

## Transcript of teachings by Khen Rinpoche Geshe Chonyi on the Modes of Mind and Mental Factors

**Lesson No: 17**

**Date: 16<sup>th</sup> August 2012**

**Root text:** *A Necklace for Those of Clear Awareness Clearly Revealing the Modes of Minds and Mental Factors* by Ye-she Gyeltsen, translated by Toh Sze Gee; January 2006 edition. Copyright: Toh Sze Gee & FPMT, Inc. September 2003.

All page references refer to the root text, unless otherwise stated.

In the *Heart Sutra*, the following five aggregates are mentioned:

1. the aggregate of form
2. the aggregate of feeling
3. the aggregate of discrimination
4. the aggregate of compositional factors
5. the aggregate of consciousness

All impermanent phenomena can be subsumed under these five aggregates. If it is an impermanent phenomenon, it is one of these aggregates.

Functioning things can be divided into:

1. matter
2. consciousness
3. non-associated compositional factor (NACF)

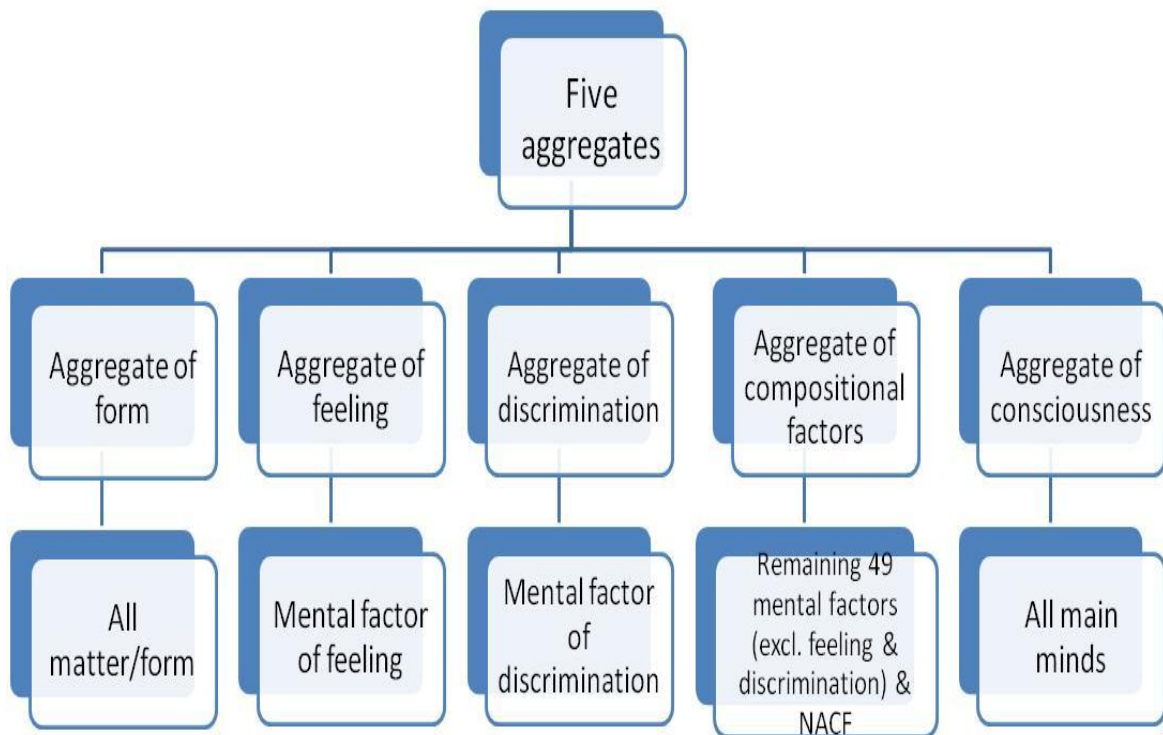
- All phenomena that are in the category of matter are subsumed under the category, the aggregate of **form**.
- Consciousness can be looked at in terms of (1) main minds and (2) mental factors. All main minds are classified under the aggregate of **consciousness**.

In general, there are fifty-one mental factors:

- The mental factor of feeling comes under the aggregate of **feeling**.
  - The mental factor of discrimination comes under the aggregate of **discrimination**.
  - The remaining forty-nine mental factors come under the aggregate of **compositional factors**.
- The third division of functioning things – non-associated compositional factor - comes under the aggregate of compositional factors.

Why are the mental factor of feeling and the mental factor of discrimination highlighted separately? Why are the remaining forty-nine mental factors classified under the aggregate of compositional factors? It

is mentioned in the *Treasury of Knowledge* that:



- the mental factor of feeling is listed separately because:
  - the pleasant feelings that arise due to attachment for the object of desire becomes the basis for conflict.
  - Due to being emotionally involved with feelings, one generates a very strong desire and attachment for feelings that then perpetuates cyclic existence.
- the mental factor of discrimination is listed separately because:
  - discriminating that which is Dharma to be non-Dharma and discriminating that which is non-Dharma to be Dharma - this becomes a basis for conflict.
  - Due to such erroneous discrimination with reference to an object, one accumulates the projecting karma for rebirth and cyclic existence.

These are the two reasons why these two mental factors are listed separately because (1) they are the bases for conflict and (2) they are the two primary causes for the perpetuation of cyclic existence. In order to highlight these two facts, the mental factors of feeling and discrimination are listed separately.

The aggregates of form, feeling, and discrimination are straightforward. The aggregate of compositional factors encompasses the rest of the mental

factors and the non-associated compositional factors. In short, all composed or impermanent phenomena can be subsumed under the five aggregates.

*Question:* A cup is subsumed under the aggregate of form. How would a cup be my aggregate of form?

*Answer:* Although the aggregate of form primarily refers to our coarse physical body, whatever is the aggregate of form is *not necessarily* included in your continuum, i.e., it does not have to be your appropriated physical aggregates.

Just as matter is defined as that which is atomically established, form is an aggregation of many parts coming together.

In the *Heart Sutra*, the aggregate of form primarily refers to our contaminated appropriated physical body. However, all instances of form, such as a cup, would come under that aggregate as well.

In an earlier lesson, we saw that awareness, knower, and consciousness are mutually inclusive. Consciousness is *she pa* in Tibetan.

In the context of mind and mental factors, we are talking about the main mind in which mind, sentience, and primary consciousness/perceiver are mutually inclusive.

We have two groups of three different phenomena:

- awareness, knower, and consciousness are mutually inclusive
- mind, sentience, and primary consciousness/perceiver are mutually inclusive

These two groups are different.<sup>1</sup>

In the last lesson, we looked at the four possibilities between sentience (*yid*) and mental consciousness (*yid she*). One comes to know well both sentience and mental consciousness by knowing the illustrations for the four possibilities between them. It would be good if you can do this as homework:

What are the four possibilities between an exalted wisdom and a mental consciousness?

If you think about the difference between a consciousness (*she pa*) and

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<sup>1</sup> Ven. Gyurme: Consciousness (*she pa*) and primary consciousness (*nam she* or *nam par she pa*) are different. “*Nam par she pa*” had been translated as consciousness. That is a problem because consciousness and primary consciousness are different. That is why I kept with the original translation as “primary consciousness”.

primary consciousness (*nam par she pa*), it seems that one would have to posit a difference between a mental consciousness (*yid she*) and a mental primary consciousness (*yid nam par she pa*).

How many possibilities are there between a mental consciousness and a mental primary consciousness? Maybe there are three possibilities. You are not going to have something that is a mental primary consciousness but not a mental consciousness.

How many possibilities are there between a sense consciousness and a sense primary consciousness? I think there are also three possibilities. Something that is sense primary consciousness but not a sense consciousness cannot exist. The sense consciousness and the sense primary consciousness are not the same. When you look at the number of possibilities that exist between these two, your understanding of them would become clearer.

- Is there something that is a sense consciousness but not a sense primary consciousness? Yes. For example, the mental factor of feeling in the retinue of an eye consciousness apprehending blue. That mental factor of feeling accompanying the eye consciousness apprehending blue is a sense consciousness but it is not a sense primary consciousness. It is not a main mind.
- How about something that is both a sense consciousness and a sense primary consciousness? An eye perceiver or an eye primary consciousness apprehending blue is a sense primary consciousness. It is also a sense consciousness.
- For something that is not both a sense consciousness and a sense primary consciousness, there are many things that you can posit here.

In order to be able to figure this out, you must commit to memory that:

- Knower, awareness, and consciousness are mutually inclusive and, in general, they encompass *both* the main minds and the mental factors.
- Mind, sentience, and primary consciousness are mutually inclusive and they refer *only* to the main mind.

Based on what we have discussed, it seems that we would have to posit a difference between:

- A mental consciousness and a mental perceiver/primary consciousness.
- A sense consciousness and a sense perceiver/primary consciousness.

How then would you answer the question that was brought up earlier about the seven-fold divisions of consciousness? Are they main minds or mental factors? It would seem that besides doubt, it is possible that the remaining six types of mind are both main minds and mental factors.

*Questions from Khen Rinpoche:*

- Are there wrong consciousnesses that are main minds?
- Are there wrong consciousnesses that are mental factors?

Intelligent beings who have in mind their welfare in future lives, not being content simply with acquiring food and clothing for the duration of this life, thinking, "What will become of me in future rebirths?" should wonder, "I have circled powerlessly in the three realms of cyclic existence since beginningless time, continuously experiencing suffering. What is the root of this?" (Page 8)

Who should wonder about this? In this context, the "intelligent beings" refer to those who look beyond the happiness of this life, whereas those who are concerned primarily with the happiness of this life are not intelligent beings. Such an intelligent person should investigate and find out the root cause of cyclic existence.

Why does one need to find out the root cause of cyclic existence? This is because when one circles in cyclic existence, one suffers. So what is the root of cyclic existence? In order to answer this question, the extensive presentation on the mind and mental factors is given.

Having contemplated in this manner, you must come to understand that these sufferings of cyclic existence neither arise without cause, nor arise from a discordant cause; rather, they arise from their own causes – actions and afflictions (Page 8).

You must come to understand that the suffering of cyclic existence that you experience do not arise without cause. You must ascertain in your heart why such suffering cannot arise without a cause. It is insufficient just to know the words. You must understand the reason for this. In addition to that, you must also be able to understand why the suffering of cyclic existence cannot arise from a discordant cause.

On the basis of understanding the reasons why (1) the suffering of cyclic existence cannot arise without a cause and (2) that it also cannot arise from a discordant cause, only then will you come to understand that the suffering of cyclic existence must arise from a cause. Not only that. You will come to understand why the suffering of cyclic existence arises from a concordant cause. One must induce a definite ascertainment of these points.

In order for an eye consciousness to be generated, it must arise in dependence upon its own uncommon empowering condition. In the case of an eye consciousness, its uncommon empowering condition has to be an eye sense power. For example, an eye consciousness cannot arise in dependence upon an ear sense power. In order to generate an eye consciousness apprehending blue, a physical sense power must be present. That physical sense power has to be the eye sense power. Without the eye sense power, there will be no eye consciousness apprehending blue.

What is it that enables an eye consciousness to apprehend visible form? It is the physical sense power, the eye sense power. That is the basis. The eye consciousness apprehending blue has to be generated in dependence upon its uncommon empowering condition, the eye sense power.

When an eye consciousness apprehending blue is generated, it is

generated into the entity of that which is clear and knowing. What causes the eye consciousness to have this entity? This is not due to the eye sense power but rather, the immediately preceding condition, i.e., the consciousness that existed just a moment prior to the generation of this eye consciousness.

By using the production of an eye consciousness apprehending blue as an example, one can see that an effect can only arise from its concordant cause. With this understanding, you then apply it to what really matters – the suffering that we do not want. The suffering that we want to avoid also arises from its own concordant cause.

When you analyse this from various angles by using logic and reasoning, you will come to the conclusion that the primary causes of all the suffering that you do not want are your karma and afflictions. It is important that you gain an ascertainment of this. This is something that you need to debate, not necessarily with others, but with yourself.

When we talk about the suffering that we do not want and the happiness that we do want, try to analyse whether the suffering that we do not want arise due to some reasons or no reason at all. Does it arise arbitrarily or is it simply bad luck?

Will you accept it if some one were to tell you that the suffering you do not want arise due to a discordant cause? Is it possible for suffering to arise from an incorrect cause?

- When we say that the suffering that we experience do not arise without a cause, we are essentially establishing that the suffering that we do not want arise from a cause.
- When we say that the suffering that we do not want do not arise from discordant causes, we are essentially establishing that the suffering that we do not want arise from concordant causes.

What are the two primary causes for our suffering? They are actions (or karma) and afflictions. We need to ascertain this for ourselves in our own mind. We need to reach a very decisive and definite conclusion about this.

Many quotations are then cited to provide the scriptural authority for establishing that karma and afflictions are the primary causes of cyclic existence.

The Protector Nagarjuna says [in his *Precious Garland (Rajaparikhatharatnavali)*] (stanza 1.35):

As long as the aggregates are misconceived,  
There will be the conception of an I.  
When there is conception of an I, there is also action.  
Due to that there is rebirth (Page 8).

What is Nagarjuna saying here? In dependence upon an apprehension of a self of phenomenon, there comes the apprehension of a self of persons that is posited to be ignorance. Due to that ignorance, we accumulate

actions. This is how the twelve links of dependent-arising are set into motion. The thesis to be proved here is this: cyclic existence arises primarily from karma and afflictions.

And [his *Treatise on the Middle Way (Madhyamakashastra)*] (stanza 26.10) says:

The root of cyclic existence is compositional actions.  
Therefore, the wise do not create compositional actions.  
Hence, the unwise are creators;  
The wise are not, because of seeing thusness (Page 8).

The root of cyclic existence is compositional actions (or compositional activities), the second link of the twelve links of dependent-arising.

- The ones who accumulate the compositional actions are the unwise ones. “The unwise are creators” are those who accumulate projecting karma.
- “The wise” do not accumulate projecting karma for cyclic existence.

Why is it that the wise do not accumulate projecting karma? This is because the wise have seen the truth directly. Therefore they do not accumulate projecting karma. Those who have not seen the truth directly accumulate projecting karma.

That is how you differentiate superior beings from ordinary beings. Superior beings do not accumulate fresh projecting karma, whereas ordinary beings accumulate projecting karma. Why do superior beings not accumulate fresh projecting karma? Because they no longer have the ignorance of the twelve links of dependent-arising, therefore they do not accumulate compositional activities, the second link.

Once one has seen the truth directly, ignorance does not disappear there and then. From the moment the superior beings see the truth directly, they do not accumulate fresh projecting karma because they no longer have the ignorance that is from the twelve links of dependent-arising. However, after having seen the truth directly, the superior beings still do have ignorance but it is not the ignorance that is powerful enough to lead to the accumulation of new projecting karma.

Acharya Aryadeva says [in his *Treatise of Four Hundred Stanzas (Chatuhshatakashastrakarika)*] (stanza 14.25ab):

The consciousness that is the seed of [cyclic] existence  
Has objects as its objects of activity (Page 8).

“The consciousness that is the seed of cyclic existence has objects as its objects of activity”: the seed of cyclic existence is consciousness. Consciousness here refers to the affliction, the apprehension of true existence. The “objects” refer to forms and so forth. These objects become the objects of observation by this ignorance that apprehends these objects to be truly existent. Through this, karma is accumulated.

Acharya Chandrakirti says [in his *Supplement to the Middle Way (Madhyamakavatara)*] (stanza 6.89abc):

The very diverse worlds of sentient beings and  
Their environments are established by the mind itself.  
It is taught that all migrating beings without exception are born from actions.

Chandrakirti is saying almost the same thing, that the environment, the world itself, and its inhabitants, sentient beings, are the results of actions.

Acharya Vasubandhu says [in his *Treasury of Knowledge (Abhidharmakoshakarika)*] (stanza 4.1a):

The various worlds are produced from actions.

And (stanza 5.1a):

The root of [cyclic] existence is the six subtle-increasers.

Likewise, Shantideva's *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds (Bodhisattvacharyavatara)*, stanza 5.6) says:

The Propounder of the Truth has taught  
That in this way, all fears and  
The immeasurable sufferings  
Arise from the mind.

And (stanza 5.17-18ab):

Those who do not understand this secret of the mind,  
The great objective of the Dharma,  
Wander aimlessly,  
Even though they wish to attain happiness and destroy suffering.

Therefore, I should hold well and guard well  
This mind of mine (Page 9).

The reason for citing these various quotations from the authoritative texts of Nagarjuna and his spiritual sons and other great Indian masters is to show what they have already concluded, i.e., all the sufferings of cyclic existence are the results of karma and afflictions. Taking these texts to be authoritative, what we have to do is to study and analyse these teachings, and develop the ascertainment for ourselves that the cause of cyclic existence is karma and afflictions.

Likewise, it has been taught that all the excellent qualities of the paths and grounds of the three vehicles, the resultant buddha field, exalted bodies, lifespan, deeds, as well as exalted activities arise solely from their own causes, wholesome virtuous minds. Therefore, the root of all of cyclic existence and nirvana is established to be the mind itself (Page 10).

Likewise it has been taught that all the excellent qualities of the paths and grounds of the three vehicles and the inconceivable qualities of the buddhas have to come from a concordant cause. That concordant cause is not external. It has to come from a virtuous and wholesome state of mind. In short, all the problems and sufferings that we experience in cyclic existence have their origins in the mind. Likewise all the happiness, up to the state of ultimate happiness, full enlightenment, has to come from the mind itself.

In general, whatever the object appearing to our mind may be, there is this factor of appearance, i.e., something is appearing to the mind. The



object appears in a particular way and we believe in that appearance. We believe that the object exists in the way that it appears to us. Due to this belief and because we hold on to this appearance to be real, we accumulate karma:

- Without the mind, even though the object appears, we cannot have such an appearance.
- Without this appearance, we will not grasp at it.
- Without grasping at this appearance, we cannot accumulate karma.

This factor of appearance is dependent on the mind. Without the mind, we cannot have this factor of appearance. So in dependence on this factor of appearance to the mind, we apprehend it to be real and to exist in the way it appears. As a result, we accumulate karma.

It is just like the example of a friend and an enemy. What is a friend? What is an enemy? They are basically appearances to our mind. Whether the person appears as a friend or the person appears as an enemy, they are appearances to the mind. But without realising this, we feel that there is something that is separate from the mind, that that is a real friend or a real enemy. Based on what is appearing to our mind, we get emotionally involved and from that, either attachment or anger arises.

- By grasping at the appearance of the enemy to be real, strong anger arises.
- By believing in the appearance of a friend existing in the way it appears to us, there is strong attachment.

From this, you can see how important it is to realise that the appearance of an object such as the appearance of a friend or an enemy is a factor of appearance to the mind. When you realise that the appearance of these various objects arises from the mind, this will definitely help in reducing our afflictions, anger, attachment, and so forth.

Our problem is that we think that the appearance to the mind and the mind itself are completely separate. Not understanding that they are actually closely related, we react to those appearances and experience unhappiness.

For us, this is how the mind works. However with practice, when the mind is more advanced, one can reach a point where such dualistic appearances subside. We can talk about dualistic appearances in many ways, e.g., the dualistic appearance of subject and object as being distinct and separate. At this moment, we have the feeling that the mind and what is appearing to the mind to be different from the mind. But with practice and progress, one can narrow the distance between these two. One comes to understand that these two are not really separate or different. By understanding that what is appearing to the mind is just the mere factor of appearance together with the understanding of how everything is in the nature of emptiness, we can definitely reduce our negative actions.

By understanding these two:

- how all appearances arise from the mind and
  - how these appearances are the display of emptiness
- and putting them together, this is how we turn back cyclic existence.

We have to think about how the mind is the creator of everything, i.e., how everything arises from the mind.

To reiterate what I had said earlier, all kinds of appearances appear to our mind. When we believe in whatever is appearing to our mind to exist in the way it appears, that is when we get emotionally involved with that appearance. We then accumulate actions that lead to the result, suffering. So we have to understand and experience how all these different appearances to the mind arise from the mind itself. Ultimately everything is created by the mind, including the suffering that we do not want. We have to understand how suffering arises from our mistaken belief in these appearances to the mind. Therefore the author says:

Hence, it is of utmost importance to understand the modes of minds and mental factors. Thus, here I shall compose a brief presentation on minds and mental factors. This has two parts:

1. The individual entities and divisions of minds and mental factors
2. A summary of the salient points and their application to practice (Page 10).

First we will look at the explanation of the mind and mental factors separately.

The main mind and the mental factors in its retinue are concomitant by way of the five types of similarity. They have a similar support or bases and so forth. You should read the following pages on your own. There is a slight difference in what is posited to be the five types of similarity according to the lower and higher Abhidharma. There is an explanation according to the *Treasury of Knowledge* and a slightly different explanation according to the *Compendium of Knowledge*. Please read the pages that deal with the five types of similarity.

When you read, think about what you have read a few times. It makes a huge difference when you read your text before coming to class. When you come to class, because of having read the text beforehand, then whatever I explain in class will make your understanding clearer and better. If you read before class and then come to listen to what I have to say, it is possible that a subsequent cogniser may arise.

*Khen Rinpoche: So make sure your minds become subsequent cognisers!*

*Question:* On page 9 of the text, can I confirm that “the six subtle-increasers” that are the root of cyclic existence is referring to the six root afflictions?

*Answer:* Yes.

*Question:* This presentation of mind and mental factors is also according to the Sutra School?

*Answer:* Yes.

*Question:* Can we say that a factually concordant knower is a mind that correctly engages its object to exist in the way it appears?

*Answer:* If the object exists in the way the mind apprehends it, that mind is a factually concordant knower. When your mind apprehends an object in a way that does not accord with how it exists in reality, then it would not be a factually concordant knower.

Do you agree that it is all right to say that a factually concordant knower is a mind that apprehends the object in the way that it exists? If the way in which the mind apprehends the object is not exactly how the object exists, then it is not a factually concordant knower. Is it all right to say this? Think about it.

*Question:* Are we aware of this mental factor of feeling that arises together with the sense consciousness? For example the eye consciousness apprehending blue, when I say, “I like blue,” is that the mental factor of feeling that arises with the eye consciousness or is it due to the mental factor of feeling that is due to the mental consciousness apprehending blue?

*Answer:* There is a mental factor of feeling in the retinue of this eye consciousness.

*Student:* Are we aware of it?

*Khen Rinpoche:* I think so.

*Student:* I always thought it was a mental factor. “I like it when I see blue”.

*Khen Rinpoche:* It will be apparent soon. We have to posit a mental factor of feeling that is in the retinue accompanying an eye consciousness. In fact there are the five omnipresent factors: feeling, discrimination, intention, contact, and attention. These five omnipresent factors necessarily accompany all main minds.

*Question:* What is the difference among these three terms: appearance, factor of appearance, and mere factor of appearance?

*Answer from Ven. Gyurme:* They mean the same thing.

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