

# Madhyamaka through Metaphors

An attempt to capture and convey the journey, intricacies, and experiences of cultivating the profound Madhyamaka View through metaphors.

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# What does having a madhayamaka view amount to?

- Arriving at an understanding about the mode of existence of all phenomena as free from the two extremes of 'existence' and 'non-existence.'
- Seeing emptiness as reinforcing dependent origination; seeing dependent origination as reinforcing emptiness
- Succeeding in exhaustively refuting any intrinsic nature while comfortably upholding all conventional realities.

# Making sense of the conflicting views on the ultimate status of phenomena

- Everything has an absolute base; essentialism/  
reductionism/atomism



# Making sense of the conflicting views on the ultimate status of phenomena

- Everything is merely mental projections; nothing has external reality; idealism



# Making sense of the conflicting views on the ultimate status of phenomena

- Everything is part projection, part objective; partial emptiness/autonomous syllogism wielders



# Making sense of the conflicting views on the ultimate status of phenomena

- Everything is mere designation; nothing exists in and of itself; emptiness school/reductio ad absurdum wielders



# Making sense of the conflicting views on the ultimate status of phenomena

- Helps us start from where we are and then advance gradually
- Helps us identify ways we might stray from the path of right understanding
- Helps us avoid becoming stuck in wrong or partial understanding of the true nature of emptiness
- Gives us greater appreciation of the profundity of the ultimate standpoint
- Safely preparing us to the task of developing a non-conceptual, direct realization

Why is madhyamika view  
essential?



# The role of rest of the practices vis-à-vis wisdom

The upholder:  
The rest of the  
virtues.

The upheld:  
Wisdom realizing  
emptiness



# The role of wisdom vis-à-vis the other spiritual practices

The Guide:  
Wisdom realizing  
emptiness

Blind people:  
The rest of the  
virtues.



# Without it, there is no way out of samsara

- Either one cares the least about the destructiveness of actions one engages in and suffer the consequences/
- Or one has to be content with only limited success with the positive actions one engages in and reap the limited benefits/
- Either one is born into the lower realms (both in symbolic and literal senses)
- Or one does not go past the higher realms (both in symbolic and literal senses)

# Benefits of pursuing a madhayamaka understanding

# Benefits

- It provides one with the eyes that see the heart of the path, for both individual liberation seekers and full-enlightenment seekers.



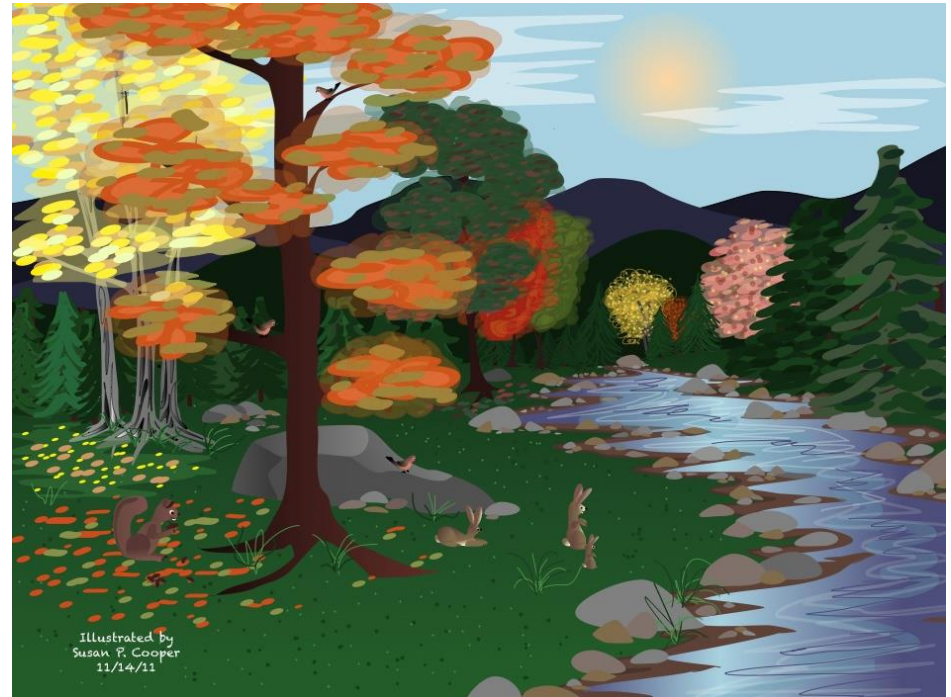
# Benefits

- Accumulates all types of merits, both mundane and super-mundane. Even when pursued with doubt.



# Benefits

- Merit accumulated on this alone far exceeds those reaped from the rest of the far-reaching practices



# Benefits

- Protects one from entering the lower realms even when one is bogged down by the ten non-virtuous actions





# Benefits

- Repels the karmic-obstruction layer off of the boundless misdeeds and the act of abandoning dharma.



Tendencies to watch out for when  
encountering the topic of emptiness

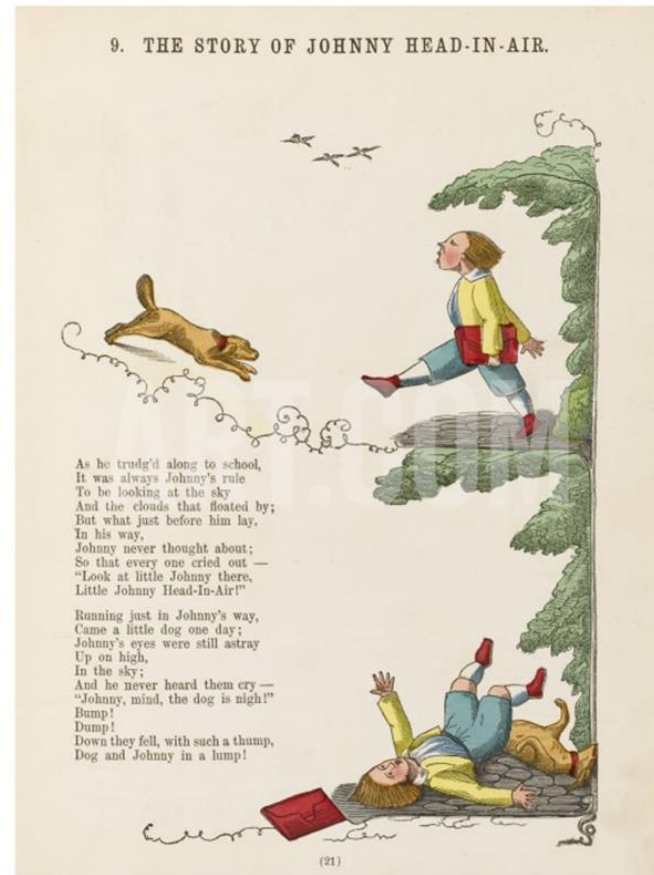
# Tendencies to watch out for

- Total lack of interest and even shuns it



# Tendencies to watch out for

- Though enthused over it, but settling for a more simplistic and nihilistic position



Conditions recommended for laying a firm  
ground for such an understanding

# Conditions for a sound understanding

- pure ethical conduct
- relying on an authentic spiritual mentor
  - purifying defilements
  - accumulating merit and wisdom
  - following definitive scriptures
- using the guidance of great sages as Nagarjuna, Aryadeva, Buddhapalita, and Chandrakirti
  - study, reflect, and meditate on emptiness.

Important distinctions to be made in arriving  
at an unmistaken understanding

# Important distinctions

- Two types of existences v/s two types of non-existences



# Important distinctions

- Existence by way of conventions v/s existence merely in the face of delusion

# Important distinctions

- Centrism free from the two extremes v/s any position free even from the stance of that Centrality

# Important distinctions

- A mind not engaged with the two (projected) selfhoods v/s a mind engaged with the two selflessness

# Important distinctions

- That something does not withstand ultimate analysis v/s that something is harmed by ultimate analysis

# Important distinctions

- That something is unfindable by a ultimate consciousness v/s that something is negated by a ultimate consciousness

# Important distinctions

- Everything that exists do so through mere designation v/s not everything that is designated necessarily exists.

# Synonyms of the object of negation

- True existence
- Ultimate existence
- Perfect existence
- Inherent existence
- Self-characterized existence
  - Intrinsic existence
- Independent existence\*

The risk of misconstruing the meaning of emptiness: like mishandling a snake, and a spell gone awry.





# The range of reactions vis-à-vis inherent existence

- Magician beholds, but not believes at the show
- Influenced spectators both behold and believe
- Uninfluenced onlookers do neither



# The need to pull up our socks in our search for the 'view'

The only way to dispel the self-grasping ignorance is by exposing its way of apprehension;

That is, by realizing the lack of inherent existence, nothing less;

Merely letting the mind in proximity to ignorance or withdrawing the mind from it periodically is not enough;

For we have three different modes of mind relating to its objects vis-à-vis the appearance of inherent existence.

# Correctly identifying the object of negation—the subjective experience grasping at inherent existence

- Correctly identifying the ignorance is crucial; making all out efforts while failing in this is like shooting arrows without seeing the target.



Identifying the self-grasping attitude within oneself is the whole purpose of the enterprise; don't lose touch with this!

- Or else, it would end up turning into a mission confined to looking for the footprints of the culprit on the lawn while he escapes safely into the forest.



What amounts to grasping at  
inherent existence:



# Why does it matter what wisdom you specialize on?

Would the knowledge of elephant's absence dispel the danger of a snake strike?

The wisdoms realizing impermanence, subservience, superficial levels of selflessness fall short of directly acting against the innate level of self-grasping.



Relationship  
between the self-  
grasping attitude  
(ISGA)  
and rest of the  
afflictions (RoA)

Sense of touch = ISGA

Remaining senses= RoA

