of wisdom; but we cannot attain Buddhahood by developing the positive qualities only. We also have to work on eliminating the faults or afflictions. If we do not purify faults, then we will not be able to achieve Buddhahood with complete wisdom and all the positive qualities. These faults are called "obscurations" because they block us from the goal we wish to achieve. The obscurations are in our own mind; we have to remove them to develop the positive qualities and attain the ultimate result. There are many religions, such as the Bonpo and the Hindu religion which teach that an external power prevents liberation. They teach that it is necessary to pray to that external power in order to win its favor and that this will bring liberation. In Buddhism, on the other hand, the view is different. Buddhism teaches that the obstacles that prevent us from attaining liberation are within ourselves and that we need to free ourselves from these obstacles to attain liberation. That is a special characteristic of Buddhism and distinguishes it from other religions.

1. The Two Obscurations

To attain the ultimate result, we need to eliminate the obscurations. To eliminate these obscurations, it is necessary to know the two kinds of obscurations. Once they are recognized, they can be eliminated. The two obscurations are the obscuration of the disturbing emotions and the obscuration of knowledge.

The first obscuration of the afflictions includes all the negative thoughts that arise in the mind (pride, miserliness, jealousy, delusion, stupidity, anger, malice and so on). The presence of these afflictions prevents us from being able to practice the dharma correctly, prevents us from being able to benefit others, and prevents us from being able to attain liberation.

The second obscuration of knowledge is not obvious like the disturbing emotions (thoughts of anger and so on). Rather, this obscuration is our mind's habitual patterns which conflict with the true nature of reality. It is the incorrect mode of perception and the attachment to outer perceptions that the mind holds; it is the belief in the reality of phenomena. When the appearance of phenomena are perceived, we have an innate and spontaneous tendency to perceive them as being solid and real. In particular, this false belief perceives reality as composed of three spheres (subject, object, and action between them). This attitude believes in the reality of the subject (the one who is doing the action), the reality of the object (that upon which the action is being done), and the reality of the act itself. This obscuration of knowledge prevents us from attaining realization of the true nature of phenomena and must be eliminated in order to achieve the goal of Buddhahood.

2. Eliminating the two obscurations

Eliminating these two obscurations requires a remedy. This remedy is the Buddha's teaching on the two kinds of egolessness. For example, if we become habituated to the disturbing emotion

of desire and don't try to eliminate it, this emotion will become stronger and result in our experiencing increased difficulties and suffering. How can disturbing emotions be eliminated? The first way is to recognize that they will bring suffering. Second, we can work on suppressing them, which will reduce their potency, but this won't entirely eliminate them. A third way is to keep the objects of the disturbing emotions at a distance by avoiding them, but this won't work completely either. None of these methods (identifying the negative, suppressing it, or distancing from it) will entirely eliminate disturbing emotions.

We can completely eliminate disturbing emotions, however, by looking at their source and recognizing that thoughts of "I," and "my" cause our disturbing emotions. When we perceive the dualism of an "I" and "others," we automatically feel an attachment to our self and regard it as more important than others. We also automatically feel a desire or attachment for what we wish to have and a disdain for our aggression towards what we think we dislike. Both these thoughts of desire and aversion arise from our basic attachment to the idea of a self. However, if we closely examine what the self is and where the "I" or "me" is located, we discover that these have no true existence and cannot be found. Once this source of suffering, the disturbing emotions, is removed, desire (for what we want), anger (against those we don't want) and jealousy (towards those who we believe have what we want) will not arise. We then become free from the disturbing emotions by realizing the egolessness of the individual.

Realizing the egolessness of the individual is not a means to suppress or distance oneself from the disturbing emotions. Rather, it eliminates the disturbing emotions completely. Therefore, the teaching on the egolessness of the individual is the remedy that eliminates the obstacle of the disturbing emotions.

The second obscuration, the obscuration of knowledge, is that we do not understand the true nature of phenomena. Rather, we believe that phenomena have true existence. Because we are attached to phenomena and believe that they have true reality, the

mind misperceives samsara. We can eliminate that obscuration which misunderstands the true nature of phenomena by examining phenomena closely and discovering that they do not have a true existence of their own. We do this by understanding the teachings of emptiness: First, we listen to and study the teachings and gain some superficial understanding. Second, we contemplate the teachings on emptiness and gain the wisdom (Skt. *prajna*) arising from contemplation. Finally, we actually meditate on emptiness and gain the wisdom that arises from meditation. Through all this, we realize that things have no true existence of their own and this eliminates an incorrect understanding of phenomena. Once that incorrect understanding is eliminated, there will no longer be delusion and error in our perception of the nature of phenomena. This is the realization of the egolessness of phenomena, which eliminates the second obstacle, the obscuration to knowledge.

B. Analysis of Egolessness

The second part of the fifth section, the analysis of egolessness, is subdivided into five parts. It may be confusing at first to hear about all the sections and subsections, but this is how the text is structured and makes it easier to understand. The first subdivision, which deals with the egolessness of phenomena, is also divided into five parts. We will go through each point.

1. The Egolessness of Phenomena

a. The Essential Meaning of the Egolessness of Phenomena

Although there is general agreement about what is meant by "the egolessness of phenomena," there are many different views when it comes to the actual subtleties of this topic. Different scholars have different interpretations of emptiness. For example,

Scholar A may say, "The egolessness of phenomena is not realized by the shravakas." Scholar B will then respond: "Egolessness of phenomena is realized by the shravakas." Scholar C says: "The egolessness of phenomena has to be realized first, otherwise one cannot realize the egolessness of the individual." Scholar D may argue: "That is not right. The egolessness of the individual can be understood purely by itself and without realizing the egolessness of phenomena."

There are many different opinions about detailed matters, such as whether shravakas can realize the egolessness of phenomena or not. Jamgon Kongtrul presents his own view of the egolessness of phenomena in *The Compendium of Knowledge*. He says there are two kinds of egolessness of phenomena: obvious egolessness and subtle egolessness. The obvious egolessness of phenomena was described above when we analyzed the hand and concluded that external phenomena have no true existence. This obvious egolessness of phenomena is, according to Jamgon Kongtrul, the level of external emptiness understood by practitioners of all three yanas (shravakas, the pratyekabuddhas, and bodhisattvas). All three levels teach and understand the obvious egolessness of phenomena. There is, however, a subtle egolessness of phenomena that is understood only by bodhisattvas.

If the obvious egolessness of phenomena is not understood correctly, the egolessness of the individual cannot be ascertained. We have an innate belief in a self from the time we are born. Innately, we have no doubt as to whether there is a self. We are born with an immediate belief in the presence of an "I" and "me" that lasts throughout our life. It is a very strong and solid belief because we have held this belief throughout all of our previous lifetimes. We are habituated to it and it is present in us whether we are young or old. It is not a belief that we have developed through investigation or intellectual reasoning; rather, the belief that a self is naturally present is based on our habitual patterns. Because this belief is so strong and feels so natural to us, it is very difficult to remove. It takes much practice and understand-

ing to eliminate this belief in a self because it is so ingrained in us. If we can understand this first obvious egolessness of phenomena, it will be possible for us to understand the egolessness of the individual.

The second subtle egolessness of phenomena concerns the belief in non-existence in contrast to the belief in existence. It is possible to become attached to an incorrect understanding of non-existence. Saraha said: "Those who believe that things exist are as stupid as a cow, but those who believe in the non-existence of phenomena are even more foolish." Shantideva gives an example: "A man dreams that a son is born to him and that the son dies. He is then very upset." First he believed in the existence of a son in his dream and then he believed in the non-existence of a son in his dream. Non-existence is a remedy for the thought of existence, so believing that the son does not exist any more should be a remedy for the previous belief in the existence of a son. However, by believing in the non-existence of a son, the man is in a worse state than before, because now he is very upset. His belief in the nonexistence of a son is a grave mistake because there was no son to begin with. In the same way, although we believe in the existence of phenomena and appearances, they are merely illusions, like appearances in a dream. Believing in the non-existence of phenomena is an even more grave error. Realizing this error is realizing the subtle egolessness of phenomena.

The Importance of Meditation Practice[19]

Generally speaking, practicing dharma includes learning and studying the teachings. Practicing the dharma also includes the practice of meditation. In Tibet learning and studying usually took place in large monasteries such as Sera, Drepung, and Gangden for the Gelugpas and at Palpung and Tsurphu for the Kagyupas. The monks spent a great deal of time studying texts and analyzing them logically to understand their meaning. During the study program they did not study the tantras; their study concen-

trated on the sutras, the Madhyamaka or "Middle-way," the Prajnaparamita, and the Abhidharma and so on. They received teachings on the texts, studied them, and contemplated the instructions. It traditionally took twelve years to study the sutra texts such as the Prajnaparamita, the Abhidharma and the Vinaya. We may then ask, "What about their meditation practice?" Some of these monks then did a three-year retreat and some even spent a lifetime in meditation. What did they meditate on? Did they meditate on the Middle-way, the Vinaya or the Abhidharma? No, they did not meditate on these texts; they studied them and then meditated on the Six Yogas of Naropa, Mahamudra, and deities such as Chakrasamvara, Hevajra and so on. We may then ask, "What is the connection between study and meditation?" They are not distinct from each other; rather each helps the other. Meditation helps study and study helps meditation.

While learning and contemplating the teachings, we engage in a great deal of logical analysis to discover the correct understanding of what emptiness is. We engage in this logical analysis, thinking and contemplating to develop certainty about emptiness. We gain certainty from studying, but we do not meditate on these teachings of the Middle-way. Why don't we meditate on the sutra teachings? The reason we don't is because it would take a very long time to achieve any result by meditating on the sutras. It is said that in the sutra tradition one needs to accumulate merit for an eon before attaining Buddhahood. Therefore, when it comes to meditation, we use the oral instructions on meditation, which are not presented using analytical reasoning. Naropa and Tilopa, for example, spent their lives meditating until they gained experience and realization. Milarepa ignored food, clothes, and possessions and spent his life meditating, gaining realization and experience. He was then able to tell his pupils, "I meditated in this way and now you can do it. If you do, you will obtain the same result." By studying, we gain certainty and know how things are, concluding, "Well, I know how things are. Now I need to meditate on what I have learned." Through studying,

we develop a definite knowledge about emptiness, whereas meditation practice depends upon a teacher's instructions and then following these instructions. Instead of presenting analytical reasoning, the teacher simply gives direct meditation instructions. In the Tibetan tradition of the great scholars and siddhis, one studies the sutra tradition when one studies, and one practices the tantra tradition when one meditates.

Both study and meditation are necessary. We could learn, contemplate, and study all the time. But, those who only study and learn as academic thinkers and who do not meditate are compared to a wealthy miser. The miser accumulates much wealth but doesn't use it, either for his own benefit or for others' benefit. He simply keeps it. Similarly, someone could study a lot and have much knowledge but if he or she doesn't meditate, then this knowledge is of no benefit to anyone. Therefore, in addition to study, we need meditation. On the other hand, if someone just meditates all the time and never studies, that meditator will only have a vague idea about how things are and can be called "an idiot meditator." He or she is like someone who tries to climb a cliff without having any hands. In the same way, we need to study and understand what we are doing in order to meditate properly. We need to study whenever possible and we need to practice meditation as well as we can. We should use the sutra tradition when we study and use the tantra tradition when we meditate. It is said that if we do that, then we will have a good result and that this complies with the tradition.

We can study all the texts on the egolessness of the individual, the egolessness of phenomena, emptiness, no-self and so on and still never find an answer to the question to, "How do I meditate?" We are stuck and think, "I don't know how to meditate." To learn to meditate we have to go to the lineage of meditation instructions which have been handed down from Tilopa, Naropa, and Marpa (in the Kagyu tradition.) This transmission of meditation instructions has never been interrupted or broken. We can receive the transmission of these meditation instructions and tell

others, "This is how one meditates. Meditate like this."

In the earlier section we saw that there are sixteen emptinesses that explain the egolessness of phenomena and the egolessness of the individual. We went through the first part of this section and saw that there are two kinds of egolessness of phenomena: the obvious egolessness and the subtle egolessness. To realize the egolessness of the individual, we have to meditate upon the obvious egolessness of phenomena. Thus, realization of the obvious egolessness of phenomena is a prerequisite for realizing the egolessness of the individual. But, to achieve Buddhahood, we have to meditate upon the subtle egolessness of phenomena as well.

b. The Nature of the Egolessness of Self

The egolessness of phenomena is realized when one is able to eliminate the belief in the solidity or self of phenomena. What is the nature of the belief in the self of phenomena? An example is given: it is like perceiving a rope as a snake. If we see a rope and believe it to be a snake, then that is a delusion, an incorrect perception. In the same way, if we see phenomena and think they are truly existent, then that is a delusion and incorrect. If we see the rope and think it is a rope, that is not a delusion; but if we see the rope and think it is a snake, that is a delusion. If we see appearances and perceive them as having reality, that is a delusion. It is the belief in the self or solidity of phenomena, which has to be eliminated.

c. Why the Self of Phenomena Must Be Refuted

The third part of the explanation on the egolessness of phenomena describes why we need to abandon the belief in the self of phenomena. The belief in the self of phenomena is both the source of this obscuration of knowledge and of the disturbing emotions. Therefore, it is the source of the obscuration of the dis-

turbing emotions. We cannot attain Buddhahood as long as we have these two obscurations. When we have the obscuration of a belief in a self and the disturbing emotions, we cannot attain full result and cannot help other beings. We may be able to give limited help at certain times through our activity, but when the texts speak about "benefiting other beings," they mean freeing them from suffering and giving them happiness. Therefore, we need to be free of these two obscurations. To be free of these two obscurations, we need to eliminate the belief in the inherent existence of phenomena. That is why eliminating the belief in the egolessness of phenomena is essential.

In the *Golden Rosary*, Nagarjuna said that we must abandon attachment to the aggregates as being the self. There are five aggregates: form, feeling, sensation, formation, and consciousness and if we are attached to them as being our own aggregates, we will have the thought of "I" and "my." Once we have this attachment to the self, we think of those things we wish to attain; we have desires and such thoughts as, "That person wishes to harm me" which gives rise to anger, or, "This person is competing with me" which gives rise to jealousy. Or we may think, "This person is lower than me" which gives rise to pride. All kinds of different sensations and experiences will arise due to attachment to a self. Also, we will not remain passive when we are attached to the self; we will engage in physical and verbal conduct so that things will go well for ourselves and badly for others. We seek our own victory and other's defeat; we want to be higher and we want others to be lower. These are negative motivations in relation to others. Therefore, it is important to eliminate attachment to a self.

Even if we do not have a particularly negative and contrived motivation, as long as we are attached to a self, it is very difficult to have the attitude that the happiness of others is as important as our own. Indeed, we will accumulate karma even without such a negative motivation; but if we accumulate karma with a negative motivation, we will have a bad rebirth. In any case, if we remain attached to a self, we will accumulate karma and be reborn with

the result. With better motivation, we will have better karma, and a better rebirth. As we are going to be continually reborn, attachment to a self is going to increase and become stronger. That is why it is important to eliminate this attachment to a self. In order to eliminate attachment to a self, we need to have realization of the egolessness of phenomena.

d. Realizing Egolessness of Phenomena in Different Traditions

The fourth section deals with the view of the egolessness of phenomena in the four different Buddhist traditions: the Great Exposition (Skt. *Vaibhashika*), the Sutra-school (Skt. *Sautantrikas*), the Mind-only (Skt. *Chittamatra*), and the Middle-way (Skt. *Madhyamaka*) tradition. These traditions are similar in that they all speak about realizing the egolessness of phenomena. They, nevertheless, disagree about how one realizes this.

There are four traditions: the first three (the Great Exposition, Sutra-school and Mind-only) are called "realists" and the fourth (the Middle-way) are called "the proponents of emptiness." The first three are called "realists" because these traditions assert that there are some existing entities that have a true existence. The fourth tradition, the Middle-way followers, asserts that all phenomena, without exception, are empty.

The Great Exposition, the Sutra-school, and the Mind-only realist traditions can be divided into two groups; the first group contains the Great Exposition followers and Sutra-school followers with minor differences between these two schools in their approach but, generally speaking, they agree on the definition of the egolessness of phenomena. Therefore, the Great Exposition followers and the Sutra-school are both Foundation vehicle schools and have the same view about the egolessness of phenomena. The second realistic view is found in the teachings of the Mind-only tradition.

The Great Exposition and the Sutra-school Traditions

What do the Great Exposition followers and Sutra-school teach? These traditions teach that there are external phenomena that have a real material existence made up of real atoms. All external phenomena (a mountain, a river, our body) have real material existence and are composed of atoms. These atoms are believed to have a true existence. External phenomena (visual forms seen with the eyes, sounds heard by the ears, smells perceived with the nose, tastes perceived with the tongue, and tactile sensations perceived by the body) also have a true material existence. Then there are internal phenomena, such as cognition, which are not made up material and atoms. Cognition consists of the consciousnesses that relate directly to each of the sensory organs (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body) and the mental consciousness.

The Great Exposition and Sutra-school followers say that these consciousnesses are not material. They are not composed of atoms, but they do exist as awareness and cognition rather than as a concrete form. The consciousness of the eye, of the nose, of the ear, of the tongue, and of the body exist as consciousnesses. Thus, there are two kinds of entities, external material entities composed of atoms and internal entities composed of consciousness and awareness. Apart from these two kinds of entities, nothing else exists.

The realists of these schools say that the very large external forms we perceive such as mountains, houses, bodies, etc. are all composed of atoms. Even though we can see and use material objects, their existence is merely conceptual, an imputation of the mind. For example, a cup can be seen and the mind can think about it; but the idea of the cup is merely a creation of the mind. There isn't really such a thing as a cup. "Cup" is a mentally fabricated idea about a collection of atoms because there are thousands of different kinds of cups. There isn't such a thing as a hand either. We ascribe the idea "hand" to the collection of its parts; a

hand is composed of a thumb, other fingers, flesh, bones, etc. and is a mental imputation. Similarly, "thumb" is a mental imputation composed of joints, a nail, flesh and bones. The thumb itself doesn't exist but is a mental imputation ascribed to a specific collection of parts. Each section of a thumb is divided into parts as well. Each section has middle, right, and left parts. This applies not just to a cup or hand but to all phenomena. Phenomena can be divided again and again and chopped up into even smaller parts with a knife, until one reaches the smallest possible particle, called "the smallest atom possible" because it cannot be divided into further parts. The Great Exposition followers say that these basic components really exist and that all things are composed of these basic atoms. These components are believed to be real objects.

The Great Exposition followers teach that the inner mind is neither material nor composed of atoms. The mind cannot be divided into parts; it is simply luminous clarity of understanding and awareness. It is, however, divisible in terms of the flow of time. Realists say that the flow of time is a succession of instants; that there is such a thing as an indivisible unit of time, a smallest possible unit of time. Because time is a succession of the smallest units of time, there is a succession of minds. We can think of "my mind" as one unit, but the mind we had when we were children was different from the mind we have now. The way the mind of a child thinks and the mind of an adult thinks are very different. The way the mind of an adult and a very old person thinks are very different as well. The way of thinking is different, the thoughts are different, the abilities of the mind are different and so on.

We can take a more subtle approach to looking at the mind. The mind changes with each passing year and with each passing month. In fact, the mind is different with each passing day; the mind of yesterday is gone and now we have the new mind of today. Similarly, the mind we had an hour ago is not the same as the mind we have now, and the mind we have now is different

from the mind we will have in the next hour. The same is true if we consider the mind from minute to minute or from second to second and so on. We follow this process until we reach a period of time which is not obvious or perceivable, but which is defined as "the smallest possible unit of time." Realists say that there is a continuous succession of these "smallest possible units of time." They liken them to a flowing river that never stands still. Flowing water is constantly followed and replaced by new water. In the same way, the mind is continually replaced by a new mind through the succession of these indivisible and tiniest units of time. The Great Exposition followers and Sautrantikas thus teach that the mind is not a single, indivisible entity, but is a succession of the minutest instants of mind.

The *shravaka* tradition (the Great Exposition followers and Sutra-followers) teaches that there are material atoms as well as instants of consciousness and that everything is composed of either the one or the other. They use these arguments for the practical reason which is that we should not have an attachment to a self when all that exists are atoms and indivisible instants of consciousness. We should not be attached either to a self of phenomena or to a self of the individual. This is how they conceive of the egolessness of phenomena. However, this shravaka tradition is not able to attain full realization of emptiness because they still believe that the smallest possible atoms and instants of consciousness have real existence. They remain attached to the reality of atoms and instants of consciousness. This is why they are not able to develop a complete realization of emptiness. This is how the shravaka tradition of the Great Exposition followers and Sautrantikas realize the egolessness of phenomena and how they realize the egolessness of the individual.

The Mind-only Tradition

The Mind-only school has a view different from the Great Exposition followers and Sutra-followers, who teach that if there

were no external, material atoms, then no external appearance could be perceived. The Mind-only proponents, in contrast, say that external appearances can be perceived without external, material atoms. They give the example of dreams. We see tigers, lions, mountains, rivers, houses, and so on when we dream. We see things as if they exist externally and as if they are composed of atoms, but, in fact, there are no atoms. In a dream, we hear sounds as if we were hearing external sounds with our ears, we see objects as if we were seeing external objects with our eyes, and we smell things as if we were smelling external smells with our nose, but in a dream there are no external sounds, forms, smells and so on. All these appearances arise from the mind only. The Mind-only proponents teach that it is the same when we are awake—everything that we perceive arises from the mind itself. There is no external form that exists and there are no atoms and there are no instants of time. All things merely arise from the mind, and this explains the egolessness of phenomena. But, it is said that the mind itself must have some reality. The mind, which is the source of all appearances, must exist. Therefore, the Mind-only proponents believe in the true existence of the mind. This is why the Mind-only proponents do not completely comprehend emptiness. They believe in the true existence of the subtle mind, which is the basis for all appearances. This is why they are called "Chittamatra" with *chitta* being "mind" and *matra* being "only or just." The Chittamatra school is called "Mind-only" because its proponents believe that the mind has true existence. Although they understand the obvious egolessness of phenomena, they have not realized subtle egolessness.[20]

e. The Middle-way Analyses of the Egolessness of Phenomena

The fifth and final part of the explanation of the egolessness of phenomena describes the Middle-way view. The previous section presented the Great Exposition, the Sutra-school and the

Mind-only views. Now we will see how the followers of the Middle-way school explain emptiness through logical analysis.

The Buddha taught the meaning of emptiness in the sutras, particularly in the Prajnaparamita sutras. Nagarjuna was the first siddha who explained these sutras in detail. In a sutra the Buddha prophesied the coming of Nagarjuna, in which he said, "In a land called Vidar there will be a monk named Naga,[21] who will understand, teach, and prove the existence of emptiness." Nagarjuna wrote commentaries on the Buddha's teachings on emptiness, with his main work being *The Mula-madhyamaka-prajna* ("The Wisdom of the Middle-way"). This was the basic outline of his arguments. In other treatises he set forth the different ways of analyzing phenomena and of logically proving emptiness so that people would be able to understand this teaching clearly and be able to have conviction in it.

Nagarjuna's Analyses Showing the Emptiness of Phenomena

Is a seed the cause from which the flower grows? The discussion of whether the sprout comes from the seed is carried out in order to see that the seed is different than the sprout; they are different. First, one cannot say that something gives rise to itself. Looking at a seed, for example, it is white, gray, or brown, whereas a sprout is green; they are different colors. A seed is round and a sprout is long; they taste differently too. So, a seed and a sprout have no characteristics in common. You cannot say that a seed grows out of itself because the sprout is completely different. Second, you cannot argue that something arises from something else because that would mean a sprout could arise from a stone because a stone is other than the sprout. A sprout must come from a seed. It definitely does not come from something else. Nonetheless, one cannot definitely establish the relationship between the sprout and the seed; one cannot say that the seed is the cause and the sprout is the result.

If seed has true existence, then the seed would exist, the flower would exist, and the seed would be the cause from which the flower grows. One might think that this is the case, but Nagarjuna explains that it is not so. The seed does not give rise to the flower. One might suppose that the flower obviously comes from the seed, but if we think about it and take the time to analyze, then we will see that it is not so. The seed and the flower are different colors and have different shapes; they are not at all the same. The seed is not capable of giving birth, giving rise to a flower. In that case, where does the flower come from? The flower naturally appears; it is an appearance without any true reality of its own. For example, if you see a house in a dream, you might think, "Who built that house and how was it built?" It might be explained, "A certain person built it on a certain property and used this and that material." All these explanations are not valid because the "house" is without any reality at all, so nobody could have built it. Similarly, the appearance of a flower has no reality whatsoever. It is an appearance without any true existence. You might wonder, "If the flower does not come from the seed, does it come from something else?" No, a flower did not come from something else because if this were true, there would be no connection between the flower and the seed. The point is that at one time there is the appearance of a seed and later there is the appearance of a flower, but the seed did not give rise to the flower. The seed is not the cause. This establishes that a seed and a flower have no true existence of their own and exemplifies the investigation of the cause as presented by Nagarjuna.

Like the analysis of the cause, Nagarjuna had five different methods of analyses[22] to establish emptiness, including analysis of the result, analysis of the nature and so on.

Chandrakirti's Two Types of Analyses

In a later time, the great Middle-way master Chandrakirti also presented two kinds of analyses to prove the emptiness of phe-

nomena. First, if one looks at external phenomena as the Mind-only followers do, then one can establish that there is no reality to external phenomena, that external phenomena have no true existence. Chandrakirti looks at the inner consciousnesses and finds that internal consciousnesses arise depending upon external phenomena; Chandrakirti then concludes that if there are no external phenomena, there can be no inner consciousnesses. In this way, if there is a blue object then there is an inner consciousness that perceives the blue object, which is dependent upon the external blue object. Consequently, if there is no blue object, then there is no internal consciousness either. Thus, if there is no external phenomenon, there is no reality to the internal consciousnesses and if there is no reality to internal consciousnesses, there can be no external phenomenon. Both internal and external are therefore said to be devoid of any reality. That is the first logical analysis by Chandrakirti.

The second logical argument is the argument of single and composites which we have already described in analyzing the hand. We discover with close analysis that any external object such as a hand is made up of different components. Therefore there is no truly existing hand. This analysis directly applies to everything else; mountains, houses, and trees appear and are understood in the same way as the example of the hand.

Those are the two types of logical analyses by Chandrakirti. Nagarjuna presented the view of the Middle-way so that his pupils understood it. They believed in it and taught it and later Chandrakirti and his pupils transmitted and explained this view. This concludes the five parts of the explanation of the egolessness of phenomena.

8

The Egolessness of the Individual

2. The Egolessness Of The Individual

The egolessness of the individual is presented to show the difference between those who follow the Buddhist tradition and those who follow non-Buddhist traditions.

a. Essential Meaning of Egolessness of the Individual

One could say that those who have taken refuge in the Buddha, dharma, and sangha are followers of the Buddhist tradition and those who have not taken refuge in the Buddha, dharma, and sangha are followers of non-Buddhist traditions. One could make this obvious distinction, but this is a distinction based upon external factors. The real distinction between the Buddhist path and the non-Buddhist path concerns the selflessness or egolessness of the individual. Those who believe that the self exists as a definite entity belong to the non-Buddhist traditions. Those who do not believe in the solid reality of the individual belong to the Buddhist tradition.

The Obvious and Subtle Egolessness of the Individual

There are two kinds of belief in the self of the individual: the obvious and the subtle. As previously described, a small child without having been told anything, instinctively believes in a self, in an "I" and "my." That belief is spontaneously present in everyone, young or old, and does not involve any contemplation, such as asking oneself, "Is the self permanent? Is it impermanent? Is it mental or material?" Without any contemplation, the thought or feeling that there is an "I" is always present in us and this belief has been present in all of our previous lives. This is the subtle belief in a self.

The more obvious belief in a self is a conceptually created belief in a self. The presence of a self is commonly accepted as common sense. Buddhist scholars examine that self asking, "Where is the self located? What kind of qualities does it have?" The Buddha taught that this examination shows that the self is devoid of any nature or essence of its own, that there is no self; therefore the belief in a self is a delusion. Other scholars, however, don't agree with that assessment.

Almost every non-Buddhist tradition accepts the existence of a self and has conceptual theories about whether it is permanent or impermanent, whether it is material or mental and so on. In accepting that the self exists, scholars often come to the conclusion that the consciousnesses of the individual is actually the "self." Still other scholars reply, "No, the different consciousnesses are not the self because consciousnesses are not stable. They continually change and therefore the self must be material. It is therefore a physical form."[24] Other scholars think, "The self is permanent because it goes from one lifetime to the next." Others reject this conclusion and argue, "No, the self is not permanent because a person is different from one lifetime to the next." These scholars come to different conclusions on the nature of the self. Beliefs in a self are all conceptual fabrications and are therefore classified as the obvious belief in the self by the individual.

The traditions that believe in the existence of the self develop views concerning the self through logical analysis or through the practice of meditation. By practicing meditation, there still may be the tendency to believe in the self and to think that this self has endured through many lifetimes. When they meditate, they think that the luminous clarity, this awareness, this knowing in their meditation, is permanent and must be the self. Whether this view of the self is developed through logic or observations in meditation, these approaches are mentally created beliefs by the individual.

The Buddhist tradition alone questions the existence of the self. The Buddha tried to discover the nature of the self, looked at the mind's essence and discovered that there is no self of the individual. However, in other traditions there are conceptually created views of the self, as well as the innate and instinctive belief in the self. In these traditions that believe in a self, people do not even consider looking to see whether the self is permanent or not, so their view is quite vague and indefinite. Thus, sometimes they identify the self as being the five skandhas, sometimes the physical body, and sometimes the mind. It is only in the Buddhist tradition that it is taught that the self does not to exist.

How do we eliminate the belief in the self? Simply thinking, "I must get rid of this belief in the self" will not eliminate this belief. Conceptual beliefs are not the main problem because what creates the obstacle is an innate belief in the self and that belief needs to be eliminated. What we must do is realize that there is no self and the belief in the self is a delusion. Conceptually examining ourselves and seeing that there is no self will not result in an immediate elimination of this belief in a permanent self because the belief in a self is a very strong habitual belief built up over many lifetimes. Even though we develop some conceptual understanding that there is no self, this deep-seated belief remains. This belief can only be removed through meditating again and again; this alone will remove the subtle belief in the self.

Meditation to Realize Egolessness

In the Vajrayana or tantra tradition one practices for the purpose of realizing egolessness. The meditation on egolessness consists of two paths: the path of methods and the path of liberation.

In the path of methods, there are many methods and practices we can do employing *yantrayoga* which are physical exercises of the body. We can also practice the creation stage or the visualization practice of different deities. The path of methods consists of a great variety of methods.

The second path of liberation is a simple meditation that leads to the understanding of emptiness. It is difficult to focus the mind in the beginning because it won't stay still. To make the mind still, we practice Tranquility or Shamatha meditation. In Tranquility meditation we initially focus the mind on the movement of the breath to stabilize the mind. Focusing on the breath all the time may become dull because there is nothing to show from the in and out of the breath. So, we can then stop focusing on the breath and focus on the mind itself.

The mind is composed of eight consciousnesses; we have the five sensory consciousnesses of the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body, and the sixth mental consciousness. The five sensory consciousnesses are non-conceptual. The eye directly sees its object without having any thought such as "This is big." or "I like this." and the same applies to the other sensory consciousnesses. There is no conceptualization because the eye sees directly and experiences the object of perception without thoughts. It is the sixth mental consciousness that is unsteady and filled with thoughts. The sixth mental consciousness gives rise to thoughts about today, yesterday, tomorrow, anger, desire, good and bad, etc. If we do not examine and look at what the mental consciousness is doing, then all sorts of thoughts arise and the mind wanders off in all directions.

In meditation we observe the mental consciousness so that we know what is happening in the mind. We know when a

thought arises and when it doesn't. We are aware of the thoughts that occur. Normally, when we are not meditating, we have a continuous outpouring of thoughts and we do not look at the mind. In contrast, thoughts do not go off in different directions in meditation when we look at them and see, "Now I am thinking this. Now I am thinking that." When we examine mind, there is a natural luminosity of the mind that we use to look at what is happening in the mind. This natural clarity is developed through Shamatha practice.

We might think, "It is impossible to have mind which is looking and at the same time is being looked at." But, in fact, it is possible. The teachings explain that mind has two aspects: luminous clarity and mental events (Tib. *salwa* and *sem jung*). The mind is luminous and aware and the mental events are any kind of thought that appears. The mind is not solid; it cannot be grasped or described as having a particular color, shape, or form. The clarity of the mind can observe what thoughts are occurring without becoming involved with them, or, we can say, without following them. In meditation if a thought arises, we do not follow it with the clarity of mind. There may be no thought arising and we are aware of the stillness of the mind. When a thought arises, we are aware that it is coming and going; but we simply let thoughts come and go and are aware of the stillness of the mind when there are no thoughts. We rest in the relaxed state of the natural clarity and awareness of the mind that observes itself. This is how we practice the Shamatha meditation, stillness of mind.

The observer aspect of mind has two aspects. One is mindfulness or memory[23] which is the faculty of mind that allows us to continuously know what is occurring in mind and remember that we are meditating. If we forget, then we lose mindfulness and the meditation ends. Mindfulness is maintaining meditation all the time. The other aspect of the observer is awareness (Tib. *seshin*), which sees what occurs in the mind, the coming and going of thoughts during the meditation. Awareness is maintained by

mindfulness. In the absence of mindfulness, thoughts come and go and there is no awareness of what they are. This is why the mind should be relaxed when doing meditation. It is not good to force the mind to be still; that will result only in poor meditation. If the mind is in a relaxed state, then we can engage in mindfulness and awareness without any stress. We can say it is like the attention a person uses when watching something happening far away. We are quite relaxed in watching distant objects and not tense while observing what is happening. Because tension will not result in good meditation, we need to be relaxed and have mindfulness to maintain the meditation and awareness of what is happening.

The observer from a distance is like a spy. A spy goes along with others in order to keep an eye on them. If the spy watches too closely, they become suspicious and wonder why they are being watched. A spy therefore needs to be at a distance when watching what the others are doing. Mindfulness and awareness should be like that spy, watching from a distance and knowing, "This thought has come up and now it is gone" and so on. We are spying on the mind from a distance. We are not on the spot with thoughts, being very determined and forceful because this will cause the mind to lose its stability and clarity.

b. The Nature of the Self of the Individual

Jamgon Kongtrul writes that the innate belief in a self can be categorized into two different kinds of belief. One is the belief in "I" and "me" and the other is the belief in "mine." Sometimes we might think of our mind as "me" and our body as "mine" only because there is no definite object for the self of the individual. Sometimes the body can be thought of as "mine" and the mind as "me" and sometimes the body as "me" and the mind as "mine" as in when we say "my mind." Or one might think of the body and mind together as "me" and material possessions as "mine." The belief in "mine" can be greatly generalized from very vast

things such as "my land," "my country," "my world" to the tiniest things such as "my name." The reason there is no definite way to refer to a self and to mine is that the belief in "I" and "mine" is a fiction or a delusion.

C. The Reason to Negate the Self

The third point discusses why one has to abandon the belief in the self. The reason given is similar to Chandrakirti's reasoning which goes: When we believe that there is a self, when there is in fact no self, then automatically another is created and we have created the duality of self and other. Once we have this dualism of I and other, we feel that the self is something good and should be cherished. Once there is self-cherishing, there is attachment to the self and aversion and rejection of that which belongs to others. This attachment to self results in pride, envy, anger and so on. As a result of the arising of these disturbing emotions we experience difficulties and suffering. Therefore we need to be able to eliminate and negate the belief in the self of the individual.

Chandrakirti further argues, "When there is a belief in an "I" or a "me," then there is attachment to the idea of "I" and "me." As a result, the thought "mine" arises. The thought "mine" is the attachment to those things considered part of "I." Chandrakirti continues that this will give rise to difficulties because we may think, "Things have not gone well for me or for these things that are mine." Such ideas cause problems and suffering, and we can trace the root of all these problems and suffering to the attachment to the idea of "I" and "mine." Therefore, we have to eliminate these beliefs.

It is easy to refute logically the arbitrariness of the belief of "mine." For example, if we go into a shop that sells watches, and see someone drop a watch and break it, we think, "Oh, somebody dropped their watch and it broke." without feeling any strong positive or negative emotion. But if our own watch has a

tiny scratch, we think, "Oh, I have a scratch on my watch" and this leads to a very unpleasant feeling. When someone else's watch falls and breaks there is no feeling, but we feel bad when our own watch has a little scratch. What is the difference between the two watches? The difference is the belief that the scratched watch is "mine." It is the belief in "mine" that gives rise to an unpleasant sensation. What justifies the idea of "my watch"? We cannot find the "my" in the watch; it is made of the same material as the watch which broke. The "my" cannot be found anywhere in the watch, so the belief, "It is mine" does not exist in the watch. In fact, the idea "mine" has no reality and yet it causes suffering.

To summarize, the root of suffering, the root of our difficult life problems, is the belief in the self. The root of our unhappiness and all our problems is believing that a self can possess things. The belief in possessions spreads to cover all manner of things like my family, my race, my country. When we hear that things go wrong in our neighborhood, we are unhappy and think, "Things are going wrong in my area. Something bad is happening in my country." This unpleasant sensation is due only to the belief in "my." If we are free of the belief in "my" and "mine," problems which come up will not be upsetting.

d. Egolessness of the Individual in the Different Traditions

The fourth point explains how the different traditions view egolessness. The four traditions are the Foundation vehicle schools of the Great Exposition and Sutra-followers and Mahayana schools of the Mind-only, and the Middle-way schools. As we have already seen, each of these schools sees the egolessness of phenomena quite differently. With respect to the egolessness of the individual, the Great Exposition followers and Sautrantikas understand the egolessness of the individual, but understand only the more obvious level of the egolessness of phe-

nomena. The other two schools teach the obvious as well as the subtle levels of the egolessness of the phenomena. But in terms of the egolessness of the individual their teaching is the same.

e. The Middle-way Analyses of the Egolessness of the Individual

The fifth point describes the Middle-way view of the egolessness of the individual. The Middle-way view is not based on experience, but rather on logical analysis.

The Cart Analysis

One of the teachings the Buddha gave on this topic was by using the example of a cart. Is there such a thing as a cart? Relatively speaking, "Yes, it appears that there is a cart. It can be loaded with things, which are carried from one place to the next. It seems as if it does exist." Although it seems to exist in relative terms, in actual fact there is no such thing as "cart." Are the wheels the cart? No, they are not the "cart." Wheels can roll but do not fulfill all the functions of a cart. Is the axle the cart? No, it cannot fulfill the functions of a cart. Is the platform or bed that holds the load the cart? No, the platform cannot take things from one place to the next. The cart is composed of wheels, an axle, a platform and so on, but none of these parts is the cart. Is the cart separate from its parts? No, one cannot say this thing is the cart, and the parts are not the cart.

Is the cart identical with the wheels and other parts? No, because each part has its own function. Looking at the wheels, one cannot say that the wheels are based upon the cart. Nor can one say that the carriage is based upon the wheels. Nor can one say that the shape of the entire object is the cart either because carts come in many different shapes and sizes. All the parts come together in the mind and one sees them as a whole and ascribes the name "cart" to that collection of parts that are able to fulfill the

function of a cart. Therefore, we call it a "cart," but the true existence of "cart" cannot be found.

We can obviously apply this similar analysis to the idea of a "self" to show it also is a mental concept, not an inherent existing thing.

The Five Aggregates

The five aggregates (Skt. *skandhas*) are form, sensation, identification, mental formation, and consciousness. Our mind is composed of the five aggregates and we may think of them as being the self. Looking at each aggregate, we can ask, "Is this the self?" No, it isn't. "Does the self own the aggregates?" No. "Is the self identical with the aggregates?" No. "Is it the shape or size or color of the aggregates that make up the self?" No. Rather, it is the collection of aggregates that carry out the function of thinking of "I" and are then ascribed the name "I.' In fact, there is no self or I that is identical to or separate from the aggregates.

To give more detail to the argument that the self and the five aggregates are not the same, there are twenty views of the self as the five aggregates, each view being incorrect. These views are shown to be false when the self is refuted. The views that are incorrect are:

1.-5. *Each of the five aggregates or skandhas are actually the self.* One might hold the view that the aggregate of "form" (our body) is the self, but it isn't. Similarly, one might hold the view that the "sensation" or "identification," or "mental formation" or "consciousness" is the self. They aren't the self. Believing the self to be one of the aggregates creates five incorrect views that can be eliminated by realizing that the self doesn't truly exist.

6.-10. *The self is accompanied by each of the five aggregates.* One might hold the view that one of the five aggre-

gates supports the self; that self and form coexist, that self and sensations coexist, that self and identification coexist, that self and mental formations coexist, or that self and consciousness coexist. All these views are wrong and can be eliminated realizing the emptiness of self.

11.-15. *The aggregates are based upon the self.* One might hold the view that form is based upon the self, that sensations are based upon the self, that identification is based upon the self, that mental activities are based upon the self, or that consciousness is based upon the self. All these views are wrong and are eliminated by refuting the belief in the self.

16.-20. *The self is based on the five aggregates.* One might hold the view that the aggregates are the foundation for the self. Is the self based upon form? Is it based upon sensations? Is it based upon identification? Is it based upon mental activities? Is it based upon consciousness? No. All these views are incorrect and are eliminated by realizing the egolessness of self.

We can go through each of these twenty views in relation to the aggregates and discover that, in fact, the self does not exist. Using the example of the chariot, we can analyze and see that there is no self in relation to the aggregates. Having understood that, we can meditate on the absence of a self, such as in the meditation instructions of Goenka, in which case one meditates on the body, working from the top of the body downwards, looking for the self. By practicing this meditation we develop the experience that there is no self.

Meditation[24]

Many people are interested in doing meditation and in gaining experience from it. We should avoid the obstacles of dullness of mind in meditation; the mind should be clear and not dull. We can also encounter the obstacle of an unstable or agitated mind, meaning that many thoughts arise in the mind. When many thoughts arise in the mind, we should notice them with mindfulness and awareness and be aware of these many thoughts. Having identified this fact, we simply return to our meditation and remain in a clear and calm meditative state.

When we are in a clear state of meditation, dullness or stupor can overcome the mind. We must first recognize this and then we must employ an antidote to bring the mind back to clarity. If we become aware that "I am going off into sleep," we should pull ourselves back into clear awareness. We should do this to avoid these two obstacles in meditation. The Buddha has taught that excitement of mind with too many thoughts and dullness of mind hamper meditation. We need to avoid these two conditions and remain in a clear meditation with mindfulness and awareness.

There is also the physical posture for meditation,[25] which is taught in the texts. It is important not to be strict or tense with our posture in meditation. In sitting meditation we should be in a pleasant and comfortable state. It is important to be relaxed and to feel at ease.

It is very good to meditate for short periods of time. We can sustain the meditation only if we do short sittings. Then, we should stop before the meditation becomes too difficult. The body can become uncomfortable too. There is no point in persisting, thinking "Well, I must endure this." Sitting there enduring the pain is not helpful. At that point, there is nothing wrong with stopping, stretching our legs, and making ourself comfortable again before continuing the meditation.

3. Egolessness of the Individual and Phenomena

This section deals with what the egolessness of phenomena and the egolessness of the individual have in common. It is presented in five sections.

a. The Two Egolessnesses as One or Separate

Are the egolessness of self and egolessness of phenomena one or two different conditions? Both of these kinds of egolessness are an absence of reality. The egolessness of phenomena means that phenomena have no true existence; the egolessness of the individual means that the individual has no true existence. They are the same in that both of them are an absence of true existence.

These egolessnesses, however, can be divided into two in terms of what they are not. When we look at the individual, we see that the individual has no true reality. When we look at phenomena in terms of the dharmadhatu, we discover phenomena have no true nature. So in these terms we have the division of emptiness into two kinds of egolessness or selflessness.

b. The Purpose for Two-fold Egolessness

Why is the egolessness of phenomena and of the individual taught as being different when their nature is the same, namely emptiness?

There are many different kinds of individuals. Some have less diligence and less capacity to understand the dharma and they have many differing abilities and aspirations, so one dharma will not suffice to teach all individuals. The Buddha also taught on two different levels: the provisional level and the definitive level. The provisional level presented teachings in which the meaning was not obvious and had to be interpreted and the definitive level

required no such interpretation. For example, the Buddha taught the Foundation teachings to those of lesser wisdom, diligence, and capacity. To those people who may not have had great faith or the ability to understand emptiness, the Buddha did not say, "This is what you must understand, believe, and practice. It will not be right if you don't." The Buddha didn't teach this way because these people still had faith and aspiration in the dharma. The Buddha rather gave teachings to these persons in accordance with their aspiration, wisdom, and diligence. The definitive meaning was only implied in these provisional teachings. The Buddha gave the definitive teachings to practitioners who had great aspiration, wisdom, and diligence. He did not withhold the complete meaning of the teaching. Therefore, they were given the definitive teachings exactly as they should be taught.

The Foundation vehicle teachings were taught to those who did not have the intention to help other beings, but who were concerned only with their own benefit. The Foundation vehicle was also taught to those who did not have the wisdom to understand the teachings entirely. Although these individuals did not have the wisdom to realize emptiness or the intention to benefit all other beings, they still had the aspiration to attain liberation from samsara. This can be explained by the fact that there are two obscurations that prevent liberation: the obscuration of the disturbing emotions and the obscuration of wisdom. In accordance with their aspiration, the Buddha taught the Foundation practitioners the methods to remove the obscuration of the disturbing emotions. This meant that the Buddha taught the egolessness of the individual to these Foundation vehicle practitioners (the shravakas and pratyekabuddhas) as a method to eliminate the disturbing emotions.

For those who had the confidence to realize the ultimate truth of the teachings and who had the motivation to benefit all beings throughout space, the Buddha gave the Mahayana teachings. For those who were able to realize emptiness and had the necessary motivation, the Buddha taught egolessness of phenomena and the attitude of bodhichitta.

C. Refuting the Existence of Self and Phenomena

The third point examines what is to be refuted in terms of the two egolessnesses. First, the self of the individual must be refuted because the self of the individual doesn't actually have a reality. Although there is no self, it seems to us as if it does exist. Therefore, as long as one is experiencing delusory appearances, one needs to go through the process of refuting the self of the individual even though it has no reality in the first place.

Also, there is a belief in the reality of phenomena. This has no reality either. But to the mind that is in a state of delusion, there is the mental fabrication of the reality of phenomena. Therefore, because one imagines that there is something that is not, one needs to refute that reality of phenomena, that self of phenomena.

What are being refuted here is the egolessness of phenomena and the egolessness of the individual. In spite of the fact that phenomena and individual self have no existence of their own, the mind perceives that which doesn't exist (persons and things) as existing. Therefore, one needs to refute them because if they did exist, it would be impossible for them to become non-existent. Similarly, if they are really non-existent, one can't make them exist. But, because the self of phenomena and the individual are actually non-existent, one can refute them. One needs to refute them because there is this belief in something that does not exist as existing. One does that for the self of the individual and for the self of phenomena. It is not that there actually is anything there that one is denying. What one is denying is not there, but because there is this mistaken belief in the mind and one has to realize that one is in error, one goes through the process of refuting the self of phenomena and the self of the individual.

d. How to Refute Existence of Self and Phenomena

The fourth point explains how one goes about refuting the existence of phenomena and of the individual on the ultimate level of reality. We use the logic from the *pramana* ("valid cognition"), which allows us to develop a conviction in the reality of egolessness. There are two kinds of logical proofs that can be used to establish egolessness of the individual and egolessness of phenomena: negative proofs and positive proofs. The negative proof establishes that something does not exist, whereas positive proof establishes that something does exist.

There are two kinds of positive proofs: "proof through identity" and "proof through effect." The proof through effect requires that the effect is different from the subject of discussion, therefore it is "a result," whereas the subject is called "the cause." For example, the positive proof that a fire on a mountain pass exists is the presence of smoke, which is the effect of the fire. Smoke is different from the fire, which is the cause of the smoke. In this way, inference is used to conclude that there is a fire when one sees the smoke, although the fire itself cannot be directly seen. This first example is the positive proof using the reasoning of cause and effect.

The second positive proof is called "proof through identity" and it deals with something that arises because it is newly created. If something had always existed, then it would be permanent. However, if something such as a plant is newly created then it is impermanent and it must be the result of causes and conditions (a seed, right soil, fertilizer, warmth). When those causes and conditions are missing or incomplete, then that thing (the plant) will never appear or cease to exist. This proof concerns the nature of the subject, a thing that is newly created.

These are the two kinds of positive logical proofs that prove the presence and identity of something. When we are refuting the existence of the egolessness of phenomena and the egolessness of the individual, the negative proof is used. There are also two

kinds of negative proofs. One negative proof is called "an absence of result." For example, we may conclude that because there is no smoke (the effect of fire) in a clump of trees, then there can be no fire (the cause of the smoke) there. Thus, the absence of smoke is a negative proof showing that there is no fire. The second type of negative proof deals with contradiction. For example, there is a contradiction between fire and water. For example, if we see an ocean with nothing on it, we know there will be no fire there. The negative proof that there won't be a fire on an undisturbed ocean is that these two things are contrary to each other.

These two kinds of positive and two kinds of negative proofs are used in logical reasoning. To prove the absence of a self, the positive proof is not used. Instead, we refute the existence of self and phenomena using both negative proofs: the absence of result (something connected with the subject) and the absence of identity (the presence of the opposite).

e. Middle-way Analysis of Ultimate Truth

The fifth point deals with the actual logic used to examine the ultimate truth and this logic comes from the Middle-way tradition. There are many different systems of reasoning used in this tradition to explain egolessness.

First, there is reasoning showing non-dependence. One might think that something is born or arises and then comes to an end; that cessation is a result from a previous cause. However, logic shows that this is not an effect. Cessation does not depend upon a previous cause. Rather, it happens naturally and is not dependent upon a previous cause. It is not an effect.

Second, one might think that when appearances arise in the mind, they must be simultaneous. A cup cannot exist independently of the perception of the visual consciousness, otherwise the perception and the object would have to be simultaneous. This is the second of the five kinds of Middle-way logic.

The third kind of reasoning involves establishing how phenomena are neither one nor many. If a thing has true existence, then it should be one single, indivisible thing. If we try to identify something as "one thing," we will fail because things are infinitely divisible. No matter how much we divide something, its parts continue to be subject to further division. They continue to have a top, bottom, right, left, and so on. It is not possible to prove anything as "one thing." Because that is the case, there cannot be the existence of "many" either. "Many" must be composed of a collection of things that are "one." If it is not possible to establish anything as "one," then it is not possible for "many" to exist either. In this way, phenomena are neither one nor many; the nature of all things is emptiness, lack of any true reality.

A fourth logical argument is employing the four extremes, called "refutation of birth from the four extremes." In the above discussion of the two positive and two negative proofs, these four points of Middle-way logic were already used. To use this same method of reasoning to prove the emptiness of phenomena using the aspect of birth and cessation we could reason:

(i.) Phenomena cannot cease because they are not born,
(ii.) Phenomena cannot be separate because they are not singular.
(iii.) Phenomena cannot appear because they do not cease.
(iv.) Phenomena cannot be nothing because they are not permanent.

In the text *The Wisdom of the Middle-way*, Nagarjuna presented four kinds of reasoning. In one, he says that there is no cessation because there is no birth, i.e. if there is no birth, there cannot be cessation. Second, there cannot be many things because there is not one thing, or we could say if one thing does not exist, then there cannot be many things that exist. Third, there cannot be coming because there is no going, or one could say if

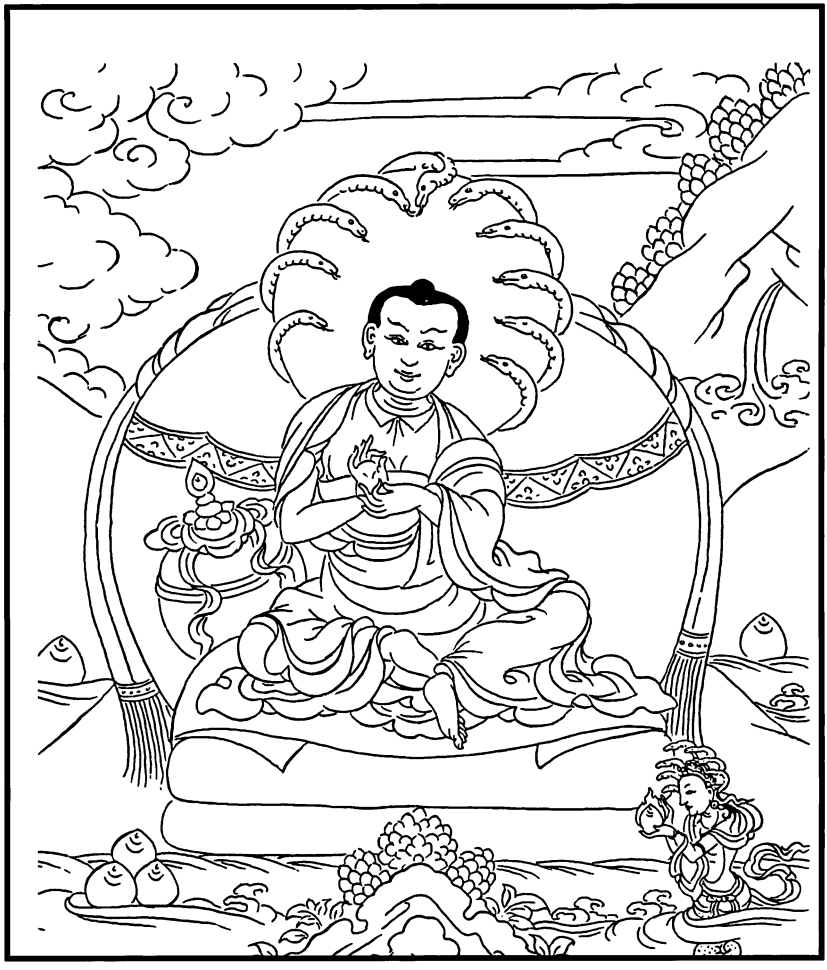
there is no going, there cannot be any coming. Fourth, there can also be no nihilism (a kind of nothingness) because there is no permanence, i.e. if there is no eternal existence, there can be no absence of existence. These are the four logical arguments presented in Nagarjuna's *The Wisdom of the Middle-way.*

That completes the five sections on looking at both the egolessness of phenomena and of the individual, together forming the third part on the section of egolessness; first the egolessness of phenomena, then the egolessness of the individual and then the egolessness of both phenomena and the individual.

Questions

Question: Would you say more about the seed and the plant arising independently? We had the point that where there is no fire there is no smoke and the less smoke, the less fire. If the seed and the plant arise separately, do they always arise one after the other?

Rinpoche: The smoke from the fire and the plant and seed are different topics. Stating that smoke points to fire is a positive logical reason, whereas ultimately there is no fire. The discussion of whether the sprout comes from the seed is carried out in order to see that the seed is different than the sprout; they are different.



Nagarjuna

Nagarjuna is said to have gone to the naga underworld where the nagas had preserved the Prajnaparamita texts on emptiness and he then brought them into our world. He is shown in the teaching mudra surrounded by snakes (signs of nagas) with a naga on the right offering him a treasure.

9

The Two Middle-way Schools

4. Definitive Analyses of the Middle-way Traditions

Next we look at the analyses used in the Middle-way traditions. Whether in terms of the sixteen emptinesses or the two egolessnesses, these analyses are used to establish that things have no true existence, that the nature of phenomena is emptiness. The two traditions in the Middle-way school are the Rangtong and the Shentong schools.

A. The Rangtong School

When the Buddha was alive, he gave teachings on the Foundation vehicle and on the emptiness of self. After he passed away (in 400 BCE), the Buddhists in India predominately taught and practiced the Foundation teachings. In about the first century CE Nagarjuna composed six main texts on the Middle-way on the emptiness of phenomena. The main text was *The Wisdom of the Middle-way* and the five others are considered branch or supplementary texts. Nagarjuna's main disciple was Aryadeva. Both Nagarjuna and Aryadeva taught the Middle-way teachings on emptiness which later became known as the Rangtong school.

After Nagarjuna's time, Buddhapalita wrote a commentary

on Nagarjuna's main text to explain Nagarjuna's views. This explanation became known as the *Prasangika* system of the Middle-way. Afterwards, another master Bhavaviveka criticized Buddhapalita, saying that he hadn't interpreted Nagarjuna's view correctly and wrote his own texts which became known as the Sutra-followers or Svatantrika tradition. Then in the seventh century, Chandrakirti who lived after Bhavaviveka wrote his famous commentary on Nagarjuna's text called *Entering the Middle-way*. Chandrakirti criticized Bhavaviveka's arguments and followed Buddhapalita's tradition, thus supporting the Prasangika tradition. Thus, two different systems developed within the Rangtong: that of the Prasangika and of the Svatantrika. The Svatantrikas were called "masters of the east" and include Bhavaviveka, Jnanagarba, and Shantarakshita. The main proponents of the Prasangika system were Buddhapalita and Chandrakirti.

In Tibet the Prasangika is seen as a set of teachings higher than the Svatantrika teachings. "Higher" in this case doesn't mean superior, rather it is a matter of approach. To understand emptiness, we need to understand the view of both the Svatantrika and the Prasangika tradition.

The Svatantrika View

The Svatantrika system believes that the five skandhas are real and truly exist, with their nature being empty. This view clearly appears to be a contradiction because something (the skandhas) cannot be both existent and not existent at the same time. Therefore, the Svatantrikas postulated two levels of reality: conventional or relative truth of the appearance of objects and the ultimate truth of the emptiness or nonexistence of the essence of the object.

They explained this contradiction in terms of conventional truth (the appearance of relative phenomena) and the ultimate truth (the emptiness of phenomena). Phenomena exist on the conventional level. It would be wrong to say that a phenomenon sim-

ply doesn't exist because on the conventional level appearances do occur. Similarly, you cannot speak of "existence" in terms of only ultimate truth; that would be incorrect. Because existence and non-existence are opposites, there has to be the division into two levels. Therefore, the Svatrantika tradition maintains that there is existence on conventional level and non-existence on the ultimate level of truth. This view is presented in Svatantrika texts such as the *Entering the Middle-way* (Skt. *Madhyamika-lankara)* which states that in terms of relative appearances there is the existence of things, and in terms of their ultimate nature there is non-existence or emptiness. Thus, in the Svatantika system there is the separation of the two truths with the conventional and ultimate truths being distinct from each other.

The Prasangika Tradition

The Prasangika tradition does not separate phenomena into relative and ultimate truth. While there are appearances, their nature is emptiness. As things appear, they are at the same time empty. There is no need to separate the two truths because they are indivisible. Prasangikas hold that while everything is empty, this emptiness is not a complete void because the emptiness has the quality which allows the presence of appearances. The example they give is when we are dreaming and we see a tiger in our dream. We can say the tiger is an actual appearance, but obviously this tiger is empty or non-existent.

While there is the appearance of the tiger, at the same time it is not existent. While there is the non-existence of the tiger (it never existed), it is present and appears. There is no need to separate between appearances and emptiness, existence and nonexistence in the Prasangika system because in this system the two truths (conventional and ultimate) are seen as indivisible.

To summarize, the Middle-way school is divided into two main traditions—the Shentong and the Rangtong. The Rangtong tradition is further subdivided into two systems—the Svatrantika and the Prasangika.

B. The Shentong School

The Shentong tradition belongs to the third and last turning of the wheel of dharma. We can find three major setbacks in the history of the spread of Buddhism. One major setback happened in the following way: At that time (around the 4th century CE) there were no drums or gongs in the monasteries, but only a *ghandi* (a long piece of wood). There were seven different ways of beating the ghandi to let practitioners know the different times of day, the time for taking the *sojong* vows and so on. In the Nalanda Monastery, the *ghandi* was beaten in a certain way to announce that the non-Buddhist tradition had been completely defeated in a debate. So this certain style of beating would announce, "May many of the Buddha's teachings spread and may the *tirthika* (non-Buddhist) tradition be completely defeated."

The story goes that a non-Buddhist beggar who begged for food at Nalanda every day heard the ghandi announcing, "May tirthikas be defeated." and wondered, "What are they saying?" He thought, "I cannot believe that these people are so malicious and nasty," and became very angry. The beggar had a companion and together they decided that they must put an end to this tradition of Nalanda University. One beggar practiced underground in complete darkness to attain the power of the sun while the other beggar begged for food to feed himself and his friend. Twelve years passed and the beggar providing the food said, "I have been feeding you for twelve years now. You must achieve the goal of your practice by tomorrow or you are a dead man." The beggar who was underground concentrated in a very focused manner and the next day he recited a mantra on a handful of earth which he then threw at Nalanda University. The earth burst into flames and the library caught fire. Water appeared and extinguished the fire, but many texts were spoiled and ruined.

At that time there lived a nun called Salwai Tsultrim in Tibetan who grieved greatly at the loss of the texts in the library. She did not have the intellectual capacity herself to replace them

and thought it would be best to give up her robes and to have sons who would help revive the Buddha-dharma. She had two sons named Asanga and Vasubandhu. In the Indian tradition, the son does the work his father did. Asanga and Vasubandhu had different fathers and each asked their mother what they should do. She answered, "I didn't bring you up for that reason. I want you to study the Dharma and revive it." They did their mother's bidding and Asanga meditated upon Maitreya while Vasubandhu studied the Abhidharma in Kashmir.

Asanga was told to practice Maitreya, which he did in four three-year retreats in a cave. After the first three years, he thought, "I have gained no results from my practice and should give up." He left his retreat and came across a man who was rubbing a large lump of iron. Asanga asked, "What are you doing?" The man answered, "This big lump of iron is useless, but if I keep rubbing it, I can wear it down to make a needle and sew my clothes." Asanga saw the diligence of this man and thought, "I am trying to receive the blessings of Maitreya and should have more diligence than that." He did another three-year retreat, but again felt that he had accomplished nothing. He thought, "Six years have gone by and I am going to give up." He went out and came across a man who was rubbing a large rock on a mountain. When Asanga asked what he was doing, the man answered, "My house is on the other side of this and this rock is blocking off the sun. If I keep rubbing it, the mountain will wear away and the sun will shine on my house." Asanga thought, "So much diligence! I should have more than that because I am trying to practice Maitreya." He returned to another three-year retreat, and again felt that he had accomplished nothing after nine years of practice. The same thing happened the third time, and Asanga went into retreat a fourth time.

After completing the fourth retreat, Asanga thought, "Twelve years have passed and still I have no results." He went out and saw a dog with many sores that were full of worms and maggots. This dog was barking and tried to bite Asanga, but Asanga felt

deep compassion for the dog because it was suffering so much pain and anger. He thought that he must take the worms out of the sores, otherwise the dog would die. Because he also did not want to harm the worms, he cut off a piece of his own flesh upon which he could lay the worms to nourish them. He decided to lift the worms out with his tongue because he didn't want to hurt the worms by pulling them out with his fingers. He closed his eyes and knelt down to touch the worms with his tongue and instead it touched the ground. Surprised, he looked up and saw the Buddha Maitreya standing before him. He told Maitreya, "I have had such a difficult time! I have been practicing for twelve years and you never appeared. Why?" Maitreya answered, "I always had compassion for you, but you couldn't see me because you were obscured by your karma. Now, because you felt so much compassion for this dog, it removed your obscurations and negative karma so you are now able to see me."

Maitreya accepted Asanga as his pupil and took him to his pure realm called Tushita. Asanga stayed in Tushita for a long time and received the teachings which are now called *The Five Texts of Maitreya*.[26]

The last of these five texts is *The Uttaratantra Shastra* which presents the Shentong teachings in the form of seven main vajra topics. When Asanga returned to the world, he told Vasubandhu (who had been studying the Abhidharma with Sankabhadra) that he had received these very profound teachings. At first Vasubandhu did not acknowledge that his brother had received these Mahayana teachings from Maitreya, but later repented. Then he received and studied these teachings of Maitreya, so that both Asanga and Vasubandhu spread them. In particular, *The Uttaratantra Shastra,* which became the transmission of the Shentong tradition of the Middle-way school was spread.

What is taught in the Shentong tradition? The first major teaching of the Shentong is that all phenomena are mind. This view holds that all things are created by the mind. There is nothing that exists separate from the mind. Because all appearances

are the mind, nothing has an existence of its own. Not only do objects have no true existence, but the perceiver of objects has no existence either. Since both subject and object have no true existence, both phenomena and the mind itself have no true existence either. When we accept this view, we see that the true nature of phenomena is emptiness. In summary, the teachings of the Shentong tradition hold that there is no reality to outer phenomena and no reality to the mind.

The Uttaratantra Shastra presents this teaching in seven topics called "vajra" points because they are so profound. The first vajra topic is the cause of enlightenment which is the Buddha. From the Buddha comes the second vajra topic, the teachings of the Buddha or the Dharma. Because there is the Dharma, the third vajra topic is the companions on the path or the sangha. Due to the sangha, we realize the fourth vajra topic that all beings possess Buddha-essence or Buddha-nature. The fifth vajra topic is that because all sentient beings have Buddha-nature, when this Buddha-nature is purified of the afflictions that obscure it, enlightenment is attained. The sixth topic is having attained enlightenment all the qualities of the Buddha, such as the ten powers, the four fearlessnesses, the 32 major and 80 secondary signs will flourish, so this sixth topic concerns the qualities of enlightenment. Finally, the seventh vajra topic is that once one possesses these positive qualities, as a Buddha one will engage in activity that will benefit other sentient beings.

Of these seven topics, the most important one is the fourth vajra topic on Buddha-nature. The Shentong tradition holds that there is the "element" (Skt. *dhatu*) or Buddha-nature (Skt. *tathagata-garbha*), also known as the dharmadhatu, and this element contains all the qualities of Buddhahood and its nature is emptiness. Buddha-nature is present within all beings at all times. It is realized at the attainment of enlightenment. But Buddha-nature is not the same as a permanent or eternal self (Skt. *atman*) posited by many Hindu religions. It is not the self, because the self is thought of as a real entity, whereas the Buddha-nature does not

exist as an entity. Rather, Buddha-nature is devoid of its own nature. It is empty. Therefore, it is not the same as a self. By removing the obscurations and by realizing the Buddha-nature, living beings will achieve Buddhahood.

i. Three phases of manifestation

When Buddha-nature is obscured by the afflictions, Buddha-nature does not manifest. There are three phases of this manifestation of Buddha-nature: the state of impurity, the state of partial purification, and the state of complete purity. The state of impurity is that of ordinary beings, in whom Buddha-nature and all the enlightened qualities of mind are completely obscured by the disturbing emotions. When ordinary beings have reached the level of a bodhisattva (having attained the first bodhisattva level) and they have removed many obscurations, they are partially purified through practice. The state of perfect purification occurs only when all obscurations are completely removed at the state of Buddhahood.

ii. Examples of Buddha-nature

The aspiration to practice the dharma to attain wisdom and develop the enlightened qualities is present within Buddha-nature, and this nature lies within all living beings. It is, however, obscured. In the *Uttaratantra Shastra,* nine examples are given to illustrate how the qualities of Buddha-nature are present within ordinary beings but are obscured. For example:

The statue of a Buddha enclosed within a lotus. In this example, one cannot see the Buddha. One can only see the petals. Once the petals are removed, the Buddha becomes visible. In the same way, all the qualities of Buddhahood are present in beings, but they are not seen because they are obscured. Once the disturbing emotions that obscure the Buddha-nature are removed, one

sees the Buddha-nature and all the qualities of Buddhahood.

A lump of gold lying in a dump. Suppose once, many years ago someone had been carrying a lump of gold and lost it beside the street. The lump of gold is gradually covered over with garbage and dirt. Then suppose a poor man comes along and builds his shack over the spot where the gold is. Even though there is a lump of gold in the ground unchanged over time, right below his floor, he remains poor. He doesn't have to look anywhere else to become free from poverty, but he is not aware of it and continues to suffer.

Then suppose there is a clairvoyant person who notices how this poor man is suffering and sees that he is living right above a lump of gold. The clairvoyant tells this man, "All you have to do is dig up the ground beneath your floor. You will find gold and become free from your poverty." The poor man does as he is told, finds the gold, and is liberated from the suffering of poverty.

These are two of the examples that illustrate how Buddha-nature is present, but obscured within ordinary beings. As in these examples, Buddha-nature has been present within ourselves for hundreds of thousands of lifetimes, even though we have not been able to perceive it. There is nothing wrong with the Buddha-nature. The Buddha-nature has no faults. It is simply obscured by the disturbing emotions. Because it is obscured, we do not perceive any of the benefits of the Buddha-nature but rather, we experience the problems and suffering of samsara. The Buddha saw that beings suffer and are not aware of the Buddha-nature within, so he taught that we have Buddha-nature within us and that to expose it, we must remove the disturbing emotions by practicing diligently. By removing the disturbing emotions, Buddha-nature will manifest, possessing all the qualities of Buddhahood, and we will become free from the suffering of samsara.

The Shentong tradition teaches that all beings possess Buddha-nature and it is this Buddha-nature which allows us to

achieve Buddhahood. Thus the qualities of Buddhahood are present within all beings. We can find these teachings of the Shentong tradition in the *Uttaratantra Shastra* of Maitreya.

iii. The Difficulty of Perceiving Buddha-nature

In *The Compendium of Knowledge,* Jamgon Kongtrul states that the Shentong tradition presents the definitive teaching on Buddha-nature, but that it is very difficult to comprehend and to realize by ordinary beings, shravakas, pratyekabuddhas and those beginning on the bodhisattva path. To realize Buddha-nature, one has to study the teachings of the great treatises of the Shentong tradition. We should read and study these teachings ourselves; therefore Jamgon Kongtrul does not go into this topic in detail in the text but goes on to the next topic.

5. Union of the Profound View and Vast Conduct

The first four sections on egolessness were the egolessness of phenomena, the egolessness of the individual, and the egolessness of both phenomena and the individual in the different Rangtong and the Shentong traditions. This fifth section deals with the union of "the two chariots," which are "the tradition of the profound view" and "the tradition of vast conduct." These are the teachings on emptiness of Nagarjuna (profound view) and of Asanga (vast conduct).

We can look at these two views and take the stand that Nagarjuna's view is correct and Asanga's view is incorrect, or we can consider Asanga's view as correct and Nagarjuna's view as incorrect. Jamgon Kongtrul, however, says that this is not the way to look at this issue at all. We should not think, "One side is correct, therefore the other side must be wrong." Instead, we should realized these two views are a unity with neither side being right or wrong.

The two traditions should be seen as one. Thus, we should

see Nagarjuna's view as free from error and a tradition that we should learn and contemplate. Having learned and contemplated Nagarjuna's tradition, we should also practice it. We should also see that Asanga's tradition is free from error. Being free from error, it is a tradition that we should also learn and contemplate. Having learned and contemplated Asanga's tradition, we should also practice it. In fact, Nagarjuna's tradition helps us understand Asanga's tradition because it clarifies Asanga's view, and Asanga's view helps us understand Nagarjuna's view. Therefore, we should regard both traditions to be equally valid. Some dharma masters described the dharma as a lump of molasses, which tastes sweet wherever you taste it. It would not be correct to think that one part of molasses is different or superior to another other; instead, we should take both traditions as being equally valuable.

The masters who founded these two traditions were foretold in an indisputable prophecy from the Buddha. The Buddha said, "From the southern land of Veda there will come a monk called Naga." Because this is a definite prophecy, there is no reason to doubt the authenticity of Nagarjuna. The Buddha also said that sooner or later Asanga would come. Furthermore, he said that Nagarjuna would be on the first bodhisattva level, called "perfect joy." He also said that Asanga would attain the third bodhisattva level, called "radiance." Both masters were not ordinary beings, but were on the ten bodhisattva levels of the noble ones. Since the Buddha prophesied the appearance of both masters, we cannot say that the one is good and the other is bad.

Not only that, but both of these great masters had great spiritual accomplishments. Nagarjuna lived for 900 years, Asanga lived for 150 years. Their greatness has not been questioned by any of the major dharma traditions. Nagarjuna and Asanga are referred to as "the adornments of the world" because they clarified the Buddha's teachings. They are also called "the great chariots" because they spread the Buddha's teachings. Their teachings and views were both outstanding.

Some masters claim that Nagarjuna's teachings are good and Asanga's are not. Some say that Asanga's teachings are superior to Nagarjuna's. Some claim that the Shentong is superior to the Rangtong or vice versa. The people who argue in this manner are not correct because they have not had the good fortune to be able to learn and contemplate the dharma teachings properly and attain the necessary understanding to evaluate them.

Jamgon Kongtrul writes that we should understand the textual tradition of both Nagarjuna and Asanga thoroughly and accurately. We need to understand Asanga's and Nagarjuna's texts clearly and not conclude, "What Nagarjuna teaches is the same as what Asanga teaches." This is not making an effort to understand both traditions clearly. We should instead study both views separately, as they are.

Nagarjuna's teachings deal primarily with emptiness while Asanga's teachings deal primarily with Buddha-nature, luminous clarity, and wisdom. Nagarjuna wrote commentaries on the first turning of the wheel of dharma (such as his *Letters of Advice*), on the middle turning of the wheel of dharma (texts on logical analysis and commentaries on the Middle-way reasoning), and on the last turning of the wheel of dharma (in his *Praises to the Dharmadhatu*). Asanga wrote the five texts of Maitreya and five texts on the bodhisattva levels, a compilation on the Abhidharma, and a compilation on the three vehicles to make a total of 12 texts. Vasubandhu wrote eight works, which makes 20 yakaranas in all.

Although Nagarjuna taught emptiness while Asanga taught Buddha-nature, clarity, and wisdom, both of these masters offered an explanation of the Middle-way. The Middle-way is the ultimate meaning of both traditions. If we can study, understand, and realize these traditions, we will be free of making false imputations (that is saying Asanga or Nagarjuna said such and such when they actually didn't say this) and be free of false denials (that is saying Nagarjuna or Asanga did not say such and such when they actually did). We will be free from these errors and have a good understanding of both traditions.

If we can be free from false imputations and denials through understanding these traditions, we will possess "the eyes of wisdom." We will have the understanding that is stainless and free from misconceptions of the view of all of the sutras and tantras that the Buddha taught. With this understanding we will be able to explain them to others.

There are many aspects to the teachings of these two traditions. Sometimes there are provisional teachings on the relative level and sometimes there are definitive teachings on the ultimate level. Sometimes the teaching deals with what is obvious or evident (an external level of teaching) while other teachings will be subtle and deeper. Some teachings are concerned with cutting through conceptualization and others are concerned with the meaning of meditation and so on. If we can understand and realize all these aspects of both traditions, then we will also be able to understand the sutras and tantras without error or contradiction. We won't think, "Oh the sutras are right but the tantras are wrong." We also won't think, "The tantras are right but the sutras are wrong." If we understand these two traditions perfectly, we will not encounter these faults.

Through this understanding, we can be free of the imputations of the ordinary mind. What we should understand is the Buddha's view. We should not impose our notions created from our own concepts upon Buddha-dharma. Therefore, we need to understand the traditions of the Rangtong and Shentong. If we don't understand the Rangtong tradition, we will have attachment to things as if they had a true existence. Therefore we need to examine and understand the Svatrantika and the Prasangika traditions of the Rangtong. Having understood the absence of reality, we go on to the ultimate aspect in which there isn't just plain emptiness but there is Buddha-nature, clarity, and ultimate wisdom, as explained in the Shentong tradition. The Shentong tradition, therefore, clarifies the Rangtong teachings, and the Rangtong teachings clarify the Shentong teachings. Thus both assist each other. We can see that there is no contradiction between them, but that they mutually assist each other.

Questions

Question: How can one say that because you do not experience something, it doesn't happen? Through using logic we know that certain things can happen. We are here in this teaching now, but that doesn't mean that downstairs something else isn't going on. The fact that we are here while it is happening doesn't mean that the things we are not experiencing are not happening.

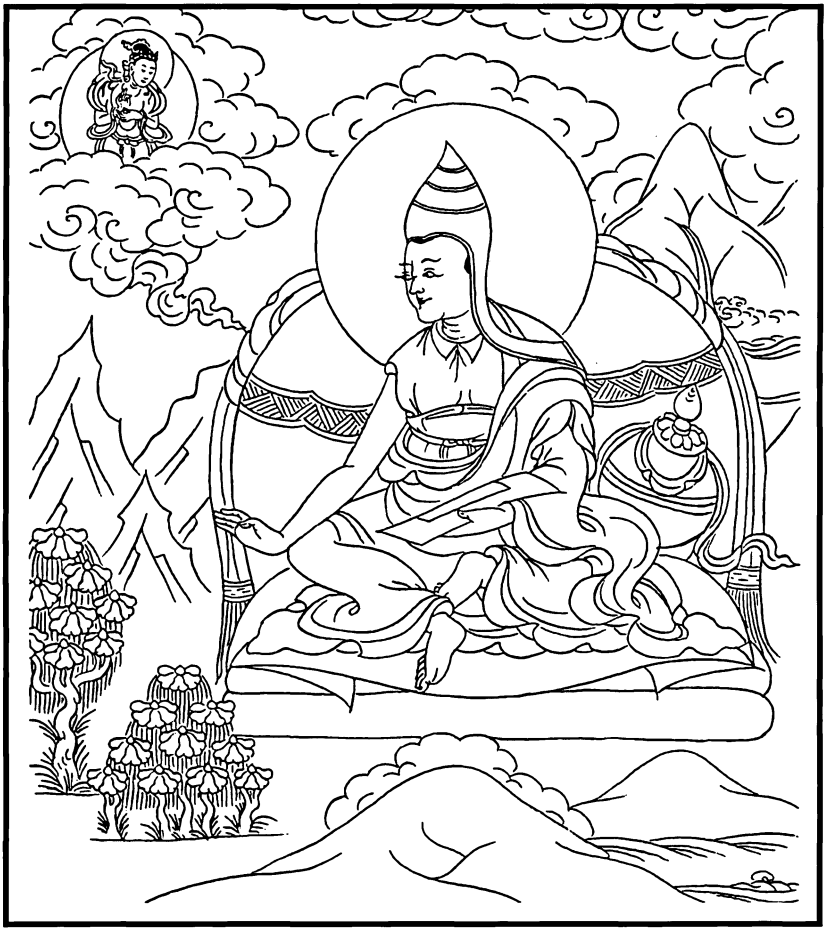
Rinpoche: There are the other things happening because there are the latencies in the ground consciousness. The general teachings describe six consciousnesses (the five sensory consciousnesses and the mental consciousness) that experience perceptions. There is also a classification into eight consciousnesses. The seventh is the "afflicted consciousness," which is a belief in a self. We always think, "I am. I exist." The seventh consciousness is latent and always present and clings to a self all the time, day and night, while eating, while drinking. It is persistently there at all times. There is also the eighth consciousness, the "ground consciousness" holding all our latencies and from which all the things we experience arise. If I go from Kathmandu to London, I get in a plane and think, "I am going to London." Then I think, "Now I am on my way to London" and later, "Now I have arrived in London." I don't think, "I have left Kathmandu. Kathmandu has disappeared and is no longer there." Rather, "I have left Kathmandu, coming to London flying up here above the clouds" with all expectations. I arrive upon the latency in the ground consciousness.

Question: Rinpoche, could you explain how things arise in the eighth consciousness when it is in the sixth consciousness that everything appears.

Rinpoche: Appearances arise through latencies or karmic imprints. In any life you have all sets of latencies in your ground consciousness. What you do not have in your ground conscious-

ness will not appear. You can't have a cold fire appearing because there isn't the latency of a cold fire; only a hot fire can appear. So, there are all these latencies present and they can arise and be grasped with the five or six consciousnesses; what is in the ground consciousness is perceived by the six consciousnesses.

It is like a movie projector. What is in the projector will shine on the screen; what is not in the movie projector will not shine on the screen. So, whatever is in that machine will appear vividly on the screen.



Asanga

Asanga was the founder of the Yogachara school which came to be known as the third turning of the wheel of dharma. It is said that he meditated on the Buddha Maitreya for 12 years and then was able to meet him. There he was given the *Five Treatises of Maitreya* which became the "School of the Vast View."

10

The View of the Tantras

The sixth chapter, entitled "The View of the Tantras" is divided into two parts. First is the general explanation given by masters of the Middle-way and second is a particular explanation given by Gargyi Wangpo (the Eighth Tai Situpa)

VI. The View of the Tantras

A. General Explanation Of The Middle-way Masters

What is the relation between Rangtong and Shentong in the tantras? We might ask, "Which Middle-way view is closest to the teachings of the tantras in the Vajrayana?" There are different masters and each master has his or her own way of explaining what the view is in the tantras. However, the major view is that the tantric teachings correspond with the final turning of the wheel of dharma. Jamgon Kongtrul writes that most of the Indian texts also teach that the tantras are part of the last turning of the wheel of dharma. In Tibet many masters and scholars presented their own individual view about this.

The Rangtong tradition says that the subject of the tantras is great bliss used as a method; the object is emptiness free from conceptual fabrication. This is not different from the Prajna-

paramita teaching on emptiness in the sutra tradition. Therefore, the Prajnaparamita and tantra teachings are the same when it comes to the object or purpose of these teachings.

Some masters say that there is no difference between the tantra view and the teachings of emptiness. Others say that the teachings are not the same, that there isn't just emptiness free from conceptualization, but that the tantra view is different. They say that the tantra view is that emptiness possesses aspects and that everything can arise in emptiness.

It is important to understand that there are slight differences between the sutras and tantras. Once somebody told me, "When you listen to the Buddhist teachings, you hear teachings on emptiness, Shamatha meditation, love, compassion and so on. This is very good, but when you see Buddhists practicing, it is not the same. In monasteries drums are beaten, horns are blown, and there are strange deities. You don't actually see Buddhists practice what they are teaching." It is true. This is how it appears to a newcomer. But, it is important to learn and understand the differences between the sutras and tantras exactly for this reason.

In the practice of the dharma, the goal is to realize the true nature of phenomena and to attain a high state of wisdom. In the Tibetan tradition the actual practice is done through the practice of the tantras. There are two methods in the tantras: the path of liberation and the path of methods. In the path of liberation one looks directly at the mind, at its true nature, which slowly becomes more and more clear. In the path of methods, various methods and yogic practices are used to increase the clarity and stability of the mind so one can look into the nature of mind more easily.

In the Vajrayana we meditate on deities and on the nature of these deities. What we wish to realize in deity practice is the dharmadhatu, the emptiness of phenomena inseparable from wisdom and luminous clarity. This is the ultimate wisdom of Buddhahood, the Buddha-nature that is present within all beings. This is the nature of the yidam deities that are meditated on who are not

perceived as external, existent beings. They are seen as internal because the deities that we are meditating on are actually our own nature. These deities include Chakrasamvara, Hevajra, Vajravarahi and so on. In tantra practices, one's own mind is that of the deity, and one meditates on this pure nature. In these practices one imagines one's own body to be that of the deity so that one does not have an ordinary and impure body, but rather one possesses the stainless body of the deity during the meditation.

We meditate on the pure body, speech, and mind of the deity, because the goal in dharma practice is to eliminate the obscuration of the afflictions and the obscuration to knowledge. We wish to eliminate these impurities, and by meditating on our nature as being the pure nature of the deity (the pure body, speech and mind), the impurities will naturally dissolve. If we simply strive to eliminate directly the disturbing emotions and the obscuration of knowledge, they will not vanish. By meditating on the pure form, the impurities will naturally be eliminated. Not only that, but when imagining ourself in this pure form, we radiate light rays from our heart, which invites the yidam deities to come and merge into ourselves. We experience cessation in the mind when we do this. This practice creates a tendency in the mind towards purity and, to some extent, this is what dispels the impurity of our perceptions.

Also, during tantric practice there are all kinds of different perceptions of many things: various visual images, pleasant or unpleasant sounds, drums, gongs, unusual smells of incense and so on. These appearances aid us in meditation. To engage the body, speech, and mind in the practice, there is also the recitation of the mantra, which isn't normal speech with a particular meaning. Rather it is a sound. The Sanskrit meaning of any mantra can be translated, but the masters recommend not to translate the mantras, but to leave them in Sanskrit. These mantras are not ordinary speech: they are special sounds that inspire us and support our practice.

It is said that the view of the tantras accords with the Shentong view. The Rangtong view is best for understanding emptiness, for analyzing phenomena, and for realizing emptiness. But, thinking about emptiness is not sufficient when it comes to meditation. The Shentong teachings on the presence of clarity and wisdom are beneficial for the actual practice of meditation in the tantras. Therefore, it is said here that the tantric view is the Shentong view, which can be understood from texts like the *Uttaratantra Shastra*. The *Uttaratantra Shastra* is often described as the teaching that joins the sutras with the tantras. Jamgon Kongtrul concludes that the view of the tantras is the view of the Shentong tradition.

B. The Explanation of Gargyi Wangpo, in Particular

Next is a description of the view of Lama Gargyi Wangpo, also known as Chogyi Nangwa and Situ Chogyi Jungne, the Eighth Tai Situpa. This section gives his specific explanation on the particular features of the Middle-way view in the context of the tantra.

1. The Union of Appearances and Emptiness

In the sutra tradition, the understanding of emptiness that is beyond conceptual fabrications is arrived at through intellectual reasoning. We use logical reasoning to analyze the two egolessnesses or the sixteen emptinesses to gain an understanding of emptiness. Although we cannot directly see the emptiness of external phenomena, by using inference we can come to the conclusion that external phenomena are devoid of their own nature; that their nature is emptiness. We can gain certainty through logical analysis, which is the result of gaining definite understanding of emptiness through reasoning. We gain certainty that emptiness is the nature of phenomena. Once we have this certainty, we meditate on the basis of that certainty. In this way, our

understanding of the nature of phenomena becomes clearer and clearer and clearer until we reach the first bodhisattva level. At this stage, we directly see the nature of phenomena. This sutra tradition has the view of the union of appearances and emptiness; meaning there are appearances but their nature is emptiness. Thus, we discover a union of appearance and emptiness, as in the Rangtong tradition.

2. The Union of Clarity and Emptiness

The Rangtong tradition also holds that there is also the "union of luminous clarity and emptiness" meaning that emptiness has luminous clarity. Thus, by believing in the union of luminous clarity and emptiness, the Rangtong tradition believes the same thing as the Shentong tradition.

3. The Union of Bliss and Emptiness

The tantras teach the union of bliss and emptiness, meaning that there is emptiness but its nature is bliss. The tantra tradition employs techniques to move the energy in the body. Within the body there are subtle channels (Tib. *tsa*) in which there is the movement of subtle energy called *prana* in Sanskrit and *lung* or "winds" in Tibetan. There are also chakras or "wheels" which are made up of the channels coming together. In yogic methods of the Vajrayana called *tummo*, warmth is created which invades the chakras and moves along the subtle channels, thus pervading the entire body. The result of this is the feeling of extreme bliss throughout the entire body. If one becomes attached to that bliss, this will impede one's spiritual practice. Instead, one should see that the nature of this bliss as emptiness. It is easier to identify bliss than it is to identify emptiness. Therefore, by creating bliss that pervades the entire body and by recognizing the emptiness of this bliss, one can realize the union of bliss and emptiness. This is the method of realizing emptiness used within the tantra

tradition.

This second method for realizing emptiness is called the method of "complete grasping" and "subsequent destruction or dissolution." "Complete grasping" is the method for completely identifying the union of bliss and emptiness. "Subsequent destruction" is the merging of everything into emptiness.

There are also other methods used in the tantra tradition for realizing emptiness. In relation to the true nature there is meditation on realizing the interdependence of phenomena by using the method of "that which purifies" and "that which is purified." These various methods just described have been put forward by the Eighth Tai Situpa. Tai Situpa was prophesied by Padmasambhava (Tib. *Guru Rinpoche*) who predicted, "Among the lamas there will be six who have the name of "Dharma" (Tib. *chö*) and six who have the name "Pema" or lotus." So Chögyi Jungne was the sixth or the last of the lamas who had the name "Dharma" within their name, and he was the Eighth Tai Situpa.

Questions

Question: How does one know which one to do, the path of liberation or the path of methods?

Rinpoche: The path of liberation is an easier way of practicing, so one should do that. If the opportunity comes to practice the path of methods, one should take advantage of that opportunity.

11

The View of the Birthless Union

VII. The View of the Birthless Union

The seventh and last subdivision of this text deals with the view of the union which is birthless, the union of appearances and emptiness, the union of luminous clarity and emptiness, and the union of bliss and emptiness. If we have gained this view, then we will reach realization through our practice because this is the nature of phenomena. If emptiness were not the true nature of phenomena, we would not be able to realize it. But, because the true nature of phenomena is the union of appearances and emptiness, we will be able to realize this union through practice. For example, charcoal is black and that is the nature of charcoal. There is nothing else you can do about it. No matter how much you try, you cannot wash charcoal white. You can wash charcoal 100 times and it will remain black. Similarly, if the nature of phenomena were not emptiness, no matter how much we practiced, it would not be possible to realize emptiness.

The Three Wisdoms

The Buddha and great masters taught about the nature of phenomena on the basis of direct realization, not logical analysis and

inference. If emptiness were not the true nature of phenomena, then the Buddha's words would not be correct and one could not attain realization following the Buddhist path. If emptiness were not the true nature of phenomena, then logical reasoning would not be correct and we could never prove the empty nature of phenomena through logic. But, it is possible to prove and realize this fact because emptiness is the true nature of phenomena. Since emptiness is the nature of phenomena, we can make progress and realize emptiness through practice. If emptiness were not the actual true nature of phenomena, it would be an illusion and spiritual practice would bring no results. As emptiness is the nature of phenomena, we can attain the result through study and practice, but we may ask, "How do we do this?"

We make progress on the path through the development of the three kinds of knowledge (Skt. *prajna*). First, we need to learn what was taught by reading the sutras that were taught by the Buddha and by reading the commentaries that were taught by the great masters in India and in Tibet. By studying the teachings, we will become familiar with the teachings on emptiness. From this study the wisdom of the teachings on emptiness arises.

Is it enough to just study the teachings on emptiness? No. We also need to examine the teachings to see what they really mean. Through our own intelligence and understanding we must examine and contemplate the teachings until we gain an understanding for ourselves of the meaning of the teachings. Once we gain understanding of the teachings, we will have the wisdom that comes through contemplation. Then we will know, "This is what is meant by emptiness. It is the same as the nature of phenomena."

Is it sufficient to just contemplate these truths? No, because we need the wisdom that comes only through meditation. For example, if we have a pain in our hand and read texts that teach

that everything is emptiness, our hand will continue to hurt. Merely repeating to ourself that everything is empty while we stick a needle in our hand will still cause pain because we are habituated through all of our lifetimes to believe in the reality of things. Just knowing the teachings on emptiness is not enough; we have to realize emptiness through the practice of meditation. It is through the practice of meditation based upon knowledge of what we have learned through analysis that we can gain the direct experience and realization, namely that emptiness is the true nature of phenomena.

When we have developed direct realization of the true nature of phenomena through meditation, we will also understand phenomena on the conventional level. The text reads: "Once we have realized the true nature of phenomena, spontaneously there will be wisdom which is free of ignorance concerning cause and effect." When we realize that the nature of all appearances is emptiness, that doesn't mean that appearances arise without a cause or reason. But once we have directly realized the true nature of phenomena is emptiness, the obscurations of belief in a solid self and in the reality of phenomena are removed. Once these are dispelled, our wisdom can then see how phenomena naturally and spontaneously arise. Upon knowing this, we truly understand that a negative action will give rise to a negative effect and that a positive action will have a positive effect. At this point, we are free from ignorance about the workings of cause and effect and have wisdom that is free from ignorance concerning the conventional level of reality.

Realizing the ultimate truth does not prevent us from seeing the conventional truth. Rather, by understanding how appearances arise unceasingly on the conventional level, we realize the empty nature of appearances and we understand the ultimate truth which is their birthless nature. Realizing this truth, we are not distracted by appearances and so we see the union of means and wisdom. This union is the *Prajnaparamita*, the perfection of wisdom, which is often described as being a mother. Whether one is

a prince, a minister or a beggar, one is born from a mother. In the same way, the shravakas, pratyekabuddhas, bodhisattvas, and Buddhas are born from this wisdom. We can call this realization of the perfection of wisdom the "Prajnaparamita" or we can call it "Mahamudra." Whatever we call it, it is the ultimate realization of all the sutra and tantra teachings.

This concludes the commentary on the third subdivision in the seventh chapter of *The Compendium of Knowledge* by Jamgon Kongtrul Lodro Thaye, the Great.

12

Applying These Teachings to Our Practice

The principal view of the teachings on emptiness has been from the view of the sutras. The view of the sutras can be found within the teachings of the Buddha himself (the sutras) and the treatises composed by great Buddhist masters (the shastras). We can learn the philosophical view from both of these types of texts. The tradition of the teachings given in Jamgon Kongtrul's text is that of the shastras, the treatises of the great masters.

Some people disagree and say, "It is wrong to emphasize the treatises. Instead, one should concentrate on the sutras of the Buddha himself." But, in fact, this is not so. We should concentrate on the treatises because for ordinary beings the sutras are difficult to master. The sutras go into minute details in some places and are very condensed in other places. The great masters have been able to explain the concise teachings or condense the long teachings of the Buddha. Also, some teachings of the Buddha are scattered among different sutras and aren't in any sequential order. However, the masters were able to organize the teachings so that the meaning contained in the sutras is accessible to ordinary people and can be easily learned. For example, one of the five works of Maitreya is the *Ornament of Clear Re-*

alization. This commentary is a very short text of about 20 pages and covers the entire meaning of the 100,000 verses (a twelve volume canon) of the great *Prajnaparamita* sutra.

We can study the treatises such as the main text of Nagarjuna, *The Mula-madhyamaka-prajna,* but does that mean that afterwards we can meditate on the teachings of these texts? No, because it isn't easy to apply these teachings to meditation. When it comes to meditation, the spiritual songs are more important than the shastras. The spiritual songs (Skt. *doha*) are the songs of great Indian masters, such as Saraha. We can study the *The King's Doha*, *The Queen's Doha,* and *The Citizen's Doha* of Saraha or *The Doha of Naropa* and *The Doha of Tilopa*, all of which are spiritual songs from India that present the view of how to meditate in brief. These spiritual songs don't present extensive descriptions or logical arguments to explain the view. Rather, they are brief and direct instructions based on the master's experience of meditation and realization. There are also the spiritual songs of Marpa, Milarepa, and Gampopa which come to us from Tibet. These spiritual songs also describe in a direct, concise, and clear form the view and how we should meditate.

There are also the oral instructions that one receives through the orally transmitted lineage. One's teacher says, "These are the instructions which I have received from my teacher. This is how I practiced them and this is how you should practice them. If you practice them in this way, you will benefit from practicing them." In fact, the oral instructions one receives from one's teacher are the most beneficial teachings one can receive for practicing meditation. They are more important than the teachings of sutras, the shastras, or the spiritual songs.

The logical arguments taught in the sutra tradition are important for the realization of emptiness. We think, "Phenomena are empty for this and that reason. External phenomena are empty and internal consciousnesses are empty." By applying these logical arguments and also from the wisdom that comes from contemplation, we attain a certainty concerning the emptiness of

phenomena. We develop a certainty to the extent that if a great scholar comes along and tells us, "That is not how it is. The nature of phenomena is not emptiness," we will think, "He is wrong because however much he knows, the nature of phenomena is emptiness. He is definitely wrong." We develop a strong certainty developed through the reasoning that is taught in the sutra tradition.

This certainty about the egolessness of self and phenomena is very important, but is it enough? No, because it takes a long time to attain the goal of realization by following the path of the sutras. It is said that it takes eons to gain the result based upon certainty because it is a very gentle and slow approach. It is through reasoning that we gain certainty of generosity, good conduct, patience, and the other paramitas and then accumulate merit. This careful and slow approach will take many lifetimes before we attain our goal of Buddhahood.

Is this the only way to practice? No, there is also the way of the Vajrayana, which has the instructions through which we can attain our goal within one lifetime with the same body. Milarepa provides an example. One night Rechungpa was dreaming that he was in a realm where the stories of the lives of great masters were being told. They were wonderful accounts. Some dakinis said, "These are wonderful, but it would be much more wonderful to only hear about the life of Milarepa. It is much more important." They asked, "Who is going to tell the life story of Milarepa?" Rechungpa noticed that some dakinis were pointing at him. When he woke up, he went to see Milarepa and told him, "I asked for and received all these meditation instructions from you, but I have never asked you to tell the story of your life. Based on what you have accomplished, you can't be an ordinary person. You must be an emanation of someone like Vajrapani or one of the Buddhas of the five families." He then asked Milarepa, "Please tell the story of your life, how you developed your diligence, how you developed realization, and how you attained the result."

Milarepa told Rechungpa, "You think that I am an emanation of someone. This is an expression of your faith and pure vision of me, but in terms of the dharma it is the wrong view because I am not an emanation of the Buddha. I am not an emanation of a bodhisattva. I am an emanation of nothing. I am merely an ordinary person. Not only am I an ordinary being, I had such bad karma because I practiced sorcery and I brought hailstorms down on people and killed them. Your belief that I am not an ordinary person is incorrect because this view actually denies the power of the dharma. I was an ordinary person with extremely bad karma, but due to the power of the dharma I met my master Marpa who gave me instructions, and I practiced these with diligence. Through this effort I was able to purify my bad karma and attain the result." Thus, you should not think that the dharma doesn't have that power. On the contrary, even someone with very bad karma can purify it and attain Buddhahood in this lifetime if he or she practices diligently.

What is special about the Vajrayana tradition is that it enables one to achieve Buddhahood within a single lifetime and this path is a direct path with a direct view of the nature of phenomena. It is a tradition not established through inference and reasoning. Through reasoning, we can conclude that appearances are by nature empty. On the Vajrayana path, we put that reasoning aside as being neither beneficial nor harmful. We put that aside because it doesn't really matter whether appearances are only mind or not. We just let appearances be appearances in our meditation. Tilopa in his spiritual song to Naropa said in his famous phrase, "My son, appearances cannot harm you. It is attachment to appearances which you must destroy." Thus, we don't worry about appearances because they cannot cause us any harm. All the harm that arises is in our own mind; all harm comes from attachment in our own mind. All happiness and sorrow occurs in the mind; disturbing emotions, wrong views, anger, jealousy, pride, all arise within our own mind. It is our mind that we need to worry about, not the appearances. All our problems and difficulties arise in the

mind, so we need to deal with that. The mind is the root or source of the path.

The sutra tradition divides the mind into different consciousnesses that have exclusive properties. Thus, there is the visual consciousness, the hearing consciousness, the mental consciousness, and so on. Even though these are taught as being separate consciousnesses, they are, in fact, all mind. The visual consciousness is just mind, the aural consciousness is just mind, the mental consciousness is just mind, the eighth ground consciousness is just mind, and so forth. One should see it in that way, "Mind is just simply mind." In the sutra path we are focusing on the mind and we do this through reasoning. We can apply all sorts of reasoning to determine the nature of the mind. But whether we apply reasoning or not, the mind is the mind; the mind just continues in the same way.

In the Vajrayana there is the direct path to examining mind. In everyday life we are habituated to thinking, "I have a mind and I perceive these things." Ordinarily, we do not directly look at the mind and therefore do not see the mind. This is very strange because we see things and we know that we are seeing visual phenomena. But who is seeing? We can look directly at the mind and find that there is no one seeing; there is no seer, and yet we are seeing phenomena. The same is true for the mental consciousness. We think various thoughts, but where is that thinking taking place? Who or what is thinking? However, when we look directly at the mind, we discover that there is nobody there; there is no thinker and yet thinking is going on. This approach of directly looking in a state of meditation isn't one of reasoning, but of directly looking at the mind to see what is there.

For example, Changkya Rolpai Dorje expressed his experience in a spiritual song. He wrote about a child sitting on his mother's lap and looking all around, thinking, "I have lost my mother." His older brother then tells him, "Turn around. You are sitting on her lap." The child does so and sees his mother. Changkya Rolpai Dorje in this example means to show that, like

that child, residing in the true nature of phenomena, but looking for it elsewhere is an incorrect perception or bewilderment. He thinks, "I can't understand the dharmadhatu. Where is it?" The older brother, who represents the interdependence of relative phenomena, says, "Look, dharmadhatu is right there." So he turns around and sees, "Oh, yes." He had been looking for it externally but it was there all the time. It is the same for the emptiness of the mind. One looks at it and discovers, "There is no mind. It is simply emptiness. There it is, that emptiness of the mind. I have been looking for it at a great distance, going through a process of logical reasoning to understand it. All along it was right here. By looking inwards I see that there is no mind. There is simply emptiness."

Some people may wonder, "What is the mind? What is being looked at in the mind? Who is looking?" They think about this, but if we simply look, we can directly experience this. We can search for the mind in the head, in the arms, in the legs, and throughout the body. If we look, we will find lots of different thoughts arising, of anger and so on. Where do they come from? They don't come from anywhere. We will see that this is emptiness. We cannot find what generates thoughts when looking for the mind. We can conclude, "This is the emptiness that the Buddha spoke about." We can see it directly for ourselves. That is why it is the direct path. We look inwards and find that thoughts arise from nowhere.

This doesn't mean that one is mindless and like a stone, without awareness and knowing because we have knowledge all the time; we perceive and know. At the same time, there is no mind to be found. We have the aspect of emptiness and the aspect of luminous clarity.

We do not have to use logic or reasoning to see directly the mind. The mind itself is the dharmadhatu. Whether we examine it or not, that is what it is. We can look and see the dharmadhatu. We can see emptiness. We can see luminous clarity because that is the mind itself. It is just that we haven't looked. Jamgon

Kongtrul says that the reason why the nature of the mind has not been realized is because it is too easy to see. It is not that the nature of mind is very far away; instead, it is very close. In fact, it is too close, too easy. Realization of the nature of the mind isn't an ordeal or difficult to accomplish. All one has to do is look at the nature of the mind, but because it is too close and too easy, we think, "That can't be it."

Some people say that what these lamas say is silly because, "How can the mind look at the mind? It is not possible." But simply, if we look at the mind, then we will gain the experience of the mind and we will see that there is clarity and emptiness. We will have a direct experience of dharmadhatu if we actually practice the meditation and look directly at our own mind. This is very important to do.

Someone may ask, "Why bother? The mind can't look at the mind so it makes no difference if you look or not. There is nothing to see when the mind looks at the mind." But, in fact, it is very important to be able to do just that. By looking at the nature of the mind, we can see the nature of luminous clarity and the nature of emptiness; we can see what and how the nature of the mind is. We shouldn't think that there is nothing to gain by trying to look at the mind and therefore just ignore it. We shouldn't do that because it is very beneficial to discover the truth.

A Brief Biography of Thrangu Rinpoche

Thrangu Rinpoche was born in Kham in 1933. At the age of five he was formally recognized by the Sixteenth Karmapa and the previous Situ Rinpoche as the incarnation of the great Thrangu tulku. Entering Thrangu monastery, from the ages of seven to sixteen he studied reading, writing, grammar, poetry, and astrology, memorized ritual texts, and completed two preliminary retreats. At sixteen under the direction of Khenpo Lodro Rabsel he began the study of the three vehicles of Buddhism while staying in retreat. At twenty-three he received full ordination from the Sixteenth Karmapa.

At the time of the Chinese military takeover of Tibet when he was twenty-seven Rinpoche left Tibet for India. He was called to Rumtek, Sikkim, where the Karmapa had his seat in exile. At thirty-five he took the geshe examination before 1500 monks and was awarded the degree of Geshe Lharampa. On his return to Rumtek he was named Abbot of Rumtek monastery and the Nalanda Institute for Higher Buddhist studies at Rumtek. He has been the personal teacher of the four principal Karma Kagyu tulkus: Shamar Rinpoche, Situ Rinpoche, Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche, and Gyaltsab Rinpoche and more recently the 17th Karmapa.

Thrangu Rinpoche has traveled extensively throughout Europe, North America, and the Far East. In 1994 he spent several months in Tibet at his monastery where he ordained over 100 monks and nuns and visited several monasteries. In Nepal Rinpoche founded Thrangu Tashi Choling in Bodhanath, a retreat center and college at Namo Buddha, a private school in Bodhanath for lay children and young monks. He also has built Tara Abbey offering a full dharma education for nuns and completed a beautiful monastery in Sarnath, India. In North America, Rinpoche has centers in Vancouver, Toronto, Maine, Colorado, and California.

For more information on Thrangu Rinpoche's activities and centers, please go to his website: www.rinpoche.com.

Notes

1. The conventional or relative level (Tib. *kunzop*) is phenomena as they appear to us ordinary beings in day-to-day life. On this level we feel we are distinct separate persons and that the objects outside of us are solid and real. The ultimate or absolute level (Tib. *don-dam)* is phenomena as they really are which is empty of inherent nature and as they are perceived by an enlightened being or Buddha.

   To give a Western example, we may be sitting on a chair and this chair on the conventional level of reality appears to be solid, made of a single substance of wood, and brown in color. However, a scientist would tell us that "in reality" the chair is a pattern of atoms of Carbon, Hydrogen, and Oxygen that are moving at incredible speeds and are emitting a frequency of radiation that the human eye sees as "brown." These atoms are so far apart from each other that the chair is actually 99.9% space. This is more what the chair is on the ultimate level.

   Thrangu Rinpoche points out that a highly developed person who has thoroughly realized the emptiness of matter, such as Milarepa, can put his hand right through the chair to prove that it isn't solid, but "empty."
2. This concept of "nature" is similar to Aristotle's concept in Western philosophy. For example, water has the external appearance of hot and gaseous (when it is steam), liquid and flowing (when it is water) and hard and cold (when it is ice). These are its external appearances (much like conventional truth already described), but its nature or essence is that of water (much like ultimate truth already described).
3. The Middle-way (Skt. *Madhyamaka*) school or tradition of study was founded by Nagarjuna about 500 years after the Buddha passed away in the first century of our era. Nagarjuna, besides being a brilliant scholar at Nalanda University in India, was a re-

alized tantric practitioner (a mahasiddha) who through the power of his meditation was able to visit the realms of the nagas and bring back the Prajnaparamita teachings which are the main teachings of the Buddha on emptiness (Skt. *shunyata*). Nagarjuna wrote many works explaining emptiness and these works are extensively studied in Tibetan monasteries to this day.

4. Disturbing emotions (Skt. *klesha*, Tib. *nyon mong*) have been translated as "afflictions," "defilements," or "kleshas." These are emotions which could obscure or disturb the mind so that the true nature of mind cannot be seen. There are, of course, also positive emotions and feelings such as devotion which help one see the true nature. The main characteristic of the disturbing emotions is that they all come out of or support the belief in a self and therefore lead to suffering because these disturbing emotions are supporting an incorrect belief. The three main disturbing emotions are attachment to things, aggression or a wanting to eliminate anything we don't like, and confusion about how things really are which is often translated as ignorance or bewilderment. The five disturbing emotions are these three plus pride and jealousy. There are a host of other disturbing emotions which support a belief in a self and thus lead to suffering.
5. Egolessness of the individual is often called "the selflessness of self" or "selflessness of person" and is the realization the personal self does not exist as a solid entity, but rather that it is a construct created by the mind.
6. Egolessness of phenomena is often called the "selflessness of phenomena" and this is the realization that not only is the belief in the self empty of inherent nature, but also that all external phenomena such as trees and rocks and other people are also empty of inherent nature.
7. The Tibetan word for emptiness (Skt. *shunyata*, Tib. *tong pa nyi*) literally means "empty" as in an empty glass. However, the Buddhist philosophical term means much more. When it is said that an object is "empty," it does not mean that the object simply isn't there because the object can obviously be seen, smelled, and grasped. On the other hand, because this empty object appears to

us, this does not mean that it is a real, solid, external object that exists outside of the conception of mind. This concept is vital to understanding the text and is explained in greater detail several times in this text.

8. Luminous clarity (Tib. *salwa*) often called "luminosity" or just "clarity" is the quality of mind that knows or cognizes. This continuous knowing of mind which goes on even when we are asleep is present all the time even though the mind itself is empty.
9. Buddha-nature or Buddha-essence (Skt. *sugatagarbha*, Tib. *der shing nying po*) is that quality of emptiness that exists in all sentient beings that allows them to eventually achieve Buddhahood. The reason we don't just suddenly reach Buddhahood is that this Buddha-nature is obscured by the disturbing emotions.
10. We have translated the Tibetan word *marigpa* which is one of the three fundamental kleshas translated as "ignorance" and sometimes as "confusion." In the Tibetan this word refers to not understanding the true nature of reality (Skt. *dharmata*), not ignorance in the sense of being ignorant of how to read and write or how to use the internet.
11. In Mahamudra meditation there is a clear distinction between intellectual thinking about something (as is done in the sutra approach) and resting in an extremely clear and calm state of Shamatha and "looking directly" at mind which involves no conceptualization or discursive thought at all.
12. The view of eternalism (Tib. *tak ta*) is that there is a permanent eternal self or soul. The view of nihilism (Tib. *che ta*) is that everything stops at death; therefore there is no law of cause and effect (karma) and there is basically no reason to do good deeds and avoid negative ones or to try to reach enlightenment.
13. Latencies (Tib. *bag chag*) are karmic tendencies connected to every action and thought which enters the eighth storehouse consciousness. Then as circumstances occur, they will leave the storehouse consciousness and enter the mental consciousness thus flavoring the mental perception of the moment. For a much more detailed description of this process see Thrangu Rinpoche's *Transcending Ego: Distinguishing Consciousness from Wisdom*.

14. Since the Buddha taught that there were no external gods or god that created and directed the world, everything that happens in the universe is due to interdependent origination. In other words, an action is done and that becomes the cause of other actions which then become the cause for more actions and so on until the world unfolds.
15. The following section is not part of Jamgon Kongtrul's original text, but Thrangu Rinpoche felt it was necessary for students to understand that in terms of actual meditation practice conduct is as important as having the correct view
16. The three natures were first described in the Mahayana *Samdhinirmocana sutra*. This sutra is based on the Chittamatra (Mind-only) school. The order of how these three natures are presented causes some confusion. Beginning with the second nature, the dependent nature, the reason we can so readily recognize external phenomena such as a chair, rocks, and trees and so on is that we have stored in our eighth consciousness these latencies (Tib. *bak chag*) from this and previous lifetimes and so we recognize these objects. The recognition of the object along with all our past associations with that object definitely appears in our mind, but it is entirely "dependent" on a mental formation of our mind. This is why two people can look at the same landscape or movie, or political personality and one person will think it is wonderful and the other awful.

    Because we perceive our world based on the second dependent nature, our mind engages in the first imaginary nature of believing that this dependently created thought in our mind is solid and real. We therefore believe that the external phenomena are solid and real when they are actually empty. It is this imaginary nature that takes all the sensory information from the five sensory consciousnesses and labels and categorizes and judges these phenomena and in this process solidifies external phenomena as being real and solid.

    The third completely perfect nature is held in the Chittamatra school and third turning of the wheel of dharma teachings. In the Shentong school this perfect nature is that true nature of ex-

istence which is on the absolute level and this position is not held by the Rangtong view.

17. Sentient beings are beginningless because they arise from the cause of a previous life. Since the previous life also has a cause which precedes it, there is an infinite number of previous lives and no definite beginning. Sentient beings are endless because there is an infinite number of sentient beings who constantly accumulate the causes of future happiness and misery.

–David Choephel

18. There are three realms or kayas (Skt. for form body). The first is the Dharmakaya which is ultimate truth which can be accessed only by a Buddha who realizes the dharmata. However, if this were the only way to access the dharma, only a few individuals in the world would ever have access to the Buddhist teachings. So the Buddha manifested the sambhogakaya which are the pure realms which may be visited by the very pure bodhisattvas. For example, Asanga after meditating on Maitreya for 12 years was able to meet the Maitreya Buddha and to go to his pure sambhogakaya realm and receive teachings from him. But again then the only people who could access the Buddhist teachings would be very high bodhisattvas. So the Buddha also manifests the nirmanakaya which is in our ordinary world and the best example of this was the Supreme Nirmanakaya who was the historical Buddha who was born a human and lived a life teaching the Buddhist teachings to ordinary beings.
19. This is not part of the original text, but Rinpoche felt that it was important to add this topic to the commentary.
20. The Mind-only school does not fully realize subtle egolessness of phenomena because they still cling to consciousness as having true existence.
21. Nagas are water spirits said to dwell in lakes and oceans. They are keepers of wealth which includes the precious dharma teachings. It is said that Nagarjuna noticed that two individuals who were attending his lectures smelled of sandalwood. When he approached them, he found out they were nagas and they took him to their realm (which may not have been a physical place, like pure realms but are not located anywhere geographically). There he was given

an immense text of the *Prajnaparamita.*

22. The five logical arguments of Nagarjuna are: (1) Analysis of neither one or many, (2) Analysis of the vajra splinters, (3) Analysis of negating arising through existence and non-existence, (4) Analysis of the four limits, (5) Analysis of interdependent arising.
23. Mindfulness and memory are the same word in Tibetan and Sanskrit. Mindfulness is therefore always remembering what you should be doing. –David Choephel
24. This section on Meditation is not part of the root text. Thrangu Rinpoche felt, however, that it was important to the topic.
25. Traditionally, these are the seven points of Vairochana. These are (1) Straighten the upper body and the spinal column, (2) Look slightly downward into space straight across from the tip of the nose while keeping the chin and neck straight, (3) Straighten the shoulder blades even in the manner of a vulture flexing its wings, (4) Keep the lips touching gently, (5) Let the tip of the tongue touch the upper palate, (6) Form the legs into either the lotus (Skt. padmasana) or the diamond (Skt. vajrasana) posture, and (7)Keep the back of the right hand flat on the left open palm with the inside of the tips of the thumbs gently touching.
26. The five texts of Maitreya are *The Ornament of Mahayana Discourses, The Ornament of Clear Realization, Distinguishing the Middle from the Extremes, Distinguishing Dharma from Dharmata,* and *The Uttaratantra Shastra.*

The Glossary

Abhidharma The Buddhist teachings are often divided into the Tripitaka: the Sutras (teachings of the Buddha), the Vinaya (teachings on conduct), and the Abhidharma which are the teachings classifying phenomena into types and categories.

aggregates, five (Skt. *skandha*) There are five mental transformations that perceptions undergo: First, there is form which includes images, sounds, tastes, etc. that are perceived by the senses. Second is feeling, in which one treats the form as positive, negative, or neutral. Third is conception, which is recognizing the sensation. Fourth is formation or concept, in which one combines the perception with past experience. Finally there is consciousness, which is ordinary consciousness with all its discursive thoughts.

aryas One who has attained a direct realization of the true nature of reality thus realizing the emptiness of self and phenomena.

Aryadeva The closest pupil of Nagarjuna who became his heir. He was born in Sri Lanka and wrote the *Catuhshakate.*

Asanga A fourth century Indian philosopher who founded the Mind-only school and discovered the five works of Maitreya which are important Mahayana works. His brother was Vasubandhu.

atman Sanskrit for a permanent "self" which continues to exist even after death. This is held by most Hindu schools and is rejected by all Buddhist schools.

Bhavaviveka (490 to 570 CE) An Indian Middle-way scholar who criticized Buddhapalita's interpretation of emptiness, leading to a split in Mahayana Buddhism. Bhavaviveka founded the Svantantrika school which used svatantra (syllogisms) to establish emptiness instead of using the negation system of the Prasangikas. His works include the *Prajna-pradipa* and *Madhyamaka-hridaya* and the *Tarka-jvala.*

bodhichitta Literally, the "mind or heart of enlightenment." There are two kinds of bodhichitta: absolute bodhichitta, which is the completely awakened mind that sees the emptiness of phenomena, and relative bodhichitta, which is the aspiration to practice the six

paramitas and free all beings from the suffering of samsara.

bodhisattva Literally, "one who exhibits the mind of enlightenment." An individual who is committed to the Mahayana path of practicing compassion and the six paramitas in order to achieve Buddhahood and free all beings from samsara. More specifically, those with a motivation to achieve liberation from samsara who are on one of the ten bodhisattva levels that culminates in Buddhahood.

bodhisattva levels (Skt. *bhumi*, literally, "ground") The levels or stages a bodhisattva goes through to reach enlightenment. These consist of ten levels in the sutra tradition and thirteen in the tantra tradition.

Bon (Tib. Pronounced "pon") This is the religion of Tibet before Buddhism was introduced. The religion is still practiced in Tibet. A follower of this pre-Buddhist religion is a Bonpo.

Buddha-nature (Skt. *tathagata-garbha* literally "the nature of one thus gone") The original nature present in all beings which when realized leads to enlightenment. It is also called the Buddha-essence.

Changkya Rolpai Dorje The fourth Karmpapa and teacher of the Emperor of China in 1786.

chakra Literally, "wheel." In this context centers of energy along the central channel at the forehead, throat, heart, solar plexus, and the "secret place" located four finger widths below the navel where there is a broadening of channels.

Chakrasamvara One of the five main practices of the Kagyu lineage. This yidam is a heruka of the lotus (or Amitabha Buddha) family and plays an important part in the Six Yogas of Naropa. The other four are Mahamaya, Vajabhairava, Guhyasamaja, and Hevajra.

Chandrakirti A seventh century Indian Buddhist scholar of the Middle-way school who is best known for his support of the Prasangika school which established emptiness by using logical method of *reductio ad absurdum*. He wrote two main treatises—the *Prasannapada* and *Introduction to the Middle-way.*

conventional truth or level of reality (Tib. *kunsop*) There are two truths or levels of reality: relative or conventional and ultimate or absolute truth. Relative truth is the perception of an ordinary (unenlightened) person who sees the world with all his or her projections based on the false belief in ego.

Chittamatra See Mind-only school.

clarity See luminous clarity.

creation stage Also known as the development stage. In the Vajrayana there are two stages of meditation: the creation stage and the completion stage. The creation stage involves visualizing and contemplating deities for the purpose of realizing the purity of all phenomena. In this stage visualization of the deity is established and maintained.

definitive teaching Teachings of the Buddha which give the direct meaning of dharma and are not changed or simplified for the capacity of the listener. This contrasts with the provisional meaning.

dharma This has two meanings. It can mean any phenomena or it can mean the teachings of the Buddha which is also referred to as Buddha-dharma.

dharmadhatu The all-encompassing space, unoriginated and without beginning, out of which all phenomena arise. The Sanskrit means "the essence of phenomena" and the Tibetan means "the expanse of phenomena."

dharmakaya or "truth-body." One of the three bodies of Buddha. It is enlightenment itself, that is, wisdom beyond reference point. See kayas, three.

disturbing emotion (Skt. *klesha*) The emotional obscurations (in contrast to intellectual obscurations) which are also translated as "afflictions" or "poisons." The three main disturbing emotions are passion or attachment, aggression or anger; and ignorance or delusion. The five kleshas are the three above plus pride and envy.

egolessness (Tib. *dag me*) Also called selflessness. The understanding that there is no permanent or separate identity or substance to be found. There are two kinds of egolessness—the egolessness of other or the emptiness of external phenomena, and the emptiness of a personal self.

egolessness or selflessness of person This doctrine asserts that when one looks for the person, one doesn't find anything. The person does not possess a self (Skt. *atman*, Tib. *dag nyid*) as an independent or substantial entity. This position is held by most Buddhist schools.

egolessness or selflessness of phenomena This doctrine asserts than not only is there selflessness of a person, but when one examines outer phenomena, one finds that external phenomena are also

empty; that is, they do not have an independent or substantial nature. This position is not held by the Foundation vehicle schools, but is put forth by the Mahayana schools, particularly the Mind-only school.

eight consciousnesses These are the five sensory consciousnesses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch, and body sensation. The sixth consciousness is mental consciousness which does our ordinary thinking. The seventh consciousness is afflicted (*klesha*) consciousness which is the ever-present feeling of "I." Finally, the eighth consciousness is the ground (or alaya) consciousness.

eternalism (Tib. *tak*) A belief that one's self has concrete existence and is eternal. This contrasts with nihilism.

five Buddha families The five sambhogakaya Buddhas embody each of the five enlightened wisdoms. They are Vairocana of the Buddha family representing dharmadhatu wisdom, Akshobhya of the vajra family representing mirror-like wisdom, Ratnasambhava of the jewel family representing wisdom of equality, Amitabha Buddha of the lotus family representing discriminating wisdom, and Amoghasiddhi of the karma family representing all-accomplishing wisdom.

Foundation vehicle (Skt. *hinayana*) The first teachings of the Buddha which emphasized the careful examination of mind and its confusion.

Great Exposition school (Skt. *Prasangika*) One of four main Foundation vehicle schools, with the other three being the Sutra-followers, Mind-only, and Middle-way schools. This school held that matter was real or independently existing and was composed of particles and that time was real and composed of moments which then made up consciousness.

Jamgon Kongtrul (1813-1899 CE) Also known as Lodro Thaye. He was best known for founding the non-sectarian *rimay* movement, an eclectic movement which preserved the various practice lineages that were on the verge of extinction. He also was a prolific writer and wrote ninety volumes.

Kadampa (Tib.) One of the early schools in Tibet. It was founded by Atisha (993-1054 CE). Its teachings were absorbed into other schools.

Kagyu (Tib.) One of the four major schools of Buddhism in Tibet. It

was founded by Marpa. The other three are the Nyingma, the Sakya, and the Gelukpa schools

Kangyur (Tib.) The Tibetan collection of about 104 volumes of the words of the Buddha. The other great collection is the Tengyur, a collection of commentaries on the Buddha's teachings.

kayas, three There are three bodies of the Buddha: the nirmanakaya, sambhogakaya and dharmakaya. The dharmakaya, also called the "truth body," is the complete enlightenment or the complete wisdom of the Buddha which is unoriginated wisdom beyond form and which manifests in the sambhogakaya and the nirmanakaya. The sambhogakaya, or the "enjoyment body," manifests only to bodhisattvas. The nirmanakaya, or the "emanation body," manifests in the world to ordinary beings and in this context is understood as the historical Shakyamuni Buddha.

luminous clarity (Tib. *salwa*) Also translated as luminosity. The nature of mind is empty of inherent existence, but not merely empty, because it has clarity which is awareness or the knowing quality of mind.

Mahamudra Literally, "great seal" meaning that all phenomena are sealed by the primordially perfect true nature. This form of meditation is traced back to Saraha (10th century) and was passed down in the Kagyu school through Marpa. This meditative transmission emphasizes perceiving mind directly rather than through analysis.

Mahayana Literally, the "great vehicle." These are the teachings of the second turning of the wheel of dharma, which emphasize emptiness, compassion, and Buddha-nature.

Maitreya In this work, the bodhisattva Maitreya who lived at the time of the Buddha. Maitreya is presently residing in the Tushita pure realm until he becomes the next Buddha of this eon.

Marpa (1012-1097 CE) A Tibetan who made three trips to India and brought back many tantric texts, including the Six Yogas of Naropa, the Guhyasamaja, and the Chakrasamvara practices. His main teacher was Naropa and he founded the Kagyu lineage in Tibet.

Middle-way (Skt. *madhyamaka*) The most influential of the four schools of Indian Buddhism founded by Nagarjuna in the second century CE based on the Prajnaparamita teachings. "Middle-way" means it is the middle way between eternalism and nihilism. The

main postulate of this school is that all phenomena—both internal mental events and external physical objects—are empty of any true nature. The school uses extensive reasoning to establish the emptiness of self and phenomena.

Mikyo Dorje (1507-1554 CE) the eighth Karmapa.

Milarepa (1040-1123 CE) Milarepa was a student of Marpa who attained enlightenment in one lifetime. His student Gampopa founded the Kagyu lineage.

Mind-only school (Skt. *chittamatra*) One of the major schools in the Mahayana tradition founded in the fourth century by Asanga which emphasizes that all phenomena are mental events.

Nagarjuna An Indian scholar in the second century who founded the Middle-way philosophical school.

Nalanda The greatest Buddhist University from the fifth to the tenth century, located near modern Rajgir which was the seat of the Mahayana teachings; many great Buddhist scholars studied there.

Naropa (956-1040 CE). An Indian master who is best known for transmitting many Vajrayana teachings to Marpa.

nihilism An extreme view of emptiness (holding that everything is meaningless) and death ends everything. Therefore there is no reason to engage in positive actions in this lifetime or strive for awakening.

nirmanakaya (Tib. *tulku*) There are three bodies of the Buddha; the nirmanakaya or "emanation body" manifests in the physical world and in this context manifests as the Shakyamuni Buddha. See kayas, three.

nirvana Literally, "extinguished." With spiritual practice individuals can attain a state of enlightenment in which all false ideas and conflicting emotions have been extinguished. This is called nirvana.

oral instructions (Tib. *man ngak*) Sometimes called the quintessential or pith instructions. These instructions are given from guru to student concerning meditation on the nature of mind. While some of these are also written down, many are only passed on orally.

Padmasambhava (Tib. *Guru Rinpoche*) A great Indian Mahasiddha who was invited to Tibet by King Trisong Detsen in the eighth century CE. He is known for introducing Buddhism to Tibet and pacifying the non-Buddhist forces there. He also founded the Nyingma lineage.

Patrul Rinpoche (1808-1887 CE) A famous Nyingma teacher who wrote *The Words of My Perfect Teacher*.

pramana The study of validity, that is, of how we know that what we think is correct.

Prasangika One of the major schools of Middle-way Buddhism whose main representatives were Buddhapalita and Chandrakirti. See Great Exposition school.

pratyekabuddha Literally, self-buddha. A Foundation vehicle practitioner awakens without relying on a teaching in his last existence.

provisional teaching The teachings of the Buddha which have been simplified or modified to the capabilities of the audience. This contrasts with the definitive teachings.

Rangtong School (Tib.) The Madhyamaka or Middle-way school is divided into two major schools: the Rangtong and Shentong. The distinction is that Rangtong primarily emphasizes emptiness, and Shentong primarily emphasizes clear wisdom.

Rechungpa A major student of Milarepa.

sambhogakaya The second of the three bodies of the Buddha, the "enjoyment body," is a realm which only manifests to bodhisattvas. See the kayas, three.

samsara Conditioned existence of ordinary life in which suffering occurs because one still possesses the disturbing emotions. It is contrasted to nirvana.

sangha The companions on the path. They may be all the persons on the path or "the Noble Sangha," which refers to the realized ones.

Saraha One of the eighty-four mahasiddhas of India said to have lived in the ninth century CE who was known for composing the first spiritual songs about Mahamudra.

Sarvastivada A Foundation level school that separated from the Theravadin school in 3rd century BCE. The name literally means the school "that believes everything exists" and believed that everything could be reduced to "atoms" (actually, 75 dharmas) and these atoms making up objects actually exist. They were later absorbed by the Vaibashika school.

shamatha (Tib. *shinay*) Tranquility or calm-abiding meditation in which one usually follows the breath and observes the workings of the mind. The main purpose of Shamatha meditation is to settle or tame the mind so that it will stay where one places it.

Shantarakshita (eighth century CE) An abbot of Nalanda University invited by King Trisong Detsen to come to Tibet to help introduce Buddhism. He oversaw the building of the first monastery in Tibet.

Shantideva (675- 725 CE) A Mahayanist who lived in 7th and 8th century in India known for his great work *The Bodhisattva's Way of Life.*

shastra The Buddhist teachings are divided into words of the Buddha (the sutras) and the commentaries of masters on his works (the shastras).

shravaka Literally "those who hear" meaning disciples practicing the Foundation vehicle to become arhats.

Shentong school (Tib.) The Madhyamaka or Middle-way school is divided into two major schools: the Rangtong and Shentong. The distinction is that Rangtong primarily emphasizes emptiness, and Shentong primarily emphasizes clear wisdom.

siddhi Spiritual powers of accomplished practitioners.

Six Yogas of Naropa These six special yogic practices were transmitted from Naropa to Marpa and are advanced practices which consist of the yoga of inner heat, the illusory body, the dream yoga, the yoga of clear light, the ejection of consciousness, and the bardo practice.

sojong vows A practice whereby one holds eight vows for a 24 hour period.

spiritual song (Skt. *doha*) A religious song spontaneously composed by a Vajrayana practitioner expressing an experience of realization.

sutras These are the Foundation vehicle and Mahayana texts which are the words of the Buddha. These are often contrasted with the tantras.

Svatrantrika One of the two main schools of Madhyamaka Buddhism whose main representatives were Bhavaviveka and Santarakshita. The other main school is the Prasangika school.

Sutra-school (Skt. *sautrantika*). One of the four major schools of Indian Buddhism. This is a Foundation vehicle school which believes that external phenomena are real and that our internal consciousness is also real, but the understanding of self is illusory.

tantra One can divide Tibetan Buddhism into the sutra tradition and the tantra tradition. The sutra tradition primarily involves the study

of the Foundation vehicle and Mahayana texts. The tantric path primarily involves the Vajrayana practices. The tantras are primarily the texts of these practices.

Taranatha (1575-1634 CE) Leading teacher of the Jonangpa school and best known for his *History of Buddhism in India*.

Tathagata-garbha Literally, "the nature of the ones thus gone" translated into English as "Buddha-nature" or "Buddha-essence." It is the seed that all beings possess and it is this essence which allows them to eventually attain Buddhahood.

three natures These are the imaginary nature (Skt. *parikalpita*), the dependent nature (Skt. *paratantra*), and the completely perfect nature (Skt. *parinishpanna*).

three spheres This is the interaction between objects on the conventional level with one sphere being the giver, one the receiver, and one the thing received.

three vehicles These are the three levels of practice as described in Tibetan Buddhism. The Foundation vehicle emphasizes the Four Noble Truths and individual liberation from suffering. The Mahayana emphasizes the view of emptiness of the phenomenal world. The third level is the Vajrayana which emphasizes reaching awakening using methods such as deity practice.

Tilopa (928-1009 CE) One of the eighty-four mahasiddhas. He was the guru of Naropa, who transmitted Tilopa's teachings to Marpa and eventually to the Kagyu lineage in Tibet.

tirthika A religious person who believes in a personal self.

true nature of phenomena (Skt. *dharmadhatu*) The all-encompassing space, unoriginated and without beginning, out of which all phenomena arise. The Sanskrit means "the essence of phenomena" and the Tibetan means "the expanse of phenomena" but usually it refers to the emptiness, which is the essence of phenomena.

Tsongkhapa (1357-1419 CE) The founder of the Gelugpa school of Tibetan Buddhism.

Tushita A pure land where the historical Buddha resided before coming down to earth to teach and where the Maitreya Buddha resides. It is also a god realm in the desire realms.

Vaibashika A Foundation school closely related to the Saravastivada school. They flourished in Gandhara and Kashmir and their name came from their main text the *Mahavibhasa*.

vajra Usually translated "diamond-like" or "indestructible." This may be an implement held in the hand during certain Vajrayana ceremonies, or it can refer to a quality which is so pure and so enduring that it is like a diamond.

Vajrapani A major bodhisattva said to be lord of the mantra and a major protector of Tibetan Buddhism.

Vajravarahi A dakini who is the consort of Chakrasamvara. She is one of the main yidams of the Kagyu lineage and the embodiment of wisdom.

Vajrayana There are three major traditions of Buddhism (Foundation vehicle, Mahayana, Vajrayana) The Vajrayana is based on the tantras and emphasizes the clarity aspect of phenomena.

Vinaya There are three main divisions of the Buddhist teachings in the Foundation level: the sutras (teachings of the Buddha), the Vinaya (the rules of discipline and vows), and the Abhidharma (the classification of physical and psychological factors).

wheel of dharma The Buddha's teachings correspond to three levels: the Foundation vehicle, the Mahayana and the Vajrayana with each being one turning of the wheel.

Wheel of dharma According to the Shentong view, there are three turnings of the wheel of dharma with the first turning emphasizing the individual liberation, the second turning being the Mahayana teachings emphasizing emptiness, and the third being the emphasis on Buddha-nature.

Yogachara school The name for the school that descended from Maitreya and Asanga.

Tibetan Glossary

Tibetan word	*Tibetan Spelling*	*Meaning*
bag chag	bag chags	karmic latencies
che ta	chad lta	nihilism
chö	chos	dharma
chod	chod	chod practice
dag me	bdag med	egolessness
dag nyi	bdag nyid	self or atman
drenpa	dran pa	mindfulness
ganden	dga' ldan	Tushita
Guru Rinpoche	gu ru rin po che	Padmasambhava
Kagyu	bka' brgyud	Kagyu lineage
Kangyur	bka' 'gyur	Kangyur
marigpa	ma rig pa	ignorance
man ngak	man ngag	oral instructions
ngedon	nges don	definitive meaning
nyon mong	nyon mongs	disturbing emotions
phung po nga	phung po lnga	five aggregates
Rangtong	rang stong	Rangtong
rimay	ris med	Eclectic movement
salwa	gsal ba	luminous clarity
sang gye	sangs rgyas	Buddha
sem jung	sems byung	mental event
seshin	sesh bzhin	alertness
Shentong	gzhan stong	Shentong
shinay	zhi gnas	tranquility meditation
tak ta	rtag lta	eternalism
tong pa nyi	stong pa nyid	emptiness
tulku	sprul sku	nirmanakaya

Books by Thrangu Rinpoche

The Three Vehicles of Buddhist Practice. This book gives an overview of the Hinayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana as it was practiced in Tibet.

The Middle-way Meditation Instructions of Mipham. This great Tibetan scholar who actually stayed for a while with the previous Thrangu Rinpoche at his monastery describes how one develops compassion and then expands this to bodhichitta and eventually develops prajna or wisdom.

Transcending Ego: Distinguishing Consciousness from Wisdom. This book, which includes the original text of the Third Karmapa and Thrangu Rinpoche's commentary, describes in detail the eight consciousnesses and how these transform into the five wisdoms at enlightenment.

The Practice of Tranquility and Insight. This book is a practical guide to the two types of meditation that form the core of Buddhist spiritual practice.

Creation and Completion: Essential Points of Tantric Meditation. This is a brilliant text by Jamgon Kongtrul the Great on the two main aspects of Vajrayana practice. Included is the Tibetan script, Sarah Harding's translation of the root text, her extensive notes on the translation, and Thrangu Rinpoche's commentary on the text.

Medicine Buddha Teachings. An extremely detailed treatment of the Medicine Buddha practice which contains a new translation of the sadhana, Thrangu Rinpoche's instructions and commentary on the practice and also a detailed explanation of the sutra The Twelve Aspirations of the Medicine Buddha.

Namo Buddha Publications carries all the teachings of Thrangu Rinpoche in English. including 32 books, 9 dharma booklets, 10 DVD sets of Rinpoche's teachings, 36 sets MP3 audio teachings, 125 sets of audio cassettes, several practice materials, and many free downloads.

For more information: www.NamoBuddhaPublications.com.

Bibliography

The Sutras

Perfection of Wisdom Literature (Skt. *Prajnaparamita*) A large body of Buddhist literature which is said to have been found by Nagarjuna. There is a Prajnaparamita text of 100,000 verses, a text of 25,000 verses, a text of 8,000 verses. The *Perfection of Wisdom* in 8,000 verses (Skt. *ashtasahasrika-prajna-paramita-sutra*) has been translated by Edward Conze. *The Large Sutra on Perfect Wisdom*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975.

The Heart Sutra. (Skt. *maha-prajnaparamita-mitahriidaya-sutra*). A sutra by the Buddha which is a condensation of the Prajnaparamita and is chanted daily in many Mahayana centers.

Aryadeva The closest pupil of Nagarjuna, who became his heir. He was born in Sri Lanka and wrote the *Four Hundred Verses* (Skt. *Catuhshakate*). This has been translated by Ruth Sonam as *Aryadeva's Four Hundred Stanzas On The Middle Way* (Snow Lion).

Bhavaviveka (490 to 570 CE) His works include the *Lamp of Wisdom (Skt. Prajna-Pradipa-Mulamadhyamaka-vritti*) and *Blaze of Reasoning* (Skt. *Madhyamaka-hridaya karika-vritti tarka-jvala)* which have not been translated.

Brunnholzl *Center of the Moonlit Sky (Snow Lion, 2004)* Karl Brunnholzl has written comprehensively on the Middle-way philosophy from the point of view of several masters who present the Shentong view.

Chandrakirti *Introduction to the Middle Way* (Skt. *madhyamakavatara*) One of most celebrated Indian works on the study of emptiness written in verse. It has ten chapters describing each of the

bodhisattva levels. Regarded in Tibetan Buddhism as the most authoritative text of the Madhyamaka Prasangika view. See *Introduction to the Middle Way* for a translation of the root text and commentary by Mipham Rinpoche (Shambhala, 2002).

He also wrote the *The Lucid Words (Skt. mula-madhyamaka-ritti-prasanna-pada)* which is a commentary on Nagarjuna's *Mula-madhyama-kakarika*

Dolpopa *Mountain Doctrine* (Snow Lion, 2004, translated by Jeffrey Hopkins) This is a translation of Dolpopa's major work which began the Shenong view of emptiness. This book is difficult reading and an easier summary of Dolpopa's works is Stern's book.

S. K. Hookham ***The Buddha Within*** (Sri Satguru Publications, 1991) This was one of the first books published in English that presented the Shentong view and discussed this in relation to the *Uttaratantra.*

Jamgon Kongtrul Lodro Thaye ***The Compendium of Knowledge*** *(Tib. shes-bya kun-khyab-mdzod)* Snow Lion Publications has been publishing this work in a series of individual books.

The Five Works of Maitreya

1. ***The Ornament of Mahayana Discourses*** (Skt. *mahayana-sutra-lamkara*). This work consists of twenty-one chapters and is written in verse. It covers a discussion of Buddha-nature, refuge in the three jewels, the Mahayana paths, and the doctrine of emptiness.
2. ***The Ornament of Clear Realization*** (Skt. *abhisamaya-lamkara*). This work is a verse commentary on the Prajnaparamita literature and is divided into eight vajra topics. This text is studied in all four Tibetan lineages and is used in the study of the sutra system. See *The Ornament of Clear Realization* for Tibetan text, a translation of the root text, and a commentary by Thrangu Rinpoche (Zhyisil Chokyi Ghatsal, 2004)
3. ***Distinguishing the Middle from the Extremes*** (Skt. *madhyanta-vibhaga*). This work is a commentary expounding primarily on the Chittamatra school of Buddhism, especially the Shentong school.

The text explores eternalism and nihilism and why these are not part of the Middle-way.

4. ***Distinguishing Dharma from Dharmata*** (Skt. *dharma-dharmata-vibhaga*). A commentary on the tathagata-garbha doctrine and the Chittamatra school of thought. See *Distinguishing Dharma and Dharmata* for the Tibetan text, a translation of the root text, and a commentary by Thrangu Rinpoche (Zhysil Chokyi Ghatsal, 2003).
5. ***The Uttaratantra*** (Skt. *Mahayana-sutrantra-shastra*). This work is written in verse and has seven vajra points. It is mainly a commentary on the three jewels, the seed of Buddha-nature which is inherent in all sentient beings, and the attributes and activities of the Buddha. It particularly deals with the subject of Buddha-nature and the development of the realization of the nature of phenomena through the purification of the disturbing emotions. See *The Uttara Tantra: A Treatise on Buddha-nature* for the Tibetan text, a translation of the root text, and a commentary by Thrangu Rinpoche (Zhyisil Chokyi Ghatsal, 2003).

Nagarjuna

Treatise on the Middle Way called Wisdom (Skt.*prajna-mula-madhyamaka-karika*) This is Nagarjuna's most famous thesis and is the basis for the study of emptiness. It has been translated by F. J. Strong as *Emptiness* (Abingdon, 1967).

Letter to a Friend *(Skt. suhrillekha).* This has been translated as *Nagarjuna's Letter to King Gautamiputra* Translated by Jamspal, Chophel, Santina (Motilal Banarsidass)

The Golden Rosary: The Precious Garland (Skt. *Rajapari-Katha-ratnevali*). Translated as *Nagarjuna's Precious Garland* by Jeffrey Hopkins (Snow Lion, 2009).

In Praise of the Dharmadhatu. One of texts of Nagarjuna which is said to support the Shentong view. This book has been translated by Karl Brunnholzl as *In Praise of Dharmadhatu* with an added commentary by Rangjung Dorje, the Third Karmapa (Snow Lion, 2008).

Patrul Rinpoche (1808-1887 CE) A famous Nyingma teacher who wrote *The Words of My Perfect Teacher*. Translated by Padmakara

Translation Group (Shambhala Publications).

Saraha ***A Song for the King***. Saraha is credited with being the first person to write about Mahamudra meditation. He wrote three spiritual songs—the *King's Doha*, the *Queen's Doha*, and the *Citizen's Doha* each explaining a different aspect of Mahamudra meditation. *The Song for the King* contains the Tibetan doha, a translation of the doha, and a commentary by Thrangu Rinpoche of the *King's Doha* (Wisdom, 2006).

Shantideva ***The Way of the Bodhisattva***. Shantideva wrote one of the most celebrated works on how a Mahayana Buddhist should conduct him- or herself in a set of beautiful verses still quoted today. This text has been translated many times. one is *The Way of the Bodhisattva* translated by the Padmakara Translation Group (Shambhala, 1997).

Cyrus Stearns ***The Buddha from Dolpo.*** The first detailed account of Dolpopa's contribution to the Shentong. Motilal Banarsidass, 1999.

Taranatha (1575-1634 CE) Leading teacher of the Jonangpa school and best known for his *History of Buddhism in India*.Translated by Lama Chimpa as *Taranatha's History of Buddhism in India* (Motilal, 2004)

THRANGU RINPOCHE

On Buddha Essence This is one of the treatises by Rangjung Dorje, the Third Karmapa on the Shentong view. Contains translation of the original treatise by Rangjung Dorje and a commentary by Thrangu Rinpoche (Shambhala, 2006)

Transcending Ego: Distinguishing Consciousness. This is the second treatise by Rangjung Dorje on the Shentong. Contains a translation of the root text and a commentary by Thrangu Rinpoche (Namo Buddha Publications, 2001).

The Index

Namo Buddha Publications

Namo Buddha Publications was founded in 1987 for the purpose of preserving and publishing all the works of Thrangu Rinpoche. Namo Buddha is Thrangu Rinpoche's non-profit organization. No persons working for it have been paid a salary with all profits going to collecting and publishing Rinpoche's works.

Namo Buddha Publications began by collecting all the audio tapes of Rinpoche's teachings. Presently, it holds over 1,500 audio tapes of teachings of Rinpoche that have an English translation.

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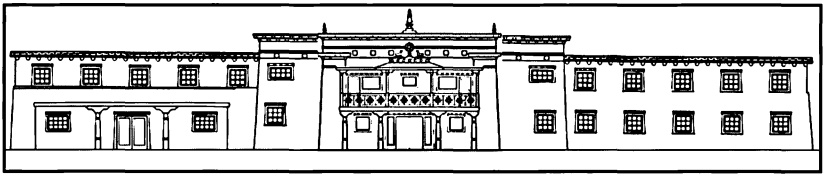

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The Care of Dharma Books

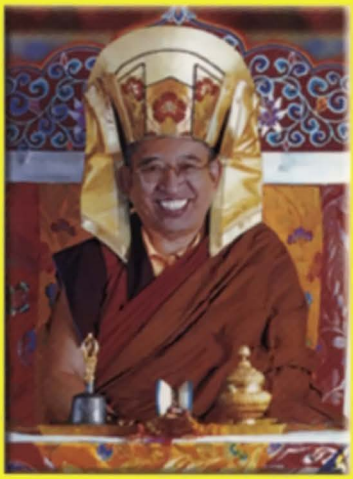
Dharma books contain the teachings of the Buddha and so they have the power to protect against lower birth and to point the way to liberation.

Therefore Dharma texts should be treated with respect, kept off the floor and places where people sit or walk and they are not to be stepped over. They should be covered or protected for transporting and kept in a high, clean place separate from more "ordinary" things.

If it is necessary to dispose of dharma materials they should be burned with care and awareness rather than thrown in the trash. When burning Dharma texts, it is traditional to recite a prayer or mantras such as OM, AH, HUNG. Then visualize the letters of the text being burned as being absorbed in an AH with the AH then being absorbed into you. After that you can burn the texts.

Shentong & Rangtong:
Two views of Emptiness

The Mahayana path of Buddhism requires the development of vast loving-kindness and compassion. The foundation for developing impartial compassion for all sentient beings is based on understanding the emptiness of self and the emptiness of phenomena.



Thrangu Rinpoche was born in Tibet. After escaping to India in 1959, he helped establish the curriculum for the Karma Kagyu lineage under the 16th Karmapa.

He has taught the major tulkus of the lineage, established monasteries in Nepal and India and set up Buddhist centers in the Far East, Germany, England, USA and Canada. He is known for taking difficult topics and making them accessible to practioners. He is author of numerous books in Tibetan and Chinese including over 30 books in English. He is also presently one of the major tutors of the 17th Karmapa.

In *Shentong and Rangtong,* Thrangu Rinpoche begins with a lucid description of the four major schools of Buddhism and their tenets. Each school had its own view of reality and Rinpoche describes the similarities and differences of these views.

The Middle-way path had two important schools in Tibet: the Shentong and the Rangtong. In the discussion of Rangtong, Rinpoche shows how important it is to understand the emptiness of persons and of phenomena because this understanding helps develop an accurate view of the world and thus how to proceed in one's practice.

In the discussion of Shentong, Rinpoche describes the empty, luminous clarity of mind and how this is developed in meditation. This clarity is also closely related to understanding Buddha-nature and meditation in the Vajrayana.

Thrangu Rinpoche bases this discussion on Jamgon Kongtrul's encyclopedic text *The Treasury of Knowledge*.

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