

Buddhist Tenets



Commentary on
Chokyi Gyaltsen's
“ A Presentation of Tenets ”

by
Geshe Tenzin Zopa

Why study Emptiness?

Because the Buddha taught that this is the direct & sole weapon to combat ignorance which has chained us to samsara for countless lives.

What are Buddhist Tenets?

They are part of Buddhist philosophy, which focus on the topic of selflessness/emptiness.

Why study Buddhist Tenets?

The Buddha revealed that we suffer because we do not know what reality is. The 4 Buddhist philosophical schools explored, examined and expounded their concepts of emptiness & reality. In so doing, they refined the understanding on the ultimate view of reality. The debates of these 4 schools eventually reveal the Buddha's final view on reality and if we steadily apply this ultimate (Prasangika) view of the nature of existence, we will accomplish the fruit of freedom from all samsaric suffering. We will become our own Liberators.

Transcriber's Note

Geshela's Commentary is indisputable. The transcribed notes of the Geshela's Commentary however, are not perfect. This is due to this transcriber's heavy ignorance, faulty faculties (of hearing, understanding and typing) and also patchy recording made during the Tenets teachings given at that time in 2007. ALL MISTAKES ARE MINE ALONE.

Some people run away from books on selflessness or emptiness because of the perception that the topic is too difficult to comprehend; the terms overwhelmingly complex. This myth is shattered in this book. Like a wise and kindly mountain guide, Geshe Tenzin Zopa patiently, gently yet firmly unveils the extraordinary debates of the 4 schools on selflessness, spotlighting the key assertions of each school, using examples we can relate to and finally brings us to the mighty gateway of the Prasangika and skillfully leads us through.

This book is dedicated to HH Dalai Lama, Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche, Khenrinpoche Lhundrup Rigsel and Geshe Tenzin Zopa, the Spiritual Friends of all practitioners; the Illuminators of the profound; the Liberators of all sentient beings.

With respect and prostrations,

Huei

As a guide to using this text to study Buddhist Tenets, please note:

- The entire **root text** of Jetsun Chokyi Gyaltsen's " *A Presentation of Tenets* " has been reproduced in this book and appear in **bold italics**. The explanations are Geshe Tenzin Zopa's Commentary on the root text.
- Ordinarily, when we see a word like reader, owner, teacher – we think of these as persons. However, in the root text/book, the term "cogniser" is not a person but mind itself. Thus, "Valid Cogniser" means "Valid Mind".
- The term "space" is often used in the root text/book. There are 2 kinds of "space" :
 - (1) "Compounded space" refers to general space (e.g. space in a room, space in the stomach), space that can be created/produced and is impermanent;
 - (2) "Space" or "Non-compounded space" is permanent and an example of it would be the "gap" between 2 moments in time.
- It was recently brought to our attention that the term "Hinayana" is regarded by the Theravadans today as an inappropriate term to use for their tradition. The late Chief Reverend of Brickfield's Vihara K.Sri Dhammananda and Ven Dr Walpola Rahula, a well-known Theravada scholar highlight:

“ We must not confuse Hīnayāna (“Lesser vehicle”) with Theravāda (“Path of the Elders”) because the terms are not synonymous. The term Hīnayāna Buddhism is used by scholars for a group of 18 early Buddhist schools, which none exist today. Theravāda as it appears today is usually traced back to the 3rd century BCE in Sri Lanka. In 1950, the World Fellowship of Buddhists, inaugurated in Colombo, Sri Lanka, unanimously decided that the term Hīnayana should be dropped when referring to Buddhism existing currently in Sri Lanka, Thailand, Burma, Cambodia, Laos, which follow the Theravāda tradition.”

BUDDHIST TENETS
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How to Study Dharma

Whatever Dharma we study should be completed by the 3 important deeds of listening, contemplating and habituating one's mind with the teachings that we have contemplated upon i.e. meditating on one's understanding of the Dharma. If these 3 actions are not undertaken, there is the danger of falling into the trap of gaining mere intellectual knowledge, without any experiential realisation. One applies one's Dharma understanding into daily life through the use of mindfulness and introspection.

The complete study of the entire Buddhadharma is critical. Our Gurus remind us constantly never to separate from these 3 aspects of learning i.e. studying, contemplating and meditating.

A certain part of our life is wasted because we are so busy with normal existence. We tell ourselves that we will practice tomorrow. But tomorrow never comes and years pass. Or we might engage in some Dharma study now but tell ourselves that we will practice it later e.g. I will learn and practice the preliminary topics now and practice the full path later. Then the moment of death arrives.

Think about your own life. Do you apply Dharma into your life or is it separate from your life or is it out of your view and plans altogether?

As it is stated in the Lam Rim, the only thing that will help us at death is Dharma. There is a danger in thinking that Buddhist philosophy (which includes topics like Tenets) and Dharma practice are distinct. They are not different. The application of philosophy into one's life IS the real practice. Sometimes, we study philosophy, we find the study going in great details such that it becomes quite dry and you might even think that what you are listening to is not really Dharma. Then, we might find that it does not strike at one's ego and we might even find it hard to see the relevance of philosophy in one's life. However, it is important to put effort into this study because philosophy is the deeper level of understanding Dharma.

The 3 great (Gelug) monasteries are established by the past great Indian and Tibetan Pandits study the 5 treatises on Logic, Vinaya, Prajnaparamita, Madhyamika and Abidhammakosha. The study of logic alone can take 25 years. As for Vinaya, this is studied for at least 4 years; Prajnaparamita is a 6-7 years study; Abidhammakosha, takes 12 years to accomplish. In total, full study can take up to 25 years. In Tibet, some of the monks there studied 50-60 years but even then, they declared that at the end of their lives, they were still exploring deeper levels of the Dharma.

Therefore, we are fortunate to embark on the study of philosophy. The technique of studying philosophy at the monastery is very exciting and enjoyable. We start debating from 6pm till sometimes 3am, non-stop! We have special hand gestures when we debate and each time we strike our hand, it reminds us of the points! It involves much concentration, much

excitement and much joy to the point where the skin of our palms can split and bleed! Yet, when we go back to our rooms, we continue to think about what was debated. Philosophy study is wonderful and worthwhile putting effort to learn it. You will benefit so much from it that whatever teaching you receive, you will feel alert and able to put forward your views on the points.

When we debate with classmates, we do so on the basis that “I wish to share my understanding with you and I want to receive your understanding on that subject” . Just like that. My classmates and debating partners are very dear to me because we spend hours each day debating. Debating Dharma points is important. This is how to effectively study and it deepens your understanding of the subject and strengthens your faith. It forces you to apply logical reasons to support your understanding or statement you assert. Otherwise, if you meet a non-Buddhist speaker who eloquently challenges you with elaborate arguments that there is no Triple Gem or Refuge in them, it will upset you and shake your faith. It can even destroy your refuge. He might even persuade you that it is much more worthwhile to take refuge in the powerful sun. If you sway in your refuge and accept his point, your refuge will be lost. When that happens, your refuge is damaged and more than that, any lay vows, Bodhisattva vows or tantra vows that you might have taken will all be lost because the refuge vow is the basis of all other vows. But keep in mind that one should never get angry with an opponent in a Dharma debate but rather cherish that person even more because it makes study so exciting and actually helps you to clarify points of study! That’s how we are in the monastery.

Lam Rim study is straightforward. Philosophical study is different –

philosophical teaching is done by the teacher raising lots of questions and issues of doubt, so as to invoke a questioning mind within the students to explore and find answers. Questions and debate lead to discovery and enhances the richness of one's Dharma understanding.

For the first 20 years, we are engaged in studying in school; the next 20 years is spent earning a living; the next 20 years pass in our search for the right practice or the meaning of life and we often think, "I will practice seriously when I retire". Then retirement comes and before we have much time putting Dharma into practice, death comes. You can see that what the Kadampa masters say is true – i.e. even if you have interest to study Dharma, if you don't at the same time put it into practice without delay, there will be no opportunity to gain benefit from it.

There are students and scholars of the Dharma who study the teachings of the Buddha extensively (Kadam Shungtapa); there are also followers who follow the advice of one's Gurus (Kadam Ningyapa ; those who follow the Lam Rim (Kadam Lam Rimpa). Some scholars try to combine all three.

Introduction to Buddhist Tenets

The study of Tenets is the study of Buddhist philosophy and it will deepen one's understanding of all the Buddha's teachings.

The teachings on emptiness and its meaning comes from Shakyamuni Buddha. There are various commentaries composed by the Indian Pandits and the great Tibetan Masters. The text we are going to use is

Jetsun Chokyi Gyaltsen's root text Titled "*A Presentation of Tenets*". At Sera Je Monastery, we use his commentaries when studying Logic, Vinaya and Madhyamika. The reason why these great scholars compose commentaries is to make it easier for us to study, as the root texts are often written in a poetic form which sometimes uses difficult words. By studying the commentary, one can gain a better understanding of the root text. The Kangyur (about 108 volumes) contain the Buddha's actual words and the Tangyur contains the Commentaries of the pandits/great masters (over 200 volumes). Some topics are particularly complex, so there will be clarifying commentaries on the Commentaries.

This text begins with homage being made to Manjushri who is inseparable from the Gurus. To accomplish the study of Dharma, one needs extensive merit and the most potent object for one to generate merit in relation to, is the Guru. The whole essence of guru devotion is the mind that sees the Guru as inseparable from Buddha. That is the realisation to be achieved i.e. spontaneously seeing the Guru in oneness with the Buddha; seeing the qualities of the Buddha as the qualities of one's Guru; when seeing any Buddha image, instantly thinking of the Guru. Without studying, contemplating and meditating on this, it will be impossible to gain that realisation.

By making offerings to Guru, serving the Guru and practising the Dharma, one is able to achieve extensive merit which leads to gaining the realisation of guru devotion and all other Dharma realisations. If we see Guru as ordinary e.g. see faults in the Guru, think that it is a reflection of one's own faults like seeing a black mark on the mirror – the mirror itself is clean but the mark appears as a reflection of the perceiver.

How did Buddhist Tenets come about?

The Buddha turned the Wheel of Dharma 3 times. The 1st Turning is the basis of Theravadan practice; the 2nd Turning of the Wheel is the basis for Mahayana practice; the 3rd Turning of the Wheel is based on the points regarding emptiness that was analysed by both the Theravadan and Mahayana schools. The Buddha saw it beneficial to give the teachings into disciples of different mentalities, so that each could develop knowledge according to their abilities. This gave rise to there being 4 schools of philosophy on the topic of emptiness – Vaibashika, Sautrantika, Cittamatra and Madhyamika (Svatantrika-Madhyamika and Prasangika-Madhyamika).

It doesn't mean that by studying just one school of philosophy (and neglecting the other schools) is enough. It is not. All the 4 schools are Buddhist and are inter-related. The study of the views of the earlier schools enable us to understand and progress to a clear understanding of the higher schools.

The fundamental point is that *"nothing exists from its own side; all lack inherent existence"*. Note however that Emptiness, is not nothingness.

The above assertion is not easy to understand. One needs to explore the views of the various schools to gain the correct understanding. The highest school is that of the Prasangika-Madhyamika and that is what we will aim for and get to. The Prasangika school is that of Nagarjuna, Lama Atisha and Lama Tsongkhapa.

Why did Buddha teach these 4 schools/methods of explaining emptiness? Why not just straightaway teach the highest school? It is because sentient beings have different mental abilities. The Buddha had to be skilful when teaching such minds of differing ability. That is why the Buddha taught 84,000 teachings and not just one.

What is the definition of a “Buddhist”?

Are we really Buddhist or just Buddhist in name? What is the criteria of being a Buddhist? Taking refuge in the Three Jewels. Is it only that? Practising loving-kindness. Is it only that? To be a Buddhist is to practice Dharma. What is meant by practising Dharma? Taking refuge under Buddha, Dharma Sangha (and avoiding taking refuge on others e.g. worldly gods), living life with pure body, speech and mind (i.e. ethics) and preserving Vows (e.g. Refuge vows, lay vows, Bodhisattva vows, tantric vows, ordination vows etc). There are 2 causes for taking refuge in the Three Jewels – fear of the suffering of the lower realms and faith (seeing the saviour as the Three Jewels).

The foundation of Buddhist philosophy is not harming any living being and having the view of dependent-existence. Through studying Buddhist Tenets, we will see that this term “dependent-existence” is used by all 4 schools but each school has a different explanation as to what it is.

What differentiates a Buddhist and the proponent of Buddhist tenets? A Buddhist has been defined above. A proponent of the Buddhist Tenets refers to the person who has taken Refuge and follows the view of one of the 4 schools.

Who is a proponent of the Buddhist Tenets?

To be qualified to be called a proponent of Buddhist tenets (or in our case , a proponent of the Prasangika-M school) it is not enough to merely take refuge in the Three Jewels. The criteria to be a proponent of Buddhist Tenets/a Buddhist philosopher, one needs to:

- (1) have **refuge** in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha; and
- (2) accept the **4 seals** (i) all conditioned phenomena/anything that is produced/a product, is impermanent (ii) all contaminated aggregates/phenomena are suffering (iii) all phenomena are empty and selfless (iv) nirvana is peace.

The 4 Seals

- (i) all conditioned phenomena/anything that is produced/products, are impermanent

There are varying levels of impermanence, gross, subtle, gross of the gross and subtle of the subtle. For this we need to observe and analyse the impermanence of our lives, impermanence of our happiness, impermanence of our suffering.

Gross impermanence: Two hours before, you were at home and now you are at the Centre. You may not have noticed how the day has progressed, bringing you from the office or from home to now at the centre. By noticing this, it contradicts the idea of permanence. The Tenzin Zopa of the morning is not the same as the Tenzin Zopa of this moment. That earlier situation has passed. This helps us not to be

attached to situations, things or people.

What is the definition of impermanence? The momentary changes that occur. For example, in one moment alone, there are 64 sub-moments and each sub-moments has its own sub-moments. By thinking of this, we realise that we are quite old. Right now, when we see a wrinkle, we feel uneasy but when death comes, that will be the most shocking display impermanence. When it happens, we might find ourselves un-prepared for it, so we must be aware of the fact of impermanence.

Are there any permanent phenomena? Yes there are - those which are not subject to momentary changes e.g. compounded space, enlightenment. One sense of "I", one's aggregates and outer phenomena are all impermanent.

The subtle nature of existence is emptiness. We talk about "enemies" but we should realise that that word is a label; when we talk about loved ones, that too is a label. As long as we cannot avoid the clinging to the labels we have put onto enemies, loved ones, wallet, bed, books etc.. as long as you cannot give up clinging and grasping to these, one can never realise their true nature. What is the nature of persons and things? Emptiness or the lack of inherent existence. How to realise this nature? One first has to understand the function of impermanent and permanent phenomena and then about dependent-arising. E.g. a prayer wheel – as we go into the more subtle labels of aspects of the prayer wheel, we will discover that we cannot find anything solid on any of those aspects and we will arrive at the point where we

cannot find any solid thing to grasp at and point to in order to call it “a prayer wheel”. Due to the subtle shifts from momentary changes, we will eventually find that there is no solid object to analyse and yet one sees an object right there. Without doing this analysis, just saying “things lack of inherent existence” may not enable us to let go of grasping at persons and things.

(ii) all contaminated aggregates/phenomena are suffering

“Contaminated” here means “tainted by delusion and karma”. All sentient beings and all products/conditioned phenomena are contaminated in this way. The example of a vase or this pillar can be used. If this pillar is contaminated, we have to say that it is suffering. How and why would we say that this pillar is suffering? The moment one (an ordinary being) perceives an object/phenomena, there will simultaneously arise a delusion (e.g. ignorance, desire, attachment in relation to that object). That is why the object/phenomena is contaminated; is a suffering. It is premised on delusion. The pillar itself is not experiencing pain but the human being who is affected by delusion, upon perceiving the object under the influence of delusion, (whether in gross or subtle form) gives rise to suffering. For example, you are sitting on a cushion here in the middle of the gompa and you see another person sitting and leaning against the pillar, who appears to be very comfortable. You might notice you do not have the support of a pillar and hence, have a sense of envy and loss of such comfort. Although the pillar is not suffering, your seeing the pillar with a mind having delusion (desiring comfort) makes your perception of the pillar, a form of suffering.

Another example: You are rushing out of the gumpa and you bump into a pillar, making your arm sore. This suffering arises due to your having contaminated aggregates and the pillar was the direct cause of your pain and hence it is part of suffering.

Or you go for blessings from the Guru and you get a hard knock on your head. You might find that knock quite painful but instead of getting agitated, you feel bliss because that was from the Guru. So you feel pain on your head because of the contaminated aggregates but then, due to your mind having respect and faith in the Guru while having your head knocked (i.e. one's mind is not so heavily contaminated at that time), there is feeling of bliss. Contamination/suffering can be heavy or light.

(iii) All phenomena are empty and selfless - we will study this in greater detail later.

(iv) Nirvana is peace – this refers to the cessation of the contaminated subject (mind) and object; freedom from the force of momentary changes arising from karma and ignorance; that cessation is called peace or Nirvana. There are 4 types of nirvana: (a) innate nirvana which is the Buddha nature in all living beings, which makes enlightenment a possibility; (b) remainder-nirvana which is the achievement of cessation of suffering of samsara but there is still the remaining contaminated form (the body) which came through contaminated causes (father-mother substances); (c) nirvana without remainder – free from contaminated mind and contaminated aggregates (d)

enlightenment i.e. complete freedom from samsara, as well as all gross and subtle defilements.

What is the Buddha nature? The nature of mind which is fundamentally clear, luminous and pure. All sentient beings have this Buddha nature but it is temporarily covered by clouds of delusion. This mind continues life after life up till enlightenment. This mind is also empty of inherent existence. By creating good karma in this moment, the imprint gets embedded into the continuum of the mind which contributes towards the progress towards enlightenment. When one's mind is clear of delusions and the purity of mind is attained, one reaches Buddhahood.

As it is stated in the Paramita Sutra, preserving Dharma and causing it to flourish can be done in 2 ways –

- (i) preserving Dharma through the oral lineage and study; and
- (ii) preserving Dharma through the lineage of obtaining realisations by way of cultivating/applying the teachings.

What we are doing here, giving a discourse on the Buddhadharma and listening to it, is part of the oral lineage. Hence, by merely attending this class, you have participated in the big responsibility of serving and preserving the Dharma. Therefore, your presence here is not a simple thing. It is priceless and important. Once you know these 2 ways of preserving the Buddhadharma, you will begin to rejoice and feel thankful to yourself that you are seriously studying the Dharma. Otherwise, without putting effort in studying Dharma and sometimes attending and sometimes not,

will result in the benefits from it going up and down. Without learning the complete path, it will be difficult to develop oneself spiritually. Through classes, one has the opportunity to learn the Dharma and share that knowledge with others. Until one attains enlightenment, one has to continue studying. Some might think that one has attended Lam Rim teachings for 30 years, so it is pointless or even embarrassing to attend basic Lam Rim class. This is completely wrong thinking. Our Guru Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche says that even if one has attended Lam Rim teachings 100 times, you should attend another 200 times because each encounter deepens one's understanding and habituates the mind with Dharma more intensely. It's like upgrading one's quality of understanding.

Some of our senior students attend Lam Rim classes and this is a joy to see because they are participating in preserving the Buddha's teaching in themselves and others, which can save from the lower realms and helps to accumulate the causes for higher rebirth and Buddhahood. If one knows this, one won't feel tired about attending Dharma classes and one will feel proud about contributing towards the preservation and flourishing of the Dharma. Preserving the Dharma doesn't require you to sit on a throne. Studying and attending a Dharma discourse are all ways to preserve the Dharma. If the Buddha saw you doing this, he would be very pleased and give you a heap of chocolates!

A PRESENTATION OF TENETS

by the Venerable Chokyi Gyaltsen, an Emanation of Manjushri

Homage to all holy and venerable Lamas, by nature inseparable from Guru-Protector Manjushri.

To explain the presentation of tenets, there are 3 points: (1) Definition (2) Divisions and (3) The meaning of each division.

1. The definition of a proponent of Buddhist tenets is: “A proponent of tenets who accepts the 3 Jewels as ultimate objects of refuge and does not assert any ultimate objects of refuge other than these.

This been explained above – to be a proponent of Buddhist tenets (i.e. a follower of Buddhist philosophy) requires 2 criteria: (i) taking refuge only in the Buddha Dharma and Sangha and not asserting any other refuge (like worldly gods) and (ii) asserts the 4 seals.

2. The Divisions/names of different schools

The first 2 are also known as the 2 schools that propound the meaning that external objects are truly existent.

- Vaibashika (Particularists) – they follow a particular teaching of the Buddha – they believe that external objects are truly existent e.g. person and outer objects e.g. trees exist inherently, from their own side.

- Sautrantika (Sutra Followers) – they only assert the Grounds and Paths based on the Sutras taught by the Buddha, without the use of commentaries. Similar to the Vaibashika, they believe that external objects are truly existent e.g. person and outer objects exist from their own side.
- Cittamatra (Proponents of “Mind Only”) – they assert that everything which exists is based on mental imprints. All things perceived are due to projections of the mind and that mind itself truly exists.
- Madhyamika (Followers of the Middle Way) – They assert the need to avoid the two extremes = true existence/substantialism (that things truly exist from their own side) and nihilism (that nothing exists). By avoiding these 2 extremes, one adopts the middle position.

The lower schools assert that things exist from their own side because they say if a thing doesn't exist from its own side, then it doesn't exist at all. The Prasangika-Madhyamika assert that things exist but exist dependently and exist as being merely labelled and do NOT exist from their own side. In the Madhyamika School, there are 2 sub-schools Svatantrika-Madhyamika and Prasangika-Madhyamika. The school holding the highest and final view on emptiness is the Prasangika-M school.

These 4 schools came about because different scholars asserted different views based on their mental abilities to extract the essence of the Buddha's teachings.

When Shakyamuni Buddha first taught the 4 Noble Truths at Sarnath, he said that there is suffering ; in order to be free from suffering, you need to know what suffering is and to be free from suffering you need to know what the causes of suffering are; the fact that suffering can end and the Path to attain this.

However, Buddha also taught that there is no suffering. This is seemingly confusing with the teaching that there is suffering. One needs to look deeper into what is meant by “there is no suffering”. This gave rise to disciples interpreting this statement differently - the Vaibashika and Sautrantika disciples interpreted it to mean that there is no suffering which doesn't exist from its own side (i.e. suffering truly exists); the Cittamatra says that there is no externally existing suffering but is a ripening of the mental imprint of suffering, which gives rise to the experience of suffering; the Prasangika-Madhyamika say that there is no suffering that exists from its own side but there is suffering that is projected or labelled by mind. From here, you can how each school explained that one teaching-statement in different ways. Each school's level of reasoning is linked to the mental capacity of its followers.

In this text, the study of each of the 4 schools is divided in 7 headings –

- Definition of the school
- Divisions (e.g. in Vaibashika school, there are 3 divisions and 18 sub-schools, one of which is the Theravadan school),
- Etymology (history of words),
- Mode of Asserting Objects,
- Mode of Asserting the Object Possessors (subject/perceiving mind),

- Mode of Asserting Selflessness - each school uses the same term “selflessness” but has a different analysis of this term
- Presentation of Grounds and Path of each school – although each school explains that the purpose of becoming a Buddhist is to achieve Cessation (of suffering), there are differing types e.g. there is the cessation of the Hearer and Solitary Realiser practitioner; the cessation of the Bodhisattva practitioner. In this way, there are different labels of cessation.

3. The explanation of the Vaibashika, Sautrantika, Cittamatra and Madhyamika systems.

VAIBASHIKA (Particularists)

- 1. Definition of Vaibashika (V) is “One who propounds Hinayana tenets and asserts external objects to be truly existent but does not assert self-cognisers”.***

So there are 3 criteria to be a Vaibashika follower:

- Propounds the Hinayana/Theravadan tenets – i.e. who aims for self-liberation or nirvana (compare this with the Mahayana which rejects self-liberation and instead seeks enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings)
- Asserts external objects to be truly existent i.e. that external objects are inherently existent, self-existent, independently existent (Prasangika-M assert that all objects including the subject (one’s mind) lack inherent existence; are not truly existent);
- Does not assert a self-cogniser. Why is the term self-cogniser used? Why not use just cogniser? Normally, the subject (mind) perceives an object and cognises it in a particular way. The term “self-cogniser” refers to mind/consciousness which perceives itself. The Vaibashika rejects the idea that subject and the object can be the same. It rejects the assertion that mind can perceive mind itself. So we need to analyse this: Can our mind perceive itself? We sometimes find ourselves noticing another part of our mind e.g. our aspirations, our motivation, our level of awareness. These aspects of mind are the objects that are cognised by our mind.

2. Divisions: There are 3 divisions of the Vaibashika school – Kashmiris, Aparantakas, Magadhas.

3. Etymology (history of words or how the word came about): If someone asks why they are called “Vaibashikas” it is because :

- **They propound tenets following the Great Detailed Explanation (Mahavibhasa); and also because**
- **They propound the 3 times as instances of substance.**

Within the Vaibashika school, there were groups who fit the 3 criteria under the Definition heading as per above but who interpreted the other 6 headings (e.g. mode of asserting objects etc.) differently. Kashmiris were those from northern India/Kashmir area; Aparantakas resided in the eastern India; Magadhas were those who lived near central India, near Bodhgaya. They follow one teaching of the Buddha called the “Great Detailed Explanation” taught to Theravadans and assert the 3 times (past, present and future) as “instances of substance” can be explained in the present existence. Example, this watch – the continuum of the past of this watch, exists in the present substance of this watch; and likewise, the continuum in the future also lies in the substance of this watch at the present moment.

4. Mode of Asserting Objects: According to the Vaibashika (V), **the definition of a “thing” (object) as “That which is able to perform a function”.** Example, a watch is a thing because it functions as a means to measure time; similarly human beings are also things because they can perform

the function of walking, talking etc.

Thing, existence and knowable objects (perceivable objects) ***are synonymous*** (refer to the same thing).

There are 2 divisions of things: Permanent things & impermanent things:

- ***Under permanent things are non-compounded space*** (a state that is free from obstruction); ***analytical cessations*** (cessation which is gained from the wisdom of meditation analysing the 4 Noble Truths) and ***non-analytical cessations*** (cessation not requiring meditation eliminating objects of negation).
- ***Under impermanent things are – products, created objects and impermanence.***

To the V, ***another way of dividing things is into Conventional Truths & Ultimate Truths***

- ***The definition of a Conventional Truth is “A phenomenon which is such that, if it were broken or mentally separated into parts, the mind apprehending that object would cease”.***

Example, this cup is existing in the manner of conventional truth i.e. things which display parts like handle, can hold liquid and the mind apprehends it as a cup which can perform the function of a cup. This is the conventional existence of the cup. If I smash this cup, the view of this as a cup, ceases. Similarly, this yellow robe appears to

us. But if I start to remove the threads from this robe, one by one, there will come a time when the yellow robe will cease. Applying this to ourselves, we likewise perceive the “I” as something true and something to be protected. So we obsess over this I, yet when we finally die and are cremated, our body ceases. So is the “I” my body or not? It’s not. Is the mind “I” or not? It’s not. By meditating on this, one will find that our perception of an absolute-“I” is mistaken and hence, one’s grasping at the I will be reduced and one day, one will gain the realisation of selflessness.

- ***The definition of an Ultimate truth is “A phenomenon which is such that if it were broken or mentally separated into parts, the mind apprehending that object would NOT cease”. For this, the V raise as examples of ultimate truth include:***

» ***the directionally partless particles*** (the V assert that these are the most subtle of objects, which one cannot break and it cannot be defined in relation to cardinal directions). Since they’re so subtle, the mind’s apprehension of it will not cease. In V, they don’t use the term emptiness, they use the term selflessness. To the V, a person is that which is based on the aggregates.

» ***Temporally partless (moments of) consciousness*** – partless nature of the mind’s continuum i.e. one cannot segregate one moment of consciousness from another, hence the V say that this is another aspect of ultimate truth

» ***Non-compounded objects*** e.g. space.

Another explanation of conventional and ultimate existence is seen in the *Abidhammakosha* which states ***“A thing which, if broken or mentally separated into other parts, is no longer understood by the mind – e.g. a pot is conventionally existent; all others are ultimately existent.”***

As the V assert ***the 3 times as “substance” e.g. they say that a pot existed at the time of the past of a pot; it will exist at the time of the future of a pot; and it exists in the present as a pot.***

5. Mode of Asserting the Object Possessor (the Perceiving Mind)

The subject here refers to that which perceives objects/phenomena. What types of perceivers are there? What kind of examples can you give when defining a person?

Some assert the combination of the 5 aggregates (form, feeling, consciousness, karmic imprints, cognition) as the illustration of the person. Some assert the aggregate of consciousness itself as the illustration of the person.

There are 2 kinds of mind: Valid Mind/valid cognisers and Invalid Mind/non-valid cognisers.

Under Valid Mind, there are 2 kinds – (i) Valid Direct Perceivers and (ii) Valid Inferences.

(i) There are 3 types of Valid Direct Perceivers:

(1) Sense Direct Perceivers e.g. eye consciousness which perceives a pillar as a pillar and not as a vase. Senses are the direct perceiver and do not necessarily involve consciousness. ***Valid Sense Direct Perceivers are not pervaded by consciousness because a visual sense power is an instance of a valid direct perceiver.***

(2) Mental Direct Perceivers – Examples are the first moment of a clairvoyant mind seeing others' minds; a mental direct perception of selflessness; a direct perception of subtle impermanence.

(3) Yogic Direct Perceivers refers to the consciousness/mind which is able to establish the self as being selfless, which arises through practice; the mind which is able to establish subtle impermanence. The yogic direct perceiver perceives the emptiness of the self-supporting or substantially existing person.

There are 2 types of Yogic Direct Perceivers: (a) Yogic Direct Perceivers that clearly realise the selflessness of persons and (b) the Yogic Direct Perceivers that clearly realise subtle impermanence. There are 2 types of the former (under category (a)) are the Yogic Direct Perceivers that realise the emptiness of a permanent, partless, independent person, and the Yogic Direct Perceivers (under category (b)) that realise the emptiness of a self-supporting or substantially existent person.

(ii) Valid Inferences - are that which through reasoning, establishing the valid object e.g. seeing smoke is a valid inference that there is a fire or

source of that smoke e.g. I am so enthusiastic in Dharma because it is due to past good karma. We can't directly go back in time to see the positive karma we committed but we can deduce that one's present enthusiasm is due to past habit of being enthusiastic about Dharma study. Inference can come about through one's own knowledge or through other's information e.g. other people; through scriptures etc.

According to V, their concept of person/self is based on 3 points – the self is impermanent (free from being permanent); self has parts (free from being partless); self is dependent (free from being independent). This is the V's view on the nature of self.

Let's look at their first point – self is impermanent: Is it true that a person is impermanent? To establish impermanence, what is meant by impermanence? Any phenomena which momentarily changes, is impermanent phenomena. In the case of space, it is permanent phenomena; mug however is impermanent phenomena. There is subtle and gross impermanent phenomena. By smashing a mug, the gross impermanent nature of the mug is established. The subtle impermanent phenomena refers to momentary changes and how each moment marks the end of the prior moment. There is a subtle, tiny space/gap between two moments because otherwise, the next moment will be the same as the prior moment.

In our own life, there are many momentary changes but we don't notice such changes because we instinctively cling to the notion of permanence. So we need to reflect and know the momentariness of the self; even the moment itself as sub-

moments which are likewise undergoing change. It is almost like one is constantly running towards the end. We celebrate one birthday and then another but never truly realise the small momentary changes that have occurred during that year.

All schools accept that momentary changes give rise to impermanence. For the V, they assert permanent and impermanent things (V define “things” as that which can perform a function). For other schools, the moment one calls an object a thing that can perform a function, it is impermanent.

The V’s next point on selflessness is that self has parts (free of being partless): V give 2 examples of self – consciousness and the combination of aggregates. For combination of aggregates, it is obvious that has parts. With regards to consciousness, the V say it has parts by way of moments of consciousness i.e. past, present and future. This moment of consciousness is the end of the previous moment; the end of this present moment is the future moment of the consciousness. Can mind be defined according to cardinal directions? Think about it.

Next point – self exists in a dependent manner. The V say that self is either a combination of aggregates or is the consciousness. It is best to use the term “self” rather than “person” because the 6 realm beings are all considered persons of each realm. Why did V assert that consciousness is one form of self? Do all preta possess 5 aggregates? No because there are formless pretas. Likewise with formless gods. There is no aggregate of form. That’s why the V say that consciousness is another form of self i.e. it is to address formless beings. After all, the consciousness of a preta gives rise to existence as a preta.

Is Buddha a monk? If he is a monk, then he would be a person? And if Buddha is person, he is impermanent? According to V, to be a person requires the above 3 aspects of impermanence, parts and dependently existing. Hence, if Buddha is a person, Buddha is then impermanent? We need to investigate more thoroughly because Buddha's mind/the Dharmakaya is permanent because that mind is not undergoing momentary changes.

Functioning phenomena are "things" according to V and they can be permanent or impermanent. What about space? How does it perform a function? The V say "Yes, space performs a function because it accommodates objects". A person who has jaundice, by looking at a white mountain sees a yellowish mountain (or a person wearing blue-tinted glasses will see the snow mountain as blue). Is such a perceiver a valid cogniser or invalid cogniser? Invalid. Although eye is able to see the mountain, it sees it incorrectly. A glass of water – let's say there are 3 beings (a human, a preta and a Buddha) looking at it – the human sees the liquid as water; the preta will see it as pus; the Buddha will see nectar. Whose perception is wrong? That same liquid

exists in the valid form of water, pus and nectar despite being totally distinct from each other. Therefore, is perception dependent on the object or the perceiver or a combination of object and perceiver?

6. Mode of Asserting Selflessness

V assert that ***subtle selflessness and subtle selflessness of person are synonymous***, have the same meaning. There are gross and subtle levels

of selflessness. ***Selflessness of phenomena is not asserted because the Vaibashikas assert that an established base is pervaded by self of phenomena*** i.e. even though the V assert selflessness of person, they do not assert the selflessness of phenomena.

Within existence, there are two aspects – person and phenomena. When one talks about selflessness of person, one is referring to the concept of “I”. When one talks about the selflessness of phenomena, one is referring to one’s 5 aggregates, all outer objects and everything other than concept of “I”. The V school doesn’t assert the selflessness of phenomena because they hold the view that phenomena is truly existent from its own side. This was not Shakyamuni Buddha’s final view of existence. The Buddha’s final view is found in the Prasangika- Madhyamika school.

Among them, the Vasiputriyans assert a selflessness of persons that is an emptiness of being permanent, partless and independent. However they do not assert a selflessness of persons that is an emptiness of being self-supporting or substantially existent because they assert a self-supporting, substantially existent self that is neither one entity with nor a different entity from the aggregates, neither permanent nor impermanent but is expressible: There is one V school called the Vasiputriyans (one of the 18 sub-schools of the V) which opposes the V assertion. They explain the selflessness of persons as being empty/lacking in being permanent, partless and independent e.g. the person is impermanent as seen in birth, aging and death; has a past, present and future (hence parts); and the person came from parents (did not come about on its own). This sub-school goes on to hold the view that the self that substantially exists but the self is neither one entity with the aggregates nor a different entity

from the aggregates; it is neither permanent nor impermanent and cannot be defined.

From V school, they assert selflessness/emptiness of the person/self is that which is impermanent (can momentarily change), has parts (physical parts, moments of time, various cardinal directions) and is dependent.

7. Presentation of Grounds and Paths

This is explained in 2 parts: (1) The object of negation (object of abandonment) and (2) Actual presentation of the Grounds and Paths.

i. Objects of Abandonment

The V ***asserts two types of the objects of negation*** or objects that must be abandoned because they are obstacles to attaining liberation/nirvana: ***(i) Deluded Obstacles*** (Delusions) ***(ii) Non-Deluded obstacles. There is no designation for “Obstacles to Omniscience”.***

The V school does not talk about obstacles to omniscience (they only refer to obstacles to liberation/nirvana). So if you read philosophical texts which only refer to obstacles to nirvana without any reference to obstacles to omniscience, then you will know that the text is based on V school. For us, we are familiar with Lam Rim, which belongs to Madhyamika school which freely refers to omniscience/enlightenment/Buddhahood. In Madhyamika texts, one will see references to both obscurations to nirvana and obscurations to omniscience; in V texts however, there is no mention of obscuration to omniscience at all.

(i) Deluded obstacles (Delusions) – self-grasping, ignorance, anger, attachment. These are formless and are part of mind. Delusions (including imprints of delusions) **act chiefly as obstacles to the attainment of liberation/nirvana** of the Hearer and the Solitary Realiser. In the Lam Rim, one refers to the 3 capability beings. The lower capability beings refers to the Hearer practitioner; the middle capability being refers to the Solitary Realiser and the higher capability refers to the Bodhisattva or Mahayanic practitioner.

Examples of deluded obstacles referred to here are :

- **a conceptual thought of grasping at the “I”; the self-grasping attitude. This is a concept of self-supporting or substantially existing person;**
- **the 3** poisons of ignorance, attachment and anger together with their seeds (through throwing karma) that arise due to that conception i.e. the self grasping mind that holds the view that self exists permanently, partlessly and independently.

These are all obstacles to attaining nirvana.

These delusions are the obstructions to the attainment of the Hearer’s nirvana and the Solitary Realiser’s nirvana as expressed by the V/ Theravadan school. This is the same with Mahayana practitioners. We too must abandon these delusions and that is why we have to respect and apply this aspect of the Theravadan teachings. Conversely, Theravadan practitioners also cannot abandon Mahayana practice

because they are seeking liberation (although only for themselves) but one day, they will arise to complete the Path.

(ii) Non-deluded obstacles act chiefly as obstacles to all-knowingness.

The V do not use the term “omniscience” but instead use the term “all-knowing” and they do not refer at all to the obstacles to obtaining this all-knowing mind (the obstacle which the Madhyamika school says is the grasping to phenomena).

Examples of non-deluded obstacles are the mental tendencies of the conception grasping at a self supporting or substantially existent person and the lack of mental clarity that arises due to these tendencies: The self-grasping mind is the object to be negated/abandoned. This mind grasps at the thought that self exists independently, thereby leaving an imprint in our mental continuum, which becomes an obscuration to the all-knowing mind. In other words, non-deluded obstacles are not the delusions but the imprints of self-grasping.

In the Madhyamika/Mahayanic school, which we will cover later – there are 2 types of obscurations i.e. the obscuration to nirvana and the obscuration to omniscience. In Lam Rim, we refer to the 3 scopes of teachings (small, middle and great) namely, the teachings for the Hearer, the Solitary Realiser (these are termed as Hinayana/Theravadan/lower vehicle) and the Bodhisattva (Mahayana/Great Vehicle). The goal of the Hearer and Solitary Realiser is to attain the Hinayana Nirvana which is to be free from samsara/cyclic existence. For the Mahayana, freedom from samsara is not enough. If one aspires only to be free from samsara (whether for self or others), we are at best, only in the middle scope

practice. We haven't entered the Mahayana path yet.

What distinguishes Dharma from non-Dharma? It is whether the teachings and actions taken relate to this-life's purposes only (which becomes a cause for samsara) or not. To be Dharma, as a minimum, it must have concern for the future life. But do understand that a better future life can mean that we are still in samsara – the problem is that we are not aware of pervasive suffering, which has to be eliminated. Only when we can get rid of pervasive suffering, are we really free from samsara. For this, we need to investigate the nature of "I" – that's why studying selflessness/emptiness is so important. When we see that we are fundamentally pure and clear and merely temporarily trapped, we will feel encouraged that we are not stuck here with no where to go. The conventional truth of "I" is not the ultimate nature of "I" and thus, we have the chance to attain the ultimate. The conventional suffering "I" and samsara is definitely there and is a truth for us right now but by learning about ultimate truth, we will see that there is liberation because the ultimate is not conventional; it is more than the conventional; we can break free of karma and delusion which has brought on the contaminated aggregates, which in turn has given rise to conventional suffering.

If we are not careful, even doing prayers has elements of samsara because although we recite the Buddha's words, we tend to only dedicate for the prosperity of family, for good health, for success etc – these are all causes for samsara because such dedication is only for this-life's purposes. To overcome this, Nagarjuna gave a very effective remedy – he said while enjoying life's pleasures, one should benefit others and automatically, one is benefited too. By doing activities to benefit others, one actualises merit

at the same time. Think, “In order to help others, I must have good health to be able to serve; I must have resources so that I can offer assistance to others”. And mean these words from your heart. Then by doing this, one can transform self-benefit into Dharma.

HH Dalai Lama is a very happy Buddhist. He says “I try to do all my practices and where possible, combine all my practices in order to be able to fulfil all my commitments”. He is very skilful in doing this. For us, if we are not careful, even though we may do extensive sadhanas, without mindfulness, we might not be doing our commitments properly. Doing puja? Holiness says his puja is bodhicitta. Without bodhicitta, even if one does all the rituals elaborately, it can become the cause for samsara unless one has the right motivation. By generating bodhicitta for others, that is the most powerful puja. Sometimes when we do puja for the sick or dying, one can never know whether one is truly helping or disturbing the person – it is vital for the one doing the puja to have clean-clear bodhicitta motivation.

The paths of the Hearers (practitioners who rely on Guru every step of the way) and Solitary Realisers (who study Dharma and then go off on their own to meditate to gain realisations) also contain the 5 Paths and 10 Grounds. The object of abandonment of the Solitary Realiser is more subtle than that of the Hearer. Both seek to eliminate self-grasping at the “I”.

The Hinayana schools (V and Sautrantika) accept Bodhisattvayana (but don’t accept Mahayana). It is useful to know how this came about. After the Buddha passed away, the practitioners of Mahayana and more so, the practitioners of Tantra/Vajrayana went into solitude to practice and gradually become less visible and the Hinayana tradition spread extensively.

It became such that at that time, they used to criticise the Mahayana as mere “flowers from the sky” i.e. fantasy.

To refresh the points covered: The V assert two types of obstacles, namely and which become:

- (i) deluded obstacles (delusions + their imprints) which are obstacles to nirvana, due to the grasping to the I as existing in a substantially existing or self-supporting manner i.e. not dependent on the aggregates nor a base; the 3 poisons of ignorance, anger and attachment (and the seeds of these delusions);
- (ii) non-deluded obstacles (imprints of self-grasping) which are obstacles to the all-knowing mind because they block one from understanding the entire aspects of phenomena. Even though one may achieve the Arya level in the Hearer and Solitary Realiser path, due to these imprints/mental tendencies, it is still possible for sudden harsh speech to be uttered or momentary negative karmic action to arise. The V do not use the term “obstacle to omniscience” at all; it only uses “all-knowingness”.

It is important to keep in mind that these 4 schools of philosophy also correspond to the level of capability as taught in the Lam Rim i.e. the small capability being is the Hearer and the middle capability being is the Solitary Realiser (V and Sautrantika schools); the higher capability being is the Bodhisattva/Mahayana practitioner (Cittamatra & Madhyamika schools). Hence when one reads texts from the lower schools like V, one will see assertions about things existing from their own side (which is contradicted

by Prasangika-Madhyamika school). This shows the Buddha's skilfulness in teaching beings of varying mental capacities. Therefore, when we read any teachings (in particular, on the topic of selflessness/emptiness) we need to keep in mind who the teachings were intended for. When reading the Heart Sutra which was taught to Mahayana followers, one has to interpret it according to the Madhyamika-Prasangika school.

(2) Actual Presentation of Grounds and Paths of V

The V school does not use the term "Mahayana" and instead uses the term, "Bodhisattvayana".

Persons of the 3 vehicles have different ways of travelling the Path (the vehicles of the Hearer, Solitary Realiser and Bodhisattva).

- ***Those of the Hearer lineage (the small capability being according to the Lam Rim) combines the view of the emptiness of the self-supporting or substantially existing person/I, together with a small collection of merit and after practising for 3 lifetimes or more*** of continually of doing so, that practitioner ***attain small enlightenment*** or the nirvana of the Hearer i.e. liberation from samsara (all 3 forms of suffering – suffering of suffering, suffering of change and pervasive suffering). How does the small capability being accumulate merit? By meditating on the right view (of selflessness) and thereby abandoning the delusions.
- ***Those of the Solitary Realiser lineage (the Middle capability being) combine the view realising the emptiness of a self-supporting and***

substantially existent with a middling collection of merit (which is more than the small capability being has accomplished) and after practising for 100 eons or more continually, the Solitary Realiser can ***attains middling enlightenment*** or the nirvana of the Solitary Realiser.

From this, you can see how difficult it is just to be free from samsara for oneself, not to mention liberating numberless beings from samsara and let alone enlightenment! It is a huge commitment just to liberate oneself alone.

- ***Bodhisattvas combines the view of realising the emptiness of a self-supporting and substantially existing person/I together with a great collection of merit*** (through the practice of great compassion) ***and after practising for at least 3 countless great eons, attains the great enlightenment.***

The Mahayana schools emphasise bodhicitta/great compassion. The lower schools assert compassion but not great compassion. According to the Vajrayana teachings, it is possible to accumulate the required 3 countless eons merit (to attain full enlightenment) within a much shorter period, even in one brief lifetime. The is why one consecrates the retreat cushion and bless the cushion/ground with Vajra mudra because of the intensity of force that arises when one attains genuine realisations during the retreat which could crack the earth below you! The kusha grass under your cushion has a potent cleansing effect and it is said that Shakyamuni Buddha sat on a pile of kusha grass when he entered his 6 year meditative retreat.

The other difference in viewpoint between lower schools and higher schools is that the higher schools posit that Shakyamuni Buddha was already an enlightened being long before he was born as Siddhartha. He manifested ordinary birth as Siddhartha, aging, death merely as a teaching to living beings, to show them that the path to enlightenment was possible; for the lower schools, they assert that Siddhartha was born as an ordinary suffering being and only when he attained enlightenment, did he become the Buddha.

The topic of Grounds and Path can be studied together with the teachings on the 4 Noble Truths to make it a complete study.

There is also a difference in the way they (the practitioners of the 3 vehicles) ***collect the accumulation of merit***

- ***Bodhisattvas having collected merit for 3 countless great aeons on the Great Stage of the Path of Accumulation and below, attain all paths from the Heat Stage of the Path of Preparation through the Path of No More Learning on one seat.***

There are 5 Paths – the 1st Path of Accumulation (of merit); the 2nd Path of Preparation; the 3rd Path of Seeing; the 4th Path of Meditation; the 5th Path of No More Learning.

The Path of Accumulation has 3 categories – Small Stage, Middle Stage and the Great Stage of Path of Accumulation. Once one has accomplished the Great Stage (of this 1st Path of Accumulation), one then progresses to abandon self-grasping mind and enters into the Path of Preparation. When

doing so, one enters the Heat Stage of the Path of Preparation (there are 3 stages in the Path of Preparation i.e. the 1st stage is called Heat; 2nd stage is called Peak; 3rd stage is called the Supreme Dharma and there, one trains in the stages of the preliminary practice to actualise direct realisation on emptiness). Upon completing the 3rd stage of Preparation, one gains the direct realisation on emptiness and one enters the Path of Seeing and becomes an Arya being.

When a practitioner attains the Path of Seeing (whether on Hinayana or Mahayana path), that person becomes an Arya Being and part of the Refuge Sangha (whether ordained or not). At that very moment of entering the Path of Seeing, one also enters the 1st of the 10 Grounds/Bhumis. The defilements to be eliminated - from the gross levels of defilements up to the subtlest defilements - are divided into 9 categories and this is done during the 10 Grounds, which leads up to the stage just before full enlightenment/Buddhahood (for the Hinayana Path, this is the moment just before attaining Nirvana). That period of the 4 learning Paths is the period that one accumulates the 3 countless eons of merit. For the Bodhisattva, the Path of No More Learning is Buddhahood itself.

- ***The Solitary Realisers, having collected merit for 100 great aeons on the Great Stage of the Path of Accumulation and below, attain (all paths) from the Heat Stage on the Path of Preparation through the Path of No More Learning on one seat:*** The Solitary Realiser cultivates the same stages of Accumulation (for 100 eons), then to Path of Preparation, Seeing and up to the Path of No More Learning. For the Solitary Realiser, the Path of No More Learning is Nirvana.

- **Hearers collect merit on all 4 learning paths and for some, it is necessary to train on the learning paths even up to 14 lifetimes after attaining the superior paths:** For the Hearer, the same stages are cultivated but even though one might attain the Path of Seeing and Path of Meditation, progressing to the Path of No More Learning/Nirvana is not easy. For them, there is still the need to train in accumulation of merit and purification of defilements for 14 lifetimes to accomplish Nirvana.

They (the Vaibashka) assert that the Buddha's form aggregate is not Buddha because it is an object to be abandoned. This is because it is included in the same lifetime as the body of the previous Bodhisattva on the Path of Preparation. There is a pervasion because the body of the Bodhisattva on the Path of Preparation is the aggregate thrown by previous karma and delusion: The V says that when the Buddha attained enlightenment, his mind became enlightened but his body/form was not an enlightened form because his body remained contaminated due to the fact that it was produced by his parents, the King and Queen, who were ordinary beings and as such, that contaminated body was an object to be abandoned (which the V say happened only at the time when the Buddha passed away). The V regard the 12 deeds of the Buddha as incidents that actually happened to Siddhartha and that the Buddha was training on the Path while having a contaminated form. (whereas the Mahayana assert the 12 deeds are manifestations of the Buddha's way of giving teachings; that Siddhartha's body was the Buddha form and that Siddhartha displayed the attainment of enlightenment within one life).

As regards the statement "... This is because it is included in the same

lifetime as the body of the previous Bodhisattva..." - this is not referring to another life. The V assert that before Siddhartha became Buddha, he was a Bodhisattva and before that, he was an ordinary person. Before Siddhartha went out of the palace, he was an ordinary person, husband to wife, father to son. After going into the jungle to meditate, he renounced and trained in loving kindness, compassion, bodhicitta (V do recognise bodhicitta). The V view Siddhartha as a previously practising the Path of Accumulation and Path of Preparation and having been born Prince Siddhartha, was continuing his cultivation. His birth as Prince Siddhartha was due to past karma and delusion throwing him into present life. So, the V say that this fact, plus the fact that he came from father's sperm and mother's blood shows Siddhartha had a contaminated body. The V say that whilst Buddha's mind was pure when he attained enlightenment, his body was contaminated.

They do not accept a complete Enjoyment Body (Sambhogakaya) and they assert that when the highest Emanation Body attain Nirvana Without Remainder (of true suffering), the mental continuum ceases: The V don't recognise the Enjoyment Body of the Buddha or the Sambhogakaya. In Mahayana, when the Buddha displayed the 12 deeds, one of his emanations was in the Bodhisattva form, teaching the Mahayana teachings to bodhisattva-disciples, in an environment only populated by bodhisattvas (these are amongst the 5 definite environments of the Sambhogakaya). When Buddha manifested attaining enlightenment from the sambhogakaya state, he simultaneously manifested attaining enlightenment under the Bodhi tree. That is why we say that Shakyamuni Buddha is the kindest of all Buddhas because he emanated in a form visible to ordinary sentient beings like us, so that ordinary beings could learn from him. For V school, Shakyamuni Buddha became a Buddha for the first time and do not accept

the notion of the Buddha manifesting any other form elsewhere.

As for the statement “...when the highest emanation body attains nirvana without remainder of true suffering, the mental continuum ceases”, it means that when Siddhartha obtained enlightenment, he achieved “nirvana WITH remainder” i.e. he achieved nirvana/freedom from samsara but his contaminated form still remained or in other words, his mind was pure but his contaminated form still remained. Only when Shakyamuni Buddha died, did he achieve “nirvana without remainder” and that’s when the Buddha’s mental continuum/the All-Knowing Mind. ceased. This sounds quite surprising and odd, doesn’t it? They say the Buddha abandoned all defilements of mind and abandoned defilement of body when he passed away and when this happened, the V say the contaminated form ceased and the All Knowing Mind also ceased. This is what the V school states. The Abidhamma teachings which include teachings on the formation of the world, is based on the Vaibashika school.

Shakyamuni Buddha long ago commented that the world was round and it was only apparently only around 15th century that the scientists established the world was indeed round.

Due to our lack of wisdom, we tend to hold the view that if we cannot see something nor touch something, it means that thing must be untrue or is a superstition. But think of it - just because you cannot see something or feel it doesn’t mean it doesn’t exist.

Although a Buddha Superior has abandoned all suffering and its origins without exception, it does not contradict that he still has true suffering

in his continuum. This is because He has abandoned every single delusion that refers to true suffering, therefore is considered to have abandoned true suffering – The V assert that there is no contradiction in this passage because Buddha's All Knowing Mind abandoned defilements and gained detachment from all contamination. Only his physical form was contaminated. All produced/conditioned objects are objects of suffering because they are objects of dissatisfaction (perceived by a mind which still has ignorance). As long as one does not gain detachment from each and every single existence, one is not free from true suffering. Every single existence is an object of delusions – due to ignorance and some objects (additionally) give rise to attachment, anger, etc. Buddha was totally free from all of this, free from true suffering (delusions/hallucinated mind connected to ordinary phenomena), free from samsara.

Hearer and Solitary Realiser Foe Destroyers, from the attainment of the state of Foe Destroyer until they die, are Foe Destroyers With Remainder. After death, they are considered to have attained Nirvana Without Remainder: The term “Foe Destroyers” refers to the Hearers and Solitary Realisers who have attained nirvana. When the Buddha attained enlightenment under the Bodhi tree, according to the V, he attained the Foe Destroyer stage/Nirvana with Remainder (because his contaminated form remained). After death, Nirvana Without Remainder was attained because the mind was no longer connected to the “contaminated” body/base.

This is similar to some scientists' view that when the body ceases (clinical death), there is no way for mind to continue to exist. [A student comments that many scientists believe that mind and brain are the same; another

student says that some scientists say that mind relates to the chemical reactions and energy transfers within the brain]. It seems like scientists think that mind is some kind of psychological process. For matters of spirituality, that too relates to the mind. Whether an action is proper or not, has connection to the mind. I think that scientists were not aware of this and hence, in the past, that majority of scientists never showed much interest in spiritual matters. Therefore, Buddhadharma remains relevant to present day because whatever is stated there, has a reasoned basis and scientific logic to it. Not just blind faith. These days, when a child sees a plane flying in the sky, he thinks of the scientists which made it possible; he doesn't think about the role of karma in one's perception of that plane. We tend to think that as long as we have a brain, we can make whatever we want and that it has nothing to do with karma. Some even regard karma as mere superstition, rather than a (scientific) process of cause and effect. Just look at this class – how many are interested in studying Buddhist philosophy? Maybe 30-40 people? (Laughter). If we could convince a famous scientist of karmic law and effect and he declares “Yes, karma is true” and this statement is published, millions of people would be happy to believe it. Yet, even though HH Dalai Lama and many great realised beings have written tons of books about karma, how many people believe it? So the world appears to believe in scientists more.

Although at the time of Nirvana with Remainder, they abandon Deluded Obstacles (delusions) without exception, they do not abandon non-deluded obstacles (imprints of self grasping). Non-deluded obstacles are not destroyed by opponent powers at the itme of attaining Nirvana Without Remainder but they are not existent because at that time, their basis – the mental continuum – ceases: This means that whilst delusions

are abandoned at the stage of Nirvana, NON-deluded obstacles (imprints of self-grasping) are not yet abandoned. However, the V say it is not necessary to have an antidote for the non-deluded obstacles because when death happens, there is no longer a base for the imprints i.e. the mind, and hence at the time of the Nirvana Without Remainder, the mind ceases and thus the contaminated form also ceases. Conversely put, as the form ceases, the mind ceases. A dependent process.

The next point relates to ***whether teachings one is receiving are definitive or interpretive***. When listening to the teachings of the Buddha, we have to observe and analyse whether it is a definitive teaching or an interpretive teaching. Likewise, when the Teacher praises you, you need to analyse – is it praise to invoke your deluded pride? Have you earned those praises? Or are they words to encourage you, to inspire you to do better? You need to interpret his praise. So that advice (praise for the purpose of encouraging oneself to improve) is interpretive teachings. The Teacher might praise somebody who doesn't deserve praise – so again, you need to interpret it by thinking, "Teacher is indirectly referring to me as well but he wants everyone to rejoice at the praise being given". Of course, there is a system of interpretation – one cannot interpret any old way we like!! Definitive teachings is like when you have done something wrong and the Guru scolds you. [A direct teaching]. You might try to deny or give reasons for your action but you know you did the wrong action, so one should regard the Guru's words and instructions as a definitive teaching. Whenever you read Buddhist philosophy books, certain teachings are based on the Hinayana position and some are debates between one school and another school. So if you are not familiar with the 4 schools, doubt will arise in your mind and you will (mistakenly) think that there are

contradictions in the Buddha's teachings! This should be an illustration that from the very first moment of the Buddha giving teachings, the teachings asserted by the 4 schools already existed in the Buddha's heart.

There's another debate: As long as the theory exists in the heart of an author, the book already exists. Maitreya's text "Abhisamayalankara" (Ornament of Clear Realisations) contains 8 chapters. He composed the text, chapter by chapter. So the debate is whether the entire book existed while he was composing the first chapter? If you say "No, the whole book did not exist yet", that statement will be refuted by the argument that when one writes a book, an overall viewpoint would be already be there. Even though the views of the 4 schools may not have been written out when Buddha gave his first teachings, it is asserted that Buddha's teachings on all the 4 schools already existed.

In the 4 Noble Truths, the 2nd is the Truth of Suffering – zillions of beings interpret that one statement differently; or in Heart Sutra, where it states, "there is no eye, no ear, no nose" – many interpret it differently – some would say, there is no nose at all; some would say there is a truly-existing nose; some would say it's a dependently arising nose. So the Buddha taught the Tenets and treated those teachings very seriously because beings do have different mental dispositions and when delivering the teachings, the Buddha skilfully used the necessary means suited to those different tendencies, to help them understand.

Proponents of Realism (i.e. true existence), when distinguishing definitive and interpretive sutras, do so by means of whether they are acceptable according to their words. Some among the 2 schools that propound the

meaning do not accept the Mahayana collection to be Buddha's words because most Vaibashikas assert that sutras are pervaded by sutras of definitive meaning: As there are definitive and interpretive teachings, we need to analyse what we hear or study. As for V, who are proponents of Realism (i.e. of true existence) are more into definitive teachings – they take the teachings literally. They don't study from all sources of teachings. They stick to a few sutras which they regard as reliable. They consider whether the teachings are acceptable according to their words, rather than through study, analysis and application. V schools abide by the sutras of definitive meaning. So, when they encounter sutras which are different from those they rely on or cannot be interpreted by them, they don't accept them. For us Mahayana practitioners, we should view Buddha's teachings as an integrated whole i.e. some teachings are preliminary teachings; some are the main body/causal teachings and some teachings

are resultant teachings. Hence to practice the complete Path, studying the entire teachings becomes necessary. Perfecting only the Hinayana teachings will help oneself to gain liberation from samsara but one will be stuck in eons and eons of peace and never achieve the omniscient mind. Hence Hearers and Solitary Realisers must eventually practice Mahayana and Vajrayana; conversely, for us Mahayana followers, we need to know and practice the Hinayana teachings like Vinaya.

*The key points to be extracted from studying the Vaibashika school are the various types of phenomena.

Lama Tsongkhapa says that even though we have obtained this precious human rebirth and the conditions to practice Dharma, we don't commit

the time and effort needed to actualise the meaning of such a rebirth. What is its purpose? Is it only to earn money or raise a family? We wish for happiness and do not wish suffering. As there is the continuum of our consciousness/mind, we need to undertake preparations; we need to set aside some time for our future lifetime's good conditions. We can only do that through Dharma which is overcoming one's own delusions and benefiting others. Hence we are aiming beyond this worldly life's welfare and achievements. By studying Tenets, it is one of the methods to understand the Buddhadharma more deeply and this will bring us the peerless happiness we seek.

SAUTRANTIKA (Sutra follower)

This school is very interesting. It explores the different types of mind and contains one of the richest teachings on the theory of mind and has a skilful way of presenting the valid mind/valid cognition and the invalid mind. It is important to know this because all virtues should be initiated by valid thought.

To determine whether the mind/thought is valid or not, we need to understand the criteria. Otherwise, a person may be appearing to do a virtuous action but because that action was initiated by an invalid mind, the action will not be the cause for good results or liberation, not to mention enlightenment .

1. Definition of a Sautrantika is “one who asserts Hinayana tenets (teachings on manner of presenting the 4 seals) and accepts both self-cognisers and external objects”.

(Compare this with V school which accepts external objects but not self-cognisers). The “self cogniser” means the mind which sees itself (the V don’t accept the self cogniser because V say that mind cannot see itself). Most presentations of the Madhyamika accept the self cogniser.

All 4 schools including the Madhyamika, accept the Sautrantika theories of mind.

Sautrantika and Exemplifier are synonymous: The Tibetan word called “kha” refers to the Buddha’s direct words. There is a particular Sutra which the S follow and they are reluctant to follow other Sutras. Due to this, they are known as the Sutra followers. Further the Commentary composed by Nagarjuna and Chandrakirti, there is a particular Commentary followed by S followers – the S don’t follow the entire Buddha’s teachings but that particular Sutra. Further, the S accept teachings explained by the Buddha via examples, for instance Buddha taught impermanence through the example of an object being broken down.

Hence, the S adopt the impermanence teachings by following such examples given by the Buddha.

1. Divisions: There are 2 divisions –

(1) ***Sautrantikas following scriptures. An example is a S who follows the Abhidarmakosha;***

(2) ***Sautrantikas following reasoning and logic. An example is a S who follows the Sutra called the Seven Treatises on Valid Cognition*** composed by Dharmakirti. This is one of the texts which has the most profound material on mind and cognition. The monks of the 3 main Gelug monasteries spend 20 over years studying this text, amongst other major texts and great debates between monasteries are often on this topic.

2. Etymology (history of words) – They are called Sautrantika because they propound/assert tenets following the sutras of Buddha and

are called Exemplifiers because they like to explain all phenomena by means of examples.

3. Mode of Asserting Objects – Definition of an “existent” (object) is “that which realised by Valid Cognition”. What is “valid”? That which is correct and definite. If a person is affected by jaundice or defective eyesight, he might perceive a white mountain as a yellow mountain, that would be an invalid cognition. Or a person comes to our gumpa and sees the pillar as a vase, that perception is also an invalid cognition. Things which are perceived by valid cognition are valid objects.

For the S, ***there are two divisions of valid existents (1) Conventional Truths (2) Ultimate Truths.*** These 2 are common terms used by all 4 schools but their meaning is explained differently by each school. The S has a “heavier”, more profound explanation of these terms than the V school but is lighter/less profound than the Madhyamika school.

Starting with Ultimate Truth first, ***definition of ultimate truth is “a phenomenon that is able to perform a function ultimately”.*** ***Synonymous with*** the S’s definition of ***ultimate truth*** are:

- ***Truly existent***
- ***Thing*** – something in the nature of momentary changes
- ***Products*** – something produced and impermanent
- ***Impermanent (phenomenon)*** – Buddha’s holy mind is permanent as it is unchangeable but his holy body whilst pure in ultimate terms but is impermanent

- ***Compounded phenomenon***
- ***Substance*** – Subtlest atom/particles that can come together to make a thing/product
- ***Specifically characterised phenomenon***

The words “..perform a function ultimately” in an example – the reality of existence of this table is that it can perform the function of being a table as it can be used to support things, it can be moved, it can be smashed to bits (impermanent). Permanent phenomena doesn’t work this way e.g. non-compounded space, you cannot move space from here to there nor smash it into parts; space never changes and hence is permanent. There are two kinds of space – general space and non-compounded space. General space/compounded space is impermanent; non-compounded space is permanent. An example of general space/compounded space – an empty stomach. When you eat an apple, it fills the stomach and that general space is gone. So that space in the stomach is not permanent, it can change. Non-compounded space is that which is untouchable, un-fillable, free from obstruction and is permanent.

As for ***the definition of a Conventional Truth*** it is a “***phenomenon that is NOT able to perform a function ultimately***” e.g. non-compounded space, it does not function, there is no movement, no changes. It is always there. ***Synonymous with*** the S’s definition of ***conventional truth*** are:

- ***Falsely existent*** – not being a substance
- ***Permanent (phenomenon)*** – not changeable e.g. non-compounded space, Buddha nature i.e. the emptiness of that nature is permanent.

Each of our nature is emptiness and thus is permanent but as persons we are not permanent. It is commonly accepted by all schools that the nature of the person i.e. its emptiness, is permanent. Our behaviour or personality traits are impermanent and changeable but the ultimate emptiness nature of a person is permanent.

The emptiness of a person is free from inherent existence and is permanent. If so, then when a person's five aggregates is destroyed at the time of cremation of one's body, the person as known by his family and friends will no longer exist. So what happens then to the ultimate nature of that person (which we previously said is permanent)? Think about it – the answer will be given later (Laughter).

There are zillions of changes within the aggregates but there is only 1 nature of the aggregates (emptiness). Mind is not permanent (as it is changeable) but the nature of mind is permanent. The causal Dharmakaya mind is the Buddha nature which exists within all of us. It is said that there are 4 types of Cessation, namely Buddhahood, Hearer's Nirvana, Solitary Realiser's Nirvana and the Buddha nature. As the Buddha nature exists within us (it means we have already attained this type of cessation and THIS is one of the causes for full enlightenment and this is why we have the chance to obtain the final cessation called Buddhahood). This is one of the profound reasons in rebutting/refuting those who say that Buddhahood is impossible. At the time of death, when the clear-light mind appears, if one had put effort into practising concentration meditation, one would be able to continue practising even after the death process has begun; even in the bardo/intermediate stage and gain direct realisations on emptiness and even attain enlightenment there.

That's how the high Lamas, after clinical death, continue to practice without their bodies decaying. I've seen this with my own eyes. At death, the body ceases and the 5 elements dissolve and yet, in my late master's Geshe Lama Konchog's (GLK) case, before clinical death, he looked like an old sickly man with wrinkled skin but after clinical death, he remained in meditation and the condition of his bodily aggregates reversed and became more youthful – his skin became smooth like a baby's skin; his face had a radiance about him; his eyes moved 4 times. If one doesn't know the death process and how meditators can continue practising after clinical death, it can be quite scary! Also, GLK's body had no odour of a decayed body but instead, emitted a light, pleasant sandalwood fragrance which is termed as the scent of morality. There was no incense lit (in fact, during a deceased person's clear-light meditation, it is not advisable to use butter light or incense near the person as it is said to interfere with clear light meditation). How GLK was able to sustain his gross aggregates after clinical death was due to his subtle meditation on clear- light. If a practitioner cannot directly perceive emptiness during life, the clear-light stage of the death process is another chance/time where he could achieve this. After realising emptiness, the practitioner applies that direct realisation to purify all remaining defilements. Emptiness is the only antidote. And if that practitioner can use emptiness to purify the most subtle of defilements, he becomes a Buddha. If he then makes a prayer to return to benefit sentient beings and makes a strong supplication to return, that is how a reincarnation of a realised being comes about. Upon being reborn, that realised being will have to manifest exactly the manner of an ordinary being in order for to be able to interact with ordinary beings. That's why Vajradhara Buddha said that in future times, he will return in the form of Gurus in order to be able to engage with ordinary beings to guide them.

Most of the Lamas manifest sickness as a teaching on impermanence for ordinary human beings. This is because amongst the greatest obstacles to Dharma realisations is the grasping at permanence; believing that the body will last beyond the immediate moment (when there is no guarantee of this). This grasping at permanence is a huge obstacle to one's cultivation, so in order to teach and remind us of impermanence, Gurus manifest illness, as did Shakyamuni Buddha – with the most powerful teaching on impermanence being death. Like Milarepa who attained all the realisations through perseverance and hardship at practice, came to a point where he declared that he looked forward to the journey of death – he felt happy and grateful that he had attained all realisations. He knew too well that the ordinary form is one of decay and impermanence, so he faced death without any fear.

- Generally characterised phenomenon.

The S assert that *“existents”* (objects) have 2 divisions **(1) Negative Phenomena and (2) Affirmative Phenomena**. Very exciting point.

(1) Definition of a Negative Phenomena is “a phenomenon realised by means of eliminating its object of negation by the mind holding it”. An example – let's take this vase. If I say this vase is a negative phenomena, it means it is an object that is free from everything that is not of a vase.

There are two ways of perceiving a vase – in a negative way and in an affirmative way. The negative way of perceiving the vase is when the consciousness eliminates all objects which are not vase and

the end result is that one is left with seeing only the vase. So the negative phenomena method of asserting a vase is called “negative” phenomena that because it negates things which are not vase. If in order for something to arise, one has to negate other factors, that is called negative phenomena.

(2) Definition of an Affirmative phenomena is “a phenomena realised by means of NOT eliminating its object of negation by the mind holding it”. Perceiving a microphone is an affirmative phenomena. To actualise an affirmative phenomena, one doesn’t have to give reasons or negate anything to perceive the object.

There are 2 types of negatives:

(i) Non-Affirming Negatives: Examples are non-compounded space, true cessation and emptiness: Non-compounded space is a non-affirming negative because it is simply an existent which negates obstruction and feelings. Likewise, true cessation is simply an existent which negates abandonments; Emptiness also is simply an existent which negates a self supporting or substantially existing nature.

(ii) Affirming Negatives: Examples are the reverse of a non-thing and the appearance of the reverse of a non-pot (i.e. the mental image of a pot) to a conception apprehending it: Why the reverse of a non-thing is an affirming negative is because it is an existent that comes about by the non-existence of that thing. Hence, the appearance of the reverse of a non-pot (i.e. the image of a pot), is an affirming negative because the image of a pot is the existent (appearance) of a non-pot.

Again, existents have 2 divisions:

(1) Single Phenomena:

(i) False Singles – Examples are knowable objects (in general) and generally characterised phenomenon because they are single conventional truths, single phenomenon, single falsely existent.

(ii) True Singles – Examples are thing and impermanent phenomenon because they are single ultimate truths, single things, single products, single substances, single truly existents, single impermanent phenomenon.

(2) Different Phenomena:

(i) False Differents – Example: The 2 – a pot’s double reverse and a pillar’s double reverse because they are plural conventional truth, plural permanent phenomenon, plural falsely existent.

(ii) True Differents – Example: The 2 – a pot and a pillar because they are plural impermanent phenomenon, they are plural things, plural products, plural substance, plural truly existent.

Past and future are both permanent – Examples are the past of a pot and future of a pot, are permanent

Present and thing are synonymous – Example is the present pot as a pot, is a thing.

5. Mode of Asserting Object Possessors (Subject/Perceiving Mind)

- **Some Sautrantika (those who strictly follow the Abidharmakosha by Vasubandhu or Tib. Loben Ingyen) assert the aggregates as the illustration of the person**
- **Some Sautrantika (those who follow Seven Treatises on Valid Cognition by Dharmakirti or Tib. Loben Choedrak) assert the mental consciousness as the illustration of the person**

The definition of Mind is “that which is clear and cognising (knowing)”.

There are 2 types of Mind (1) Valid Cogniser and (2) Non-valid Cognisers.

The definition of a Valid Cogniser (Mind) is “An initial, infallible cogniser”.

It is necessary to mention all 3 – “initial”, “infallible” and “cogniser” – as the borders of the definition of a valid cogniser because

- **“initial” eliminates a “subsequent cogniser” as a valid cogniser**
- **“Infallible” eliminates “correct assumption” as a valid cogniser**
- **“cogniser” eliminates a “physical sense power” as a valid cogniser.**

“Initial ” refers to the first time of one moment. “Initial” eliminates a subsequent cogniser as a valid cogniser. Example, I met some students yesterday – that was my first cognition of them. Today I have a memory of

them, so this memory is the subsequent cognition and thus no longer the initial cognition. However if I see them again today, then that encounter will once again be "initial". Hence, all our memories are not initial cognition.

"infallible" means not failing to recognise the object. It eliminates a correct assumption as a valid cognition. Let's say somebody talks about a vase. In my mind, a picture of a vase will come to my mind but the mental picture may be unclear (or inaccurate); this mental picture was based on someone's description or choice of words. Hence, although one's correctly assumes/mentally sees a vase, one is not a valid cogniser of the vase i.e. you're not wrong but you're not valid.

"cogniser" means the mind that is perceiving the object; this eliminates the physical sense power – the physical sense power is that part of the sense organ which makes contact with the object e.g. in relation to the eye, that part of the eye which encounters the object and sends the message to the brain.

Valid Cognisers can be divided into 2:

(1) ***Valid Direct Perceivers*** – perceiving directly without relying on reasons. When I see a person for the first time, I don't require reasoning. I just see the person.

(2) ***Valid Inferences*** – Why do we say that HH Dalai Lama is Chenresig? Because we see HH Dalai Lama perform all the activities of Chenresig and his thinking is inseparable from Chenresig's mind. In order to prove that HHDL is Compassionate Buddha, one relies on such reasoning, so the valid

inferential mind is one that relies on reason as its basis.

In philosophical study, every question must be answered and the answer often takes the form of definitions with criteria and characteristics to be observed and not merely based on “I think so” or “It should be so”. Definitions provide the boundaries of a view.

- What is ***the definition of the Direct Perceiver? A cogniser that is non-mistaken and free from conceptuality.***
- What is the ***definition of a Valid Direct Perceiver? An initial, infallible cogniser that is free from conceptuality.*** A cogniser that is non-mistaken. In order to have cognition of an object, one needs 2 things – to hear the sound of the object like “a vase” and be able to see its characteristics, and in addition to this, to be a valid direct perception, one also needs to be free from conceptuality. Hence if one’s senses are not in good condition, resulting in an unclear perception of an object, one will be mistaken and one will not be a valid direct perceiver.

There are 4 types of Valid Direct Perceivers:

1. ***Self cognising, valid direct perceivers*** – What is a self-cogniser? “Self” here refers to one’s mind. So a self-cogniser is the mind which can cognise/see itself e.g. my mind is very busy or my mind finds this topic difficult to understand. These are examples of self-cognition. A self-cognising, valid direct perceiver is ***an initial, infallible cogniser that is free from conceptuality*** that cognises/sees itself.

2. ***Sensory valid direct perceivers*** –The eye sense, the nose sense, touch sense etc are forms of sensory direct perceivers. So the ***initial, infallible cognisers that is free from conceptuality and that arises in dependence upon a physical sense power as its uncommon empowering condition*** is the sensory valid direct perceiver.
3. ***Mental valid direct perceivers*** – ***An initial, infallible cogniser that is free from conceptuality and that arises in dependence upon a mental sense power as its uncommon empowering condition:*** One's mind realising for the first time, thoughts like "I am a happy person" for the first time or "My goodness, I haven't practice Dharma at all and half of my life is gone". Or "I cannot confirm that I won't die tomorrow!" These are mental valid direct perceptions and the mind having such views is the mental valid direct perceiver.
4. ***Yogic valid direct perceivers*** – There are two situations giving rise to a yogic valid direct perceiver namely, one who enters the **Path of Seeing for the first time; and one who is able to realise subtle impermanence (able to directly perceive at least 64 momentary changes in one moment).

The general ***definition of a Yogic Valid Direct Perceiver is "a wisdom consciousness that clearly realises subtle impermanence or gross or subtle selflessness of persons, having depended upon a concentration that is the union of Tranquil Abiding and Special Insight as its uncommon empowering condition"***.

**Briefly on the 5 Paths:

1. *Path of Accumulation:* For Hinayana practitioners (Hearers and Solitary Realisers), when they first generate spontaneous renunciation, they enter the Path of Accumulation (where much merit is accumulated); for the Bodhisattvayana practitioners, they enter the Path of Accumulation when they first generate spontaneous bodhicitta. At that moment, one can emanate 100 different bodies and travel to 100 different Buddha Purelands to receive teachings from Buddhas. Hence it is so easy to accumulate merit.

There is the initial, middle and final stage of this Path of Accumulation (the moment before entering into the next Path of Preparation)

2. *Path of Preparation:* There are 4 different levels here: Heat, Peak, Patience and Supreme Dharma. The last stage which is the Supreme Dharma is the moment when one enters the Path of Seeing.
3. *Path of Seeing* – Seeing what? Seeing emptiness directly. Some people have come up to me to claim that they have seen emptiness but when I ask them “Have you completed the Path of Accumulation?” “Oh, what’s that?” they say. “Then I don’t think you have seen true emptiness; maybe you are just spacing out and seeing blank?” “Oh no, I see everything as empty” they insist. “If so, why are you here to see me?” (laughter). This kind of conclusion that they see nothing and hence have realised emptiness, is akin to nihilism (i.e. that nothing exists). Some people want to escape from their problems and busy thoughts, so they try to block out all thoughts and find some kind of

bliss and comfort from that. However, that is not emptiness. There are two extremes to be avoided – one is the belief in true existence and the other is nihilism. So it is very important for us to study and know exactly what emptiness is. To actualise emptiness, we need to actualise the understanding of dependent-arising. If we don't achieve this, there will be no way to realise emptiness.

4. *Path of Meditation* – At the previous Path of Seeing, although one gains the direct perception of emptiness, it is not very strong as yet. Is there any difference in the levels of realisation of emptiness? No, the realisation of emptiness is the same for all practitioners who realise emptiness directly; it is the same as the Buddha's realisation of emptiness. Then why is it that in order to purify defilements totally, one has to apply the antidote of emptiness "more strongly"? According to the Mahayana schools, the answer is that whilst the wisdom realising emptiness is the same for all Arya Beings, there is a difference in terms of the Method aspect or in other words, in the quality of bodhicitta. By enhancing one's meditation on emptiness, it can remove the increasingly subtle defilements. There are 9 categories of defilements, from the gross to the subtle. The final stage of this Path of Meditation, the quality of bodhicitta is much deeper than the one that one had at the Path of Accumulation. Hence, the power of bodhicitta makes the wisdom realising emptiness more intense and this purifies the subtlest defilements enabling the attainment of Cessation. During meditation, this strong application of wisdom realising emptiness is combined with bodhicitta and in the post-meditation session, merit continues to be accumulated through the practice of the 6 Perfections e.g. being generous with possessions, help, facing adversity with patience to

guide and pacify the suffering of beings, etc.

After the late Geshe Lama Konchog (GLK) had meditated many years in the cave, he came down to the village. It is common for households to have a very comfortable bed-cushion, where upon returning from the fields, they don't wash and just go onto the bed-cushion. So there was this particular family which had such a bed-cushion which they used daily and never washed for many years. When they saw GLK coming into the village all ragged, looking like a beggar and walking past their house, they wanted to chase him away. As he passed their house, they spat at him and purposely dusted the bed-cushion in order to have all that dust fall onto GLK as a sign of disrespect.

GLK didn't get angry and felt more bliss but he commented that during that first meeting, an inauspicious act was done, so later in life, poverty would occur to that family (they were wealthy at that time). GLK said that when a practitioner practices sincerely (like many cave meditators do), going into solitary retreat, that practitioner leaves the society of men and enters the realm of street-dogs, yet it never disturbs the meditators mind for a moment. The relevance of this story is in relation to the Yogic Valid Direct Perceiver: At the last stage of the Path of Preparation, the yogi has just entered a profound level of realising emptiness (but has not directly perceived emptiness yet). When he realises emptiness **directly**, he becomes a Yogic Valid Direct Perceiver.

In each moment, there are 64 sub-moments and within each of these sub-moments, there are smaller sub-moments. To realise subtle impermanence, one has to realise momentary changes at least 64 times

in one moment and this can be achieved during meditation. When one is able to do this, one is also called a Yogic Valid Direct Perceiver.

5. *Path of No More Learning* – this is Buddhahood. So the first 4 paths are the paths of Learning and Buddhahood is the state of no more learning.

So we have seen the general definition of a Yogic Valid Direct Perceiver - “a wisdom consciousness that clearly realises subtle impermanence or gross or subtle selflessness of persons, having depended upon a concentration that is the union of Tranquil Abiding and Special Insight as its uncommon empowering condition”.

There are 3 types of Yogic Valid Direct Perceivers:

1. ***A Valid Cogniser that clearly realises subtle impermanence*** – If there is a subtle level of impermanence, there is definitely a gross level of impermanence. What are the gross levels of impermanence? Objects that we can see with our bare eyes as being destroyed/degenerated e.g. demolishing a house, aging lines on our face. Subtle level of impermanence would be the momentary changes e.g. the changes that occur within the 64 sub-moments of one moment. If one is able to realise such momentary changes through tranquil abiding (or calm-abiding/samatha) concentration and special insight (or by calm abiding concentration alone), one can be said to realise subtle impermanence.

By knowing the theory of valid and invalid cognition, one will be able to recognise what kind of perceptions one is having. In Buddhism, the mind/consciousness is not a “soul”. The power of the mind/consciousness to live within the aggregates can be called a “soul” – this matter regarding the “soul” is a point for debate. This life’s “soul” is not permanent because although there is a mental continuum, that too is momentarily changing. It’s worth analysing and debating concepts of “life”, “soul”, “*atman*”, “consciousness”, “clear-light mind” – whether these are life or have-life or not; whether permanent or non-permanent.

For most of us and most of the time, we project/we see objects and perceive all things as permanent/lasting and that is how our clinging to life arises. We think we will live for one more moment; we think we can fulfil our plans for tomorrow.

2. **A Valid Cogniser that clearly realises gross selflessness of persons** –

According to the S, the existent self is that which exists based on the collective aggregates or is the continuum of mind. In order to be free from samsara, especially pervasive suffering, the antidote to be realised is the subtle level of selflessness. To S, the gross level of selflessness is the absence of an independent and self-sufficient person i.e. the absence of a self which exists without the base of imputation. Such an independent/self-sufficient person that doesn’t need a base, is the object of negation.

3. **A Valid Cogniser that clearly realises subtle selflessness of persons** –

The subtle level of existence person is the absence of inherent existence

and does not rely on aggregates or parts, also to be realised by calm abiding concentration and special insight.

The definition of a Valid Inference is “An initial, infallible, conceiving cogniser that arises in dependence upon a perfect sign as its basis”. The cognition which identifies the object based on the correct sign/reason.

There are 3 divisions of valid inferences:

- i. ***Inference by the power of the fact – e.g. an inference that realises sound to be impermanent by the reason that sound is a “product”.***
Whatever is produced is changeable; whatever is changeable is impermanent and as sound is produced, it is impermanent. Likewise with oneself. One never notices how one grows old momentarily and aging happens because one’s aggregates are products and are thus changeable and impermanent. There are inferences by the power of the fact.
- ii. ***Inference through renown –e.g. an inference that realises that the term “rabbit-bearer” is suitable to be called by the term “moon” by reason that it is an object of conception:*** This type of inference through renown arises due to commonly held & accepted views e.g. a common view is that the moon has an image of the rabbit on it and hence when one says “rabbit-bearer” one infers/deduces that it is referring to the moon. ***Inference through renown is pervaded by inference by the power of fact (above).***
- iii. ***Inference of belief – e.g. An inference that realises the instruction***

“from giving arises wealth; from practising morality arises happiness” – is infallible with respect to the meaning indicated by it by the reason that it is an instruction certified by a 3-fold investigation: This type of inference is one that realises the instructions from Dharma teachings e.g. from generosity comes wealth; from practising ethics/morality comes happiness. Accepting something as true due to it being based on a valid quote (Buddha’s teaching).

Direct perceivers are NOT pervaded by Valid Direct Perceivers and inferences are NOT pervaded by Valid Inferences because the 2nd moment of a sense Direct Perceiver apprehending form and the 2nd moment of an inference realising sound as impermanent are (instances) of Subsequent Cognisers: In order to be a Valid Inference, it has to be qualified by “initial, infallible perception” i.e. the first moment of cognition by mind.

From Dharmottara’s Commentary to Dharmakirti’s “Ascertainment of Valid Cognition” – the initial moments of both direct perceivers and inferences are Valid Cognisers. Later moments of those cognisers are Invalid Cognisers because their objects do not differ from the objects already established in those continuums: Why are valid inferences differentiated by having to be initial, infallible, whereas 2nd /subsequent moments are not cognised as valid inferences? Because Dharmottara’s

Commentary to Dharmakirti’s *Ascertainment of Valid Cognition* explains: “...Later moments of those cognisers are Invalid Cognisers because (their objects) do not differ from the objects already established in those continuums”.

Refresh: There are 2 types of Mind (1) Valid Cognisers and (2) Non-Valid Cognisers. Under Valid Cognisers are (i) Valid Direct Perceivers and (ii) Valid Inferences (both already covered above). Now we come to Non-Valid Cognisers.

Definition of a Non- Valid Cogniser is “A cogniser (mind) that is NOT initial and infallible” – (Remember that we have learned about the valid cogniser which is defined as “An initial, infallible cogniser [mind]”). In our daily life, we should analyse whether our perceptions are valid cognitions or invalid cognitions, based on the above criteria. As long as the one’s perception is non-initial or if not perceived directly or through valid inference, that perception is invalid.

There are 5 subdivisions of Non-Valid Cognisers:

1. **Subsequent cognisers** – even though the first moment of valid cognition will go into the 2nd/next moment, it doesn’t last as a valid cognition i.e. although the cognition/perception may remain infallible, it is no longer initial and hence doesn’t qualify to be valid cognition. For the Buddha, he sees everything in totality at all times, so every moment of Buddha’s cognition remains initial and infallible. For the Buddha, there is no “2nd/next moment of cognition. Hence, the Buddha’s cognition is always valid cognition. As ordinary beings, we will always have subsequent cognitions. What about the realised Mahayanic beings, do they have subsequent cognitions? Yes, they do. Only the Buddha is free from subsequent cognitions.
2. **Wrong consciousnesses/conception** – The mind which wrongly sees

an object e.g. seeing a pillar as a vase; the mind which operates under wrong view e.g. thinking that there is no past nor future lives or there are no 4 Noble Truths; perceiving, accepting, imputing through mind that there is no law of cause and effect (that everything is created by some divine being) and thus no need to abide by karma. These are wrong conception. In order for a conception to be a non-valid cognition does not require it to be a negative one – it just needs the mind to be in the manner of wrong perception due to not being initial, not being infallible (and of course, if it is negative in nature, that too would be a non-valid cognition)

3. **Doubt** – these could be either negative or non-negative perceptions. An example of a negative perception would be - after having taken Refuge in the Triple Gem, thinking “The Buddha may be an object of refuge or maybe not” or “Worldly gods may be the supreme refuge”. These are negative doubts because they will bring negative results. An example of non-negative perception would be “Shall I go to section 17 for dinner or go into the city for it?” This would not be a negative perception but still an invalid perception due to its unclear/doubtful nature.
4. **Correct Assumption** – Let’s say you don’t know what a vase is and someone introduces the concept of a vase to you, by describing it as a container with a belly, which can hold water, has a long neck etc. Even though you may not have directly encountered a vase before that, through the description of it, you obtain a perception of what a vase looks like. Such a perception is said to be a correct assumption of a vase. However, as you didn’t perceive the vase directly, initially

and infallibly, such a perception is still under the category of invalid cognition. Even when we study emptiness, before we actually realise emptiness directly, we first study the topic and get an understanding of it at an assumption level. It is only when we achieve the Path of Seeing, then we will realise emptiness directly. At the last part of the Path of Preparation, we can say that one has a clear perception of emptiness but still, it is at an assumptional level and based on theory.

Another example – a Theravadan practitioner says to you “I’ve gained the realisation of emptiness”. Then you ask him “Have you realised renunciation or not?” If he says “No” or by observation, it is clear he has no renunciation, then one can say that his assertion that he has realised emptiness is at an assumptional level only. Similarly, if a Mahayana practitioner says “I have gained realisation into emptiness” and you ask, “Have you gained realisation of bodhicitta or not?” and he says “No” or by observation, you see that he has no bodhicitta, then one can say that his assertion of having realised emptiness is at an assumptional level only and not a valid cognition. In both cases, they may have gained something but not emptiness. If one allows oneself to remain at that assumptional level, one cannot properly eliminate the object of negation i.e. eliminate the grasping at inherent existence.

5. ***Inattentive perception*** – “Inattentive” means one may have observed something but is unclear. Example, you are feeling very tired and someone brings a freshly-baked cake to you. You may notice the cake in a general way like the smell of the cake but you don’t notice the other details of the cake. Or while driving, you put on the music. One of your friends is walking along on the roadside while your car passes

and you catch a glimpse of him. But as you were focusing on the music, you are not sure whether it was your friend whom you saw on the road just now. Or you thought you saw Mr Bean at a place but you were not sure whether it was him or someone who looked like him. This is called inattentive perception. Our lives are filled with such inattentive perceptions, where we believe we saw a person on a particular date or place, thinking it is a valid cognition but in fact, it was inattentive perception and hence, invalid. Or we might have read something on a topic in the past without much concentration and as such, it appears in your mind but if instead of saying “Ya, I think I remember reading it in a text but I’m not sure”, you say “Yes, it is stated in that text..”, then this statement is the product of inattentive perception and is not valid. This teaches us the importance of being sure of what we say or think or when we do anything.

Let’s say someone comes to me and says “Geshela, there is a fish in the Centre’s pond that is dancing” and I believe it without checking. When I later discover that there was never such an incident, my earlier conclusion would have been invalid. It would have been worse if I had repeated the mis-statement because whilst it may not be a lie in the sense of wanting to deceive others but due to the fact that I made the statement based on invalid perception, I would have misled others through it. An inattentive perception may not necessarily a negative perception but still an invalid perception.

A further elaboration of the above 5 types of Non-Valid Cognisers

1. *The definition of a Subsequent Cogniser - “one who perceives what has*

already been (previously) perceived". There are 2 divisions:

- (1) Conceptual Subsequent Cognisers – examples: (i) a remembering consciousness remembering blue that is generated by being induced by a Sense Direct Perceiver apprehending blue; (ii) the 2nd moment of an inference realising sound as impermanent:*** To explain example (i) - The eye consciousness conventionally sees a blue-coloured object, the imprint of blue-colour goes into the consciousness which gains a concept of it and the memory of the blue-colour is a subsequent thought and is conceptual. Thus the conceptual subsequent cogniser.
- (2) Non-Conceptual Subsequent Cognisers – example is the 2nd moment of a Sense Direct Perceiver apprehending form: The second moment of a direct perception of form,*** which arises due to memory but not on conceptual level i.e. a “bare” recognition of the form/object without any concept attached to it.

2. Wrong Consciousness – “A cogniser that engages (with its object) incorrectly”. There are 2 divisions:

- (1) Conceptual wrong consciousness – An example is the conception apprehending that sound as permanent*** i.e. the mistaken conceptual mind that clings to the idea that sound is permanent.
- (2) Non Conceptual wrong consciousness – examples are : a visual sense consciousness to which 1 moon appears as 2 moons; and a snow mountain (which is white) appears blue:*** Let’s say there is something wrong with our eye consciousness, when we look at

the moon, we see two moons. This incorrect perception is not due to one's mental/conceptual process but due to one's eye/sense consciousness.

3. **Doubt** is defined as ***“A mental factor that by its own power, hesitates with regard to 2 alternatives”***. An example from ordinary life would be a doubt as to alternatives such as, whether to go to the city for dinner or remain at home for dinner.

A mental consciousness and an accompanying feeling that have the (5) similarities with doubt are NOT that which, by its own power, hesitates with regard to 2 alternatives because they hesitate with regard to 2 alternatives by the power of doubt: This means that while the 5 senses may not be engaging in wrong perception but due to the factor of doubt, they are influenced by uncertainty e.g. doubt as to what is being seen, heard etc.. One might feel a piece of cloth as smooth but because someone says it is rough, one's mind gets affected by doubt resulting in hesitation as to whether the cloth is smooth or not.

There are 3 divisions of doubt:

a. ***Doubt tending towards the correct – e.g. a doubt that think MAYBE sound is impermanent”*** : Another example is - we generally believe in the law of cause and effect but when someone strongly disagrees with the idea of karma, we might begin to doubt karma. Or one accepts the correctness of karma but is not 100% convinced, thinking, “Maybe cause and effect is true”. Such uncertainty of mind is doubt tending towards the correct but is still part of invalid cognition due to the doubt. When

doubt comes, we should analyse which type of doubt one is having.

- b. ***Doubt not tending towards the correct e.g. “MAYBE sound is permanent”*** – or “Maybe cause and effect is not true”.
- c. ***Doubt that is equal to both sides e.g. A doubt that thinks sound is neither permanent nor impermanent”*** or “Cause & effect is either permanent or impermanent”.
- 4. ***Correct Assumption is a conceiving cogniser that accords with what is correct*** (i.e. one has a perception that is consistent with the object based on descriptions) ***but is fallible in conceiving its object*** (as it is not unable to establish the actual/definite object to be cognised).

Correct assumption has 5 divisions:

- i. ***Correct assumption without a reason – A mind apprehending sound as impermanent based on the mere words “sound is impermanent” is a correct assumption without a reason because “sound is impermanent” is only a statement but a perfect reason for sound being impermanent is not stated:*** Example – one accepts the assertion “Sound is impermanent” without being told or knowing the reason that sound is impermanent because it is something that is produced/a product.
- ii. ***Correct assumption with a contradictory reason – A mind apprehending sound as impermanent by the sign of it being empty of the ability to perform a function is an example of a correct assumption with a contradictory reason because being empty of the ability to perform***

a function is contradictory with sound: Asserting a view that sound is impermanent because it is unable to perform a function. This is ridiculous reasoning because sound is able to perform a function and thus cannot be permanent. It is like saying that sound is impermanent because it is permanent. That would be totally contradictory. So one part of the view is correct but the other part is contradictory.

- iii. ***Correct assumption with an indefinite reason – A mind apprehending sound as impermanent by the sign of it being a measurable object is an example of correct assumption with an indefinite reason because being a measurable object is an indefinite reason to establish sound as impermanent:*** Asserting a view that sound is impermanent because it is a measurable object. Such a statement does not clear one's doubt of whether sound as an existent phenomena is either permanent or impermanent. The statement is correct but the reason is incomplete.
- iv. ***Correct assumption with an inapplicable reason – A mind apprehending sound as impermanent by the sign of it being an object of apprehension of an eye consciousness is an example of this type of assumption because being an object of apprehension of an eye consciousness is an inapplicable reason to establish sound as impermanent:*** A mind holding the view that sound is impermanent (correct assumption) by the sign of it being an object of perception of an eye consciousness (this is an inapplicable reason because an object of the eye consciousness would be an inapplicable/inappropriate explanation to establish sound). Clear and definite reasons are important as they are vital to analysis.

- v. **Correct assumption with a correct but un-established reason - A mind apprehending sound as impermanent by the sign “product” in the continuum of a person who has not ascertained with Valid Cognition that “sound is impermanent:** is an example of this type of assumption because although “product” is a correct sign to establish “sound as impermanent”, that correct sign/reason has not been established by that person: A view that sound is impermanent (correct assumption) by the sign/reason of “product” in the continuum of a person who has not ascertained through Valid Cognition that “sound is impermanent” or in other words, a person who has not directly established that sound is produced/a product/momentary changes and hence, concludes that sound is impermanent on an un-established reason. A person who asserts that sound is impermanent without being clear or thoroughly believing in the reason that sound is produced/subject to changes.

5. Inattentive Perception – A non-mistaken cogniser to which an object appears clearly but which does not ascertain its object. This is a perception that arises but of which is uncertain (e.g. whether it was Mr Bean that you saw or not).

There are 3 kinds of Inattentive Perceptions :

(a) **Sense direct perceivers that are Inattentive Perceivers – e.g. an audio consciousness apprehending sound at the time of being engrossed in beautiful visual forms:** Whilst one is totally absorbed by the beauty of the waterfall, someone calls you, you can hear that sound but the content is not clear;

(b) *Mental direct perceivers that are Inattentive Perceivers – Mental Direct Perceivers in the continuums of ordinary beings that apprehend the 5 objects of form and so forth* e.g. memories or mental imprints of the objects of the 5 senses but whose details are unclear.

(c) *Self cognising direct perceivers that are Inattentive Perceivers – self cognisers in the continuums of ordinary beings that experience mental direct perceivers apprehending the 5 objects of form and so forth*: The mind which perceives itself is a self-cogniser. If one's mind is inattentive, one's perception of one's own mind will be unclear.

Generally, there are 3 divisions of objects-possessors i.e. able to perceive objects:

(1) Beings

(2) Speech

(3) Consciousness (tshad.ma)

Object-possessing valid objects (tshad.ma) can be divided into 3:

(1) Valid Persons e.g. Shakyamuni Buddha

(2) Valid Speech – e.g. Buddha's teachings such as 4 Noble Truths

(3) Valid Consciousness – Valid Direct Perceiver and Valid Inference (views established through reasoning).

6. Mode of Asserting Selflessness

The S assert:

(a) A selflessness of persons is the emptiness/absence of a permanent, partless and independent person;

(b) A subtle selfless of persons that is emptiness/being free of being self-supporting (i.e. without relying on aggregates, a person just appears) **or substantially existent person** (again without relying on aggregates, just spontaneous appearance).

Like the Vaibashikas, the Sautrantikas do NOT assert a selflessness of phenomena and only assert the selflessness of persons at a gross level and subtle level, as per above.

7. Presentation of Grounds and Paths

“When holders of the 3 lineages collect merit, they do so on all 4 learning paths; it is by reason of this that a Buddha’s form aggregate is asserted to be Buddha”. “Their presentation of obstacles, mode of travelling on the grounds and paths and so forth are like the assertions of the Vaibashikas”: Here the accumulation of merit is same as V school i.e. through the learning on the 4 paths and elimination of self grasping. The only difference is that the S school asserts that when Nirvana is attained, the body of the practitioner becomes a Buddha’s form (unlike the V who do not hold this view and assert that the Arhat who attains Arhatship has the Buddha’s mind but still has contaminated aggregates).

** The key thing to be extracted from the Sautrantika school is the study on valid and invalid cognition; the types of object-possessors (perceivers).

This concludes the study of the Hinayana schools' views namely the Vaibashika and Sautrantika schools. Next we will study the Mahayana schools of which there are 2 – the Cittamatra school and the Madhyamika school (which has 2 sub-schools).

CITTAMATRA (Mind Only School)

As for the history of the school, about 700-800 years after Shakyamuni Buddha passed away, the Madhyamika school started to emerge amongst scholars, due to the kindness of Nagarjuna who lived about 400 years after the Buddha passed away and gradually the great Buddhist University of Nalanda was established bringing with it great scholars like Lama Atisha and Dharmakirti and the rest, who expounded the Mahayana. Before that time however, the Hinayana school had flourished and even though there were a small number of practitioners who remembered the Madhyamika teachings given during Buddha's time and raised this during the meetings (Buddhist Councils) which sought to reconcile the Buddha's teachings, the Hinayana views prevailed at that time. The Mahayana practitioners practiced in solitude, hidden from public view.

What we are learning now is based on the philosophical writings and discussions of the 17 Indian Pandits

Cittamatra school was strongly emphasised during the 3rd Turning of the Wheel of Dharma.

- The 1st Turning of the Wheel was at Sarnath on the common teachings of the 4 Noble Truths (the direct disciples for this were the Hinayana disciples);
- the 2nd Turning of the Wheel was at Vulture's Peak, Rajgir on the Perfection of Wisdom teachings based on the Madhyamika-Prasangika

view of emptiness (the direct disciples were Mahayana disciples);

- the 3rd Turning of the Wheel focused on the Cittamatra philosophy based on analysing the 3 ways of establishing whether something is truly existing or not , namely, whether something is:
 - (i) “other-powered” in nature: “Other-powered” phenomena means that which is powered/sustained by causes and conditions and examples are produced objects;
 - (ii) thoroughly established in nature: As long as that phenomena exists, its nature exists e.g. the emptiness of table or emptiness of persons etc.. are thoroughly established nature;
 - (iii) has an imputational nature: Take an example of compounded space - it exists permanently but in the manner of imputation based on the reflection of one’s imprints.

The C assert that existence that is other-powered and thoroughly-established in nature truly exist; whereas imputational nature does not truly exist. These 3 types of existence is the key point discussed in the Cittamatra school.

1. **Definition of a Cittamatin (C) is “One who propounds Mahayana tenets and does not assert external objects** (it doesn’t mean that C don’t assert vase, table etc but does not assert external objects without relying on mental imprints; put another way, C assert that objects perceived are dependent on one’s mental imprints) **but asserts self cognisers** (mind which is aware and able to cognise itself) **to be truly existent.**

Cittamatra, Vijnaptivadin (Aspectarian) and Yogacarin are synonymous.

2. Divisions – There are 2 divisions: (1) True Aspect Cittamatrins and (2) False Aspect Cittamatrins.

The definition of a True Aspect Cittamatrin is – A Cittamatrin who asserts that the part (of the appearance) that appears as a gross form to a form-apprehending direct perceiver in an ordinary being's continuum is not polluted by the propensities of ignorance. This means the perceiver (who is not yet an Arya being and hence an ordinary being) who directly perceives a gross object e.g. a table without that perception being diluted by ignorance.

The definition of a False Aspect Cittamatrin is - A Cittamatrin who asserts that the part (of the appearance) that appears as a gross form to a form-apprehending direct perceiver in an ordinary being's continuum IS polluted by the propensities of ignorance. This means the perceiver (who is not yet an Arya being and hence an ordinary being) who directly perceives a gross object e.g. a table but whose perception of the object is affected by ignorance.

There are 3 types of True Aspectarians (True Aspect Cittamatrins):

(i) Proponents of an equal number of subjects and objects – They assert that when a visual consciousness perceiving the various colours on the wing of a butterfly apprehends the various colours, from the object's (butterfly) side, an aspect of each colour e.g. blue,

yellow etc appears and also from the subject's (the perceiver) side, a consciousness (mental imprint) is produced that apprehends the aspect of each colour – blue, yellow etc – accordingly. Hence, “an equal number of subjects and objects”.

(ii) *Half-eggists* – They *assert that when the various colours are perceived, from the objects side an aspect of each colour - blue, yellow etc appears but from the subject's side, a consciousness (mental imprint) is produced that does not perceive the aspect of each different colour - blue, yellow etc accordingly - but rather, sees an overall, colourful image.*

(iii) *Non-Pluralists* - They *assert that when the various colours are perceived, from the objects side, an aspect of each different colour – blue, yellow, etc – does not appear BUT an aspect of the mere conglomeration (collation) appears; and from the subject's side, a consciousness (mental imprint) perceiving the aspect of each colour -blue, yellow etc - is not produced but a consciousness (mental imprint) apprehending/perceiving the mere conglomeration (collation) is produced:* If one is at the top of KLCC looking down, one would see the city as a whole (but not house by house). Such a perceiver is a non-pluralist.

There are 2 types of False Aspectarians: (1) Tainted False Aspectarians and (2) Untainted False Aspectarians.

3. Etymology

If someone asks why they are called “Cittamatrins” –

- ***Cittamatrins are called “Mind Only” because they assert that phenomena are merely in the nature of consciousness.*** Whatever exists is merely the ripening of past mental imprints. In past lifetimes, we have accumulated in our mental continuum many different types of imprints. The moment a mental imprint is activated, we see the object in relation to that imprint. Example, if we see a table, it is because of a past imprint of seeing the object called “table”. In fact, we often say, “This and that happened because of karma”. Karma involves mental imprints in one’s mind. So in making this statement, we are asserting a Cittamatrin view.
- ***Cittamatrins are called “Aspectarians” because they assert that all phenomena are merely in the nature of aspect-cognisers.*** Things appear as an aspect of mind. The mental imprints cause us to reflect the idea of “table” and from there, we see a table. If we shut our minds to the imprints, we wouldn’t see the object “table”. Example, when a newcomer comes into the gompa and see what we call a prayer wheel, if that newcomer doesn’t know what a prayer wheel looks like, that newcomer won’t actually see a prayer wheel. Only after someone explains what a prayer wheel is, then from that point, the mental imprint of “a prayer wheel” arises and thereon, the newcomer will know/cognise what a prayer wheel is. Hence, in that way, the prayer wheel comes about due to the newcomer’s mental imprint. For most of us, existence arises in this way i.e. due to imprints. Some people see an object and regard it as beautiful, whereas another person who sees the same object might regard it as ugly. It all depends on one’s mind/mental imprints – if we project good, we see it positively; if we project

negatively, we will see it as bad. Likewise, heaven and hell is a state of mind and dependent on how we project with our minds.

One thing to note is that to the Cittamatra school, projections due to mental imprints truly exist (whereas the Prasangika-Madhyamika school, whilst agreeing on the point of mental projections, denies that the mental projection is truly existent).

4. Mode of Asserting Objects

There are 2 divisions of knowable objects (objects which can be perceived and differentiated): ***(1) Ultimate Truths and (2) Conventional Truths***

(1) ***Definition of an ultimate truth is – That which is realised by means of a valid direct perceiver that realises it clearly without dualistic appearance*** (i.e. the object being different/distinct from the perceiver). The object is knowable in the manner of the object and subject being of one nature and not separate entities i.e. non-dualistic. The truth arises from the mind. Nothing exists without relying on the mind. The existence of a table comes about due to the mind invoking the concept of “table” – hence, the perceiver/mind/subject is not separate from the object/table.

Synonyms of ultimate truth are reality (emptiness), ***element of qualities*** (nature of existence) and ***final condition*** (emptiness; every single phenomena has the final condition of emptiness).

In the C, ***there are 2 divisions of ultimate truths:***

- (a) ***Subtle selflessness of phenomena:*** Note that the V and S schools only assert the selflessness of person and don't assert selflessness of phenomena. They didn't assert the selflessness of phenomena because they didn't assert omniscience, not realising the subtle selflessness of phenomena is the obstacle to omniscience. Self-grasping at the "I" is an obstacle to the Hinayana nirvana. For those who want to attain omniscience, they need to negate the failure to realise the selflessness of phenomena. C school asserts that that both the subtle selflessness of person and the subtle selflessness of phenomena must be realised.

The subtle selflessness of phenomena can be divided into different levels of emptiness e.g. the 20 emptinesses which can be condensed into 18; which can be further condensed into 16 and into the 4 emptinesses and so on. All are in the manner of lack of inherent existence.

Examples of subtle selflessness of phenomena are:

- ***An emptiness that is a form and the form-perceiving mind's emptiness of being other substances*** (i.e. subject and object are not separate);
- ***An emptiness that is a form's emptiness of existing by way of its own characteristics as a base for assigning the term "form".*** When our cognition sees form as a form based on its own characteristics, rather than in the manner of mental projection, that is a fault.

The C's explanation of "lack of inherent existence" means lack of

inherent existence of the “separateness” of subject and object. As long as one grasps to object and subject as distinct and separate, the C say it is the greatest obstacle to be free from grasping attitude towards self and to phenomena, which in turn is an obstruction to omniscience.

- (b) ***Subtle selflessness of persons – An emptiness that is a person’s emptiness of being self-supporting and substantially existent*** (same meaning as discussed under V and S schools i.e. empty of a person appearing without relying on aggregates).

(2) Definition of Conventional Truth – That which is realised by means of a valid direct perceiver that realises it clearly with dualistic appearance.

Right now, my mind perceives the table as coming into existence due to causes, such as a carpenter making the wood into a table, and has nothing to do by my mind. If we perceive the table this way, without recognising the role of one’s mind in perceiving “table”, one already has a dualistic mind i.e. one sees the table as a separate entity from mind (mental projection). In ordinary life, we tend to perceive things that way. According to C school, this is mistaken and should not be the case i.e. we should know that because of our mental imprint of table, the table arises. Hence without mind, phenomena will not arise; things exist only because of mind and we should thus recognise that object (table) and subject (mind/mental imprints) are inseparable.

There are 2 divisions of conventional truths:

- (1) ***Other-powered phenomena (synonymous with compounded/produced phenomena)*** e.g. table. My mind perceives a table as an externally existent object. Because of that, I tend to see the table and my mind as different entities ie. I see the table as a separate entity from my mind/mental projection.
- (2) ***Conventional truths that are included in imaginaries (synonymous with non-compounded phenomena other than ultimate truths)*** e.g. general space. We never think that such a space is a projection of my mind. We have dualistic mind.

The C ***assert that all things are common bases of the truly-existence and are false*** e.g. table. Why false? Because we never realise that it is a mere reflection of our mind. We treat the object and the mind as different entities. This theory on ultimate and conventional truth is beneficial to help us understand later the Madhyamika Prasangika school/that of Lama Tsongkhapa/the final view of Buddha. The Prasangika-M school agrees to the theory of mental projections but asserts that the only flaw of the C school is C's belief that mind is truly existent.

The C assert ***that all realities are common bases of the truly existent and true*** – The C regard “true” and “truly existent” as the same. C regards that if anyone says something is not truly existent, it must mean something like empty space; nothing there, which is an extreme view. Prasangika-M however, accept “true” but not “truly existent”. To the Prasangika-M, “True” means fact; “truly” means inherently.

The C assert ***that all non-compounded phenomena other than emptinesses are common bases of falsely-existent and false.***

Realities are pervaded by non-affirming negatives and examples of other non-affirming negatives are (presented) in the same way as the Sautrantikas: All 4 schools, especially the Madhyamika school, assert that emptiness exists in the manner of a non-affirming negative. Emptiness/Lack of inherent existence is a “non-affirming negative” because what is not affirmed is inherent existence; what is negative is that there is nothing to grasp at. In other words, lack of inherent existence means that existence is established not as something that exists on its own but arises dependently and therefore, if one wants to hold onto something independently existing, one will find nothing of that kind.

The 5 senses objects – form, hearing etc – arise from the substance of inner consciousness, in dependence upon the propensities of common and uncommon actions placed on the mind-basis-of-all and they do not exist as external objects: The C school asserts that imprints are left on the mind-basis-of-all (which C says is different from consciousness). Objects of the 5 senses only arise from the imprints from past times left on this mind-basis-of-all and when the imprints are activated, one will see, experience etc the objects. The C say imprints are left on this mind-basis-of-all and do not accept that imprints are left on the consciousness because they say that consciousness is unstable; whereas the mind-basis-of-all is stable and able to carry imprints from lifetime to lifetime.

The True Aspectarians assert the 5 sense objects – form, smell etc are NOT external objects but do exist as gross objects, through the projection of mind.

The False Aspectarians assert that the 5 sense objects – form, smell etc are NOT gross objects because if they did exist as gross objects, they would necessarily exist as external objects and external existence is refuted by this division of C.

5. Mode of Asserting Object-Possessors (Subject/Perceiving Mind)

The True Aspectarians assert a group of 8 consciousnesses. A “Mind-Basis-of-All” and an “Afflicted Mind” are added to the 6 consciousnesses (outer 5 senses + consciousness) asserted by other proponents of tenets, making a total of 8 consciousnesses.

A “Mind Basis of All” is a first consciousness that is other than the group of 6 consciousnesses and does not depend on a power as its empowering condition e.g. the eye sense depends on its own power (retina/wall of the eye’s ability to reflect objects; ear sense depends on its auditory nerves; etc). The C regards Mind-Basis-of- All as that which is stable/unshakeable. They say that if one asserts that consciousness hold imprints, then if that consciousness is shaken, the imprint can be lost. If so, the C argue that consciousness cannot be that which brings imprints up to enlightenment. Hence, their view that is the Mind-Basis-Of-All that carry imprints from lifetime to lifetime.

An “Afflicted Mind” is a second consciousness that that refers to its referent – the Mind Basis of All and apprehends its aspect – a self supporting or substantially existent I: This type of mind always relates to the Mind Basis of All and is a grasping mind which (mistakenly) perceives self as a self supporting or substantially existent I.

The True Aspectarians assert Mind Basis of All as the illustration of the person; as the receptacle which holds imprints and acts out karma and is the holder of the fruit of actions.

The False Aspectarians assert the 6 consciousness and posit the mere mental consciousness as the illustration of the person, the receptacle of the fruit of actions. Mental consciousness is where the imprint/karma is left upon. They don’t assert Mind Basis of All nor the Afflicted Mind.

The C assert 2 types of mind: (1) Valid Cognisers and (2) Non-Valid Cognisers.

There are 2 types of Valid Cognisers: (1) Valid Direct Perceivers (2) Valid Inferences

(1) There are 4 types of (Valid) Direct Perceivers:

(i) Self cognising direct perceivers – pervaded by non mistaken consciousness

(ii) Yogic Direct Perceivers are pervaded by non mistaken consciousness – there are 4 types : Those that clearly realise

(i) subtle impermanence (ii) clearly realise gross selflessness of persons (iii) clearly realise the subtle selflessness of persons and (iv) clearly realise the selflessness of phenomena.

(iii) Sense Direct Perceivers – in ordinary beings, are pervaded by mistaken consciousness. Outer perceptions e.g. sense consciousness are mistaken consciousness because they perceive outer objects as being different from the subject/mind of the perceiver.

(iv) Mental Direct Perceivers – There are 2 types of Mental Direct Perceivers. in ordinary beings (i) a mistaken consciousness because they perceive the object and subject as different entities; ***(ii) a non-mistaken consciousnesses,*** the mind must perceive the object and subject as one entity.

Direct perceptions are not necessarily valid direct perceptions because although there are form-apprehending Mental Direct Perceivers, in ordinary beings continuums, there are no valid form-apprehending Mental Direct Perceivers in ordinary beings because the 2nd moment of a direct perception is not a valid perception because it is not initial nor infallible. The perception (e.g. direct perception from eye sense) may still be infallible but no longer initial, hence not “valid”.

And ordinary being's Self-Cogniser experiencing a form-apprehending Mental Direct Perceiver, and the second moment of a form-apprehending Sense Direct Perceiver of an ordinary being are Invalid Cognisers.

(2) Valid Inferences

Valid Inferences are pervaded by conceptions...: Valid Inferences are pervaded by (definitely arising due to) conceptual mind. As long as something is an inference, it is from the conceptual mind. Eye direct perception is non-conceptual.

...but if it is an inference with respect to a phenomenon, it is not necessarily a conception with respect to that phenomenon because although an inference realising sound to be impermanent is an inference with respect to the sound's emptiness of permanence, it is not a conception with respect to that. This is because if it is a conception with respect to a phenomenon, it is pervaded by the aspect of that phenomenon appearing to it and with regard to an inference realising sound as impermanent, the aspect of sound's emptiness of permanence does not appear. That inference does not realise sound's emptiness of permanence explicitly; it realises that implicitly when it realises impermanent sound explicitly: This means that if the inference that sound is impermanent were the conceptual mind, that mind would have to reflect the object namely "impermanence" – yet, the inferential mind which realises that sound is impermanent doesn't reflect the impermanence of sound but realises it through inferential reasoning. Another reason is that the inferential mind doesn't realise directly that sound is impermanent phenomena immediately but only later arrives at the conclusion that sound is produced and hence impermanent.

6. Mode of Asserting Selflessness

The C manner of explaining the examples of gross and subtle selflessness of person is like that of the systems of Svatantrika and below: The

Cittamatra explanation of gross and subtle selflessness of person is the same as that of the V and S schools up to the Svatantrika-M school. Only Prasangika-M have a different explanation.

The Cassert that ***an example of a selflessness of phenomena is an emptiness that is a form and its form-perceiving, valid cogniser's emptiness of being other substances*** i.e. the lack of separate entities between object and subject; or the non-duality between subject and object, is the emptiness of phenomena according to the C school.

7. Presentation of Grounds and Paths

This has 2 divisions:

(a) The objects of abandonment/objects of negation

(b) Actual Presentation of Grounds and Paths.

(a) Objects of negation:

- ***Deluded obstacles, include self-grasping of persons together with its seeds; and its root which are the 3 poisons together with their seeds, that arise due to the power of self grasping of persons.*** These obstruct the Hearers and Solitary Realisers from achieving nirvana;
- ***Obstacles to Omniscience include grasping-as-true, together with seeds, its propensities and all mistaken dualistic appearances that arise due to the power of grasping-as-true and its propensities:***
This refers to self grasping attitude towards phenomena together

with its seeds and the dualistic mind which sees object and subject as different entities. The obstacles to nirvana are also obstacles to omniscience but these can be eradicated if one removes the obstacles to omniscience. To obtain enlightenment, we have to negate the self-grasping towards phenomena, its seeds and the dualistic mind. By achieving the elimination of the self-grasping to phenomena, one will eliminate self-grasping towards person as well. To become Buddha, we need to purify negative karma but the key is to eliminate the obstacles to omniscience through realising selflessness of person and selflessness of phenomena.

Emptiness of self is the emptiness of the concept of “I”; the emptiness of phenomena is the emptiness of aggregates and outer phenomena.

- ***Holders of the Hearer lineage combine the view realising selflessness of persons with a small collection of merit, mainly for their own sake and due to meditating for at least 3 lifetimes, attain their enlightenment:*** This means the Hearer practitioners who for the purpose of self-liberation, engage in meditation and combine that with the small amount of merit like practising for 3 lifetimes, can achieve the Nirvana of the Hearer.
- ***Holders of the Solitary Realiser lineage combine the view realising selflessness of persons with a middling collection of merit, mainly for their own sake and due to meditating at least 100 eons, attain their enlightenment:*** Solitary Realisers by meditating on the selflessness of person and combining a middling amount of merit for 100 eons, can achieve the Nirvana of the Solitary Realiser.

- ***Bodhisattvas combine the view realising the emptiness of subject and object being of other substances with a great collection of merit, for the sake of others, and due to meditating for at least 3 countless aeons, attain their enlightenment:*** By meditating and applying the emptiness of subject and object being different entities and whose efforts are dedicated to all living beings, combining a great amount of merit for at least 3 countless eons, the Bodhisattva attains enlightenment.

True Aspectarians assert that when Hearer and Solitary Realiser For Destroyer attain nirvana without remainder (i.e. when they die), their mental continuums cease. They assert that it is impossible for a Buddha's Superior mental continuum to cease because Bodhisattvas first attain enlightenment in og.min in a Complete Enjoyment Body and that Complete Enjoyment Body does not cease in the continuum of the same aspect until samsara ends but works for the welfare of others, through various emanations according to the fortunes of disciples: This means that Buddha's omniscient mind does not cease. When Bodhisattvas attain omniscience while still living in sambogakaya Pureland called Ogmin where Mahayanic teachings are taught to bodhisattvas, they emanate bodies for the benefit of living beings e.g. Shakyamuni Buddha was already a Buddha but took birth as Siddhartha as one of the 12 Deeds to teach living beings and hence the Buddha's mind didn't cease (Theravadans believe that Siddhartha was an ordinary being and the 12 deeds were a mere sentient-being's activities).

True Aspectarians assert that the 3 vehicles are definite in their own lineages ie. Lineage of Hearer, Solitary Realiser and Bodhisattva ***because***

sentient beings since beginningless time have different karmic affinities (although the common ground is liberation from samsara but the respective purposes is different). From this, sentient beings have ***3 different natures and therefore 3 different aspirations and therefore 3 different ways of accomplishing (attaining realisations) and therefore they attain 3 different results:*** Example, some people can only manage to practice based on self-liberation path of the Hearer or Solitary Realiser and not have to cope with liberating other beings as well. Their goal is to achieve the Hearer Arhatship (such a practitioner relies on a teacher throughout the Path) or Solitary Arhatship (such a practitioner having received teachings from a teacher then decides to continue the practice without a teacher and in solitary manner). For us here, we have affinity to the Mahayana, which is why we are here and engaging in Mahayana practice to attain full enlightenment for the benefit of all living beings and bring them all to the enlightened state.

False Aspectarians do not assert that when Hearer and Solitary Realiser Foe Destroyers attain nirvana without remainder, their mental continuums cease because although they assert that at that time, only the continuum of the mere mind that is included in true sufferings and true origins ceases, a mere cogniser goes to enlightenment; thus they assert the existence of one final vehicle: The C assert that contaminated aggregates and contaminated mind ceases but clear-light mind doesn't cease. They assert that final liberation is enlightenment.

MADHYAMIKA (Followers of the “Middle Way”)

The system of the proponents of Non-Entityness is explained by way of definition, divisions and the meaning of each division.

The definition of a proponent of non-entityness is “One who propounds/ asserts Mahayana tenets and does not assert true existence, even nominally”.

There are two divisions/sub-schools of the M (1) Svatantrika and (2) Prasangika.

The meaning of each of these sub-schools appears hereafter.

SVATANTRIKA-MADHYAMIKA

1. *The definition of a Svatantrika is “A Madhyamika who, by means of positing a reason that exists from its own side, does not accept true existence, even nominally”.*

In other words, the Svatantrika-Madhyamika (S-M) is a school of Madhyamika who assert the total lack of true existence of all phenomena and especially that of functioning phenomena. However, S-M assert inherent existence (of the base). For the S-M, they interpret true existence and inherent existence differently (the P-M however, hold the view that true existence and inherent existence are synonymous). The name of the S-M school is derived from their assertion that, in dependence upon a correct reason (within the context of this school) established by the nature of a base having inherent characteristics. An example of a S-M is Bhavaviveka.

A Svatantrika-Madhyamika is synonymous with a Madhyamika who propounds natural existence.

2. *Divisions: (i) Sautrantika-Svatantrika-Mahyamika and (ii) Yogacarini-Svatantrika-Madhyamika.*

(i) *The definition of Sautrantika-Svatantrika-Mahyamika (SSM) is “A Madhyamika who propounds a presentation of nominal existence for the most part in accordance with Sautrantika tenets. Examples of scholars from this school are Bhavaviveka (Legden Je) and Yeshe*

Nyingo: This sub-school's basic assertions resemble those of the Sautrantika school. Scholar Jnanagarbha is also an S-M.

- (ii) *The definition of Yogacarin-Svatantrika-Madhyamika (YSM) is "A Madhyamika who propounds a presentation of nominal existence for the most part in accordance with Cittamatra tenets". Examples of scholars from this school are Shantarakshita (Shiwatso), Haribhadra (Sange Zangpo) and Kamalashila:* This sub-school's basic assertions resemble those of the Cittamatra school. Kamalashila was a disciple of Shantarakshita.

3. Etymology

The reason why Bhavaviveka is said to be a Svatantrika-Madhyamika is that he is a Madhyamika who asserts reasons that exist from their own side: In other words Bhavaviveka is a S-M because he asserts that existence comes about in dependence upon a correct reason ("correct" within the context of this school) namely, the nature of a base is that which has inherent characteristics.

4. Mode of Asserting Objects

Existence by way of its own characteristics, existence from its own side and natural existence are synonymous.

Non-compounded space, true cessations, past, future and subtle selflessness of persons are all non-affirming negatives as well as Conventional Truths.

Ultimate Truth, reality and subtle selflessness of phenomena are synonymous.

The Sautrantika-Svatantrika M assert that the 5 sense objects – form etc. – are of different entities from consciousness, and they are gross, external objects composed of partless particles.

The Yogacara-Svantrika M assert that the 5 sense objects – form etc. – are one entity with the consciousness apprehending them.

Objects can be divided into 2: Conventional truth and ultimate truth.

A *conventional* truth is a phenomena which is dualistically realized by a direct valid cognizer that actually cognises it. Examples: un-compounded space, true cessation, past, future, subtle-selflessness of person.

Conventional truth can be further divided into 2: True and false perception of objects.

True objects are those that cannot be perceived to exist in any other way, other than the way it appears e.g. vase, pillar etc.

False objects are those that can be perceived as not existing in the way it appears e.g. a mirror image

An *ultimate truth* is a phenomena which when perceived by an ideal direct perception, does not appear dualistically to that mind. As an example: reality, subtle selflessness of phenomena, the lack of true existence of a vase etc.

5. Mode of Asserting Object Possessors (Perceiving Mind)

The Svatantrika-Madhyamika assert a group of 6 consciousnesses and that the mental consciousness is the illustration of the person: The S-M assert a group of 6 consciousness namely eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mental consciousness. They assert mental consciousness as illustration of the person.

They say there are 2 types of mind (1) Valid Cognisers and (2) Non Valid Cognisers

Under Valid Cognisers, there are 2 types : (1) Valid Direct Perceivers (2) Valid Inferences:

There are two types of mind (1)Valid Cognizers and Non Valid Cognizers. Under valid cognizers, there are two types namely the valid direct cognizer and the valid inferential cognizer.

Under valid direct cognizers, there are four kinds: The sense direct perceiver, mental direct perceiver, yogic direct perceiver and the self-cognizing direct perceiver.

As regards the sense direct perceivers and mental direct perceivers, they can be either mistaken or non mistaken; as for the yogic direct perceivers and self-cognizing direct perceivers, they are non-mistaken consciousnesses.

The Sautrantika-Svatantrika M do not assert self-cognisers.

The Yogacara-Svantrika M assert all 4 types of direct perceivers; and

- **The Self-Cognising Direct Perceivers and Yogic Direct Perceivers are pervaded by non-mistaken consciousness;**
- **The other 2 types of direct perceivers have instances of both mistaken and non-mistaken consciousnesses.**

Sautrantika, Cittamatra and Svatantrika all assert:

- **That Direct Perceivers are pervaded by non-conceptual consciousnesses.**
- **That Subsequent Cognisers are pervaded by non-valid cognisers.**
- **That consciousnesses mistaken with respect to their determined objects are pervaded by Wrong Consciousnesses.**
- **That if it is a Mistaken Consciousness with respect to a phenomenon, it is necessarily a non-valid mind with respect to that phenomenon.**
- **That if it is an Inference, it is necessarily a non-valid mind with respect to its appearing object and so forth.**

Under Non-Valid Cognizers there are 5 categories:

- Subsequent cognizer : There are 2 sub-categories – conceptual and non-conceptual;**
- wrong consciousness: There are 2 sub-categories - conceptual and non-conceptual**
- doubt: There are 3 sub-categories - tending towards the fact, tending**

away from the fact, equally tending to both sides.

- (iv) correctly assuming consciousness: There are 5 sub-categories: Without a reason, with a contradictory reason, with an indefinite reason, with an inapplicable reason and with a correct but un-established reason.
- (v) an awareness to which an object appears but is not ascertained: There are 3 sub-categories - sense direct perceiver, mental direct perceiver, self-cognizing direct perceiver

6. Mode of Asserting Selflessness

They (S-M) assert that:

- **A Gross selflessness of persons that is a person's emptiness of being permanent, partless and independent:** Gross selflessness of persons: A person is empty of being permanent, unitary and independent.
- **A Subtle Selflessness of persons that is a person's emptiness of being self-supporting or substantially existent:** A person is empty of being self-sufficient substantially existent.

The Yogacara-Svatantrika M assert :

- **A Gross Selflessness of phenomena that is a form and its form-apprehending, valid cogniser's emptiness of being other substances:** A form and the Valid cognition apprehending that form, being empty of being different substance.
- **A Subtle Selflessness of phenomena that is all phenomena's emptiness**

of true existence: All phenomena being empty of true existence.

The 2 subtle selflessnesses are differentiated according to their objects of negation and not according to their bases of emptiness. This is because:

- **The refutation of the object of negation – true existence, upon the base - person, is the Subtle Selflessness of Phenomena**
- **The refutation of self-supporting, substantial existence upon the base – person, is the Subtle Selflessness of Persons.**

The subtle selflessness of person and subtle selflessness of phenomenon are differentiated according to their object of negation and not according to their base of emptiness because the refutation of the object of negation (i.e. true existence) upon the base – the person - is the subtle selflessness of phenomenon; and the refutation of self -supporting, substantial existence upon the base- person, is the subtle selflessness of persons.

The 2 self-grasplings are differentiated according to the manner of grasping and not according to their referent object. This is because:

- **Referring to the base – person, and grasping it as truly-existent is Self Grasping of Phenomena;**
- **Referring to the base – person, and grasping it as self-supporting or substantially existent is Self Grasping of Persons.**

7. Presentation of Grounds and Paths

The Yogacara-Svatantrika-Madhyamikas posit the differences between the persons of the 3 vehicles to be that they have 3 different obstacles as main objects to be abandoned and the 3 different views as the main objects of meditation:

- **Holders of the Hearer (Shravaka) Lineage** take as their main object of abandonment, the conception of grasping at a self-supporting or substantially existent person together with its retinue, and take the antidote to that, the view realising the emptiness of a self-supporting or substantially existent person as their main object of meditation and from that, they attain small enlightenment: The main object of abandonment is the conception grasping at a self-sufficient, substantially existent person together with its retinue; and apply the antidote which is the view realizing the emptiness of a self-supporting or substantially existent person and from that they attain small enlightenment or 'Nirvana' .
- **Holders of the Solitary Realiser (Pratyekabuddha) Lineage** take as their main object of abandonment, the conception of grasping form and form-apprehending valid cognisers to be of other substances, and take as their main object of meditation, the view realising the emptiness of subject and object being of other substances as the antidote to that conception and from that, they attain middling enlightenment: The main object of abandonment is the conception grasping form and form-apprehending valid cognizer to be of other substances; the antidote is the view realizing the emptiness of subject and object being of other

substances and from that, they attain middling enlightenment 'Nirvana'.

- **Bodhisattvas take as their main object of abandonment, the grasping at true existence together with its propensities (subtle tendencies) and take as their main object of meditation, the view realising the non-true existence of all phenomena as the antidote to that grasping and from that, they attain great enlightenment:** Grasping at true existence together with its latencies 'propensities' is object of abandonment; main object of meditation and the antidote is the view realizing the non-true existence of all phenomena, and from that, they attain great enlightenment.

According to the Sautrantika-Svatantrika-Madhyamikas, there is no difference between Hearer and Solitary Realises regarding their main objects of abandonment and the main objects of meditation because they are alike in taking deluded obstacles (delusions and their imprints) as their main objects of abandonment and they are alike also in taking selflessness of persons as their main object of meditation.

However there is a reason why the 2 (Hearer and Solitary Realiser) have different fruits, inferior and superior. It is because they have differences due to the extent of their collections of merit and the length of time spent accumulating merit.

The Sautrantika - Svatantrika – Madhyamika's assertions on the objects of abandonment of three levels of practitioner's are:

For the Hearer Lineage, the afflicted obscurations (delusions) are their

main objects of abandonment;

For the Solitary Realizer lineage, the afflicted obscurations (delusions) are their main objects of abandonment.

This means that the Hearer lineage and Solitary Realiser lineage have the same objects of abandonment. They are alike also in taking selflessness of person as their main object of meditation and as the main antidote. From that, they attain the “small enlightenment” of the Hearer and middle enlightenment for Solitary Realizer.

For the Bodhisattva lineage, grasping at true existence (together with its latencies or ‘propensities’ or subtle tendencies) is object of abandonment. And take as their main object of meditation and the antidote which holds the view realizing the non-true existence of all phenomena and from that, they attain great enlightenment.

The Svatantrikas assert 2 kinds of sutras: (1) Mahayana and (2) Hinayana

And like the Cittamatrins, they assert 2 parts (of sutras): (1) Definitive and (2) Interpretive.

However the indication is different because the Cittamatrins assert the first 2 Wheels as sutras of interpretive meaning and the later Wheel as sutras of definitive meanings.

According to this system, the First and Last Wheels are sutras of interpretive meaning and the Middle Wheel has 2 parts: Interpretive and

Definitive. They assert that those sutras of the Middle Wheel in which the object of negation is joined with the qualification “ultimately”, are sutras of definitive meaning and those sutras of the Middle Wheel in which the object of negation is not joined with the qualification “Ultimately” are sutras of interpretive meaning.

Introduction to Buddha’s final view on Emptiness – the Prasangika-Madhyamika

Astaught by the Buddha himself and all the Indian pandits such as Nagarjuna, Atisha and Chanrdakirti, who preserved the Buddha’s teachings based on cultivating their meaning and attaining realisations and the great past Kadampa masters like Dromtoenpa and Lama Tsongkhapa, all have stated that the fundamental cause of samsara is the grasping attitude i.e. grasping towards self or “I” and grasping at the aggregates/outer phenomena; the clinging to the idea that self and phenomena have true existence from their own side. This is the root cause for sentient beings to continue circling in cyclic existence, never eradicating contaminated samsaric existence nor attain Hinayana liberation, let alone full enlightenment. This statement of fact is the view of the Buddha and all the great realised beings.

With the right attitude/motivation to attainment of enlightenment for the sake of living beings, one has to eradicate all delusions up to the defilement of self-grasping at phenomena and for this, we have to actualise the right antidote which directly ceases this defilement i.e. wisdom realising emptiness. Only then can we complete the path to attain ultimate bodhicitta (i.e. bodhicitta conjoined with the right and final view on emptiness) – it is

for this reason that we engage in the study of tenets.

As Lama Tsongkapa stated in the 3 Principal Aspects of the Path, until one is able to establish dependent existence within the meaning of emptiness, one will be unable to gain the realisation of emptiness and be unable to see the true nature of existence of self and phenomena. Lama Tsongkhapa advised that we need to be able to see dependent existence within the context of emptiness; and likewise, the lack of inherent existence within dependent existence. “Empty but not empty” i.e. empty of inherent existence but not empty because dependent existence.

PRASANGIKA-MADHYAMIKA (P-M)

The P-M school holds the highest and final view on Emptiness and only relying on this view's method of establishing Emptiness, can one cease all obstacles to attaining the omniscient mind. It is thus important to learn P-M. In studying it, one should put effort into actualising the wisdom realising emptiness of self and of phenomena.

When one studies the Lam Rim, Lojong, Bodhicaryavatara and tantric teachings and such general teachings, there is frequent mention of the word "wisdom" and this is referring to P-M school of emptiness and none other. Whatever the views of emptiness asserted in lower schools including [the Mahayanic schools of Cittamatra and Svatantrika-Madhyamika (S-M)], those views are not qualified to be the direct antidote to eradicate the self-grasping attitude towards phenomena nor towards the self-grasping attitude of self/person.

When the Buddha taught the Perfection of Wisdom sutras in the 2nd Turning of the Wheel, he established that everything - from form, aggregates, products, stages of the grounds and paths, results, karmic causes, everything up to achieving full enlightenment - all of this was "entity-less" i.e. all aspects of phenomena are empty of their own characteristics (i.e. there is nothing which has its own, independently existing characteristics); this is the final assertion of the View on emptiness.

Differences between Svatantrika-M and Prasangika-M

Both S-M and P-M rely on the 2nd Turning of the Wheel teachings but the reason there came to be these 2 schools within the Madhyamika, was that S-M could not establish dependent existence (emptiness) without asserting the existence of “characteristics” of existence/phenomena. The P-M however asserted that there was no way to discover the truth of phenomena/dependent existence, if one based it on characteristics of existence and must instead, see all existence as being empty of characteristics. The S-M asserted that things exist through being labelled (and that there are characteristics from the object’s side) but not merely-labelled. For P-M school, all phenomena is merely-labelled. Though both these schools assert “lack of true existence” but their explanations on “lack of true existence” are explained differently.

1. Definition of a Prasangika-Madhyamika (P-M) - “ A Madhyamika who by means of positing a mere consequence known to the other, does not accept true existence even nominally”.

The P-M is translated as the Middle Way Consequence School and is called that because they assert that inferences realising propositions, can be generated in the continuum of the suitable proponent by stating a mere consequence (Tibetan word for P-M/ Middle Way Consequence school is *uma tagyupa*; whereas the S-M school is called *rangyupa*). Prasangika’s method is to identify the faults in the assertions of their opponents and by doing so, enable the opponents to realise the incorrectness of their views and at the same time, establishes its (the Prasangika’s) valid view on the nature of existence. Let’s take the statement that sound is impermanent.

The S-M use the direct reason that sound is impermanent because it is a product (product is impermanent). S-M use this logic to analyse phenomena, especially hidden phenomena (see below). Another example, a table - they apply reasons as to why a table is a product and hence impermanent. This is a longer way of arriving at a conclusion because one needs to question whether sound is permanent or impermanent and then establish whether sound is a product or not, but to do that, one first needs to know what is product or non-product.

The M-P also use inferential logic but uses the approach of disputing/refuting the lower schools' views and showing the faults of their reasoning.

2. Divisions

Buddhapalita, Chandrakirti and Shantideva are examples of Prasangika-Madhyamika scholars. Nagarjuna is the main source of the P-M view on emptiness. Hinayana and Mahayana practitioners when referring to right view, always refer to Nagarjuna (Hinayana focus on the self-liberation aspect of his teachings).

There are many great Indian Pandits - for M-P view, rely on Nagarjuna, Chandrakirti, Buddhapalita, Atisha and Tibetan pandits like Lama Tsongkhapa.

3. Etymology

There is a reason why Acharya Buddhapalita is called a Prasangika. It is because he asserts that an inference realising a proposition is generated

in the continuum of a later disputant by stating a mere consequence.

4. Mode of asserting objects

There are 2 kinds of objects (1) Hidden and (2) Manifest

1. **Hidden objects must be realised by depending on a sign:** Hidden objects are those realised/cognised by depending on a sign and right reasoning e.g. impermanence of sound; emptiness of true existence. It may be difficult to prove that sound is impermanent, without relying on reasons e.g. that sound is a product and thus impermanent. Another example - it could be difficult to realise the impermanent nature of a person or “I” without the right reasons, hence we need reasons, such as due to momentary changes and shifts towards end of life are the signs/reason to prove the impermanence of life. However, to prove and show momentary changes (gross and subtle) is also difficult. Hence, one needs inferential cognition to realise such a hidden object as impermanence. Just to establish the impermanence of “I” is so difficult. To further establish the emptiness of “I” is even more difficult. Every single phenomena is empty and this emptiness is a hidden object. Due to this, we need the signs and right reasons or else our conclusions/projections of the hidden object could be wrong. E.g. if we say that person is bad, the “badness” is a hidden object and hence we need to be careful about the signs and reasoning about that “badness” before we express our view about it. We shouldn’t blindly believe what we perceive because the object may be a hidden object, requiring us to analyse whether our inferential mind has correctly established the hidden object or not. We need to use right reasoning as to what is being perceived.

2. **Manifest objects/directly perceivable objects are objects that can be ascertained by ordinary beings through the power of experience, without depending on a sign e.g. a pot , woollen cloth.** In daily life, objects perceived are in the above 2 categories of hidden and manifest objects.

Another way of dividing objects is into: (1) Conventional Truths and (2) Ultimate Truths

(1) The definition of a Conventional truth - An object which is found by a valid cogniser distinguishing a conventionality and with respect to which a valid cogniser distinguishing a conventionality, becomes a valid cogniser distinguishing a conventionality: The meaning here can be explained in an example - Let's say we place a dog and a human in front of you. Conventionally, it appears that from the object side, a dog exists as a dog and a human being exists as a human. When perceiving these two objects, if one perceives the dog as a dog, that would be called a conventional valid cognition (if one perceived a human as a dog, that would be a conventionally invalid cognition). For Malaysians, Char Kway Teow is well known; for Tibetans, we call that same dish Chow Mein. If someone came with a plate of Char Kway Teow and showed it to a Malaysian and a Tibetan, there could arise a debate as to whether that plate of noodles was Char Kway Teow or Chow Mein. Conventionally, both would be correct because Char Kway Teow or Chow Mein was premised on a right base (something that can function as a noodle) and is generally accepted (by Malaysian and Tibetans respectively) as correct terms.

All conventional objects contain ultimate truth too. Without the

conventional truth as a base, there would be no way to establish the ultimate truth within ordinary existence. Let's say I want to cognise the ultimate truth of char kway teow. To do that, I must analyse on the base of something called char kway teow. If I try to analyse the ultimate truth of char kway teow using the base of nasi lemak, that would not work nor be correct. If we want to realise/cognise the ultimate truth of a phenomena, we need to investigate the nature of that particular phenomena. To do this, we need to do this based on a phenomena that is a conventionally accepted base.

It is not right to divide conventional truths into “real” conventional truths and “wrong” conventional truths because there are NO real conventional truths. This is because if there is a conventional truth, it is necessarily not real. This is because if it is a Conventional Truth, it IS necessarily wrong: In other words, if something is a conventional truth, it is necessarily wrong because ordinary beings' perception (mistakenly) perceives things as existing from their own side. Things don't appear as arising due to one's own mental projections or as being merely labelled by our mind.

That appearance (of existence coming from its own side) is conventional truth but is actually incorrect and is not true existence. Only dependent arising/emptiness/the lack of inherent existence is real, correct, ultimate truth.

Hence one can see why the term “conventional truth” is used. “Conventional” is in relation to what is perceived by ordinary beings without the correct understanding;

“truth” is in the sense of being in accordance with a common, ordinary view but is wrong from the viewpoint of ultimate truth.

It is right to divide conventional truth into Real and Wrong with respect to worldly consciousness because:

- ***A form is real with respect to worldly consciousness; and***
- ***The reflection of a face in a mirror is wrong with respect to worldly consciousness:*** Here “wrong” is explained this way - When one sees one’s face in the mirror, one thinks that mirror-image is one’s actual face (which has wrinkles, is dark etc..). Yet if you pinch that mirror-image, you will feel no pain. So that mirror image is NOT your face; it is just a reflection. Yet we see all existence in the same way as a mirror-image, that’s why we are misled into grasping onto the self/”I”. We do not realise this and fail to explore the existent-I and the non-existent I. The non-existent I is that which (we wrongly believe to) truly exist from its own side; the existent-I is that which arises dependently and is merely-labelled on the aggregates. We have never realised the true, dependently existing I; instead, we have spent all our time on the false, non-existent I e.g when someone pinches your hand, you say “You hurt me”. The reply then comes “I only pinched your hand, not you”. Think about it. This theory of the “non-existent I” helps when one gets angry due to being criticised or being hurt - it makes us question “Are people really criticising something that exists? Is one’s face, hair, name, status etc..really me?” No. These are all merely-labelled by mind. Hence Prasangika-Ms are not easily offended nor hurt by others!

If it is real with respect to worldly consciousness, it is not pervaded by existence because truly existent forms are real only with respect to worldly consciousness but are not existent (i.e. are not actually real because they are not truly existent).

(2) Definition of an Ultimate truth is an object found by a valid cogniser distinguishing a final phenomena, and with respect to which a valid cogniser distinguishing a final phenomena, becomes a valid cogniser distinguishing a final phenomena.

Ultimate truth has to be established by a valid cogniser distinguishing final phenomena e.g. cessation and emptiness of phenomena (nature of true existence).

The divisions of Ultimate Truths in the Prasangika school are like those of Cittamatra (subtle selflessness of persons and subtle selflessness of phenomena) but this system asserts that true cessation are pervaded by Ultimate Truths.

8. Mode of Asserting Object Possessors (Perceivers)

The P-M **assert that:**

- **the merely** labelled “I” in **dependence/as imputed on the 5 aggregates, is the illustration of the person:** this means this means a person/self/concept of “I” is dependent on and imputed on the right base of the aggregates. The moment conception happens, the 5 aggregates already commence, including consciousness. Right there, there is already the base of a person; then we label that base

“Tenzin Zopa”. From that moment, Tenzin Zopa comes into being and exists as merely-labelled and in dependence on the 5 aggregates. Conventionally, I am Tenzin Zopa and no one else. The moment Tenzin Zopa gets angry, the perception of “self” or “I, Tenzin Zopa” arises; that disturbed I, that troubled person, forgets that the I is merely-imputed and starts to wrongly believe that the self is independently-existing and hence, should be “protected” and praised etc. That “I” is the one that commits all the negative karma and remains stuck in samsara due to the self-grasping mind; this self grasping mind is an obstruction to liberation from samsara, not to mention full enlightenment. The whole purpose of Buddha’s teaching is to destroy that self-grasping mind which failed to realise dependent-arising and mental projections and hence we suffer. Therefore we need to apply the understanding of dependent existence/ emptiness because only with that can we see the true face of the non-existent I. Even the bodichitta mind cannot see that non-existent I. Only the mind that realises emptiness, that realises the lack of inherent existence, can see the false and mistaken view of the self-grasping I. The late Geshe Lama Konchog said that whatever we do, as long as it does not strike at self-grasping, at the ego, at self-cherishing, at anger, jealousy etc, it is not Dharma practice.

- ***person is pervaded by non-associated compositional factors:*** Products exist in 3 manners - form, consciousness and non-associated compositional factors. A person/”I” is in the category of non associated compositional factors as it is neither form nor consciousness.

There are 2 kinds of mind: (1) Valid Cognisers (2) Non valid cognisers

There are 2 kinds of valid cognisers: (1) Valid Direct Perceivers and (2) Valid Inferences

- P-M ***do not assert self-cognising direct perceivers***
- ***Sense consciousness*** (e.g. eye, nose, touch, mental etc) ***in sentient beings continuums are pervaded by mistaken consciousness*** because the senses perceive true/inherent existence (rather than dependent existence); the senses perceive that things exist from their own side, which is mistaken. One must be free from the 2 extremes.
- ***Mental consciousness and Yogic Direct Perceivers can be either mistaken or non-mistaken:*** Mental consciousness realising the true nature of phenomena as dependent existence is unmistaken; if a mental consciousness believes that a person exists from its own side, rather than dependently, that consciousness is mistaken.

There 2 kinds of valid direct perceivers:

(a) Conceptual valid direct perceivers - these are those who perceive the object as being dependent on the label and the base e.g. vase is a label onto a base which has a big belly, able to hold liquid etc. As long as we need to perceive something with a label and a base, that perception is called conceptual mind. Another ***example is the 2nd moment/imprint of the inference realising sound as impermanent*** by reason of sound being a product; and ***a consciousness correctly remembering blue that is generated by being induced by a Sense Direct Perceiver apprehending blue.***

(b) Non-conceptual valid direct perceivers - this is the mind which perceives the object without depending on the label or the meaning; an ***example is a Sense Direct Perceiver apprehending form.***

Valid Direct Perceivers are not pervaded by that which is Directly Perceivable because Yogic Direct Perception is necessarily not directly perceivable. This is because that which is Directly Perceivable is synonymous with Manifest Phenomena.

Subsequent Cognisers are pervaded by Valid Direct Perceivers.

There are 4 kinds of Inferences:

(1) Inference by the power of fact - inferences under (2) and (3) are included here

(2) Inference through renown - based on that which is well known

(3) Inference that realises the meaning through an example

(4) Inference of belief

If it is a Valid Cogniser, it is not pervaded by being non-mistaken (i.e. can be mistaken too) with respect to its determined object because an inference realising sound as impermanent is a mistaken consciousness with respect to sound as impermanent in the sense that whilst it (correctly) understands that sound is impermanent, it has the ordinary perception that sound is truly existent from its own side.

If it is a consciousness, it IS pervaded by realising its object of comprehension because the mental image of a rabbit's horns is the object of comprehension of a conception (apprehending the horns of a rabbit); and the mental image of sound as impermanent is the object of comprehension of a conception apprehending sound as impermanent:

The mental image of horns on a rabbit is the object of comprehension of a thought perceiving a rabbit's horns; the mental view that sound is impermanent is the object of comprehension of a conception/thought apprehending sound as impermanent. Even though there is no such thing as a horns on a rabbit, the mind is still able to reflect/bring up an image of horns on a rabbit. Likewise, when we cognise sound as impermanent, we do so with the help of one's comprehension/mental reflection of that statement and then applying the reason that product is impermanent and thus concludes that sound is impermanent.

The point here is that even though objects may not exist, one's mind is still able to create an image of it e.g. a rabbit's horn. Hence, we need to know that we should not assume that whatever we perceive definitely exists because our perception could be wrong and as non-existent as a rabbit's horn.

6. Mode of Asserting Selflessness

The Prasangika-M **assert:**

- ***a gross selflessness of persons that is a person's emptiness of being self-supporting or substantially existent:*** The lower schools call this emptiness of being self-supporting as subtle selflessness but P-M say

this statement refers only to the gross selflessness of persons;

- ***a subtle selflessness of persons that is a person's emptiness of true existence.***

If we want to meditate on selflessness, first we need to meditate on the gross selflessness of persons; gradually one proceeds to meditate on subtle selflessness of person i.e. being empty of true/inherent existence.

To attain the Hearer's Nirvana, one must overcome these 2 selflessnesses (gross and subtle self grasping). To achieve enlightenment, one has to overcome these selflessness of persons but need to also realise emptiness of phenomena (see below)

The P-M ***posit***/assert:

- ***a gross selflessness of phenomena that is the emptiness of a gross object composed of partless particles and the valid cogniser apprehending it being of other substances:*** In Cittamatra school, subtle selflessness of phenomena means seeing no separation between object and subject. In P-M school, this view is understanding only gross selflessness of phenomena.
- ***a subtle selflessness of phenomena is the emptiness of true existence of the aggregates and every base of imputation:*** They are all empty of inherent existence. If we don't realise this point, we will still have grasping mind towards phenomena/true existence, which is a defilement.

The 2 subtle selflessnesses (of person and of phenomena) ***are differentiated according to their bases of emptiness and not according to their objects of negation because*** (the object of negation i.e. true existence, is the same; only the base is different):

- ***The refutation of the object of negation - true existence, upon the base of person, is the Subtle Selflessness of Persons***
- ***The refutation of the object of negation - true existence upon the base of the aggregates is the Subtle Selflessness of Phenomena.***

The 2 (subtle) self graspings are differentiated according to their referent object and not according to their manner of grasping because:

- ***Referring to the base - the person*** (the concept of truly existent “I”) ***and grasping it as truly-existent is the (subtle) self-grasping of persons:***
The self-grasping of persons is the main obstruction to nirvana and an obstruction to omniscience;
- ***Referring to the base of imputation - the aggregates/phenomena, and grasping them as truly-existent, is the subtle self grasping of phenomena:***
This self-grasping to phenomena is an obstruction to nirvana but is the main obstruction to omniscience. If one can eliminate self grasping to phenomena, one will also, by the way, eliminate self grasping to persons. For those on the Bodhisattvayana path, who wish to free all beings from suffering, enter the Mahayana path and put much effort to understanding emptiness. When you attain the Mahayana Path of Seeing, you realise emptiness directly and you should use this emptiness

not only to eradicate self-grasping of person (as truly existent) because there is a bigger obstacle/defilement ie. the grasping to phenomena (which includes aggregates). This defilement has 9 different divisions and the overcoming of these 9 phases is done during the period of Path of Seeing and Path of Meditation through applying the antidote of emptiness at different levels of intensity. During this meditational period, no conventional reality appears. During the post-meditational period, one engages in 6 Perfections and develop bodhicitta. The stronger the bodhicitta, the stronger the effect of the emptiness antidote.

Before entering the Path of No More Learning, one has to have the strongest bodhicitta, similar to the Buddha and due to this strong bodhicitta (method path) when one engages in deep meditational absorption on emptiness, it is like switching on the light in a dark room where the darkness is dispelled. All grasping at self and at phenomena disappears. When is the total purification of defilement? When one achieves cessation through concentration on emptiness without any disturbance or interruption, one becomes a Buddha. From that time on, one's actual meditational and post-meditational sessions become fused ie. having total concentration on emptiness whilst engaging in bodhicitta action.

The practice of other traditions e.g. Mahamudra or Dzogchen practices, they are all also aiming to discover the true nature of existence based on the realisation of the lack of inherent existence. Analysis is done during meditation, as well as post meditation, to capture increasing levels of negating inherent existence. There is nothing that can be seized upon to be true existence, hence all are merely labelled upon the right bases. This

might sound as if there remains some concept of “own characteristics”. Why is it that the S-M use the concept of characteristics to emphasise the lack of true existence? Because they say that without referring to characteristics of existence, all would become a state of nothingness. P-M respond to say that there is existence but only existence that arises dependently and is merely-labelled by mind. Further, if one doesn’t assert “merely-labelled”, it would mean that things truly exist (which is incorrect). The assertion of emptiness must be free from the faults of the 2 extremes (of true/ inherent existence and of nothingness/nihilism) and be of the Middle Path - exist but don’t exist; empty because of dependent existence; existence due to emptiness.

7. Presentation of Grounds and Paths

This has 2 divisions: (1) Objects of Abandonment (2) Actual Presentation of Grounds and Paths

(1) Objects of Abandonment

- ***Gross and subtle selfgraspings together with their seeds*** (ignorance), ***as well as attachment and so forth (the delusions) together with their seeds,, that arise due to the power of (self-grasping) are Deluded Obstacles that mainly obstruct the attainment of liberation*** (of the Hearer and Solitary Realiser practitioners);
- ***The propensities (tendencies) of grasping at true existence and all parts of the mistaken dualistic appearance*** (of phenomena) ***that arise due to the power of these (propensities), are obstacles to***

omniscience and obstacles that mainly obstruct the attainment of an exalted knower of all.

(2) Actual Presentation of Grounds and Paths:

There is no difference in terms of superiority among the views that are the objects of meditation of persons of the 3 vehicles because all 3 are alike in taking as their main objects of meditation, the subtle selflessness of persons and subtle selflessness of phenomena: Hearers, Solitary Realisers and Bodhisattvas all cultivate the same antidote which is emptiness but their goal/purpose is different. The different purposes plus the different methods, produce different results. Example, Hearers and Solitary Realisers cultivate compassion while applying emptiness; for Bodhisattvas however, they practice great compassion while applying emptiness. Also their objects of abandonment also differ - for Hearers and Solitary Realisers, their object of abandonment are the gross and subtle self grasping of persons; whereas the object of abandonment of the Bodhisattvas are the abandonment of gross and subtle self grasping of person and mainly gross and subtle grasping at phenomena.

So you can see that although the same antidote of emptiness is applied by all 3 types of practitioners, the different methods used can cause a different result. Hence, bodhicitta and wisdom realising emptiness must always be practiced together. One supports the other to produce the ultimate fruit of enlightenment.

There are differences with regard to their main objects of abandonment because:

- ***Hearers and Solitary Realisers take as their main objects of abandonment the 2 self graspings*** (gross and subtle self grasping) ***together with their seeds;***
- ***Bodhisattvas take as their main objects of abandonment the propensities of self grasping*** at phenomena (remember that eradication of grasping to phenomena will also eradicate grasping to self).
- ***Nirvana without remainder is a suchness distinguished by the abandonment of the 2 self graspings and their seeds in the continuums of the Hearer and Solitary Realiser*** ***Foe Destroyers in meditative equipoise.***
- ***Nirvana with remainder is the same kind of suchness in the continuums of the Hearer and Solitary Realiser*** ***Foe Destroyers in the post-meditation state.***

Holders of the Mahayana Lineage who are definite in the lineage from the very first, abandon Deluded Obstacles and attain the 8th Ground simultaneously and they abandon Obstacles to Omniscience and attain the 4 Bodies simultaneously (the 4 Bodies of the Buddha are - Emanation Body/ nirmanakaya; Enjoyment Body/sambogakaya; Wisdom Truth Body/Dharmakaya and Natural Truth Body/emptiness nature) : Some practitioners first enter the Hearer's Path and then attain self liberation and remain in the peace of nirvana for a long period of time and one day

awaken from their meditative equipoise to cultivate great compassion and altruistic mind. Then they enter the Mahayana path by generating the renunciation of the Bodhisattva and gain bodhicitta at that same moment. This practitioner will not fall back into the Hinayana Path. Then there are also those who enter the Mahayana path during the 5 paths or before attaining nirvana.

Those practitioners called “definite in the lineage from the very first” means those who directly enter into Mahayanic path without going through the Hinayana path and will pursue the Mahayana path without falling into the Hinayana path until full enlightenment. There are definite and non definite Mahayanic followers. Some practitioners don’t follow a definite path but go here and there. There are 3 levels within the Path of Accumulation - the Small, Middle and Highest levels of the Path of Accumulation - until one has arrived at the Highest level of the Path of Accumulation, there remains the danger of degenerating one’s bodhicitta and fall into the Hinayana path (of self liberation, instead of the Mahayana path of liberating all beings from suffering). Whilst one’s renunciation may remain intact, one’s bodhicitta still face risks until one has attained the Highest level of the Path of Accumulation. Once achieving highest level of Path of Accumulation, one won’t lose bodhicitta nor renunciation but it doesn’t mean one has purified all negative karma yet. To escape falling into the lower realms due to negative karma, one needs enter the Patience stage of the Path of Preparation (which has the 4 stages i.e. Heat, Peak, Patience and Supreme Dharma).

Chenresig/Kuan Yin story: Kuan Yin had been working tirelessly for sentient beings but despite all this, he noticed that there were even more beings

needing help. In a moment of despair, he cried and his head split into 11 pieces. From those tears emerged Tara, who advised Kuan Yin never to give up bodhicitta and promising to help Kuan Yin in his tasks. Then through the blessings of the Buddhas, all the 11 heads came together, giving rise to the 11-head, 1000 arm Kuan Yin. So for us, we need to pray everyday never to give up bodhicitta nor living beings. We need to actualise the 3 Principle Aspects of the Path to benefit living beings through realisations and turning the Wheel of Dharma; that's the only way to get nearer to Buddhahood. It's not about having masses of disciples; it is about benefitting living beings. Some masters lived alone in caves; some left behind the conch-shell tooth relics as evidence of heir turning the wheel of Dharma. So we cannot criticise those solitary practitioners of Dharma for not turning the Wheel of Dharma. They can.

**** Listening to Tenets has left great positive imprints and has built up merit. This will enable us to gain the omniscient mind in order to be of real benefit to living beings****

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Losang Dragpa Buddhist Society is the sponsor of this book for the perfection of wisdom of all its members, friends and all those who come into contact with this text.

HOW TO TREAT DHARMA BOOKS

Dharma books contain the teachings of the Buddha. They have the power to protect against lower rebirth and to point the way to liberation.

Therefore, they should be treated with respect – kept off the floor and places where people sit or walk and should not be stepped over. They should be covered or protected for transporting and kept in a high, clean place separated from other mundane materials. Other objects, including statues and stupas, should not be placed on top of dharma books and materials. Licking the fingers to turn pages is considered negative and will create negative karma.

If it is necessary to dispose of written dharma materials, they should be burned rather than thrown in the trash.

When offering dharma texts to the fire, first recite the mantra OM AH HUNG, then visualize the letters of the texts to be burned absorbing into the syllable AH and the AH absorbing into you, transmitting their wisdom to your mind stream. After that, as you continue to recite OM AH HUNG, you can offer the texts to the fire.

Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche has specifically advised that photos or images of holy beings, deities and other holy objects should not be burned and instead placed with respect in stupas or other high clean places so that they do not end up on the ground.



Biodata of Geshe Tenzin Zopa

Geshe Tenzin Zopa holds a doctorate in Buddhist Philosophy from Sera Jey Monastic University in South India and is a master in Tibetan Buddhist rituals. He is currently the Resident Teacher at Losang Dragpa Buddhist Society, Malaysia and was for a long time, the Director of the Tsum Valley Project (in the Himalayan

region), which provides Buddhist study and practice facilities and accomodation for the community in the Valley. Geshe Tenzin Zopa is the principal and focal point of the award winning film titled “Unmistaken Child” which chronicles the search for the reincarnation of his great master.

Geshe Tenzin Zopa has a contemporary style of teaching which he combines with the ancient wisdom derived from his years of philosophical studies and debate, thereby benefitting everyone who has met or heard him teach. Geshe Tenzin Zopa is the face of a dynamic and socially engaged Buddhism in the 21st century.

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