

# MIND & ITS WORLD 1

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*sourcebook*

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**For further information contact: [info@nitarthainstitute.org](mailto:info@nitarthainstitute.org)**

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# EXPLANATION OF SENSE DIRECT VALID COGNITION

ĀCHĀRYA SHERAB GYALTSEN

## SENSE DIRECT VALID COGNITION

The first division of direct valid cognition is sense direct valid cognition, and it has two parts: the definition and the divisions.

The text says:

### 2.1.1.2.1.1.2.1. *Sense direct valid cognition*

This has two parts:

- (1) Definition
- (2) Divisions

### *Definition of Sense Direct Valid Cognition*

The text says:

#### 2.1.1.2.1.1.2.1.1. *Definition of sense direct valid cognition*

The first, [the definition of sense direct valid cognition], exists because it is “a non-conceptual and nonmistaken awareness arisen on the basis of its own uncommon dominant condition, a physical sense faculty.” This is so, because it is stated in the *Compendium of Valid Cognition*:

On the basis of the sense faculties, conceptuality is impossible.  
Through conventional terms, the respective specific objects  
of awareness  
Cannot be shown; their nature [is to be] objects of the sense faculties.

and in the *Commentary on Valid Cognition*:

Therefore, the minds that arise from the sense faculties  
Are all perceiving subjects of particulars.

The definition of sense direct valid cognition has four parts. The last part of the definition is distinctive. It says: “arisen on the basis of its own uncommon dominant condition,<sup>16</sup> a physical sense faculty.” The word “uncommon”<sup>17</sup> means not shared with anything else. A sense direct valid cognition arises on the basis of its own uncommon—its own particular—dominant condition, which is a physical sense faculty. There are five divisions of sense direct valid cognition because there are five dominant conditions for sense direct valid cognition. These five are the sense faculties from the eye through the body. When we look at this definition, the first of the four points is that a sense direct valid cognition arises on the basis of its own uncommon dominant condition, a sense faculty.

By saying “arisen on the basis of its own uncommon dominant condition, a sense faculty,” it excludes the possibility that sense direct valid cognition could be a mental direct valid cognition, self-aware direct valid cognition, or yogic direct valid cognition. Saying “arising on the basis of its own uncommon dominant condition” means that it has to arise on the basis of its own particular dominant condition. None of these could arise on the basis of a mental sense faculty, for example. It excludes the possibility that they are mental direct valid cognition. The rest of the definition, “a nonconceptual, nonmistaken awareness,” is the same as the general definition for direct valid cognition.

<sup>16</sup> San. adhipati-pratyaya; Tib. bdag rkyen

<sup>17</sup> Tib. thun mong ma yin ba



see Lorik: divisions of mind:  
valid cognition:  
direct valid cognition:  
sense direct valid cognition

You need to first understand the definition of a direct valid cognition, and then you will understand the divisions into sense direct valid cognition, mental direct valid cognition, self-aware direct valid cognition, and yogic direct valid cognition without any problems. But if you do not understand the definition for direct valid cognition well to begin with, it will be hard to understand the definitions for its divisions.

### ***Sense Faculties, Sense Consciousnesses & Their Objects***

Next the text says, “This is so, because it is stated in the *Compendium of Valid Cognition*: ‘On the basis of the sense faculties, conceptuality is impossible. / Through conventional terms, the respective specific objects of awareness / Cannot be shown; their nature [is to be] objects of the sense faculties.’”

The first part of the first line says, “On the basis of the sense faculties.” This means that the sense faculties themselves, which are the dominant conditions, and also what arises on the basis of the sense faculties—the sense direct valid cognition and the sense consciousnesses—cannot be conceptual. They are not a conceptual cognition that mixes together the referent and the terms, and they are not conceptual. So when you are talking about the sense faculties, or what arises on the basis of the sense faculties, which are the sense consciousnesses including sense direct valid cognition, all these are all nonconceptual.

“The respective specific objects of awareness” refers to the objects apprehended by the sense consciousnesses, which themselves arise from the sense faculties. The specific objects that are cognized are specifically characterized phenomena; for the eye consciousness, it would be specifically characterized phenomena which are forms. These cannot be shown through conventional terms—through words or terms. If one wonders, are these specifically characterized phenomena cognized? Yes, they are. They are directly cognized by the sense consciousnesses.

The last part says: “their nature is to be objects of the sense faculties.” Nature refers to the essence or entity of a specifically characterized phenomenon, which is the object for a sense consciousness. They are the objects for the sense consciousnesses, which arise on the basis of the sense faculties. Even though they cannot be shown through words and terms, these specifically characterized phenomena are cognized by the sense consciousnesses.

Next the *Commentary on Valid Cognition* says, “Therefore, minds arisen from the sense faculties / Are all perceiving subjects of particulars.” “Minds arisen from the sense faculties” means the sense consciousnesses, which arise on the basis of their own specific dominant condition: their respective sense faculties. They are all perceiving subjects of particulars, and here “particulars” means specifically characterized phenomena. Perceiving subject and subject aspect (which is the way it is translated in our list of definitions) is the same word in Tibetan.<sup>18</sup> They are all subject aspects for their particular object, namely, their respective, specifically characterized phenomenon.

### ***Divisions of Sense Direct Valid Cognition***

The text says:

#### ***2.1.1.2.1.1.2.1.2. Divisions of sense direct valid cognition***

This has five parts:

- (1) Sense direct valid cognitions apprehending forms
- (2) Sense direct valid cognitions apprehending sounds
- (3) Sense direct valid cognitions apprehending smells
- (4) Sense direct valid cognitions apprehending tastes
- (5) Sense direct valid cognitions apprehending tangible objects

<sup>18</sup> Tib. yul chen, yul can

The definition of the first exists, because it is “a nonconceptual, nonmistaken awareness arisen on the basis of its dominant condition, the eye sense faculty.”

The definition of the second exists, because it is “a nonconceptual, nonmistaken awareness arisen on the basis of its dominant condition, the ear sense faculty.”

The definition of the third exists, because it is “a nonconceptual, nonmistaken awareness arisen on the basis of its dominant condition, the nose sense faculty.”

The definition of the fourth exists, because it is “a nonconceptual, nonmistaken awareness arisen on the basis of its dominant condition, the tongue sense faculty.”

The definition of the fifth exists, because it is “a nonconceptual, nonmistaken awareness arisen on the basis of its dominant condition, the body sense faculty.”

There are five divisions based on the five dominant conditions and five observed object conditions: sense direct valid cognition apprehending forms, sense direct valid cognition apprehending sounds, sense direct valid cognition apprehending smells, sense direct valid cognition apprehending tastes, and sense direct valid cognition apprehending tangible objects.

### **Three Conditions**

Each one must have three conditions present: the observed object condition,<sup>19</sup> the dominant condition,<sup>20</sup> and the immediately preceding condition.<sup>21</sup> If we take the example of the first one, sense direct cognition apprehending forms, their observed object condition is a form. Their dominant condition is the eye sense faculty. Their dominant condition—as in the general definition—is their own uncommon, not shared with anything else, dominant condition, the eye sense faculty. Each one of the sense faculties has a subtle form, and the eye sense faculty’s form is like that of a flax flower, which is a small blue flower. The third condition that must be present is the immediately preceding condition, which is also sometimes translated as “proximate condition.” This is the immediately preceding moment of consciousness. For an eye consciousness, this may be either the immediately preceding moment of the eye consciousness, or it may be the immediately preceding moment of the mental consciousness. If we are talking about the second moment of an eye consciousness, then the immediately preceding moment of consciousness will be an eye consciousness. However, if we are talking about the first moment of an eye consciousness cognizing or apprehending form, then the immediately preceding moment would be a mental consciousness.

For the sense direct valid cognition apprehending sounds, its observed object condition would be a sound. Its dominant condition would be the ear sense faculty, whose subtle form is said to be like a twisted bundle of wheat; you take the whole thing and twist it. Its immediately preceding condition would be the same thing: the immediately preceding moment of consciousness would either be a mental consciousness or an ear consciousness. Each case of sense direct valid cognition must have all three conditions present. If any one of the conditions is not present, it will not arise.

Sense direct valid cognition apprehending smells have the nose sense faculty, which is said to be like two copper needles, as their dominant condition. The dominant condition is the main condition. The dominant condition must be present—it has to be complete or fully present—for the sense consciousness to arise. The observed object condition for the nose consciousness is a smell, and of course, the immediately preceding condition is an immediately preceding moment of consciousness.

For the sense direct valid cognition apprehending taste, the dominant condition is a tongue sense faculty, whose form is said to be like a moon split in two. The tongue sense

19 San. ālambana-pratyaya; Tib. dmigs rkyen

20 San. adhipati-pratyaya; Tib. bdag rkyen

21 San. samanantara-pratyaya; Tib. de ma thag rkyen

faculty is said to be the uncommon dominant condition because the tongue sense faculty will only give rise to a tongue consciousness; it will not give rise to any of the other consciousnesses. “Uncommon” means not shared with anything else, not common to all sense faculties. Obviously the observed object condition is taste, and the immediately preceding condition is an immediately preceding moment of consciousness.

For the sense direct valid cognition apprehending tangible objects, the dominant condition is the body sense faculty, which is said to be like a bird that is soft to the touch, a bird that is covered with very small little feathers. The observed object condition is tangible objects, and again, the immediately preceding condition is an immediately preceding moment of consciousness.

First we need to understand well how sense direct valid cognition arises, because if we understand this well, we will understand how mental direct valid cognition arises. If we understand how direct valid cognition arises, we will understand how conceptual cognition develops on the basis of direct valid cognition. We will understand how certainty arises from direct valid cognition. Certainty develops both on the basis of direct valid cognition and inferential valid cognition. Therefore we need to understand the steps of direct valid cognition properly, so that we can understand how certainty arises from direct valid cognition.

You see that each definition has four parts, as before. Each one is “a nonconceptual, nonmistaken awareness.” The only difference lies in the last part: “arisen on the basis of its dominant condition,” which is an unshared dominant condition. For example, in the case of a sense direct valid cognition apprehending forms, it is the eye sense faculty. The only thing that changes in these five definitions is the dominant condition. In the first case, the dominant condition is the eye sense faculty, and in the last case, it is the body sense faculty. It would be good if you could memorize them. 🙏