

Alex Wayman Replies to Geshe Sopa

While responding to Geshe Sopa's comments on my translation of the last two parts of Tsong-kha-pa's *Lam rim chen mo* (New York, 1978), I should like first to thank the learned Geshe for writing at length to make his point, because only so is it possible to use his comments to further the point I wish to make. Certain Tibetan sects represented by Western establishments have insisted that their important books should not be translated by Westerners except in collaboration with, or by help of native Tibetans who are more sensitive to the meanings and nuances of such texts. While this Geshe of the Gelugpa order does not explicitly say this, the attitude is rather pronounced, partly by his denial that any of the Mādhyamika classics have been reliably translated into Western languages, and partly by a charged language in his comments. So as he makes this point, taking my translation up for comment, I too can make a point, to wit, that no matter how a learned Tibetan informant might help with this or that text, I did succeed by myself on the part of the *Lam rim chen mo* rendered from the Tibetan language with the title *Calming the Mind and Discerning the Real*. For this point, may I initially explain, what the Geshe never mentioned in his review article, that for every sentence of the Discerning section—on which the Geshe makes comments—besides original Sanskrit when available for quotations, I employed the 'four annotation' (*mchan bzhi*) commentarial edition of the *Lam rim chen mo* (cf. my book pp. 70-71). Thus, I resorted to informants of the Path lineage, who had taken great pains in writing up these annotations.

The Geshe finds "particularly objectionable" certain glosses in my translation, such as "eye, etc." in a *Samādhirāja-sūtra* citation. As I mentioned in my introduction, almost all glosses in parentheses, and including these ones, that are within the translation come from the 'four annotation' commentaries of the text. Also when I cite Asaṅga for an explanation of name-and-form (*nāma-rūpa*), implicating it as the 'reality' object of *vipaśyanā* (Discerning) and so also in Tsong-kha-pa's position, the Geshe disagrees on the grounds that "Tsong kha pa's own position on 'Discerning' is that of a Mādhyamika." Then the Geshe should also disagree with Tsong-kha-pa's own section on 'Varieties of Discerning' (my book, pp. 386-390) since these varieties are just taken from Asaṅga's *Srāvakabhūmi* and from the Yogācāra scripture *Samdhinirmocana*. Of course, the Geshe might well be right that Asaṅga's mention of name-and-form as I cited it, is irrelevant, but he might be right merely as an outsider to the Path lineage, because as I showed in my introduction, Atiśa's lineage, exemplified by Tsong-kha-pa in the *Lam rim chen mo*, is a combination of the

lineages of Nāgārjuna and Śāntideva (both Mādhyamika) and of Asaṅga (Yogācāra).

The Geshe feels that my translation should be used with caution by persons who cannot read the original Tibetan. I should hope the readers are cautious, both for my translation and for what the Geshe has to say about it. This raises the question of whether educated Tibetans while reading in the Tibetan language can understand Tsong-kha-pa's Discerning section. I for one would prefer that they could, but there are some disquieting counter-indications. Thus, it has been called to my attention that in the generation following Tsong-kha-pa, there was an eminent monk of the Sa-kya-pa order named Gorampa who sought to refute Tsong-kha-pa's type of Mādhyamika, labelling it a nihilism, and in a work entitled *Dbu ma spyi don* criticized this very Discerning section. Of course, Geshe Sopa and I both know that this nihilism charge is not justified. But then, the readers of the Geshe's review of my book should wonder why a monk so learned as Gorampa would misunderstand. Is it enough to say that he belongs to a rival sect, apprehensive of the then rising strength of the Gelugpa order, and so deliberately misrepresents Tsong-kha-pa's position? Suppose we do discount Gorampa as an 'opponent' and credit a learned Gelugpa monk with ability to understand the Discerning section on the grounds that he is a sympathetic 'insider.' Of course, when the Geshe makes his various comments, he expects readers to believe him (since the arguments deal with subtle matters) as an 'insider.' Well, so far I have not found this Geshe talking as an insider of the Path lineage when he objects to glosses within parentheses taken from Path lineage annotations (calling them "particularly objectionable"), and when he insists we should accept Tsong-kha-pa in the present context (including the introductions) as a Mādhyamika, while Atīṣa's lineage followed in the *Lam rim chen mo* is a combination of Mādhyamika and Yogācāra. Indeed, the very title of Tsong-kha-pa's work abbreviated as *Lim rim chen mo* shows he is writing here with Buddhist path lineage, not as a commentator on a Mādhyamika text, as he was in two other works with commentaries on Nāgārjuna's *Madhyamaka-kārikā* and on Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra*. But the Geshe's ability to read Tsong-kha-pa's work with understanding should be taken for granted, until proven otherwise.

I do not deny that in a pioneer translation of this type—a rather long stretch of difficult text with involved sentences, and worked at intermittently over some years—I could, probably did miss some subtle points, or misrender some phrases or sentences. Fortunately, Tsong-kha-pa's 'right views' are often repeated, and anyone studying the text will eventually garner what he is driving at. Geshe properly caught my slip in the *Samādhirāja* passage, where I had put 'Noble Truth' instead of 'Noble Path' (or 'Noble's Path'), and he is certainly right in criticizing my rendering of *ma 'dus pa'i chos*—a bad slip. After that, he made too much fuss over various passages without scholarly proof for his "improvements." When the Geshe says *bsnyon* means "to deny the apparent"

and that I mistranslate “to affirm and then deny,” he paid no attention to my note referring to the Geshe Chos kyi grags native Tibetan dictionary, which I now cite for the term *bsnyon can*: *dang por yod ces dam bcas nas rjes par med ces snyon mkhan*. Perhaps the trouble is that I have better reference works than the reviewer, or else that I actually consult them. Then in his section VI he cites my rendition, “(The Mādhyamika replies with compassionate interjection.) Alas! Because you are without ears or heart you have thrown a challenge that is severe on us!” And the Geshe thinking to improve on this, first saying “by something like” as though he were not sure, goes on with his version: “Ouch! The hardship of an argument by one without ears or wits (i.e. a blockhead) has landed on me!” Aside from the fact that his ‘improvement’ changes the rendition from a compassionate interjection to a jest, there is no word in the original for ‘ouch’ and so forth. His kind of rendition is symptomatic of some of his other ‘improvements,’ namely, that the first 500 English words learned by a foreigner are superior to the words, such as ‘severe’ and ‘caul,’ found in larger vocabularies. Unfortunately for his stance, Tsong-kha-pa had an extraordinary Tibetan vocabulary and did not write such books for the Tibetans who only knew 500 Tibetan words or phrases. Why should the Western translator be so limited for his own potential readers—hopefully intelligent persons?

Moreover, the Geshe’s lengthy revision examples go along with attributing a host of ‘misconstruals’ on my part; and one has to go to his note 10 to learn, “In following our own preferences in translation-words for our suggested translations of the various passages, we do not mean to imply any criticism of Professor Wayman’s own choice of translation-words.” It is impractical to take up these various paragraphs of his; and I shall concern myself only with what seem to bother the Geshe the most, to wit, my introductory section about Buddhist logic, and Tsong-kha-pa’s position about *svabhāva*, supposedly misrepresented by me.

First, as to the Geshe’s own ability to render these technical terms, when he renders the primary word of Buddhist logic, *pramāṇa* (Tib. *tshad ma*) as ‘avenue of validity’ he falls into the trap of translating it in instrumental manner, in agreement with the Hindu Kumārila and the Jaina critics of Dignāga, for whom *pramāṇa* is a *phala* (result), not an avenue (cf. Hattori, *Dignāga, on Perception*, p. 99).

In the matter of my introductory chapter “Use of Buddhist Logic” (pp. 60-65), the Geshe’s fervent denial that Tsong-kha-pa employed in strictly logical manner the two terms I render ‘overpervasion’ and ‘non-pervasion’—is amazing. It is hard to believe that anybody who had read through the entire Discerning section in its original Tibetan with attentiveness could have avoided the conclusion that Tsong-kha-pa uses terms of Buddhist logic again and again and with strict adherence to the technical meaning in the logic system. So, for example, there occurred a great many times the term *rtags* in the technical meaning of Skt. *liṅga*, sometimes with explicit mention of its two

stipulations, *anvaya* and *vyatireka*, which are two kinds of 'pervasion' (*vyāpti*). Besides, in Tsong-kha-pa's own little logic treatise, the '*Mun sel*'—which my manuscript translation entitles "Guided Tour through the Seven Books of Dharmakīrti"—he discusses toward the end both the *svatantra* (*rang rgyud*) and the *prasāṅga* (*thal 'gyur*), which in their derivative forms, the Svātantrika and the Prāsaṅgika, are the two main schools of Mādhyamika. This suggests that the reason for writing the logic treatise was to further arguments in Mādhyamika discussions. Then there is the testimony of Gene Smith, Library of Congress, who during his years at the Delhi office supervised the hundreds of Tibetan books that are pre-catalogued and sent to various American universities and depositories. He once told me in his Delhi home that the Gelugpa monks spend so much time reading the later *yig cha-s* (manuals) that they rarely read even the works of their founder Tsong-kha-pa. It is true that the usual monastic drill called *mtshan nyid* covering a number of years of learning the main works of Abhidharma, etc., does not include any works of Tsong-kha-pa, that there are many *yig cha-s* and other collected works of eminent Lamas. However, we should have hoped that a learned monk like Geshe Sopa would have at least read through Tsong-kha-pa's *lhag mthong* (Skt. *vipāśyanā*) section before adopting so confident a pose in commenting upon my translation! After all, I as translator did not presume to know what this section was saying prior to translating it.

Geshe writes about my Introduction, p. 61: "for the writer goes on to identify the overpervasionists as the realists, including the Yogācārins and Svātantrika Mādhyamikas." I made no such inclusion, saying rather, "The opponents are especially the realists, . . . *Other opponents* [my present italics] are . . . of the Yogācāra school . . . as well as the Mādhyamika Svātantrika." And of course these are indeed the opponents of the section (my translation, pp. 189-252), no matter how the Geshe tries to make them out as being otherwise. And the opponents guilty of the non-pervasion are certain Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamikas of the next section (pp. 253-260) no matter how the Geshe tries to make them out as being otherwise. Unfortunately, as I shall now show, the Geshe's position itself is included in the deviation which Tsong-kha-pa refers to as 'non-pervasion.'

Take the Geshe's conclusion (his own note 7): "Strictly speaking, both overpervasionism and underpervasionism, being exegeses of the meaning of the Mādhyamika, and Tsong kha pa's own view of the exact meaning of Middleism (or Mādhyamika), all deny *svābhava*." However, Tsong-kha-pa (Tashilunpo edition of *Lam rim chen mo*, f. 389a-5,6) says: / *gzugs sogs rnam rang bzhin gnyis gang du 'ang ma grub pas chos nyid la rang bzhin du byas pa'i rang bzhin de blta ba'i phyir du lam bsgom pas na tshangs spyod kyang don med du mi 'gyur bar gsungs shing . . .* / As I translate (p. 257): "The (elements) such as form are not accomplished in either of the two *svabhāvas* ([annotation commentary:] the *svabhāva* in the meaning of true nature and the *svabhāva* accomplished by own nature).

Since one cultivates the path so as to view the *svabhāva* that is the *svabhāva* in the meaning of true nature, it is also said that the pure life is not purposeless.” This is not just Tsong-kha-pa’s own position, because he makes these remarks to introduce a passage of Candrakīrti’s *Madhyamakāvatāra* (on VI, 182) that has the same message. One can read this in my translation at that point. I should explain here that the *svabhāva* accomplished by own nature is what is denied again and again by the Mādhyamikas, and this insight (*prajñā*) of denial is referred to in Atiśa’s *Light on the Path to Enlightenment*, verse 54 (my work, p. 13). It is frequently referred to as the denial in an absolute sense (*paramārthatas*). Candrakīrti’s passage here clarifies that the *svabhāva* of true nature (*dharmatā*)—to be witnessed on the path by the yogin in *samāpatti*—is in dependence on conventional truth (*samvṛti-satya*). I should inform the readers of this, my rebuttal, that when translating this Discerning section it was as though I was in the presence of a great mind; and it would have been most ungracious and unappreciative of me to have had an introduction section entitled “Svabhāva of the Path” (pp. 67-69), if the Tibetan author had not used the words of the above-cited passage and emphasized the importance of his communication at that point. If indeed my translation is guilty of numerous small ‘misconstruals’—if one can believe Geshe Sopa—at least I avoided the huge ‘misconstrual’ of which the Geshe is guilty, namely, to have attributed a universal denial of *svabhāva* to Tsong-kha-pa, thus to have had no pervasion of the *svabhāva* of the path, thus to have been among the very partisans whose views of such sort are rejected by Tsong-kha-pa in this very ‘non-pervasion’ section.

The above discussion, not edifying for me to have to write, does lead to a conclusion that even learned Tibetan monks, whether a spirited adversary like Gorampa, or a self-appointed defender like Geshe Sopa, share an over-confidence as to their ability to understand such texts. I am indeed happy to have seen the appearance in form useful to Western readers of this large section of Tsong-kha-pa’s remarkable encyclopedic work, and to have written for it various introductions which are faithful to the Path-lineage being exposed; happy also to announce that an Indian reprint was quickly produced in Delhi. I should like also to inform the readers of what I did not explain in the book, why on the dedication page there occurs “in memory of Dilowa Gegen Hutukhtu.” It was because early in the 1950’s this grand Lama of Mongolia, carrier of the Path-lineage, at Berkeley, California, gave me the advice of how to proceed in case any expression was obscure or difficult. I followed his advice; while he did not say it, I am sure he would have approved a consultation with any learned Tibetan of the Path Lineage.