

Mind Only continued:

What are tenets classed as – consciousness, matter or non-associated compositional factors? All impermanent things are either matter or consciousness or neither of these, like time.

A tenet is a psychological position held by someone on an issue by evaluating the reasons for and against it. So tenets are consciousnesses. She pa is the Tibetan word. A proponent of a tenet has a dialogue with a partner, using lines of reasoning to make their case.

What is the difference between Mahayana and Hinayana schools of thought?

A Hinayana *proponent* of tenets believes in selflessness of person and a Mahayana *proponent* of tenets believes in selflessness of person and of phenomena.

A Hinayana *practitioner* is concerned with personal liberation and a Mahayana *practitioner* for liberation of all beings.

The main difference between Mahayana and Hinayana proponents is that Mahayana believes that phenomena are selfless and Hinayana proponents do not agree with this.

Three points to remember tonight –

What is a tenet? It is a consciousness – a psychological position you hold.

What makes one be a proponent of a tenet? It is one who subscribes to some view and expresses his or her view about it and has a debate.

What is the difference between Hinayana school of thought and Mahayana school of thought? Mahayana believes in selflessness of phenomena, and Hinayana does not.

Mind Only continued:

Last week we began talking about the Mind Only School of thought/Cittamatra. We covered the historical development of it. Historically these ideas were prevalent during Buddha's own time, but it was Asanga who trail-blazed this school of thought. He founded, instituted and propagated it. He delineated Buddha's teaching into interpretive/provisional and definitive/those that can be accepted literally. He did that because he took full advantage of four types of freedom Buddha has given to his followers.

The four reliances give freedom of choice. They are:

1 – Rely not on the person, but the teaching. Buddha said don't trust me because I am your teacher, but do so by examining the teaching as valid. If it is found to be full-proof and based in empirical experiences, then accept it, and not only because I am your teacher.

2 - Don't rely on the words, but the meaning. As Buddhists we must check the content of the course, not the diction with which it is conveyed. It is no good to rely on it because it is flowery and rich if it is not congruent with reality. If a teaching makes sense, marries with the ground reality, then although the words may not be well chosen the content can be trusted.

3 - Don't rely on the provisional but the definitive. From Mind Only School point of view, a discourse is definitive if the words of it are literally acceptable, that is, they say what they mean. A teaching is provisional if the words are not to be taken literally.

The Mind Only school has their own way of presenting these two. Prasangika Madhyamaka (Consequentialist) has another way. From the Mind Only point of view provisional means if words can't be taken to be literally acceptable.

A provisional example from Mind Only is; Buddha said the five aggregates are a baggage, and the person is the porter. This statement they say seems to show there is a self of person because person is different from aggregates. Such a statement cannot be taken to be definitive because we know there is no self of a person. It is ultimately provisional.

An example of definitive teaching from Mind Only is; Buddha's statement that all compounded phenomena are impermanent.

The Prasangika view example of a provisional teaching is; all teachings about relative/ conventional truth. An example of a definitive teaching is the emptiness teachings – that of emptiness of inherent existence, or of intrinsic nature. Whilst the Mind Only school uses the same terms to delineate teachings into these two, the way they interpret these terms is different. For Mind Only a teaching is provisional because the actual words needed to be interpreted to show the underlying meaning. For them it depends on the words, whereas for the highest school it is more decided on the content.

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Drup.ta Tenets

Geshe Jampa Tenzin

Mind Only continued:

From their view it is only teachings on emptiness which are definitive because emptiness is the definitive underlying principle of all phenomena. Anything other than emptiness is provisional. Impermanence of form is an example of provisional teachings for Prasangika and Buddha's teaching on the emptiness of intrinsic nature of form is ultimate/definitive. Why is impermanence of form interpretive? Because impermanence may be true of phenomena, but it is not emptiness or ultimate attribute. Impermanence is the conventional attribute of phenomena and not the ultimate, which is emptiness.

4 – Don't trust the six consciousnesses (5 sensory and one mental), but trust wisdom consciousness / mind
I'd like to reiterate that these four reliances are freedoms of choice, unique gifts of the Buddha to his followers.

If you relate these four reliances to a spiritual practice level, the first – rely not on person but teaching, it is saying don't judge the book by its cover, or the charisma of the teacher, rather by the message it brings. The second reliance, to trust the meaning, not the words translates to listen to and hold onto the content of a discourse, not so much to the words used.

With relying on the definitive meaning rather than the provisional, it is saying the definitive ultimate meaning is what we need to look for in the discourses; that is what we need to trust.

When the fourth says rely on wisdom not consciousnesses it means when you think you understand the definitive although it may be a definitive teaching/reality which of your consciousnesses understands the content? Is it understood by one of the six consciousnesses/ conceptual minds? These may be mistaken because they are associated with concepts. The advice is not to rest with that but try to get to the definitive meaning through empirical knowledge.

The first two reliances tell us we need to get a lot of teachings. The third reliance deals with contemplation and the fourth deals with analytical meditation and single pointed meditation. So these four reliances also refer to the three ways of Buddhist training; learning through hearing, then internalize through contemplation and then analytically and single-pointedly meditate. We must first educate ourselves through receiving teaching and remember the content of it, which can be provisional or definitive in nature, then reflect on it and then arrive at the right conclusion which is realization. Then single pointedly meditate on it to sink it into the recesses of your consciousness.

To get to a definitive meaning state, first you need lines of reasoning to probe into emptiness which is said to be a definitive meaning. In the beginning you will form a conceptual understanding. Then you familiarize by way of analytical and single pointed meditation. Confronted with it face to face, only the investigator will have that feeling. These psychological events can be directly experienced by each person. We cannot do the experience justice verbally. You could have a strong feeling and may be absolutely right but when talking about it you won't do full justice to it, or get to the bottom of such a subtle overarching principle; not until you experience it. If you get some nice brown sugar lollies you can say, "It is very sweet." Someone can ask, "How sweet?" But you can't accurately depict that verbally.

Emptiness is something of a mute experience. It is a highly powerful experience but one becomes mute when trying to express it. This is why Buddha says perfection of wisdom gone beyond is inconceivable for the ordinary mind and inexpressible for one who experiences it.

What meditation can you do on emptiness? There are the many lines of reasoning in this area. Last Sunday I started talking about this- the four point analysis. First is ascertaining the object of negation, what emptiness to we need to establish. A pot for example is conventional truth, is impermanent and which has its own characteristics. They hide the underlying truth of the emptiness of the pot. The pot isn't how it appears. When you reason it is empty of selfhood intellectually you must meditate on it repeatedly, until you empirically and starkly see its emptiness.

The process of moving to empirical understanding involves listening then developing healthy skepticism leading to curiosity which asks questions and leads to employment of lines of reasoning. Based on that you will gain some understanding. You move from doubt/suspicion/scepticism to presumption, to inference to direct cognition. This is how you move through the systems. You need to reinforce that understanding by meditating. There will then come a time when that understanding takes on a new meaning, that of realisation.

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Drup.ta Tenets

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Mind Only continued:

Questions from Audience:

Answer: The six consciousnesses are visual, hearing, smell, taste, touch and mental. The mental consciousness can be conceptual or direct. The aggregates are form, feeling, recognition /discriminating awareness, compositional factors/intention and consciousness. This consciousness subsumes the six consciousnesses mentioned before.

Prasangika says emptiness is the definitive in the sense that when you apply the ultimate probing analysis, at the end of that search you find things are empty of previously believed true, intrinsic, objective existence and so emptiness is considered ultimate. It is not necessarily because it is totally necessary for Buddhahood; it is called ultimate because if you probe and probe you find things are ultimately empty of what they seem to be. The Mind Only sees a discourse as provisional if you cannot literally accept the discourse, for example the aggregates are the load and the person is the carrier, which suggests there is an independent person apart from the aggregates. For Mind Only provisional means the words cannot be literally trusted. The definitive discourse for Mind Only is something which can be literally accepted. If you understand the Mind Only school meaning of definitive this paves the way for better understanding of the meaning of definitive for the Prasangika School.

Question;

Answer: The appearance of true existence has been dubbed dualistic appearance. When your mind evolves into omniscient mind all dualistic appearances both in meditation and out of it will totally disappear. Buddha is perennially in meditative absorption. He sees both truths.