

and another side a different color, then we see a contradiction emerging with reference to the qualities the object possesses. **A singular object should not have a multitude of qualities if it is truly singular.** Gyel-tsab is specifically concerned with the idea of gross objects being truly singular and not with the preceding step in reasoning which argues that if one accepts that if gross objects are made up of truly singular partless particles, then the gross object must be accepted as truly singular as well.<sup>51</sup>

### *The Refutation of Unitary, Partless Particles*

The next topic in Śāntarakṣita's root text is the refutation of truly unitary, partless particles and follows logically from the previous one (the second part of stanza ten). Śāntarakṣita introduces this topic in *MAV* out of a discussion of the issues concerning the assertion that gross, unitary objects are made up of unitary, partless particles.<sup>52</sup> From this discussion in *MAV*, Śāntarakṣita proceeds to cite the eleventh and twelfth stanzas back-to-back in *MAV*, then comments and follows that with the thirteenth *MA* stanza. Gyel-tsab notes that the eleventh through thirteenth stanzas of the root text all pertain to this argument. If one were to name the main target of Śāntarakṣita's argument here, it appears to be a view held by both the Vaibhāṣika and Sautrāntika Buddhist schools that there exist the minutest particles which are actually partless and, therefore, of a truly single nature. Neither Śāntarakṣita, Kamalaśīla, nor Gyel-tsab specifically names their opponent here, but the views of the above two schools would certainly be among the targets of this argument. According to this position held by Vaibhāṣikas and Sautrāntikas, and as discussed above with regards to the previous topic, the smallest essential building blocks for the physical world are these partless particles which are of a single nature and which combine to form gross objects. The eleventh through thirteenth root text stanzas aim to disprove the reasonability of asserting such truly unitary, partless particles and read as follows:

(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 to-

ward 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?

In order to refute the notion of the existence of partless particles, the argument put forth here questions basic assertions and assumptions of the type held by both the Vaibhāṣika and Sautrāntika philosophical schools.<sup>53</sup> The first of these three stanzas questions what the nature of such a particle would be which is related in one of three possible ways with other particles abiding in the ten directions around it. If the central particle is related with multiple particles surrounding it in any of the three possible ways (these being exhaustive of all possible ways to combine to form gross objects), then it must have parts related to the various particles around it and therefore not be truly single. The second of these three stanzas from the *MA* questions how such particles of singular nature could combine to form gross objects. If they do in fact combine to do this, then that first or central partless particle must have other inherently singular partless particles with which it combines surrounding it in one of the three possible ways, as Śāntarakṣita states in the first stanza, in order to form gross objects. A contradiction arises here however because if other particles abiding in the ten surrounding directions combine with the central particle, then the central particle must have sides facing each of those particles in ten distinct directions. Either that, or it must have some sort of relationship with those directions and therefore would not be truly singular due to its having parts related with different directions, as Śāntarakṣita questions in the thirteenth stanza of the *MA*. If it were truly singular and could only have one side (i.e., not have spatial extension) and face and combine in one direction, then gross objects such as land and water or even earth *maṇḍalas*, as Śāntarakṣita writes in his autocommentary, could not be spatially expansive. This of course runs contrary to our direct perception, which knows all sorts of gross expansive objects such as the ones mentioned. Gyel-tsab explains this point very briefly in the form of an inferential proof:

The subject, a particle which abides in the center of the ten directions, would not have a different place [of abiding from] the par-

ticle to the east and in the nine other directions because the part of the subject facing to the east and the parts of the subject facing the other nine directions are one. If you accept this, then it would not be possible to develop into gross forms like earth due to accepting that [previous inference]. If you accept each of the [ten] faces, then that subject (i.e., the particle in the center of the ten directions) must not be singular and without parts because the subject would have ten different faces facing the [surrounding] particles in the ten directions.<sup>54</sup>

Gyel-tsab therefore offers two alternatives to those who assert partless particles, both of which are unacceptable. The first is that gross forms could not develop if their position were correct because particles, being truly singular, could not combine in the so-called ten directions as would be necessary for gross form to take shape, but could only combine in one place. If a single partless particle were to combine with particles in a variety of directions around it, then it would not be truly single and partless since it would be related with other particles in a variety of directions and have multiple parts related with each other particle in each distinct direction. Therefore, the only other alternative for proponents of partless particles, according to Gyel-tsab, is to accept that those partless, singular particles which they assert to be the building blocks of gross form are not truly partless or truly singular and that in fact there are no truly singular partless particles; they do not exist. Kamalaśīla discusses this topic in his *Sarvadharmāṅsvabhāvasiddhi*, emphasizing the physicality or the material quality of the particles while making essentially the same point:

If particles are physical, then they should be known to have distinct directions. If that were not the case, then [gross physical objects such as] mountains and the like would not [be able to take form] as the accumulation [of particles] because there would certainly be no distinct directions such as east and north, etc.<sup>55</sup>

Śāntarakṣita proceeds from here, in the following stanzas and commentary on them, to summarize and elaborate on the arguments he has just made. His autocommentary following this stanza from the root text additionally reveals indirectly Śāntarakṣita's own high regard for the soteriological value of Buddhist philosophical inquiry and logical inference. Not

only does he argue that this philosophical exercise, engaged upon in the application of the neither-one-nor-many argument, aids in the understanding of the philosophical system Śāntarakṣita maintains, but more fundamentally, the philosophical inquiry itself facilitates an understanding of emptiness, the realization of which is central to the attainment of Buddhahood in Mahāyāna Buddhism. Thus, philosophical investigation is inseparably part of the path to the soteriological goal for Śāntarakṣita. Reason is a tool for the religious.<sup>56</sup> He summarizes in the fourteenth stanza and accompanying autocommentary as follows:

(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.

If we are certain that subtlest particles do not exist, then the eyes and form and consciousness of that asserted to be real [by our schools] and the substantial [phenomena] and qualities, etc. asserted by the Vaiśeṣikas and the like will effortlessly be known to be empty of inherent existence. Thus, one may ask if this [teaching of the five aggregates (*skandha, phung po*), twelve constituent elements (*āyatana, skye mched*) and eighteen sources (*dhātu, khams*)]<sup>57</sup> is the teaching of the Conqueror or not?<sup>58</sup>

Śāntarakṣita argues that as a result of the understanding that particles do not have a single, inherently existing nature, the holders of such a view would come to know that those grosser objects, which the accumulation of those particles supposedly form, also have no inherently existing nature. Much in the vein of *The Heart Sūtra* (*Prajñāhṛdaya/ Bhagavatīprajñāpāramitāhṛdayasūtra, Shes rab snying po/ bCom ldan 'das ma shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa 'i snying po 'i mdo*), which similarly negates a host of Buddhist concepts, Śāntarakṣita refutes the true existence of the fundamental components of Buddhist *abhidharma*, including the true existence of the five aggregates, the twelve constituent elements, and the eighteen sources.

Gyel-tsab offers a basic inferential proof as explanation of this verse in