

## Transcript of teachings by Khen Rinpoche Geshe Chonyi

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All page references refer to this root text unless otherwise stated.

### Lesson No: 17

**Date: 30<sup>th</sup> April 2013**

We spent two to three lessons talking about the selflessness of phenomena in accordance with the MOS. We also talked about the emptiness of the object and subject as different entities and the emptiness of an object existing by way of its own character as the basis for the conception of the conceptual consciousness. From your own side, you must be able to verbalise what these two emptinesses are, i.e., at least you must be able to say the words correctly. Only on that basis can you think about their meanings: what exactly is the emptiness of object and subject as different entities and so forth? It is important that you gain that understanding.

Then we talked about the three natures or characteristics according to the MOS:

1. Other-powered natures
2. Thoroughly established natures
3. Imputational natures
  - In our discussion of other-powered natures, we used the physical and mental aggregates as an example of other-powered natures.
  - The aggregates are the bases of designation. The bases of designation—the aggregates—do not exist by way of their own character as the basis of conception of a conceptual consciousness. An aggregate existing by way of its own character as a basis of conception of a conceptual consciousness is its imputational nature.
  - The emptiness of that imputational nature of an aggregate is a thoroughly established nature.

I mentioned to you the purpose of looking at these three natures.

- The other-powered nature is the basis of emptiness.
- The object of negation, i.e., its imputational nature, exists on this basis of emptiness.
- The emptiness or the non-existence of the imputational nature that exists on any other-powered natures is the thoroughly established nature.

We have now completed the definition of ultimate truth.

### Conventional truth

**The definition of a conventional truth** is: that which is realized by the direct valid cognizer directly realizing it by way of being together with dualistic

appearance (Page 15).

Remember I gave you an alternative definition of an ultimate truth: a thoroughly established nature is the final object of observation of a pure path. All phenomena that are not final objects of observation of a pure path are conventional truths.

When you think about the three natures in terms of the two truths, the thoroughly established nature is the ultimate truth. Phenomena that are not ultimate truths are conventional truths. This means that both other-powered natures and imputational natures are conventional truths. In short, all phenomena that exist are either ultimate truths or conventional truths.

We have all these definitions of ultimate truth. When you think of an ultimate truth, what exactly is it? An ultimate truth is an object whereby, when you familiarise yourself with it, you can remove and purify all obscurations from the root. This very object is the ultimate truth. A conventional truth is the opposite to this: when you familiarise yourself with a conventional truth, your obscurations cannot be removed from the root.

Let us look at the definition of an ultimate truth. An ultimate truth is, “that which is realised by the direct valid cogniser directly realising it by way of the vanishing of dualistic appearance.” Here “that” refers to emptiness. Emptiness is realised by a particular mind, the direct valid cogniser. Specifically it refers to the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness.

- What is realised by this wisdom directly perceiving emptiness? It realises emptiness.
- How does it realise emptiness? It realises emptiness through the vanishing or subsidence of dualistic appearance.

### ***Dualistic appearance***

“Dualistic appearance” here refers to:

- the appearance of an external object,
- the appearance of object and subject, and
- the appearance of a conventional phenomenon.

When the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness realises emptiness, it does so *without* these dualistic appearances.

A conventional truth is any phenomenon that, when realised directly by the direct valid cogniser realising it, that realisation comes with any of the three dualistic appearances:

- the appearance of an external object, or
- the appearance of object and subject, or
- the appearance of a conventional phenomenon.

Let us use blue as an illustration of a conventional truth. Blue is realised by a direct valid cogniser; in this case, an eye consciousness apprehending blue. How does it apprehend blue? It apprehends blue by way of dualistic appearance, i.e., the realisation of blue comes with dualistic appearance. So in the case of the eye consciousness apprehending blue, what appears to that consciousness?

- There is an appearance of blue as an external object.
- There is also an appearance of object and subject.
- There is also an appearance of a conventional phenomenon, a conventional

blue.

There are two types of conventional truths:

1. other-powered phenomena and
2. conventional truths that are included in imputational constructs (Page 15).

If it is a conventional truth, it is either an other-powered phenomenon or an imputational construct. But whatever is an imputational construct is not necessarily a conventional truth because there are imputational constructs that are non-existents. Therefore only imputational constructs that are existents are conventional truths. That is why it says here, “conventional truths that are included in imputational constructs.”

Other-powered phenomena and compounded phenomena are equivalent.

Conventional truths that are included in imputational constructs and uncompounded phenomena other than ultimate truths are equivalent.

All things are accepted to be the common locus of being truly existent and being a falsity; all final realities are accepted to be the common locus of being truly existent and being true; and all uncompounded phenomena other than final realities are accepted to be the common locus of being falsely existent and being a falsity (Pages 15 – 16).

In the MOS, all things are accepted to be the common loci of being truly established and falsities. In the MOS, only emptiness is asserted to be a truth. When we talk about emptiness, emptiness is a truth. A conventional truth is a falsity.

- “All final realities are accepted to be the common locus of being truly existent and being true”: “final realities” can be translated as suchnesses.
- “All uncompounded phenomena other than final realities are accepted to be the common locus of being falsely existent and being a falsity”: uncompounded phenomena refer to permanent phenomena.

When you think about this, it is not complicated because we have covered this already. If you memorise them, then it is very easy as it is straightforward. As mentioned before:

- Thoroughly established natures and other-powered natures are truly established.
- Imputational natures are not truly established.

What we read out earlier is just another way of saying this.

Falsities are conventional truths. Emptiness or suchness is an ultimate truth and it is a truth. So ultimate truth and truth are the same and conventional truth and falsity are the same.

Final realities are necessarily non-affirming negatives. Illustrations of other non-affirming negatives are similar to those of the Proponents of Sutra.

The five sense objects – forms and so forth – are produced on the basis of a substance that is an inner consciousness in dependence upon the latencies of common and uncommon actions deposited upon the mind-basis-of-all. They are not established as external objects (Page 16).

Latencies of all kinds of actions are deposited on the mind-basis-of-all. It is through the ripening of these latencies that there is the appearance of phenomena.

According to the True Aspectarians, even though the five sense objects – forms and so forth – are not external objects they are accepted to exist as gross objects.

According to the False Aspectarians, the five sense objects – forms and so forth – are not gross objects because if they were gross objects they would necessarily be external objects (Page 16).

We have already talked about this.

#### **5 Way of asserting object-possessors**

True Aspectarians accept a collection of eight consciousnesses because they assert that in addition to the collection of six consciousnesses accepted by the other proponents of tenets, there are the mind-basis-of-all and the afflicted mentality, making a total of a collection of eight consciousnesses (Page 16).

This section looks at the differences between the assertion of the True Aspectarians and the False Aspectarians with regard to the number of consciousnesses. The True Aspectarians assert that there is a collection of eight consciousnesses whereas the False Aspectarians assert that there are only six consciousnesses.

The six consciousnesses are the main minds that we studied in the previous module on lo-rig. The six consciousnesses are the five primary sense consciousnesses and the primary mental consciousness. When you add the mind-basis-of-all and the afflicted mentality to these six consciousnesses, you have the eight consciousnesses.

#### **The mind-basis-of-all**

There are illustrations of both a mind-basis-of-all and an afflicted mentality. The consciousness that is an object different from the collection of six consciousnesses and that does not depend upon a sense power which is its own empowering condition is asserted to be the mind-basis-of-all (Page 16).

Why do the True Aspectarians assert that there is a mind-basis-of-all that is a repository of all the latencies of karma? In order for the six consciousnesses—the five sense consciousnesses and the mental consciousness—to be produced, there must be an uncommon empowering condition, i.e., their respective sense powers. It is only by depending on their respective sense power that a consciousness is generated. That means the consciousness is generated

temporarily and that it does not exist all the time.

According to the True Aspectarians, because such a consciousness does not exist all the time, therefore this consciousness cannot be the consciousness that receives all the latencies of the karma that we have accumulated. The basis of infusion or the repository of all the imprints of our karma must be something that is stable and enduring at all times. Otherwise it is difficult to account for karma. Therefore the True Aspectarians think that there must be a consciousness that (1) is other than these six consciousnesses and (2) does not depend upon a sense power that is its own uncommon empowering condition. Such a consciousness is called the mind-basis-of-all. The reason they assert the mind-basis-of-all is to account for the need for a stable and enduring repository for all the imprints of the karma.

- The mind-basis-of-all is an awareness to which an object appears and is not ascertained.
- It does *not* realise its object.
- It is neither virtuous nor non-virtuous, i.e., it is unspecified.
  - Why is the mind-basis-of-all not virtuous? If it is virtuous, it is very difficult to account for the mind-basis-of-all being a repository of imprints of non-virtuous actions.
  - If the mind-basis-of-all is asserted to be non-virtuous, then it is difficult to explain how the mind-basis-of-all can act as a repository of imprints of virtuous actions.

### **The afflicted mentality**

Next is the illustration of the eighth consciousness, the afflicted mentality.

The consciousness that observes the mind-basis-of-all – its observed object – and apprehends it in the aspect of it being a self-sufficient substantially existent I is asserted to be the afflicted mentality (Page 16).

According to the MOS, this afflicted mentality is the view of the transitory collection. The view of the transitory collection is the mind that observes, in this case, the mind-basis-of-all and apprehends it to be a self-sufficient substantially existent “I.”

- What does the afflicted mentality observe? It observes the mind-basis-of-all.
- The mind-basis-of-all is the object of the afflicted mentality.
- The afflicted mentality apprehends the mind-basis-of-all to be a self-sufficient substantially existent “I.”

The mind-basis-of-all is asserted to be the illustration of the person that is the support of actions (Skt. *karma*) and their results (page 16).

### **Meaning of “findable”**

According to the True Aspectarians, who is the “I” or person that moves from life to life, who creates and experiences the results of karma? For them, such an “I” or person is findable. It must be something that one can point to. For the True Aspectarians, this is the mind-basis-of-all, the “I” that is findable.

With the exception of the CMWS, the highest school, all the other tenets—starting from the AMWS down to the MOS, the SS, and the GES—asserts that the “I” or person is findable. Not only is the “I” findable but everything is findable.

What is the meaning of “findable”? It means that when you look for it, definitely you will be able to point to something that is the object, be it a person, the “I,” or anything else for that matter. If there is nothing that you can point to as the object, then that thing does not exist whatsoever. The GES, the SS, the MOS, and the AMWS all have their own take as to what an “I” or person is. All of them accept that the “I” or person is findable as you can point to something that is the person. To the Mind Only True Aspectarians, the thing that you can point to as the person is the mind-basis-of-all.

False Aspectarians assert a collection of six consciousnesses and posit the mere mental consciousness to be the illustration of the person that is the support of actions and their results (Page 16).

The Mind Only False Aspectarians on the other hand assert a collection of six consciousnesses. They do not assert the mind-basis-of-all and for them, the illustration of a person is the consciousness. Who exactly is the person who moves from life to life? To them, that “I” or person must be the mental consciousness.

[The Proponents of Mind Only] assert two types of awarenesses:

1. valid cognizers and
2. non-valid cognizers.

They assert two types of valid cognizers:

1. direct valid cognizers and
2. inferential valid cognizers (Page 16).

The presentation is similar to what we have covered so there is nothing much to say about it.

### **6 Way of asserting selflessness**

The way of positing illustrations of the coarse and subtle selflessness of persons is similar to the Autonomists and below.

An illustration of the selflessness of phenomena is, for example, the emptiness that is a form and the valid cognizer apprehending that form being empty of being different substances (Page 16).

### **“Everything is in the nature of mind”**

- According to the MOS, a form and the valid cogniser apprehending that form are of the same substance.
- According to the SS, a form and the valid cogniser apprehending that form are of different substances. They have a cause and effect relationship.

### ***The clairvoyant mind***

The SS have difficulties with seeing how the object and the subject can be of the same substance. Their argument is this: there can be a clairvoyance, which is a mind, knowing another mind, i.e. the mind of another person. The object that is realised by this clairvoyant mind is another mind. This clairvoyance is the subject and the other mind is the object. If these two minds are of the same

substance that means the clairvoyance and the mind that it realises would become one entity. That would necessarily incur the fallacy that these two mind streams are one. It follows then that these two persons are one and the same person. This is what the SS says to the MOS, “Your mind and someone else’s mind is not one substance. You as a person and the other person cannot be the same person. The clairvoyance that knows someone else’s mind is a valid cogniser. If we were to posit that this clairvoyance and the mind that it knows are of one substance, it follows that these two minds would be one entity. This would lead to the fallacy that these two individuals are one person.”

If you were to think about this, it is not so straightforward. Even the theory is challenging at times. When you say, “Everything is in the nature of mind,” what does this really mean? When we say that everything is in *the nature* of mind, we are *not* saying that everything *is* mind. This is definitely not the meaning. But when we really think about it, there is some sense behind it and it can be explained.

### **Factor of appearance**

As we discussed in the past, whether something is pleasant or unpleasant is determined by that object appearing to *your mind* as pleasant or unpleasant, *not* appearing to *someone else*. In order for there to be this factor of appearance of a pleasant object, there must be a cause. In this case, it is the imprint for that appearance of a pleasant object to arise. Without such an imprint, you will not experience that appearance of the pleasant object. Likewise, in order for there to be an appearance of an unpleasant object, there must be an imprint for that particular appearance without which there cannot be the appearance of that unpleasant object.

Without the imprint for a particular appearance, there is no way for that appearance to arise. There is an imprint that ripens in terms of the appearance of an object. The object is the factor of appearance of that phenomenon and it is that which performs the function of the object.

Take for instance time. When we are suffering or unhappy, regardless of the actual duration of our suffering or unhappiness, we feel that it lasts for a very long time. There is this appearance of time going on forever and never ending. Based on that appearance, we have the feeling that the suffering we are experiencing is lasting a long time. Whether we suffer for a short or long period of time—the actual duration may be very short—but during the time that we are experiencing those unpleasant feelings, they seem to last a very long time. There is an appearance of our suffering going on and on and never ending. That appearance causes us to suffer. What causes our suffering is just that appearance. When we are suffering, when we really think about it, it has nothing to do with its actual duration in terms of hours and minutes. Whether it seems to last for a short or long period of time depends on what we feel. It is same as coming to class. Most of you probably think that these two hours are too long. But maybe there are some students who think that it is too short!

### **More on the clairvoyant mind**

How does the MOS explain a clairvoyance knowing another mind? They have to be able to explain coherently:

- how this clairvoyance is a direct valid cogniser,
- how it directly apprehends another mind, and

- how, at the same time, this direct valid cogniser and the mind that it realises are of one substance.

The way this clairvoyance realises another mind is unlike how an eye consciousness realises a vase. An eye consciousness realises its object nakedly. But that is not how a clairvoyance knowing another mind realises the other mind.

According to the MOS, on the basis of developing a very stable concentration, there will come a point whereby another mind will appear to this concentration. The mind of another person is experiencing different things and has different aspects. How does the mind of the other person appear to this clairvoyance? An aspect that is similar to this other mind appears to this clairvoyance. Because of this, the MOS asserts that this clairvoyance knowing the mind of another person knows exactly the mind of another person and therefore it can be a direct valid cogniser.

For example, it is possible to have a prophetic dream—a dream whereby you see clearly what will definitely happen in the future. You see that appearance in the dream. This prophetic dream can happen due to the power of karma or through the blessing of a deity. In the prophetic dream you are seeing something that has yet to happen. Provided it is an accurate dream and something definitely will happen, actually what you are perceiving is something that is similar to that will happen. You are not perceiving the event nakedly. What you are seeing is something that is *similar in aspect* to what will happen. What you see in the case of an accurate prophetic dream is exactly what will happen.

This is similar to the earlier explanation of how a clairvoyance knows the mind of another person and how that is a valid cogniser according to the MOS. Although the clairvoyance that knows the mind of another person does not see nakedly the mind of the other person, an *aspect that is similar* to that other mind appears. Therefore this clairvoyance can be posited as a direct valid cogniser. So there is no danger of two individuals becoming one individual. This is the explanation of how the clairvoyant mind sees another mind according to the MOS.

### ***More qualms from the SS***

But the SS has more qualms. According to the SS, let us say that there are two individuals looking at blue. There is a *shared* blue, i.e., the same blue appears to these two individuals. According to the MOS, the blue that is seen and the eye consciousness apprehending blue are of the same substance.

However the SS refutes this. According to their point of view, for these two individuals, there is one blue. This blue is due to the ripening of the latency of a particular karma in the mind of person A. But this blue is also the result of the ripening of the latency of a particular karma in the mind of person B. If there is a common blue that is seen by these two persons, it follows then that the minds of person A and person B are of one entity. This is the criticism of the SS. That is why the SS says that things are *not* in the nature of the mind and that there *are* external objects. If you posit external objects, then such problems will not arise.

The explanation by the MOS is this: using the illustration of two individuals looking at one vase, the vase that is appearing to person A is *not* the vase that is appearing to person B. That is:



- What appears to person A does not appear to person B.
- What appears to person B does not appear to person A.

When person A says, “The vase is impermanent,” that is not what person B is saying. Likewise, when person B says, “The vase is impermanent,” that is not what person A is saying. But both are similar in saying that a vase is impermanent. Even though both persons A and B say the same thing, “A vase is impermanent,” what person A is saying is not the same thing as what person B is saying. If you understand this, it will be quite easy to understand that what person A sees is not what person B sees. Similarly, what person B sees is not what person A sees. Therefore, these two individuals are not the same individual.

- The vase that appears to person A is of one substance with the mind of person A.
- The vase that appears to person B is of one substance with the mind of person B.

This is because the vase that appears to person A does not appear to person B. Therefore the vase that appears to person A is *not* one entity with the mind of person B.

This is like giving you the answers to the three questions that I had asked you all in an earlier lesson.

Does hell fire appear to the Buddha? If hell fire appears to Buddha, hell fire will be one entity with the mind of the Buddha.

How is hell fire established? It is established from the ripening of a karma to be born in the hell realm as this appearance can be only be found in the hell realm. But things and phenomena do not appear to the Buddha due to ripening of the karmic imprints. All phenomena appear to the Buddha due to the Buddha completing the accumulation of the two collections.

Because hell fire exists, it must also exist in the mind of the Buddha, i.e., he is a direct valid cogniser apprehending that fire. Similar to the explanation of how clairvoyance works, there is hell fire. The fully qualified hell fire appears to a hell being. An *aspect similar* to that appears to the mind of the Buddha. Specifically to the direct valid cognition of the Buddha apprehending hell fire, an *aspect similar* to the hell fire that appears to the hell beings appear to that mind. The Buddha does not realise hell fire nakedly but through the appearance of an aspect similar to the object. The reason why the Buddha can see hell fire is because hell beings see hell fire. The Buddha directly perceives hell fire in dependence upon the hell beings seeing hell fire.

This is just an illustration to help us think over and over again what is meant by, “Everything is in the nature of the mind,” as asserted by the MOS.

As I mentioned some time ago, you have to experiment and discover for yourself whether—when you adopt the view of the MOS that everything is in the nature of the mind—your destructive emotions are weakened or not. First we have to understand the assertions of the MOS. After having gained a good understanding of their worldview, then we look at our own experiences and think according to that worldview. We then check for ourselves whether there is

any benefit in doing that and whether it helps us to become calmer, less emotionally involved in negative actions, and reduce our destructive emotions. If we can see that such a worldview can help us lessen our afflictions, then there must be some truth in it.

### **Homework**

I have to go away for one week. There will be no classes this coming Thursday but I would like all of you to come together next Tuesday with a short written essay.

We have been talking about the four seals. Imagine someone is asking you about the four seals. How are you going to explain them to that person? The scenario is this. A person says to you, “Since you have been studying the Basic Program and also studying the tenets, I really want to learn about the four seals. Can you please explain them to me in an easy-to-understand and practical manner in an hour?”

The four seals are:

1. All compounded phenomena are impermanent.
2. All contaminated phenomena are miserable (or in the nature of suffering).
3. All phenomena are empty and selfless.
4. Nirvana is peace.

Your explanation should be based on the self, the person, and our contaminated body and mind. You should explain to the person in such a way that he can think about them and then put them into practice in order to help him to arrive at an understanding that indeed we ourselves, our lifespans, and our bodies are impermanent and the source of problems and our misery. You must be able to link the first and second links: because it is impermanent therefore it is suffering.

We also talked about the third seal, “All phenomena are empty and selfless.” Because of that therefore there is an end to our problems. The source of our problems is ego-grasping. When we can end that, then we can end our suffering and all our problems. We have to show this person how this is the case.

We talked a lot about this but how does that understanding lead to an end to our problems? We have to show and explain this clearly in a practical way. The main purpose is to lead the listener to the conclusion that enlightenment and nirvana exist and can be attained. How do you prove this by using your understanding of the four seals?

So write that essay before you come on Tuesday. You can write two or three pages. Don't write just what comes into your head. Don't write for the sake of writing. The point is to be concise with your words and their meaning. You have to be very clear in your own mind first. It is only when you are clear in your own mind that you can be clear in your essay. So think carefully and then write it up.

Bring whatever you have written on Tuesday. Then you find another person and present your essay to him or her, i.e., you exchange what you have written and read what was written by the other person. If there is anything that you do not agree with or am not sure about, you can ask the other party, “Why did you write this?”

From the discussion, you can help one another improve on what was written so as to raise the standard and improve the quality of what was written. You can learn new ideas, new ways of expressing yourself, or new logic. You have to keep in mind that you should be able to substantiate whatever you have written.

If you were to read out what you have written to many listeners, naturally people will have questions and ask; “Why do you write this? What is your reason? Can you share with us?” You should be able to explain clearly why you wrote what you wrote. If you had to ask someone else why you wrote what you wrote, then that is not the way. For those of you who had studied in university, it is the same as presenting your thesis to your professor.

*Khen Rinpoche: This is the idea behind this.*

The essence is that you have to be confident and be able to defend what you wrote. On Tuesday, come at 7.30pm. Start with the usual prayers that we do in class. After that you chose the person with whom you want to discuss your essay. You can discuss until 9.00pm.

We may have studied but we may not be confident of what we know and when someone asks, “What have you learnt?” we are not able to reply confidently. That is not good. I thought this exercise might be helpful. Keep whatever you have written. In the future when we have the opportunity and time perhaps some of you can share whatever you have written. Perhaps I will call one of you to present your essay.

It is possible that some of you cannot write for whatever reason. Then it is all right. You do not need to be stressed about it. But for those of you who really want to learn and have the interest to do so, especially those who are committed to this Basic Program, then you must write. It is not an option. As there is no class on Thursday, there is some time between now and next Tuesday. So bring along what you have written on Tuesday.

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