

# **The Two, the Sixteen and the Four:**

Explaining the Divisions of Emptiness

Topic: The Divisions of Emptiness

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## 1. Explaining the divisions of emptiness in brief

(Chandrakirti: The explanations starting from 'It does not arise from itself, ...' up to '... becomes quickly liberated' clarify the selflessness of phenomena. The explanations starting from 'Seeing with awareness that all afflictions and faults arise from the view of the transitory collections,' up to here, clarify the selflessness of person. Therefore, having shown these, and wishing to express the divisions of emptiness, I then said:)

**This selflessness was taught in two aspects to liberate** [6.179]

**Migrators, dividing it according to phenomena and person.**

**The Teacher taught this itself again in many aspects**

**By dividing it further according to the students.**

**Having taught emptiness with elaboration,** [6.180]

**Explaining sixteen<sup>1</sup>, he taught again four**

**In a condensed way<sup>2</sup>. These are**

**Posited for the Mahayana as well.**

Take the subject 'teaching this selflessness that is the lack of inherent existence of phenomena in two aspects, by dividing it according to phenomena and person' – it has a purpose – because it was taught this way to liberate migrators from cyclic existence.

The Teacher taught this emptiness itself again in many aspects by dividing it further according to the students. Having taught with elaboration sixteen emptinesses, he taught again, in a condensed way, the four emptinesses. These are posited for the Mahayana as well.

## 2. Explaining the meaning of the individual divisions

### 2.1. The sixteen emptinesses

#### 2.1.1. Inner emptiness

**Because this is its nature**

**[6.181]**

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<sup>1</sup> From a sutra,

Subhuti, further, for the great vehicle of the bodhisattva, there is inner emptiness, outer emptiness, outer inner emptiness, emptiness of emptiness, great emptiness, ultimate emptiness, compounded emptiness, non-compounded emptiness, emptiness having transcended extremes, emptiness without beginning or end, emptiness of not giving up, emptiness of nature, emptiness of all dharmas, emptiness of one's definition, emptiness of the unobservable and emptiness of the quintessential nature of non-functionalities.

<sup>2</sup> From a sutra,

Subhuti, further, functionalities are empty of functionalities, non-functionalities are empty of non-functionalities, nature is empty of nature and other-functionalities are empty of other-functionalities.

The eye is empty of the eye.  
Similarly, ear, nose, tongue,  
Body and mind should be taught likewise.

Because of not remaining unchanging and [6.182]  
Because of not disintegrating.  
The lack of inherent existence of  
The six, the eyes and so forth -

It is asserted as inner emptiness. [6.183a]

Take the subject 'the lack of inherent existence of the six, the eyes and so forth' – it is asserted as inner emptiness – because it is the emptiness that is the lack of inner true existence.

Take the subject 'the eye' – it is empty of the quintessential nature of the eye – because this emptiness is its nature – because it does not ultimately remain unchanging and because of not disintegrating ultimately. Similarly, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind should be taught likewise.

#### 2.1.2. Outer emptiness

Because this is its nature [6.183bcd]  
Form is empty of form.  
Sound, smell, taste, tactile stimuli and

Phenomena are the same. [6.184abc]  
The mere lack of quintessential nature of form  
And so forth is asserted as outer emptiness.

Form is empty of the quintessential nature of form because this emptiness is its nature. Sound, smell, taste, tactile stimuli and phenomena are the same.

Take the subject 'the mere lack of quintessential nature of form and so forth' – it is asserted as outer emptiness – because it is the emptiness that is the lack of outer true existence.

#### 2.1.3. Outer inner emptiness

The mere lack of inherent existence of [6.184d]  
Both is outer inner emptiness. [6.185a]

Take the subject 'the mere lack of inherent existence of both' – it is outer inner emptiness – because it is the emptiness that is the lack of outer inner true existence.

#### 2.1.4. Emptiness of emptiness

The mere lack of inherent existence of phenomena [6.185bcd]

Is taught by the sages to be emptiness.

This emptiness is also asserted to be

Empty of the entity of emptiness. [6.186]

The emptiness of that called emptiness

Is asserted as emptiness of emptiness.

It is taught to oppose awareness

Grasping at emptiness as a phenomenon. [6.187a]

This emptiness that is the mere lack of inherent existence of phenomena as taught by the sages is also asserted to be empty of the entity of emptiness, because all phenomena are empty of true existence.

Take the subject 'the emptiness of that called emptiness' – it is asserted as emptiness of emptiness – because it is the emptiness that is the lack of the true existence of emptiness.

Take the subject 'the teaching on the emptiness of emptiness' – it has a purpose – because it is to oppose the awareness grasping at emptiness as a phenomenon, i.e. as truly existent.

#### 2.1.5. Great emptiness

Because of pervading all, i.e. sentient beings [6.187bcd]

And the worlds containing them, and because

There is no limit through the example

Of the infinite, directions are great indeed. [6.188]

Whatever is the emptiness of

The ten directions Is the great emptiness,

Taught to oppose the grasping at the Great.

Take the subject 'the ten directions' – they are great indeed – because of pervading all, i.e. sentient beings and the worlds containing them, and because the limitless expanse of

immeasurable love focussing on the sentient beings of the ten directions is taught through the example of their infinity.

Whatever is the emptiness of the inherent nature of these ten directions, i.e. the eight points of the compass together with up and down, is the great emptiness.

Take the subject 'teaching that emptiness' – it has a purpose – because it is taught to oppose the grasping at the true existence of the Great.

#### 2.1.6. Ultimate emptiness

Because of being of great purpose, [6.189]  
To go beyond sorrow is the ultimate.  
Whatever is the emptiness of this,  
That is the ultimate emptiness.

To endeavor opposing the grasping [6.190]  
Awareness at nirvana as a phenomenon,  
Ultimate Exalted Wisdom took to  
Teaching the ultimate emptiness.

Take the subject 'gone beyond sorrow' – it is ultimate – because of being of great purpose. Whatever is the emptiness of the quintessential nature of this ultimate, that is the ultimate emptiness.

Take the subject 'Ultimate Exalted Wisdom teaching the ultimate emptiness' – there is a purpose – because it is to endeavor opposing the grasping-awareness grasping at nirvana as a phenomenon, i.e. as truly existent.

#### 2.1.7. Compounded emptiness

Because of arising from conditions the three [6.191]  
Realms are taught with certainty to be compounded.  
Whatever is the emptiness of this,  
That is taught as compounded emptiness.

Take the subject 'the three realms' – they are taught with certainty to be compounded – because of arising from conditions.

Take the subject 'whatever is the emptiness of the quintessential nature of this compounded phenomenon' – it is taught as compounded emptiness – because it is the emptiness that is the lack of the true existence of the compounded.

#### 2.1.8. Non-compounded emptiness

That which does not have generation, abiding, [6.192]  
And impermanence, that is non-compounded.  
Whatever is the emptiness of it,  
That is non-compounded emptiness.

Take the subject 'space' – it is non-compounded – because it is that which does not have generation, abiding and impermanence.

Take the subject 'whatever is the emptiness of the quintessential nature of this non-compounded' – it is non-compounded emptiness – because it is the emptiness that is the lack of the true existence of the non-compounded.

#### 2.1.9. Emptiness having transcended extremes

Anything that does not have extremes [6.193]  
Is called 'having transcended extremes'.  
Its emptiness of merely that  
Is called 'emptiness having transcended extremes'.

Take the subject 'any dependent arising' – it is called 'having transcended extremes' – because it does not have the extremes of eternalism and nihilism.

Take the subject 'emptiness of the quintessential nature of that having transcended extremes' – it is called 'emptiness having transcended extremes' – because it is the emptiness that is the lack of true existence of that having transcended extremes.

#### 2.1.10 Emptiness without beginning or end

Beginning is first, the last is the end. [6.194]  
Because of lacking these, cyclic existence  
Is described as lacking beginning or end.

Since it lacks going and coming, that which [6.195]  
Is the void of this dreamlike existence  
Is called emptiness without  
Beginning and without end.

It is accurately taught in the treatises. [6.196a]

Cyclic existence is described as lacking a beginning or an end, because the beginning is the first and the last is the end, and samsara lacks both.

Take the subject 'that which is the void of the quintessential nature of this dreamlike existence, since it lacks inherent going and coming' – it is definitely taught in the treatises that it is called emptiness without beginning or end – because it is the emptiness that is the lack of the true existence of coming and going.

#### 2.1.11. Emptiness of not giving up

That called 'giving up' is accurately [6.196abc]  
Described as discarding and throwing away.  
To not give up is to not cast aside.

Not to give up anything that is. [6.197a]

That called 'giving up' is accurately described as discarding and throwing away and to not give up is to not cast aside.

Take the subject 'that which is Mahayana' – it is something not to give up – because it is not anything to give up both from the point of view of entity as well as time.

That which is the very emptiness [6.197abc]  
Of the mere lack of giving up,  
Because it is that it should be described

As emptiness of not giving up. [6.198]

Take the subject 'that which is the very emptiness of the quintessential nature of the mere lack of giving up' – it should be described as the emptiness of not giving up – because it is the emptiness that is the lack of the true existence of not giving up.

#### 2.1.12. Emptiness of nature

The identity of compounded phenomena and so forth, [6.198bcd]  
It is not created by students,  
Self-enlightened ones, conquerors' children and tatagatas.

Therefore the mere identity of compounded phenomena [6.199]  
And so forth is described  
As mere nature. That which is the emptiness of that itself,  
It is the emptiness of nature.

The mere identity, i.e. emptiness, of compounded phenomena and so forth, is described as mere nature because the identity, i.e. emptiness, of compounded phenomena and so forth, is not created by hearer students, self-enlightened ones, conquerors' children and tatagatas, but is their primordial mode of abiding.

Take the subject 'that which is the emptiness of the quintessential nature of that nature itself' – it is the emptiness of nature – because it is the emptiness that is the lack of the true existence of nature itself.

#### 2.1.13. Emptiness of all dharmas

The eighteen spheres, six contacts and [6.200]  
The six feelings arising from them,  
Possessing form and not possessing form,  
Likewise compounded and non-compounded phenomena,

Anything that is the void of [6.201ab]  
All these phenomena is emptiness.

Take the subject 'that which is the void of the quintessential nature of all these phenomena – the eighteen spheres, six contacts and the six feelings arising from them, those possessing form and not possessing form, and likewise compounded and non-compounded phenomena' – it is the emptiness of all dharmas – because it is the emptiness that is the lack of the true existence of all dharmas.

#### 2.1.14. The emptiness of one's definition

##### 2.1.14.1. Condensed

Any non-phenomenon such as suitable to be form<sup>3</sup> [6.201cd]  
And so forth is the emptiness of definition.

Take the subject 'the non-phenomenon of truly existing suitable to be form and so forth' – it is the emptiness of definition – because it is the emptiness that is the lack of the true existence of definition.

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<sup>3</sup> 'Suitable to be form' is the definition of form.

## 2.1.14.2. Extensive

### 2.1.14.2.1. The definitions relating to the basis

Form has the definition of that suitable to [6.202]

Be form, feeling has the nature of experience,

Recognition is apprehending characteristics,

Compositional factors are strongly activating,

Clearly knowing the individual objects [6.203]

Is the definition of primary consciousness,

Misery is the definition of the aggregates,

The spheres' nature is asserted as a striking snake,

The sources were taught by the Buddha [6.204]

As the very doors to birth,

That which arises dependently and related

Has the definition of meeting.

Take the subject 'that suitable to be form, the uncommon definition of form' – it does not exist inherently – because it is neither inherently existing one nor inherently existing many. All the others are the same.

Feeling has the nature of experience; the definition of recognition is that apprehending characteristics; the definition of compositional factors is that strongly activating the mind; clearly knowing the individual objects is the definition of primary consciousness.

Misery is the definition of the aggregates; the spheres' nature is asserted as that holding sentient beings in samsara, like a striking snake, the sources were taught by the Buddha as the very doors to birth,

and that which arises dependently and related has the definition of the meeting of causes and conditions.

### 2.1.14.2.2. The definitions relating to the path

Letting go is generosity gone beyond, [6.205]

The definition of morality is lack of misery,

The definition of patience is lack of anger, of enthusiasm

It is the very lack of the unspeakable.

Mental stabilization has the definition of bringing together, [6.206] Wisdom's very definition is lack of attachment.

The definitions of the six perfections

Are stated as such.

The thought of letting go is the definition of the perfection of generosity; the definition of morality is lack of misery caused by mental afflictions; the definition of patience is lack of anger; the definition of enthusiasm is joy in virtue lacking the unspeakable; mental stabilization has the definition of a single-pointed mind bringing together all virtuous dharmas; wisdom's very definition is lack of attachment. The definitions of the six perfections are stated as such in the sutras.

Mental stabilisations and the immeasurables and [6.207]  
Likewise whatever other formless ones,  
These were taught by Perfect Transcendental Knowledge  
As having the definition of being undisturbed.

The thirty-seven features of enlightenment - [6.208]  
Their definition is definitely liberating.  
The definition of emptiness is  
The mere void aspect lacking focus,

The lack of signs is mere pacification, [6.209]  
The third's definition is a lack of suffering  
And ignorance. The definition of  
Emancipation is to liberate.

Take the subject 'mental stabilizations, the immeasurables, and likewise whatever other formless ones, these that were taught by Perfect Transcendental Knowledge as having the definition of being undisturbed' – they do not exist inherently – because they are neither inherently existing one, nor inherently existing many.

The definition of the thirty-seven features of enlightenment is definitely liberating.

The definition of the first door to liberation, i.e. emptiness, is the mere void aspect empty of true-grasping since it is lacking the focus of true-grasping, the definition of the second door to liberation, i.e. the lack of signs, is the mere pacification of signs, the third door's definition is a lack of suffering and ignorance, and the definition of emancipation is to liberate from the obscurations of absorption.

2.1.14.2.3. The definitions relating to the result

The powers are in the nature of [6.210]  
Strong understanding, it is taught.  
The saving fearlessnesses  
Have the identity of strong stability.

The individual perfect knowledges have the definition [6.211]  
Of uninterrupted confidence and so forth.  
Superbly achieving the welfare of migrators  
Has to be called great love.

Completely saving those who suffer [6.212]  
Is great-hearted compassion. Intense joy  
Is the definition of joy. Know that  
Equanimity has the definition of being undiluted.

The uncommon dharmas of a buddha, [6.213]  
Whichever one of the ten and eight one asserts,  
Since they are not taken from the Buddha  
By that, therefore the definition 'not taken'.

Exalted omniscient transcendental wisdom knowledge [6.214]  
Is posited as having the definition 'direct perception'.  
Others, being merely partial,  
Are not called direct perception.

It is taught that the powers are in the nature of strong understanding. The saving fearlessnesses have the identity of strong stability. The individual perfect knowledges have the definition of an uninterrupted continuum of confidence and so forth.

Superbly achieving the welfare of migrators has to be called great love. Completely saving those who suffer is great-hearted compassion, and know that equanimity has the definition of being undiluted.

Whichever one of the ten and eight uncommon dharmas of a buddha one asserts, it has the definition 'not taken', since they are not taken from the Buddha by adverse conditions.

Exalted omniscient transcendental wisdom knowledge is posited as having the definition of 'an exalted knower directly perceiving all objects of knowledge'. Other

consciousnesses, by a mere partial engagement of the object, are not called a direct perception of all objects of knowledge.

#### 2.1.14.3. Summary

Any definitions of compounded phenomena [6.215]  
And any definitions of non-compounded phenomena,  
The emptiness of that alone,  
It is the emptiness of definitions.

Take the subject 'the emptiness of the quintessential nature of the definitions of compounded and non-compounded phenomena alone' – it is the emptiness of definitions – because it is the emptiness that is the lack of the true existence of definitions.

#### 2.1.15. The emptiness of the unobservable

The present does not abide and [6.216]  
The past and future do not exist.  
They are unobservable at any time,  
They are called unobservable.

That which is the mere void [6.217]  
Of the unobservable is not unchanging,  
And it also does not disintegrate, hence  
It is the emptiness of that called unobservable.

They, the three times, are mutually unobservable at any time and they are called unobservable because the present does not abide in the next moment and, since the past has disintegrated and the future has not yet generated, they do not exist in the present.

Take the subject 'that which is the mere void of the unobservable' – it is the emptiness of that called unobservable – because it is the lack of the truly existing unobservable. The unobservable is not ultimately unchanging and it also does not disintegrate.

#### 2.1.16. The emptiness of the quintessential nature of non-functionalities

Since functionalities arise from conditions [6.218]  
They do not have the nature of being compounded.  
The emptiness of the compounded itself  
Is the emptiness of non-functionalities.

Take the subject 'functionalities' – they do not have the nature of being compounded inherently – because they arise from conditions.

Take the subject 'the emptiness of the quintessential nature of the compounded itself' – it is the emptiness of non-functionality – because it is the emptiness that is the lack of the true existence of non-functionality.

## 2.2. The four emptinesses

If summarized, the word 'functionality' [6.219]

Describes the five aggregates.

Any such emptiness of theirs

Is described as emptiness of functionalities.

If summarized, the word 'functionality' describes the five aggregates. Take the subject 'any such emptiness of their quintessential nature' – it is described as emptiness of functionalities – because it is the emptiness that is the lack of the true existence of functionalities.

In short, non-functionalities [6.220]

Are described as non-compounded phenomena.

The emptiness of the non-functionality itself

Is the emptiness of non-functionalities.

In short, non-functionalities are described as non-compounded phenomena.

Take the subject 'the emptiness of the quintessential nature of the non-functionality itself' – it is the emptiness of non-functionalities – because it is the emptiness that is the lack of the true existence of non-functionalities.

The lack of the quintessential nature of nature [6.221]

Is the emptiness of that called nature.

Because nature was not created

It is taught that it should be called nature.

Take the subject 'the lack of the quintessential nature of nature' – it is the emptiness of that called nature – because it is the emptiness that is the lack of the true existence of nature.

Take the subject ‘the nature emptiness’ – it is taught it that should be called nature – because it was not created by hearers and so forth, but is the mode of abiding of phenomena.

Whether the buddhas are present [6.222]  
Or not, this very emptiness is the  
Nature of all phenomena, a nature  
Apart<sup>4</sup>, that is proclaimed to be empty<sup>5</sup>.

The perfect end and suchness [6.223]  
Are the emptiness of phenomena apart.  
In the sutras of the Perfection of Wisdom Method  
These are emphatically proclaimed in those words.

Take the subject ‘the lack of an inherently existing perfect ending and suchness, the very emptiness that is the nature of all phenomena, whether the buddhas are present in the world or not’ – it is the emptiness of the nature apart – because it is the emptiness that is the lack of a truly existing nature apart.

Take the subject ‘these emptinesses’ – they are explained in the sutras – because they are emphatically proclaimed in those words in the sutras of the Method of the Perfection of Wisdom as explained earlier.

#### 4. Concluding by expressing the qualities of the ground

Having thus realized all the three worlds, illuminated by the brilliance [6.224]  
Of wisdom light, like a gyurura<sup>6</sup> lying in their hand,  
As lacking generation from the outset,  
They enter cessation through the power of nominal truth.

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<sup>4</sup> From Illumination, ‘The meaning of the words “a nature apart” is threefold. In the first case it means supreme suchness. “Supreme” means that it exists never straying from the definition of suchness. In the second case “apart” means apart from the world, i.e. the non-conceptual transcendental wisdom, which is the supreme among transcendental wisdoms having gone beyond the world. The “nature” is that realised by that wisdom. In the third case “a nature apart” means to exist on the other shore. The perfect end is the “shore beyond samsara” because it is beyond samsara. End refers here to nirvana that has exhausted samsara.

<sup>5</sup> The second and fourth lines of the Tibetan are from the translation of Nak-tso in accordance with Lama Tsong Khapa’s preference.

<sup>6</sup> Tib-Eng Dict of Tib Medicine & Astrology gives this name for the fruit *Emblica officianalis*. It is used in Indian medicine and to make pickles.

Although always in the meditative stabilization classified as cessation [6.225]

They also generated compassion for protectorless migrators,  
And above they will embarrass all those born from the speech of  
The Tatagata and middling buddhas through their awareness.

The king possessing the expanding white vast wings [6.226]

Of the illusory and suchness, having progressed to the seventh  
Through the needs of beings, goes on to the supreme perfection  
Of the ocean of the conquerors' qualities through the force of the gale of virtues.

Take the subject 'bodhisattvas abiding on the sixth ground illuminated by the brilliance of the light of wisdom as explained thus earlier' – they go into meditative absorption on cessation through the power of nominal truth – because they realized directly that these three worlds lack generation from the outset, like seeing a gyurura lying in their hand.

Take the same subject – they do not abandon the thought to rescue migrators even though they enter into absorption on cessation – because although they always have the thought of clear light cessation they also generated compassion for protectorless migrators.

Take the same subject – above, on the seventh ground, they will embarrass all those hearers born from the speech of the Tatagata and self-liberating middling buddhas through their awareness – because a seventh ground bodhisattva can enter and exit from the absorption on cessation in an instant.

Take the same subject – they progress to buddhahood through the path that is complete with method and wisdom – because the king possessing the expanding white vast wings of the sequence of the illusory extensive path and the sequence of the profound path realising suchness, having progressed to the seventh ground that fulfils the needs of beings, goes on to the supreme perfection of the ocean of the conquerors' qualities through the force of the gale of virtues.

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