
Ornament for Clear Realisation

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We have been discussing the section in *Ornament for Clear Realisation* on paying homage. In this section we learn how homage is paid to each of the three knowers by stipulating the qualities of each of the knowers, for example, the qualities of the knower of bases.

Monastic method

In the monastery, we would first discuss the sections in the sutras that cover the three knowers. The sutra source is the short, medium and extensive mother Perfection of Wisdom sutras. So, we must find out where there is mention of the three knowers in the Perfection of Wisdom sutra. We also then need to memorise the relevant quotes from the sutras, for example the sutra lines relating to the knower of bases, to use them at the debate sessions. We don't take the texts to the debate ground. But here, we are going straight to the actual meaning of the three knowers and their respective qualities.

As part of studying *Ornament for Clear Realisation*, the monk must memorise the whole text by heart; there's no question about that. Also, for the purpose of analysis and discussions, they need to study various commentaries on *Ornament*. The monks must study the main commentary, Haribhadra's *Commentary Clarifying the Meaning*, and those who are sharp-minded will even memorise that whole text as well. Those monks who can't memorise the whole of Haribhadra's text must at least memorise some key lines of the text to use as references during the debate sessions. Usually, memorisation is done in the morning and then at night after the last debate session, memorised texts are recited to retain memory of all the texts and prayers. I am sharing with you how we study at the monasteries so that you may integrate some parts of this method in your approach to your study.

The main themes of *Ornament for Clear Realisation* are included in what we call the eight topics expounding on eight clear realisations, among which are the three knowers that we are studying now.

It is really important, if not essential, that everyone becomes familiar with these eight topics, not just being able to list them but also knowing their meaning. Last week we began the discussion on the knower of bases.

Knower of bases

Definition

The definition of the knower of bases is:

An exalted wisdom abiding within a lesser vehicle class of realisation conjoined with the wisdom directly realising selflessness in the continuum of the person who possesses it.

We went over the meaning of this definition last week. We must remember that there are three main elements in this definition.

1. The first element is a knower of the bases which should be a *wisdom directly realising selflessness*.
2. The second element is that how all other realisations are *conjoined with the wisdom directly realising selflessness*. The implication is that all other realisations within the continuum of the person who possesses the knower of bases are conjoined with the wisdom directly realising selflessness.
3. The third element is it should be *within a lesser vehicle class of realisations* in the continuum of a superior being.

We are reviewing what we discussed last time so that we know this definition in detail. For example, in the definition of the knower of bases, it says it should be a wisdom directly realising selflessness. Wisdom is a consciousness and last time we talked about what kind of consciousness the wisdom referred to here refers to. It is important to have some background understanding of mind and mental factors here, such as what is the meaning of consciousness and the types of consciousness etc. Consciousness can be either conceptual or non-conceptual thought, a sense consciousness or a mental consciousness, and with regard to cognising its object it can be direct or indirect. We discussed this in the last session, so you can refer to it.

The object to be cognised by this wisdom is the view of selflessness and we are talking about the consciousness of an ordinary being. This means the cognising consciousness must be a mental consciousness. It cannot be a sense consciousness because the sense consciousness of an ordinary being cannot cognise objects such as the view of selflessness. Therefore, we now know that the wisdom directly realising selflessness, as mentioned in the definition of the knower of bases, refers to a mental consciousness. Furthermore, as it is a wisdom *directly realising selflessness*, the person who possesses such a wisdom must be a superior being, or an arya, because only they possess the wisdom directly realising selflessness.

In relation to this subject, last time we talked about an ordinary being and how they cannot have a wisdom consciousness which directly cognises the view of selflessness. However, they can have a consciousness which directly cognises its object. We discussed if the consciousness of an ordinary being is unable to cognise the view of selflessness, then can it cognise any object at all? This is another topic which is open for discussion, and we did raise some questions on that.

Questions arise such as, can a direct mental perceiver or mental consciousness of an ordinary being cognise any objects? If so, what sort of object can it cognise? In relation to this, in Yongzin Phurchok Jampa Gyatso's *Collected Topics on Awareness and Knowledge*, it is mentioned that a direct mental perceiver of an ordinary being is an example of an awareness or consciousness to which the object appears but is not ascertained. Based on that, some say a mental direct perceiver of an ordinary being lacks the capacity to cognise its object. However, according to other texts that I have studied, the mental direct perceiver refers to a kind of very short instant of a

mental direct perceiver that subsequently arises the moment after a direct sense consciousness, such as an eye sense consciousness. This sense consciousness will serve as its immediately preceding condition. This direct mental awareness will serve as a basis for the memory and thought of the sensory object to arise. Since this direct mental consciousness is an instant and subtle moment, it has no capacity to cognise its object.

However, we can still say that it is possible for an ordinary mental consciousness to directly cognise coarse objects. We know if we meditate, for example, on even a very subtle object, such as the view of the selflessness of a person, initially our knowledge of selflessness is very coarse and can be very vague. However, if we continue to meditate on the object for a longer duration, eventually we can unveil or get rid of all the barriers that exist between our mind and that subtle object to the point that, as said in the text, we can eventually have a direct cognition of selflessness that is like pouring water into water, in the sense that our mind becomes one with that object.

We can therefore infer that in the same way as we become familiar with other objects, such as continually thinking of a person you have met before, the image of that person will become clearer and clearer to your mind. From this example, we can say that if we keep imagining the person, then it is possible to have a direct cognition of that person. We know from personal experience that the more we ponder and think about objects, such as day-to-day objects, or persons that we like or dislike, we experience a clearer picture and the thought of those objects will arise more easily.

With respect to subtle objects such as selflessness, the minds of ordinary beings, after repeatedly meditating on the subtle object of selflessness, becomes very habituated with that view of selflessness. Eventually they can have a direct realisation or cognition of selflessness. When this happens, we say that then the person has become a superior or an arya being, by virtue of having realised that subtle object of selflessness. Likewise, of course, an ordinary being can also have the direct cognition of coarse or manifest objects, however it doesn't qualify them to become a superior being.

Anyway, this topic of whether an ordinary being can be a mental direct perceiver cognising any object is subject to much analysis and varying views. Therefore, I encourage you to investigate it further and develop your own thinking about this.

Another reason that supports the idea of ordinary beings having a direct mental consciousness cognising various objects, is that the texts mention five types of clairvoyant power - divine eye, divine ear, knowing of the other's mind, recollection of past lives and miraculous power.

For example, both the divine eye and the divine ear can be possessed by an ordinary being and both refer to the heightened states of mental consciousness of ordinary beings, because the sensory consciousness cannot be a clairvoyant power. These clairvoyant powers are developed through meditation on the four mental levels of concentration and absorptions. Therefore, we know that all five clairvoyant powers are a mental

consciousness, because we cannot really train our sense faculties through meditation.

When we discussed the definition of the knower of bases last week, we covered the meaning of 'conjoined with', so I won't go through that again. But there is also the third important element of this definition where it says *within a lesser vehicle class of realisations*. We did not discuss that one last time.

If you take as an example an exalted wisdom realising selflessness within the continuum of a Buddha, a fully enlightened being, it is a knower of bases and hence is abiding within a lesser vehicle class of realisations. Why does it fall within a lesser vehicle class of realisations? It is because the main focus or the objective aspect of that realisation is the view of selflessness. Since that selflessness is the main object to be meditated on by the followers of the lesser vehicle, the realisation of selflessness within the continuum of a buddha is called 'falling within a lesser vehicle class of realisation'.

Boundary of knower of bases

Now, if we want to find out who can possess a knower of bases, it falls under the outline 'The Boundary of a Knower of Bases'. Here it says that it can be possessed by all the superior beings. Superior beings, which you heard earlier, are those beings who have entered, or who have attained the path of seeing, or any paths above that.

Divisions of the knower of bases

There are four or five types of knowers of bases but here we will focus on the two which we mentioned last time, *the knower of bases close to the resultant mother*, and *the knower of bases distant from the resultant mother*.

The words *close* and *distant* are related to how close or distant the knower of the bases is to the *resultant mother*, which is the state of buddhahood, or omniscience.

The knower of bases within the continuum of Hinayana superior beings are knowers of bases distant from the resultant mother, whereas the knower of bases with the continuum of the Mahayana superior being is the knower of bases close to the resultant mother.

Knower of paths

Now we will move to the knower of paths. In the verse paying homage, the second line says *and which through knowledge of paths causes those helping transmigrators to achieve the welfare of the world*. This is referring to the knower of paths.

Definition

Firstly, the definition or meaning of the knower of paths is:

A Mahayana superior clear realiser conjoined with the wisdom directly realising emptiness in the continuum of a person who possesses it.

We can say that there are two main parts to this definition. The first part is it must be within the continuum of a *Mahayana superior being*, and that it should be *conjoined with the wisdom directly realising emptiness*.

We should take note that within the definition of the knower of paths and knower of bases, we find the words *conjoined with the wisdom directly realising selflessness and*

emptiness. With the definition of the knower of bases, in accordance with the school of Svatantrika school of tenets which we are following, and on which the study of *Ornament* is based, this direct realisation of selflessness refers to the selflessness of persons in terms of the person being empty of a substantially existent self in the sense of self-sufficiency. So, it is not the view of emptiness.

However, when the definition of the knower of the path says 'wisdom directly realising emptiness', we are talking about the view of emptiness in terms of lacking true existence.

As the knower of paths is a Mahayana superior clear realiser, it must be within the continuum of a Mahayana superior being. Mahayana superior beings are those who have attained the Mahayana path of seeing or above the path of seeing.

Technically speaking, we can say that all the realisations and paths within the continuum of Mahayana superior beings do in fact become knowers of paths as they are necessarily conjoined with the wisdom directly realising emptiness as well. We can say that all the clear realisers or the inner realisations of Mahayana superior beings are the knowers of paths.

Divisions of knower of paths

In terms of the divisions of the knower of paths, there are three. Just remember that the definition of knower of paths refers to the inner realisations within the continuum of Mahayana superior beings.

The three divisions are:

1. The knower of paths that know the Hearer's Path
2. The knower of paths that know the Solitary Realiser's Path; and
3. The knower of paths that know the Mahayana Path.

The knower of paths that know the Hearer's Path is referring to the knower of the path realising the selflessness of persons, so that is the knower of paths that knows the Hearer's Path.

The knower of paths that knows the Solitary Realiser's Path is the inner realisation of the voidness of dualistic, or non-duality of subject and object. Such a realisation within the Mahayana superior being is the knower of the path that knows the Solitary Realiser's Path.

And then the realisations within the continuum of Mahayana superior beings which realises the emptiness of true existence is the knower of the path that knows the Mahayana Path.

Boundary of knower of paths

In terms of the boundary of the knower of paths, the knower of paths only exists from the Mahayana path of seeing. The knower of paths can only exist within the continuum of the Mahayana superior beings, so that's the boundary.

Exalted-knower-of-all-aspects

Definition

The definition of an exalted-knower-of-all-aspects is:

A fully developed exalted wisdom directly realising all phenomena.

That will do as a definition of an exalted-knower-of-all-aspects.

Divisions of exalted-knower-of-all-aspects

The exalted-knower-of-all-aspects can be divided into two:

1. An exalted-knower-of-all-aspects that knows suchness; and
2. An exalted-knower-of-all-aspects that knows the conventional truth, or literally the objects or phenomena of diversity.

Boundary

In terms of the boundary, the exalted-knower-of-all-aspects exists only on the buddha ground or only within the continuum of a buddha.

Homework

The first question, which I mentioned in one of the preceding teachings is, can you come up with an example of something which is all three knowers?

The second question relates to the verse of paying homage, wherein the line which pays homage to the knower of bases only mentions hearers. However, as we now understand, the knower of bases can be within the continuum of a bodhisattva or the continuum of a buddha. Therefore, why is the reference in the expression of homage made only to hearers?

Likewise, when you think of the knower of paths, it is not just the property or the realisation of bodhisattvas, as even the buddhas can also possess the knowers of paths.

So again, in paying the homage, why does it only refer to bodhisattvas?

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