

Chittamatra School – "Mind-Basis-of-All" and "Afflictive Mental Consciousness"

Karma – Law of Cause and Effect

1. Karma: Every cause has an effect – we create the cause; we get the result.
2. Actions: Positive actions create positive results; negative actions create negative results.
3. Phenomena: All phenomena are changing moment by moment. Therefore, the person I am today is a *different* entity from the person I was last week, year, lifetime.
4. Propensity (seed, imprint, latency): When an action is completed, a propensity or *seed* is placed on the consciousness that will ripen later.

Mind-Basis-of-All

1. Chittamatrain view: To posit a 7th mind beyond the 5 sensory consciousnesses and one mental consciousness – the *mind-basis-of-all*.
2. Mind-basis-of-all: functions as a base where karmic seeds are stored.
3. Description: The mind-basis-of-all is a consciousness and is *non-material, clear, and knowing*.

Features of Mind-Basis-of-All

1. Object: Everything apprehended by the other minds is also apprehended by the mind-basis-of-all. (Note: For a mind to be "clear and knowing", it must know something – a mind must be a *subject* that takes an *object*.)
2. Aspect: The mind-basis-of-all apprehends or cognizes its object, but never ascertains it (*non-ascertaining cognition*). The sole function of this mind is to retain some sort of *taste* (all the other minds ascertain the object but are incapable of retaining anything about it). For example, when we see a desirable object, all the other minds ascertain it (perceiving, conceptualizing, etc.), whereas the *flavour* of that desire stays on the mind-basis-of-all as a propensity – or imprint, seed, latency.
3. Nature: The specific nature of the mind-basis-of-all is that it is *neutral* – so that as a base for karmic seeds, it will not taint them with any bias (virtuous or non-virtuous).
4. Accompanying minds: The 5 *always-present mental factors* (contact, discernment, feeling, intention, attention), but no other factors. Since the mind-basis-of-all must be *neutral*, all other mental factors are eliminated.
Note: The mind-basis-of-all is a suitable base for apprehending the "I" (not the aggregates which are absorbed at death). The "I" abides within the mind-basis-of-all.

Properties of Mind-Basis-of-All

1. Stable: So that karmic seeds can stay on the mindstream until they ripen (whether in a moment or an eon). It must last as long as the propensities last – that is until we become enlightened and all karmic seeds have been extinguished (other minds arise, abide, and cease).
2. Neutral: So that there is no bias affecting the seeds it carries.
3. Conditioned compounded phenomenon: So that it is able to acquire new karmic propensities each time an action is performed (it must be *receptive*).
4. Related to the propensities: So that there is some tie between the action and the mind (when the seed is created in relation to a specific mental or physical action).
5. A basis in its own right: So that it does not have to rely on other minds to arise. It is the mind that survives at death when all other minds have ceased (and is what takes our karmic seeds from life to life) – and will continue until the end of samsara. It has been there as long as there has been mind, and will continue until enlightenment.

Afflictive Mental Consciousness

1. Function: The 8th mind, *afflictive mental consciousness*, is that which ascribes the sense of self onto whatever action is done (and hence is the cause of all afflictions).
2. Description: The afflictive mental consciousness is the sense of "I" that we carry around with us all the time. It is the continual sense of a permanent, unitary self that underpins and motivates our whole world. However, it is *not* a unitary, independent entity. Note: We continue life after life, and our karma continues to ripen life after life, because the mind-basis-of-all is the mechanism that carries our sense of self.
3. "I-maker" – the afflictive mental consciousness is also called *I-maker* because this is the mind that firmly believes that the "I" really exists and is the source of all the internal egoistic dialogue.
4. Duration of existence: The afflictive mental consciousness continues until we become enlightened, but it becomes weaker and weaker as we progress toward enlightenment (and as we burn off the seeds of unenlightenment).
5. True cause of problems: This afflicted mind is the real cause of our problems – it is the screen the filters everything we experience, the internal discursive conversation that forever runs through our life.

Source: Tsering, Geshe Tashi. *Relative Truth, Ultimate Truth* (The Foundation of Buddhist Thought, Volume 2). Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2008. (Pages 75-97.)
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