
Mind and Mental Factors

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Please generate a virtuous motivation.

Five Ascertaining Mental Factors (cont)

Of the five ascertaining mental factors we have completed aspiration, belief, mindfulness and concentration.

2.2.2.5. Wisdom¹

Wisdom is a knower discerning in detail the faults and qualities of the objects to be investigated.

The object to be investigated refers to virtue, non-virtue and non-predicted, which is neutral. Wisdom is discerning what is beneficial, what is not beneficial, what is harmful, what is not harmful, what gives happiness and what doesn't give happiness. Then through analysing and investigating in this way, wisdom eliminates doubt. The text gives eliminating doubt as the function of wisdom.

Four Types of Analysis

To determine what is beneficial and what is not beneficial there are four methods of investigation.

They are,

- reason of action
- reason of dependence
- reason establishing it as correct
- natural reason

Reason of action refers to an investigation into the function of various phenomena. So, for example, when we analyse by investigating the nature and function of fire, then we will find that fire is in the nature of being very hot, and can fulfil the function of burning things. In the same way, if we analyse the function of the wisdom realising emptiness, then we will find that the wisdom realising emptiness can oppose the grasping at the self, which is the root of all suffering.

Reason of dependence refers to investigating how impermanent phenomena come about, and then understanding that they are generated in dependence upon causes and condition. In other words, understanding that compounded phenomena come about through dependence on causes and conditions.

Reason establishing it is correct refers to analysing whether the object of our investigation is contradicted by any of the three valid cognisers. As mentioned before, if something is not contradicted by any of the three valid cognisers then it has to be correct.

Natural reason refers to the various natural attributes of different phenomena. For example, it is the nature of fire to be hot and burning, and it is the nature of water to be wet and moistening, and so forth. According to worldly convention, various phenomena naturally have certain qualities.

Four Types of Reliances

Those four lines of investigation are related by Asanga to what are called the four teachers. The four teachers are,

- Not relying on the teacher, but relying on what he explains
- Not relying on the words, but relying on the meaning
- Not relying on the interpreted meaning, but relying on the definitive meaning

- Not relying on consciousness, but relying on mental consciousness

First of all one shouldn't rely on the teacher, but one should **rely on what the teacher actually says**.

One shouldn't rely on the words themselves, that is, whether they are spoken very pleasantly or skilfully and so forth. Rather one should **rely on the actual meaning** of what was said.

With regard to the meaning, one shouldn't rely on the interpretative meaning but one should **rely on the definitive meaning**.

Fourthly, even though consciousness and mental consciousness are very similar, this is saying that one should **rely on non-mistaken mental consciousness** rather than mistaken consciousness.

These are the four kinds of analysis, and the four reliances that one talks about quite often.

Having contemplated those points, the omniscient Lama Tsong Khapa said, "Having investigated with those four reasons what one has heard, day and night, may any doubt as to the objects of contemplation be cut off, by discerning awareness arising from contemplation."

Having first of all listened to many teachings, and then concentrating on and investigating again and again what one has heard with the four kinds of analysis, a certain kind of wisdom will be generated. The ascertaining awareness that is generated by this process is the wisdom of contemplation.

This wisdom of contemplation can then cut off any doubt. The ascertaining awareness, which arises through investigating with the four kinds of reasons what one has heard, again and again, is the wisdom arising from contemplation. That wisdom will oppose doubt. If that wisdom is further increased through further meditation, then it becomes the wisdom arising from meditation.

We have now finished with the five every present mental factors and the five ascertaining mental factors.

2.2.3. Eleven Virtuous Mental Factors

The eleven virtuous mental factors are: faith, shame, consideration, detachment, non-anger, non-ignorance, enthusiastic effort, pliancy, conscientiousness, equanimity and non-cruelty or non-harmfulness.

When we go through those eleven virtuous mental factors we shouldn't just analyse them as if they were something unrelated to us. Rather we should check to see how many of those eleven virtuous mental factors we have actually generated in our mind. Everybody has some virtuous mental factors in their mind. When one goes through faith check one's own mind. Has one generated faith? How strong is that faith? Which kind of faith is it? Then do the same for shame and so forth.

Knowing this enumeration of the eleven virtuous mental factors, and then realising that one actually has a certain number within one's own mind, is a very great cause for rejoicing. A beggar rejoices very greatly if we give him a piece of gold. If we find out that we have certain number of those virtuous factors then we can rejoice in the same way. Then through rejoicing in those virtuous mental factors, one greatly increases one's merit.

2.2.3.1. Faith²

The first virtuous mental factor is faith. We all have faith in the Dharma. However it is important to really understand faith, and to generate it, and not to just know faith as mere words.

The text explains that *faith is a knower having the aspect of*

¹ From the *Compendium of Knowledge*: "What is wisdom? Discerning thoroughly the objects of mere analysis, having the function of eliminating doubt."

² The *Compendium of Knowledge* defines faith as, "What is faith? Aspiring belief, clarity and wish with regard to mere existent, qualities, and ability, acting as the basis for aspiration."

belief, clarity or wish, acting as direct antidote against faithlessness.

As I have explained before, if during our meditation we generate faith in the objects of refuge, then we have to take that faith as the object of our meditation, and concentrate on it and increase it. Through that, this faith that we generate, will stabilise and increase in our mind and will become the antidote to faithlessness.

There are three kinds of faith, which are called clarifying or clear faith, faith through belief, and aspiring faith.

Clear Faith

Clear faith arises through seeing the qualities of the object. When we see the qualities of the object, for example the Three Jewels - the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha - they have a clarifying, illuminating effect on the mind. The faith which one generated in that way is called clear faith, because if it is generated in the continuum, it clarifies the dirt in the mind. It is like a water-clarifying jewel: if you put it into dirty, polluted water, then the water will become very clean and pure. In the same way if we generate this kind of clarifying, clear faith in the mind, then it will have a purifying effect on the mind when we think about the qualities of the Buddha - the qualities of his body, speech and mind, his virtuous activities, his knowledge, compassion and so forth.

If we generate this clear faith in our mind it purifies the pollution of faithlessness from our mind. Through that it becomes possible for all the qualities of the realisations to be generated in our continuum. It is said that the root of all qualities is faith. We establish that the roof of all qualities is faith, by purifying the pollution of faithlessness from our mind. Then it becomes possible for the realisations of faith to be generated in our continuum.

Faith Through Belief

Faith through belief relates to the faith that we generate after thinking about, for example, things which were taught by the Buddha, such as the law of cause and effect, dependent arising and so forth. Then, having contemplated and thought about what we have heard in the various teachings again and again, we generate an ascertaining awareness, which is an understanding that what the Buddha explained is true. This is the wisdom that arises from contemplation. Through that one generates faith through the belief that, for example, the law of cause and effect as explained by the Buddha is incontrovertible, or that from non-virtue comes suffering, and from virtue comes happiness and so forth.

The word normally translated as 'belief' is actually closer in meaning to 'conviction'. In this context, belief is not just believing something for no reason. It actually refers to being completely convinced single-pointedly, with a complete single-pointed and stable conviction that what one believes is true.

For example if, after having thought about it, we decide that a person is 100% reliable, then we generate a certain belief in that person, and we generate a conviction in their truthfulness. Once we have generated that conviction in the truthfulness of the other person, then we can safely lend money to them. Many rich people have become very poor by lending money to just anyone!

In the same way, having a single-pointed and stable conviction that the law of cause and effect, as explained by the Buddha, is incontrovertible or valid generates a very good practice of watching one's karma. So a very good practice of karma will be generated.

If we apply that attitude of accepting only what we have ascertained through investigation, then that of course will be very beneficial to our Dharma practice. It also will be very useful in ordinary worldly life if you don't just believe anything, and everything, and everybody, but only follow what

we have found to be true through analysis and investigation.

Aspiring Faith

Aspiring faith could be also called an achieving faith. Knowing that one has the potential to attain a certain result, such as the potential to attain the truth of cessation and the truth of the path, this kind of aspiring faith encourages one to want to attain the truth of cessation, and to want to attain the truth of the path.

Vasubandhu says that in these days, in worldly terms faith and liking are regarded as one. In fact, there is no pervasion that if something is faith, then there is necessarily a liking for that object, or vice versa.

There are actually four possibilities.

- Something which is liking, but not faith. For example the liking for one's father and mother, or for one's boyfriend or girlfriend are all obvious instances of liking, but they are not faith.
- Something can be faith without necessarily liking the object. For example, having reflected on the sufferings of the lower realms, and understanding that the Three Jewels have the power to protect oneself from those sufferings. Then through meditation a belief is generated in the ability of the Three Jewels to protect oneself from those sufferings of the lower realms. That is faith, but not liking.
- Something which is both liked and faith. For example, faith in the qualities of one's virtuous friends, or in the benefits of cause and effect.
- Something which is neither liking nor faith is anger and suffering, and so on and so forth.

2.2.3.2. Shame

The meaning of *shame* is **apprehension towards non-virtue, taking oneself as the reason**. The Tibetan word for non-virtue is *ka-na-ma to-wa*, which has the connotation of being inexpressible. What is inexpressible is non-virtue, one cannot say anything non-virtuous to the Three Jewels. It is said that non-virtuous is something that one cannot express from the mouth. Although this word *ka-na-ma to-pa* is expressed from the mouth, the meaning is basically non-virtue. (Translator: I think it might mean to bad to be expressed, something better kept quiet.)

If after taking oneself as the reason, one feels caution with regard to engaging in non-virtue, then that is called shame.

2.2.3.3. Consideration

Consideration is **apprehension to with regard to non-virtue, taking others as the reason**.

Both shame and consideration are the same in being apprehensive about negative actions.

However shame is becoming apprehensive when coming close to engaging in a negative action, thinking, "This is not an appropriate action for me"; or for example remembering one's vows and thinking, "This is not something which is appropriate for me to do"; or if one is an ordained person such as a bhikshu, then remembering one's vows and thinking, "Oh according to my vows I am not allowed to do this. It is not appropriate action for a monk to engage in", and then not doing it.

Consideration is becoming apprehensive when coming close to engaging in a negative action, then thinking, "Others would criticise or despise me because of that action, so this action is not suitable". The 'others' in this thought refers to, for example, one's lama, or the Buddha and so forth, as the main objects of apprehension. So consideration is thinking that it would not be appropriate to engage into an action, for which one would be criticised for by, for example, one's teacher.

The various vows which one can take, like the vows of

individual liberation, the Bodhisattva vows and Tantric vows are a very good help in generating shame. That is because one remembers one's vows before one engaging in a negative action, and will think, "Oh, this is something which is not appropriate for me to do, because of the vows that I have taken". That helps in the generation of shame, which helps one to keep one's vows.

Also, when we take the various vows, we always take them from special objects like the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. When we take the Bodhisattva vows, we visualise the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the Ten Directions in the space in front of us. It is the same with taking Tantric vows. So they become the objects of our consideration as we remember, "Oh, we took those vows from those special objects, so therefore it would not be appropriate to engage in actions that they would not like".

If we have pictures of the Buddhas and so forth in our room, then we should visualise them as actually being there, not just thinking of them as a picture. That will also help to generate consideration within one's mind.

Without shame and consideration then it will be very difficult to stop negative actions. Actually it will be impossible to stop negative actions. By considering that we take the various vows from those special objects, the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas, then we can also understand how the negativity comes about when we break a vow. We understand that we have broken a promise which we made with regard to those holy objects. This is something worthwhile and important to think about very deeply over and over again.

Also if, for example, we remember the Buddhas again and again, then they will also appear to our mind more and more vividly as our mind becomes more and more habituated and accustomed to them. That also helps when, for example, we are sad or depressed and so forth. If we sit down and start to think about the Buddhas, and visualise them, then that can have a very beneficial effect on the mind.

The text says that the main object of apprehension with regard to consideration is the lama and the Buddha etc., through thinking that they might know what I am up to.

I think that this is the reason why people marry in churches. When you marry in church, you exchange marriage vows. It makes it special if you go to a special place, with a priest, and all the relatives of the husband, and all the relatives of the future wife, as well as their many friends. When they exchange the marriage vows they do so in front of all those people, and if god exists then he is also there. Regardless of whether or not god exists, at least his representative is there! *{laughter}*

I don't know if it is correct, but I think that such a ceremony is also for the purpose of generating consideration and shame within the mind. So the couple think, "We really took those vows in front of all those people, in front of god and so forth." Then later when there is a danger of the relationship breaking down, they remember those vows and that helps to keep them together.

During the marriage ceremony you have to repeat various promises such as taking care of the other person when they are sick, and always respecting them and so forth. Later if husband or wife is sick, then you remember, "Oh, at the time of our marriage I made those vows, and they were not just words. They were vows actually taken in front of god (or whatever the refuge is). If I do not act in accordance with those vows now, then it will become like a lie." So that gives power to whatever promise one has made earlier. That is how the power of the Dharma comes about.

The next three virtuous mental factors, detachment or non-attachment, non-anger and non-ignorance are also referred to as the three roots of virtue.

2.2.3.4. Detachment

Asanga gives this definition of detachment or non-attachment, "What is detachment? It is non-attachment to samsara and samsaric perfections acting as the basis for not engaging in negative actions."

Samsara refers to one's own five contaminated aggregates, and samsaric perfections refers to wealth and so forth. The meaning of this definition is basically ***a knower with renunciation and without attachment.***

By reflecting on the disadvantages and sufferings of samsara, and the samsaric perfections, one will generate renunciation. Renunciation will counteract the grasping for samsara and samsaric perfections, so it will counteract the attachment. By reflecting on, for example, the four sufferings of birth, aging, sickness and death, then one will generate renunciation with regard to samsara and samsara perfections. This automatically counteracts grasping towards samsaric happiness and towards samsara.

Lessening and giving up the grasping for samsara and samsara happinesses also has the great benefit of leading to more happiness in this life. Detachment is a virtuous mind which counteracts attachment.

The three minds of detachment, non-anger and non-ignorance counteract the three delusions, and as we know the root of cyclic existence is ignorance. In the same way as the three delusions are the root of all suffering, these three kinds of antidotes are the root of all qualities.

2.2.3.5. Non-anger

Asanga gives as the definition of non-anger as, "the non-harming intention towards sentient beings, sufferings and places of suffering, acting as the basis for not engaging into negative actions". So it is a knower completely without any harmful intention, that after focusing on any of the three objects of anger, has eliminated the generation of anger.

With regard to the objects of anger,

- we get angry with other sentient beings,
- we get angry with our own sufferings
- we get angry with the places of suffering

Non-anger is a knower completely without any harmful intention, after having focused on any of those three kinds of objects of anger.

2.2.3.6. Non-ignorance³

Non-ignorance is the discriminative wisdom attained through birth or through practice, able to act as the antidote to ignorance.

Non-ignorance is a discriminative wisdom that can be attained by birth, or through one's own practice. One can have a certain wisdom that comes about through the ripening of karma. If one widens it out, there are also certain qualities, which a person can have, that don't come about through practice in this life, but which are the result of ripening karma.

Then there is the discriminative wisdom that is attained through practice in this life. In the same way there are qualities with which one hasn't been born, but which have been attained through practice in this life.

Either one of those two kinds of wisdom is able to act as the antidote to ignorance.

Those three mental factors of detachment, non-anger and non-ignorance are the root of all virtuous dharmas. That is why they are referred to as the three roots of virtue, and are the

³ From the *Compendium of Knowledge*, "What is non-ignorance? Discerning analysis and understanding arising from ripening, teachings, contemplation or realisation, acting as the basis for not engaging into negative actions."

method to stop all negative actions. They are the essence of all paths, because all grounds and paths are for the purpose of eliminating the three poisons including their latencies. Because all negative actions definitely arise from the cause of any of the three poisons, the text gives the function of those three mental factors as acting as the basis for not engaging into negative actions.

Three Kinds of Capable Beings

There are three kinds of detachments relating to the three kinds of capable beings.

The thought of the **small capable being** is being detached from this life, changing the focus of the awareness from this life to aspiring to the next life. So the motivation of the small capable being is one kind of detachment.

The thought of the **middle capable being** is being detached from any samsaric perfection, and overturning grasping from the heart. So the motivation of the middle capable being is related to another kind of detachment.

The thought of the **great capable being** is the aspiration for non-abiding nirvana, being detached from both of the extremes of existence and peace.

If one hasn't generated any one of those three kinds of detachment, then one's Dharma practice will not progress very well. These three motivations are very important. If one meditates on them, there is nothing but profit for oneself.

Maybe we will finish here. The next virtuous mental factor is enthusiastic effort.

As we have only one more Friday it looks like we won't finish.

If we add two more Fridays to the four which were planned, that will be six Fridays altogether. Then, even though it we would be just a short introduction to each of the mental factors, we might finish them all.

We don't have to decide now. You can tell me next time whether you want to go on or not.

Note on authentication

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