Chapter 4: The Structure of Consciousness

4.1 Concept of Seeds (Bīja)

The “seeds” are the different potentialities found in the fundamental consciousness (ālayavijñāna). They immediately produce their fruits or the actual dharmas. The bīja in relation to the mūlavijñāna and the fruit are neither identical nor different. They are real entities. However their reality is not the same as tathatā. They exist as they are produced through causes and conditions. The bīja depend in the substance of the eight consciousnesses. According to Dharmapāla, there are two kinds of bīja.

1) Natural bīja
2) Bīja born of perfuming.

The natural bīja are the potentialities, which have existed innately in the ālaya by the natural force of things. They produce mental elements, sense-organs and the seeming external objects. The other kind of the bījas are those which have come into being as a result of the perfuming of actual dharma, the perfuming being repeated again and again from beginning less time. The seed stored in the ālayavijñāna, being perfumed by seven other consciousness, are caused to grow, resulting in the appearance of things.

The bīja has seven characteristics:\1:

1) Bīja is momentary. They are the dharmas which perish immediately after birth and which possess a power of activity
2) Bīja is the dharma, which is simultaneously and actually connected with its fruit.

3) The bīja continue in a homogeneous and uninterrupted series until the final stage of the holy path of ascetic practices is attained

4) The bīja belong to a specific kind of moral species which means they must possess the capacity to produce actual dharmas good, bad or non-defined, this capacity is determined by actual dharmas, good, bad or non-defiled, which have perfumed and created them.

5) The bīja depend on a group of conditions to realize their capacity to produce an actual dharma

6) Each bīja leads to the production of its own fruit.

7) A bīja of citta leads to the manifestation of rūpa

The term “seeds” refers to nothing other than the potential energy, under the right conditions, to produce subsequent manifest activities related to those that proceeded. Seeds can be characterized as “the potential within the eighth consciousness to produce an effect”. Yesterday’s conduct and today’s activity produce what will end up being the self of tomorrow, and the function and power that brings about such a result is called “seed”

Seeds present the momentum of impressions, and also are understood from the perspective of the almost synonymous technical term, karmic impression (skt vasana). Karmic impressions have the connotation of dispositions cause by perfumation. The notions of seed and perfumation are seminal in Yogācāra Buddhism, and although they may seem to be rather
arcane concepts, they are necessary to understanding the operation of karma and consciousness in Yogācāra³.

Seeds are explained as the power within the eighth consciousness to produce an effect. That is, they represent the causative power to manifest activity as fruit. Yogācāra explained that manifest activity perfumes the seeds in the ālayavijñāna. Manifest activity can be understood as our concrete activities, and these concrete actions and behaviors end up being perfumed into the store consciousness in the form of metaphorical seeds.

These seeds, which are secretly impregnated and retained in the ālayavijñāna, will again generate visible phenomena when the right set of circumstance arises. Since this is exactly the kind of function associated with the physical seeds of plants, they are so named metaphorically. We should not go so far as to construe them as material, substantial seeds. As the bearer of seeds, ālayavijñāna is closely related to bīja, but the exact nature of this relationship is difficult to determine. That various dharmas as fruits are stored in this consciousness, this ālayavijñāna become that which stores in it the seeds that are the fruits of various dharmas. To use a space metaphor, ālayavijñāna is the storing place where bījas as goods are stored. However, ālayavijñāna and bīja are not material things like storage or stored goods, but rather something spiritual. Consequently, there arises a complex question in their relationship.⁴

4.2 Mere-consciousness (Vijñāptimātratā)

The Yogācāra has always been interpreted as idealism of one kind or another. This is the most basic point how is it that the Yogācāra system came to be regarded as an idealism? The basis reason for this seems to be a gross misunderstanding of the phrases vijñāptimatrā,
prajñaptimatrā and cittamatra. The three phrases are synonymous with each other interchangeable. They are commonly translated as follows:

Vijñaptimatrā/prajnaptimatra = mere-consciousness/ representation-only.

Cittamatra=mind only

A. K. Chatterjee, in the introduction to his Readings on Yogācāra Buddhism says, parinispanna is the Absolute, the undefiled undifferentiated, non-dual consciousness (vijñaptimātratā). In the Yogācāra Idealism he says, once this idea of objectivity is eradicated, all the three vijñānas revert to the pristine purity of vijñaptimātratā.

There is a transcendent Absolute Reality of the Pure Spirit (vijñaptimātratā), Hegel’s Absolute Idea. Dr. C. D. Sharma in his A Critical Survey o f Indian Philosophy says.

Reality, says the TSK, is pure Consciousness. This Reality (Vijñaptimātra) on account o f its inherent power suffers threefold modification. Behind these three modifications is the permanent background of eternal an unchanging Pure Consciousness (Vijñāna or Vijñaptimātra).

This vijñaptimātra is some supra-mundane consciousness beyond mind and picturing thought. It is the pure element called dharma that is dharmadhatu, of Buddha and is the same as his dhammakaya. S. N. Dasgupta in his Buddhist Idealism says, As a ground o f this ālayavijñāna we have the pure consciousness called the vijñaptimatrā, which is beyond all experiences, transcendent and pure consciousness, pure bliss, eternal, unchangeable and unthinkable. It is this one pure being as pure consciousness and pure bliss, eternal and unchangeable like the
Brahman of the Vedanta, that forms the ultimate ground and ultimate essence of all appearances.

Authors almost unanimously accept *vijñaptimātratā* or *prajnaptimatrata* or *cittamatrata* as the Yogācārins description of the absolute, undefiled, undifferentiated, non-dual, transcendent, pure, ultimate, permanent, unchanging, eternal, super-mundane, unthinkable, Reality. This is a totally misinformed interpretation of what the Yogācārins, particularly Vasubandhu, meant by *vijñaptimātratā*/*prajnaptimatrata*/*cittamatra*, and consequently it cannot pass the test of textual analysis.

These quotations from Vasubandhu would easily give the impression that “mere representation of consciousness” (*Vijñaptimatrā*) or “thought-only” (*cittamatra*) is the absolute reality for Vasubandhu. The context of their occurrence, which will realize that the phrases *vijñaptimātra* and *cittamātra* in them do not at all refer to the absolute reality, or to the final mode of existence. What is more, nowhere does Vasubandhu use these phrases to describe the absolute state of existence. Instead, whenever he uses these phrases, he means that whatever falls within the reach of one’s *samsaric* experience, is mere representation of consciousness or thought-only or mind-only. In other words, far from being a description of the absolute state of existence, *vijñaptimatrā*/*prajnaptimatra*/*cittamatra* is an evaluative description of the objects of one’s experiences in the state of *samsara*.

However *vijñaptimātratā* can also mean the state in which one realizes that the entire contents of one’s *samsaric* experience are mere representation of consciousness. Whenever Vasubandhu uses the term *Vijñaptimatrā* he means to say that the contents of *samsaric* experience, (such as the subject-object distinction, the forms of subjectivity and objectivity),
are all merely representations of consciousness. But whenever he uses the term *vijñaptimātratā* he refers to the state in which one realizes the fact that the contents of one’s *samsaric* experience are, or rather were mere representations of consciousness. *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhih*, which happens to be the general title for *Vasubandhu’s* two treatises, *TSK* and *Vimśatikā*, thus would mean “the attainment (*siddhi*) of the state in which one realizes that whatever is experienced in the state of samsara is mere representation of consciousness*. *Vijñaptimātra* refers to the fact that the contents of one’s experience are mere representation of consciousness, while *vijñaptimātra* refers to the state of *nirvāṇa* in which one realizes, the same fact. This does not mean that the state of nirvana is itself mere representation of consciousness. To take an example from ordinary life, one wakes up from sleep to realize that what one was experiencing in sleep was all mere dream. This does not mean that the wakefulness in which alone one has this realization, is itself mere dream. However, here it must be admitted that this principle cannot conclusively prove the unreality of the objects. It is true that objects are always perceived simultaneously with knowledge, but it would be wrong to infer from this that the object does not exist at all when it is not known. A. K. Chatterjee rightly observes that:

“*Because we can never see without light we cannot infer that light is a constituent of things seen. ... We cannot know without knowing ... that is a tautology; things cannot exist without our knowing them - that is false*”

Hence, for establishing the unreality of objects some more positive proofs are necessary. It must be proved from the very nature of the objects that they are dependent upon consciousness. For establishing the unreality of the objects, the *vijñanavādins* take recourse to the example of a dream, illusion, etc., where there is a knowledge form without any
assignable objects. To prove the unreality of objects, First of all, he refutes the arguments of the realists. The realists who uphold the independent reality of the objects of knowledge raise some serious objections against the theory of consciousness only. Thus, if there were no objects, any restriction with regard to space and time would become illogical. It is generally seen that an object arises only in a particular place and at some particular time, not everywhere and always.

Hence, if there are no objects and if all experiences are to be dismissed as hallucinations, there will occur the absence of determination in respect of the moment-series (i.e., absence of a common experience of a large number of percipient individuals). Furthermore, objects, which are experienced by normal persons, do exist and produce real consequences, whereas the objects, which are merely appearances, are incapable of discharging the functions of real objects. Hence, it is not possible to deny the existence of objects and regard them as appearances. \textit{Vasubandhu} refute all these contentions of the realists, to meet the first two objections regarding the restriction of place and time.

\textit{Vasubandhu} makes use of the example of a dream. In a dream, even without the existence of external objects, certain things are perceived in some particular place and time, and not everywhere and always. In order to refute the objection of the realists regarding the non-observance of the moment-series, \textit{Vasubandhu} brings in the example of the pietas or parted spirits. It is said that a large number of these parted spirits who have done similar misdeeds are placed in hell and see a river filled with pus or full of urine and faces, etc. This experience is not confined to one individual but shared by all. However, in reality, the rivers filled with pus, etc., are non-existent.
So, *Vasubandhu* argues, it is not true that if the object is non-existent and merely an appearance, many people cannot perceive it simultaneously. The objection about the functional viability can also be answered with the help of the example of a dream. In a dream, semen is released even without a couple coming together. In this way, *Vasubandhu* has established the non-existence of objects by refuting all the major objections of the realists. Further, the realists uphold that consciousness is *nirakara* (without form) and objects existing independently of consciousness engender the form of knowledge. In what form may they be experienced? There are only three possibilities: they may be experienced as a single entity, or as many discrete atoms, or as an aggregate of atoms. *Vasubandhu* here argues that the object cannot be a single entity, since nobody can apprehend a composite whole, which is different from its component parts. Actually, the Sautrāntika have decisively refuted the reality of the whole. The atoms also cannot serve as the objective counterpart of knowledge as they lack gross form and are not capable of apprehension by the senses. The object of knowledge, however, cannot be an aggregate of atoms, for a combination of atoms is possible only in two ways. Firstly, atoms can join each other from six directions, and, secondly, atoms can occupy the same direction. If there is a simultaneous conjunction of six atoms from six directions, the atom comes to have six parts, which will ultimately make it a non-atom. If the six atoms belong to the same direction and thus have a common locus, then the agglomeration would be only one atom.
4.3 Three Vijñāṇas (Ālayavijñāna, Kliśṭamanovijñāna, and Pravṛttivijñāna)

Vasubandhu proceeds to examine the transformation of consciousness. The self-transformation of consciousness results in three different derivatives of the same consciousness\(^{14}\). The only existent is "vijñāṇa", and yet what we perceive is an infinite plurality. This plurality must be reflected in "vijñāṇa" itself. Kinds of "vijñāṇa" therefore must be accepted to account for the empirical distinctions. The Yogācāra form of idealism accepts three different kinds of "vijñānas"\(^{15}\): 1. Ālayavijñāna 2. Manoviñāna 3. Pravṛttivijñānas. A evaluates of "vijñāṇa" are infinite, and yet these are the three stages of its evolution.

Among these "vijñānas" the most important is the ālayavijñāṇa (store-consciousness) because it is said to contain all the seeds (bīja) and impressions (vāsanās) in it. This ālayavijñāṇa has been compared with the flow of a vast river carrying in its stream a number of things along with it.\(^{16}\)

These three are not to be construed as distinct and static categories, but rather as so many phases of the cosmic evolution of "vijñāna. Vijñāṇa" diversifies itself and gives rise to the whole panorama of empirical existence, and these three "vijñānas" represent different stages of this diversifying process.\(^{17}\) The difference is only that of the degree of self-determination.
4.3.1 The Store House-Consciousness (Ālayavijñāna)

4.3.1.1 Definition

It is called ālaya, as it is the place or the receptor in which are contained the seeds or impressions (vāsanās) of any karma whatsoever, good, bad or indifferent. Ālayavijñāna is the receptacle consciousness because it receives and retains all the traces of every dharma activity. These deposits are seeds (bīja), which remain in the ālayavijñāna as potential causes until their eventual fruition from within the ālayavijñāna.

The name of this consciousness has three meanings:

1. It is actively ālaya, storehouse, because it plays the active part of storing up the bīja (seeds) which, being stored, are passively ālaya.

2. It is passively ālaya in the sense that it is “perfumed” by the defiling dharmas of samklesa (These dharmas create in it the bīja, which make of it a storehouse and store them in it.)

3. It is the object of attachment. Manas attach itself to it as to its Atman. In other words: The ālayavijñāna and the defiling dharmas of samklesa are the cause of one another; Sentient beings hold on to the ālayavijñāna and imagine that it is their inner sell. The present treatise defines, by the word ālaya, the specific nature (svalaksana) of the eighth consciousness. This consciousness has the characteristics of being both cause and effect: its “self-nature” (svalaksana) is to “concentrate” on these two characteristics and to depend on them.18
The self-nature of this consciousness admits of many variations according to the three stages of spiritual progress. The name of ālaya is appropriate for this consciousness only when it is in the first stage, which is characterized by its being “grasped” by manas as the inner self. It is generally, and incorrectly, designated by this name precisely because of this and also because of its serious fault in storing up all the defiling elements, which are the bījas.

4.3.1.2 Origins of the Ālayavijñāna

The primary aim is to understand the ālayavijñāna within the context of Indian Buddhist vijñāna theory, first by outlining its background and context in the early Buddhist and Abhidharma traditions. Neither the concept of the ālayavijñāna itself, nor its elaborate defense, a complex blend of exegetical, logical, and phenomenological arguments, can be adequately understood without reference to this larger historical context. It is only in the light of the Abhidharma problematic as a whole, arising out of the discrepancies between the newer dharma analytic and the traditional doctrines preserved in the early Pāli texts, that we can understand why the questions of the latent affective dispositions, the nature of karmic potentiality, and the gradual progress along the path to liberation became problematic at this point in Indian Buddhist thought and, even more importantly, why they came to be addressed in terms of the two “aspects” of vijñāna first found in those early texts.¹⁹ Most of the responses to these questions either implicitly or explicitly pointed toward some kind of multi-dimensionality of mind, a “common interest in the deeper strata of conscious life,”²⁰. In this respect, the concept of ālayavijñāna can be seen as merely the most comprehensive and systematic of the many innovative ideas proffered within the intellectual milieu of fourth–sixth centuries CE Buddhist India.
The origin or even first occurrence of the term ālayavijñāna is unclear. The SDS is traditionally regarded as the first Yogācāra Sūtra, announcing the advent of the special doctrines associated with that school and receiving, at least from their fellow Mahayanists, the veneration due to the sacred words of the Buddha. Most of the early Yogācāra literature dates from the second or third to the fifth centuries CE, but establishing firmer dates for Indian Buddhist texts is notoriously difficult. We shall not, however, attempt our own chronology of the Yogācāra school or of the minute developments within each stage of the ālayavijñāna, but will roughly follow Lambert Schmithausen’s careful reconstruction, which, if debatable on this or that particular point, is persuasive enough in its basic outline to serve our more general purpose of introducing the doctrinal developments and demonstrating the psychological and philosophical significance of the concept of the ālayavijñāna in the context of Indian Buddhist metapsychology.

The beginnings of the ālayavijñāna and of the Yogācāra School as a whole are closely connected with the voluminous Yogācārabhūmi, attributed to Asaṅga. Many major Yogācāra texts are well in all probability parts of the Yogācārabhūmi predate the SDS, while other parts were composed or compiled afterwards. We shall be drawing most heavily upon selected sections of the SDS and the Yogācārabhūmi, before proceeding in the succeeding chapters to developments of the ālayavijñāna in the MSS, also written by Asaṅga. It is in the basic section of the Yogācārabhūmi that the term ālayavijñāna seems to have been first used. In what Schmithausen takes to be its initial occurrence, the ālayavijñāna is portrayed as a kind of basal consciousness, which persists uninterruptedly within the material sense-faculties during the absorption of cessation (nirodha-samāpatti). Within this form of consciousness dwell, in the form of seeds, the causal conditions for manifest forms of cognitive awareness to reappear...
upon emerging from that absorption. In its most important terminological innovation, these modes of manifest cognitive awareness are now collectively called forms of “arising,” or “manifesting cognitive awareness” (*pravṛtti-vijñāna*), insofar as they intermittently arise or become manifest in conjunction with their appropriate objects, and in contrast to the abiding, uninterrupted stream of sentience newly called “ālaya” *vijñāna*. The distinction we discerned as merely implicit within the early Pāli concept of *vijñāna* is now terminologically explicit. It represents the *Yogācārins*’ basic departure from earlier Buddhist models of mind.

The newly coined terms “ālayavijñāna” and “pravṛtti-vijñāna” are telling in themselves. The term ālaya conveys two distinct semantic ranges serendipitously united in Pali and Sanskrit. Ālaya means, “that, which is clung to, adhered to, dwelled in,” and thus derivatively “dwelling, receptacle, house.” Yet it also retained an older sense from the early texts of “clinging, attachment, or grasping.” This new kind of *vijñāna*, which dwells in or sticks to the material sense-faculties, contrasts with the traditional six types of “manifest cognitive awareness” (*pravṛtti-vijñāna*) insofar as they “arise, come forth, manifest, issue, originate, occur, commence” in conjunction with objects impinging upon their respective sense-fields.

In this initial passage, ālayavijñāna is closely connected with bodily existence, as we would expect for any kind of process that persists during a meditative state in which all mental processes are said to come to a halt. Even in its most complex formulations, ālayavijñāna never entirely loses this somatic dimension. This reflects one of the roles attributed to *vijñāna* in both the Pāli and *Abhidharma* texts we have already examined: for as long one is alive, consciousness (*vijñāna*) takes up or “appropriates” (*upādāna*) the body, the material sense-faculties, thereby preventing death; in this sense, it constitutes, along with heat (*uṣma*) and the life-force (*āyus*), one of the indispensable concomitants of any sentient being.
At this stage, the conception of ālayavijñāna seems to be little more than a combination of the Sautrāntika view that the body is the carrier of the seeds during the absorption of cessation with Vasumitra’s position that a subtle form of mind subsists at that time without apparent functioning. In effect, as a simple “hypostatization” of the seeds, this depiction of Ālayavijñāna is not yet a distinct vijñāna, nor is it systematically related to the traditional six modes of cognitive awareness; its status outside of the absorption of cessation, moreover, remains undefined.

On emerging from the attainment of cessation, how do these six forms of “arising cognitive awareness” arise again from the seeds that are within this “ālaya” vijñāna? And where or how does this ālayavijñāna function outside of that attainment of cessation? Is it a discontinuous kind of cognitive awareness that, like the bhavaṅga-citta, only occurs when the manifest modes of cognitive awareness do not, or does it continuously occur throughout all states of mind? If the latter, then how are the seeds that are associated with this new kind of vijñāna related to the traditional six kinds of cognitive awareness? And in what way might this ālayavijñāna function as a vijñāna itself, as a distinct species of cognitive awareness? In other words, if ālayavijñāna were to be more than a hypostatization of the seeds, if it were to become a new genre of consciousness in its own right, it would have to be related to traditional conceptions of mind in much more specific detail. These kinds of questions were not asked in the earliest sections of the Yogācārabhūmi, but responses to them were effectively outlined in the momentous developments found in the SDS.
4.3.1.3 The Function of Ālayavijñāna

The first and most fundamental of these three is the ālayavijñāna. The most important addition that Yogācāra made in the set of consciousness was the eighth, the store consciousness. Ālayavijñāna is also called retribution consciousness and seed-carrier consciousness. Ālayavijñāna is the first phase in the process of differentiation of pure vijñāna. Ālayavijñāna is the individual unconscious, which carries within it the seeds of all pass experiences. It has within itself the representation of consciousness of unknown objects and places. It is invariably associated with the experiential categories such as touch, attentiveness, knowledge, conception, volition and feeling.27

All dharmas ensue from it as its effects or evaluates. It is called therefore being the cause of everything empirical. Any kind of karma is done by the individual in any sphere of existence, leaves its trace in the ālaya.

Ālayavijñāna is the generative cause of all dharmas arising because its seed produce dharmas as and when conditions are favorable. Asaṅga makes a point that the Ālayavijñāna is a retribution consciousness provided with all the seeds, which produce the pratīyāsamutpāda, and so all the existences in the triple world and all destinies arise from this consciousness.

All these processes actions producing seeds, seeds producing actions, show the ālayavijñāna to be a universal and unending consciousness “atmosphere” in which every thing lives and dies according to karmic seed production and fruition.

Therefore the ālaya serves function in the cosmic process. It is the receptor of the impressions of past vijñānas, while in its own turn it gives rise to further vijñānas by maturing those
impressions. The whole order is cyclic. The cosmic evolution has therefore two aspects: first, the replenishment of vāsanās in the ālaya, and secondly, the fructification of these into further vijñānas, which again lay their own seeds in the ālaya and so on.

Vijñāna is essentially creative. A transparent and diaphanous consciousness cannot be admitted. It must by its very nature have content, a content projected by it. The ālaya therefore must have content. The eight consciousnesses is the first subjective transformer. Its content cannot be any empirical one, since it is itself nothing empirical. Its content is an objectivity not differentiated into specific forms. It is an indeterminate content, a bare otherness confronting the ālaya. The object is so pure that it is not even felt as an “other”. Since the object is absolutely indeterminate, the subject is totally engrossed in a colorless contemplation of it with no idea of its own dissociation. It is not knowledge in the ordinary sense of the term. The subject is not even a subject in the sense of a self-conscious knower. The knowledge here is a mere going-on-ness, a perpetual monotony.

This bare objectivity is the first precipitation of the transcendentally illusion, the primal projection by pure consciousness. The ālaya is not therefore pure. It already contains the seed of self-disruption in the form of this implicit duality. The process of bifurcation of consciousness has started. Hence it is said that the ālaya functions in two ways:

1. Internally, consciousness appearing as the constituents of an individual.
2. Externally as consciousness of the undifferentiated objectivity

This bifurcation is very essential for the ālaya to give rise to further determination. It will be just like space whose unitary nature precludes the possibility of its ever being unbalanced.
Hence an initial lack of harmony must be posited to account for the cosmic evolution. It must be internally unstable. The idea of pure objectivity or of bare otherness, confronting the ālaya cannot let it rest in peace; as soon as the externality is consciously realized; its indeterminateness dissolves itself into an infinite plurality of empirical determinations. There can be no conscious awareness of bare objectivity.

To realize anything as objective, it must be known as dissociated from the subjective, and this is possible only when the objective is a plurality. Consciousness as ridden by the idea of indeterminate objectivity is the ālaya. But both the terms of this opposition are still pure are not at an empirical level.

The root of all projections is their respective vāsanās of an individual ego and that of the objective elements of existence; it is because of the presence of these that the illusion of an ego and of a world is created. But the presence of these vāsanās in the ālaya cannot be noted by any consciousness. Vāsanā is not an object of knowledge but its presupposition. It is the tendency or the propensity on the part of consciousness to create an “other” and to project it as distinct from itself. This tendency itself, not being a thing or an entity, cannot be known as such. The objectivity that confronts the ālaya said to be unknown; to know a thing is to make it definite, to fix its place in the order of things, by differentiating it from all the rest of the objective. The knowledge of a thing is possible as much because of its identity as because of its difference from all other thing. In the case of the indeterminate objectivity this is not available, though consciousness has started in the way to self-differentiation, the “other” which it has projected out of itself is not known as an “other.” The idea of the “other” will indeed not let it rest in peace it must be known and as soon as it is known as an “other,” it is known as a determinate other. The ālaya situation is inherently unstable; and yet the
consciousness of a determinate other leaves its impression in the ālaya as a vāsanā, which makes it impossible for the ālaya to be wholly determined; as one moment of the ālaya gets differentiated, another moment of indeterminateness takes its place to be further differentiated, so that though the ālaya is unstable, it can never be exhausted till the idea of objectivity itself is eradicated.

The ālaya stands therefore on a transcendental level. The determinate knowledge represents the last stage in the process of categorization of consciousness. The ālaya marks just the dawn of this process of determination, and is itself still indeterminate.

The store consciousness is a stream of continuous consciousness of universal dimensions. The seed elements (bīja) stored in it are forever being activated into dharmas, which by their actions and associations produce patterns and constructions of both “internal” and “external” composites.

This profound penetration to the ālayavijñāna gives rise, in Yogācāra, to a further significant doctrine, the teaching of vijñaptimātratā, with a literal meaning of “mere notional projections”, sometimes referred to as “representation only”. This has two main meaning

First, that all perceptions “externals” are the result of seeds and dharmas arising from the store consciousness (Ālayavijñāna), so that all sensory perception is mind produced and has no independent existence.

The second main meaning has to do with the ultimately false bifurcation of subject and object, sometimes give as ātman and dharmas. From this false apprehension arise all the defilements connected with grasping and selfhood. Vasubandhu’s verses are terse as usual. He says that
when no idea of object is considered this is the state of vijñaptimātratā, in which the apprehension of each object and the act of apprehension are absent.

4.3.2 The Seventh Consciousness (Manasvijñāna)

The function of *manas* in the evolutionary process is rather obscure, and the text is not very illuminating. This consciousness manifests itself with the ālayavijñāna as its support and takes ālayavijñāna as its object. It has the nature and characteristics of deliberation. This consciousness is given the name *manas* because in its continuous practice of deliberation it surpasses the other consciousnsses. It continuously thinks about the self to which it is attached. It is clearly related to the four mūlakleśas (self-delusion, self-belief, self-conceit and self-love).

The function of the *manas* is of intellection (*manana*) and also of categorization of the object. It is to continually turn its eye toward the ālayavijñāna as itself and to attach to it. This word of determinate categorization is performed by *manas*. For an object to reach the stages of the pravṛttivijñāna, these three successive stages beginning from ālayavijñāna and the indeterminate being that of the *manas* and the last being the final one.

*Mana* is accompanied by five universal mental associate, i.e. mental contact, attention, sensation, conception and volition. It is moreover associated with the sensation of indifference. Regarding the moral species of *manas*, it is said that *manas* is defiled non-defiled, the four kleśas associated with *manas* are defiled dharmas as they stand as obstacles to the Holy path. On the other hand they are neither good nor bad their support being subtle and their manifestation being spontaneous and consequently that are non-defined. But when *manas* has been revolutionized at the first stage of the holy path and transformed into exclusive good.
The mental associated of manas are confined to some specific bhūmi. It is said that manas is active in the dhātu or bhūmi in which the sentient being is born and to which he is bound. The caittas of manas are confined to kāmadhātu when the Ālayavijñāna is born at kāmadhātu. Like this in all the bhūmis up to bhavāgra, those caittas always take the ālayavijñāna as their object in all their particular bhūmis.

In the state of arahatship defiled manas is completely annihilated in both actual and bīja form. It is said that defiled manas is provisionally subdued, meaning incapable of actualizing itself. The sutras teach that citta, manas and vijñāna have different meanings. That which deliberates is called manas and that which discriminates is called vijñāna. The sixth consciousness has a support, which is manas, the seventh consciousness. The causal condition of manovijñāna is also the same, manas. The separate existence of manas is also proved by its name. It is said in the sutra “the faculty of deliberation is called manas”. These manas that “perpetually thinks” is the seventh consciousness.31

According to the idealistic principle, the pravṛttivijñānas present no problem because of the universes itself as identical with the knowing consciousness. And without a repository in which the latent forces lie dormant, the flow of phenomenal existence would come to a stop. Consciousness is momentary, and unless its seeds are stored in the ālaya. Its further continuity will of its own accord comet an end. Further, in certain states like deep sleep and trance, the empirical consciousness does not exist at all. Here the unbroken sequence of the ālaya must be posited to account for the resuscitation of the waking life. The ālaya must therefore be accepted over and above the various pravṛttivijñānas.
If these two strata of consciousness suffice to explain phenomena, the *manas* need not be accepted as a distinct consciousness. It cannot however be dispensed with, because it mediates between these two consciousness. Whenever two terms are posited, the intervention of a third entity as a connecting link becomes necessary. If two unrelated real are accepted, they cannot even be known as two. In the case of *manas* the mediation is all the more necessary since the empirical consciousness arises wholly out of the ālaya; the question of unrelated real does not arise. On the one hand there is the ālaya with an indeterminate content. There are the *pravṛttivijñānas* with wholly determinate contents on the other: in between these is the process of determination. This transitional function is served by the *manas*. It makes possible the emergence of the object-consciousness out of the ālaya, and at the same time maintains the distinction between the two. It may be said that if a terbium quid is required to establish the separation and at the same time to mediate the relation between two terms, by parity of reasoning another entity must be posited between one of the original terms and this terbium quid, and this clearly leads to an infinite regress. This only means that ultimately two distinct terms cannot be accepted as separately real. The consideration here is that the acceptance of two entails that of a third as well, and for empirical purposes this complex must be granted. Theoretically any duality requires the intervention of a third entity, including the duality between a term and this third entity itself; practically, the acceptance of three serves all purposes, but three at least must be accepted.

*Manas* is always functioning subliminally. Contributing to the progress and enhancement of society is unmistakably a wonderful and wholesome thing. Manas are so called because the process of intellection (*manana*) is always going on in it. The content of Ālaya is indeterminate objectivity. As soon as this content is known as another, its indeterminateness
gives place to empirical determinations. We known that it must be pure contemplation of the other cannot last forever. The transition from the act of willing of this fundamental content to those of the determinate contents is the work of manas. It breaks up the monotony of the indeterminate objectivity by projecting the latter through categories; its essence is categorization. The bare otherness is indeed itself a category, the most fundamental one; but it has not been differentiated into categories of empirical knowledge. It is only in the case of a self-conscious awareness of objectivity that these categories are brought into play. The pure objectivity is not categorized, except by itself. This work of determinate categorization is done by the manas. It actualizes the empirical contents, which are implicitly contained in the pure objective. Manas are not the consciousness of these contents but are the function of this actualization itself. The “other” can realized only as a determinate other and the splitting up of the pure form into determinate forms resulting in the precipitation of matter or content is intellection. The bare “other” is certainly itself matter, but is so only in relation to the transcendental consciousness of the ālaya; in relation to empirical objects it is their form. It is so bare that it cannot be distinguished from its form, i.e., from its awareness. Only after consciousness is determinately categorized, does the awareness of the distinction between form and matter, or consciousness and its content, characteristic of empirical knowledge, arise. Manas is not the result of this process, which are the several object knowledge’s, but is the process itself. It is the fructification of the seeds lying dormant in the ālaya into the content-consciousness. It is the ripening of the fruit, not the ripe fruit itself.

An apparently different account of manas is given in the text. It is invariably referred to as defiled (kliśta) because it is surcharged with a particular class of “Mentals” (caittas), i.e., the four-nivṛtāvyākṛta kleśas. As long as manas functions, these four must accompany it:
i. The false notion of an ego

ii. Ignorance about ego

iii. Elation over it

iv. Attachment to it

The imposition of the false notion of an ego, in reality, there is no “I” but only the momentary constituents (skandhas). This notion of the “I” arises out of ignorance about the real nature of the ālaya. As soon as the sense of ego arises, one gloats over it, proudly proclaims its existence, with the result that one gets attached to this false notion.

It is clear that the manas is understood more as concerned with the projection of the ego, than that of the objective, and this seems not to be in accordance with the meditational function just now attributed to it. A deeper probing into the problem will however reveal that these two accounts are not disconnected as might appear. Manas represents the stage of categorization of the objective. The knowledge of the objective is connected with the sense of “I” in two ways. First, “I know” is the invariable condition for any knowledge to occur. This alone imparts the unity required in the synthesis of knowledge. Without this, the manifold would not be appropriated, and consequently there would be no synthesis. It is however only a presupposition; there is no self-consciousness in the sense of the consciousness of the self. The explicit reference to the knowing subject takes place when the content-knowledge has thrown the subject back upon itself, i.e., when the subject is consciously dissociated from the content. Here the knower turns back upon himself; the former “I” is a presupposition while the latter a reflex. The two forms of the “I” are radically different, but may be comprised in a common concept of ego. The notion of ego is thus the alpha and omega of all empirical knowledge in a literal sense. The dawn of ego-consciousness indicates that the process of categorization of the
objective has started, since an uncategorized objective would be indeterminate which cannot yield any reference to the ego. The twin processes of the categorization of knowledge and the dawning of the notion of ego are very vitally connected with each other and are rather two ways of looking at the same function of manas.

The ego is real neither in this system nor in the Advaita Vedānta. In both, it is a construction; yet a construction in fundamentally different senses. In the Yogācāra, it is a construction superimposed upon the incessantly fleeting states of ālaya-moments, while the Vedāntin thinks it to be ascribed to the unchanging pure consciousness. Though the ego is unreal according to both the systems, it is so for opposite reasons. In Vedānta it is unreal, because it veils the universality and the ubiquity of consciousness; it is unreal because it imports change into the unchanging real. In the Yogācāra the reason for its unreality is precisely antipodal to this. The ego masquerades as something permanent and stable, while in reality the Ālāya is a continuous series. It is unreal because it imports permanence to the changing series. Experience requires both analysis and synthesis. Metaphysics picks up one pattern and universalizes it to such an extent as to explain the other away. The function of manas is more synthesis. It binds together the different states under the common concept of the ego. It supplies the requisite element of stability, which makes discursive knowledge possible. In common with the whole Buddhist tradition, the Yogācāra is initially prejudiced in favor of impermanence. The other aspect of knowledge is explained away as an illusory construction. The pramata, on the other hand, makes room for analysis, i.e., change and succession, which the Real, as unchanging consciousness, cannot render explicable, and which is yet required to make experience possible.
The activity of manas is directed towards the actualization of the potential forces stored in the ālaya; it is the Ālaya therefore which supplies the data on which manas operates. Manas is not an independent consciousness; its status is somewhat different from that of the ālaya as well as the object-consciousness. It is more or less a relational function, and requires a base of operation. Its locus is the ālaya. Categories cannot float in vacuum. The category of the “other” in the ālaya is indeterminate and manas determine it empirically. It has been said above that no content less consciousness can be admitted. If the manas is to be accredited as one, it must have its own content. Peculiarly enough, its content also is said to be the ālaya. That is to say, it projects no new content; its function is exhausted in categorizing the indeterminate objective created by the ālaya. It projects the same content through many more lenses added, as it were. Manas enjoy no independent status its own. Just as a relation is exhausted in relating its terms, but is not a term in itself, so the manas is not a consciousness co-ordinate with the ālaya or the pravṛtti-vijñānas. The activity of the ālaya itself, as its content gets differentiated into this and that, is the manas. It is the function of incessant unrest in the ālaya.

By certain meditations and practices this process of intellection can be stopped; the categorization of the determinate content over which our will has ordinarily no jurisdiction, can be affected by intense meditation. In the state of Arhat who has destroyed all the defilements without any residue; the flow of the Ālaya itself ceases there and hence the manas is stopped automatically. So also in certain transit states the manas does not exist, and after he trance is over, it arises again out of the Ālaya. The Ālaya revolves round itself, with no categorization. Manas is said to be absent in no less than five states. This again shows the close parallel existing between the concepts of the ālaya.
4.3.3 The Six Consciousness (Pravṛattivijñāna)

The six categories of consciousness are classified in accordance with the six sense-organs (indriya) and their respective objects (viṣaya). The five consciousness (of the sense) depending on the Ālayavijñāna manifest themselves in accordance with their respective sense-organ and objects, which are their causes and conditions. They arise sometimes together, sometimes separately.

The function of the conscious representations, ideas, cognitions, volitions into which the vāsanās (subliminal impressions) are transformed, can be divided into seven forms of manifestation. Six of them are the five types of sensorial cognition (visual, etc.), and the mental cognition (manovijñāna) whose object is only ideas (dharma) in abroad sense; any cognitive act adopts necessarily one of these six forms. The seventh form is the manas. The stage of the evolution of consciousness is the determinate awareness of the object. This is the only consciousness, which matters in empirical discourse. This alone is empirically known; the former two form its submerged base as it were. For all practical purposes this constitutes our universe, since it includes everything whatsoever as can be presented before the empirical consciousness. This consciousness is not a unity but class, comprising six kinds of consciousness, all of which are grouped together because of their common empirical nature.

These six kinds of consciousness can be classified into: External and internal. The former includes the five consciousness corresponding to the five sense-organs which give us all the information we have about the so-called external world. The five senses make possible the awareness of matter (rūpa), sound (śadba), smell (gandha), taste (rasa) and the tactual data (spraṣṭavya). The sixth or the internal consciousness is Manovijñāna, the knowledge of ideas.
(dharmas). Though these ideas are “internal” they are as much objects of consciousness as rūpa... This Manovijñāna is not to be confused with the kliṣṭa manas; the latter is a transcendental function, while the former is merely the knowledge of empirical ideas.36

There is one point about the five sensual consciousness’s that needs clarification. The senses give us, the Yogācāra holds in accordance with the Buddhist tradition, merely the sense-data, and the resultant consciousness also is of this alone. Color is a sense-datum; the colored object is not. The consciousness also is of color alone. Consciousness is identical with the object known; consciousness itself should be of a colored object, and not of a bare color. It has been said before that though the object known is identical with the knowledge of it, yet, owing to the cosmic illusion, it appears as independent and as objectively present. So, though in reality there is merely the consciousness of color, that color, when objectified, is known only as a colored object. The concept of substance is a category through which the form of knowledge, when objectified, must be cognized. We cannot perceive an objectivity, which is bare color; it would invariably be an object merely by the fact of its being objectified. To invest the sense-data with this object-hood is the work of manas. The sense-data are certainly not objectively real; but consciousness has that form alone. Of the object hoods there can be no consciousness; it is the form of projection; to be projected is to be projected as an object.

All these six vijñāna arise out of the ālaya due to their respective seeds; they can arise either singly or simultaneously. To create the illusion of a full-fledged object, many sense-data must combine which is possible if their consciousness arise simultaneously. None of the three or rather eight vijñānas is ultimate. Consciousness is disturbed owing to the impact of a wrong idea, and once this idea is eradicated or realized to be illusory, the agitated commotion of consciousness is calmed down, and it regains its eternal quiescence.37
This progression of the evolution of consciousness must be understood merely in a logical sense and not as a historical process. Because it is said that the object-consciousness arises out of the ālaya, mediated by the manas, it must not be imagined that at first there was only the ālaya, and that in course of time the other vijñānas emerge. Pure consciousness has no tendency to get defiled; it must be posited as already defiled. So also the cycle of the karmic forces and their actualization is an infinite one, like the trite cycle of the tree and its seed. The dependence is reciprocal; one cannot be had without the other. The pravṛttivijñānas arise because of the seeds latent in the ālaya, while the former further replenishes the ālaya itself, but for which it would come to a stop. The priority is merely logical, and not factual. The ālaya with all its paraphernalia must be accepted as beginning less and it lasts up to the cessation of the phenomenal existence itself. The other vijñānas have gaps in between them, but the ālaya suffers no break whatsoever in its continuous flow.

4.4 The Function of Mind

The idea that experience has three aspects is fundamental to Yogācārins soteriology and epistemology. The notion is a complex one and will not be given a systematic and complete exposition in what follows. Those elements of the theory will be of most relevance to understand the Yogācārins treatment of the attainment of cessation. At the beginning of a work devoted exclusively to discussing the three aspects. The three aspects, then, are the “imagined” (parikalpita), the “relative” (paratantra) and the “perfected” (parinīspanna).

Thus the three-aspect theory simply describes different ways in which mind can function, different modes under which experience can appear to the experiencer. The centerpiece of the theory is the relative aspect of experience. This is simply identified with mind, mind
understood as experience. It is called “relative” because, as Vasubandhu says in the extract quoted, it is “dependent upon causes and conditions”. Asaṅga, in his Compendium of the Great Vehicle, makes this a little more specific. This extract introduces some more technical terms, which need explanation. Asaṅga tells us that the relative aspect of experience is relative because it is causally dependent upon “the seeds, which are its own tendencies”. Both “seed” (bīja) and “tendency” (vāsanā) are extensively discussed by Asaṅga in the first chapter of his Compendium; there he tells us that tendencies to do this or that—to be passionate, to be hateful, to be greedy—are the result of seeds planted by previous actions. This point is illustrated with the extremely common image of the sesame seed. The sesame seed, itself “perfumed” by the plant which bore it with the “tendency” to produce plants which are similarly perfumed, produces the “tendency” in the flowering plant which grows from it to have a certain perfume, even though the seed itself no longer exists; in just the same way, actions of any kind produce seeds which in turn issue in “tendencies” or “capacities” which will have their effects upon the future actions of the original agent.

The developed form of the seed-tendency theory, found in the classical texts of the Yogācāra, is essentially an attempt to formulate a theory according to which it is possible to combine talk of tendencies or capacities on the part of persons with a metaphysic which denies

(i) That there are enduring individuals.

(ii) That there are enduring events.

This is one of the basic problems of Buddhist metaphysics, and the peculiar Yogācārins answer to it involves the construction of a theory of mind which goes a long way towards providing a theory which can coherently allow for talk of capacities and tendencies belonging
to persons. The cost, of course, is that the theory stands in some tension with earlier Buddhist theories of the person, theories which stress radical impermanence and are thus hard put to it to account for enduring character traits.

However, in the extract from the Compendium quoted above the seed-tendency theory is used only to explain what the “relative” aspect of experience is relative to. It explains that the causes and conditions which govern the ways in which mind functions (the kinds of experience which occur) are essentially the tendencies or habit-patterns produced in the mental life of that particular experiencer by his past actions and intentions. This suggests that the relative aspect of experience, which consists simply in mental representations, mental events of all kinds, is all that there is, but that these mental events can operate in different ways, appear under different aspects, according to the “seeds” and “tendencies” of the continuum of mental events in which they occur. And this brings us to a consideration of the other two aspects under which experience can occur: the imagined and the perfected.

_Vasubandhu_ has already told us that the imagined is simply imagination and that it consists in the way in which things appear, the way in which experience constructs a world for itself, in contrast to the fact of its functioning which he identified with the relative aspect of experience. Later in the same text he specifies exactly what this means: the way in which experience functions (for all but enlightened beings) is as duality, in terms of the relationship between subject and object. The imagined aspect of experience consists essentially in dualism, a subject-object structure, which does not reflect the way things (according to this theory) actually are. It should be remembered that there is no radical ontological distinction between the relative and the imagined aspects of experience: the latter is simply a mode of the former, a way in which the former sometimes functions or appears. This intimate link between the
relative and the imagined is illustrated by the fact that the important technical term imagination of the unreal (abhūtaparikalpa), while used normally of the relative aspect, is also sometimes applied to the imagined aspect. The identification of the imagined aspect of experience with a dualistic subject-object structure is made especially clear in Vasubandhu’s commentary to the Discrimination Between Middle and Extremes and Sthiramati’s sub-commentary to that work. Vasubandhu begins in that text by defining the dual structure, which is essential to the imagined aspect of experience: he says that it consists simply in the imaginative construction of a dichotomy between subject and object. It is precisely this, he says, which is the “imagination” of the “unreal”.

Sthiramati goes on to say: The term “imagination of the unreal” means either that in which the duality (subject-object) is imagined, or, alternatively, that by which such a duality is imagined. The use of the word “unreal” indicates that one imaginatively constructs this world through the categories of subject and object, when it does not exist. The use of the word “imagination” indicates that external objects do not exist in the way that they are imagined. In this way it had been made clear that the defining characteristic of this imagination of the unreal is completely free from subject and object. Here Sthiramati explains that the imagination of the unreal, which links the first (relative) aspect of experience to the second (imagined) aspect of experience, is characterized by duality, the duality of subject and object, and that in actuality there are neither subjects nor objects. He continues: What then is this imagination of the unreal? Broadly speaking, the imagination of the unreal is the mind and mental phenomena which relate to past, present and future, which consist in causes and effects, which belong to the three-realmed cosmos, which have no beginning, which issue in Nirvana and which conform to Samsara. Specifically, though, it is the imagination of subject and object.
Here, “imagination of object” means consciousness appearing as living beings and inanimate objects; and “imagination of subject” means consciousness appearing as that representation which is the “self”. Here it becomes especially clear that the distinction between the imagined and relative aspects of experience is phenomenological rather than substantive. Sthiramati makes it clear that the “imagination of the unreal” is simply everything there is, every kind of mental phenomenon; the list of “mind and mental phenomena” in the extract translated above is meant simply as a series of different ways of saying “all mental phenomena” those which occur in any time, which are caused or have effects, which issue in salvation or which belong to the world of rebirth and suffering. There is no remainder. This inclusive definition, it will be remembered, is also the definition of the first aspect of experience, the relative. That too is the same as mind or mental representation, which in turn is simply, according to classical Indian Yogācāra, what there is in the world? Thus there is a sense in which the first aspect of experience and the second are identical; the difference between them is one of mode or phenomenological flavor.44

In short, explicit models of unconsciousness mental and physical processes arose within Buddhism in response to the Abhidharma tradition’s intensive analysis of consciousness, both in theory and practice. Yogācārins Buddhists subsequently discerned the limits of conscious awareness, and, in the process, the underlying conditions that must necessarily support all ordinary conscious experience. Until this point, the notion of a foundational consciousness (ālayavijñāna) had largely remained a solution to concerning the relationship between different modalities and functions of consciousness. Once the notion of a foundational consciousness underlying all other forms of mind was fully articulated, however, it became an
interpretive nexus inviting speculation on its relationship to other processes outside consciousness awareness and control.
References

2 Tagawa Shun’ei (2009), p. 45.
3 Ibid., p. 33.
6 Ibid., p. 87.
9 P. T. Raju, Idealistic Thought of India, (George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1953; reprinted. with the subtitle “Vedanta and Buddhism in the Light of Western Idealism”, New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1973) p. 269.
12 Chatterjee (1975), p. 49.
15 Chatterjee (1975), p. 87.
18 Jiang, Tao (2010), p. 43.
20 Guenther observes, which “reflects the collective spirit or Zeitgeist of this epoch in Indian Buddhist thought” (1989: 19). Nor was this spirit limited to Buddhist thought, for many of the same concerns, even the same terms, are found in the roughly contemporaneous Yogastras. They were all products of the classic, Gupta-era of Indian civilization. See for example, Eliade (1973)
21 Lamotte, Saddhi (1935), p. 25. Dates this sutra from the second to third century CE.

22 The account of the ālayavijñāna that follows is drawn from numerous texts, developed over a number of centuries. In order to avoid the redundancy found in the original materials, we will generally discuss the characteristics of the ālayavijñāna in connection with the text in which they first play a prominent role, relegating later developments and other sundry matters to the endnotes.

23 Schmithausen, amongst other scholars, has therefore attempted to stratify this text based primarily upon its doctrinal content. He finds (1987: 12–14), there are pre-Ālayavijñāna sections, such as the Bodhisattvabhūmi and parts of the Basic sections that only sporadically refer to the Ālayavijñāna, and others, such as the Viniscaya-samgrahaṇi, that describe the Ālayavijñāna in considerable detail, quoting, for example, from the Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra.

24 Ālaya is a nominal form composed of the prefix a, “near to, towards” with the verbal root in, “to cling or press closely, stick or adhere to, to lie, recline, alight or settle upon, hide or cower down in, disappear, vanish”

25 This also parallels doctrines in the Koka, as we see also Schmithausen (1987), p.20.


28 Tagawa Shun’ei (2009), p. 29.


31 Swati, Ganguly (1992), p.44.

32 Tagawa Shun’ei (2009), p. 64.


34 Ibid, p.44.


38 The Sanskrit term trisvabhāva is more often translated “three natures”. It is the same term that used by the Vaibhāṣika theoreticians in their discussions of the sense in which dharmas may properly be said to exist. To translate svabhāva in the context of classical Yogācāra theories of consciousness as “nature” or “essence” or “own-being”, though, would connote an inappropriately substantiality view. This is in part an epistemological notion and in part a descriptive-phenomenological notion, and 'aspect' therefore seems an appropriate translation for svabhāva.
Vasubandhu defines them thus: The three aspects are the imagined, the relative, and the perfected. This is said to be the profound thing, which wise men know. That which appears is the relative because it occurs in dependence upon conditions. The way in which it appears is the imagined because it is simply imagination. The eternal non-existence of the mode of appearance of what appears should be understood as the perfected aspect; this is because it does not change.

“what appears” is identified with the “imagination of what is unreal, and this in turn is said to be “mind”. Mind in turn is described as twofold: the “store-consciousness” and the “functioning consciousnesses”

If the relative aspect (of experience) is simply representation, the basis for the appearance of external objects, in what sense is it “relative” and why is it called “relative”? Because it issues from the seeds, which are its own tendencies, and is thus dependent upon conditions other. It is called “relative” because as soon as it has arisen it is incapable of enduring by itself for even a moment.

