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དང་མན་ངག་ལས་འབྲོས་པའི་བློ་བྱིས་ཅི་རིགས།

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Miscellaneous Notes on the Classes of Tantra and Pith Instructions of the Great Chariots of the Practice Lineage in the Land of Snows

The Four Tenet Systems

Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo



KHYENTSE VISION
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*gangs can gyi sgrub brgyud shing rta chen po rnam kyî rgyud sde dang man ngag las 'phros pa'i zin bris ci
rigs
grub mtha' bzhi*

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TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

The Four Tenet Systems is taken from a series of notes that were compiled and included in Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo's Collected Works.¹ It is essentially an overview of the philosophical perspectives and meditation methods of the Sūtrayāna. In Tibet, discussion of Buddhist philosophy has traditionally followed a division into four main schools: Vaibhāṣika, Sautrāntika, Cittamātra, and Madhyamaka. This tradition of doxographical classification appraises different Indian commentators according to their relative superiority, and as such it can be considered contentious. However, there are pedagogical and soteriological reasons for why they are arranged in this order. For the practitioner, they form a scale of analysis of increasing profundity that eventually leads one to the realization of emptiness.² And while there are a large number of debate manuals for Tibetan monastic colleges that cover the same topics covered here in much greater detail, these notes are unique in that they also discuss methods of meditation, at times resembling a meditation manual.

These notes first address how the four tenet systems line up with the categories of the three vehicles (Śrāvakayāna, Pratyekabuddhayāna, and Bodhisattvayāna). They cover some of the differences between the Vaibhāṣikas and Sautrāntikas, examining which schools are “proponents of entity” and how they describe relative and ultimate reality. Then they go on to describe the main arguments utilized by the Mādhyamikas.

The notes next turn toward the topic of meditation practice. The text explains that the appearances of relative reality come about through seeds planted in the *ālaya*, which shows that appearances are mind. Investigating thoughts to see if they exist or not, and recognizing that they do not exist, one sees the mind to be empty. By understanding this as transcending the intellect, emptiness is recognized to be awareness. Because one needs a calm and stable mind to realize this, the notes describe the stages of *śamatha* meditation and how to overcome the obstacles one can face when seeking to achieve them. The notes proceed from training in *samādhi* to training

in *prajñā*, which concerns the twelve links of dependent origination. Finally, the notes state in summary that relative reality is like an illusion, and one should meditate on the union of the two realities without fabricating any mental states.

This work could seem like two separate series of notes—one on philosophy and the other on meditation—if one does not keep in mind that the study of the various philosophical positions is meant to be applied to one's practice. Thus, the first part of the notes describes progressively subtler understandings of reality presented in Sūtrayāna texts, and the second part explains how one can realize this reality through meditation.

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The Four Tenet Systems

Knowing the six topics in that way, one then trains in the views of the four tenet systems. Moreover, there are three vehicles: the Śrāvakayāna, the Pratyekabuddhayāna, and the Bodhisattvayāna. The four tenet systems are Vaibhāṣika, Sautrāntika, Madhyamaka, and Cittamātra. They are presented according to the principle that the first two belong to the Hīnayāna of śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas and the latter two belong to the Mahāyāna path of bodhisattvas. That is equivalent to how the four tenet systems are posited elsewhere according to the path and result of the three vehicles.

According to the Vaibhāṣikas and Sautrāntikas, knowable objects are subsumed into five foundations:³

...appearing forms, primary minds, their attendant mental factors, non-associated formations, and unconditioned phenomena.⁴

Although their number and arrangement are comparable, the Vaibhāṣikas assert these five foundations to be truly established while the Sautrāntikas assert that only form and mind are substantially existent, since the three types of unconditioned phenomena transcend causes and conditions (without substance); non-associated formations are merely imputed existents projected upon the temporary phenomena of forms, primary minds, and mental factors; and mental factors are not a different substance from primary minds.

Since these two schools assert that external objects exist, [they are called] the two schools that propound external objects. Moreover, although Cittamātrins do not assert that external objects exist, [206] they still assert that the thoroughly established nature exists. These three schools are therefore posited to be proponents of true existence.

The ways in which these two schools posit the two realities are as follows. The Vaibhāṣika position is as stated in the *Abhidharmakośa*:

That which is not mentally engaged in (of the form of that previous mind),
When destroyed (as if by a hammer) and mentally eliminated,
Seemingly exists, like water in a vase (droplets being scattered).
The ultimately existent are different from this.⁵

The Sautrāntika position is as stated in the *Pramāṇavārttika*:

Whatever performs a function (like a pillar)
Is here said to be ultimately existent (as a collection of indivisible particles).
Everything else (imagined phenomena lacking characteristics, like a so-called “pillar”)⁶ exists as
relative reality.
They (the ultimate, indivisible particles) are explained to be specifically and generally
characterized (as a collection of indivisible particles called a pillar, which is a phenomenon
that relatively exists as an imputation).⁷

Nevertheless, although that is the case for the Followers of Logic, the Followers of Scripture do not posit the two realities any differently from the Vaibhāṣikas.

As for the tenet system of Cittamātra, the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* states:

The entities of the five dharmas, nature, and
The eight consciousnesses, and
The two types of selflessness
Comprise all of the Mahāyāna teachings.⁸

These are constrained by the explanations of the four Dharma seals. The five dharmas are as follows:

Name, reason, concept, and
Authentic wisdom, and suchness.⁹

Name and reason are included in the imaginary nature.¹⁰ [207] The phenomena contained in the imputed duality of apprehender and apprehended, the other-dependent nature, comprise seeming reality. Authentic wisdom and suchness are self-aware, self-cognizant consciousness that is without (like the horns of a rabbit) the duality of apprehender and apprehended. They are the thoroughly established nature and ultimate reality.

The three natures are the imaginary, other-dependent, and thoroughly established. Moreover, there are the enumerated imaginary nature and the imaginary nature in which characteristics are terminated. There are also the pure and impure dependent natures, as well as the unchanging thoroughly established nature and the unmistakable

thoroughly established nature.¹¹ These make six. The eightfold collection of consciousness is as mentioned above.

The two types of selflessness are the selflessness of phenomena and of persons. If one does not find them due to the way in which they are not the same or different, they are definitely non-existent. If there were an established basis for them, they would necessarily be the same or different from each other.

Although Buddhists assert the selflessness of persons, they also assert a presentation of the two realities on the basis of phenomena. Additionally, they assert a gross seeming [reality] and subtle ultimate [reality] in accordance with the tenet systems. Moreover, because they are dependently designated, in order, [one finds] the tenet system that posits objects to be the ultimate for the lower vehicles, [and] the logic of the higher tenets, which later asserts that there is another, more subtle ultimate.

The tenet system of the Mādhyamikas [208] determines that all phenomena are birthless through five great reasonings: (1) the investigation into causes, the (sharp) “vajra splinters” on the four possibilities, argues that an ear of grain does not arise from itself, and so on; (2) the investigation into results, “the refutation of existent and non-existent effects,” argues that if a fruit already existed in its seed, it could not be born, and so on; (3) the investigation into both, “the refutation of the four possibilities for arising,” argues that one cause does not give rise to multiple results and so forth, as well as the rest of the four possibilities; (4) the investigation into the essence, “neither one nor many,” argues that if there is an established basis, it would necessarily be either one or many, and that is logically determined to not be the case; and (5) the “reasoning of great dependent origination” is that things do not arise from their own essence because they arise in dependence on other causes and conditions.

In summary, the non-Buddhists and Buddhists debate whether the self of a person exists or not. Vaibhāṣika and Sautrāntika debate whether two, four, or three¹² are truly established or not. The Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna debate whether external objects are truly established or not. Madhamaka and Cittamātra debate whether the thoroughly established nature is truly established or not.

Accordingly, among the Buddhists there is no one who does not assert the selflessness of persons. There is no Mahāyāna practitioner who does not assert the selflessness of phenomena. There is no Mādhyamika who does not assert freedom from conceptual constructs. In particular, while training in prajñā, if logic cannot find there to be no object, fixation cannot be destroyed; it is like, for instance, how one might think that there is no thief behind a mountain pass but one is caught off guard when one later encounters a thief there.¹³ [209] Thus, one must understand nonexistence through expert investigation.

Regarding the selflessness of persons, there is the self-clinging of thinking “I” and then freshly imputed, inconceivably wrong concepts invented by non-Buddhists that come along with it. Something separate from the looker is not found, no matter where

one endeavors to find it, such as in the five aggregates and so forth. The very mind of the one looking also disappears in an instant of time, so the “I” is not found. Afterward, one repeats that there is no “I” that is privately established as something other than the mere term “I,” an imputation devoid of characteristics, in relation to the collection of the five aggregates.

Regarding the selflessness of phenomena, one may posit that on one particle, there are particles in four directions. Then, if one divides the middle into a particle, there is not [any foundational or fundamental] part to be found. If the former and later moment of thought do not meet, whatever is thought of by the past [mind] would not be known afterwards. If they do meet, it would follow that past and future thoughts exist in the middle thought. A thought also has no parts if one cuts its smallest duration down the middle. Because of the selflessness of phenomena, it is empty. The appearance of phenomena left over from that is the support for individual karma. Phenomena are the appearances of the apprehender and apprehended of relative reality. On top of that, selflessness is ultimate *dharmatā*.

The sixfold collection of consciousness and the primary minds and mental factors arise through the latent tendencies¹⁴ existent in the continuum of the ālaya. Because of this, appearances are ascertained to be mind. As one investigates thoughts in the context of meditative absorption, [210] they are dissected as selfless. Furthermore, as those thoughts are empty, recollecting and settling upon the mere knowing that they are empty is the ascertainment that mind is empty. Additionally, the knowing that transcends the intellect and is free from conceptual constructs is ascertained as emptiness awareness.

In terms of a pith instruction, anything that one is conscious of or comes to know and so on out of the unimpeded state where the mind abides is genuine vipaśyanā. Abiding vividly in an experience of the aspect of clarity of such mind (also called mental stillness) is śamatha.

The ethics of the three trainings of the path are to not transgress the disciplines of *pratimokṣa*, the bodhisattvas, and Mantrayāna as one has committed to them.

Concerning the samādhi of śamatha, there are nine methods of mentally settling in that:

The nine are settling, continuously settling, and repeatedly settling (through
mindfulness not engaging in distraction, like pulling the reins of a horse),
Closely settling (distraction having come to an end), taming through settling (being
enthusiastic due to recollecting its benefits), pacifying (drowsiness and agitation),
Completely pacifying (other thoughts of the five poisons), one-pointedness
(concentrating by means of effort),
And resting in evenness (relaxing after concentrating).

There are five faults that are discordant with samādhi:

The five are laziness (sluggishness and being attached to bad actions), forgetting the instructions (the focal support), Dullness (a lax mode of apprehension) and agitation (being drunk with desire), Underapplication (not concentrating enough), and overapplication (concentrating too much).

There are eight mental applications for abandoning those:

(In samādhi,) faith, aspiration (interest), [211] effort, pliancy (which causes enjoyment), Mindfulness (not forgetting), attentiveness (being careful, as if near the edge of a cliff), attention, and equanimity (giving up effort)...

The training in prajñā is to know all phenomena to be mere dependent origination. Dependent origination is twelvefold:¹⁵ (1) ignorance or total delusion; (2) the three formations of the three doors; (3) the six or eight collections of consciousness; (4) feelings of happiness, suffering, and neutrality; (5) the cravings of the desire, form, and formless realms; (6) the four types of appropriation, that is, desire, view, moral discipline and austerity, and expounding a self; (7) existence, that is, the desire, form, and formless realms; (8) the twelve sense spheres; (9) the individual acquisition of the aggregates of the type one is born into, including the individual acquisition of the constituents, the individual acquisition of the sense spheres, and the production of the fully formed power of the life force; and (10) old age and death, with white hair, wrinkles, baldness, and so forth, and extreme old age, while death is the cessation of the power of life force.

In summary, the relative reality of objects in the phenomenal world—everything that arises from the collection of causes and conditions—is like the moon in water. The ultimate reality of dharmatā—which is freed from all the proliferations of causes and conditions, and is beyond the intellect—is like space. From the state of knowing that, in a state of ordinary mind that is free of fabrication, realize the amazing path of the middle way, the union of the two realities [212] that is not bound by the rope of mindfulness and conceptualization of the antidotes.

*This was also collected from the notes. Sarva maṅgalam.*¹⁶

NOTES

1. This text is an excerpt from *Miscellaneous Notes on the Classes of Tantra and Pith Instructions of the Great Chariots of the Practice Lineage in the Land of Snows*. As no subtitle exists for this section, the short title *The Four Tenet Systems* (*grub mtha' bzhi*) has been added for the sake of clarity.
2. One can explore this topic in such modern publications as Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche's *Progressive Stages of Meditation on Emptiness*.
3. These "five bases of the knowable" are referred to in Choephel, *Jewels from the Treasury*, 605: "The Kashmiri Great Exposition posits five bases of the knowable—form, mind, mental factors, nonconcurrent formations, and noncomposites—which have substantial existence." The Chim commentary on the *Abhidharmakośa* also states: "The Sarvāstivādins assert that all objects of awareness are contained within the five foundations (*mūla*; *gzhi*): (1) form, (2) mind, (3) mental factors, (4) non-concordant composites and (5) non-compounds" (Coghlan, *Ornament of Abhidharma*).
4. It has not been possible to identify the source of this quote.
5. *Abhidharmakośa* 6.4.
6. This technical expression (*mtshan nyid chad pa'i kun brtags*) refers to phenomena that are imputed as hypothetical but in reality do not exist, like names or the horns of a rabbit.
7. *Pramāṇavārttika* III.3.
8. *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, ch. 6, 146b. The third line of the original in Toh. 107 differs slightly (*bdag med rnam pa gnyis par ni*).
9. *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, ch. 6, 146b. The original in Toh. 107 differs slightly (*ming dang mtshan ma kun brtags pa/... yang dag ye shes de bzhi nyid*); however, in Toh. 108 one finds another version (*ming dang rgyu mtshan rnam par rtog/... yang dag ye shes de bzhi nyid*).
10. In his commentary on the *Madhyāntavibhāga*, Ju Mipam (*Middle Beyond Extremes*, 26) explains, "Like the perspective of high and low in a painting or a cairn that appears to be a person, they are purely imaginary and have no essence of their own."
11. For a more extensive explanation of these divisions, see Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Taye, *The Treasury of Knowledge*, 181–82.

12. According to Lopön Sonam Jamtsho, this sentence could be translated as “the two, Vaibhāṣika and Sautrāntika, debate whether the three bases exist or not.” These bases would then refer to the uncompounded basis (*'dus ma byas kyi gzhi*), non-associated basis (*ldan min 'du byed kyi gzhi*), and basis of mental factors (*'khor sems byung gi gzhi*). The two schools often debate whether these three truly exist or not.
13. This is translated according to the advice of Tenzin Bhuchung (provided via Daniel McNamara).
14. According to *Abhidharmakośa* V, karma is accumulated due to the power of these negative tendencies.
15. Departing slightly from the standard list of the twelve links of dependent origination, the text does not mention the third and fifth in the series, that is, “name and form” (*ming gzugs*) and “contact” (*reg pa*).
16. “May all be auspicious.”

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GLOSSARY

Abhidharmakośa

མངོན་པ་མཛོད། • *mngon pa mdzod* • abhidharmakośa

A seminal text on Abhidharma written by Vasubandhu.

ālaya

ཀུན་གཞི། • *kun gzhi* • ālaya

The ground consciousness in which the seeds of one's karmic deeds are placed.

apprehender and apprehended

གཟུང་འཛིན། • *gzung 'dzin*

The dualistic appearance of the observer and the observed object within the mind.

aspiration

འདུན་པ། • *'dun pa*

This is one of the eight mental applications that counteract the five obstacles to accomplishing *śamatha*; in particular, it is one of the four antidotes to laziness.

attention

སེམས། • *sems*

This is one of the eight mental applications that counteract the five obstacles to accomplishing *śamatha*; in particular, it is an antidote to the fault of not applying the method.

austerity

བརྟུལ་བྱུགས། • *brtul zhugs*

This refers to hardship one willingly undergoes for the spiritual path. It sometimes refers to self-mortification.

authentic wisdom

ཡང་དག་ཡེ་ཤེས། • *yang dag ye shes*

This is the awareness which realizes true reality, which some assert to primordially exist, and which is unstained.

Cittamātra

སེམས་ཅམ། • *sems tsam* • cittamātra

The Cittamātra or Mind-Only school of thought belongs to the Mahāyāna tradition. The term is related to the cognate concept of Vijñaptimātra (Cognition-Only) and to the Yogācāra tradition founded by the Indian masters Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, which is also sometimes called Vijñānavāda (School of Consciousness). The unique approach consists of aiming to demonstrate that everything in the world is nothing but mind; in other words, the objects one relates to are nothing but mental representations devoid of external independent existence (hence the name Mind-Only).

Cittamātrin

སེམས་ཅམ་པ། • *sems tsam pa* • cittamātrin

One who adheres to the Cittamātra philosophical approach.

closely settling

ཉེར་འཇོག་ ཉེ་བར་འཇོག་པ། • *nyer 'jog, nye bar 'jog pa* • upasthāpana

This is the fourth stage of śamatha meditation.

completely pacifying

རྣམ་པར་ཞི་བྱེད། • *rnam par zhi byed*

This is the seventh stage of śamatha meditation.

constituent

ཁམས། • *kham*

In the context of this text, this term refers to the six objects, the six consciousnesses, and the six faculties.

continuous settling

རྒྱུན་འཇོག་ • *rgyun 'jog*

This is the second stage of śamatha meditation.

conventional

ཀུན་རྫོབ། • *kun rdzob* • saṃvṛti

This is the level of seeming reality. This word is also sometimes translated as “seeming” or “concealed.”

craving

སྤོང་པ། • *sred pa*

Here, “craving” refers to one of the twelve links of dependent origination. Having encountered sensations, one desires pleasurable ones and wishes to avoid painful ones.

dependently designated

བསྟོས་བཞག་ • *bltos bzbag*

This means to be designated or imputed on the basis of other concepts, such as the concept of “long” depending on the concept of “short.”

desire realm

འདོད་ཁམས། • *'dod kham*

This is one of the three realms of reality. The desire realm contains the six realms of hell, hungry ghosts, animals, humans, demi-gods, and gods like Indra and Brahma; the form and formless realms are also populated by gods and are free from coarser types of afflictions.

desire, form, and formless realms

འདོད་གཟུགས་གཟུགས་མེད་ཀྱི་གསུམ། • *'dod gzugs gzugs med kyi gsum*

The three realms of saṃsāra that one can be born into.

dharmatā

ཆོས་ཉིད། • *chos nyid*

This refers to the true nature of reality.

disciplines of the prātimokṣa, bodhisattvas, and mantrayāna

སྔ་བྱང་སྡགས་ཀྱི་འདུལ་བ། • *so byang sngags kyi 'dul ba*

The rules of conduct for monks and nuns (*prātimokṣa*), bodhisattva vows, and tantric precepts.

dullness and agitation

བྱིང་ཚོད། • *bying rgod*

These are two of the obstacles to the attainment of śamatha.

effort

རྩོལ་བ། • *rtsol ba*

One of the eight mental applications that act as the antidote to the five faults that prevent one from attaining śamatha.

eight mental applications

འདུ་བྱེད་བརྒྱུད། • *'du byed brgyad*

These are eight antidotes that one can apply to one's meditation practice in order to counteract the five faults.

eightfold collection of consciousness

རྣམ་ཤེས་བརྒྱུད་པོ། • *rnam shes brgyad po*

This is the number of consciousnesses in the Yogācāra system: the five sense consciousnesses, the mental consciousness, the afflicted consciousness which apprehends the all-ground as a self, and the all-ground consciousness.

enumerated imaginary nature

རྣམ་གྲངས་པའི་ཀླན་བརྟག། • *rnam grangs pa'i kun brtag*

This is one of the two divisions of the imaginary nature; it refers to object universals (*don spyi*), or generalities that appear to the conceptual mind. It also refers to the seemingly appearing dualism of subject and object. See Callihan, *Frameworks of Buddhist Philosophy*, 181.

established basis

གཞི་གུབ། • *gzhi grub*

A phenomena that is verified (“established”) by valid cognition, typically understood to be equivalent to “phenomena,” “object,” “existent,” and “knowable object.”

existence

སྲིད་པ། • *srid pa*

This is one of the twelve links of dependent origination, referring to existence within saṃsāra.

exists conventionally

ཀུན་རྫོབ་དུ་ཡོད། • *kun rdzob tu yod*

This means that it only exists in seeming or conventional reality but not in ultimate reality; it may seem to exist in our daily functionings in the world, but if analyzed it is found to not really exist in an ultimate sense.

external objects

ཕྱི་དོན། • *phyi don*

Objects that exist in the outside world, outside the mind.

fabrication

བཟོ་བཅོས། • *bzo bcos*

Something contrived or altered.

faith

དད་པ། • *dad pa*

One of the eight mental applications that counteract the five faults. It is also included among the eleven virtuous mental factors. It refers to a feeling of confidence or conviction in the Buddhist path.

feeling

ཚོར་བ། • *tshor ba*

The second aggregate, one of the five omnipresent mental factors, is typically listed as the seventh link of dependent origination (although here, it is listed as the fourth). It refers to sensations of pleasure, pain, and neutrality.

five aggregates

ཕུང་ལྔ་ལྷ། • *phung po lnga*

These are the five components that make up an ordinary person: form, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and the six or eight consciousnesses.

five dharmas

ཚོས་ལྔ། • *chos lnga*

Five categories of phenomena according to the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*.

five faults which are discordant [with attaining samādhi]

མི་མཐུན་ཕྱོགས་ཉེས་པ་ལྔ། • *mi mthun phyogs nyes pa lnga*

These are five faults that prevent one from attaining śamatha.

five foundations

གཞི་ལྔ་། • *gzhi lnga*

Five categories of knowable objects that Sarvāstivādins are said to assert.

five great reasonings

གཏན་ཆོག་ས་ཆེན་པོ་ལྔ་། • *gtan tshigs chen po lnga*

Five arguments employed in Madhyamaka texts in order to prove emptiness.

focal support

དམིགས་རྟེན་། • *dmigs rten*

The focal support is the object one focuses upon.

Follower of Logic

རིགས་པའི་རྗེས་འབྲངས་རྣམས། • *rigs pa'i rjes 'brangs rnams*

Member of a Sautrāntika subschool.

Follower of Scripture

ལུང་གི་རྗེས་འབྲངས་རྣམས། • *lung gi rjes 'brangs rnams*

Member of a Sautrāntika subschool.

forgetting the instructions

གདམས་ངག་བརྗེད་པ། • *gdams ngag brjed pa*

One of the five obstacles to attaining śamatha.

form

གཟུགས། • *gzugs*

That which is suitable to be form, or that which is capable of manifesting as form.

form realm

གཟུགས་ཁམས། • *gzugs kham*

One of the three realms of existence, the other two being the desire and formless realms.

formations

འདུ་བྱེད། • *'du byed* • *saṃskāraḥ*

This is the third of the five aggregates, and it refers to all of the mental factors (*sems byung*, or thoughts or mental events) that are not included in the first two. It also refers to karmic formations or habitual tendencies, and it is one of the twelve links of dependent origination. Lastly, it is also a general word for composite phenomena.

formless realm

གཟུགས་མེད་ཁམས། • *gzugs med kham*

One of the three realms of existence.

four Dharma seals

ཆོས་ཀྱི་ཕྱོད་བཞི། • *chos kyi sdom bzhi*

The four Dharma seals are: (1) all compounded phenomena are impermanent, (2) all phenomena contaminated by the afflictions have the nature of suffering, (3) all phenomena are empty, and (4) nirvāṇa is peace.

four tenet systems

གྲུབ་མཐའ་བཞི། • *grub mtha' bzhi*

Vaibhāṣika, Sautrāntika, Cittamātra, and Madhyamaka.

four types of appropriation

ལེན་པ་བཞི། • *len pa bzhi*

Also translated as the “four graspings,” it refers to grasping at sense objects, wrong views, austerity and ethics, and the self. See Conze, “List of Buddhist Terms.”

freedom from conceptual constructs

སྤྲོས་བྲལ། • *spros bral*

This means to transcend all thoughts or conceptual categories.

Hīnayāna

ཐེག་དམན། • *theg dman* • hīnayāna

This refers to the Śrāvakayāna and Pratyekabuddhayāna; it is a pejorative word that reflects these paths' inferiority to the Mahāyāna in terms of their scope, in that they only aim for their own liberation and they do not fully realize the selflessness of phenomena.

ignorance

མ་རིག་པ། • *ma rig pa*

This is the first of the twelve links of dependent origination; it is the root of cyclic existence, the fundamental unknowing or misperception of the truth of reality.

imaginary nature

ཀུན་བརྟག། • *kun brtag* • parikalpita

This is the duality of subject and object that is imputed upon the dependent nature; it is something that does not exist as it appears.

imaginary nature in which characteristics are terminated

མཚན་ཉིད་ཡོངས་སྤོང་པའི་ཀུན་བརྟག། • *mtshan nyid yongs su chad pa'i kun brtag*

This is one of the two divisions of the imaginary nature; it refers to things that do not exist but are conceptually imputed, like the self.

in an instant of time

དུས་ཀྱི་ཆ་སྐད་ཅིག་མཐའ། • *dus kyi cha skad cig mar*

This is the smallest duration of time, a tiny split second, from which larger moments of time are constructed in foundational Buddhist philosophy.

indivisible particle

རུལ་པ་རབ། • *rdul phra rab*

The smallest scale of material reality in Buddhist philosophy, analogous to atoms.

interest

མོས་པ། • *mos pa* • adhimokśa

One of the five object-determining mental factors; as a mental factor, it means to regard an object as possessing qualities one wishes to obtain.

knowable object

ཤེས་བྱ། • *shes bya*

Something which can be known, synonymous with “object” and “existent phenomena.”

Laṅkāvatārasūtra

ལང་ཀར་གསེགས་པའི་མདོ། • *lang kar gshegs pa'i mdo* • *laṅkāvatārasūtra*

This Mahāyāna sūtra is especially important for those who propound Yogācāra philosophy.

latent tendencies

བག་ཆགས། • *bag chags*

Subtle habits within the mind.

laziness

ལེ་ལོ། • *le lo*

One of the five faults that prevent one from attaining śamatha, here defined as sluggishness and being attached to bad actions.

Mādhyamika

དབུ་མ་པ། • *dbu ma pa*

One who adheres to the Madhyamaka philosophical approach.

Mahāyāna path of bodhisattvas

ཐེག་ཆེན་བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་ལམ། • *theg chen byang chub sems lam*

The spiritual path that a bodhisattva follows, the path to full enlightenment or buddhahood; a bodhisattva is one who has vowed to liberate all beings from cyclic existence.

Mahāyāna practitioner

ཐེག་ཆེན་པ། • *theg chen pa*

A Buddhist who practices the Mahāyāna path, having vowed to attain enlightenment in order to bring all beings to that state.

Mantrayāna

གསངས་སྒྲགས་རྫོང་ཐེག་པ། • *gsangs sngags rdo rje theg pa* • *mantrayāna*

This refers to a sub-category of Mahāyāna which uses profound, esoteric methods in order to attain enlightenment quickly.

mental factor

སེམས་བྱུང་། • *sems byung*

These are aspects of mind that are like emotions or mental actions: attention, hate, and so on. There are fifty-one of them in the Abhidharma system followed in Tibet. They are said to be aware of particular characteristics of objects, while primary minds (the six or eight consciousnesses) are aware of the essence of an object.

mentally eliminated

གཞན་བསལ། • *gzhan bsal* • *apoha*

This refers to the idea within Buddhist epistemology that conceptual objects, or generalities, are imputed through mentally eliminating everything they are not. A chair is

found through eliminating everything not-chair. This is discussed at length in the works of Dharmakīrti and their commentaries.

mind

མེས་པ། • *sems*

That which is clear and aware.

mindfulness

བྱོན་པ། • *dran pa*

Not forgetting familiar objects.

mindfulness and attentiveness

བྱོན་ཤེས། • *dran shes*

Two factors in meditation: being mindful of the meditation object (not forgetting it) and being continually attentive to it.

mode of apprehension

འཛིན་སྟངས་སྟོན་པ། • *'dzin stangs lhod pa* • *muṣṭibandha*

In this context, how the perceiver grasps the object of meditation.

moral discipline

ཚུལ་ཁྲིམས། • *tshul khrims*

This refers to the discipline to refrain from improper conduct. It is a cause for birth in higher realms.

nature

རང་བཞིན། • *rang bzhin*

Essence, or essential character.

neither one nor many

གཅིག་དང་དུ་བྲལ། • *gcig dang du bral*

One of the five great reasonings of Madhyamaka, this refers to the argument that since an object has no foundational part that cannot be broken down further, singularity cannot be established, and since its building blocks cannot be established, multiplicity cannot be established either.

nine methods of mental placement

མེས་ཀྱི་འཛིན་ཚུལ་དགུ། • *sems kyi 'jog tshul dgu*

These are nine steps to accomplishing śamatha.

nine methods of mental placement

རྟོག་པ་རྣམ་དགུ། • *jog pa rnam dgu*

These are nine steps to accomplishing śamatha.

non-associated formation

མི་ལྷན་པའི་འདུ་བྱིད། • *mi ldan pa'i 'du byed*

That which is neither matter nor consciousness but is still observable as a conditioned phenomenon, like “attainment,” “person,” etc.

one-pointedness

རྩེ་གཅིག་བྱེད། • *rtse gcig byed*

This is the eighth stage of śamatha meditation.

ordinary mind

ཐ་མཐུ་གྱི་ཤེས་པ། • *tha mal gyi shes pa*

This is a term often used in Mahāmudrā and other meditation-oriented literature, referring to the basic state of the mind that is naturally free of stains; it refers to how our true nature is something uncontrived and natural.

other-dependent nature

གཞན་དབང་། • *gzhan dbang* • paratantra

The substratum of consciousness upon which duality is imputed in the Yogācāra system.

overapplication

ཧ་ཅང་བྱེད་པ། • *ha cang byed pa*

This is the fifth of the five faults that prevent one from succeeding in śamatha. It is to apply antidotes when one does not need to, thus being unnecessary mental activity.

pacifying

ཞི་བར་བྱེད། • *zhi bar byed*

This is the sixth stage of śamatha meditation.

path of the middle way union of the two realities

བདེན་གཉིས་ཟུང་འཇུག་དབུ་མའི་ལམ། • *bden gnyis zung 'jug dbu ma'i lam*

This refers to Madhyamaka as the union of the two realities (ultimate and relative), which does not fall into any extreme view, such as eternity or annihilation.

performs a function

དོན་བྱེད་རུས་པ། • *don byed nus pa*

According to certain Tibetan epistemological literature, the meaning of this phrase is that an object can cause its own result, or it can cause a subsequent moment of its own continuum. According to contemporary research by authors such as John Dunne into earlier Indian Buddhist epistemology, to perform a function can also mean to cause a cognition of that object, allowing a person to get what they need.

pith instructions

མན་ངག་། • *man ngag*

This refers to direct or oral instructions that one is given for one's practice, often condensing a subject into its key points; this word also refers to the instructions one receives from a spiritual master and through which one comes to understand the meaning of esoteric texts.

pliancy

ཤིན་སྙངས། • *shin sbyangs*

One of the eight mental applications, pliancy is the quality of flexibility of body and mind that one attains through meditation.

power of the life force

སློག་གི་དབང་པོ། • *srog gi dbang po*

However much of a lifespan one has; the animating force of life.

prajñā

ཤེས་རབ། • *shes rab*

Wisdom or discriminating insight is the third of the three trainings. The other two are training in ethics (*śīla*) and meditative concentration (*samādhi*).

Pramāṇavārttika

ཚད་མ་རྒྱུ་འགྲེལ། • *tshad ma rnam 'grel*

Written by Dharmakīrti, this text forms the basis of most subsequent Indian and Tibetan works on Buddhist epistemology.

pratyekabuddhas

རང་སངས་རྒྱལ། • *rang sangs rgyas*

Those who attain liberation through meditating on their own on the twelve links of dependent origination. They are said to be superior to śrāvakas in that, in addition to realizing the selflessness of the five aggregates, they also realize one half of the selflessness of phenomena; they are still inferior to complete buddhas, however.

primary mind

གཙོ་བོ་སེམས། • *gtso bo sems* • *mūlacitta*

This comprises the six or eight consciousnesses, in contrast to mental events.

proponents of entity

དངོས་པོར་སྤྲོ་བ། • *dnegos por smra ba*

Philosophical schools which assert that some kind of substance (whether mental or physical) exists.

proponents of true existence

དངོས་པོར་སྤྲོ་བ། • *dnegos por smra ba*

Followers of schools which assert there to be existent, substantial phenomena, whether that is limited to just the mental substratum or if it includes atoms and so forth.

pure and impure dependent natures

དག་མ་དག་གི་གཞན་དབང་། • *dag ma dag gi gzhan dbang*

The dependent nature is the substratum of consciousness upon which duality is imputed.

The impure dependent nature is afflicted by the negative emotions, ignorance, and karmic tendencies; once these have been purified, what is left over is the pure dependent nature.

refutation of existent and non-existent effects

ཡོད་མེད་སྟེ་བྲལ། • *yod med skye bral*

This is the second of the five great Madhyamaka reasonings, which asserts that it is unreasonable for results to be existent, nonexistent, both, or neither.

refutation of the four possibilities for arising

མུ་བཞི་སྐྱེ་འགོག་ • *mu bzhi skye 'gog*

This is the third of the five great Madhyamaka reasonings, which analyzes causes and results in terms of their being one or many (one cause cannot give rise to many results or a single result, and a single result cannot arise from one or many causes).

repeated settling

སྒྲན་ཏེ་འཛོག་ • *slan te 'jog*

This is the third stage of śamatha meditation.

resting in evenness

མཉམ་པར་འཛོག་པ། • *mnyam par 'jog pa*

This is the last of the nine stages of śamatha meditation.

samādhi

ཏིང་ངེ་འཛིན། • *ting nge 'dzin*

This is another word for “meditation.” It means to rest the mind one-pointedly on the object of meditation. It is one of the three basic trainings of Buddhism, the other two being ethics (*śīla*) and wisdom (*prajñā*).

śamatha

གཞི་གནས། • *gzhi gnas*

One of the two fundamental types of meditation in Buddhism. Here, one calms the mind through settling it upon an object of meditation; this is a support for the other fundamental type of meditation (*vipāśyanā*).

Sautrāntika

མདོ་སྡེ་པ། • *mdo sde pa*

A school of Indian Buddhist philosophy, and a doxographical category that Tibetan authors assigned different Indian Buddhist philosophers to. It is typically presented in contrast to the Vaibhāṣika school.

self-clinging

བདག་འཛིན། • *bdag 'dzin*

This is the misapprehension of the five aggregates as a self, or clinging to self-identity.

selflessness of persons

གང་ཟག་གི་བདག་མེད། • *gang zag gi bdag med*

The selflessness of persons is the lack of selfhood or identity of living beings, based on the fact that no person or animal has an independent, truly existent self or soul.

selflessness of phenomena and of persons

ཆོས་དང་གང་ཟག་གི་བདག་མེད། • *chos dang gang zag gi bdag med*

The two types of selflessness or emptiness that one realizes on the Mahāyāna path: the selflessness of persons is no-self, and the selflessness of phenomena is the lack of true existence of all phenomena.

sense spheres

སྒྱེ་མཆེད། • *skye mched*

Twelve sources for (or spheres of) the consciousnesses: the six faculties and the six objects.

settling, placement

འཇོག་ • *'jog*

This is placement of the mind on an object of meditation; in the context of the nine stages of śamatha meditation, it is the first one.

six topics

ཐྲོམ་བླུག་ • *sdom drug*

The six topics include the aggregates, the elements, the sense spheres, dependent origination, and the correct and incorrect.

sixfold collection of consciousness

ཚོགས་བླུག་ • *tshogs drug*

The five sense consciousnesses and the mental consciousness.

śrāvakas

ཉན་ཐོས། • *nyan thos*

These are the followers of the non-Mahāyāna scriptures of Buddhism who aim to become an arhat, one who has attained liberation through realizing selflessness but is not a complete buddha.

suchness

དེ་བཞིན་ཉིད། • *de bzhin nyid*

The true essence or nature of reality.

Sūtrayāna

མདོ་མཚན་ཉིད་ཐེག་པ། • *mdo mtshan nyid theg pa*

The paths to buddhahood taught in the sūtras, including the Śravakayāna and the Bodhisattvayāna, as opposed to Mantrayāna or the path of Tantra.

taming through settling

འཇོག་བླུག་ • *'jog dul*

This is presented as the fifth stage of śamatha practice in this text, although it is phrased differently elsewhere (*dul bar byed pa*).

tenet system

གྲུབ་མཐའ། • *grub mtha'* • *siddhānta*

Doxographical classifications of philosophical schools or doctrines.

thoroughly established nature

ཡོངས་གྲུབ། • *yongs grub* • *pariṇiṣpanna*

The ultimate reality according to Yogācāra or Cittamātra (Mind Only) schools. It is emptiness of duality as well as the wisdom that realizes that nonduality.

thoughts of the five poisons

དུག་ལྔ་རྩོག་པ། • *dug lnga'i rtog pa*

This refers to a list of five primary negative emotions. Here, it likely includes attachment, aversion, ignorance, pride, and jealousy.

three formations of the three doors

འདུ་བྱེད་སྒོ་གསུམ་གྱི་གསུམ། • *'du byed sgo gsum gyi gsum*

The second of the twelve links of dependent origination, formations represent the generation of karma through positive and negative actions. The phrasing presented in this text refers to the actions of body, speech, and mind.

three trainings of the path

བསྐྱབ་པ་གསུམ། • *bslab pa gsum* • *triśikṣā*

These trainings are those of ethics (*sīla*), meditation (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*prajñā*).

three vehicles

ཐེག་གསུམ། • *theg gsum*

These are the Śrāvakayāna, Pratyekabuddhayāna, and Bodhisattvayāna.

total delusion

ཀུན་དུ་ཚོངས་པ། • *kun tu rmongs pa*

This is the afflicted state of being caught in cyclic existence. Its opposite is complete purification (*rnam byang*).

training in prajñā

ཤེས་རབ་ཀྱི་བསྐྱབ་པ། • *shes rab kyi bslab pa*

This is one of the three trainings of the path, the other two being the trainings in ethics (*sīla*) and meditation (*samādhi*).

two realities

བདེན་གཉིས། • *bden gnyis*

The ultimate reality (true reality) and conventional reality (seeming reality).

two schools that propound external objects

དོན་སྒྲུ་ལྟེ་གཉིས། • *don smra sde gnyis*

These two schools are the Vaibhāṣika and the Sautrāntika.

ultimate reality of dharmatā

ཆོས་ཉིད་དམ་པའི་བདེན་པ། • *chos nyid dam pa'i bden pa*

This is the ultimate reality to be realized in the Mahāyāna system.

ultimately existent

དོན་དམ་ཡོད། • *don dam yod*

This means that something truly exists, rather than being imputed or misconstrued through ordinary perception.

unchanging thoroughly established nature and unmistakable thoroughly established nature

འགྱུར་མེད་དང་བྱིན་ཅི་མ་ལོག་པའི་ཡོངས་གྲུབ། • *'gyur med dang phyin ci ma log pa'i yongs grub*

These are two divisions of the thoroughly established nature. The former refers to emptiness as unchanging, the latter to its wisdom or cognitive aspect as unmistakable.

underapplication

འདྲ་མི་བྱེད་པ། • *'du mi byed pa*

One of the five faults, this means to not bother to apply a remedy when one experiences a fault in meditation.

Vaibhāṣika

བྱེ་སྒྲ་བ། • *bye smra ba*

A Buddhist philosophical tradition of analysis of the Abhidharma, it is one of what Tibetans consider to be the four main Indian Buddhist philosophical schools.

vajra splinter

རྫོ་རྩེ་གཟེར་མ། • *rdo rje gzer ma*

This refers to a type of Madhyamaka reasoning by which one determines that things are not caused by themselves, other phenomena, both, or neither.

view

ལྟ་བ། • *lta ba*

One's philosophical perspective or worldview.

vīpaśyanā

ལྟག་མཐོང་། • *lhag mthong*

One of the basic types of Buddhist meditation, this refers to the stage of pure seeing, where one either analyzes or directly perceives the nature of phenomena, whether that means probing their emptiness or determining that all emotions are impermanent and so forth.

Yogācāra

རྣལ་འབྱོར་སྟོན་པ། • *rnal 'byor spyod pa*

One of the four tenet systems found in Tibetan doxographies, it is concerned with doctrines such as the eight consciousnesses, the three natures, and the universe being mind-only. It is also sometimes referred to as Cittamātra (*sems tsam*) and Vijñānavāda.