

Transcript of teachings by Khen Rinpoche Geshe Chonyi

Lesson No: 7

Date: 10th July 2012

At the end of the previous lesson, there was a question regarding the validity of the eye consciousness seeing a shadow. We are talking here about how our mind works so please pay attention.

With respect to what is apprehending the shadow, the **eye consciousness apprehending the shadow** is valid because the shadow exists in the way it appears. The eye consciousness apprehending the shadow realises and knows that it is a shadow.

While the eye consciousness apprehending the shadow is in operation, at the same time, it is possible to have a thought wondering about the nature of the shadow, “Is it a shadow of a leaf or is it a shadow of a bird?” It is possible to have this two-pointed **doubting consciousness** that is unsure of exactly what kind of shadow it is. This doubting consciousness is included within the seven-fold division of consciousness.

The eye consciousness sees the shadow but at the same time one is wondering what kind of shadow it is. These two different consciousnesses are operating at the same time:

1. An eye consciousness apprehending the shadow that is valid as it is apprehending the shadow as it is.
2. A thought wondering what kind of shadow it is. This is doubt.

Let us say that the shadow is a shadow of a bird. After some thinking, you conclude, “That is definitely the shadow of a bird. Its shape looks like a shadow of a bird. Therefore it must be the shadow of a bird.” This is the conclusion that you have arrived at.

The doubt you had earlier is now transformed into a correct assumption. In reality it is true that it is a shadow of a bird. You have concluded correctly that it is a shadow of a bird but nevertheless this mind that is just an assumption has not yet realised it is a shadow of the bird. So it is not a valid cognition of this object being the shadow of a bird.

You can make an assumption that accords with reality. You can also make assumptions with all kinds of reasons many of which can be wrong. You can use many reasons but you may arrive at a correct conclusion with a wrong reason. A **correctly assuming consciousness** is like that. A correct assumption is a mind that arrives at a decisive conclusion that accords with the reality of that object but that conclusion may *not* necessarily have been reached with a correct reason. Whatever the correctly assuming consciousness apprehends, that object has to exist in reality as it is. The definition of a correctly assuming consciousness is a

factually concordant determinative knower that is controvertible with regard to determining its object. You can see from here that it is important to memorise the definition of a correctly assuming consciousness in order to know what a correct assumption is.

It is possible for the correctly assuming consciousness to be transformed into a valid cogniser. Initially you have the correct assumption that it is a shadow of a bird but you may not have arrived at that assumption through a valid reason. Subsequently when you look up, you can see a bird and there is the shadow of that bird on the ground. Based on this, you are now very sure that the shadow is the shadow of the bird. Your eye consciousness is apprehending the shadow of a bird and, in your mind, you know that it is the shadow of a bird.

Another scenario is this: while it is a shadow of a bird, it is possible that you may apprehend it to be a shadow of a leaf. The mind that apprehends the shadow of a leaf is a **wrong consciousness** because the principal object of that mind is the shadow of a leaf. The definition of a wrong consciousness is a knower that engages its object erroneously.

After you generated the valid cognition realising that the shadow is the shadow of a bird, from the second moment of that valid cognition onwards, when you remember the shadow of the bird, the second moment of that valid cognition is a **subsequent cogniser**. That is a knower that realises what has already been realised.

I remembered that there was a question about the shadow that was brought up at the end of the previous lesson. An eye consciousness apprehending the shadow is valid with respect to what it is apprehending. At the same time it is possible to have doubts and you may wonder, “What exactly is that shadow?” At that time there is no valid cognition that the shadow is the shadow of a bird but through the process of thinking, you may generate a correctly assuming consciousness. Then subsequently you have a valid cognition apprehending the shadow to be the shadow of a bird.

Based on this example, you can have a rough understanding of the seven-fold division of consciousness: what is a wrong consciousness, a correctly assuming consciousness, a valid cogniser, and so forth. You can then try to apply this understanding to other examples.

There is a shadow of a bird on the ground. The shadow appears to the eye consciousness apprehending it.

Question from Khen Rinpoche: Does the shadow of a bird appear to the eye consciousness apprehending it?

There is a consciousness to which the shadow of a bird appears. I have just explained that this consciousness is a valid cogniser. It is valid with

respect to the shadow that is appearing to it but this consciousness is not a valid cogniser with respect to the shadow of the bird.

Khen Rinpoche: Do you agree with what I have said?

There are two things here. In reality it is the shadow of a bird. When you first see the shadow, your eye consciousness understands that it is a shadow but your eye consciousness does not understand that it is the shadow of a bird. If the eye consciousness realised that the shadow is the shadow of a bird, that person would not have any doubt.

But that person has a doubt. “What kind of shadow is it?” This means that he does not realise that it is the shadow of a bird.

Question from Khen Rinpoche: To the eye consciousness apprehending the shadow, does the shadow of the bird appear?

It is clear that whatever appears to a collective engager or a direct perceiver is *not* necessarily ascertained. Everything appears but not everything that appears is ascertained.

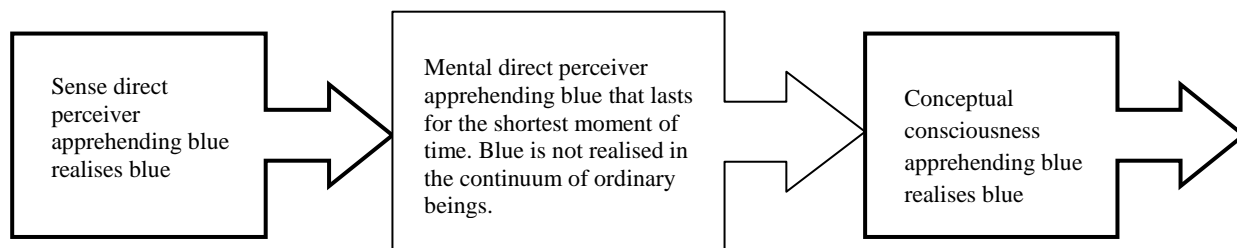
Question: According to past teachings by Lama Zopa Rinpoche, he said that when you see something, say a bird, for the first time, it appears to you fully. But immediately after that, what you see is an inherently existent bird. When you talk about subsequent cognisers, are you seeing that inherently existent bird or just the bird as it is, i.e., not an inherently existent object?

Answer: Firstly, I need to know from the perspective of which tenet are you asking this question?

According to the Sutra School, when the object exists, it is necessarily truly established, existing from its own side, and existing inherently. Do you remember the definition of a specifically characterised phenomenon? It is a phenomenon that is established by way of its own character without being merely imputed by a term or thought consciousness.

When you think of memories, it is remembering something that you have already realised. So a remembering consciousness is a conceptual subsequent cogniser.

An eye consciousness apprehending blue is a direct perceiver and it is a sense consciousness. It is a valid cogniser. Specifically, an eye consciousness apprehending blue is a sense direct perceiver. After the generation of the sense direct perceiver apprehending blue, a mental direct perceiver apprehending blue is generated. Following that you have the conceptual consciousness apprehending blue.



This is the order:

1. First the sense direct perceiver apprehending blue realises blue.
2. Following that the mental direct perceiver apprehending blue arises but in the continuum of ordinary beings, blue is *not* realised by this mental direct perceiver apprehending blue. This is because the mental direct perceiver apprehending blue in the continuum of an ordinary being lasts for only a very short moment, i.e., the shortest moment of time¹. It is so brief that ordinary beings cannot realise the object.
3. After the mental direct perceiver apprehending blue is generated for the shortest moment of time, the conceptual consciousness apprehending blue arises, i.e., the thought thinking of blue. This conceptual consciousness apprehending blue realises blue.

We mentioned in the previous lesson that the conceptual consciousness apprehending blue realises blue but it can only realise blue through the medium of the meaning generality (or mental image) of blue.

What I have mentioned here is for the purpose of giving you a rough understanding of how the mind works. In reality it may not be exactly like this as it depends on whose views you follow. Different scholars have different views on this issue and it can be very complicated.

Question: I am trying to understand the logic of the mental direct perceiver not realising blue. Can I compare this with the first moment of the sense direct perceiver apprehending blue? Can I say because the mental direct perceiver in the first moment does not realise blue, it follows that the sense direct perceiver also does not realise blue in the first moment. It is only able to realise blue through its subsequent cogniser that is a sense direct perceiver.

Answer: It depends on how you define the first moment of comprehension by the sense direct perceiver apprehending blue.

Question: I also have this qualm as to whether the first moment of perception refers to the first time you see the object in this lifetime after which it is no longer the first moment as different schools have different assertions.

¹ When the duration of a finger snap is divided into 65 parts, 1/65 of a finger snap is the shortest moment of time. (*Basic Program – First Cycle: Lesson 9 of Module 11 on the Ornament for Clear Realisations*).

Answer: The “new” in the definition of a valid cogniser refers to the first time in this lifetime.

As for the duration of the moment that we are talking about here, we are *not* talking about the smallest moment of time but a very short time like a finger snap. Literally, in Tibetan, it refers to the instant it takes to complete an action.

Question: (The student tries to clarify what happens with the first moment you look at blue that is *not* the first time you realise blue in your lifetime, e.g., seeing blue as a baby and seeing the same blue many years later).

Khen Rinpoche: Are you talking about the same blue?

Student: The same blue.

Khen Rinpoche: Then that becomes the second time, not the first time.

Student: Same blue at different times: is that considered as a second moment?

Khen Rinpoche: Yes. Seeing the same blue for second time is considered a subsequent cogniser.

As mentioned before it is very important to gain an understanding of the seven-fold division of consciousness on the basis of having memorised the definitions. Having memorised the definitions, you can then compare the two valid cognisers. For example what is the difference between an inferential valid cogniser and the direct valid cogniser based on their definitions? After that you examine the subsequent cogniser and so forth. Having understood the definitions that you have memorised, you can take a specific mind as the subject and check whether it is among the seven consciousnesses.

Khen Rinpoche: Can anyone see a mind that is not one of the seven minds? Can you give an example?

The dream elephant

Regarding the dream elephant, there is a consciousness to which a dream elephant appears.

- Between a sense consciousness and a mental consciousness, it is a mental consciousness
- Between a conceptual consciousness and a non-conceptual consciousness, it is a non-conceptual consciousness
- In this case this dream consciousness is a **non-conceptual wrong consciousness**. Dreaming of an elephant is a wrong consciousness because that is defined as a knower that engages its object erroneously.
- What is the object of engagement of this consciousness that is

dreaming of an elephant? It is the dream elephant that it perceives as a real elephant. But a dream elephant is *not* an elephant.

Wrong consciousness vs. mistaken consciousness

What is the difference then between a mistaken consciousness and a wrong consciousness? This analysis has to be done on the basis of their definitions:

- A wrong consciousness is a knower that engages its object erroneously.
- A mistaken consciousness is a knower that is mistaken with regard to its appearing object.

We have to know clearly the definitions. Only then can we begin to analyse. Let us use as an example an inferential valid cogniser realising vase.

- An inferential valid cogniser realising vase is not a wrong consciousness. It is a newly incontrovertible determinative knower that is directly produced in dependence on a correct sign that is its basis.
- It is incontrovertible with respect to its principal object. What is its principal object? It is the vase because it realises the vase.
- Therefore with respect to the vase, it is a valid mind and it is newly incontrovertible.
- Because it is a valid cogniser, it is *necessarily* not a wrong consciousness. A valid cogniser and a wrong consciousness are *mutually exclusive*. There is no common locus between them. The inferential valid cogniser is *not* a wrong consciousness because it is a valid cogniser.

While it is not a wrong consciousness, it is a mistaken consciousness. Why?

- A mistaken consciousness is a knower that is mistaken with regard to its appearing object.
- The appearing object of a conceptual (or thought) consciousness is necessarily permanent.
- The appearing object of a conceptual consciousness apprehending vase is the meaning generality of vase and *not* the actual vase.
- This meaning generality is a factor that is imputed by thought; therefore it is necessarily permanent. Whatever appears to the conceptual consciousness apprehending vase is not posited to be the appearing object. Rather the appearing object is the factor that is imputed by thought, i.e., the imputed factor that appears as vase. That imputed factor, the meaning generality (or mental image) of vase, is posited to be the appearing object of the conceptual consciousness apprehending vase.

The appearing object of the conceptual consciousness apprehending vase or the appearing object of the inferential valid cogniser apprehending vase

is the appearance of vase. This appearance of vase to the conceptual consciousness apprehending vase is *not* the actual vase.

When we visualise offering gold and diamonds during pujas, the gold and diamonds you are thinking about, are they actually gold and diamonds? If this appearance of gold is actually gold, it absurdly follows that there will be no more poverty in this world.

What is the appearing object of the conceptual consciousness apprehending vase? It is the appearance of vase. While the appearance of vase is *not* the actual vase, it appears as the actual vase. The conceptual consciousness apprehending vase is *unable to realise* that the appearance of vase is *not* the actual vase. It is therefore mistaken with regard to its appearing object.

Do you know now how a conceptual consciousness is mistaken with regard to its appearing object?

What is the appearing object of a conceptual consciousness apprehending vase? It is the meaning generality of vase. The appearing object of your conceptual (or thought) consciousness thinking of vase is the meaning generality of vase. While the meaning generality of vase is not the vase, it appears as vase. That being the case, it is mistaken with regard to its appearing object.

Question: What is the relationship between the conceptual consciousness and a mental image? Are they one entity?

Answer: The conceptual consciousness and its appearing object are not one substantiality, because one is a functioning thing and the other is a permanent phenomenon. But it is questionable if they are one entity.

Student: It seems like they are one entity.

Khen Rinpoche: I will need to think about this.

Question: (A student tries to clarify what is a mental sense power and whether the mental consciousness can be rendered unable of functioning through a defect in the mental sense power as can happen with the sense consciousnesses and its relevant sense powers).

Answer: The mental sense power is posited to be *any* of the six consciousnesses in its immediately preceding moment.

Let us return to the example of the sense direct perceiver apprehending blue. The sense direct perceiver apprehending blue is generated and lasts for a moment but when that sense direct perceiver apprehending blue ceases, immediately the mental direct perceiver apprehending blue is generated. The uncommon empowering condition for this mental direct

perceiver apprehending blue is the mental sense power. This consciousness arises due to the sense direct perceiver apprehending blue that immediately preceded it.

Khen Rinpoche: Say the sense direct perceiver apprehends blue for ten minutes. At the very last moment, it becomes the mental sense power. This last moment of the sense direct perceiver apprehending blue is the mental sense power.

The last moment of the sense direct perceiver apprehending blue is the mental sense power. In dependence on this last moment of the sense direct perceiver apprehending blue that acts as its uncommon empowering condition, in the next moment a mental direct perceiver apprehending blue is generated. However in the continuum of an ordinary being, this mental direct perceiver lasts only for the shortest moment of time.

(A student misunderstands Khen Rinpoche's explanation given above. The student thinks one must look at the object for ten minutes before the mental sense power can arise!).

In the monastery, there was an example where the teacher was giving an illustration of a functioning thing. He said, "The illustration of a functioning thing is blue." A student then thought that a functioning thing is *necessarily* blue!

Khen Rinpoche: This student is similar to you!

The mental direct perceiver is posited to be the consciousness that is immediately generated after any of the six consciousnesses. The consciousness that arises immediately after the cessation of the sense direct perceiver apprehending blue is the mental direct perceiver apprehending blue. It is said that for an ordinary being, this mental direct perceiver is an awareness to which an object appears but is not ascertained (AAA).

After that comes the conceptual consciousness apprehending blue. It is the conceptual consciousness that induces the ascertainment of blue because it is the mind that thinks, "This is blue" or "This is not blue." Based on that, comes the convention (or term) "blue."

The handout given out today (Handout No. 5 dated 10th July 2012) is about direct perceivers. Please read this on your own and try your best to understand it. Memorise and think about the definitions. We have to look at direct perceivers of which there are four divisions:

- sense direct perceivers
- mental direct perceivers
- self-knowing direct perceivers
- yogic direct perceivers

These terms will come up very often especially when we look at the next module on tenets. You have to get some ideas about them now. Then when they come up again when we look at tenets, over time they will become clearer.

What is really important is to understand the way in which direct perception and conceptual consciousness work because the way they engage their objects is different. You have to have a rough idea of this:

- The conceptual consciousness can only apprehend its object by way of the meaning generality or mental (or generic) image of the object.
- Direct perception does not require the help of any mental image but rather it perceives its object as it is. Everything about the object appears to the direct perceiver.

This is the minimum that you **must** keep in mind.

On the basis of this rough idea of how a direct perceiver and a conceptual consciousness apprehend their objects comes the seven-fold division of consciousness. You need to know the names and the meanings of these seven consciousnesses. In order to know their meanings, you need to memorise their definitions. On the basis of memorising their definitions, you can then understand what these seven consciousnesses are.

When we talk about a valid cogniser, **what exactly is a valid cogniser?** A valid cogniser is a new incontrovertible knower. From its definition, you then try to understand what does “new” refer to, what does “incontrovertible,” and “knower” mean. You will be able to get a very clear idea of what a valid cogniser is from its definition. This clear understanding of the valid cogniser has to come by depending on its definition. That means you have to know the definition.

Using this process, you know what these seven consciousnesses are, their names, and definitions. Once you know what a valid cogniser is and its definition, if someone were to ask you, “What is an AAA? **Is an AAA a valid cogniser?**” the answer is then very clear, “No!”

In order to be able to say with certainty that an AAA is not a valid cogniser, it depends on whether you know what an AAA is, whether you know its definition: that an AAA is a knower that is a common locus of (1) having 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.

The key words, “unable to induce ascertainment with respect to its object of engagement” indicates that it is not a valid cogniser because a valid cogniser necessarily induces ascertainment with respect to its object of engagement, i.e., it necessarily realises its object.

In the same way, if you were asked, **“Is a wrong consciousness a valid cogniser?”** you must be able to say immediately, “No!” When you are asked, “Why?” your answer will be, “Because a wrong consciousness is defined as a knower that engages its object erroneously. A valid cogniser *never* engages its object erroneously.”

Is a correctly assuming consciousness a valid cogniser? The answer is very clear when you look at the definition: a correctly assuming consciousness is a factually concordant determinative knower that is controvertible with regard to determining its object.

A valid cogniser is a new incontrovertible knower whereas a correctly assuming consciousness is a determinative knower that is controvertible with regard to determining its object. There is no common locus between incontrovertible and controvertible, i.e., there is nothing that is both.

Is a doubting consciousness a valid cogniser? The answer has to come once again from looking at the definition: a doubting consciousness is a knower that has qualms two-pointedly by its own power.

A valid cogniser is never indecisive in this way. A valid cogniser completely realises its object. It never doubts nor does it have any qualms whatsoever regarding its object.

From this you can see that when you are comparing two consciousnesses, when you don't know what they are, there is nothing to compare. You only know what they are by depending on their definitions. Without knowing their definitions there is no way to understand what they are. Therefore it is important that you must memorise the definitions. Only then can you compare them.

You will then slowly know whether these consciousnesses are mistaken, non-mistaken, conceptual, non-conceptual, factually concordant, discordant, realises its object, not realises its object, and so forth. This comes down to the knowing the definitions.

There are many things to think about. How many possibilities are there between an inferential valid cogniser and a mistaken consciousness? By knowing the number of possibilities, the result will be that it will become clearer as to what an inferential valid cogniser and a mistaken consciousness are.

Homework:

How many possibilities are there between:

1. an inferential valid cogniser and a mistaken consciousness?
2. a conceptual consciousness and a correctly assuming consciousness?
3. a wrong consciousness and a mistaken consciousness?

Do this homework on your own. By doing this, you will get a clearer idea of these seven consciousnesses. Listening alone will not help with your understanding of this topic. You have to think about it. If you don't think about it, there is no way to understand this topic. When you do your homework, please do not refer to the table on page 4 of the handout (Handout No. 3 dated 3rd July 2012). The answers are there. It will be a waste of time and defeats the purpose of doing this homework. The most important thing is not so much getting the correct answer with regard to the number of possibilities. The most important part is your reasons for your answer.

(A student, Tan Seow Kheng, shares her experience of studying in the Basic Program).

Khen Rinpoche: I thought it is good for some students to share with you how they learn, what their feelings are, and how they encourage themselves to study.

Some of them have been here a long time. They have some experience. They have been in the last Basic Program cycle and have completed one round of the Basic Program. Yet many of them are still coming back to study again. Those who come back again have already completed the Basic Program. I am wondering why they are coming back. They have graduated and already have their certificates yet they still come back and seem to enjoy the classes. So I thought that some of them could share how they feel and how they enjoy these classes.

This will happen not at every class but once in a while. I asked some of them to share their experiences on how they study, what benefits they get, why they study all these difficult topics, and what they get out of it in the end.

It is hoped that in this way it will encourage you to work hard and to study Buddhist philosophy. I hope this sharing will help to encourage you.

Everyone is the same in that everyone definitely can study. Some may be good in their studies. Some may not be so good. This doesn't matter. I think everyone can study. You have the merit to come here so there is no excuse that you do not have the merit to come here. I don't think that is the case. You have the merit to study these subjects but now it depends on how much effort you want to put in, how much you see the point of studying.

By putting in some effort, hopefully you will be able to enjoy the classes. Once you enjoy the classes, my job is done.

That is the most difficult part of being a teacher. This topic is extremely difficult and I really don't know how to make you taste the flavour of the

teachings in your mouth.

So this is what I am trying to do. I cannot go through every single word. That is not possible. Also I don't see much point in doing that because it will take too much time to complete the module. What I am trying to do is giving you some pointers, ideas, and trying my best to relate it to the subject. When you enjoy the classes, you will want to study more deeply. You will read different books, go deeper into the topic, and your understanding will improve. Then you will be able to enjoy the Buddha's teachings. That is the whole idea.

I cannot go through every single word of the text. That is impossible but I am trying to give some flavour (of the teachings). Some time it is extremely difficult. I don't how to make the flavour and you do not know how to enjoy the flavour. Sometimes that makes things difficult but we will try. I hope you will enjoy your studies.

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