

## Transcript of teachings by Khen Rinpoche Geshe Chonyi

**Lesson No: 3**

**Date: 26th June 2012**

As mentioned before, the main objective of the Basic Program is to provide you with the foundational knowledge and understanding of the teachings of the Buddha to enable you to study the Great Treatises in the future. Many of these Great Treatises are already available in English so whatever you learn from your Basic Program studies will enable you to at least understand these texts when you read them in the future.

When we are learning a philosophical subject like this for the first time, of course it may be a little challenging. First you must memorise the terms so that at least you are able to name some of these terms. You should then be able to explain the meaning of those terms. But in the very first place, you must know what those terms are. You have no choice. You have to memorise them.

We have completed two lessons. If there is anything that you do not understand or you need further clarification, you may bring it up now.

### **Matter and consciousness are mutually exclusive**

(Matter, consciousness, and non-associated compositional factor are said to be mutually exclusive. A student is unclear as to whether matter and consciousness are mutually exclusive because to the student, they *do* have a common locus since they are both functioning things and are impermanent phenomena).

*Answer:* The comparison of phenomena is very important. Phenomena can be compared in different ways such as through the three or four possibilities. This is very important in investigating phenomena. For example, what are the number of possibilities between object of knowledge and consciousness?

*Answer from student:* Three.

*Khen Rinpoche:* When you say that there is something that is an object of knowledge but not a consciousness, you can see from this that the limit of pervasion of an object of knowledge is greater than the limit of pervasion of consciousness.

<b>Comparison of object of knowledge and consciousness</b>	<b>Illustration</b>
1. Something that is both an object of	Eye consciousness

<b>Comparison of object of knowledge and consciousness</b>	<b>Illustration</b>
knowledge and a consciousness	
2. Something that is an object of knowledge but not a consciousness	A horse
Something that is a consciousness but is not an object of knowledge	This is not possible because a consciousness is <i>necessarily</i> an object of knowledge.
3. Something that is neither an object of knowledge nor a consciousness	A sky flower

There isn't anything that is *both* matter and consciousness because they are mutually exclusive. If someone were to say: "The subject, functioning thing, is both matter and consciousness," what are you going to say? There are two ways of asking the question:

1. Are both matter and consciousness functioning things?
2. Is a functioning thing both matter and consciousness?

Is a functioning thing a consciousness?

Is a functioning thing a person? If you were to say that a functioning thing is a person, you also have to say that a horse, a cow, or elephant is a functioning thing.

*Khen Rinpoche: Is a functioning thing an elephant? There is no doubt that an elephant is a functioning thing but the question is: Is a functioning thing an elephant?*

*Khen Rinpoche: There is no problem in saying, "Matter and consciousness are functioning things." But if you were to say: "A functioning thing is a consciousness," then questions will be arise. Is it a horse? Is it a person? It becomes difficult to answer this.*

*Student: Both matter and consciousness are functioning things so they are not mutually exclusive.*

*Khen Rinpoche: Are you saying that there is a common locus between both matter and consciousness, i.e., that there is something that is both matter and consciousness? Please give an illustration.*

*Student: An impermanent phenomenon.*

*Khen Rinpoche: Are you saying that an impermanent phenomenon is both matter and consciousness?*

*Student* : No.

*Khen Rinpoche*: So there is nothing that is both matter and consciousness.

The question and answer is not just between two people, i.e., myself and the student. It is for everyone here. You must pay attention to what is being asked and what is the answer that is given. This is an important part of the learning process.

### **Eye sense power vs. eye consciousness**

*Question*: What is the difference between the eye sense power and eye consciousness?

*Answer*: The Great Exposition School (GES) and Sutra School (SS) assert that the eye sense power is a form. Specifically it is a clear form. The eye sense power does not refer to the entire eyeball but to something that is within the eyeball. In the *Abhidharma*, the size of the eye sense power is posited to be the size of a raisin.

The eye sense power is a clear form that exists within the eyeball. In dependence on this eye sense power that is form, the eye consciousness is generated.

An eye consciousness is consciousness, not a form. Therefore you cannot posit the eye sense power and the eye consciousness to be the same thing. They are different.

An eye consciousness apprehending form can only apprehend a form source. It cannot apprehend, say, sound. It can only apprehend a form source because the uncommon empowering condition for the production of an eye consciousness is the eye sense power.

In order for an eye consciousness apprehending form to be generated, it must depend on three conditions:

1. its uncommon empowering condition, the eye sense power
2. its observed object condition, form
3. its immediately preceding condition, a consciousness that exists just prior to the production of the eye consciousness

What causes an eye consciousness apprehending form to be generated in the aspect of that which is in the entity of being clear and knowing? It is the immediately preceding condition, the consciousness that exists just prior to the production of this particular consciousness.

What causes an eye consciousness apprehending form to be generated in the aspect of form? It is its observed object condition, form.

The eye sense power is a form but as to whether it is a form that can be

apprehended by the naked eye, that is another question. There are five sense objects: form, sound, smell, taste, and touch. There is also a sixth category, a phenomenon-source form. Is the eye sense power a form or a phenomenon-source form?

The eye sense power is a form. The eye consciousness that is generated in dependence on the eye sense power is a consciousness. Although the eye sense power is a form, I don't think it refers to the entire eyeball but rather it refers to a kind of form that is located within the eyeball. That is posited as an eye sense power that is the uncommon empowering condition for the production of the eye consciousness.

### **Non-associated compositional factor**

*Question:* Is the combination of an eye sense power that is a form and the eye consciousness a non-associated compositional factor? Also is a non-associated compositional factor a label that is affixed on to an object, e.g., because a person is labelled on its aggregates, a person is a non-associated compositional factor. When you label the concept of time as "time," then time is a non-associated compositional factor. (The student supplements his question with a presentation of the way an eye sees its object in accordance with conventional science).

*Answer:* When we use the word, "eye," it either has to refer to the eye sense power or the eye consciousness. There isn't an "eye" that is both the eye sense power and the eye consciousness. When we use the word "eye," it refers primarily to the physical eye that is a form. Therefore it is necessarily not a non-associated compositional factor.

It says in the *Heart Sutra*, "there is no eye, no ear, no nose ...." These all refer to the physical sense bases. In that sense, the "eye" refers to the eye sense power. Therefore it is necessarily not a non-associated compositional factor.

### **Phenomenon-source form**

*Question:* What is a phenomenon-source form?

*Answer:* An example of a phenomenon-source form is a dream elephant. A dream elephant does not appear to the eye consciousness or any sense consciousness for that matter. It is a subtle form that can only appear to the mental consciousness.

*Question:* Is a phenomenon-source form atomically established, i.e., is it matter?

*Answer:* This is something you can think about. Matter is one of the divisions of functioning thing.

If we adopt the position that "Matter is mutually inclusive with form," we will have to say that a phenomenon form source is atomically established.

In the case of the dream elephant, we have to analyse whether it is atomically established or not. It is easy to understand that a form that appears to a sense consciousness is atomically established. But what about a form that appears to the mental consciousness?

This is from the perspective of the position that asserts that form and matter are mutually inclusive, but not all the Buddhist tenets assert this. Some Buddhist tenets assert that form and matter are *not* mutually inclusive.

Even then, we have to analyse whether a phenomenon form source, e.g., a dream elephant, is atomically established. It is very clear in many texts that a phenomenon-source form is a form but the question is whether that form is atomically established?

### **Correction to pg. 7 of Handout No. 1**

*Question:* From the last lesson, we learnt that mutually exclusive phenomena have no common locus between them. May I confirm if this statement still stands, “If there are three possibilities between two phenomena, there *must be a common locus* of the two points of difference”?

*Answer:* I don’t think it is necessary that you must have a possibility that is both the two objects beings compared.

*Student:* So this statement is not so accurate.

*Khen Rinpoche:* You can give an illustration of an object that is both the objects being compared or an object that is neither of the two objects being compared.<sup>1</sup>

### **Mutually exclusive phenomena**

*Question:* If two objects are mutually exclusive, are there *necessarily* three possibilities as it was mentioned previously, “there can be three but not four possibilities”? For example, between a pillar and a pot, there are always three possibilities.

*Khen Rinpoche:* You can say that. It is not possible to have four (possibilities).

### **Immediately preceding condition**

*Question:* With regard to the immediately preceding condition, at the manifest level, do the six consciousnesses manifest at the same time? If each of these consciousnesses have their own respective immediately

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<sup>1</sup> Under “**2. Three possibilities**,” the first possibility should then be amended to read as “There is something that is both a p and a q **or** there is something that is neither a p nor a q.”

preceding conditions, how then do we posit a single continuum of consciousness within a person?

*Answer:* The immediately preceding condition for the production of any consciousness can be *any* consciousness that immediately precedes it. In the case of the eye consciousness apprehending a form, it does not have to be a former moment of eye consciousness.

The uncommon empowering condition for the production of the mental consciousness is the mental sense power. This mental sense power can also act as the empowering condition for the production of a sense consciousness in which case it becomes the common empowering condition.

### **Why *Lorig* is presented according to the view of the Sutra School**

*Question:* The presentation of *Lorig* is according to the view of the Sutra School. Why is this so since, in order to gain full enlightenment, we have to learn the highest view? Why are we not studying *Lorig* in accordance with the view of the highest school?

*Answer:* There are four tenets: the Great Exposition School (GES), the Sutra School (SS), the Mind-only School (MOS), and the Middle Way School (MWS). It is good to know why there are four tenets. In order to fully understand the assertions of a higher tenet, there are clear explanations of the assertions of the tenets below it.

The study of *Lorig* here is based on the perspective of the Sutra School because the majority of the Buddhist tenets have similar assertions as to what constitutes a valid cogniser and so forth. The presentation with regard to the mind is mainly the same for the GES, SS, MOS, and the Autonomy Middle Way School (AMWS). The exception is the view of the Consequence Middle Way School (CMWS).

In order to appreciate the unique features of a higher tenet, we need to know the assertions of the lower tenets. When we are familiar with the assertions of the lower tenets, it will be easier for us to appreciate the differences when the assertions of the higher tenet are presented.

### **Terminologies**

*Question:* With reference to the chart on established base, do the terms “established,” “observed,” and “realized,” by a valid cogniser and “known by an awareness” mean different things?

*Answer:* These terms are synonymous with one another.

### **Dream elephant vs. sky flower**

*Question:* How does the dream elephant that is a phenomenon-source form different from a sky flower?

*Answer:* Does the elephant that is conjured by an illusionist exist? Everyone will answer “No.”

Is the elephant conjured by an illusionist a form, a consciousness, or a non-associated compositional factor? Among the five senses, form, sound, smell, taste, and touch, which one is this illusory elephant? Is it atomically established?

The elephant that is conjured by an illusionist appears to the eye consciousness. It is a form and it exists.

So we have to say the dream elephant exists. What is the reason then for saying the dream elephant does not exist? A dream elephant is posited as an impermanent phenomenon so it has to be matter, a consciousness, or a non-associated compositional factor.

We also have to think about why a dream elephant is an existent?

We see a cup of water as water but the hungry ghost sees the water as blood and pus. It has to exist in the way it appears. To us, the liquid appears as water. The gods will see the water as nectar. Depending on the power of the individual's karma, on that one single base, there is nectar, water, blood, and pus.

### **More about phenomenon-source form**

*Question:* Is day-dreaming or visualising a celestial mansion a phenomenon-source form?

*Answer:* You need to understand the difference between a non-conceptual consciousness and a conceptual consciousness as they function in different ways.

In the case of day-dreaming or visualisations, whatever appears to the thought consciousness is not the actual object. It is a mental image of the object that you are thinking about.

Although a sky flower does not exist, there can be a conception of a sky flower. When you think of a sky flower, there is a mental appearance of a sky flower. Although a sky flower does not exist, the appearance of a sky flower to the thought (or conceptual) consciousness apprehending it exists. A sky flower that appears to a thought consciousness apprehending it is a mental image (or **meaning generality**). That is not a form. It is a mere imputed factor.

However, an object that appears to a non-conceptual mental consciousness is a form. This will be explained later.

*Question:* Is the mental image of a sky flower an existent?

*Answer:* Of course

*Question:* So all mental images are existents?

*Khen Rinpoche:* Yes.

*Ven Gyurme:* Because they are permanent phenomena.

### **Internal matter and external matter**

(A student is unclear regarding the distinction between the two and quotes a number of examples: (1) is the foetus in a pregnant woman internal or external matter? (2) how about someone receiving a transplanted organ – is that transplanted organ internal or external matter?)

*Answer:* The body of the baby inside a womb is an internal matter because it is included within the continuum of that baby who is a person.

Is the body of the baby included within the mother's continuum? When the baby is still inside the womb, it is included within the continuum of the mother, so it is an internal matter.

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It is good if you can give feedback on the difficulties and challenges that you encounter in your studies. I guess one of the difficulties you are all facing is tackling all these new terms for the very first time. The only solution is for you to memorise them.

For example, you have to know the words, “mutually exclusive,” and their meaning. In order for any two phenomena that are being compared to be mutually exclusive, the objects that are to be compared must be existents, the two must be different, and there should not be any common locus between these two, i.e. there is nothing that is both the objects in question.

### **Singular and different phenomena**

If you think more deeply about it, if it is an existent, is it necessarily a singular or different phenomenon? Having said that, do you agree that it has to be like that? Is this necessarily so?

*Question from Khen Rinpoche:* If it is an existent, is it necessarily a singular phenomenon or different phenomenon? Is there any existent that is not both these two?

For example, a horse is a singular phenomenon. How about a horse and an elephant? They are different phenomena because a horse and an elephant are not one. So whatever illustration is given to you, it can be only be either one or many.



Can you point to something that is *both* one and many? Can you look at one and many in terms of three or four possibilities?

If someone were to posit: Is the subject, “different,” a singular or different phenomenon?

*Khen Rinpoche: What do you think?*

Translated by Ven. Tenzin Gyurme

Transcribed by Phuah Soon Ek, Vivien Ng and Patricia Lee

Edited by Cecilia Tsong