
Mind and Mental Factors

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Please generate the virtuous motivation of bodhicitta.

Last time we talked about the five ever present mental factors, which are: feeling, recognition, intention, contact and attention. Last time we finished the first one, feeling.

2.2.1.3. Recognition¹

The second ever-present mental factor is recognition.

What do we understand by recognition? *Recognition is a knower apprehending the uncommon characteristic of its object after the meeting of object, sense power, and consciousness.*

Object, sense power, and consciousness have come together, and after that there is one mental factor that now apprehends the uncommon characteristic of the object, and that is recognition.

Divisions of Recognition According to *Compendium of Knowledge*

Recognition has a two-fold division into recognition apprehending characteristics, and recognition apprehending patterns.

Recognition apprehending characteristics refers to the recognition apprehending the uncommon characteristic of the object appearing to a non-conceptual consciousness. So, for example, the recognition of the eye consciousness apprehending blue would apprehend the uncommon characteristic of blue.

Recognition apprehending patterns refers to the recognition apprehending the uncommon characteristic of the object appearing to a conceptual thought.

Bases Engaged by Recognition

There are various bases that are engaged by recognition. The bases are distinguished by what are called seeing, hearing, categorising and the object of consciousness.

Seeing refers to the recognition labelling the meaning that is seen by a direct perception.

Hearing refers to the recognition labelling the meaning that is understood by a correct assumption, which came about through listening.

Categorisation, is labelling the meaning ascertained in dependence upon the reason.

Consciousness is recognition labelling the meaning that is ascertained by a direct perception.

That division was according to the *Compendium of Knowledge*².

Divisions of Recognition According to *Treasury of Knowledge*

According to the *Treasury of Knowledge*³, recognition is again divided into two: recognition apprehending the characteristics with regard to meaning, and recognition apprehending characteristics with regards to label.

The first one, **recognition apprehending characteristics with regard to meaning** would be the recognition that differentiates between blue and yellow, for example. If we have an eye consciousness to which blue and yellow appears, the various meanings such as blue and yellow are differentiated by recognition. Without recognition, then even though they would

appear to the mind, one couldn't distinguish between the two colours. So the mental factor that apprehends the details of those two colours is recognition. The recognition apprehends the uncommon characteristic of those individual meanings, such as blue and yellow.

The **recognition apprehending characteristics with regard to label** would be the recognition that apprehends the details of the label woman and man. If we think, "This is a man, this is a woman", then there is a part of the mind which makes that distinction, and attaches these different labels. That is recognition apprehending characteristics with regard to labels.

There could be much more to say, but now we go to the third ever-present mental factor, which is intention.

2.2.1.1. Intention

Of the various mental factors, the mental factor of intention is regarded as the most important one.

What do we call intention? *Intention is the mental factor that moves and directs its concomitant mind towards the object.*

This mental factor of intention is what we normally call karma. The mental factor of intention moves and directs the mind to different objects. Just by itself the consciousness wouldn't go to particular objects. Nor would consciousness, just by itself, be able to identify different objects. That is done by recognition.

Intention directs the mind towards virtuous or non-virtuous objects. Our mind doesn't actually have any freedom, but it is directed by the mental factor of intention towards various virtuous and non-virtuous objects. That is good to know.

Regardless of whether it is a mind, or whether it is a mental factor, the moving of any type of awareness towards its object is caused by the mental factor of intention. It is like a magnet attracting iron filings. The magnet will move the iron filings that will be drawn to the magnet without choice. In the same way, without any independence the mind will be moved towards various objects without choice, by the mental factor of intention, which is what we call karma.

Normally we say that our mind is controlled by karma, the various mental states that arise without any control, even when we know that those mental states will cause danger. For example, the object to which the mind is attracted is a dangerous object. Yet without any freedom it happens that the mind is attracted to that object. That is through the power of karma, or the mental factor of intention.

Six-fold Division by Way of Base

1. Feeling arising from contact, through meeting of the eye
2. Feeling arising from contact, through meeting of the ear
3. Feeling arising from contact, through meeting of the nose
4. Feeling arising from contact, through meeting of the tongue
5. Feeling arising from contact, through meeting of the body
6. Feeling arising from contact, through meeting of the mental sense power

There are also many other divisions of karma but they were all explained when we went through the Lam Rim.

Two-fold Division of Karma

One two-fold division of karma is into intentional karma and intended karma.

Intentional karma is the karma that we have at the time of the motivation. For example, in the case of the negative action of harsh speech, firstly we would generate in our mind the motivation of saying something harsh. At this time the intention of wanting to say something harsh is called intentional; it is at the time of the cause.

Intended karma is intention at the time when we are actually expressing the harsh words.

The same division applies to all the virtuous and other non-

¹ The numbering follows the order in which the ever present factors were defined last week. It does not follow the order in which they are presented here.

² *Compendium of Knowledge* was written by Asanga

³ *Treasury of Knowledge* was written by Vasubhandu (Asanga's brother)

virtuous actions.

2.2.1.4. Contact

The definition is a long one! The fourth ever present mental factor, *contact is a knower that, after the meeting of object, sense power and consciousness, establishes the object that is concordant with the feelings to be experienced, such as happiness and suffering.*

For example, if after the coming together of object, sense power, and consciousness, the mental factor of contact establishes a pleasant object, then the feeling generated by that will be happiness. That is what 'object concordant with the feeling to be experienced' means.

- If a happy feeling is to be experienced, a pleasant object will be established.
- If an unhappy, suffering feeling is to be experienced, an unpleasant object is established
- If a neutral feeling is to be experienced then a neutral object is established.

The mental factor of contact will establish any one of those three objects after the coming together of object, sense power and consciousness.

For example, when the eye sense power meets with a pleasant form the mental factor of contact, which comes about through that meeting, will cause a pleasant feeling to arise. So the mental factor of contact establishes and also apprehends, or knows this pleasant form. Then through that it becomes empowered to cause the feeling of happiness. It is the same with regard to unpleasant forms and neutral forms.

Contact has a six-fold division according to the six sense bases.

1. Contact, through meeting of the eye
2. Contact, through meeting of the ear
3. Contact, through meeting of the nose
4. Contact, through meeting of the tongue
5. Contact, through meeting of the body
6. Contact, through meeting of the mental sense power

2.2.1.2. Attention⁴

The fifth mental factor, attention, is quite similar to the third one, intention.

As we said before, the mental factor of intention moves the mind towards various objects; more specifically intention moves the mind towards the generality of the object. It directs the awareness to the basic generality of the object, and through that the various feelings of happiness and suffering are generated.

The mental factor of attention is the apprehending of a particular of the object. It causes the mind to apprehend a particular of the object to which the mental factor of intention has directed it. So *attention is an awareness that places its concomitant mind on a particular focal object.*

The five mental factors described above are called five ever-present mental factors because every main mind will always have those five concomitant mental factors.

2.2.2. The Five Ascertaining Mental Factors

The second set of mental factors is the five ascertaining mental factors, which are: aspiration, belief, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom.

These five determining mental factors will only come together with a mind that realises or ascertains its object. They will not come together with every kind of mind.

They called determining or ascertaining mental factors because

they ascertain the individual object.

2.2.2.1. Aspiration is an awareness that aspires to a particular object one wants to attain. It aspires to a particular end.

2.2.2.2. Belief is engaging the object with pleasure, as if we realise something and that we like the object.

2.2.2.3. Mindfulness causes the not forgetting of the object.

2.2.2.4. Concentration causes the single-pointed engagement with the object.

2.2.2.5. Wisdom causes the discriminating between the various objects.

2.2.2.1. Aspiration⁵

Aspiration is an awareness that wishes to attain some aim that one has in mind. It is the mental factor that acts as the basis for enthusiastic effort, because of the wish wanting to engage in actions to attain whatever one aims to achieve. So aspiration is the antidote against laziness.

It is explained in the *Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path* by Lama Tsong Khapa: "If one doesn't abandon the laziness that likes the obstacles of concentration and doesn't like concentration, then one won't start engaging into concentration meditation. Even if it is attained once, because one can't practice continuous it will degenerate quickly. Therefore it is important at first to abandon laziness. If one attains the pliancy that increases the bliss and happiness of body and mind, because one won't get tired of engaging day and night into virtue, one will abandon laziness. For that to be generated one need to be able to exert continuous enthusiastic effort in concentration, which is the cause for the generation of pliancy. For that to be generated one needs to have continuous strong aspiration wanting to attain the qualities of concentration. Since as cause for that one needs to have stable faith beyond belief through seeing the qualities of concentration, first one should repeatedly familiarize oneself with the faith seeing the qualities of concentration. You should hold this as very special because if you check after practising this sequence you will realise very clearly what I mean."

What this is saying is that one needs to have the strong wish or aspiration to engage in attaining whatever one has set out to attain.

Threefold Division of Aspiration

Aspiration has a three-fold division into:

- the aspiration of wanting to meet
- the aspiration of not wanting to be separated
- the aspiration of wanting to attain

Once one has generated the aspiration of wanting to attain a particular aim, one needs to generate that aspiration again and again generate that aspiration to make it stronger and stronger.

As we have already mentioned, aspiration is the base for enthusiasm.

2.2.2.2. Belief⁶

A knower thinking it is only like this and not different, with regards to an object ascertained by ones own valid cogniser.

Belief is an awareness that thinks, "That is exactly how I have ascertained it with my valid cogniser and not in any other way".

It is explained that this mental factor of belief has the function of not being disturbed within one's realisation. Nobody can change one's mind to think that it is any different from how one has understood it to be.

⁵ The *Compendium of Knowledge* states, "What is aspiration? The wish to work for attaining the aspired qualities, having the function of acting as the basis for practising (starting to) effort."

⁶ The *Compendium of Knowledge* states, "What is belief? Apprehending the ascertained object the way it was ascertained, having the function of preventing loss."

⁴ The *Compendium of Knowledge* states, "What is attention? The engaging of the mind, having the function of making the mind apprehend (grasp at) the object."

For example this comes into play with refuge. One is very certain that the Three Jewels are our perfect refuge. Nobody can rob us of our realisation. Thinking about the qualities and characteristics of the Buddha, one has found the Buddha to be faultless, or a valid being. One has also found the Dharma, which is explained by the Buddha to be valid Dharma. Likewise one has found the Sangha, which practises and has realised the Dharma taught by the Buddha, to be valid. Then one has generated a very strong conviction that those three are the undeceiving and infallible refuge. Then, regardless what other people will say, they will not be able to rob us of our understanding. This is the function of belief. With strong belief one will be able to overcome all adverse conditions.

In the same way it is also mentioned in *The Bodhisattva's Way of Life*: **The Able one explained belief; as the root for all virtues dharmas; Always meditate on the ripened result; Of their root**

The Buddha explained that the root of all virtuous dharmas is belief, and that one should meditate permanently on that root.

If we have strong belief in the Dharma, then regardless of what other people say, they will not be able to cause us to give up our Dharma practice. Without a strong belief in the Dharma, then as soon as other people make some critical remarks we very easily give up our Dharma practice. For that reason I always advice people to start slowly with the Dharma practice, then steadily and slowly, slowly increasing their Dharma practice, rather than rushing into it. There are people who rush into it, but because they don't have a strong belief in the Dharma, as soon as other people criticise them, or make remarks like, "Oh you are just wasting your time", then they give up their Dharma practice easily.

2.2.2.3. Mindfulness⁷

Mindfulness is important. It is **an awareness that possesses the three characteristics, relating to the object, aspect, and function.**

Mindfulness is an awareness that possesses three characteristics.

- First of all, the **object** has to be an introduced object.
- The **aspect** of mindfulness is non-forgetfulness.
- The **function** is making the mind non-distracted.

The significance of saying that it has to be an **introduced object** is because we cannot be mindful of an object to which we have not been introduced.

So having been introduced to an object, mindfulness is in the **aspect of not-forgetfulness** - not forgetting the object to which one has been previously introduced.

We were saying that the third characteristic is the **function of mindfulness**, which is avoiding distraction, or **causing non-distraction** in the mind. What mindfulness does is to cause one's mental placement and stability to increase more and more.

The mindfulness that possesses these three characteristics is what we call special mindfulness, and this is the mindfulness that we need for meditation. We need to be introduced to the object, and then we need to have non-forgetfulness with regard to the object. Not forgetting the object to which we have been introduced causes mental placement and stability.

Mindfulness and introspection are regarded as very important mental factors. Without those two mental factors then our meditation will not progress very well, and also other practices such as listening, engaging with effort, joyful enthusiasm and so forth, will not turn out successfully.

We need to be continuously mindful of our virtuous practices, remembering and not forgetting them.

Because the increasing of all the qualities of the grounds and paths depends on mindfulness and introspection and whatever attainment of the concentrations of Sutra and Tantra needs to be attained through the power of this special mindfulness, for those who from their heart have the wish to practice this method of relying on mindfulness is most important.

The object of mindfulness is an object to which one has to be introduced. This doesn't happen with sense consciousnesses. In order to be introduced to an object, one has to be introduced to it again and again. There has to be certain continuity of being introduced to the same object again and again so that there is a continuity of becoming acquainted with the object. This doesn't happen with sense consciousnesses, which don't have this continuous acquaintance with their object. Therefore we see that sense consciousnesses don't have this aspect of strong mindfulness.

2.2.2.4. Concentration⁸

Concentration is **single pointedness of mind that, having focused on the bound phenomenon, engages with continuity.**

We are talking about the object being bound to the mind by the rope of mindfulness. Concentration is the mind that continuously and single-pointedly engages the bound object.

The concentration that is mentioned here is not necessarily single-pointed concentration.

At the time of meditation we have the mind itself, then mindfulness, introspection and concentration.

First of all one should say that concentration is the abiding aspect of the mind. Mindfulness and introspection cause that stability, but mindfulness and introspection are not the stable aspect of the mind. They are not the concentration, and actually the mind itself is also not the concentration. Also, all the various other concomitant mental factors like feeling, aspiration, contact and so forth, (we went through a variety of them), are not concentration.

What is concentration? It is the abiding aspect of the mind, the stable aspect of the mind that was caused by mindfulness and introspection. That is what concentration is. At the time of meditation, this can of course be why it is strong and long lasting. Actually every virtuous mind has a concomitant mental factor of concentration - a certain moment of abiding with the object.

Focal Object of Concentration

The focal object of concentration has a four-fold division that is mentioned in the *Great Exposition of The Graduated Stages of the Path*.

They are:

- Focal object purifying behaviour
- Focal object purifying delusion
- Pervading focal object
- Proficient focal object.

The **focal object purifying behaviour** refers to the meditational object that can purify whichever delusion is most prevalent in our mind, and so purify the harmful behaviour that is the most prevalent behaviour of the mind. For example:

- a person whose predominant delusion is attachment should meditate on the meditational object of impurity
- a person whose predominant delusion is anger should meditate on the meditational object of love and compassion

⁷ The *Compendium of Knowledge* states, "What is mindfulness? Non-forgetfulness by the mind of an introduced object, having the function of non-distraction."

⁸ The *Compendium of Knowledge* states, "What is concentration? Singlepointed mind to imputed object, having the function of generating understanding."

- a person whose predominant delusion is ignorance should meditate on the twelve interdependent links and emptiness

- a person whose predominant problem is too much conceptualisation, agitation should meditate on the coming and going of the breath.

So focus purifying behaviour are the various objects that purify predominant harmful behaviours of the mind.

With regard to the **focal object purifying delusion** there are objects that are common to the worldly paths, which purify the manifest delusion, and there are objects of the superior paths, which purify the delusions, together with their seeds.

The first refers to the various meditations which can lead one through the various concentrative absorptions of the form and formless realms. So, for example, to attain the absorption of the first form realm, one meditates on the objects of the desire realm as being coarse and unattractive, and on the pleasures and objects of the first form realm as being attractive. Then through that meditation one attains the absorption of the first form realm.

When one attains that absorption, then the manifest delusions of the desire realm are pacified, and in that way one then goes on to meditate on the objects of the first form realm as being coarse and unpleasant, and on the pleasures of the second form realm as being attractive. In that manner one attains the second absorption and again purifies one level of manifest delusions. Like that one proceeds up until the peak of cyclic existence. However, these are only the **worldly paths** that purify manifest levels of delusions.

We also have the objects of the **superior path**, the Four Noble Truths, which can then purify the delusions together with their seeds.

With regard to the third object, **pervading objects**, basically if it is an object of the meditation on calm abiding, then it is a pervading object. For example, the objects purifying behaviour and the objects purifying delusions would all actually fall in this third category of pervading objects.

The **objects of proficiency** include the aggregates, the spheres, the sources, dependent arising and so forth.

With regard to this fourth category, the object of experts, this is becoming proficient with regard to the five aggregates, with regard to the 18 spheres, with regard to the 12 sources, or with regard to dependent arising.

- Becoming proficient with regard to the aggregates means, based on an understanding of the five aggregates understanding that all compounded phenomena are condensed within those five aggregates. In order to be able to do that, one has to first clearly identify what those five aggregates are. The aim is to realise there is no I or mine separate from the aggregates.

- Becoming an expert in the 18 spheres includes becoming an expert how the various phenomena are generated from their own particular seeds, or causes.

- With regard to becoming proficient in the 12 sources, we have the six inner sources that are the six sense powers, and we have the six outer sources that are the six objects of the six consciousnesses. You become proficient how the six inner sources become what we call sense powers, and then how they become what we call the uncommon empowering condition for the individual consciousnesses to arise. You also become proficient in how the various outer six sources become the focal condition for the various consciousnesses to arise.

- Becoming proficient in dependent arising includes becoming an expert in all compounded phenomena being empty, selfless, suffering and so forth.

This mental factor of concentration arises only in connection with the mental consciousness, and not with the sense

consciousness. There is no concentration that arises in connection with the eye consciousness, for example.

When we meditate on the visualisation of Buddha, first we look at a Buddha statue to see what the form body of the Buddha looks like. However, the actual object of the meditation is not the statue, but the reflection of the statue within our mind. Then we familiarise our mind with that reflection of the Buddha's form, and acquaint our mind with that reflection.

When one has meditated in that manner for some time then the object will actually appear to one's mind as clearly as if one saw it with one's eye. Actually the object of meditation doesn't have to be an appropriate object. Any kind of object will appear clearly to our mind after some time, if we acquaint our mind with it.

When you do this type of meditation it is important to make the focal object heavy. That will help to lessen mental excitement. If we make the focal object light then that counteracts mental sinking. So at the beginning it helps to make the focal object a little bit heavy.

If our mind is very distracted we can think that the focal object is like a container in which our mind is placed. So the focal object is a container where we place our mind, and then that can also help to lessen distraction in the mind. If you are truly interested in meditation then you have to know these things.

If you think that you experience too much distraction in the mind, then think that the focal object is like a hat, which sort of covers your mind. Through that you attain greater stability of mind, and then you can continue your meditation.

It is also important to mix the mind with the object. It shouldn't be like the mind looking at the object. Rather the mind should merge with the object. That also helps to maintain stability of mind.

Note on authentication

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