
Mind and Awareness

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As usual please try to generate the virtuous motivation of bodhicitta for listening to the teaching. If we listen to the teachings without having the proper motivation then it will not be beneficial. Just knowing the Dharma alone is not enough; one needs to have a proper motivation.

There are examples mentioned in the Lam Rim explaining the various wrong motivations for listening to the teachings. One is 'dirty vessel'. If we listen to the teachings with a motivation for this life, with the purpose of attaining fame, or becoming a great renowned scholar and so forth, we will be just like a dirty vessel. Even very fine food when poured into a dirty vessel will be inedible.

There are three examples explaining the wrong ways of listening to the teachings. The first is listening to the teachings like a dirty pot. The second is listening to the teachings like a pot with a hole in it. Regardless of how much is poured in at the top, it will all flow out of the bottom. We may listen to the teaching with a good motivation. However if we are not mindful of what is being said - keeping it in mind, and concentrating on what is being said - we will be just like a leaking pot. No matter how much is explained it will all go straight in one end and out the other. The third example is, not to be like an upside-down pot. No matter how much water we pour on an upside-down pot nothing will go inside.

When we listen to the teachings we should try to be free of these three faults, which are explained in the Lam Rim. We should keep these explanations from the Lam Rim in mind wherever we go, and apply them in the appropriate situations.

Not only should we be free from these three faults, but also one should have 'the mind which listens to everything'. This means not just listening to certain sections or parts of the teaching, and switching off during other parts of the teaching. We should not listen like that, but listen to all parts of the teaching.

Another explanation of this mind listening to everything, or listening with everything (it depends on how you say it in Tibetan), is that we should concentrate one hundred percent on what is explained. We should not concentrate with only one part of our mind, while the other part of our mind has already gone home.

Last time we went through the definition of awarenesses that are non-valid cognisers, and we finished the first two divisions.

3.3. Awarenesses to which the object appears but isn't ascertained

Definition: A knower to which its engaged object, a self-characterised meaning, appears clearly but can't induce ascertainment of it's engaged object, a self-characterised meaning.

In the Sutrast school functioning phenomena, self-characterised phenomena and ultimate phenomena, ultimate truth are all synonymous.

This kind of awareness has a self-characterised phenomenon that is its engaged object. This object appears clearly to that mind, but that mind cannot induce an ascertaining awareness¹.

The first part of the definition is 'a knower to which it's engaged object, a self-characterised meaning, appears clearly'. There is debate with regards to the significance of positing

'engaged object instead of just object. If one would not specify engaged object then the eye-consciousness to which a blue snow mountain appears would become an awareness to which the object appears but is not ascertained. The appearance of the white colour of the snow-mountain as blue is a self-characterised object appearing clearly to this eye-consciousness.

Here again we have two points of view, that the appearance of the white colour of the snow-mountain as blue is the self-characterised object appearing clearly to that eye-consciousness or that the white colour of the snow-mountain is the self-characterised object that appears clearly to that eye-consciousness. I think it is the first. If we say: "Take the subject white colour of the snow-mountain - it follows it is the self-characterised object which appears clearly to the eye-consciousness to which a blue snow mountain appears - because it appears to that eye-consciousness as blue", then various logical faults would arise.

The correct situation is that the colour of the snow-mountain appears to that eye-consciousness as blue.

One example for this type of consciousness is the eye consciousness that induces the doubt: 'Oh, maybe I have seen a blue snow-mountain, but maybe not'.

Also the five mental direct perceptions apprehending form etc. in the continuum of an ordinary being are examples for awarenesses to which the object appears but isn't ascertained.

This mental consciousnesses last only for one instant, and because it is so short ordinary beings cannot realise the object apprehended by that consciousness. Therefore these very short mental consciousnesses following the five sense consciousnesses are also inattentive awarenesses.

Yogic direct perceptions don't have a common base with inattentive awarenesses. Yogic direct perceptions are never inattentive awarenesses. With regard to yogic direct perceptions there are valid cognisers and subsequent cognisers, but there are no inattentive awarenesses that are yogic direct perceptions. With regard to omniscient minds there are no inattentive awarenesses, and there are no subsequent cognisers. All instances of omniscient mind are valid cognisers.

Another example for inattentive awarenesses is the ear consciousness apprehending sound, at the time when the mental consciousness is distracted by some beautiful form. At the time when our mental consciousness is distracted by some beautiful form, it is possible that the ear consciousness apprehends sound, but because the mental consciousness is distracted, the sound will only be apprehended, and not ascertained.

We can relate this to meditation because this example shows that the mental consciousness is more powerful than the sense consciousness. When the mental consciousness is engaged the sense consciousnesses are less engaged. Sometimes people say meditating with open eyes is distracting and prevents them from concentrating, but if our mental consciousness is properly engaged, having the eyes open will not distract us. This is because the more the mental consciousness is engaged, the less the eye consciousness will be engaged.

Even though it is recommended to keep our eyes open during meditation, one should just gaze over the tip of one's nose. Staring off into space is not recommended. The two extremes to avoid are staring off into space and closing the eyes completely. Just gazing over the tip of one's nose is said to be the best position for the eyes during meditation. There is a special reason why this is recommended.

We have finished with subsequent cognisers, correct assumptions, and inattentive awareness and now we come to doubt.

3.4. Doubt

¹ Ascertainning awarenesses are conceptual realisers.

A knower which has, through its own power, qualms in two directions, is the definition of doubt.

Although already mentioned before, there is a reason why the definition includes the phrase, 'through its own power'. The reason is that we have the concomitant mental factors with doubt, and the main consciousness concomitant with doubt. They also have qualms in two directions and they are also knowers, but this doesn't happen through their own power. The main consciousness concomitant with doubt has qualms in two directions, but through the force of doubt and not through its own power. In order to make this distinction clear 'through its own power' is included in the definition.

There are three kinds of doubt: doubts tending towards the truth, tending away from the truth and equal doubt. Of the various divisions of doubt, the most important is the doubt included in the six root delusions, which is afflicted doubt. This is the kind of doubt that prevents us from entering and progressing along the path. As long as we have qualms about the path, are undecided and don't make up our mind, we don't start our practice.

There are three doubts: equal doubt, doubt tending towards the truth and away from the truth. An example for **doubt tending towards the truth** is the doubt thinking that, 'Most likely sound is impermanent'. Having first asserted impermanent sound, then having thought about it and analysed it, the practitioner gains the doubt, 'Maybe I was wrong. Maybe sound is not permanent after all, but impermanent'. This is the generation of doubt tending towards the truth.

Doubt is a very powerful mental factor, which has the power to turn us in a negative direction. For example if there is a person who has faith in the law of cause and effect and karma, but then starts to doubt whether karma really exists or not, he starts to waver in his conviction, and then slowly starts to generate the doubt tending away from the truth. There is a very fine line where his mind changes over to 'Most likely karma does not exist'. From that moment onwards it becomes very easy for more delusions, and more negative actions and karma to arise. One the other hand, through the doubt tending towards the truth one can change from a negative point of view into a positive direction. It is important to know the importance of doubt and how it can affect us.

3.5. Wrong Awareness

Fifth is wrong awareness. The definition of *wrong awareness is a knower that mistakenly engages its object*. There are conceptual wrong consciousnesses and non-conceptual wrong consciousnesses.

It is very important to know what a wrong mind is. Many times we believe mental states and awarenesses that are wrong minds to be valid minds. Then we follow them and end up in all kinds of confusing situations.

Since the grasping at the self of a person is also a wrong mind, and is the mind that we have to oppose with the wisdom realising selflessness, it is important to know how it comes about that the grasping at the self of a person is a wrong mind. Because it is a wrong mind we can oppose it with the wisdom realising selflessness. It is important to be able to identify our wrong minds and then to know how we can oppose them with wisdom.

There are two divisions, conceptual wrong minds and non-conceptual wrong minds.

3.5.1. Conceptual Wrong Awareness

3.5.2. An example of conceptual wrong mind is the grasping at permanent sound. It is very important to be able to identify grasping at permanence as a wrong mind. When we meditate, our understanding of why grasping at permanence is a wrong mind will not be definite at the beginning. It will be what we

call a correct assumption. However through continuing familiarity, that correct assumption will become an actual realisation that grasping at permanence is a wrong mind. If we don't understand that grasping at permanence is a wrong mind, we will not be able to understand impermanence.

It is also very important to understand awarenesses to which the object appears but is not ascertained, because in our life we should learn not to trust all our awarenesses. We should be able to see that what appears to us at certain times is not necessarily definite. Just as at certain times a snow-mountain can appear as blue, not everything that appears to us in our daily life is necessarily definite. Not everything that appears to us can be ascertained. Therefore those various types of consciousness, like wrong consciousness, and awarenesses to which the object appears but is not ascertained, are important to know.

Grasping at permanent sound is an example for a conceptual wrong mind. Grasping at sound as being impermanent, such as the correct assumption apprehending impermanent sound, is a correct mind, and it is a mind concordant with reality. Grasping at permanent sound apprehends sound in a way sound that doesn't exist, so therefore it is an awareness that mistakenly engages its object. The correct assumption apprehending impermanent sound apprehends sound in exactly the same way as it exists - as being impermanent. Therefore it doesn't engage its object mistakenly.

3.5.2. Non-Conceptual Wrong Awareness

Non-conceptual wrong minds have a two-fold division into sense consciousness and mental consciousness.

1. An example for a **mental non-conceptual wrong consciousness** would be apprehending the blue that appears to us in dreams, as blue. That dream awareness apprehending the blue of the dream as actual blue is an example for mental non-conceptual wrong consciousness. First of all it is a **mental consciousness** because it is a dream. All dreams are mental consciousnesses. It is **non-conceptual** because it is free from grasping at the meaning and sound generality as being suitable to be mixed. It is a **wrong consciousness** because it apprehends the blue of the dream as being an actual blue.

The dream apprehending the dreamt blue as being actual blue is a wrong consciousness. Why? Because the blue that appears to us in the dream is not actually blue. If we apprehend something that is not actually blue as being blue, then it becomes a wrong consciousness. The blue appearing to us in the dream is not any of the five sources. The sixth source that we call the dharma or phenomenon source² refers to phenomena that are objects only of mental consciousness.

Objects or phenomena, which are objects only of mental consciousness but not of any of the five sense consciousnesses, are referred to as the source of dharma or phenomena. The blue in the dream is such a phenomenon. It is not an object of any of the five sense consciousnesses. It is only the object of mental consciousness, and as such it is a phenomenon source. These kinds of phenomena, even though they are not what we normally refer to as form, are some other kind of subtle form.

2. Examples for **sense non-conceptual wrong consciousnesses** are the eye consciousness apprehending a snow-mountain as blue, or the eye consciousness apprehending a conch shell as yellow. Through the condition of having certain sicknesses such as hepatitis it is possible that one can apprehend something, which is white, as being yellow. Our whole body becomes yellow, the eyes become yellow and everything one sees has a yellow tinge. So you could apprehend the conch shell as yellow. Also the eye consciousnesses generated when wearing sunglasses of various coloured

² Lit. Dharma source. In this context dharma is synonymous with phenomenon.

shadings would also be wrong consciousnesses. If we wear sunglasses with blue shading, then the snow-mountain will appear as blue. That eye consciousness is a wrong consciousness. If we have sunglasses with a yellow colouring then the snow-mountain will appear yellow. That will also be a wrong consciousness. These examples are very easy to understand.

We have been through the five types of awarenesses that are non-valid cognisers: subsequent cognisers, correct assumption, doubt, awarenesses to which the object appears but is not ascertained and wrong consciousnesses. If we add direct valid cognisers and inferential valid cognisers to that list we have the seven-fold division of awareness.

4. Other Divisions of awareness

After the seven-fold division a further three-fold division of awareness is mentioned. The first is conceptual awareness which has a meaning generality as its held object³, the second is a non-mistaken, non-conceptual awareness which takes self-characterised as it's held object, the third is mistaken non-conceptual awareness which takes a clearly appearing non-existent as it's held object.

4.1. Conceptual awareness that has a meaning generality as its held object.

The definition of a *conceptual awareness is a determinative knower that grasps at meaning and sound as suitable to be mixed*. The definition includes, 'grasping at sound and meaning as suitable to be mixed'. Sound refers to the sound generality, and meaning refers to the meaning generality. A conceptual thought is a type of awareness that grasps at those two as suitable to be mixed.

The definition says, 'grasps at sound and meaning as suitable to be mixed'. When we analyse the definition of conceptual awareness we can understand how it comes that all conceptual awarenesses are mistaken awarenesses. For example the conceptual thought apprehending a yellow vase apprehends a yellow vase. Yellow vase appears to the conception apprehending yellow vase, but the appearance of yellow vase is mixed with the appearance of the reversal of non-yellow vase.

So we have the meaning generality and the sound generality that are mixed with the appearance of the object to the conceptual thought. Because they are mixed, the conceptual thought becomes a mistaken awareness. The conceptual thought apprehending a vase doesn't apprehend the meaning generality and sound generality as being mixed with the appearance of the object. In the appearance to that conceptual thought, it doesn't apprehend them as being mixed, but they appear as mixed. Because they appear as mixed the conceptual thought is a mistaken awareness.

There are three types of conceptual awareness: conceptual awareness grasping only at sound generality, grasping only at meaning generality and grasping both. The definition of a vase is a flat-bottomed bulbous container that can fulfil the function of carrying water. We can have a conception that only grasps at that phenomenon that can fulfil the function of carrying water, is flat bottomed and bulbous and so forth, without actually grasping at that as being a vase. Normally, in order to understand a phenomenon such as vase we first have to understand the definition of that phenomenon, and then apply the name of that phenomenon to the definition.

The first kind of conception grasps only at the meaning generality. That conception doesn't understand vase, it only understands the meaning of vase, but not vase itself.

The second kind of conception grasps only at the sound generality that comes about, for example, through hearing the

sound 'vase'. Having heard the sound 'vase', some kind of idea will form in our mind about what a vase is. However it is not necessarily the correct one, so it will not necessarily be mixed with the actual definition of vase.

The third kind of conception mixes both the meaning and the name.

With all the definiendums⁴ we have to first understand the definition and then afterwards we apply the name to the definition. For example with valid cogniser, first we have to understand the definition of a valid cogniser, which is a newly incontrovertible knower. Then having understood the definition, 'a newly incontrovertible knower', we can apply the name 'valid cogniser' to the definition, and then understand exactly what a valid cogniser is.

It is the same with all phenomena that are definiendums. With the example of vase, the thought apprehending a vase can be generated just through hearing the sound 'vase'. The concept apprehending a vase that is generated only from the sound of the word 'vase' is a conception grasping only at the sound generality, and the meaning of vase does not appear to that conception. So the definition of a vase - flat bottom, bulbous, phenomenon that fills the function of carrying water - does not appear to that conception, because it is a conception that grasps only at the sound generality.

Maybe we can leave it here.

Tea Offering

Even though I have mentioned this before, when we recite the OM AH HUM there is a certain meditation we have to do in relation to each of these three syllables. There are two ways of reciting the three syllables: either separately or, as we do sometimes do, reciting them three times as one word, OM AH HUM, OM AH HUM, OM AH HUM. Regardless of how we do it, there are three steps of purifying the impurities of taste, smell, colour and so forth, then transforming it into nectar, and making the nectar inexhaustible. These three steps are related to either the three separate syllables of OM AH HUM, or to the first recitation of OM AH HUM. The second recitation of OM AH HUM. and the third recitation of OM AH HUM.

The HUM is the seed syllable of the enlightened mind or the omniscient consciousness of the Buddha that blesses the nectar and makes it inexhaustible. We talk about the three steps of purifying, realising and increasing.

In the *Lama Chopa* it talks about the ocean of wisdom nectar that has been purified, realised and increased. The impurities of colour, smell, taste and so forth are purified, realised as wisdom nectar and then increased.

The three syllables are related to the vajra body, speech and mind of the Buddha. There is the blue HUM, the red AH and the white OM.

The letter HUM is what we would call the interpretive vajra mind. The definitive meaning of the letter HUM is the enlightened vajra mind of the Buddha. HUM is the seed syllable of Akshobhya.

The definitive meaning of the letter AH is the vajra speech of the Buddha and AH is the seed syllable of Buddha Amitabha.

The definitive meaning of the white OM is the vajra body of the Buddha and the white OM is the seed syllable of Vairochana.

Vairochana is white and therefore the OM that is the syllable of Vairochana is also white. Amitabha is red and therefore his syllable AH is also red, and Akshobhya is blue so therefore his syllable HUM is also blue. So the OM AH HUM symbolises the vajra body, speech and mind of the Buddha.

When we bless our tea and recite OM AH HUM three times we

³ Synonymous with appearing object.

⁴ The *Macquarie Dictionary* defines a definiendum as the thing which is to be defined, especially a word or phrase in a dictionary entry.

have to meditate on how these three syllables do perform the three steps of purifying, realising and increasing. One can visualise that the whole sky is filled with the various offerings, so that at the end one no longer has just an ordinary cup of tea.

The word offering, which in Tibetan is *cho-pa* and in Sanskrit is *puja*, actually has the connotation of pleasing or making happy. The meaning of making an offering to the Buddhas is making the mind of the Buddhas happy. If the Buddhas or the teachers are pleased, it becomes an offering. If they are not pleased it won't be an offering - then you have to try something else.

There is the offering of practice or accomplishment. All practices we do during the day can be offered to the Buddhas. This becomes the offering of practice. Milarepa said, 'I don't have any kind of material offerings. I only have the offering of practice. So that is what I am going to offer to my teacher'.

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Note on authentication

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