

## **TSK Online Program, Unit 11**

### **Week 1 WIR 136-138, LOK 193-198, LOK Ex. 16**

#### **Orientation**

In the first two weeks of this Session on knowledge, we look at the witness. The reading for the week jumps right in to discussing the witness without much introduction, because it has been discussed earlier in LOK. So I want to follow the advice in WIR and review what is meant by ‘the witness’ in LOK.

In earlier parts of LOK, which we have looked at in the past, Rinpoche points out that we are always conditioned by our own limited understanding, our own interpretations. This seems a fundamental limitation, one that holds even if we make a commitment to inquiry. See LOK 142: “Analysis and questioning themselves arise within interpretive structures, so how can they illuminate those structures?”

This is where the witness comes in. As the discussion in LOK Ch. 17 makes clear, the witness is not so much a knower as a feeling. It is the ‘feel’ of ‘the real’: an almost indisputable sense of conviction that guarantees the truth of what we know to be so. This is the testimony that the witness gives, and (143) from “within the experience, the testimony of the witness is conclusive.”

There is an important distinction to be made between the ‘feel of the real’ and the content of the real. Yet usually we miss this distinction; we slide from one to the other. We make the witness into the self; we go from the feeling, “this is real” to a story about just what it is that is real. And at the center of that story (those stories) is the founding story, the story “Here I am.” The indisputable witness-experience of ‘thatness’ becomes the claim “I experience,” and we assume that that too is indisputable.

To clarify this distinction between witness and story, and the claims of the self that it sustains, LOK turns from the witness to an examination of the self, starting with Chapter 17. But that examination gets caught up in the problem already identified: any inquiry or examination will arise “within interpretive structures.” And so eventually the inquiry returns to the witness. That is where we are starting.

At the end of LOK Chapter 24, Rinpoche sets the stage for the reading for this week: “Perhaps the witness is not just another story. Perhaps [it is] a direct of expression of the dynamic energy . . . ‘within’ time.” If so, we can ask: what is the knowledge that would be able to engage such energy?