

## **Elucidating the Zhentong View** **A Condensation of the Threefold Nature of Reality**

Composed by Tsen Kawoche

Here is essential guidance on the view of *zhentong*, extrinsic emptiness:

One begins by going to refuge and by generating the mind of awakening.

Seizing onto delusory projections as true is the imaginary nature. Seizing onto objects of fixation and the one who fixates as real is the essence of inaccurate conceptual elaborations. This is like deceptively perceiving a rope as a snake. From material form all the way up to omniscience, to the fullest extent of whatever is possible, there are that many imaginative imputations to fixate upon.

What depends upon causes and conditions is the relational nature. Although these appear in multiplicity, they are all merely inaccurate conceptual elaborations. Likewise, delusory projections are like the rope that is the premise for deceptively perceiving the snake. From form up to omniscience, karma and disturbing emotions generate conceptual elaborations.

The unerring perfected nature is the naturally manifest ultimate actuality of phenomena that primordially pervades the relational nature, like space pervading the rope-snake. This immutable perfected nature encompasses the two form dimensions of Buddhahood, the factors of enlightenment, the truth of the path, and everything from the ultimate actuality of phenomenal form up to omniscience. On the conventional level, it is devoid of the qualifying attributes imputed by the imaginary nature.

Although classified as three natures without an inherent essence, if you analyze — since there are no fixations and nothing to fixate upon besides the mind, only the phenomenal quality of the relational nature and the phenomenal actuality of the perfected nature are free from defilements. They are the identical ultimate actuality of phenomena which is spontaneous presence.

In this way, the imaginary nature is devoid of an intrinsic essence, like a hare's horns. The relational nature is devoid of the imaginary nature, like an illusion. The perfected nature is devoid of both the imaginary nature and the relational nature, like space. Distinctions between the imaginary and the relational are relative, not absolute. The perfected actuality of phenomena is absolute. This is the Great Middle Way, free from extremes without being in any way either identical or different in essence from the phenomenal quality of relative reality.

*From a condensation of the threefold nature of reality. This is a teaching that un-taints the rust of dualistic perceptions. It is a lucid writing and a supreme instruction on joyful natural freedom. /// Gathered from the ancient writings of Tsen Kawoche (born 1021) and preserved by Kunga Dolchok (1507-1566) in the *One-Hundred-Eight Essential Guidance Instructions of the Jonang*.*

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