

shes), the impermanent basis of all attainments. A seed naturally abiding in the mind-basis-of-all is the natural lineage, an impermanent phenomenon which is the potential for spiritual attainment.²⁶⁸ Here, it is not emptiness that is called the Buddha nature but a potency predisposing the individual to certain paths and allowing the attainment of states that never existed before in the mental continuum. This seed, therefore, is not planted or established newly 'on' the mind-basis-of-all but abides there naturally, without beginning.

In sum, neither Chittamatrins nor Prasangikas accept as literal the teaching of a permanent body of Buddha obscured in the continuums of all sentient beings. According to the Ge-luk-bas an assertion of this teaching as literal is beyond the pale of the four schools of tenets of this Buddha's teachings. The Prasangikas, taking the *Descent into Lanka Sutra* as their source, show that the teaching of a permanent essence points to the lack of independent existence of the mind, that quality which when cognized can lead to Buddhahood. Emptiness in general is the element of (superior) qualities (*dharmadhatu*, *chos dbyings*) because meditation on it acts as a cause generating the qualities of Superiors.²⁶⁹ The emptiness of the mind is singled out as the Buddha nature because it specifically allows for mental improvement- and the cognition of what previously was not cognized.

MIND-BASIS-OF-ALL

According to the Chittamatra system as explained by Asanga, each sentient being has a mind-basis-of-all.²⁷⁰ It is a repository of seeds or predispositions, including those that simultaneously produce an apprehending subject and an apprehended object. It is a non-defiled, neutral consciousness and thus capable of being 'infused', or 'stained', or 'perfumed' with virtuous, non-virtuous, and neutral potencies. It is a steady consciousness capable of existing through states which are otherwise mindless, such as deep sleep, the meditative equipoise of cessation, and fainting. It derives its potency from one complete action done in the past and lasts as long as the potency established by that action lasts.

It pervades the entire body, and when a person is about to die, his mind-basis-of-all withdraws from the limits of the body, slowly making those parts cold. Finally, it leaves the body and takes rebirth through the force of another of its seeds, carrying with it the seeds already accumulated but not yet activated. It is a continuum of seeds, similar to a stream, existing for Hearers and Solitary Realizers until they become Foe Destroyers and for Bodhisattvas until the eighth ground. Beyond these levels it is called a fruition consciousness (*vipakavijnana*, *rnam smin rnam shes*) until Buddhahood when it is transformed into a mirror-like wisdom.

The principal function of the mind-basis-of-all is contained in its seed aspect. However, the senses themselves and all the objects that appear to them also appear to the mind-basis-of-all, but it does not notice or identify them, nor is it capable of either remembering or inducing another consciousness to take notice of them. A sense consciousness directly perceives its objects and is capable of drawing the mental consciousness into noticing or identifying them; however, although objects appear to a mind-basis-of-all, it is incapable of drawing the mental consciousness into noticing those objects.

The Chittamatrins who follow Asanga are the only school to assert the existence of a mind-basis-of-all. Along with it, an afflicted mind (*klishtamanas*, *nyonyid*) is asserted, together with the other six consciousnesses that are commonly accepted: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mental consciousnesses. A mental consciousness ascribes names to objects, perceives slightly hidden objects such as impermanence and emptiness, misconceives a difference of entity of subject and object, and so forth. A mind-basis-of-all does not cognize emptiness even though it has seeds with it that ripen and cause a mental consciousness to do so.

The afflicted mind, or the seventh from among the eight consciousnesses, mistakenly conceives the mind-basis-of-all to be a self-sufficient person. Even though the mind-basis-of-all, because it is the transmigrating entity, is indeed found to be the actual person when one searches to find it, it is not a self-sufficient person. Thus, the seventh mind is described as afflicted by four

mental factors: view of a self, obscuration with respect to a self, pride in a self, and attachment to a self. When these mental factors are overcome through their antidote—realization of selflessness—the untainted entity of the seventh mind remains. Then, when the conception of subject and object as different entities is destroyed totally and forever at Buddhahood, the seventh mind is transformed into the wisdom of sameness cognizing all phenomena as equally free from a difference in entity between subject and object.

All Buddhist schools refute a certain type of self and accept another.²⁷¹ All deny that there is a permanent, single, independent self. All except the Pudgalavadins (Proponents of a Person) deny that there is a substantially existent or self-sufficient person; they present the person as something other than these two. The Pudgalavadins assert a self which is neither the same as nor different from the mental and physical aggregates. The Kashmiri Vaibhashikas and the Sautrantikas Following Scripture assert that the *continuum* of the mental and physical aggregates is the self. The Sautrantikas Following Reasoning, the Chittamatrins Following Reasoning, and the Sautrantika-Svatantrika-Madhyamikas assert that a subtle form of mental consciousness is the self. The Chittamatrins Following Scripture assert that the mind-basis-of-all is the self. The Yogachara-Svatantrika-Madhyamikas assert that the continuum of the mental consciousness is the self. For Prasangika, none of these is the self, which is the I *imputed* in dependence upon the mental and physical aggregates.

Those who accept a consciousness as the actual self are specifically referring to the transmigrator, a neutral, subtle entity. They also accept that there is a self imputed to the aggregates, but in all systems except Prasangika 'only imputed' (*prajñapti-matra, btags pa tsam*) eliminates only that something *separate* from its bases of imputation is the self, not that the composite of the bases of imputation or any one of them is it. Therefore, Tugan (*Thu'u-bkvan*, 1737-1802) says that only in the Prasangika system does the word 'only imputed' have its full meaning.²⁷² In all the other systems something must *be* the self; otherwise, for

them there could be no transmigration, activity, and so forth. They identify the mental consciousness or the continuum of the aggregates as the self. Their meaning of 'only imputed' carries the sense of identification with one or more of the bases of imputation. In the Prasangika system 'only imputed' means that also not any of its bases of imputation is the self; nonetheless, the imputed self or person can function. The mere-I is the transmigrator and the carrier of the seeds or potencies from one life to another. It is the object that gives rise to the thought 'I' in lifetime after lifetime. It is the I that is imputed or designated in dependence upon the mental and physical aggregates in the Desire and Form Realms and upon only the mental aggregates in the Formless Realm. The Chittamatrins, however, assert that the mind-basis-of-all is the actual I since it is the transmigrator and carrier of seeds.

Thus, it should not be thought that because the Buddhist systems deny self, there is no transmigrator. The non-Buddhist systems could not posit transmigration without a permanent self; the Buddhist schools often do, on the other hand, posit many different modes of transmigration without a permanent self.

The Chittamatrins following Asanga feel that because Buddha said that the six consciousnesses of a person do not function in deep sleep and in the meditative equipoise of cessation, etc., there must be another very subtle consciousness, the continuity of which keeps the person alive.²⁷³ Also, since the six consciousnesses have periods of non-existence, the seeds or predispositions, if stored there, would be destroyed, and the continuity of lives would be severed. Therefore, they posit the existence of a mind-basis-of-all. The schools that accept the mental consciousness or its continuum as the self answer that Buddha was referring to the coarse states of the mental consciousness and that there is a subtle, neutral, stable mental consciousness that passes from one lifetime to another and exists through the equipoises of cessation, bearing the continuity of the seeds.²⁷⁴

The Chittamatrins following Asanga accept that a mind-basis-of-all is accompanied by the five mental factors that accompany any consciousness—feeling, discrimination, intention, contact,

and mental engagement. The absorption of cessation is nevertheless without coarse feeling and discrimination even though the mind-basis-of-all and its five factors are present because **the feeling and discrimination that accompany the mind-basis-of-all are subtle and non-manifest**. This same reasoning allows the other schools to posit a subtle mental consciousness that is accompanied by such subtle, non-manifest factors and thus to say that there is no need to assert a separate mind-basis-of-all as an eighth consciousness.²⁷⁵

PRASANGIKA POSITION ON THE MIND-BASIS-OF-ALL

In the Prasangika system, external objects, and not seeds, are what provide sense objects although the overlay of false appearance is produced from seeds. A mental consciousness, and not an afflicted mind, misconceives the nature of the person. A subtle mental consciousness, and not a mind-basis-of-all, abides throughout the 'mindless' states. The mere-I, not a mind-basis-of-all, transmigrates. The six consciousnesses are temporary bases of seeds; the mere-I, not the mind-basis-of-all, is the constant basis of the seeds.

The basis in Buddha's own thought when he taught a mind-basis-of-all was emptiness, the basis of all phenomena which is to be minded well (*alayavijnana*). **Taking *vijnana* not as referring to the agent or action of knowing but as the object, the Prasangikas see the mind-basis-of-all as referring to the 'basis of all to be known well or in detail', emptiness. Emptiness is the basis of all in that it makes possible all the various types of beings, nirvana, cyclic existence, and so forth.**

Buddha's purpose in teaching a mind-basis-of-all was to provide a base for the transmission of cause and effect through a continuum of lives for those disciples who could not understand the mere-I as the bearer of predisposing tendencies. The refutation of the explicit teaching is that, although a mind-basis-of-all is said to be impermanent, it is like the Samkhyas' nature (*prakṛtirang bzhin*) which contains all causes.²⁷⁶ Because the

causes already exist, everything would necessarily be produced all of the time, or once and never again.

The Yogachara-Svatantrikas, who do not assert an external world, do not even conventionally assert a mind-basis-of-all; for them, a mental consciousness bears the seeds that create the appearance of an external world. Thus, it is said that no Madhyamika school asserts the existence of a mind-basis-of-all even though one Indian Madhyamika, Abhayakara, early in his life is said to have asserted a mind-basis-of-all.²⁷⁷ There are also a few passages in Nagarjuna's writings that refer to a basis-of-all, but these are said to refer to the mental consciousness that takes rebirth.²⁷⁸

Although Nagarjuna does say once in his *Precious Garland* and once in his *Sixty Stanzas of Reasoning* that everything is included in the mind, the Ge-luk-bas point to his *Essay on the Mind of Enlightenment* for his position:²⁷⁹

A knower realizes an object known.

Without an object known, there is no knower.

Also, many yogic treatises make reference to a basis-of-all (*alaya, kun gzhi*), but there the term means the nature of phenomena (*dharmata, chos nyid*), or emptiness.²⁸⁰ Thus, not even conventionally do the Prasangikas accept a mind-basis-of-all; they say that this teaching points to emptiness, the basis of all change.

THREE NATURES

Buddha said that every phenomenon has three natures (*trisvabhava, rang bzhingsum*): imaginary or imputed (*parikalpita, kun btags*), other-powered (*paratantra, gzhan dbang*), and thoroughly established (*parinishpanna, yongs grub*).^m There are an endless number of non-existent imaginaries, such as the horns of a rabbit or the hairs of a turtle, but according to the Chittamatra system the most significant imaginary nature of every phenomenon is its being a different entity from an apprehending subject. Buddha called attention to an illusory element in ordinary perception, the bifurcation of object and subject into separate