

## The Chittamatra School – The Three Natures

### ***Dependent Nature – Mind/Object Relationship***

1. Causal flow: Everything operates on the base of *causal flow* – the universe being dictated by the creation and ripening of karmic seeds. Every mind moment is laden with karmic seeds – some being created by mental/verbal/physical actions; others are ripening. This is due to causes and conditions.
2. Dependent nature: That which arises in our consciousness from causal flow and is apprehended as two polarities – the subject (mind) and the object (the object apprehended by the mind).
3. Flow of consciousness: That from which the *subjective* and *objective* aspects arise. In other words, this is the dependent nature.
4. Chittamatrin view: A very *strong connection* exists between consciousness and an object (e.g. the eye and a pen). For example, one's experience of a pen, and the pen itself, are actually the same entity – there is no difference between the two! *Subject and object are one entity*. Subject and object both arise from the single flow of experience. Dependent nature includes all impermanent phenomena.

### ***Imputed Nature – Imputations Placed on Mind/Object Relationship***

1. Imputed nature: Where the mind and its object appear as two separate, unconnected things. We *impute separateness* onto subject and object which are one entity.
2. Mistaken view: The apparent distinction between subject and object that is due to the conceptual, habituated aspect of one's mind. We *assume* that objects exist separate from the mind. (However, investigating objects involves the mind – knowledge has a subjective element. No object of knowledge exists apart from the mind experiencing it.)
3. "Grasper": The *mind* that grasps the object.
4. "Grasped": The *object* grasped by the mind.
5. Concept of "I": The mind is inextricably involved with external objects – and it is also the case with *mental objects*, such as the all-important concept of "I". Object and mind are one entity.
6. Imputations: These include subject/object separation, internal verbalizing, labelling, judging, and other *conceptual minds*.
7. Two imputed natures:
  - (a) Nonexistent imputed nature – (i) subject and object seen as different entities; (ii) objects seen as established by their own character; (iii) objects that have no existence at all (e.g. horns of a rabbit).
  - (b) Existent imputed nature – permanent phenomena, that is, not produced by causes and conditions.

### ***Perfect Nature***

1. Perfect nature: Is seen when the perceiving of duality between an object and the way the mind conceives the object finally breaks down. However, this only occurs when a person has realized a very advanced state of mind. Another name for this nature is *thoroughly established*.
2. Meditation: As the mind becomes more subtle through meditation, the gap between reality and illusion narrows. The veil that the mind throws over an object gets thinner. An example is meditating on one's own body – eventually "body" and "mind meditating on body" will become one. Through meditation, the sense of the object being "out there" ceases; the object that we are meditating on becomes like part of the mind itself, and we have thoroughly established the lack of duality between subject and object.
3. Present condition: We carry karmic baggage that includes lifetimes of conceiving objects as being independently and externally existent – and so we instinctively see an object and the mind perceiving the object as two separate things.
4. Emptiness: Is the absence of the subject-object duality (not the absence of essence). Realizing the absence of duality between subject and object is the emptiness that a bodhisattva must realize in order to attain full enlightenment.
5. Realization of selflessness of persons: There is no self-sufficient person in any way. This is sufficient for removing the obscurations to liberation. (cf. Sautrantikas)
6. Realization of selflessness of phenomena: This is required for removing the obscurations to omniscience, which is needed to reach buddhahood.