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12

A GUIDE TO THE BODHISATTVA'S WAY OF LIFE, PART III
Level 5 of the Middle-Way Philosophy (*Madhyamika*)

DHARMA ESSENTIALS





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Class One Outline

- I. Introduction to the Dharma Essentials Series and to this Course
- II. Root Text and Commentary
 - A. *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life (Bodhisattvacharyavatara)*, by Master Shantideva (ca. 700 A.D.)
 - B. *Entry Point for the Children of the Victorious Buddhas*, by Gyaltzab Je, Darma Richen (1364-1432)
- III. Wisdom in Relation to the Other Perfections
 - A. The "view of destruction"
 - B. Are the perfections of giving, etc., prerequisites to wisdom?
- IV. The Two Truths, and Two Types of People
 - A. What are the two truths?
 - B. The two kinds of persons who result from these two viewpoints
- V. Illusory Things Still Work, and Illusory Beings Still Take Rebirth
 - A. "Natural nirvana" and "nirvana that occurs through circumstances"
- VI. Meditation Assignment

Fifteen minutes a day on how we are deceived by the appearances of things in "deceptive reality." Meditate on your most difficult, irritating person and notice how we ordinarily assume that person has inherent, objectively existing dislikable qualities. Then meditate on something or someone you like, and observe how it seems to us that the good qualities we see in that thing or being exist naturally, from their own side.

Class Two Outline

- I. The Meaning of "Illusion"
- II. Why the Mind Can't Apprehend Itself
- III. Nirvana as the Permanent End to Mental Afflictions
 - A. The two forms of a mental affliction
- IV. The Six-Step Process of Suffering as Described by Maitreya
 - A. We're born with the potential for the two forms of grasping to self-existence
 - B. Those seeds ripen
 - C. Nice things and ugly things appear as if they existed from their own side
 - D. This causes ignorant liking and disliking
 - E. This causes us to do bad deeds and collect karma
 - F. Karma forces us to wander around in the circle of suffering
- V. Don't Fear Emptiness, Fear Ignorance!
- VI. "Learned" and "Innate" Forms of Grasping to Self-Existence
 - A. Three wrong ideas we have about the self that are learned
 1. Like a master and servants
 2. Objectively real, partless atoms
 3. Objectively real, partless moments of consciousness
 - B. The self that does exist
- VI. Meditation Assignment

Fifteen minutes a day on one of the things or people you are most bothered by and how substituting wise disliking for ignorant disliking could help you respond in a way that would eliminate the appearance of the dislikable thing or person in the future.

Class Three Outline

- I. The Emptiness of the Parts
 - A. The emptiness of the “raw data” of the two divisions of a person: body and mind; atoms and moments of awareness
 - B. The implications of realizing the emptiness of the parts
 - C. Why karma is both empty and works

- II. The Four Kinds of Deep Awareness
 - A. The deep awareness of the body
 - B. The deep awareness of feeling
 - C. The deep awareness of the mind
 - 1. The seven-step analysis of the emptiness of the mind

 - D. The deep awareness of objects

- III. The Five “Heaps” That Make Up a Person
 - A. The emptiness of impure discrimination and impure feeling

- VI. Meditation Assignment

Fifteen minutes a day in which you try to determine whether the “you” you think exists is the same as or different from its parts (physical and mental).

Class Four Outline

- I. The Emptiness of Causes
 - A. The sliver of diamond proof
 - B. The object denied (what emptiness is empty of)
- II. Dependent Things are Empty
 - A. The proof based on dependent origination
 - B. Three different understandings of dependent origination
- III. The Emptiness of Results
 - A. The proof based on refuting that neither a thing which does nor does not exist could ever grow
- IV. The emptiness of Nirvana
 - A. The “equivalence” of samsara and nirvana
 - B. Natural nirvana and regular nirvana
- V. Dedication
 - A. The distinction between ‘prayer’ and ‘dedication’
 - B. The benefit of dedication
 - C. Master Shantideva’s final act
- VI. Meditation Assignment

Fifteen minutes on the importance of finding a spiritual teacher in order to understand how things do and do not exist.



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The Asian Classics Institute
Dharma Essentials Course XII: A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way
of Life, Part III

Reading One:

The following contemplations are based on the *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* (*Bodhisattvacharyavatara*; *Byang-chub-sems-dpa'i spyod-pa la 'jug-pa*) of the Buddhist master Shantideva (circa 700 AD), and the commentary upon it by Gyaltsab Je Darma Rinchen (1364-1432) entitled *Entry Point for Children of the Victorious Buddhas* (*rGyal-sras 'jug-ngogs*). The relevant sections are found at folios 30B-31A and 114A-117A, respectively, in the ACIP electronic editions TD3871 and S5436.

**... All of these branches then were stated
By the Able Ones to be
Something for the purpose of wisdom.**

There are two different ways of explaining the phrase "these branches" in the root text at this point. Sometimes it is explained as referring only to the practice of quietude which was covered in the eighth chapter. But it is also explained as referring to all of the remaining perfections, of giving and the rest...

Here is the first section. One might have the following thought:

It's true that, in order to help put an end to the entire amount of suffering that exists in other people, we must achieve matchless enlightenment. And for this reason we must realize thusness. How could it be though that, in order to put an end only to that suffering which exists in ourselves, we would also have to realize thusness?

Remember though that our Protector, Nagarjuna, has said the following:

As long as a person possesses the habit
Of grasping to the heaps as true,
For just this long will they also grasp
To the thought that these are "me."

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He is saying here that, as long as we still possess the habit of grasping to our heaps as true, then for just this long will we find ourselves unable to reverse our "view of destruction": our tendency to view these heaps as being "me" or "mine," in a way where they exist through some nature of their own. To do this though, one must finish off one's tendency to grasp to the heaps as existing in truth....

The Two Realities

**We accept the truths as being two:
The one which is deceptive,
And the one which is the ultimate.**

The second part, [the way to develop wisdom which realizes thusness,] has three sections of its own: a presentation of the two truths; a proof that, even if all you hope to do is to reach freedom, you must still realize emptiness; and a detailed explanation of the different types of reasoning used to prove emptiness.

The first of these three has two divisions of its own: the actual presentation, and disproving the argument that emptiness is pointless and useless.

The first of these two divisions covers three topics: a division of existence into two truths; the definition of the two truths; and identifying the type of person who can establish the nature of the two truths.

Here is the first of the three. The following quotation from the *Sutra on the Meeting of the Father and the Son* appears in the *Compendium of the Trainings*:

Thus do Those Who Have Gone That Way fathom the deceptive and the ultimate: and so, knowable objects are either deceptive truth or ultimate truth, and nothing else. So too do the Conquerors see the perfectly as emptiness; know them so, perfectly, and bring them to reality with excellence; and this is why they we call them the All-Knowing.

The fact that all knowable objects are the thing which is divided into two truths is conveyed by the words "...and so, knowable objects." The phrase "and nothing else" expresses the fact that there are exactly two truths, no more and no less. The point too is that, because Those Who Have Gone That Way fathom both the truths completely, they are all-knowing....

We can see ultimate reality

**The ultimate is not something which is
An object of the mind; the mind
Is something said to be deceptive.**

For the second topic, [the definition of the two truths,] we will proceed in two steps: refuting the opponent's position, and presenting our own position.

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Here is the first of the two steps. Certain Tibetans of the past, such as Gyamar of Tulung, have taken the following position:

The first line of this section, "The ultimate is not something which is an object of the mind," is presenting an assertion by the author. The second line is a reason to support his assertion. The point of both is to say that ultimate reality could never be an object of any state of mind, whether it be a conceptual state or a nonconceptual state. This is proven by the fact that the latter line is stating that anything which is either a state of mind or the object of any state of mind must always be deceptive truth.

This position though is completely mistaken. If you accept the idea that during the deep meditation of a realized being on the greater way there is no state of mind at all, then you are introducing beliefs found in the texts of the Lokayata, [a non-Buddhist sect in ancient India which said that there were no future lives, and no such thing as karma and its consequences.] They believe that, up to the point of death, the mind does exist; but that after this point it discontinues. You too believe that, up to the very end of the path of preparation, there is mind; but that while this person is engaged in deep meditation upon the actual state of reality, there is no mind.

Beyond that, suppose we were to assert that there were no object at all which was such that, if you realized it directly, this would function to allow you to finish off every impurity. Since it would then be impossible to finish off one's impurities, we could never say that some beings were enlightened and others were not—and this would be a gross example of discounting something that was actually true....

Only Two Kinds of People

**This one in the world we find of two types:
These are the high practitioners,
And common people as well.**

**Now this common one in the world
Is disproved by the one we call
The "world practitioner."
Even high practitioners "disprove"
Each other by mental qualities
At relatively higher levels.**

The third part, [identifying the type of person who can establish the nature of the two truths,] includes two points: a division based on the type of person it is who seeks to establish the nature of the two truths, and the distinction between relative degrees of understanding.

Here is the first. *This* person who seeks to establish the nature of the two truths is called "*one in the world*," in the sense that he is a person which is projected based upon the heaps. And *two types* of these persons are *found*: those who are *high practitioners* possessed of the single-pointed concentration which combines

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quietude and special insight—that is, those who have realized that every object which exists is empty of any nature of its own; *and common people as well*—that is, those who profess that things which function exist truly....

Here is the second. First consider those *in the world* who are *common* people: those who believe that there are atoms which are partless, that the mind is partless in the sense of existing in indivisible instants, and that functional objects as such exist in truth. *The "world practitioners"*—so called because they are both high practitioners and persons in the world—are people who have realized that things have no nature of their own. These latter *disprove* the system of the former, that lower system followed by those who assert that functional things exist in truth. Even within high practitioners who are able to combine quietude and special insight, those at each succeeding, higher level *disprove* those at each preceding and lower level....

What it Means When We Say Things Work

**Those in the world can see
Things that function;
They also imagine them pure,
But not as being just like
An illusion; thus practitioners
And those in the world do argue.**

Someone may assert the following:

You do accept, as well as we do, the fact that we can see with our own eyes objects such as a fire which has the ability to perform a function such as cooking food or the like. Since this is what it means for us when we say that something exists in truth, you and we have nothing to argue about. If on the other hand you refuse that these objects exist, then you are disproved in a great many ways—including the way you would then contradict what we can all see with our own eyes.

Your argument though is one based on the idea that the two truths cannot coexist: you think that if functional things have no nature of their own, then they must not exist at all; and that if these things do exist, then they must exist with some nature of their own....

Emptiness and Rebirth Work Perfectly Together

**One may ask: "If beings are like
An illusion, how can they take
A rebirth after they die?
Even an illusion will occur
As long all the conditions
Needed for it are together.**

**How could it be that living
Beings exist in truth**

Simply because they've been longer?

Here is the third point, [a refutation of the idea that there could be no rebirth].
One may ask the following question as well:

If living beings lack any true existence, and are like an illusion, then how can they take a rebirth after they die? Wouldn't they be similar to a being created by a magical illusion; wouldn't they disappear once, and then never come back?

It's not that we're asserting that a magical illusion and a living being are in every respect alike. And if you claim that the problem you propose would apply even to our limited analogy, consider the way in which you yourself accept the fact that dreams and illusions are something false: it would be the same as if you were asking, "If the object around which a magician creates his illusion can appear as if it were a horse, then how come it can't appear as a donkey?"

Remember too that *even an illusion*, although it is something false, *will* continue to occur for exactly as long as all the different conditions needed for its occurrence continue to be present together. Here the case is just the same: beings continue to cross into a new rebirth just as long as ignorance and the other conditions necessary for them to do so continue to be present together.

One may respond as follows:

It's not the same thing, because we are talking about living beings that have been around for a very long time—for time with no beginning, in fact.

How could it be though that, simply because they have been around for a longer time, living beings must exist in truth? And that, because it is of a shorter duration, an illusion must then be false? It is wrong for you to make a necessary correlation between the duration of an object and its truth or falsehood; if this held true, then since there are also differences in the duration of magical illusions and dreams and the like, then you would have to accept a distinction where some were more true and others were more false. This is true for example because in some dreams you can think that an entire eon has passed, while in others you can only remember the events of a single day....

***The Difference between Freedom and the Circle of Suffering
is Empty and Perfectly True***

**Suppose the ultimate were nirvana,
And this of the deceptive cycle
Of suffering; in this case then
Buddhas too would be circling.
What would the use be then
Of bodhisattva activities?**

**Unless you cut off the stream
Of conditions, not even illusions**

**Can ever come to a stop.
If one cut off the stream
Of conditions, it couldn't happen,
Even deceptively.**

Here is the fifth point, [a refutation of the idea that there would be no fixed distinction between the cycle of suffering and transcending this cycle]. Those of the Middle-Way school say that there is no birth or aging or anything of the like which exists in an ultimate way. They also assert that the fact that all objects are void of any nature of their own is necessarily a natural state of nirvana. They assert finally that the cycle of suffering consists of the events of birth, aging, and the rest, all occurring through the power of karma and mental afflictions. To these points the Sutrists make the following objection:

Suppose that if something is a kind of nirvana which exists ultimately, or which comes by nature, then it is necessarily a kind of nirvana. Suppose further that the fact that the cycle of suffering is void of any nature of its own is itself this ultimate kind of nirvana; but that a person circles around in this circle of suffering, in a stream of births and deaths, all as a kind of deceptive reality. If this were true then there would have to exist a thing which was, simultaneously, both the cycle of suffering and nirvana. And in this case then Buddhas themselves would too be circling around in the cycle of suffering. What then would the use be for bodhisattvas to engage in the activities of a bodhisattva, in order to achieve the state of Buddhahood? It would be totally pointless.

And yet there is no such problem, for there exists a distinction between the natural state of nirvana and that nirvana which consists of a state of purity which occurs through circumstances.

The nirvana which comes by nature is not something which depends upon one's practice of the path; this is because it is, rather, the very nature of everything, whether they involve any practice of the path or not. The nirvana which occurs through circumstances, and consists of becoming free of all impurity, must be achieved through cutting off the process through which, in a stream of births and deaths, a person circles around in the cycle of suffering...

Reading Two

The following contemplations are based on the *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* (*Bodhisattvacharyavatara*; *Byang-chub-sems-dpa'i spyod-pa la 'jug-pa*) of the Buddhist master Shantideva (circa 700 AD), and the commentary upon it by Gyaltsab Je Darma Rinchen (1364-1432) entitled *Entry Point for Children of the Victorious Buddhas* (*rGyal-sras 'jug-ngogs*). The relevant sections are found at folios 31B-32A and 121B-128B, respectively, in the ACIP electronic editions TD3871 and S5436.

How Do We See the Illusion?

Here is the second part: a more particular refutation, of the position of the Mind-Only School. Here we will proceed in two steps: stating their position, and then refuting it.

Here is the first of the two. One may begin with the following objection:

If there is no object at all that has any nature of its own, then the mistaken state of mind which perceives the illusion cannot exist either. If this were so, then there would be no state of mind that could ever take the illusion as its object. And if this were the case, then the illusion itself could not exist either.

This argument too is another version of the idea that, if something exists, it must have a nature of its own.

The second of the two has two sections of its own: a demonstration that the same arguments apply to them instead, and then a refutation of their attempted rebuttal in response to this demonstration.

**You would say there'd also
Be no illusion itself;
On what then would it focus?
Suppose those same exist
In another way; the forms
Consist of the mind itself.**

Here is the first. *You* of the Mind-Only School *would say* that, if things grasped by the mind both appear to be outer objects and also actually exist the way that they appear, then there must exist outer objects. In such a case then there would be nothing that was like an illusion, and no state of mind that could focus on it either. You would also say though that, if things that appeared to be outer objects did not actually exist the way that they appear, then they would have no nature; and then, according to you yourselves, these objects could not exist at all. In this case then *there would also be no illusion itself*—that is, no instance of the thing being grasped by mind appearing to be an outer object. If this were the case, *then* what would it be that the mind was grasping to—*what would it be focusing*

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upon? Because after all, there would also be no state of mind at all that was grasping to visible objects, sounds, and so on...

The opponent may respond as follows:

Suppose it were true that the things which appear as outer objects do not exist at all as those same objects, as what they appear to be. Nonetheless they do exist in another way; that is, the forms that they take, as visible objects and such, consist of the very substance of the mind itself.

**Suppose the mind itself
Had the illusory; what
Would then see such?**

The second step too has two parts: asking the opponent how the realization that there are no two things could itself ever be perceived by any state of mind; and refuting the self-perception of the mind that they propose in answer to our question.

Here is the first. *Suppose it were the case that the mind itself was both having the appearance that there was this illusory object, but that there was in fact no outer object. In such a case, then the mind would lack any object. What valid perception then would there be to see just such a state of mind? There could never exist then any state of mind that saw it.*

**The Savior of the World
Himself has stated
That "mind can't see the mind."
The mind's the same as the
Blade of a sword,
Which could never cut itself.**

Here is the second. The Mind-Only School says that there are two parts to the mind: an object-oriented part which focuses outwardly, and a subject-oriented part which only focuses inwardly; and that the latter is the direct self-perception of the mind, and that it is this state of mind which perceives all states of mind...

It is incorrect to say that the mind could experience, could know, itself, in a way where the duality was repressed. *The Savior of the World has himself stated that the mind cannot see itself; he did so in the Sutra Requested by Crowning Jewel, through using examples such as the fact that the blade of a sword cannot cut itself. "How, for example, could the blade of a sword ever cut the blade of a sword? The mind is the same: it could never see the mind itself."...*

How Then are We Aware of our Minds?

**If there were no such thing as self-perception
Of the mind, then how
Could we remember consciousness?
The memory is by a relationship**

**With the experience of something other;
It's like the poison of a rat....**

It is not the case though that, because we can remember the subject, some self-perception of the mind is proven to be true. When the state of mind which perceives blue *experiences* the object which is *something other* than it—that is, blue—the *memory* of the subject is actually caused *by* remembering a *relationship*: by remembering the connection between the object and the subject, when you say the words, “I saw this blue thing before.” It is not though that the memory of the subject is caused by an experience of the subject; *it is rather like* the case where, although [a hibernating animal] has no experience of *the poison* that comes from being bitten by *a rat* at the time when the rat bites it, [the hibernating animal] still remembers it later on.

Think for example of a case where a rat bites the body [of a hibernating animal] during the wintertime. Even though the poison that comes from the rat bite has entered the body, the poison is not experienced—although the bite itself is. At some later point in time, [the hibernating animal] hears the sound of [springtime] thunder, [is awakened from hibernation,] and has a memory wherein it thinks to itself, “The poison must have entered my body when I was bitten.” It is not the case though that the animal had an experience of the poison prior to this time. The situation here is the same:

Being bitten by the rat is an analogy for the experience of the object by the state of mind which perceives something blue. The fact that the poison has entered the body at the same time as the bite occurred is an analogy for the experience of a subject which exists at the same time that the object was perceived. The fact that, at this particular moment, the subject does not experience itself is represented by the way in which the poison has not been experienced at the time when the bite occurred. Remembering the bite later on is the same as remembering the experience of the object. The fact that we remember the subject solely because we remember the object (even without the previous subject ever experiencing itself) is similar to the fact that, solely through the power of remembering the bite, we remember the poison which entered the body but which was not experienced....

On Emptiness and Nirvana Alone

**When they stop with the state of mind
Which lacks emptiness,
They will still come back again.
It's just like deep meditation
Where distinctions are stopped;
So you must meditate on emptiness.**

...Consider now *the state of mind which still lacks* the realization that the person and his heaps are *empty* of any nature where they could exist by definition. Even though people with this state of mind have succeeded temporarily in stopping the manifest form of their mental afflictions, *these* manifest forms *will* still come back again. It's just like staying in the deep meditation where you [nearly] *stop* completely your tendency to draw any kind of *distinctions*. So therefore one must

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definitely hold the position that anyone who might hope to achieve the goal of becoming an enemy destroyer—much less an Omniscient One—*must* still *meditate upon* the *emptiness* which refuses the subtle form of the self-existent object, whose existence we deny.

On Ending the Two Obstacles

**...Emptiness is the antidote
For the darkness of the obstacles
Of affliction and to omniscience.
How could it be that those
Who hope for omniscience quickly
Would neglect meditating upon it?**

The wisdom which realizes emptiness is, moreover, the antidote for the darkness of both the mental-affliction obstacles and the obstacles to knowledge. How could it ever *be* then *that*—if you *hoped* to achieve *quickly* the state of *omniscience*, the state where you end finally both the obstacles—you *would neglect* to go and *meditate upon* emptiness? Without this, you would never be able to eliminate even the seeds of the mental-affliction obstacles....

**If you feel frightened about
The thing it is that creates
Every kind of pain,
Why is it then you feel
Any fear for the thing it is
That ends all pain?**

We will now summarize our discussion. Someone might come and say, "This thing you call emptiness is something that frightens me; I don't think I can meditate on it." This thing we call the tendency to grasp to things as existing truly though is *the thing* which we have identified as the main cause *that creates every kind of pain* in this cycle of suffering. This is the thing *you should feel frightened about*, this is the thing that should strike terror into your heart. *Why is it then that you feel any fear* for the wisdom which realizes emptiness, *for the thing it is that will put a final end to all the pain* of the cycle of suffering? It is wrong for you to feel afraid about that very thing that ends all fear....

The Two Kinds of Grasping to Self-Existence

...On this point, the difference between the learned and the innate forms of the tendency to grasp things as true is as follows. What we call the "innate" form of this grasping can focus either on the person or upon the parts of the person. It is a state of mind that everyone has, whether their opinions have been affected by any particular school of philosophy or not. And it holds that things exist through some nature of their own—that they exist by definition. It is not dependent on any logical examination of its object, but rather comes up in the mind automatically....

Regarding the tendency to grasp to the person as having some self-nature, there does also exist a type where one holds the person as being self-standing and

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substantial; this is taken in by the innate type just mentioned. You should understand though that the tendency of looking upon the person and his parts as being like a master and his servants can only be an intellectual type. In the same way, the tendency to hold that there exists an atomic particle which is partless, as well as the tendency to hold that there exists a moment of consciousness which is partless, can both only be an intellectual type of the tendency to hold that objects [meaning the parts of a person] have some self-nature.

In brief, the two forms of the kind of tendency to grasp to things as existing truly which comes in the mind automatically, without relying on analysis according to some philosophical school, are the innate type. All the other tendencies to hold that things have some self-nature are the intellectual kind. It should be understood that the principal object which we deny when we speak of emptiness is the object that the former tendency believes in; disproving the object believed in by the latter tendency is ancillary to disproving that believed in by the former.

Reading Three

The following contemplations are based on the *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* (*Bodhisattvacharyavatara*; *Byang-chub-sems-dpa'i spyod-pa la 'jug-pa*) of the Buddhist master Shantideva (circa 700 AD), and the commentary upon it by Gyaltsab Je Darma Rinchen (1364-1432) entitled *Entry Point for Children of the Victorious Buddhas* (*rGyal-sras 'jug-ngogs*). The relevant sections are found at folios 33A-33B and 133B-137B, respectively, in the ACIP electronic editions TD3871 and S5436.

The Person and the Parts

**Neither my teeth nor hair
Nor nails are me; nor am I
The bones or blood;
Not the snot, and not
The phlegm, not the
Lymph or pus.
Neither is my self the
Fat, the particles; nor
The lungs or liver me.**

One may make the following objection:

Here you are attempting to disprove the fact that the teeth and nails and so on could be a self. If you are doing so with the idea that it could liberate someone, then you are mistaken, since living beings tend to hold these things as being "mine," and not as being "me."

The point here is the same as in places where, for example, it's stated that the physical body is not the self. As such, the things focused upon for the two objects that are pictured in the mind during the innate form of the view of destruction are the simple "me" which serves as the basis for the workings of karma and its consequences, as well as the simple thing which is delineated as "mine." The view of destruction focuses upon these things and believes them to be a "me" and "mine" which exist by definition. Given all this, then if the "me" were to exist by definition, it would also be true that the collection of the heaps, and their continued existence, and all its components and parts, and anything completely separate from these things at all, any of them, would have to constitute what "me" refers to. The fact though is that none of these things constitutes anything of the kind. This is what is being expressed at this point.

Here is our refutation that the individual members of the various heaps could ever be what "myself" refers to. Neither my teeth nor nails are myself; the bones and blood are not what "myself" refers to; neither is the snot, nor the phlegm; all these are, rather, only something which the idea of a "me" is imposed upon, and nothing more. *Nor is the lymph, nor the pus, what "me" refers to; and the fat and particles of the body are nothing that "myself" refers to either—for the exact same reasons that we mentioned earlier.*

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Neither are the *lungs* or the *liver* what “*myself*” refers to, nor are any of the other organs, like the intestines, what “*myself*” refers to either. I am not my feces, nor my urine; I am neither the flesh nor skin; all I am is an idea imposed upon all these, nothing more. Neither the warmth of the body nor the inner winds are myself, and I am not the aperture in me, or anything of the kind—we must decide, finally, that I am none of them....

Therefore it would be wrong to consider, even nominally, either the whole of the parts of a person, or the stream of the mind, or any of the components or parts of a person to be the thing we refer to as the “person.” Neither is there anything that can we decide is the person and which is essentially different from these things. Therefore the simple fact of the matter is that the person is something which is merely imposed upon all these....

Karma and its Consequences, Despite No Self

The third part, [disproving any attempted argument concerning the refutations just presented], has two steps of its own: disproving the idea that the principle of karma and its consequences would have to be incorrect, and disproving the idea that it would be incorrect to meditate upon compassion. The first of these itself has two sections: the opponent's argument, and our response to this argument.

**“Suppose there exists no self;
The relation then between karma
And consequences is wrong.
If they disappeared after they did
Some deed, then whose karma
Would it be?” they object.**

Here is the first. Someone may make the following *objection*:

Suppose that *there exists no self* which is the basis of all things, whether they are part of the condition of bondage or part of the condition of liberation. If it is true that each and every thing that does something goes through a process of appearing and disappearing instant by instant, *then* it is completely *wrong* to postulate some *relationship between* good and bad *karma* and the corresponding *consequences*. This is because, *if* it were true that a person *disappeared* in the instant *after* he or she had *done* some good or bad *deed*, *then* later on it would be impossible to say *whose karma it would be*—what person there was who had committed it. And this is because, when it was time to experience the consequence of the karma, there would be no person left who had committed it. This is why, according to us, there must exist a person who is unchanging.

**The basis at commission and result
Is different; also this the self,
Who committed, is not.**

**Both of us accept
The fact; so isn't your argument
Something meaningless?**

Here is the second. *Both of us accept the fact that the basis, or the person, at the time of the commission of a karma (meaning, in this context, at the time of the cause) and at the time when the result is experienced is essentially different. We both also accept that—at this time when the result is experienced—the “self,” in the sense of the person who committed the karma, is not something that exists any longer. So isn't your argument here, at this point where we are discussing the relationship between karma and its consequences, something which is meaningless? Don't you also accept the fact that, at the time one is committing the karma, the experience of the result does not yet exist, and—at that time that one is experiencing the result—the one who committed the karma no longer exists?*

**To say you can see that when
We have the cause we also have
The result is impossible.
We point to one as performing
And experiencing, all with reference
To a single stream.**

If there is any problem with this train of thought, then the same problem applies to you. And if you say you can see that, when we have the cause (meaning at the time of the cause or whatever) then *we also have the experience of its result*, you are talking about something which *is completely impossible*.

“Well then,” you may continue, “what is your own position in this regard?” We can *point to someone as*—that is, name someone as—“the one who *performs* the karma” and “the one who experiences the result” all with reference to a single continuous *stream* of the parts or heaps to a person. The term “continuous stream” here refers to a whole, the person to whom the various parts belong; and these parts are the moments of them that exist earlier, later, and in between, and which belong to the person. To summarize, it is entirely correct to say that any one person has both committed a karma and experienced its consequences; it's not the case though that cause and effect are then simultaneous—no one could ever show that was the case....

Neither the Parts nor the Whole

Here is the second major division of the discussion: a detailed presentation of the types of reasoning used to prove that things [meaning here the parts of a person, as opposed to the person themselves,] have no self-nature. We proceed in three steps: an explanation of the fact that things have no self-nature, utilizing the four different forms of deep awareness; disproving any contention that the two truths would be incorrect; and setting forth logical proofs to demonstrate that there is no self-nature.

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The first of these has four parts of its own: meditating on deep awareness of one's body; meditating on deep awareness of one's feelings; meditating on deep awareness of one's mind; and meditating on deep awareness of objects....

Here is the first. It is not the case that the body has any nature of its own. This is because, if it did, then when we looked for the thing we refer to as "the body" we would have to find it to be one of the following: either the individual components of the body, or the sum total of these parts, or something essentially different from these. And yet we cannot find it to be any of these....

The Emptiness of the Parts of Parts

**The hand too then is just
The same; a collection of fingers,
So how could it ever be?
Each in turn is a collection
Of joints; and if you divide
The joints into parts, and then
Divide the parts down to atoms,
And then divide these into
Sides in different directions,
Then things are devoid of parts,
And just like empty space;
So even the atoms have none.**

Here is the second point, [establishing the fact that the body's parts, the components, have no nature]. Think of the way in which the body of a person is just a concept applied to the collection of its components. *The hand too then is just the same: a concept applied to the collection of its various pieces, to its fingers. So how then could it ever be something that had some nature of its own? It would be a complete impossibility.*

Each finger, in turn, is a concept applied to the collection of the joints that make it up—and so they too have no nature of their own. And if you examine each of the joints as well, if you divide the joints each into their various parts, you find they have no nature of their own either. And then you can take each of the parts of these wholes and divide them all the way down to their atoms, and find that none of them has any nature of its own.

And even these atoms can be divided then into their own parts: into their eastern side, and so on. They too then are a concept applied to the collection of the multiple sides that face in the different directions, and so they have no nature of their own either. You can even divide the directions themselves, which have no nature of their own either. Things then are devoid of any parts that have any nature of their own; and so they are just like, for example, empty space.

And thus it is that atoms themselves have no nature of their own; for if they did, then we would be forced to accept the existence of atoms that were partless. This concept though is disproved by the logic expressed in the lines that begin with "Suppose the six [sides in the six directions] were stuck together."

The Emptiness of Feelings

The relevant sections are found at folios 34A - 34B and 140B - 143B, respectively in the ACIP electronic editions TD3871 and S5436.

The second section, meditating on deep awareness of one's feelings, covers four different points: refuting the idea that the very essence of feeling could be something that existed by nature; refuting the idea that the cause of feeling could exist by nature; refuting the idea that the object upon which feeling focuses could exist by nature; and refuting the idea that the subject state of mind in an act of feeling could exist by nature....

The Emptiness of the Mind

**The mind doesn't reside in the faculties,
Nor in the visual or the rest,
Nor somewhere in between.**

Here is the third section, which is meditating on deep awareness of one's mind....

The mind is not something which has any nature of its own, and this is because of the following reasons:

- 1) It *does not reside*, through any nature of its own, *within the six faculties*;
- 2) It is *not* something which resides, through any nature of its own, *within the six objects of visual matter or the rest*; and
- 3) It is *not* something which resides "*somewhere in between*" these two—meaning in the combination of the two.

For this point one should recall the seven points in the analysis of a wagon, as found in *Entering the Middle Way*. [These are examining a wagon to see *whether it is self-existently*:

- 1) its parts (in which case it would have to be as many as its parts);
- 2) something unrelated to its parts (in which case it would be some externally existing "self," and no longer be a changing thing);
- 3) something that depends upon its parts (in which case their relationship would have to be that of two completely separate things, like a bowl and the yogurt in the bowl—since the thing dependent was a self-existent other);
- 4) something that its parts depend upon (similar problem);
- 5) something that possesses its parts (again, something completely other than its parts, if it "possesses" them);
- 6) the sum of its parts (independent of our projections, which cannot be); or
- 7) some special visual outline of the wagon (if this were true, then the mental heaps, since they are not physical matter and cannot have shape or color, could not be included in the "person" or his "mind").]...

Reading Four

The following contemplations are based on the *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* (*Bodhisattvacharyavatara*; *Byang-chub-sems-dpa'i spyod-pa la 'jug-pa*) of the Buddhist master Shantideva (circa 700 AD), and the commentary upon it by Gyaltsab Je Darma Rinchen (1364-1432) entitled *Entry Point for Children of the Victorious Buddhas* (*rGyal-sras 'jug-ngogs*). The relevant sections are found at folios 35A-36B and 146A-151B, respectively, in the ACIP electronic editions TD3871 and S5436.

The Sliver of Diamond

The third part, setting forth logical proofs to demonstrate that there is no selfnature, has three sections of its own: the proof known as the “sliver of diamond”; the proof based on dependent origination; and the proof based on refuting that neither a thing which does, nor does not, exist could ever grow.

The first of these has five points of its own: refuting the idea that things could grow without a cause; refuting the idea that things could grow from something other than themselves which was also unchanging; refuting the idea that things could grow from a primal One which was unchanging; a summary of the refutation of the idea that things could grow without a cause; and a refutation of the idea that things could grow from both themselves and things other than themselves....

What Emptiness is Empty Of

**...One would never be able to
Grasp how something was
Devoid of being a thing
Without encountering that
Thing it was which one
Imagined it to be.
For this reason, the fact that the
Deceptive thing is not a thing
Is something clearly deceptive.**

And this really is the case, because *one would never be able to grasp*, through the process of conceptualization, how something was devoid of being a thing (how it lacked any true existence) *unless* one was first able to “*encounter*” (or conceptualize) that thing it was which one “*imagined it to be*” (meaning true existence); that is, unless one was first able to form a mental picture of what it was like to exist in truth. And *for this reason*—which means, because of *the fact that the “deceptive thing”* or object we deny is totally impossible—then the condition that remains when we have denied the existence of this object (meaning the fact that this object *is not a thing*) *is itself something which is clearly deceptive.*

Here is an example to illustrate what we have just been talking about. Until such time as you are able to form a mental picture of the child of a barren woman, you can never form a picture of this same child dying...

Things are Empty Because They are Dependent

**They are not something that comes
From somewhere else, nor
Do they stay or go.
What difference is there between
An illusion, and that object which
Dark ignorance imagines true?**

**Consider a thing a magician
Creates, and things which are
Created by causes.
Examine where it is
That they came from,
And where it is they're going.**

Here secondly is the proof which uses dependent origination. Consider now *that object which* ignorance, the *dark ignorance* which relates to mental affliction, *imagines* has some *true* existence; consider a working thing that exists nominally. What difference is there between this thing and an illusion, or a dream, or a reflection in a mirror, or anything of the like? This is because, despite the fact they are empty of any nature of their own, they still appear to have such a nature.

Consider next something like an illusory horse or an elephant, or anything of the sort, *created by a magician*. And think too of the working *things* that are *created by causes* and conditions. Suppose that these things had some nature of their own. When they started then they would have to be *something that comes from somewhere else*, and when they stopped they would have to go to somewhere else.

Try to examine though where it is that they came from, and where it is they are *going*. The coming and going have no nature of their own, and so we can state the following proof:

Consider the person and the heaps that are his parts.
They have no nature of their own, because
They are examples of dependent origination.
They are, for example, like a reflection in a mirror....

The Emptiness of Becoming and Ending

The relevant sections are found at folios 36B - 36B and 151B - 153A, respectively in the ACIP electronic editions TD3871 and S5436.

Here is the third section, the proof based on refuting that neither a thing which does nor does not exist could ever grow. This section itself has three steps: making the proof, and thus refuting the idea that the arising of things could exist by nature; using this same proof to disprove that the ending of things could exist by nature; and showing how this proves that suffering existence and the state of peace have one quality which is totally equivalent.

**Suppose that working things
Did have some; what need
Would there be for causes?
And even if these didn't
Exist, what need again
Would there be for causes?**

Here is the first. *Suppose that working things had some nature of their own. What need then would there be for causes?* They wouldn't have to make anything grow. And even if these results didn't exist, then what need again would there be *for causes?* They would never be able to make anything grow either. Incidentally, the fact is that no result at all ever exists at the time that its cause is present, and this is invariably the way that things grow; so this is not what we are denying in the present case. Rather, we are denying that something that could never exist at all could grow.

And suppose next that we are denying that a result which did exist could grow. What we deny in this case is the kind of result that the Numerists posit—one that could exist at the time of its cause; as well as the result which the majority of schools accept, which is one that could have any nature of its own. To say though that “Because something has already grown, it is not necessary for the cause to make it grow,” would be beyond all logic. The point then is that we are asserting that cause and effect are empty of any nature of their own; that they are like an illusion, or the reflection of an image in the mirror.

**You could have billions of causes,
But still never turn
A thing that didn't function.
How can the condition become
A functioning thing? To become so
It could be no other one.**

What follows next is a proof that a thing without any function could never be the object of the functioning of a cause. In this regard, someone might make the following claim:

Since a result that already existed would already have occurred, there would be no need for its cause to produce it. Why though is it that you say a result which does not exist cannot occur?

The fact though is that *you could have literally billions of causes involved, but you could still never turn something that was not a functioning thing into something that was: there is nothing at all that could ever make something that was not a functioning thing into something that was....*

**It's impossible for it to be
Functioning while it does not;
When could it become functioning?
Until such time as the functioning
Was produced, it could never**

**Lose its not functioning.
Until such time as it did lose
Not functioning, the condition
Of doing so would be impossible.**

Suppose moreover that the thing which doesn't function *does not* lose its condition of being a thing which doesn't function when it is the object of a cause. It is completely impossible for anything to be a functioning thing while it is a thing which *does not* function. *When* then do you imagine *it could* be that this *became a functioning* thing? A functioning thing could never grow so long as the thing was something that didn't function.

Suppose again that it became a functioning thing after it *did* lose its condition of being a thing which didn't function. *Until such time as the functioning* thing was produced, it could never lose its condition of being a thing which didn't function; but until such time as it did lose the condition of not functioning, it is an impossibility that it could take on the condition of having a function—for the two conditions are mutually exclusive.

**A thing that does function could never
Be what didn't either:
It would have to have two natures.**

A thing that doesn't function could never become a thing that did; just so, *a* thing that does function could never become a thing that didn't either. If a thing were half something that functioned and half something that didn't function, then a single thing *would have to have two* different *natures*, and this again is impossible.

This same kind of reasoning can be used for disproving both the idea that something which didn't exist at all could grow, and the idea that any of the things which have no function could ever grow.

Consider then a sprout.
It cannot grow through any nature of its own, because
Neither can a thing which exists and which has a nature of its own ever
grow,
nor can a thing which does not exist and which has a nature of its own
ever grow.
It is like, for example, the child of a barren woman....

**From the point of view of suchness,
There is no difference between
Reaching nirvana and failing to.**

Consider now the condition of *reaching nirvana*, where you are freed from the shackles of suffering life—from desire and the rest, *and* the condition of *failing to* reach nirvana—that is, of being thrust into the prison of cyclic existence.

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From the point of view of their suchness, there is no difference between these two. This is because a suffering existence and peace itself are totally equivalent in being empty of any nature of their own...

To summarize, we must undertake to meditate upon the real nature of things, basing this analysis upon the practice of meditative quietude. The "me" you think of when you say "it's mine" is nothing more than a projection that you lay on the heaps or parts that make you up. It has not the slightest bit of any natural existence, of any definitive existence, of any independent way of being.

The existence of a person is something which happens only by virtue of an idea; the person exists only through projections, only in dependence on other things, and nothing more. Practice thinking of things this way: see that they have no nature of their own. Continue in your meditation, applying this same concept to every existing object: to the parts of a person, and everything else as well. . . .

Pray They All Be Bodhisattvas

The relevant sections are found at folios 37A - 40A and 155A - 163A, respectively in the ACIP electronic editions TD3871 and S5436.

(The following contemplations are all from the "Chapter on Dedication")...

**I have thus finished composing
A guide to the way of life
Followed by bodhisattvas.
By all the virtue achieved thus
May every being engage
In the bodhisattva's life.**

Here is the first. "I," meaning the author of this commentarial classic, "*have thus finished composing a very thorough guide to the way of life followed by bodhisattvas.... I hereby dedicate all the virtue that I have achieved through this act, as well as all the virtue that anyone may ever obtain through teaching, or learning, or thinking about the meaning of this book. Through this virtue, may every living being engage in—that is actually practice, properly—the bodhisattva's way of life.*"...

Moreover this virtue, as explained in the ninth chapter, must be performed in such a manner that it is imbued with the wisdom which perceives the fact that none of the three elements has any true existence. Admittedly there is no great difference between the act of dedication and that of prayer. Nonetheless, an act of prayer can be described as something characterized by a kind of aspiration in which you hope for some goal, something that you wish to happen. Dedication, on the other hand, is something characterized by a kind of aspiration in which you hope that virtues, from their causal point of view, might become a cause for some particular result to occur. . . .

For the Teacher and Teachings

...I bow down to Gentle Voice,

**The one whose kindness has brought me
That virtuous state of mind....**

*I bow down to that extraordinary Spiritual Guide who has acted as the personal cause for it all: the one whose kindness has brought to me that *virtuous state of mind* through which I have been able to meditate upon the Wish for enlightenment, and to train myself in the activities of a bodhisattva, and to compose this classical commentary which takes these activities as its subject matter. In short, I bow down to the personal cause of these; that is, to *Gentle Voice* (Manjushri) himself.*

**I bow down in the very same
Way to that Spiritual Guide
Whose kindness has made me prosper.**

*I bow down in the very same way to that Spiritual Guide who has granted me the *kindness of making* the virtuous side of *my* being *prosper*, by leading me into the spiritual trainings, and by helping me to develop realizations such as those achieved through the three-fold process of learning, contemplation, and meditation.*

This final chapter is characterized by the act of dedication, in which virtues are transformed by fierce feelings of aspiration expressed in prayers for temporal and ultimate goals. As such, it represents a detailed explanation of how we train ourselves in that type of generosity where we give away our bodies, possessions, and the virtues we have collected, all in order to help others....