

ཕུང་པོ་ལྔ་ THE FIVE SKANDHAS (*phung po nga*)¹

According to the Buddha, everything that we experience can be classified within the following five categories or “heaps” (*skandhas*) and their subdivisions—namely, 1. matter (11 sub-divisions), 2. feeling (6 sub-divisions), 3. conception (3 sub-divisions), 4. conditioning forces (51 sub-divisions of mental formations) and (24 sub-divisions of non-material and non-mental forces), and 5. consciousness (8 sub-divisions). These categories and subdivisions circumscribe the only experienceable bases upon which we designate a ‘self.’² We habitually and unconsciously assume that ‘self’ to have a singular, lasting, and autonomous nature. But if we search within them for a ‘self’ or ‘fixed identity,’ we do not find one anywhere within the five skandhas. Instead, we discover that our assumption runs contrary to the reality of our experience: everything consists of parts, is impermanent, and is subject to causes and conditions. Despite this fact, we habitually maintain our ignorance and avoid facing reality while constantly engaging in cognitive and emotional struggles to cherish and protect our vague idea of a singular, lasting, and autonomous self. Through craving to cherish and protect this imaginary self, we become mired in the five negative emotions which lead us into various types of painful states of existence. In order to free ourselves from our ignorant struggle against reality, we can loosen our painful attachment to this imaginary singular, lasting, and autonomous ‘self’ by taking full stock of all the constituents of our experience and carefully observing whether they contain anything singular, lasting, or autonomous to be experienced that comprises our ‘self’ as we are emotionally attached to it. The proposition is that by carefully observing our experience, we will not find anything that falls outside of the five categories and their subdivisions and we will find that everything that falls within them consists of parts, is impermanent, and is subject to causes and conditions. The outline below is provided as a basic framework for meditatively taking stock of our experience and objectively observing what it consists in. It is helpful to familiarize ourselves with the list, study and contemplate the definitions of each term, and then reflect on our experience in light of them. The five main categories and their subdivisions are presented together with their defining characteristics below.

གནུབ་ལྔ་ Material forms (*rūpa; gzugs; zuk*)

These have the nature of materiality. The category of matter can be subdivided into the four material elements and the eleven material forms that are dependent upon them.

¹ This work-in-progress document contains the translations and definitions presently being used in MSB's online courses as of July 2019. It is hybrid based on Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa*, Vasubandhu's *Pañcaskandhaka*, Asaṅga's *Abhidharmasamuccaya*, Mipham's *Gateway to Knowledge*, and Dzigar Kongtrul Rinpoche's comments made at previous NSS programs and 2019.

² To be precise, it is only the five “skandhas to which we cling” (*upādānaskandha; nye bar len pa'i phung po*)—i.e. the above five categories minus the 24 sub-divisions of non-material and non-mental forces in the fourth skandha—that forms the basis for our habitual and unconscious assumption of a ‘self.’ Hence, while guiding searches for “self,” VDKR and others usually do not mention the 24 other sub-divisions in the fourth skandha. For this reason, I have included them in the appendix, rather than the fourth skandha below.

a. Four material elements:

1. སྐ. **Earth Element (*sa*)**

The quality of hardness, mass

2. ལྷ. **Water element (*chu*)**

The quality of cohesion, liquid

3. མེ. **Fire element (*mé*)**

The quality of heat

4. ལྷོ. **Wind Element (*lung*)**

Ethereality, movement

b. Eleven types of material forms:

1. མིག་. **Eye organ (*mig*)**

lucid form functioning within an eye whose scope is a sight

2. རྩ་. **Ear organ (*na wa*)**

lucid form functioning within an ear whose scope is a sound

3. རྩ་. **Nose organ (*na*)**

lucid form functioning within a nose whose scope is a scent

4. ལྷོ. **Tongue organ (*je*)**

lucid form functioning within a tongue whose scope is a flavor.

5. ལྷོ. **Body organ (*lü*)**

lucid form functioning within a body whose scope is something tangible

6. བཞུགས་. **Sights (*zuk*)** – the various

shapes, colors, and perceptible forms that are the scope of the eye

7. ལྷོ. **Sounds (*dra*)** – either the scope of

the ear produced by the elements that is either natural or acquired

8. ལྷོ. **Scents (*dri*)** – the scope of the

nose that is pleasant, unpleasant, or otherwise

9. ལྷོ. **Flavors (*ro*)** – the sweet, sour,

salty, bitter, pungent, and astringent types that are the scope of the tongue

10. རྩ་. **Tangibles (*rekcha*)**

the smooth/ rough, heavy/light, cool/warm, hungry/ thirsty types that depend on the elements and are bodily objects

11. རྩ་པར་རྩེད་མ་ཡིན་པ་ **Imperceptible forms (*nampar rigché mayinpa*)**

The unmanifest and non-resistant forms born from meditative concentration, and classified as a dharma of the mental door (*āyatana*).

ཚོར་བ་ **Feelings (*vedanā; tshor ba; tsorwa*)**

Positive, negative or neutral direct experiences. Since the emotional formations are not included in this category of “feelings”—i.e. only the painful or pleasurable charge is intended here—it is sometimes translation “sensations” instead of “feeling” (which might incorrectly imply emotions).

ལུས་ཚོར་ **Physical feelings (*lus tshor; lü tsorwa*)**

1. Pleasurable sensory feelings
2. Painful sensory feelings
3. Neutral sensory feelings

ཡིད་ཚོར་ **Mental/emotional feelings (*yid tshor; yi tsor*)**

4. Happiness/ positive mental feelings
5. Sadness/ negative mental feelings
6. Neutral mental feelings³

འདུ་ཤེས་ **Conceptions (*saṃjñā; 'du shes; du shé*)**

Mentally labeling something as attractive, unattractive, or neutral—always with the assumption that the object is real—based on the six types of sensory or mental perceptions of a particular objects.⁴

འདུ་བྱེད་ **Conditioning Forces (*saṃskāra; 'du byed; du jé*)**

The conditioning forces can be divided into fifty-one different types of mental functions and the twenty-four non-mental and non-material forces (included in the appendix). The fifty-one mental functions condition our mindset and lead us in positive, negative or neutral karmic directions. The mental functions can be sub-divided as follows: (1–5) the five omnipresent; (5–10) the five allowing discernment;⁵ (10–21) the eleven positive; (21–26) the six root negative; (27–47) the twenty subsidiary negative; (48–51) the four changeable.⁶

³ Sometimes the list has only five feelings, because some argue that neutral mental feelings are undetectable.

⁴ The labels can be limited (in the desire realm), expansive (in the form realm), or unlimited (in the formless meditations on infinite space and consciousness). Cf. Abhidharmasamuccaya: *ālambanānimittikaraṇa*

⁵ The first ten mental functions are the mechanism or infrastructure of mind. These are helpful to know so we can overcome the negative and strengthen the positive.

⁶ I have included only in the appendix the list of twenty-four conditioning forces disconnected from mind or material form (*ldan min 'dus byed*), such as attainment and so on.

ཀུན་འགྲོ་ལྔ་ **Five Omnipresent (*sarvatraga; kun 'gro lnga; kundro nga*)**⁷

1. རེག་པ་ **Contact (*sparṣa; reg pa; rekpa*)**

The coming together of sensory or mental consciousness, its organ, and its object.

2. ཚོར་བ་ **Feeling (*vedanā; tshor ba; tsorwa*)**

Pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral quality of experience.⁸

3. སེམས་པ་ **Knowing (*cetanā; sems pa; sempa*)**

Pre-thought knowing of an object as pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral.⁹

4. འདུ་ཤེས་ **Concept / Label (*saṃjñā; 'du shes; du shé*)**¹⁰

Mentally labeling something as attractive, unattractive, or neutral, always with the assumption that the object is real.

5. ཡིད་ལ་བྱེད་པ་ **Attention (*manaskāra; yid la byed pa; yi la jépa*)**

Developing a further relation to the object—beyond merely labeling it—by continuing either to grasp it as desirable or reject it as undesirable.

ཡུལ་ངེས་ལྔ་ **Five Mental Functions Allowing Discernment (*yul nges lnga*)**

6. འདུན་པ་ **Intention (*chandaḥ; 'dun pa; dūnpa*)**

The wish to get something desirable or to get rid of something undesirable.

7. རྗེས་པ་ **Affection/Inclination (*adhimokṣaḥ; mos pa; möpa*)**

Based on one's taste, wishing with fondness to cultivate a thing believed to be desirable OR with aversion to get rid of a thing believed to be undesirable.

⁷ The order here follows VDKR's explanation of their temporal occurrence. But they all occur rapidly in an indistinguishable cluster with each moment of perception.

⁸ This is listed separately as the "feeling skandha" due to its importance, but is included here also due to its being a subset of the fourth skandha.

⁹ See also the Western philosophical term "intentionality," i.e. consciousness' being directed toward an object.

¹⁰ This too is listed separately as the "conception skandha" due to its importance, but is included here also due to its being a subset of the fourth skandha.

8. དྲན་པ་ **Mindfulness** (*smṛtiḥ; dran pa; drenpa*)

Remembering the quality of the object, so that one keep going toward it or away from it.

9. ཉིང་རེ་འཇིག་ **Concentration** (*samādhi; ting nge 'dzin; ting ngé dzin*)

Single-pointedly concentrating on a thing to work on embracing it or rejecting it.

10. ཤེས་རབ་ **Discernment** (*prajñā; shes rab; shérab*)

Distinguishing things; natural intelligence regarding whatever one is focused upon, either as something desirable that you want or as something undesirable that you reject.

དགེ་བའི་སེམས་འབྱུང་ **Eleven Positive Mental Functions**

(*kuśalacetasaḥ; dge ba'i sems 'byung*)

1. དད་པ་ **Faith** (*śraddhā; dad pa*)

Faith can be in the effects of karma, the four noble truths, the three jewels and so on. The three types are:

- (a) Inspired faith, based on seeing or hearing about something
- (b) Enthusiastic faith, based on one's own wish to achieve something
- (c) Confident faith, based on unshakeable conviction.

2. རྩོམ་ཤེས་པ་ **Preserving Self-Respect and Dignity** (*hrīḥ; ngo tsha shes pa; ngotsa shépa - Etymologically, ngo=face, tsa=blushing*)

Not doing anything to denigrate your sense of self-respect or dignity, mainly out of a healthy sense of shame with consideration for oneself or one's own qualities.

3. སྦྲོལ་ཡོད་པ་ **Conscientiousness** (*apatrāpyah; khrel yod pa; trel yöpa*)

Being conscious not to do something reprehensible, mainly out of consideration for others.

4. མ་ཚགས་པ་ **Absence of Attachment (*alobhaḥ; ma chags pa; ma chakpa*)**¹¹

On a gross level, not being attached to one's self, possessions, status, etc. On a subtle level, it is the letting go that serves as an antidote to attachment.

5. མི་སྤང་བ་ **Absence of Aggression (*adveṣaḥ; mi sdang ba; mi dangwa*)**¹²

Not responding to a seemingly threatening object with hatred (gross level). On a subtle level, it is the benevolence (*maitrī*) that serves as an antidote to hatred.

6. གཉི་སྤྱུག་མེད་པ་ **Absence of Deep Mental Fog (*amohaḥ; gñi mug med pa; timuk mépa*)**

Not being in a deep mental fog that allows attachment and aggression to develop.

7. བརྩོན་འགྲུས་ **Perseverance/Diligence (*vīryaṃ; brtson 'grus; tsöndrū*)**

Enthusiastic application towards beneficial and positive thoughts, emotions, and actions.¹³

8. འཛིན་སྤྱང་ས་ **Being Thoroughly Processed (*praśrabdhi; shin sbyangs; shinjang*)**

The relaxed and uplifted physical and mental agility, presence of mind, and bliss that comes from having thoroughly trained in something.

9. བག་ཡོད་ **Vigilance (*apramādaḥ; bag yod; bakyö*)**

Energetically applying oneself both toward guarding against harmful qualities and actions and toward cultivating beneficial qualities and actions. It is like the mental state of guarding an open wound.

10. བཏང་སྦྱོམ་ས་ **Equanimity (*upekṣā; btang snyoms; tangnyom*)**

An even-minded, composed, and balanced state of mind that has let go of affirming or denying.

11. རྣམ་པར་མི་འཚོ་བ་ **Non-harm (*avihiṃsā; rnam par mi 'tshé ba; nampar mi tséwa*)**¹⁴

A state of mind of physically, verbally, and mentally not bringing harm to others.

¹¹ VDKR NSS 2019 - "freedom from lust" or from a disturbed state of mind,

¹² VDKR NSS 2019 - freedom from aggression Also, known as *zhe sdang med pa; shédang mépa*.

¹³ VDKR NSS 2019 - "exuberant in energy output" lacking three forms of laziness. See list under laziness below.

¹⁴ VDKR NSS 2019 - nonviolence

ཕ་བའི་ཉོན་མོངས་བྱུག་ **The Six Root Negative Mental Functions**

(*ṣaṭkleśaḥ; rtsa ba'i nyonmong druk; tsawé nyonmon druk*)

1. འདོད་ཆགས་ **Attachment (*rāgaḥ; 'dod chags; döchak*)**

Desire that propels you towards self-gain at the expense of others.

2. རྩོད་ཚྲོལ་ **Animosity (*pratighaḥ; khong khro ba; khongtrowa*)**

A deep rage that strikes out at beings or things that threaten oneself.¹⁵

3. རྒྱལ་ **Pride (*mānaḥ; nga rgyal; ngagyal*)**

There are seven sub-types:

a. རྒྱལ་ **Snobbishness (*mānaḥ; nga rgyal; ngagyal*)**

Any mental pride regarding others who are inferior or equal to oneself, thinking “I am better than they are.”

b. ལྷག་པའི་རྒྱལ་ **Superiority (*atimānaḥ; lhag pa'i nga rgyal; lhakpé ngagyal*)**

Any mental pride regarding others who are equal to oneself, thinking “I am better than they are,” or towards others who are superior, thinking “I am equal to them.”

c. རྒྱལ་ལས་ཀྱང་རྒྱལ་ **Conceitedness (*mānātimāno; nga rgyal las kyang nga rgyal; ngagyal lé kyang ngagyal*)**

Any mental pride regarding others who are superior to oneself, thinking “I am better.”

d. ངའོ་སྒྲིམ་པའི་རྒྱལ་ **Egotism (*asmimānaḥ; nga'o snyam pa'i nga rgyal; nga o nyampé nga gyal*)**

Any mental pride regarding (*samanupāsyaṭaḥ*) the five skandhas to be “me” or “mine.”

¹⁵ The Tibetan etymology is “deep inside” (khong) “anger” (khro ba; krodha)

e. མངོན་པའི་ང་རྒྱལ་ **Grandeur** (*abhimānaḥ; mngon pa'i nga rgyal; ngönpé*

ngagyal)

Any mental pride in which one has not reached attainment, but one thinks, “I have reached the highest (*uttara*) attainment.”

f. ཅུང་ཟད་སྐྱམ་པའི་ང་རྒྱལ་ **Immodesty** (*ūnamānaḥ; cung zad snyam pa'i nga rgyal;*

chungsé nyampé ngagyal)

Any mental pride regarding those who are far superior, thinking “I am only slightly inferior, but better than others.” This is a misconstrued notion of humbleness.

g. ལོག་པའི་ང་རྒྱལ་ **Deluded pride** (*mithyāmānaḥ; log pa'i nga rgyal; logpé ngagyal*)

Any mental pride when one does not have good qualities, thinking “I have good qualities” (*agunavataḥ*). This can also manifest as a misconstrual of anger and so on as a positive quality.

4. མ་རིག་པ་ **Ignorance** (*avidyā; ma rig pa; marikpa*)

Not being aware of the nature of self and phenomena, not understanding cause and effect, the truths, the three jewels, and so on. There are two types, namely coemergent and imagined.

5. ཐེ་ཚོམ་ **Doubt** (*vicikitsā; the tshom; tétsom*)

Any confusion (*vimatih*), second guessing, or discomfort about the truths, due to not letting go of one’s own limited or wrong points of view.

6. ལྟ་བུ་ **Beliefs** (*dṛṣṭiḥ; lta ba; tawa*)– There are five types of wrong belief or dogmatism.

a. འཇིག་ལྟ་ **Belief in individuality** (*satkāyadrṣṭiḥ; 'jig lta; jigta*)

Any afflicted discernment (*prajñā*) leading to consideration of the five skandhas as me or mine.

b. མཐར་ལྟ་ **Belief that grasps the extremes** (*antagrāhadṛṣṭiḥ; mthar lta; tarta*)

Any afflicted discernment leading to consideration of those five skandhas as lasting or annihilated.

c. ལོག་པར་ལྟ་བུ་ **Deluded Belief** (*mithyādrṣṭiḥ; log par lta ba*)

Any afflicted discernment that diminishes cause and effect.

d. ལྷ་བ་མཚོག་འཛིན་ **Clinging to Belief (*dṛṣṭiparāmarśaḥ*)**

Any afflicted discernment leading to consideration of the above three types of beliefs as high, highest, superior, or supreme.

e. ཚུལ་ཁྲིམས་དང་བརྟུལ་ཞུགས་མཚོག་འཛིན་ **Clinging to the Vows and Moral Conduct**
(*śīlavrataparāmarśaḥ; tshul khrimś dang brdul zhugs mchog 'dzin*)

Any afflicted discernment leading to clinging to a moral conduct, vows, and so on as purified, freed, and causing escape from saṃsāra.

ཉེ་བའི་ཉོན་མོངས་ **The Twenty Subsidiary Negative Mental Functions**
(*upakleśa; nye ba'i nyon mongs; nyéwé nyön mong*)

1. ཁྲོ་བ་ **Anger (*krodha; khro ba; trowa*)**

Not being able to tolerate something that threatens you and striking out in the presence of injury.

2. ཁོན་དུ་འཛིན་པ་ **Grudge (*upanāhaḥ; khon du 'dzin pa; khon du dzinpa*)¹⁶**

Persistently holding onto resentment and possibly even contemplating revenge at a later time.

3. འཚབ་པ་ **Concealing/Hypocrisy (*mraśaḥ; 'chab pa; chabpa*)**

Hiding something reprehensible that we have done, not acknowledging it, and ignoring possible ways to remedy it.

4. འཚོག་པ་ **Spitefulness (*pradāśa; 'tshig pa; tsikpa*)¹⁷**

Being consumed with anger and expressing this verbally or only in our mind.

5. སྤག་དོག་ **Jealousy (*irśyā; phrag dog; tradok*)**

Mental anguish regarding others' prosperity.

¹⁶ VDKR NSS 2019 - 'khon 'dzin pa (both khong/khon appear in the dictionary)

¹⁷ VDKR NSS 2019 - agitation when you do not want to hear something

6. སེར་སྒྲི་ **Stinginess (*mātsaryam*; *ser sna*; *serna*)**

Mentally clinging to possessions and wealth that prevents one from giving to others.

7. བཤེད་ **Dishonesty of a particular type (*śādyam*; *g.yo*; *yo*)**

Blaming others or circumstances for something that is your fault, or making excuses, rather than owning up and taking responsibility for what you have done. This prevents one from getting to the base of being able to confess.¹⁸

8. འཕྲོད་ **Having Ulterior Motives (*māyā*; *sgyu*; *gyu*)**

Giving others a false impression with the intention of getting others to serve your own interests, or not being straightforward at all. (Dishonesty and Ulterior Motives always go together)

9. རྒྱལ་ལྡན་ **Bloatedness (*madaḥ*; *rgyags pa*; *gyakpa*)**

Being attached to and excited about one's own class, wealth, beauty, etc. It is a false sense of pride that does not come from comparing oneself to others.

a. རིགས་ཀྱི་རྒྱལ་ལྡན་ **Bloatedness about One's Class (*gotramadaḥ*; *rigs kyi rgyags pa*; *rik gi yakpa*)**

Being bloated about being upper class or bloated having old money vs. new money.

b. ལང་ཚོ་རྒྱལ་ལྡན་ **Bloatedness about Beauty (*yauvanamadaḥ*; *lang tsho rgyags pa*; *langtso yakpa*)**

Being bloated about one's physique or beauty, especially if you have that reputation.

c. རྣམ་གྱི་རྒྱལ་ལྡན་ **Bloatedness about Wealth (*bhogamadaḥ*; *nor gyi rgyags pa*; *norgyi yakpa*)**

Being bloated about one's wealth or possessions.

¹⁸ VDKR NSS 2019 translated this as "deception." Vasubandhu's Pañcaskandhaka defines it as: "Mental crookedness in which one conceals one's own faults or makes one's shortcomings or mistakes seem to be positive things."

10. རྣམ་པར་འཚོ་བ་ **Harmfulness** (*vihimsā; rnam par 'tshé ba; nampar tséwa*)

Harming beings physically, verbally, or mentally without any sympathy: treating others abusively.

11. རྩོལ་མེད་པ་ **Lacking Self-Respect or Dignity** (*āhrīkyam; ngo tsha med pa; ngotsa mépa*)

Not feeling ashamed to do something reprehensible, for the sake of oneself.

12. བྱིལ་མེད་པ་ **Unconscientiousness** (*anapatrāpyam; khrel med pa; trel mépa*)

Not feeling ashamed to do something reprehensible, for the sake of others.

13. རླུགས་པ་ **Dullness** (*styānam; rmugs pa; mukpa*)

Listlessness, mental sluggishness, and heaviness.

14. རྩོད་པ་ **Wild mind** (*auddhatyam; rgod pa; göpa*)

Mental restlessness that gets lost in thoughts of past or future.

15. མ་དད་པ་ **Faithlessness** (*āsraddhyam; ma dad pa; madépa*)

A lack of appreciation for or faith in cause and effect, the truths, or the three jewels. This is the opposite of having faith in them.

16. ལེ་ལོ་ **Laziness** (*kausīdyam; le lo; le lo*)

A lackluster mental attitude toward what is beneficial. This is the opposite of enthusiasm. There are three kinds:

(a) བྱ་བ་ངན་ཞེན་གྱི་ལེ་ལོ་ **Busyness/procrastination** (*bya ba ngan zhen gyi le lo; chawa ngen zhen gi le lo*)

Being caught in the mundane momentum of one's distractions that bring no benefit, like surfing the net.

(b) རློམས་ལས་གྱི་ལེ་ལོ་ **Torpor** (*snyoms las kyi le lo; chawa ngen zhen gi le lo*)

Feeling resistance when it comes time to do something out of attachment to rest or sleep.

(c) གློན་ལུགས་པའི་ལོ་ལོ་ Giving up

Talking oneself out of it before even trying.¹⁹

18. བག་མེད་པ་ Absence of Vigilance (*pramāda; bag med pa; bakmépa*)

Negligence, or a lack of vigilance, due to which one fails to guard the mind from harmful qualities or actions and fails to cultivate the beneficial qualities or actions.

19. བརྗེད་ངས་པ་ Forgetfulness (*muṣītasmr̥titā; brjed ngas pa; jé ngépa*)

Not exerting yourself to remember what is positive to adopt or to abandon what is negative. Forgetting how to apply oneself in practice. Also, an afflicted mindfulness unfocused on what is beneficial (*kuśalah*). One sometimes even purposely forgets what one has learned or puts no effort into applying oneself to keep what is beneficial in mind.

20. རྣམ་པར་གཡིངས་པ་ Distractedness (*vikṣepah; rnam g.yengs; namyeng*)

The mental state in which one is being distracted in six ways:

a. རོ་བོ་ཉིད་ཀྱི་གཡིང་བ་ Natural Distractedness (*ngo bo nyid kyi g.yeng ba; ngowo nyi kyi yengwa*)

Being distracted through the senses and feeling “lost”

b. ཕྱི་རོལ་དུ་གཡིང་བ་ Outward Distractedness (*phyi rol du g.yeng ba; chirol tu yengwa*)

Being distracted by the particular thing one is absorbed in, such as music, objects of passion, and so on

c. རྣང་གི་གཡིང་བ་ Internal Distractedness (*nang gi g.yeng ba; nang gi yengwa*)

Being distracted by wild or dull mind.

d. མཚན་མའི་གཡིང་བ་ Distractedness About Signs or Status (*mtshan ma'i g.yeng ba; tsenmé yengwa*)

Being distracted by what one is studying or practicing, or by feeling “respected” or “important.”

¹⁹ VDKR NSS 2019 - describes these three differently, more as restlessness, procrastination, and self-disparagement.

e. གནས་ངན་ལེན་གྱི་གཡེང་བ་ **Distractedness of Habitual Tendencies (*gnas ngan len gyi g.yeng ba; né ngen len gyi yengwa*)**

Being distracted by being caught in the feeling of being relaxed, rather than letting it be.

f. ཡིད་ལ་བྱེད་པའི་གཡེང་བ་ **Distractedness of Mental Engagement (*yid la byed pa'i g.yeng ba; yi la chépe yengwa*)**

Being distracted by the “next thought” before the “current thought” is even finished.

20. ཤེན་བཞིན་མ་ཡིན་པ་ **Non-Discernment (*asamprajāna; shes bzhin ma yin pa; shézhin mayinpa*)**

Any afflicted discernment unaware (*vihāritā*) of beneficial physical, verbal or mental qualities or actions.

གཞན་འགྱུར་བཞི་ **The Four Changeable Mental Functions**

These four mental functions can be either negative or positive depending on the context or situation. For this reason, they might be called "changeable" or undetermined.

1. འགྱེད་པ་ **Regret (*kaukrtyam; 'gyod pa; gyöpa*)**

Feeling remorse for what one has done. If one regrets a positive deed, then that regret is negative, because it undermines the positive seed sown. If one regrets a negative deed, then that regret is positive, because it lessens the negative seed sown.

2. གཉིད་ **Sleep (*middham; gnyid; nyi*)**

A contraction of the mind that functions without self-control. If you sleep with positive state of mind, then that sleep is positive. If you go to sleep in a negative state, then that sleep is negative.

3. རྟོག་པ་ **Thinking in general (*vitarkaḥ; rtog pa; tokpa*)**

A mental discourse focused on a general topic, grasping that first as a whole. Thinking can be utilized in a positive sense if it is a kind thought, or in a negative sense if it is a harmful thought.

4. རྟོག་པ་ Reflection on specifics (*vicārah; dpyod pa; chöpa*)

An mental discourse focused on the details within a general topic. This can be utilized in a positive sense if it is a kind thought, or in a negative sense if it is a harmful thought.

རྣམ་པར་ཤེས་པ་ **Consciousness**

(*vijñāna; rnam par shes pa; nampar shépa*)

The perception (*vijñapti*) of a scope or object. There are eight types of perception.

1. **Visual consciousness** (*cakṣurvijñānaṃ; mig gi rnam par shes pa; mig gi nampar shépa*) - perception of sights.

2. **Aural consciousness** (*śrotravijñānaṃ; rna ba's rnam par shes pa; né nampar shépa*) - perception of sounds.

3. **Olefactory consciousness** (*ghrāṇavijñānaṃ; sna'i rnam par shes pa; né nampar shépa*) - perception of scents.

4. **Gustatory consciousness** (*jivhāvijñānaṃ; lce'i rnam par shes pa; ché'i nampar shépa*) - perception of tastes.

5. **Tangible consciousness** (*kāyavijñānaṃ; lus kyi rnam par shes pa; lükyi nampar shépa*) - perception of bodily feelings.

6. **Active mental consciousness** (*manovijñānaṃ; yid kyi rnam par shes pa; yikyī nampar shépa*) - perception of sensory data or mental objects.

7. **Afflicted ego** (*kliṣṭamanas; nyon yid; nyön yi*) consciousness - perception of self.

8. **Receptacle consciousness** (*alayavijñānāī; kun zhi rnam par shes pa; kunzhi nampar shépa*) - unconscious perception of everything.

Appendix: The Non-material and Non-mental Conditioning Forces²⁰

²⁰ This document was quickly prepared by Greg Seton for the Foundations Course in June 2019, based on Mipham's summary of *Abhidharmakośa* in *Gateway to knowledge*, Asaṅga's *Abhidharmasamuccaya*, and Dhammajoti's *Sarvāstivāda-Abhidharma*.

*Note: The following sub-section on “Non-material and Non-mental Conditioning Forces” is usually included after the fifty-one Mental Formations/ Conditioning Forces **within the Fourth Skandha** and hence are called 4b here. But since these forces are not a usually basis for our clinging to self, they are often left out of the list of skandhas to which we cling (upādānaskandha). Furthermore, since they are rarely included in most expositions and since explaining them involves much explanation, I have included them only here in the appendix.*

All conditioned things are included within the categories of Matter (that which is made of particles) Mind (that which is conscious and cognizant), and the Non-material and Non-mental Conditioning forces (which are neither made of particles, nor conscious/cognizant).

4.b **Non-material and Non-mental Conditioning Forces** (*viprayuktasaṃskāra; ldan min ‘du byed*) refers to any virtuous, non-virtuous, or neutral things—that are both conditioned and forces (*chos*) connected to an ongoing state of being (*rgyun*)—within the stream of one’s experience.

4.b.1. The force that causes **attainment** (*prāpti; thob pa*) of something new that was not there formerly, or attainment in the sense of being continuously endowed (*ldan pa*) with something attained.

4.b.2 The force that causes **non-attainment** (*aprāpti; ma thob pa*) – the loss or obscuration of something virtuous, non-virtuous, or neutral that was acquired in one's being.

4.b.3 The force that causes the **group-homogeneity** (*nikāya-sabhāga*) of those belonging to the same kind or species within the different classes of sentient beings.

4.b.4 The force that causes the **absence of conception** (*āsamjñika*) in the god realm to continue for a period of time.

4.b.5 The force that causes the **attainment of freedom from conception** (*asamjñi-samāpatti*) to continue for a period of time in a temporary but relatively stable meditative state.

4.b.6 The force that causes the **attainment of cessation** (*nirodha-samāpatti*) of all cognition to continue for a period of time in highest meditative attainment of Arhats.

4.b.7 The force that causes **life-span** (*jīvitendriya*) of different living things with different karma.

4.b.8 The force that causes **the characteristic of production** (*jāti-lakṣaṇa*) of things that have not occurred before.

4.b.9 The force that causes **the characteristic of continuity** (*sthiti-lakṣaṇa*) of things that continue in a similar form.

4.b.10 The force that causes **the characteristic of deterioration** (*jarā-lakṣaṇa*) of things changing into something else.

4.b.11 The force that causes **the characteristic of dissolution** (*vyaya-lakṣaṇa*) of things that cease.

4.b.12 The force that causes **word-grouping** (*nāma-kāya*) to express the general identity of something.

4.b.13 The force that causes **phrase-grouping** (*pada-kāya*) to express the particular identity of something.

4.b.14 The force that causes **syllable-grouping** (*vyañjana-kāya*) to form the basis for words and phrases.²¹

4.b.15. The force that causes **an ordinary person** (*prthagjana*; *so so skye bo*) not to become a noble one but to remain a particular type of person associated with mind and matter.

4.b.16 The force that causes **continuity** (*pravṛtti*), i.e. non-interruptedness of causes and effects.

4.b.17 The force that causes **determinacy** (*pratiniyama*) i.e. distinctness of causes and effects.

4.b.18 The force that causes **relatedness** (*yoga*) i.e. similarity causes and effects.

4.b.19 The force that causes **momentum** (*java*) i.e. the speedy progression of causes and effects.

4.b.20 The force that causes **succession** (*anukrama*) i.e. the singular progression of causes and effects.

4.b.21 The force that causes **time** (*kāla*) i.e. the serial progression of causes and effects.

4.b.22 The force that causes **spatial location** (*deśa*) i.e. the occurrence of causes and effects in the ten different directions.

4.b.23 The force that causes **enumeration** (*saṃkhyā*), i.e. the differentiation of causal factors.

4.b.24 The force that causes **combination** (*sāmagri*) i.e. the concurrence of causes, conditions, and results.

²¹ The first fourteen forces above are mentioned in the *Abhidharmakośa*. The following ten forces (i.e. in numbers 15–24) are mentioned in the *Abhidharmasamuccaya*.