

## *Ten Aspects of the Mahayana*

as presented in Arya Asanga's Mahayanasamgraha (Summary of the Great Vehicle)  
(10 themes found only in the Great Vehicle, to be realized in the sequence presented here;  
aspects 1-3 are upheld only by Yogachara School; 4-10 are upheld by all of Mahayana)

- 1. Alaya-vijnana** (storehouse/repository/container consciousness) – 8 consciousness system; see below
- 2. Trisvabhava / trilakshana** (3 natures / 3 characteristics) – paratantra (other-dependent – all manifestations of consciousness, born of alaya), parikalpita (imputational/completely imagined/conceptually grasped – as something established by way of its own character), parinishpanna (thoroughly-established/completely perfected/perfectly real); parinishpanna is the absence of parikalpita in paratantra – this is suchness, ultimate essencelessness, the object of observation for purification
- 3. Vijnaptimatra** (mere concept/consciousness-only/cognition-only) – realization of parinishpanna and that all objects of experience are therefore just manifestations of consciousness, born of alaya; darshana-marga (path of seeing) is entered at first direct cognition of vijnaptimatra - this is 1<sup>st</sup> bodhisattva bhumi
- 4. Paramita** (6 or 10 perfections) – dana (giving), shila (morality), kshanti (patience), virya (diligence), dhyana (meditation), prajna (wisdom), upayakaushalya (skillful means), pranidhana (aspiration), bala (power), jnana (knowledge); these paramitas are both the condition and the result of realization
- 5. Bodhisattva-bhumi** (10 grounds/levels/stages of awakening beings) – pramudita (joyous), vimala (stainless), prabhakari (luminous), arcismati (radiant), sudarjaya (unconquerable), abhimukhi (directly facing), durangama (far going), achala (immovable), sadhumati (good intellect), dharmamegha (cloud of teachings) – 10 paramitas are practiced on 10 bhumi, successively, on bhavana-marga (path of cultivation); this is applying vijnaptimatra (nonduality of subject and object) to each paramita
- 6. Bodhisattva-shila** (precepts of awakening beings) – embracing and sustaining standards of conduct, embracing and sustaining wholesome qualities, embracing and sustaining living beings
- 7. Mahayana samadhi** (great vehicle concentrations/absorptions) – Heroic March, Ocean Seal, etc.
- 8. Nirvikalpa-jnana** (nonconceptual/nonimaginative wisdom/knowledge) – same as prajna-paramita (perfection of wisdom); direct realization of suchness (6,7,8 are Mahayana version of the basic path)
- 9. Apratishtita-nirvana** (non-abiding liberation/cessation/unbinding) – complete non-attachment to both samsara and nirvana; this is ashraya-paravrtti (transformation/conversion/revolution of the basis) – paratantra is converted from imputation to reality, alaya-vijnana is transformed into perfect mirror jnana
- 10. Trikaya** (3 bodies of Buddha) – dharmakaya (inconceivable truth body), sambhogakaya (enjoyment bliss body – appears only to bodhisattvas), nirmanakaya (illusory/transformation body); these 3 bodies manifest at ashraya-paravrtti – Buddhahood is ashaiksha-marga (path of no more learning)

## *Eight Consciousnesses of the Yogachara School*

as presented in Sandhinirmochana Sutra (ch.5), Lankavatara Sutra, Asanga's Mahayanasamgraha (ch.1), Vasubandhu's Vijnaptimatratasiddhi; early Buddhism taught only first 6 consciousnesses

- 1-5. Chakshur/shrotra/grahna/jihva/kaya-vijnana** (eye/ear/nose/tongue/body consciousness)
- 6. Mano-vijnana** (mental consciousness) – awareness/cognition/discriminination which ascribes names to objects, directly perceives emptiness, misconceives duality, etc.; awareness of activity of klishta-manas
- 7. Klishta-manas** (afflicted mind/intellect – the mental sense organ, afflicted with view of self, confusion regarding self, pride in self, attachment to self; it is the source of the imputational character; it conceives alaya to be the self of the person, until hinayana stream-entry or 1<sup>st</sup> bodhisattva bhumi)
- 8. Alaya-vijnana** (storehouse/repository/container consciousness) – the basis into which karmic actions leave vasana (permeations) or bija (seeds), which in turn give rise to sense organs, objects, the 7 other consciousnesses, and habits (the whole dependently arisen world of experience) – all pervaded by a sense of duality of perceiver and perceived; alaya is what “flows” through deep sleep, transmigrates in rebirth, and connects body and mind – though it is not a permanent self; it continues until arhatship or 8<sup>th</sup> bodhisattva bhumi (when no more seeds are deposited and all stored seeds have come to fruition), when it is called fruition consciousness – at Buddhahood it is transformed into perfect mirror jnana

### **3 Characteristics of all Phenomena (in Chapters 6&7 of the Sandhinirmochana Sutra)**

**1. Imputational Character** (parikalpita - completely imagined, mere fantasy, conceptually grasped, projected; this is a non-existent imputational character - there are existent imputational characters, like uncompounded space, which are also referents of words, but do not exist by way of their own character)

It is that which is imputed as (imagined as, posited by) a name or symbol (to the objects of conceptual activity, the signs of compounded phenomena) in terms of the own-being (svabhava - identity, essence, entity) or attributes (particulars) of phenomena in order to subsequently designate (impute) any convention whatsoever.

It is known in dependence upon names that are connected with signs (nimitta).

It is a lack of own-being in terms of character (marks, characteristics, traits, features - lakshana-nihsvabhavata)...It is posited as (defined by) names and symbols, but it does not subsist by way of its own character (by inherent definition).

(Jang-gya definition): It is the (false) establishment of an (other-dependent) phenomenon by way of its own-character (svalakshana) (from its own side) as the referent (ground, base of imputation) of a conceptual consciousness or of a word (name, designation, apprehension), and the (false) establishment of object (perceived, phenomena) and subject (perceiver, consciousness) as separate entities.

(Svabhava: inherent existence, entity, substance, essence, own-being, intrinsic being, self-existence, self-nature; basically equivalent to svalakshana: natural existence, own-character)

**2. Other-Dependent Character** (paratantra – other-powered, dependent origination; objects of conceptual activity, bases of the imputational character, signs (or that which has the signs) of compounded phenomena)

It is simply the dependent origination (dependent co-arising) of phenomena .

It is known in dependence upon strongly adhering to the other-dependent character as being the imputational character (being superimposed on the imputational character).

It is a lack of own-being in terms of self-production (birth - utpatti-nihsvabhavata)...It arises through the force (dependent on the power) of other conditions and not by itself.

(Asanga's definition): It is all the consciously constructed differentiations (vijnapti – concepts) that have alaya as their seed...They correspond to the (6 sense organs, 6 sense objects, 6 consciousnesses).

**3. Thoroughly Established Character** (parinirpanna - completely perfected, perfectly real, consummate; its realization is equivalent to realizing that all objects of experience are mere consciousness; this is vijnaptimatra - mere concept, consciousness-only, perception-only, ideation-only, cognition-only, mere representation of consciousness, mere denomination, pure information, only constructs of consciousness; it is realized directly and non-conceptually on the Path of Seeing)

It is the suchness (tathata - thusness) of phenomena. Through diligence and proper mental application (it is realized)...It is the other-dependent char. not thoroughly established as being the imputational char.

It is known in dependence upon absence of strong adherence to the other-dependent character (dependent co-arising, interdependent origination) as being the imputational character.

It is an ultimate lack of own-being (essence - paramartha-nihsvabhavata)...It is the selflessness of phenomena...the object of observation for purification...ultimate truth.

Other-powered (characters) are permanently and forever thoroughly not established as (having) the imputational (character), and are without that inherent nature; just that non-establishment or lack of inherent nature is to be viewed as the thoroughly established character.

(Jang-gya definition): It is the emptiness (absence) of an (other-dependent) object's establishment by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness or of a term (word) and the emptiness of its being a separate entity from the consciousness apprehending it (of object and subject being different substantial entities, of subject-object duality, of perceiver-perceived duality).

(The thoroughly established character is the absence of the imputational character in the other-dependent character. Other-powered characters are not established by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses or as the referents of words.)