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# Study Group - “Buddhist Tenets”

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

གྲུབ་མཐུན་རྒྱུ་མ་གཞག་བཤམ་པ།

17 July 2001

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As usual, establish a virtuous and positive motivation for listening to the teachings.

As I have mentioned in the past, when we talk about tenets we are talking about the different views in Buddhism. The different schools of tenets come about through various views: the Hinayana tenets are based on the Hinayana view of the selflessness of the self, and the Mahayana tenets are based on the view of the selflessness of phenomena.

## 5 Explaining the Mind Only School

The view of selflessness of phenomena in the Mind Only tenet is that of a form and it's valid cogniser's emptiness of being different substance.

The intention of proponents of the Mind Only School is to become enlightened for the sake of all sentient beings, and to this end they practise the six perfections. When we proceed to the higher point of view of the Madhyamika the view is the absence of true, or inherent, or natural existence. Again the intention is bodhicitta, the mind wanting to become enlightened for the benefit of all sentient beings, and the practice are the six perfections.

The divisions followed in the Mind Only chapter are the same as those followed in pervious chapters.

### 5.1 Definition

The definition of a proponent of the Mind Only tenet is *a proponent of Mahayana tenet who doesn't accept outer meaning and assert self-knowers as being truly existent.*

The Mind Only tenet doesn't assert outer existence whereas the Sautrantrika tenet does. As we mentioned in previous weeks, the Sautrantika School asserts outer existence by proposing a partless particle. They assert coarse forms to be accumulations of these partless particles, and these accumulations of partless particles are called outer form. In the Mind Only tenet, partless particles are not accepted. So therefore coarse forms, which are the accumulations of those partless particles, are also not accepted.

To the Mind only school, whatever form exists is asserted to be of one nature with consciousness. We have discussed the definition of a self-knower in previous weeks, explaining a little what the term 'self-knower' exactly means. Each mind has two parts, the clear and knowing part, which knows outer objects, and the clear and knowing part knowing that mind itself. So one part of that clear and knowing knows the object, and the other part knows the subject.

We have also mentioned in the past the various attributes of a self-knower. A self-knower is focused only inwards, meaning that its object is only mind itself; it is singular which means that it is not concomitant with a main mind and it does not have a mental factor which is concomitant with itself.

Awareness has the division into mind and mental factors. But if it is awareness, then there is no pervasion that it has to be either a main mind or a mental factor, as for example a self-knower. So a self-knower is an awareness, but it is neither a main mind nor a mental factor because it doesn't have a main mind with which it is concomitant, nor does it

have a mental factor which it is concomitant with it.

The function of the self-knower is to generate the memory of the object-possessor. Without a self-knower you would not be able to remember that at a particular time you had a particular awareness. Actually this kind of explanation comes from the Madhyamika point of view and I have mentioned this already several times before. Although I don't know if you remember! (*Laughter*)

There are various names used to describe the Mind Only tenet. Sometimes a person following this school is called a Mind Only Advocate. They can also be called an Advocate of Consciousness (*lit. aspect knowers*) or an Advocate of Yogic Practice. These three terms are synonymous.

The pioneer of the Mind Only tenet was Asanga. Even though Asanga is regarded as the pioneer of the Mind Only tenet, Asanga himself was actually an advocate of the Madhyamika tenet. The reason for saying this is that Asanga wrote a commentary to the *Uttaratantra (Sublime Continuum)* by Maitreya, which reflects the Madhyamika point of view. Since Asanga was the author of this text, one can say that he was actually a follower of the Madhyamika tenet, even though he was the pioneer of the Mind Only tenet. In pioneering the Mind Only system, it wasn't as if Asanga created something new that didn't previously exist in the Buddhist teachings. What he did was to clarify the Mind Only teaching of the Buddha.

In particular Asanga clarified the divisions of phenomena into what are called the three characteristics: **wholly labelled phenomena**, **other-powered phenomena** and **thoroughly established phenomena**. It is asserted that **wholly labelled phenomena** are empty of inherent existence that **other-powered phenomena** and **thoroughly established phenomena** truly exist. This threefold division of phenomena and assertion that other-powered phenomena and thoroughly established phenomena are truly existing, and mentally elaborated phenomena are empty of inherent existence is the Mind Only point of view which was explained by the Buddha, and then clarified by Asanga. Vasubandhu, Dignaga and Dharmakirti are three examples of proponents of the Mind Only tenet.

### 5.2 Classification

Proponents of the Mind Only tenets can be divided into Mind Only True Aspectarians and Mind Only False Aspectarians.

#### 5.2.1 Mind Only True Aspectarians

The definition of Mind Only True Aspectarian is *a Mind Only, as well as a proponent asserting that the part of the appearance of coarse form to the sense direct perception apprehending form in the continuum of a 'here-seer' (an ordinary being) is not being contaminated by the karmic latencies of ignorance.*

Here we have this term 'here-seer'. You can talk about seeing 'the here', and seeing 'over there', where those who can see only 'the here' refers to those who can only see samsara. That is because they are 'here' in samsara, and can see only what is 'here'. Really this is just a more flowery term for 'ordinary beings'. Those who can see the 'other' side or 'over there' would be those who can see nirvana, and emptiness directly.

It is good to know that all Mind Only proponents agree that, apart from the self-knower, all direct perceptions in the continuum of an ordinary being (meaning a being who hasn't realised emptiness directly) are always contaminated, and therefore will always be mistaken. They are mistaken with regard to the appearing object because, in the context

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of the eye-consciousness perceiving form, form will always appear as a different entity from the mind.

The difference between the two Mind Only groups lies in their different assertions regarding the appearance of coarse form. The True aspectarians assert that the appearance of coarse form to the mind is not contaminated by the karmic latencies of ignorance and that the mind is non-mistaken with regards to this appearance.

One part within the appearance of the object to the mind is the appearance of outer existence, and another the appearance of coarse form. The Mind Only True Aspectarians assert that the consciousness is mistaken with regard to the appearance of outer existence but not with regards to the appearance of coarse form. This is because the appearance of outer existence is contaminated by the latencies of ignorance while appearance of coarse form is uncontaminated by the karmic latencies of ignorance.

### 5.2.2 Mind Only False Aspectarians

**(A mind only as well as a proponent asserting that the part of the appearance of coarse form to the sense direct perception apprehending form in the continuum of a here-seer (an ordinary being) is being contaminated by the karmic latencies of ignorance.)**

The Mind Only False Aspectarians say that the mind is actually mistaken with regard to both the appearance of outer existence, and the appearance of coarse existence. Both of those appearances are contaminated by the karmic latencies of ignorance.

Both schools agree that the mind is mistaken with regard to the appearance of outer existence. When the mind sees a certain object such as a form it appears as if the object is over there, and that the subject (the mind which is perceiving) is over here. It appears to the mind as if there is this distance between the object and the subject. This appearance of object and subject as being of a different substance is a false appearance.

Remember that the Sautrantika School asserted that form is the cause for what is called the focal condition of the eye-consciousness perceiving form. They assert that there is a cause-and-effect relationship between the object and the mind perceiving the object.

Here however, the outer form is not the cause for the eye consciousness perceiving that form. The outer focal object is not the actual focal condition. Rather the actual focal condition is a karmic potential on the main consciousness. Through the ripening of this karmic potential, the mind and the object are produced at the same time. Here we can see that the mind and the object don't have a cause-and-effect relationship. Rather they are established simultaneously.

The Mind Only School accepts that cause and effect cannot occur simultaneously, so therefore the object and the mind itself cannot have a cause-and-effect relationship. They are also not of different substance as asserted by the Sautrantika. Since they are established simultaneously from a concordant karmic imprint on the mental consciousness they are of same substance.

This Mind Only point of view on how everything is generated from karmic imprints on the mental continuum is very beneficial for one's understanding of cause and effect. I have heard, although I am not sure about it, that at least some parts of modern science assert a point of view similar to the point of view of Mind-Only school. Some groups within modern science assert that the power of outer matter comes about through the power of the mind, but this is just

something that I have heard.

Mind Only also asserts that the grasping at the self as being self-sufficient and a substantially existent is the subtle self-grasping at a self, and that the absence of a self which is self-sufficient and a substantially existent is subtle selflessness.

The grasping at form and its valid cogniser being of separate substance is the grasping at the self of phenomena. Form and its valid cogniser's emptiness of being separate substance is the subtle selflessness of phenomena.

The grasping at form being inherently the base of determination of the concept apprehending form is the other subtle self-grasping at phenomena and form not being inherently the base of determination of the concept apprehending form is the other subtle selflessness of phenomena as clarified by Lama Tsong Khapa.

The Mind Only True Aspectarians have three divisions: the form-mind equalists, the half-eggists and the non-pluralists.

#### 5.2.1.1 Form and Mind Equalists

Form refers to the object, and mind is that which perceives those objects. Why are they called equalists? The text says:

*If the Yogacara posits that at the time, when an eye-consciousness apprehending the colour pattern on the wings of a butterfly apprehends (that) colour pattern, at the object's side blue, yellow etc. are shown as individual aspects and that also at the object possessor's (subject's) side the different individual aspects of blue, yellow etc. are generated as true aspects, then he is a form-mind equalist.*

Here the text uses the example of the moment when the eye-consciousness perceives the pattern of colours on the wings of a butterfly. Here we have two parts, the object which is the pattern of colours on the wings of a butterfly, and the eye-consciousness perceiving those patterns. The pattern of colour shows many different colours. Just as there are a number of individual aspects of colour shown at the object, so also the eye-consciousness perceiving that pattern of colours is actually made up of the same number of consciousnesses, as there are aspects of colour on the wing. This means that each aspect of colour on the wing actually has one eye-consciousness perceiving it, and the eye-consciousness perceiving the pattern is actually made up of an accumulation of eye consciousnesses equal in number to the number of aspects of colours that form the pattern. Therefore this particular Mind Only group are called form-mind equalists, because they assert an equal number of aspects of form and mind perceiving those forms.

#### 5.2.1.2 Half Eggists

What is the difference between the form-mind equalists and the half-eggists (which means half of an egg).

*If the Yogacara posits that at the time of such an apprehension at the object's side blue, yellow etc. are shown as individual aspects, but that at the object possessor's (subject's) side the different individual aspects of blue, yellow etc. are generated without aspect, then he is a half eggist.*

Using the same example as the form-mind equalists of the eye consciousness perceiving the pattern of colour on the wings of a butterfly, the half eggists say that that pattern of colours shows various individual aspects of colour. Then they say that the eye-consciousness perceiving the pattern of colour would be generated aspect less in the individual aspects of yellow, blue and so forth.

So therefore they are called half-eggists because they have only half of the assertion of the equalists.

### 5.2.1.3 Non-pluralists

The third group of True Aspectarians are called Non-pluralists. Here again the example is the same.

*If the Yogacara posits that at the time of such an apprehension at the object's side blue, yellow etc. aren't shown as individual aspects but only the aspect of mere colour pattern is shown, and that at the object possessor's (subject's) side the different individual aspects of blue, yellow etc. aren't generated without aspect but the aspect of mere colour pattern is generated without aspect, then he is a non-pluralist.*

This is saying that the Yogacara, the Mind Only proponent, posits that at the time of the apprehension of the eye-consciousness apprehending the pattern of colour on the wings of a butterfly, the mere pattern is apprehended by that eye consciousness. So at the object's side the individual colour aspects of blue, yellow, etc - are not shown, only the aspect of mere colour-pattern is shown. When we analyse the object there is a difference from the previous two schools, which say that the different colours are shown individually. Whereas this school says that the individual colours are not shown individually, but as a whole pattern. Also at the subject's or consciousness' side the different individual aspects of blue, yellow, etc are not generated without aspect, but the aspect of mere colour pattern is generated without aspect.

#### 5.2.2.1 Tainted False Aspectarians

Within the False Aspectarians there are two divisions: Tainted False Aspectarians and Untainted False Aspectarians.

This refers to whether or not the nature of the mind is tainted by the stains of ignorance. If they assert that the nature of the mind is contaminated, or tainted by the karmic latencies of ignorance, then they are called Tainted False Aspectarians.

#### 5.2.2.2 Untainted False Aspectarians

If they assert that the nature of the mind is untainted by the karmic latencies of ignorance they are called Untainted False Aspectarians.

### 5.3 Etymology

The third section, the etymology of the Mind Only School begins by asking why they are called Mind Only? It is because they assert that phenomena exist by being in the mere nature of mind. Why are they called the Advocates of Consciousness<sup>1</sup>? It is the same thing; they assert that the way phenomena exist is by being in the mere nature of consciousness.

The next section concerns positing objects.

However maybe we can stop here, and have time for a few questions.

*(In the following discussion there were many questions, which merely reviewed various categories that we have studied. This transcript is limited to additional points of clarification. It is also limited by the lack of amplification of audience responses, although these can sometimes be deduced from the reply.)*

*Geshe-la: What is the difference between a Buddhist and a Buddhist tenet proponent?*

*Student: A Buddhist goes for refuge to the Three Jewels, while a Buddhist tenet holder also has understood and accepted the four seals of Buddhism.*

*Geshe-la: What are the four seals?*

*Student: All compounded phenomena are impermanent, all contaminated phenomena are suffering, all phenomena are empty*

*and selfless, nirvana is peace.*

*Geshe-la: Of the four seals of Buddhism the third states that all phenomena are empty and selfless. What does the empty and selfless refer to?*

*Student: There are different interpretations according to the different tenets, but here the absence of a permanent, single, independent self.*

*Geshe-la: If you don't posit the emptiness of a permanent, single, independent self then what other kinds of emptiness would you posit?*

*Student: It depends upon the school.*

*Geshe-la: You said that each school could have its own interpretation. So the empty and selfless of the third seal is also the selflessness of phenomena? Is that what you are saying?*

*Student: According to a higher school they could.*

*Geshe-la: In regard to the selflessness of the person we can posit a coarse selflessness of the person, and a subtle selflessness of the person. The first is the absence of a permanent, single, independent self, and the second is an absence of a self, which is self-sufficient, and a substantially existent.*

*As the empty and selfless in the third seal we posit the absence of a permanent, single, independent self. If we would not do that then the Vatsiputra Vaibashika, which are regarded as Buddhist tenet holders in this text, would be excluded as such.*

*When we talk about the selflessness or the absence of a permanent, single, independent self then how many parts or characteristics are we talking about here, and what are they? They are 'permanent', and 'single' and 'independent'.*

*Permanent refers to not momentarily changing. The self is empty of being permanent because it is changing moment by moment. The 'single' refers to being independent of its parts. The self appears single by appearing to exist independently of its parts. Because it is empty of that, it is empty of being single. It appears as being 'independent' because it appears as being independent of its causes and conditions, and because it is dependent on its causes and conditions it is empty of independent.*

*Student: Does Mind Only mean all phenomena are mind?*

*Geshe-la: Both form and and it's valid cogniser are generated from the one concordant karmic potential on the mental continuum. There is this karmic potential on the mental continuum, and one part of that becomes the cause for form, and the other part becomes the cause for the valid cognition apprehending that form. So both form, as well as the valid cognition apprehending that form is generated at the same time from that same karmic potential. Therefore form is said to be in the nature of mind. It is not said to be mind, rather that it is in the nature of mind. So because form and the valid cognition apprehending form don't have a cause-and-effect relationship - they are therefore of one nature.*

*Student: What is the difference between permanent, partless and independent, and self-sufficiency by way of substantial existence?*

*Geshe-la: There is a difference in subtlety. The mode of appearing as being able to support itself is when the self appears to be engaging the five aggregates without depending on the five aggregates. It is not like that at all, because the self actually depends on the five aggregates. The person is in reality engaging the aggregates, but not independently of them.*

*Another way of explaining being 'a substantial existent' is*

<sup>1</sup> Nam-rig = aspect-knower

that if in order for it to become an object of mind, it doesn't depend on another phenomena also becoming an object of mind, then it is 'a substantial existent'.

The other way is that the self appears as that which is engaging the five aggregates. If the self appears as being able to support itself, it appears as if it can engage the five aggregates without actually being dependent upon them. In actuality the self is engaging the five aggregates, but it does so by being dependent on them. When the self appears as if it were engaging the five aggregates without being dependent on those aggregates, then we call that appearance of the self as appearing that it is able to support itself.

Student: How is form in the nature of mind?

Form is not mind but of one nature with it. Form and its valid cogniser are generated simultaneously from the same concordant karmic imprint on the mental consciousness.

*(After some questions on the definition of valid cognition)*

Geshe-la: Out of the various tenets only the Prasangikas posit a subsequent cogniser as a valid cogniser. From the Svatantrika-Madhyamika downwards, all agree that the definition of a valid cogniser is a newly incontrovertible knower. The Prasangika School also say that a valid cogniser definitely has to be a consciousness, and it has to be incontrovertible. So it has to be an incontrovertible knower but they don't say that it has to be new.

*(After a number of questions on the categories of inferential cognisers)*

Geshe-la: What is the reason through which we posit that the subject is incontrovertible? We say that it is when a quote is free from the three contradictions: it is not contradicted by direct valid perception, it is not contradicted by an inferential cogniser through fact and it is not contradicted by an inferential cogniser through belief. If the quote is free from those three contradictions then it is a quote which is incontrovertible with regard to its meaning. It is something that we can believe, and usually it expresses something that we cannot analyse with reason or fact. As we don't have access to the facts we have to understand it in dependence upon a quote that is free from the three contradictions.

We generate that inferential cogniser by depending upon the proof statement which says: 'Take the quote now 'from generosity comes wealth, and from morality, higher rebirth'. It is incontrovertible in regard to its meaning because it is a quote which is free from the three contradictions. The proof statement has a subject, predicate and a reason.

The reason is that it is a quote that is free from the three contradictions and there is a pervasion. If it is a quote that is free from the three contradictions then it necessarily has to be a quote which is incontrovertible with regard to its meaning. So since this quote 'from generosity comes wealth and from morality, higher rebirth', is a quote free from the three contradictions, it has to necessarily be a quote which is incontrovertible with regard to its meaning.

In which way is the quote free from the three contradictions? Objects of knowledge are divided into manifest objects, and hidden phenomena. Hidden phenomena can further be divided into slightly hidden phenomena, and very hidden phenomena.

Manifest phenomena refer for example to objects of the five senses, which can be perceived directly with sense consciousness. In order to understand them we don't need to depend on reasoning.

Slightly hidden phenomena are phenomena such as

impermanent sound, selflessness of sound and so forth. At the beginning we cannot understand those phenomena through direct perception, and we have to understand them through inference, by depending on valid reasons. By depending on facts and reasons then we can understand slightly hidden phenomena like impermanent sound, selflessness of sound and so forth.

Very hidden phenomena include the subtle relationship, which is expressed in this quote, 'From generosity comes wealth, from morality comes a higher rebirth, and from patience comes beauty'. These subtle karmic relationships are very hidden phenomena, and they have to be understood by the inferential cogniser through belief.

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Please establish as your motivation, 'I have to become enlightened for the benefit of all sentient beings, and in order to be able to achieve this I am now going to listen to the holy Dharma'.

We have finished the definition, division and etymology of the Mind Only School. We now start with the next section, which concerns the positing of objects.

## 5.4 Mode of Asserting Objects

The definition of *an object of knowledge* is *that which is suitable to be made an object of mind*.

Objects of knowledge can be divided into other-powered, wholly labelled and thoroughly established.

### 5.4.1.1 Other-Powered

The definition of *an other-powered* is *that which is generated through causes and conditions*. Other-powered can be divided into pure other-powered and impure other-powered. Examples of **pure other-powered** are the non-dual wisdom in the continuum of an Arya, or the marks and signs of a Buddha. An example of **impure other-powered** is the contaminated aggregates of an ordinary being.

### 5.4.1.2 Thoroughly Established

The definition of a *thoroughly established* is *the final focal object of a pure path*. A 'pure path' can have various objects of meditation. When we talk about a thoroughly established, we are talking about their final object of meditation. The 'pure' in pure path refers to liberation. So 'pure path' refers to a path leading to liberation. The final object of meditation of a path leading to liberation is emptiness. Here, therefore, 'pure path' refers to the non-dual wisdom in the continuum of a Learners-Arya realising emptiness. The final meditation object of that path is emptiness, and that is what we refer to as a thoroughly established. Thoroughly established is synonymous with emptiness.

### 5.4.1.3 Wholly-labelled

The definition of a *wholly labelled* is *that which is fabricated by the conception apprehending it*.

Other-powered, thoroughly established and wholly labelled are referred to as the three characteristics, and all objects of knowledge are divided into those three characteristics.

Wholly labelled can be divided into existent wholly labelled and non-existent wholly labelled. The self of the person falls into the category of non-existent wholly labelled. Examples for existent wholly labelled are non-compounded space or meaning generality.

The Mind Only proponents assert that out of the three characteristics both other powered and thoroughly established are truly existent, inherently existent, naturally existent and existent from their own side. But wholly labelled are not truly existent and inherent existent, even though they exist from their own side and are naturally existent.

Mind only asserts that other-powered have to be truly

existent since they are the basis of thoroughly-established, which they assert to be both truly existent and true.

Following the text, there are two types of objects of knowledge: ultimate truth and conventional truth.

## 5.4.2 Ultimate Truth

The definition of *ultimate truth* is *that which is to be realised in a non-dual manner by a direct valid cogniser realising it directly*.

Here 'direct valid cogniser' refers to the non-dual wisdom realising emptiness in the continuum of a Learner-Arya. This wisdom non-dually realising emptiness is the main object-possessor, or the main subject of the object emptiness. It realises emptiness in a non-dual manner, which means that it is free from the three kinds of dualistic appearance: it is free from conventional appearance, it is free from the object and subject appearing as being different, and it is free from the appearance of the self of phenomena.

The text then says that ultimate truth, suchness, the sphere of Dharma, and the final mode of abiding are synonyms. In each case these terms refer to the final object of meditation of the non-dual wisdom realising emptiness in the continuum of an Arya being.

Ultimate truth has two divisions: a subtle selflessness of phenomena and a subtle selflessness of person.

We have already posited form and its valid cogniser's emptiness of being of a different substance, in addition to form being empty of being inherently the object of determination of the concept apprehending it. These are two examples for the subtle selflessness of phenomena.

The example for the subtle selflessness of a person is the absence of a self of a person that is self-sufficient and a substantially existent.

### 5.4.2.1 Subtle Selflessness of Phenomena

Selflessness of phenomena can have various divisions by way of the base of the emptiness. One can have 20 emptinesses, or if one condenses it a little, 18 emptinesses, or if it is further condensed 16 emptinesses, and if you even make it even more condensed there are four emptinesses.

The 20 emptinesses are divided by way of the base. They are inner emptiness, outer emptiness, outer-inner emptiness; emptiness of emptiness, great emptiness, ultimate emptiness, compounded emptiness, non-compounded emptiness, emptiness beyond extremes, emptiness of beginningless and endless, indestructible emptiness, nature emptiness, emptiness of all phenomena, emptiness of definition, non-focused emptiness, Emptiness of identitylessness of non-functioning, emptiness of functional phenomena, emptiness of non-functional phenomena, nature emptiness, other-identity emptiness.

## 5.4.3 Conventional Truth

The definition of *conventional truth* is *that which can be realised in a dual manner by the direct valid cogniser realising it directly*.

Conventional truth can be sub-divided into other-powered and wholly labelled. Other-powered and compounded are synonymous. Wholly labelled phenomena and non-compounded phenomena other than ultimate truth are synonymous.

In the definition of conventional truth, an example of a direct valid cogniser would be the eye consciousness realising yellow, or the eye consciousness apprehending blue. Both realise their object in a dual manner, because the object itself - yellow or blue - is a conventional

phenomenon. So when a conventional phenomenon appears to the mind, then you already have a dual appearance.

Wholly labelled and non-compounded phenomena other than ultimate truth are synonymous. Within existent phenomena there are permanent and impermanent phenomena. Within permanent phenomena there are thoroughly established and wholly labelled.

All existent wholly labelled are permanent and synonymous with permanent phenomena other than thoroughly established. Here we are just repeating what we have already mentioned, which is that all functioning phenomena are accepted as a common basis between truly existent and false, and all suchnesses are accepted as a common basis between truly existent and true.

All non-compounded phenomena other than suchness, are accepted as a common basis between falsely established and false. If it is suchness there is a pervasion that it is a non-affirming negative. The examples for non-affirming negatives other than suchness are the same as in the Sautrantika tenet.

The text then merely repeats what has already been mentioned, that form and so forth (meaning the other objects of the senses) are not established as outer phenomena.

Instead they are generated from the inner substance of consciousness in dependence upon the placing of common and uncommon imprints on the mental consciousness called the mind-basis-of-all. Therefore the five sense objects are empty of being an accumulation of partless particles, as is asserted by the Sautrantika tenet.

The Sautrantika tenet asserts that the five sense objects are accumulations of partless particles, and therefore they exist somehow separately from the mind. The Mind Only School says that phenomena are empty of being an accumulation of partless particles. Rather they are generated from within the mind in dependence upon common and uncommon karmic latencies placed on the mind-basis-of-all.

Next we come to the difference between the Mind Only True Aspectarians and the Mind Only False Aspectarians. The Mind Only True Aspectarians assert that form and so forth (the five objects of the senses) are not what is referred to as outer meaning. They are not outer existence but they are still coarse forms or substances. The Mind Only False Aspectarians say that they are neither outer existence, nor are they coarsely established phenomena.

Both True and False Aspectarians agree that the five objects of the senses are not outer established phenomena. However Mind Only True Aspectarians say that form and so forth are coarse phenomena, while the Mind Only False Aspectarians say that they are neither outer established nor are they even coarse phenomena.

*In the discussion, which follows, student questions and responses are in italics, Geshe-la's questions and responses are in normal typeface.*

What is the definition of objects of knowledge?

*Something that is suitable to be posited as an object of mind.*

It is important to memorise these definitions and divisions. Not only does one have to contemplate and meditate on the meaning of these texts, but one also has to memorise these definitions. Once a student of Gen Loden told me that it is completely unnecessary to memorise those various definitions, and that it is enough to meditate in order to

become enlightened. When I asked him, 'Well if you don't memorise anything out of the lam rim, then how do you meditate on the lam rim?' that monk didn't have anything to say. So it is very important to try to memorise some definitions.

The definition of an object of knowledge is that which is suitable to be posited as an object of mind. Then we said that it can be divided into what are called the three characteristics. What are they?

*Thoroughly established, wholly labelled and other-powered.*

So what's the definition of other-powered phenomena?

*Something dependent on causes and conditions.*

How many categories of other-powered phenomena are there?

*Two – pure and impure.*

What's the definition of thoroughly established phenomena?

*The final focal object of a pure path.*

What is the meaning of pure path?

*The non-dual path followed by an Arya being.*

Why is that path called a pure path?

*It refers to liberation. It's the path of an Arya, so it is a non-dual wisdom and has no subject.*

If you say that it is a pure path because it's a non-dual mind, then we can also posit that the self-knower is non-dual.

When you are asked, 'What is a pure path?' then you posit the non-dual transcendental wisdom in the continuum of an Arya being. However if you are asked 'Why is that wisdom a pure path?' Then you say, 'because the 'pure' here refers to liberation as it is a path which leads to liberation. Therefore it is called a pure path.' If you investigate in this manner, then you will generate a good understanding.

If you know how to investigate a subject properly by dividing it up into a step-by step analysis, then once you know the method with regard to one subject, you will also be able to properly investigate other topics and subjects.

So what is the definition of wholly labelled phenomena?

*Mentally fabricated by the concept apprehending it.*

What is an example for wholly labelled?

*I'm just reading it out of the notes! The self of person is wholly labelled.*

That's correct, and if we want to posit an existent wholly labelled you could posit such things as non-compounded space, or a meaning generality appearing to the concept. In fact all permanent phenomena apart from emptiness can be posited as existent or wholly labelled.

So what is the definition of ultimate truth?

*Things that exist the way they appear.*

That is the definition of 'true'. What you were saying is that if there is no discrepancy between appearance and mode of existence, then that is the meaning of 'true', and if there is a discrepancy between appearance and existence, then that's the meaning of false. However that is not really the definition of ultimate truth. Even in non-Dharmic terms, just at an ordinary day-to-day level we refer to something as being true if it exists in the same way as it was explained. We also refer to something as being false if there is a discrepancy between the explanation and the actual existence.

So then what is the definition of ultimate truth?

*A direct valid perception of the apprehension of an object without dual subject-object appearance.*

That which is to be realised in a non-dual manner by the direct valid cogniser realising it directly.

Is there a translation of the definition in the text you have?  
Is it similar?

*The text says 'That comprehended by a valid perception perceptually comprehending it, through dualistic appearance' is the definition of concealer truth.*

Do you have any questions? Otherwise we will go on to object-possessors.

*Question partly inaudible. It may be as follows - If an object arises at the same time as a consciousness arising, what is the basis of the meaning generality being an object of the next moment?*

*Trans: So you are asking whether form can become the condition for the conceptual thought thinking about form, which is introduced by the direct perception apprehending form? You are asking whether it's a cause-effect relationship?*

There is no difference between Mind Only and Sautrantika with regard to this point. That is because the form that is realised by the eye consciousness does not exist simultaneously with the concept apprehending form, which was introduced by that eye consciousness. They don't exist simultaneously. So it is valid to say that the concept apprehending form is generated from form. So form is the determinate object of the concept apprehending form. Thus there is no difference between the Mind Only and the Sautrantika.

*What is the difference between grossly established and externally established?*

The way form appears as coarse is that just by the mere appearance of form, you have coarse appearance. If a form appears then everything that is non-dually of one substance with the form will also appear to the eye consciousness. It is not necessarily apprehended but it will appear. So together with form, the impermanence of form will appear, the coarseness of form will appear and so forth.

*Are gross forms apprehended?*

According to the True Aspectarians, you could say that the eye-consciousness apprehends coarse form. However we have already said previously that the False Aspectarians assert that the appearance of form is contaminated by the karmic potential of ignorance. That, we have already said is a false, deceptive appearance. So according to the True Aspectarians the eye-consciousness apprehending form would apprehend coarse form.

*What are the different classifications of emptiness apart from their base?*

Oh you mean the 20, 18, 16 emptinesses and so forth? They are the same - the only difference is their base.

For example we have inner emptiness, outer emptiness and inner-outer emptiness. An example for inner emptiness would be the emptiness of the eye consciousness apprehending form. An example for outer emptiness would be the emptiness of the apprehended object form. An example for inner-outer emptiness would be the emptiness of subject and object combined. An example for the emptiness of emptiness would be the emptiness of the emptiness itself. Going through the various kinds of emptinesses, it is always be the same. The base of great emptiness is according to size. The base of negation of the

emptiness without beginning or end would be cyclic existence or samsara.

There is a debate where somebody might say, Samsara does not have an end, because it is the base of the emptiness without beginning or end?' The answer to this is that there is no pervasion. Even though it is the base for that emptiness, samsara can still have an end.

For ultimate emptiness the base of emptiness is nirvana. The base of indestructible emptiness is virtue, such as virtuous karma, or the truth of the path. In the same manner the various emptinesses are just differentiated by their base.

*So for each type of emptiness is there a limited number of bases?*

The emptiness of the object thumb you could call the 'thumb emptiness'. Here you have the base of the thumb, and the absence of the self of phenomena on the base of the thumb would be the emptiness of the thumb. Therefore this emptiness could be called the 'thumb emptiness', by virtue of its base. Or, since you have five fingers, and each finger has its own emptiness, you have five different kinds of emptinesses of finger.

*What I meant was can all the 20 types of emptinesses apply to one base?*

No.

*So, the base and the type of emptiness are linked?*

They are not unrelated phenomena; they are related. For example on the table in front of me it is valid to say that the emptiness of the vase does not exist there because there is no vase. It's just like in the *Heart Sutra* where it says, 'There's no eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body, no truth of suffering, no truth of cessation, no path and so forth. You can posit the emptiness of each and every object - of the four noble truths, the 12 dependent links and so forth.

*Transcribed from tape by Kathi Melnic*

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*Edited Version*

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# Study Group - "Buddhist Tenets"

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

གྲུབ་མཐུན་རྣམ་གཞག་བཤམ་པ།

31 July 2001

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

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

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

## 5.5 Mode of Asserting Object-Possessors

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

### 5.5.1 Mind Only True Aspectarians

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

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

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

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

### 5.5.1.2 Mind-basis-of-all

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### 5.5.1.2 Afflicted Consciousness

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

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

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

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

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

#### 5.5.2 Mind Only False Aspectarians

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

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

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

#### 5.5.3 Awareness

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

*A newly incontrovertible knower.*

Thank you very much.

How many divisions does a valid cogniser have?

*Two*

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

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

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

*Inaudible but containing: The objects appearing dualistically.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Have you some questions?

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Transcribed from tape by Kathi Melnic*

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*Edited Version*

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# Study Group - "Buddhist Tenets"

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

ལྷན་འགྲོལ་རྒྱུ་རྒྱུ་ལྷན་འགྲོལ་རྒྱུ་

21 August 2001

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Please establish a virtuous motivation as usual.

## 5.6 Method of Asserting Selflessness

All tenets below the Svatantrika-Madhyamika assert that the subtle selflessness of a person is the absence of a self-sufficient substantially existent person and that the coarse selflessness of a person is the absence of a single, permanent and independent self. Basically that covers subtle and coarse selflessness.

As we have already said, one special point is that the person who is engaging outer objects, such as a vase and so forth, is empty of being self-supporting in terms of being a substantially existent. There is also the selflessness of a person relating to the object which is being engaged. So the vase is empty of being that which is engaged by a self-supporting substantially existing person.

Selflessness of phenomena is the emptiness of form and the valid cogniser apprehending form, being of different substance.

## 5.7 Principles of Grounds and Paths

The seventh division is positing grounds and paths. Here there are two sub-sections, objects of abandonment and the actual positing of grounds and paths.

### 5.7.1 Objects of abandonment

Obscurations are what has to be abandoned. The meaning of *obscurations* is *that which obstructs the attainment of liberation and omniscience*. An obscuration that primarily obstructs the attainment of liberation is called an afflictive obscuration, and an obscuration that primarily obstructs the attainment of omniscient mind is called an obscuration of knowledge. An example for the afflictive obscuration is grasping at a self of person together with the seeds, the three delusions that arise through the force of grasping at a self of a person, and also their seeds.

The seeds of self-grasping are posited as obscurations to liberation, and the karmic latencies of self-grasping are posited as obscurations to omniscience. The difference between karmic seeds and karmic latencies is that karmic seeds possess the power to produce further delusions within the mind. So the **seed** of self-grasping at the person has the power to produce further self-grasping within the mental continuum, while karmic **latencies** do not possess the power to produce further self-grasping. The karmic latencies produce mistaken appearances within the mind, but they don't produce further delusions. Therefore karmic seeds are the obscurations to liberation, and karmic latencies are obscurations to enlightenment.

The truth of cessation or liberation is the absence of the grasping at a self of person together with the karmic seeds. So the truth of cessation is a negative phenomenon, and its object of negation is grasping at a self of a person, together with the seeds.

Both the Mind Only and the Prasangika assert that the truth of cessation is emptiness and the object of negation for the Mind Only is the grasping at the self of person including the

seeds.

Here the text says that the *obscurations to omniscience are true grasping including the seeds, and also the karmic latencies, and the dualistic mistaken appearances that arise through the power of those karmic latencies*. Even though it says here 'true-grasping' it is referring to the grasping at a self of phenomena according to Mind Only.

In the Mind Only tenet, both other-powered and thoroughly established phenomena are regarded as being truly existent. Therefore for this tenet, grasping at true existence is not generally regarded as a wrong mind. What this is talking about is the various types of grasping at the self of phenomena, such as grasping at form and its valid cogniser as being of a different substance, or grasping at form being inherently the determined object of the conception apprehending form.

## 7.2 Principles Of Paths And Grounds

### 7.2.1 Hearers

Here the text says that the Hearers combine the view of the selflessness of a person, which is the view of the absence of a self-supporting substantially existing self, with the accumulation of merit and combined with single-pointed concentration or calm abiding for three lifetimes at the most. Then after three lifetimes they attain their own purpose, which is the liberation of the Hearer *arhat*. The motivation of these practitioners is for their own happiness. They say, 'At the most I will remain in cyclic existence another three lifetimes, and after three lifetimes I will definitely have attained my own liberation from cyclic existence.' Therefore they are called practitioners of the small vehicle, because their attainment, which they reach after three lifetimes, is a lesser one when compared to other attainments.

### 7.2.2 Solitary Realiser

The next Hinayana practitioner is the Solitary Realiser. In order to attain liberation, this practitioner, having generated spontaneous renunciation towards cyclic existence, combines the view of the absence of a person, which is self-sufficient in terms of being substantially existent, with the accumulation of merits which comes through the practice of patience, morality, generosity and so forth, for a period of from three lifetimes up to a hundred aeons.

A person who belongs to the lineage of a Solitary Realiser has a greater strength of mind than the practitioner following the Hearer vehicle, but they are the same in that they generate spontaneous renunciation towards cyclic existence. However one of them wants to get out of cyclic existence very quickly and saying, 'the most I will spend to attain liberation is three lifetimes.' While the Solitary Realiser practitioner has a greater strength of mind saying, 'I want to accumulate merit for a greater length of time', and therefore spends a greater length of time accumulating merit while practising the learner's path. The Solitary Realiser's purpose is for them selves.

### 7.2.3 Mahayana Practitioners

There is a question in regard to practitioners who abide within the Mahayana lineage. When do they generate spontaneous renunciation? I think that they Mahayana practitioners first generate a spontaneous renunciation towards cyclic existence. Then, only after having generated that spontaneous renunciation towards cyclic existence, will they generate spontaneous bodhicitta, and completely enter the Mahayana path. When practitioners who abide within the Mahayana lineage generate spontaneous renunciation towards cyclic existence they don't immediately enter any

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of the three paths. Strictly speaking, they haven't entered yet the Mahayana path, rather they are abiding within the family of the Mahayana path.

The text says that for the purpose of all sentient beings the Bodhisattvas combine the view of the emptiness of object and mind being of a different substance, with the accumulation of great merit over three countless great aeons. Then in dependence upon that they attain their enlightenment. Here the main object of meditation is the selflessness of phenomena, or the absence of form and mind being of different substance. The main objects of abandonment are the obscurations towards omniscience, and the object of attainment is complete enlightenment or omniscience.

In the case of practitioners who abide within the Hearer and Solitary Realiser lineages, the main object of meditation was the absence of a self that is self-supporting in terms of being substantially existent. The main objects of abandonment were the obscurations towards liberation, and the main object of attainment was the enlightenment of the Hearer *arhat*, and the enlightenment of the Solitary Realiser *arhat*. So there are differences with regard to the main object of meditation, the main object of abandonment and the main object of attainment.

### **The Three Higher Trainings**

The Bodhisattvas accumulate merit for three countless great aeons. This is done while they continue to practise generosity, patience, morality, the three higher trainings and so forth.

As you know the three higher trainings are wisdom, concentration and morality. Those three trainings are dependent upon each other. The higher training of wisdom refers to the union of calm-abiding and special insight. The higher training of concentration refers to the attainment of calm-abiding and meditative absorption, and the higher training of morality refers to the practice of keeping the vows of individual liberation.

Keeping the vows of individual liberation purely is the basis upon which one can attain concentration, because if we have a pure morality the coarse disturbing minds, which distract us towards outer and wrong objects, will be pacified. Those coarse disturbing thoughts prevent our attainment of concentration. If we practise pure morality those coarse disturbing thoughts will be pacified, and our mind will remain calmer and more focused. We can also further pacify the mind through the attainment of calm abiding. Then this attainment of calm abiding can act as the cause for thoroughly pacifying the mind with the union of calm-abiding and special insight, which can purify the disturbing thoughts completely from their root. This is good to know.

Then the text goes on further to say that from the point of view of the Mind Only True Aspectarians, the mental continuum of the Hearer and Solitary Realiser *arhats* will be severed when they attain nirvana without remainder. However, when one attains complete enlightenment the continuum will not be severed. The reason for this is that the Bodhisattvas become enlightened in the pure land of *Og-min*, and having become enlightened in the pure land of *Og-min*, they attain the enjoyment body of a Buddha. The enjoyment body of a Buddha remains for as long as cyclic existence remains, and only stops existing when cyclic existence is empty. Therefore the mental continuum of a Buddha is not severed.

This is a very similar explanation to the one in tantra, where it talks about taking the three bodies into the path. The wisdom truth body of the Buddha is only accessible to other Buddhas, and not accessible to sentient beings below the level of a Buddha. Therefore in order to benefit sentient beings the Buddhas need to manifest various forms.

The first form that is manifested is the enjoyment body of the Buddha, but then not all sentient beings have access to the enjoyment body of the Buddha, and further bodies need to be manifested. These are called emanation bodies. So it is said that the bases of imputation of the emanation bodies are the enjoyment bodies, and the base of imputation of the enjoyment bodies is the wisdom truth body of the Buddha. This explanation of the three bodies is very similar to what we find in tantra, at the time of taking the three kayas into the path.

Mind Only True Aspectarians assert that the individual lineages of the three paths are definite. What they say is that the various practitioners have what one calls a particular lineage. They can belong to the Hearer lineage, the Solitary Realiser lineage or the Mahayana lineage. This is determined by the various dispositions and abilities of the disciples. If the Buddha sees that a particular disciple has the disposition to follow the Hearer vehicle, then it will be more beneficial for that disciple to first follow the Hearer vehicle. As he or she he doesn't have the ability, the interest, the space of mind to follow the Mahayana vehicle, the Buddha will first teach that person the Hearer vehicle.

The True Aspectarians assert that these three lineages are definite. From those three lineages, three kinds of wishes are generated according to the path the practitioner wants to follow. Those of the lowest capacity just follow the Hearer's path; those of slightly greater capacity, and greater strength of mind say, 'I will follow the Solitary Realiser's path and will accumulate merit for many, many lifetimes and aeons.' Practitioners of the greatest capacity and strength of mind say, 'I am going to work for complete enlightenment which takes three countless great aeons, for the benefit of all sentient beings'.

From those three kinds of wishes we get three kinds of paths, which are referred to as the three kinds of accomplishments. From the practice of those paths we get three kinds of results - the enlightenment of the Hearer, the enlightenment of the Solitary Realiser and enlightenment of the Buddha.

With respect to these three results, and the three kinds of wishes for those results, the Mind Only True Aspectarians assert that once one has attained one of these three kinds of enlightenment, then one cannot progress to a higher form of enlightenment. According to the Mind Only True Aspectarians there is only one final path.

The result of the Hearer *arhat* is the abandonment of the obscurations towards liberation. The attainment of the Solitary Realiser *arhat* is the same - the abandonment of the obscurations towards liberation. However the liberation of the Solitary Realiser *arhat* is regarded as slightly better than that of the Hearer *arhat*. Then there is the attainment of complete enlightenment, which is the abandonment of the obscurations to omniscience.

### **7.2.4 Bodies of A Buddha**

The Mind Only asserts the four bodies of the Buddha - two form bodies and the two truth bodies. The two form bodies

are the emanation body<sup>1</sup> and the enjoyment body, and the two truth bodies are the nature truth body of the Buddha, and the wisdom truth body of the Buddha, the enlightened mind.

#### 7.2.4.1 Nature Truth Body

The definition of a nature truth body is *the final sphere possessing the two purities*. Here the two purities refer to the purity of being free of the natural obscuration, and the purity of being free from the temporary obscuration. **Natural obscuration** refers to the subtle object of negation, and **temporary obscuration** refers to the two kinds of obscurations mentioned before - the obscurations towards liberation and enlightenment. So the final sphere, which is free from the natural impurity and the temporary impurity, is the identity body of the Buddha.

#### 7.2.4.2 Emanation body

**A final form body possessing the five definiteness.**  
(Definition)

The definiteness of **place**, refers to the emanation body definitely residing in the pure land of *Og-min*. This *Og-min* should not be confused with the *Og-min* that can be found among the 17 different places in the form realm, because that *Og-min* is still within cyclic existence. The *Og-min* referred to here is a higher place which is free from cyclic existence: it is the pure land of *Og-min* and all bodhisattvas become enlightened there, and their emanation body resides there.

The definiteness of **body** means that all emanation bodies are endowed with the marks and signs of an enlightened being.

The definiteness of **entourage** means that they will only be surrounded by arya bodhisattvas.

The definiteness of **Dharma** means that they will teach only the Mahayana Dharma.

The definiteness of **time** means that the emanation body will definitely abide until cyclic existence is completely empty.

This is according the sutra system! In the tantric system we can become enlightened on the basis of our present five aggregates

Then as the emanation body alone is not enough to benefit sentient beings, the Buddha will emanate further other form bodies that don't have the five definitenesses and those other bodies are called emanation bodies. The definition of *an emanation body is a final form body, which doesn't have the five definitenesses.*

Within the emanation bodies there is a threefold division into supreme emanation body, the born emanation body and the artistic emanation body. The **supreme emanation body** would be for example Shakyamuni Buddha. Actually there are many different kinds of emanation bodies that I should mention first. For example, His Holiness the Dalai Lama is an emanation body. We cannot see his aspect as Chenrezig but as the guru devotion chapter of the *lam rim* it is explained, the Guru is actually Buddha. So we can understand how His Holiness can actually be Chenrezig, and how viewing one's Guru as Buddha is the root of all attainments.

To return to the three divisions of emanation body, at the present time the **born emanation body** is, for example, Maitreya Buddha. Maitreya Buddha is presently residing in

Ganden pure land waiting for the right time to be reborn as a supreme emanation body of a realm such as ours in order to again start Buddhism. Each supreme emanation body is first reborn in Ganden, and that rebirth in Ganden is called the born emanation body.

An example of an **artistic emanation body** is that at one time Shakyamuni Buddha assumed the aspect of a sitar player, and entered into this contest with another sitar player. This player was incredibly conceited, thinking he was the best player in the whole universe - until he saw the Buddha playing without any string!

Actually this very conceited sitar player is said to have been the last disciple to be subdued by Shakyamuni Buddha. The place is in Northern India close to Kushinigar. When you drive along the road there you see a stupa by the side of the road. It is explained that the story of the sitar player happened there, and also the sutra of Paranirvana was taught there.

#### 7.2.4.3 Wisdom Truth Body

The wisdom truth body of a Buddha is the final transcendental wisdom with regard to both conventional and ultimate phenomena. *The wisdom truth body of a Buddha is defined as the transcendental wisdom that has the final realisation with regard to suchness, and with regard to conventional phenomena.* Here we also have the conventional wisdom truth body, and the ultimate wisdom truth body. Of course every part of the omniscient mind realises the two truths simultaneously but, for example, the appearance of emptiness to the ultimate wisdom truth body is unmixed with conventional appearance. Even though every part of the enlightened mind is completely omniscient and realises the two truths simultaneously, still we can talk directly about the main object of the particular aspects of enlightened mind. Then through the division of the main object, we get the various divisions of the uncontaminated wisdom, such as conventional omniscient mind, and ultimate omniscient mind.

That completes the Mind Only chapter. Next week we can start with the Svatantrika-Madhyamika tenet.

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<sup>1</sup> This was discussed earlier.