



# Dhargyey Buddhist Centre

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Questions from audience are on unofficial word document and not here.

The topic tonight is prime or valid cognition, there are two: direct prime cognition and inferential valid cognition. Tonight we will talk about the inferential valid cognition.

## Inferential prime cognition

As you are all aware direct valid cognition or prime cognition is empirical and thus not dependent or reliant on reasons whereas inferential valid cognition is very much reliant on reason. Inferential cognition is roughly defined as a conceptual awareness that is non-deceptive in relation to the object and which develops as a result of its support/ correct sign. What is a correct sign? If you know that there is a fire on the mountain miles and miles away? What helps you know? Smoke. Is it smoke in general or smoke on top of the hill? If you say it is smoke on top of the hill this is not the correct reason because if you say that there is smoke on the top of the hill you don't need smoke as proof for fire as you already know there is smoke. This does not serve as the correct sign. When you first see smoke you say, 'maybe there is a fire'. Your awareness, there and then, of smoke itself without qualification establishes the likelihood of fire. Why? Because where there is smoke there is fire. Again: when you see smoke on the hill, first you say, 'there is smoke.' As soon as you see smoke you think, 'there must be fire'. You don't say 'smoke on the top of hill' but 'smoke in general'. That smoke then helps establish the existence of the fire on the top of the hill. A qualified smoke, that is, 'smoke on the top of the hill', for example, is not a correct logical sign. The point of all this is very subtle.

Again: when you see smoke on top of the mountain you think 'there is smoke'. Soon after that then you say to yourself 'there must be fire.' Why? Generally wherever there is smoke there is fire. But at that time you don't use a qualified smoke, 'smoke on top of mountain', as a sign of 'fire on top of the mountain.' In that case then you would not need smoke to establish the existence of fire on the mountain.

For example, sound is impermanent. Why? Because it is a product. This means it is a momentary changing thing. When you say that sound is impermanent because it is a product, you are not saying to yourself 'the product sound'. At that time, the topic 'sound' is impermanent. Why? Because it is a product. You are using product in general as a reason to infer that sound must be impermanent. However, you are not using sound's momentary change as a sign to show that sound is impermanent. If sound's momentary change is already established by it being a product then the thesis is already established.

When a person comes to understand through the sign of smoke that there is a fire on top of the hill then that understanding is inferential valid cognition. Such inferential valid cognition develops or arises from its base or with the support of a correct logical sign.

We need to talk about this correct logical sign or proof in the following way:

1. Thesis: what is to be established?

The existence of fire on the hill or that there is a fire on the hill is to be established.

2. Proof: the proof is the sighting of smoke.

We are not saying the smoke on the hill. We are just saying, smoke. This proof/ establisher/correct sign/evidence/correct reason. In this particular case it is smoke in general and unqualified.

For whom can unqualified smoke be proof/establisher? The person for who smoke can be a correct reason must have three conditions/modes:

The first mode: The person has clearly sighted smoke on the top of the hill but it is still unclear whether there is a fire or not.

The second mode: This is a forward pervasion. Again, smoke is the pervasion. Pervasion is established in the person's consciousness that wherever there is smoke there is fire. He is not saying 'the smoke on the mountain' but elsewhere where there is smoke there is fire so it pervades that wherever there is smoke there is fire. That knowledge is established.

The third mode: This is a backward/counter-pervasion: this is establishing that wherever there is no fire there cannot be smoke either.

Unqualified smoke itself is all the three modes. What I have just talked about is the process of establishing a forward and counter pervasion. For a person who meets these three conditions of establishing these triple modes then you present correct logical statement or syllogism. Then you say to them, 'Mate, that on that hill up there, there is fire' – fire becomes the predicate of the thesis. If he asks, 'Why?', then you say, 'Because there is smoke.' Unqualified smoke is the correct sign or evidence or proof.

Again: 'Oh friend, on that hill up there is a fire.' 'Why?' 'There is smoke'. We did not say 'there is smoke on the hill' – it does not become correct sign. It is not correct sign because the pervasion, where there is smoke there is fire, is already established in him as the correct sign. Correct signs are used to educate and kindle correct knowledge. Saying 'smoke on the hill' becomes redundant proof because it would mean that he or she has no doubt or reservation as to whether there is fire or not.

Recap: there is a situation with a person who has sighted smoke on the hill. Although he has seen smoke, he is now in doubt whether there is fire or not. However, he is also a person who generally knows that wherever there is smoke there has to be fire. Yet, he has some doubt about the smoke and fire. In the state of indecision then you present a correct logical statement. When does this become or fulfil its purpose? It does so when because of the statement of proof that the presence of smoke establishes fire, he says, 'yes there must be fire on the hill,' and then it is established. Thus correct inference of fire on the hill is correct inferential valid cognition and as such it is contingent upon presentation of correct logical sign.

### **Inferential Valid Cognition**

Last time when we went through those seven seeming conceptual direct awarenesses, one of them was mind apprehending sign. What is that conceptual mind apprehending sign? That kind of mind is what we have just been talking about. Firstly, there was the establishment of the smoke on the hill or the sighting of the smoke on the hill; secondly, there was the awareness which establishes forward pervasion, the mind which establishes for itself the forward pervasion. The awareness that generally anywhere there is smoke there is fire is also conceptual mind apprehending sign.

This is a rather brief presentation or explanation of how you develop inference or inferential valid cognition.

As for inference there are three types:

1. Inference through the power of fact.
2. Inference through belief or conviction.
3. Inference through the power of renown or popularity.

Why are there three types? Because of three different ways of reasoning.

1. Inference through the power of fact is called this because its knowledge is gained indirectly or inferentially through innate or latent characteristics or properties that each and every thing has.
2. Inference through belief is correct knowledge of something gained inferentially not because we have seen correct tangible signs which infer the knowledge of the object but simply because we believe somebody else's authority on the subject.
3. Inference through renown is more like a metaphor from the ancient Indian context. The sun has many synonyms. It is known as the friend of the lotus, and the illuminator; the moon is called the one with the

rabbit, or rabbit possessor, and the lord of the night. The moon is known by many names, so is the sun. Why does each have their names? They are just known popularly by those names.

Inference through belief:

This is the hardest to establish as it is to be developed through belief itself as the correct sign (like smoke was above) of logical syllogism. There could be many things that could be used as object of belief. We could take what Nagarjuna said; ‘Buddha’s statement was: ‘wealth through generosity and higher rebirth through pure ethics’’. This statement is non-fraudulent regarding what it conveys, explains and shows because such a statement of the Buddha and meets the requirements of three logical analyses. This statement of the Buddha ‘wealth through generosity and higher rebirth through ethics’ meets the criteria of correctness through three logical analyses, that is, establishing the manifest, the covert/ hidden, and the extremely hidden (phenomena).

1. That statement of the Buddha meets the first analysis establishing the manifest because direct valid cognition – empirical – does not undermine that statement. No matter how you examined that statement you will find the statement is not affected or undermined by direct valid cognition.
2. The same statement is non-fraudulent in establishing slightly hidden phenomena because the statement is not undermined or affected by inferential cognition through the power of fact.
3. The same statement is non-deceptive and non-fraudulent in establishing the extremely hidden because in doing so this same statement is not challenged or undermined by inference through belief. Also it is not undermined by the process of explaining or revealing it directly or indirectly.

Next time I am going to talk about inference through belief, how it is not just blind faith but how it works as logical proof.