

 *The Ornament of the Middle Way*

In Sanskrit [this text is called] *Madhyamakālaṃkāra*.

In Tibetan [this text is called] *The Ornament of the Middle Way*.

Homage to the youthful Mañjuśrī (Mañjuśrī Kumarabhūta).

(1) Those entities, as asserted by our own [Buddhist schools] and other [non-Buddhist] schools, have no inherent nature at all because in reality they have neither a singular nor a manifold nature – like a reflected image.

(2) Because they contribute to [the production of] successive effects, permanent [causal] entities are not themselves singular. If each successive effect is distinct, then [the argument in support of] permanent [causal] entities [that are truly singular] degenerates.

(3) Even those uncompounded objects of knowledge [known by] the knowledge which arises in meditation [for an *ārya*], according to the system [of the Vaibhāṣikas], are not unitary because they are related to successive moments of knowledge.

(4) If the nature of the object known by a previous consciousness continues to exist subsequently, then the previous cognition would still exist in the latter [and], similarly, the latter would exist in the former.

(5) Since the nature of the [latter] object does not arise in the earlier [time] and [the earlier object] does not arise at the latter time, uncompounded phenomena like consciousness must be objects known to arise momentarily.

(6) If the previous [uncompounded object] arises from the power of [the causes and conditions of the uncompounded object of] an earlier moment,

then this would not [actually] be uncompounded, like minds (*citta, sems*) and mental states (*caitta, sems las byung ba*).

(7) If you accept that these momentary [objects] arise independently because there is no dependence on others, then they must either exist permanently or not exist at all.

(8) What is the purpose of investigating objects which have no meaningful ability to act? What is the purpose of a lustful person inquiring as to whether a eunuch is attractive or not?

(9) It is clearly understood that a person [of the type asserted by Vātsīputrīyans] has neither a singular nor a manifold nature, since [such a person] cannot be explained as momentary or non-momentary.

(10) How can pervasive [entities such as space] be unitary given that they are related with a variety of directions? Gross [non-pervasive entities] are also not unitary since [some parts] of such entities can be visible [while other parts] are not visible.

(11) What is the nature of the central [partless] particle which faces singly towards [another] particle yet abides [with other partless particles in various directions] either [around and] joining with it, or around it [with space between them, or] around it without space between?

(12) If it is asserted that [the central particle] also faces entirely toward another such [unitary, partless] particle, then if that were so, wouldn't it be the case that [gross objects such as] land and water and the like would not be [spatially] expansive?

(13) If you accept [partless particles with sides] which face other such particles [in different directions], then if that is the case, how could [even] the most minute particles be singular and partless?

(14) Particles have thus been established to have no inherent nature. Therefore it is evident that eyes and [other gross] substantial [entities], etc., which are asserted [to be real] by many of our own [Buddhist] schools and other [non-Buddhist] schools, are directly known to have no inherent nature.

(15) The nature of these [entities] is [said to be] composed of those [particles]. The qualities of these [entities], their own actions, and even their universals (*spyi, sāmānya*) and particularities (*khyad pa, viśeṣa*) are said to be made up of those [particles and therefore must not inherently exist].

(16) Consciousness is produced in the opposite way from that which is of an inanimate nature. That which is not the nature of being inanimate is the self-knowledge of this [consciousness].

(17) Self-cognizing cognition is not an entity which [exists as] agent and action [with its object] because it would be incorrect for consciousness, which is of a single, partless nature, to be three (i.e., knower, knowing, and known).

(18) Therefore, this [consciousness] is capable of self-consciousness (*bdag shes*) since this is the nature of consciousness. How [though] could that cognize the nature of objects from which it is distinct?

(19) [Since] its nature does not exist in external objects (*gzhan*), given that you assert that objects of consciousness and consciousness are different, how could consciousness know objects other than consciousness?

(20) According to the position [of some], consciousness knows images in spite of the fact that in actuality the two (i.e., consciousness and images) are distinct. Since it is just like a mirror reflection, it can be suitably experienced by mere imputation.

(21) However, there cannot be externally cognized images for those who do not assert a consciousness which reflects images of objects.

(22) Since [images] are not different from the unitary consciousness, there cannot be a multiplicity of images. Therefore one would not be able to establish the knowledge of [external] objects with the force of that [image].

(23) Consciousness cannot be unitary since it is not separate from images. If that were not the case, then how would you explain the two (i.e., images and consciousness) as unitary?

(24) [Colors such as] white and the like arise in succession to the consciousness, yet because of arising quickly, foolish people think that they arise simultaneously.

(25) Why, when the mind which hears the sound of such words as *latā* [and *tāla*] arise very quickly, does it not hear [the two syllables] as if they were arising simultaneously [thus rendering the two words indistinguishable]?

(26) Even if we were to consider only conceptual minds, [the images] would still not be known in succession. Since they do not remain for a long time, all minds are similar [to images] in the rapidity with which they arise.¹

(27) Therefore, all objects are not apprehended gradually. Rather, just as they appear, [they] are apprehended simultaneously as distinct images.

(28) Even with regard to [the example of] a burning torch, the arising of the mistaken instantaneous appearance of a wheel [of fire] is not [a result of] joining the boundaries between [memories of distinct] perceptions because it appears very clearly.

(29) This joining of boundaries is done by the memory [of the mental consciousness], not by the seeing [of an eye consciousness], because that [eye consciousness] cannot apprehend past objects.

(30) Since the object of that [memory] has passed, it is not clear. Therefore, the appearance of the wheel [of fire] is of a type which is not clear.

(31, 32) If one were to claim that when someone sees the base of the images of a painting, as many minds will arise simultaneously as there are images in that [painting], then if that were the case, even when cognition is of a single image type such as the color white, etc., since there is a distinct beginning, middle and end to that, there will be a variety of objects of observation [within that cognition of a single image].

(33) I honestly do not feel that [an image] such as the color white, etc., which is like the nature of a particle which is a partless singularity, has ever appeared to any consciousness.

(34) [According to our opponent,] the sources of the five [sense] consciousnesses are images of objects [made of] accumulated [partless particles]. Minds (*citta, sems*) and mental states (*caitta, sems byung*) are objects established in the sixth [source of perception].

(35) Even according to the scriptures of non-Buddhists (*phyi rol pa*) [such as the Vaiśeṣikas], the appearance [of gross objects] as singular would not occur because its objects are substances which have qualities (*guna, yon tan*), etc.

(36) [According to the views of the Jains and the Mīmāṃsakas], all entities are [manifold] like the nature of a gem [emitting colorful] rays. It would be irrational for the mind which apprehends those [entities] to appear in the nature of singularity.

(37) Even for proponents of the [Lokāyata] system, which accepts the establishment of all sense faculties and objects as compounds of [the four elements] such as earth and the like, [consciousness] is still incompatible with a singular [manner of] engaging entities.

(38) Even according to the position [of the Sāṃkhya, which claims that the five mere existences] such as sound, etc. are [the nature of the three qualities such as] courage and the like, a consciousness of the appearance of a unitary object is illogical because objects appear in the nature of the three [qualities].

(39) Regarding the trifold nature of entities, if the appearance of that [type of entity] is incompatible with a consciousness, which is of a single nature, how could it (i.e., the consciousness) be asserted to apprehend that object?

(40) [Since] they do not even assert the existence of external objects, [Vedāntas ask] why the suitability of maintaining a permanent consciousness, which is said to arise either simultaneously or successively with various appearances, is so difficult [to accept].

(41) Even for the cognition of [the three non-compounded phenomena such as] space and the like, because of the appearance of many [conceptual

images of] letters for the appearance of the mere name, there are many clear appearances.

(42) Although there are some who assert consciousnesses to which manifold [images] do not appear, still it is not suitable to establish their existence from the perspective of the ultimate because it has already been shown that there is a logical fallacy [in asserting] the existence [of such] with these characteristics.

(43) Therefore it is established from all perspectives that consciousness occurs with the appearance of manifold images, and thus like the [many] distinct images [themselves], cannot logically be of a single nature.

(44) Images are manifest due to the ripening of latent potentialities of a beginningless [personal] continuum. Although they appear, since it is the result of a mistake, they are like the nature of an illusion.

(45) Although their view (i.e., the Yogācāra view) is virtuous, we should think about whether such things [as the images known by consciousness accepted by Yogācāras] actually exist or if they are something contentedly accepted only when left unanalyzed.

(46) Since contradictions would ensue for those unitary [images] *even if* the actual consciousness is manifold, [consciousness and images] are undoubtedly distinct entities.

(47) If images are not different from [the singular consciousness], then it will be very difficult to respond to the following consequence: that with regard to moving and rest and the like, due to the movement of one, all would move.

(48) Even according to the system of those maintaining external objects, if images are not separate [from each other], then they would all also certainly be engaged as a single phenomenon and not other than that.

(49) If you accept an equal number of consciousnesses and images, then it would be difficult to overcome the same type of analysis as is made regarding particles.

(50) If one [consciousness experiences] a variety [of images], wouldn't that be like the system of the [Jain] Sky Clad (*Digambara*)? A variety [of images] is not the nature of singularity just as manifold precious [gems] and the like [are not the nature of singularity].

(51) If the variety [of images] exists in a single nature, how could they appear in the nature of many, and how could parts such as those being obstructed and those which are unobstructed, etc. be distinguished?

(52) Some say that [consciousness] does not naturally possess images of these [objects]. In reality, images do not exist but appear to the consciousness by virtue of a mistake.

(53) If [images] do not exist, how can consciousness clearly experience those [objects]? That [clear, non-dual consciousness] is not like a consciousness which is distinct from the entities, [and those entities must possess images which appear to it].

(54) Likewise, that [image, such as yellow,] will not be known as that [yellow image] by anyone if entities are without [yellow images]. Likewise bliss is not experienced in suffering and non-white is not seen in white.

(55) With regard to images, "knowledge" (*shes pa*) is not actually the correct term because [the image] is distinct from consciousness itself (*shes pa 'i bdag*), like flowers [growing] in the sky, etc.

(56) [Consciousness] is incapable of experiencing [images] even when they are examined because non-existent [images] have no [causal] ability, like the horn of a horse. [To assert that] a non-existent [image] has the ability to [cause the] generation of an appearing consciousness of itself is irrational.

(57) What reason is there which would account for a relationship between those [images] which are definitely experienced and consciousness? It is not the nature of that which does not exist and does not arise from it.

(58) If there were no cause [for images], how is it suitable that they arise only on occasion? If they have a cause, how could they not have an other-dependent nature (*paratantra-svabhāva, gzhan gi dbang gi ngo bo*)?

(59) If [images] do not exist, then consciousness [with images] also [would not exist] due to the non-existence of the images. Consciousness then, like a clear, round crystal, would not really experience [objects].

(60) If they say that this [eye consciousness which sees a mirage] is known as such as a result of a mistake, then why does it rely on mistakes? Even if it arises by the [power of delusion], still then that [consciousness of a mirage is] dependent on the power of others.

(61) When analyzing any entity, [we find] that there are none which are truly single. For those for which there is nothing which is truly single, there must also be nothing which is [truly] manifold.

(62) The existence of an entity belonging to a class other than that which has a single or a manifold [nature] does not make sense because the two are exhaustive of all possible alternatives.

(63) Therefore, these entities are characterized only by conventionality. If [someone accepts] them as ultimate, what can I do for that person?

(64) Those phenomena which are only agreeable when not put to the test of [ultimate] analysis, those phenomena which are generated and disintegrate, and those which have the ability to function are known to be of a conventional nature.

(65) Although they are agreeable only when not analyzed [by ultimate analysis], since it depends on the earlier cause, the subsequent fruit arises in correspondence with that.

(66) Therefore, if [one claims] that there is no conventional cause, that is said to be incorrect and is no good. If its substantial cause (*upādāna, nyer len*) is said to be real, then that must be explained.

(67) Regarding the inherent nature of all entities, we have cleared away others' assertions by following the path of reasoning. Therefore there is nothing to be disputed [in our position].

(68) If they are earnest, those [opponents] will not be able to find any fault in [the view of] those who assert neither existence nor non-existence, nor both existence and non-existence.

(69) Therefore, in reality there are not any established entities. Due to that, the *Tathāgatas* taught the non-production of all phenomena.

(70) Because they are harmonious with ultimate truths, some call this [non-production] ultimate truth, but in reality they (i.e., ultimate truths) are free from all accumulations of verbal fabrications (*prapañca, sproś pa*).

(71) Due to the lack of [ultimate] production, there can be no non-production, etc. Because of the refutation of the nature of that [production], verbal expressions referring to that [non-production] do not exist.

(72) There is no point in applying [words] of negation to a non-existent object. Even if one relies on conceptual thought, it would be conventional, not ultimate.

(73) Well then, [what if someone were to say that] since by cognizing those [entities] the nature of them can be directly perceived, why don't non-masters also know [the ultimate nature of] entities in this way?

(74) They (i.e., non-masters) do not [know the ultimate nature of entities] because, due to the power of false imputations [of real existence] onto entities by the burdened, beginningless continuums of all sentient beings, [emptiness] is not known directly by living beings.

(75) [Those who realize emptiness are] those who know it inferentially with reasons which make [the lack of a real nature] known and that cut superimpositions, as well as those powerful yogis who know it clearly by direct perception.

(76) Having discarded [views] concerning the way subjects exist based on particular discourses of scriptures, there are entities which are well known by everyone from masters to women to children.

(77) All these entities, including that thesis and the proof, are engaged as such. If that were not the case, we would have such problems as that of an unestablished base (*āśrayāsiddha*, *gzhi ma grub*), etc., as has been argued.

(78) Because I have not rejected entities with regard to their possessing the taste (*rasa*, *ngang*) of appearances, [this position is] unshaken with regard to the establishment of the subject (*sgrub pa*) and the thesis (*bsgrub bya*).

(79) Therefore, the seeds of a similar type, which [stimulate] conception with entities or conception without [entities], etc. in the continuums [of beings] from beginningless existence, are objects of inferential [knowledge].

(80) Regarding this, they (i.e., the conceptions of entities) do not arise by the force of entities because these [entities ultimately] do not exist. The nature of entities has been thoroughly rejected in an extensive manner.

(81) Because they arise gradually, they are not sudden. Because they are not permanently arisen, they are not permanent. Because they themselves are similarly accustomed to those [previous habits of conceptualization], they first arise from their own kind.

(82) Therefore, the views of [the two extremes of] eternalism and absolute non-existence remain far away from the ideas put forth in this text. [Entities arise], change, and become like a seed, sprout, and plant.

(83) Masters who know the selflessness of phenomena abandon disturbing emotions, which arise from perverted views, without effort since they have become accustomed to a lack of inherent existence.

(84) Since entities which are causes and results are not negated conventionally, there is no confusion in establishing what is pure and what is an affliction.

(85) Since this teaching of causes and results is established, the positing of stainless accumulations [of wisdom and merit] is suitable according to this text.

(86) Pure results arise from pure causes just as the pure limb of ethics arises from the correct view.

(87) Likewise, impure [results] arise from impure causes just as sexual misconduct, etc. arise from the power of wrong views.

(88) Since it is harmed by the valid knowledge (*pramāṇa*, *tshad ma*) [established in this text that demonstrates that entities have no inherent nature], reification of entities is known as a mistaken awareness, like a consciousness of a mirage.

(89) Because of that [grasping at inherent existence], accomplishing the [six] perfections with the force arising from that [grasping will be of little power], just as [accomplishments] arising from wrong views [which cling to] “I” and “mine” are of little power.

(90) There is a great fruit arising from not seeing entities as [ultimately] existent because they arise from an extensive cause, like a sprout [arising from] a powerful seed, etc.

(91) That which is cause and result is mere consciousness only. Whatever is established by itself abides in consciousness.

(92) By relying on the Mind Only (*cittamatra*, *sems tsam pa*) [system], know that external entities do not exist. And by relying on this [Madhyamaka] system, know that no self at all exists, even in that [mind].

(93) Therefore, due to holding the reigns of logic as one rides the chariots of the two systems (i.e., Yogācāra and Madhyamaka), one attains [the path of] the actual Mahāyānist.

(94) The cause of abiding in the immeasurable is not experienced by the highest of worldly ones, much less experienced by Viṣṇu or Śiva.

(95) This ultimate, pure nectar is an attainment which belongs to none other than the *Tathāgata*, who is motivated by the causes and conditions of great compassion.

(96) Therefore, intelligent beings who follow the system of [the *Tathāgata*] should generate compassion for those believing in tenets which are based on mistaken [views].

(97) Therefore, due to possessing the wealth of intelligence, one sees that there is no essential [worth] to those other systems, and s/he generates great respect for the Protector (i.e., the Buddha).

(Colophon:)

The verses of *The Ornament of the Middle Way* were composed by the great master Śāntarakṣita, who has crossed to the other side of the ocean of the tenets of our own Buddhist schools and others' non-Buddhist schools and bowed down with the crown of his head to the nectar of the stainless lotus feet of the Lord of Speech (i.e., the Venerable Mañjuśrī).

This text was collected and translated by the Indian abbot Śīlendrābodhi and the great translator Yeshe De.