



# The Buddha Project

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The Lower Tenet Schools



*This is an AI generated transcript and contains inaccuracies.*

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## About the meditation

The meditation is based on the Cūlasuññatasutta, the small sutra on emptiness from the Pali Canon, a very comprehensive and complex sutra.

For a yogi it is important to keep in mind: we *have the illusion of having control of the mind*. Where I receive several mails from people who want to calm their minds and become very frustrated in trying and there seems to be only little progress.

Let me give you an analogy from the Netherlands, where we have the largest port in Europe: Rotterdam, where enormous container ships from all over the world come and go. When such a ship wants to turn into the estuary to moor in Rotterdam, it has to start turning approximately a hundred kilometres in advance; you cannot make a 90 degree angle with such a ship. The same goes for the mind, it is impossible to calm the mind when we think, worry and complain all day either wanting or not wanting things and then we meditate and hope the mind will be at ease . . . ? A formidable delusion.

If you aim for a calm mind, you must learn to live with more calm, slow down the speed throughout the day. Use the engines of the mind when you need them and turn them off when you do not need them. At the moment you don't need thoughts, you calm the movement of the mind or you stop it.

## Deliberate thinking

A good way to calm the mind are the Lamrim reflections. Rather than having thoughts automatically come up all the time, learn to constantly think in a deliberate way. Take a topic that matters to you, and whenever you have time, go back to the topic and reflect on it: how does this topic matter in my life, how does it work, how does it make me relate to others?

Get a habit of having a constant, deliberate reflection, it is most beneficial to the sense of wellbeing, this practice really helps to reduce overactivity of the mind.

For most Westerners it is difficult to think in deliberate ways, where at the same time it is very important.

Usually, we rely just on a barrage of thoughts hoping something good comes of it, sadly that is not helpful.

Accept it takes time to develop deliberate thinking and to continuously be engaged with it, try again and again. Don't set yourself up for failure: all good things take time. Pick up a habit it is very helpful.

You can use all the recordings from the website, maybe when you go for a walk listen to a part and then stop the recording and reflect deliberately: *What did I just hear? How does that work out in my life? What does that mean to me? Is it true or not? Do I agree or not?* Then listen some more.

I would also advise not to switch subjects too often. It's better to get to know something deeply than to get to know a lot superficially. Contemplate things over a



longer period of time and learn to enjoy them. To see the depths you come up when you take the time. There's so much to explore; the recordings give you the freedom to explore for yourself.

## One thing at the time

Another good habit to develop is to learn to do one thing at a time. When you are doing the laundry, to be fully engaged with doing the laundry. For example observe: how do you do the laundry?

The sentence '*I am doing the laundry*', suggests all kinds of things that are not true when you investigate. It is fascinating to observe how body and mind can do the laundry without any interference neither from the body, nor from the mind. How does that work?

Another example is how I wave my hands while speaking to you: I do not tell them to wave? They do that by themselves it seems.

This observing helps calming the mind. To have moments where you enjoy doing the laundry and enjoying the silence doing the laundry; only doing laundry.

Often we wait until we are able to meditate: not necessary, do laundry meditation, or ironing meditation, washing up meditation, folding clothes meditation, going to the toilet meditation. Throughout the day you have so many occasions to be simply aware of what is happening in the present. All occasions to develop calm abiding throughout your day. Then you make life becomes the cave you long for.

## Transition zone

Before the meditation on the cushion, it is helpful to have a transition space, using prayers as they tell a wholesome, rewarding, informative narrative. The Buddha does not need our prayers, we need prayers as they tell us something about the Buddha, we tell something about ourselves. We *understand* the Buddha through ourselves; an important aspect of prayers.

For example before I meditate, I always clean up the room, everything has its own place. This makes cleaning the house very easy and at the same time cleaning helps to slow down the mind.

Slowing down is also important before going to sleep: you prepare mind and body to sleep. The body already becomes heavy and the mind becomes calmer moving towards your bed; it is helpful to create a transition zone before you go to sleep. I do that by cleaning my environment, making some offerings, doing some prayers. By then the mind is already much calmer, much more at peace and enriched by what I've just done. Because I always do that, the mind knows where it is going.



## Letting go in stages

One of the helpful aspects of the Cūlasuññatasutta is it does not go straight forward to the object of meditation, but by steps. The Sutta takes you step by step through letting go, thus calming gradually. First by letting go of past and future, then letting go of sensory objects and at the same time creating a safe zone. Next to let go of complexity by focusing on the earth element, then letting go of gross forms by focusing on infinite space and finally getting where we want to be: infinite consciousness, an investigation of subjectivity.

We have the habit wanting to jump into calm abiding, something impossible unless you really trained your mind. Otherwise, please don't try.

It is a very good and useful habit to learn to let go in stages. All the stages are moments of reflection, of investigation; there's so much to be learned in that gradually calming down. All these stages bring something useful to you in daily life.

One of the things I highlighted today in the meditation is the answer to the question: *why does the mind get stuck to things, why is the mind sticky?*

To realize it is something we *do*; unwittingly, but it is a *doing*.

The moment we judge, the moment we desire or have aversion; at that moment the mind gets stuck to the object and it is difficult to let go.

We want freedom to be able to think about what we want to think about; we want to be able to pay attention to what we find important to pay attention to. At night in bed, I want to pay attention to falling asleep and not to a conflict at my job or any other distraction.

As we seek freedom or agency, we must learn to make the mind un-sticky. This does not mean there is no time to think about a new iPhone if you need one, instead you want to be able to choose when you inform yourself about a new iPhone and which one to buy. You want to choose, you do not want the mind to force you to buy something you did not actually want in the first place.

This is a very practical way to cultivate *definite emergence*: emerging from the illusion aversion, desire, judgment, attachments are forms of agency, they are not. If you had agency, you would be capable of letting them go.

By analysing this process again and again you find that you cannot stop it; the mind does that on its own. We have to show the mind what it does out of habit, and it doesn't lead to the result we want. The more the mind grows in conviction, the easier it recognizes when these habits arise. The earlier we recognize the arising, the easier it is to let go, just like the tanker going to Rotterdam. When the engines have just fired up, it's easy to stop it. But once the habit has set in again it becomes very hard to intervene.

For example, my mind has a healthy apprehension with regard to desire and aversion, because after 40 years of practice it is quite habituated to recognize what it does. When desire arises, my mind perceives desire as its enemy. Once the mind has invested in desire, it's very difficult to stop it and desire makes me unfree. I end up either buying



what I don't want or I end up doing something to someone I don't want to do; where in the middle, I am unpeaceful.

It is a good reminder how important it is to be introspective, to be the guardian of your mind and to know what the mind does is wholesome or not. Not judgmental, the mind believes that what it does works. See for yourself: it doesn't, let go. That's all, no force, not being judgmental.

The result of this practice is normative, it is the analysis of what we normally do. See if these habits lead to the wished result and when it does not: let go. That is freedom.

## Visualize the Buddha alive

To my surprise I received questions about visualizing the Buddha alive: yes it is important to practice this way. Keep two things in mind:

1. Often we visualize the Buddha so unhuman the visualization becomes inconsequential.

We no longer see a relation between us and the Buddha and conclude: *'I can relax, this Buddha is a statue'*. We must bring the Buddha closer.

2. Humans have a tendency to be ethical, especially when we feel seen. We all do naughty things when no one is looking.

There was a scientific investigation in Germany, where they invited children to throw darts at the dartboard, promising them a bag of candy if they would hit bullseye. The children were divided into two groups and in both groups the phone of the researcher would go off and he had to leave.

One group was told nothing, and as the researcher left the children took the dart up to the board, plug it in the bullseye and wait for the researcher to come back and receive their sweets.

The other group was told a story about a fairy sitting in a chair with them; they were unable to see the fairy, but don't worry, she's kind. The make-believe fairy was more than enough for none of the children to plug the dart in the bullseye.

More interestingly, this even works with adults. It is fascinating the mind responds differently the moment we tell ourselves someone might be looking.

We gradually bring this process from the outside inward. In reality we externalize what is an aspect of the mind. As we are able to introspect our mind, we want to become witnesses to ourselves and experience this self-witnessing is enough to change our behaviour.

In the beginning we are all a little bit naughty, we love to get the bag of candy. For this aspect it is healthy to have a feeling the Buddha is looking. To remind us there is an omniscient Buddha and he is aware of what we do. The Buddha is here for me; he doesn't judge, but he sees and that is embarrassing. This is a powerful practice even when it sounds too simple.



And, this does not only work in unfortunate situations or when we misbehave; it also works in circumstances where we feel alone in our practice. To know we are seen by the Buddha, or by our guru in tantric context, performs the function we feel safe and seen in a non-judgmental way, by someone who knows we can do well.

## Seven Points of Mind Training

We will now move to the Seven Points of Mind Training by Geshe Chekawa Yeshe Dorje, please look at the reader page 32.

We will use the first two verses as a reminder of the stages of emptiness from the Cūlasuññatasutta, to figure out what is still left.

Mādhyamaka is about letting go what is left.

### 2.3.1 The Preliminaries

*First, train in the preliminaries.*

This first sentence is easily explained: meditate on the Lamrim a lot: first train in the preliminaries.

Geshe Chekawa Yeshe Dorje was one of the great Kadampa masters, speaks from a tantric perspective. The [Kadampa tradition](#) comes from Atisha, another great tantric master. It is good to see the larger picture of this text.

In a more narrow sense the text reflects on precious human rebirth, reflects on mortality and impermanence, on virtues and non-virtuous actions, the karma that they cause etcetera.

We have agency but our agency needs information to work. We can't just expect intent to do what is needed, we must have something to work with and these are the preliminaries. They create a big, rich environment in which there is much to consider; you can use many resources to investigate your life in order to make beneficial choices. As discussed, this gradually calms the mind for two reasons:

1. You are doing slow/deliberately thinking all the time
2. The Dharma provides you with the right means to make wholesome decisions.

The greatest meditative obstacle is guilt.

The more your actions are informed by the Dharma, the more they become wholesome. Actions might not always work out well but as long as we know we did whatever we did with the right intention, we can at least sleep with a calm mind.

Sometimes we need to say sorry: I did my best, unfortunately it failed, but this will not lead to guilt feelings.

If you ever find the opportunity to go into long-term solitary retreat, please do! There is no underestimating the importance of a long-term retreat. We want to go to the jungle for a long retreat believing we can leave our enemy behind: *other people*. However, in your cave or hut you will find your enemy was not *other people*. You just brought the

enemy along. *Other people* were very helpful distractions to not have to think about your real enemy. Now the distractions are gone and you got stuck with you. The Dharma explains that in our diluted state, agency is not free; that's very helpful. We have done unskilful things in the past, but the past is the past. We did what we did at that time because we believed it was the right thing to do. These two reflections allow us to let go and take responsibility. Now that I know, I don't have to repeat things and I can let go of guilt. Taking responsibility is an alleviation of the past. *You are fixing the world* – as the Jewish tradition says.

## 2.3.2 The main practice

### 2.3.2.1 Training in ultimate awakening mind

*Consider all things and events as dreamlike.  
Examine the nature of unborn awareness  
Let even the antidote be freed in its own place  
Place your mind on the basis-of-all, the actual path  
Between sessions, be a conjurer of illusions.*

This verse is so complex I will come back to it next week. In 2026 we will discuss about this verse during many sessions.

Today I would just like to use as a reminder so that we are all on the same page.

The Buddha calls all things dreamlike because in dreams things seem to be real. And when you wake up, you know it was not. What appears in your dreams appears different from how they exist. This is the big argument.

There are all kinds of impressions in day to day experiences that are not true. When you investigate them, you come to understand they appear in an impossible way.

## The lower Tenet schools: Vaibhashika & Sautantrika

The first year we looked at Vaibhashika and Sautantrika. They focus on the self. Note, I will keep separating the words self and person. These word are not used in Sanskrit or Tibetan, but it makes talking about the subject of these schools clearer. The Buddha highlights: person exists. There is no denial of person, however we add something unrealistic to person. This constantly adding of lots of things is called reification: we generalize and then believe these generalities are true, but they cannot be true.



All philosophy deals with this problem: we think in terms of generalized things, but what we see is always particular. No tradition has explored this as deeply as Buddhism.

## Impermanent

We have the sense that we are permanent. When we look at our baby photo, we identify: that's me. Then we see a photo of our adolescents, we think: me again. In your 20s, you still think, me again. You will see when you become 30 and 40 and 50, that delusion deepens.

We have a sense there is something about us that is unchanging. As if every moment has the same basis for calling this (*venerable points at himself*) is and always has been Gendun.

But that does not make sense. If this were true, Gendun wouldn't have changed. And, something that stays the same in every moment doesn't do anything either.

Once you understand this, almost everything becomes apparent; almost everything follows from this argument.

This is the reason the Theravada tradition puts impermanence central in their meditative path. If you just keep elaborating what impermanence means, you end up with Mādhyamaka. Sadly this theory is not entirely self-evident, but I am happy to help you along.

I see because my eyes change in relationship to you. If my eyes were unchanging, I would not see anything. If you deeply understand what this sentence means, you can reason back.

I am someone who now knows what kind of specific T-shirt you wear (*ven. Gendun points at someone in front of him*). If I would be unchanging, I would be unable to know, but I learned about the shirt. This shows I am not permanent, I am impermanent changing from moment to moment, that is how I know things. That is the way I talk, the way I do the laundry. Things can only perform functions when they change.

Some moments seem similar, as the conditions are similar (*but not the same*). If I look at your T-shirt, there are a number of similar moments, all depending on your shirt. The moment you take of your shirt, then I become aware these individual moments all dependent on your shirt. The moment you take it off, the experience disappears. This shows these individual moments were all depending on the same thing: your shirt. As long as these moment are dependent on the same thing, I have similar moments.

This is also true exactly what calm abiding is: all these moments of mind are similar. So I keep the conditions the same. That is what calm abiding is: training and keeping the conditions the same.

To summarize

All things appear to be permanent, we appear to be permanent, but when we investigate, we find something very different: we are more like a river than a thing.

To deeply understand this is psychologically very liberating. Once you deeply understand and integrate this in life, you reached a third of your path in terms of



freedom. It means in every moment you are reborn, and every moment you are free to start over. If only we would know that.

## Consisting of parts

This goes even deeper. We have the idea: 'I am *unitary*'; I have one name and it must refer to one thing.

Anyone who did any introspection, find out that this is not the case at all, it does not make any sense. It takes some reflection to find out all things with a function also have parts. A scissor would not be a scissor if it does not have parts. Some might think: what about a knife? Well, to cut a knife needs to make friction with what it is about to cut. A knife might not seem to have parts, but it does. When you look closely, you come to understand the edge is composed – among other things of atoms.

When we look at ourselves, we find the five aggregates. All these aspects are distinguishable and also necessary.

- There is body, obviously; when I woke up this morning, there was lots of body, trying to get up.
- There is feeling, we *feel* the world.
- There is discernment; an act of trying to make sense of what I see.
- There's intentionality, choosing to do one thing or another.
- And there is consciousness.

All five are there, without them, 'I' would not make any sense whatsoever. So I must be a composite phenomenon, I am definitely not unitary.

## Causes and conditions

Finally, we have a sense of independence, especially Westerners love this. A sense we are independent of causes and conditions: an authentic, true self, and that this was always the case, and we had to discover the opposite. People went to India to discover reality: we depend on causes and conditions: we depend on our parents, ultimately we depend on an almost infinite amount of people. We also depend on sunshine, depend on plants to grow. We depend on the earth to hold us (when you would leave for Mars you would not be able to ever come back as Mars' gravity is half of ours). We need the earth, we need gravity, oxygen, the trees to make oxygen, and so on and so forth. To be Gendun means I am embedded with an infinity of conditions to keep me alive. If any of these conditions stops, I cease to exist. Or start to malfunction: I suffer from asthma and we pollute the air, something that makes me function less. When staying in areas with less pollution, I am more active. My function as Gendun is dependent on all things around me.

However I don't appear to myself like this. We have the sense to be independent.

The meditation we did is difficult; when I lead this meditation in a retreat, there is always someone sticks up their hand and asks: '*what to do when I don't like my mother?*'

Tibetans fall from their chair thinking '*this person really needs to be brought to a psychological hospital*'. Without our mother, we would not be here. Not liking one's mother is . . . . – it doesn't make any sense.

We appear as seemingly permanent, like a single thing, and somehow independently in the world and we behave like that: we play [zero-sum games](#): ones gain is someone else's loss.

This only makes sense if we would be independent, but we are not. Through this zero-sum politics will never work: there is 'one side' imposing something on 'the other side', depriving them of some important things. Then the 'one side' is very surprised 'the other side' tries to do the same thing back after a while. After which they will be surprised again, etc. etc. From a monastic perspective this looks like football, you want to keep the ball and score against the other team.

The only strategy that will ever work is a win-win game. For me to function, I need to be able to breathe. For me to be able to breathe, I need others to find forms of transport that are convenient to them, but don't pollute the air. This is the only way to go about, not punishing 'the other'. People need to go to their work; forbidding them to drive their car is silly – many people cannot live without a car as they need to get to the factory. Imposing things on people is unskilful.

This is a very coarse layer that the mind adds to the world; when we investigate we come to understand that what the mind adds does not exist in that way.

When we behave based on this dreamlike appearance, we fail to get what we aspire. This misunderstanding is true for ourselves and it also explains all the unwholesome behaviour in this world.

When our actions fail we take these actions very personal as we believe we have a permanent unitary independent self, and we blame someone else. We do not yet realize the problem is (*luckily!*) within us, not outside of us. There have been enough people trying to kill millions of others and never succeeded in overcoming their problem; we should learn from history.

We can overcome ignorance, thus meeting all our needs.

## Self-sufficient

The second layer is deeper, and because of limited time I will explore it in a straightforward way.

It is the idea that we as persons can act self-sufficiently. Which has to do with the way we relate to our body and our mind.

We have a felt sense that we *should* be in control of body and mind; we are made to believe that when we feel unhappy, it is our own fault. If we are not very handsome and we don't have a six- or eight pack, it's our fault. We, very incorrectly, feel bad about our body and mind. It is almost easy to understand this is irrational: e.g. if you don't sleep enough, the mind is dull when you wake up and no matter what you want from the mind, it cannot perform well because the mind is dull. When I did not sleep enough last night, my function as a teacher decreases because my mind would be dull. This is

however not my fault. I rely on the mind, I am not self-sufficient. I cannot make something happen despite body and mind., that is impossible.

When my bowels or my kidneys malfunction, teaching will also become problematic. I could wish things would be different, but I can't change them. I do have some agency, but it is not self-sufficient.

One could say it is a negotiated agency because the dependency between me as a person and my body and mind is mutual. My body and mind function as a part of me. You can see that easily with regard to your body. There will come a moment in our life where the body will no longer be part of our person. At that very moment, the body will cease to function. As persons we depend on body and mind, but body and mind depend on the person. It's a mutual relationship. The parts are parts because they are part of a whole. And a whole only makes sense in relation to the parts.

For example: the cylinder of a car is only a cylinder of a car when it is part of a car. Outside the car, outside of a gasoline tank and so on, it's not a cylinder. It doesn't do anything. Cylinders only make sense when there is gasoline, when there is ignition, and so on and so forth. Only then it performs the function of the cylinder. Just like that: the mind only performs the function of a mind as part of a person, as does the body, and vice versa. Their functions are interdependent.

Another example: my life is awesome. My body and mind will flourish in that context. If my life does not feel wholesome, my body and mind will both start to have problems. When we, as persons, function in a non-nourishing context, it deprives us of the resources we need, body and mind will also start to malfunction.

And vice versa, if my body and mind malfunction, I don't function as a person.

The Buddha argues to let go of the idea of having absolute control over body and mind. In absence of that delusion, we come to see we exist dependently of body and mind. We learn to negotiate with body and mind, to ask body and mind questions. They are not self, but without them we would not exist. In collaboration, as part of person, they produce all we can.

But if we want them to collaborate we should take care of body and mind.

## Created by the mind

Then there is a next level, and equally important to us. The Sautantrika's talk about things performing a function and things that do not. In the latter, they refer to ideas, concepts. This leads to a difficult conclusion that we will not go into too deep: mental objects are permanent.

We will get into this deeper, however for now you have to believe me. For those who want to dive in: [Anne Klein](#) has written good books on the topic. If you are interested, please contact me and I will send you the titles.

The concept of mental objects being permanent has to do with the fact all our concepts, the way we think, are generalizations and we generalize by exclusion. All exclusions, like empty space, are permanent – these exclusions do not change form



moment to moment The Sautantrika's want to show is all unskilful emotions depend on thoughts. We behave towards thoughts as if they are real but they are not.

When we are angry, we create a mental picture, then we start to talk to and about the picture, the picture does not perform the function of a person. That is central in what the Sautantrika's point out. These pictures can be helpful but in and of themselves they don't perform the function of what they are a picture of.

Desire does the same: desire conjures up an unchanging picture of, let's say, an iPhone. Because it is a picture, it stays the same. You can look at the picture multiple times and it seems to stay the same. This creates the illusion that the object we desire can perform its' function always in the same way, which is impossible.

Dharmakirti, one of the main propounders of the Sautantrika's, says: be aware whenever the mind is desirous or judgmental or angry as these emotions do not come from the real thing: the mind observes a mental object which seems to be stable. Thereby we attribute unchanging characteristics to the original object that doesn't have these characteristics. The mind overestimates the object – based on this unchanging picture. The mind changes impermanent and contextual into something permanent and non-contextual. Dharmakirti argues constantly realizing *the picture is nothing but a picture created by the mind* is a simple way to puncture our unfortunate emotions. Next time you are angry, you can have a good laugh realizing you walk around screaming at a picture, believing that somehow this will do the job. But it cannot!

At the same time, when we look deeply at what is really there (e.g. when there is anger) we understand this person (*of whom we thought created my anger*) constantly changes, they behave in ways based on causes and conditions. We already realized anger is not an wholesome state of mind, anger doesn't work. When I want behaviour to change, I must create the conditions for the aspired behaviour is. When I create the right conditions, the person might behave differently.

It is not realistic though to expect we can always change everybody's behaviour. What we can expect is anger will go or will no longer arise. Anger poisons body and mind. At least we then have the benefit of not being angry; an enormous benefit.

Sometimes there is an opportunity to change causes and conditions as we exist in interdependence with some people. In those occasions I am free of anger, I feel empowered in our relationship and maybe this person – for his or her sake – might function differently next time? Thinking about this person through the lens of kindness, compassion, appreciation, something very beneficial to the mind.

The game to play is to figure out what is unrealistic about our perception and to reflect on what problems this unrealistic perspective creates. And how am I benefited from letting this wrong perception go? This internal dialogue will in time change the behaviour of body and mind. The way you perceive will change.

To relate this to the last sentence of the verse we looked at:



### 2.3.2.1 Training in ultimate awakening mind

*Consider all things and events as dreamlike.  
Examine the nature of unborn awareness  
Let even the antidote be freed in its own place  
Place your mind on the basis-of-all, the actual path  
Between sessions, be a conjurer of illusions.*

We become in between conjures of illusions. In other words, even outside of meditation we will be able to navigate the illusion-like aspect of the world. We then know what is to be relied upon and what is not. This way we are truly agents, actors in the world.

## Yogachara

What the foundational schools (Vaibhashika & Sautantrika) leave behind is a self-existing world out there. They discussed the world in terms of particles of mind and particles of physicality, of energy and matter. The two schools are very liberating but they leave something in the mind to hold on to. For example feeling, these schools leave grounds for unfortunate behaviour of the mind.

The Yogachara-school solves many of these problems, not all of them. Yogachara also creates some problems.

The Yogachara-school takes the understanding of the Vaibashika's more broadly: all things performing functions must be *wholes* and *parts* as a whole only exists in relation to a mind (you have never seen a whole walking around without its parts). Wholes are projected by the mind.

Example:

Here in front of me there is a *whole* of glass and metal and plastic. To me, it is a laptop. I project *whole-ness* onto the laptop, I project computer-ness on the laptop as it can perform in relation to me. It cannot perform computer-ness on its own. For a fly, the laptop cannot do computer things.

Yogachara argue: *'when you investigate and analyse you find this is true for all things in the world'*.

This is a surprising and fascinating conclusion. For atoms to function, they must have directional parts. When you take a part of an atom, it has parts again, it is parts all the way down.

It defines what we seem to see as the phenomenal world and everything in it is not really out there. We see projections, *the world is a mind-made world*.

Yogachara's put experience in the middle. They come to a very important conclusion: *the world is a world of experience*.

What happens is we rip apart the experience into two different things.



### 1. Subject

We take something from this experience and create it into *me*. It seems there is a perspective that we create into a *me*.

When you try to discover who or where this 'me' is – you cannot find it!

### 2. Object

In reality you never see these object and subject separated. The only thing you experienced is the union of knower and known. No one has ever seen either of those two apart from the other. This insight make you understand objects of aversion, desire, are creations of the mind. The mind is the maker of these illusions and we run after them.

Cats often try to catch their own tails. I had a cat that one day caught his tail and bit the tail so hard, I did not hear anything scream so loud. Cats can bite very hard, I learned.

From a Buddhist perspective, we all do this.

We conjure up illusions, we believe them and we run after them. The Sautantrika's already made this clear: when we think, we get so lost in these illusions and fantasies of anger, desire etc.. Dharmakirti already argued: '*you are lost in thoughts of your own making*'.

Asanga and Vasubandhu argue: '*this is not only true of thinking, it is always the case*'.

There's one more thing I want to tell about the Yogachara's without losing perspective. Yogachara's do say the world is made by mind.

They also argue we don't do it on our own, not everything is reducible to *my* mind.

The Yogachara use language and philosophy by highlighting that every idea we project is always a social construction; this is not my world alone, this is a world we create together.

Some aspects of a joint creation are individual (I might like a camera, others might not). But the thing being a camera is joint creation, it is not done by flies. All living beings share some of their reality and do not share others. To the extent that they share a lived experience.

This shows us we make this world together, both in terms of what is unskillful about it and in terms of what is skillful about it. I experience a precious human rebirth that was co-created by many others. Otherwise, I would not be able to know it.

The Yogachara leave two things behind that need further investigation

1. Their reasoning makes the world a little bit too unreal.
2. It leaves the mind on the one hand more real than it really is

We will see next time that the Madhyamika's iron that out.

They argue that both the world and the mind exist in the same way: dependently.

Madhyamika's give the world some reality back, but for pay 😊: they steal away some of the perceived reality of the mind. They give a deeply elegant description of the



world – and by the time you deeply understand you wonder how you could ever believe anything else. Madhyamika gives a deeply beautiful, dynamic, intimate, interactive perspective of the world. When you get it, you will know why we need to become Buddhas. There is nothing else left to pursue.

## Closure

We looked at these different schools and what they leave behind:

- Too much gravity of the mind,
- Still something to hold on to, for example, pleasant feeling.
- Experiencing the world in a way we have enough ‘sense of reality’ to care for it.

We will come back to the way Madhyamika’s see the world. They will accept everything from all the schools, but add one thing to balance things out. It is like a beautiful dance and once we can live the dance, when we see the world as it really is, we are free and obtain real agency. We will know we were never alone.

Please reflect on this and become familiar with the verses.

In the guided meditation I will gradually introduce the relationship between emptiness, dependent origination, and compassion. In time we will come to a difficultly practice of *exchanging self and others*.

We will see the Seven points of Mind Training supports us in the process of pursuing loving all beings; the text is very rich with practical tips and tricks.

Next time I will give a short introduction on Madhyamaka using our superficial understanding to generate compassion. In February, we will dive deeply.

## Prayers

Dedication is protecting intent with intent. But above all, it's a beautiful holding story for our mind. I once asked my abbot when I was newly ordained and he said: ‘Gendun, if you ever end up teaching, please teach the Bodhicharyavatara over and over and over. These are the most beautiful verses in our tradition’.



## Final remarks

There is question left open: *Why does confession relieves one from guilt?*

Start contemplating and investigating about the Buddha being selfless and take it from there.

Thank you, everyone, for being here.

Thank you for your intent to pursue the welfare of all living beings. It does not need further commentary to understand how important this is in the world we live in.

Please go forth and multiply your virtues, or '*let's go out there and care for living beings*'.

That is our job as a community, not to judge others, not to hate others, not to enforce something on others, but to know they are not free. Let us make them free. So one day all of this ends.

Thank you.

