10. Refining the view: On the Four Schools of Buddhist Thought with an Emphasis on Madhyamaka in Tibet

Today, I will speak about the four tenet systems or schools of Buddhist thought. Sachen Kunga Nyinpo[1] stated that the Buddhadharma is like the ocean, both vast and profound. There is no point at which we can say that we have studied everything the Buddha taught. Our learning comes to completion only upon the attainment of buddhahood. It is said that even bodhisattvas on the third bhūmi are ready to pass through flames so fierce they consume the entire face of the earth and give their own body as a light offering just to be able receive teachings on just a few lines of the Dharma. This means that, until they become fully awakened buddhas, even these noble and realised beings do not stop studying the Dharma and receiving teachings.

The views of the four schools of Buddhist thought is a difficult subject for both the teacher and the listener. Generally speaking however, there is great benefit in receiving the Dharma through this teaching. Master Rendawa[2] said that it is better to teach and listen to the Dharma, thereby planting the seeds of liberation, even if it is not perfectly understood, than to practice other paths.

After the time of Buddha Śākyamuni, four schools of Buddhist thought or tenet systems emerged in India. Two of these belong to the Hinayana tradition of the śrāvakas, namely the Vaibhāṣika school (lit., "adherents of the commentary") and the Sautrāntika school ("adherents of the sutras"), and two to the Mahayana tradition, the Madhyamaka school ("Middle Way") and the Cittamātra ("Mind Only").

An important concept in this context is what we refer to as the "view." What do we mean by "view?" Generally speaking, the Abhidharma mentions eight types of views, which can be subsumed under good views and unwholesome views. The view referred to in the context of the four tenet systems is the supreme type of view, the world-transcending view. Generally speaking, all phenomena have two aspects: one is the way they appear or the way they are perceived, and the other is the way they really are. These two are also called conventional reality and ultimate reality. The view, here, refers to the wisdom that realizes ultimate reality or the way things really are.

Now what is the purpose of the view? A buddha is someone who is free of all faults and endowed will all possible excellent qualities. What is the means that allows us to eradicate the faults? It is precisely the view. All faults arise from not knowing, not understanding the way things really are. This ignorance is at the origin of all mental afflictions and all the suffering of samsara. Since the direct opposite of ignorance is the right view, it is the only means that allows us to relinquish the faults.

The Śrāvaka Systems

When we speak of the śrāvaka vehicle, we either refer to a tenet system of philosophical views or to the historical schools. With regard to the latter, there were four main śrāvaka schools in India in the past, which in turn are further divided into eighteen subschools.

Only two of these eighteen schools are extant today, namely the Sarvāstivāda and the Sthaviravāda. The four śrāvaka schools maintained minor differences with regard to the conduct. Based on different interpretations of the Vinaya they held different views regarding the way the Dharma robes should be worn, what constitutes a transgression, and so forth.

They also held different views with regard to the teachings. For instance, the followers of the Sthaviravāda (Pāli: *Theravāda*)—a tradition still alive today—maintained that the Buddha did not teach in Sanskrit, whereas the proponents of the Sarvāstivāda claimed that he mainly taught in Sanskrit. Another difference lies in the understanding of how long it would take to achieve the perfect awakening of buddhahood. According to the Sthaviravāda it would take nine incalculable eons, while it would take only three according to the Sarvāstivāda. In this way, there are some differences in the views of the historical śrāvaka schools.

The Vaibhāṣika School

Let us now turn to the two tenet systems of the śrāvaka tradition, beginning with the Vaibhāṣika school. Generally speaking, there are two ontological categories: the individual or person, and dharmas or phenomena. An individual is that which we refer to with "I," "you," "human," "animal," "sentient being," and so on.

The proponents of non-Buddhist schools claim that the individual is truly existent or real. However, according to the highest school of the śrāvaka system, the Vaibhāṣikas, the individual is not a real entity. Rather, it is merely imputed on the basis of the physical form and the mental events which constitute it. It is similar to imputing the name "house" on a collection of things including a door, walls, windows, a roof, and so on. There is no "house" that would exist separately from these elements. In the same way, the Vaibhāṣika hold that there are aggregates or *skandhas*,[3] but no individual as such. If this individual were real, it would be impossible to relinquish self-grasping, which in turn would make it impossible to abandon the afflictions, and this would mean that there is no liberation.

Generally speaking, according to the śrāvaka system, the world of existence can be divided into two categories: objects and mind. Of the five skandhas, the form skandha comprises the outer objects, such as houses and trees, and so on; the things we can see and experience with our senses. Then, there is the knowing, remembering, conscious aspect which resides within the physical form of our being. This is called the mind.

When the objects or outer phenomena of our experience are examined, from the biggest objects like mountains and houses, down to the tiniest things like grains and mustard seeds, we realize that they can be divided or broken down into individual parts. This is why these phenomena are said to be gross elements of existence, and this is what is called conventional reality according to the śrāvaka system. These phenomena of conventional reality, however, do not exist in actual reality: they do not exist in and of themselves, but are dependent on their parts. Ultimate reality, according to this view, consists of the subtle phenomena which cannot be further broken down in smaller parts. In other words, ultimate reality consists of the minute, indivisible components which make up the composite phenomena of conventional reality.

How are the individual particles or atoms structured to form the larger phenomena? According to this system, these particles form

conglomerations with a little empty space in between them. However, from outside this empty space between the particles is not perceived and therefore we see the conglomeration as a single unit. It is like looking at someone's hair from a distance and perceiving it as one unit instead of seeing each individual strand, or like a lawn perceived as one thing, instead of seeing the individual blades of grass it is made of.

Now how about the mind? The mind, just like outer phenomena, exists as a continuum. Just as a house, for instance, may last for twenty years, or a person may live for forty years, the mind exists as a continuum. When we speak, for example, of a mind of faith lasting for a long time, it is a continuum of individual moments of faith. This continuum, however, is only a conventional reality, it does not exist in and of itself.

The mind arises in one instant, and as soon as it has arisen it immediately vanishes; it does not remain. In other words, mind does not last more than a short moment in time. This time measure is called momentariness or momentary existence, and this is all that really exists. Whereas there is no continuum or prolonged existence of mind in actuality, the momentary existence of mind is held to be an ultimate reality according to this system.

In this way, there are two types of indivisible phenomena. One is the indivisible atom or subtle particle, which cannot be divided it into an eastern side, a southern side, a western side, and a northern side, and thus has no spatial parts. The other is the indivisible moment of the mind. This momentary mind cannot be broken down into further temporal moments, such as a past or a future part. These two, that is, the indivisible atom and the momentary mind, are regarded as truly existent or ultimate realities in the Vaibhāṣika system.

The Sautrāntika School

The second of the two śrāvaka systems is that of the Sautrāntikas (lit., "those who follow the sutras") which generally agrees with the views of the Vaibhāṣika school outlined above. There are differences between these two tenets however, such as their respective interpretation of the nature of space for instance. Generally speaking, empty space, like the space between us sitting here, is an uncompounded phenomenon (*dus ma byas*, *asaṁskṛta*).[4] According to the Vaibhāṣikas, empty space is also held to be a real or functional phenomenon (*dngos po, bhāva*), while for the Sautrāntika space is regarded to be a non-thing (*dngos med, abhāva*).

On top of that, the Vaibhāṣikas also accept a type of compounded phenomena, which is not accepted by the Sautrāntikas. According to the Vaibhāṣika system, there is a group of compounded phenomena which neither belongs to the form skandha, nor to the mind. This group includes things such as "life," "arising," "continued existence," "disintegration," as well as "names," "words," and "syllables" to name but a few. These are considered compounded phenomena separate from form and mind, and they are held to be truly existent by the Vaibhāṣikas.[5] This view is rejected by the Sautrāntikas.

Another disagreement concerns the way the gross elements of existence are physically structured. According to the Vaibhāṣika system, there are empty spaces between the individual subtle particles which conglomerate to form the gross phenomena perceived by our senses. The Sautrāntikas refute this view, saying that if there was empty space between these particles, a vessel containing water, for instance, could not retain the water inside, it would seep through these empty spaces between the particles.

In these and other ways the views of these two śrāvaka schools different in certain points.

The CittamĀtra School

Let us now discuss the views of the Mahayana tenets, starting with the Cittamātra or Mind Only school. Generally speaking, all Buddhist schools accept the view of no-self or lack of self-nature. The difference lies in the extent to which this view is developed. According to the Cittamātra system, not only does the individual not exist, but the indivisible particle has no true existence either. The proponents of this tenet maintain that there are no non-mental phenomena, including the most subtle phenomena of this kind, which are the indivisible particles. A particle, if it were to exist, would necessarily have parts (in order for it to be able to conglomerate with other particles to make up larger objects). Since there exist no indivisible particles at all, there cannot be any real particles.[6]

What, then, does exist? According to this view, only the mind exists. If the mind was itself non-existent, there would be no basis for the confused appearances of samsara to arise. If one confuses a heap of stones for a human being, although there is no human in actuality, there must be a basis for this misconception, which is the heap of stones. In the same way, there must be a real basis for samsara, and this real basis is held to be the

mind. Without the mind, there would be no basis for either samsara or nirvana: there wouldn't be anything at all. The proponents of the Cittamātra view do accept the Hinayana schools' categories of form and mind; but in their view, only the mind is real.[7]

The Cittamātra has two sub-schools: the Sākāravādin (Tib. *rnam bden pa*, lit., "those who hold appearances to be real") and Alīkākāravādin (Tib. *rnam brdzun pa*, lit., "those who hold appearances to be false"). The term *ākāra* in the names of these two schools, or *rnam pa* in Tibetan, means "aspect" or "appearance" and refers to the appearances of our perceptual reality. According to the first school, these appearances are real, while for the second school they are false.

For the Sākāravādins, the fundamental delusion consists in perceiving our present appearances, like a house or a tree we see, to be separate from the mind. To maintain that apprehended objects exist "out there" separate from the "inner" apprehending mind is a mistake, because these appearances are nothing but mind itself; they are mental appearances. Just like an egg cut in two halves, the one mind gets split into two parts, one being the object-apprehending mind and the other the apprehended object. Both, however, are mind. The mind is real, while the appearances are nothing but mind or mental appearances. In other words, the object never really existed separately from the mind: it is of the nature of the mind. This is the view held by the first subschool of the Cittamātra school.

According to the other school, the Alīkākāravādin, these appearances are neither real in terms of existing outside the mind, nor are they real in terms of being real mental appearances. However, even though they are not real, these appearances do manifest due to the mind's confusion. It is like a certain eye disease that causes one to see hairs wherever one looks, while these hairs are actually not there.[8]

The Cittamātra school of thought was widely spread in India in the past, and later become one of the most prevalent Buddhist schools of thought in China. In Tibet, however, this tenet never took hold as a separate school. Nowadays, it seems that the Cittamātra tenet no longer exists as a living philosophical tradition in its own right, generally speaking.

The Madhyamaka School

We now come to the fourth tenet, the Madhyamaka or Middle Way school. In India there were various strands of the Madhyamaka school. Dragpa Gyaltsen says that while these different Madhyamaka schools in India were in agreement with regard to the view of ultimate reality, we can differentiate five types of Madhyamaka based on their different understanding of conventional reality.

In Tibet, all followers of the Buddhadharma claim to be proponents of the fourth tenet, the Madhyamaka view. But there are significant differences here, even with regard to the view of ultimate reality. We can distinguish three principal systems that arose in Tibet, are still extant today, and are even spreading to the West.

One is the shentong (Tib. *gzhan stong*, lit., "empty of other") view, another the view propagated by the Gelugpa school, and the third one is the view held by the Sakya school and other traditions.

Shentong Madhyamaka

The shentong system has its root in the Sakya school. The tradition that formed based on the earliest propagation of the Dharma in Tibet became later known as the Nyingma school. In the following centuries, three other schools appeared in Tibet namely the Kadam, Sakya, and Kagyü traditions. After the Kadam tradition died out, it was replaced by the Gelug school. These four: Nyingma, Sakya, Kagyü, and Gelug, are the main schools of Buddhism in Tibet. In addition to these four, minor schools emerged, such as the Jonang, the Bodong, and the Butön traditions. These three widely renowned traditions emerged from the Sakya school, each with slightly differing views of reality. From among these three it was the Jonang tradition that first expounded the shentong view.

The proponents of the shentong view thus originally come from the Sakya tradition and some from the Nyingma school. Nowadays, the proponents of this view are predominantly found among the various Kagyü schools and specifically in the Karma Kagyü tradition.

According to the shentong view, there are two types of emptiness: self-emptiness and other-emptiness. As in all other traditions, the two realities, conventional and ultimate, are accepted. Conventional realities include

outer objects such as houses and so one, as well as the mind. These conventional realities are empty of essence. This is what is called "self-empty." Ultimate reality, on the other hand, is not empty of itself; it is empty only of that which is not itself. That is to say it is empty of conventional realities. Hence the name "other emptiness" or "empty of other."

Consider the following analogy: When, in an everyday context, we say, "the house is empty," we do not mean that the house itself does not exist but that there are no people in the house. This is similar to the way ultimate reality is said to be empty. The house in the analogy stands for ultimate reality. Ultimate reality is not nonexistent; it does exist, but just as the empty house is devoid of people, ultimate reality is devoid of conventional realities. It is in this sense that the term "empty" is employed and it is why this view is described as "empty of other." Ultimate reality is not empty of itself, but only empty of "other," meaning conventional reality.[9] The ultimate is therefore considered real and permanent.

Further, ultimate reality and the wisdom mind or enlightened awareness of a buddha are considered to be one and the same. For this reason, as ultimate reality is ever-present, the enlightened awareness of a buddha is said to be present in us at this very moment, even though we are ordinary sentient beings.

Madhyamaka in the Gelug Tradition

The view formulated by the Gelugpa scholars can be summarized as follows. When the Buddha taught that all phenomena are empty, he did not mean to say that things like houses, tables, people, and so forth are completely nonexistent. It means nothing more than that phenomena are empty (of inherent existence).

Phenomena themselves are not to be understood as emptiness. If phenomena were nonexistent, there would be no conventional reality. This would mean that there could be no law of karma: cause, condition, and result. Such a view would have severe consequences.

Then, what is meant with the phrase, "All dharmas are emptiness"? It means that things do not exist in the way we ordinary beings conceive them to be, that is, as being real. Consider the following analogy. To someone afflicted by jaundice, a white conch can appear as yellow, even

though, in reality, the conch is not yellow, but white. In the same way, the things we perceive do not exist as they are perceived to by ordinary beings. According to this view, there are objects such as cars, houses, and so forth, but they are not real. At the same time however, we cannot say that they are completely nonexistent or empty.

A vase is therefore not empty of itself, but empty of true existence. What is meant by "true existence?" In actuality, these phenomena do not exist apart from the concept we hold of them (as being real). However, we think that they exist in reality, aside from their existence superimposed by our mind. If things existed in actuality, this is called "true existence." The proponents of the Gelugpa view say that there is no true existence of this kind. They do not, however, assert that phenomena do not exist.

Again, here things are said to be empty of "true existence" or of "being established as real," not empty of themselves. The existence of things is not completely denied, only their "true existence." It is in this sense that things are empty. When we see a tree, for example, we do not think that this tree is a delusion. We hold this tree to be real. This superimposed reality of the tree is the confusion.[10]

The Gelugpa further maintain that the view held by other traditions who maintain that things are (in the ultimate sense) neither empty nor nonempty; neither existent nor nonexistent, is logically incoherent. According to this system, the reality of things cannot be recognized correctly in this way. If something is not "existent," it follows that it must be "nonexistent." If something is not "empty," it necessarily follows that it must be "non-empty." Therefore, we cannot completely negate things.[11] According to these other, non-Gelugpa schools, any form of conceptual grasping (including to things as "empty") is inappropriate when we meditate on emptiness. During the actual cultivation of insight into emptiness there is no mental activity at all, according to these schools.

For the proponents of the Gelugpa view, this approach is incorrect. To meditate on emptiness without there being any form of mental activity is the view of the Chinese master Hoshang, who came to Tibet in the eighth century.[12] According to the Gelugpa system, the thought of emptiness, thinking "it is emptiness," is needed when we meditate on emptiness. There are many lines of reasoning to establish the fact that the nature of things is emptiness. Based on any of these we come to the conclusion, "it is emptiness" and meditate with this thought in mind.[13]

Madhyamaka in the Sakya Tradition

Refuting the extreme of existence

In accordance with the other schools, we make use of the Madhyamaka lines of reasoning to first of all establish the right view in terms of the lack of existence of all phenomena. As stated above, there are various lines of reasoning used to do this, of which there are five principal ones. The reasoning investigating the cause of a given phenomenon is called the "vajra slivers" reasoning (Tib. *rdo rje gzegs ma*). In this analysis we investigate whether things arise from themselves, from another, from both (that is, a combination of itself and other), or without a cause. All four possible modes of arising are found to be impossible, and hence it is said that ultimately there is no arising at all.[14]

Another line of reasoning (called "refuting the arising of an existent and a nonexistent thing," Tib. *yod med skye 'gog*) investigates the result. If the result is (truly) existent at the time of its cause, it follows that it does not newly arise later, in which case there is no arising. If it is (truly) nonexistent at the time of the cause, it also follows that it does not arise. Take the example of a seed (the cause) and a sprout (the result). At the time of the seed, is there already a sprout or not? If the sprout is existent at the time of the seed, it means that it there is no arising of the sprout. If it is nonexistent at the time of the seed, there is no arising of it either.[15]

A third line of reasoning (called "refuting the arising in terms of the four alternatives," Tib. *mu bzhi skye 'gog*) analyzes both cause and result: does a singular cause give rise to a singular result? Does a singular cause give rise to a multitude of results? Does a multitude of causes give rise to a multitude of results? Does a multitude of causes give rise to a singular result? When any of these four possibilities are analyzed, we will see that there cannot be any arising at all, which establishes the emptiness of phenomena. When carefully examined, we will realize that none of the four conceivable ways of the arising of phenomena is possible (in an ultimate or real sense), that is, one cause giving rise to either one or many results, or many causes giving rise to one or many results.

A fourth line of reasoning (called "neither one nor many," Tib. *gcig du dral*) investigates the essence of things: are phenomena singular entities or composed of many parts? Through this analysis we come to the conclusion that there is no such thing as a singular entity and that therefore there can't be "many" either.[16]

The fifth analysis is the "reasoning of dependent arising" (Tib. *rten 'brel gyi gtan tshigs*). It simultaneously investigates causes, results, and inherent existence. All phenomena arise based on a combination of causes and conditions and are therefore empty (of inherent existence).

To say that all phenomena are emptiness does not mean that things cannot appear, that we don't see things. The point here is to investigate the nature of that which appears: whether it truly exists or not. Through such analysis we come to the conclusion that things are not truly established and therefore empty (of inherent existence). In other words, we do not deny our present experience of appearances. We use the lines of reasoning described above to scrutinize that which appears, questioning its true mode of existence or lack thereof. To the confused mind, these appearances do not seem to be empty at all. They appear to exist. Through these reasonings we see how, in reality, they are nonexistent or devoid of inherent nature.

Refuting the extreme of emptiness

Now, because there are no nonempty phenomena, as explained above, it follows that "empty" phenomena are also not truly existent. "Empty" and "nonempty" are mutually dependent on each other, just like the notions of "long" and "short." "Long" only makes sense in comparison to something "short" and vice versa. Only when there are two things can one be labeled "short" and the other "long." Without "short" there is no "long." In the same way, only when there *is* something "nonempty" can there be something "empty." Without "non-emptiness" there is no "emptiness" either.

Initially it was asserted that all phenomena are emptiness. Now we examine this notion of emptiness and come to the conclusion that emptiness too is not truly existent. Since there is no thing that is nonempty, there cannot be a thing that is "empty" either. These two notions of "empty" and "nonempty" are dependent on each other: one cannot be established without the other. For this reason we say that emptiness is not the ultimate reality or final mode of abiding.[17]

Refuting the remaining two extremes

After refuting each of these notions individually, their combination must be refuted, which is the view that maintains that things are ultimately both empty and nonempty. Since these two notions contradict each other, their combination too cannot be the nature of things. Finally, since the combination "empty and nonempty" is not the ultimate reality, their negation, that is, "neither empty nor nonempty," must also be rejected. In this way we arrive at a view that is free from all four extremes or conceptual elaborations regarding the ultimate.

The same principle then applies to the notion of "freedom from extremes" and its negation: "not freedom from extremes." Ultimately, nothing whatsoever can be said about ultimate reality. Jetsün Dragpa Gyaltsen said that, from this perspective, there is no such thing as an "ultimate nature" or "reality" of things. The actual view is neither "freedom from extremes," nor "freedom from elaborations," nor "not freedom from elaborations." When we cultivate the view, we first understand the view to be free from all conceptual elaborations and extremes. Based on this correct understanding, we rest the mind and familiarize ourselves with the state within which there is no grasping whatsoever.

According to the Chinese master who came to Tibet in the eighth century, Hoshang Mohoyen, no conceptual thought whatsoever should arise during the cultivation of special insight. All thoughts are regarded as being identical in the sense that all are a fault in the practice. Therefore, he taught that it was wrong for any thought to emerge during the practice. The great Indian scholar Kamalaśīla debated him on this point and defeated the Chinese master, after which the latter's tradition was officially banned from Tibet on the king's command.

For the Gelugpas, the view described as "freedom from elaborations" is similar to Hoshang's view. This is not correct. In Hoshang's method, there was no conceptual understanding of the ultimate at all; it was merely a matter of blocking out thoughts all together. This is not the view. In our tradition, we first establish the right view through conceptual understanding, and then rest the mind in a state free of conceptual elaborations. In other words, conceptual thinking comes to stop based on the correct understanding of the view. This is completely different than blocking thought all together.[18]

Sakya Paṇḍita himself said that if we do not first study the view and merely abide in a state without mental activity, our view will be that of Hoshang.

It is my hope that you will be able to meditate correctly on the view and, through the union of method and wisdom, quickly attain buddhahood.

Translated by Christian Bernert.

12. This paragraph on the five sense faculties was added by the translator.
13. The Sanskrit term is *saṃskāra* and has been translated in many ways including "formation, (pre) disposition, conditioning, compositional factor."
14. The formative factors dissociated from mind, which includes notions like "time," "arising," "ceasing," "continuing," "life faculty" and others, are not discussed here. The nature and status of these factors is debated amongst scholars.
15. These forty-six mental factors are grouped into six categories dependent on whether or not they are present in every moment of consciousness, how they relate to the objects of perception, and on whether they are wholesome, unwholesome, or neutral. These six categories are: ten ever-present factors, ten wholesome factors, six root afflictions, two unwholesome factors, ten lesser afflictions, and eight undetermined factors. Asaṅga's *Compendium of Abhidharma* (*Abhidharmasamuccaya*) gives another list composed of fifty-one mental factors.
16. The reason the Buddha listed feelings and perceptions separately is that these two are of particular importance regarding the way we experience the world. Feelings and perceptions are very closely related to the experience of suffering and happiness, and are therefore treated separately.
17. The two types of cessation are analytical cessation, which is, for instance, the cessation of suffering resulting from insight, and non-analytical cessation, which is the mere absence of a phenomenon due to the lack of causes and conditions.
18. An example for this type of cause would be the elements which compose a resultant object. These elements arise simultaneously with the object they form.

10. Refining the view: On the Four Schools of Buddhist Thought with an Emphasis on Madhyamaka in Tibet

1. Sachen Kunga Nyingpo (1092–1158) was the first of the five founding master of the Sakya tradition.
2. Rendawa Shönnu Lodrö (1349-1412) was an important master of the Sakya tradition, famous in particular for his writings on Madhyamaka philosophy. He was one of the main teachers of Jé Tsongkhapa, the father of the Gelug school.
3. There are five skandhas or types of phenomena comprising all elements of experience. Of these five, one, namely the form skandha, is of physical nature, and four are of mental nature, i.e., sensations, perceptions, formative factors and consciousness.
4. The Vaibhāṣikas accept three types of uncompounded phenomena: space, cessation that results from insight (like the cessation of attachment due to the insight into impermanence), and cessation that results from a lack of conditions (like the cessation of attachment due to the mere absence of objects of attachment).
5. Among the five skandhas, these phenomena are listed in the group of formative factors dissociated from mind according to the Vaibhāṣika system.

6. The logic here is that a particle must have a spatial dimension (a front side, a back side, etc.) in order to connect to other particles to form a larger phenomenon. If the smallest units have no sides, they cannot connect to other particles in order to grow in space to manifest the phenomena visible to the eye. Since, therefore, even the tiniest particles must have sides, they can be further divided ad infinitum and are, in this sense, no longer indivisible. In this way, the idea of truly existent, partless particles is refuted. There is therefore no ultimate reality to any form of outer phenomena.
7. In other words, the Cittamātra system accepts the existence of particles on the conventional level. On the ultimate level, however, there is only the mind.
8. Due to an eye disease called timira, the person affected will see "floaters" that resemble hairs in his or her field of vision.
9. In other words, one arrives at the view of ultimate reality through the realization that conventional realities are ultimately nonexistent, thereby emptying the ultimate of the conventional.
10. In other words, according to this view, the object of negation is not the tree itself, but its true existence.
11. This means that while all four "extremes" or possible ways to conceptualize things—either as "existent" or "nonexistent," or as "both existent and nonexistent," or as "neither existent nor nonexistent"—are refuted with regard to ultimate reality according to these non-Gelug schools, the Gelugpa maintain that only the extreme of "existence" is refuted in this regard. The extreme of "nonexistence" is maintained as valid in the context of the ultimate and to be refuted in the context of conventional reality.
12. The Chinese Chan master Hoshang Mohoyen came to Tibet in the eighth century at the invitation of King Trisong Detsen to debate the Indian master Kamalaśīla during the famous court debate of Samyé. This debate was organized to decide which brand of Buddhism should become the official religion of Tibet, the Chinese or the Indian. Put very briefly and according to the Tibetan account of the event, Hoshang defended the "sudden" approach, according to which nonconceptual meditation was the immediate means to achieve liberation because it would undermine the root of samsara which are all forms of conceptual activity. At the same time, the conceptual differentiation between good and bad deeds represents an obstacle to liberation and should therefore be abandoned. According to Kamalaśīla, who defended the "gradual" approach, this method was too radical. It would preclude followers from accumulating the merit needed to complete the path (the path being the union of merit and wisdom, resulting in the twofold obtainment of the form body and the dharmakāya of a buddha). Finally, it was the Indian tradition that was to become the official religion of Tibet.
13. One dialectic method used in the Madhyamaka tradition to investigate the nature of things is the so-called four-fold negation or *catuṣkoṭi*. This tool, famously employed by Nāgārjuna in his *Fundamental Stanzas on the Middle Way* (MMK 1.1), investigates all possible ontological positions regarding the nature of any

given object: is X existent, nonexistent, both existent-and-nonexistent, or neither existent-nor-nonexistent? While the Sakya and other schools maintain that these four positions are to be negated with regard to ultimate reality alone, the proponents of the Gelugpa school qualify these statements in relation to the two realities, saying that X is *ultimately* not existent and *conventionally* not nonexistent.

14. This reasoning is famously used by Nāgārjuna in his *Fundamental Stanzas on the Middle Way* (MMK 1.1): "Neither from itself nor from another, nor from both, nor without a cause, does anything, anywhere, ever arise." To elaborate on this briefly: the proponents of the Sāṁkhya tradition, an Indian non-Buddhist school of thought, assert that results and causes are fundamentally one and the same, and that the result is already present in the cause, albeit nonmanifest. This notion is refuted with the following logic: if a real phenomenon arises from itself, there would be no need for its new arising since it would already be existent. Also, there would be no need for a cause either, and the result would be producing itself endlessly. The second position maintains that cause and result are inherently different or "other." To refute this, it is stated that it is impossible for two inherently unrelated things to function as cause and result, due to their fundamentally different nature. If one thing exists intrinsically (labeled "result"), it cannot rely on something other (labeled "cause") to give rise to it. Therefore we cannot say that one thing arises from something other. The third position incurs both faults of arising from itself and other another, and the fourth position, i.e., arising without a cause, makes no sense whatsoever.

15. We have to bear in mind that what is refuted here is the arising of a real phenomenon, that is to say something that has its own intrinsic nature, and is, owing to this nature, truly existent or truly nonexistent. If X is said to truly exist already at the time of Y, we cannot say that there is any arising of X at all. If X is truly nonexistent at the time of Y, then how could it ever arise?

16. The logic behind this argument is that phenomena are composed of their constituent parts, such as a "flower" being composed of root, stem, leaves, petals, pistil, and so forth. Each of these parts can again be separated into its own constituent parts, and so on and so forth. Even the subtle particles making up the smallest part can be spatially differentiated into an upper part, a lower part, and so forth. This analysis can be carried out *ad infinitum*.

17. With the first stage of analysis, the notion that things truly exist is refuted by establishing their lack of inherent existence by means of the Madhyamaka lines of reasoning. In this way one comes to the conclusion that phenomena are "empty of inherent existence." Since at this point there is a risk of one conceptually clinging to the notion of emptiness as ultimate reality, the idea of things being "empty" must be refuted as well. This is the purpose of this second stage of analysis. Here, it is argued that the notions of "empty" and "nonempty" are mutually dependent. One cannot have one without the other. Since it was shown that there is no such thing as a "nonempty" phenomenon, the idea of "empty phenomenon" does not have more meaning. In other words, "emptiness" only

makes sense to disprove the notion of "true existence." Without this notion of "true existence," however, the idea of "emptiness" too collapses.

18. In other words, the process used to arrive at the view is crucial for there to be a genuine state of realization. Simply blocking out thoughts will not lead to the right view, but merely to a thought-free state that cannot function as the antidote to samsara.

Appendix: The Tibetan Publications of Khenchen Appey Rinpoche

1. Translations of the teachings marked with one star (*) are contained in the present volume. The titles marked with two stars (**) are part of upcoming volumes. Those marked with three stars (***) have already been translated, and may be available in one form or another.
2. *Annotations* always include the annotated text together with Rinpoche's notes.
3. Included in this volume, but excluded from this list, are a brief biography of Khenchen Appey Rinpoche written by Khenpo Sönam Gyatso, and a prayer for the swift return of Khenchen Appey Rinpoche composed by Gongma Trichen Rinpoche, the 41st Sakya Trizin.
4. Another edition of this teaching was published by IBA in 2012, see above.
5. This is the teaching given in Singapore in 1986 mentioned above.
6. The teachings contained in volumes 3 and 4 have also been published by the Students' Association of the Sakya College in 2013. The teaching of volume 4 has been recently edited by Khenpo Sönam Gyatso and published under: Mkhan chen 'jam dpal dgyis pa'i bshes gnyen tshangs sras bzhad pa'i blo gros mchog. *Thub pa dgongs gsal gyi rnam bshad*, Sapan Series, vol 9. Manduwalla: Sapan Translation and Research Foundation, 2017.