

Triratna Dharma Training Course for Mitras

Year Four

Module 4: Know Your Mind – the Ethical Psychology of the Abhidharma

Introduction

Experiences are preceded by mind, led by mind, and produced by mind.

Cease to do evil; learn to do good; purify the mind.

The Dhammapada, vv. 1 and 183

This module aims to emphasise and explore the fundamental importance of the mind in Buddhism, from the very early teaching of the Buddha in the *Dhammapada* through to the systematic analysis of the Abhidharma, particularly in its later Mahāyāna form. Although there is some philosophical reflection on the nature of mind, the main focus is on the ethical and practical implications of Buddhist psychology. It is axiomatic in Buddhism that an action is ethical according to the mental state from which it springs.

It is hoped that this module will help you to develop the mindfulness necessary for identifying your mental states, especially habitual ones, so that you can encourage those that are positive and valuable, while letting go of those which are negative and unhelpful to your spiritual growth. By understanding more clearly the workings of your own mind, you may also find it easier to develop compassion for others, since we are all in the same predicament. What you will be engaging in is the time honoured Buddhist practice of ‘dharma-vicaya’, which is the second of the enlightenment factors, and refers to the process of discerning, discriminating, identifying and investigating mental events.

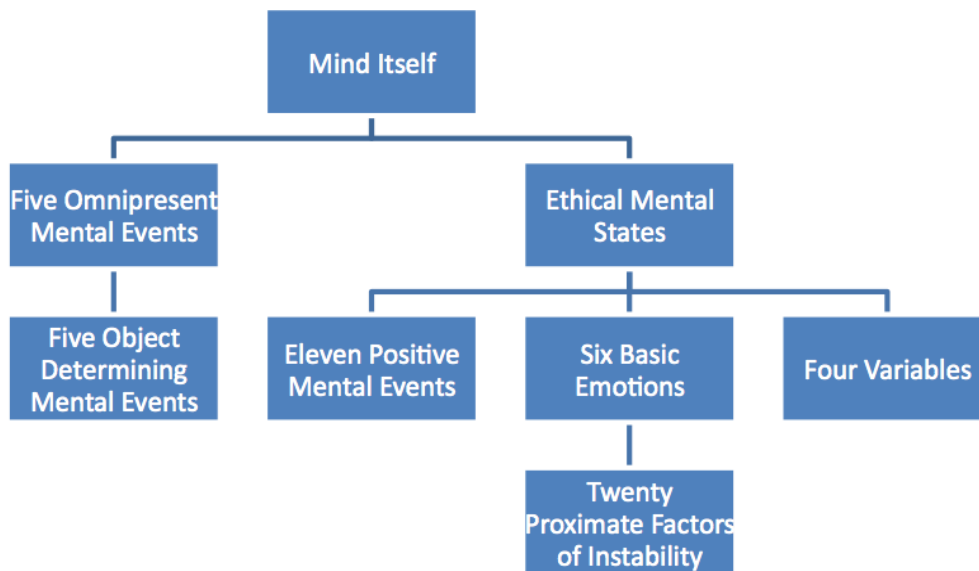
Although the module refers to Buddhist ‘psychology’, it is important to remember that, unlike its Western counterparts, the purpose of exploring the mind in Buddhism is to assist the development of higher states of consciousness that can lead us to Insight. Each week, therefore, in addition to the study material and discussion, there is the opportunity for a period of meditation to help create the ‘inner tranquillity, clarity and insight’ necessary for effective examination of our mental states.

Study material

The primary study material for this module is Sangharakshita’s *Know Your Mind*. You will be focussing mainly on chapters 5-9, but the whole book is well worth reading. The first four chapters provide the historical and philosophical background to the 18th century Tibetan text on which Sangharakshita bases his exposition: *The Necklace of Clear Understanding* by Yeshe Gyaltzen. A synopsis of these four chapters has been provided (see *Appendix 1* below), though it is

recommended that you read them for yourself if possible, especially if you are interested in the development of the Buddhist understanding of reality. Although the material you will be studying comes from *Know Your Mind*, the structure of the module follows that used by Subhuti in his talks to the Men's Order Convention in 2001. The advantage of Subhuti's structure is that he presents the material in clusters of similar and contrasting mental events. This makes it easier to understand the links between them, e.g. between *śraddhā* and *asraddhyā* and to see how it is possible to use one to 'drive out' (Subhuti's phrase) the other, though the correlation is not always so clear. An abbreviated transcription of his talks, which include references to Geshe Rabten's *Mind and its Functions*, is provided for you to use alongside the corresponding sections of *Know Your Mind*. In addition, Unit 1 contains an extract from Dhammadinna's talk to the women's convention in the same year.

The module is divided into eight units, each of which will probably correspond to one week's session. There will be a series of questions attached to each unit to help you engage with the material, though you may well have additional questions of your own.



Unit 1: What is the Mind and Why is it So Fundamental to Buddhism?

Preparation

If possible, read the Introduction and Chapters 1-4 of *Know Your Mind*. If you don't have time for this, read the summary printed as *Appendix 1* below. Chapters 1-3 provide an outline of the Abhidharma's historical and philosophical background while chapter 4 is particularly important in explaining the nature of mind from the Yogācāra point of view, on which the rest of the book is based. Make a note of any questions you have and points you would like to explore.

This is an introductory unit to get you thinking about the nature of mind. Mind is to be distinguished from mental states or events. It is not an object to be categorised among other objects; it is that which *experiences* objects – the subjective dimension of our experience. Just as the eye cannot see itself, so the mind cannot experience itself as an object.

Although the mind is never an object of experience, the Abhidharma describes it as having certain distinguishing characteristics:

1. **Clarity** – as Milarepa says (in *The Shepherd's Search for Mind*), mind is, “Lucid, limpid, ungraspable, illuminating.” It is infinitely malleable, unbounded, indefinable.
2. **Cognition** – mind consists in knowing its object. All consciousness is consciousness *of*, however subtle the object may be; it is always relational.
3. **Momentary** – mind is ever-changing, in continuous flux. It is a process, a sequence of mind-moments.

4. **Conditioned** – each mind-moment is conditioned by previous ones. These tend to cohere and create habitual mental states – a skilful or unskilful ‘groove’. These give the mind its flavour – like salt in water.

Taken from Dhammadinna’s talk to the 2002 women’s Order Convention.

Questions to consider:

1. How would you define ‘mind’? Is it something different from the brain?
2. How do people use the word ‘mind’ in common parlance? Could you substitute ‘brain’ in these usages? E.g. “I haven’t made up my brain yet!”
3. In your experience, what effect has meditation had on your mind? How far do you think it possible to access higher states of consciousness that cannot be analysed in ordinary psychological terms?
4. What do you understand to be the difference between a positive and negative mental state? Can you think of examples of how your mental state has directly affected your experience of the world?
5. Sangharakshita believes that modern western Buddhists are likely to be less motivated by a good rebirth than by other factors such as the need for, “A solution to psychological problems.” or “An intellectually respectable alternative to a purely materialist philosophy.” (p.41) or the aspiration to “...transform their lives and the world around them.”(p.42). How far would you agree and which of these motivations (if any) do you resonate with?
6. How seriously do you take the teaching that, “Mind and mental events together with the law of karma determine one’s whole future, both in this life and throughout future lives.”? (p.45)

Meditation and reflection

There will be a 15 minute period of meditation and reflection on the nature of mind, based on some of the questions posed by Milarepa in ‘The Shepherd’s Search for Mind’.

Unit 2: Becoming Aware of Mental Events That Are Always With Us

Preparation

Read chapter 5, *The Perceptual Situation*. Make a note of any questions you have and points you would like to explore.

From Subhuti's talk on *The Sarvatragas*

These five omnipresent mental events (*sarvatragas*) constitute the basic mechanics of the mind; if you are conscious, they are present. However, they are not always experienced separately and, since they condition each other, there is plenty of overlap between them.

1. ***Feeling-tone (vedanā)*** – The hedonic evaluation of our experience as pleasant, painful or neutral. Every moment of consciousness has *vedanā* in it. Sometimes our senses are so overloaded that we have become somewhat numb, but it is still there.

Vedanā is particularly strong in connection with other people – a thought of someone is pleasurable, painful or neutral and this quickly turns into like, dislike or indifference.

So *vedanā* gives us information but it is not necessarily objective – it just tells us about ourselves. It points to the danger of basing our judgments simply on likes and dislikes.

It is important to note that *vedanā* is a *vipāka* – you are not responsible for it arising, only to how you respond to it.

2. ***Recognition (or conceptualisation) (saṃjñā)*** – distinguishing the characteristics of an object and interpreting it in our experience. This can be of three kinds:
 - I. Accurate or inaccurate.
 - II. Have levels of depth commensurate with the 3 levels of wisdom:
 - i. Hearing: we learn to label and identify the object correctly.
 - ii. Reflection: we understand it as impermanent and insubstantial.
 - iii. Meditation: we understand it in the context of Reality.
 - III. Experienced in different ‘worlds’:
 - i. The *kāmaloka*: when we perceive something in terms of its physical existence and our material needs.
 - ii. The *rūpaloka*: when we perceive ourselves and the world primarily from a dhyānic perspective.

iii. The *arūpaloka*: beyond space and time.

We can see these ‘worlds’ as an increasing purification of our experience, i.e. an object is pure inasmuch as the subject is pure. We can choose to refine our experience e.g. thinking of others instead of being wrapped up in ourselves; looking for beauty as well as utility.

3. **Directionality of mind (*cetanā*)** – the general drive or motivation that moves us towards the objects of our experience. This drive can be skilful, unskilful or neutral. Mind is ‘hungry’ – it is always looking for something to involve itself with.

Cetanā is key to the spiritual life – Going for Refuge is a form of *cetanā* and moving towards this is the art of the spiritual life.

4. **Contact (*spāṛśa*)** – the bringing together of three elements: sense organ, sense object and consciousness (*vijñāna*).
5. **Egocentric demanding (*manaskāra*)** – the conscious apprehension of an object. It is the clinching of *cetanā* in a moment of attention.

Manaskāra can be:

- I. Wise, i.e. in accordance with reality, or
- II. Unwise, i.e. not in accordance with reality as when we pay attention to an unreal object or wrongly identify the characteristics of an object e.g. the *lakṣaṇas*. All unskilful mental states are caused by this.

Sustained wise *manaskāra* is equivalent to *samādhi*.

Some conclusions:

1. All our experience is feeling-toned. The more conscious we are of this, the less we will react and be driven by our likes and dislikes.
2. We are always interpreting our experience with varying degrees of accuracy and depth. We can make an ongoing effort to raise the level of our experience.
3. The mind is always moving towards things. We can use *cetanā* skilfully to move in the direction of Going for Refuge by practising the precepts etc. But we need to want to go in that direction.

Questions to consider:

1. Make a point of pausing a few times to investigate what pleasurable and/or painful feelings you are experiencing. Notice if they immediately turn into likes and dislikes. Can you notice any 'gap' between the 'feeling' and the dependently arising emotion?
2. Read again the verse by William Blake on p.76. Does this resonate with you at all? Do you think it is possible to experience pleasure in this way? What difference would it make to your life if you could consistently do as Blake suggests.
3. "The desire to be rid of pain actually contributes to it." (p.77) Can you see how this works? Do you have experience of this yourself?
4. What do you understand to be the difference between equanimity (*upekṣā*) and indifference? What experience, if any, have you had of the kind of 'alienation' Sangharakshita discusses on p.78?
5. Try looking around you without labelling the objects of your perception. What difference, if any, does it make to the quality of your experience?
6. Apart from in meditation, what experiences have you had of consciously re-directing your mind in a more skilful direction? What positive habits are you trying to establish and do you believe these make a difference to how you deal with craving or aversion?

Meditation and reflection

A 15 minute 'Just Sitting' period noticing the flow of the omnipresent mental events and seeing if you can identify them. Are they all there? Are some easier to be aware of than others?

Unit 3: Becoming Interested and Where That Can Take Us

Preparation

Read Chapter 6, *A Steady Focus*. Make a note of any questions you have and points you would like to explore.

From Subhuti's talk on *The Vinīyatas*

Like the omnipresent mental events, the five object-determining mental events (*vinīyatas*) are neither skilful nor unskilful in themselves. They are ways of getting more deeply involved, more clearly conscious of what is going on in our minds.

1. ***Interest (chanda)*** – in the sense of emotional engagement, not just intellectual interest. This is necessary for any successful enterprise, skilful or unskilful. It is a form of *cetanā*, which for Buddhists connects us to objects of the spiritual life, such as meditation. You want to stay with the breath because it is intrinsically interesting. How to do this is the whole art of meditation. If *chanda* is not there, we need to ask, “Why not? Where is our interest going?” This can be quite revealing.
2. ***Intensified interest which stays with its object (adhimokṣa)*** – a making up of your mind to do something e.g. rob a bank, pass an exam, lead a spiritual life. It has two principle aspects:
 - I. Cognitive: we have become convinced that the object is worth focussing on. There is no longer that habitual doubt that can subtly undermine our practice.
 - II. Commitment: continually acting on your conviction. If you are finding it hard to concentrate, it may be that *chanda* is there but not *adhimokṣa*. Habits of distraction can make it difficult to sustain focus without an underlying thread of mindfulness (see below).
3. ***Inspection (or mindfulness or recollection) (smṛti)*** – remembering not to forget, not to drift away from the object. We need to work on mindfulness outside of meditation if we are to meditate effectively.
4. ***Intense concentration (samādhi)*** – by now, the hindrances have been left behind and we come into a less dualistic relationship with the object. This represents a significant shift in consciousness whereby subject and object have become more subtle and conscious and unconscious energies have become unified.
5. ***Appreciative discrimination (prajñā)*** – you reflect on the nature of an object, especially the *lakṣaṇas* and cut through the delusion of a separate subject and object.

So all of this is a gradual process of truly attending to an object, purifying it and then seeing how it is being distorted by the subject/object dichotomy.

This whole schema is especially useful in meditation – at any time we can check which of these stages are present and where we can go next. It is interesting that *prajñā* is the pinnacle of this process and points up the need to reflect in every meditation, especially at the end of our practice.

Questions to consider:

1. Think of some things in life that really interest, perhaps fascinate, you. Can you pinpoint what it is about them that you find interesting? What effect do these things have on your energy and state of consciousness? How often are you able to bring this kind of interest to your meditation? What helps you to do this?
2. “Being lazy really means being busy doing something that is not conducive to skilful mental states.” (p.103). How do you respond to this statement?
3. “Some would argue that simply being aware of a mental state is not enough to change it, while one could equally argue that the very act of becoming aware has a transformative effect.” (p.108) Think of examples from your experience where you have found the act of awareness to have a transformative effect and where you have needed to apply effort.
4. How far do you consciously practise mindfulness in daily life? Why do you think Buddhism places so much emphasis on this practice?
5. Can you think of specific examples that show you are prey to the *viparyāsas*, the topsy-turvy views? How far has your commitment to the Buddhist path helped you to develop the *prajñā* necessary to distinguish clearly between that which is impermanent, insubstantial, painful and unlovely, and that which is permanent, real, blissful and beautiful?

Meditation and reflection

A 15-20 minute period of the Mindfulness of Breathing, looking out for the presence of the object determining mental events and any experience of them as a progressive series.

Unit 4: Starting to Move Beyond ‘I’ and ‘Mine-Making’

Preparation

Read the following sections from Chapter 7, *The Creative Mind at Work*:

- The introductory paragraphs pp. 117-118.
- Confidence-trust (or faith) (*śraddhā*) pp. 119-125.
- Self-respect (or shame) (*hrī*) pp. 125-126.
- Decorum (or, respect for wise opinion) (*apatrāpya*) pp.126-129.

And the following sections from Chapter 9, *Factors of Instability*:

- The introductory paragraphs p. 205.
- Lack of trust (or non-faith) (*āśraddhya*) pp. 230-233.
- Shamelessness (*āhrīkya*) p. 226.
- Lack of sense of propriety (*anapatrāpya*) pp. 227-228.

Make a note of any questions you have and points you would like to explore.

From Subhuti’s talk

Śraddhā is fundamental to any positive mental state. It is our capacity to respond to value and is latent in all consciousness. It manifests in different areas, e.g. on the aesthetic plane, *śraddhā* is our response to beauty; ethically, it is our response to goodness or truth. In its most developed form, it is our response to spiritual values manifested, for example, in images, words, ritual or perhaps a person. This response is more than an intellectual conviction; it colours the whole mind. Hsuan Tsang draws out three aspects:

1. ***Cognitive*** – a deep conviction in the truths realised by the Buddha, expressed in the Dharma and followed by the Sangha. It is initially intuitive but needs to be tested in reason and experience. In this way it differs from a common Christian understanding of faith as being opposed to reason.
2. ***Emotional*** – taking delight in the qualities of the Buddha. A ‘lucid and serene’ faith that gives us a strong sense of calm and clarity, of everything falling into place.
3. ***Volitional*** – ‘longing faith’; a strong urge to realise the spiritual potential you know you have.

So we can characterise *śraddhā* as:

1. An underlying orientation, revealed in what you do rather than just how you feel.
2. More than devotion, though devotion can express faith, be a channel for it.
3. Purifying the mind by calming and clarifying and by cleansing it of negativity.
4. Tending towards action – leaps forward to its objective. Going for Refuge is the volitional aspect of śraddhā.
5. Not exclusive to Buddhists. It is present in every decent human action.

Where śraddhā is not present, there is *āśraddhya*:

1. A lack of all the attributes of śraddhā, e.g. no conviction as to Buddhist truths, no attraction to good qualities, no aspiration.
2. Can be a definite aversion to value, an utter cynicism and contempt for those embodying spiritual or ethical values.
3. Can be a definite espousal of the unskilful or a foolish trust in authority, irrespective of value.
4. Can be as much a shared experience as śraddhā, e.g. the mentality of the mob.

Hrī is the painful consciousness of falling short of your ideals and often manifests physically as shame. It can be triggered either by a sensitive conscience that is offended when we act unskilfully or simply by our love of the Dharma.

Apatrāpya differs from hrī in that it arises in dependence on our connection with others we respect or have faith in. It is not to be confused with neurotic guilt and the need to please others. Apatrāpya can be the more powerful motivator because we can't delude ourselves so easily.

It is important to remember that, though normally unpleasant, both hrī and apatrāpya are positive mental events and we can cultivate them as guardians of our ethical values. The practice of confession can play an important part in this.

Their opposites are:

Āhrīkyā – a lack of shame or conscience; no remorse for acting unskilfully. It can even become an anti-moral sense, such as occurs in the moral rebelliousness of adolescence.

Anapatrāpya – no respect for what others think; maybe even a perverse desire to shock or upset them.

Questions to consider:

1. How far are you able to appreciate the fundamental importance of śraddhā in Buddhism? Can you see faith as a positive mental event, which though intuitive, can be tested in reason and experience unlike the common Christian understanding of faith being opposed to reason?
2. “The test of faith is whether one is able to act on it in the absence of any kind of gratification whatsoever, any kind of pleasurable feeling or emotion associated with the object of one’s faith.” p. 122.

Can you think of examples of being aware of faith in this kind of situation?

What is your experience of the difference between faith and pleasure?

3. Cynicism is a form of āśraddhya. What do you think underlies the tendency to be cynical – have you experience of this yourself? How do you think cynicism differs from scepticism?
4. Can you think of examples of hrī in your experience? Does it help to see this as a positive, albeit often painful, mental event?
5. How do you think apatrāpya differs from neurotic guilt? Are you able to distinguish it from just wanting to please other people?
6. Āhrīkya and anapatrāpya are quite common in adolescence. Do you think they can be at all helpful in this context and how important do you think it is to grow out of them!?
7. “You cannot be an ethical individual unless you love yourself.” (p.227).

Do you agree with this and how does it relate to shamelessness?

Meditation and reflection

A 15 minute first stage Mettā Bhavana meditation opening to a sense of confidence and trust in ourselves and our practice, bringing to mind, with kindness, any shame or remorse that we may be experiencing.

Unit 5: Purifying the Mind of Craving and Aversion

Preparation

Read the following sections from Chapter 7, *The Creative Mind at Work*:

- Non-attachment (*alobha*) pp. 129-130.
- Non-hatred (*adveṣa*) pp. 131-134.

And the following sections from Chapter 8, *Forces of Disintegration*:

- The introductory paragraphs pp. 157-162.
- Cupidity-attachment (*rāga*) pp. 162-164.
- Anger (*pratigha*) pp. 164-168.

And the following sections from Chapter 9, *Factors of Instability*:

- Slyness-concealment (*mrakṣa*) pp. 209 – 212.
- Avarice (or acquisitiveness) (*mātsarya*) pp. 217-218.
- Deceit (or pretence) (*māyā*) pp. 218-220.
- Dishonesty (*ṣāṭhya*) pp. 220-223.
- Indignation or rage (*krodha*) pp. 206-207.
- Resentment (*upanāha*) pp. 207-209.
- Spite (or defensiveness) (*pradāśa*) pp. 212-214.
- Jealousy (or envy) (*irṣyā*) pp. 215-217.

Make a note of any questions you have and points you would like to explore.

The six basic emotions (*mūlakleśas*) are the roots of our negativity and what they have in common is the wrong view that we are separate ego-identities. This then produces the basic contamination of our minds with greed, hatred and delusion. We need to identify and acknowledge these basic negative emotions before we can transform them.

From Subhuti's talk

Cupidity-attachment or desire (rāga) involves exaggerating the pleasurable aspects of an object and minimising its painful ones. In this way we contaminate the object with our craving, making it an unreal projection.

Practising its opposite, ***non-attachment (alobha)***, serves to drive this out. It isn't possible to have both in your mind. Alobha can begin with a sense of revulsion to craving, a sense of not wanting to be a slave to desire, but becomes a positive state

of contentment, fullness, generosity and inner confidence. It is a sense of great freedom. Generosity is intrinsic to this positive mental event. It is also a state of positive individuality.

The Abhidharma discusses four *upakleśas* associated with rāga:

1. Avarice (*mātsarya*). Happiness is identified with having rather than using, e.g. having money in the bank and never spending it. It is the quality of misers and often associated with a cold, hard-heartedness, e.g. Scrooge. The antidote is Generosity.
2. Slyness-concealment (*mrakṣa*). Hiding your faults to try to make people think well of you. This effectively blocks transformation and the antidote is to open up – which may actually come as a great relief.
3. Deceit (*māyā*). This is similar in that it involves presenting yourself in an untrue way – as better than you are. Again, the antidotes are openness and confession.
4. Dishonesty (*ṣāṭhya*). This goes further since it involves actual lying.

All these hold us back and are destructive of the spiritual community. They point up the need to become more and more open-hearted, transparent and candid.

Hatred involves seeing an object (often a person) as the cause of our suffering and exaggerating their negative aspects while minimising their positive ones.

Non-hatred (*adveṣa*) is the complete absence of the desire to retaliate. It is also a positive state of love and well-wishing.

Anger (*pratigha*) is identified as the basic opposite *mulakleśa* and there are four *upakleśas* associated with it:

1. Fury or rage (*krodha*). ‘Hot’ rage – losing all sense of proportion and just wanting to harm the object of it.
2. Resentment (*upanāha*). ‘Cold’ rage – you nurse it until there is the opportunity to strike. Because nurtured, it becomes more and more bitter and can continue for years.
3. Spite (*pradāśa*). Strong hatred or irritability; a tendency to snarl or snap or make cynical comments.
4. Envy (*irṣyā*). Hatred stimulated by the success or good fortune of others.

Questions to consider:

1. Think of some examples of things you desire. What kind of objects are they – material possessions, people, experiences? What effect does this kind of craving have on your state of mind? How would it feel to be free of it?

2. Why do you think the Abhidharma identifies three separate upakleśas associated with disguising oneself in one way or another? Why might they be particularly prevalent in a spiritual community?
3. “There is a close relationship between hatred and attachment.” (p.132) How far do you agree with this?
4. Can you identify upakleśas to which you are particularly prone (either associated with attachment or hatred)? What can you do to try to counteract them?
5. Do you agree that ethical conduct should override psychological integration in all circumstances?

Meditation and reflection

A 15 minute ‘Just Sitting’ meditation looking particularly at the tendency in our minds to move towards or away from an object, i.e. craving and aversion.

Unit 6: Removing the Veil of Ignorance

Preparation

Read the following section from Chapter 7, *The Creative Mind at Work*:

- Non-deludedness (*amoha*) pp. 134-141.

and the following sections from Chapter 8, *Forces of Disintegration*:

- Arrogance (*māna*) pp. 168-171.
- Lack of Intrinsic Awareness (*avidyā*) pp. 171-175.
- Indecision (*vicikitsā*) pp. 176-181.
- Opinionatedness (*dr̥ṣṭi*) pp. 181-203.

Make a note of any questions you have and points you would like to explore.

From Subhuti's talk

Lack of intrinsic awareness (ignorance) (avidyā) is the fundamental *mulakleśa* that gives rise to the sense of ego-identity underlying craving and aversion.

Arrogance (pride) (māna) comes from attachment to this sense of self and leads to:

Opinionatedness (afflicted view) (dr̥ṣṭi) that gives rise to ***indecision (doubt) (vicikitsā)***.

Ignorance is defined as the 'lack of being aware to one's fullest capacity'. We do not see how our minds distort reality. It is present right up to Enlightenment and is in every mental event, positive as well as negative.

Non-deludedness (non-ignorance) (amoha) is the opposite: seeing things as they really are. It drives out ignorance. Full *amoha* is equivalent to Enlightenment.

According to the Abhidharma, we all have some *amoha* – none of us is completely deluded! There must be some there already in order to develop it.

Avidyā becomes embodied in views, the fundamental one being self-view by means of which we set up a dualistic take on the world – self/other; subject/object. This self-view leads directly to craving (needing to bolster our sense of self with things that we think will protect and enhance it), aversion (defending the self by pushing away whatever threatens it) and arrogance (*māna*) where we compare ourselves with others with the implicit desire to be better. A certain amount of *māna* is innate and natural and we need to come to terms with it in order to have self-mettā. It is ok to see yourself as special and lovable and then realise that others see themselves in the same way.

However, māna gets distorted in various ways, one of which is māda (mental inflation or intoxication with oneself). This is where we get carried away with our achievements and also non-achievements, especially Youth, Health and Life, all of which are impermanent. We become blinded to the realities of old age, sickness and death and such intoxication prevents us making spiritual effort.

Although all views need ultimately to be transcended, at our stage we need to distinguish between ‘right views’ that help us to grow spiritually and ‘wrong views’ – basic misconceptions that prevent us from leading an effective spiritual life. Examples of wrong views include not believing actions to have moral value or consequences, and not believing in moral agency, i.e. that people are responsible for their actions. In fact, if we really hold and act on these views, we are unable even to lead a decent human life.

Our views can lead to ‘doubt and indecision’ (*vicikitsā*), a kind of two-pointedness of mind, if we find ourselves struggling with different sets of beliefs. These may concern views about the Three Jewels, about meditation or our fellow Dharma-farers. We may have come to the Dharma with certain political views that we hold dear but which Buddhism challenges. There is a genuine thinking through of our views, which is skilful and necessary, but equally there may be a wavering indecisiveness that prevents us fully committing ourselves to the Dharma. It is important to make our doubts conscious and then seek clarity through study, reflection, meditation and discussion. There may be an underlying factor such as fear.

Questions to consider:

1. How far do you see non-deludedness as something you can actively cultivate? Have you found the three levels of wisdom (the three knowledges) useful in this process? How could you apply them more often?
2. “Very generally, one could say that the sort of people who want to know ‘what is’ attend lectures and read books on Buddhism, while those who want to know ‘what to do’ go along to meditation classes.” (p.136) What sort are you and what effect does this have on your spiritual life?
3. What do you think is the crucial difference between māna and self-mettā? Are you able to effectively distinguish between them?
4. Can you think of specific ways in which māna blocks progress on the spiritual path?
5. Have you experienced any conflict between what you assent to intellectually and what you feel deep down? What effect does this have on your spiritual practice and what can you do about it?
6. Do you consider yourself to be primarily an eternalist or a nihilist? How does this manifest in your approach to life?
7. How do you understand the idea that or views lead to doubt and indecision?

Meditation and reflection

A 15 minute mindfulness of breathing meditation, bringing as much clarity as possible to the breath and noticing any tendency to doubt or indecision.

Unit 7: Śraddhā in Action (Vīrya) Leading to Freedom From All Kleśas

Preparation

Read the following sections from Chapter 7, *The Creative Mind at Work*:

- Diligence (or energy in pursuit of the good) (*vīrya*) pp. 141-144.
- Alertness (or tranquillity) (*praśrabdhi*) pp. 144-145.
- Equanimity (*upekṣā*) pp. 147-148.

And the following sections from Chapter 9, *Factors of Instability*:

- Gloominess (or stagnation) (*styāna*) pp. 228-229.
- Ebullience (*auddhatya*) pp. 229-230.
- Laziness (*kausīdya*) pp. 233-235.

Make a note of any questions you have and points you would like to explore.

From Subhuti's talk

Diligence (or energy in pursuit of the good) (vīrya) is what connects śraddhā with action – e.g. consciously turning your mind away from sensuous longing to something more ultimately satisfying and wholesome.

Vīrya is analysed in terms of:

1. Protection – a kind of spiritual armour that defends us against unskilful thoughts and behaviour.
2. Applied effort – systematically giving effort to the skilful; raising our level of consciousness.
3. Refusal to despair – not daunted by the magnitude of our ideals.
4. Not turning back regardless of difficulties; not blaming others or expecting others to remove our difficulties.
5. No complacency – constantly stretching ourselves, never settling down.

Its opposite is ***laziness (kausīdya)*** – this is not just the absence of effort but a countervailing effort, i.e. turning away from the wholesome and attending to the unwholesome. The Abhidharma describes three kinds of laziness:

1. Indulging in the pleasures of lying down and not getting up.
2. Allowing oneself to be carried along by unskilful motivations.

3. Self-pity or a victim mentality, which saps all energy for the spiritual life.

Another threefold analysis of laziness is:

1. You regard spiritual practice as unnecessary.
2. Procrastination – you want to live a spiritual life but not now – you put it off.
3. Destructive laziness – you find unwholesome motivations more attractive so you follow them.

Alertness (pliancy) (praśrabdhi) has three characteristics:

1. Lightness and ease, traditionally described as like ‘thistledown on the wind’.
2. Calmness, composure and serenity, especially associated with the third dhyāna.
3. Suppleness, flexibility, pliancy. The mind is able to move in whichever direction you want and this is therefore essential for Insight.

Its opposite is **gloominess or stagnation (lethargy) (styāna)**, also described as sloth (physical heaviness and dullness). It is a lack of pliancy of mind; a stiffness and rigidity that leads to a lack of clarity even with regard to ordinary perception. It is a mental state, not a physical one, though it can be brought on by prolonged lack of exercise. It can also be the consequence of deep inner conflict – doing what you don’t want to do perhaps because other factors have not been resolved.

Equanimity (upekṣā) in this context refers to the dhyanic state that is so positive that it is beyond happiness. It is vīrya combined with alobha, adveṣa and amoha. The mind is completely free from the kleśas with no tendency towards the unskillful. There is just no reaction to objects of craving and aversion when they arise. There are three levels:

1. A balanced mind that requires effort to maintain.
2. A mind that is steady and at rest and no great effort is required to maintain it.
3. A spontaneous mind that is completely absorbed and no effort is required at all.

We need to develop this as an antidote to **ebullience (auddhatya)** and **desultoriness (vikṣepa)**.

Ebullience is restlessness, agitation, excitability. The object is steady but the mind is unsteady because it is urgently looking for pleasure. So it is primarily an

expression of craving and can feel quite pleasant because of the anticipation of pleasure.

Desultoriness is drifting from one object to another, so here it is the object that changes. The mind is scattered and cannot sustain attention.

Questions to consider:

1. How often do you feel enthusiastic or inspired about following your spiritual path? How important is this for you?
2. Do you think it is possible to raise your level of consciousness by applying sufficient effort? How else might you do this?
3. What has been your experience of difficulties or obstacles on the path? How have you dealt with them?
4. How far do you recognise a tendency to laziness as described in these teachings? Is it something you would like to address? How might you do that?
5. Do you have a sense of the mind oscillating between *styāna* and *praśrabdhi*? How helpful is physical exercise for moving you from one to the other?
6. Ebullience can be pleasurable but is nevertheless a negative mental state. Why is that and what is your experience, if any, of equanimity with regard to the objects of craving and aversion?

Meditation and reflection

A 15 minute period of ‘Just Sitting’ with the emphasis on balanced effort – making just enough effort to be aware of where the mind wants to go and cultivating a sense of lightness and ease.

Week 8: Cherishing the Skilful and Developing a Heart of Compassion

Preparation

Read the following sections from Chapter 7, *The Creative Mind at Work*:

- Concern (or non-heedlessness) (*apramāda*) pp. 145-147.
- Non-violence (*avihiṃsā*) pp. 148-153.

And the following sections from Chapter 9, *Factors of Instability*:

- Unconcern (or heedlessness) (*pramāda*) pp. 235-236.
- Forgetfulness (or unreclectedness or unmindfulness) (*muṣitasmr̥titā*) pp. 236-237.
- Inattentiveness (or purposelessness) (*asamprajanya*) pp. 237-238.
- Desultoriness (or distraction) (*vikṣepa*) pp. 238-241.
- Malice (*vihimṣā*) pp. 224-226.

Make a note of any questions you have and points you would like to explore.

From Subhuti's talk

Mindfulness (smṛti), though itself an object-determining rather than a positive mental event, is nevertheless crucial to all positive mental events. Its root meaning is 'memory' and this is vital for any kind of productive life, from doing what you said you'd do to keeping a continuity of focus in meditation.

Its opposite is ***Forgetfulness (or unmindfulness) (muṣitasmr̥titā)*** – the inability to hold one's mind to an object. In everyday life, this can cause us to forget appointments, forget what we've learned and our lives can become chaotic and ineffective.

Samprajanya (clear comprehension) involves seeing what is going on and understanding it in terms of spiritual values. There are four aspects to this in the Theravada tradition:

1. Purpose – you know what you're doing and why you are doing it.
2. Suitability – you have chosen the appropriate means to fulfil your purpose.
3. Pasture/field – you retain a sense of your meditation practice in your ordinary experience, e.g. keeping an awareness of the body or breath. Also, you have sufficient self-awareness to know what you need to be working on at any particular time in your life.
4. Non-deludedness – you are conscious to the greatest possible extent; you retain an awareness of the ultimate nature of things.

Its opposite is inattentiveness (or purposelessness) (*asamprajanya*). You have only a vague idea of what is going on or why you are doing something or how it relates to any broader purpose or ultimate context.

Concern (or non-heedlessness) (*apramāda*) involves a feeling tone of care and responsibility. On the one hand, we cherish the skilful and, on the other, we are protected from the unskilful because we are naturally repelled by it.

Its opposite is **unconcern (or heedlessness) (*pramāda*)** – an active desire not to care, to heedlessly give way to unskilful motivation.

Malice (harmfulness) (*vihimṣā*): the desire to hurt the person we perceive as hurting us can lead to malice – an active enjoyment of inflicting pain. This can be physical or by speech or by group manipulation.

Non-violence (*avihimṣā*): no desire to hurt anyone and a revulsion to causing others suffering. This leads to *compassion* – the desire to alleviate the suffering of others.

It is significant that our list concludes with that which becomes compassion. So *knowing your mind* leads directly to compassionate activity.

Questions to consider:

1. In what ways does being mindful help you to be more ethical?
2. What is the connection between mindfulness and freedom?
3. “If one were a balanced, happy and integrated person one would be able to become more and more absorbed in the in-breath without any trouble.” (p.237) What have you found to be the connection between your meditation practice and your everyday experience?
4. Do you think there are times of creative endeavour when it is helpful not to know exactly why you are doing something? If so, how would you apply *samprajanya* in such a case?
5. How far are you able to distinguish between a healthy awareness of your mental states and an unhealthy, neurotic preoccupation with them?
6. The Dhammapada states that ‘*Mindfulness is the Way to the Immortal, unmindfulness the way to death.*’ v.21

What do you make of this?

7. What is your response to scenes of violence in films or television? Do you agree with Bhante that they can be a way of gratifying latent malice in us?
8. How far are you aware of malice in yourself – perhaps in very subtle manifestations?

9. “Avihimṣā, or abstention from harming, is the first and most fundamental of the precepts.” How seriously do you take this in your everyday life?

Meditation and reflection

1. A 10 minute Mindfulness of Breathing meditation with particular attention to ‘cherishing the skilful’ – labelling thoughts and feelings as craving, aversion or delusion as they arise, and noticing any relief or resistance to letting them go.
2. A 10 minute Mettā Bhavana meditation with emphasis on noticing responses to our own and others’ suffering – acknowledging any tendency to malice or simply ‘schadenfreude’ and allowing feelings of compassion to grow.

Projects

To complete this course, you are invited to take an aspect of it and explore it more deeply in the form of a project. It may be that there is a particular positive mental event that you aspire to and would like to find ways of developing more consistently in your life. Or perhaps you have discovered a tendency to a negative mental event that you want to be more aware of and find ways of transforming. Or something in the material may have just sparked your interest and you'd like to look into it in more depth. This is your opportunity to make the material more your own and help consolidate your understanding of it.

Taking it Further

Below is a selection of works that you may want to refer to in order to explore the whole subject of *Know Your Mind* further.

Subhuti: 'Mind and Mental Events' – a series of talks given to the Men's Order Convention in 2001, much of which is incorporated in this course along with Sangharakshita's *Know Your Mind*. Talk 4 includes 'the four variables', which Sangharakshita also discusses at the end of *Know Your Mind*. Although these have not been included in the course, they form two pairs of neutral mental events that can become positive or negative and are therefore useful to know something about.

These talks can be listened to here:

<http://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/series/details?ser=X38>

Geshe Rabten: 'Mind and its Functions' – the text on which Subhuti bases his talks, along with *Know Your Mind*.

Dhammadinna: 'What is Mind' – a clear and interesting talk given to the Women's Order Convention in 2001 that explores the nature of mind. It links with the material in chapters 1-4 of *Know Your Mind*. This talk can be found in a booklet available from Taraloka that also contains other talks on the mind.

You can listen to the talk itself here:

<http://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/talks/details?num=OM795>

Subhuti: 'Mindfulness and the Mind'. An article in *Madhyamavani*, available at:

<http://madhyamavani.fwbo.org/8/mindfulness.html>

Subhuti has various booklets of talks available from Padmaloka and Madhyamaloka (some from Tiratanaloka) that explore aspects of the material in an imaginative and inspiring way, e.g:

- ***Remorse and Confession in the Spiritual Community***: a very clear and helpful look at the mental states of *śraddhā*, *hrī*, and *apatrāpya*, and how they relate to the practice of confession.

- ***Going For Refuge***: especially the section on ‘Characteristics of Faith’.
- ***The Mythic Context***: especially, ‘*To see with angel’s eyes*’.

Milarepa: The Shepherd’s Search For Mind. (in Volume One of *The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa*, trans. Garma C. C. Chang). The text of a conversation between the 11th century yogi and a simple shepherd boy who is gently led to insight through directly experiencing his mind.

Appendix: Know Your Mind – Synopsis of Chapters 1-4

Introduction: Is there such a thing as Buddhist Psychology?

Although Buddhism is a fully integrated tradition, it can be helpful, for practical purposes, to talk of Buddhist psychology. The Abhidharma comprises Buddhist teachings about the nature and functioning of mind, not as a set of theories but solely as a means of investigating and recognising the contents of our minds, and of discriminating between positive and negative mental events.

According to Buddhism, our problems are rooted in ignorance. It is therefore vital to become aware of those habitual patterns of thought, feeling and behaviour that contribute to our own suffering and that of others. Only then, are we in a position to choose how to respond to any situation we find ourselves in; whether to be creative or reactive, encourage positive mental states or reinforce negative ones. By taking responsibility in this way, we are not just following the Buddhist path, we are the path.

“The path simply represents the individual solution to one’s own particular predicament.”

When speaking of Buddhism in psychological terms, we need to beware of limiting our understanding of it. By and large, western psychology does not recognise higher states of consciousness, i.e. the dhyānas. However, the Abhidharmikas were interested in the vast potential of the mind to reach Enlightenment. The Buddhist conception of mind, therefore, goes way beyond psychology and embraces both those temporary states of dhyāna, which we may refer to as ‘spiritual’, and the permanent breakthrough to Insight and beyond, which we can designate as ‘transcendental’.

The Buddhist concept of mind is not a metaphysical principle; it simply refers to the range of mental events that we can experience by direct perception. All the teachings on it can be verified by examining our experience honestly. In order to do this, it is essential to develop tranquillity and clarity through meditation. The freer we are of negative mental states, the more likely we are to see the truth.

Chapter 1: The First Buddhist Analysts

Ancient Indian Philosophy had two main trends:

1. Pluralistic: reality broken down into its essential parts.
2. Monistic: reality seen as essentially One; a unity.

The Abhidharmikas belonged to the first trend. Their work started as a vast sorting out operation of the Buddha’s teachings, which for hundreds of years were handed down by word of mouth, and ended as an analysis of the whole of existence, conditioned and unconditioned. For them, existence (mental, physical, spiritual and transcendental) could be reduced to a set of ultimately real, discrete elements called dharmas. They drew their inspiration from the Buddha who had analysed

conditioned existence into the five *skandhas* – *rūpa* (form), *vedanā* (feeling), *saṃjñā* (perception), *saṃskāra* (volition) and *viññāna* (consciousness). The purpose of such classification was to draw attention to the impermanent and insubstantial nature of phenomena. Recognising the reality of such impermanence offers the possibility of growth and change.

Ironically, while the Abhidharmikas analysis can be very helpful, their insistence on the ultimate reality of their *dharmas* was in direct contradiction to the Buddha's purpose and the central Buddhist doctrine of *anātman*. For this reason, their 'pluralistic realism' was rejected by the later Mahayanists. *Dharmas*, too, they argued, were empty of ultimately real existence.

The Abhidharma's analysis of conditioned existence was classified under three groupings: *rūpa* (form), *citta* (mind) and *caitta* (mental events), most of the emphasis being on the last two categories.

The early 'Hīnayāna' Abhidhamma developed into the Mahayana's Abhidharma through the work of Asaṅga and, later, his brother Vasubandhu. They became great teachers of the Yogācāra, one of the two great Indian Mahayana schools, which developed the philosophy of *cittamatra* or 'mind-only'. The other great school was the Madhyamaka whose teacher, Nāgārjuna, used sustained philosophical thought and logic to demonstrate *śūnyatā*, the essential emptiness of phenomena. The Yogācāra did not deny *śūnyatā*, but sought to emphasise the positive content of experience, especially in meditation.

In Tibet, both schools have a place, with the Nyingmapas being heirs to the Yogācāra tradition and the Gelukpas being more influenced by the Madhyamaka. However, the original Indian Yogācāra Abhidharma is studied more by the Gelukpas and it is from this tradition that Yeshe Gyaltzen comes. It is he who wrote the eighteenth century text, *The Necklace of Clear Understanding*, on which *Know Your Mind* is based.

Chapter 2: Analysing the Path to Enlightenment

Guenther's introduction to his translation of *The Necklace of Clear Understanding* contains a lesser known 'Path to Enlightenment' called the 'Path of Five Stages'. These are:

1. ***The path of accumulation*** in which one becomes relatively integrated by accumulating certain qualities. It has three practices of increasing intensity:
 - I. Mindfulness – the Four Foundations.
 - II. The Four Right Efforts.
 - III. Transforming negative energy through the four *ṛddhipādas* or 'bases of psychic power'. These are *chanda* (interest), *vīrya* (vigour), *citta* (wholeheartedness), *mīmāṃsā* (investigation).

By means of this path, some effective (though perhaps not irreversible) transcendental insight is attained.

2. ***The path of practice*** where one has sufficient momentum to apply oneself to penetrating basic Buddhist truths. One is able to generate psychic heat in meditation whereby the mind becomes pliable. The 5 spiritual faculties; faith, energy, mindfulness, meditative absorption and wisdom are developed and one experiences the highest mundane realisation.
3. ***The path of seeing*** in which one breaks through to the transcendental with direct vision of the nature of mind and reality.
4. ***The path of cultivation*** – a long process whereby one experiences permanent transformation.
5. ***The path of fulfilment*** i.e. Enlightenment itself characterised by spontaneous, compassionate activity wherein there is no more to learn.

Taken together, these paths comprise a path of regular steps. They require us to integrate our energies through disciplined practice. This is what is needed to effectively work on our minds – to distinguish skilful from unskilful mental states, removing those that are negative and developing those that are positive.

To do this, we need to feel inspired. To feel inspired we need to be motivated and our motivation can be purified by devotional practice. Yeshe Gyaltsen recognises this and so begins the text with ‘verses of veneration and intention’ dedicated to Mañjuḥoṣa (the gentle-voiced Bodhisattva of Wisdom); the Buddha Śākyamuni; Maitreyañātha (‘the invincible Lord Buddha’s representative’ which may refer to Asaṅga, the founder of the Yogācāra school); six great Indian teachers; and finally Mañjunātha (Tsongkhapa).

These verses are intended to generate in us the wish to emulate such inspiring beings or any others to whom we feel drawn.

Chapter 3: What’s the Point

Yeshe Gyaltsen next turns to another strong motivation for ethical and spiritual practice – that it will determine one’s future rebirth. This may be less of a motivation for modern westerners than ancient Indians. It is possible to practise Buddhism effectively without believing in the traditional ideas of karma and rebirth (though no notable Buddhist teacher has ever denied them). That actions have consequences is fundamental to Buddhism but it is possible to see this as operating simply within this life.

As to what happens at death, there are three main possibilities – continuation of this life in some other realm (the Christian view), no continued existence whatsoever (the materialist view), and rebirth.

Rebirth cannot be proven but it is borne out by certain factors such as the sense one may have as one gets older of a definite direction to one’s life that cannot be

fully explained by one's circumstances. Also some people have memories or a sense of previous lives. However, belief in rebirth may not motivate one to practise – it may simply provide an excuse to postpone any real spiritual effort. Also, westerners are more likely to be attracted to Buddhism as a solution to psychological problems, as a respectable alternative to materialist philosophy or as a means of saving the world.

Rather than concern ourselves with the fear or promise of what may happen after death, a more positive motivation may be to love the spiritual life for its own sake, seeing spiritual development as good in itself.

Karma is only one of the five levels of conditionality (although for Tibetans, it is the dominant one). Everything arises in dependence on conditions but these conditions can be physical, biological, psychological, karmic or transcendental. However, while not every event in our lives is caused by karma, we can be sure that what we do will have karmic consequences, i.e. we are constantly being modified by our actions. Such modification indicates that we have no fixed self and so have the potential to continually transform ourselves. At this point, Yeshe Gyaltsen brings in the great sage Nāgārjuna to warn us against regarding the five skandhas as ultimately substantial and real. In particular, it is the fourth skandha, the *samskāras* or volitions, which can drive us to continuously try to reinforce our ego-identity through our plans and projects. The wise hang loose to their plans and are fully equal to any and every situation that arises.

The true motivation for the study of the Abhidharma is that:

“Mind and mental events together with the law of karma determine one's whole future, both in this life and throughout future lives.”

The Tibetan Wheel of Life recognises that everything in life is either something that happens to us or something we do. The term *vipāka* refers to what happens to us as the result of past actions (*karma*). Consciousness, the five skandhas, the six senses (including mind), contact and feeling are all *karma-vipāka*. From this point, however, we have choice; we can act. We can create fresh karma by craving which leads to grasping and becoming. Alternatively, if we respond to pleasant feeling without craving and to unpleasant feeling without aversion, we can start to act creatively in the direction of Enlightenment.

While it is important to remember that not everything that happens to us is the direct result of karma, there may be an indirect karmic link in the fact that we have taken rebirth at all. We could even say that our world is the result of collective karma; many beings acting in a similar way and producing the same kind of result. This implies that, through our volitions, we create our world. In this way, the distinction between subject and object, self and world, starts to dissolve. Instead of objects 'out there', we are left with 'the objective content of a perceptual situation'.

“The main point to be drawn from all this is that as one's mind is, so is one's karma. As one's karma is, so is one's rebirth. As one's rebirth is, so is one's happiness or suffering.”

So by transforming the mind, all else follows, until with the attainment of Enlightenment, there is no further alternation between happiness and suffering.

Chapter 4: The Nature of Mind

The Yogācāra Background

Yeshe Gyaltzen's *The Necklace of Clear Understanding* is based on the Yogācāra doctrine that the Enlightened mind is free of the dualism between subject and object. Mind is not separate from matter. Together they comprise what Guenther refers to as 'the perceptual situation' in which there are two poles – the subjective pole (the inner experience of everything I call myself) and the objective pole (the experience of objects and situations 'out there').

The Enlightened person experiences this perceptual situation but no longer identifies with the subjective pole. He or she no longer has a will separate from others. Consequently, there is no sense of friction or resistance between oneself and others and one's experience is lighter and freer. Some inkling of this can sometimes be attained during meditation and it is significant that the Yogācāra doctrine arose out of meditative experience rather than philosophical reasoning.

For the Yogācāra, Enlightenment is the transformation of the eight *vijñānas* (consciousnesses) into the five *jñānas* (wisdoms). *Vijñāna* refers to discriminating awareness and the first five of these are the functions of the five senses – so we have eye-consciousness or visual perception, ear-consciousness or aural perception etc. The sixth refers to mind, here classified as a sixth sense and called *mano-vijñāna*. Mind here is simply the process of perceiving mental objects. Mental objects are of two kinds:

1. Thoughts about what is perceived through the first five senses, e.g. "What a delicious dinner!"
2. Ideas that arise independently of sense-perception. These include meditative experiences, functions such as imagination, comparison and reflection, and dream images.

The seventh *vijñāna* is the *kliṣṭa-mano-vijñāna* and refers to the defiled, dualistic consciousness of the unenlightened person. Everything is seen in terms of opposites: self and world; good and bad; right and wrong etc.

The eighth *vijñāna* is the *ālaya-vijñāna*, the 'store consciousness', which has two aspects, the *relative ālaya* and the *absolute ālaya*. The Yogācāra sees all the consequences of previous actions and thoughts as leaving impressions in the relative *ālaya*. These take the form of seeds that bear fruit when the conditions are right. The absolute *ālaya* is Reality itself, pure awareness free from all duality and therefore inconceivable to the unenlightened mind. Spiritual practice enables more and more pure seeds to accumulate in the relative *ālaya*. These put pressure on the impure seeds until only pure ones remain. This represents the *asraya-parāvṛtti*, the 'turning about in the deepest seat of consciousness' whereby the eight *vijñānas* are

transformed into the five jñānas – modes of non-discriminating awareness or wisdom.

These five jñānas are represented in the Mahayana by the five archetypal Buddhas:

1. Amoghasiddhi whose all-performing wisdom transforms the first five vijñānas, the sense-consciousnesses.
2. Amitābha, whose distinguishing wisdom transforms the mano-vijñāna, the mind consciousness.
3. Ratnasambhava whose wisdom of equality transforms the kliṣṭa-mano-vijñāna, the defiled consciousness.
4. Akṣobhya, whose mirror-like wisdom transforms the relative ālaya.
5. Vairocana, whose wisdom of the Dharmadhātu symbolises the absolute ālaya.

The notion of the absolute ālaya is controversial, as it can seem to undermine the essential emptiness of both the conditioned and the Unconditioned. This has led to the Yogācāra being considered eternalist in contrast to the Madhyamaka, which the Yogācārins considered to be in danger of nihilism.

Yeshe Gyaltzen avoids this controversy by considering only the first six vijñānas – the ones he considers to be important for practical purposes. Although the defiled mind consciousness is dualistic, we need to make use of this so that we can discriminate effectively between positive and negative mental states.

Mind and Mental Events Distinguished

Yeshe Gyaltzen begins with the crucial distinction between mind and mental events. ‘Mind’ is a direct awareness of an object without any conceptualisation. However, normally, the mind immediately becomes involved with the object at which point ‘mental events’ arise. So although there is a pure mind that exists without mental events, we don’t experience this; we experience mind imbued with mental events. Nothing can be said about the pure mind or mind-as-such. It is simply an operational concept and must not be mistaken for some permanent and unchanging ego.

There is always a danger when analysing our experience. We can divide reality into bits but reality does not consist of bits. For example, we can divide the nose from the rest of the face but where the nose ends and the rest of the face begins is bound to be more or less arbitrary.

So the classifications of the Abhidharma are useful for practical purposes only. By distinguishing mind from mental events we are able to distinguish skilful from unskilful mental events until we eventually go beyond such distinctions. Through spiritual practice, especially the cultivation of dhyāna, we can eventually

experience the formless dhyānas, at which point, mental events have been fully absorbed and integrated into mind itself.

The Five Functional Co-Relations

Mental events always arise in conjunction with the mind through five ‘functional co-relations’ or likenesses:

1. **‘Alike basis’**: mental events depend on the mind just as our sense faculties do. Just as what we see depends on mind, so does any mental event, such as jealousy. Asaṅga calls this ‘alike spheres and levels’ and points out that as we move into higher states of consciousness so the nature of our mental events changes. Craving, for example, will not arise during meditative absorption. Such ‘spheres and levels’ play a prominent part in Buddhist thought. For example, the Wheel of Life describes six realms, which can be taken literally or metaphorically. There is also the traditional classification of the three realms of the *kāmaloka* (sensuous experience), the *rūpaloka* (archetypal form) and the *arūpaloka* (formlessness).
2. **‘Alike objective reference’**: mind and mental events refer to the same objects.
3. **‘Alike observable quality’**: mind and mental events both observe – mind observes the object-as-such while mental events observe the object’s specific qualities.
4. **‘Alike time’**: mind and mental events operate simultaneously.
5. **‘Alike stuff’**: the mind associated with mental events is never pure; it always contains a residue from previous situations. If we are feeling grumpy, everything we perceive may be coloured by that grumpiness and we will judge something to be ugly or unpleasant which at other times may appear to us differently.

Mind

The most important thing to remember about mind in Buddhism is that it is not an entity. ‘It’ is always in relation to an object: where there is awareness, there is mind. The perceiving mind, says Yeshe Gyaltsen, singles out an object for attention. It is therefore active rather than passive. We could say that the passive reception of sense experience is *vipāka*, whereas the singling out for attention is the starting point for fresh *karma* to arise, since what we give attention to leads directly to volition.

Mental events

Mental events, then, share in the nature of mind. As the mind is, so are its attendant mental events. Any classification of them can never be exhaustive and they are enumerated differently in different traditions. Here we will be following the Yogācāra identification of fifty-one mental events, divided into six categories:

five omnipresent, five object-determining, eleven positive, six primary negative, twenty secondary negative and four variable.