

CONSCIOUSNESS AND MENTAL STATES ACCORDING TO ABHIDHARMA AND PRAMANA TEXTS

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In Buddhism, consciousness and mental states are defined, analyzed and classified mainly from ethical standpoint. The starting point of Buddhist dharma is the truth of suffering. Suffering is a problem of consciousness; only that which is conscious can suffer. Consciousness is subject to suffering because of ignorance, fundamental not-knowing, which divides consciousness into subject and object, into self and other-than-self. Ignorance is defined as the notion of a static and independent self and its object. Because of this notion a division between subject and object is created which in turn causes tension between the two. Craving and aversion towards those things that support the self and those that are not conducive to the self arise. In Abhidharma both mind and matter, which constitutes the complex machinery of man, are microscopically analyzed. Buddha's teaching on the five aggregates is meant for dismantling the idea of a person as a solid entity; and to help us to fully comprehend the *nairatmya* (No-soul) doctrine, the crux of Buddhism, which is important from a philosophical and an ethical standpoint. The advent of death, process of rebirth in various planes without anything substantial to pass from one life to another, the evidentially verifiable doctrine of Karma and Rebirth are fully explained.

According to the five aggregate schemes, an individual (*pudgala*) is composed of five groups or aggregates (*panchaskandha*):- *Rupa* (matter), *Vedana* (feeling), *Samjna* (perception), *Samskara* (mental states) and *Vijnana* (Mind-consciousness). In *Abhidharama*, in the context of two constituents, *Nama* and *Rupa*, *Nama* is used to refer to consciousness. When it is in the context of five aggregates, *Vijnana* is used. *Chitta*, (*sems*) *mana*, (*yid*) *Vijnana*, (*rnamshes*) *chitta-chaitta*, (*sems-semsbyung*) are used as synonymous terms in *Abhidharma*. Thus, we see that out of the five aggregates, except the first, *Rupa*, the rest four are of mental nature. In *pramana* system, the term consciousness (*jnana*, *shes pa*) is treated as synonymous with two other names, i.e. awareness (*buddhi*, *blo*) and knower (*samvedana*, *rig pa*). In this paper, I propose to present (power point, if possible) a brief sketch of modes of divisions found in various Buddhist texts.

“*Lorig*” is a term most probably coined by Tibetan scholars to cover all the mental constituents of the five aggregates, or *Nama* in the *Nama Rupa* scheme. This is composed of two words, *blo*, awareness and *rigpa*, knower. The combined term *Lorig* is used in this regard as subject of study. Here, I propose to use the word “consciousness” as equivalent for the Tibetan word “*Lorig*”.

There are a number of ways of classifications. A major mode of classification is into seven:

1. direct perceivers (*pratiyaksha*, *mnon sum*)
2. inferential cognizers (*anumana*, *rjes dpag*)
3. subsequent cognizers (*parichchhina-jnana*, *bcad shes*)
4. correctly assuming consciousness (*manah pariksha*, *yid dpyod*)
5. awareness to which the object appears but not ascertained (*aniyata-pratibhasa*, *snang la ma nges pa*)
6. doubting consciousness (*samshaya*, *the tshom*)
7. wrong consciousness (*viparyaya-jnana*, *log shes*)

A Direct perceiver is a knower which is free from conceptuality and non-mistaken. There are four types: 1) Sensory direct perceiver (*indriya-pratyaksha*) 2) Mental direct perceiver (*manas-pratyaksha*) 3) Self-knowing direct perceiver (*svasamvedna-pratyaksha* and 4) yogic direct perceiver (*yogi-pratyaksha*)

An **inferential cognizer** is a type of conceptual consciousness which realizes (or incontrovertibly gets at,) an object of comprehension which can not be initially realized by direct perception. Generated as the culmination of a process of reasoning, it is produced in dependence of a correct sign (linga). It is as reliable a form of knowledge as is a direct perceiver.

All conceptual consciousnesses are mistaken with respect to the object that appears to them, the *meaning generality*, and thus mistaken consciousnesses (bhrantijnana). This element of error does not interfere with the accuracy.

Subsequent cognizers are the later moments within the same continuum of either a direct perception or an inference. They realize that which has already been realized by the former moments of consciousness which has already removed superimposition (aropa). Only the first moment of either of the first two types of consciousnesses are called as a direct or inferential cognizer.

A **Correctly assuming consciousness** is a correct mode of thought; and is necessarily a conceptual consciousness and thus mistaken. (But not wrong!) Unlike the first three types of consciousnesses, it does not realize its object; it is not incontrovertible. It arrives at its conclusions either without reason, or based on correct reasoning but without bringing it to its full conclusion. Most of the information we take in by listening to teachers or reading book etc., falls within this category of consciousness. It is not a reliable form of knowledge in that it lacks incontrovertibility; one will lose the force of one's conviction, when confronted by someone strongly presenting an opposite view-point.

An **awareness to which an object appears but is not ascertained** is a type of direct perceiver. They are non-conceptual consciousness and non-mistaken with respect to the object they comprehend. These minds are for some reason, unable subsequently to induce ascertainment (nishchaya). An example for this is the duration of the consciousness being too brief to be noticed. It is not a mistaken consciousness, for in that it does not perceive something that is not actually so to be so. Because it does not provide reliable information and has no factor of certainty, it is set forth separately from the direct perceiver.

Doubting consciousnesses are minds distinguished primarily by their quality of indecisiveness, two-pointedness. Doubt can tend towards one side of an issue or another, or it can be equal. Doubt tending toward the fact is a powerful initial step in weakening the force of a strongly adhered to wrong view and in beginning the process toward development of correct understanding. Aryadeva's chaturshataka says, "Those whose merit is small have no doubts about this doctrine (shunyata). Even through merely having doubts, cyclic existence is torn to tatters.

Wrong consciousnesses are those that are mistaken with respect to the object they are engaged in. They are to be distinguished from mistaken consciousnesses. Wrong consciousness non-conceptual one is for instance, an eye consciousness which sees a double moon in the sky. Wrong consciousness conceptual one is, for instance, a mind which conceives that there is substantially existent self (dravya-sat-atman). The later one is mistaken with respect to both their appearing object and the object being engaged in. This particular conceptual wrong consciousness provides the *raison d'être* for Buddhist meditation.

The sevenfold division is a distinguishing of various types of consciousness in terms of their correctness and incorrectness and the degree to which they actually gets at their objects, as well as an ordering of them in terms of preference.

One can take the sevenfold division of awareness and knowledge as illustrative of the stages one might go through while developing correct understanding through its use.

One begins with a wrong view such as the idea that there is a substantially existent self. Then, through hearing doctrine of selflessness, one would have generated doubt. The next step in the development of the view of selflessness is to generate a correctly assuming consciousness. It is now necessary to contemplate selflessness again and again. One's consciousnesses through out this process of familiarization are correct assumptions; when this is brought the point of unwavering certainty, one generates an inference. An inference is the end result of a specific process of reasoning. The way in which an inference is transformed into direct perception is just repeated familiarization with the object. The clarity of appearance gradually increases until finally the image of the object disappears and is replaced by just clear appearance of the object itself. When this occurs, one has generated direct perception of one's object of meditation. Later moments of that realization are subsequent cognizers.

Before going into other ways of classification of consciousness, it will be useful to see the types of object mentioned in Pramana texts. There are mainly four:

- 1 object of engagement (pravitti-vishaya, 'jug yul)
- 2 determined object (adhyavasaya-vishaya, zhen yul)
- 3 appearing object (pratibhasa-vishaya, snang yul)
- 4 apprehended object (grahya-vishaya, bzung yul)

The term "object of engagement" is used for both conceptual and non-conceptual consciousness. "Determined object" is used only for conceptual ones. -Appearing and apprehended- refer to the object which is actually appearing to the consciousness. To a direct perception, Object of appearing, apprehended and engagement are all the same. For a conceptual consciousness, the object of engagement and determined object is the actual object, the appearing and apprehended object are just an image of the actual object.

We shall now selectively see four divisions from six ways of classifications,

1. Conceptual and non-conceptual consciousness.
 2. Mistaken and non-mistaken consciousness
 3. Mental and sense Consciousness
 4. Mind and mental factors
1. The point here is on the manner in which a consciousness gets at its object – either directly or by means of an image.
 2. Non-mistaken consciousness category includes only direct perceivers. They perceive all the qualities, all the attributes of the object collectively. All conceptual consciousnesses are included within mistaken consciousness, because they perceive an object an image. Wrong consciousnesses are both "wrong" and "mistaken" consciousness.
 3. This division is in terms of whether the consciousness is are produced in dependence upon "uncommon empowering condition" which is a physical sense power (indriya) - eye, ear, nose, tongue, or body sense power – which are clear matters located within the sense organs. Mental consciousnesses are produced in dependence on a preceding moment of mental sense power – a consciousness. Sense consciousnesses are non-conceptual; mental consciousnesses can be either conceptual or non-conceptual.
 4. This division is a way of describing the various functions of consciousnesses. Mind (citta) here is synonymous with main mind and is the one which knows the mere entity of the object. A mind is accompanied by mental factors which apprehend various features of that object, and affects manner of mind's apprehending its object

Mind and mental factors have five similarities (samprayukta):

- a) They are produced in dependence on the same basis (ashraya)
- b) They observe the same object (almbana)
- c) They are generated in the same aspect (akara)
- d) They occur at the same time (kala)
- e) They are the same substantial (dravya)

Main minds are, for example, the five sense perceivers and the mental factors are commonly described in a list of fifty-one which are divided into the following six categories:

1. omnipresent (*sarvatraga, kun 'gro*)
2. determining (*vishayapratiniyama, yul nges*)
3. virtuous (*kushala, dge ba*)
4. root afflictions (*mūlaklesha, rtsa nyon*)
5. secondary afflictions (*upaklesha, nye nyon*)
6. changeable (*anyathābhāva, gzhan 'gyur*)

The five omnipresent factors are So-called because they accompany every main mind, they are:

1. feeling (*vedanā, tshor ba*) – that factor which experiences an object as pleasurable, painful, or neutral
2. discrimination (*samjñā, 'du shes*)
3. intention (*chetanā, sems pa*) which directs the mind to the object
4. mental engagement (*manasi-kāra, yid la byed pa*) which directs the mind to the particular object of observation
5. contact (*sparsha, reg pa*) which serves as the basis for the generation of the feelings of pleasure, pain or neutrality

The five with particular objects are:

1. aspiration (*chhandā, 'dun pa*)
2. belief (*adhimoksha, mos pa*)
3. mindfulness (*smṛti, dranpa*)
4. stabilization (*samādhi, ting nge 'dzin*)
5. wisdom (*prajñā, shes rab*)

If one of these is present all five are present; they accompany all virtuous minds and no others.

There are eleven virtuous mental factors. According to Abhidharma, if one is present all are necessarily so. Pramana texts state that it is not necessary that all occur simultaneously. These can never occur at the same time as any of the affliction.

1. faith (*shraddhā, dad pa*)
2. shame (*hrī, ngo tsha shes pa*)
3. embarrassment (*apatrāpya, khrel yod pa*)
4. non-attachment (*alobha, ma chags pa*)
5. non-hatred (*advēsha, zhe sdang med pa*)
6. non-ignorance (*amoha, gti mug med pa*)
7. effort (*vīrya, brtson 'grys*)
8. pliancy (*prasrabdhi, shin tu sbyangs pa*)
9. conscientiousness (*apramāda, bag yod pa*)
10. equanimity (*upekshā, btang snyoms*)
11. non-harmfulness (*avihimsā, rnam par mi 'tshes ba*)

Although it is possible for all eleven to occur simultaneously, it is not the case that they always do; this Sautrāntika assertion differs from the system of Vasubandhu's *Treasury of Knowledge* (*Adhidharmokosha*) which states that there are six root afflictions:

1. desire (*rāga*, 'dod chags)
2. anger (*pratigha*, khong khro)
3. pride (*māna*, nga rgyal)
4. ignorance (*avidhyā*, ma rig pa)
5. doubt (*vichikitsā*, the tshom)
6. afflicted view (*drshti*, lta ban yon mongs can)

as well as twenty secondary afflictions:

1. belligerence (*krodha*, khro ba)
2. resentment (*upanāha*, 'khon 'dzin)
3. concealment (*mraksha*, 'chab pa)
4. spite (*pradāsa*, 'tshig pa)
5. jealousy (*īrshyā*, phrag dog)
6. miserliness (*mātsarya*, ser sna)
7. deceit (*māya*, sgyu)
8. dissimulation (*shāthya*, g.yo)
9. haughtiness (*mada*, rgyags pa)
10. harmfulness (*vihimsā*, rnam pa 'tsho ba)
11. non-shame (*āhrīkyā*, ngo tsha med pa)
12. non-embarrassment (*anapatrāpya*, khrel med pa)
13. lethargy (*styāna*, rmugs pa)
14. excitement (*auddhatya*, rgod pa)
15. non-faith (*āshraddhya*, rgod pa)
16. laziness (*kausīdya*, le lo)
17. non-conscientiousness (*pramāda*, bag med pa)
18. forgetfulness (*mushitasmrtitā*, brjed nges pa)
19. non-introspection (*asamprajanya*, shes bzhin ma yin pa)
20. distraction (*vikshepa*, rnam par gyeng ba)

It is not possible for all the root afflictions to be present simultaneously; for example, if desire is present, hatred will not be, and vice versa; similarly for the secondary afflictions, those of the type of desire, such as jealousy, will not be present at the same time as those of the type of hatred, such as belligerence or resentment. However, secondary afflictions and root afflictions of the same type such as hatred and belligerence can be present simultaneously although they do not have to be.

The four changeable factors are:

1. sleep (*middha*, gnyid)
2. contrition (*kaukritya*, 'gyod pa)
3. investigation (*vitarka*, rtog pa)
4. analysis (*vichāra*, dpyod pa)

They are changeable in the sense that they can become either virtuous or non-virtuous depending on the motivation which impels them.

Through study of 'Awareness and Knowledge' one comes to know what the different types of minds are, and moreover, which sorts of minds it is helpful to develop and which should be abandoned. One can understand what the state of one's mind is at present as well as into what it can eventually be transformed. With this as a basis, it is then far more meaningful both to engage in further study of the stages involved in the process of transformation and actually to enter into it.