

## Transcript of teachings by Khen Rinpoche Geshe Chonyi

**Lesson No: 9**

**Date: 17<sup>th</sup> July 2012**

All page references in this lesson refer to **Handout No. 5 dated 10<sup>th</sup> July 2012: *The Study of Mind and its Functions*** (Direct perceiver and its divisions) unless otherwise stated.

### **Sense Direct Perceiver**

A sense direct perceiver possesses the following three characteristics:

1. It is produced in dependence on its uncommon empowering condition, a physical sense power.
2. It is free from conceptuality, i.e., it is non-conceptual.
3. It is non-mistaken.

If someone were to ask you: “Is a direct perceiver necessarily a valid cogniser?” you should be able to say, “It is not necessarily so.” You have to understand why it is not necessarily so.

The handout (page 2) clearly states that a sense direct perceiver has three divisions:

1. valid cognisers that are sense direct perceivers
2. subsequent cognisers that are sense direct perceivers
3. awarenesses to which an object appears and is not ascertained (AAA) that are sense direct perceivers

From this you should know instantly that if it is a sense direct perceiver, it is not necessarily a valid cogniser.

The chart on the seven-fold consciousnesses (Page 4, Handout No. 3 dated 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2012) shows very clearly how many consciousnesses are valid cognisers, how many are non-valid awarenesses, and so forth. You should be able to give the answer immediately.

(Students answered that two are valid cognisers and five are non-valid cognisers).

*Khen Rinpoche: Are you sure? I thought it was three and four? Isn't a subsequent cogniser a valid cogniser? You must confirm this. You cannot have doubts anymore. A subsequent cogniser doesn't realise its object?*

(Students confirm the above answer).

*Khen Rinpoche: Ok! Good.*

### **Mental Direct Perceiver**

What determines a mental direct perceiver? A mental direct perceiver possesses the following three characteristics:

1. It is produced in dependence on its own uncommon empowering

condition, a mental sense power.  
 2. It is free from conceptuality, i.e., it is non-conceptual.  
 3. It is non-mistaken.  
 However, these three characteristics are insufficient. In addition, a mental direct perceiver is an **other-knower**.

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Definition of a **mental direct perceiver** is:

- 1) that which is generated in dependence on a mental sense power which is its own uncommon empowering condition and
- 2) is a consciousness that is an other-knower which is free from conceptuality and non-mistaken.

We can only understand what a mental direct perceiver is on the basis of its definition. That is why one has to memorise the definition. On the basis of the definition, we are then able to extract the essential features that make up a mental direct perceiver. From the definition of the mental direct perceiver, we see that there must be four characteristics:

1. It has to be generated in dependence on a mental sense power, i.e., its own uncommon empowering condition.
2. It is free from conceptuality.
3. It is non-mistaken.
4. It is an other-knower.

When all these four features are present, that mind is a mental direct perceiver.

Just like the sense direct perceiver, the mental direct perceiver has three divisions:

1. valid cognisers that are mental direct perceivers
2. subsequent cognisers that are mental direct perceivers
3. AAAs that are mental direct perceivers

It is clear from this that there are *no* mental direct perceivers that are:

- inferential valid cognisers
- correctly assuming consciousnesses
- doubting consciousnesses
- wrong consciousnesses

### Self-knowing direct perceiver

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The definition of a **self-knowing direct perceiver** is: **that which has the aspect of an apprehender, is free from conceptuality, and is non-mistaken.**

Among the four Buddhist tenets, most of them assert self-knowers:

- The Sutra School (SS), the Mind-Only School (MOS), and the Autonomy Middle Way School (AMWS) assert self-knowers, and they each have their own reasons for doing so.
- The Great Exposition School (GES) and the Consequence Middle Way

School (CMWS) do not assert self-knowers.

### ***Self-knower and other-knower***

A self-knower is:

- that which has the aspect of an apprehender
- is an experiencer of a consciousness
- is of one collection with the consciousness that it experiences
- is a consciousness that is directed inwards and not directed outwards

How does a self-knower experience the consciousness that comes along with it? It experiences that consciousness non-dualistically, i.e., through the subsidence of duality.

An analogy to understand a self-knower and an other-knower is the illumination of a flame. The nature of a flame is that it is bright and illuminating. The flame can also illuminate other objects. Likewise the other-knower is like the flame that illuminates another object *other than itself*.

A consciousness also has these two factors:

1. By nature it is clear and knowing and is related to having the aspect of an apprehender.
2. It is also able to illuminate or clarify other objects and is related to having the aspect of the apprehended.

These two factors are established in any consciousness.

### ***Related to memory***

Why do some tenets assert self-knowers? It is related to memory. Memory explains why we can remember things. For example, you see the object blue. Later you remember, “I saw blue at that time.” The reason why you are able to remember having seen blue in the past is because in the past, there was a valid cogniser that realised blue.

You have a memory of that experience. That memory consists of the memory of remembering (1) the object, blue, and (2) the subject, the consciousness that saw blue. When you think, “I remember seeing blue,” you remember *both* the object and the subject.

All the tenets assert a memory, even the highest school, the CMWS. We remember both the object *and* the mind that experienced the object.

- Why do we remember blue? This is because at an earlier time, there was a valid cogniser realising blue.
- Likewise, the reason why we remember an eye consciousness apprehending blue is because, at that time, there was a valid cogniser, an experiencer of that eye consciousness apprehending blue. That is why at a later moment we can remember the eye consciousness that apprehended blue.

This is the reason why the proponents of self-knowers assert that there

must be a self-knower, an experiencer of the eye consciousness apprehending blue at the time when the eye consciousness was apprehending blue. Without this self-knower that experienced the eye consciousness apprehending blue at that time, later on you will not be able to remember that eye consciousness that saw blue.

For this reason, therefore the proponents of the SS, MOS, and the AMWS assert self-knowers. For them if you didn't assert self-knowers, you would not be able to remember the eye consciousness that saw blue earlier. This is the most important reason for those who assert self-knowers: to account for memory. It is important to understand why self-knowers are asserted.

- Just like the analogy of the flame that is illuminating by nature, the consciousness that is able to experience itself is a self-knower.
- The consciousness that is also able to illuminate objects other than itself is the other-knower.

### ***Aspect of an apprehender & aspect of the apprehended***

It is also important to understand what is an aspect of the apprehender and an aspect of the apprehended.

- The factor of a consciousness that is just mere experience of itself is having the aspect of an apprehender.
- The factor of a consciousness that experiences something other than consciousness itself is the aspect of the apprehended.

### ***Main mind and mental factor***

A self-knowing direct perceiver is neither a main mind nor a mental factor. It is said that the presentation of the main mind and the mental factor is from the perspective of the aspect of the apprehended. The self-knower has the aspect of an apprehender. Therefore it is neither a main mind nor a mental factor.

### ***Divisions***

A self-knowing direct perceiver has three divisions:

1. valid cognisers that are self-knowing direct perceivers
2. subsequent cognisers that are self-knowing direct perceivers
3. AAAs that are self-knowing direct perceivers

The illustrations of a self-knowing direct perceiver that is an AAA are:

- a self-knowing direct perceiver in the continuum of a Samkhya that experiences bliss as being a consciousness
- a self-knowing direct perceiver in the continuum of a Vaisheshika that experiences bliss as being a consciousness
- a self-knower in the continuum of a Nihilist that experiences an inferential cogniser as being a prime cogniser

The proponents of non-Buddhist Indian philosophical systems, such as the Samkhyas and Vaisheshikas, assert that bliss is matter and not consciousness, whereas for Buddhists, bliss is necessarily a

consciousness. In the continuum of a Samkhya who experiences bliss, bliss appears but he doesn't realise bliss is a consciousness. According to proponents of self-knowers, since bliss is a consciousness, there is a self-knower that is the experiencer of this bliss. The Samkhya who experiences bliss does not realise that bliss is a consciousness. Therefore the self-knower that experiences the bliss but does not realise the bliss is a self-knower that is an AAA.

The Nihilists only assert direct valid cogniser. They do not assert inferential valid cognisers. In the continuum of the Nihilist who does not believe in an inferential valid cogniser, nevertheless in his mind there is an inferential valid cogniser whether he believes it or not. So there must be a self-knower experiencing this inferential valid cogniser. So we have to say that the self-knower experiencing the inferential valid cogniser in the continuum of a Nihilist, that self-knower does not realise the inferential valid cogniser but is nevertheless experiencing it, is a self-knower that is an AAA.

*Question:* Can any self-knower that *experiences* an AAA be cited as an example of a self-knower that *is* an AAA?

*Answer:* An ear consciousness to which sound appears when one is fully engrossed in looking at something is an AAA. There is a self-knower that is experiencing this AAA. Your question pertains to whether this self-knower that is experiencing this AAA is itself a self-knower that *is* an AAA.

The answer is not necessarily so. It is possible to have a self-knower experiencing an AAA to realise the AAA.

The ear consciousness to which sound appears in the continuum of someone whose mind is very engrossed with a form is an AAA. The self-knower experiencing this ear consciousness can realise that mind that is an AAA.

Why? Because later on you remember, "Did I hear that sound or not?" Later on don't you remember that AAA? So why can't we say that the self-knower that experiences the AAA can realise the AAA?

*Question:* It was mentioned earlier that the study of mind and mental factors is with respect to the aspect of the apprehended. So far there has been no mention of the aspect of the apprehender except for the self-knower. How is something apprehended without an apprehender?

In the previous lesson, it was posited that the immediately preceding condition for the eye consciousness apprehending blue is in the aspect of the apprehended. It was not stated whether the eye consciousness apprehending blue that is generated immediately after that is in the aspect of an apprehender though that seems to be the natural inference.

*Ven Gyurme:* (Paraphrasing the question): In the last lesson, Khen

Rinpoche spoke of three things that came together. Consciousness is one of them. It was mentioned that consciousness is generated into the aspect of vase. In the next moment, that consciousness transforms into the entity of an eye consciousness apprehending vase.

At the time when the three things came together, there is no eye consciousness apprehending vase because cause has to precede effect. But at that time there is a consciousness that is generated into the aspect of vase. In the next moment, that consciousness transforms into the eye consciousness apprehending vase.

He (the student) is saying that this eye consciousness apprehending vase has an aspect of the apprehender. Why? Because it is a continuation of the consciousness that existed prior to it at the time when the three things meet.

*Question:* Where does the aspect of the apprehender come in the study of mind and mental factors or is there no such thing?

*Answer:* There is no such thing.

*Question:* What then is apprehending the aspect of the apprehended?

*Answer:* An aspect of an apprehender does not merely refer to any mind that realises another mind.

The study of the aspected consciousness is one of the most difficult aspects of this topic. The presentation of main mind and the mental factors is from the perspective of the aspect of the apprehended. Why? How do you distinguish a main mind from a mental factor?

- A main mind realises the entity of the object.
- A mental factor realises the characteristics of the object.

Therefore the main mind and the mental factors are explained from the perspective of the aspect of the apprehended. Through the sense direct perceiver, mental direct perceiver, and yogic direct perceiver, one explains the mind and mental factors.

The presentation of main mind and mental factor is not done from the perspective of a self-knowing direct perceiver because a self-knower is just a mere experiencer of the entity of the consciousness. Self-knower is that which has the aspect of an apprehender.

The factor of a consciousness that is just mere experience of itself is an inherent part of consciousness. From the moment consciousness exists, that consciousness has the factor of experiencing itself.

*Question:* The main mind realises the entity of the object. Why can't that object be consciousness itself? Why must it be other objects?

*Answer:* We are trying to find out about the entity of an object. The object

can be a consciousness but it has to be a consciousness other than itself.

*Student:* In this case since consciousness can be divided into the main mind and mental factors, the main mind and mental factors are not all-encompassing as there is a category of self-knowers, that are consciousnesses, that are excluded.

*Khen Rinpoche:* Yes, you can say that.

*Question:* Would this self-knowing direct perceiver be a non-associated compositional factor? Is it a consciousness?

*Answer:* The self-knowing direct perceiver is a division of direct perceivers; therefore it has to be a consciousness. A direct perceiver is necessarily a knower; so self-knowing direct perceivers will necessarily be consciousnesses.

The aspect of an apprehender and aspect of the apprehended are *necessarily* consciousnesses:

- A self-knower has the aspect of an apprehender.
- The sense direct perceiver, mental direct perceiver, and yogic direct perceiver are other-knowers and they have the aspects of the apprehended.

*Question:* The first moment of the eye consciousness apprehending blue is a sense direct valid cogniser apprehending blue. The impermanence of blue also appears to such a consciousness but it doesn't realise the impermanence of blue. Is such a mind a sense direct valid cogniser with respect to apprehending blue but an AAA with respect to apprehending the impermanence of blue?

*Answer:* The eye consciousness apprehending blue is a valid cogniser. If it is a valid cogniser then it cannot be an AAA. To this eye consciousness, the impermanence of blue also appears but is not ascertained. Does that make the eye consciousness apprehending blue an AAA?

This eye consciousness apprehending blue is an AAA *with respect to the impermanence of blue* but this eye consciousness apprehending blue is not an AAA. Why? Because whether a mind is an AAA or not depends on its object of engagement. The object of engagement of the eye consciousness apprehending blue is blue and is not impermanence of blue.

The conclusion therefore is:

- the eye consciousness apprehending blue is a valid cogniser and is *not* an AAA,
- but *with respect to the impermanence of blue*, the eye consciousness apprehending blue is an AAA.
- That does *not* entail that the eye consciousness *apprehending blue itself* is an AAA.

*Question:* A vase generality is the opposite from non-vase. The meaning generality of vase is the appearance of opposite from non-vase mixed with the vase appearing. Are these two mutually exclusive?

*Answer:* Is opposite from non-vase a vase generality? Yes, opposite from non-vase is a vase generality.

When we say vase generality, it is different from the meaning generality of vase. The meaning generality of vase has to be an appearance of opposite from non-vase. That is insufficient. It also has to be a imputed factor, i.e., a factor imputed by thought.

*Question:* Is vase generality permanent or impermanent?

*Answer:* A vase generality is permanent because it is also an imputation by thought.

In general, generalities and instances are imputed by thought. But whatever is a vase generality is not *necessarily* permanent. For example, something that is a vase generality but is not permanent is “opposite from non-vase,” i.e., vase, which is impermanent. So whatever is a vase generality is not permanent, but a vase generality itself is permanent.

*Question:* Does “opposite from non-vase” also include permanent phenomenon such as the absence of a horse in this gompa?

*Answer:* The absence of a horse in this gompa is *not* opposite from non-vase. Opposite from non-vase is necessarily vase. Therefore it is necessarily impermanent.

*Question:* Is there something that is a vase generality that is a permanent phenomenon?

*Answer:* Appearance of opposite from non-vase.

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(Benny Law shares his experience of studying the Basic Program)

*Khen Rinpoche:* Benny said he took nine years to understand a little bit (of the teachings). I took 30 years to understand a little bit (of the teachings). It took about 18 years of full-time studies but still I have a lot of questions. Having been here for 12 years, I taught the first Basic Program and now I am teaching the second Basic Program. I have more questions now than the first time round.

*This is the quality of the Buddha’s teachings. The more you study, the more questions you will have. That means you are getting more intelligent That means you are getting closer to enlightenment! We say the Buddha knows everything. Each time you clear some doubt in your mind, you understand*



*something better. That means you are closer to knowing everything.*

*There is no other way. It is not easy, but just put in the effort, make strong prayers and give your time to attend discussions. Try to put in the effort. Not everyone can become the same but somehow you will get something out of this. This is the important part of studying.*

*In the course of one's studies, all sorts of obstacles and hindrances can occur. Therefore it is very important to make strong aspirational prayers all the time to succeed in your studies.*

*For that reason on this coming Friday, I will be giving a short introduction to the deity, the Most Secret Hayagriva, and some suggestions for a short practice based on this deity. Come if you can to this introduction of the Most Secret Hayagriva and find out about the short practice that you can do.*

*Relying on Most Secret Hayagriva through this short meditational practice with mantra recitation becomes the most supreme method of overcoming obstacles in one's learning process and one's studies. It can also help to overcome both human and non-human interferences. Also this organisation and some of us as individuals have a very long karmic connection with this deity.*

*In the previous Basic Program, we collected some money from all the students and, collectively as a class, we sponsored the Most Secret Hayagriva extensive tsog offering and fulfilment puja several times at Sera Je Monastery.*

*This time I did not say anything but recently this idea was brought up because at that time there were many students who did not understand the subject. So it was suggested that now is the best time to do the puja with the hope that everyone can understand this topic faster.*

*It is important to have faith and make a single-pointed request to the deity. But the most important factor remains one's own determination. On the basis of maintaining that firm determination, one then makes single-pointed request to and rely on this deity. Of course then something can be achieved.*

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