

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

### **Lesson No: 16**

**Date: 14<sup>th</sup> August 2012**

*Question:* You mentioned that a mental direct perceiver for an ordinary being is an awareness to which an object appears but is not ascertained (AAA). Can there be mental direct perceivers that are valid cognisers?

*Answer:* Not all mental direct perceivers in the continua of ordinary beings are AAAs. The mental direct perceiver apprehending form in the continuum of an ordinary being, that is an AAA. Are there mental direct valid cognisers in the continuum of an ordinary being? Yes, it is possible.

When mental direct perceivers are divided, there are:

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

The first moment of a clairvoyance in the mind of an ordinary being that knows another person's mind can be posited as a mental direct valid cogniser.

*Question:* When the consciousness apprehends an object, at which stage is it known as an appearing object and at which stage is it known as an object of engagement?

*Answer:* For an eye consciousness apprehending blue:

- when blue appears to the eye consciousness apprehending it, it becomes the appearing object.
- when the eye consciousness apprehending blue realises blue, blue becomes the object of the mode of apprehension.

*Question:* According to the perspective of Sera Je College, there is no object of engagement for a wrong consciousness. Why is this so? What is the appearing object of this consciousness?

*Khen Rinpoche:* I have already explained the reason for not positing an object of engagement for a wrong consciousness.

### **Awareness to which an object appears but is not ascertained**

*Question:* In Handout No. 8 dated 7<sup>th</sup> August 2012, there is this passage following the definition of an AAA:

However, one should know the manner in which not to posit as the definition of “something’s being an awareness to which the object appears without being ascertained,” “that which is a common locus of (1) having clear appearance of the specifically characterized phenomenon which is its object and (2) being unable to induce ascertainment with respect to the specifically characterized phenomenon which is its object” (Page 3)

Can you please explain this?

*Answer:* According to the author, you should posit the definition of an AAA as 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 operation.<sup>1</sup>

The author is saying that you should *not* posit the definition of an AAA as a knower that is a common locus of

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

In other words, you have to say, “object of engagement,” instead of simply “object” in defining an AAA. In the definition of an AAA, if you only say, “having clear appearance of the specifically characterised phenomenon that is its object,” that would incur the fallacy that an eye consciousness apprehending a blue snow mountain would be an AAA. That eye consciousness apprehending a blue snow mountain would fulfil the definition of “having a clear appearance of the specifically characterised phenomenon that is its object,” i.e., the definition that does not mention an object of engagement.

However since the definition of 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 ...,” this eliminates the eye consciousness apprehending a blue snow mountain to be an AAA as it is not an AAA.

Having said this, you must figure out how simply eliminating “object” from the definition and having “object of engagement” in the definition solves the problem that we have just brought up.

Based on the correct definition of an AAA, is an AAA a factually concordant or a factually discordant knower? Is an AAA necessarily a

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<sup>1</sup> Ven Gyurme: In the definition of an AAA, *jug.yul* in Tibetan applies to both an object of engagement and an object of operation but the author translates it as “object of operation” in the second part of the definition. I believed the author is trying to bring something across.

factually concordant knower?

For example, when you are engrossed in an activity but you have a sense of something flying past you but you are unable to identify what it is, that is an AAA. Is that a factually concordant knower?

In the handout, the illustration of an AAA is a sense direct perceiver apprehending blue that induces the doubt that wonders, “Did I see blue or not?” This is something for you to think about.

## **Doubting consciousness**

The definition of a **doubting consciousness** is: **a knower that has qualms two-pointedly by its own power** (Page 4).

In the definition, why are the words, “by its own power,” included? This is because there is a main mind that is concomitant with doubt. In the retinue of this main mind there are also other mental factors such as feeling, discrimination, and so forth.

- The main mind that is concomitant with doubt is *not* doubt. There is a difference between a main mind and a mental factor. Doubt is a mental factor. It is concomitant with the main mind but this main mind that is concomitant with doubt is not doubt. Why? Because if it is doubt, it is necessarily a mental factor. The main mind that is concomitant with the mental factor doubt has qualms two-pointedly but it does not have qualms two-pointedly by its own power. Therefore the main mind is not doubt.
- How about those mental factors that are in the retinue of the main mind that is concomitant with doubt? Are they knowers that have qualms two-pointedly? Yes, but these mental factors also do not have qualms two-pointedly by their own power.

When doubting consciousnesses are divided there are three:

- **doubt tending toward the factual**  
e.g. doubt which thinks that sound is probably impermanent
- **doubt tending toward the non-factual**  
e.g. doubt which thinks that sound is probably permanent
- **equal doubt**  
e.g. doubt which wonders whether sound is permanent or impermanent (Page 4).

The illustration for **doubt tending toward the factual** is the doubt that thinks that sound is probably impermanent. In reality, sound is impermanent. Although there is doubt, that doubt is tending toward the factual in accordance with how sound exists.

The illustration for **doubt tending toward the non-factual** is the doubt that thinks that sound is probably permanent but, in reality, sound is not permanent.

*Question:* It seems that doubt and doubting consciousness are referring to the same entity. I remember Khen Rinpoche mentioning that the seven-fold divisions of consciousness refer to main minds. If doubting consciousness is not a main mind but a mental factor, how do we reconcile this?

*Khen Rinpoche:* If that was said, it should not be the case.

*Question:* Among the seven consciousnesses, doubting consciousness is a mental factor and the other six consciousnesses are main minds?

*Khen Rinpoche:* We have to think about this. Is a direct perceiver necessarily a main mind? Is an inferential valid cogniser a main mind? Going by its definition of being a new incontrovertible knower, free from conceptuality, which arises in dependence upon a physical sense power that is its uncommon empowering condition, is a sense direct valid cogniser a main mind?

In the retinue of this sense direct valid cogniser, there is the mental factor of discrimination. Is this mental factor of discrimination necessarily a valid cogniser? Is the mental factor of discrimination that is concomitant with the sense consciousness a sense consciousness or not?

In the seven-fold divisions of consciousness, is doubt the only mental factor? Are the remaining consciousnesses necessarily main minds?

In general, “mind” refer to a main mind (*tso sem*). Mind (*sem*), sentience (*yid*), and primary consciousness (*nam she*) are mutually inclusive. They are all talking about a main mind. Sometimes, primary consciousness is also translated as “perceiver.”

Having said that, there is definitely a difference between sentience and mental consciousness. In terms of possibilities, there are four possibilities between sentience and a mental consciousness:

1. An eye perceiver (or eye primary consciousness) is a sentience because it is a main mind. It is not a mental consciousness because it is a sense consciousness.
2. There is something that is a mental consciousness but is not sentience. For example, the mental factor of feeling that is concomitant with a mental primary consciousness is a mental consciousness but is not sentience because it is a mental factor. Sentience is a main mind.
3. Something that is both sentience and a mental consciousness is a mental primary consciousness. A mental primary consciousness is a

sentience, i.e., a main mind and a mental consciousness.

4. Something that is neither sentience nor a mental consciousness is the mental factor of feeling that is concomitant with an eye primary consciousness. That mental factor of feeling is not sentience because it is a mental factor. It is not a mental consciousness because it is a sense consciousness.

- In Tibetan, *yid* is usually translated as mental.
- In this text, when *yid* appears on its own, it refers to a main mind and is translated as sentience.
- When it is *yid nam par she pa*, that refers to a mental primary consciousness.

We do this exercise of the four possibilities to show their differences.

*Question:* Awareness, consciousness, and knower are mutually inclusive. Why is “mind” not included there?

*Answer:* When we say mind (*sem*) it means the main mind. Therefore it is not mutually inclusive with awareness, consciousness, and knower.

*Question:* Does ascertain and realise mean the same thing?

*Answer:* Yes.

*Question:* In the sequence of the eye consciousness apprehending blue followed by the mental direct perceiver and the conceptual consciousness apprehending blue, that conceptual consciousness is a subsequent cogniser. But for an ordinary being, that mental direct perceiver is an AAA. It seems that this mental direct perceiver cannot realise its object yet it can induce a subsequent cogniser that realises something that has already been realised.

*Answer:* A subsequent cogniser is a knower that realises what has already been realised. It has to be induced by a valid cogniser. The valid cogniser that induces the subsequent cogniser is not the mental direct perceiver apprehending blue. It is the eye consciousness apprehending blue.

*Question:* Is it necessary for the mental direct perceiver to be in the middle? Why can't the conceptual consciousness be induced by the eye consciousness directly without going through the mental direct perceiver?

*Answer:* This is what is said in the text. It is difficult for us to experience the mental direct perceiver because it lasts for only the shortest moment of time.

This mental direct perceiver apprehending form in the continuum of ordinary being is posited to be an AAA. Therefore it cannot induce the subsequent cogniser. The subsequent cogniser has to be induced by a

valid cogniser. In this case, one has to posit the eye consciousness apprehending blue to be the valid cogniser that induces the subsequent cogniser.

*Question:* I refer to page 3 of Handout No. 8 dated 7<sup>th</sup> August. It reads:

This is because a sense consciousness that sees snow mountains as blue sees as blue the white color of the snow mountains, which is its object of operation, and therefore does not see clearly the specifically characterized phenomenon which is its object of operation. Still, since its appearing object, the white color of snow mountains, appears clearly as blue whereas it does not exist [as blue], there is clear appearance of the specifically characterized phenomenon which is its object. Also it is unable to induce ascertainment with respect to that because it engages that [object] perversely .

Can you please explain: “Still, since its appearing object, the white colour of snow mountains, appears clearly as blue whereas it does not exist [as blue], there is clear appearance of the specifically characterised phenomenon which is its object. Also it is unable to induce ascertainment with respect to that because it engages that [object] perversely.”

*Answer:* The definition of an AAA is having “clear appearance of the specifically characterised phenomenon that is its object of engagement ...” so you cannot posit a blue snow mountain. Is there a specifically characterised phenomenon such as a blue snow mountain? It is all right if you posit that to be a snow mountain or a white snow mountain.

This is a bit complicated. When you posit a snow mountain or a white snow mountain to be the appearing object, does the snow mountain appear as white?

To the eye consciousness to which a blue snow mountain appears, how does that white snow mountain appear to the eye consciousness? Does the white snow mountain appear? We have to say that a white snow mountain appears but the white snow mountain does not appear as white.

There is a text that mentions that whatever appears to a non-conceptual consciousness is posited to be its appearing object. If that is the case, there is nothing wrong in saying that the blue snow mountain is the appearing object of the consciousness to which the blue snow mountain appears. The blue snow mountain is the appearing object of the non-conceptual consciousness to which a blue snow mountain appears but, in general, the blue snow mountain is not an appearing object.

*Question:* During our lessons on special insight, it was said that in the first moment of realising the selflessness of persons directly, for such a person, nothing appears except emptiness. According to the Sutra School, in the first moment, what exactly appears to the consciousness?

*Answer:* The yogic direct perceiver explicitly realises the composed phenomena, the aggregates, that are the bases of the selflessness of

persons. He implicitly realises the selflessness of persons.

*Student:* So the composed phenomenon is its appearing object and it does appear to such a consciousness? So such a consciousness is realising two truths simultaneously?

*Khen Rinpoche:* I am not sure. I need to think about this.

*Student:* So the appearing object is *not* the selflessness of persons although the object of engagement is the selflessness of persons. It seems to me that this consciousness is like a mistaken consciousness in that it is mistaken with respect to its appearing object ...

*Khen Rinpoche:* What is wrong with having a composed phenomenon as the appearing object for this mind? Whatever a mind realises, does the object necessarily appear to it?

When we talk about realisation here, we are talking about explicitly realising and implicitly realising something. When the mind realises something, that something that is being realised need not be appearing to it. Following from this, you have to say that the selflessness of persons does *not* appear to the yogic direct perceiver apprehending it.

Is the selflessness of persons *realised* by a yogic direct perceiver? Yes.

Does the selflessness of persons *appear* to the yogic direct perceiver apprehending it? No.

*Question:* When the forward pervasion is established, isn't the counter pervasion necessarily established as well? It seems to me that two modes are sufficient for a correct sign to be established.

*Answer:* In general, if the sign is present in the similar class, then it is definitely universally absent from the dissimilar class. But we are talking about the three modes in relation to the person to whom we are trying to establish something. For that person to whom we are positing the sign, it is not sufficient for him to realise that the sign exists only in the similar class. He may have realised that but he may still have doubts as to whether the sign is universally absent from the dissimilar class. He is not sure about that yet. For that reason, the correct sign is that which is the three modes.

When we talk about the three modes and the correct sign, we are not talking so much about the sign itself. If the sign exists in the similar class, the sign is definitely universally absent from the dissimilar class. Although that is the case, we are stating the reason in order to establish something. To the mind of the person to whom we are proving this, that person must have established the three modes.

According to the position of Sera Je, there is a common locus between a **doubting consciousness and a wrong consciousness**. An illustration would be a mind that thinks reincarnation most likely does not exist. That is a doubt tending toward the non-factual and is a wrong consciousness as it is a knower that engages its object erroneously. What is being posited to be the object of the mind here? The object is reincarnation. This mind engages its object erroneously.

However there are also those who assert that there isn't a common locus between a doubting consciousness and a wrong consciousness, that they are contradictory and are mutually exclusive without any common locus between them. Why? This is because a wrong consciousness is very decisive about what it believes, e.g., that reincarnation does not exist whatsoever. A doubting consciousness on the other hand is two-pointed; maybe it exists and maybe it does not exist.

So that is about it for the seven-fold divisions of consciousness. We will start mental factors in the next class. It is easier to handle mental factors so please start reading the text.

*Question:* I refer to page 4 of Handout No. 2 dated 26 June. Can you please explain, "Whatever is an established base is necessarily the object of the mode of apprehension of both a conceptual and a non-conceptual consciousness." My example is this: uncompounded space is a permanent phenomenon. How can a permanent phenomenon be an object of engagement of a non-conceptual consciousness?

(Khen Rinpoche asks the students to answer the question)

*Student's answer to question:* For a yogic direct perceiver realising the selflessness of persons, the selflessness of persons is a permanent phenomenon but it is not the appearing object.

*Khen Rinpoche:* Is there a valid cogniser that directly realises uncomposed space?

*Student:* Yes.

*Khen Rinpoche:* Then there is no problem. Uncomposed space is the object of the mode of apprehension of a non-conceptual consciousness.

*Question:* How are existents and non-existents regarded as selfless?

*Answer:* Non-existents are not established as self.

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