

The Connotations and Denotations of Alaya Consciousness

——Comment on Chen Yibiao's "About the Change of
the Literal Meaning of Alaya Consciousness"

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Abstract

The Alaya consciousness, or called the eighth consciousness, store consciousness, Vipaka consciousness, Adana consciousness, mind, what the perception depends on, etc., is the most important secret dharma of Mahayana and not included in the dharma of sound-hearer or solitary-realizer. The existence of Alaya consciousness is an objective fact; therefore, it has concrete connotations and denotations and its existence is observable. With lots of natures and states, it is described with different focuses among sutras and treatises so that the descriptions seem very different outwardly. But for those who have personally experienced the Alaya consciousness, these descriptions are all correct.

Most Western and Japanese researchers study Buddhism by regarding it as a thought. It in fact conflicts with the teachings of sutras. There is lots of recoded evidence about the requirement of personal experience in sutras. Those researchers, due to their prejudices and mistakes in methods, have drawn wrong conclusions with significant errors.

The connotations of Alaya consciousness include: it independently and originally exists since the beginningless time and is the root cause of all dharmas; it hides in the physical body and sustains sentient being's life; it is the object which each sentient being is greedy for and it is the self to which each sentient being is internally attached to. These connotations have been indistinctly mentioned in *The Agama Sutras*.

On the other hand, the denotations of Alaya consciousness can not be described through language because it is the real object which the language refers to. Only those Mahayana bodhisattvas who have personally experienced it can understand.

Keywords: Alaya consciousness, consciousness staying together with the five aggregates, consciousness with fetters and attachments, consciousness without fetters or attachments, the fields of six views