

# MAHAMUDRA

## THE SIX FLAVORS OF EMPTINESS: A MEDITATION ON THE GREAT SEAL



# The Six Flavors of Emptiness

## *A Meditation on the Great Seal*

*The following are six different "flavors" of emptiness that are taught by the different schools of classical Indian Buddhism. They are culled from different texts in the lineage of Tsongkapa the Great (1357–1419). Please note that not all of them would be called true "emptiness," but rather "selflessness" in different classical schools.*

### **Emptiness, Flavor #1**

The lack of a self which is unchanging, whole, and independent.

*[According to the Independent group of the Middle-Way School, this is the gross lack of a self to the person.]*

### **Emptiness, Flavor #2**

The lack of a self which is self-standing and substantial.

*["Substantial" can mean a lot of different things; here it refers to the lack of a "driver" or "director" of the five heaps over the five heaps. According to the Mind-Only School, this is the lack of a self to the person. According to the Independent group, this is the subtle lack of a self to the person.]*

### **Emptiness, Flavor #3**

The fact that a visible object and the valid perception which grasps the visible object are devoid of any separate substance.

*["Devoid of any separate substance" means: "It is not true that they come from a separate karmic seed; rather, they both arise from the same karmic seed." According to the Mind-Only School, this is the lack of a self to things. According to the Independent group, this is the gross lack of a self to things.]*

#### **Emptiness, Flavor #4**

The fact that the fact that any particular thing is called what it is is something which is devoid of existing by definition.

*[Put simply: The fact that things are called what they are is not something which is automatic. According to the Mind-Only School, this is also the lack of a self to things.]*

#### **Emptiness, Flavor #5**

The fact that objects are devoid of existing from their own side through any unique identity of their own, rather than existing simply by virtue of having appeared to an unaffected state of mind.

*[According to the Independent group, this is the subtle lack of a self to things, or real emptiness.]*

#### **Emptiness, Flavor #6**

The fact that objects are void of existing from their own side through their own identity, rather than existing simply through names [words] and terms [thoughts].

*[According to the Consequence group of the Middle-Way School, this-and only this-is emptiness, and there are no separate degrees of emptiness (although emptiness can be divided according to the object that has it: the person or "things," meaning the person's parts). This interpretation is the ultimate one accepted by Lord Buddha; the realized being Nagarjuna; Je Tsongkapa; Khen Rinpoche; for all of tantra; and moreover by anyone who has seen emptiness directly.]*