

## THE TEACHING OF THE THREE OWN-BEINGS (TRI-SVABHĀVA-NIRDEŚA)

The constructed, the interdependent, and the fulfilled :  
these three own-beings are accepted as a most profound thing  
to be known by the discerning. 1.

That which appears is the interdependent; "how it appears"  
is the constructed,  
through the former's state of developing subject to conditions,  
through the latter's being construction-only. 2.

The constant state-of-not-being-found of "how it appears"  
in that which appears,  
can be known as the fulfilled own-being,  
because of its state of non-otherness.<sup>1</sup> 3.

Among these, what is it that appears ?  
A construction of the non-existent.  
How is it that it appears ?  
Through dualities.  
What is its non-existence ?  
It is, as regards it, a state of events of non-duality. 4.

What is a construction of the non-existent ?  
A citta, by which it\* becomes constructed  
in such a way that the object which it constructs,  
cannot be completely found in that way. 5.

This citta is accepted as being of two kinds, being either cause  
or result :  
the "store-consciousness" and "the evolving consciousness"  
of seven kinds. 6.

"Citta" is so called because of its state of becoming accumulat-  
ed (*citatvāt*)  
through the seeds of the residual impressions of the afflictions-  
together :

\*the interdependent

This is the first kind of citta\*; the second kind is so called through evolvment of various (*citra*) aspects. 7.

This construction of that which was not is thought of in brief to be three-fold :  
as maturational, as having signs, and as flashing appearances. 8.

The first is the root-consciousness, because it consists of maturation;  
the others are the evolving consciousnesses,  
because of their evolving with cognitions of "seen" and "seeing"<sup>2</sup>. 9.

The profundity of these own-beings comes from their non-difference in characteristics,  
from existing-and-not-existing, from duality-and-unity,  
and from afflictions-together and alleviation. 10.

The constructed own-being is perceived as existent,  
yet it is complete non-being,  
so it is thought of as having an existent-and-non-existent characteristic. 11.

The interdependent exists, but not in the way that it appears,  
there being confusion there,  
so it is thought of as having an existent-and-non-existent characteristic, too. 12.

The fulfilled own-being exists through non-duality,  
but is simply the non-being of "two":  
so it is thought of as having an existent-and-non-existent characteristic, too. 13.

Because of the dual state of the constructed object\*\*,  
and because of its being one through the non-existence of duality,  
own-being as constructed by fools is thought of as consisting of duality-and-unity. 14.

Because of its appearing with there being a duality,

\*the store-consciousness.

\*\*as implying the duality of object apprehended and subject apprehendor.

and because of its being one because this (duality) is only confusion,  
the own-being called "interdependent" is thought of  
as consisting of duality-and-unity, too. 15.

Because of its state as the own-being of the two beings,  
and because of its being the *one* own-being of non-duality,  
the fulfilled own-being is thought of  
as consisting of duality-and-unity, too. 16.

The characteristic of the afflictions-together  
can be known as the constructed and interdependent,  
but the fulfilled is accepted as the characteristic of alleviation. 17.

Because of (one's) state as the own-being of a non-existent duality,  
and because of (the other's) being the own-being of the non-being of that duality,  
it can be known that the fulfilled is non-different in characteristic from the constructed. 18.

Because of (one's) state as the own-being of non-duality,  
and because of (the other's) being the own-being of the non-being of duality,  
it can be perceived that the constructed is non-different in characteristic from the fulfilled. 19.

Because of (one's) being non-existent as it appears,  
and because of (the other's) being the own-being of that non-existence in that way,  
the fulfilled is non-different in characteristic from the interdependent, too. 20.

Because of (one's) state as the own-being of a non-existent duality,  
and because of (the other's) having no own-being as it appears,  
it can be perceived that the interdependent is non-different in characteristic from the fulfilled. 21.

Still, as far as their arising is concerned,  
a difference in the order of occurrence of these own-beings is taught,

from the point of view of conventional practise,  
and from the point of view of entry into them.<sup>3</sup> 22.

The constructed consists of conventional practise,  
that which consists of engaging in conventional practise is the  
other (the interdependent),  
and the severance of conventional practise is accepted as yet  
another own-being (the fulfilled). 23.

At first, the interdependent, which consists of the non-being of  
duality, is entered,  
then and there construction-only, non-existent duality, is en-  
tered, 24.

then and there the fulfilled, the non-being of duality, is entered,  
thus it's said that it both exists and doesn't exist.<sup>4</sup> 25.

These three own-beings have characteristics which are surely  
non-dual and ungraspable,  
because of (one's) simple non-being, (the other's) non-being  
like that (in the manner in which it appears),  
and (the third's) being the own-being of that non-being. 26.

A magical creation produced by force of mantras may appear  
like an elephant,  
but there is only an appearance there, and no elephant's there  
at all. 27.

The constructed own-being is the elephant,  
the interdependent is its appearance,  
and the fulfilled is the non-being of the elephant there. 28.

The construction of the non-existent appears in the same way  
from the root-consciousness by nature of duality;  
there is no duality there at all: there's only an appearance  
there. 29.

The root-consciousness is like the mantra;  
Suchness is like the wood;  
discrimination is like the elephant's appearance,  
and duality is like the elephant itself.<sup>5</sup> 30

In a penetration of the "reality of objects", there arises simultaneously in regard to the three own-beings complete knowledge, abandonment, and attainment, in that order. 31.

The complete knowledge (of the constructed) is its non-apprehension,  
the abandonment (of the interdependent as constructing) is its non-appearance,  
the attainment, realization (of the fulfilled) is its signless apprehension. 32.

With the non-apprehension of duality, the appearance of duality vanishes,  
and with this disappearance, the fulfilled, the non-being of duality, is understood. 33.

It's just like the non-apprehension of the elephant,  
its appearance's disappearance,  
and the apprehension of the wood,  
take place simultaneously in a magical show. 34.

Because of the state of there being contradictory views in relation to the same moment,<sup>6</sup>  
because of the intellect's seeing without a true object<sup>7</sup>,  
because of the different development of the three kinds of knowledge<sup>8</sup>,  
and because of the fact that without this,  
the attainment of freedom would come without effort,<sup>9</sup> 35.

there is the apprehension of the knowable,  
by the apprehension of its being citta-only,  
and through this non-apprehension of a knowable "object",  
there is the non-apprehension of citta itself.<sup>10</sup> 36.

Through the non-apprehension of any duality,  
there is the apprehension of the Ground of events,  
because of the apprehension of the Ground of events,  
there is the apprehension of psychic mastery. 37.

With psychic mastery apprehended, and through fulfilling both one's own and others' aims,

the discerning attain that enlightenment which has no higher, and which consists of the three Buddha-bodies.<sup>11</sup> 38.

### NOTES

1. Whenever it is considered "how something appears", there is a duality. But the constant absence of "how it appears" in that which appears is the absence of duality, i.e. the fulfilled. Unlike the constructed ("how it appears"), and the interdependent (that which appears), which occur in innumerable different ways, the fulfilled, being freed from duality, appears with no division of "one" and "the other". Since any moment of investigation into that which appears can give rise to the fulfilled, the fulfilled is "the constant state-of-not-being-found of 'how it appears' in that which appears."

2. The "evolving consciousnesses" are the first seven consciousnesses: the visual, audial, olfactory, gustatory, tactile, and mental consciousnesses, and the *manas*, or ego-consciousness. They evolve with cognitions of "seen" and "seeing" in the case of the visual consciousness, "heard" and "hearing" in the case of the audial, "smelled" and "smelling" in the case of the olfactory, "felt tactilely" and "feeling tactilely" in the case of the tactile, "thought" and "thinking" in the case of the mental consciousness, and "I" and "I am existing" in the case of the *manas*. That is, they usually have within them the cognitions of "object" and "subject". Because of these cognitions, they are called "having signs".

3. Though there is no essential difference between these so-called "own-beings", they are taught as three because of their respective relations to "conventional practise", and because they are "entered" serially. Conventional practise, i.e. any dealings from the point of view of conventional "reality", is based totally on the constructed. That which engages itself in such conventional practise is the interdependent, and the disappearance of conventional practise is the fulfilled. This leads us to the second reason for speaking of three own-beings: the fact that they arise at different times. The interdependent is prior, as it is the play of the phenomenal world itself. But at some point the constructing of dualities may begin, which results in the purely constructed. Once the constructed is present, the non-existent character of its dualities can be realized, and thus the fulfilled is attained. So there must be the interdependent before there can be the constructed, and there must have been the constructed before there can be the fulfilled,

4. The fulfilled exists inasmuch as it is the interdependent without the constructed; it does not exist inasmuch as it is only the non-being of any duality. This ties in with Vasubandhu's previous characterization of emptiness as being "neither being nor non-being". (*Commentary on the Separation of the Middle from Extremes*, ad I, 13).

5. The store-consciousness or "seeds" of residual impressions is like the mantra which sets the magical creation going, for it is only by power of latent impressions that dualities appear to arise. Discriminating, i.e. the constructing of dualities, is like the appearance of an apparitional elephant

in the magical show. The dualities which are held to be like the elephant, or, to put this another way, the belief in the elephant's existence. What underlies it, non-dual Suchness or Emptiness, is like the sticks of wood the magician has before him, which are transformed into the apparition in the spectators' eyes.

6. The same moment will be perceived in different ways by different consciousness-streams. This is one of the main points of *The Twenty Verses*.

7. The intellect can conceive of something without there being an object to correspond to it: another one of the main points of *The Twenty Verses*.

8. "The three kinds of knowledge" are interdependent knowledge, constructed knowledge, and fulfilled knowledge. On their "different development", see this treatise, 22-25.

9. Without the processes of the construction of that which was not, there could be no bondage or act of freedom for anyone. See *Commentary on the Separation of the Middle from Extremes*, ad I 4b.

10. Without the apprehension of a knowable "object", there is no citta, either. (Compare *Commentary on the Separation of the Middle from Extremes*, ad I 6-7.)

11. On the three Buddha-bodies, see *Commentary on the Separation of the Middle from Extremes*, note 48.