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Seminal Words:
A Systematic Presentation of the
Four Truths and Dependent Arising

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PROJECT

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Khyentse Vision Project: Translating the Works of
Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo

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TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

Summary

This short treatise is an academic exposition of two core pillars of the Buddhist doctrine—the four ārya truths and dependent arising—with a third, related chapter on rebirth. These subjects are common to all schools of Buddhism and represent the foundation for all systems of thought and praxis based on the Buddha's teachings.

As a preliminary note, it is worth considering the meaning of the central phrase *four ārya truths*, or “four noble truths,” as they are often called. While *ārya* does mean noble, in this context it indicates those beings who have become noble and wise through their recognition of the nature of reality. Here, “truths” should not be understood as properties of a fact or a statement but as categories of experience and, as such, actual phenomena. The Buddha taught four such categories, and those who have recognized this teaching to be in accord with reality are āryas, or noble ones. Thus, one arrives at the four ārya truths.

The text begins by introducing the four truths—suffering, origin, cessation, and the path—as the main principles to be understood by those who wish to attain liberation. The four truths represent a comprehensive explanation of suffering and its end in terms of resultant experiences and their causes. The text explains why the four truths are taught in this order, provides a definition of each, and elucidates their essential characteristics. This includes a discussion of the various types of suffering, the different classes of afflictions and actions, the various kinds of cessation, an enumeration of the paths, and a brief explanation of the process of purification. The next section discusses the types of mind streams that the truths belong to—from ordinary beings, to beings in the pure lands and āryas—and presents the sixteen aspects of the four truths. Understanding the truths in terms of their aspects is important, as this removes mistaken notions that obstruct the path to liberation. The first chapter concludes with

an explanation of the term “ārya truth” and an explanation of the purpose of this teaching.

While the four truths relate to the understanding of suffering and its ending based on the principle of cause and result, the teaching on dependent arising describes in detail the causal mechanism perpetuating the never-ending cycle of birth and death in terms of twelve links. This is the subject of the second chapter. After a discussion of each link, the text subsumes them into two classes of causes and results: projecting causes and projected results, and actualizing causes and actualized results. The purpose of this classification is to explain—on the basis of the twelve links—how the seeds for rebirth are planted, nurtured, and finally brought to maturation. The links are then also briefly classified in terms of the three aspects of the process of total affliction (i.e., saṃsāra): afflictions, karma, and resultant suffering. After a paragraph on the functions of each link and a section on the number of lives it takes to complete the cycle, the chapter concludes with an explanation of the method of contemplating dependent arising and the benefits of this practice.

The third and final chapter elucidates the actual process of rebirth. It includes a brief section on the causes of death, an account of the main mental and physical processes occurring at that time, and an explanation of the postmortal process: the attainment of the intermediate state and how the connection to the next life and the physical place of birth is created. The next section establishes the doctrinal harmony of the teachings on rebirth, dependent arising, and emptiness as taught in the Madhya maka school, answering an important question: in the absence of a permanent entity or self that transmigrates from one life to the next, what is being reborn?

The text concludes with a brief note on rebirth from the perspective of the highest class of Buddhist Tantra.

The Source of This Teaching

This text is directly based on a writing by the eminent Geluk scholar Dragpa Shedrub,¹ *Illuminating the Path to Liberation: A Systematic Presentation of the Four Truths and Dependent Arising*.² It follows the same outline and repeats much of the content verbatim, albeit in a slightly condensed form and omitting most of the quotations cited by Dragpa Shedrub.

Among Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo’s Geluk teachers, Drakgön Könchok Tenpa Rabgye and Geshe Jampa Puntsok figure most prominently.³ These eminent teachers transmitted to him a vast treasury of teachings on sūtra and tantra. Even though the biography of Khyentse Wangpo includes long lists of the teachings he received from his numerous masters, the complete catalogue of his received teachings⁴ is either not extant or unavailable at this point. Since the writings of Dragpa Shedrub are not mentioned in the biography and the colophon itself does not give us any details on them, we do not

know the circumstances in which Khyentse Wangpo studied the works of Dragpa Shedrub and composed this text. However, the mere fact that Khyentse Wangpo based at least two of his writings on this master's compositions indicates that he found them particularly beneficial.⁵

Canonical Sources

In terms of canonical sources, the four truths are famously expounded in *The Sūtra of the Wheel of Dharma*,⁶ regarded as the first formal discourse given by the Buddha after his awakening, as well as in many scriptures throughout the entire Buddhist canon. Dependent arising is taught in many sūtras dedicated to the subject, most notably *The Rice Seedling*⁷ and *Teaching the Fundamental Exposition and Detailed Analysis of Dependent Arising*.⁸ The various topics around death and rebirth taught in the third chapter can be traced to a variety of canonical sources. The conditions of death, for instance, are taught in *The Detailed Account of the Previous Aspirations of the Blessed Bhaiṣajyaguruvaideśyaprabhā*,⁹ analogies for the process of rebirth can be found in *Questions Regarding Death and Transmigration*,¹⁰ and a detailed exposition of the process of birth is given in *The Teaching to Venerable Nanda on Entry into the Womb*.¹¹

On this Translation

This translation is based on a comparative reading of the witnesses of the text found in the various editions of the Collected Works of Khyentse Wangpo¹² as well as in the collection of The Seven Transmissions.¹³ Since the text very closely relies on the treatise by Dragpa Shedrub, his text was read in parallel. This proved to be particularly helpful for difficult passages, or when the writing in the Khyentse collections was terse or contained errors. Significant variations in reading are indicated in the notes.

OUTLINE

I. THE FOUR TRUTHS

- A. Determining Their Number
- B. Their Sequence
- C. Their Essential Characteristics
- D. The Types of Mind Streams They Belong To
- E. How Their Aspects Are Accomplished
- F. The Meaning of the Term
- G. Their Purpose

II. THE TWELVE LINKS OF DEPENDENT ARISING

- A. General Definition
- B. Individual Analysis
 - 1. Ignorance
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 - 3. Consciousness
 - 4. Name and Form
 - 5. Six Sense Bases
 - 6. Contact
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 - 8. Craving
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 - 10. Becoming
 - 11. Birth
 - 12. Aging and Death
- C. Classifications
 - 1. Concise Classification

- 2. Classification in Terms of the Process of Total Affliction
- D. Functions
- E. The Number of Lives It Takes to Complete the Links
 - 1. Two Lifetimes
 - 2. Three Lifetimes
 - 3. Four Lifetimes
- F. How to Meditate on Dependent Arising³⁶
- G. The Benefits of This Meditation
- III. THE STAGES OF DEATH AND TRANSFERENCE
 - A. The Actual Subject
 - 1. The Conditions of Death
 - 2. The Mind at the Moment of Death
 - 3. The Way Heat Withdraws
 - 4. How the Intermediate State is Attained
 - 5. How the Connection to the Next Birth is Established
 - 5.1. Main Explanation
 - 5.2. Supplementary Remarks
 - B. Ancillary Note

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Seminal Words

When all suffering that results from the cause of origin [134]
Is relinquished with the nectar of the truth of the path,
The spring of deathless cessation arrives.
Supreme One who teaches this, bestow virtue and goodness!

Three subjects will be discussed here: systematic presentations of the four truths and of dependent arising, and the stages of death and transference.

I. The Four Truths

The presentation of the four truths entails determining their number, their sequence, their essential characteristics, the types of mind stream they belong to, how their aspects are accomplished, the meaning of the term, and their purpose.

A. Determining Their Number

That which is to be ascertained by those who aspire for liberation is enumerated as the four truths. They are the main principles of engagement and disengagement. The cause for engagement in saṃsāra is the truth of origin and its result is the truth of suffering; the cause for disengagement is the truth of the path, and [135] the result of separation is the truth of cessation. In this way, the four truths are ascertained with this twofold scheme.

B. Their Sequence

Throughout his numerous discourses, the Bhagavān mentioned two sequences to teach the four truths. From the perspective of the actual stages of cause and result, he first taught the truths of origin and the path, followed by the truths of suffering and cessation. From the perspective of the stages of realization, he taught the truths in the order of suffering, origin, cessation, and path.

Here, we shall discuss the latter. The purpose of teaching the sequence in this way is the following. In the process of engaging in the practice of adopting and discarding in relation to the four truths, one must first generate the mind wishing to overcome suffering. For this, one needs to understand how oneself and others are afflicted by the sufferings of saṃsāra, that is, birth, aging, sickness, and death and so forth. [136] For this reason, the truth of suffering is taught first.

Then, one must understand where that suffering comes from. Recognizing that suffering arises from an origin, that is, deeds motivated by mental afflictions such as attachment, one generates the mind wishing to abandon them. For this reason, the truth of origin is taught next.

After this, one needs to generate the mind wishing to gain liberation, the truth of the cessation that is the relinquishment of both suffering and origin. Thus, the truth of cessation is taught.

Finally, as a means to attain liberation, one must rely on the truth of the path within one's own mind stream, including the wisdom that directly cognizes selflessness. Therefore, the truth of the path is taught fourth.

This is similar to the process of recovering from a disease. First, we must acknowledge our predicament. This understanding gives rise to the wish to eradicate the cause of this disease and regain our well-being. In order to accomplish this, we then proceed to take medicine. The exalted Maitreya stated:

Just as a disease must be understood, its cause eradicated,
Well-being is to be gained, and medicine is to be taken,
Suffering, its cause, cessation, and the path
Are to be known, relinquished, realized, and relied upon, respectively.¹⁴

From the perspective of the actual stages of cause and result, in terms of the process of affliction, the truth of suffering arises from the truth of origin; in terms of the process of purification, [137] the truth of cessation is obtained from the truth of the path.

C. Their Essential Characteristics

Even though most scholars are in agreement with regard to the bases of characteristics,¹⁵ there are many different interpretations of their defining characteristics. Here, I shall present them as they are commonly understood.

Regarding the defining characteristic of the truth of suffering, the truth of suffering is comprised of the skandhas of clinging formed by the truth of origin, which acts as its cause.

The truth of suffering can be further classified into three in terms of its nature: (1) the suffering of suffering, such as the suffering of intense physical pain when one is fatally ill or wounded; (2) the suffering of change, for example, the craving for the taste of delicious food and the pleasant sensation that comes with it; and (3) the pervasive suffering of conditioned existence, which is exemplified by the five skandhas formed by karma and afflictions.

The truth of suffering further comprises the impure container world, such as this place, the desire realm, and the ordinary, impure sentient beings it contains, such as us. These are further described in terms of the result of maturation, such as the five skandhas of clinging, and the dominant result, for instance, the ground of burning iron of the hell realm.

In terms of how it is experienced, the truth of suffering is further differentiated into eight types. These are: (1–4) the sufferings of birth, aging, sickness, and death; (5) the sufferings of fearing an encounter with enemies and hostile experiences, and (6) of worrying about being separated from loved ones and pleasant experiences; (7) the suffering of not obtaining what one desires; and (8) the suffering of negative tendencies. [138]

Regarding the defining characteristic of the truth of origin, the truth of origin is comprised of the types of skandhas of clinging that produce the truth of suffering, which is its result. It is classified into afflictions, actions, and the origin that is different from those.

The first comprises the six root afflictions—desire, hatred, pride, ignorance, doubt, and wrong views—and the twenty secondary afflictions.

The second comprises three types of actions: (1) meritorious actions, such as abandoning killing and so forth, and defiled acts of giving and the like, which lead to a good rebirth in the desire realm; (2) nonmeritorious actions, such as killing, stealing, and so forth, which lead to an unfortunate rebirth; and (3) nontransferring actions, such as cultivation of the four meditative absorptions and the four formless states, which lead to rebirth as gods of the form and formless realms.

The third refers to the main mind that is concomitant with the origin, that is, afflictions and actions. In terms of actions, the origin is also divided into the abovementioned actions committed through the three doors, and undetermined actions.

Regarding the defining characteristic of the truth of cessation, the truth of cessation is the analytical cessation that comes about as the result of separation accomplished through the truth of the path, which is the means to obtain it.

The following terminological distinctions can be made: there is non-analytical or [139] nominal cessation, and there is ultimate cessation. One also distinguishes between cessation with adornment and without adornment, cessation with remainder and without remainder, and complete and incomplete cessation.

Regarding the first, non-analytical or nominal cessation, in the mind stream of individuals at the stage of peak of the path of joining,¹⁶ it is the aspect of eradication of the possibility for the roots of goodness to be destroyed by anger. In the mind stream of individuals at the stage of forbearance and above, it is the aspect of eradication of the possibility of rebirth in the lower realms. In the mind stream of ordinary beings, it is the aspect of being temporarily free from attachment to the active afflictions of the desire realm. Finally, in the mind stream of Mahāyāna followers who have not previously engaged in inferior paths and who have attained the unobstructed path of the path of seeing, it is the cessation of the imputed conception of true existence.

The second, ultimate cessation, is synonymous with the truth of cessation.

The third, cessation with adornment, is the truth of cessation in the mind stream of an arhat who has attained the six supernatural faculties.

The fourth, cessation without adornment, is the truth of cessation in the mind stream of an individual who has not attained supernatural faculties.

The fifth and sixth, cessation with remainder and without remainder, respectively indicate the presence and absence of the skandhas of clinging. According to the Prāsaṅgika school, they refer to two kinds of nirvāṇa: with and without the traces of apprehending appearances as truly existent.

The seventh and eighth, complete and incomplete cessation, are the truth of cessation in the mind stream of a learner and a nonlearner, respectively.

Regarding the defining characteristic of the truth of the path, the truth of the path is the type of knowledge in the mind stream of an ārya that functions as the cause of separation; the truth of cessation is its result of separation. [140]

Without distinguishing between actual and nominal paths, five paths are listed: the path of accumulation and so forth.¹⁷ In terms of their nature, three classes of the truth of the path are distinguished as belonging to the mind streams of the āryas of the three vehicles.

How are cessation and the path obtained? All wisdom cognitions¹⁸ of ārya beings function as antidotes to directly eliminate their corresponding discards,¹⁹ both conceptually constructed and innate. When these wisdom cognitions have generated the cause of separation—that is, the moments of the truth of cessation, which are directly obtained by them—each of them directly eliminates its respective discard. Because the aspect of elimination²⁰ whereby these specific discards cannot again arise in that mind stream has been obtained, it is termed the truth of cessation.

The liberations corresponding to these cessations are posited as the type of truth of the path that functions as the cause of separation of the truth of cessation.

D. The Types of Mind Streams They Belong To

Suffering and origin exist mainly in the mind streams of ordinary beings, while cessation and path exist only in the mind streams of ārya beings.

It is also taught that the truth of suffering refers exclusively to impure fields and not to pure ones. The realm of Sukhāvatī²¹ and the ordinary beings of this buddha field are therefore not the truth of suffering. All other ordinary beings, their skandhas of clinging, and the karma and afflictions of their mind streams, are certainly classified as either suffering or origin. As the mind stream of a Hīnayāna ārya includes skandhas of clinging, [141] those beings have both the truth of suffering and origin in terms of karma. The mind stream of a Mahāyāna ārya, on the other hand, is free of both suffering and origin. Therefore, the karma and afflictions in their mind stream is not an origin.²²

The suffering of conditioned existence pervades all three realms of existence. The two other forms of suffering exist only in the desire realm.

E. How Their Aspects Are Accomplished

Among the sixteen aspects of the four truths—impermanence and so forth—the truth of suffering comprises four aspects: impermanence, suffering, emptiness, and lack of self. The skandhas of clinging are impermanent because they arise temporarily; suffering, because they are controlled by karma and afflictions; empty of something other, in the sense of being devoid of a controlling entity or owner that is other; and lacking self, because no autonomous self is found to exist.

By recollecting and familiarizing oneself with these points, one abandons the four misapprehensions that view the skandhas of clinging as permanent, happiness, pure, and having a self, respectively.

The truth of origin comprises four aspects: cause, origin, producer, and condition. Defiled karma and afflictions are a cause because they are the root of suffering, which is their result; an origin, because they incessantly bring forth all forms of suffering, which is their result; [142] a producer, because they generate that suffering with great intensity; and a condition, because they are the cooperating condition for the arising of suffering, which is their result.

By familiarizing oneself with these points, one abandons the notions that suffering is without a cause; that suffering has only one single cause; that suffering is produced by an all-powerful being, such as a god; and that suffering is by nature permanent and in a state of continuous change, respectively.

The truth of cessation comprises four aspects: cessation, peace, excellence, and definite release. The freedom that consists of the complete elimination of suffering and origin is cessation, because it is the freedom that arises as a result of having eliminated suffering; peace, because it is the freedom that arises as a result of having eliminated the

afflictions; excellence, because it is a liberation the nature of which is benefit and happiness; and definite release, because it is an irreversible liberation.

By familiarizing oneself with these points, one abandons the notions that there is no liberation; that liberation is a particular defiled state; that liberation is of the nature of suffering; and that liberation is a reversible state, respectively.

The truth of the path comprises four aspects: path, accomplisher, appropriate means, and definite releaser. The wisdom cognition that directly cognizes the reality of a lack of self is a path, because it is the actual paths that lead to liberation [143] as well as the paths that pertain to it;²³ an accomplisher, because it is the wisdom cognitions that directly cognize the pertinent type of selflessness;²⁴ an appropriate means, because it is the wisdom cognition that functions as the antidote for the afflictions; and a definite releaser, because it is the wisdom cognition that makes it impossible for suffering to reemerge.

By familiarizing oneself with these points, one abandons the notions that there is no path to liberation; that the path to liberation consists of states of meditative absorption; that the path to liberation consists of specific defiled states; and that there is no path to liberation that completely eradicates all suffering, respectively.

F. The Meaning of the Term

These four are called ārya truths because they truly are as perceived by the ārya beings and because they are not in accord with the perception of ordinary, child-like beings.

G. Their Purpose

The four truths are expounded in many places in all the traditions of both the great and the lesser vehicles. As they contain the essential points of the processes of entanglement with and disengagement from saṃsāra as condensed by the Omniscient One, they are of central importance for the accomplishment of true liberation. Because they also summarize the main principles of the practice, they must be learned according to these stages. Therefore, this teaching accomplishes a very important purpose.

II. The Twelve Links of Dependent Arising

The systematic presentation of dependent arising entails seven points: a general definition, [144] individual analysis, classifications, functions, the number of lives it takes to complete the links, how to meditate on dependent arising, and the benefits of this meditation.

A. General Definition

The topic taught in the *Rice Seedling Sūtra* was elaborated upon in various sūtras and commentaries²⁵ on dependent arising. Their main teaching in terms of the dependent arising of compounded phenomena is the following: the general definition of dependent arising is a dependent occurrence, and the definition of dependent arising of compounded phenomena is an occurrence dependent on its own causes and conditions.

B. Individual Analysis

From ignorance to aging and death, the process of dependent arising comprises twelve links.

1. IGNORANCE

Ignorance has two aspects: general ignorance with regard to deeds and their results, and ignorance that is deluded about the nature of reality. Due to the former, deeds that lead to an unfortunate rebirth are accumulated, and due to the latter, deeds that lead to both good and unfortunate rebirths.

Regarding the ignorance that is deluded about the nature of reality, the proponents of the Prāsaṅgika and Svātantrika systems both agree that it applies to all cognitions that apprehend things as real. However, the Prāsaṅgika assertion that any cognition that apprehends things as real is necessarily ignorance is not shared by the Svātantrikas. According to all lower Buddhist tenets, including the Svātantrika school, this ignorance refers to the notions that apprehend the individual as a substantially existent, self-sufficient entity. For this reason, the root of saṃsāra is identified differently in the Prāsaṅgika and Svātantrika traditions.²⁶

In any case, they are similar in the sense that both assert the root of saṃsāra to be the ignorance of ordinary beings [145] with regard to the reality of selflessness, as understood in their own tradition.

For this reason, even though both types of ignorance—that is, the ignorance that is the first of the twelve links of dependent arising, and the ignorance that is deluded with regard to the reality of the nonexistence of a self—are explained to be of two types, namely, conceptually constructed and innate,²⁷ the mind stream of an ārya does not have the ignorance that is the first of the twelve links of dependent arising.

Although most scholars seem to agree that the ignorance that is the causal motivating factor for the karma of formations cannot be the ignorance that is deluded with regard to actions and their results, it is nevertheless present with the motivation at that time.²⁸

2. FORMATIONS

Formations are karma. They are of three types: non-meritorious, meritorious, and non-transferring.

3. CONSCIOUSNESS

In the sūtras, consciousness is explained to be of six types. Here, however, it should be understood in terms of the main aspect, which is mental consciousness. At the time of being imbued with the latencies of wholesome and unwholesome deeds, it is a causal consciousness. At a later stage, when this consciousness is connected to the next place of birth, it is a resultant consciousness. Both aspects are implied in the link of dependent arising named consciousness.

4. NAME AND FORM

In the term “name and form,” “name” refers to four formless skandhas²⁹ of sensations, perceptions, formations, and consciousness. [146] “Form” refers to the *kalala* embryo,³⁰ and so forth. When a being is born in the formless realm, there is no actual form, only the seed of form.

5. SIX SENSE BASES

For a being born from a womb, the *kalala* embryo—consisting of consciousness, sperm, and blood—and the name skandhas initially develop and are fully formed. This process includes the formation of the sense bases of the eyes, ears, and so forth. This means that the physical and mental sense bases exist prior to birth.

In the case of a miraculous birth, the sense faculties are instantly formed and do not develop gradually. When birth occurs from an egg or from heat, the explanation of the formation of the sense bases is similar to the one above, except for the birthplace not being a womb.

6. CONTACT

When an object, sense faculty, and consciousness come together, the first mental factor that arises is contact. It determines the object—form, for instance—as either pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. Contact is of six types, from eye to mind.

7. SENSATION

In accordance with the three types of objects determined by contact, there arise three types of sensation: pleasure, pain, or a neutral sensation. These are also of six types, like contact above.

8. CRAVING

With the sensation of pleasure arises the craving that desires not to be separated from it, and with the sensation of pain arises the craving that desires to be separate from it. With neutral sensations arise corresponding forms of craving. One also distinguishes three types of craving: craving for sense pleasure, craving for becoming,³¹ [147] and craving for annihilation.

9. CLINGING

Clinging is attachment, which is an increased form of craving. It is of four types: clinging to sense pleasures, clinging to views, clinging to disciplines, and clinging to identity. The first of these refers to attachment to sense objects like forms. The second is attachment to wrong views, except for the view of the perishing collection.³² The third is attachment to inferior conduct and disciplines. The fourth is craving that has a strong interest in and is attached to the view of the perishing collection.

10. BECOMING

At an earlier stage, consciousness was imbued with the latencies of the karma of formations,³³ which are then nurtured by craving and clinging.³⁴ Becoming refers to actions when they have the power to then induce the next rebirth. The term “becoming” is in this case the name of the result used for the cause. Here, we can differentiate the three types of karma related to the three realms of existence.

11. BIRTH

Through the power of the karma of becoming, the consciousness is for the first time connected to the new life in any of the four places of rebirth. Here, one distinguishes four connections in relation to the four modes of rebirth—a womb, and so forth—and three connections in relation to the three realms. Birth, then, refers to the five skandhas as soon as this connection has taken place. Even though some posit that birth refers to the moment the being exits the womb, here it is asserted to be the skandhas in the first moment of the aforementioned connection.

12. AGING AND DEATH

Aging [148] is the process of maturation and change of the skandhas. Death is the process of discarding the skandhas of one type of birth and the stage when they have been discarded. These two are subsumed under one link because their sequence is uncertain. Sorrow, lamentation, and so forth are merely uncertain by-products that come with the links. They are taught for the purpose of generating weariness with the cycle of rebirth.

C. Classifications

This has two parts: a concise classification and classification in terms of the process of total affliction.

1. CONCISE CLASSIFICATION

The twelve links are classified in terms of causes and results, as they comprise the two pairs of projecting causes and projected results, and actualizing causes and actualized results.

Ignorance, formations, and the causal consciousness are classified as the three branches of projecting causes; the resultant consciousness, name and form, the six

sense bases, contact, and sensations are the four and a half branches of projected results. Craving, clinging, and becoming are the three branches of actualizing causes; birth and aging and death are the two branches of actualized results.

What is being projected? The four and a half links from resultant consciousness through sensation.

What are these links projected by? By the karma of formations conditioned by ignorance.

How are they projected? By imbuing the causal consciousness with the latencies of these actions.

What is the meaning of projection? [149] It means that when the actualizing links of craving and so forth are present, the resultant links are accordingly actualized.

What is actualizing the result? It is actualized by clinging conditioned by craving.³⁵

What is actualized? Birth and aging and death.

How are they actualized? By activating the latencies of the karma of formations that consciousness has been imbued with.

Therefore, the projecting and the actualizing links have different functions but are one in nature.

2. CLASSIFICATION IN TERMS OF THE PROCESS OF TOTAL AFFLICTION

Ignorance, craving, and clinging are the origin of suffering in terms of afflictions. Formations and becoming are the origin of suffering in terms of karma. The seven remaining links, resultant consciousness and so forth, comprise the truth of suffering.

D. Functions

Ignorance obscures reality. Formations plant the seeds of future rebirth. Consciousness leads to the place of birth. Name and form appropriates a body. The sense bases complete the formation of the body. Contact experiences the change of objects. Sensation experiences the maturation of karma. Craving attracts the skandhas of a new birth. Clinging establishes the connection to acquire these skandhas. Becoming actualizes the skandhas of the next life. Aging and death causes the individual who possesses these skandhas to experience suffering.

E. The Number of Lives It Takes to Complete the Links

It takes a minimum of two lifetimes and a maximum of three lifetimes for the twelve links to be completed. Some scholars maintain that this process can even take four lifetimes. [150]

1. TWO LIFETIMES

Once one is born, the experience of the links unfolds as follows. For instance, driven by ignorance, a human being may accumulate—with the causal consciousness—the karma of formations for a birth as a god of the desire realm. Until this person passes

away, that particular karma is nurtured through craving and clinging, and activated by the karma of becoming, which then leads to birth. In this way, the first life comprises five and a half links. The next life, when that being is born as a god, comprises six and a half links, including the resultant consciousness and so forth.

2. THREE LIFETIMES

When it takes an additional lifetime, the experience can unfold as follows. For example, in that life as a human being, the karmic latencies for birth as a god in the desire realm are placed in the consciousness through the power of ignorance, but because they are not nurtured through craving and clinging there is rebirth as an animal instead. In that animal life, the latencies are then nurtured through craving and clinging, and activated through becoming, bringing about that birth as a god of the desire realm. Here, the first two links occur in the first life; craving, clinging, and becoming in the second life; and the rest in the third life, thus completing the twelve links.

3. FOUR LIFETIMES

If one maintains that there can be one more [life to complete the cycle], one must accept that even though the latencies were nurtured through craving, they were not nurtured through clinging. The views of the Mahāyāna schools differ slightly in this regard from those of the Sautrāntika and Vaibhāṣika schools. [151]

*F. How to Meditate on Dependent Arising*³⁶

To contemplate the dependent arising of afflicted existence in forward order, one reflects on how the first link, ignorance,³⁷ is the root of saṃsāra in general and, in particular, how each link is based on the previous one: “Due to ignorance the formations arise,” and so forth, up to “Due to birth arises aging and death.” To contemplate the dependent arising of afflicted existence in reverse order, one asks oneself: “Due to what condition is there aging and death? It is due to birth,” and so forth, up to the formations that arise on the basis of ignorance.

To contemplate the dependent arising of purification in forward order, one reflects: “When ignorance ceases, formations cease,” and so forth, up to “When birth ceases, aging and death ceases.” And lastly, to reflect on the dependent arising of purification in reverse order, one inquires: “What has to cease for aging and death to cease? Due to the cessation of birth, aging and death ceases,” and so forth, up to “Due to the cessation of ignorance, formations cease.”

The contemplations according to the first two modes respectively reveal the truths of suffering and origin. Contemplation according to the last two modes familiarizes one with the truths of cessation and the path.

G. The Benefits of This Meditation

This meditation has immeasurable benefits, as stated, for instance, by Ārya Nāgārjuna:

Among the treasury of the Victorious One's words
This teaching on dependent arising is most precious and profound.
Those who see it as it truly is
See the buddhas, supreme knowers of reality.³⁸

III. The Stages of Death and Transference

[152] The explanation of the process of death and transference has two parts: the actual subject and an ancillary note.

A. The Actual Subject

The actual subject comprises five topics: the conditions of death, the mind at the moment of death, the way heat withdraws, how the intermediate state is attained, and how the connection to the next birth is established.

1. THE CONDITIONS OF DEATH

When the life force is exhausted, it is a timely death. Untimely death occurs even when the life force has not been exhausted. It may occur when merit has been exhausted due to a fatal disease, for example, or due to other conditions for an untimely death, of which nine are taught in the sūtras.³⁹

2. THE MIND AT THE MOMENT OF DEATH

The mind at the moment of death is either wholesome, unwholesome, or neutral. Although, generally speaking, people who engaged in wholesome deeds will have a wholesome mind and those who committed unwholesome deeds a negative one, there are exceptions, which is why this is uncertain. These refer to the states when coarse perceptions are active. In terms of subtle perceptions, however, the mind can only be neutral.

3. THE WAY HEAT WITHDRAWS

For individuals who have committed severe unwholesome deeds, the heat withdraws from the upper part of the body, and for those who have committed powerful wholesome deeds it withdraws from the lower part of the body. In both cases, the heat gathers at the level of the heart, after which consciousness leaves the body.

4. HOW THE INTERMEDIATE STATE IS ATTAINED

When consciousness leaves the body, the intermediate state is attained without interruption, just like the simultaneous rise and fall of the two sides of a scale. The

bardo being takes the form of the state of existence it will be born in. However, when one is born in the formless realm [153] there is no intermediate state.

5. HOW THE CONNECTION TO THE NEXT BIRTH IS ESTABLISHED

This has two parts: the main explanation and supplementary remarks.

5.1. Main Explanation

In the case of birth from a womb, the bardo being, having seen beings of its own type, looks at them and feels attraction and so forth. With a mind that sees the parents' semen and blood in a distorted way, the bardo being approaches them. Only perceiving the sexual organ of the woman, anger is generated toward the man, due to which the bardo being dies and transitions to connect to the next birth.⁴⁰ The consciousness at the moment this connection is made is only the mental consciousness. There is no other consciousness at that time. At this point, the *kalala* embryo mingles with other subtle elements,⁴¹ and the new life gradually develops. It is born a bit after thirty-eight weeks. A detailed presentation of this process can be found in *The Teaching to Venerable Nanda on Entry into the Womb*.⁴²

For most births in the hell realms, as well as births as an animal, a hungry ghost, a human, or a god in the realms of desire and form, the bardo being sees the beings of their own type and approaches them. Once there, the anger generated toward the birthplace is the condition ending the intermediate existence, on the basis of which the connection to the new birth is established. However, those with negative tendencies accumulated by killing lots of sheep, pigs, birds, or other wildlife, and who are bound to take birth in a hell realm, in their intermediate state see these sheep and pigs and so forth, [154] as if in a dream. Due to the fondness for killing stemming from their previous habituation with the act, they rush toward these animals. The strong aversion that they then generate toward the birthplace ends the intermediate existence and transfers them to the new birth.

It is taught that the process for birth from an egg is for the most part similar to that of birth from a womb. With birth from heat and moisture, the connection to that birth is made through the condition of a desire for smell, and in the case of miraculous birth, through longing for the place. For birth in the hot and cold hells, it is the longing for heat and cold, respectively.

5.2. Supplementary Remarks

The way beings continuously roam in saṃsāra should be well understood in terms of the twelve links of dependent arising according to the Madhyamaka tradition. That is to say, the skandhas themselves are not the self, and there is no individual being that is other than these skandhas; that is, there is no self-sufficient self that continues on to the other world.⁴³ It is the mere "I" imputed on the basis of the skandhas that continuously roams in saṃsāra only on the conventional level, based on the illusory phenomena that are the twelve links of dependent arising. This must be clearly understood.

Are there analogies to illustrate how this consciousness bridges the gap between this life and the next while roaming in saṃsāra? I will present in an accessible manner, according to the Mahāyāna tradition, what the sūtras teach about how consciousness bridges the gap to the next life.⁴⁴ When a teacher recites from memory words like *namo buddhāya* to their student [155] and the student memorizes the words and then recites them in turn, the speech of the teacher has not been transferred to the student. If this were the case, the teacher could not recite these words again. It is also not the case that the student can say the words without depending on the teacher's speech. If it were so, their recitation would be causeless.

Just as in this analogy, at the time of connecting to the next life the consciousness at the moment of death is not something unchanging in essence that is transferred to the next life.⁴⁵ If it were, it would become permanent, which in turn would make taking birth untenable. It is also not the case that the consciousness of the next life arises without dependence on the consciousness at the moment of death; otherwise it would follow that it is causeless.

Thus, similar to how the student's words arise on the basis of a cause, which is the utterance of the teacher, the next life's consciousness arises from the continuum of the previous life's consciousness. Just as it would be wrong to say that the teacher's and the student's words are one, the consciousness of the present life at the time of death and the consciousness connected to the next life are not one either. And just as the student's words arise on the basis of having heard the teacher speak, the consciousness of the next life arises on the basis of the consciousness of the previous life. It also does not suddenly arise as something distinct from the consciousness of the previous life.

Similarly, other analogies express the same idea: the flame of one candle lit from another candle,⁴⁶ the reflection of a form appearing in a mirror, [156] the image of a deity cast from a mold, the fire started with a magnifying glass, the shoot arising from a seed, the flow of saliva triggered by the sight of a sour fruit, and the echo reverberating from a loud sound. The understanding of the explanation above should be applied to these analogies as well.

Even though death and transference exist conventionally, they are devoid of ultimate existence. Understanding that is established as the path of the Middle Way, free from the two extremes.⁴⁷ Accordingly, it should also be applied to the arising and ceasing of all compounded phenomena.

B. Ancillary Note

In the tradition of the Unexcelled Yoga Tantra,⁴⁸ it is the ignorance apprehending things as truly existent that functions as the root of all wandering in saṃsāra. This ignorance establishes the link to future birth by imbuing with the latencies of karma the "I" labeled merely on the basis of the most subtle wind and mind. As it is stated in the *Vajra Rosary*:⁴⁹

Birth, abiding, and perishing,
As well as intermediate existence—
Whatever is designated by the world
Is emanated by the mental winds.⁵⁰

This is an important article.

*Śubham.*⁵¹

NOTES

1. Dragpa Shedrub (grags pa bshad sgrub, 1675–1748) was a prolific teacher and author who served as abbot of the tantric college at Choné (co ne) Monastery in Amdo, northeastern Tibet. Renowned for his extraordinary memorization skills, Dragpa Shedrub received his Geshe Lharampa degree from Sera Monastery near Lhasa in central Tibet at around the age of thirty. In 1706, he returned to Amdo, and in 1714 he established a philosophy college at his home monastery in Choné, where he served as the head teacher for eight years. He spent the rest of his life engaged in activities of composition, teaching, and meditation while never abandoning his own studies. His collected writings encompass eleven volumes, containing commentaries and original compositions on all major fields of Buddhist learning, including tantra. See <https://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Dragpa-Shedrub/2931>.
2. Choné Dragpa Shedrub, *bden bzhi dang rten 'brel gyi rnam par bzhas pa thar lam gsal byed*, 232–58.
3. Drakgön Könchok Tenpa Rabgye (brag dgon dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, 1801–1866) was from Amdo and Jampa Puntsok (byams pa phun tshogs, b. 1812) from Lithang.
4. *gsan yig*.
5. The second text by Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo based on Dragpa Shedrub's writings is entitled *grub mtha' bzhi'i bden gnyis kyi legs bshad snying po'i rgyan*. It explains the two realities in accord with the understanding of the four philosophical tenet systems.
6. *Dharmacakrasūtra*.
7. *Śālistamba*.
8. *Pratītyasamutpāḍādivibhaṅganirdeśa*.
9. *Bhagavānbhaiṣajyaguruvaiḍūryaprabhasya pūrvapraṇidhānaviśeṣavistāra*.
10. *Āyusṣattiyathākāraparipṛcchā*.
11. *Āyusmannandagarbhāvakraṇtīnirdeśa*.
12. *mkhyen brtse'i dbang po'i bka' 'bum*.
13. *bka' babs bdun*.
14. *Sublime Continuum (Uttaratantra)*, 4.52.
15. That is, the four ārya truths.

16. This is the second of the four stages of the path of joining, the first being heat, and the last two forbearance and highest worldly dharma.
17. The other four are the path of joining, the path of seeing, the path of cultivation, and the path of no more learning.
18. *ye shes*.
19. That is, the factors to be eliminated (*spang bya*).
20. While all Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo editions of this text read *spangs pa'i tshe*, Dragpa Shedrub has *spangs pa'i cha*, which is the reading followed here.
21. Sukhāvātī is the pure land of Buddha Amitābha. Before attaining buddhahood, Amitābha made special aspirations to the effect that anyone inspired by faith in him may be reborn in his future buddha field. For this reason, the practice around Buddha Amitābha and his pure land is of particular relevance for people close to death and the deceased.
22. The question of whether ārya bodhisattvas still have afflictions is a point of contention. Generally speaking, two types of veils are to be removed to attain complete awakening: the veil of afflictions, comprised of the root and secondary mental afflictions, and the cognitive veil comprised of the afflictions' latencies. The former can be further subdivided into conceptually constructed afflictions (*kun brtags kyi nyon mongs pa*), based on acquired world views, and innate afflictions (*lhan skyes kyi nyon mongs pa*), that is, afflictions that are not based on such views. According to the Geluk interpretation—reflected here—Mahāyāna āryas still possess innate afflictions that are eliminated through the path of cultivation (i.e., the fourth of the five paths of awakening). According to the Sakya tradition, which generally follows the expositions of Gorampa Sönam Senge, this view represents the position of the common vehicle. According to the Madhyamaka tradition of Nāgārjuna, however, the path of seeing (i.e., the insight that turns ordinary bodhisattvas into ārya bodhisattvas) is the direct cognition of emptiness that eliminates all mental afflictions from the mind stream. What is left for these ārya bodhisattvas to eliminate is the cognitive veil, comprised of their latencies, which manifest themselves as conceptual thought. See Khenchen Appey Rinpoche, *Teachings on Sakya Pandita's Clarifying the Sage's Intent*, 2008; Gorampa Sönam Senge, *Distinguishing the Views*, 2014.
23. This refers to the actual paths of liberation (i.e., the path of seeing, the path of cultivation, and the path of no further training) and the paths conducive to liberation (i.e., the path of accumulation and the path of joining), respectively.
24. The degree to which selflessness is realized depends on the individual's path. For those on the śrāvaka path, for instance, the truth of the path accomplishes the cognition of the selflessness of the individual but not that of the selflessness of phenomena. For those on the bodhisattva path, the truth of the path accomplishes the cognition of the selflessness of both the individual and phenomena.
25. The Tengyur contains two commentaries on the *Rice Seedling Sūtra*, one by Nāgārjuna (Toh. 3986) and one by Kamalaśīla (Toh. 4001).
26. This point reflects one of the key differences between Prāsaṅgika and Svātantrika Madhyamaka, according to the Geluk system. According to this view, the Prāsaṅgika approach is superior to Svātantrika in that, among other things, it is the only system able to correctly identify the most subtle root of saṃsāra. This view is not shared by all Tibetan schools. According to the Sakya school, for instance, Prāsaṅgika and Svātantrika Madhyamaka differ only in terms of the methods used to establish the view, not in terms of the view itself. For a presentation of the unique tenets of Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka according to the Geluk system, see Cozort, *Unique Tenets of the Middle Way Consequence School*. For articles on the distinction between the two schools, see Dreyfus and McClintock, *The Svātantrika-Prāsaṅgika Distinction*.

27. Conceptually constructed ignorance (*kun tu brtags pa'i ma rig pa*) is based on a mistaken worldview or philosophical system, such as belief in a permanent self, distinct from the skandhas, that attains liberation. Innate ignorance (*lhan cig skyes pa'i ma rig pa*) is a misapprehension of reality that is not dependent on a particular set of acquired beliefs, such as the view of the self based on the five skandhas.
28. For a discussion of the two types of motivating factors—the causal motivating factor (*rgyu'i kun slong*) and the motivating factor at the time of action (*dus kyi kun slong*)—refer to the discussion of karma in Vasubandhu's *Treasury of Abhidharma* (*Abhidharmakośa*), 4.10.
29. Here, the translation follows Dragpa Shedrub (*gzugs can ma yin pa'i ming bzhi'i phung po* instead of *gzugs can ma yin pa'i ming gzhi'i phung po*), as it makes for a more correct reading.
30. The Sanskrit word *kalala* (*mer mer po*) refers to the first stage of embryonic development.
31. That is, craving for identity.
32. The view of the perishing collection (*satkāyadr̥ṣṭi*; *'jig tshogs kyi lta ba*), also called “personality view,” is the belief in a permanent self or identity where there are only impermanent phenomena, that is, the five skandhas of clinging.
33. The second link above.
34. That is, links eight and nine.
35. All editions in the Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo collections read *srid pa'i rkyen gyi len pa*. In this case, Dragpa Shedrub's *sred pa'i rkyen gyi len pa* was followed.
36. Even though all editions mark this passage as the third section of this chapter, it is the sixth, as indicated in the outline.
37. A significant difference in Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo's editions should be noted here. While later editions read *yan lag dang por rig pa*, Dzongsar 1919 reads *yan lag dang po ma rig pa*. The latter is followed here.
38. *Letter to a Friend* (*Suḥrillekha*), verse 112.
39. For example, *The Detailed Account of the Previous Aspirations of the Blessed Bhaiṣajya-guruvaidūryaprabha* (*Bhagavānbhaiṣajyaguruvaidūryaprabhasya pūrvapraṇidhāna-viśeṣavistāra*) teaches nine causes for an untimely death: (1) lacking access to appropriate treatment or receiving wrong treatment, (2) execution, (3) being robbed of one's vital energy by nonhuman beings due to one's own carelessness, (4) being killed in a fire, (5) drowning, (6) being killed by wild animals, (7) falling from a cliff, (8) being killed by poison, a curse, or a risen corpse, and (9) starvation and dehydration. The sūtra adds that besides these main causes for untimely death, there are countless more.
40. Generally it is taught that if the bardo being's mind generates desire for the mother and anger toward the father, it will be born as a male, and vice versa for birth as a female.
41. Here, “other subtle elements” refers to the four elements of earth, water, fire, and wind, which support the development of the embryo in the womb.
42. *Āyusmannandagarbhāvakraṇṭinirdeśa*.
43. In other words, the next life.
44. The analogies explained in this text are listed in Nāgārjuna's *Verses on the Heart of Dependent Arising* (*Pratītyasamutpādahṛdayakārikā*), verse 5, and explained in some detail in its autocommentary (*Pratītyasamutpādahṛdayavyākhyāna*).
45. Followed here is Dragpa Shedrub's *ngo bo 'gyur med* instead of *ngo bos 'gyur med* found in the Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo editions.

46. In this case, Dragpa Shedrub's *mar me gnyis pa 'byung ba* is followed instead of Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo's *mar me gnyis pa chad pa*, which does not correspond to the intended meaning.
47. The two extremes are the extremes of permanence (*rtag mtha'*), the belief in the existence of a permanent entity or self, and annihilation (*chad mtha'*), which is the belief that the self is permanently annihilated at death.
48. *bla med*, referring to the highest class of tantra.
49. *Vajramālātantra*.
50. In the Derge Kangyur (f. 265b2), the last two lines of this stanza read: *ji snyed 'jig rten gyis brtags pa//sems kyi rlung ni rnam 'phrul lo//*. In Dragpa Shedrub's version, they read: *ji snyed 'jig rten gyis btags pas//sems kyi rlung gi rnam 'phrul lo//*.
51. "Virtue!"

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GLOSSARY

ārya

འཕགས་པ། • *'phags pa* • ārya

Literally, “noble one.” Those have attained a clear understanding of reality through the path taught by the Buddha. According to the Śrāvakayāna, the term denotes those who have attained any of the four levels of stream-enterer, once-returner, non-returner, and arhat. According to the Mahāyāna it refers to those who have directly perceived emptiness, the ultimate nature of phenomena, through the path of seeing and above.

bad migration

དན་འགྲོ། དན་སྒྲོང། • *ngan 'gro, ngan song* • durgati

Among the six realms of existence, the three realms dominated by suffering: animal realm, hungry ghost realm, and hell realm. Also, *lower realms*.

compounded phenomena

འདུས་བྱས། • *'dus byas* • saṃskṛta

Any phenomenon compounded by causes and conditions.

conceptually constructed discard

སྤང་བྱ་ཀུན་བརྟགས། • *spang bya kun brtags*

Mistaken notions about reality derived from a conceptually constructed world view and the afflictions based on them, to be eliminated through the truth of the path.

conceptually constructed ignorance

ཀུན་ཏུ་བརྟགས་པའི་མ་རིག་པ། • *kun tu brtags pa'i ma rig pa*

Misapprehension of reality based on a mistaken worldview or philosophical system, such as the belief in a permanent self, distinct from the skandhas, that attains liberation.

discard

སྤང་བྱ། • *spang bya* • praheya

That which is eliminated through the truth of the path. See also, *conceptually constructed discard* and *innate discard*.

good rebirth

བདེ་འཁོ། • *bde 'gro* • sugati

Among the six realms of existence, the three realms characterized by a lesser degree of suffering and more pleasure, compared to the bad migrations: human realm, asura realm, and god realm.

Hīnayāna

ཐེག་པ་དམན་པ། • *theg pa dman pa* • hīnayāna

Literally, “lesser vehicle.” The foundational system of Buddhist thought and praxis, distinguished from the Mahāyāna on the basis of their authoritative scriptures and philosophical tenet systems, as well as their paths and results. The Hīnayāna encompasses two vehicles—Śrāvakayāna (*nyan thos kyi theg pa*) and Pratyekabuddhayāna (*rang sangs rgyas kyi theg pa*)—and two tenet systems: Vaibhāṣika (*bye brag smra ba*) and Sautrāntika (*mdo sde pa*).

impure field

མ་དག་པའི་ཞིང་། • *ma dag pa'i zhing*

The dimension of experience of ordinary beings, such as the ordinary world and the beings living in it.

innate discard

སྤང་བྱ་ལྗན་སྒྱེས། • *spang bya lhan skyes*

Mistaken notions about reality not based on a conceptual worldview or philosophical system and the afflictions based on them, to be eliminated through the truth of the path.

innate ignorance

ལྗན་ཅིག་སྒྱེས་པའི་མ་རིག་པ། • *lhan cig skyes pa'i ma rig pa*

The most fundamental aspect of ignorance and root cause of existence in saṃsāra. Innate ignorance is the misapprehension of reality that is not dependent on a particular belief system. It most significantly denotes the innate belief in the existence of the self which is common to all ordinary beings regardless of their religious and philosophical views.

intermediate state

བར་དོ། • *bar do* • antarābhāva

The state experienced after the consciousness leaves body at death and before it connects to a next life.

latency

བག་ཆགས། • *bag chags* • vāsanā

The karmic potential of an intentional deed left in the mind stream. Also, *predisposition* or *tendency*.

Madhyamaka

དབུ་མ། • *dbu ma* • madhyamaka

Literally, “Middle Way.” One of the two philosophical systems of the Mahāyāna, the other being the Cittamātra, or Mind Only school. Going back to the writings of the Indian master Nāgārjuna, the Madhyamaka school emphasizes the lack of inherent existence of all

phenomena, based on the doctrine of dependent arising. It is called the Middle Way because it frees the mind of the two conceptual extremes of existence and nonexistence.

Mahāyāna

ཐེག་པ་ཆེན་པོ། • *theg pa chen po* • mahāyāna

Literally, “great vehicle.” The system of Buddhist thought and praxis based on the Mahāyāna scriptures and distinguished from the Hīnayāna on the basis of their authoritative scriptures and philosophical tenet systems, as well as their paths and results. One of the key distinguishing features defining the Mahāyāna path is bodhicitta, the altruistic intention to gain true and complete awakening for the benefit of all beings and the practices motivated by this resolve. The Mahāyāna encompasses two systems of practice —Pāramitāyāna (*phar phyin theg pa*) based on the sūtras and Secret Mantra Vajrayāna (*gsang sngags rdo rje theg pa*) based on the tantras—and two philosophical tenet systems: Cittamātra (*sems tsam*) and Madhyamaka (*dbu ma*).

miraculous birth

བརྒྱུ་ཏི་སྐྱེས་པ། • *brdzus te skyes pa*

One of the four modes of birth, the other three being birth from a womb (e.g., humans and most mammals), birth from an egg (e.g., birds), and birth from heat and moisture (e.g., microscopic life forms are generally grouped in this category). Examples of miraculous birth are gods and denizens of the hell realms.

negative tendencies

གནས་ངན་ལེན། • *gnas ngan len* • dauṣṭhulya

Negative traits of body, speech, and mind, incompatible with the path of purification.

omniscient

ཐམས་ཅད་མཁྱེན་པ། • *thams cad mkhyen pa* • sarvajñatā, sarvajñā

Epithet of the Buddha.

ordinary being

སོ་སོའི་སྐྱེ་བོ། • *so so'i skye bo* • pṛthagjana

Those who have not attained direct cognition of reality.

Prāsaṅgika

ཐལ་འགྱུར་བ། • *thal 'gyur ba* • prāsaṅgika

Literally, “Consequentialist.” One of the two main subschools of Madhyamaka. Proponents of this school do not establish any thesis on their own, but merely demonstrate that any thesis about ultimate reality is untenable by pointing out the unwanted or impossible consequences of such views.

pure field

དག་པའི་ཞིང་། • *dag pa'i zhing*

The dimension of experience of awakened beings, such as the abodes of the buddhas and the beings that dwell in them.

result of separation

བྲལ་བའི་འབྲས་བུ། • *bral ba'i 'bras bu* • viśaṃyoga phala

Separation from the causes of suffering resulting from the truth of the path.

Sautrāntika

སངས་སྤྲེལ་པ། • *mdo sde pa* • sautrāntika

Literally, “Sūtra Followers.” One of the two philosophical systems of the Hīnayāna, the other being Vaibhāṣika. The Sautrāntika system relies closely on the sūtras and rejects the authority of the Abhidharma treatises accepted by the Vaibhāṣika. Both schools accept the true existence of outer phenomena in terms of partless particles and of mind in terms of indivisible moments of awareness.

selflessness

བདག་མེད་པ། • *bdag med pa* • anātman

Also translated as “no-self” and “not self.” The absence of inherence existence. Two types of selflessness are distinguished: the selflessness of the individual, which is the lack of an inherent identity or self in the five skandhas of clinging, and the selflessness of phenomena, which is the lack of inherent existence of all phenomena.

skandhas of clinging

ཉེ་བར་ལེན་པའི་སྤྱང་པོ། ཉེར་ལེན་གྱི་སྤྱང་པོ། • *nye bar len pa'i phung po, nyer len gyi phung po*
• upadāna skandha

The five skandhas are the five groups of psychophysical phenomena making up the entirety of human experience. They are form (*rūpa*, *gzugs*), feeling (*vedanā*, *tsbor ba*), perception (*saṃjñā*, *'du shes*), formative factors (*saṃskāra*, *'du byed*), and consciousness (*viññāna*, *rnam shes*). The term “clinging” denotes their connection to mental afflictions in the sense that the skandhas are derived from afflictions, and that further afflictions are generated due to one’s clinging to them. The self of the individual gets erroneously imputed on the basis of those five skandhas. The term is also translated as *appropriated*, *appropriative*, or *perpetuating aggregates*.

Sukhāvātī

བདེ་བ་ཅན་པ། • *bde ba can* • sukhāvātī

The pure land of Buddha Amitābha ('od dpag med).

Svātantrika

རང་རྒྱུད་པ། • *rang rgyud pa* • svātantrika

Literally, “Autonomist.” One of the two main subschools of Madhyamaka. Proponents of this school use their own syllogistic arguments to establish the view of emptiness.

total affliction

ཀུན་ནས་ཉོན་མོངས་པ། • *kun nas nyon mongs pa* • saṃkleśa

The processes of conditioned existence in saṃsāra, in terms of its causes and results.

truth of cessation

འགོག་པའི་བདེན་པ། • *'gog pa'i bden pa* • nirodha satya

The cessation of suffering resulting from the truth of the path.

truth of origin

ཀུན་འབྱུང་གི་བདེན་པ། • *kun 'byung gi bden pa* • samudaya satya

The causes of suffering: mental afflictions and defiled actions.

truth of path

ལམ་གྱི་བདེན་པ། • *lam gyi bden pa* • mārḡa satya

The mind and mental factors functioning as the causes of the cessation of suffering.

truth of suffering

སྤུག་བསྐྱེད་ཀྱི་བདེན་པ། • *sdug bsngal gyi bden pa* • duḥkha satya

The suffering and dissatisfaction experienced as a result of the truth of origin. Three kinds of suffering are distinguished: suffering of suffering, suffering of change, and suffering of conditioned existence.

Vaibhāṣika

བྱེ་བྲག་སྤྲུ་བ། • *bye brag smra ba* • vaibhāṣika

Literally, “Vibhāṣa Followers.” One of the two philosophical systems of the Hīnayāna, the other being the Sautrāntika. The Vaibhāṣika system relies on the authority of the encyclopedic Abhidharma work known as the *Mahāvibhāṣa*, or *Great Commentary*. Both schools accept the true existence of outer phenomena in terms of partless particles and of mind in terms of indivisible moments of awareness.

view of the perishing collection

འཛིན་རྩིས་ལ་ལྟ་བ། • *'jig tshogs la lta ba* • satkāyadṛṣṭi

The belief in the existence of an inherent identity, or self, imputed on the basis of the five skandhas of clinging, all of which are transient phenomena. Also *personality view*.

wisdom cognition

ཡེ་ཤེས། • *ye shes* • jñāna

Direct cognition of reality, free of mental afflictions and distortions. In the context of sūtra level teachings, the liberating and liberated insight of ārya beings. Also translated as “awakened awareness” and “pristine wisdom.” In tantric contexts also translated as “primordial wisdom.”