

Shastra on the Understanding of the Hundred Dharmas

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continued from issue #182

TEXT:

THE FIRST, MIND DHARMAS, INCLUDE IN GENERAL EIGHT: 1. THE EYE CONSCIOUSNESS, 2. THE EAR CONSCIOUSNESS 3. THE NOSE CONSCIOUSNESS 4. THE TONGUE CONSCIOUSNESS 5. THE BODY CONSCIOUSNESS 6. THE MIND CONSCIOUSNESS 7. THE MANAS CONSCIOUSNESS 8. THE ALAYA CONSCIOUSNESS.

COMMENTARY:

Now, at last, we are going to discuss some dharmas. THE FIRST, MIND DHARMAS, INCLUDE IN GENERAL EIGHT.

THE EIGHT MIND DHARMAS

1. eye consciousness (眼識) *cakshurvijana*
2. ear consciousness (耳識) *shrotravijana*
3. nose consciousness (鼻識) *ghranavijana*
4. tongue consciousness (舌識) *jihvavijana*
5. body consciousness (身識) *kayavijana*
6. mind consciousness (意識) *manovijana*
7. manas consciousness (末那識) *manasvijana*
8. alaya consciousness (阿賴耶識) *alayavijana*

I. THE EYE CONSCIOUSNESS. We say that eyes can see, but it's not actually the eyes themselves that see. It is the eye consciousness which sees. II. THE EAR CONSCIOUSNESS. We say the ear can hear, but if you sliced off your ears and laid them aside would they be able to hear of themselves? If you gouged out your eyes and set them aside would they be able to see? Could you say, "I'm not going to the movies, but I'll send my eyes along and they can take in the show." Obviously not. The eyes cannot see by themselves. It is the eye consciousness which does the seeing. And from where does the eye consciousness come? From the mind--the Mind-King. The same is true for all the other consciousnesses as well: III. THE NOSE CONSCIOUSNESS, IV. THE TONGUE CONSCIOUSNESS, V. THE BODY CONSCIOUSNESS, VI. THE MIND CONSCIOUSNESS. The way it works is that the six sense faculties of eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind combine with the six defiling sense objects of sights, sounds, smells, tastes, objects of touch and dharmas. When this occurs, between each pair a consciousness arises. On the inside there are six faculties, on the outside there are six sense objects, and in the middle, in between the faculties and their objects, the six consciousnesses arise. Taken together, these three sets of six make up the Eighteen Realms. I discussed these in detail when I lectured the *Heart Sutra*, so if you want to explore them more, you can look into that text.

The mind consciousness, the sixth or "intellectual" consciousness, is not really the mind, properly speaking. The Sixth consciousness is the function of the mind whose substance is the seventh consciousness, the MANAS CONSCIOUSNESS, also called the "transmitting" consciousness or the "defiling" consciousness. It is the substance of the mind. It continually takes the functions of the sixth consciousness and transmits them to the eighth consciousness. THE ALAYA CONSCIOUSNESS. The eighth consciousness is called the alaya which means "store," because it stores all information transmitted to it by the seventh. If it is turned around, it becomes the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One.

When the Eight consciousnesses are turned around, they become the Four Wisdoms.

The Four Wisdoms

1. The Great Perfect Mirror Wisdom
2. The Wisdom of Equality
3. The Wisdom of Wonderful Contemplation
4. The Wisdom that Accomplishes What is Done

How does one turn them around? One must work hard at cultivation and then one will know how to do it. I can't tell you now because even if I were to tell you, in the future you still wouldn't know.

Upon awakening, one obtains them oneself.

If you yourself cultivate, then you yourself will know, Before you know, it doesn't do any good to be told. But after you know, you very naturally will have the use of them.

The alaya is the store consciousness because it is like the ground in which we plant seeds, storing them away until they sprout. That is why they are often analogies made likening the mind to the ground. For instance it is said,

Plant the mindground and
Nourish the divine nature.

All the different external and internal states we experience, whether good or bad, defiled or pure, are

planted in the eighth consciousness. The seeds of every event, circumstance, and experience are stored away in that consciousness. If you cultivate and turn that store consciousness around, then it becomes the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One. It's just a matter of being able to use it. If you can use it, then the Great Perfect Mirror Wisdom will appear. If you can't use it, then you just keep on having false thinking. And all the false thoughts you have, whether you act upon them or not, still get stored in the eighth consciousness. Even the most subtle kinds of mental activities--thoughts which you are completely unaware of get stored there. Despite your lack of awareness of them, the seeds are planted there just the same.

In a single unenlightened thought, the Three Subtle Marks appear.

The Three Subtle Marks are the Mark of Karma, the Mark of Turning, and the Mark of Manifesting. When they appear, the Thus Come One's Treasury turns into the eighth consciousness. However, if you are able to turn that eighth consciousness around to become the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One, then you are one who has returned to the origin and gone back to the source.

Very generally speaking, that's what the Eighth Mind Dharmas are like. If discussed in detail it gets incredibly complex.

We have just introduced the Eight Mind Dharmas. But why is it that the sixth is called the manas--"mind," or "intellectual" consciousness and so is the seventh? It is because the sixth relies on the seventh, for the seventh is the root or basis of the mind consciousness. It is the substance of the mind and the sixth is the function of the mind, as was already mentioned. The seventh consciousness is called the "defiled consciousness." It's also known as "that upon which the defiled and the pure rely." The sixth consciousness is also defiled and the eighth consciousness is fundamentally pure. Both the sixth and the eighth rely on the seventh consciousness. That explains this name for it.

The eighth consciousness is the alaya, which means "nonvanishing". It also translates as "store". "NonVanishing" means that True Suchness accords with birth and death and yet remains without vanishing. This consciousness is never lost. It doesn't disappear. "Store" consciousness has three meanings.

The Three Meanings of Store Consciousness

- 1 . That which stores.
- 2 . That which is stored.
- 3 . Attaching and storing.

It is "that which stores," because it stores all good and evil seeds within it. It is "that which is stored" because it is comprised of those seeds stored in it. All good and evil karma is stored here. It also means "attaching and storing," for attachment and storing take place within the eighth consciousness. Because absolutely every thought we have, be it a good one or a bad one, is stored in the eighth consciousness. All dharmas are manifestations of the eighth consciousness. The things that we see comprise the Marks Division of the Eighth Consciousness. Our ability to see them makes up the Seeing Division of the Eighth Consciousness. That's why it is said that the myriad dharmas are consciousness only. That is, they arise only from mind. Consciousness is just True Suchness when it is bound. Therefore, this consciousness is what we refer to as the Buddha Nature. It is the source of all good and evil. It is the original home of all sages and ordinary people.

