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# Ornament for Clear Realisations

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## I.2.3.7. Precepts which instruct on the five eyes

We are up to the seventh of the ten instructions or precepts, which is on the five eyes: the flesh eye, the divine eye, the wisdom eye, the Dharma eye, and the Buddha eye. In last session we listed the five eyes and went through the definition of the (sublime) eye or *chen* in Tibetan.

The definition of the sublime eye given in the last teaching is based on the Sera-Je text by Jetsun Chokyi Gyaltsen. It says:

*The sublime eye is a knower which directly perceives its object, and belonging to a distinguished class, it arises from its empowering condition of the level of actual concentration.*

We must understand this definition of the sublime eye before we move on to study the five types of the sublime eye.

### The flesh eye

The first eye which is the flesh eye. We learned the definition and a bit about it in the last teaching.

*A flesh eye (shey chen in Tibetan) is a sublime eye which directly perceives the gross and subtle forms within the area of one hundred paktse or yojanas by depending on its own uncommon empowering condition of the (causal) flesh eye (shay mik in Tibetan).*

If we look into the whole definition, we can see that there are three main components.

- The first component is that the flesh eye must be a *sublime eye* or *chen*.
- The second component is that it is a *knower which directly perceives the gross and subtle forms within an area of one hundred paktse*. This indicates the types of objects perceived and how they are perceived.
- The third component is *depending on its own uncommon empowering condition of the (causal) flesh eye*.

Here there is a terminological issue with respect to the word 'eye'.

We should note that in Tibetan there are two words for 'eye' – the colloquial *mik* and the honorific *chen*. In the context of the five eyes, the Tibetan word *chen* is used. So the first of the five eyes, the flesh eye is called *shey chen*, where *shey* means flesh or meaty.

However, in the definition statement of the flesh eye (*shey chen*) we find a line saying it is dependent on its empowering condition of the causal flesh eye. Here, the Tibetan word *mik* is used, hence the causal flesh eye, the first of the five eyes is *shey mik*. So let's use the term 'causal flesh eye' in reference to the flesh eye that serves as the empowering condition.

Among the followers of Lama Tsongkhapa, there are two views about this causal flesh eye. One view proposes that it is a kind of form, whereas the other view says it is a type of consciousness. Each view has merit along with reasons to substantiate its position.

Those who posit this causal flesh eye, *shey mik*, as some kind of luminous form that serves as an empowering condition giving rise to the flesh eye or *shey chen*. Hence, they maintain that by entity or nature, it is not a consciousness or a mind.

On the other hand, there are others who argue that if it's a form and an uncommon empowering condition for the flesh eye, *shey chen*, then this flesh eye must be a sense consciousness. They argue that just like depending on an uncommon empowering condition of an eye sense organ, which is a form, gives rise to an eye sense consciousness, the flesh eye that arises from the causal flesh eye *shey mik* must also be a sense consciousness.

However, both sides assert that the flesh eye is a mental consciousness because it is produced through the force of the meditation on the level of actual concentration. Nevertheless, we find here that the argument is whether the flesh eye, *shey chen*, arises from either its empowering condition as a sense organ and its consciousness or through the force of meditation.

The first view of the causal flesh eye, *shey mik*, as being some kind of subtle and luminous form is based on the quote from the Gyatsab Je's text, *Ornament of the Essential Explanation*, which says:

The divine eye which is produced by meditating on the level of concentration in this life is a luminous form included within the meditative equipoise of perceiving all the gross and subtle and close and distant forms. The clairvoyances are mental consciousness's concomitant with two dharmas, and depended on it (divine eye) serving as it's empowering condition.

With regard to the ability of the flesh eye to directly perceive gross and subtle forms that exist within the distance of 100 *paktse* or *yojanas*, refer to the previous weeks teaching where I explained the measurement of a *paktse*.

### Divine eye

Next is the divine eye. First, we will go through the definition of each of the five eyes and then look at some questions relating to these.

The definition of **divine eye** (*lhey chen* in Tibetan) as given in the text is:

*It is a sublime eye which directly perceives the birth and death of sentient beings by depending on the (causal) divine eye (lhey mik in Tibetan).*

When it says *perceives the birth*, this indicates knowing where the person will be born next and the word *death* indicates when the person will die. The words *depending on the divine eye* refer to the causal divine eye just as the flesh eye in the definition of the flesh eye is refers to the causal flesh eye.

### Wisdom eye

The third sublime eye called the **wisdom eye** is defined as:

*A sublime eye which is a nonconceptual exalted wisdom.*

Here, *nonconceptual exalted wisdom* refers to the wisdom directly realising emptiness.

### Dharma eye

The fourth sublime eye, the **Dharma eye** is defined as:

*A sublime eye which cognises the precise levels of sharpness and dullness of the mental faculties of arya beings.*

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Those who possess the Dharma eye have an ability to precisely know the mental capacity of the other beings and hence an ability to teach and benefit other beings at their levels.

### **Buddha eye**

The fifth is the **Buddha eye** which is defined as:

*A sublime eye which is an exalted knower directly and perfectly or completely seeing all phenomena."*

### **Analysis**

**Is the Buddha's physical eye one of these five eyes?** If so, then you need to specify which one of them it is. To answer this, you first need to ask this question: is the Buddha's eye a sublime eye as we defined earlier?

In order to be one of the five eyes, it must be a sublime eye. You therefore, need to check if the Buddha's eye satisfies the definition of a sublime eye.

It fulfils part of the definition where it says *a sublime eye is a knower which directly perceives its objects*, because the Buddha's eyes directly see all phenomena. So really the question is whether it fulfills the definition of a sublime eye that we defined earlier.

However, there is a question of whether the Buddha's eyes arise from its empowering condition of the level of actual concentration.

In other words, are the Buddha's physical eyes dependent on, or produced by the force of meditation. I would say 'no'. It is an eye sense consciousness and as such it arises by depending on its empowering condition of an eye sense organ. We don't say that an eye sense consciousness or any other sense consciousness is gained through meditation practice or the sense organs.

So based on the fact that a sense organ or a sense consciousness is not gained through the force of meditation, we can possibly say the Buddha's physical eye is not a sublime eye.

When a person becomes a fully awakened being or a buddha, they have completely overcome and purified all of their negativities and obscurations. Hence, not only their minds but also their sense organs, and in fact all the parts of their physical and spiritual being, can directly perceive all things. Because the person has reached that omniscient state of perfection through meditation, does that also mean all the parts of their being such as hands, head, sense organs, sense consciousness and so on, have also resulted from meditation? I wouldn't say 'yes'.

If you look at the stages of the spiritual path to enlightenment, there are five paths to progress through while successively abandoning afflictions and obscurations. For example, progressing from the uninterrupted path to the path of release takes place with the abandonment of a particular level of affliction or obscuration. While in the stage of the uninterrupted path, the person is engaged in the state of meditative equipoise which directly realises emptiness and counteracts the obscuration. Upon the abandonment of that obscuration, the person attains the path of release.

The main point to be understand here is that these successive developments on the path to enlightenment are mainly due to transformation and purification on the mental level. This however, may also have an impact on the physical level as

well. However, meditation is mainly for mental development.

On the other hand, when we think about the continuum of our sense organs, sense consciousness's and parts of our body, these are not something we can change and produce through meditation practice.

Hence, the Buddha's physical eyes are not any of the five sublime eyes because they are a sense consciousness. A sublime eye must be a mental consciousness as it is dependent on the level of actual concentration as it's empowering condition and hence it is attained through the force of meditation.

### **Concerning the ability of the flesh eye to perceive forms**

There is a sutra saying that a flesh eye can perceive gross and subtle forms within the area from one hundred *paktse* to three thousand-fold worlds. However, the definition says it perceives gross and subtle forms within the area of 100 *paktse*. Isn't there a contradiction between the statement in the sutra and the definition of the flesh eye with regard to the extent of the area of forms perceived by a flesh eye?

The sutra specifies that it perceives forms beyond 100 *paktse*, whereas the definition specifies 100 *paktse*. There is no contradiction here because the definition points out it perceives forms within 100 *paktse* however this doesn't mean that it can't perceive beyond that. Nor does it mean that all flesh eyes can perceive all the forms within the three thousand-fold world.

The implication here is, as mentioned in the Arya Vimuktisena's *Light of the Twenty Thousand Lines sutra*, a flesh eye perceives any forms from within the area of 100 *paktse* to the great one thousandth world of the three-thousand-fold worlds. So, the definition sets the minimum distance to 100 *paktse*.

We won't go through it here but we need to know about the three thousand-fold worlds and the great one thousandth world. Is there any world beyond that?

### **The influence of the karma of past lives on sublime eyes**

The flesh eyes of any ordinary sentient being or those who have not yet entered the path are said to have the ability to perceive any one of the objects which exists within 100 *paktse* up until the three thousand-fold worlds but not beyond that. Why is this? This also doesn't mean that their flesh eyes necessarily can perceive all the gross and subtle forms within its radar of the area of perceptions.

So, what are the factors that determine the types, numbers and distance of objects that it can perceive? In relation to this, Arya Vimuktisena further adds:

... that arise from the ripening cause, and hence its object is definitive but varies individually. The flesh eye is a subjective thing and an environmental result included within the great thousandth world of the three thousand-fold worlds.

Here we find that the flesh eye's ability to perceive is also influenced by the ripening of past life karma. Let us say someone gains a flesh eye in this current life. It is saying here that the flesh eye arises due to its empowering condition (causal) flesh eye or *shey mik*, however the karma of the person's past life also serves as a cause to ripen it. That is to say, if in the past life the person had trained and made some progress in the meditation practice, particularly on the level

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of concentration, then by virtue of that past life meditation training and experience, the flesh eye they have gained in this life would be enhanced to perceive certain types or levels of objects. From this point of view, it is saying the flesh eye is conditioned or ripened by the past karma. Hence, past karma has an impact on the flesh eye's range of perception in future lives.

Furthermore, in *Precious Garland* Nagarjuna says that by making light offerings to stupas, to those in need of light to see in the darkness, or providing offerings of butter, oil, or candles to facilitate others to make light offering, are the causes for one to attain the divine eye.

This also shows that the virtues and merits accumulated in past lives have an influence to be more powerful and effective on whatever virtues, merits and realisations we gain in present and future lives.

#### **A question concerning the wisdom eye**

According to the definition of the wisdom eye, it should be a non-conceptualised exalted wisdom and this wisdom refers to the wisdom directly realising emptiness. However, in one of his texts, Arya Vimuktisena referred to the wisdom eye realising the gross or the subtle form of selflessness.

We will have a teaching break next week so you can have a group discussion. The discussion should cover the topics that we have been discussing from the beginning of this year, like the three types of joyful effort, the five sublime eyes and specifically on the two questions we raised tonight. Consider:

Why the flesh eye of a person who has not entered into the path is limited to perceive forms that exist only within the three thousand-fold worlds. Why not beyond that?

Does the wisdom eye have to directly realise emptiness or can we have a wisdom eye that only realises the gross form of selflessness?

We need to understand that the primary purpose of achieving these five eyes is to achieve the state of enlightenment to benefit all sentient beings. These eyes will serve as an aid or favourable condition to benefit other beings effectively, and to make one's progress on the spiritual path quicker.

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