MIPHAM'S WHEEL OF ANALYTICAL MEDITATION

ABHIDHARMA VIPASHYANA

An SSBS Summer Elective Course
Five Wednesdays from July 6th to August 3rd, 2005

Sourcebook
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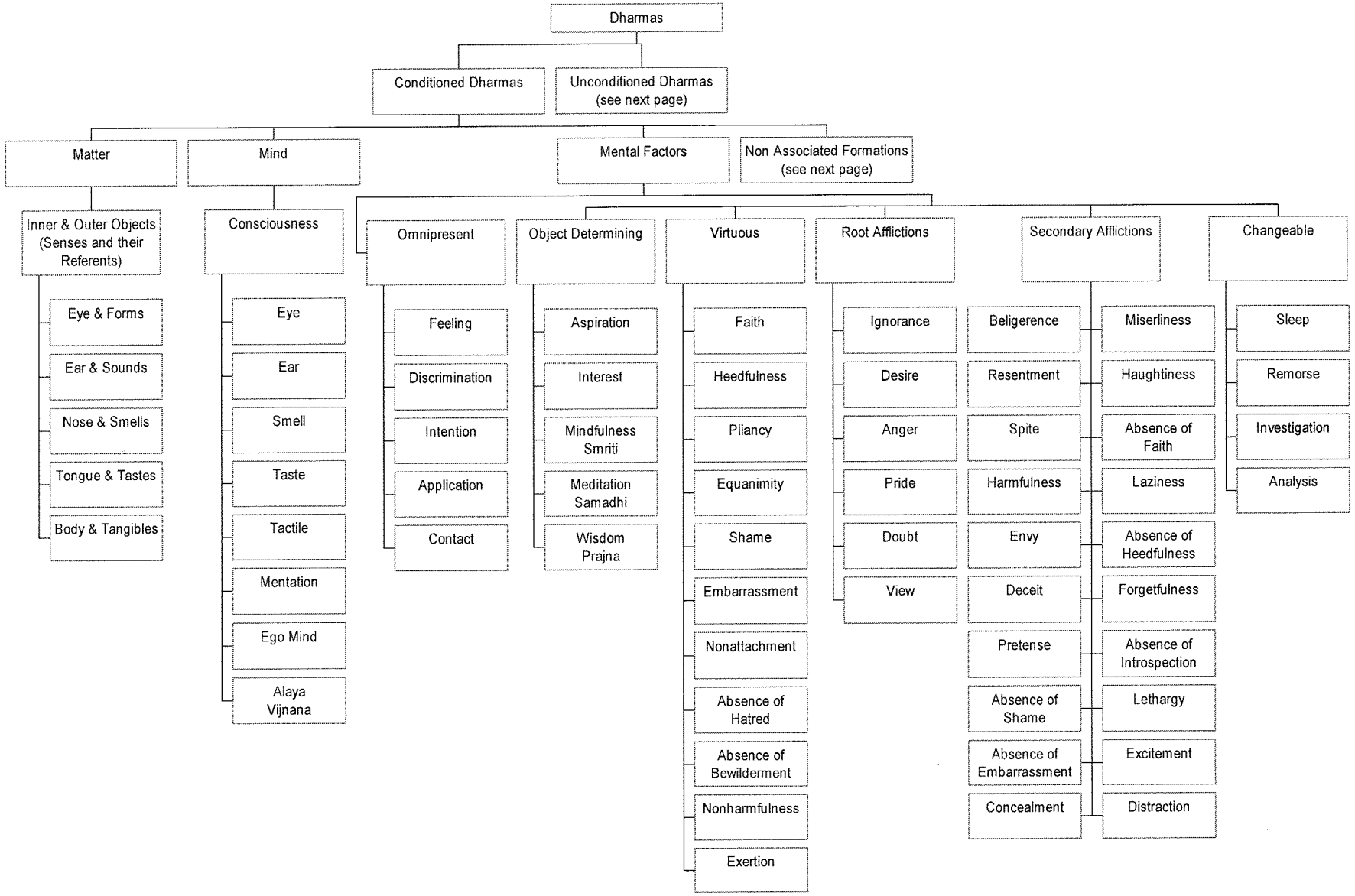

A Thorough Training in Mental Analysis called 'The Wheel of Precise Investigative Meditation'

by Mipham Rinpoche

Namo mañjushriye!

Whatever problems there are in the world
Are created by the afflictions in our own minds.
A mistaken attitude is a cause for the kleshas,
Yet the pattern of our thoughts can be refined.

Here there are three sections:
(i) how to meditate
(ii) the measure of progress, and
(iii) the significance of the practice.

1. How to Meditate

Imagine someone who stirs in you intense attachment,
And consider them now present vividly before you.
Separate this person into five component *skandhas*,
And begin by investigating the physical body.

Consider all its impure substances
Of flesh and blood, bones, marrow, fat,
Internal organs, limbs and organs of sense,
Feces, urine, bacteria, hair, nails and the like,
And the components of earth and other elements.

Think of all these aspects, each of which
Can still be divided even further, and then,
Down to the very tiniest particle,
Mentally dissect them all stage by stage,
Checking whether you feel desire for each in turn.

Since there is nothing we could call "body"
Apart from these substances, varied and impure,
A body is nothing but an unclean contraption,
A bundle of muscles and fibres, a mound of waste,
And seething fluids that ooze and trickle.

Seeing this fact, sit and consider it mindfully.
Once the momentum of this insight fades,
Turn to feelings, perceptions, formations and consciousness,

And look into their nature,
By dividing them into their various aspects.

When you see them as insubstantial like bubbles,
A mirage, a plantain tree or a magical illusion,
You will understand how in these too there is nothing
To which one could ever be attached.
Continue with this thought until it fades.

Then, once it does, do not try to prolong it,
But turn instead to another investigation.
Reflect deeply on how these aggregates,
Which are impure and lack real essence,
Do not remain once they have arisen,
But perish from one moment to the next.

All the civilizations and societies of the past,
Met with only destruction in the end,
And so will those of today and ages yet to come.
The nature of the conditioned can inspire disenchantment.
Death is certain for all living things,
Suddenly it comes, and without warning.

Reflect on how all that we experience in life
Is changing from one moment to the next.
In summary, to the best of your ability,
Consider all the aspects of impermanence
That characterize conditioned things.

Reflect on each in turn with lucid thoughts.
Recognize how the aggregates of those that we desire,
Are transient as lightning, evanescent like bubbles,
And fleeting like clouds in the sky.
Until the momentum of this idea fades,
Focus your attention on nothing else.

Then consider how within each of the aggregates,
Which are momentary and consist of many aspects,
There are experiences we might describe as pain itself,
And those that seem pleasant until they change.
Yet they all provide the cause for future woes,
And thus the skandhas are the basis of suffering.

Reflect as well, as much as you are able,
On all the misery there is within the world.
All is due to the skandhas' imperfections.

There is not the tiniest speck or pin-tip's worth
Of these contaminated aggregates
That is free from the defect of suffering.

As they are the source of suffering,
The skandhas are likened to a filthy swamp,
A pit of burning coals or an island of demons.
Remain with this insight for as long as you can.

At the end, investigate these aggregates,
Which have many aspects and are impermanent,
And whose suffering nature has now been shown,
And look for what it is that we call "I."

When you see that, like a waterfall,
A shower of rain or an empty house,
They are devoid of any intrinsic self,
Remain until this conviction fades.

When it does disappear, then once again
Investigate in the stages as they have been shown.
Sometimes contemplate in no particular sequence,
Or else investigate a variety of things.

Practise investigating these points again and again,
Sometimes considering another's aggregates,
Sometimes looking into your own,
And at times, analyzing all that is conditioned.

Let your attachment to anything be undermined.
In short, renounce any thought that does not
Involve an investigation of these four points1[1],
And turn the wheel of analysis again and again.

The more you analyze, the more your certainty will grow.
Apply therefore a clear mind of intelligence
To all kinds of observations just like these,
And, like wildfire spreading across a grassy plain,
Practise continually without interruption.

Say to yourself: "In the past, I would always
Get caught in my mistaken ideas and attitudes,
Which led to all kinds of useless speculation,
But now I will consider only this instead."

If you find yourself getting tired,
Yet notice that the afflictions still do not arise,
Even without your applying the antidote,
Then rest in equanimity to refresh your mind.

After a while, once your tiredness is no more,
Repeat the investigation just like before,
At all times being mindful and aware
Of the insight the investigation brings.

If, at times, you slip into forgetfulness,
And the afflictions have occasion to arise,
Then take up this investigation once more,
Like reaching for a weapon when enemies appear.

Just as light will banish darkness,
It is almost needless to say that
A precise investigation such as this,
Even if it is only practised a little,
Will do great harm to the kleshas.

However much one understands the flaws
Of this conditioned samsaric world,
One will also understand the unconditioned,
Nirvana's supreme and refreshing peace.

2. The Measure of Progress

Eventually, through familiarity with this practice,
You will naturally appreciate how everything
Included within the five skandhas and the unconditioned
Is manifold, impermanent, painful and devoid of self.

Even without any deliberate effort,
The whole of your experience
Will seem magical and insubstantial,
And you will overcome the kleshas.

When it is free from the waves of the afflictive emotions,
The ocean of your mind is made serene and calm.
This is conducive to gaining mental self-control,
Through which one reaches the samadhi of calm abiding.

If you can then look into the very identity
Of the mind in one-pointed concentration,

That is the extraordinary insight of vipashyana.
It is here that one finds the initial entry point
That is common to all three vehicles.

3. The Significance of the Practice

All illusory phenomena which arise interdependently,
Have never arisen since the very dawn of time,
And so in emptiness--the lack of phenomenal identity—
They are beyond extremes such as sameness or difference.

This absolute space of great indivisible equality,
Is also known as the essence of the sugatas.
Once it is realized, one finds the great nirvana
That abides in neither existence nor quiescence.

This is supremely pure and blissful,
The great unconditioned, totally permanent,
The great self-identity—these are its
Transcendent and unsurpassable qualities.

This is the theme of the highest secret essence tantras,
The all-pervading space of ultimate co-emergent bliss,
It is also referred to as 'naturally arising wisdom,'
A state in which all phenomena have total perfection.

To introduce this directly through the master's
Pith instructions is the approach of the Great Perfection.
Therefore, as a preliminary training
For the mahayana path of both sutra and mantra,
Breaking through the shell of confusion surrounding the conditioned,
This path of precise investigation is excellent indeed.

First, through the power of fine analysis,
One destroys the marks of rising afflictions.
Then through confidence in the emptiness of the aggregates,
One lets go of desires and hopes based on the three realms,
And eventually, by progressing in stages, all conceptual notions
Are pacified completely within the state of emptiness.

Not wishing for any antidotes or further relinquishing,
One is freed entirely from attachment and clinging to extremes.
With the purest compassion beyond attachment,
One courses through existence without the slightest fear,
Like a bird soaring through absolute space,
And attains the level of a supreme bodhisattva.

Based on the texts of noble masters, I have here explained
The important points of the paths of the three vehicles,
Which provide a training in mental investigation,
As a preliminary to the paths of shamatha and vipashyana.

The more familiar you become with this practice
Of thorough training in investigative meditation,
The more the afflictions will diminish,
And the subtler the kleshas will become.

This will make it easier to practise shamatha,
And just like gold that is treated in fire
So it becomes malleable and ready to craft,
Mind will be refined once it is freed from attachment.

Imagine if someone were to offer plentiful gifts
To the Three Jewels for a thousand godly years.
It is said in the sutras that the merit of this generosity
Is surpassed by the merit of even a moment's reflection
On impermanence, emptiness and selflessness.

This is because the teachings say that
To recite the Four Seals of the Mahayana Dharma
Is equivalent to understanding the teachings
In the eighty-four thousand sections of the Dharma.

If you meditate well on the points explained here,
Since they bring together the key points of many thousands of sutras,
You will easily gain the treasure of knowing perfectly the profound and vast,
And liberation will swiftly follow in its wake.

By the virtue of this explanation, may all beings
Tormented by the troubles of this degenerate age,
Meet this elixir-like teaching on non-attachment,
And, through its power, reach a state of perfect peace.

This was written by Mipham Nampar Gyalwa in the Iron Hare year [1891] on the 18th day of the tenth month.

Mangalam!

Translated by Adam Pearcey, based on a version prepared by Garth Copenhaver and Adam Pearcey in 2002 through the kindness of Ringu Tulku Rinpoche.

Note 1: Multiplicity, impermanence, suffering and selflessness

ANALYTICAL
MEDITATION

Acharya Tenpa Gyaltsen

Oral Translation by Tyler Dewar

TALK 2

TRANSCENDING SINGLE UNITS – EXTERNAL OBJECTS

We might think that meditation means coming to a state of complete quietness in which our mind becomes very peaceful. We might think that this kind of tranquility, where nothing much is happening, is meditation. While this type of peacefulness, tranquility, or silence is necessary to practice meditation in Buddhism, it is not sufficient. In addition to coming to a state of peaceful tranquility, we also need to wake up from our sleep. And to wake up, the practice of analytical meditation can be helpful.

One thing that we need to wake up from is our confusion. We often make confusion our gomden, or meditation cushion, and then we sit on it to meditate. But because our very cushion is confusion, we'll never be able to wake up from our sleep. The first thing we need to do is to get up from that cushion. We need to recognize our confusion, the ways that we are mistaken. We might begin our meditation with a good motivation saying, "I'm going to rise from my confusion. I'm going to get rid of my confusion." However if we have not recognized what our confusion is, these motivations and aspirations won't be of much benefit. In contrast, if we become familiar with and recognize what our confusion is, it will be easy to become liberated from it.

To illustrate this Khenpo Tsultrim Rinpoche gave an example. There's a story in Lhasa about someone who went to the Potala palace, an important pilgrimage site. This person wanted to look in the windows of the palace, but there were iron bars on them, so he poked his head between the bars and looked around. When he was ready to leave he discovered that his head was caught between the bars. He thought he was really stuck and didn't know what to do. A few hours later some of his friends came along. "There's absolutely nothing I can do!" he said to them, "I'm going to die here! I have an excellent place to die – this is the Potala palace – but the manner in which I'm dying is pretty pathetic!" Then another friend showed up and said, "You're really stupid! All you need to do is remember how you put your head in there in the first place. If you got your head in, then you're going be able to get your head out. Just remember how you put your head in there and then do the same thing for the way out." So this guy thought back to the way he had stuck his head in between the bars and then arranged his head in the same way and was able to pull it out.

Our confusion is just like that. It's something that's simple to understand yet we become mistaken as to what it actually is and end up spinning around in cycles in this confusion. If we actually recognize what our confusion is, it will be easy for us to liberate ourselves from it. Therefore, in analytical meditation, it is important to first identify the basis or the ground of our confusion. In the teachings we are taught that the basis of our confusion, the earliest form of mistakenness, is fourfold. It includes clinging to things as being single units, clinging to things as permanent, clinging to things as being special, and clinging to things as having a self.

In the *Madhyamakaavatara* the master Chandrakirti put this in verse form when he said, "Since they see mentally that all mental afflictions and problems arise from the view of the transitory collection, and realize that the self is the object of that view, yogins and yoginis transcend a self."

Confusion is simply a thought. But it doesn't remain merely a thought. When confusion solidifies, it becomes a view. It turns from being a thought into being a view or an outlook. When the thought becomes a view it becomes very difficult to work with because it's very solid. What is this confusion looking at when it hardens and turns into a view? What does it take as its observed object? It's taught that it takes as its observed object the skandhas, which are referred to in the verse as the "transitory collection."

There are many ways in which our confused minds view the five skandhas, but foremost among these are views that they are single units, permanent, and special. On the basis of having viewed the skandhas with those three qualities, the mind then takes that 'transitory collection' to be a self; it takes it to be 'me.' If we really look at the way we are, we'll see that we're a collection of five skandhas. But when we look at ourselves, we don't remember that. For example, if someone says, "Lama Tenpa!" I respond by thinking, "That's me and I'm singular." I don't remember that I am multiple things. Instead I think that I'm one thing, a singular unit. Not only that, I think I'm permanent, that I'll never die. And on top of that, when someone calls my name, I think I'm special. These types of thoughts arise in our minds.

The analytical meditation on these topics is connected to the meditation on personal selflessness. We all have this thought that clings to ourselves as being singular. We can see this in our experience. Clinging to being a single unit means that we think of ourselves as being totally unconnected with everything and everyone else; we think that we're just floating along as one unit. We single ourselves out from everything else and assume that we're completely unconnected to everything else. We're very selective in this way. We take this singular thing to be ourselves and we think that the singular thing that each of us is cannot be divided into subsections, it can never be annihilated and it doesn't depend on anything else. This very clinging becomes the basis for self-clinging, or ego-clinging, or fixation upon a self. This constant thinking, "I, I, I, me, me, me," has, as its basis, this clinging to single units.

Some people might think, "We need this type of thought because if we didn't have it, there wouldn't be any basis for ourselves. Why is it so harmful for us to think in this way?" Actually this thought that clings to the self as being singular takes the vast mind that we have and shrinks it down into a tiny stuffy prison. We all have a vast mind that is beyond any limit whatsoever. The thought that clings to the self as being singular takes this vast mind and shrinks it down into something very limited and small. Then, on this basis, fear arises. Fear is mainly centered on gain and loss. This fear comes because our clinging to ourselves as being singular is very solid. As our clinging to ourselves as being singular becomes more solid, our fear centered on gain and loss becomes stronger. It's taught that all other forms of confusion arise on the basis of this clinging to ourselves as singular. Therefore the first thing we work with is transforming this thought, this view that clings to ourselves as being singular.

From a Buddhist perspective, this thought that clings to things as singular produces all forms of confusion and is the basis for all suffering. Once we've recognized that, what do we do about it? We might react by thinking, "Well, I'm going to just get rid of it. I'm going to cast it away." But this is a coarse level of thought. It's a mundane and ordinary thought. If we completely cast out our thoughts that cling to things as singular, we won't find any wisdom.

We have to find wisdom within the thought that clings to things as singular. Even though these thoughts form the basis of our confusion, we need to find our wisdom right within them. When we don't recognize our confusion, it becomes the basis of all mental afflictions and suffering. But if we come to recognize our confusion, if we come to have a good discussion, a good debate, with our confusion, and thereby recognize its nature, we will discover wisdom right within that spot. Therefore, in analytical meditation, we don't throw away our confusion; rather, we discover wisdom and certainty within the ground of confusion.

Do you feel confident that you will be able to find wisdom that dispels confusion within your confusion? If you do, you'll be enthusiastic and delighted about the practice of analytical meditation. But most of the time we don't think that we'll be able to find wisdom that dispels confusion within our confusion. We think that we need to pray to the Three Jewels and to the gods in order to dispel our confusion. We think that confusion is bad and that, in order to dispel confusion, we need to look to something or someone else. If we have that type of motivation when approaching analytical meditation we won't be enthusiastic toward the practice. Thinking that we will never be able to find wisdom within our confusion is the same thing as thinking that our begging bowl is empty.

Meditation

We begin with a session of shamatha in order to dispel the coarse level of drowsiness, or torpor, in our minds so that we can arise within a clear state of mind. With our clear and lucid mind we begin our analytical meditation. We identify an example of something that we think of as being singular – it can be anything that comes to mind. We identify it and write it down, then we visualize it in front of us as clearly as possible. In the past the first thing that always came to my mind as something that I cling to as being singular was a tree. Now I think of begging bowls. I've been talking about begging bowls a lot lately so now I have a lot of thoughts about begging bowls! Whatever arises in your mind is fine; it makes no difference what the example is. But from my perspective what appears is a begging bowl. So first I identify a begging bowl as the basis for my clinging to singularity. When we pick a begging bowl as our example, we don't need to think about whether the begging bowl is full or empty. What we're working with is the thought that thinks of the begging bowl as being singular. After we visualize the begging bowl in front of us, we need to have a debate with it. Are we saying that the begging bowl is singular? Is the begging bowl saying to us that it is singular? We wait a while to see what is being said.

Then we can ask ourselves three questions about the supposed singularity of this begging bowl.

- Does the singularity of the begging bowl exist inside the begging bowl?
- Does the singularity of the begging bowl exist outside the begging bowl?
- Is the mere collection of the parts of the begging bowl the singularity?"

If we debate in this way, we'll find an answer to these questions. If we simply put the begging bowl in front of us, and say, "This begging bowl is something I cling to as being singular. This singularity is the basis for all confusion and suffering," our fear will become greater and greater and we'll just sit there terrified of the begging bowl. Nothing of benefit will happen. We'll be sitting in front of the begging bowl terrified, thinking that we need to get rid of this thought that clings to the begging bowl as being singular. We'll pray to the Three Jewels and the gods and start reciting mantras. Personally, this type of approach is something that I like – it makes me feel better – but it doesn't benefit much because it just makes the begging bowl more and more powerful. Instead, we need to ask the begging bowl questions and examine it.

When we're doing this practice it's good to identify three examples: an object that we don't feel any attachment or aversion toward, an object that we feel attachment toward, and an object that we feel aversion toward. We work with these in stages.

In our meditation today we'll work with a neutral object. It doesn't have to be a begging bowl – it can be anything. We achieve a clear mind and then take whatever appears as a singular object as our example. We visualize the object clearly in front of us, and then we ask ourselves:

- Are we calling it singular?
- Is it calling itself singular?

We then examine the example to see if it's really singular. We ask ourselves:

- Does the singular unit exist within the object?
- Does the singular unit exist outside of the object?
- Is the mere collection of the parts of the object the singularity?

TALK 4

TRANSCENDING SINGLE UNITS – THE MIND

We've been examining single units and doing analytical meditation on that. First, we took an external example as the basis of analysis. Yesterday we took an inner object – our bodies – to see whether any kind of single unit existed in relation to them. No single unit could be found anywhere within the form skandha. Since we couldn't find it, this single unit had probably escaped somewhere before we analyzed. It was arrogant and haughty, sitting there like a master saying, "I am a single unit," but now that we've applied our eye of prajna, we can't find it. So it has probably escaped to our minds. We shouldn't take a break from applying our analysis until we've reached complete certainty that there's no single unit. Since it has probably escaped to our mind, today we'll focus on mind in relation to single units.

To examine whether or not our minds are single units we need to use the *Lorig* composed by Khenpo Rinpoche. The *Lorig* is the key that allows us to open the door, a mirror that reflects our minds. We can apply it to the analysis. Otherwise we might just sit there thinking, "Mind is not a single unit. Mind is not a single unit." That won't help us much.

Once again we begin with a brief period of shamatha and through this we accomplish a clear and lucid mind. We arise in that lucid mind and isolate the thought that thinks our

mind is singular. Then we examine how this could be the case. To begin we look at all of the classifications in *Lorig*. We ask:

- If our mind is singular, what kind of a mind is this singular mind?
- Is it a primary mind or a mental event?

First we think it must be a primary mind because primary mind is important and mental events aren't. At this point we recall the numerous classifications for primary minds. For example, we can have a mistaken primary mind or a non-mistaken primary mind. There's a primary mind of the present, a primary mind of the past, a primary mind apprehending red, a primary mind apprehending white, and so on. So we bring to mind all of the classifications that we can in relation to mind.

Looking at each one of these minds individually we will see that none of them is a single unit. In terms of primary minds there could be eight different primary minds: the five sense consciousnesses, the mental consciousness, the afflicted mind, and the all-base consciousness, or alayavijnana. If we look at the sense consciousnesses there are five of them, so there's no single unit there. We then take your analysis further and look at each one of them individually. Once we've analyzed each of them, we actually say to ourselves, "*That* is not a single unit." We look at the eye consciousness and recall that there are further sub-classifications of eye consciousness. Again we say, "*That* is not a single unit." We shift our analysis to the next consciousness, the ear consciousness, and in the same way say, "*That* is not a single unit." We continue through each of the primary minds in this way.

We might then conclude that the single unit lies in the mind consciousness. But when we look at the mind consciousness we see that it can be sub-classified into conceptual and non-conceptual consciousness. We look at the conceptual consciousness and find that there's no single unit in that. We say to ourselves, "There's no single unit there." We look

at the non-conceptual consciousness and find no single unit there. Likewise we look at the afflicted mind and the all-base consciousness; we find and say to ourselves that there's no single unit there.

This process is like peeling off the layers of an onion. Finding that no single unit exists in the eye consciousness is like peeling off the first level. When we find no singularity in the ear consciousness we peel off the next level. We continue this process all the way to the alayavijnana, or all-base consciousness. Going through this process we peel off all of the layers of the onion to find that actually there's no single unit there. Concluding that there's no single unit in the all-base consciousness is like peeling off the last level of an onion. This stage is called certainty – all of the onion has been exhausted and we can say with complete certainty that there's nothing there, there's no single unit. When this certainty has been generated we rest evenly.

When we've finished dismantling the onion of primary mind we might find that the single unit has escaped to another onion – the onion of mental events. Again, by progressing through all of the classifications of mental events we won't be able to find any single unit. When the onion of mental events has exhausted itself we can again rest evenly.

There are two main ways that we can engage in this type of analysis. The first was explained yesterday – we ask three main questions in relation to the object of analysis. For example, when we're looking for a single unit in primary minds we ask whether the single unit exists within the primary mind, whether it exists outside of the primary mind or whether it exists as a mere collection of the aspects of the primary mind. We can apply this three-fold questioning process to any object of analytical meditation we are working with.

The second method was explained using the example of the onion. In this method we simply look at whatever primary mind we're looking at, such as an eye consciousness, and

we see whether there's a single unit in it. When we have concluded that there isn't, we tell ourselves that there isn't a single unit in it. We give ourselves a kind of pointing out, saying, for example, "There is no single unit in the eye consciousness." We then peel off that layer and proceed to the next layer, which would be the next sense consciousness. With this method we don't have to engage in a lot of contemplation at each stage. We can simply look at the primary mind, recall all of the classifications and subdivisions it has, and then conclude to ourselves that it is not a single unit. For example, we look at the eye consciousness, recall it's classifications, conclude to ourselves that it's not a single unit, move on to the ear consciousness, look at its classifications, tell ourselves that it's not a single unit, and proceed in that way. It's like peeling an onion; we don't have to examine each skin at each stage too much; instead, we just say, "This is not a single unit." We peel the skin back, examine the next skin, say, "This is not a single unit," and so on. We should be able to recall all of the classifications that are presented in *Lorig*; otherwise it will be like leaving half of the onion still there. We don't have to peel away all of the onion in one session. It will be sufficient if we manage to peel away all of the onion in one lifetime. We will have accomplished Buddhahood in one life! If we all of the onion vanish we will have accomplished Buddhahood.

Yesterday we examined whether a single unit existed in the body – this is the progressive stages of meditation on *Collected Topics*. Today we'll examine single units in relation to mind – this is the progressive stages of meditation on *Lorig*. We'll have to see what comes tomorrow. Perhaps we'll need a progressive stages of meditation on *Tarig*! Khenpo Rinpoche always says that both *Collected Topics* and *Lorig* are progressive presentations of meditation stages.

We might think that, because there are many classifications of mind presented in the *Lorig*, we must have various types of minds. But in the Buddhadharma tradition it's said that one person has only one mental continuum. The many classifications of mind presented in *Lorig* are not trying to teach that there are many mental continua. They are

simply pointing out that there are many different aspects and functions of mind. Sometimes I explain that it means that the mental continuum is more than one but less than two. More than one means that mind has more than one facet or aspect. If it had only one aspect, mind would be very limited and stuffy. But mind has vast various extensive aspects. There are more than fifty mental events explained, and mind has even more aspects than that. Yet mind has only one mental continuum. All of these aspects are contained within one continuum, and so the continuum is less than two. The only reason that numerous classifications are presented is to serve as an antidote for thoughts that cling to things as being singular. Once we have dismantled thoughts that cling to things as single units, we don't need to rely on them.

Since there are many classifications, we might think that are there are multiple things. But if there are no single units, how could there be multiple things? There are many classifications but there are no multiple things; there are no multiple things because there are no single units. Even the thought that thinks there is a single unit is not a single unit. Thoughts that think, "This is not a single unit," are just tools that we use in our analytical mediation. Even they do not exist. They are beyond what can be expressed. This is what is taught in *Lorig*. If we look at it in this way we can see that *Lorig* is actually a very profound presentation of progressive stages of meditation on selflessness. This is how Khenpo Rinpoche teaches it.

Meditation

We'll begin with a brief period of shamatha meditation; through that we accomplish a clear and lucid mind. We arise within that clear and lucid mind and slowly isolate a thought that thinks that mind is a single unit. We don't need to rush when we're doing this; when we're isolating this thought we can go slowly at first. We need to be relaxed. The sign of a meditator is to be relaxed. Finishing is not important. It's very important for us to relax while we're doing this. It will be fine if we only peel off one or two layers of the

onion. If we manage to finish the onion completely that too will be fine. But whatever we do we need to be relaxed. The two important things to keep in mind are to be relaxed and to proceed through each stage in a proper way.

TALK 6

TRANSCENDING PERMANENCE – CESSATION

We have been working with the basis of our confusion, which is the apprehension of single units. We have done a brief analytical meditation on single units, taking an object as the basis of our analysis. However, once we have concluded that there is no single unit within that object we have to bring about some kind of transformation in the mind that is doing the analysis. If we were to focus our analytical meditation only on objects and not examine the mind that is looking at these objects we would become skilled in analyzing the absence of single units in outer objects but, as for our minds, we would become like dry Sophists. We'd be no different from ordinary professors in that sense. So when analyzing whether or not there is a single unit in an object we also have to effect a transformation in the mind that is doing that analysis.

As it is our thoughts that think there are single units, we need to change these thoughts in our mind. We won't be able to transform our minds immediately. If we have strong and solid clinging to single units, we won't be able to get rid of that clinging right away. What we can do is approach it slowly and in a relaxed manner. If we are spacious and relaxed in our approach to transforming the thoughts in our minds, one day we will find that we have transformed our minds. We can't transform everything within one session, but it is sufficient if we transform everything within one lifetime!

Now we've come to the second stage, which is looking at the mind that clings to permanence, the mind that apprehends permanence. I think we all have a good understanding of clinging to permanence; it doesn't require an extensive explanation. As an antidote to our clinging to permanence, we contemplate impermanence.

The Buddha taught that the contemplation on impermanence is important at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of our path. It is important at the beginning because it causes us to enter the Dharma; it's important in the middle because it catalyses our exertion; and it's important at the end because impermanence serves as a condition for the ripening of the final fruition. The Buddha said that beings have a great many thoughts and discriminations and that, of these thoughts and discriminations, the best thought and the best discriminating notion is impermanence. The thought of impermanence is taught to be the best thought because it benefits this life and our path the most.

However, we might not think that impermanence is the best thought. We might think it is the least beneficial thought we can have. We don't like to hear about impermanence, and we don't have a great desire to do analytical meditation on impermanence. The Buddha taught that impermanence is the best news, but we think that impermanence is the worst news.

What is impermanence? Impermanence is that which is suitable to arise, abide and cease. The reason that news of impermanence doesn't sound pleasant is that when we think of impermanence we don't think of arising and abiding, we only think of ceasing. That is pretty bad! It's not in accordance with the nature of people to think about impermanence in this way because the nature of people is to think positive thoughts. Also impermanence isn't explained in great detail or clearly in the books we read. Often the main emphasis in books and in lama's teachings is on the cessation part of impermanence – things dying and ceasing to exist. This type of explanation is presented from the perspective of a

certain need – it is a remedy for those who have fallen into the sleep of laziness. Impermanence is taught in this manner to wake us up from the sleep of laziness. But if we look at how impermanence is taught in the texts, it's taught to have the three qualities of arising, abiding and ceasing.

When we engage in analytical meditation on these three characteristics of impermanence we start by going in the reverse order – we start with cessation. We begin with a period of shamatha and then identify an example of something that we cling to as permanent. It doesn't matter what it is; we simply let it arise in our mind and then write it down. Once we have identified an example, we work with it by meditating on coarse impermanence and subtle impermanence. For example, if we have chosen a tree as our basis of analysis, we first visualize a beautiful tree in full blossom, a tree that is very alive. Gradually we visualize its leaves falling, its branches starting to rot and then falling off. Finally the tree falls down, rots, and disappears. This is coarse impermanence. When the tree has dissolved we should look at our mind and ask what it is saying about this. What kind of reaction is our mind having? What kind of feeling is arising?

Second, we can meditate on a tree with which we have a strong personal connection. It may be a tree that we planted on our own property or tended in our garden. Once again we visualize the tree becoming fully blossomed then getting old and rotting away. When this tree has dissolved we look at our mind to see what kind of reaction it has, what kind of expressions our mind is making. We should notice if there is a difference between the feelings that arise when the ordinary tree disintegrates and when our own tree disintegrates. Is there a difference in the heaviness of the feelings?

Third, we can do the same analysis, this time examining the tree of our neighbor. We may be a little bit averse to the tree of our neighbor. When the leaves and then the branches start falling, then the trunk falls down and starts rotting away, what kind of feelings and reactions arise?

These are examples of coarse impermanence because the various stages are visible to the eye. We can see the tree growing, its leaves blossoming, then the leaves falling, the branches falling off, and so on. This is a coarse way of disintegrating.

For the analysis of subtle impermanence, we recognize that the tree is going through a process of ceasing and we ask ourselves:

- How is it going through this process of ceasing?
- Why is it going through a process of ceasing? What is making it cease?

Each of us has to find answers for these questions ourselves.

Meditation

Today we'll meditate on coarse impermanence. We start with a period of shamatha meditation; through this we accomplish a clear and lucid mind with which we arise for our analytical meditation. Then we identify an example of an object that we think of as being permanent. It can be anything that arises when we think, "What does my mind cling to as being permanent?" For example, a tree could arise. In that case, we visualize the tree very clearly. First we visualize an ordinary tree, an ownerless tree. We get a clear visualization of the tree in its prime, in full bloom, beautiful and alive. Then we visualize the leaves slowly turning yellow, the branches falling off, and finally the tree trunk falling down, rotting, and completely dissolving until no trace of it remains. At that stage we look at our mind to see how it is reacting.

- What kinds of feelings are arising?
- What is our mind saying about this?

Then we rest evenly. We apply the same process to the tree in our garden and then to our neighbour's tree. So now we'll do the cleansing breaths.

~ Brief Meditation ~

What did our mind tell us when the tree dissolved? Was our mind sad or happy? Most people find that their minds become sad when they get to this stage – except when they are meditating on their neighbor's tree! Sometimes fear also arises. We should ask ourselves why our mind becomes sad and frightened when a tree dissolves. When we look at it, we see that what makes our mind sad or frightened is not the mere cessation of the tree but the thought that the tree is going from the state of being a thing to the state of being a non-thing. We think that first there is a beautiful tree that is a thing and then this thing becomes a non-thing. We think that first there is an existent and then, in the end, there is a non-existent. However in the Buddhadharma there is nothing that can become a non-thing once it is a thing. No non-things can arise on the basis of a thing. When something like a tree disintegrates, or ceases, we should not think that it is becoming non-existent or entering into the realm of non-things.

After meditating on our first example we can also meditate on the body of a Buddha; we can meditate on a statue of the Buddha and it's disintegration. Likewise, we can meditate on an image of our root guru and contemplate the disintegration of that. Finally we can apply the analysis to our own body. Some people might think meditating on the cessation of pure objects such as images of the Buddha and the root guru is non-virtuous because they think that when they meditate on the cessation of those images they are actually causing the destruction of the body of the Buddha or killing their root guru. That's not at all the case and it's not at all a negative action to do this meditation. It's good to think about cessation in this way. We should apply this meditation on cessation to everything. The reason we apply this meditation to everything will become clear when we come to the meditation on arising.

TALK 7

TRANSCENDING PERMANENCE – CEASING & ARISING

Coarse Impermanence

We have come to the second stage of the analytical meditation that counteracts self-clinging, which is the meditation on impermanence. The other day I talked briefly about coarse impermanence. Since we all have plenty of experience with course impermanence there is no need to elaborate on it here. In terms of analytical meditation on course impermanence it is helpful to use three examples: a neutral object, such as an ordinary tree; an object one is attached to, such as a tree in our garden; and an object that one has aversion toward, such as a tree in our neighbour's garden.

We can also look at how our clinging to permanence differs with respect to different objects. For example, we might be aware that trees and the bodies of sentient beings disintegrate but have the notion that the body of a Buddha is something permanent. We should visualize the stages of disintegration, or cessation, of a Buddha body. We might find it even harder to imagine that the body of our root guru will eventual disintegrate and vanish. We could visualize the body of our root guru in front of us and then think that it gradually disintegrates. We should watch what's going on in our mind while we are doing that. We will probably have a slight feeling of discomfort, or unease, when we

visualize the body of a Buddha or the body of our root guru disintegrating. Yet when we do creation stage meditation and completion stage meditation we think it's very good if all these visualized deity bodies, buddha bodies, and lama bodies vanish at the end of the meditation. We should see what's going on in our mind when we like or dislike it that something disintegrates.

When we meditate on coarse impermanence we do it in a mentally imputed way, which means we purposely visualize something disintegrating. It's still very coarse because we purposely make something vanish in our mind.

Subtle Impermanence

The second stage is subtle impermanence and here we have to ask ourselves two questions:

- Why do things cease to exist?
- How do they cease to exist?

The reasons that things cease to exist can be found in the *Classifications of Reasons*, which is one of the texts studied here. We could say that this is the progressive stages of meditation on *Classifications of Reasons*. When we read the *Classifications of Reasons*, we find that the reason things cease to exist is because they are produced by causes and conditions. We could state this as a reasoning: things cease because they arise or because they are produced. That means that the cause for things to cease lies in the things themselves. The cause for the arising of things also lies in the things themselves. There is no extrinsic cause that destroys things. So when we say that things cease because they arise, or because they are produced, we are saying that the potential for things to cease lies in things themselves.

There's a quotation from the teachings of the Buddha in which he talked about such impermanence:

> *Whatever arises has to cease in the end.*
>
> *Whatever goes up, or stands up, has to come down in the end.*
>
> *Whatever meets has to part in the end.*
>
> *And whatever is accumulated becomes scattered again in the end.*

These four sentences are about impermanence. The actual cause for things to arise and cease lies in things themselves; it is nowhere other than in things themselves. And the way things cease is naturally, they cease on their own accord. There's no need for any conditions or causes from outside to destroy things because it is the nature of things to disintegrate on their own. They cease naturally and do not have to depend on other causes and conditions for their cessation.

In brief, the meditation on impermanence pertains to the two aspects of coarse impermanence and subtle impermanence. Within the context of coarse impermanence we can take many different examples and think about their disintegration or make them disintegrate mentally. Within the context of subtle impermanence we should ask ourselves:

- What is the reason or the cause for things to cease?
- How do they cease?

At the Nitartha Institute we learn what analytical mediation is and how to do it. Here, the explanation is the main part. But when we actually do analytical meditation we have to do each one of these steps for a few days or a few weeks. We cultivate our understanding over many sessions.

Arising

Impermanence has three aspects – ceasing, arising and abiding. So far we have covered the different stages of meditation on the cessation aspect of impermanence. Now we come to the arising aspect.

Remember the trees that you disintegrated in your meditation? What kind of feeling came up in your mind when they ceased? For most people there is a slight feeling of unease or fear. There might also be sadness. When all the trees have disintegrated, or ceased to exist, we think, "There's nothing left so that is really the end of that." We can't really think of what comes next. But if we can think beyond the absence of the trees we come to the second point, which is arising. Cessation becomes the very basis, or the cause, for something new to arise.

In the Buddhist tradition it is not explained that things such as trees disintegrate into nothing and then there are just non-things, or nothing at all. On the contrary, when all the big trees that one has thought about have vanished, many small new trees start to grow. The very cessation of one big tree becomes the basis, or the cause, for the growth of many small trees out of it. This applies in a general way. So the basic cause for things to arise is that something ceases.

We could state this as a reasoning: things, as the subject, possess arising because something ceases. Things have the potential to both cease and to arise. This is important because in the Buddhist tradition cessation is the actual door for arising – if there is no cessation there is no arising. If we keep that in mind we will think about arising and ceasing in a proper way. We won't have a feeling of unease or discomfort when we think about cessation; we won't be sad or afraid of it. The way to do that is, once again, in terms of coarse arising and subtle arising.

In terms of coarse arising, first we think about all our trees, we think that they have ceased altogether. But we don't stop at that. We remember that new trees grow from the ceased trees. We can connect this with the three examples of trees: a tree in one's own garden, a tree in one's neighbor's garden, and then just any tree.

In terms of subtle impermanence, we can reverse the four sentences on impermanence by the Buddha that we read before: Whatever comes apart has to meet again. Whatever has died will be reborn or arise again. Whatever falls down has to go up again. And whatever gets scattered becomes accumulated.

Khenpo Rinpoche says that you can take the example of airports or train stations or bus stations. First think that people depart and then think that they arrive again. When people travel, those who stay behind and those who go might cry and be very sad, but when they return they are overjoyed to meet each other again. What is the cause for this arriving and the joy that goes along with it? You have to have departed first in order to come back. The reverse is also true: in order for somebody to depart they first have to have arrived. In that way arising and ceasing, or coming and going, are mutually dependent.

Khenpo Rinpoche once gave me an instruction that is very similar. I live in Hamburg and most of the time I stay on my own in my room in my flat. Khenpo Rinpoche said to me, "If you stay alone too much your thinking becomes somewhat frozen. You have to be flexible. Sometimes you have to go out to a train station or a bus station and watch people coming and going." That's how arising and ceasing is. First we do analytical meditation with respect to cessation and then we do the same with respect to arising. When we think about arising we should see that things arise due to a limitless number of causes and conditions that precede the actual arising of the thing. When we go back in time we see that there is no end to the causes for something arising. The important point here is that each of the causes that precede the arising of something has to cease; otherwise, the result

will not arise. If the causes didn't cease, we would be stuck with whatever cause we had at the time. So only if all the preceding causes have ceased can something that is the result of those causes arise. If we think about impermanence in this way we will get to a very good understanding of arising.

Meditation

So now we will meditate. First we can meditate on cessation. We meditate that the things we take as examples cease; we then look at our mind to see how it feels. We see whether we are sad or afraid or feeling uneasy, and if we are, we say to ourselves, "No need for that. It is mistaken." Then we start to meditate on the arising aspect of impermanence. We could think about the many different causes and conditions that lead to the arising of something, and be aware that from the cessation of things new things arise, which might look pretty much the same as the old ones.

First we do the three cleansing of the stale breath and then we do a short period of shamatha meditation.

TALK 11
BEING SPECIAL

We've been discussing analytical meditation about single units and permanence and have completed a brief analytical meditation on these topics. We'll now move on to discuss being special. If the analytical meditation on single units and permanence goes well, then the meditation on being special will be easy.

Our thoughts that cling to things being special are a great form of confusion and are posited as the third basis of our confusion. Clinging to single units is the first, permanence is the second, and taking things to be special is the third.

I would like to explain this with a story. In Tibet there are three different categories of horses: supreme, middling and lesser horses. An excellent or supreme horse is one for which we don't need to use a whip. The mere sight of the whip makes the horse run; even a picture or photo image of a whip will make it run. A middling horse needs more. It needs to hear the sound of the whip and have a little bit of contact with the whip in order to start running. And a lesser horse not only needs contact with the whip but also to be whipped hard. When it feels the whipping in the marrow of its bones, it will finally start running.

Which of these horses should we emulate? Most people think that we should be like the best horse - the supreme one. If we're not at that supreme performance level, we'll get

there through our practice. But if we think like this our path will be very difficult. Striving to be the best horse shouldn't be the goal of our practice. Rather we should recognize that there is no need to classify horses and ourselves into categories of good, middling and worse. We just need to recognize what qualities we have and proceed with our practice on that basis.

Thoughts about being special are predominant in people. Perhaps Westerners don't have these thoughts as much as Easterners. In the East these thoughts are very strong. For example, there are strong distinctions among the classes, between religious or spiritual traditions, and between the genders. These thoughts that cling to things as being special, or possessing differences, is *keparjen* in Tibetan. It means literally to possess or to be endowed with differences. These thoughts that cling to differences are the basis of dualistic appearances and dualistic clinging.

Clinging to single units and to permanence are two types of clinging but they don't become the basis or strong foundation for duality. However, clinging to things as being special or as possessing inherent differences creates duality. Our thoughts that cling to things as being special select certain things out and separate them from everything else. These thoughts take things to be completely unconnected with everything else, making them into "rhinoceroses."

What harm is done by thoughts that take things to be special or possessing inherent differences? When we have these thoughts, we are not able to relax our minds. Our minds become restless. These thoughts are a strong basis for our confusion and are one of the greatest obstacles to traversing the path. When we first enter the path, these thoughts that take things to be special may be good. They may get us thinking about what is special about the path, but in the end they are not helpful.

When we have thoughts that cling to things as being special, we'll look down at our begging bowl and think that it's not special, seeing it as empty. Our thoughts will be invested in hopes for the future to fill the empty begging bowl with special accomplishments on the path, even though such is not possible. Our thoughts may also turn to the past. We may look at ourselves in the past and think. "Oh I am really special because of what I have done. I need to protect that." We put a lot of effort into protecting the past and as a result become restless. So this process of clinging to things as being special is the basis of our hopes and fears. We hope towards the future that we can accomplish something special and we fear that we'll lose the special things accomplished in the past. With these thoughts we can never relax. Buddhist teachings always say that we need to be free from hopes and fears. When we examine where our hopes and fears come from, we'll find that they always originate from thoughts that cling to things as being special.

In India there is a lot of clinging towards thoughts about caste and class which is connected to the past. This fear is from the past where thoughts about caste and class were strong and people feared falling from the class they were in. They remember histories that tell of people who made mistakes and were expelled from their caste. And so they have a very strong fear in their minds. You can see this in movies where usually a lot of fear is in the storylines.

Spiritual traditions are most often rooted in hope about the future: I need to make my spiritual tradition the best one and I need to make myself into the best person through my spiritual tradition.

We can see that both these phenomena – hoping toward the future and fearing as a result of the past – come from clinging to things as being special. We can see that if we have thoughts clinging to things as being special we can never relax.

If I say I'm going to tell you a special story then immediately everyone becomes really excited. When our gurus tell us they're going to teach us the special Dharma teaching, how excited we get! What happens in our mind? Our minds get so worked up in this excited state, we can't relax and the special Dharma teaching ends up being lost. We don't actually receive it. In order for us to actually receive precious and special Dharma teachings we need to have a relaxed mind.

What does the mind that thinks of things as special do to a relaxed mind? Being special is taught to be the third basis of confusion in these analytical meditation classes, but we might think that it's not a basis of confusion; it's something that we need. We might think that it's not a form of confusion but really the way things are. So we need to be our own teachers in this regard and look at thoughts that cling to things as being special and see what they're connected to. What do these thoughts produce? If we look closely, we can see that these thoughts are the basis for pride. We can also see that they are the basis for laziness.

I can say from experience that thoughts that take things to be special cause pride. Before going to the monastery, I only had the thought that I was the same as everyone else in my family. I was at a lower level than my parents and I had a strong attitude that my duty was to serve and help them. But when I went to the monastery and became a monk, I thought that I'd become special and the most important member of my family. In Tibetan tradition the most important person in any gathering would sit in the most prominent and highest place in the room. So I thought this place in my house was immediately mine when I became a monk. When I went back to be with my family, I immediately sat at this place because I had the strong thought that this place now belonged to me. I sat at this place that was higher than where my father sat. I didn't have any thought at this time that I needed to serve my mother or father. I thought that *they* needed to serve me. As you can see in this case, thoughts that took things to be special led to pride.

When I went to the monastery I hadn't had any type of realization or even clear understanding of the Dharma. Just my going to the monastery and becoming a monk became the basis for that strong thought that gave rise to much pride. The thoughts that take things to be special can be the basis for pride. When I really think about this, there was actually nothing special happening, just pride. The mind that thinks "I'm special" is merely a mind of pride with nothing special happening.

Thoughts that take things to be special can also lead to laziness. For example, we might think that meditation is good but today is not a special time, so we are not going to meditate today. We put our attention towards meditating at a special time, such as the fifteenth day of the lunar calendar. This special time comes, but then we don't have a special place. We might be in a special place, such as a monastery or a three-year retreat center, but we might think, "I've found a good place but my Dharma friends aren't special." We might even have special Dharma friends, surrounded by Lamas, but think, "I have good Dharma friends now but I don't have any special instructions." The mind that's saying all this is the mind of laziness. At the basis of all this is no desire to practice. Since we don't have any desire to practice we make up all these excuses and start placing our attention on looking for things that are special. We may also not be prepared to practice, not have readiness towards our practice. And since we don't have readiness, we're always looking for something special to go along with our practice.

The results of clinging to things as being special are basically laziness and pride. Therefore we need to relinquish our thoughts that take things to be special. This is pretty hard for us because we all think that we're special. Each and every one of us thinks that our self is something that is very special and it is a strong fixation. The clinging to things as being single units and being permanent are the first two bases of confusion but they don't appear in our minds in an obvious way. However, clinging to things as being special is very obvious.

As ordinary human beings we don't have very high prajna and because of this we fall into the extremes of laziness and pride on the basis of our taking things to be special. On the other hand we can think that we're *not* special and on that basis think that we're pathetic human beings, a bunch of useless trash. This is even worse than thinking that we are special. If we think that we're useless trash, it may be better to think that we're special because there's some benefit to it. But both thinking of things as being special and thinking of things as not being special are great forms of mistakenness. Neither exists in the true nature of things. If we relate thoughts that cling to things as being special to the two extremes of superimposition and denial, these thoughts fit within the category of superimposition.

Meditation

When we meditate on this topic we do so with a basis of analysis, an example. First we pick an external object that we think of as being special. We isolate this object that appears to our mind as being special and keep it in our minds. And then we identify an object that we take as *not* being special such as garbage and keep it in our minds. This is the opposite of something special. We now have two examples of extreme opposites, something that's special and something that's utterly not special. We then think of something that's just plain, that's neither special nor utterly non-special. We look at these three objects we have identified and ask ourselves if they are really there? Do they really exist? Do they exist in a way that they're unlike each other?

TALK 12
TRANSCENDING BEING SPECIAL

We said that thoughts that cling to things as being special are incorrect discriminations. They are not only incorrect discriminations, they are also minds endowed with a large amount of attachment. This attachment makes things difficult for us by creating all sorts of problems. We're being fettered or bound in the suffering of samsara. What is it that fetters or binds us? It's not outer objects but none other than our attachment that binds us in samsara.

There is a famous teaching given to Naropa by Tilopa, who said, "Child, you are not bound by appearances, you are bound by clinging. Cut through clinging, Naropa." This applies in the exact same way to us. We need to transform our thoughts that cling to things as being special. We won't be able to abandon or get rid of them and we don't need to. We can simply transform them.

It may seem weird to you but analytical meditation is *not* a path for relinquishing the kleshas or relinquishing fixation. Rather, it is a path for improving kleshas and improving fixation; it's a path of improvement. In general the root, the ground of all samsara is ego-clinging, fixation upon a self. When we engage in analytical meditation, we actually do not abandon this fixation upon a self. Rather the practice is to find wisdom within that

very fixation; this is the function of analytical meditation. If we got rid of our ego-clinging, where would we ever find the wisdom that realizes there is not a self?

I would like to give the example of our wanting to produce a learned scholar, a wise person in a world full of stupid people. If we killed all the stupid people in the world where would we find our wise person? The only way we'd be able to find a wise person would be to make improvements among the stupid people, but not if we killed all the stupid people. Where would we be able to find a wise person with no people around?

In the same way, if we simply cast away the mind that fixated upon a self, we would never find the wisdom that realizes there is no self. This works the same way for kleshas or mental afflictions. If we simply try to cast away all of our mental afflictions, where would we find the wisdom that abides within mental afflictions? For example, if we tried to get rid of the klesha of desire by casting it away, then where would we get faith, devotion and compassion? We can't simply cast away our desire; we need to make improvements upon our desire so it's not mere mundane desire. We need to transform it into trust, faith, devotion and compassion. Finally, we need to transform it into wisdom. Therefore, analytical meditation is the path of improving upon fixating upon a self and mental afflictions. It's not the path of relinquishing them.

As Buddhists, we sometimes think that fixation upon a self and kleshas, and thoughts that take things to be special, are all bad. They're "illegal" and we need to get rid of them. But we don't need to think this way. For Western people in particular, the thought that they're doing something illegal makes them very uncomfortable and they can't remain in the same state. They have to do something about it. Eastern people, on the other hand, are not that much bothered if they have a little thought of doing something illegal. They just say, "This as well is impermanent." If we think that self fixation and kleshas and thoughts that take things as special are "illegal" because we're Buddhists, because these thoughts are completely opposite to Buddhist rules, then our minds will be very stiff and

uptight. It's not good to think this way. We should simply think of them as good because they're the basis for our path of improving them.

In the root text we chanted, we looked at thoughts that cling to things as being special, with attachment as their root. To what objects can we be attached? To what objects do we cling as being special? These objects can be places, time and our own retinue of self, friends and family.

Taking places to be special is clinging caught up in fear. We always think that we need to be in a special place. That place is always somewhere else; it's never the place that we're at in the present moment. A type of fear is involved. For example, we can never engender confidence that we will be able to become enlightened right where we are now. We don't think that we can attain enlightenment on this very meditation cushion, in this very place, because this place isn't special enough. We need a place that's more special. Based on these thoughts that cling to places as being special we have thoughts of escape arising in our minds. We need to escape to somewhere that is special and, when we do so, we end up in circles. We might think the special place is in India and Nepal and go there. But once we are there, the places are not special anymore. We then need to find some other special places elsewhere. We might go to Tibet but once we've arrived, it isn't special anymore. Then we have to find another special place and so we come back to the West. We keep going around in cycles known as samsara or cyclic existence. These thoughts that cling to things as being special are always sending us around in circles. There is no special place. If we need to have a special place, if we feel that there will be benefits, great purpose in having a special place, we should make this special place wherever our butt is sitting right now.

The next object we cling to as special is time. We're always fixating upon and waiting for a special time. The special time is never the time we are in now. We either long for some special time in the past or wait for some special time in the future. We become

sandwiched between our concepts of special times. Consider samsara and nirvana. The duality of samsara and nirvana is a very strong form of confusion that arises due to clinging to special times. We think that samsara started in the past, "Oohhhhh! Samsara! It started in the past!" Similarly we think nirvana will start in the future. So there's this big fixation where we think of samsara started in the past and nirvana's going to come someday in the future. We're sandwiched in between these two concepts.

If we have this clinging to time, it isn't very comfortable. We'll think, "I'm not going to practice today because it's not a special time. I'll practice when the special time comes." How many days are we going to wait? We've been waiting in samsara for this special time to come so as to start practicing; but up until now it has never arrived. This special time will never come because there is no special time. If we need to have a special time then make it right now, right in this very session.

We can cling to ourselves and those surrounding us as being special. We might think, "I'm ready to practice now but my Dharma friends aren't so special. So maybe it's not the situation to practice." Conversely, we can think, "I'm not so special, I'm not very good so I'm not going to practice." So there is attachment to things as being special. But in the wake of this, there comes laziness. We think of ourselves as being special and end up looking down upon ourselves. And this is not beneficial.

We should look at our own experience and see which object it is that we cling to the most as being special. Do we take places to be special? Do we cling to certain times as being special? Or do we think of ourselves and those who surround us as being special? We should look at these and try to be cautious of these thoughts when they arise.

In regard to special places, it is taught in the Buddhist tradition that there are many sacred special places such as Bodhgaya in India. So you may say in response to what I've been saying, "Aren't there these special pilgrimage sites?" There are special places –

Bodhgaya, Lumbini and Gampo Abbey. If we were to have a special place, then we need a reason for it to be so. In Buddhism we can't just say something is so because I say so. We need a reason to back it up. The reason that places like Bodhgaya are considered special is that buddhas in the past stayed there. In regard to Bodhgaya, it's where the Buddha attained enlightenment and for that reason it is a special place. At one point in the past, the Buddha attained enlightenment there and therefore it is a special place. For the reason that the buddhas had stayed there, places are called special places.

So for what reason would *this* place not be a special place since we can't say that there's no buddha here? It was taught by the Buddha in a Sutra called *The Sutra that Expresses the Dharma* that no place that can be observed by valid cognition is empty of a buddha. So there's no place without a buddha since a buddha abides in all places as an object of direct valid cognition. If we say that Bodhgaya is a special place for the reason that a buddha stayed there then it follows that this place right here is also special because a buddha is here right now. How would we respond to that? Perhaps direct valid cognition was overstating it but we can say a buddha *really* is here. If places are special for the reason that buddhas have stayed or are staying there, then it follows that all places are special because a buddha abides in all of them.

We look at special times and compare them with times that are not so special. What are the bad times and good times in our mind? We might say that the time when the door to samsara was opened is a bad time, and the time for nirvana to be opened is a good time. So when is the time for the opening of the door to samsara and the time of the opening of the door to nirvana? We might think that the door to samsara was opened many aeons in the past and we've progressed through this time already. We might think that the door to nirvana will be opened in the future after three aeons. If so, what's now? Is the present time the door to samsara or the door to nirvana? According to our prior thinking it would be neither. The present time is neither special nor bad but it is an opportunity and a gateway. The door is not good or bad. It's not the door to nirvana or the door to samsara.

We can make the door into what it is, depending upon the individual person. It is in our own hands whether we make the present into a door to nirvana or a door to samsara. If we need or must have a special time, then we should make a special time for ourselves. We don't need thoughts that cling to special times.

Meditation

We continually need to be mindful of these types of thoughts that cling to things as special. Being mindful like this will also be meditation. Whenever we recognize these thoughts, we should recall that we need to transform these thoughts that cling to things as being special. In terms of the way to meditate on this topic, we can follow one of two methods.

The first is to choose an external example as the object for our analysis and ask two questions.

- Why is this object special?
- In what way is it special?

We can analyze this way or use the white sphere meditation to focus our attention on the six main points in our body (the crown center, the forehead center, the throat center, the heart center, the navel center and the secret center). When feelings arise at these six points we immediately use the thought of impermanence to reverse thoughts that cling to these feelings as being special. If you have time, you can also focus your attention on the various branches of your body. The size of the white sphere can be the size of a tennis ball but if you find that hard, you can use the size of a soccer ball! We don't necessarily need to visualize this white sphere either. It's simply a support for placing our attention on these various parts of the body.

TALK 13
THE SELF

We've been doing analytical meditation on thoughts that cling to things as being special. Today we'll start analytical meditation on the fourth topic of the root verses, which is the self. *Self, self, self*. According to the tradition of *Nagarjuna* and *Chandrakirti,* the self is the fourth basis of mistakenness or confusion. The view that clings to a self, fixates upon a self, or apprehends a self is one present in all of us. This view is an incorrect discrimination, an incorrect view. Therefore we have to improve or transform this view of a self or of a mind that conceives of a self. The mind that conceives of a self also fixates upon others on the basis of conceiving of a self. If we leave these mental states as they are without transforming them, they'll become the root of all problems, all mental afflictions, all suffering and all samsara.

The master *Dharmakirti* said that if there is a self then there is an other, or if there is a thought of a self then there is a thought of an other. With this there is attachment and aversion to the self and the other respectively. The self refers to the thought of "me" or "I." If we have this thought that thinks of "me" and "I.'" then there will be naturally a thought that thinks of "you" or something other than "I." If we have this type of conception, we will have attachment toward ourselves and toward things and people on our own side. And we will have aversion toward those we perceive as "other" than ourselves and toward the retinue or things and people on the other side. In this way the

thought of a self becomes the basis for the arising of attachment and aversion. Attachment and aversion is the basis for all the sufferings we experience.

When we engage in analytical meditation, we would like to decrease our suffering, to become free from our suffering and samsara. When we look at the causes of our suffering, the things performing the work, duty or function of creating our suffering, we'll find them to be our attachment and aversion. And if we look at the causes for attachment and aversion we'll find them to be thoughts that think of self versus other.

Therefore in our practice we try to transform the thought that clings to self and other. This thought that thinks of a self, continually thinks "I" and "me." There is no reason for its arising other than that we have familiarized ourselves with it since beginningless time in samsara. We have become habituated to thinking "I" and "me" since beginningless time even though there's no valid reason for us to have this type of thought. This type of clinging to an "I" or a "me" is present in an innate way in all of us. In a natural innate way and due to these habitual tendencies since beginningless time, the mind that clings to the skandhas as a self arises. The self is taken as the object for this mind conceiving of an "I."

The mind that conceives of a self does so by looking at the object of the five skandhas. The self is the enjoyer or the experiencer. And the five skandhas are conceived as that which is experienced or enjoyed. When we conceive of a self we do so by looking, by viewing the five skandhas.

If we do not apply any analysis, we have a sensation or feeling that conceives of the self as being outside the five skandhas, something not connected to our bodies or minds. For example, when someone calls my name, Lama Tenpa, I immediately think that they are talking to me. They're talking to the me behind Lama Tenpa, conceived as not being mind or body but something off to the side, separate from these two. If someone calls me

Lama Tenpa, I never think that they're calling my body Lama Tenpa or calling my mind Lama Tenpa. I think the "me" they're calling Lama Tenpa is apart from these.

When this mind arises, it doesn't do so simply endowed with the aspect of thinking "me." If it was a mind that simply thought 'me,' it couldn't be able to do much harm. However, it not only thinks "me" but also imputes a lot of special qualities on this "me." The mind takes this "I" that it conceives and says that it is singular. When we think of ourselves we think of the person as being singular; we never think of that "I" as being multiple. Not only do we think it's singular, we think it's solid, something indestructible. We also think it is independent; something that does not need to depend on causes and conditions. Not only that, we think of it as powerful and special. When we mix all of these together, we have something heavy and ready to cause a lot of problems.

When I just say. "I am Lama Tenpa," it doesn't seem to be a very harmful thing. But when we get all these concepts and special qualities coming together, then "I" becomes very heavy and starts to cause problems. When we do analytical meditation on selflessness, we want to start dismantling these elements. Some people say that it is impossible to get rid of the "I" because even the Buddha used the word "I" when he taught Dharma. He said "My sangha, *my* temple. I am teaching the Dharma." If even the Buddha used "I" then what need to speak of people like us? If the Buddha didn't get rid of "I" then why should we? So it's okay to call Lama Tenpa "Lama Tenpa". When I say "I am Lama Tenpa," it's fine to have the thought "I" arise in mind. But we should know that when the Buddha said, "my sangha," and, "I am teaching the Dharma," etc., it's a *different* situation from when we as ordinary people use the word "I." There's a great difference between the Buddha saying "I" or "me" and our saying "I" or "me". When we say "I" and "me" there are a lot of special characteristics involved and it's very heavy. But when the Buddha said "I" or "me" there was no heaviness whatsoever.

Our mind that conceives of a self is endowed with complex elements of all these special characteristics mixed together. So the thought our mind conceives of isn't just a thought. Strictly speaking it is a thought, but a type of thought that is a view as well as a discrimination. It's an incorrect view and an incorrect discrimination endowed with many thoughts and views associated with special characteristics.

In general there are many types of thoughts. Some thoughts arise without any reason whatsoever and hardly without any cause or condition. They just arise spontaneously. These types of thoughts will disappear naturally if we just leave them be. An example is when we have a thought that we have shat on our own head. There's no reason and cause for this thought at all. We don't need to do analytical meditation on it; it will naturally disappear. However, some thoughts arise due to reasons and will not disappear so easily. Other thoughts don't have reasons behind them but have causes that are strong habitual tendencies made in the past. These thoughts are very hard to disappear in a natural way. Our thoughts that cling to a self are just these types of thoughts. The thoughts that cling to a self don't have any reason for arising and if we look for a reason, we won't be able to find one. However, they do have a cause which is habitual tendencies that have been habituated since beginningless time. If there was a reason to have thoughts that cling to a self, then there would arise and appear a different self to each and every individual person; but that's not the case. The self that appears to every individual person is basically the same. It's the same type of clinging, just thinking "me, me." The thinking of that self basically possesses the same characteristics. And the only cause for these thoughts to arise is these strong habitual tendencies.

There are two types of self, the innate self and the imputed self. What has been explained up to this point is the innate self. The thoughts about the innate self need no reason for their arising. They simply arise due to the cause of habitual tendencies since beginningless time. They are present in an innate way in everyone, not just human beings but all sentient beings of the six realms. Even small beings have this innate conception of a self.

The second type is the imputed self which arises newly. It's something we need to create. The conception of the imputed self is like putting a patch on top of the innate self. The sources of the conception of the imputed self are usually religious traditions and incorrect spiritual teachers. They are the sources from which we get the patch of the imputed self, and we need to be careful about them. For example, what if a lama who was not a good and genuine lama, were to approach us and say, "You are Arya Tara"? We might say "Well I certainly am Arya Tara" and attain another imputed self. We might then strive to keep proving to ourselves that we are Arya Tara and try to maintain that identity, thus going through a lot of hardships. So this is all the imputed self. What benefit has this thought of our being Arya Tara performed? It hasn't performed any benefit but simply created more hardship. First we had an innate sense of self and then on top of that we put the patch of the imputed self and tried to maintain that identity. But that only created more problems.

In Buddhism it's taught that selflessness is important and meditating on selflessness is crucial. What we first need to do is examine the basis for our fixation upon a self. The basis for our fixation upon a self is these two types of self, the innate self and the imputed self. Contrary to other meditations where we started with an external object as an example, we can't use an external object as an illustrating example when meditating on the self or the lack thereof. We need to begin immediately with analyzing ourselves. Therefore to do analytical meditation on selflessness we need a brave meditator, an excellent meditator who turns the analysis inward.

We all are affected by the mind that clings to a self. When we are not analyzing, we think that the self is beyond the five skandhas, beyond our bodies and minds. We think that there is a self ruling over our bodies and minds like a master or a principal; someone or something that is controlling our body and mind. Since we think this way, we need to look to see if this self is really there or not. So the first thing we tell ourselves is, "I think

that there is a self controlling my body and mind. I'm going to look to see if it's there or not". We ask ourselves three questions:

- Is this self of which I'm thinking separate from the skandhas?
- Is it one with the skandhas?
- Is it a mere collection of the skandhas?

First we investigate the possibility of the self being one with the skandhas. In the sutras the Buddha gave a verse for meditating on selflessness. It would be good if we could write this down and memorize it. It says:

Form is not the self
The self does not possess form
Form has no self
The self has no form.

We can apply this verse in the same way to all of the other skandhas. So with feeling we can say that:

Feeling is not the self
The self does not possess feeling
Feeling has no self
The self has no feeling.

We can then apply this to discriminations and all the five skandhas. In this way it is said that we have twenty different views of a self related to the five skandhas, one for each of the four lines. These verses then will become twenty antidotes to these twenty views of a self.

TALK 14
TRANSCENDING THE SELF – THE SKANDHAS

We'll chant the verse from yesterday together. These are words from the Sutra of the Buddha and are endowed with great blessings.

Form is not the self
The self does not possess form
Form has no self
The self has no form.

Now we will chant this verse using the skandha of feelings.

Feelings are not the self
The self does not possess feelings
Feelings have no self
The self has no feelings.

We can apply each of the five skandhas to this verse and work with the twenty views of a self. There are four lines in a verse and they are all remedies for the view of a self in relation to each skandha [form, perception, feeling, formation, consciousness]. Altogether there are twenty views of a self and twenty remedies.

We all have a form of attachment that thinks "me" and a mind that thinks "me." The basis for this mind is the self. In analytical meditation we ask ourselves these three questions relating to the self and the skandhas:

- Is this type of self one with the skandhas?
- Is it separate from the skandhas?
- Or is it the mere collection of the skandhas?

First of all it's impossible for the self to be separate from the skandhas if we analyze it. If the self were separate in both entity and substance from the skandhas, then there would be no reason to have fixation on a self in relation to the skandhas. We have fixation upon a self directed toward our skandhas and it can be established by direct experience. For example when we have a headache we say "I am sick." Our head has become the basis for our fixation on a self. If the self was different in entity and substance from the skandhas then we can say "I'm not sick" when we have a headache, because this "I" is not connected to my head whatsoever. But when we look at our experience, we say "I am sick" when we have a headache. Not only do we say that orally, we also have a deep sensation in our minds that says "I am sick."

Another example is that we think our nose was too big and have a feeling and sensation that something is wrong with us. If the self to which we clung was separate in entity from the skandhas and separate in substance from the skandhas, this self would be observed completely separate from the nose. But it's not the case in our experience. If we think that our nose is imperfect, we'll also think that there's something wrong with us. We'll think that our selves aren't so good. Our nose becomes the basis for a fixation on the self. Therefore through looking at our experience we can say and see that our idea of a self is not separate from the skandhas. Also, if the self were separate from the skandhas, it would have to be observable by a valid cognition but there's no such observation.

Having concluded that the self is not separate from the skandhas, we then move onto the next possibility that the skandhas themselves are the basis for the self. We observe that the mind that fixates upon a self arises in relation to the skandhas. Since we've concluded that the self is not separate from the skandhas it must be one with the skandhas. If it's one with the skandhas then how do we do analytical meditation on that?

Student: For example, when I lose an arm I'm still me. That part can go, so the self obviously wasn't all of my body.

There are two main ways you can do analysis once you've concluded that the self is one with the skandhas. You can ask yourself, "If it's one with the skandhas, is it one with the form skandha? Is it one with the feeling skandha? Is it one with the discrimination skandha? Is it one with the formation skandha? Or is it one with the consciousness skandha?" These are the five skandhas from the coarsest level of classification.

If you say that the self is one with all five skandhas then it has become many. So we have one self with the form skandha, two when we include the feelings skandha, three when we include the discrimination skandha. In the end we have five selves for five skandhas. But we don't have such a thing as five selves. It's not how we think of ourselves at all. It is completely contradictory with the way we think.

The second way of analyzing is in the tradition of the *Bodhicharyavatara.* We start with the form skandha, look at our body and say "Myself is my head." Is myself one with my head? Or is myself one with my arms? We go through all the various parts of our body. And we won't find the self with any one thing.

We can also do analytical meditation by starting off with the form skandha and recall how many classifications there are within the form skandha. We start our analysis under the assumption that the self is one with the form skandha. Then we look into that and

remember the numerous classifications from *Collected Topics*. If we simply say that the self is one with the form skandha, we might just sit there befuddled, give up, and simply say "Oh the self is one with the form skandha. I have nothing to do now. I have nowhere to go." It is not okay if we just sit there in this state. We'll have more fear arise if we remain in this state. And so we have to continue with our analysis.

We've debated thoroughly on the self and the skandhas, so we should apply our debates to this analytical meditation. If the self is one with the form skandha what will we ask at that point? Immediately we should remember the classifications of form. First of all there are outer form and inner form. So is the self one with outer form or is it one with inner form? If we say it's one with inner form then is it one with the eye faculty? The nose faculty? Or the body faculty? If we conclude that the self is not one with inner form, it must be one with outer form. For outer form there's form, sound, smell, tastes and tangible objects. With which of these five form is the self one? We won't be able to find the self in any one of these many divisions. We'll just find many sub-classifications. We did this analysis when we worked with single units and it's the same here working with the self.

When we analyze we can't find anything. It's not that something's there and we can't find it; it's because something's not there that we can't find it. When we don't analyze then it seems that it's there. Therefore it's been said in the scriptures:

> *When I look at it it's there.*
> *When I look for it it's not there.*
> *What is it?*

What is "it"? It's the self. When we look at it at first, without applying analysis, it seems to be there. Not only does it seem to be there, it's there with great power like a great master. A king, a Chakravartin King. A master. But if we look for it we won't find it. This is not

only true for the self. In the Madhyamika tradition, this is true for all phenomena. When we look and keep looking in other philosophical systems of Buddhism there is something to find. For example, in the Cittamatra system we can find partless moments of consciousness. But in the Madhyamika system, there is nothing to find. Therefore we say "When I look *at* it it's there, when I look *for* it it's not there."

What is "it"? In the Madhyamika tradition "it" is all phenomena. It's not just the self, it's all phenomena. When we apply this to persons, it is the self of persons. And when we apply this "it" to phenomena, it's the self of phenomena. When we look at it and it's there, we shouldn't have trust at merely that level because this is just mere appearance. At the same time we shouldn't just take what we look at and say "It doesn't exist." That would be in denial of the relative truth, in denial of appearance. When we say "it" does not exist, we say it after having analyzed, after having found nothing. Only after we have looked into the manner in which it exists and looked for it, we find that it does not exist.

Today we'll do analytical meditation on this topic. The basis for all our conceptions of "I" and "me" is the self and the observed object for that self is the five skandhas. We can ask ourselves if the self is *one* with the skandhas or *separate* from the skandhas. As was said before, it's pretty hard to have the self be separate from the skandhas. We can assume momentarily that it's one with the skandhas. When it's one with the skandhas, we begin analyzing each of the five skandhas. We start off with the form skandha and ask if the self is one with the form skandha. Then we look into outer form and inner form. At this time we can bring to mind the many classifications from the *Dudra* and *Abhidharma* studies. Our mediation on selflessness, our removing thoughts that cling to a self will become more effective.

Some people who have engaged in Buddhist practice say that this type of meditation isn't very good to do, that they don't need it. They say that there are more important meditations to do. The reason is that they've already ascertained that the self is not

within the form skandha. So they don't need to ask themselves if the self is one with the form skandha or separate from the form skandha. They already have certainty that the self is nowhere within the form skandha.

If we ask them, "Are you your body? Are you your form?" they'll say, "No I'm not my form, I'm a bit better than my form." They say there's no need at all to meditate on the selflessness of the form skandha or on the absence of the self within the form skandha, because the self has no connection to the form skandha whatsoever.

But if we look closely, we'll find that we might say and think that our self is not our body, but our deepest feeling is that our body is our self. We think we have these three aspects of our existence – body, speech and mind. And we have this deep feeling that if our body is okay, then our selves are okay. And the body is the best among this triad. If our body is A-OK with no faults then we're A-OK too. And so, the body has become the self.

There are twenty four hours in a day and twelve months in a year. If we look at how ordinary people spend all this time, we'll probably find us spending seventy to 90 percent of the time for the sake of our body. This is because we think of our body as being our self. We spend a lot of energy into buying clothes for our body. When we get clothes, we need to have beautiful clothes with a nice color and shape, and fulfilling various characteristics. But really our body doesn't need these kinds of clothes at all. All our body needs is something to protect it from the cold and wind. So it's not our body that needs all these beautiful clothes. The reason we buy such beautiful and complex clothing is that we think of our body as being our self. We think that the body is *me*. We have this *big* fixation, this very powerful fixation on our body as being our self. We might from time to time say "My body is not the self and my body is not me." When we really look at how we behave, in our hearts we have this very strong fixation on our body being our self. Therefore it's very important to first go through the stages of analyzing the form skandha and how it is not the self.

It's okay to apprehend the skandhas as the self, but it's not okay to cling to the skandhas as the self. There's a difference. We can call skandhas such as the form skandha the self but it's not okay to cling to the skandhas as being the self. When we do analytical meditation we shouldn't do so thinking that we're not allowed to call the skandhas the self, that we're not allowed to think of the skandhas as being the self. We do analytical meditation so that we can decrease our clinging to the skandhas as being the self.

Meditation

Now we'll do some analysis regarding the form skandha. There are two ways we can analyze. One is in the tradition of the *Bodhicharyavatara* which is the coarser of the two ways. We look at the various parts of our body and see how they are not the self: our head is not the self, our eyes are not the self, and our ears are not the self and so on. This is a coarser level of analysis.

Then there's the tradition of *Nagarjuna* and *Chandrakirti* where we look at the thought that the self is one with the form skandha. We look at the various classifications of the form skandha and the classifications of outer form and inner form and so on.

We can do either one of these. When doing the analysis in the tradition of *Nagarjuna* and *Chandrakirti,* however deep we can go with bringing to mind the different classifications, however subtle we can take that analysis, then that many more keys to opening the door to selflessness will we attain. We can see from learning all these classifications in *Collected Topics* and *Lorig* that we have attained many keys to open the door to selflessness. Sometimes we think it's just an annoyance to remember all these different classifications but they are actually very beneficial.

So now we'll meditate starting with the three cleansing breaths. Then recite:

Form is not the self

The self does not possess form

Form has no self

The self has no form.

Form is not the self

The self does not possess form

Form has no self

The self has no form.

Form is not the self

The self does not possess form

Form has no self

The self has no form.

The Mind and its Functions

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Chapter Five
Objects

In the previous four chapters we have looked at the nature of subjects and in particular the mind. Now we shall briefly discuss the various types of objects that the different states of mind apprehend.

Here, the term *object** only denotes existent objects of the mind. Although we may speak of a hare's horn or a permanent sound as being objects of the particular thoughts that conceive of them, or of two moons as being the object of a mistaken visual perception, these things are not objects in the strict sense of the word. Likewise, when we talk of the ignorance that apprehends a self-existent person, although the self-existent person is the object of that ignorant mind, it is not really an object, since it is utterly non-existent. Therefore, what we mean by an object is something the nature of which becomes clearer and clearer however much it is analysed, something that can be correctly known and comprehended by the mind.

We should note that the terms "object", "existent", "*knowable entity**" and "phenomenon" are synonymous.

There are three different ways in which objects are classified: into the fourfold classification of appearing, principal, conceived and referent objects;[1] the twofold classification of direct and indirect objects; and the threefold classification of evident, concealed and extremely concealed objects. We shall now continue to examine each of these categories in turn.

Moreover, it is important to understand that the above distinctions are not made from the side of the objects themselves but from their position in a given cognitive situation. This is to say that although something may be the appearing object of one particular cognition, it may be the conceived object of another, the principal object of yet another and so on. Likewise being the appearing object of a particular cognition does not necessarily exclude the possibility of also being some of the other types of objects of that same cognition. Keeping this in mind, the particular relationships that these objects bear with each other should be clarified by the following considerations of their individual distinctions.

I. THE FOURFOLD CLASSIFICATION OF OBJECTS

A. The Appearing Object

Generally speaking, as the name suggests, the appearing object for a cognition is the object that appears to the particular perception or conception. But this is not always so,

1 In addition the beheld object (*bzung.yul*) is also mentioned in the Tibetan texts. Here it will not be dealt with separately since it is identical with the appearing object (*snang.yul*). It should not be assumed that the beheld object is necessarily apprehended as the syllable *bzung* in the term *bzung.yul* would suggest. In the case of conceptions, like the appearing object, it only appears to the mind but is not apprehended.

because although a certain object may appear to a particular cognition, it does not necessarily have to be its appearing object. This is particularly true in the case of conception. For example, one may be looking at a jug and thinking about it at the same time. But although the jug is appearing to one's conceptual cognition, it is not regarded as being its appearing object. For conceptions *only* the mental image of the object is regarded as being the appearing object and nothing else. Thus in our example the mental image of the jug is the appearing object whereas the jug itself is only the principal and the conceived object. Therefore we should understand that among the objects appearing to a conception only permanent mental images are regarded as being the appearing objects. But in the case of non-conceptual states of mind, such a distinction is not made. For it is the nature of perception, be it sensory or mental, to apprehend its objects barely, without the projection of any mental images. Therefore, whatever object appears to a perception is said to be its appearing object. When we look out of the window and see houses, trees, mountains and so forth, every aspect of our field of vision, whether apprehended or not, is an appearing object of that visual perception. Likewise all the sounds we hear are the appearing objects of the audial perception and so on.

B. The Principal Object

In addition to being endowed with an appearing object all cognitions are also characterised by having a principal object. This is the main object of the cognition, the object with which the mind is primarily concerned and involved. So when we look out of our window at the view, although a wide variety of impressions are received, the mind has the tendency to concern itself with particular aspects of the entire field. Hence these particular aspects would be both

the appearing as well as the principal objects of the visual perception whereas the impressions to which no attention is given would be its appearing objects but not its principal objects.[2] In the case of conception the object about which one is thinking would be the principal object and the mental image of the same object would be the appearing object. But for any given conceptual mind, the appearing object can never be the principal object since it can never be apprehended as an identifiable entity by that mind. It thereby follows that the appearing and principal objects of a given conceptual mind are mutually exclusive phenomena. In short, any object that is apprehended by a particular mind is said to be its principal object. Thus the terms "principal object" and "apprehended object" are synonymous.

C. The Conceived Object

Simply stated, the conceived object is the same as the principal object of a conception. Only a conceptual mind is said to be endowed with a conceived object, because only within a conceptual framework is the mind able to conceive its object. Conceiving, then, is the exclusive way in which conception apprehends its object. But how does the mind conceive its object? To conceive means to apprehend the object by means of the appearance of a mental image. It should be made clear, though, that the mental image of the object is not itself the conceived object but merely an auxiliary in the process of conceiving it.[3] So

2 In the case of an inattentive perception, the appearing object and the principal object would be the same since no attention is given to any one aspect of the objective field.

3 The mental image acts as an auxiliary in the process of conceiving (*zhen.sa*) since it is an indispensable factor for any conception, but it is never the conceived object (*zhen.yul*) for that same conception because it is never apprehended by it.

when one is thinking about a jug, for example, the jug is both the principal object as well as the conceived object of that particular conception. The mental image of the jug is merely the appearing object of the conception that acts as an auxiliary in the process of actually conceiving the jug with the mind.

In the case of a visual perception of a jug, however, the principal object is apprehended but not conceived. The reason for this is that perception, being non-conceptual, apprehends its objects barely without mixing them with any mental images.

D. The Referent Object

The referent object for any given cognition is the basic object which the mind refers to or focuses upon whilst apprehending certain aspects of that object. Suppose for example that an earthenware jug is being apprehended by a visual perception. In this case a jug would be the referent object whereas an earthenware jug would be the principal object. Likewise, we may be mistakenly conceiving sound to be permanent. In this case sound would be the referent object and permanent sound the principal object. In the latter example the mind is merely focusing upon sound whilst it mistakenly apprehends it to be permanent. Thus sound itself is not the principal object since sound as such is not being apprehended. One should note that although we are speaking of permanent sound as being the principal object of this conception, it is only being regarded as a principal object in terms of the mind that apprehends it. But permanent sound *per se* is not a principal object, since, being non-existent, it cannot be regarded as an object.

When applied to practice it is important for us to realise the distinction between the referent object and the principal object of the ignorance that apprehends a self-existent

person. Whilst focused upon the person, this fundamental misconception conceives it to be something permanent, partless and autonomous. Nevertheless its referent object, the person, exists as an impermanent entity, but its principal object, a permanent, partless and autonomous person, does not exist at all. So, when investigating the lack of a self-existent person it is a serious mistake to consider these two objects as identical. To do so will eliminate any possibility of understanding this crucial point.

II. DIRECT AND INDIRECT OBJECTS

In discussing direct and indirect objects we are primarily making a distinction concerning what it means to be a principal object of comprehension. A comprehension of an object can be either direct or indirect. For this reason the object comprehended is said to be either a direct or an indirect object of that comprehension.

Any principal object appearing to a cognition that comprehends it is regarded as the direct object of that cognition. In other words it is an object directly comprehended by that mind. The characteristic that distinguishes a direct object from an indirect object is that, in addition to being a principal object, its aspect actually appears to the mind that apprehends it. An indirect object of a comprehension, on the other hand, is still a principal object of that comprehension but one whose aspect does not actually appear to the mind. Take for example an ideal visual perception of a jug. Here the jug is considered to be the direct object because it actually appears to the perception. However, the existence of the jug, although it can be comprehended through the visual perception, is not a direct object since it does not actually appear to the perception. Although the existence of the jug is a permanent, non-temporal phenomenon, it is said to be indirectly

comprehended by this visual sense perception because, even though it does not appear to it, the visual perception is able to subsequently induce a conceptual certainty about the existence of the jug.

The existence of the jug is therefore regarded as an indirect object of this perception.

At this point we should clarify the distinction between an object being directly comprehended as opposed to being immediately comprehended. The distinguishing feature here is that direct comprehension may be either conceptual or non-conceptual, whereas immediate comprehension is exclusively non-conceptual. The impermanence of sound which appears to a conceptual cognition may be directly comprehended by that cognition. But since its appearance would then be mixed with that of a mental image, it cannot be said to be immediately comprehended by that cognition. Immediate comprehension, then, is a true perception that comprehends the object without the admixture of its own subjective content.

III. EVIDENT, SLIGHTLY CONCEALED, AND EXTREMELY CONCEALED OBJECTS

This division of the objects of cognition is made according to the degree to which an object is accessible to our comprehension. Thus an evident object is one that can be immediately perceived with the senses; a slightly concealed object, one that can be inferred through thought; and an extremely concealed object, one that has to be accepted out of belief and faith.

The external world of houses, trees, mountains, rivers and so forth, other people as well as our own feelings are all objects that are experienced directly by our senses. In order to cognise them we do not need to rely upon the intermediary of conceptual thought based on reasoning.

Hence they are said to be "evident" or "manifest" objects of our cognition.

Although our immediate experience as sentient beings is limited to these objects of sense, by means of direct reasoning we are nevertheless able to infer the existence of other objects that are, at present, beyond the range of our perception. For example, through having comprehended that a jug is a created phenomena and that whatever is created necessarily entails being impermanent, we are able to correctly infer that a jug is an impermanent phenomenon. Although the impermanence of a jug is not evident to our senses, in dependence upon a perfect reason a direct inference can be generated, thereby including it within the domain of our comprehension. The impermanence of a jug is actually not so difficult to infer, but, in addition, the lack of a self-existent person, the existence of past and future lives, and the four Noble Truths can also be validly comprehended by means of logic. Hence an object is said to be "slightly *concealed [object]**" when, although concealed from perception, it can still be inferred by means of direct reasoning.

In addition to evident and slightly concealed objects, certain phenomena still remain that we cannot comprehend either with or without reliance upon reasoning. Such phenomena are beyond the range of our comprehension and their existence can only be accepted out of confidence in the validity of the wider and more profound understanding of a Buddha. An example of such an object would be the specific karmic cause of a particular event within this life. Such a thing is beyond the range of our cognition. We can neither directly perceive it nor indirectly infer its existence. Similarly, the particular conditions under which it was created and the particular manner in which it rose to fruition are also incomprehensible to us. Another example that is frequently used is that of the particular causes and reasons for the various different colours of the

feathers in the tail of a peacock. Since such subtle points as these are impossible for us to comprehend without relying upon the consciousness of a Buddha, they are therefore said to be "extremely concealed objects of cognition".

Contents of Chapter Six

Chapter Six

Primary Minds and Mental Factors

In this second part of the book we shall approach the mind from the point of view of primary minds and mental factors. In the previous section attention was given in terms of how it cognises its objects perceptually, conceptually, ideally, non-ideally and so forth. We presented a basic epistemological model of consciousness. Now we shall follow a more psychological approach as we examine the mind from the point of view of its wholesome and unwholesome aspects that condition our personality and direct the course of our inner development. This does not imply, however, that the preceding epistemological considerations are devoid of any moral or psychological implications. Similarly, the following psychological approach should not be abstracted from its epistemological context. The structure of the Buddhist path to enlightenment equally involves the transformation of the mind from a non-ideal to an ideal state as well as from an unwholesome to a wholesome state. In fact it is only

through systematically uprooting the unwholesome mental factors that the ideal perceptions of an Arya or Buddha can be realised. Similarly it is only the ideal inferences and perceptions of impermanence and selflessness that are able to overcome the most deeply engrained unwholesome traits of the mind. When used to describe the path of spiritual development, the two schema simply reveal two facets of the same process.

It is the mental factors that are primarily responsible for leading us to all forms of experience. When the mind is under the influence of unwholesome mental factors, such as attachment and anger, one is led into committing actions that cause experiences of frustration and suffering. But whenever the mind is dominated by wholesome factors, such as compassion and patience, then any ensuing physical and vocal activity will only result in happiness and wellbeing. It is the unwholesome aspects of the mind that are the root of our bondage within samsāra whereas it is the wholesome aspects that allow us to discover freedom from this unsatisfactory condition.

Since the principal motivating force behind our lives is the desire to find happiness and avoid suffering it is thus essential to recognise the psychological processes that are at work within ourselves. Only by means of careful examination will we be able to realise exactly what the causes for our pleasure and pain are and subsequently be able to engage in cultivating certain mental factors whilst discarding others. But as long as the mind continues to be dominated by unwholesome afflictions, then what we basically wish for and what we actually do in order to find it, will be completely opposed to one another. Whilst wishing for happiness we shall only be creating the causes for further suffering. Thus to investigate the natures, the functions and the effects of the various thoughts and emotions that occur within us and to act realistically upon our findings is the very essence of the study and practice of Dharma.

To persist in trying to manipulate the external, material world in order to achieve happiness and dispel suffering is like being concerned about fighting a battle outside, unaware that the enemy is dwelling indoors. Without dealing directly with our own psychological make-up, no real happiness will ever be found within external situations: we shall always find ourselves facing the same problems as the person who does not realise that the enemy dwells within his own house. Thus the importance of being aware of the way in which the mental factors affect our lives cannot be stressed enough.

I. PRIMARY MINDS

Firstly we should understand that a primary mind and its attendant mental factors always operate in conjunction with one another. An object is never cognised by a primary mind devoid of any mental factors nor by a mental factor unaccompanied by a primary mind. The term "primary mind" denotes the totality of a sensory or mental state composed of a variety of mental factors. A primary mind is like a hand whereas the mental factors are like the individual fingers, the palm and so forth. The character of a primary mind is thus determined by its constituent mental factors. If an unwholesome factor is present, the entire mind becomes unwholesome whereas if a wholesome factor is present, the entire mind takes on a wholesome aspect. This is similar to adding sugar or salt to a glass of water. With the addition of either substance the whole glass of water becomes flavoured with their taste. It is in this way that the individual mental factors exert their influence over the primary state of mind, colouring its disposition and activating its potential to manifest in outward activity.

A *primary mind** is defined as a primary cognition established by means of its apprehension of the fundamental

presence of the object. It is not the function of a primary mind to be specifically concerned with any aspect of the objective field, it is a mere consciousness of the data presented to it. As we shall see, it is the individual mental factors that are responsible for the selection and processing of this data. In this respect the relationship of a primary mind and its mental factors is somewhat similar to an overseer and a group of workers. Each worker is solely occupied with his or her own specific task whilst the overseer is equally conscious of what each worker is doing, without being directly involved in any one of their individual activities.

There are two types of primary mind: sensory primary minds and mental primary minds. Sensory primary minds are fivefold, namely, visual, audial, olfactory, gustatory and tactile primary minds. Each of these five are defined according to the dominant condition, i.e. the particular sense organ in dependence upon which they occur. They are all mutually exclusive states of consciousness, each being composed of their own sets of mental factors. A mental primary mind is a primary cognition that arises in dependence upon the mental organ as its dominant condition. This is the most complex and important of the primary minds since it is the one attended and directly affected by the wholesome and unwholesome mental factors. The sensory minds are unspecified phenomena, i.e. neither wholesome nor unwholesome.

Sensory primary minds are exclusively perceptions whereas mental primary minds can be either perceptual or conceptual. Both categories are likewise distinguishable into true and false, ideal and non-ideal cognitions. Furthermore, if a primary mind is a perception or an ideal mind, then its attendant mental factors will also be perceptions or ideal minds. It is impossible to have a primary mind and its mental factors belonging to substantially distinct and mutually exclusive categories of cognition.

Thus we cannot call an ideal perception, for example, either a "primary mind" or a "mental factor", because it is an overall state of consciousness comprised of both primary minds as well as mental factors. Amongst the seven types of mind only indecision can be classified into one of these two categories since it is exclusively a mental factor.

II. MENTAL FACTORS

A *mental factor** is defined as a cognition that apprehends a particular quality of the object and that arises in attendance upon a primary mind with which it has certain similarities. The mental factors each have a specific function in dealing with a particular quality of the objective field. For example, it is the specific function of feeling to experience the object, of discernment to recognise it, and of concentration to firmly hold it in view and so forth.

Generally speaking, there are innumerable mental factors. However, in the *Compendium of Abhidharma*, Asaṅga enumerates fifty-one in order to clearly present those that are the most important.[1] These fifty-one are in turn classified into six different groups: the omnipresent

1 In contrast to this classification, Vasubhandu, in his *Commentary to the Treasury of Abhidharma*, lists forty six mental factors in the following sets. (1) The ever present set of ten: feeling, intention, discernment, aspiration, contact, intelligence (*blo.gros*), recollection, attention, appreciation and concentration. (2) The wholesome set of ten: faith, conscientiousness, flexibility, equanimity, self-respect, consideration for others, detachment, non-hatred, non-violence, enthusiasm. (3) The six great afflictions: faithlessness, laziness, confusion (*rmongs.pa*), dullness, excitement, unconscientiousness. (4) The unwholesome set of two: inconsideration for others, shamelessness. (5) The ten lesser afflictions: wrath, vengeance, dishonesty, envy, spite, concealment, avarice, pretension, self-satisfaction, cruelty. (6) The undetermined set of eight: general examination, precise analysis, regret, sleep, anger, attachment (*chags.pa*), self-importance, indecision.

factors, the object-ascertaining factors, the variable factors, the wholesome factors, the root afflictions and the proximate afflictions. The omnipresent mental factors: feeling, discernment, intention, contact and attention are the five elements essential to any state of consciousness, however gross or subtle it may be. They constitute the inherent make-up of cognition without which it could not function. The object-ascertaining mental factors: aspiration, appreciation, recollection, concentration and intelligence are so called since they determine or ascertain individual aspects within the objective field. Although morally neutral in themselves, when they come under the influence of the wholesome and unwholesome mental factors, they play a major role in moulding the character of the personality and the quality of individual experience. The variable mental factors: sleep, regret, general examination and precise analysis are so called because their character varies according to whether they are under the influence of wholesome or unwholesome factors. Although only these four are specifically mentioned in this category, in fact both the omnipresent and the object ascertaining factors share this quality of moral variability.

There are eleven wholesome mental factors, including faith, self-respect, consideration for others, conscientiousness, enthusiasm, and so forth. Through their cultivation their corresponding unwholesome counterparts, faithlessness, shamelessness, inconsideration for others, etc., are naturally overcome, and we discover greater and greater peace and well-being. They are the elements responsible for all forms of spiritual growth and development.

The root afflictions: attachment, anger, pride, ignorance, afflicted views and indecision are the mental factors that bind us to the cycle of discontented existence, thereby acting as the primary cause for all our suffering and frustration. They put the mind into a state of turmoil and unrest that results in mental and physical activity which

is harmful to both oneself and others. They are the real enemy that has to be overcome through the practice of Dharma. The proximate afflictions are the unwholesome mental factors that naturally arise in proximity with the root afflictions. They include spite, envy, pretension, laziness and so forth, all of which are specific outcomes of one or more of the root afflictions. In the following chapters we shall continue to elucidate each of these fifty-one mental factors in greater detail.

III. THE FIVE SIMILARITIES BETWEEN A PRIMARY MIND AND ITS MENTAL FACTORS

In addition to the relationships described above, all primary minds and their mental factors are similar in five ways. They have a similar basis, duration, aspect, referent and substance. To explain these similarities, let us take the example of a primary visual consciousness of the colour blue and its attendant mental factor of feeling. They have a similar basis, since they both come into existence in dependence upon the same organ, i.e. the eye-organ. They have a similar duration since they both come into existence simultaneously, abide simultaneously and cease simultaneously. Thus a causal relationship is never possible between a primary mind and its attendant mental factors since one never precedes the other. Their aspect is similar since they both bear the aspect of the colour blue. This is to say that subjectively they both reflect a similar image of the objective field.[2] Their referent is similar since they both refer to the same object. It is not possible for a primary mind and its attendant mental factors to have different referent objects. Finally they have a similar substance since their basic cognitive character is always the

2 See page 38.

same. It never happens that a primary mind is a perception whilst one of its mental factors is a conception, or that a mental factor is a mistaken cognition whilst its accompanying primary mind is an unmistaken cognition. Their cognitive nature, or substance, is always identical. The five similarities are applicable to every primary mind and its attendant mental factors.

Chapter Seven

The Omnipresent, Object-Ascertaining and Variable Mental Factors

The omnipresent, object-ascertaining and variable mental factors will be treated together since they all share the characteristics of being functions of the mind that in themselves are neither wholesome nor unwholesome.[1] The omnipresent and object-ascertaining mental factors are the psychological activities that constitute the basic mechanism of the mind. Depending upon how this mechanism is used and directed, the mind can either be developed into higher states of peace, understanding and love for others or it can degenerate into confusion, neurosis and even insanity. The variable mental factors include four specific mental functions that can be either positive or negative.

The direction our own inner development takes is essentially our own responsibility. Others can show us the way but

1 Traditionally the four variable mental factors are treated after the twenty proximate afflictions.

it is up to us to incorporate their teachings into our lives. At present the basic elements of our minds are constantly prone to the uncontrolled arousal of disturbing thoughts and conflicting emotions. These occurrences expose us to all sorts of inner tensions, worries, fears and frustrations and lead us to act in a way that is incompatible with the well-being of ourselves and others. To overcome these problems it is necessary to fundamentally re-orient our outlook and develop a mastery and control over these psychological processes imbuing them with clarity, joy and kindness.

I. THE OMNIPRESENT MENTAL FACTORS

Since feeling, discernment, intention, contact and attention accompany every primary mind, no matter how brief or subtle it may be, they are said to be the "omnipresent mental factors".

A. Feeling

*Feeling** is defined as a distinct cognition that is an experience of either pleasure, pain or indifference, i.e. a state that is neither pleasurable nor painful. Pleasure and pain are not the objects of feeling. They are the feeling or the experience itself. Thus they are of the nature of consciousness and arise in dependence upon the mind's coming into contact with its various objects. Feeling is therefore the inherent quality of experience present in every mental state.

The general function of feeling is to fully experience the ripening effects of our previous actions. Its specific function is that of leading to the reactions of attachment, hatred and bewilderment. As soon as a pleasurable feeling occurs, sentient beings have a tendency to become desirous of maintaining and repeating such experiences. Thus attachment and longing arise. But when painful feelings occur the

tendency is the complete opposite; a strong desire to be free from them develops and aversion or anger is induced. When indifference is experienced the mind tends to become dull and unclear, thus leading to a state of confusion and bewilderment. These habitual reactions to our feelings constitute one of the basic elements in the process of samsāric existence and as long as they remain uncontrolled, we shall continue to be propelled into unsatisfactory states of existence. To counteract these innate tendencies, the Buddha taught a form of meditation called "close placement of mindfulness on the feelings".[2] By means of this practice one develops a firm and lucid awareness of whatever feeling arises in the mind and then learns to intelligently respond to the experience instead of blindly reacting to it.

There are three different ways of classifying feelings: into pleasurable, painful and indifferent feelings; sensory and mental feelings; and contaminated and uncontaminated feelings. The first classification has already been dealt with. As for the second, sensory feelings are those that accompany sense consciousnesses whereas mental feelings are those that accompany mental consciousnesses. Contaminated feelings are the unsatisfactory experiences of pleasure, pain and indifference that accompany all states of consciousness affected by the afflictions. Uncontaminated feelings are those that accompany states of consciousness in the minds of Aryas who are no longer affected by the afflictions.

B. Discernment

*Discernment** is defined as a distinct mental factor having the function of identifying the object to be one thing as opposed to another by means of differentiation.

This is the inherent quality of the mind whose task it is to distinguish one object from another, either by identifying

2 See Geshe Rabten, *Close Placement of Mindfulness in the Mahāyāna.*

it with terms and phrases, as in the case of most conceptions, or by merely making a distinction between objects, as in the case of perceptions. Thus it is present in all forms of cognition, playing an essential role in abstract thought and imagination as well as in the simplest visual and audial perceptions.

According to their bases there are six forms of discernment ranging from discernment associated with visual contact up until discernment associated with mental contact. Also six types of discernment are classified according to their referents:

1. Discernment with a sign

This kind of discernment is of three types: that which is skilled in relating terms to their corresponding objects; that which discerns concrete, impermanent phenomena; and that which has a clear, distinct referent.

2. Discernment without a sign

This is also of three types, being the opposites of the three mentioned above. The first is the discernment of a young child who, having not yet learnt a language, does not identify objects with signs, i.e. names and terms. The second is the discernment of a meditative perception of ultimate truth in which there is no sign of any conditioned phenomenon. The third is the discernment of the formless absorption at the peak of samsāra in which there is no sign of a clear or distinct referent.

3. Discernment of the limited

This is a discernment present in beings abiding in the realm of desire who have not attained even the preparatory stage for mental absoption. It is said to be of something limited since it discerns a world in which life is shorter,

afflictions are more numerous, endowments and even the environment are of a lower quality than in higher states of existence.

4. Discernment of the vast

This is a discernment existing within the realm of form. It is of the vast in the sense that it discerns a world in which afflictions are fewer and wholesome qualities are greater than in the realm of desire.

5. Discernment of infinity

This discernment exists in the formless realms where one is absorbed in the infinity of space and the infinity of consciousness. It is so called since it discerns space and consciousness to be infinite.

6. Discernment of nothing at all

This discernment is that of the formless realm in which the mind is absorbed in nothingness. It is so called since it considers that there is nothing at all presenting itself to the mind.

In addition, we can talk of deceived and non-deceived discernments.

C. Intention

*Intention** is defined as a distinct mental factor that moves the primary mind with which it bears the five similarities, as well as the other attendant mental factors of that primary mind, to the object.

It is both the conscious and automatic motivating element of consciousness that causes the mind to involve itself with and apprehend its objects. Just as a magnet by nature moves any iron that comes into contact with it,

likewise by the mere existence of intention, the mind is moved to various beneficial and detrimental objects. In addition, intention is the actual principle of activity. It is *karma* itself. Whether an action is mental, vocal or physical, the formative element that is primarily responsible and that accumulates tendencies and imprints on the mind is intention. Thus it acts as a basis for conditioned existence.

There are many ways of classifying intention according to the ways in which we classify actions. Thus we distinguish between intentions that are wholesome, unwholesome and unspecified activites and likewise between those that are meritorious, non-meritorious and unfluctuating actions. These in turn can be propulsive, completing or foreseeably experiencable forms of action as well as either contaminated or uncontaminated actions.

D. Contact

*Contact** is a distinct mental factor that, by connecting the object, the organ and the primary consciousness, activates the organ. It is said to activate the organ since, due to its co-operation, the organ is transformed into an entity with the ability to act as the basis for feelings of pleasure, pain and indifference.

It is the basis for these feelings because when a primary consciousness apprehends an object it is the contact that causes the object to be experienced as something attractive or unattractive and that gives rise to feelings of pleasure and pain. Although it acts as the basis for feelings it does not act as the basis for the feeling that occurs simultaneously with it. It only acts as the basis for feelings that arise subsequent to it.

There are six forms of contact ranging from those associated with visual consciousness up until those associated with mental consciousness.

E. Attention

*Attention** is a distinct mental factor that has the function of *(a)* directing the primary mind and the mental factors with which it is associated to the object and *(b)* actually apprehending the object. It focuses and holds the mind on its object without allowing it to move elsewhere. In this way it forms the basis for the more developed mental functions of recollection and alertness.

It should not, however, be confused with intention. Intention moves the mind to a general field of reference, say a landscape, whereas attention moves to and focuses upon the specific details such as the mountains, the trees and so forth.

There are two types of attention: realistic attention, i.e. when the mind is attentive of existent objects, and mistaken attention, i.e. when the mind is attentive of non-existent objects.

If any one of these five mental factors should be absent from any particular perception or conception, that cognition would be unable to function or even exist. For if there were no feeling, no experience of pleasure, pain or indifference would occur. If there were no discernment, no recognition or identification of the object would occur. If there were no intention, no involvement with the object would occur. If there were no contact, there would be no basis for the occurrence of feeling. And if there were no attention, the mind would not be directed towards any objects. Nevertheless, they do not always have to be present in a manifest state. Occasionally, such as at the time of the subtle death consciousness, at the moment immediately prior to the taking of birth and when the mind is absorbed in a cessation, some of these omnipresent mental factors are merely present in a dormant or latent state.

II. THE OBJECT-ASCERTAINING MENTAL FACTORS

Aspiration, appreciation, recollection, concentration and intelligence are said to be the mental factors that "ascertain" their objects, because they perform the function of ascertaining their particular objects by means of distinguishing a specific characteristic of the objective field. For example, aspiration ascertains that which is desirable within the objective field; appreciation, that which has been understood as being valuable; and recollection, that which has to be borne in mind. When the mind is actively engaged in a task, be it wholesome or unwholesome, all of these mental factors are constantly at work, giving direction, coherence and meaning to the train of our thought and behaviour.

A. Aspiration

*Aspiration** is a distinct mental factor that, having focused upon an intended object, takes a strong interest in it. It has the function of acting as the basis for enthusiasm.

In general, any wish or yearning to obtain a particular object is an aspiration. Depending upon the nature of that object or goal, the aspiration becomes wholesome and constructive or unwholesome and destructive. It is thus important to learn which objects are worthy of aspiration and which are not.

There is a threefold classification of aspiration: aspiring to encounter once again that which has passed; aspiring not to be separated from what one is experiencing at present; and aspiring to achieve a certain goal in the future. It can further be divided into four types: a strong interest in an object of sensual desire; a strong interest in a material object; a strong interest in a particular opinion or view; and a strong interest in liberation.

B. Appreciation

*Appreciation** is a distinct mental factor that *(a)* stabilises the cherished apprehension of a previously ascertained object and *(b)* does not allow the mind to be distracted by anything else. Thus it has the function of cherishing the object and securing the recollection of it.

Appreciation of an object only follows after the object's qualities have been ascertained as being worthwhile or valuable. Once appreciated in this way the mind will be far more inclined to pursue a certain form of behaviour in order to either obtain the object or realize a goal embodied in or otherwise related to the object. In the practice of Dharma, appreciation is an essential element for a meaningful state of faith and confidence. The stronger one's appreciation of the natures and characteristics of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, for example, the stronger will be one's faith in their infallibility, and the stronger one's motivation to realise one's spiritual goals. In fact the Buddha himself, in the *Sūtra Requested by Sagaramati*, has said that appreciation is the very root of all that is wholesome.

There are limitless forms of appreciation, since the objects appreciated by the limitless sentient beings are infinite. But, in brief, we can talk about two kinds of appreciations: those that are mistaken and those that are realistic.

C. Recollection

*Recollection** is a distinct mental factor that repeatedly brings to mind a phenomenon of previous acquaintance

without forgetting it. It has the function of not allowing the mind to be distracted from its object. It acts as the basis for concentration.

Recollection operates within a wide variety of activities. During single-pointed meditation it is the factor responsible for constantly bringing the object to mind and holding it there. In the practice of moral discipline it is compared to the watchman at the doorway of the mind who has the task of being constantly mindful of the various mental factors—in particular the afflictions—that arise. Through recollection of one's vows and commitments unwholesome mental factors are unable to gain a foothold in the mind thus causing turmoil and chaos. While studying, recollection enables one to remember what one has learnt previously and thus allows a store of knowledge to be built up. In everyday life it gives order to one's daily activities through enabling one to remember what has to be done at particular times and so forth. In brief, recollection is compared to a treasure house that can store many wholesome qualities without letting them perish.

There is basically a twofold classification of recollection into those recollections and memories that disturb the mind and those that do not. Mentally undisturbing recollections can further be divided into those that are still hindered by mental sinking and exitement, and those that are not so hindered. The first type includes all forms of recollection that have arisen from learning and contemplation in the mind of one who has not yet attained the ninth level of mental quiescence. The second type includes all recollections associated with the ninth level of mental quiescence as well as those associated with both mental quiescence and penetrative insight.[3]

3 See Geshe Rabten, *The Life and Teachings of Geshe Rabten*, p. 165 seq.

D. Concentration

*Concentration** is a distinct mental factor that is capable of dwelling one-pointedly, bearing the same aspect, for a sustained duration of time upon a single referent. It has the function of *(a)* acting as the basis for the increase of intelligence and of *(b)* bringing all mundane and supramundane phenomena under control.

Concentration exists, to some degree, in the minds of us all. At present this faculty may be undeveloped and only able to remain on one object for a very limited duration. But with continuous effort and practice its ability to dwell one-pointedly upon a single object can be developed until, in a state of total mental quiescence, one may remain for days concentrating on a particular object. Furthermore, beings who have taken birth in one of the formless realms can spend aeons absorbed in concentration on extremely subtle objects such as the infinity of space and the infinity of consciousness. Concentration is also an important factor in the heightening of intelligence. When we are taking a photograph, the steadier we hold the camera, the sharper will be the picture. Similarly, the firmer and more intense our concentration becomes, the sharper and more acute becomes our intelligence.

Although there are limitless degrees of concentration, we can classify them according to their natures into ten types: the concentrations associated with a mind within the realm of desire; the four concentrations associated with the four levels of absorption pertaining to the realm of form; the four concentrations associated with the four levels of absorption pertaining to the realm of no-form; and supramundane concentration.

E. Intelligence

*Intelligence** is a distinct mental factor having the specific function of fine discrimination. It examines the characteristics or the value of a recollected object. In addition it has the functions of *(a)* cutting through indecision and doubt with unilateral certainty *(b)* maintaining the root of all wholesome qualities both forseeable and unforseeable and *(c)* being similar to an eye that beholds or a lamp that illuminates concealed phenomena.

The examining, analytical quality of intelligence should not be confused with the uncertain wavering between two alternatives of indecision. Due to unknowing, indecision merely fluctuates between two alternatives concerning an object about which no certainty has been found. Intelligence, on the other hand, analyses two alternatives by means of differentiating the specific characteristics of an object whose fundamental presence has been ascertained.

Intelligence can be applied in unwholesome as well as wholesome pursuits. It has enabled people to construct highly complex weapons of destruction on the one hand and codes of ethical conduct on the other. But by far the most important role it plays is that of discerning the nature of ultimate truth—selflessness. Both for the inference as well as for the immediate perception of selflessness, a keen intelligence is the vital factor in reaching a comprehension. Nevertheless, without being mounted upon the firm concentration of mental quiescence, it alone lacks any power to cause one to progress along the path to liberation. Similarly, mental quiescence and the various other levels of concentration also lack any liberating power by themselves alone. Thus it is essential to combine the firm concentration of mental quiescence with the intelligent discrimination of penetrative insight.

There are four kinds of intelligence: that which is inborn; that which occurs from learning; that which occurs from reflection; and that which occurs from meditation. Inborn intelligence is the natural acuity of mind that we inherit from our actions in previous existences. Thus it varies greatly from individual to individual. The other three forms of intelligence are the outcome of intellectual training and spiritual discipline that we follow in this life. Furthermore, we can distinguish between intelligence that analyses what actually exists, i.e. selflessness, and intelligence that analyses what conventionally exists.

III. THE VARIABLE MENTAL FACTORS

Sleep, regret, general examination and precise analysis are said to be the "variable" mental factors since in dependence upon one's motivation or a particular situation they become either wholesome, unwholesome or unspecified.

A. Sleep

*Sleep** is a mental factor that makes the mind unclear, gathers the sense consciousnesses inward, and renders the mind incapable of apprehending the body. It has the function of *(a)* letting the apprehension of the object of the conscious mind degenerate and *(b)* causing a loss of conscious physical activity. It can be an aspect of either bewilderment or mentally undisturbing unknowing.

When the body is exhausted and in need of refreshment, sleepiness pulls the primary mind into the darkness of deep sleep i.e. a state in which no dreaming occurs. As the force of sleep becomes lighter dreams are then experienced due to the arousal of imprints and tendencies implanted on the mind during the waking state. It is a variable

mental factor because it can be influenced by our behaviour. If we spend the day involved in wholesome tasks and, in particular, generate strong positive thoughts before going to sleep, this will cause the sleep itself to be wholesome and restful. If, on the other hand, our minds are filled with hatred and craving when we go to sleep, the quality of sleep will likewise be unwholesome and disturbed. In addition there exist certain techniques by which the sleep and dream consciousnesses are actually utilised for the practice of Dharma. Since they are much subtler states of mind than the waking consciousnesses, they can become very powerful bases for developing insight.

But before they can be used in this way we must first learn how to become conscious within the sleep and dream states.[4]

B. Regret

*Regret** is a mental factor that, having regarded something one did in the past to be bad, causes the mind to become displeased and distraught. It has the function of not allowing the mind to rest at ease and of acting as a basis for bringing about mental unhappiness.

If the action or deed we regret having done was unwholesome, then the regret becomes wholesome. It is necessary to develop this form of regret in order to help purify the negative mental imprints we accumulate from unwholesome deeds. However, if we regret having made a generous gift or offering, then the regret becomes unwholesome and harmful. Simply regretting that one parked one's car in the wrong place is neither a wholesome nor unwholesome state of mind, rather it is unspecified.

4 See Geshe Rabten, *Introduction to the Different Levels of Consciousness and their Application in Meditation.*

C. General Examination

*General examination** is a distinct mental factor that in dependence upon either intention or intelligence searches for merely a rough idea about any name-bearing object.

D. Precise Analysis

*Precise analysis** is a distinct mental factor that in dependence upon intention or intelligence analyses the object in detail.

Both general examination and precise analysis are qualities ascribed to intention and intelligence, their difference being determined by the degree of precision with which they investigate the object. If they are cultivated in a wholesome manner, they give rise to what we wish for in this and later lives. But if they are developed in an unwholesome way, they only become a cause for what we do not desire, both now and in the future.

Buddhist Philosophy

Losang Gönchok's Short Commentary to Jamyang Shayba's *Root Text on Tenets*

by Daniel Cozort and Craig Preston

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What Is Valid Cognition?

Since our problem, saṃsāra, is a matter of making an error in judgment, Buddhism is very concerned with how to distinguish faulty cognition from reliable, valid cognition.[1] This has been a major topic in Buddhist philosophy since the very beginning, as it has been in many of the non-Buddhist schools.

All of the Buddhist schools identify at least six types of consciousness. Unlike the Western model of mind, in which we think of consciousness as singular and as fed by the senses, in Buddhism each of the senses is itself conscious and is capable of a kind of recognition. Our eyes, ears, nose, tongue, or body in general have consciousness and can know things that are familiar to them even before the mental consciousness, the sixth one, applies its conceptual labels.

The Cittamātrins Following Scripture add two more types of consciousness: the afflicted mentality and the mind-basis-of-all. The *afflicted mentality* is ignorance; in this case, it is the conception that the mind-basis-of-all, which is the "person" in this system, is a self-sufficient, substantial entity. The *mind-basis-of-all* is a very odd sort of entity that neither thinks nor perceives but is a kind of neutral, continuous medium to hold the karmic predispositions.

Asaṅga felt that if there were no mind-basis-of-all, there would be no continuously operating consciousness to be a basis for the infusion of karmic latencies, to appropriate a new body at the time of rebirth, or to be present during "mindless" states such as the meditative equipoise of cessation. As we have seen, other schools have been able to account for these functions without adding to the basic list of six consciousnesses.

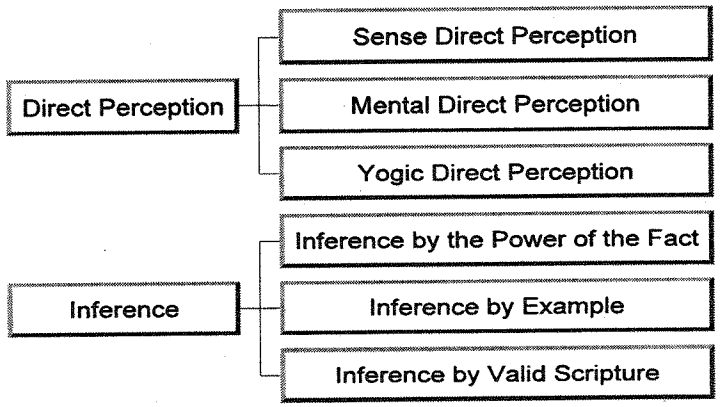
[1]Much of the discussion of direct perception that follows is based on Napper and Lati Rinbochay, *Mind in Tibetan Buddhism.*

What is "Valid"?

Except for Asaṅga's system and for that of the Vaibhāṣikas, Buddhist philosophers explain consciousness very similarly, taking their cues from the works of Dharmakīrti. This seventh-century writer used the term *pramāṇa* for valid cognition. His followers, whether they be otherwise classed as Cittamātrins or Sautrāntikas, have sometimes been called Pramāṇavādins ("Proponents of Valid Cognition") because of the centrality of this concept for them. In general, for a consciousness to be *pramāṇa* it must be "incontrovertible" regarding what it sees, hears, or thinks; it cannot be overturned.

Many of our awarenesses cannot meet that standard. *Correct assumptions* are cases when we choose correctly but without the conviction that reason might bring. *Unobservant awareness* occurs when we see or hear something but are too distracted to really notice it. *Doubt* is when we are not sure of where we stand. *Wrong consciousnesses* are common. We might experience some sort of a distortion, such as a mirage or a problem with our eyes, etc., or we might have faulty reasoning.

Valid cognition is of two main types: direct perception and inference. The main types of each are shown in the chart below.



Types of Direct Perception

Direct perception is knowledge that does not involve conceptuality. Thought, as we have previously discussed, is indirect because it employs generic images. When I recognize the thing before me as a table, I do so by mixing my sense perception of the top and legs with my idea of "table" gained from many exposures to tables. Direct perception, on the other hand, is unmediated. It has two types: sense direct perception and mental direct perception.

Sense direct perception is of the five well-known types: eye, ear, nose, tongue, and touch. But we should note that it requires three conditions:

1 the observed object
2 a sense power
3 a preceding moment of consciousness

The *observed object* is whatever form, sound, odor, taste, or tactile sensation is presented to awareness.

The *sense powers* are thought to be invisible, clear material forms that are located in the organs of perception. So, it is not precisely the case that my eyeball sees a flower; rather, the eye sense power transforms into the shape and color of the flower. This is called "taking on the aspect" of the object and it is the common tenet of all schools except Vaibhāṣika, which asserts that sense direct perception happens "nakedly." My "wind" (energy) flows out through my open eyes and knows the object without any transformation. In the case of a body consciousness, which is how we know tactile sensations and internal sensations, the body sense power is spread throughout the body (with the exception of the hair, nails, etc., which experience no sensations).

That there must be a *preceding moment of consciousness* not only makes the point that consciousness is an unbroken continuum—we are never without some sort of mind, even in special meditative states that are supposedly "mindless"—but also that perception takes time. We are well aware within our own experience that if we are exposed to something for only an instant we will not be able to notice it, getting at best a subliminal perception that we cannot remember. For sense direct perception to occur, it must be preceded by many moments ("moments" being fractions of a second) of attention.

Mental direct perception is a special type of knowing, very valued in Buddhism, wherein we know something without using the senses or conceptuality. Normally, this type of knowing is very, very brief; just before sense direct perception induces conceptuality, where we will attach a concept to what has been observed, there is a flash of mental direct perception. Otherwise, for ordinary persons, mental direct perception is what we would call extrasensory perception, which is rather rare.[1] Some of us occasionally, and others of us frequently, are able to know things that are beyond the limits of our senses. The Buddhist tradition recognizes many types of clairvoyance, clairaudience, etc. but does not consider instances other than those induced by meditation to be particularly significant.

Yogic direct perception is, in fact, a kind of mental direct perception but it is set forth separately because it is important and because it is produced in a special way, through the power of meditation. It designates the type of consciousness that can bring about liberation and omniscience. This consciousness is one that combines impeccable strength of concentration, the state of "calm abiding," with the inferential understanding of selflessness, the state of "special insight." It is, therefore, only found amongst Superiors, those who have directly understood selflessness (however it is defined in the various schools).

Types of Inference

An inference is an understanding based on reasoning. For instance, if we know that smoke and fire are related such that whenever we see smoke, we know that there must be fire, when we see smoke in a particular place, we are able to infer that fire exists there, too.

There are actually "three modes" in such a process. The first mode is the *presence of the reason in the subject.* If we say, "In a smoke-filled room, fire exists, because smoke exists," the *reason* is "smoke," and it is present in the subject, "smoke-filled room."

The second mode is the *forward entailment,* the logical relationship of the third element and the second, stated in that order. In our example, it would be, "Wherever there is smoke, there is fire."

The third mode is the other side of that coin, called the *reverse entailment.* Here, it is, "If there is no fire, there is no smoke." When we understand the three modes, we make an inference and have valid cognition.

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[1]Jamyang Shayba actually classifies these as mental consciousnesses and direct cognition but not as mental direct perception.

There are three main types of inference. The main one is **inference by the power of the fact**, i.e., inference based on the statement of valid reasons. The example of fire and smoke would be such an inference.

Inference comprehending through an analogy is to know something by way of an example. We might be said to comprehend a building through studying a scale model of it, for instance.

Finally, **scriptural inference** is to accept what a scripture teaches, having ascertained that it is not contradicted by direct perception, inference, or other scriptures. For instance, the Buddha taught about the subtle workings of karma, which is not something that we who are without omniscience can establish or disprove by direct perception or inference. It is a "very hidden phenomenon." Although in general the Buddha's statements are to be analyzed carefully, in some cases one simply trusts him on the basis of having analyzed his major teachings and having found them persuasive.[1]

Does the Mind Know Itself?

Those who follow Dharmakīrti—the Sautrāntikas Following Reasoning, the Cittamātrins Following Reasoning and the Yogācāra-Svātantrikas[2]—contend that our subjective consciousness is also an *object* of consciousness. That is, the mind is itself known at the same time that it knows its object. Otherwise, they argue, we could not remember not only the things we experience but our experiencing itself. That we *can* remember our own seeing, hearing, etc., is broadly accepted.

Self-consciousness is part of the "mind only" concept, for it is said to occur simultaneously with the mind that it observes (just as the Cittamātrins, etc., say that

[1]This typology of inference is the one that Losang Gönchok uses in the Prāsaṅgika school section but there are other lists of inferences, too. All include these types. Some of the non-Buddhist schools put a great deal of emphasis on inference, also. The Sāṃkhya school propounded two main types, inferences made for oneself and those made for others; the latter were divided into proof statements and consequences (roughly similar to the main logical forms used by the Svātantrika and Prāsaṅgika schools in Buddhism). The Vaiśeṣika and Naiyāyika schools used the same divisions but added that reliance on valid scriptures is a type of valid cognition.

[2]The root text does not specify which Cittamātrins accept self-consciousness, but Losang Gönchok attributes it only to those who Follow Reasoning. He is probably following the *Great Exposition of the Middle Way*, where Jamyang Shayba points out that Asaṅga never mentions self-consciousness. But Losang Gönchok might have gone the other way as well, since Jamyang Shayba also states that some Cittamātrins Following Scripture diverge from Asaṅga on this point.

mind and object occur simultaneously, produced by the same karmic seed). Those who say self-consciousness exists say that mind is like a lamp: at the same time it illuminates other things, it illuminates itself.

Those who dispute self-consciousness use a different metaphor. Mind is like a measuring weight: it cannot measure itself at the same time it measures something else. Or, say the Prāsaṅgikas, it *is* like a lamp; but since the very nature of a lamp is illumination, it does not *act upon itself* to illuminate itself.

But how, other than self-consciousness, can we account for memory of the subjective aspect of experience? Except for the Prāsaṅgikas, other schools account for memory of consciousness itself by the mind's ability to perform "introspection" (looking inside), which observes a mental state (but a moment *after* it occurs, as with any other object).

Prāsaṅgikas deny that self-consciousness is necessary for several other reasons. The most intriguing is that my memories are times when I train my mind upon a past object. This is quite unlike our "mechanical" model of memory, in which we imagine that memory retrieves stored records of past events and displays them on the screen of consciousness. Rather, we are making contact again with a past object and subject. Śāntideva, the ninth-century author of the famous *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds*, even says that memory can reach the subjective aspect of experience even if that awareness was not *noticed* at the time, just by remembering the object. For instance, as long as I can remember Niagara Falls, I can remember my *seeing* of Niagara Falls through association.

Other Controversies

There are many other small differences between the schools on the subject of valid cognition. What follows are brief summaries of four issues on which Losang Gönchok dwells.

Valid Cognition Can be "Mistaken." Prāsaṅgikas are usually keen to uphold the conventions of the world and thus are inclined to classify as valid the cognitions that the world would agree are valid. However, as Jamyang Shayba says, "Until Buddhahood is attained, one has no non-mistaken consciousnesses except for a

Superior's exalted wisdom of meditative equipoise."[1] Because things appear to exist inherently, there is a falseness to every appearance outside of meditation.

However, a consciousness does not have to be non-mistaken in order to be correct about the existence of its object. For instance, when we see mountains in the distance, they appear to be blue because of the haze. Although we might be mistaken about the color, we can still be correct regarding the mountains themselves.

Although this seems to be a minor point, it is a way of refuting the Svātantrika claim that things truly exist on a conventional level, as they appear, because otherwise the consciousnesses that realize things would not be valid. Prāsaṅgikas are saying, to the contrary, that a consciousness can be valid about the *existence* of its object without being correct about the *way* the object exists.

Direct Perception Can be Conceptual. Prāsaṅgikas also are alone in regarding our inferential cognitions as leading very quickly to a kind of direct cognition. They say that once we have had a real inference, which again means an incontrovertible understanding, we no longer depend on the reason that produced our inference. Our understanding is "direct," in that sense; it is still indirect in another sense, because conceptuality always involves a generic image, but it is powerful. Therefore, we can have a mental direct perception that is not merely the "flash" at the end of sense direct perception but which goes on for some time after an inference is made. This mental direct perception is memory, and memory is always conceptual.[2]

Do Objects Cast a True Aspect to Consciousness? True and False Aspectarians, who can be found among the Sautrāntikas and Cittamātrins, agree that the appearance of coarse objects as external is distorted by ignorance.[3] They disagree over whether the coarse appearances of wholes exists as they appear. For example, a patch of blue is actually many tiny parts that are blue; is the appearance of a "patch" true or false? Among True Aspectarians are those who contend that in

[1] *Great Exposition of Tenets* 37a.2–3 (in DSK edition), a commentary on a passage in Candrakīrti's *Clear Words*.

[2] This point is made by Dzongkaba in *Illumination of the Thought*, which is cited by Jamyang Shayba.

[3] There are several explanations of the differences between True and False Aspectarians and between types of each but here we are following Jamyang Shayba. Gönchok Jikmay Wangbo gives three versions and much more attention to the topic in his much shorter text (see Hopkins and Sopa, *Cutting*).

relation to a multifarious multicolored object there are as many eye consciousnesses as there are colors (or other aspects) of the object and those who say there is only one.[1]

Pramāṇa Does Not Mean "New." Of less consequence is that there is a difference between Prāsaṅgikas and others over whether *pramāṇa*, the term we have simply said means valid cognition, actually means "prime cognition," i.e., means only a *new* knower which is also incontrovertible. Dharmakīrti and his followers understand the prefix *pra* to mean "new"; Prāsaṅgikas regard it simply as meaning "foremost," or best.

[1] The three divisions are (1) the Proponents of Equal Number of Subjects and Objects, who hold the position that there are as many eye consciousnesses as there are colors (or other aspects) of the object; (2) "Half-Eggists" who speak of only one consciousness but who note that because of self-consciousness, both subject and object are observed simultaneously and are, therefore, one substantial entity; and (3) "Non-Pluralists" who speak of only one consciousness that perceives one multicolored object. Among False Aspectarians, Gönchok Jikmay Wangpo (but no one else, apparently) asserts that there are some Tainted False Aspectarians who either say that the mind is polluted by ignorance or that even Buddhas suffer from false appearances. Most Buddhists would say that neither is possible.

LORIK

Oral Commentary

by

Ven. Dzogchen Pönlop Rinpoche

Nitartha Institute 1996

SECTION TWO

THE SPECIFIC ANALYSIS OF THE ESSENTIAL MODES OF ENGAGEMENT OF MIND

CHAPTER TWELVE

APPREHENDING GENERALITY AND PARTICULARS: THE THREE DIVISIONS OF MIND APPREHENDING A GENERALITY

We have just finished the main section of the *Lorik*, the general teaching about the important divisions of mind. It is the more important and perhaps the more difficult part. The second section of the *Lorik* is known as the specific analysis of the essential modes of engagement of mind. It is the second main point. In some sense it does not really differ from the first section. It stretches a little further into looking at different aspects of the modes of engagement of the mind.

Apprehending Generality and Particulars

The first part of this section addresses the mode of engagement of mind apprehending generality and particulars. Two aspects of mind apprehend these two phenomena. The mind apprehending generality is defined here as "a mind apprehending a phenomenon as pervading." This is the first mode of engagement. The mind that conceives a generality is a conceptual mind. A generality refers to an all-pervading general characteristic. For example, the term "table," is a pervading phenomenon, in the sense that the phenomenon "table" pervades all particular tables. "Table" in general is the phenomenon that is present in all particular tables--like the table beside the sound system, the table facing me, and the table in front of the shrine. They all fall into the category of "table." That general category, term, and idea pervading these phenomena is called the generality. When it says, "Mind apprehending a phenomenon as pervading," it means that the phenomenon pervades all throughout the particular representations of that phenomenon. A generality may have different levels. This particular table in front of the

shrine is a subset of "table," and "table" is a subset of "furniture." Table is also a subset of what we call a "substantial thing," and "substantial thing" is a subset of "phenomena" (or all knowable things). Therefore there are different levels within generalities.

Regardless of levels, the mind that apprehends a phenomenon as pervading is the mind that apprehends a generality. We usually do not realize this; we are vague about such things. But here we are reducing them to subtleties.

The Three Divisions of a Mind Apprehending a Generality

There are three divisions of a mind apprehending a generality: a mind apprehending a type generality; a mind apprehending a collection generality; and a mind apprehending a term generality.

Conceptual mind apprehending a generality is conceiving a generally characteristic phenomenon. It is our conceptual mind that apprehends this phenomenon. The generally characterized has two aspects, the "isolate" and "exclusion" (*selwa*).

To be more specific about isolates, we can have a single isolate or a double isolate. This is a "not not" joke. [laughter, R. laughs] For example, when we say "tree," that is a single isolate, or a single "reverse"--a reverse from what is not "tree." When we say "cedar tree," that is a double isolate. It is not "not tree"--the reverse of "not tree"--as well as the reverse of "not cedar." This is interesting.

To go over this in a little more depth, when we say "tree," that means it is a reverse of what is "not tree." That simply means it's a tree. [R. laughs, laughter] It means it is not a table; it is not a book; it is not a glass. Having just one reverse means it is a reverse of just one thing, which is "tree." When we say "cedar tree," there is a general isolate, the reverse of "not tree," and there is a specific isolate, "cedar." It is not just any tree, but it is a cedar tree, meaning it is not a pine tree, it is not a redwood tree, it is not a wish fulfilling tree. [R. laughs, laughter] There is a double isolate. In this case, the mind that apprehends a generality apprehends on two levels, so to speak, that of a single isolate and that of a double isolate. Is that clear? Is it clear to you, *Lotsawa* [addressing Scott Wellenbach]. Can you say it in your own words? Maybe we can have different ways of saying it, and that will make it clearer.

Scott Wellenbach: The single isolate, as I heard you explain it, is the reverse of what is not wood, for instance. Then, among all wood, it is the reverse of what is not cedar. What's excluded in the first instance is everything that's not wood, and in the second instance, what's being excluded is all wood that's not cedar. I understand from what you are saying that we know things by excluding everything that they're not. By things we mean concepts....

DPR: That makes it clear, yes. There could be no better way to express it.

Type Generality

The text here describing the three divisions is brief, so we will go through them briefly, and then you can ask questions. The first division is the mind apprehending a type generality, which is defined as, "A mind apprehending a phenomenon as pervading many phenomena belonging to its own type." The meaning of "apprehending a phenomenon as pervading" should be clear from the above discussion. When we say "table," "table" is a general phenomenon, which pervades its subsets, [that is, all tables]. It belongs to its own type. "Type generality" is a specific reference to mind apprehending general types, such as, to cite other examples, "cow" or "computer."

The second division is mind apprehending a collection generality, defined as, "A mind apprehending a phenomenon as pervading the objects of a collection." The third division, mind apprehending a term generality, is defined as, "A mind apprehending a phenomenon as pervading many means of verbal expression." These are three different ways of apprehending generalities. These categories apply throughout this whole section of the text, because they describe the different modes of engagement of mind in apprehending generalities. First, you apprehend the generalities through type, then through collection, and then through terminology or sound. Therefore, conceptual minds apprehend generally characterized objects through these three different modes.

These three different modes of the mind apprehending generality do not engage an object directly, as we have discussed previously. The mind apprehending generality is not clear; its object is very vague, and that object is not distinguished from particulars. On the one hand, you cannot find the generality, "table," without real tables, particular tables outside. On the other hand, this generality of an ideal table is a projection of a confused mind,

which mixes conceptual isolates with the actual experience of the particular object. We mix the two together and conceive them as one.

Questions

12Q1: We talked about levels of generality, and you said there were four: knowable things, things, table and specific table. Are there these four levels of knowables or generalities? If so, what is the difference between knowable things and things?

DPR: In the *Collected Topics* knowables are divided into two: thing and non-thing. Thing is impermanent, and non-thing is permanent. The thing, the substantial existent, is divided again into three: form, consciousness or mind, and "non-associated compositional factor," whatever that means. [laughter, laughs] Non-associated compositional factor is something that is neither form nor consciousness, but it is a thing, and it is a composition of things. There are many subcategories.

Student: Is space one?

DPR: No. Space is permanent and is a non-thing. One example is a "person" or "individual;" it is neither form nor consciousness. Another example is a "vow," such as the *pratimoksha* or monastic vows, which start with the *upasika* vows. These are non-associated compositional factors. In the hinayana Sautrantika Vaibashika view, we believe that the vows are existent--they are not form, but they are some kind of existent thing. Therefore, when you have pratimoksha vow ceremonies, usually there is no high table between the preceptor and the recipients because, being a thing, such a table would obstruct the transmission. Antennae and satellite dishes are not so strong.

Therefore, we can divide, subdivide, and subdivide--you can have many subdivisions of isolates. In general, however, there are only two categories of isolates, single and double.

12Q2: Why are there generally just two levels of isolates? In the example of cedar you could keep subdividing different kinds of cedar, isolating that

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE THREE DIVISIONS OF A MIND APPREHENDING A GENERALITY (CONTINUED)

To summarize our discussion up to this point: "A mind apprehending a generality," has three divisions. The first one is, "A mind apprehending a type generality"--basically the category of different phenomena, different kinds. These are isolates. An isolate, such as "cow," isolates one type of animal from others. "Table" is one type of furniture, one type of a thing. That isolate, which is a type generality apprehended by our mind, is the first of the three divisions of this mind apprehending a generality.

Collection Generality

The second division is, "A mind comprehending a collection generality." One collection generality would be "furniture." "Furniture" is a collection of different things: chairs, tables, etc. The traditional example given is a forest. When you say "forest," that word indicates a collection of trees, different kinds of vegetation, and so on. "Tropical forest," would be another collection generality--a combination of trees, greenery, and whatever grows in a tropical area.

A collection generality differs quite a bit from a type generality. A collection generality has different varieties in one basket, so to speak. A collection generality is a group of different things; they may not share the same type. A forest may include different kinds of trees like cedar or pine, not just one, as well as different species of plants, like sage--all together. This contrasts with a type generality, which is always of same kind. When you say "cow," for example, it always refers to the same type of animal, no matter what kind of cow it may be.

Student: Is it like the difference between cows and animals? Animals would be a collection generality, and cows would be a type generality.

DPR: I think that it would be nice [R. makes debating clap] to debate this. My first thought is that "animal" is more like a type generality, but we can

debate that. Generally characterized phenomena are relative; we may look at the relativity of these things altogether.

A collection generality is also an isolate. "Forest" isolates itself from whatever is "not forest". It is a general characteristic. When you say, "Forest," is that a single or double isolate?

Audience: Single.

DPR: That was a long "S." Sssssssingle. [laughter]

Student: Rainforest is a double isolate.

DPR: That's right. "Rainforest" would be a double isolate, generally speaking. That isolate is a collection generality, but we are not saying a mind apprehending a collection generality is an isolate. A mind comprehending a collection generality is a specifically characterized phenomenon. Why is it a specifically characterized phenomenon?

Student: Because it is ultimately able to perform a function?

That would be one reason. You could generally say it is specifically characterized because it is mind. Whatever is mind or consciousness is a substantial thing, ultimate truth.

In the last talk [and discussion] we distinguished knowables, things, and non-things. Here, we are talking about subject and object. The subject, conceptual mind, apprehends its object, a collection generality, which is an isolate.

The subject is a mind; whether conceptual or non-conceptual, it is still mind. It is a thing because mind is a subset of a thing, [laughs] according to the Sautrantika Cittamatra view. A thing is capable of performing a function, and whatever is capable of performing a function is a particularly characterized phenomenon.

The last division is, "A mind apprehending a term generality." "Term" refers to a collection of names and labels. The mind that apprehends a term generality is the mind that apprehends labels, such as "cup," "table," or

"chair." The object in this third category of mind apprehending generality is the term generality, and the subject is the mind that apprehends it.

That term generality is also an isolate. For example, when you say, "vase," that is a term isolate. It eliminates everything that does not mean "vase." It is something, which is not "not vase." That is our "not not" joke.

These are the three divisions.

When you see a cow, you conceive of this type generality, "cow," which identifies the particular kind of animal. At the same time you conceive of the collection generality, which includes different kinds of cows. If you see different kinds of cows together, there is a collection generality. Then when you say "cow," or when you have the label "cow" in your mind, there is the term generality.

When we perceive anything it is always mixed with generalities. The general and particular characteristics are mixed together. The label, "cow," is mixed with the particularly characterized phenomenon, the actual cow. All these experiences are mixed together and perceived or conceived as one. When you see a cow, usually you see only one phenomenon: the type generality of "a cow," the actual cow, the term, "cow," as well as the collection generality. We do not see the subtle separation of the two phenomena, generally and specifically characterized.

Questions

13Q1: I don't understand how a forest could be specifically characterized, while the forest belongs to a collection generality. If a forest was a type generality then it wouldn't necessarily be specifically characterized--it would be an isolate. Can't a forest in a collection generality operate as an isolate as well?

DPR: Yes.

13Q1 : When it is operating as an isolate is it not specifically characterized?

DPR: Yes.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

MIND APPREHENDING A PARTICULAR

The second aspect of the two modes of engagement of mind is the mind apprehending a particular. The definition of this is, "A mind apprehending the pervaded object of a pervader." This second aspect is "a mind that apprehends the pervaded objects" of that generality, which is known as the "pervader." We have talked about the pervader, or generality; this is the individual particular object which the generality pervades. The mind that apprehends the pervaded object of a pervader is a subset, so to speak, of the mind apprehending a generality. For example, when you say, "glass," that is a generally characterized phenomenon. When you have a particular glass in front of you and when you perceive that glass, it becomes a particular object. It is a pervaded object. The whole general idea of "glass" pervades each individual glass. So what we are perceiving or apprehending is the particular aspect of that generality. If the generality is "glass," and we perceive or apprehend a particular aspect of that generality of "glass," such as the glass in front of us, that exemplifies the general definition of a mind cognizing a particular.

Its Three Divisions

We have two aspects of mind: the first is a mind which apprehends a generality and the second one is a mind which apprehends a particular. There are three subsets of the mind which cognizes a particular thing, rather than a general object. These are exactly the same as the three divisions of a mind apprehending a generality, except it is a apprehending a particular. We have a mind apprehending a particular of a type generality, a mind apprehending a particular of a collection generality, and a mind apprehending a particular of a term generality. Comparing the first division of mind apprehending a generality with the first division of mind apprehending a particular: the first was a mind apprehending a type generality, and here is a mind apprehending a particular of a type generality. We can look at the definition of the the first division, a mind apprehending a particular of a type generality as representative of the other two, and since the rest are the same, we won't need to go through each one. The first subset is defined as, "A mind apprehending the pervaded object of a pervader of

many [phenomena] belonging to its type." This is a mind that apprehends the pervaded object, the particular object. It is a particular object of a pervader of many phenomena belonging to its type. Examples of type generalities include cows, PC's, cars, and wild horses. We have a pervader of many phenomena, which means one generality pervades all the different particulars of a similar type. "Car" is a generality. Here we are using it as a type generality.

The text says, "(The) object of a pervader of many phenomena belonging to its type." What is the pervader in the example of the "car"?

Q: I thought it was mind.

DPR: Mind is the pervader? That must be a Cittamattrin car. [laughter, R. laughs] The pervader here is "car," the generality. The pervaded objects will be your car, Sangpo's car, or somebody else's car. [To Sangpo:] You don't have a car?

Sangpo: Not yet.

DPR: Oh, okay--Sangpo's future car. [laughter] The pervaded objects are all these particulars.

Student: Could you say that the pervader is the car-ness?

DPR: Yes, you can say car-ness or the quality of "car." When you say "car," it is a particular thing already, in some sense. It is defined by your concept in certain ways. Pervaded objects are the particular objects of the general pervaders. The mind that apprehends the pervaded object of a general pervader is the first subset--a mind apprehending a particular of a type generality.

I don't think we have to go through each one of the three subsets of a mind cognizing a particular. It is the same as in the last talk-- just change from general to particular. The rest of them are exactly the same definition.