

## **Transcript of teachings by Khen Rinpoche Geshe Chonyi**

### **Lesson No: 6**

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In the section on calm-abiding (or meditative serenity) in the *Lam-Rim Chenmo*, it says:

When you seek your object of meditation, the basis upon which you first keep your attention, look for an excellent painting or sculpture of the Teacher's body and view it again and again. Remembering its features, firmly familiarize yourself with the mental appearance of the object. Or, seek your object of meditation by reflecting upon the meaning of the eloquent descriptions of the Buddha's form which you have heard from your guru and make this image appear in your mind. Furthermore, do not let the object of meditation have the aspect of a painting or sculpture; rather, learn to have it appear in your mind with the aspect of an actual buddha (Page 44, Volume 3).

“When you seek your object of meditation, the basis upon which you first keep your attention, look for an excellent painting or sculpture of the Teacher's body and view it again and again.” When you are trying to focus on the Buddha either by looking at a painting or a sculpture of him, you have to look at it repeatedly over and over again. By remembering his features, you have to firmly familiarise yourself with the mental appearance of the object, i.e., you try to create an appearance of that object that you have chosen to focus on. This mental appearance is an appearance to the conceptual consciousness.

When you are trying to meditate on, say, an image of the Buddha, what are you focusing on? It is the image that is appearing as the Buddha. You are holding on to that image and meditating on it. You have to understand that when we say, “meditate,” meditation is an activity of the mental consciousness. It is done with the mental consciousness and not the sense consciousness.

In the beginning, we have to meditate on an image, an appearance of the object that we are focussing on. One starts with a conceptual understanding by meditating with the conceptual consciousness, focusing on the appearance of the object that one has chosen. Then slowly there will come a time when one will be able to directly perceive the object.

Therefore the conceptual consciousness (or conceptual thought) is very important. Meditation is done with the mental consciousness and initially with the conceptual consciousness. In order to be able to do this, you first have to understand fully what is the appearing object of a conceptual consciousness.

The text mentions, “remembering its features.” Having chosen a representation of the Buddha, you look at it and you have to remember his features. From remembering his features, you firmly familiarise yourself with the mental appearance of that object. We are talking here about the way to meditate that is done first with the conceptual consciousness. Without understanding how the conceptual consciousness works, what its appearing object is, and so forth, it is not possible to understand thoroughly the lam-rim, the stages of the path to enlightenment.

In order to have a full, complete, and correct understanding of the lam-rim, one has to study various teachings just as we are doing here right now. Sometimes people think that the lam-rim is so much easier than what we are studying here. But when you start to look at the lam-rim, the individual words and their meanings, one begins to realise one actually doesn't know anything at all.

*Question:* A subsequent cogniser can be either a conceptual or a non-conceptual consciousness. If it is a conceptual consciousness, when you try to remember blue, there is a mental image of blue. Is that mental image of blue a permanent phenomenon?

*Answer:* Your main question seems to be, “Is that mental image a permanent or impermanent phenomenon?”

The appearance of blue to the conceptual consciousness apprehending blue has two parts:

1. the specifically characterised phenomenon
2. the generally characterised phenomenon

### **One Entity but Different Isolates**

We had been looking at phenomena that are mutually inclusive with functioning things. A functioning thing is mutually inclusive with cause, effect, impermanent phenomena, composed phenomenon, ultimate truth, specifically characterised phenomenon, and so forth.

All those phenomena that are mutually inclusive with a functioning thing are one entity but different isolates. Now may be the time to talk a little about the meaning of one entity but different isolates.

How does a conceptual consciousness (or conceptual thought) and term (or expressive sound) engage their objects? A conceptual consciousness and term engage their objects through the process of elimination whereas a direct perceiver engages its object in a collective manner.

When object possessors are divided, there are three:

1. Person
2. Awareness
3. Expressive sound (or term)

A product and an impermanent phenomenon are one entity but different isolates.

There is a term expressing “product”:

- How does the term “product” engage its object? The term “product” eliminates everything that is a non-product.
- What is the opposite of a non-product? The opposite of a non-product is a product.
- The conceptual thought apprehending product that is induced by the term “product” engages product by eliminating non-product.
- The conceptual thought realises product.

To the conceptual thought apprehending product that is induced by the term “product,” a product appears as a product. Therefore the opposite from non-product also appears.

A conceptual thought or a term engages its object in the same way. The term or the expressive sound expressing product expresses (1) “product” and (2) that which is opposite from non-product. But the term “product” does *not* express opposite from non-impermanent phenomenon.

A product and an impermanent phenomenon are mutually inclusive. However, the term “product” can *only* express product and it does not express impermanent phenomenon. Because the term “product” does not express impermanent phenomenon, therefore it also cannot express opposite from non-impermanent phenomenon.

### ***Many isolates on one basis***

Let us take a product as the basis. On that one basis product, there can be many isolates: opposite from non-impermanent phenomenon, opposite from non-ultimate truth, opposite from non-composed phenomenon, and so forth. All these isolates exist on one basis, product.

Because the term “opposite of non-product” cannot express the opposite from non-impermanent phenomenon, therefore these two isolates that exist on the one basis are different.

A product is mutually inclusive with an impermanent phenomenon, a composed phenomenon, an ultimate truth, a specifically characterised phenomenon, and so forth. On the basis, product, there exist the isolates that are opposite from non-impermanent phenomenon, opposite from non-composed phenomenon, opposite from non-ultimate truth, opposite from non-specifically characterised phenomenon, and so forth.

- On the basis of a product, there exists the isolate the opposite from a non-impermanent phenomenon. Because of this isolate, it is also an impermanent phenomenon.
- On the basis of a product, there exists the isolate the opposite from a non-composed phenomenon. Because of this isolate, it is also a

composed phenomenon.

### **Term “vase” and non-vase**

The term “vase” expresses vase through:

- eliminating that which is non-vase
- also expressing the opposite from non-vase

The two appearances: (1) the appearance as a vase and (2) the appearance as opposite from non-vase are the reasons why the term “vase” is used.

The appearance of opposite from non-vase to the conceptual consciousness apprehending a vase has two parts:

1. One part is the specifically characterised vase
2. One part is the meaning generality of the vase that is a permanent phenomenon

The basis of imputation of a vase is a flat-based bulbous thing. The term “vase” is imputed upon such an object. What is the process of imputing the term “vase” to the flat-based bulbous thing? It is through the appearance of the opposite from non-vase.

To the conceptual consciousness apprehending a vase, this appearance of opposite from non-vase is the generality, vase.

The difficulty we are facing now is because we do not have the time to go through a subject called *Collected Topics* that is the foundation for what we are covering here. Under *Collected Topics*, you study subjects such as the established bases, causes and effects, the meaning of isolates and entities, one and different, generalities and instances, and so forth. Due to not having studied this, we are trying to gather information here and there and to summarise it. It becomes a little difficult.

### **Generalities and Instances**

When we say, “A vase,” a vase is a **generality**.

When we say, “A golden vase,” a golden vase is an **instance** of a vase. It refers to a specific vase.

Just as a vase is a generality, the opposite from non-vase is also a generality. When it is the opposite from non-vase, it is necessarily a vase and it is necessarily a functioning thing.

The term “vase” expresses opposite from non-vase. Opposite from non-vase is a generality. That makes vase a generality. Opposite from non-vase pervades a golden vase, a copper vase, and so forth. Likewise the appearance of opposite from non-vase engages all these as well.

On every single instance of vase, i.e., on every specific vase, the vase generality that is the opposite from non-vase exists and the appearance of

a vase that is opposite from non-vase exists and pervades the vase.

When you first see a golden flat-based bulbous thing, you may not have any idea what it is. Then someone tells you, “This is a vase.” At that moment when you hear the term “vase,” it induces in you the thought apprehending that golden flat-based bulbous thing as a vase.

How did that imputation of a vase arise in relation to that golden flat-based bulbous thing? It is through the appearance of that which is opposite from a non-vase. With that vase generality as the object, you then impute a vase on that golden flat-based bulbous thing.

Later on when you see a copper flat-based bulbous thing, immediately upon seeing that object, the thought thinking, “This is a vase” arises automatically. At this time no one needs to tell you that the object is a vase. It cannot be that someone has to tell you, “This is a vase,” every time you see a flat-based bulbous thing. You have to think about this: why is it that after you have been introduced to the golden flat-based bulbous thing as a vase, subsequently when you see a copper flat-based bulbous thing, you know innately that it is a vase?

The term “vase” expresses vase. It also expresses opposite from non-vase. The opposite from non-vase is a vase generality. This vase generality exists on the copper flat-based bulbous thing, the copper vase. Therefore when you see the copper flat-based bulbous thing, you will be able to immediately conceive of it as a vase.

***The term “vase”:***

- ***eliminates everything that is non-vase***
- ***expresses the opposite from non-vase.***

The term “vase” expresses a vase generality. A vase generality is opposite from non-vase. This opposite from non-vase pervades all instances of vase.

When we give the term “vase” to a copper flat-based bulbous thing, that term “vase” is eliminating everything that is non-vase and is expressing the opposite from non-vase.

The opposite from non-vase that is the vase generality exists on the copper vase. The copper vase is an instance of vase. When you see this copper flat-based bulbous thing, without thinking, immediately you can recognise it and say that it is a vase, i.e., you conceive of it as vase.

This is a complicated topic and is also an area where non-Buddhist philosophers disagree with the Buddhist presentation. For us, term (or expressive sound) and conceptual consciousness are eliminative engagers, whereas some non-Buddhist philosophical traditions assert that they are collective engagers.

Accordingly to Buddhist epistemology and the texts on valid cognition, what allows you to understand something that is similar to what you have seen or known earlier, e.g., a vase, is due to the generality existing on all instances of that object.

When the factor of opposite from non-vase on a golden vase and the factor of opposite from non-vase on a copper vase appear to the conceptual consciousness, these two appear as if they were the same thing, i.e., you see them as vases.

How does the appearance of opposite from non-vase appear to a conceptual consciousness apprehending a vase?

- To a conceptual consciousness apprehending a vase, there is the appearance of opposite from non-vase.
- To a conceptual consciousness apprehending a vase, this appearance of opposite from non-vase appears *as if it is the actual vase*. It is *not* a functioning thing.
- The appearance as opposite from non-vase to the conceptual consciousness apprehending a vase is a permanent phenomenon because it is an imputed factor.

However, to a conceptual consciousness apprehending a vase, whatever is an appearance as opposite from non-vase is not necessarily permanent.

As mentioned earlier, to a conceptual consciousness apprehending a vase, there is the appearance of opposite from non-vase. This appearance of opposite from non-vase has two parts:

- (1) one is a generally characterised phenomenon
- (2) one is a specifically characterised phenomenon

What is both (1) an appearance that is opposite from non-vase and (2) a specifically characterised phenomenon? It is the opposite from non-vase, i.e., a vase.

What is both (1) an appearance that is opposite from non-vase and (2) a generally characterised phenomenon? It is the meaning generality of a vase.

How does a vase **appear** to a conceptual consciousness apprehending a vase? The meaning generality of a vase appears to be one mixed with the vase. To a conceptual consciousness apprehending a vase, the appearance as opposite from non-vase appears as the actual vase. This is one of the reasons why we say a conceptual consciousness is a mistaken consciousness.

Why is a conceptual consciousness apprehending a vase a mistaken consciousness? Because to a conceptual consciousness apprehending a vase, there is the appearance as opposite from non-vase. This appearance

as opposite from non-vase is *not* the actual vase but it appears as the actual vase. For this reason, we say that conceptual consciousnesses are mistaken consciousnesses.

To a conceptual consciousness apprehending a vase, the appearance of opposite from non-vase appears as if it is the actual vase, but the conceptual consciousness apprehending a vase does *not* believe that the appearance of opposite from non-vase to be the actual vase. It knows that this is *not* the actual vase.

There are two things to note:

- To a conceptual consciousness apprehending a vase, there is the appearance of opposite from non-vase.
- This appearance as opposite from non-vase appears as if it was the actual vase. For this reason, we say that the conceptual consciousness apprehending a vase is mistaken.

Does the conceptual consciousness apprehending a vase *believe* that this appearance of opposite from non-vase *is* the actual vase? No, it does not.

What does the conceptual consciousness apprehending a vase apprehend? It apprehends a vase. A conceptual consciousness apprehending vase does *not* apprehend a vase generality.

What is posited to be the **appearing object** of a conceptual consciousness apprehending a vase? It is the meaning generality (or mental image) of a vase, i.e., the appearance of opposite from non-vase.

What is posited to be the **object of engagement**, the **object of mode of apprehension**, and the **determined object** for the conceptual consciousness apprehending a vase? It is just the vase.

- How does a conceptual consciousness apprehending a vase apprehend the vase? It can only apprehend a vase by way of the appearance of opposite from non-vase.
- To a conceptual consciousness apprehending a vase, the vase appears as mixed with the appearance of opposite from non-vase.
- But to that conceptual consciousness apprehending a vase, the appearance of opposite from non-vase appears as well. How does it appear? The appearance as opposite from non-vase appears as if it was the actual vase.
- To a conceptual consciousness apprehending vase, there is the appearance of opposite from non-vase. A conceptual consciousness apprehending a vase is a mistaken consciousness because to this conceptual consciousness apprehending a vase, the appearance of opposite from non-vase *appears* to be the actual vase. Therefore it is a mistaken consciousness.

Similarly the eye consciousness looking at your reflection in a mirror, the reflection of your face appears as if it was your face, but it is not your face.

When your eye consciousness sees a reflection of your face in the mirror, what appears to the eye consciousness? It is your reflection. It looks as if you are in the mirror but you don't believe that that is you. Although the reflection appears to be you, you would not normally apprehend and believe that it is you.

*Question:* (A student tries to clarify his understanding of a direct perceiver and a conceptual consciousness with reference to three examples: a shadow, a star, and a 3-D picture).

*Answer:* The examples you gave are basically direct perception with the sense consciousness.

One has to understand that there are different kinds of sense consciousnesses. Some are mistaken and some are non-mistaken sense consciousnesses.

The way an object appears to a sense consciousness can vary:

- sometimes the difference comes from the side of the object
- sometimes the difference comes from your vantage point, i.e., where you are viewing the object from
- sometimes the difference comes from problems with one's sensory powers

Many things can appear to a sense consciousness but it doesn't mean that whatever appears to a sense consciousness is necessarily valid.

An example given in the text is that when one is very upset, whatever one looks at with one's eyes will appear as unpleasant. But it is not necessarily like that. The unpleasant appearance is not coming from the side of the object. Rather it is due to the mind being disturbed that is affecting how you view things.

Let us say something happens to your eyes or you apply pressure to your eyeballs for a short time. You may see two moons but that appearance is invalid as there is only one moon.

*Question:* When you see two moons, is that considered to be a direct perceiver or a conceptual consciousness?

*Answer:* It is a wrong consciousness and not a valid mind. When you posit that the eye consciousness seeing two moons is valid, then you must find two moons outside because this is established by a valid cogniser.



*Question:* The conceptual consciousness apprehending a vase is a mistaken consciousness. Is it also a wrong consciousness?

*Answer:* The conceptual consciousness apprehending a vase is a mistaken consciousness. That is correct, but that should not be confused with a wrong consciousness.

If it is a mistaken consciousness, it is *not* necessarily a wrong consciousness, e.g., the inferential cogniser apprehending a vase. That is a mistaken consciousness but it is *not* a wrong consciousness. Why is it not a wrong consciousness? This is because it is a valid cogniser.

There are consciousnesses that are mistaken with respect to their appearing objects but which can still realise its objects.

Do you remember the definition of the facsimile of a direct perceiver that is mutually inclusive with a mistaken consciousness? A mistaken consciousness is so-called because it is mistaken with regard to its appearing object.

In preparation for class next Tuesday, please try to memorise the seven-fold division of consciousnesses, what they are, and their definitions. I will try to clarify these seven consciousnesses again with the help of some illustrations.

Translated by Ven. Tenzin Gyurme

Transcribed by Phuah Soon Ek, Vivien Ng and Patricia Lee

Edited by Cecilia Tsong