

# ***Teachings on the Madhyamakaśhāstra***

**His Holiness the Dalai Lama**

English translation by Christophe Humblot (Jinpa).  
Any errors or omissions are his. The brackets and notes are added.

This preliminary version is intended for internal use only,  
i.e., for the teachings of Venerable Geshe Jamphel.

*(Madhyamaka International Study).*

**[P. 13] Explanation, among other things, of the homage at the beginning of the *Great Commentary***

As mentioned in the homage in [Lama Tsongkhapa's] commentary on the *Root Treatise of the Middle Way*<sup>1</sup> entitled *Ocean of Reasoning – A Great Commentary on the Madhyamakaśāstra*<sup>2</sup> :

[1.] May I be continually supported by the Victor,  
Who is universally praised by the wise  
As the crown jewel of all teachers,  
For having taught the empty nature of dependent arising.<sup>3</sup>

Thus paying homage to the teacher [the Buddha] for having by himself proclaimed the instructions on interdependence (*pratītyasamutpāda*) in an unsurpassable manner. Then<sup>4</sup>:

[2.] I take refuge in the lord of the treasure of wisdom  
Who, seeing this discourse as the quintessence of all the Scriptures,  
Satisfies the universal assembly of bodhisattvas  
By means of this profound discourse.

This recalls the fact that among the two lineages of transmission of the Buddhadharma—vast and profound—Ārya Mañjuśrī presides over the profound gradual path and teaches it after making it accessible through his wisdom. Next:

[3.] May Nāgārjuna, sun of rhetoric, be victorious, he who,  
Having identified countless points of indecision that could divert us  
From the definitive meaning as it was taught,  
Has perfectly overturned them;  
[4] And who, providing unsurpassable certainty of this system  
Through a diversity of proofs and refutations  
Whose eruption into thousands of dialectical rays of light  
Dispels the thick darkness at the heart of grasping at extremes.

This brings to mind the noble protector Ārya Nāgārjuna, who demonstrated correctly through countless arguments the Buddha's intention, which is the reality of interdependence.

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<sup>1</sup> *Root verses of the Middle Way entitled Wisdom (Prajñā nāma mūlamadhyamakakārikā)* from Ārya Nāgārjuna, text also known as *Madhyamakaśāstra (Treatise of the Middle Way)*.

<sup>2</sup> རྩ་ཤེད་རྒྱུ་ཆེན་རིགས་པའི་བྱ་མཚན་. Cf. *Ocean of Reasoning – A Great Commentary on Nāgārjuna's Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (Geshe Ngawang Samten & Jay Garfield; Oxford 2006).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Ocean of Reasoning*, p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> From this point on, His Holiness quotes only the first verse of the stanza or group of stanzas that he then comments on.

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Next:

[5] Homage to all upholders of the tradition of the great founder,  
The glorious Āryadeva and Āryaśhūra among others,  
Who fully and perfectly maintained this supreme vehicle  
And who greatly illuminated the teaching of the Sage.

First mentioned here in general terms are the followers of Ārya Nāgārjuna such as Āryadeva and Āchārya Āryaśhūra, then more specifically:

[6.] Just like the protector of the night among the constellations,  
Here shines even more radiantly upon the crowd of commentators  
The system of the supremely accomplished Buddhapālita and Chandrakīrti,  
And their memory filled with faith gives me goosebumps.

... special tribute is paid to these two: Āchārya Buddhapālita and the glorious Chandrakīrti, who revealed ever more clearly the principles of emptiness and interdependence. [P. 14] Then:

[7.] I rely on the lotus feet of those who completely dispel  
My enemy—confusion—through their dialectical radiance.  
May the prodigious activities of these sublime guides  
Protect me until the end of *saṃsāra*!

This indicates the prostrations and homage paid to all the lamas of holy Tibet who follow in the footsteps of the masters of the noble country [India] mentioned above, and once this is done, the request to be protected until *saṃsāra* is empty. Next:

[8.] I am delighted to explain this profound Middle Way,  
As requested by many Dharma friends  
In search of the ultimate meaning  
And by the illustrious governor of the kingdom.

This shows that when writing the promise to compose, [Lama Tsongkhapa] mentions the reasons for the necessity of the treatise: the fact that he was invited to do so by many close friends—scholars and accomplished practitioners—, and on that basis, the pleasure he takes in writing this commentary. Then:

[9.] Though those who are satisfied with the mere words “definitive meaning”,  
Those who are content with a glimpse of its partial meaning,  
And those who, when they desire to practice from the bottom of their hearts,  
Find any aspiration for this supreme treatise useless,

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[10.] Perfectly lighting the torch of valid reasonings  
That dispels the dark clusters of false conceptions and doubts  
About the meaning of the *Prajñāpāramitā*—core of the definitive scriptures,  
Which is none other than the path taken by countless lords of yogis,  
[11.] I will duly explain the *Root Treatise of the Middle Way*  
To those who wish to meditate on the intention of Ārya Nāgārjuna  
By means of a decisive view of the mode of being;  
May these wise ones then listen with deference!

*Those who are satisfied with the mere words “definitive meaning”*, refers to the fact that one should not be satisfied with the terms *definitive meaning* alone, such as those who claim that an abridged manual is a text expounding the definitive meaning, or that it’s an unsurpassable text which teaches emptiness, and say, “I meditate on emptiness!” “I meditate on the definitive meaning!” We must thoroughly examine emptiness exactly as it is through rigorous analysis, still to do so, we must certainly address the entire scriptural tradition; and on this occasion, we should not be satisfied with a crude understanding of the fact that this emptiness is the emptiness of inherent existence, or even of the fact that dependent origination implies the emptiness of inherent existence. It is important to complete the analysis in its depth and subtleties without being satisfied with a mere crude and truncated presentation of the meaning of emptiness, because presumption that is content with a partial understanding leads nowhere. [P. 15] For those who approach this text with the desire to put this sought-after meaning into practice, it is advisable to *listen with deference* to this excellent explanation<sup>5</sup>. The content of these verses indicates, first, *those who are satisfied with the mere words “definitive meaning”*; second, the presumptuous who claim to be knowledgeable after having had a rough *glimpse* of the entire scriptural tradition; and third, those who have no desire to practice the meaning of this text, thereby showing that [some consider] this central text to be useless.

In contrast to these, the composition of this text is said to be intended for those who are not satisfied with the mere expression “definitive meaning,” to those who investigate subtly instead of pretending to know everything after a mere cursory glance, as well as to those who wish to put [the meaning of the text] into practice. Then:

...About the meaning of the *Prajñāpāramitā*—core of the definitive scriptures<sup>6</sup>

Referring to the fact that the very meaning of the *Perfection of Wisdom*, which is the quintessence of the definitive teachings, was expressed on the basis of their spiritual experience by the lords of the yogis who came in the past, which made them lords among the yogis, so too those who are becoming lords of the yogis by expressing

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<sup>5</sup> The last Tibetan verse of these preliminary stanzas. Cf. *Ocean of Reasoning*, p. 8.

<sup>6</sup> Of the last two stanzas above, the first begins in Tibetan with this verse quoted by His Holiness. Cf. *Ocean of Reasoning*, p. 8.

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it on the basis of their spiritual experience, and those who will become such in the future are these *countless lords of yogis* following this *path*; yet, such a profound path is difficult to find and to realize, which is why all these *dark clusters* (namely non-realization, *false conceptions* in terms of incorrect understanding, and the dark piles of indecision where one is not freed from hundreds of bonds of *doubt* regarding this profound meaning) having been dispelled by the blazing torch of reasoning supported by valid cognition, this excellent commentary on the *Root Treatise on the Middle Way* is intended for all wise people who wish to meditate in accordance with Ārya Nāgārjuna's intention this decisive view of the reality of the mode of being—or the way things exist. That is why it is advisable to *listen with deference*.

**[P. 16] The necessity and manner of seeking reality**

*The Ocean of Reasoning* indicates:

The Dharma explained is the *Madhyamakaśāstra*, and the explanation is in two parts: [I] the preliminary explanation and [II] the entry into the main body of the explanation. The first part [I] is in five sections.<sup>7</sup>

The first of these five sections concerns the necessity and manner of seeking reality, and in this context the need for this view of profound emptiness is taught, as well as the crucial importance of understanding it in terms of the Four Noble Truths. Without this, wishing to identify the Buddhadharma by thinking of an image of the teacher called “the Buddha” and turning one's attention to his Dharma called “the Buddhadharma” would not be enough to truly know the Dharma of the Buddha.

Therefore, it is certainly necessary to be introduced to the Buddhadharma through understanding the exposition on the Four Noble Truths. These four are: true sufferings, true origins, true cessations, and true paths. One should not only know the sound generalities thereby conceptualized, but also check whether or not they are generally objects of knowledge, and whether or not they fit with reality. Even though, among the Four Noble Truths, true sufferings and true origins can be recognized through most of our experiences, the realization of the other two—true cessation and true paths [P. 17], is more difficult or requires more sustained and detailed application.

So, to touch on the subject briefly, true cessations concern qualities of separation<sup>8</sup>; we are talking here about separation from defilements through the power of antidotes that arise in the mind. In other words, we must be able to explain whether these defilements in the mind, such as attachment, etc., can be eliminated or not, what is the entity of their antidote, which is the wisdom realizing selflessness, how this wisdom realizing selflessness is able to serve as an antidote to afflictions, etc. In general, the four tenet systems accept the Four Noble Truths as well as the fact that, in general, true cessations are part of objects of knowledge. In particular, if we come to understand the view of emptiness as taught in the *Mādhyamika* tradition, thereby giving rise to a deep certainty that within the [mental] continuum there exists the cause for extricating ourselves [from afflictions], we must carefully reflect on the fact that we grasp the inherent establishment of phenomena in the depth of our minds, even though no phenomenon is inherently established. Furthermore, if we examine things in detail, comparing again and again how our individual feelings arise and how our experiences occur with the explanations found in textbooks, we will be able to consider with certainty the existence of what is called liberation.

Recently, during a meeting with people from a Buddhist center, I was asked whether it was appropriate to meditate solely on compassion. I explained that if a

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Ocean of Reasoning*, p. 9.

<sup>8</sup> བྱམ་བཞི་ཡོན་ཏན་.

person practices compassion without thinking about whether it is possible to end suffering and whether there is an antidote to the causes of suffering, that person will not be able to generate great compassion. Although this view of emptiness is difficult to realize, in order to generate in the depth of our mind a certainty in the fact that the Buddhadharma is factual, understanding this view of emptiness [P. 18] is indispensable and of crucial importance, which is why [Āchārya Āryadeva] explains in the *Chatuḥśhataka*<sup>9</sup>:

[XII, 5] Anyone who doubts the Buddha's teachings  
Concerning what is hidden from us  
Should rely on emptiness  
In order to generate confidence in it alone.

He thus raises a crucial point: when, among the phenomena taught by the Buddha, some are extremely hidden from us and are the basis of our doubts, it is by relying on the principle of emptiness taught by the Buddha that we can resolve these doubts, so that this understanding generates confidence. Therefore, knowing emptiness is extremely important, and since it pertains to phenomena that are slightly hidden, we should not be satisfied with the scriptures alone, but rather approach it in dependence on reasoned explanations. Since it is nevertheless difficult to realize emptiness right away without someone pointing out the essential points, which are how to investigate and how to present it through reasoning, we will learn these crucial points, such as how to investigate, based on the teachings of the Bhagavān. Each of us must finally examine through reflection, and having understood the mode of analysis of emptiness according to the Buddha's teachings, we may know and observe all these essential points.

However, there is a distinction between the Buddha's words that are open to interpretation and those that are definitive, and each philosophical system has its own assertions on this subject. For example, concerning the *Pratimokṣhayāna*<sup>10</sup> systems, the Vaibhāṣhika asserts that apart from the fact that the Buddha's words are definitive, there are no words that are open to interpretation, and the assertions of the sautrāntikas are similar for the most part. However, as indicated [by Lama Tsongkhapa] in *The Essence of Eloquence*<sup>11</sup>, since both *Śhrāvakayāna* schools would commonly agree on what the *Chittamātra* teaches as the correct establishment of the Buddha's intention in the second turning of the wheel (i.e., the fact that aggregates, etc., are not established by their own characteristics) and whose hidden meaning [according to them] is: that which pertains to factors such as definitions and definienda, actions and objects on the basis of the aggregates is not ultimately established, [P. 19] there are two ways of explaining that for these two *Śhrāvakayāna*

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. *The Yogic Deeds of the Bodhisattvas – Gyel-tsap on Āryadeva's Four Hundred*, p. 241 (Snow Lion 1994).

<sup>10</sup> Tenets of the Individual Liberation Vehicle (also called the Vehicle of the Hearers, *Śhrāvakayāna*).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. for instance p. 230 in *The Central Philosophy of Tibet – A Study and Translation of Jey Tsongkhapa's Essence of True Eloquence*, (Princeton 1991).

schools, on the one hand, the *Mahāyāna* speech [of the Buddha] may or may not be accepted, and and, on the other hand, whether or not there is a distinction between interpretable speech and definitive speech. That is why Gyeltsab Rinpoche also says in his *Commentary on the Uttaratantraśhāstra* [by Ārya Maitreya]:

It should be noted that within the *Vatsīputrīya*, some deny the *Mahāyāna* canon and others do not, and that this divergence also exists among the *Vaibhāṣikas* of Kashmir, etc.

Explaining that there are *Vaibhāṣikas* who accept the *Mahāyāna* as being the [Buddha's] speech, but Khedrup Rinpoche's *Great Digest*<sup>12</sup> argues that they:

... believe that the *Mahāyāna* canon is not the word of the Buddha.

Thereby indicating that the *Vaibhāṣikas* and other *Pratimokṣhayāna* tenet holders do not accept the *Mahāyāna* as being the [Buddha's] speech. Some textbooks clarify the fact that the *Sautrāntika* following Scriptures does not accept any [Buddha's] speech as belonging to the *Mahāyāna*, while the *Sautrāntika* following reasoning does accept them. Regarding the *Mahāyāna* proponents, both the *Chittamātra*<sup>13</sup> and *Madhyamaka* schools establish that among the Buddha's words there are interpretable *Sūtras* and definitive *Sūtras*; and regarding the meaning of *interpretable* and *definitive*, the *Chittamātrins* argue that any *Sūtra* that can be accepted literally is definitive, and that if not, it is interpretable; the distinction is therefore made from the point of view of its formulation. The *Mādhyamikas* do not define *interpretable* and *definitive* solely in terms of what can be accepted literally or not, but that which is expressed is definitive in terms of emptiness or interpretable in terms of conventionalities, in the sense that a *Sūtra* is considered definitive when its main subject is emptiness, and a *Sūtra* is established as interpretable when its main subject is conventionalities.

The words of the Bhagavān himself can be divided into interpretable and definitive, and this same hermeneutic distinction is made according to two explanatory modes within the Bhagavān's words.

[P. 20] It is necessary to be able to determine this distinction, according to which some *Sūtras* are definitive and some others are open to interpretation depending on reasoning, but it is not possible to make this distinction between definitive *Sūtras* and interpretable *Sūtras* by relying solely on the teachings of the Bhagavān, because if we were to rely solely on the Scriptures to carry out this hermeneutics, it would be compromised by consequences such that we would still have to determine these Scriptures as definitive depending on other Scriptures, which would be endless.

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<sup>12</sup> *A Dose of Emptiness*, p. 35-36 (Sri Satguru Publications 1993).

<sup>13</sup> Or *Yogāchāra*.



That is why it is mentioned [by Lama Tsongkhapa] in *The Essence of Eloquence*<sup>14</sup>:

Thus, ultimately, we must discriminate with impeccable reasoning. Should we accept theories violating reason, their teacher could not become the personification of validating cognition<sup>15</sup>.

Now, since it is necessary to analyze rationally, how should we proceed? This crucial point must be examined according to the method of scholars, using hermeneutic distinctions of the Buddha's words by means of reason and according to the six dialectical treatises of Ārya Nāgārjuna<sup>16</sup>. Here is how to proceed: any words [of the Buddha] that have as their subject matter the ultimate nature of things but which would be called into question by reasonings examining the hermeneutic distinction that arise from the dialectical treatises of Ārya Nāgārjuna will be interpretable, and the *Sūtra* expounding this will be established as a *Sūtra* of interpretable meaning; instead if, when this subject matter is thus analyzed, a certifying cognition arises that does not question the fact that it is the ultimate nature, then the *Sūtra* expounding this will be established as being of definitive meaning.

For example, in some *Sūtras*, the absence of the imputed nature<sup>17</sup> in the dependent nature<sup>18</sup> is taught as emptiness, and this is accepted by the *Chittamātra*, but when examined in light of Ārya Nāgārjuna's reasonings, the fact that this thoroughly established nature<sup>19</sup> (which is the absence of imputed natures in the dependent nature), is emptiness is found to be harmed by reason. And since this suchness, which is the non-duality, is neither the subtle emptiness nor the final ultimate truth, what is taught in these *Sūtras* [P. 21] illustrates that which is not definitive but interpretable. Although the *Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka* school also expounds the three natures—dependent, thoroughly established, and imputed—it does not expound them in the same way as the *Chittamātra* school, since the *Mādhyamika* reasonings refute the acceptance of the true existence of the dependent nature and the thoroughly established nature (which is the emptiness of nature imputed in dependent nature).

Therefore, it is by relying on the treatises composed by Ārya Nāgārjuna himself and the teachings of accomplished scholars and practitioners who follow him that we can realize how preeminent Ārya Nāgārjuna is. To do this, it is extremely important to rely primarily on thorough examination.

<sup>14</sup> *The Central Philosophy of Tibet – A Study and Translation of Jey Tsongkhapa's Essence of True Eloquence*, p. 189 (Princeton 1991).

<sup>15</sup> *Pramāṇabhūta*, མདོ་མཁོ་རྒྱུ་ལུ་.

<sup>16</sup> *Madhyamakaśāstra*, *Śhūnyatāsaptatikārikā*, *Yuktiṣaṣṭhikakārikā*, *Ratnāvalī*, *Vaidalyasūtra* and *Vigrahavyāvartanī*.

<sup>17</sup> *Parikalpita svabhāva*, ཀློན་པར་གསུང་གི་ལྷན་པ་ལུ་འོ་པོ་ཉིད་.

<sup>18</sup> Or other-powered nature ; *paratantra svabhāva*, གཞན་དབང་གི་ལྷན་པ་ལུ་འོ་པོ་ཉིད་.

<sup>19</sup> *Pariniṣhpanna svabhāva*, ཡོངས་གྲུབ་ལུ་འོ་པོ་ཉིད་.

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After [I] a brief preliminary explanation on how to offer initial homage to the Buddha, we will then move on to [II] the main topic, beginning with [II.2] the second general point of the outline<sup>20</sup>, which will expound its meaning in three sections: [II.2.1] paying homage<sup>21</sup> to the Buddha for his teaching on dependent existence free from extremes, [II.2.2] how to explain how dependent existence is free from the eight extremes, and [II.2.3] the reverence<sup>22</sup> that testifies to the Buddha's kindness in having taught in this way.

The first section [II.2.1] consists of two points: [II.2.1.1] the general meaning and [II.2.1.2] the detailed meaning. The general meaning is in three parts: [II.2.1.1] how the meaning of this utterance of homage encompasses the content of the text, [II.2.1.2] how the basis possesses the eight characteristics, and [II.2.1.3] addressing objections on this point. First, the stanza of homage demonstrates the four such as the purpose etc.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> The first point being [II.1] the meaning of the title of the text. Cf *Ocean of Reasoning – A Great Commentary on Nāgārjuna's Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (Oxford 2006), p.3.  
p. 3.

<sup>21</sup> The initial homage in the root text :

I pay homage to the perfect Buddha supreme among all orators, who taught interdependence—according to which there is neither cessation nor creation, neither annihilation nor permanence, neither identity nor difference, neither coming nor going—the auspicious peace free from reifications.

The eight attributes are in this order in Sanskrit (cf. *Nāgārjuna's Middle Way*, p. 13), but the Tibetan translation reverses the last two pairs and changes the order in the last: ...*neither difference nor identity* (perhaps for reasons of euphony, which is not uncommon).

<sup>22</sup> The very last stanza of the root text, at the end of chapter XXVII (cf. *Nāgārjuna's Middle Way*, p. 334):

I pay homage to Gautama  
Who, out of compassion,  
Taught the holy Dharma  
In order to dispel all [wrong] views.

<sup>23</sup> The purpose or content of the text, the objective, the essential objective, and the relationship (between these elements). Cf. *Ocean of Reasoning*, p. 24.

**[P. 22] [II.2.1.2] The manner in which the basis possesses the eight attributes**

Dependent origination [*pratītyasamutpāda*] is mentioned in this context, where it is taught how the characterized basis possesses the eight characteristics [without cessation, etc.], and for essentialists, the meaning of production refers to the dependent existence of compounded phenomena in the sense that they explain arising in dependence on causes and conditions, while the *Mādhyamikas* do not only expound this meaning of *pratītyasamutpāda* because “arising” [*samutpāda*] in “dependent arising” does not only imply the meaning of production in dependence on causes and conditions, but can also be understood as “that which is established in terms of mutual relationship” [ཕན་ཚུན་བརྟན་ནས་གྲུབ་པ་] or “arisen in terms of mutual relationship” [ཕན་ཚུན་བརྟན་ནས་འབྱུང་བ་], or “established in terms of mutual dependence” [ཕན་ཚུན་བརྟེན་ནས་གྲུབ་པ་] or “arisen in terms of mutual dependence” [ཕན་ཚུན་བརྟེན་ནས་འབྱུང་བ་] etc. All phenomena, whether compounded or uncompounded, are understood to be dependent existents, as indicated in the *Madhyamakaśhāstra* [VIII, 12a] by saying that *the agent depends on the action*.

For example, when we talk about a carpenter, it is in relation to his carpentry activity or through his relationship to his activity that we attribute the designation “carpenter” to this man, and similarly, when referring to the activity of carpentry, we posit it in relation to the carpenter, just as the carpenter is posited in relation to the activity of carpentry; thus, the agent who has become the carpenter depends on the action, and the action depends on the agent, because they maintain a mutual relationship or mutual dependence. The chapter VIII of the root text says:

[VIII, 12] The agent occurs in dependence on the action, and the action  
Occurs in dependence on the agent; we see no other way to establish them.<sup>24</sup>

**[P. 23]** ... thus exposing dependent existence in terms of mutual relationship. Consequently, since this dependent arising/existence [*pratītyasamutpāda*] is not to be understood solely in terms of causal dependence, if we consider it as interdependence in terms of mutual relationship, it is possible to understand that all phenomena exist in dependence. In *The Great Commentary on the Madhyamakaśhāstra* [Lama Tsongkhapa]<sup>25</sup> indicates:

Whatever is arisen depending on its causes and conditions must be a [functioning] thing, except for the fruits of separation [true cessations]. Though the dependently arisen which are other than these [things] arise depending on other phenomena, those on which they depend are not their causes and conditions.

<sup>24</sup> *Nāgārjuna’s Middle Way*, p. 96 (Wisdom 2013).

<sup>25</sup> *Ocean of Reasoning – A Great Commentary on Nāgārjuna’s Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, p. 27 (Oxford 2006).

We understand from these explanations that *what is produced in dependence on causes and conditions* generally applies to things. The mention *except for the fruits of separation* indicates that, although fruits of separation are not things, they arise in dependence on causes and conditions, and yet they are not separation fruits that are produced by causes and conditions, because it is taught that if they arose in this way, the consequence would follow that these fruits of separation would be things or conditioned phenomena; it is established that arising in dependence on causes and conditions does not entail arising as being produced by causes and conditions.

In this context, dependent origination taught as being free of the eight characteristics appears to be understood in terms of the dependence of compounded phenomena, because although in general interdependence exists for both compounded and uncompounded phenomena, compounded phenomena must be posited as the dependent phenomena that possess characteristics such as cessation, etc. Regarding these eight characteristics (cessation, etc.) of dependent arising in terms of characterized compounded bases, since these dependently arisen compounded bases possess all eight characteristics (cessation, etc.), when [the homage at the beginning of the root text] mentions: *without cessation, without production...*, it is necessary to apply a modifying phrase to these negations in terms of what is referred to [in the homage] as the *absence of all these conceptual proliferations*<sup>26</sup> with regard to cessation, etc.

Regarding this special qualification of negations, Āchārya Chandrakīrti explains in *The Clear Words – Commentary on the Madhyamakaśāstra* (*Prasannapadā Madhyamakavṛtti*):

[P. 24]

It is depending on the exalted wisdom that there is no cessation, etc.

And further on, as he explains even more clearly:

From the perspective of the nature that is the object of uncontaminated gnosis free of the obscuring cataract of ignorance, things do not exist.<sup>27</sup>

... it is necessary to apply this to what is in accordance with the nature of the object of wisdom in meditative equipoise, in other words, among the two wisdoms—the noble wisdom realizing the mode and the wisdom realizing the varieties—the one that realizes the mode, that is, the uncontaminated wisdom of an *ārya* in meditative equipoise, and not the wisdom of subsequent attainment similar to illusion.

In general, although there are various ways to explain what is contaminated [*sāsrava*; ཟག་པཅས་] and what is uncontaminated [*anāsrava*; ཟག་མེད་], in the present context the meaning of *contaminated* and *uncontaminated* is explained as follows: a

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<sup>26</sup> Or reifications (*prapañca*; རྒྱུ་པ་).

<sup>27</sup> The quote is also provided by Lama Tsongkhapa in *Illuminating the Intent*, p. 64 (Wisdom 2021).

contaminated cognition is a cognition tainted by ignorance and/or its imprints, and an uncontaminated exalted wisdom is an exalted wisdom which is free from the taints of ignorance and/or its imprints<sup>28</sup>. An exalted wisdom [or an *ārya* wisdom] that directly realizes emptiness is an uncontaminated wisdom, and since such an exalted uncontaminated wisdom has emptiness as its object, although this emptiness is the object of a cognition that realizes it by means of a meaning generality of emptiness, what is called the object of uncontaminated exalted wisdom is not stained by the slightest subtle dualistic appearance with regard to the mode of ascertainment of emptiness. Therefore, the direct realization of emptiness that overturns all dualistic appearances is a special mode of realization similar to water poured into water, which becomes of equal flavor. This emptiness, which is the nature of the object of this special type of uncontaminated wisdom, and this uncontaminated wisdom have become of equal flavor, such that all dualistic appearances, like conventional appearances, appearances of meaning generalities, etc., are reversed. It is then said that there are no such eight characteristics on the basis of subjects such as sprouts, etc., in accordance with the nature of the object of such uncontaminated exalted wisdom.

[P. 25] So if the eight (cessation and the rest) were established within the mode of abiding of the reality of something like a flower, the wisdom that observes the mode of abiding should find them, still these [eight] do not belong to the mode of abiding of the flower, which is why they are not established or do not exist from the perspective of the cognition that directly perceives the mode of abiding.

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<sup>28</sup> A similar statement is reported by Lama Tsongkhapa in *Illuminating the Intent – An Exposition of Candrakīrti’s Entering the Middle Way* (Wisdom 2021) p. 64:

What is contaminated is tainted either by ignorance grasping at true existence or by the imprints of such ignorance. The gnosis free of such a taint is uncontaminated.

**[P. 26] [II.2.1.3] Dispelling objections about the fact that “cessation” and the other [attributes] are not inherently established**

Here, dispelling the objections is in two parts: [II.2.1.3.1] dispelling the objections concerning the fact that “cessation” and the other [attributes] are not established inherently, and [II.2.1.3.2] dispelling the objections concerning their number and order.

Regarding the first point [II.2.1.3.1], Lama Tsongkhapa's *Great Commentary on the Madhyamakaśāstra*<sup>29</sup> says:

Suppose someone argued as follows: If such a modifying phrase<sup>30</sup> is applied, that which exists in accordance with the nature of the object of the uncontaminated wisdom of meditative equipoise would ultimately exist. This would be inconsistent with the fact that the ultimate truth exists from that perspective. Besides that, from the perspective of that wisdom, since there is an unperishable reality, there is permanence. There is also identity and difference and the annihilation of afflictive mental states. Therefore, it is inappropriate to say that their nonexistence from the perspective of that wisdom is the characteristic of dependent origination.

This means that if the cognition which observes emptiness by means of direct perception realizes emptiness, then since emptiness exists from the perspective of that cognition, that emptiness becomes ultimately established! Yet, there is no fault, because there are two ultimates: first, the ultimate that is *ultimate* in terms of the object of negation, and second, the ultimate that is *ultimate* in terms of a rational cognition<sup>31</sup> arisen from the three—listening, reflection, and meditation. Of these two, it is in terms of the ultimate in terms of a rational cognition arisen from the three—listening, reflection, and meditation, that this emptiness is ultimate. However, this emptiness is not established in the ultimate sense, which is the *ultimate* in terms of the object of negation—true establishment. [P. 27] Among these two existing meanings of *ultimate*, if it is established ultimately in the sense that this ultimate is *ultimate* in terms of the object of negation, then it must certainly be found in the ultimate perspective where ultimate here is in terms of a rational cognition arisen from the three—listening, reflection, and meditation. Nevertheless, it is not necessary to be truly established simply by being found in the perspective of this ultimate in terms of a rational cognition arisen from the three—listening, reflection, and meditation, or simply by being an object that is found by this ultimate.

In brief, if something is found in the aftermath of a research by rational cognition, the object sought itself does not need to be found; for example, if a rational cognition seeks to know whether a flower is inherently established or not, in a context

<sup>29</sup> *Ocean of Reasoning – A Great Commentary on Nāgārjuna's Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, p. 28 (Oxford 2006).

<sup>30</sup> Mentioned previously, at the end of page 23.

<sup>31</sup> རིགས་ཤེས་

where, without being satisfied with its mere appearance, what is sought is not the expression “flower” but rather the essence of the flower in order to determine whether or not the flower exists according to its own mode of existence or mode of subsistence, this flower is not found in the sense that the referent of the term “flower” is not found at the end of this research, or in the sense that what is found is the simple absence of what would be established beyond the object “flower.” Therefore, when the ultimate (which is the *ultimate* in terms of rational cognition), conducts a search such as the search for a flower, if it were to find it based on this investigation, then the flower would thereby become truly established, but since it is not found by means of such a search, it is the mode of being of the flower that is found. Although the flower is what is being sought, if it is a rational cognition analyzing finality which investigates, it then investigates whether the flower has an essence or not, and not finding it, it finds the mode of abiding of the flower.

Thus, what is called the mode of abiding of the flower, apart from the fact that it is simply stated in conventional terms, is not truly established, because if the mode of establishment of the flower's mode of abiding were in turn to be posited as an object of inquiry and the mode of being thus sought in its qualified basis, since the object of inquiry (which is the flower's mode of abiding or the flower's emptiness), is not found, what is found is the emptiness of the flower's emptiness. If emptiness [P. 28] were truly established, then by positing this emptiness itself as the object of inquiry and searching for its essence, it should be found, still based on the fact that it is not found but that its emptiness of inherent existence is found, we are able to understand that even emptiness is not truly established. When the ultimate (that is a rational cognition) investigates the mode of being of the substrate which is the qualified basis, this simple absence of inherent existence, or simple emptiness of true establishment found at the end of the investigation, is the mode of being of the substrate that depends on the substrate. One must understand how there is no mode of being as a mode of being itself.

Let us now look at how essentialists, *Chittamātrins*, and *Svātantrika Mādhyamikas* explain this teaching of the eight objects of conceptual proliferations (cessation, etc.): they assert that we apprehend all phenomena as existing on the object's side, and the fact that they exist on the object's side as we apprehend them is the proof that birth, old age, etc. exist. If this were not the case, then without existing on the side of the object, all phenomena would be like inventions of the mind and would be nothing more than conceptual fabrications, imagined solely by the mind and simply imputed by concepts. If we say, for example, that white is black or that this man is a Buddha, it would follow that this man would become a Buddha. However, this is not consistent, because such and such phenomena arise from concordant causes and conditions and not from discordant causes and conditions; conditions have a truth, and the production of their respective effects is also true. The establishment of this truthfulness ensures that objects have their own characteristics; but if they were not endowed with such truthfulness, and without any truth in objects, they would be fabrications of the mind, and neither production nor cessation would have the capacity

to be posited. Although all those who accept existence on the side of the object posit this existence on the object side as the main proof that birth and [P. 29] old age, oneness and difference, production and cessation, etc., are consistent, by these eight attributes, neither the probandum such as a sprout is inherently established, nor is any proof such as production, cessation, etc., inherently established.

In brief, when it is stated that a cognition which correctly inquires whether any phenomenon exists or not from the object's side must find it if it exists from the object's side, and it does not find it, then existence from the object's side is refuted. An explanation from Chapter XXIV of the *Madhyamakaśhāstra* will be given concerning this distinction between existence and non-existence in relation to the two cognitions that are, on the one hand, the exalted non-conceptual wisdom, and that which does not exist in accordance with the nature of its object, and on the other hand, the conventional perspective, and that which exists in dependence upon it.

Secondly, [II.2.1.3.2] **dispelling objections concerning their number and order**. Regarding phenomena, which are these attributes (cessation, etc.), when we generally speak of production, there must first be production and then cessation. However, in our present context, there is cessation first and only then production<sup>32</sup>. The objection would be raised in relation to a basis and a temporality such as a sprout: although the correct order of occurrence is such that it must first be born from a seed and then cease, the homage indicates: ... *without cessation, without production*. But by mentioning cessation first, isn't there a confusion regarding this sequence? There is no fault, for we are not discussing here conventional production and cessation, but rather, if production and cessation were inherent to the true nature of a substrate such as a sprout or a flower, then, since cessation and production would be truly established, production would exist independently and without any relation to other causes or conditions, such that production would not depend on other causes or conditions; likewise, cessation would be unrelated to causes and conditions, and therefore cessation would have no connection with production. [P. 30] Therefore, based on the reasoned refutation of a cessation, etc., that would exist in some true nature, since there is no necessity for an order such that production must precede, we are not found to be at fault for any confusion in the sequence. If such a phenomenon existed as a truly established cessation, it would in fact be truly established and without any relation whatsoever, but our experience does not confirm this.

Secondly [II.2.1.2], concerning **the detailed meaning**: when [the homage] speaks of *interdependence*..., and this interdependence is based on compounded phenomena, then characteristics such as cessation, etc., are explained in relation to their entity: there is production and cessation<sup>33</sup> in the sense that there is a cessation which is the momentary disintegration, and there is production in the sense that there

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<sup>32</sup> In the homage: *Anirodham anutpādam*... འགྲོག་པ་མེད་པ་སྐྱེ་མེད་པ་...

<sup>33</sup> In Tibetan, the order of the attributes may be reversed compared to that found in the homage. See note 21.



is production from the establishment of a thing. In relation to the continuum, there is permanence and annihilation in the sense that there is the interruption of a previous continuum, and there is permanence in the sense of remaining over time. In relation to location, there is coming and going in the sense of approaching from a distant place and moving away from a nearby place. In relation to connectivity, there is one and different: difference in terms of distinct objects, and singularity in terms of an object which is non-distinct. In this way, the pacification of proliferations is explained with regard to this interdependence, because all reifications in terms of signified and signifier, definition and definiendum, etc., are abolished in the perspective that correctly observes the reality of interdependence.

In the section: *...who taught interdependence (...) the auspicious peace free from reification*, I wonder whether *peace*<sup>34</sup>, which refers to the pacification of reifications, should be posited as the natural purity, and *free* as the adventitious purity. *The great commentary* [by Lama Tsongkhapa]<sup>35</sup> indicates:

Since in such a state free from the engagement of the mind and mental factors, having discarded all convention in terms of cognition and object of knowledge by the absence of discursive movements, one is separated from the torments of birth, old age, sickness and death, this is peace.

And, although in general no conventional phenomenon is established in the perspective which observes suchness, here the main meaning of what this text explains is that even if the torments of birth, old age, sickness, death [**P. 31**] etc., are generally empty of inherent existence, on this basis there is the peace of adventitious purity where birth, old age, sickness and death are pacified because their causes and conditions are no longer complete by the force of the production of antidotes, or rather the destruction by antidotes of their causes and conditions causes birth, old age, sickness and death to be destroyed by the force of the antidotes.

It is explained that this second occurrence of *peace*<sup>36</sup>, which is the space of full pacification totally free from objects of abandonment by the force of the production of antidotes in terms of appeasing reifications with regard to natural purity, was taught by the compassionate Buddha, *supreme among all orators*, and that the glorious protector Ārya Nāgārjuna, after distinguishing him from other preachers, pays homage to the perfect Buddha at the beginning of the composition of his treatise with the intention of accomplishing the goal of oneself and others by means of the instructions on interdependence.

Chapter XXVI explains how to wander in *saṃsāra* by means of the 12 links of dependent origination, Chapter XVIII explains how to be freed from it and how necessary it is to realize emptiness in order to achieve liberation, and Chapter XXIV explains how what is called emptiness means dependent existence, which is why we

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<sup>34</sup> His Holiness mentions here the two occurrences of the term ཞི in the Tibetan homage: མཆོག་པ་ཉེར་ཞི་ཞི་བཟུངས་.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. *Ocean of Reasoning*, p. 33.

<sup>36</sup> *Free* in this English version. See notes 21 and 34.

*Teachings on the Madhyamakaśhāstra*

His Holiness the Dalai Lama

will highlight these chapters before beginning to expound how to establish the absence of inherence in relation to Chapter I.