

Study Group - “Buddhist Tenets”

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

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Please generate a good motivation for listening to the teaching - which is to generate an altruistic motivation. Try to generate bodhicitta.

Generating an altruistic motivation, or being concerned with the happiness of others, is very important. It also helps us to lessen the delusions in our mind, as well as preventing delusions from arising. Such an altruistic mind makes it more difficult for disturbing states of mind to arise. If we are concerned only with our own happiness then that makes it easier for delusions to arise within the mind. You all know this very well, and that it is just a question of putting it into practice. Making use of this motivation means practising what one knows.

Whether we experience happiness or suffering all depends upon our own mind. Generating the virtuous motivation of wanting happiness for others will facilitate our own happiness. Conversely, wishing happiness for us and the worst for others will just generate unhappiness.

5.5 Mode of Asserting Object-Possessors

We have reached the fifth point, which concerns object-possessors. Object-possessors refer to mind.

5.5.1 Mind Only True Aspectarians

According to the Mind Only True Aspectarians a collection of eight consciousnesses is accepted. As we mentioned in earlier teachings, within the Mind Only there are two groups - the True Aspectarians and the False Aspectarians. The Mind Only True Aspectarians are also called the Mind Only Following Scripture. These scriptures referred to are the five grounds, which were composed by Asanga. In those texts Asanga mentioned a collection of eight consciousnesses. Because Mind Only True Aspectarians follow what is said in those texts they therefore accept a collection of eight consciousnesses. These comprise the collection of six consciousnesses that the other tenets accept, in addition to a consciousness that is called mind-basis-of-all, and a consciousness that is referred to as afflicted consciousness.

We have already been through the collection of six consciousnesses (5 sense consciousnesses and one mental), and it is very important for you to remember them. In addition to that collection of six consciousnesses, the Mind Only True Aspectarians assert the mind-basis-of-all and afflicted consciousness.

There are four types of assertions about the number of object possessors. There is the Mind Only that asserts just the six types of consciousness, with which we are already familiar. Then there is a Mind Only that asserts seven types of consciousness adding what is called the ‘consciousness of taking’ to the basic six. There is the Mind Only that asserts a collection of eight types of consciousness, which we have already mentioned in the previous paragraph. Finally, there’s the Mind Only that asserts nine types of consciousness; in addition to the eight they add what is called the pure consciousness. Actually most traditions

follow the assertions of either eight types of consciousness, or the six types of consciousness. Asserting nine types and seven types of consciousness was refuted.

5.5.1.2 Mind-basis-of-all

Firstly we explain this consciousness called the mind-basis-of-all. The mind-basis-of-all has four characteristics, which are: the focal object of mind-basis-of-all, its aspect, its identity, and the concomitant mental factors.

1. *The mind-basis-of-all focuses on the sense powers; the basis which are the objects, and the mental imprints.* These three are the focal object of the mind-basis-of-all.

2. What kind of aspect does the mind-basis-of-all have? It arises in *the aspect of a mind to which the object appears, but is not ascertained.* The objects appear to the mind-basis-of-all, but the mind-basis-of-all cannot ascertain its objects and it can also not induce a mind that ascertains those objects. This covers aspect.

3. The *identity or nature of the mind-basis-of-all is unobstructed and neutral, or more literally, unpredicted* It is unobstructed by virtue, by non-virtue, or by any kind of obscuration. It is neutral because it is neither virtue nor non-virtue.

4. With regard to the *concomitant mental factors, it has what are called the five ever-present mental factors.*

The **identity** or the nature of the mind-basis-of-all is said to be neutral for various reasons. One reason is that there are sentient beings that have completely run out of any kind of virtue but those sentient beings still have a mind-basis-of-all within their continuum. Since these sentient beings have cut off their root of virtue the mind-basis-of-all in their continuum cannot be a virtuous mind.

However the mind-basis-of-all cannot be a non-virtuous mind because it exists in the continuum of beings that are reborn in the form or formless realms where anything contained within those realms has to be free from non-virtue. It is said that no non-virtue exists contained within the upper realms. This is one line of reasoning as to why the mind-basis-of-all is neutral.

Another line of reasoning is that the mind-basis-of-all is the basis where the various mental imprints are placed or planted. If it would be a virtuous mind, then no non-virtuous karmic imprints could be planted or placed upon it. Likewise if it was a non-virtuous mind, no virtuous karmic imprints could be placed upon it. So therefore according to this line of reasoning the mind-basis-of-all has to be a neutral mind.

No non-virtue exists in the upper realms because no anger exists there. However other delusions such as desire, wrong view, pride, and ignorance still exist within the upper realms. If it is a delusion is there pervasion that it has to be a non-virtue? We say there is no pervasion, positing the example of desire, ignorance, doubt and pride that are contained within the upper realms.

Thus the reason for there being no anger in the upper realms is that the nine conditions responsible for the arousal of anger and non-virtue don’t exist in the upper realms. These nine conditions can be divided into three sets: those relating to oneself, those relating to one’s friends and dear ones, and those relating to one’s enemies.

In relation to oneself it means thinking, ‘that person has harmed me in the past’, or ‘that person is harming me now’, or ‘that person will harm me in the future’.

The second set concerning one’s dear ones means thinking,

'that person has harmed my friends in the past', or 'that person is harming my friends at present', or 'that person will harm my friends or dear ones in the future'.

The third set is thinking, 'that person has benefited my enemy in the past' or 'that person is benefiting my enemy just now' or 'that person will benefit my enemy in the future'.

These nine types of thinking bring about non-virtuous states of mind.

In regard to virtue and non-virtue, the definition of *virtue is having been predicted (by the Buddha) and abiding in the family of white ripening*. The definition of *non-virtue is having been predicted (by the Buddha) and abiding in the family of black ripening*. Virtue and non-virtue is that which causes happiness and suffering respectively and therefore are referred to as white and black.

The fourth characteristic of the mind-basis-of-all is that it has **the five ever-present mental factors as its concomitant factors**. We will explain these five ever-present mental factors in more detail in the mind and awareness classes. Very briefly, they refer to feeling, recognition, intention, attention and contact. They are called the five ever-present mental factors because every main consciousness has those five concomitant mental factors. This is something that is accepted by all Buddhist tenets and schools.

The mind-basis-of-all is a type of consciousness that is different from the six types of consciousness to which we have already been introduced, and is the basis for all virtuous, non-virtuous and neutral mental imprints. If you generate an understanding that this is what the mind-basis-of-all refers to, then that is good enough. The 'all' in mind-basis-of-all refers to virtue, non-virtue and neutral karmic imprints.

5.5.1.2 Afflicted Consciousness

The next consciousness, which is posited by the Mind Only True Aspectarians, is called afflicted consciousness. The focal object of the afflicted consciousness is the mind-basis-of-all. It arises in the aspect of apprehending a self that is substantially existent in terms of being self-sufficient, and the nature or identity is obscured and neutral.

The nature of afflicted consciousness is obscured because it is obscured by the four concomitant mental factors, which are the view of the self, attachment, wrong view and pride. It is not obscured because of obstructing the attainment of liberation of enlightenment.

There are two types of abandonment of an afflicted consciousness. There is temporary abandonment of the afflicted consciousness, and the final abandonment of the afflicted consciousness. Temporary abandonment of afflicted consciousness happens when an Arya being is in non-dual meditative equipoise on emptiness, or is absorbed into what we call the cessative absorption. When the practitioner reaches the state of either Arhat ship, or what is called an empowered bodhisattva, meaning the three pure grounds from the eighth ground and above, then afflicted consciousness is abandoned completely. The mind-basis-of-all is posited as the example for the person who is the basis for the law of cause and effect.

That completes the discussion on mind-basis-of-all and afflicted consciousness. The root text of the mind-basis-of-all has three main commentaries, one of which is by Lama Tsong Khapa and is around 50 pages in length. I have studied those commentaries and the root text very deeply

for around 25 to 30 years. So I feel I have quite good insight into what the mind-basis-of-all means.

5.5.2 Mind Only False Aspectarians

Now we turn to the Mind Only False Aspectarians who are also referred to as the Mind Only Following Reason because they follow the seven treatises on valid cognition by Dharmakirti. This distinguishes them from the Mind Only Following Scripture who follow the five grounds composed by Asanga, and who are referred to as the Mind Only True Aspectarians.

The Mind Only False Aspectarians accept only the collection of six consciousnesses. They posit the mere mental consciousness as the example for the person who is the base for the law of cause and effect.

The reason why the Mind Only False Aspectarians assert the mental consciousness to be the basis for cause and effect is because out of the six types of consciousness, the five physical sense consciousnesses will sooner or later cease. However mental consciousness exists continuously. Therefore only mental consciousness can act as the basis for the virtuous and non-virtuous karmic imprints. This mental consciousness is posited as the example of the person that is the base for cause and effect.

5.5.3 Awareness

Awareness is divided into awareness's that are valid cognisers and awarenesses that are not valid cognisers. The definition of a valid cogniser is the same as was asserted by the Sautrantika. The reason why the definition of valid cogniser is not posited again in the text is because it is the same as posited by the Sautrantika School. So what is the definition of valid cogniser?

A newly incontrovertible knower.

Thank you very much.

How many divisions does a valid cogniser have?

Two

They are direct valid cogniser, and inferential valid cogniser. A direct valid cogniser again has four divisions just like before. The text doesn't enumerate those four divisions individually. What are they?

Self-Knowing Direct Valid cogniser, Sense Direct Valid cogniser, Mental Direct Valid cogniser, and Yogic Direct Valid cogniser.

Self-knowing direct perception and yogic direct perception are pervaded by being non-mistaken consciousnesses. The sense direct perceptions in the continuum of an ordinary being are pervaded by being mistaken consciousnesses. What does that refer to? What does it mean if all consciousnesses of ordinary beings are mistaken consciousnesses? Why do they assert that?

Inaudible but containing: The objects appearing dualistically.

No it is not duality. Rather, even though there is no outer existence, there is the appearance of an outer existence. The reason why all sense direct perceptions are regarded as mistaken consciousnesses is because there is the appearance of outer existence to those sense consciousnesses. It is a mistaken appearance because outer existence does not exist. This is something that is shared by both the True Aspectarians and the False Aspectarians. Both assert that outer existence is non-existent so therefore if there is the appearance of outer existence to the mind then that mind has to be a mistaken mind.

However they differ with regard to the appearance of coarse form, in that the True Aspectarians assert that the

appearance of coarse form to the consciousness is an unmistakable appearance. Whereas the Mind Only False Aspectarians assert that the appearance of coarse form to the mind is a mistaken appearance, meaning it is an appearance that is contaminated by the karmic imprints of ignorance. So the False Aspectarians say that the appearance of coarse form is tainted or contaminated by the karmic imprints of ignorance, while the True Aspectarians say that this appearance of coarse form is non-mistaken, because the karmic imprints of ignorance do not contaminate it. So whether something is a mistaken or an unmistakable appearance depends on whether the karmic imprints of ignorance contaminate that appearance.

The text goes on to say that the mental direct perception in the continuum of an ordinary being has both instances of mistaken consciousness as well as non-mistaken consciousnesses. Then the text says that if it is direct perception there is no pervasion that it is valid direct cogniser. Why is it like that? Because in the continuum of an ordinary being we have a mental direct perception apprehending form, but in the continuum of an ordinary being we don't have a direct valid mental cogniser apprehending form.

The text also goes on to say in the continuum of an ordinary being we have a self-knower who is experiencing this mental direct perception apprehending form. This self-knower is not a direct valid cogniser. Also the second moment of a sense direct perception apprehending form is not a valid cogniser. So for these reasons one can say that if it is a direct perception there is no pervasion that it is a direct valid cogniser. All this was mentioned before when we studied the Sautrantika.

The text then goes on to say that a **yogic direct perception** has four divisions: yogic direct perception realising directly subtle impermanence, yogic direct perception realising directly subtle selflessness of a person, yogic direct perception realising directly the coarse selflessness of a person, and yogic direct perception realising directly selflessness of phenomena.

The definition of a yogic direct perception is the same as was posited by the Sautrantika. The text goes on to say that if it is an inferential valid cogniser, then there is a pervasion that it is a conceptual thought. However if it is an inferential cogniser with regard to one particular object, then it doesn't have to be a conceptual thought with regard to that object.

It says here that the inferential cogniser realising impermanent sound is an inferential cogniser with regard to the absence of permanent sound while it is not a conceptual thought with regard to the absence of permanent sound. What it is saying is that by explicitly understanding impermanent sound, the inferential cogniser implicitly understands the absence of permanent sound. Therefore it is a valid cogniser with regards to both impermanent sound and the absence of permanent sound, but it is only a conceptual thought with regards to impermanent sound. It is not a conceptual thought with regard to the absence of permanent sound.

The reason for this is that it can only be a thought with regard to an object that is understood explicitly, meaning that the thought or the concept actually has to arise in the aspect of the object. Here this inferential cogniser realising impermanent sound realises impermanent sound explicitly by arising in the aspect of impermanent sound therefore is also a conceptual thought with regards to impermanent

sound. With regard to the absence of permanent sound, it is only an inferential cogniser, not a conceptual thought, because it doesn't arise in the aspect of the absence of permanent sound, as the absence of permanent sound is only understood implicitly.

We shall stop here. In the next teaching we can go through the modes of asserting selflessnesses, and the various obscurations or abandonments of the path.

Next week you have a discussion and then the week after that you have the examination. Please discuss those topics thoroughly, and then also please come to do the examination, and write down whatever you know. I don't want to say that it is not good to sit and meditate during the examination but there is certain significance in writing down answers, as it actually helps to stabilise one's understanding of the Dharma in the mind.

The reason why I gave permission for some people to meditate during the examination is because they specifically told me that when they try to write down answers to the questions, then their mind actually becomes more confused. Then when they try to sit down and write answers to the questions, it actually generates a disturbance within their mind, a kind of mental disturbance. Because these people explained this to me I gave them special permission to just sit and meditate during the examination. That is the history of that special rule.

Have you some questions?

(Inaudible but reconstructed as follows: With regard to afflictive consciousness, what would happen at the time of enlightenment.. Would the view of a self-sufficient consciousness be eclipsed by a mind viewing selflessness?)

I have already mentioned that arhats and bodhisattvas from the eighth level upwards have abandoned afflictive consciousness.

Does something findable have to be posited as a basis of karmic imprints? If not what would be the basis? Do all schools posit something as a basis for karmic imprints?

Most tenets assert the mental consciousness or one type of the mental consciousness to be the example for the person who is the basis for cause and effect. The only school which doesn't do that is the Prasangika. One has to say that the mental consciousness has to act as the base for the various virtuous and non-virtuous karmic imprints.

What is the difference between a wholly labelled phenomena and a mental image?

If it is wholly labelled then there is no pervasion that it is an existent. As we said, we have an existent wholly labelled like non-compounded space, and we have a non-existent wholly labelled like the horns of a rabbit. On the side of the meaning generality you can have only an existent. Meaning generalities are always existent.

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Edited Version

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