Transcript of teachings by Khen Rinpoche Geshe Chonyi

Root text: *Presentation of Tenets* by Jetsün Chökyi Gyaltsen, translated by Glen Svensson. Copyright: Glen Svensson, April 2005. Reproduced for use in the FPMT Basic Program with permission from Glen Svensson

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All page references refer to this root text unless otherwise stated.

Lesson No: 21   Date: 28ᵗʰ May 2013

Question from Student A: In Lesson 17, it was mentioned that there are three types of dualistic appearance:
1. appearance of an external object
2. appearance of subject and object being different entities
3. appearance of conventional phenomena
When dualistic appearance arises, is it any *one* of these three appearances or all the three appearances must arise simultaneously to the mind?

Answer: Any of the three in the examples given by you can be posited to be dualistic appearance. Dualistic appearance need not be all three.

Question from Khen Rinpoche (addressing Student A): Why do you think that in order to be dualistic appearance, it must be all the three appearances?

(Khen Rinpoche addresses the class): I said that dualistic appearance can be any of the three in the examples given and all of you are satisfied with that. Do you understand the reason for this? Why don't you need all three appearances in order for it to be dualistic appearance?

This is not straightforward and is not easy. The way to learn is not to be satisfied and simply accept what I say. This is not going to work. The way to study is to ask, "Why is it like this? Why is it like that?" The only way to learn is to have a continuous succession of, "Why? Why? Why?" Only then will you get the point.

What faults would there be if one asserts that all three appearances must be present in order for there to be dualistic appearance?

Student A: Could it be like this? The dualistic appearance that arises for an individual depends on that person's karmic imprints. Also there is one karmic imprint for each appearance. If we were to assert that all three appearances are necessary to qualify as "dualistic appearance," that would mean that for every apprehension of an object, we would need three karmic imprints, instead of just one.

Khen Rinpoche: The appearance of an external object is always there. It is stated very clearly that all sense consciousnesses are necessarily mistaken. So definitely that appearance is there.

(Exchange with student A).

Student B: (Attempts to answer Khen Rinpoche's question): It would mean that simply have one of the three appearances will not qualify as dualistic appearance. That is incorrect.

(Khen Rinpoche addresses Student A): Your question was, "In order for there to be dualistic appearance, do all the three appearances have to appear or will any one of the three appearances be enough?"

My answer was, "You need not have all the three appearances. Any one of those appearances can be a dualistic appearance."

Now my question is, "What is the problem if all three appearances have to be there in order for there to be dualistic appearance?"

Khen Rinpoche: Do you need all three appearances? Yes or no?

Student A: No.

Khen Rinpoche: Posit an illustration.

Student A: An eye consciousness apprehending blue as an external object.

Khen Rinpoche: Posit an illustration where you need one of the three appearances without the other two in order for it to be dualistic appearance?

Student A: An eye consciousness apprehending blue as an external object. The appearance of blue as an external object is the dualistic appearance.

Ven Gyurme: Of the three appearances, what is missing?

Student A: Subject and object being different entities and the appearance of the object as conventional phenomena.

Khen Rinpoche: If there is an appearance of external blue, then blue is appearing as something different from the apprehender. Therefore there is an appearance of the apprehender and the apprehended, i.e., subject and object being different entities. Now which appearance is missing?

Student A: Appearance of conventional phenomena.

Khen Rinpoche: Blue does not appear to that consciousness?

Student A: Yes, it appears. Ah …does that mean Khen Rinpoche was purposely giving me the wrong answer in the beginning so that we can have this discussion?

Ven Gyurme: The original answer given by Khen Rinpoche is correct.

Student A: Then it is back to the drawing board. I am thinking along the lines of three karmic imprints as I explained earlier.

Khen Rinpoche: You all accepted what was said earlier: Any of the three

appearances in the examples you gave can be posited to be dualistic appearance. Dualistic appearance need not be all three.

(Addressing Student A): Your illustration of eye consciousness apprehending blue actually has all the three appearances. It follows then that if it is a dualistic appearance, it has to be all the three appearances. You have to accept this. Your thesis is defeated!

Student C: An illustration is: I myself apprehending a self.

Khen Rinpoche: Of the three appearances, what is missing?

Student C: There is no external object. And maybe no subject and object being different entities.

Khen Rinpoche: Why is there no appearance of external object for the thought apprehending the "I"?

Khen Rinpoche: Someone come up with a better example. Come, come.

Student D: An illustration is a mental direct perceiver apprehending blue as a gross object, blue.

Khen Rinpoche: Among the three appearances, what is missing?

Student D: There is no appearance of an external object because blue appears as vivid blue to the mental consciousness.

Khen Rinpoche: Why isn't there an appearance of an external object to this mental direct perceiver apprehending blue? Isn't there a consciousness to which this external blue appears?

Student D: Not necessarily.

Ven Gyurme: It follows then that there is no consciousness to which an external blue appears. Why isn't there an appearance of an external object to this mental direct perceiver apprehending blue?

Student D: Because blue exists to the MOS True Aspectarians …

Khen Rinpoche: Are you saying that as long as there is blue, it will not appear as an external object to any consciousness?

Student D: No, I am not saying that. When blue appears, it can appear as the gross object, vivid blue or it can appear as an external blue. The mental consciousness apprehending blue as blue is an illustration of an apprehension of the blue that is not an external blue. This is an illustration of dualistic appearance.

Khen Rinpoche: Is the mental direct perceiver apprehending blue a valid cogniser? Isn't the mental direct perceiver apprehending blue in the mental continuum of an ordinary being an awareness to which an object appears and is not ascertained? The answer is yes.

There are two divisions of the MWS:
1. the AMWS
2. the CMWS
Both proponents of the AMWS and the CMWS are Proponents of the Middle Way. This means that they both do not assert true existence even conventionally.

The difference between the AMWS and the CMWS is this:
• The AMWS asserts existence (or establishment)[1] by way of its own character.
• The CMWS does not assert existence by way of its own character.

In order to fully understand the difference between these two sub-schools of the Middle Way, one must know:
• what true existence is and
• what is the meaning of "existence by way of its own character."

Existence by way of its own character
Existence by way of its own character means that the imputed object, when sought, is findable. So when the imputed object is sought and is findable, it shows that the object exists by way of its own character. When the imputed object is sought and is *not* findable, it shows that the object does not exist by way of its own character.

The AMWS believes that an object exists from its own side in that there is something that you can point to and call the object. This is what you are looking for. There is an appearance of such an object. This appearance is coming from the side of the object. The AMWS asserts that this is how phenomena exist in reality; when you look for the imputed object, you will be able to find it.

For the tenets of the AMWS and those below it, they believe that things exist from their own side. When the imputed object is sought, it is findable. Everything exists like that including the "I," the self, or the person, i.e., you should be able to point to something that is the person.

According to the AMWS, the illustration of a person is the mental consciousness. Therefore the person can be found. They have to think about this as they have to account for how a person moves from life to life. At the end of their analysis, they conclude that it has to be the mind, specifically, the mental consciousness. Not just any consciousness but the mental consciousness. Many other tenets also assert that the mental consciousness is the person.

It is stated very clearly in the writings of the great master Bhavaviveka, the trailblazer of AMWS, that the mental consciousness is the "I" or self.

We are talking now about the assertions of the AMWS. Do bear in mind however that in reality, the mental consciousness is *not* the "I" according to the viewpoint of the CMWS.

It is wrong to posit that the mental consciousness is the illustration of the "I," but this is the view of the AMWS. This is because of their fundamental assertion that things exist by way of their own character and therefore, you *must* be able to point to something that is the phenomenon in question. Since they believe

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[1] For the sake of consistency, "existent by way of its own character" will be used in these transcripts.

that a phenomenon can be found when sought, then with regard to the "I," the best illustration that can be pointed to is the mental consciousness.

It is an extremely difficult task to realise what the "I," the self, or the person is exactly. There is an "I" that wants to be happy and do not want to suffer. What exactly is this "I"? It is a big question. This is the main object of enquiry of all the Buddhist tenets. Everyone is trying to find out exactly what is this "I" or the person. All the tenets have their own explanations for this.

Because of not understanding exactly what is the "I" or the person, all problems arise. Every single problem, difficulty, and hardship comes from this. With a correct and proper understanding of exactly what the "I" or the person is, these problems will go away.

True existence
The proponents of the AMWS do not assert true existence because they are the Proponents of the Middle Way. What is true existence exactly?

As discussed in the previous lesson with the quotation from the *Descent into Lanka Sutra*[2] as the source, the AMWS states that a phenomenon is an existent because it appears to a mind or awareness. This is why it exists. Without such appearance, it cannot be posited as an existent. For the AMWS, this is the meaning of existence.

The opposite is this: if there is something that can exist *without* appearing to a mind, that would make the object truly existent. This is the view of the AMWS. They explain that anything that exists has to be posited through its appearance to an awareness. Not just any awareness. It has to appear to a non-defective awareness.

What determines whether something exists or not? If it is posited through the force of appearing to a non-defective awareness, then it is said to be an existent.

What is the meaning of a non-defective awareness? A non-defective awareness has two features:
1. It is a mind that is not affected by adventitious causes of error.
2. It is not mistaken with respect to objects appearing as existing by way of their own character.

According to the AMWS, true existence means, "established by way of its own uncommon mode of existence without being posited through the force of appearing to a non-defective awareness."[3]

In the last lesson, we saw how the AMWS is divided into two:
1. the Sutra Middle Way Autonomists (*Skt.Sautrantika-Svatantrika-Madhyamika)* (SMWA)
2. the Yogic Middle Way Autonomists (*Skt. Yogacara-Svatantrika-Madhyamika)* (YMWA).

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[2] There is a quotation from the *Descent into Lanka Sutra* that reads, "All phenomena exist through appearing to the consciousness. All phenomena exist conventionally and all phenomena do not exist ultimately." (Page 5, Lesson 20)
[3] Refer to chart, "Meaning of Terms used to Describe the Mode of Existence of Phenomena in the Mahayana Schools."

The Yogic Middle Way Autonomists

The YMWAs are proponents of the AMWS who have views that mostly conform with the tenets of the MOS: (1) they do not assert external objects and (2) they do assert self-knowers.

An illustration of a YMWA was Shantarakshita. He was a great Indian master who was invited to Tibet during the reign of King Trisong Detsen in the 8th century when Samye monastery was built. He introduced the lineage of ordination to Tibet and it is said that Shantarakshita was the architect who designed the layout of Samye monastery.

The Sutra Middle Way Autonomists

The assertions of the SMWAs mostly conform with the assertions of the Sutra School: (1) they assert external objects but (2) they do not assert self-knowers. We could say that Proponents of the Middle Way who assert that external objects exist by way of their own character and who do not assert self-knowers are SMWAs.

The trailblazer of the SMWAS is the great Indian master Bhavaviveka who was born in South India. He became a monk and a great scholar at Nalanda monastery. It was said that he established over 50 temples and thus helped to spread the teachings of the Buddha. He wrote a commentary on Nagarjuna's *Fundamental Wisdom* that refuted the commentary of the same text by Buddhapalita, who held the view of the Prasangika.

In so doing, Bhavaviveka established the view of the AMWS. From his side, he asserted that the view of the AMWS is correct and that the view of the Prasangika is incorrect. He tried to show that the intention of Nagarjuna's explanations in *Fundamental Wisdom* was based on the view of the AMWS.

The two truths

As mentioned in the previous lesson, the presentation of the two truths according to the AMWS is similar to that of the MOS.

Selflessness of persons

The AMWS's assertion of the selflessness of persons is the same as the lower tenets.

Selflessness of phenomena

The YMWAs assert that:
- A form and a cogniser apprehending that form being empty of different substances is the coarse selflessness of phenomena.
- All phenomena being empty of true existence is asserted to be the subtle selflessness of phenomena.

Therefore the YMWAs divide the selflessness of phenomena into coarse and subtle.

The YMWAs distinguish between:
- the coarse and subtle selflessness of persons and
- the coarse and subtle selflessness of phenomena.

The difference is not made on the basis of emptiness but by way of the object of negation. Having said that, you should be able to explain why, according to the AMWS, the difference between the two selflessnesses of phenomena is made on

the basis of the object of negation and not on the basis of emptiness?

Question from Khen Rinpoche: The two subtle selflessnesses are differentiated by way of the object of negation and not by way of the basis of the emptiness. What are the faults if we were to say that the two selflessnesses are differentiated by way of the basis of emptiness?

> The two [subtle] selflessnesses are differentiated by way of the object of negation and not by way of the basis of the emptiness because the refutation of the object of negation - true existence – upon the basis of a person is the subtle selflessness of phenomena, while the refutation of self-sufficient substantial existence upon the basis of a person is the subtle selflessness of persons (Page 22).

Yogic Autonomy Middle Way school	Coarse selflessness of persons	Subtle selflessness of persons	Coarse selflessness of phenomena	Subtle selflessness of phenomena
	Non-existence of a permanent, unitary, and independent person	Non-existence of a self-sufficient substantially existent person	Non-existence of object and subject being different entities	Non-existence of truly existent phenomena

The Yogic Middle Way Autonomists: the three vehicles

7 Presentation of the grounds and paths

According to Yogic Middle Way Autonomists the differences between the persons of the three vehicles are posited in terms of three different obscurations that are the main objects of abandonment and three different views that are the main objects of meditation (Page 22).

In order to clarify what I just said, the next three paragraphs explain how the differences between the persons of the three vehicles are posited in terms of the three obscurations.

> Those of the hearer lineage, having taken the conception apprehending [the person] to be self-sufficient substantially existent together with its retinue as their main object of abandonment, through taking, as the antidote to that, the view realizing the person to be empty of being self-sufficient substantially existent as their main object of meditation, attain the small enlightenment (Page 22).

The three vehicles are the Hearers' Vehicle, the Solitary Realisers' Vehicle and the Bodhisattvas' Vehicle.

For those of the hearer lineage:
- The main object of meditation is the emptiness of a self-sufficient substantially existent person.
- The main object of abandonment is the conception apprehending a self-sufficient substantially existent person.
- Through meditating on the emptiness of a self-sufficient substantially existent person, they abandon the conception apprehending a self-sufficient substantially existent person.
- Through that they achieve the small enlightenment, the hearer's

enlightenment.

> Those of the solitary realizer lineage, having taken the conception apprehending a form and the valid cognizer apprehending that form to be different substances as their main object of abandonment, through taking, as the antidote to that, the view realizing apprehenders and apprehendeds to be empty of being different substances as their main object of meditation, attain the middling enlightenment (Page 22).

For those of the solitary realiser lineage:
- The main object of meditation is the emptiness of object and subject being different substances.
- The main object of abandonment is the conception apprehending form and the valid cogniser apprehending that form being different substances.
- Through meditating on that emptiness, they abandon this object of abandonment.
- Through that, they achieve the middling enlightenment, the solitary realiser's enlightenment.

> Bodhisattvas, having taken the conception of true existence together with its latencies as their main object of abandonment, through taking, as the antidote to that, the view realizing all phenomena to be lacking true existence as their main object of meditation, attain the great enlightenment (Page 22).

For those of the bodhisattva lineage:
- The main object of meditation is the emptiness of true existence.
- The main object of abandonment is the conception of true existence.
- Through meditating on that emptiness, they abandon the objects of abandonment.
- Through that, they achieve the great enlightenment, i.e., full enlightenment.

This is the explanations by the YMWAs. The YMWAs assert that there are differences between the person of the three vehicles and these differences are posited in terms of them having different obscurations as their main objects of abandonment. Therefore there is a difference in their main objects of meditation.

THE YOGIC MIDDLE WAY AUTONOMISTS: THE THREE VEHICLES			
	Hearers Lineage	**Solitary Realisers Lineage**	**Bodhisattvas Lineage**
Main object of abandonment	Conception apprehending a self-sufficient substantially existent person	Conception apprehending form and the valid cogniser apprehending form being different substances	Conception of true existence
Main object of meditation	The emptiness of a self-sufficient substantially existent person	The emptiness of object and subject being different substances	The emptiness of true existence
Type of enlightenment	Small enlightenment or hearer's enlightenment	Middling enlightenment or solitary realiser's enlightenment	Great enlightenment or full enlightenment

The Sutra Middle Way Autonomists: the three vehicles

> According to Sutra Middle Way Autonomists there is no difference between hearers and solitary realizers regarding their main objects of abandonment and main objects of meditation because they are similar in taking the afflictive obscurations as their main objects of abandonment, and they are also similar in taking the selflessness of persons as their main object of meditation. However, there is a reason why there is a difference in the results of those two in terms of inferiority and superiority. It is because there is a difference in terms of the amount of merit accumulated and the length of time [spent accumulating that merit] (Page 22).

The SMWAs are similar to the Proponents of Sutra in asserting external objects. Because they assert external objects, they do not talk about the emptiness of object and subject being different substances. The SMWAs assert that:

- The main object of meditation of both hearers and solitary realisers is the selflessness of persons.
- The main object of abandonment of both hearers and solitary realisers is the afflictive obscurations.

Having said that, this question will arise, "According to the SMWAs, is there any difference between hearers and solitary realisers"? The answer is, "Yes, there is a difference." The difference comes in terms of the amount of merit that the hearers and the solitary realisers accumulate.

Interpretative and definitive sutras

> The Autonomists are similar to the Proponents of Mind Only in asserting two types of sutras – Great Vehicle sutras and Lesser Vehicle sutras – and in asserting two parts to sutras – the definitive and interpretive.

> However, they are not similar in the illustrations of these because the Proponents of Mind Only assert the first two turnings of the wheel [of Dharma] to be sutras of interpretive meaning and the third to be sutras of definitive meaning (Pages 22 – 23).

The words of the Buddha can be divided into the Hinayana sutras and the Mahayana sutras. How are they differentiated? There were three turnings of the Wheel of Dharma.
- The first turning of the Wheel of Dharma consists of the Hinayana sutras and the uncommon Hinayana sutras.
- The second turning of the Wheel of Dharma consists of the Mahayana sutras and the uncommon Mahayana sutras.
- The third turning of the Wheel of Dharma consists of sutras that were common or shared with both the Hinayana and Mahayana.

According to the YMWAs:
- The first and third turnings of the Wheel of Dharma consist of sutras of interpretive meaning.

- The second turning of the Wheel of Dharma consist of sutras of *both* interpretive meaning and definitive meaning.

According to the Autonomists:
- The *Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom Sutra* that we recite regularly is a sutra that belongs to the second turning of the Wheel of Dharma and it is a sutra of interpretive meaning.
- The *Short, Middling, and Extensive Perfection of Wisdom Sutras* are sutras that belong to the second turning of the Wheel of Dharma and are sutras of definitive meaning.

The *Heart of the Perfection of the Wisdom Sutra* is a sutra belonging to the second turning of the Wheel of Dharma and it is a sutra of interpretive not definitive meaning. Why is this so? This is because, according to the AMWS, the *Heart of the Perfection of the Wisdom Sutra* cannot be taken literally as there will be many problems if you were to do so.

This is because the *Heart of the Perfection of the Wisdom Sutra* states clearly that phenomena are empty of inherent existence while the AMWS asserts that phenomena exist inherently. The AMWS asserts that if a phenomenon exists, it necessarily exists inherently. If we were to take the *Heart of the Perfection of the Wisdom Sutra* literally, that means we would have to accept that phenomena do *not* exist inherently.

On the other hand, the AMWS accepts that the *Short, Middling, and Extensive Perfection of Wisdom Sutras* are sutras of definitive meaning. Why? Because in these sutras, the qualification of "ultimately" is added. So whenever phenomena are said to be empty of existing inherently, the qualification of "ultimately" is added, i.e., ultimately phenomena are not inherently existent.

> In this context, the first and third turnings of the wheel [of Dharma] are sutras of interpretive meaning, while the middle [turning of the wheel of Dharma] has both parts – interpretive and definitive – because those in which the qualification of 'ultimately' is applied to the object of negation are asserted to be sutras of definitive meaning, while those of the middle turning of the wheel, in which it is not applied, are asserted to be sutras of interpretive meaning (Page 23).

SUTRAS OF DEFINITIVE AND INTERPRETATIVE MEANING			
Turning of the Wheel of Dharma	Type of sutras	Assertion of the YMWAs	Assertions of the AMWS
First	Hinayana sutras and the uncommon Hinayana sutras	Interpretive meaning	Interpretative meaning
Second	Mahayana sutras and the uncommon Mahayana sutra	Both interpretive meaning and definitive meaning	*Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom Sutra*—interpretive meaning *Short, Middling and Extensive Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*—definitive meaning
Third	Sutras that are shared with both the Hinayana and Mahayana.	Interpretive meaning	Interpretative meaning

That is all for the AMWS. We will complete the CMWS in the next few lessons.

Question: Do the SMWAs assert partless particles?

Answer: The SMWAs assert partless particles but they do *not* assert *directionally* partless particles.

According to the MWS, if it is an existent, it necessarily possesses parts. That would mean a partless particle has parts, i.e., a partless particle is not partless because they possess parts. You have to think about this.

The exam will be held on Sunday, 23rd June at 10.30am.

Tenets classes will end on 13th June. The week following that will be empty of classes.

Khen Rinpoche: Empty of classes. Full of knowledge. The meaning of exams is that: no exams, no knowledge. A little bit of stress is ok.

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