

Transcript of teachings by Khen Rinpoche Geshe Chonyi

Lesson No: 5

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All page references in this lesson refer to Handout No. 3 dated 3rd July 2012: *The Study of Mind and its Functions (Object Possessor)* unless otherwise stated.

Question: It was mentioned in the previous lesson that, when an object is divided into object and object possessor, whatever is a mind (or consciousness) is necessarily categorised as an object possessor and whatever is a non-mind is categorised as an object.

Today's handout shows that when an object possessor is divided into three, there are: person, awareness, and expressive sound. Person and expressive sound are both non-minds and yet they are not objects. How then are they classified?

Answer: In the two-fold division of object and object possessor, an object possessor is necessarily a consciousness. Within this two-fold division of object and object possessor, person and expressive sound belong to objects.

If you were to ask, "In general, aren't persons and expressive sounds object possessors?" Yes, in general, persons and expressive sounds are object possessors.

The topic we are studying in this module, the presentation of the mind and its functions, is challenging because we are talking about the mind. Simply having an idea of the presentation of the mind is difficult as, generally speaking, this is not something most people will pay attention to. So this is a new subject for most people.

You have to understand that whenever we look at the presentation of the mind, it is not an easy subject and it cannot be explained by using simple words. If you expect this subject to be explained by using simple words and think that you can understand it just by hearing these simple terms, that is not possible.

I have mentioned before that all the various topics are closely related to one another. What we are studying here, the presentation of the mind, is closely related to the topic of the next module on Buddhist philosophy, tenets. In fact whatever subjects, be it the stages of the path to enlightenment or engaging in the bodhisattva deeds, all these topics are interlinked.

It is extremely important to understand the meaning of direct perception, i.e., realising an object directly. It is also extremely important to understand how a conceptual consciousness realises its object. This is an extremely important topic and it is something we have to continue to learn, to think about, and to discuss with one another.

We had discussed a specifically characterised phenomenon. Why is it called this? One of the reasons is this: a specifically characterised phenomenon is an object that has the potential from its own side to cast an aspect of its uncommon nature to the consciousness perceiving it. This is the implication of the words, “specifically characterised,” i.e., it has the potential from its own side to cast an aspect of its uncommon nature to the consciousness that perceives it.

A generally characterised phenomenon is not like that. A generally characterised phenomenon does *not* have the potential from its own side to cast an aspect of its uncommon nature to the consciousness perceiving it. Rather the mind is involved, i.e., it has to be imputed by the mind. A generally characterised phenomenon can only be known by involving the mind imputing it. You may recall the definition of a generally characterised phenomenon that was covered in our first two lessons¹. It is a phenomenon whose nature is completed by the mind imputing it.

So you can see that there is a difference between a specifically characterised phenomenon and a generally characterised phenomenon.

(Khen Rinpoche checks whether any student has memorised the definition of a generally characterised phenomenon).

During the time when you are looking at blue, there is a consciousness to which the blue is appearing. Blue appears very clearly to this consciousness.

But when you close your eyes and think of blue, what comes to the mind? The blue that appears to the mind is not as clear as the blue that appears to the eye consciousness directly perceiving it.

We will talk about this later again. Seeing the difference between a conceptual and a non-conceptual consciousness is very important but it is very challenging. You have to spend a lot of time thinking about it to get a clear understanding of this topic.

A conceptual consciousness can only engage its object through the medium of a meaning generality or mental image. A conceptual consciousness cannot engage its object nakedly as it is, i.e., it cannot engage it directly. It has to do so through the medium of a mental image unlike direct perception.

¹ A phenomenon that is merely imputed by a term or thought consciousness and is not established as a specifically characterised phenomenon.

When you close your eyes and think of blue, for the concept of blue to arise, there has to be an appearance of blue *before* we can conceive of blue. When we conceive of blue, the appearance of blue has to arise *before* the mind is able to engage blue.

This appearance of blue to the conceptual (or thought) consciousness apprehending blue consists of two parts: (1) one part is blue and (2) another part is opposite from non-blue.

Page 1: Definition of a person

When object possessors are divided, there are three:

- person
- awareness
- expressive sound

Person, awareness, and expressive sound are all object possessors because they possess their respective objects.

The definition of **person** is: **a being imputed in dependence upon any of its five aggregates.**

An illustration is a being who possesses a basis of one of the three realms.

The definition of a person is a being imputed in dependence upon *any* of its five aggregates. The definition does not say, “in dependence upon all of the five aggregates.” A person is *not necessarily* a being imputed in dependence upon the five aggregates. Therefore the definition of a person is a being imputed in dependence upon *any* of its five aggregates. That is the reason for saying “any.”

Why is a person not a being imputed in dependence upon the five aggregates? One should be able to understand this by looking at the illustration given. The illustration of a person is a being who possesses a basis of one of the three realms that are the desire, form, and formless realms.

For beings of the formless realm, you cannot posit a form aggregate because in the formless realms, there is no form. Therefore a person of a formless realm can only be a being that is imputed in dependence upon the remaining four aggregates.

Self, I, person, and being are mutually inclusive.

Question: All the lower tenets assert that the person is a subtle consciousness, a mind-basis-of-all, and so forth. It seems to me that a person is a consciousness for all these lower schools. Would there then be a contradiction if a person is classified as a non-associated compositional factor and a person imputed in dependence upon the five aggregates?

Answer: The definition of a person here is a being imputed in dependence upon any of its five aggregates. This is how all the Buddhist tenets would

identify a person. To them a person is a being imputed in dependence upon any of its five aggregates.

If you were to look at the assertions of the respective tenets as to what the illustration of a person is, different illustrations are posited by the different tenets. Many of them assert that the illustration of a person is the consciousness because the majority of the tenets believe that the imputed object when sought can be and has to be found. They give the consciousness as the illustration of a person. That means a person is the consciousness. If that is the case, a person cannot be a non-associated compositional factor.

Then how should we look at the definition of a person given here? You can say that this is the general procedure of all the tenets. One can also look at it as being the actual way in which a person exists.

For those tenets that posit the illustration of a person to be the consciousness, then you will have to say a person is the consciousness.

This will be covered in more detail in the future. It is not possible to understand this right now because when you think about what a person is, it is very profound. In order to understand what a person is, you have to understand the assertions of the various different Buddhist philosophical systems or tenets. The illustration of the person varies depending on the tenet system in question.

Some assert the person to be the body. Many others assert the person to be the consciousness and among the different types of consciousnesses, it is the mental consciousness. What exactly then is the person? Most people think that it is the mental consciousness. There is one particular school that asserts that it is not the mental consciousness. It has to be something different and that is called the mind-basis-of-all.

But all these assertions are not the final view because they can be negated through using reasoning whereby you will arrive at the assertions of the highest school, the Consequence Middle Way School (CMWS). For them, a person is a non-associated compositional factor. A person is the “I”. What is the person or the “I”? The “I” is that which is merely imputed in dependence upon the aggregates.

All these points will be discussed further in the next module on tenets.

Page 2: Valid cogniser

An awareness can be divided into (1) a valid cogniser and (2) a non-valid awareness.

What is a valid cogniser? The definition of a valid cogniser is that it is a new incontrovertible knower. In order for an awareness to be a valid cogniser, three features must be present:

1. it must be new
2. it is incontrovertible (or infallible), i.e., it knows the object as it is

3. it is a knower

When an awareness possesses these three features, that awareness is a valid cogniser.

This definition of a valid cogniser, a new incontrovertible knower, is accepted by the majority of the tenets, starting from the Autonomy Middle Way School (AMWS) and the tenets below it.

The AMWS and all the tenets below it assert that, in order for an awareness to be a valid cogniser, it has to be “new,” i.e., it refers only to the first (or initial) moment of realising the object.

On the other hand the CMWS asserts that as long as the awareness realises its object, it is a valid cogniser, i.e., a valid cogniser is not confined to the very first moment of realising its object.

Each feature in the definition of a valid cogniser, i.e., a new incontrovertible knower, eliminates something from being a valid cogniser:

“**New**” eliminates that subsequent cognisers are valid cognisers.

“**Incontrovertible**” eliminates that correctly assuming consciousnesses are valid cognisers.

“**Knower**” eliminates that physical sense powers are valid cognisers.

In order to understand what these three features mean, you first have to understand what are a subsequent cogniser and a correctly assuming consciousness. This will come later.

All other awarenesses that are not valid cognisers are non-valid awarenesses. If the definition of a valid cogniser is a new incontrovertible knower, the non-valid awareness is a knower that is not new and incontrovertible, i.e., that which is not a valid cogniser.

There are two types of valid cognisers:

1. a direct valid cogniser
2. an inferential valid cogniser

Page 3: Seven-fold division of consciousness

Consciousness	Definition
1. Direct valid cogniser	a new incontrovertible knower that is free of conceptuality
2. Inferential valid cogniser	a new incontrovertible determinative knower that is directly produced in dependence on a correct sign that is its basis
3. Subsequent cogniser	a knower that realises what has already been realised
4. Correctly assuming	a factually concordant determinative knower

Consciousness	Definition
consciousness	that is controvertible with regard to determining its object
5. An awareness to which an object appears and is not ascertained	a knower that is a common locus of (1) having a clear appearance of the specifically characterised phenomenon that is its object of engagement and (2) being unable to induce ascertainment with respect to the specifically characterised phenomenon that is its object of engagement.
6. Doubting consciousness	a knower that has qualms two-pointedly by its own power
7. Wrong consciousness	a knower that engages its object erroneously

1. Direct valid cogniser

A direct valid cogniser is a valid cogniser but that is not sufficient. It is a valid cogniser and, at the same time, it is free of conceptuality. That means a direct valid cogniser is *necessarily* a non-conceptual consciousness.

2. Inferential valid cogniser

The other valid cogniser is an inferential valid cogniser that is a new incontrovertible determinative knower that is directly produced in dependence on a correct sign that is its basis.

A valid cognition that is conceptual in nature is an inferential valid cogniser.

For example: there is the thought thinking that there is a fire in the mountain pass. You don't see the fire directly but you realise that there is a fire in the mountain pass in dependence upon seeing the presence of smoke. In dependence on seeing smoke as the reason, you realise that there is a fire in the mountain pass. This thought realising that there is a fire in the mountain pass that arose in dependence upon seeing the presence of smoke is an example of an inferential valid cogniser.

This inferential valid cogniser is *not* a direct perceiver. It is a conceptual consciousness but it does realise fire. This inferential valid cogniser does not perceive fire nakedly but it apprehends fire through a meaning generality (or mental image) of fire.

3. Subsequent cogniser

This is a knower that realises what has already been realised. A subsequent cogniser does *not* refer to the *first* moment or the initial realisation of the object. It is simply realising what has been realised earlier by valid cognition. It is the subsequent realisation of the same object.

A subsequent cogniser is therefore not a valid cogniser because it is not the initial realisation of the object. Rather it is a knower that realises an

object that has already been realised, i.e., it is not new and therefore it is not a valid cogniser.

There are subsequent cognisers that are conceptual consciousnesses and there are subsequent cognisers that are non-conceptual consciousnesses.

4. An awareness to which an object appears and is not ascertained (hereinafter referred to as AAA)

This is a knower that is a common locus of:

- (1) having a clear appearance of the specifically characterised phenomenon that is its object of engagement and
- (2) being unable to induce ascertainment with respect to the specifically characterised phenomenon that is its object of engagement.

Here is an illustration of an AAA: imagine that your mind is completely engrossed due to your attachment to a particular object or you are focussing on someone with whom you are very angry. During that time, when you are either very engrossed in a particular object or very angry, when your mind is completely preoccupied, a visible form appears to your eye consciousness or a sound appears to your ear consciousness. While they appear, you do not ascertain either that visible form that appears to your eye consciousness or the sound that appears to your ear consciousness at that time.

Khen Rinpoche: When my mother watches her favourite Indian series on TV, she is totally focused on the TV. Even when someone walks in front of her, nothing distracts her. When someone says something, she seems to hear and she will nod her head but I am not sure she has heard anything. That is an AAA. She doesn't like all kinds of TV programmes, just that particular Indian serial. It is a family drama of some kind. It is like how some Chinese people like to follow the Korean dramas. I noticed that when my mother is watching this serial, nothing can disturb her.

An AAA is necessarily a non-conceptual consciousness.

5. Correctly assuming consciousness

This is a factually concordant determinative knower that is controvertible with regard to determining its object.

An illustration: a person has not realised the impermanence of sound but this person firmly believes, without any reason, that sound is impermanent.

A correctly assuming consciousness is necessarily a conceptual consciousness.

When we look at the definition of a correctly assuming consciousness, how do we know that it is a conceptual consciousness? The clue is in the word, “determinative.”

In Handout No. 2² we discussed the appearing object, the object of engagement, and the determined or conceived object. It was pointed out then that the determined object does not exist for direct perceivers. It only exists for conceptual consciousnesses.

6. Doubting consciousness

This is a knower that has qualms two-pointedly by its own power.

An illustration: a mind that wonders, “Is sound impermanent or permanent?”

A doubting consciousness is necessarily a conceptual consciousness.

7. Wrong consciousness

This is a knower that engages its object erroneously.

An illustration: a mind that firmly believes that sound is permanent.

A wrong consciousness can be either a conceptual consciousness or a non-conceptual consciousness.

Page 4

The table here shows the seven-fold division of consciousness in terms of:

- whether they are valid cognizers or non-valid awarenesses,
- whether they are knowers who realise their object or knowers that do not realise their objects
- whether they are factually concordant consciousnesses or whether they are factually discordant consciousnesses
- whether they are conceptual or non-conceptual consciousnesses and
- whether they are mistaken or non-mistaken consciousnesses

	Valid Cognizer	Non-valid awareness	Knower that realises its object	Knower that does not realise its object	Factually concordant consciousness	Factually discordant consciousness	Conceptual consciousness	Non conceptual consciousness	Mistaken consciousness	Non-mistaken consciousness
Direct valid cognizer	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	X	✓	X	✓
Inferential valid cognizer	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X
Subsequent cognizer	X	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓
Correctly assuming consciousness	X	✓	X	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X
Awareness to which an object appears and is not ascertained	X	✓	X	✓	?	?	X	✓	X	✓
Doubting consciousness	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓	X	✓	X
Wrong consciousness	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	X

In order to be able to understand the above table, one must first memorise the definitions of the consciousnesses in the seven-fold division

² Dated 26 June 2012

of consciousness. You have to know them individually and on that basis, you will be able to work out whether each of these consciousnesses is valid or invalid, mistaken or non-mistaken, conceptual or non-conceptual, and so forth. This can only come about on the basis of having memorised the definitions.

Conceptual consciousness

Let us turn our attention back to the conceptual consciousness.

If it is a conceptual consciousness, it is necessarily a mistaken consciousness. Why is this so? As mentioned in the previous lesson, a conceptual consciousness is also a conventional mind. Why is it a conventional mind? Because it is obscured from seeing the actual object nakedly and it can only see the object through a meaning generality of the object.

What appears to the conceptual consciousness apprehending its object? What appears is the actual object and the meaning generality (or mental image) of that object mixed together and appearing as one, the actual object. The conceptual consciousness apprehends the object through such an appearance. Therefore it is a mistaken consciousness because it is a consciousness that is mistaken with regard to its appearing object.

The definition of a **facsimile of a direct perceiver** is: **a knower that is mistaken with regard to its appearing object.**

Facsimile of a direct perceiver and mistaken consciousness are mutually inclusive (Page 3).

A mistaken consciousness is necessarily a knower that is mistaken with regard to its appearing object.

Whatever appears to a direct perceiver is necessarily the appearing object of that direct perceiver. But whatever appears to a conceptual consciousness apprehending it is *not* necessarily the appearing object of that conceptual consciousness.

An example: the conceptual consciousness apprehending blue. Does blue appear to the conceptual consciousness apprehending blue? Yes it appears but blue is *not* its appearing object.

Why do we say blue appears to that conceptual consciousness apprehending blue? We say this because the conceptual consciousness apprehending blue explicitly realises blue. Because it explicitly realises blue, therefore we say that blue appears to the conceptual consciousness apprehending it. The conceptual consciousness apprehending blue can only explicitly realise blue through blue appearing to it.

What we need to think about is this: why is blue *not* the appearing object of a conceptual consciousness apprehending blue although blue appears to it? To a conceptual consciousness apprehending blue, the actual object blue does *not* appear with all its complete characteristics, i.e., its

complete entity, to the conceptual consciousness apprehending blue.

We mentioned before the difference between a specifically characterised phenomenon and a generally characterised phenomenon. A specifically characterised phenomenon is a phenomenon that can cast an aspect of itself fully with all its characteristics only to a direct perceiver, not to a conceptual consciousness. Therefore not all the essential characteristics of blue can appear to the conceptual consciousness that is apprehending it and while blue does appear to the conceptual consciousness apprehending it, it is *not* the appearing object of the conceptual consciousness apprehending it.

If it is the appearing object of a conceptual consciousness, it is necessarily permanent and, in this context, it has to be a meaning generality (or mental image) of the object.

Question: (A student tries to clarify her understanding of the difference between an object appearing to a conceptual consciousness and the appearing object of that conceptual consciousness).

Answer: When you think about blue, in technical language, it is a conceptual consciousness apprehending blue. The conceptual consciousness:

- explicitly realises blue
- implicitly realises the opposite of non-blue

When a consciousness realises its object, it doesn't necessarily mean that it *only* realises it explicitly. It also realises something about the object implicitly.

What is the meaning of a consciousness realising an object explicitly? It means that it realises its object through the appearance of the aspect of the object to the consciousness. There is no problem in saying that blue appears to the conceptual consciousness apprehending blue. Blue appears to that conceptual consciousness apprehending blue.

But whatever appears to the conceptual consciousness apprehending blue does *not* necessarily have to be blue. It also does not mean that blue cannot appear.

Question: In relation to both a conceptual consciousness and a direct perceiver, must we already know the object beforehand? For example, a baby sees blue for the very first time. Is that a direct perception? Likewise, I see an object for the first time without knowing what it is. I can still have a conceptual image of that object but I don't know what it is. Do I need to know something before I can conclude that I am a direct perceiver or that is a conceptual consciousness?

Answer: There is a conceptual consciousness that apprehends:

- only a meaning generality
- only a sound generality

- both the meaning and sound generalities

An example of a conceptual consciousness that apprehends only a meaning generality is this: someone realises a being is imputed in dependence upon any of the five aggregates. There is a thought realising this but not knowing that such a being is called a person. This is someone who realises a person but has not associated its meaning with the term, “person,” yet.

This is an example of a conceptual consciousness that apprehends only a sound generality: someone who does not know the meaning of a person but who hears and apprehends the term, “person.” So there is the thought apprehending the term “person” without knowing what is a person. That mind is a conceptual consciousness apprehending only a sound generality.

An example of a conceptual consciousness that apprehends both the meaning and sound generalities is this: someone who realises that a being imputed in dependence upon any of its five aggregates is a person. That mind is a conceptual consciousness that apprehends both the meaning and the sound generalities.

This is what you need to think about: when your sense consciousness realises something, does it necessarily mean that your mental consciousness also realises it?

We will continue with this next time. Please read the handout and think about it. If you have any questions, you can bring it up in the next class.

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