

**Mind Only School**

Do you have any questions?

**Question:** Can one arrive at the bodhisattva or Buddha state naturally through observance of suffering of others like a shepherd who spends his time alone tending his flock but who observes and has compassion for the people in the village below?

**Answer:** Such a keen observer and the observations they have of life down in the valley will help towards it but it will not be enough for him to develop bodhicitta. When he sees the generations of ordinary people and their suffering he would only see symptomatic pain, the physical and psychological distress, he wouldn't have developed aversion to the third suffering, that of pervasive conditioning. Bodhisattvas develop compassion and love leading to bodhicitta because they have seen the deeper underlying causes of the drudgery of life going on down in the valley.

**Question:** The western mind could become overly pessimistic when taking on the idea of pervasive suffering with regard to external phenomena. How do we reconcile that with our appreciation of art and nature? Does pervasive suffering exist within the Buddhist art, for example in images of the Buddha or of Mount Kailash?

**Answer:** Is the image pervaded by the suffering of pervasive conditioning? Yes it is. Is the image of Buddha the real Buddha? No it is not. The real Buddha is beyond suffering. The image is a pictorial depiction, the work of an artist, and so is an instance of suffering due to pervasive conditioning. The pessimism of the western mind due to pervasive conditioning is because they have only focused on the suffering and haven't considered the solutions at hand that one can access. They are just dwelling in the suffering of pervasive conditioning.

**Question:** His Holiness enjoys art and nature, yet he has a good understanding of pervasive conditioning

**Answer:** His Holiness appreciates art, gardens, flowers, food. However speaking purely from an enlightened perspective nothing is delicious, nothing is repulsive. There is no real admiration or put down. Things are just as is. We see him enjoying himself with the crowd and expressing his feelings – this is done to conform to the norms of society in which he has appeared in human form. When a Buddha appears in a human world system he has to act in conformance with the norms of society. You'll find him expressing all kinds of human emotion.

Last Monday I was going through the four reliances. I would say they are not terribly important, but very useful to know – so please review your notes.

Some time ago I talked about teachings classified into provisional and ultimate/definitive. How can you know which is which? We know through the 4 reliances, 4 examinations and 4 intended meanings.

Some teachings of Buddha say compounded phenomena are truly existent. Yet in others Buddha says compounded phenomena do not exist truly. Which should we trust? Because the teaching has such directly contradictory statements Nargajuna and Asanga have classified them for us, by saying this is as it states and this is not. When Asanga and Nargajuna put teachings into these categories they used those three sets of four; the 4 reliances, four examinations/critical analyses and four intended meanings.

Previously I talked about the four reliances. **Tonight I will talk about four critical reasonings.**

*First is the reasoning of dependence.* This says that for a result to emerge it depends on its cause. For a cause to be called cause it is dependent on its effect. If it doesn't produce an effect it can't be called a cause. This is called dependence on effect and cause or cause and effect. This is quite important. All schools of thought including and below Savatantrika Madhyamika believe things exist inherently because cause and effect depend on each other. The mutual dependence of things on each other is used for the very reason why they have intrinsic existence from the side of their own characteristics.

Whereas, for Prasangika Madhyamika, the highest school, the very fact that things are dependent on each other clearly shows things do not exist truly. This is called the dependent arising of the law of causation. There are coarse and subtle levels of this. Coarsely, and accepted by all schools, effect is dependent on cause and cause is dependent on effect. The subtle level says things exist in relation to, or depending on, others. For example, before a woman gives birth she is not a mother. After she gives birth she becomes a mother.

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Becoming a mother is dependent on her giving birth. So Mother is nothing more than a label affixed, dependent on that phenomenon.

From Prasangika Madhyamika, cause is nothing more than just a name. Like “mother”, the cause of a child, is just a label given. The process via classifying things into relative and ultimate is carried out through the first reasoning, the reasoning of dependence.

*The second is called reasoning of performing a function – functionality.* This is a process by which, yet again performance of function is used to delineate things as conventional or ultimate truth. For example, fire performs the function of consuming fuel. There is that which burns, that which is burnt, and the burning itself; subject, object and action are dependent on each other. This relationship of performing a function is used to categorise things as conventional or ultimate. For example, fire burns the wood, which is an action. Although burning is the action, there is no true burning, no independent burning of the wood. If you take away fire and wood, there is no burning. Burning, the action, is dependent on the wood. Wood is the object and fire is the subject/agent.

If we as a person have a characteristic/true existence, then we would become parts of the aggregates. If we exist truly, we become inseparable from our aggregates. We are one with them. Person and aggregates become one. Normally one sees the person as the appropriator/receiver of the body and mind, which are the objects received through karma. If we as a person are one with the aggregates, inseparably, indivisibly one, then a tripartite relationship, between subject object and action can not be made, because they are one. The receiver has become the received. All are lumped into one and no distinction between them can be made.

*The third reasoning is called, reason of validity.* For example, a vase is impermanent. How do we know? There are validating factors. Its impermanence is established by reason of it being a produced phenomenon. Eing produced means it is impermanent. Inferentially we know that. So inferential understanding establishes, validates the impermanence of a vase. Also we know empirically, through direct cognition, which establishes the impermanence of vase, and thirdly there are some authoritative statements in scriptures which validate impermanence of a vase.

When the highest school posits a conventional reality it must meet three factors for it to be conventionally, nominally established.

1) It must be known conventionally in the world as a vase by consensus. 2) The phenomenon known by that name, must not be harmed, undermined by another worldly conventional term. 3) It must not be undermined, affected by analysis/reasoning, which is looking for its ultimate nature. 4) Reasoning of suchness. An example – it is the suchness/nature of flame to move upwards. Fire moves up. Water goes down – why, it is just its nature, there is no question. This is a coarse level of example.

*The fourth reasoning is that of absence of inherent oneness or difference.* The reasoning of suchness incorporates the reasoning of absence of inherent oneness or difference. If a phenomenon exists truly it must be either unitary/singular or plural/many/different. Universally speaking things are either one or many but things are not inherently one or inherently different/many. That kind of reasoning falls into this category. Reasoning of suchness is crucial for our understanding of emptiness. It includes absence of inherent one-ness and inherent many-ness. This reasoning has been used throughout the ages and helps people a lot. When you go through these four reasonings, you gain a new experience about the metaphysical nature of things.

**The third set of four is the four intended meanings.**

1) *intended meaning in terms of the sameness.* For example the historical Buddha has said, going back into the very distant past, at such and such a time and place, I was a Buddha called Namzig. But Shakyamuni Buddha and the Buddha Namzig are two separate continuums. When he said that he was thinking in terms of the sameness of dharmakayas of all Buddhas. So why did he say, he was that Buddha? He was thinking in terms of the sameness of dharmakayas of all Buddhas. He did not mean he was actually that Buddha. Buddha made this statement in that context; just as Buddha Namzig attained dharmakaya, so did Buddha Shakyamuni, so they are the same.

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Four Intended Reasonings continued:

2) *Intended meaning in terms of other phenomena.* Usually in Buddha's teaching there is the term entity-lessness. All phenomena are without entity. Why did Buddha say things are without entity? Things do have their own entity/ attributes/ characteristics. So why did he say they do not? It is in terms of lacking inherent entity from their own side. This is what Prasangika Madhyamika/highest school would say; he meant things don't exist, in and of themselves with their own characteristics, whereas Mind Only school would give a very detailed analysis of this statement.

3) *Intended meaning in terms of different time.* Buddha issued a statement which said if you pray to be reborn in Sukhavarti pure-land of Amitabha, there and then you will be born there. In fact it is not so easy to be born there just by wanting to and making a wish. Buddha said it is possible, meaning that if a person does pray earnestly to be born there, there will come a time when this eventuates. With that in view he issued the statement. He had a different time reference.

4) *The intended meaning in terms of the thought of the person in question.* Some statements of the teachings differ, in terms of attitude or thought of the person who Buddha was talking to. To some he would say generosity is the supreme practice, you needn't do anything more, it is the supreme. To others with a higher level of development he would say why are you focusing on generosity bodhicitta is more important. They are seemingly contradictory statements. They are made in terms of the level of psychological depth of the person he was talking to.

These last four were the four intended meanings, where Buddha makes many statements which seem to deviate from each other, or to clash with reality but which have some intended purpose or meaning. **The next four are part of these four intended meanings.**

1) *Intended for entry* Buddha said all sentient beings/ persons, have selflessness of person. They lack existence from their own side. That is a given. However to some non-buddhists he said persons do have a self. He said this to give temporary comfort to them so that later on they would accept his final message that persons have no self. It was to make it easier for non-buddhists to enter the fold/ Buddhism.

2) *Intended meaning/ intention with regard to definition/ defining characteristics.*

3) *Intended meaning behind/ in terms of antidotes.*

4) *Intended meaning in terms of transformation from one state to another.*

We need to understand the four reasonings and the four intended meanings or else as the teaching of the Buddha becomes more accessible to you they look contradictory. Each has a purpose behind it. Some statements are literally acceptable, others need interpretation. We need to interpret the teachings contextually, for which we need four reliances, reasonings and intentions/intended meanings. In the case of Arya Asanga and Nargajuna, they were able to contextualize these seemingly contradictory statements and put them in their proper place. So they were able to classify some teachings as interpretive/provisional when they could not be literally accepted, and others as definitive, because the meaning is what the words say.

Last week I asked you a question and asked you to remember three points: Tenets are consciousness; a proponent is one who expresses their point of view to engage in dialogue, and the definition of a proponent of Hinayana and a proponent of Mahayana tenets.

Tonight I want you to remember Asanga and Nagarjuna as trailblazers/ charioteers. Asanga is the trailblazer for Mind Only school and Nagarjuna is the trailblazer for Madhyamaka. These two are the Mahayana Schools. In Hinayana there aren't trailblazers. Hinayana did not need a trailblazer because it did not suffer decline, they survived intact. Whereas Mahayana declined after Buddha passed away and due to its decline it needed these two to bring it back to its former state.