

**Shamatha, Vipashyana
and the
Four Applications of Mindfulness
Fall 2012**

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TRANSCRIPTS



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00 Introduction to the retreat

25 Aug 2012

Transcriber's note for the readers:

- We have not transcribed everything that Alan Wallace said during this session since it is just the introduction to the retreat. We are writing here just a summary of this session.
- In all 92 transcriptions of this retreat, we have tried to stay as close as possible to Alan's words, with minimal editing to ensure readability. We hope you enjoy the teachings.
- Sessions of Questions and Answers: we have not included in the transcripts these sessions. You may find the audio of these sessions in the podcasts after the sessions of teachings and meditation.

Transcribed by *Rafael Carlos Giusti*

Revised by Alma Ayon

Final edition by Alma Ayon

01 Settling body speech and mind in its natural state

As many of you know in the retreats that I lead, I tend to keep ritual to a minimum, little ritual but filled with meaning. I have nothing against rituals but it tends sometimes to focus too much on the outside rather than the inside, it does not necessarily do that but often does. So the only two rituals we are engaging in at this point are: 1) the one like this (he brings hands together to the area of heart in the prayer gesture), which is a common greeting. If we are in Asia it is just courtesy, it is politeness. For me it is my deepest respect to the Buddha nature in each one, to the essential purity awareness in each one. 2) And then this (he snaps his fingers) saying that is a sign/ritual standard in the Tibetan tradition that he embraced, reminding himself of his own mortality. It is simply "here I am", I am here to offer the Dharma, to transmit the Dharma, as purely as I can with the awareness that I certainly shall die at any moment. In the light of that, leave off everything else, just let that scrape away everything else that is not essential and not true dharma such as ego, reputation, praise, respect, all that stuff. Within the context of one life, within the border of one life, how much people respect this, etc and have some value, but in face of death it has no value at all. So that is my reminder, let all the Dharma teachings through my mouth as much as I possibly can. Let it of value in the face of death. So money, wealth, fame, etc all of that stuff, zero value, but whatever can be offered is authentic dharma with good motivation that is truly of benefit that still has value in the face of death. That is why this tradition is being carried for hundreds of years and I very happily embrace it. That is our ritual.

(4:15) Since we are starting very, very deliberately, starting relatively late in the day, I assume you have one session in your own room, I would encourage in your session before coming here, one of the things to do preferably in the very first session is to settle your motivation as meaningful as it possibly be and I leave that for you to decide exactly what that entails, of course in classical Mahayana teachings that should be starting the day with refuge in bodhicitta that is hard to do but whatever you find to be the most meaningful motivation then I would encourage you to really kind of plant your stuff, get your barriers, settle your navigation from the sessions before this, so then when we gather, I would assume that you already settle your motivation so I would not take time of our very short morning session to focus on that as well, you already have done that, Ok?

(5:40) This fit with a framework that I find more and more useful and that is the framework of, I called that Buddha's mental health, so speaking in terms of conative, conation and desires, aspiration, motivation, intention all that built in the psychological term of conation. Attention we all know, conation we know and emotion these are very familiar terms so I can speak of each of these four. Conative balance and that is having authentic motivation but not having too much desires that can be obsessive, not too little that can be apathetic and having meaningful desires, aspirations. So that has to do with motivation and with that grounding, with that settling forth with that initiation then getting your mind serviceable and of course is through Shamatha and Shamatha is all about making your mind serviceable specifically in terms of your

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attentional skills and there is the central theme that I think you are already familiar with, which is cultivating the sense of relaxation, stability and clarity.

(6:45) On that basis then we apply our mindfulness, our introspective skills, our attention, our Samadhi and we apply that to really attending closely to the nature of reality in terms of “the four applications of mindfulness” to get greater and greater cognitive balance that may lead us to stop conflating reality with our projections. We are not becoming apathetic or disengaged from reality, that is a kind of cognitive deficit, nor are we distorting our perception with another kind of cognition of reality, a true delusion.

So the cognitive balance of course with the “four application of mindfulness”, is what the doctor ordered and out of that may have the emotional balance that come quite naturally, quite spontaneously but if you would like to give a boost to this emotional balance, you may also apply “the four immeasurable”, bodhichitta is bound to be a sheer elixir.

This conative balance may also be called as intelligence is one translation for prajña, sometimes wisdom is also a good translation but among the mental factors when we go to Buddha’s psychology, the mental factor of prajña is a best translation of intelligence. So conative intelligence, we bring intelligence to our desires to our aspirations, our motivations and our intentions so we become wiser and wiser in terms of choosing what to choose, choosing what to desire and this is a type of intelligence.

Sometimes we desire foolishly and there is a saying that says: be careful of what you wish because you may get it. So that would be an indication, well look out if you have a foolish desire and then you get it, you fulfill it and then you just suffer.

So conative intelligence that is what renunciation and bodhichitta is all about, it is bringing all the wisdom we can bear to our aspirations. As Dalai Lama said: “if you want to be self-centered at least be intelligent about it”.

That would be just sheer renunciation without bodhicitta, without the four immeasurable but at least developing the authentic motivation that you desire things that really will get to undermining or relieving the causes of suffering and giving rise to greater wellbeing by cultivating the actual causes of happiness.

So conative intelligence I think is very useful and then attentional intelligence, attending wisely with intelligence, relaxation, stability and clarity, that makes really a good sense. Cognitive intelligence is almost, well that is kind obvious and then we have of course emotional intelligence and there is a lot of research on this and that would be a kind of culmination, a kind of flourishing and that is supported by, nurtured by the four immeasurable, by bodhichitta, by the whole bodhisattva way of life.

This framework, I find very useful then I assume that you developed, cultivated your conative intelligence and wisdom before coming here. Our morning sessions will be really primarily focusing on the attentional balance and then as we venture into the rest of the day with the vipashyana, the four applications of mindfulness, primarily by cognitive, but just by cultivating the clarity, the groundless, discernment, the insights, leading from the four applications of mindfulness, this will definitely have an impact on your sense of emotional balance, emotional wellbeing, overall sense of genuine happiness and of course augmented a little bit with the four immeasurable. So that is the scope.

So this morning we go directly to the shamatha and the mode of shamatha that we’re going to start with and the one you are familiar with it, it is really like a cornerstone of a building and so the cornerstone for shamatha which is the cornerstone for vipashyana which is the cornerstone for developing compassion on the basis of wisdom all comes right down to relaxation, stability and vividness, and relaxation means learning the skills of settling your body, your speech, your respiration and your mind in a natural state.

We are including here (below) definitions of the four aspects of mental balance (conative balance, attentional balance, cognitive balance and emotional balance) that may help you to have a better understanding of what is being writing in this transcript based on what Alan Wallace said about this theme in the session.

The source is: www.sbinstitute.com/node/1576 that give a summary of the retreat of Feb, 2012 covering “Cultivating Emotional Balance”.

This retreat provides an overview of the central themes of the 42-hour training program called “Cultivating Emotional Balance” devised by the eminent psychologist Paul Ekman, Ph.D. and B. Alan Wallace, Ph.D. at the request of HH the Dalai Lama.

Focusing on both theory and practice, Alan Wallace explains four aspects of mental balance: conative,

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attentional, cognitive, and emotional. Conative balance has to do with cultivating meaningful desires and aspirations that truly contribute to one's own and others' wellbeing. Attentional balance focuses on overcoming attention deficit and hyperactivity, replacing these imbalances with a sense of inner calm, centeredness, and clarity. Cognitive balance is achieved through the cultivation of mindfulness so that we can experience the world without cognitive distortions. Finally, emotional balance maybe achieved through enhancing the positive emotions of loving kindness, compassion, empathetic joy and equanimity while bringing afflictive emotional states under control through understanding and meditation. The weekend included guided meditations, lectures and open discussion.

Meditation:

Let your awareness descend into the body, right down to the ground. Attend to those sensations of firmness and solidity where your body is in contact with your chair, cushion and floor and rest your awareness in a witnessing mode, the quiet attentiveness, the closest approximation to bare attention.

Attend quietly, not conceptually to the sensations of the earth element, sensations of firmness and solidity, your body in contact with the earth.

Let your awareness rise up and fill the whole space of your body, right up to the top of the head, like a frequency filling a room. Let your awareness fill the space of the body, taking note of the sensations arising on the interior and from the interior as well as on the surface.

There is no need to visualize the body or think about it. Simply be aware of the sensations arising in this tactile field.

As you are mindfully aware of the sensations arising throughout this field, you may note areas that feel tense, tight, contracted. Gently focus your attention upon this area as you breathe in, and as you breathe out, surrendering your muscles to gravity. As you breathe out you may feel your shoulders drop, the muscles around the base of the neck soften and loosen up.

Bring awareness to the face and soften, loosen the muscles around the mouth, the lips, the jaws, the temples. Bring awareness to the forehead, let it feel opened, spacious, relaxed, let it be opened between the eyebrow, soften all the muscles around the eyes and finally soften the eyes themselves. Soften your whole face and feel relaxed, soften and loosen.

In this way settle your body in a posture of ease and comfort and insofar you do it and feel relaxed and comfortable you should find it easy to let your body remain still with no unnecessary movements, just the movement of the breath.

If you are in a supine position then your body should be fully relaxed, let still, psychologically you can adopt a stance, an attitude, a posture of vigilance. This is a formal meditation posture to use only for practicing. And if you are sitting upright, let your spine be straight, slightly lift your chest so you are sitting with very much attention, keep your abdomen muscles lucid and relaxed so as you breathe in, the sensations of the breathe go right down to the belly that is expanding when you inhale and falling back as you exhale.

In this way settle your body in its natural state imbued with the qualities of relaxation, stillness and vigilance. (25:04) Settling your speech in its natural state is quite straightforward, not difficult, it simply means to rest silently, in effortless silence, the silence of a guitar with the streams cut. But together with settling the speech in its natural state, you settle the respiration in its natural rhythm, this is crucially important. In short this involves breathing effortless without forcefully drawing the air in as you inhale or forcefully expelling it as you exhale. Allow the breath to flow in and out effortless without constraint. The key is the out breathe, with every out breath relax more and more deeply in the body, releasing most of the tension, tightness, stress, with every out breath simply release the breath without holding it back or forcefully expelling it.

And with every out breath simply release any thoughts, memories and images that may come to mind as if the out breath is gently gust of breeze loading away easily. With every out breath as if with a sign of relief, just let go of any thought that may come to mind and return your awareness to a non-conceptual flow of mindfulness.

The key to the out breath is at the very end of the out breath. Each time be mindfully as you approach the end of the exhalation. See if you do release fully without expelling the breath. Simply do not hold any back,

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release it fully, release, release until the next breath flows in, effortless like a wave washing upon the shore, just let it flow in, and whether the breath is short or long, deep or shallow, whether the cycle of respiration is rhythmic or not-rhythmic, let your body breathe without intervention, without regulation, without control. Allow your body to reestablish in its own equilibrium, its own balance, energetically by way of the breath. And in this way settle your respiration in its natural rhythm which is bound to shift, to change as your body is sorted itself out and find its own equilibrium.

And finally settle your mind at ease by releasing all concerns, all hopes and fears about the future and the past.

For the brief duration of this session settle it all aside, let your mind be careful and free, untroubled by what is going by and by what is yet to come.

And in this way allow your awareness to come to rest in stillness, hovering motionless in the present moment. Awareness is by nature luminous, it is clear, it is bright, so let the natural luminosity of your own awareness illuminate the field of the body and attending especially to those sensations associated with the in and out breath.

Relax deeply with every out breath.

Settle your mind in its natural state, imbued with the qualities of relaxation, stillness and clarity.

And in this phase of mindfulness of breathing, the challenge is to balance an ever deeper sense of relaxation, of lucidness, of ease, without losing the degree of clarity with which we began the session.

Comments after finishing the meditation:

(41:04) What we are trying to do here is cultivating a new type of habit which we are not born with it, that is not coming naturally, but it is incredibly important and that is to learn deliberately how to relax more deeply and the out breath is a really good occasion for that: releasing, releasing and doing nothing more than relax more and more deeply without losing the clarity which you began with. The first thing is just to learn to mellow out (relax) and not mellow out into dullness but maintaining the clarity you have right down that is sufficient and on that basis we can slowly start developing stability and on that basis start developing clarity and move along the path of shamatha.

Develop a habit of allowing the breath to flow unimpededly, effortlessly and stop holding the natural flow of the breath, relax by breathing not only when you are meditating in your cushion but also when you are walking, checking e-mail, eating, sleeping and so forth.

Transcribed by *Rafael Carlos Giusti*

Revised by Alma Ayon

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02 Introduction to the 4 applications of mindfulness

Meditation:

Now with fewer words of guidance, let's settle the body speech and mind in its natural state, beginning as always by letting the awareness descend into the field of the body right down to the ground. Let your awareness permeate the whole field of the body illuminating the sensations throughout.

Gently attend those areas that feel tight and as you breathe out, surrender those muscles to gravity, soften, and loosen. Soften all the muscles of the face. With your body relaxed and at ease, be still apart from the movement of the breath and adopt a posture of vigilance with your spine straight, your chest slightly lifted. Abdominal muscles loose and relaxed so that when you breathe in, the sensations of the breath you feel from the bottom up, as if you are filling a vase with water. The sensations of the breath go down to the belly as you continue to inhale after the belly then the diaphragm expands, and if it is a deep breath, finally the chest will expand.

And in this way settle your body in its natural state, relaxed, still and vigilant and then settle your respiration in its natural rhythm, relaxing deeply and fully through every out breath as you release tension in the body, release the breath and release thoughts, images, memories that may come to mind.

Relax so deeply and fully throughout the out-breath right through the end that you feel as if the in-breath is just flowing in on its own accord, that it is being given to you without your taking it. In other words don't pull

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it in. Let it flow in. And apply your will to your own mind and deliberately release all concerns, just for the time being, all concerns related to the future and the past. Allow yourself this freedom and this luxury to let your awareness come to rest quietly and non-conceptually in stillness in the present moment.

Now as if you are rebooting a computer, shutting down all the operating systems, all the programs without pulling the plug, for just a brief time, let your eyes be open. Evenly rest your awareness in the space in front of you but without meditating on anything, shut down all your programs without taking anything as an object without directing your attention here or there. Just rest with no object, just being aware, without deliberately attending to any appearances either sensory or mental, just let your awareness hover, motionless in the present moment.

Sustain this flow of non-conceptual, mindful presence, without distraction and without grasping, without allowing your attention to be drawn away to any sensory stimulus, without being caught up and carried away by thoughts. Let your awareness hold its own ground without being caught up or being carried away in distraction and sustain this awareness without grasping, without being launch onto, labeling, conceptualizing, preferring anything. Just being present.

Now taking the first step towards the close application of mindfulness to the body, which includes all physical phenomena, not just your own and others' body. As an initial step, let your awareness illuminate all of the 5 sensory fields, the visual, the auditory, the olfactory (the field of smells), the gustatory (of taste) and the tactile. Without preference and without moving let your awareness illuminate all of these 5 sensory fields, while sounds come and go, tactile sensations come and go, let your awareness be still and to the best of your ability, let your awareness remain in a non-conceptual mode, a quiet witness, discerning, attentive, clear and sharp but without superimposing categories, labels, judgments. In other words rest in clarity and receptivity. While your mindfulness illuminates these 5 fields of sensory experience, apply your faculty of introspection to monitor the flow of mindfulness, to recognize as swiftly as possible when you have fallen into excitation, agitation, the mind has become distracted and as soon as you see that excitation is set in, apply the response, the remedy: first of all relax, loosen up, then release whatever captivated your attention, and thirdly return to the present moment, your mindfulness open to all of the 5 sense fields. So relax, release and return.

It is imperative to maintain a flow of knowing, not spacing out, not becoming vague. So when you see with your faculty of introspection that you are losing clarity, becoming a bit dull, recognize the laxity and apply the appropriate remedy. Refresh your interest in the practice, refocus your attention in the present moment and retain a flow of mindfulness. Refresh, refocus and retain.

Commentary on This Practice:

Like putting our toe in the water! Just getting a little tiny taste. So one might wonder, what was that practice? Shall we give it a name? I don't have a label. I do know, though, that the first book on Buddhist meditation that I ever read, that I could actually understand, was *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation* by a German monk, scholar, translator by the name of Nyanaponika Thera. He was interned during the second world war, then became a monk, then became a really accomplished scholar/translator. He wrote this book on the four applications of mindfulness, which he translated as "the four foundations of mindfulness," and it was he who coined the term "bare attention" as your entry into the practice of the four applications of mindfulness. He never equated mindfulness with bare attention, and when he heard later popularizers of satipatthana doing so, he was quite appalled. Boy, you really missed it, you've dumbed it down, you've been really reductionist here. He was not pleased at all, and I have this from a direct disciple of his, Bhikkhu Bodhi, who is one of our best modern scholars. Really outstanding, right there at the top. They're both aware of the tremendous richness of the Buddhist genre of practice called vipashyana, and then that specific modality, that specific set of practices called the satipatthana, or four applications of mindfulness: the richness, the theoretical depth, the sophistication of the methods involved, and the diversity of practices that are applied to all of the four applications of mindfulness. It's just tremendously rich, and to see all of that reduced to "mindfulness is just bare attention, vipashyana is mindfulness, that's all there is, now just sit in bare attention and you've got the whole thing," it's just like how could you? That's what happens when you popularize. You want to present a practice with a theory that's accessible and helpful, so there's nothing wrong with popularizes. But there is something profoundly wrong with popularizing and then saying that's all there is, there's just nothing more to it than that. That is just profoundly misleading, and that's happened a lot in the popularization of vipassana generally, and the four applications of mindfulness in particular.

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And then there's been some imports into this practice also. One that's become very popular in the modern Vipassana movement is called "Choiceless awareness." So one might use that label, which has been around for a good 35 or 40 years by now, and one might say well that's what we were just practicing here.

"Choiceless" because we're not choosing the visual over the auditory, just open to all the five sense fields, and so that's choiceless awareness. Well, the news is – and I have this from another top scholar who is the editor of the Buddhist publication society in Sri Lanka – that this term "choiceless awareness" is actually not a Buddhist term at all. It's not found in any Buddhist text or commentary, it's actually a term coined by and defined by Krishnamurti, who is not a Buddhist, never taught Buddhism. But some of the early popularizers of vipashyana really liked it, and so they just said we'll take that! And they kind of slipped it in, like, slipping something into your drink! So it's not a Buddhist practice, never was, and it doesn't become a Buddhist practice just by saying so. Otherwise, if I like Freud, I could just start taking ideas from Freud and start saying this is Buddhism, just because I like it. We know that's not legitimate. Krishnamurti is Krishnamurti. He has his own deal going. Let's respect that for what it is and what it's not, but what it's not is Buddhism.

So this is not choiceless awareness. If you want to call this choiceless awareness, you can, but let's give Krishnamurti his due. Let him do his own trip, which is not a Buddhist trip.

Now with the popularization not only of vipashyana, but also of Dzogchen, you can go for a weekend on Dzogchen and come out thinking I'm a Dzogchen practitioner. You might think what we just did was "open presence." It was present, and it was open, and so was that Dzogchen? And the answer is 100%, emphatically and very enthusiastically no! That was not Dzogchen. That wasn't even close. That's not even in the same ballpark. It's not in the same continent as Dzogchen. Dzogchen is – in the Nyingma tradition where it's most strongly preserved, taught, and realized – the ninth yana, the pinnacle of all of the Buddhadharma, starting with the Sravakayana, the glorious foundation; the Pratyeka-buddhayana of solitary realizers, the Bodhisattva-yana, and right on through the various stages of Vajrayana up to Mahayoga, Anu-yoga. And then finally, the pinnacle of pinnacles, the ninth yana, Ati-yoga. So to take the essence of Dzogchen meditation and bring it down to the bottom and say that's Dzogchen is really quite silly. I'm speaking here not out of my own authority, but I'm drawing very explicitly on the classic Dzogchen literature. There's no dissent here. There's a right answer. What is Dzogchen meditation? What's the term? Rigpa-chokshyak. A nice literal translation would be "let it be." But it's not just letting be. It's rigpa-chokshyak. Rigpa is pristine awareness, it's Buddha-nature, it's tathagatagarbha, it's dharmakaya. It doesn't get any deeper than that! What this means is that you've ascertained rigpa, you are viewing reality from the perspective of rigpa, of a dimension of consciousness beyond time, beyond space, beyond individuation, beyond all conceptual elaboration. It is completely inconceivable. But you've broken through to that dimension of consciousness, and you're actually viewing reality from that perspective. That's called Trekcho, "break through to primordial purity and pristine awareness." Once you've broken through, and you actually are viewing reality from that perspective, then you just rest. There's nothing to do. I mean literally, absolutely nothing to do. You're just being aware, and your awareness is pristine awareness. You're just being pristinely aware. You are buddha-nature, you are dharmakaya, or in the new translation schools, you are the innate mind of clear light. According to the Dalai Lama, two different terms for the same reality. Innate mind of clear light, rigpa: same! And so having broken through to that, you're viewing reality from that perspective, and then you just rest with your awareness wide open, doing nothing whatsoever. That's rigpa-chokshyak. So to now closely paraphrase from Dudjom Lingpa. I will refer to him multiple times over this eight weeks. Nineteenth century grandmaster, thirteen of his disciples achieve rainbow body: I don't know anybody in recent history who has matched that. And he's not living in New York City with eight million people around, he's living out on the nomadic highlands of eastern Tibet. So that's pretty low population density out there, and to have thirteen disciples achieve rainbow body is quite extraordinary. So there he was, a consummate Dzogchen treasure-revealer, profound realizer, extraordinary teacher. He makes this point, and speaks for the entire tradition, he's not an iconoclast. He speaks for the entire tradition when he says that Dzogchen meditation, this rigpa-chokshyak, is nothing other than sustaining the view of Dzogchen. That means you must be viewing reality from the perspective of Dzogchen, which is nothing other than viewing reality from the perspective of rigpa. And so that's all there is to it, but if you don't have the Dzogchen view, if you're not viewing reality from that perspective, there is no such thing as Dzogchen meditation. That's it! Because the meditation is nothing other than breaking through to that way of viewing reality and then just being there. But to compare that with what we just did, where

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there was no reference to Dzogchen view, no reference to Dzogchen way of life, and then just sitting here. Well! Not the same thing! Let's just put it that way! And so it is misleading if anyone says that's Dzogchen. Well, it's not. I'll just put it that way.

But now, why did I teach it, to ridicule it? No, there's nothing wrong with that practice. It's useful. Bare attention, as this outstanding scholar/practitioner/monk pointed out some 50 years ago or so, really is valid, and that's why I consider those 24 minutes well spent. What's the point here?

Teachings:

(36:40) A central theme about this whole 8 weeks, is central for all of vipashyana, central for all the applications of mindfulness, really core, is developing the ability through experience of being able to distinguish "what is reality presenting," that is what's immediately arising to all of your 6 fields of awareness, the five sensory and mental, what is manifesting, what is being presented versus what you are superimposing: the labels, the categories, the preferences, the ruminations, the judgments and so forth and so on.

It is not to say that we should not label, that we should never exercise good judgment, that we should never use categories and so forth and so on, that we should never think, consider, reflect, of course we should. Of course we should! But it is also crucial, this is in day to day life, it's crucial in attending to our own personal reality here in body and mind, attending to the environmental around us, it is crucial in scientific research. It is crucial to distinguish what you are superimposing and what is being presented and not conflate the two, fuse the two, to the point that you can no longer tell the difference. That is crucial.

And moreover the Buddhist premise is that we are engaging in this delusional "con-fusion" – because that is what it is – it is a fusing together. We are engaging in delusional "con-fusion" as our daily bread. We do it all the time every day and it has big disadvantages. It gives rise to an enormous amount of unnecessary suffering. So everything here in these 8 weeks, while it is going very much into insight, into knowledge, wisdom, direct realization it all has, it is nested, it is embedded in a pragmatic orientation. This is not what drives a lot of science and I say this with respect for science, but what drives a lot of science is sheer curiosity. There is not wrong with that and it is giving rise to a lot of really brilliant discoveries. Fine. That is good. That is not what drives Buddhism. That is not what drove the Buddha. The four noble truths are not about curiosity. The 8-fold noble path, the four applications of mindfulness and so forth, there is something a lot more than curiosity going on. It is fundamentally pragmatic and that is attending to the reality of suffering, the sources of suffering, the possibility of freedom and then following that path. The whole of Buddhadharma is embedded in that framework. Mere curiosity: nothing wrong with it! Not condemning it! But that simply is not the motivation force in Buddhism.

So what we did here, in this quiet awareness, first of all kind of rebooting – I like the image although I do not generally like mind/computer analogies – but this one actually seems to work very well. The practice that we did is just to settle the body, and then the respiration, and then the mind, it comes directly from Padmasambhava's text, "Natural Liberation," which I translated years ago under Gyatrul Rinpoche's guidance and just what he really does, you're settling the body, then you settle your speech in effortless silence, you're settling the respiration in a nice smooth flow. And then he says, and you can see it there in the text, he says now just rest your awareness vacantly in space, just evenly in space, and do not attend to anything, do not meditate on anything, do not take anything as an object. And so everything you were doing previously you are shutting down, just like having your computer, having a whole bunch of programs open and then you see the computer is just getting really funky, it's behaving badly, so if you're an amateur like me and don't know much about the innards of a computer, you think that maybe should just reboot and hope for the best. And sometimes that works! Sometimes, if it's a pretty minor glitch, just shut the whole system down without turning off the electricity, and having shut down all your programs, then they come back on again and lo! And behold! It fills your heart with gladness when you see that the problem has actually vanished just by rebooting.

Well, this is a kind of rebooting, that is we get caught in rumination, we get caught in what I've called obsessive compulsive delusional disorder, we get caught in the refractory period (psychological term), getting really uptight, narrow minded, locked into some perspective and so the mind operates in a dysfunctional way and in a quite wide variety of ways.

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And this simple task of just shutting down the system, just into the body, into the breath, into the mind, no object, no systems operating, just leaving the light of awareness on but without using it, without directing it, just leaving it there, just being present and then turn on your system and so we turned on the system, that is we directed the awareness in a very simple way, this little light of mine, let it shine through the sensory fields because we are venturing into the close applications of mindfulness to the body as I mentioned before, actually covers the entire physical realm, all the 5 sensory fields. Everything physical is included in that and the body is where we are starting from. So where are you looking from? From the perspective of your own body, so you're attending to the physical.

And so the idea there was to just get as clean data as you can, that is why it was so simple, be aware discerningly, clearly, knowingly, but as quietly as you can so you're actually picking up the sounds as sounds, the sights as sights, tactile sensations as tactile sensations, without conflating them or confusing them with all of the categories, labels and so on, objectifications that we superimpose upon appearances.

(42:40) If we draw an analogy with science and I'll do that repeatedly I'm sure over the coming 8 weeks: you are just trying to get clean data because when you have a system of measurement and you first learning how it works and getting it to work well it is bound to produce a lot of noise, artifacts of the system. And this happens in pretty much all fields of science, cosmology to molecular biology to neuroscience and so forth. When you pick up something you have to wonder if you are not really familiar with your instrument, if you are not totally confident that your system of measurement is operating correctly, when you get some data coming, the good scientist has to ask the question: is this data generated by my system of measurement, in other words internally generated noise, junk, which has no relevance to anything outside the system of measurement, or actually is this information that my system of measurement is getting from something outside of the system of measurement, in other words I'm actually detecting something in reality? That is absolutely crucial.

(43:50) And summing up a good example that Alan mentioned: recent physics research that came to the conclusion that neutrinos could travel faster than light. Later on it was proved that this was not the correct conclusion. The mistake was due to the system of measurement.

(45:00) But now we are back to this contemplative science, or in Sanskrit it's called Adyatma Vidhya, inner science, inner knowledge, one of the 5 major fields of knowledge of the great Nalanda Tradition, which is preserved more than anywhere else nowadays in the Tibetan tradition, this inner knowledge with knowledge of the mind being at its very core and then as we investigate the mind, then observing, investigating how the mind relates to the rest of phenomena, the role of the mind in nature at large. So it is a science, it's a natural science from the inside out, we're starting from the mind, and rather than developing a telescope we are developing our attention skills. That is the shamatha, to get cut down on the noise, the rumination and then we begin to apply it – there we took the first baby step in that session, applying it and just trying to get clean data. As the Buddha said "in the seen let be just the seen" rather than all the junk you put on top of it: like "isn't that pretty, that is ugly, I do not like that or that, bla, bla, bla," all the categories we superimpose on stuff and think they are already out there. You know, we conceive them and then we orphan them.

(46:25) We actually project our own reality and say: Who, me? I didn't do it! And if there are two of us that agree then we know we are right. That is good but that happens often a lot.

So there we are trying to just get clean data. So the Buddha said "in the seen let there be just the seen," pick up clear data, so that you're not conflating the noise of your system, the artifacts of your system and that is your memories, your associations, your prejudices, hopes and fears, likes and dislikes, all of that has its place inside the measurement system but don't conflate with what you are trying to measure! Like other people, situations, environments and so forth and so on. Try to get clean data. It is pretty smart! That is bare attention.

This is your entrance, it is not the middle phase, not the final phase, but it is your entry to getting really good clean data as you closely apply mindfulness to body, to feelings, mental states and phenomena at large.

Without getting clean data you can always being second guessing yourself, wandering did I really observe that or that I imagine it? Did I speculate, did I superimpose and so forth and so on. So we'll just call that entry into, the first step into getting clean data, clear awareness.

And then we can ask, all right now that we are venturing more beyond simply finding an inner peace, beyond the retreat of shamatha. Remember the retreat? When you are practicing shamatha, especially if you really

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go for it, you are “retreating.” Quite rightfully so. You are losing the battle with samsara, you are getting beat up by surrounding environment, other people, but most intimately getting beat up by your own mental afflictions. You just come out bruised, broken jaw, black eyes, and what hit you? It is anger, resentment, craving, jealousy, bleeding from all pores.

So when you are kind losing the battle with your own mental afflictions, losing the battle with samsara, that it’s just stronger than you. As that happens, you may be in certain environments where you feel: I cannot practice here. If I were an arya bodhisattva I could but I am not and therefore I cannot practice here, this is just overwhelming.

On occasion I have been in such environments, where I know my limitations, but I know: I need to get out because I cannot flourish in this environment because it is stronger than I am and it is bringing out all the rubbish in me and I do not have strong enough defenses to protect myself from this environment. So what would you do? You retreat. You retreat like a really smart military general that says: my forces are meeting overwhelming forces so if I stay out there they’re going to get all wiped out, so what to do? Advance to the rear! It’s called retreat. It is called retreat, retreat quickly and do not throw away your weapons! That is called a rout. A rout is getting drunk. That is also retreat from reality but that is throwing away all your weapons, snorting cocaine, ecstasy and so forth. That is a rout. You cannot handle reality so why don’t you just dope yourself up, as many, many people are doing nowadays. They find reality quite intolerable, so let’s just throw away our weapons of intelligence and mindfulness and so forth, throw them into the air and just say yes. That is a rout.

(50:20) But shamatha is not a rout, shamatha is a retreat, a really smart retreat. Why in the military do people go into retreat? Because they are facing overwhelming odds and moreover maybe they are running out of supplies or out of ammunition and so forth, maybe they are in a bad area, maybe they are at a disadvantage, the enemy is shooting downhill at them and they’re just sitting ducks.

So what you do? You retreat! And bring weapons with you and then you get a good meal, you replenish your supplies, your ammunition and so forth. You re-strategize and then you think: ok, what is the strategy? To go back and to fight another day and eventually win the battle.

Shamatha is a retreat. That is really what it is, you go into shamatha retreat and that is you disengage from other people, disengage from the activities in the world, you simplify your life down to the bare minimum and then you retreat from the sensory fields, into maybe the tactile sensations of the breath, or you retreat into the mind or you do the deepest retreat right into awareness itself not even attending to, not even venturing out into your mind, let alone your body, let alone the surrounding environment. You’ve gone into this real deep cubby hole like: “I am just staying here, the sheer luminosity and cognizance of my own awareness and I am staying here and world take a hike, I am recuperating here, this little light of mine, awareness, and just rest.” That is really retreat. So it can be very useful.

(51:48) But we in these 8 weeks we are doing more than retreat, we are venturing into the “expedition.”

These are the two terms I really like. Retreat you know can be really very smart but then once you’ve retreated, regrouped, re-strategize and you are ready to venture out into the world then it’s expedition time, like a military expedition, expedition to go to the north pole, go to someplace you’ve never been before. But again the etymology is really great, because expedition means, “ex” you’re getting out, your “ped” your feet from where they’ve been stuck. “Expedition” means getting out of ruts, getting out of old habits, extricating your feet from where they have been stuck. That’s an expedition.

Boy! Vipashyana is just 100% expedition. There is no retreat involved. You are not withdrawing from any reality at all. The field of your attention is the whole of reality and we’ll methodically go through it to the physical, to the affective, to the mental and the whole pratityasamutpada, the dependent origination, all of these facets of reality and see how they arise, arise in codependent origination. But vipashyana is not retreat. Vipashyana is an expedition to attend to reality or to engage with reality but in ways in which we do not fall back into our old ruts. So it is an expedition, right?

So you may wonder, well who is qualified? If you enter the military, especially the special forces, the ones that don’t just draft you, they’ll be giving you a checkup, medical checkup, especially if it’s the Navy SEALs, Green Berets, what have you. They’ll want to know you’re made of the right stuff. Want to be an Air Force pilot? Right stuff or not?

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So who has the right stuff, what are the qualifications? What gives you the right stuff to venture out into the expedition, venturing onto the Buddha's path to liberation and for example by way of "The Four Applications of Mindfulness"?

Well Aryadeva, one of the great pandits, scholars, contemplatives of the whole Indian Buddhist Tradition, disciple of Nagarjuna, in his text "The Four Hundred Versus", he just pinpoints exactly what is necessary and to pass the entrance exam, to be qualified, it means you are ready, you are suitable for the training. Just three qualities:

- **You must be perceptive.**

It is not a matter of how high your IQ is but you better be really paying attention. If you are not paying attention, if you are not being perceptive, if you are not really interested in reality, you are just kind of doping out, stoning out, whatever. Sorry, you are Four F. Four F in the American Military means you don't get in. So you must be perceptive, attentive, interested, and engaged.

- **You must be open-minded.**

Free of precedents, free of bias, you must be un-biased, you must be – in the scientific sense of the term – objective and that is being open to whatever reality dishes up whether or not it accords with your assumptions, your beliefs, your preconceptions and that is a tough one! It is really tough to really be open-minded.

Of course it's ever so easy to open-mindedly be critical of other people's assumptions. That's really easy. Just have people start talking and you say: I disagree with you on this point and you are wrong on that one, and you're definitely wrong on this point and that point. As for me, my beliefs are all fine! This is really easy to do; it's really easy to do. Open-mindedly critical and prejudicial with regards to everybody else beliefs especially when they are different from my own. That happens unfortunately a lot in science, happens regularly in religion, it is all too common in philosophy and politics. Ha Ha! It is the kiss of death to all of them.

If our assumptions were so good then we should be a lot happier than we are right now. If our way of viewing reality is completely authentic and in no need any correction, any reassessment, we should already be fully awake, Buddhas, we should be free of suffering.

So if we are still suffering, if our minds are still cluttered with mental afflictions, then that would imply that we may be holding some beliefs and assumptions, but more importantly, we may be viewing reality in some ways that are simply delusional.

And then we can ask: am I 100% deluded? No I don't think anybody, not even a schizophrenic, is 100% delusional. You're getting most of it wrong. So no, we can't just say my mind is totally broken, please give a new one, this one's worn out. Then we may have to see: Ok, within my mind, the ways I view reality, myself, other people, the environment, which aspects of the ways I view reality do not stand up to critical analyses, that proved themselves to be faulty, not based in reality, just speculation or false assumptions?

And so there it is, there is a core theme, be open minded and be – above all – be willing to reassess even your most cherished assumptions, even assumptions you'd bet your life one. Be willing to reassess. If you're not, so sorry you are not qualified and go off and follow some other tradition, but you are really not suitable for this path.

- **You must really have a passion.**

You must really have a passion, a great longing, a commitment to put the teachings into practice. If one only wants to listen to them and think about them and then write papers and essays and maybe get a degree, that's fine! You get a university degree and perhaps get a university job, but you're not qualified to follow the Buddha's path. Because following the Buddha's path means you hear, you understand, you test and then when you see that a certain practice is authentic, then you put it into practice, you apply it. You are an applied scientist and not just a theoretical scientist and your science is a science of your own life in relationship to the world around you.

So there is, just those three qualities, perceptive, open-minded and with a great passion to practice. Well I do have some scientific background, and if you're venturing into biology, astronomy, physics, whatever it may be, that seems like a pretty good set of criteria for any branch of science, right? You must be perceptive, you must be open-minded and you must really want to practice science and not just think about science.

His Holiness Dalai Lama has been emphasizing a lot over the years now, including in his wonderful book, The Universe in a Single Atom, that within the domain of Buddhism there is really a very powerful "Mind Science."

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I don't think he says and I would not say all of Buddhism simply is a Mind Science, but in it there are elements that are clearly scientific and they are driven by, focus on the nature of the mind and foundational to this whole vipashyana, this contemplative science, this science of the mind is: "The Four Applications of Mindfulness". (59:15)

Buddha's quoted from the Satipatthana Sutra.

(1:06:40) Here's simply a quote from the Sutra. Buddha referring to the four applications of mindfulness says: "this is the direct path, monks, for the purification of beings". Alright so there are many, many practices that can provide you with some really nice scenic routes, going here and there and wandering around and doing some very interesting things and so forth, that could eventually lead you to liberation. And then there's the Autobahn, the one that just doesn't go anywhere else. It's from Hamburg to Frankfurt, it doesn't go anywhere else. Get on the autobahn, stay there in the fast lane, you'll be in Frankfurt before you know it! Because it doesn't go anywhere else, right? Pedal to the metal, get in your Maserati, get in the fast lane, put on your blinker, get out of my way! This is the direct path. It's the fast lane on the autobahn. That's what this direct path is: to liberation. "This is the direct path, monks, for the purification of beings." Ok so the first thing he says is pragmatic. Purification of what? Purification, of course, like a doctor looking at his patient, take this medicine, this will purify your system, this will detoxify your system, this will remove the harmful viruses, bacteria and so forth. This will purify. This will heal. For the "healing" of beings, for the "purification" of beings.

Purifying what? The klesha avarana: the afflictions of the mind. "For the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation." In other words by purifying, by dispelling, by healing the underlying causes of suffering, which lie in the human mind, you thereby overcome sorrow and lamentation. "For overcoming pain and grief." In other words even your experience of pain, physical pain in the body, it shouldn't go away, it shouldn't vanish as if you've had a general anesthesia, why you're walking and so forth putting your hand on the fire and not hurting. Of course that should hurt! That is your body sending you a signal. But overcoming pain and grief in a way that your experience of even physical suffering is radically transformed. This is the direct path for reaching the authentic path, this is the direct route to reaching the authentic path, one that actually works, one that is a path from here to there, from suffering and the causes of suffering to liberation, the cessation of suffering and its causes. This is authentic, it is true, it is real, this is the direct path for the realization of nirvana.

This is for the total purification, the total liberation of the mind from all afflictive obscurations. And what is this direct path? Namely, it is "The Four Applications of Mindfulness". It is a very simple statement. There it is. The hidden meaning is there. Not very deeply hidden, but one needs to know where to look. It's not so obvious. I'd say our modern society is in a pre-contemplative phase. As scientists or modern historians so often speak of a pre-scientific era before Galileo and Copernicus, when we were basically muddling about in the dark, in the Dark Ages. Not having awoken to the fact that if you want to understand the physical world, the objective world, the quantitative world, you should look at it really closely, which is what Galileo did both in terms of astronomy as well as terrestrial physics. He, like nobody else before him including Aristotle, he developed the technology and applied it, he made the precise measurements, he had hypotheses. He was the first full scientist, because he had all the trappings of what it means to be a scientist in the modern world. And until he started that, we'd say do you have astrology? Yes, they'd had centuries of astrology. And very good astrology! They could predict solar and lunar eclipses, they knew a lot about the stars. The one thing they didn't do was develop any very sophisticated means for actually observing celestial events, and that's what Galileo did. It's called a telescope. From his eight-powered telescope up to the Hubble and the newer versions that are coming out right now, all of that is about the core of the scientific method of making the most rigorous, sophisticated, replicable observations of the phenomena under investigation that you possibly can. That is the essence of scientific method. And that's exactly what modern cognitive scientists don't do when it comes to the mind. Don't even get close, don't even try! And that is, making rigorous, replicable, sophisticated, precise observations of mental phenomena. Not the brain correlates, and not the behavioral expressions. Williams James said, about 110 years ago, when it comes to psychology, it's like astronomy prior to Galileo. In other words, like astrology. Astrology was very good at studying the correlates of celestial bodies, but not much good at actually observing. Not with precision. Folk astronomy, just using the naked eye. And that's where we are, folk psychology, when it comes to the direct observation of mental events.

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But the statement there is so deep. There's an implication here that's just totally against the grain of the last 400 years of Eurocentric civilization, and it's built in, it's core to multiple contemplative traditions, it's almost universally known among contemplative traditions and almost entirely unknown in the scientific tradition. And that is that in order to realize, let's say Anatman, Non-Self, in order to realize that – and by “realize” I mean in order to know it immediately, directly, to drink it in, to totally get it experientially, not just figure it out conceptually in order to write a paper on it but actually to taste it, to immerse your mind in it, to directly realize it – in order for that to take place, you have to be more than just smart. You actually have to have cultivated a mind that's prepared, that is tuned, that is honed and purified to be able to access that truth and drench itself in it. In other words, it's not just about being smart. There are a lot of very good scholars who have written very smart essays about anatta without it ever touching home at all. It's like they're rhinoceri, you know the little mosquito of their conceptual understanding doesn't even penetrate the skin. It has no impact on one's way of life. And this is not only for western scholars, there are Buddhist scholars who can crush everybody in debate, and yet it never gets in. It never actually penetrates. They can give the greatest dharma talk and it never gets inside. Why? Because the mind itself has not been prepared to receive that truth, so you get it only on the most superficial level of articulation, conceptualization, being really smart and clever. That's all very well, but does it purify the mind of mental afflictions? Doesn't even touch them, doesn't even get close.

So the direct preparation for the vipashyana, to be able to really gain access to these truths, to realize them so that they radically and even irreversibly transform the mind that knows them – and that's the core of this authentic path, that knowing these aspects of reality radically and irreversibly transforms and purifies the mind that has gained such knowledge – for that to take place, you can't bring an ordinary mind and expect for that to be sufficient. It's not. That mind has to be trained and purified by shamatha, by samadhi. The mind that you bring to that must be exceptionally sane. “Samadhi” means unified, it means coherent, it means composed, it means balanced. That's conative, attentional, cognitive, and affective. You must bring a resplendently sane mind to your vipashyana practice so that when you do penetrate to these deep aspects of reality such as an-atman (non-self) your mind drinks it in and that realization goes right down to your marrow. It goes down into the very core of your being so that you can never view reality in a contrary way ever again. It's gone so deep that it's actually your way of viewing reality and now non-reality is impotent to knock you out. It has no power, because you're rooted in an authentic way of viewing reality, of an-atman. That's not going to happen unless the mind you bring to vipashyana is deeply trained in samadhi and the Buddha specifically said in this regard and I have to quote this one again. It's important. And it's just nowhere to be found in modern western civilization and it's hardly to be found anywhere on the planet these days.

As His Holiness commented, just in a conversation a few days ago, he said any good Buddhist scholar knows that shamatha/vipashyana is the core of any Buddhist meditation. And you don't need to be a brilliant scholar. It all boils down to shamatha/vipashyana, it's pan-Buddhist. And His Holiness commented that very few people are practicing! Very few! A few yes, but very few! How bizarre! What part of that was unclear? What part of shamatha/vipashyana didn't you understand? You get carried up doing all these other kinds of practices and then skip the heart? So if anybody can ferret out, seek out and lure the really accomplished shamatha practitioners and the really accomplished vipashyana practitioners it will only be one man, I think. I don't know anybody else who has his authority.

So where is that quote? There! Here's a direct statement from the Buddha. “So long as these five obscurations are not abandoned.” What are the 5 obscurations that make your mind unsuitable so that even if you get some insight by way of vipashyana it will not stick, it will not transform, it will not liberate, because your mind is screwed up, it's obscure, it's dysfunctional? What are the 5 obscurations that obscure the luminous and pure nature of your own awareness? Five! Sensual craving, and that's your addiction to all hedonic pleasure. Malice or ill-will. Laxity and dullness. Excitation and anxiety. And then afflictive uncertainty. Those are the 5 obscurations, sometimes called the 5 hindrances. And the Buddha said: “As long as these five obscurations are not abandoned, one considers oneself as indebted.” So just imagine this: you're deep in debt. Some of you might find that quite easy. “One considers oneself as indebted,” but now not only you're in debt but “sick”, not only sick, but you're “in bonds” so you're in chains. You're not only in chains, you're “enslaved” and you're “lost in a desert track.” Have a nice day! And enjoy your vipashyana practice, it's bound to turn out well! That's really heady terminology. He always chose his words very carefully. But insofar as your

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mind is encumbered by, obscured, afflicted, toxified by these 5 obscurations, consider yourself indebted, sick, in bonds, enslaved and lost in a desert track!

Well, you don't need samadhi to be a really good scientist, because the technology is free of the 5 obscurations. Your X-ray, your electron microscope, your fMRI, they don't have any of the 5 obscurations so they can get nice clean data. The one thing they can't get any clean data on at all is your mind, because your mind and everything that takes place in the mind is invisible to all instruments of scientific technology. So it's good for all the physical stuff and it's completely blind to all the stuff that happens in your mind. The only access that you have to your mind, and if your mind is encumbered by those 5 obscurations, you are 5 things down the tubes.

So therefore, samadhi is not optional, it is a prerequisite for the wisdom teachings to really have the power of liberating, transforming, alleviating the causes of suffering. So there it is: samadhi, so often overlooked, ridiculously overlooked. And there is the Buddha himself saying this. You want to debate with the Buddha? Have a nice day with that one. But samadhi is absolutely a prerequisite. But then if you want to develop samadhi, you'd better to look to its foundation, which is ethics. Avoiding the unwholesome, following the wholesome, living a non-violent way of life, a benevolent way of life, and then fine-tuning that so that your whole way of life is just saturated by a discerning mindfulness of recognizing what is wholesome, what is not wholesome, what is conducive to one's own flourishing or genuine happiness, and what is counterproductive, destructive of genuine happiness. But this means you have to just totally have a radical makeover of your whole way of life. It's just a fundamental shift, a radical re-orientation towards a profoundly, essentially, and pervasively ethical way of life. And if you don't, you'll never develop samadhi. It's not like you shouldn't, you just won't be able to. Because one can also define an unethical way of life as that which makes it impossible to develop samadhi. It will erode it. Your sensual craving, hostility, then 10 non-virtues. All of those would be like just putting bombs under your cultivation of samadhi, it'll just fall apart. And you'll go back to retreat and it'll fall apart. Go back, fall apart.

So here is a science, a contemplative science, or an inner science, where ethics is not an add-on. Ethics is added on to science. Human subjects, criteria, how can you treat your subjects, human and non-human, what constitutes cruelty: there are a lot of regulations there. They are add-ons. They weren't even there 50, 60 years ago. Psychology got away with all kinds of stuff. But then you know they added on, so that's good. But it's an add-on, right? You don't have to be all that ethical to be a brilliant scientist. You certainly don't have to be humble, and you certainly don't have to have samadhi. So they have an enormous amount of knowledge in the other branches of science, but it doesn't take ethics, and it doesn't take samadhi, and it doesn't transform radically the mind that gains the insights.

This is an inner science, *adyatma-vidhya*, an inner science, and ethics is not an add-on, the ethics is absolutely from its core. Indispensable. Because you'll never develop samadhi without it, and without samadhi, the vipashyana that truly liberates will never manifest. So it makes it an exceptional science where virtue is actually part of the scientific process. Virtue is indispensable for gaining knowledge that liberates. It's not just being nice. It's core. It's essential. So the pursuit of genuine happiness, the pursuit of truth, the pursuit of virtue are all bound up together like a braid with three strands. You can't take them apart. If you take apart away, the other two unravel. They're no longer there. So it's an extraordinary science. It's not unique to Buddhism. There are other traditions where there's also the three strands. It's simply very clear in Buddhism. So there it is. Just a little introduction to the relationship between shamatha and vipashyana. And of all the traditions, and I am a comparative scholar, I don't know of any other tradition that so lends itself to entry simply with the three qualities of being perceptive, having an open mind, and having a passionate yearning to practice. Do you have to believe in reincarnation? Do you have to believe in your guru, that your guru's a Buddha? Do you have to believe the Buddha was omniscient? Do you have to believe in karma? The six realms of existence? How about Mount Meru? Do you really have to believe in that or not? And the answer is: how many ways do you want us to say "be perceptive, open-minded and have a passionate wish to practice and that's enough."

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Final edition by *Alma Ayon*

03 Mindfulness of Breathing (2)

This morning we continue to polish our lenses, prepare the instrument for investigating the body and so forth in terms of “the four applications of mindfulness”. We will move on to the second balancing act of seeking to, gently but very persistently, enhance the stability of attention, the continuity of attention, the ongoing coherence of attention, without, at least, course excitation. So this means some effort needs to be exerted to maintain that continuity and then the challenge and the balance is: exert just enough effort to maintain the continuity but without starting to seize up, without getting tight, contracted.

So in other words we are doing something, developing ability we were not born with and it's not part of the world of mundane ways of focusing attention. There is a lot of study behind this, a lot of scientific studies, I think I've mentioned before. That is, overall, in all types of mundane efforts when people really focus they contract, they tight up, they sustain it with effort and then they get exhausted, whereas a yogi will go into meditation of Shamatha for four hours effortlessly and come out just fresh as a daisy. So it's a fundamentally different way of sustaining the focus. Here the stability is coming out of relaxation rather than the stability coming out of contraction. So that is one crucial point.

Second crucial point, this second phase where we will be focusing, as you probably anticipate, on the rise and fall of the abdomen, just the bare tactile sensation. The idea here is really to overcome a very deeply ingrained, old habit and that is of letting our default mode – when we are not specifically attending to or engaging with something – our default mode shifting from rumination, kind of quasi-conscious, non-lucid rumination. So that is for many people where they have nothing to do, they just porrrr (sound) and go into the non-lucid dream, a little mini dream of rumination and it is exhausting, so it is really a bad habit, exhausting and as Shantideva points out in the eighth, meditation chapter: as soon you flip into that then you are just living between the fangs of mental afflictions. In other words you are just ready to fall prey to any mental affliction because your guard is down; your psychological immune system is shot.

(2:58) So here for these 8 weeks, the idea here, starting this session today, now, is to develop a new default mode, rather than falling into rumination, when there is nothing else to do and going on bla, bla, bla, semi-consciously and non-lucidly, let your default mode be to rest in a non-conceptual, clear mode of awareness, present-centered, let that be the default mode. And then from the default mode, when there is something to think about by all means think! Creatively, analytically, drawing on memory, drawing on fantasy, whatever you like. But let it be deliberate, let it be conscious, let it be lucid rather than rumination which is just the opposite of all the above.

So the idea here is with every out-breath, we're releasing rumination. Releasing, releasing, releasing, going back to our default mode, developing a new default mode, a new baseline, and the baseline is quiet, clear, non-conceptual attentiveness. That is a new habit and it's refreshing, it's much more pleasant than rumination, I guarantee it!

Third point, we are developing now a continuity of a type of knowing we already have but it so easily and habitually gets totally overwhelmed by rumination and unnecessary cogitation.

I want to give you a simply example:

I am going to hold up either a short finger, like that, or a longer finger, like that, ok? There's the short finger, there's the long finger. Keep your mind – this is going to be really short, less than thirty seconds – but keep your mind as quiet as you possibly can, no rumination, no reasoning, logic, bla, bla, bla, no verbalization at all and just see how quickly you can detect whether I am holding up a short or long finger. Ready? Ok. It was ridiculously easy and you didn't think: ah, long, ah, short. If those words came up they came up as long after you recognize whether it was long or short, right? That is where we often get caught up, in the bla, bla, bla, whereas you knew it before you said anything.

Like taste of chocolate you know before you say: ah, chocolate! Sweet, sour, bitter, and so forth and so on you know it before you label it. Right?

So we are now wanting to maintain a continuity of that knowing before the cogitation, the verbalization, the categorization, the rumination sets in. Sustain that. It is an immediate knowing.

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Now, what is the Buddha's instruction? This is for mindfulness of breathing: when you breathe in short, when you breathe in long, you note you breathe in long. That's why I did this business with the finger. You do not need to think, oh, that was long. You already know it before you talk about it.

Breathing in long one knows I breathe in long, breathing out long one knows I breathe out long.

Then as your whole system settles down, gradually but not very – how do you say? – homogeneously but on occasion, then your whole system will calm down, you'll need less air and therefore the duration of your breath is going to get shorter.

Breathing in short one knows I breathe in short, breathing out short one knows I breathe out short, it is just knowing that, it is a kind of knowing that is very primitive but is sufficient and so exercise that, sustain that from breath to breath, but knowing prior to articulation. It is opening the portals of intuition, it is opening that door so in a way you're intuiting whether that is long or short, before you ever figure out it is an immediate knowing. That is what we are seeking to sustain here.

Let's jump in!

Meditation:

(6:59) We call this phase two of mindfulness of breathing and it will be a guide meditation. It is very good in a supine position, either posture is fine.

As soon as possible develop a type of pavlovian response to this bell, not to salivate but to relax, to invite yourself lovingly, and very friendly, inviting, warm, affectionate way to soothingly enter into this session by letting your awareness descend into the body, right down to the ground, coming out of your head, coming out of the web of conceptualization and simplify.

Touch the ground and let your awareness rise up and fill the whole space of the body, right up to the top of the head. Be mindfully present throughout the body, noting areas of tightness, gently attending to them as you breathe in and then utterly surrounding, loosening up, relaxing as you breathe out. Soften all the muscles of the face, soften the eyes, and let your body be still and adopt a posture, even if it is only psychological, adopt a posture of vigilance.

And take on the subtler challenge of settling your respiration in its natural rhythm, utterly releasing with every out breath, which is to say relax more and more deeply in the body, utterly release the breath, release any thoughts that may come to mind. And as if you've opened a valve tank full of water and you simply leave it open until all the water is drained out, as you breathe out just let the air flow out until there is nothing more to flow out but without ever expelling it, forcing it out or keeping it out, just let it flow out all the way to the last drop.

(13:24) And allow the breath to flow in without pulling it in and however long the in breath is, just let it be, long or short, deep or shallow, and from breath to breath do not try to regulate it, let the body find its own balance.

This practice of shamatha leads to samadhi which means the unification of the mind, which means not multitasking. So in order to facilitate this, now release very deliberately all concerns about the future and the past, all cogitations about the present, surrender them all and let your awareness come to rest in stillness in the present moment, carefree.

And for just a short while let your awareness illuminate the sensations throughout the body with a special interest, focus on those associated with the in and out breath. Be aware of the sensations of the body breathing, without visualizing it, just attending to the bare tactile sensations.

And now to shift to the explicit cultivation of stability, direct your attention downwards to the tactile sensations of the rise and fall of the abdomen with each in and out breath. There is no need to visualize or think about the abdomen, just focus on the bare tactile sensations.

As the breath naturally and effortlessly flows in, let each in breath be an occasion for arousal, focusing, concentrating your attention. Now is the time for effort, to focus closely on the sensations of the in breath at the abdomen, non-conceptually. With each out breath, deeply relax. Relax evenly while at the same time gently sustaining the flow of mindfulness of the sensations of the breath at the abdomen. Arouse and release, arouse and release with each in and out breath.

As the breath flows in clearly and sharply focus your attention non-conceptually and by so doing you overcome naturally the attentional imbalance of laxity or dullness. And with every out breath as you deeply relax, release any thoughts, image, memories that may have come to mind, just release them, let them go, let

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them dissolve back into the space of the mind while gently sustaining the flow of mindfulness of the breath and in this way overcome the attentional imbalance of excitation, of agitation.

Now and again introspectively check up on the body to see that your posture is as it needs to be, settled in its natural state, relaxed, still and vigilant, check up on the muscles of the face and on the eyes to see that they are loose and relaxed.

Introspectively monitor the flow of the breath as well, noting or insuring that you are not voluntarily regulating it in any way, do not try to regularize it, just let it be, trust your body to breathe without intervening in any way.

Summary of Alan's comments/advices to the Yogis after meditation:

(31:55) Alan suggests to the yogis in between sessions:

As much as you can maintain a peripheral awareness of the out flow and in flow of the breath as you are walking, lying down, doing this, doing that. Like keeping a finger on the pulse. Stay in touch, in other words develop a new default mode of your awareness grounded in your senses, grounded in the present moment in a non-conceptual mode. At the same time, this is not tight, not constricted, it is not authoritarian, as if you're trying to bring some dictatorship to the mind. Whenever you wish to think, go ahead!

It's very much like, if you want to dream, why not be lucid and have as many dreams as you like, but just let them be lucid. That is when you are dreaming, know that you are dreaming, rather than being caught up in a delusional state of non-lucid dreaming, where you're dreaming and you don't even know it. So likewise think whenever you like, whenever it's worthwhile, meaningful, but know that you are thinking, think lucidly. And when there is nothing to think about, as a matter of fact that's most of the time here – in the business-place, for instance, there's a lot to this about – but this is a really simple environment where there's not a whole lot to think about. Give to yourself a break and do not think about anything at all, just enjoy. Whoa! This is what it's like to be a sentient being in the universe! Rest there and then just get into that nice flow, just a peripheral awareness.

But Tsongkhapa points out that in terms of real success in the practice of shamatha it's not enough to be focused just while you're in session or on the cushion. You need to maintain a peripheral awareness, stay in touch, just gently. It's not kind of really tight concentration, but stay in touch with the in and out flow of the breath. It's almost like living near the beach and just being aware of the wave going Whoosh! Whoosh! You may be reading, you may be listening to music, you may be walking, washing the dishes, cooking a meal but you are still aware of that Whoosh! [hearing the sound of the respiration and feeling the sensations of the in and out breath], that is nice soothing flow of the waves washing upon shore. Peripherally, right? Just let that be your touchstone, you're touching down into reality.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Revised by James French

Final edition by Rafael Carlos Giusti

04 Mindfulness of the body (1)

We continue on our trajectory in the close application of mindfulness to the body, being aware that that includes not only one's own body and other people's bodies, but in fact, the whole physical domain, all of the five physical senses.

(1:06) What we are seeking to do here is to approximate, but not to reach, a state of non-conceptual awareness. We cannot simply decide to go non-conceptual and then achieve it, because, in the buddhist understanding, there's going to be some precognitive or subliminal or implicit degree of conceptualization that takes place and is not voluntary - we can't just turn it off.

(1:29) Nevertheless, we can attenuate or turn down the volume of the sheer conceptual noise that's coming up that we "plaster" onto the various fields of experience, the different senses domains, and thereby concretize, objectify and subjectify our world. This is very much in accordance with shamatha, where we are seeking to slip more into a quiet and non-conceptual way of knowing. Bear in mind it is ever so crucial that, whether it is in shamatha or whether it's in vipashyana, in both cases it's nothing remotely like a trance. It is

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sustaining a flow of knowing. If it's not, then you're falling into dullness and you're exercising stupidity, you're actually cultivating stupefaction, right? It's a very important point. So in both of these, it is a flow of knowing, but it's a flow of knowing that is not talkative, it's not discursive, it doesn't have a commentary.

(2:18) Again the short finger or the long finger, sweet, bitter, sour, red, green, blue, loud, soft and so forth. We just know them – boom! Immediately. So I won't say non-conceptually, but I will say without the verbal commentary or the conceptual or discursive commentary. So we're seeking to cultivate that way of knowing in shamatha. Bear in mind this is a close reflection or a clear, very transparent preparation for entering into the knowing that comes at the culmination of the practice of shamatha, and that's when your coarse mind has dissolved into substrate consciousness. There is a mode of knowing that is direct, it's non-conceptual, it's the portal to developing an array of types of extrasensory perception, whether precognition, remote viewing, remote auditory (divine ear or clairaudience). Substrate consciousness is the portal to that, because they have something in common. It's a knowing, but it's not by way of our five sense faculties, nor is it by way of reasoning, cogitation, inference. It's another type of knowing.

So that's what we're cultivating in shamatha, and in a very simple way. Long finger, short finger, long breath, short breath - very, very simple, right? So we're developing that and getting that noise of rumination to quiet down. Likewise, when we are moving here into the shallow end of the pool in terms of just attending very closely, that is, closely applying mindfulness to the different sensory domains within the physical realm, we're sustaining that same quality of knowing that is immediate, it's direct, we can't say it's infallible but it is very, very direct and is not mediated by a lot of conceptual categories. It tends to be like, if you get smacked, I'll just smack my hands [claps hands] like that. I feel a stinging sensation, of course - [claps hands] there it is. I don't have to think about it. Afterwards, I'll call it stinging, or I'll call it sharp, or I'll call it whatever but - [claps hands] there it is, right there, you get it, right? Then you can qualify and talk about it ad infinitum, but there's something [claps hands] immediate, and that is exactly where we are going.

(4:30) That theme that you've probably heard of from the Dzogchen Tradition - PHAT! I'm not going to try to mimic it, but that's where you've already settled into the substrate consciousness, ideally, you've already tapped into [something] very subtle. And that PHAT! is like a pickaxe. A pickaxe that you use to breakthrough something really hard. Like a pickaxe to break, not through your psyche, through your coarse mind, but to actually break right through the individuation of your own substrate consciousness, OK? So we're moving in that direction. When you gain an unmediated, non-conceptual realization of rigpa, that's totally non conceptual. When you gain a non-conceptual realization of emptiness, that's totally non conceptual. But when you're resting in the substrate consciousness, it's not overtly conceptual, but it is implicitly, or covertly, conceptual, but it's still very clear and so on a coarse level we will say that the substrate consciousness, when you are getting it clearly, fully by way of shamatha, is blissful, luminous and non-conceptual. Not totally, but a pretty good approximation. OK?

So let's move along that trajectory. I will talk a bit about the practice that we're doing now, afterwards, but first let's just jump in and taste it.

Meditation:

(6:00) As soon you hear the bell, that can be like the sound, "dive, dive, dive". Come right down to the ground, literally to the earth element. Attend to it. Know it. Directly, non-conceptually. Then let your awareness rise and fill the space of the body, settle it in its natural state, relaxed, still and vigilant, and settle your respiration in its natural rhythm.

Meditation starts at 5:30 (meditation was cut short because of some technical problems. Sorry!)

Teachings/Comments after meditation:

- **What are your sources for what we have just done?**

(7:38) Oh la so, I'd like to give just a little bit of background, actually a very important background. It's in Tibetan called "kung". What's your source? Give the source for what we have just done. I hope you never refer to the method of shamatha that I teach or the methods of vipashyana that I teach as Alan Wallace's method. Please don't say that. It's not true. If I came up with any new method it would so pale in comparison to the wisdom that precedes me for the last twenty five, twenty six hundred years, that it would just be trivial. So I have tremendous respect for what's preceded me, but if I came up with something all by my own, I would say: are you kidding me? The California hippie dharma! I think we can do better than that. So, what's the source here? Well, I'll tell you a little bit because it's kind of a cool story. The source here is in the notes,

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which I'll share with you, and if you have Minding Closely, it's got to be in there. It's the story of Bahiya. [I'll tell] the story rather briefly, because I don't want to spend a lot of time on commentary. I want to make sure we have at least a half an hour this afternoon for just open discussion.

- **Source 1: The story of Bahiya**

(8:35) The story of Bahiya is quite interesting because he was a sailor and his ship was shipwrecked. It seems like he was the only survivor, at least only one we know about. So he was washed up, kind of one of those classic cases, washed up on shore. Maybe it crashed when he was in bed, so he basically washed up on shore naked. There he is, everybody's dead and he doesn't know where he is and he doesn't know anybody. He's naked and that was kind of embarrassing, so he found some bark and clad his private parts in bark.

Then the Indians, being the devotional people they were, they thought: naked guy in bark, he must be a holy man. You know, why not? And so they start saying, "sadhu, sadhu, swami, swami! Cool guy! What's up dude, give me blessing, give me blessing." And Bahiya, thought, OK, you give me money and I'll give you blessing. So people starting come to him and thinking he was a holy man, but he wasn't, he was just a shipwrecked sailor. But the word got out, there's this pretty serious dude, naked, apparently wearing bark. He's a real ascetic. So people starting coming and he saw that this is a pretty easy way to make a living. You know, say whatever kind of baloney that comes to mind, you know, Om shanti..., whatever, whatever it is. So he got a reputation, he started having more and more disciples coming, you know, fake it till you make it!

After while he just kind of thought: Oh man, this is getting a bit old, you know, faking to be a holy man and actually something arose from within, like, what would it be like to actually be enlightened and not just be pretending. So he kept his ears open to see if there was anybody who was actually authentic, wasn't a phony baloney like him. He heard about this man Gautama who had allegedly become awake and so he said, ok, let's find him.

He must have been very, very dedicated, because as I recall the ship wrecked on the south-western coast of India and Buddha lives way up in north-east central, so way, way up, hundreds miles away. Of course, there's no trains, just walking. He didn't even have a horse. Hey, he's got bark! So he walked all the way up there, to the region where the Buddha was. Bear in mind that there was no GPS, where's the Buddha now, click click click. I mean, how would you find him? But he was very persevering and so eventually he did track him down. He saw him when the Buddha Gautama was out on an alms round. But the guy had walked so far that he comes right up to him and says. "Gautama, please give me teaching!" And Gautama says (in vernacular), "hey, chill. I'm on Alms round. I'll get back to you, but cool it; I am doing something else right now."

But the guy's really eager, so the next day again he finds the Buddha when he's on alms round and says, "please give me teachings!" And Buddha says, "I'm on alms round. Later." You know it's going to be the third time. So he catches him at the right moment, alms round finished, he comes to Buddha and he asks him, "please give me guidance, I want to become liberated." This is what the Buddha gave him. It's one of the shortest discourses the Buddha ever gave, in response to which somebody immediately achieved arhatship. This is the discourse, so, are you ready? This is your first exam, OK? So listen very attentively. It was hearing this discourse, this one paragraph, upon hearing this, right when it was finished, he became an arhat. I'm watching!

This was the Buddha's response. Of course, he could have suspended his alms just for a moment. He was waiting. This happened a lot, you see this in the Pali canon, the Buddha would be waiting for the right time. It wasn't just – I've got good teachings, shall I give them to you right now? He would be waiting for that time when the person would be perfectly ripe, and then - drop it. That was what he did here. He waited until Bahiya was really balanced and ready to insert, and this is what he inserted.

The discourse

"In the seen, there is only the seen; in the heard, there is only the heard; in the sensed (tactile), there is only the sensed; in the cognized (mentally perceived), there is only the cognized.

Thus you should see that, indeed, there is no thing here. This, Bahiya, is how you should train yourself.

(13:19) Since Bahiya, there is for you: in the seen, only the seen; in the heard, only the heard; in the sensed, only the sensed; in the cognized, only the cognized; and you see there is no thing here, you will therefore see that, indeed, there is no thing there. As you see that there is no thing there, you will see that you are therefore located neither in the world of this, nor in the world of that, nor in any place between the two. This alone is the end of suffering." And that was enough for Bahiya!

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(14:34) In case you're not already an Arhat, let's unpack that a little bit. "In the seen" – conceptually quite clear. By allowing reality to speak to you without you superposing all your categories, labels and reification on the various domains of appearances, then you see that indeed there is no thing here. This term "thing" can be understood as a personal self, so an ego, but atman does not always mean ego. It sometimes simply means entity or some kind of intrinsic nature, some real stuff.

In this case he did a step beyond what we did in the last session because I very deliberately excluded, or did not direct your attention to, the mental domain. We're going to get to that. Next week, the week after, the week after... this week is for the physical, the sensory, right? So that's why I left it out. But, you see, in these teachings he didn't leave anything out. The smell and the taste, so marginal, it's like, "never mind, we won't worry about those", right? Because, overwhelmingly, our engagement with the world around us, except maybe when we are eating, is the visual, the auditory and tactile. That's how we're really navigating around the world, right? So including those three sensory domains and the domain of the mind, in each of those four domains, simply attending to what is being presented but with no superimpositions at all.

(15:38) We're also attending to that whole domain of mind, just this array of events, arising, arising, fizzing, frothing, bubbling, collapsing. Just all flux, so called internally, that is in the domain of mind. Nothing there that's congealed, that's solid, that's stable, that's really static and unchanging, nothing, no evidence whatsoever. As you attend to this whole array of events just arising and passing, arising and passing, you see for yourself that there simply is no thing in here. There is no ego, there's no self, there's no entity in here on the subjective side that is unchanging and static.

(16:36) But then as you see that, you see that it's like a plantain tree that has no core, it's hollow inside. There's nothing in there that is abiding, that holds everything together, some hard core, some immutable core. It's exactly empty of that immutable core. And as you're aware of that from the inside out and then you direct your attention back to the so-called outer world, the visual, the auditory, the tactile, you see - oh! But all these domains of experience, they are just as empty of any external core, something really out there, static, immutable, unchanging, absolutely there in and of itself. You see, they're empty. There is no thing out there, there is no atman, there's no intrinsic identity of phenomena either. This term atman can be personal identity, it's also phenomenal identity, not just a self or a person. It's something really there, some core, some essence, something abiding. That's empty, this is empty. That being the case, then this person is neither here, nor there, nor anywhere in between. Welcome to nirvana!

(17:44) So Bahiya is one of those people we would say, despite his rather motley past of pretending to be a Sadhu when he was not, he outgrew that and clearly he was, in the Buddhist parlance, he was called a person "wombo nunbo", a person of sharp faculties. Very sharp faculties. He heard one paragraph and that was enough to become a stream enterer, once returner or non-returner. He just flashed through it. Pow!

Arhatship by the time the discourse was finished. So a person of very sharp faculties.

So, can we say that this very short discourse was the Buddha teaching him vipashyana? Well, it had to be, because you don't get to realization of nirvana, you don't become an arhat without vipashyana. vipashyana is the blade that cuts through all the delusion. That's it. There's no other blade, not faith, not worship, not devotion, not shamatha, not dhyana. There's only one blade that cuts through and brings you to arhatship and that's the blade of vipashyana. So the answer is, yeah, he couldn't be teaching anything else, in dependence upon which Bahiya immediately became arhat. It had to be vipashyana.

Therefore, we have to say, ok, in some cases this bare attention, with a tiny bit of commentary - in the seen let there be just the seen and so forth, and seeing there is no thing here, no thing there, therefore you are neither there, here or in between... Boom! That was it.

But in some cases, for those who are of very sharp faculties, just the bare attention. Just that searing, sharp, utterly clear, transparent, discerning... Pow! close application of mindfulness to the immediacy of experience - that may in some cases be sufficient to be called vipashyana and to lead you to realization of nirvana, emptiness and to become an arhat. It can do. It can do. (19:42)

Now I'll give what I think is a really powerful analogy to this. I will do this frequently. I'll be dealing with the Pali canon, foundational Buddhism, which is the reason we're here for the eight weeks. But I keep on throwing the ropes over to Dzogchen, ok? Foundational yana, the shravaka yana, that's what's going to occupy us for the first four weeks. It's the foundation. It's sweet, it's really so soft, so practical. And then the highest yana, Atiyoga. Atiyogayana. Dzogchen.

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Again, I'll draw from my primary source, extraordinary source, tremendous authority, depth, utterly profound realization, and that is of course Dudjom Lingpa, in his text *The Vajra Essence*, which I've translated under my Lama Gyatrul Rinpoche's guidance and also other mind terms that pertain to Dzogchen. Right towards the beginning of each of these texts, at least two if not three of the texts, as far as I know I think I have translated all of his mind terms on Dzogchen, he gives something that we in modern education system call a placement exam, a placement examination. So, for example, if you've been home schooled. That's rather popular these days. Your mother, your father keeps you at home, gives you an education, but then sooner or later they want to put you into the school system. Well, how long have they been home schooling you? How far have you gotten, what grade should you go into? So you get a placement exam. Should you be in kindergarten still, first grade, are you ready to go to high school? Where are you? So that when you enter in, you're not getting old stuff you've already heard before, but it's also not so over your head that you're just lost, and then get depressed. You know, like that. So, placement exam. Very useful.

Dudjom Lingpa's placement exam to see whether you are a person with sharp faculties.

(21:49) Well that's exactly what Dudjom Lingpa gives. He gives a placement exam right towards the beginning of these mind terms. Here is his placement exam to see whether you are a person with sharp faculties. Very simple, it's a very nice, easy, straightforward placement exam.

The examination is, retire in solitude, go into total solitude, sit yourself down, make some preparations. Then the main practice, which is the placement exam, is: Alright, now just bring your awareness into space. Rest your awareness in space. There it is, right in front of you, rest there. Just that, no commentary. Just rest your awareness in space. Do that, un-interruptedly, for twenty days. That's how long the placement exam takes. If, in the course of the twenty days, you have a direct unmediated realization of rigpa, you are a person with sharp faculties. Congratulations! You become a vidyadhara just by resting your awareness in space! Now you're a vidyadhara. I mean, that's pretty cool. In which case, skip all of the text except the last phase which is thogyal, the direct crossing over, and have a really nice time becoming rainbow body within a very, very short time. You just come right to the end. Just because you already realized rigpa, then you are totally primed to enter into the explicit practices of thogyal, which will then fully manifest, or unveil, the qualities of the Buddha's mind and you become awakened quite quickly.

Now, what happens if, during those twenty days, you don't realize rigpa? Your mind is going blah blah blah. Or even if it's not, you're just sitting there: space, space, space... You know, like these frogs, they go [frog impression]. If you haven't heard them yet, you will hear them. They don't really change the song, that's pretty much the whole song. They just sing that indefinitely. So, if all you're getting is space, and that is all you get, either just wandering mind or getting really restless, or really bored or really depressed or just getting a whole lot of space for twenty days, if that's all you got, then you just finished the exam, but so sorry, you are not a person with sharp faculties. Which means if you keep on doing that, just "well, I'll give it another twenty days [frog impression], OK didn't work. I'll try it another twenty days, I'll try it for two years, I'll try it for thirty years. I'm just going to keep on hoping I'm a person of sharp faculties." You're just going to get old. That's not a technique. Either you get it in twenty days or move on. It's not working. So sorry, you're just not a person of sharp faculties. You're maybe of medium faculties, if not then you are a person of dull faculties and that means you've got some work to do. Practice shamatha and achieve it, practice vipashyana and achieve it, and move along the path, because you too can achieve enlightenment in one life time. But not by just staring into space!

So twenty days. Either be a vidyadhara or move on and get back to the text. That's why he wrote the text! For those people who are not sharp faculties. That's why you have all the intermediates: shamatha, vipashyana and so forth and so on.

Likewise, these teachings here, they are cited many times in the modern Vipassana movement and the popularization of Vipassana. Look at these teachings of Bahiya and what do you call that? That's bare attention. That certainly is bare attention and so if worked for Bahiya, well let's just practice bare attention and never mind all that other stuff. Just practice bare attention.

(26:02) Well, if you are Bahiya, it should work quite quickly. If you're not, then you're not practicing vipashyana, and you're not practicing shamatha, which means... what are you practicing here? Nothing in particular. You are just kind of sitting there hoping you are a person of sharp faculties but reality disagrees. So one wants to find where you are in the practice and then make sure that, almost like gears, make sure the

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gears mesh. That you are in fact engaging in a practice that's really working, and not just kind of hoping, "one day over the rainbow, I'll become an arhat". Not likely.

That's why the Buddha taught sila, samadhi, prajna. That's why he taught shamatha. That's why he taught the dhyanas. That's why he taught the four applications of mindfulness, with all the richness, the finesse, the precision, the sophistication of the methods, for people who can't become arhat by hearing one paragraph. By the way, a footnote to the story. It was very good that Bahyia achieved arhatship so quickly, because about a week later he has gored by a bull and died. So his karma was quite complex, it was very mixed. He had to travel all across India to meet Buddha and become an arhat and to meet the bull that would kill him. That's the sentient being with whom he had the karma to be gored, right? So, quite complex. Meet the Buddha, then meet the bull and die. Became an arhat first, that's good! So that's a little background on where this practice comes from.

- **Second source: Shamatha without a sign, in Dzogchen, settling and resting in space.**

Likewise in the Dzogchen, that initial settling, just resting in space, well this actually comes up repeatedly in Padmasambhava's teachings. In Natural Liberation, a text I have translated, when he is teaching shamatha without a sign, there it is. The subtlest form, quite possibly the most profound type of shamatha there is, taught by the Buddha himself. *Vijñāna kasina* it's called. When Padmasambhava is teaching this, having already explained quite a number of other methods of shamatha, kind of leading up to the culmination, he doesn't teach any shamatha after this one. He said, "Ok, this one, if you haven't achieved shamatha yet, well stay here until you do." That's what he says. Stay here until your mind has settled in its natural state and then comes vipashyana thereafter. Well when he's teaching the shamatha without a sign, this is how he starts: settle your body, speech and mind in their natural state, let your awareness rest evenly in space. Then he moves on. He gives very clear, very explicit teachings on shamatha, how do you achieve shamatha. He does say, in the course of his instructions on shamatha without a sign, you may realize *rigpa*. But even if you don't, you're not wasting time, because you are engaging in the practices that lead you direct to realizing shamatha, realizing the substrate consciousness, which is very useful.

- **Sentient beings suffer due to the misapprehension of reality as characterized by the three marks of existence—1) impermanence, 2) suffering, and 3) non-self—and the four types of impermanence—1) whatever is born, perishes, 2) whenever there is meeting, separation, 3) whatever is acquired, lost, and 4) whatever goes up, comes down**

(29:03) So, there are three themes that are the core of foundational Buddhist vipashyana practice. They are absolutely core to the four applications of mindfulness and they will be the central themes, the central questions or working hypotheses, especially for the first four weeks and they will continue after that for the final four weeks. That is the three marks of existence. Actually, there are four, but we will focus on three for the time being. They are simply: impermanence (*anitya*), suffering (*dukkha*) and then in Sanskrit, *anātman*, not-self.

The Buddha's premise here, and this is all utterly experiential, radically experiential, the Buddha's premise here is that these are highlighted because, out of a very deep ingrained habituation, we are on a regular basis misapprehending reality in ways that give rise to an enormous amount of suffering. It's not necessary, because that suffering is arising by getting it wrong, by misapprehending reality. Very very similar, in a way, to being in a non-lucid dream. That is, you don't know that you're dreaming and while not knowing, *avidya*, not knowing that you are dreaming, then not just being, "gosh, I wonder what it is happening?" That would be nice and honest, like, "gee, I don't know what is happening, I wonder what." That would be really fertile grounds for finding out what is happening.

The first step to wisdom is to know you're ignorant, that kind of theme. It would be so easy, so useful, so cool, if when you are in a dream and you don't know you're dreaming, you'd be aware that you don't know what is happening. You say, "wow, a lot of appearances happening. I wonder what a kind of experience this is. Let's check it out." That would be just ignorance and then responding very well to recognize that ignorance and then trying to become un-ignorant. But that's not what happens.

You wind up in a dream, not knowing what's taking place, and then what happens? You falsely apprehend it. You take it to be reality, that is, this consensual reality, this inter-subjective physical world. You take to be that which it is not, and by falsely apprehending the nature of the dream, now you're just set up to suffer. And we do. About 80% of non-lucid dreams tend to be unpleasant. Very explicitly unpleasant.

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So, in a similar fashion, here is the hypothesis. You do not have to believe it, check it out with your experience. There is a deeply ingrained habit, a delusional habit, of apprehending that which by nature is totally fizzing, effervescent, moment to moment, constantly in flux, in micro flux, as something stable. Which it's totally not, but one is superimposing, projecting an image, a thought, an idea, a concept. Superimposing on the fields of experience something that is unchanging, rigid, static and then conflating one's projections with the actual reality. On a micro level, in terms of subtle impermanence, taking that which is by nature always arising, fizzing, arising ever so quickly moment to moment and just locking on to that as being stable. That's on a micro level. Then, on a macro level, we're working more in the kind of conceptual domain, not being aware of coarse impermanence, and taking that which by nature will definitely dissolve away and viewing it, attending to it, apprehending it as if it's going to endure indefinitely. It's just unimaginable how much suffering comes from those two ways of misapprehending reality.

(32:54-45:00) So in terms of mindfulness, it's ever so important, and so often overlooked, especially in the modern Vipassana movement, that mindfulness is more than bare attention. Mindfulness is more than attending moment to moment to whatever is arising right now. This is very useful, it was useful to Bahiya - he became an arhat by doing that. But there's so much more to mindfulness. So, while acknowledging bare attention is very useful, extremely good, also good for shamatha, there is nothing about that it's specifically states it's vipashyana. You need [bare attention] in shamatha as well. But other types of mindfulness, mindfulness in the sense of bearing in mind, not forgetting and not only remembering your address or your telephone number, where you just put it in the back drawer of your mind so you call out when you need. I remember my cell phone number, but that really has virtually no impact on the way I view reality. When I need it, I call it out - when I'm filling all those forms, when I land at airports and so forth. When I don't need it, I just put it in the back drawer. I don't want to think about it, but I know where it is. [Mindfulness] is not that.

(34:19) What bearing in mind [means] here is: tapping into, identifying, ascertaining certain really core features of reality. Then, as you engage with other people, your body, your mind, your environment, just engaging with reality, this you are bearing in mind, in insight, and letting that shape, clarify, distill, the way you're actually engaging with whatever you're attending to.

So let's take four bombs of mindfulness, to be borne in mind with mindfulness. Bear them in mind, let them just suffuse your way of attending to your body, your mind, other people, situations, the entire environment. Let these four insights (if they are true, and that you check out for yourself), if you suffuse your way of viewing reality by bearing in mind these truths, it will change everything. It really will be a revolution in the way you engage with reality.

The four types of impermanence:

1) Whatever is born, perishes

(35:16) [These insights are] so simple, almost transparently obvious, but we forget about them, we cover them over. Like Gyatrul Rinpoche loved to say, like a kitty covers over its poop in the cat box, and then says, "who, me?" That's how it works! The first of these is whatever is born, perishes. So simple. Whatever is created, whatever is born, whatever emerges, it will perish. It will be destroyed.

Philosophically, when one looks into this, it turns out to be the case (again, test it for yourself), as soon something is born, whether it's a galaxy, a human being, a human embryo or a termite, or anything else. Anything that's created, born, arises. The seeds of its destruction are built right in. That is, it's not waiting for something to come along and clobber it. Something may clobber it, for example, I've been born. Now maybe something outside, a rock, a weapon or something outside, a car, maybe something outside will kill me. That can happen. But even if I just sat in a room by myself and was just given food regularly, saying "at least here I'm safe, I've got six foot lead walls protecting me in all directions. This is a bomb shelter. The rest of the world can go to hell, but at least I'll be safe in my room. Nothing can get to me here. Just give me that antiseptic food. I'll die from internal causes. It doesn't take anything to kill me, I'll kill myself. The body is going to die no matter what. It may get a little help from its friends or adversaries, but even with no help from outside whatsoever, freeze me, put me in a space capsule, send me into deep space, I'm still going to die. So that's an interesting thing about destruction. The seeds of destruction are right there in a very nature of birthing itself. Outside catalysts, causes and conditions, they may hasten it, catalyze it, sure. But even without anything outside, it's entropy from the inside out. It will perish. So if one bears that in mind, gosh! Take the subject, as we'd say in debating, take the subject, "me". I was born. Oh, therefore I'm going to die. It doesn't

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matter how much I protect myself from the environment, I'm born with the seeds of my own destruction. This person will no longer be. It's called coarse impermanence. To live that way, for the existentialist philosophers, they said that's the only way to live authentically. By bearing in mind, not just like a telephone number but something that is right there in the way you're viewing yourself and then in the way your viewing every other person and every relationship. It changes everything, in a really good way. Or at least potentially a really good way. It may just make you as morbid as hell. Just incredibly depressed. So thereon hangs the tail. So there's the first one, whatever is born, perishes. Here's the second one.

2) Wherever there is meeting, separation

(38:54) Wherever there's meeting, meeting of anything - galaxies, elementary particles, people, your pet. Wherever there's meeting, there will be separation. It's built in. It doesn't need something from outside to pull it apart, as soon there is meeting, it's already a given. You can be a prophet here. It will happen. When? Oh, that's to be seen. But will it happen, that wherever there is a meeting there will be parting? It's a done deal. It's already writ. It's there. All of our human relationship with our children, spouses, our parents, lovers, friends, bosses, employees. Wherever there is meeting, there will be parting. So get used to it. Don't be surprised, because it was inevitable. It was there from the moment you met the person, there will be separation. Doesn't matter who it is. That'll change everything.

Just a little footnote - Atisha's marital advice. From a person who'd never been married, he gave some of the best marital advice I've ever heard. Do you remember it? "Be nice to each other, you're going to be dead soon." He was talking some couple who were squabbling a lot. That really works for me! However your spouse is bugging you, or I cannot stand this, or ahhh... don't worry, she's going to be dead soon. Or you're going to be dead soon. But one way or another, this is a really transient problem. This is one of those problems that's going to solve itself. You're going to be dead, she's going to be dead, but one way or another, this problem's going to be gone. Just be patient. Wherever there is meeting, there is parting. That's just the way it is.

3) Whatever is acquired, lost

Whatever is acquired will be lost. Practical stuff like cell phones, houses, your body, any acquisition, of any kind, of something material, tangible. But also fame, renown, the respect from other people, the affection of other people. Something you get. Now this person loves me, respects me, admires me, whatever. You've got some respect, you've got some praise. Whatever you've got, whatever you've acquired, it will be lost. It is already built in. You don't have to wonder, "Gee! Will it happen?" No, it will happen. It's just a matter of time, and nothing else has to happen from outside. It will happen because it's built in. Whatever you've got, you will lose it.

4) Whatever goes up, comes down

Then, whatever arises, whatever goes up, goes down. Wherever there is an ascent, wherever you go to high status, of power, fame, wealth, prestige, caste, whatever it maybe. Whatever goes up, goes down. It's only a matter of time. Count on it. Be absolutely certain. Wherever there is some elevation, like a hot air balloon, they will definitely go down. It's built into the system.

Given that, if these are true, if this is not just some kind of a morbid pessimistic way of viewing reality, you know, Buddha is so pessimistic because India is such a grungy place. That's the first I heard about Buddhism. Buddhism is really pessimistic, because India is a pretty tough place to live. If it's not just that, if this is something more core, if this is about existence in the universe, **then here's a really juicy question that will keep you occupied at least for eight weeks:**

In the midst of that, those four themes of coarse impermanence, and underlying that is subtle impermanence, everything is fizzing, everything arising momentarily anyway. In the midst of that, if that's the situation we really find ourselves in, in the midst of all of that, is it possible, working within this world of ongoing change, is it possible to evolve? To have your life transformed? To grow, to evolve in a meaningful way that does not just fall back, or which is not just disintegrated and leaving you back at square one?

In the midst of all that, can you actually evolve? Can there be something that is irreversible? In other words, marga, path? Or is it just, "Oh! I achieved shamatha and lost shamatha, practiced vipashyana and lost vipashyana, I was really compassionate but now I'm a real dirtbag." Is it just all up and down, up and down? Is that the way for dharma too? Two steps forward, two steps back. What can you say, everything is

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impermanent. Or is there a possibility of something irreversible? An actual path in a world saturated by change? There is a really good question.

Then on a very practical level: can you imagine how you might truly flourish? How you could truly be happy, with your eyes wide open, clearly discerning in the way you're viewing reality every time you wake up in the morning and throughout the course of the day. That you're bearing in mind that you're always in touch with reality. Whatever born dies, etc, etc. for each of the four. So that this is suffusing your way of viewing reality, because they are pretty core truths and while maintaining that awareness of impermanence, you're light, you're joyful, you're truly flourishing. Is that conceivable? Pretty good question.

That's what dharma is all about, right there. Dharma is the answer to that question. And frankly, I'm going to be really flamboyantly dogmatic, I really enjoy that sometimes. Dharma is the only answer. I didn't say Buddha Dharma! Basically, this is a trick. That is, anything that is the answer to that question is Dharma. We're just going to call that Dharma, because that's what Dharma is

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti, Revised by Jim Parsley, Final edition by Alma Ayon

05 Mindfulness of breathing (3)

This morning we'll return to refining the attention, balancing the attention with the emphasis on stability without losing relaxation. We'll focus again on the rise and fall of the abdomen, and this time I will introduce a little bit more: the counting of breaths. I'm quoting Asanga here, he says, "if you find the counting helpful, go for it, and if you find it unhelpful, forget it, no problem. People with sharp faculties don't need it".

I immediately think, oh, then I must need it, I must need it, because I always fall under the dull faculty.

Wherever it is, oh, there I am. I'm always at the bottom. It's true, it's not humility, it's actually the way the things are. So I'm used to that, but the real point here is completely pragmatic and that is, if you do count the breaths, it of course interrupts the flow of mindfulness a little bit. I think the closest analogy I can think of is the speed bumps, like we have out on this road here. It's there just in case you start getting carried away in rumination, it's just there to go "ping... ping..." just to break it up and bring you back to the present moment, to mindfulness of breathing.

In economics I think it's called the cost-benefit analysis. It's going to cost you something to break the flow of your mindfulness to do the counting and having to remember what count, seven, eight, I mean it's so boring! It's unbelievably boring. Seven comes after six, and gosh, after seven... what was it? Oh yeah, eight. It's kind of drudgery, it's tedious, but if that helps to break up this ongoing flow of rumination, then that's where the benefits lies. On the other hand if you can maintain that flow [of mindfulness] without the counting, all the better.

So then I'll introduce this and it's really crucial that it's a staccato count. What happens very easily when people count breaths is they go, "oneeee, twoooooo, threeee", you know, mentally. So they're no longer practicing mindfulness of breathing, they're practicing moronic counting! Which is really much cruder. It's supposed to be just, "One. Two. Three." Just staccato, like a little fairy dancing on a tip of a needle. Just [tap] like that. Just a little tiny speed bump. Not one of those tank blockades. Tank barriers. So there's one point, staccato, a very brief count at the end of each inhalation. Second point: introspection [to detect any laxity or excitation], relax, release, return [to counteract excitation] and refresh, refocus, retain [to counteract laxity]. Let's jump in. Find a nice posture.

Meditation:

Settle your body in its natural state and the respiration in its natural rhythm.

Allow yourself the freedom for this short session to release all concerns, all cogitations, all ruminations about the future and the past, and in silence let your awareness come to rest in stillness in the present moment.

And for just a little while, be aware of your whole body breathing, the sensations throughout the entire field associated with the in- and out-breath, quietly, non-discursively. Immerse your awareness in this non-conceptual, non-verbal domain of experience in which there's nothing to think about, just be present, knowingly, recognizing [when] the breath is short or the breath is long.

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Now focus more narrowly, directing your attention downwards which helps to stabilize the attention. Focus on the bare tactile sensations of the rise and fall of the abdomen and again, ever so simply, non-discursively recognizing the long in-breath as being long, the long out-breath is long. As your system calms down, the volume of air you need decreases. Note as you breathe in short that it is short and when you breathe out short that it is short.

Then experiment with counting. One brief staccato count at the very end of each inhalation. Relax deeply as you breathe out, releasing any thoughts that come up; arouse your attention as you breathe in, again a staccato count. You may count one through ten, one through ten, or simply continue counting - but experiment. You can only know through your own experience whether this turns out to be beneficial or simply clutters the flow of mindfulness. You must see for yourself.

The primary engine that drives the practice of shamatha is mindfulness: the non-forgetting, the non-distracted mind that continually engages with this meditative object. But in order to refine the mindfulness, to avoid pitfalls of excitation and laxity, it's imperative to utilize and refine your faculty of introspection, monitoring the flow of attention, recognizing as quickly as possible the occurrence of excitation, in response to which relax, release and return. Then [when] falling into laxity, dullness, becoming spaced out, as soon as you see it, refresh your interest, refocus your attention and then retain the flow of mindfulness. In this way, prepare your mind to be a serviceable vessel for the practice of vipashyana and all other types of meditative practices. Let's continue practicing now in silence.

Transcribed by *Rafael Carlos Giusti*

Revised by *Jim Parsley*

Final edition by *Alma Ayon*

06 Mindfulness of the body (2)

This afternoon we begin some actual investigation. In the context of classic Buddhist education within India in the Nalanda Tradition, what we're focusing on here falls very clearly in the category of Advaita Vidya, or inner knowledge; knowledge from the inside out. It's really one of the great traditions, and as you probably know His Holiness Dalai Lama is very strongly promoting, trying to promulgate this whole orientation towards education and specifically to an understanding of Buddhadharmā.

This Advaita Vidya, this inner knowledge, what it's seeking to do is definitely in the pursuit of knowledge; not just faith or belief or something else, but really knowing reality as it is, from the inside out.

The perspective of science, outside in:

There is a quite an extraordinary complementarity here. It's almost like there's some grand design in terms of the whole current of western civilization, from the time of Aristotle right up through the "crescendo" beginning with Galileo four hundred years ago and right up to the present day, of really seeking to understand the nature of reality from the outside in, from God's perspective. From God's perspective - that was exactly what Galileo was after. What's the universe look like from God's perspective? From an outside perspective? What's out there when we're not looking? In other words, what's really, absolutely, inherently and truly existent? How is the world really, as God himself sees it? So trying to approximate that. It's called apotheosis and that is where the mind of man seeks to ascend to the perspective of God himself, to see what it looks like from God's perspective.

Scientists don't use that terminology anymore, they simply call it pure objectivity, which means that all subjective influences from the human side are banished through taboo. I have a whole book on that, "The Taboo of Subjectivity". So, you're getting reality as it is, as if we're not involved, from the outside in. The culmination of this – and this traces right back to Aristotle, right back to science today – the culmination of this approach to understanding reality, the natural universe, the natural world, the universe itself and our role in it; the culmination of this, when you come to the kind of cherry, the icing on the cake, the grand finale: It is a conceptual understanding. We are following Aristotle here: man's highest faculty (and it's very gender specific), man's highest faculty is reason.

(3:40) That's the grand finale. You say something, you think something or nowadays you publish a paper in a peer reviewed journal, and that's when you get your Nobel Prize. In fact it will be said, the discovery isn't made until it's published or at least accepted in a peer reviewed journal – that's when the discovery is made. You might have made a discovery years before, but that doesn't count. It doesn't count until it is conceptualized and it's made public, published in a peer reviewed journal. Ok then, now it's real, now here is your reward and that's it. It culminates in conceptualization. That's exactly what Galileo was after; he was a frustrated contemplative, as you might recall if you know his life story, he was trained as a contemplative as a youth. He wanted to stay in the monastery and his dad wouldn't pay for it, so he had to go off to university. He tried medicine, he hated it, but found he was good at mathematics and the rest is history.

(4:19) So the culmination is conceptualization, but starting from the outside in. Of course, where this is leading to, when you finally get around to it, is the human mind. Frankly we don't know what to do with it, because it's not objective, it's not physical, it's not quantitative, it's totally invisible to all methods of scientific inquiry. So what do you do?

Oh, you say, "ai caramba!" * Just say that the mind is the same as the brain. Now it's mission accomplished, you can carry right on. Just say it, you know? Say it loud, have a whole bunch of people say it in unison: the mind is the brain; the mind is what the brain does. Let's just say it altogether, we'll all agree and after all reality is by vote, isn't it? So we simply vote what's true. That's exactly what the scientific community has done. They've simply voted it in, with no evidence; all the evidence is to the contrary, there's no evidence to support it, but..., never mind, let's just just say that. That the mind is really just the brain.

*["ai caramba": it is a Brazilian expression used to express surprise.]

So we wind up [with] mind having no role in nature at all. The mind is simply a little excretion, like brain poop. John Searle says, "The brain excretes thoughts like the gall bladder excretes bile." So why don't we just call it brain poop? That's the role of consciousness; it's brain poop, with no significance in the natural world at all. It's just a sheer accident.

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So that's what you get when you come from the outside in: fantastic technology, a lot of knowledge, marvelous laws of nature, the mathematics is sublime. The only thing you left out is "You", and you just wind up being equated to a brain with brain poop.

So that's one approach. It is magnificent, and yet profoundly limited where it matters most.

(6:00) The Buddhist approach, inside out:

Then we have the Buddhist approach which is profoundly limited: no mathematics, no physics, no quantitative [measurements], no science of the brain, no cosmology, no telescopes, no technology. Let's call it limited. But we have liberation! That counts.

This is from the inside out; where, from the very beginning, you're assuming [that] of course mind has a role, because the only type of reality we're interested in is that which is experiential. The culmination of the path, when you [become] an Arhat, a Pratyekabuddha, a Buddha, you realize Dzogchen, you achieve rainbow body. Is it conceptual or non-conceptual? Non-conceptual!

(7:03) In other words, no Nobel Prize but rather a Noble Prize. It's called the Third Noble Truth. That's your prize; the arya [arya-bodhisattva] prize. There's no Nobel Prize because - where's your paper?

In this marvelous film, called "The Yogis of Tibet", there's this incredibly accomplished yogi, Drupon Rinpoche. Formidable. He just looks right into the camera and says: "I can remember all my past lives. And although I appear human from the outside, inside it's very different." No Nobel Prize for him. He made some of the most important discoveries from his own experience about the nature of consciousness and... ah, whatever. Old man, funky looking old man.

(7:40) So [the inside out approach] culminates in the non-conceptual, and it's the non-conceptual that radically transforms and liberates. The other one [the science approach, outside in] just gives you a Nobel Prize. It doesn't liberate anything. It doesn't even touch one single mental affliction. Doesn't even touch it. So, complementarity. I love the fact that I could fly here, I didn't have to swim. Buddhism would have had me swim, and I wouldn't have done it! So, it's not one side is good and one is bad, but boy are they different! We are profoundly, drastically missing in the modern world the necessary complement to this massive emphasis on the objective, the quantifiable and the totally reductionistic materialistic view of all of reality, where the absolute insistence is that we must understand the mind in biological terms. I was just reading a paper yesterday; the biologists say that we can't understand biology in terms of pure physics and chemistry. No, you can't do that. But can you understand the mind in terms of biology? Oh, yeah, that we can, no problem! So it is really hysterical. So this is complementary, this is from the inside out.

(8:45) Where are we going in this meditation that is coming right up?

When you come from the outside in and you're really trying to understand – and this is what scientists [have been doing] from at least the time of Galileo, and you can go back to Aristotle – what they've been trying to understand is: what's out there when we're not looking? When you close your eyes? When you close your eyes, you don't get these images. The images arise in dependence upon your visual cortex, right? Blue, red, all that kind of stuff; close your eyes, they're not there. They're not waiting for you when you open your eyes, as if images are traveling through space; they're not. Physicists don't believe that, neuroscientists don't believe that, it's not true.

When you close your eyes, when you close your ears, what's still out there? What the scientists have come up with – and it's brilliant, it's ingenious, it's very practical and very useful – is a whole periodic table of the elements that constitute the physical world. From the gases, all the way to the heavy metals, you know, radium, and particles that hardly last any time at all because they're almost virtual. So, very very useful. Very useful for technology, very useful for developing a conceptual understanding of chemistry, of physics, right down to quantum mechanics, right down to particle physics. Very good. It's brilliant science. I say that with only respect. Because those particles out there, those electrons, those protons and everything else all the way up; that's what we assume to be there when we're not looking. They don't arise just by looking, they're already there. This is not just make-believe, this is not something you conjure up with machines. This is really talking about what's there when we're not looking.

That is when you're trying to look from the outside in. When we're not here, when we're closing our eyes, what's still out there? Conceptually, cobalt, aluminum, copper, helium, hydrogen, oxygen, shall we go on? I don't know how many, over a hundred elements I think. But that's not the question from the Buddhist side.

[Let's see below what Alan says about the Buddhist question:]

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When you're starting with the fundamental question: what's the reality of suffering? You don't ask: what's the reality of suffering when nobody's experiencing it? What's the sound of one hand clapping? That's a stupid question. What's the nature of suffering when nobody's experiencing it? Why are you asking such a dumb question? What is the origin of suffering when nobody's experiencing it? Dumb question.

These questions are about our lives, about reality that we experience and not reality as it exists independently of our experience. That's the framework for all the Buddhadharma; Zen, Chan, Theravada, Mahayana, Vajrayana, Dzogchen and everything. Four noble truths. It starts with experience, it moves through experience, it culminates in experience; it's all about experience. It's from the inside out, mind being central. The mind precedes all phenomena, all phenomena issue forth from the mind, all phenomena consist of the mind, Chapter 1, Verse 1, Dhammapada. It couldn't get more central than that.

So Buddhism does not have a periodic table. This brilliant, and I mean it's really just a masterpiece that all fits together so elegantly, this periodic table known to all the chemists, physicists and so forth. It's brilliant, and there's no such thing in Buddhism, because that's not what you get when you look from the inside out.

What do you get when you look from the inside out? When you look [out from] that body of matter; the only body of matter in the universe that you can actually view from the inside out?

I can look at a cell phone and all I get is the surfaces. It's smooth, it's a bit heavy, it could be cool and so forth, and I can take it off. I'm getting surfaces all the way down, all the way through; it's all surfaces. I don't know what is like to be a cell phone. Is it like anything? It is boring? Or, in the words of one western Philosopher, "What's it like to be a bat?" Well, only the bat knows. All we can do is stroke the little furry critters; little rats with wings. We only know it from the outside. There's only one body of matter in the universe that we know what it's like from the inside out. Only one – your body!

(13:12) You get to view it from the inside out. What's it like to be embodied? What's it like to have your own awareness permeate your body? What's it like from the inside? You can ask that only of your body until you're clairvoyant. This is the only one you have to look at.

When you go right into the body and you observe it, [you should do so] optimally with shamatha, or your best approximation of shamatha. Stable and clear, really looking without throwing a bunch of junk on it; all your conceptualizations, images, associations. OK, clean out the junk, and try to get a nice clear take [on] what's arising in the space of the body. You find, lo and behold, only four elements. Not more than a hundred, because they don't show up first person perspective, but four elements do, and these actually are enormously useful: [earth, water, fire and air.]

First the earth element. When you go into your body, can you feel that you have an immediate experience of firmness, of solidity. Like where your body is in contact with the cushion or your hands meet. You knock on your arm, knock on your head, yeah feels solid. That's earth. I've got a lot of earth element there. It's not dirt, just solid and firm. Earth element. We feel it.

Second, water element: moist and fluid. You feel it in your mouth. You don't really feel the blood but you can experience fluidity, moisture in the body when you're sweating and so forth.

Third, fire element. That's a whole gradient from cold to hot. So if there's very little fire element it feels cool; if it feels really hot, fire element is prominent.

Fourth, air element; the sensations of lightness, motility, motion of all kinds, buzzing, tingling, vibration, pulsing, movements of limbs and so forth. All of that is the air element.

Earth, water, fire and air. Where are these all emerging from? Space. The space of your body. They emerge from it and they dissolve back into it; emerging, merging. The very translation "element", which I use because it's pretty standard by now, it's the translation from the Tibetan "jungwa". In Sanskrit it's "buta" I think, but in any case jungwa I know. Jungwa doesn't literally mean "element" like the periodic table. Those are elements right? That's not the connotation at all of the Sanskrit or the Tibetan. The jungwa, which is a very close translation from the Sanskrit, just means to emerge. Something is emerging, coming up, manifesting.

So within the space of the body there's an emergence of solidity/firmness; we're going to call that earth. An emergence of, experience of moisture, fluidity; we're going to call that water. An emergence of warmth, heat; fire. An emergence of sensations of motions, tingling, vibration, movement of all kinds; we'll call that air.

Where are they emerging from? Space. What do they all dissolve into? Space. Where they are present? Space. [These four elements emerge from the space of your body. They emerge from the space of your body and dissolve back into the space of your body.]

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Then there are derivative or emergent properties out of the elements such as smoothness, roughness and so forth. These are emerging out of the same elements, but all of this within the context of the lived world, the experienced world; not the world that exists independently of our experience, but the world that we are experiencing.

So where we're going, and we've just about finished here, is to take this very seriously, because what happens ever so often, I see it, oh, agonizingly too common, is psychologists especially, but neuroscientists really love to say this too: all of your first experience, oh, that's illusory. Your first person experience is illusory. Your experience of your own mind, oh, that's illusory, don't take it seriously, we'll take over from here thanks very much. We'll study your brain, so just shut up, we'll do a brain scan and we'll tell you what is going on. (16:35) One of the most hilarious instances of this I saw just a couple of days ago. It actually got published in major press. Some scientists took some guinea pigs, exposed them to dim light, then studied their brain activities, and they found brain activities that were comparable to the brain activities of humans when they are depressed. They just found some parallels. Guinea pigs exposed to dim light. What shall we conclude from this? Are you ready? Watching late night television leads to depression! This is not in a comic book; serious scientists spent money to come up with that conclusion. Then the press picked it up and said, "Oh, this is catchy! Late night television causes depression!" Imagine you're a guinea pig, in your cage, with wood chips, surrounded by your own shit. You'll never in your life ever escape, and you're exposed to dim light. Might you be a bit depressed? Anyway? And they conclude from this that late night television makes you depressed. I saw a really good spoof on this, it wasn't a science writer, because they seem to be like puppies lapping up milk. Whatever the scientists say they just say it, they just do not seem to have any critical attitude at all. Whatever the scientists say, they just pass it on, like a choir. It actually took a comedian to say, "This is how you figure out that watching late night television makes you depressed? Why not actually ask someone who watches late night television, are you depressed?" But we wouldn't want to go there, because that's not scientific, right? I mean, what would you know whether you're depressed or not? That's your subjective experience, that's illusory. Let's get back to the hamster's brains where we really know what is going on. So there's a lot of real absurdity here. I mean it's taking absurdity to the infinite levels; trying to figure out the nature of the human mind by way of hamster brains. It's really quite something.

(19:11) What we are doing here is, we're taking first person experience seriously and trying to refine it.

Because, of course, we can be mistaken, we can misinterpret, we can project all kind of stuff, there's no question about it. That's what shamatha is for; to refine, to close down and shut down the noise, the junk, the rumination, the projections; [to] see clearly with stability, with vividness, with high resolution; [to] take first person [experience] seriously and make it into a rigorous approach to investigating the nature of the mind. It becomes flamboyant obvious that it's not the brain, never was and never will be. It's complete superstition and you can see that. That's why I just speak like, "Oh, please stop saying this rubbish!" Especially in the name of science, which I so love and respect.

We're coming right back to four elements: earth, water, fire and air. We're going to look at them closely, as they emerge in the space of the body, see them for what they are. Follow the Buddha's teachings: in the felt, let there be just the felt. Just take them nakedly; that is, we're using concepts to identify – the phrase used a lot in Buddhism is: the finger pointed to the moon. So I say, "Look, Martin, look over there. Can you see the moon? It's just rising over the horizon. Can you see it over there?" When I'm saying that, that's all conceptual. But then he says, "Where, where?" And I say, "Right over there!" Then with the concept, and with my finger, what does he do? Think about the moon? No, he uses the words, "Can you see the moon rising over there?" and then he goes non-conceptual... Boom! Got it... Boom! Don't got it. I see it, I don't see it, but the concepts are just to direct you. It's like pointing a gun or pointing a laser beam, pointing a telescope. So, earth, water, fire and air; we identify them by way of concepts, but once you've got on target, then just look at them closely.

That's what Galileo did. He had a brilliant conceptual mind, but when he was looking through his telescope he was not just thinking about planets and stars. He was actually observing very, very carefully. With continuity, with stability, with vividness; revolutionizing modern science. He really started modern science. So it starts with concepts but then it goes beyond concepts; it goes right to direct, precise, sophisticated and replicable observation. That's where we're starting; conceptual categories of earth, water, fire, air and space. There's the target, there's the finger pointing to the moon, now just go in and look closely. Look closely, then start

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posing questions, as Galileo did when he saw these little dots right next to the larger dot that we call Jupiter. They could be background stars. They look just like stars; they're little dots, stars are little dots. But he wasn't satisfied with that. He saw those little dots clustered around Jupiter through his telescope. Then the question arose, are they background stars? In which case Jupiter will move across them. You'd just see Jupiter moving across and they would be stationary, right? Or what? And lo and behold, he found the little dots moved around Jupiter rather than Jupiter moving across the sky. So, big discovery: Jupiter has moons. Likewise, phases of Venus; likewise, craters of the moon; likewise, sunspots and so forth. (22:40) He observed carefully, but with a question; then he observed more carefully, and then he wrote one of the most epic texts in the whole history of modern science, *Starry Messenger*, 1609. The publication of what he saw. It's brilliant! It's really core science.

But that's exactly what the mind scientists aren't doing. They are professionally trained not to look at the mind. That's what Buddhist contemplatives, Hindus and so forth are professionally trained to do. Don't just think about the mind, don't just dogmatically equate with something that it's not because you find it easier to study – which is the easy way out that all of modern science has taken – but actually observe it very closely, with rigor, sophistication, precision and see what you discover there.

So, we're starting with the body and then we'll move from there to the mind. We'll go from coarse to subtle; starting with the body, then attending to feelings, and then we get to the mind, to consciousness itself.

[Finally] we go supernova, [as we] try to look at the interrelationship among all these phenomena, physical, mental and so forth.

So this is a big deal. It's really a big deal. This is the complement to the awe inspiring, the majestic, the wondrous discoveries made by science looking from outside in, but just falling flat on their face when it comes to the nature of consciousness. [They] really don't have a clue what the nature of mind is, or the role of mind in nature because they've already decided it's only the brain. Well, if you've already decided then you're not going to discover anything. It's called an illusion of knowledge blocking actual discovery, and that just saturates the mind sciences. Illusions of knowledge just like smoke filling a room. Henry David Thoreau called it "the smoke of opinion". That's just clouding everything. In the scientific study of the mind they just cannot get away from their materialistic assumptions. They will one day, but – man! They're taking a long time. So we don't have to wait for them, just go right in with clear awareness. You do not need to bring any metaphysical assumptions with you. Just look closely, attend closely; first to the body and next week we'll go onto feelings, we'll go onto mind, we'll go onto consciousness itself. See what you see. This is not brain washing, this is not dogma; it's just radical empiricism. [We'll look] at the body from the inside out and then we will start posing questions.

Are you ready? Ok! Get into a comfortable position.

Meditation:

(25:45) The first step, as always, is just to relax. To literally settle down, letting your awareness descend right down to the ground, non-conceptually, going right into this mode of immediate awareness, simply attending to the emergence of the earth element as your body is in contact with the ground. If you are in a supine position you have a lot to work with, all the sensations from the back of the head down to the heels, lots of earth element, very good for grounding the awareness.

Let your awareness rise up and fill the space of the body, settling it in its natural state, relaxed, still and vigilant. Settle your respiration in its natural rhythm.

For this short time set aside all your cares, all mundane concerns, give yourself a break, freedom, just to rest silently, non-conceptually, in the present moment. See what it's like just to be present.

For just a short time, simply allow your awareness to rest without focusing it upon anything, external or internal, sensory or mental; just be present, rebooting, with no object, without meditating on anything; just be present in the present moment, without distraction, without grasping.

Now direct the light of your awareness, focus your mindfulness on the space of the body, viewing this physical phenomenon from the inside out, let your awareness flood the space of the body.

Like a finger pointing to the moon, take the concept, "earth element", emerging as sensations of firmness and solidity and attend to them nakedly. In the felt let there be just the felt. Identify them conceptually but then drop the concept, drop the label. Observe what you observe. What is the earth element that you observe nakedly, perceptually?

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Within the space of the body, do you detect any sensations associated with the water element, moisture, fluidity? If you can identify then focus clearly, non-conceptually; drink it in with your mind.

The fire element, that whole gradient from cold to hot: observe it directly. Areas of the body that feel cool, that feel warm, that feel hot; observe closely, closely apply mindfulness to the gradient of the fire element.

The air element, indicated by all sensations of motion; use the concepts to identify them and then observe them closely, non-conceptually.

Now, within the space of the body, can you directly perceive anything else other than earth, water, fire and air? Observe very closely.

Among these four elements, these sensations arising from moment to moment, do you see anything stable, static, unchanging? Does anything endure through time, statically?

Can you directly perceive the space of the body itself, the space from which the elements of earth, water, fire and air, emerge; in which they are present and into which they dissolve? Can you directly observe that space itself or can you only project it, imagine it, visualize it? Does that space have any qualities or is merely nothing, a mere vacuity, nothing at all?

If you sense that you can directly observe or perceive tactile space, then finesse the question. Are you observing it with your tactile awareness [in the same way] as you directly perceive tactilely the sensations of solidity, moisture, warmth and so forth? Or is the space of the body something you mentally perceive, not with tactile perception but with mental perception? See if you can discern the difference.

Transcribed by *Rafael Carlos Giusti*, **Revised** by Jim Parsley, **Final edition** by Rafael Carlos Giusti

07 Mindfulness of breathing (4)

This morning we move on to the third phase, really the classic phase, the marathon phase, of mindfulness of breathing. This is the one that will take you very, very far. This is focusing on the apertures of the nostrils; that is, the breath sensations there. Most important, as we go through these different phases, is to remember the balancing act in each one.

In the first one, full-body awareness, you are cultivating a deeper sense of relaxation without sacrificing the clarity you already have. [In] the second one, you are cultivating stability without sacrificing relaxation. In this third phase, we're going to be explicitly cultivating vividness without sacrificing stability. So, there it is, those are the three balancing acts.

So, jump right in, find a comfortable position and we shall proceed.

Meditation:

(2:20) Beginnings are important, so to the best of your ability let each session begin in a welcoming fashion; an expression of loving kindness for yourself. As you allow your awareness to slip into this quiet, non-conceptual, serene space of the body; as you settle your body in relaxation, stillness and vigilance and settle your respiration in its natural rhythm; breathing so effortlessly, it's as if you were deep, deep asleep, yet mindfully aware of the sensations of the breath.

With the spirit of renunciation, or more literally a spirit of emergence, the aspiration to emerge from sources of suffering and its result, set your mind at ease, releasing all mundane concerns. Settling your awareness in stillness in the present moment and for a little while clearly illuminating the sensations associated with the breath throughout the entire body.

Now make a strong point, an emphatic point, by keeping all the muscles of your face soft and relaxed.

Spaciousness in the forehead, open, relaxed, loose; spaciousness between the eyebrows, a softness of the eyes. Keep it all loose and relaxed. Keep your eyes unfocused. Now, focus just your mental awareness, not your eyes or visual attention, on the tactile sensations of the passage of the breath; the actual air as it passes over the region above your upper lip, or the aperture of the nostrils, wherever you most distinctly experience the passage of the breath. Single pointedly focus your attention, just your mental awareness, right there.

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Get into the rhythm of arousing your attention with each in-breath, relaxing deeply with each out-breath, but now make a very deliberate point of attending to the whole body of the breath. That is, remaining continually engaged throughout the entire course of the in-breath, and even as you deeply relax, remaining continually engaged with the sensations of the [out-] breath, throughout the entire course of the exhalation. Let this be a full time job.

Again, as soon as you've detected or identified, targeted-in on the tactile sensations of the breath – and there's no need to visualize, no mental imagery, no cogitation, no labels – just focus on the bare tactile sensations of the in- and out-breath.

Let the flow of your mindfulness be so continuous, so tightly woven, so continually engaged that there's just no occasion for rumination. As you sharply, intently focus your attention on each in-breath and as you breathe out releasing, releasing, releasing any thoughts that might try to creep in, release them instantly and gently. As you relax deeply, sustain that flow of mindfulness of the breath throughout the entire body of the breath.

Experiment with counting; one brief staccato count at the end of each inhalation. See for yourself the extent to which this is helpful in breaking up the flow of rumination.

Implement the all-important factor of applying introspection to monitor the flow of attention, recognizing as quickly as possible the occurrence of excitation and laxity, and then remember the antidotes: relax, release whatever captivated your attention and then return – in response to excitation. Refresh your interest, refocus your attention and then retain your mindfulness – in response to laxity.

Let's continue practicing now in silence.

Instructions after meditation:

26:15) To maintain continuity of practice when you're not on the cushion or in supine practicing mindfulness of breathing, what I really encourage is: just make ongoing, very gentle but persistent effort to keep coming to your senses, coming back to the senses. Just break, just be relentless, be almost ferocious in breaking that old habit of just falling into rumination, which is just going in the opposite direction from enlightenment. So just always try to be present, always engaged with something that's real and that can include thoughts, be attentive to them. So it's not saying don't think, simply avoid the rumination.

Transcribed by *Rafael Carlos Giusti*

Revised by Jim Parsley

Final edition by Alma Ayon

08 Mindfulness of the body (3)

29 Aug 2012

This afternoon we'll return to the close application of mindfulness to the body. We'll engage in a practice a number of you I'm sure are familiar with, called "body scanning". I first learned this from the very renowned teacher who disseminated it, directly or indirectly, all over of the world, and that is Goenka, S.N. I attended his course back in 1974. I've not found any evidence that the Buddha taught this method, there's no evidence at all from any source that I can see. [However], it's clearly very helpful and it clearly is a close application of mindfulness to the body, so I would say that there's absolutely nothing incompatible between this practice and the Buddha's teachings. So, perfectly compatible. Goenka's teacher, U Ba Khin, taught it, and he taught it to a quite number people, including a number of westerners who he authorized to teach. [U Ba Khin] learned it from his own teacher who was a Burmese monk, forest monk; that's about as far as I can trace the method back, but most importantly, pragmatically speaking it's very helpful.

(2:00) I'll talk very, very briefly about what it entails and then we'll just do it. It entails mentally scanning through your body, on the surface but very much in the interior as well. It is a close application of mindfulness, especially if you enrich the practice with a question. There are multiple questions you can ask, but a really a good one, which then clearly shifts this over from simply a mindfulness practice or a shamatha practice and into the realm of vipashyana, is: as you're scanning through – and we'll generally go top to bottom, not bottom to top, top to bottom – as you are scanning through, there's just an implicit question there, you don't need to talk about it, it's just there, quietly, and that is:

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Can you detect anything here as you're scanning through the body that is stable, unchanging, durable? It's called "anitya", permanent. That's the question, OK? A simple question. Obviously you don't need to think about it, you just observe very carefully, but that's there in the back of the mind. As long as it's there, you can definitely call this vipashyana, because vipashyana, classic vipashyana always entails some degree of inquiry. It maybe a very simple question; it maybe the elaborated syllogisms of Nagarjuna, that also can be vipashyana.

(3:35) But if there is no inquiry whatsoever then there's just really no reason to call it vipashyana. That is, bare attention by itself isn't vipashyana. That should be obvious; when you're practicing mindfulness of breathing, what quality of awareness are you bringing to the sensations of the breath at your nostrils? Bare attention. That's not vipashyana, it's shamatha, right?

But now, why would one do this? I'll talk about it a little bit more. As you're scanning through, there's a principle that I'm utterly persuaded is true, it comes from Mahayana and especially from Vajrayana Buddhism, and that is – and we find this for sure, even though I'm not a scholar of Hinduism, I think it must be there in Hindu tantra and the whole understanding of the Chakras, the Nadis and so forth – and that is: wherever you direct your awareness within in the body, there you are directing prana.

(4:35) Prana is physical [but not material]. I think there's at least one professional physicist here, I think you'll bear witness with me that there's a difference between something that's physical and something that's material. If we define material as something that's created with matter; that is, particles of matter, such as electrons, protons, neutrons and so forth; let's just call that material. It's kind of a straightforward definition. But then there are things that are physical but are simply not composed of particles of matter; a really good example of that would be an electromagnetic field. Electromagnetic field – is it physical or not physical? Well, that almost doesn't need to be asked. They're physical. They're measured physically, they display physical properties, electromagnetic fields colliding with each other display interference patterns and so forth. They are waves; electromagnetic fields travelling through space bearing wave properties. So, physical but not material.

Well, we would say now, using that [model], [that] physical means: located in physical space, having physical properties, interacting with other physical phenomena directly. Boom boom! Like that, ok? [For example,] an electromagnetic field will interact with a light detector, a photo-electric cell. Directly interacting, nothing spooky about it, nothing mystical, but it's not made of matter.

(5:55) There's similar distinction in Buddhism. We can say "zugchen"; "zugchen" means physical and "bembo" means material. The definition of "bembo", of material, is something that's composed of elementary particles or particles of matter. So - quite clear.

(6:11) So prana is physical, it directly interacts with, causally interacts with the physical constituents of your body. It's physical and not composed of particles of matter. Clearly not. But it is located in physical space, has physical properties, causally interacts with other physical phenomena including material phenomena like your brain, neurons and so forth and so on.

(6:35) Here is the premise, and you can test for yourself: When you're directing your awareness through the body, those particular types of prana or energy, vital energy, prana whatever you want to call it, there are different types and I won't go into elaborate discussion now, but just those types of prana that are specifically related to, or most closely conjoined with, consciousness. Wherever you're directing your consciousness, those pranas are going along for the ride, they're there.

(7:05) So as you're scanning through your body, it's a little bit like taking a comb through a woman's hair, man or woman it doesn't make any difference, but a big full head of long hair. Taking that comb and just stroking it through it, through it, through it. You're going to comb out the knots, because there's going to be areas that it's all knotted up and so forth. And after a while, it's silky, silky, no snags. Nice and free flow all the way up and down, no more to be done. Your hair is fully combed, right? All the snags are gone.

[Likewise,] you're "combing" your body. You're "combing" your nervous system, and you may find also that, as you're scanning through the body, bear in mind it's a three dimensional scan, as you do so, you may find areas (and this is where you want to closely apply mindfulness), you may find areas within the space of your body where, as you scan through, and you're seeking to detect whatever tactile sensations are there, earth, water, fire and air, you may detect some areas where, as you're scanning through, you're not getting anything. I mean it's like, "ok, I'm getting space, that's all I'm getting here, but there's no content". Rather like

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some of you when you're practicing settling the mind in its natural state and you say, "ok, I'm ready to focus on, there is the space of the mind, what's happening in it? Oh, nothing!" All the cockroaches of the thoughts disappeared. They're waiting until you want to practice mindfulness of breathing and then they [appear], right?! So as you may find as you attend to the space of the mind, sometimes it's just empty space. Like, was it something I said? Everybody vanished! As you may find just emptiness in the space of your mind on occasion, you can also find just emptiness in the space of the body. Then, you might be interested!

(9:10) Now we'll just do a brief introduction, it's going to be a twenty four minute session as usual. If you want to do this again, then you might, as you're scanning through, as you're combing through, if you find areas that you just don't pick up anything, then you might return to those areas. It's especially interesting for yoga teachers, people doing a lot of yoga, really developing a lot of sensitivity to the body. As you're doing that, then come to those dark areas where you're just not picking up any content. No elements – earth, water, fire and air; just nothing. Then, just kind of start mentally massaging it, going in and encroaching into it. Ok, where do you pick up some sensations, get some content? Then, start encroaching into those dark areas and maybe starting spiraling in on it, spiraling in. You'll be looking to see, maybe there were some sensations there, but they were subtler than my awareness. Now, I'm going to attend more closely and maybe they'll start to manifest, or maybe as I'm drawing my awareness in and I'm also drawing prana in, maybe these will actually activate, illuminate, arouse, make manifest, areas which are kind dead; make them alive.

(10:22) So, this is actually significant for shamatha. If we think far ahead to coming to the end of the trajectory, the nine stages of shamatha, the nine attentional stages and then finally achieving shamatha – what's that like? Well I won't give an elaborate description, I'll just say one aspect of it, and that is, when you fully achieve shamatha, you have this total free flow – they're called "lelung" or karmic energies, dynamic energies – but the energies, these robust dynamic energies within the body, they just go into total free flow. It's like you just put your finger into an electronic circuit and you just feel like the whole body is charged. I mean there's just no part that's untouched. Total free flow, total body of energy, like just somebody turned on the light and it's just – woah! Man is my body charged, and it's just total free flow. This is a nice preparation for that. To kind of be scanning through, illuminating dark areas and so eventually you're just getting more and more [sensations of] energy throughout the whole field. So, something like that. You can be in the supine or the sitting position, whatever feels good. Find your posture and we'll jump right in.

Meditation:

Now, with few words, settle your body in its natural state, your respiration in its natural rhythm, and for a short time, calm and balance your mind; calm the discursive mind by way of mindfulness of breathing.

Now, single-pointedly direct your attention to the sensations of the breath right at the apertures of the nostrils, again making a point of focusing just your mental awareness, not your visual awareness. Keep your eyes totally disengaged from the focus of your attention.

Now, as if you were focusing a laser pointer or a spotlight, single-pointedly focus the light of your attention on the very crown of your head, the very top of your head, to a little disk maybe two centimeters across, size of a small coin, and focus on the tactile sensations arising in that target area. First you visualize, and then you just focus on the tactile sensations themselves, with no mental imagery, no labeling or concepts.

Now, expand this disk of attention to about fifteen centimeters or about the size of a beany, or a little cap on top of your head. Observe the sensations right there on the surface of the scalp, whatever they are.

And now we will gradually move this more or less two-dimensional field of mindfulness, expanding it a little bit and moving it down the right side of the head, down to the ear, focusing just on the surface of the head and attend to whatever sensations arise within this relatively two-dimensional field.

(20:05) Move this field back to the back of the head.

Over to the left side of the head.

Up to the forehead.

[Then] gradually move this plane of mindfulness from the top of the face down to the chin. Like a topographical map, note the sensations along the contours of your face.

Now, expand the field to cover the entire front side of your head or your whole face.

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Now, scan; take this vertical field of mindfulness, scan from the front of your face, from the front of your head to the back, scanning right through the interior to the back side of the head.

And then from the back to the front, noting the sensations both on the surface as well as the interior.

Expand this vertical field of mindfulness to a three-dimensional field. Simultaneously, let your awareness, your mindfulness, permeate the whole head; a three-dimensional field of mindfulness, illuminating the sensations on the interior and exterior.

Now, move this three-dimensional field of mindfulness down the neck, down to your shoulders, to the base of the neck. Keep this three-dimensional field of mindfulness slowly in motion, moving it across now to the right shoulder.

From the right shoulder down the upper arm to the right elbow.

From the right elbow down to the right wrist, along the forearm.

From the wrist through your hand to the tips to the fingers.

(26:32) Now, move this three-dimensional field of mindfulness back up to the base of the neck and move gradually over to the left shoulder.

Down to the left elbow, to the left wrist and through the hand to the tips of the fingers.

(28:09) And now, refocus this three-dimensional field of mindfulness to the upper left region of your torso; that is the upper left chest through to the upper left part of the back, three-dimensionally upper left.

Over to the upper center.

Over to the upper right.

Down to the middle right, centered more or less at the diaphragm.

Over to the middle center.

The middle left.

The lower left down to the pelvis.

The lower center.

The lower right.

Down to the right buttock, noting the sensations of contact and also the sensations on the interior.

(31:38) Move the field down the right side to the knee.

Down to the right ankle.

Down the right foot to the tips of the toes.

Shift over to the left buttock.

Move down to the left knee.

Down to the ankle.

And through the foot to the tips of the toes.

Once again, single-pointedly focus your attention to the sensations at the top of the head. Take about thirty seconds to scan from top to bottom; a quick scan top to bottom.

Back to the top; quick scan top to bottom.

Final very quick scan top to bottom.

Now expand the field to suffuse the entire space of your body.

Teachings after meditation:

Summary:

Alan introduces some Sautrāntika philosophy—view of reality—to help us observe closely. There are 1) things that exist and 2) things that don't exist.

- Among things that exist, there are 1a) real and 1b) unreal.

1a) According with the summary: Real phenomena constitute anything that can be perceived directly or with the help of instruments.

Alan's teachings:

(37:25) I'd like to introduce just a very little bit of philosophy, but it's utterly practical, or empirical, experiential philosophy. It will give us some hypotheses to put to the test of experience; not just to think about a lot, that won't take you very far, but to observe very carefully. This is from, the term is Sautrāntika.

Sautrāntika is the name of one of the four philosophical schools of classical India, part of the Nalanda Tradition. It means The Followers of the Sutras. So there is a lot to be said about it, but I'm going to focus just

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on one theme. It's a very interesting one. I'm not even saying it's true; I am saying it may be very useful. Then, you can see for yourself: true or false, a little bit true, wholly true, totally untrue – you can check.

(38:04) **Here's the assertion:**

[Consider] the domain of things that exist, as opposed to things that don't exist at all like the raccoon seating on top of my head. It's not there. It's something that doesn't exist at all. Raccoons yes, but the one on top of my head? Non-existent. So there are things that do not exist at all and then, within the domain of things that do exist, they are said to be real and unreal; so something could be existent but not real.

Once again, a lot can be said. I'm going to just try to go right to the point here. At least make one point right now. And that is, what's real? What's real is anything that can be directly observed by way of any of these modes of perception. This is not materialism, it's not materialist reductionism, because we have not five modes of perception; [instead] we have six modes of perceptions.

So your emotions, are they real? Can you directly experience them? Of course you can. So it's real.

Your thoughts, can you directly observe your thoughts? Of course you can. You don't just imagine them, you can observe them.

Dreams. Dream situations, dream events, dream people: real or unreal? Real. They are real! There's as real as... they're real! There's no more or less real; it's either real or unreal. And dreams are real. They're directly perceived.

We directly perceive things with mind, we see things directly, we hear things directly, directly we perceive by way of six modes of perception.

(40:14) I will introduce something very silly, I mean... simple to the point of silliness.

A long time ago we used a pencil, but it doesn't matter what you use; this pair of glasses would be quite sufficient. I'm going to close my eyes and you just imagine what I'm doing. Imagine you're doing the same thing, or if you have a pen just do it yourself. You don't need to close your eyes. The point here is I'm holding this [pair of glasses], I know the density and so forth of the glasses; I'm going to close my eyes now and I'm going to run the glasses around the surface of the paper. I can feel the texture of the paper. I can feel its bumps, I feel it's smooth but not perfectly smooth. [Moves the glasses to a different surface] Oh, that's a lot rougher. [Moves the glasses again] That's quite smooth, it's actually a bit oily. It's slick. It's not like the paper. There's no nerve endings, obviously, in these eyeglasses. But nevertheless, through them we are perceiving. We're not inferring. I mean you pick it up, you try with a pencil, a stick, anything you like and you actually do perceive it. So this is called an instrument. It's called a measuring system and so there's an interesting parallel in science, it's just classic philosophy of science. Very, very mainstream and that is that there are two types of phenomena:

- Observational entities. These you can directly observe with some system of measurement, [such as a] telescope, electrical microscope, stethoscope, an x-ray machine, whatever; but you can directly observe it.
- Theoretical entities, like gravity. It's not something you directly measure. Gravity does exist. [Another example is] charge. So there's a number of things, they do exist, but you can't really say you directly measure them. Philosophers of science do make this distinction: theoretical entities do exist but you can't directly measure them. Nevertheless, they do exist.

Summary:

1b) According with the summary: Unreal phenomena exist only because we say so—i.e., conceptual designations.

(42:35) Likewise in the Sautrāntika, there are things that do exist but you cannot directly perceive them. For example, the ownership of this pair of glasses. This pair of glasses, does it have an owner? Is there any ownership related to this pair of glasses? The answer is yes! If you disagree, you're wrong. Now is there any way that you can do a measurement on those pair of glasses and determine its owner? Not the finger prints on it, not the DNA on it, but actually – who does it belong to? Because these could have been borrowed, you don't know, right? These could be somebody else's. They just lent them to me. So is there any measurement you can do that will actually say, "Ah, I just measured it and the owner of this is..." and fill in the space. The Sautrāntika's answer is no, because the ownership is not Real.

It does exist, and I'll tell you now, yes these glasses, of course, they do belong to me; but even without looking, I could say "Miles, do you like my pair of glasses?" And he says, "Yep." "OK, Miles – they're yours".

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And then they are! That's it, all it takes is: "Ok, Miles, you can have them" and then he's understood, I've understood – they belong to him. So in other words these are Unreal entities. They do exist, like the ownership of the glasses, they do exist but they exist only because we say so. Only because we have agreed, "ok, now they are yours". But if we don't say so, it's not true. If I don't think and nobody else thinks that these glasses belong to me, they don't. The ownership changes as easily as "ok they're yours" and somebody hearing me say that.

Who can say that ownership doesn't exist? Of course it does, but only because we say so. In other words, it's purely conventional. It shifts just with a shift of convention.

Now, the eyeglasses themselves, we can call this a paperweight, we can call it a tiara, we can call it a strange mustache, we can call it food; we can call it all kinds of things, but it really doesn't matter what you call it – there's something there. It doesn't matter whether you think so or not, it doesn't matter what you call it, it doesn't matter whether you're looking, it doesn't matter whether you're touching it, it doesn't matter whether you're measuring it! It's already there!

That's why you can be in the dark and somebody throws a pair of glasses at your head and it bounces off, you'd say "Oh, I didn't see that coming!" Well, that's because it didn't matter whether you saw it coming, whether you thought it was coming, or not, or what you called it. It was just "Oh, what was that? Eyeglasses in the head! What a strange thing."

Interesting point here: what is real is what you can directly perceive. And that which you cannot directly perceive may exist or may not exist at all. You can't directly perceive the raccoon on top of my head. That's because it doesn't exist at all. But, there are things you can't directly perceive, but you can know; by way of language, by way of thought – you can know it conceptually. Those things do exist, they're not real though.

Summary: The central theme about this discussion of things being Real or Unreal: only real things have causal effect, only real things do things. Only real things exist arising from the network of causality, cause and effect, cause and effect.

(45:50) Interesting point here. It says that only real things have causal efficacy. That is, only real things do things or arise within the network of causality, cause and effect, cause and effect. Only real things.

So the ownership of this [pair of glasses] has no causal efficacy. My belief that this is mine – oh, that is real. So if Miles stole my glasses I could be quite upset. That could set up a causal sequence, like I seek him down, grab the glasses out of his hand, and say "how dare you, how dare you!" So it can give rise to a whole sequence of causal results. But it's my *belief* that triggers that and not just the ownership itself. The ownership is just a convention, but I grasp onto it conceptually and a mental process, a *real* mental process takes place: "Oh, my glasses, I found my glasses", you know. That's real.

You might just at your leisure, if you're feeling in a little bit of a philosophical mood sometime, think if you can identify anything else that does exist but which is not real.

Now why bring up this? Is it just philosophy for philosophy sake? Not in Buddhism. That is, are there Buddhist philosophers who just philosophize for the sake of philosophizing? Yes there are, but they've kind of lost the mark. They're like a hound dog that's lost the scent. They're just wondering around in the forest howling. But authentic Buddhist philosophy is always connected to practice. It never strays to far from the four noble truths. Fundamentally, philosophy is therapeutic, it's pragmatic, it's designed to liberate. So, it really deserves the name philosophy – *philosophia*, love of wisdom. It's wisdom that is pragmatic wisdom that really does something useful. In other words, wisdom is real. Philosophy is real, it has causal efficacy.

So what would be the value of adopting this set of categories, real and unreal, within the domain of the existent?

Summary: this framework helps us in the practice of the four applications of mindfulness to distinguish through careful observation between 1) what's being presented and 2) what's being superimposed.

Alan's teachings:

(48:10) To distinguish experientially, I'm going to take that philosophy and I'm going to give some it some wheels! That is, give it an empirical carrier: the four applications of mindfulness, or vipashyana generally, but especially this foundational four applications of mindfulness.

And that is the central theme here. To distinguish experientially; in other words, the four applications of mindfulness is not a head trip. It's not a "conceptual meat-grinder", trying to crunch ideas, complex thoughts, rationalizations, syllogisms and so forth. No, it's pretty much, here's a concept and then – launch! It's much

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more like Galileo. It's Galileo having some ideas and then looking carefully, in contrast with string theory, for which there's no empirical basis at all! String theory is one hundred percent conceptual, because it never touches down on empirical corroborating evidence. So it's very cool, it's incredible elegant and it's entirely theoretical; whereas Galileo with his telescope, Galileo dropping masses off the tower of Pisa, rolling balls down a ramp – now that's observational! He had ideas and he was testing, when a ball rolls down a ramp does it go at constant velocity or does it accelerate? That's a question, and then you answer it by looking very carefully. Not by thinking about it a lot.

(49:35) So here is an empirical issue: as we are engaging with the world around us, as we engage with our own mind, mental perception, observing thoughts, images and so forth; tactile perception, observing your own body; sensory modes, observing the environment around you. A crucial, absolutely central theme of these four applications of mindfulness is to distinguish experientially, to draw the distinction between: a) what's being perceptually presented to you, rising up to meet you? And b) what's being conceptually projected on?

(50:07) To conceptually project is not an evil, it's not a bad thing, it's not delusional. For me to look these glasses and say, let's just double-check here... yep! Those are my glasses. "Those are my glasses" – is that a delusional statement? No, nothing wrong with that. To think that there's something in the nature of the glasses, that actually this is really mine, it's really mine – now that's delusional. All you have to say is, it's just glasses! There's nothing there that's Alan's. It's just glasses. Now, yes, I purchased it, they have my prescription, and so forth; but to not conflate the conceptual designation, the projection, the superimposition, which maybe is something true. Are the glasses mine? Yes, they are. That's true, but it's purely conceptually designated. There's nothing there from the side of the glasses that suggests ownership.

(51:00) Is there anything from the side of the glasses (speaking in terms of Sautrāntika) regardless of what I think, whatever I say, that is earth element? [Alan taps the glasses] I can think "water, you're water, you're air." And it disagrees! It says, "I'm sorry, you call me earth element. Call me whatever you like; there's something there whatever you think." It's real.

So to distinguish, to draw a clear distinction between what's being presented, what's real, arising directly to any of your six modes of perception, [and what's superimposed]. That's why this is not materialism. One of the dumbest ideas ever conceived by man: only material things are real. Man, what a dumb idea! Who ever thought of that? What passed through their mind when they thought only material things are real?

Something material? It's really crazy. When you just step out of the mass hypnosis of materialism, and think, "man is that stupid!" But it's groupthink, it happens; racism, religious dogmatism and so forth. Just get a large enough [group of] people all to bleat in the same voice and people believe the craziest things. So there it is. But now we're trying to cut through that and this close applications of mindfulness is a really good way to cut through dogma, to cut through baloney, to cut through conceptual junk that we superimpose upon reality. Just to observe very carefully: What's presented? What's superimposed? What's real? What's merely conventional? Really useful.

(52:57) Final point on that theme, something also really very interesting... I love Sautrāntika! I love it also because it's flawed. That it challenges me to find out – where is it flawed? The flaws are embedded in it; you have to ferret them out with intelligence and very close observation.

So what was that final point...? Oh yeah. That which we superimpose, that which we do not *perceive* but we only *conceive*: I think, this is mine; that these glasses belong to me. I think that; I don't see that but I do *think* that. And it's true! That which is not real but does exist is static. That is, the ownership of this pair of glasses *now*, and then the ownership of this pair of glasses *now* – is the same ownership. It wasn't pulsing "Mine mine mine mine mine..." It's just a static construct superimposed upon reality but it didn't become more mine, sweet mine, bitter mine. It didn't change, it was just mine or not mine.

So that which we conceptually superimpose has a relatively static quality. I'm not saying immutable, I'm not saying forever, I'm certainly not saying permanent because again, the ownership of this can change as quickly as, "OK, Miles you can have it." Boom! It's gone. Now it's no longer mine, so it's certainly not permanent. But as long as I have the notion, "this is mine". That notion is quite static. That is, the "mine" is; the ownership of it. That's true for all of the other conventionally existent but unreal phenomena.

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Whereas the theme here, [in the] Sautāntika, is that everything that we directly know –this is an hypothesis, you don't have to believe it, it would be much better to realize it for yourself – but the hypothesis here, is that everything that is real can be directly measured.

[This could be] with an instrument; [so] we're opening up the whole field of technology here. That is, direct measurement doesn't mean just with your five or six senses. It also includes eyeglasses, detecting smoothness, x-ray machines, electron microscopes, hadron supercollider and so forth. Are they measuring things? Yes! They're not just conjuring up concepts. They are measuring particles. Right? Likewise telescopes, and so many, many marvelous instruments of technology. Are they measuring things? The answer is yes. Are they measuring things that are real? That have causal efficacy, that you may not be able to detect with your five physical senses but you can measure with the augmentation or the extension of our senses by way of sonar, x-rays and so forth and so on. So yes, these are observable entities.

[For] all of these observable entities, I would say there is a strong correlation between "observable entities" as philosophers of science use the term and what the Sautrāntika says is "Real"; something that is perceivable. That doesn't mean you've perceived it yet, but it's perceivable, right?

[In other words,] all perceivable things are causally efficacious. They're real. They matter. They matter in the sense that they do things, they have influence. The relatively static ones, these existent-but-unreals, they have no causal efficacy of their own; it's only the way we latch onto them with grasping, hope, fear and so forth. It's the mental activities that have causal efficacy; but that which exists merely by conventional designation, by agreement, by simple verbal language norms, has no causal efficacy of its own. It's static, whereas everything that's directly perceived has a momentary quality. It's arising and passing, arising and passing, always in a state of flux.

[These are] big, big statements; universal statements; large statements. So there they are. But they're statements about our experience; in other words if we're going to test those hypotheses, test those statements, then you closely apply mindfulness to your own experience, and you find, is it true or false? So, it's an interesting set there:

- That which is real is that which can be measured, either directly with your six senses or with extension of technology and so forth. That which is real has causal efficacy; that which is real has a momentary, arising and passing, arising and passing nature.
- Whereas those things that are existent, but not real, cannot be perceived. They do not have causal efficacy and they do not have that momentary existence.

So, it's very pragmatic. It's all about our experience. These are some of the themes that really enrich; that bring a richness, a theoretical sophistication, a depth to the close application of mindfulness, to then clearly distinguish, clearly and sharply as we can, almost as if we were surgeons, to distinguish – ah, that was presented and that was superimposed; that was real, that was merely conventional. Quite interesting.

Because where we get caught up in delusion, and delusion then being the progenitor of all suffering, is where we're conflating that which is superimposed with that which is real. It's an act of misapprehension of reality.

Oh la so. That was a little Sautrāntika 101! We'll not be covering a lot of the detail of it, I'm just highlighting elements of that philosophy, or that way of viewing reality. That's the Tibetan word. We have "philosophy"

[from] *Philosophia* – the love of wisdom; a beautiful term. But the Greeks also had another term that's not the same, but it's a very useful term, and that's *Theoria*, from which we get "theory", and then you have all the permutations of that in the Indo-European languages, but *Theoria* actually means "to behold". Right?

Now Sanskrit term, *Darshana*, means "theory". But it comes from the Sanskrit verbal root, *Vrish*, which means "to see", "to look". So "theory" means a way of viewing. The Tibetan term *Tawa* is a direct translation of *Darshana*, it's "theory", or "view" but literally means "look". So this is very practical philosophy.

So often [philosophy], especially analytical philosophy, gets so caught up. It's like a fly caught in a spider web, and it just struggles and struggles and struggles until eventually the great big spider of death comes and just munches the philosopher, and that's the end of the philosophy. It's just entangled in a network of concepts and never extricates itself. Conceptualization giving rise to conceptualization giving rise to conceptualization.

I think the motto of modern analytical philosophy is "I disagree therefore I am". Because if you don't disagree, you're student of philosophy; but if you do disagree, then you can be a philosopher. That's why they don't agree on anything! They really don't they agree on anything at all! Because each one is saying, "well, here is

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where I stand; I disagree, therefore I am.” [I am] insignificant. Because I’ve not discovered anything that anyone else agrees with, or maybe a few compadres* that just happen to share opinions. Big deal.

[*compadres is a Brazilian word and the English translation in this context is: buddies, close friends.]

Alright, but when you go to the classics, the greats, like Socrates. He’s great. Plato’s great, Pythagoras is great, Aristotle’s great. They differ yeah, but – man! These were deeps ones. They really *viewed*. They lived their reality. It wasn’t just a profession in which they got a doctorate. They were *philosophers*. They transformed their whole lives into being philosophers. That commands my deep respect. They weren’t the only ones but, man, they set the standard. They set the bar very high. And so, philosophy is a way of viewing reality. That’s what the Sautrāntika’s for. Not just to give food for thought; cogitate, cogitate and then fall asleep. Cogitate to launch! Right back into experience, so that your concepts, your ideas, your working hypotheses; they illuminate, they test. You’re probing into the nature of reality, and philosophy is the handmaiden of direct observation. So, [that was] a little introduction to Sautrāntika.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

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Final edition by Rafael Carlos Giusti

09 Mindfulness of breathing (5)

30 Aug 2012

[Recording begins after Alan has begun speaking] ... passage of the breath most clearly; focus right there [at the sensations of the breath at the nostril]. In other words you’re kind of holding on to the desire realm, or the physical realm, just with the finger... I mean about the size of your baby fingertip, tiny, so you’re withdrawn from most of your body as well. And that further retreat so you are just holding on by fingertip, tiny, tiny little target area of tactile sensations, which then gets subtler, and subtler and subtler. That’s a big retreat.

So there we are. Now while we’re practicing mindfulness of breathing to these increasingly subtle sensations of the breath in this very tiny target area and retreating from all other physical phenomena, what else are we doing if you are practicing shamatha properly? What else are we doing besides, or in addition to, focusing mindfulness on the tactile sensations of the breath? What else? Introspection! Attending to what?

Introspection primarily. I could elaborate but I’m not going to right now.

I want to rephrase that. The words are important. If we get the words down correctly, that’s going to give precision and accuracy to the practice itself. So let’s try to use words as carefully as possible.

Introspection is not attending to laxity and excitement. Now I’m nit-picking. If we were when there is no laxity or excitement then you would have nothing to attend to. So that’s not quite right.

What are you attending to in introspection? The quality of mindfulness or one can simply say the flow of mindfulness, which means mindfulness being a mental factor then with your faculty of introspection you are attending the mind. That is, when thoughts come up, images come up, restlessness, agitation, dullness and so forth, you’re picking that up with introspection.

When you are now practicing mindfulness of the breath, introspecting, monitoring the flow of your awareness, your mindfulness, attention, are you or are you not aware of being aware? Yes, you are of course you are [aware of being aware].

(2:47) So think of *Russian dolls, the outer Russian doll, the biggest one, is attending to the sensations – now that’s a pretty small doll but here it is – attending to the body, a little tiny region in it but you are attending to the body, but now the Russian doll inside of that is introspection monitoring the mind, and the Russian doll inside of that is aware of being aware. So in other words all three of our practices are all included for the price of one.

*[A Russian doll is actually a set of dolls. Each doll is painted exactly the same way, with the same exact shape, except one is just a little smaller than the last. What makes them special is that every doll, except the smallest one, is hollow, and are cut in half horizontally so that they can be opened up, and each smaller doll fits perfectly inside the next larger one. When you open up a Russian doll, you find another whole doll waiting to

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be opened. It's very charming. More details about Russian dolls: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matryoshka_doll and google.]

(3:17) Mindfulness of breathing (first stage) is covering all three. And then over the coming weeks as we then move to settling the mind in its natural state, we throw off – almost like one of those rockets that goes into orbit and throws off its first stage, it just expends all of the fuel and drops the first stage and maybe even the second – well we are just kind of dropping the body when we go to settling the mind and then when we go to awareness of awareness we drop the second stage, we are no longer interested in anything that happening in the mind at all, mind as such, we're going to drop that stage as well. In other words going into deeper, deeper retreat. So it is mindfulness of breathing without breathing, and then it's mindfulness of mind without mind, and then it is just awareness of awareness.

(4:03) Now if you are practicing according to Padmasambhava, when you are doing this inversion and release, inversion and release, really kind of doing what I like to call a "cognoscopy", scoping, penetrating right into your immediate experience of being the observer, being the agent. And if you are very ripe, you are kind of Bahiya type, a Bahiya class meditator, if you are really, really ripe then Padmasambhava says that when you are doing that simple exercise of just probing right in – who is the observer? Who is the agent? – just by doing that practice you may go into the ultimate retreat and break through substrate consciousness into rigpa. It is possible! That one little, simple little shamatha practice may be enough to break right through not only your psyche to the substrate but the substrate consciousness to rigpa itself, pristine awareness. You have to be very ripe for that but that is a very deep retreat. That is going right down to the very ground, ultimate ground consciousness, ok?

(5:16) So meanwhile back at the mind center! Practicing mindfulness of breathing and why this among all the different shamatha methods that the Buddha taught and that have been developed later on from multiple Buddhist traditions? Because this is the one, the Buddha himself said this is the one most suitable for people who are heavily prone to rumination. Not everybody is equally prone to, but for those who are especially prone to, like Oh, gee everybody in the twenty-first century who has caught up in modernity. They weren't all like that 25 hundred years ago but now it's like a mental virus, that we're all catching. And according to one friend of mine who is a very interesting guy – clinical psychologist, trained in Tibetan medicine and we were monks together in a monastery almost forty years ago – addressing western people, he was in Washington D. C. at the time, he said: "you know, you people all have nervous system disorders, you all have nervous imbalances. But considering how ill you are, you are coping very well!" So he was talking about modernity.

(6:24) So here we are. And one central feature, almost like the rat that holds the virus of the bubonic plague of the mind, is rumination. It carries with it the seeds for delusion, craving, hostility and just a mass of suffering. So here we are, the prime directive of mindfulness of breathing is "get over it!" Get over it! If you know the term "cold turkey", if you're a heroin addict, you just stop taking heroin altogether, and the withdrawal symptoms are really painful, but you have to go through that and get out the other side and hope you survive. Go through the withdrawal symptoms of just going cold turkey on rumination. And that is with every out breath be relentless and just release it, and release it and release it. And then Tsongkhapa says, when he is talking about actually achieving shamatha, and what you need to do for that – and he's citing classic sources, he's always a classicist, he himself being a great authority, cites the great authorities from India especially – he says that if you are really intent on achieving shamatha, then between sessions, let alone during sessions [here Alan recites the original Tibetan phrase] completely eliminate all rumination involving desires and so forth. In other words just be relentless. Be like the person who's joined Alcoholics Anonymous and be a non-practicing ruminator. How long have you on the wagon? Ten seconds, oh, good!!! Twenty seconds, Oh!!! Ok, back to one second. Break the habit of rumination, be relentless. And having said that, there is no implication you just stop thinking (during mindfulness of breathing of course there is no need to think for that time except for a bit commentary to keep you on track) but in between sessions of course you if you want to think, think! We're not being tyrannical here, there's not an authoritarian regime, but think consciously, think lucidly and be aware that every time you fall into rumination, you've just fallen into a little mini, non-lucid dream, which means if enlightenment is this way, you are marching the other way, you are marching in the opposite direction from awakening because every time you fall into rumination you are falling into a little, mini non-lucid dream, which is the opposite direction, coming, from ignorance, saturated by delusion and a host for all the vermin of the mind.

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So think yeah, but think lucidly, think creatively, think analytically, think retrospectively, think about the future, think in any way you like! Just like there is nothing wrong with dreaming! But certainly it is better to dream lucidly than dreaming delusionally which is what every non-lucid dream is.

So you ready? Roll up your sleeves, let's go cold turkey!

Fewer words, same practice, mindfulness of breathing phase three.

Meditation:

Settle your body in its natural state and the respiration in its natural rhythm. And then with a brief reflection upon the disadvantages, the debilitating disadvantages of rumination, of the five obscurations that obscure the luminous and pure nature of your own awareness: sensual craving, ill will, laxity and dullness, excitement and anxiety, and afflictive uncertainty. Reflecting upon the disadvantages of these obscurations of your own awareness, arouse a powerful aspiration and a great interest and an enthusiasm to heal and balance and unveil your own awareness, and with that motivation give yourself the freedom, the leisure for this short session to release all rumination about the future and the past, all rumination about the present, let your awareness refreshingly come to rest in stillness in the present moment.

For just a short time let your awareness illuminate the sensations associated with the breath throughout the body, relaxing more and more deeply with every out-breath, releasing thoughts, rumination, releasing the breath itself with every exhalation.

(14:31) And elevate and narrowly focus your attention on the sensations of the breath at the apertures of the nostrils. Identify the target area conceptually and then release the concepts and focus on the bare attention, the bare tactile sensations of the breath. Be very clear that you are keeping the eyes soft, relaxed and unfocused, no tension around the eyes, forehead opened and spacious, just focusing mental awareness on the target area, arousing your attention with each inhalation, relaxing with each exhalation and maintaining as much continuity as you possibly can throughout the entire course of the cycle of the respiration.

Experiment with counting, see to the extent to which it is useful and practice accordingly. Monitor the flow of your awareness with introspection, taking special note of the occurrence of laxity or excitement, as soon as you note with zero tolerance the occurrence of excitement, having your attention being caught up by rumination or carried away to some other sensory field, relax, release and return.

It is absolutely imperative in the practice of both shamatha as well as vipashyana that you are maintaining ongoing flow of knowing, of ascertaining. As soon as you see that you have gotten soft, dull, spaced out, disengaged, this means laxity or dullness have settled in. So in response refresh, refocus and retain.

Let's continue the practice now in silence.

Instructions/teachings after meditation:

If you recall that little nugget of philosophy from yesterday, from the Sauntrāntica view, that only that which is directly perceivable is real, and that which is only conceivable but never perceivable may exist but is not real.

So in between sessions just let your default mode, the place of resting, your home be in an ongoing flow of perception. Perceiving whatever arises in the mind: that is real! Perceiving whatever comes by way of the 5 senses: that is real!

But as soon as you're caught up on rumination, you've just slipped out of that and you enter the realm of the unreal, into the realm of unreal. So get real and stay real, always releasing rumination. And yet think whenever wish to, just do so lucidly and in the meantime also especially when you are just walking or moving about and so forth make a real habit, an ongoing habit of seeing that your respiration is just in an ongoing way, flowing and resting and flowing in its natural rhythm, and that means just releasing with every out-breath, and letting that in-breath just flow in, shallow, deep, regular, irregular, just let it flow, flow without interrupting it, inhibiting it, straining it with emotions, thoughts and so forth and so on. So this both then rehabilitation of your nervous system as well as the detoxification program for the mind. So that's good! And it is possible in the midst of all of that to enjoy the day, so go for it! See you later!

Transcribed by *Rafael Carlos Giusti*

Revised by James French

Final edition by Rafael Carlos Giusti

10 Mindfulness of the body (4)

30 Aug 2012

This afternoon we return once again to the close application of mindfulness to the body, and I'd like to spend a short time providing a little bit more theory to inform, to enrich, to illuminate our actual empirical investigations.

To my mind one of the terrific success stories of modern science over the last four hundred years – going right back to the time of Galileo and even before then to Copernicus – is this ongoing dynamic between theoretical physics and experimental physics. During the time of Galileo, they were both ... although Kepler, for example, was only a theoretician, he wasn't an experimentalist. Copernicus was only a theoretician, not an experimentalist. But Galileo was the whole package. Newton was the whole package: great experimentalist and a great theoretician. But as we move on into the nineteenth century and twentieth century then you pretty much fall into one of the two camps, although people like Anton Zeilinger was experimentalist and also was very well versed in theory. But my point here is a simply one, and that is there are people like Einstein – I don't know if he had run any experiment in his life, I doubt it – his research laboratory was his blackboard or just pencil and paper.

(2:01) So coming up with these, and Max Planck's saying, coming up with these theoretical ideas, that wouldn't be then just simply debated, and debated, and debated among other theoretical physicist and just with more and more theory but actually the whole idea of the theory at its best, and it often was at its best, was "here is the theory, ok you experimentalist try this on for size, can you put that to the test of experiment?" And then they would come up with new empirical investigations or discoveries, and that would enrich the theory and then the theory would go back and enrich the experiment and so back and forth, back and forth. It was really just a fantastic combination, quite spectacular.

And that is exactly what we don't have for the scientific study of the mind. We have people studying behavior; we have people studying brain. Where are the great theoreticians? I don't think there are any! I think the neuroscientists, they're really only coming up with one experiment after another, but who is standing back? We have the philosophers of the mind, but they're not coming up with any experiments! So they're sitting on the lines debating among themselves while most people ignore them, and so it's kind of lost touch, they've drifted off by themselves and the experimentalists are sludging around in nineteenth century physics. There are really a dearth of really fresh ideas. I mean obviously that's my judgment, but it is my judgment, I stand by it.

(3:15) So in Buddhism that happens too, it happens frequently that people who are really brilliant in the debating, in the analysis and the writing, theory and so forth, hardly do any meditation and then there are people who really gung-ho in meditation – doing tummo and so forth – they hardly have a clue about the theory. So it easily gets separated there as well. But that's not Buddhism at its best and there is such a thing as Buddhism as its best and that is people like Shantideva, Tsongkhapa and so forth and so on. You find, like Galileo, they were great experimentalists and they were yogis and they were brilliant when it came to theory. And when they come up with theories, and of course the theories are for the sake of putting it to the test of experiment, or *experience*, back to your research, to meditation.

So in that spirit, really trying to revitalize – and that's exactly what His Holiness was talking to me about one week ago – revitalizing the whole spirit of shamatha/vipashyana, not only in Buddhism but across the boards among all the contemplative traditions that have something like shamatha and vipashyana, to revitalize, breathe fresh light into it. Because as he told me last Wednesday, he said "well there are Tibetan yogis here and there that are really practicing shamatha and vipashyana but they're rare, and most of them are doing chod, they're doing tummo, six yogas of Naropa, lamrim, vajrasattva, they are doing three years retreats and so forth and so on, Hello is anybody doing shamatha?" Almost nobody! Is there anybody doing vipashyana with the power, the muscle of shamatha behind it? Well almost nobody, but that doesn't mean nobody! So if anyone on the planet can find really accomplished Tibetan yogis who are deeply experienced in shamatha and vipashyana he is the man and he is going to be the recruiting force to cherry-pick some of these people and bring them down to Bangalore when ready. That would be very cool. And he is going into the "Kumbh Mela", the great Hindu gathering I think next January 2013 and keep his eyes open for those yogis from the Himalayas, the swamis, and see if he can persuade some of them. Want to come to Bangalore? As he was

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saying to me, in old times, your whole tradition was off in your caves and so they disappeared, they are low profile and nobody knows about them. He said now in the twenty-first century we need to have a bit more in an institution, so please, out of your compassion, come from your cave, come down to Bangalore and help these younger aspirants who would really like to learn from your experience.

(5:53) So bit of theory but now theory not in terms of just something to think about, but theory in the sense of *teoria*, the term I mentioned yesterday from Greek, which means to behold, to look, so theory, talking, concepts intended to enrich your way of viewing, investigating, probing into experience itself like the dynamic between theoretical physics and experimental physics.

The Buddha's theory of causality:

So I just draw on theme this afternoon and it's a really powerful one with just a tremendous application in daily life and it's a very simply point. Some of you who've studied Buddha's philosophy you already know it but I bet you've never had any chance to practice, because so often it's just taught by itself. The Buddhist theory of causality. We are right back to classical physics, I mean classical Buddhism, Sauntrāntika, just classical. You learn this when you are in kindergarten or in the first year as a Buddhist monk or nun, now we get some nuns, Tibetan and one westerner now Geshe. So they've been through all of this. Well you get this in first grade but saying it is the first grade does not mean it is silly or stupid or primitive it just means it's foundational. Buddhists notion of causality: here it is in a nutshell.

(7:06) And that is, so we are dealing with real phenomenon, real phenomena are those that you can perceive, that have causal efficacy, everything you perceive or that is perceivable has causal efficacy, which means it arises in dependence upon causes and conditions and everything that is a fruit, a result, is itself a cause.

So there's no unmoved mover, there's no cause that doesn't have a preceding cause, there's no cause that does not have its own effects; there is no effects that don't have their own effects and so it's all in a network, a web of causality. So that's just for starters.

Substantial Causes and Cooperative Conditions

But now within this network of causality there are two types of causes, we'll call them substantial causes and cooperative conditions. Don't get too heavy about the notion of "substantial."

- **Substantial causes:**

Substantial is just the stuff of which the phenomenon in question is made.

Let's take a nice easy example, the classic example and that is a little grain of wheat:

Now that arose in dependence upon causes and conditions. There's something that transformed into that grain. That's what you have in your hand right now. You put it in the soil and then you fertilize it, mulch it, add a little bit of water, let some sunlight come to it, and then what happens: the stuff inside the husk, the juice inside the grain of wheat, as it germinates then it sends a little tendril down, a little taproot, and it sends a little shoot up, the first shoot of the wheat stock, and the stuff inside the wheat kernel, ie the husk inside, actually gets transformed and used up, gets used and transforms into the taproot going down and the shoot going up, so by the time it's really growing then that husk is empty. There is no more seed inside, because the stuff of the seed has turned into the root and the sprout and there it goes.

And so we are going to say that the wheat seed, a little grain, is the substantial cause of the subsequent wheat stock and eventually the whole wheat sprout because it actually transformed into the stuff of the wheat stock and in so doing got used up. It lost its former identity as the seed. It is no longer a seed. The seed is gone, the stuff of which the seed was made has transformed into the stuff of which the sprout is made.

- **Cooperative Conditions:**

Now in the process of that there are many cooperative conditions and a general principle in Buddhism is that anything that arises always must arise from a substantial cause which is to say you never get something from nothing, you can never have a lot of cooperative conditions coming in and transform nothing into something. That would be magic and there is no magic in Buddhism. There is paranormal but there is no magic. And so something always transformed into something but you never have nothing transformed into something with a lot of help of his friends.

So let's take just an indisputable aspect of this. You have that little grain of wheat. It's within a sack full of wheat, and it's owned by a farmer, and the farmer is looking at the newspaper saying ok what's next year's cost of wheat likely to be? What are the futures? What are the prospects for the price of wheat? Compared to

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soy, and barley, and oats, looks like wheat's going to do very well. Over there, there was a drought, so this year I'm not going to go for barley, oats, or soy, it's going to be wheat next year. He makes a decision based upon what he read in the newspaper. He says Ok! Wheat it is! So his decision to plant that field with wheat is a cooperative condition. Had he not made that decision, that wheat could just sit in the bag and eventually rot, and never turn into a wheat sprout. But he made the decision, that's where the profit is, that's where it's going. So there's a cooperative condition. Now there are many others as well. He needs a tractor, he needs something to plough the soil.

There are many cooperative conditions that do not actually transform into the wheat but without, them that seed would not be transform into the wheat either. He didn't transform into the wheat, his tractor didn't transform into the wheat, his idea or decision did not transform into the wheat.

(11:50) And so basic principle: for whatever effect there is in the universe, it never comes about as a result of one cause. Never one. One is never enough, doesn't matter if it is God, Buddha or Buddha Nature or anything else, one is never enough. It always has to be that concatenation or that confluence, that gathering together of substantial cause and then any number of direct and indirect cooperative conditions. Like why is the cost of wheat next year going to be high? Because there's a drought here. That drought is a cooperative condition for this farmer planting his wheat here. And what caused the drought? Oh well, it was global warming. What caused the global warming? Oh, Detroit. It always boils down to Detroit. But you can see you can just take that chain back and back and back, and you wind up with Indra's net, this inconceivably vast array of direct and then indirect, going back in time, of all of the conditions that, in dependence upon which: Ah there's a wheat field! You need the substantial cause and cooperative conditions and a variety of cooperative conditions, not just one.

Now let's see how to apply this view of causality to the close application of mindfulness to the body.

(13:10) Now we come here to the body, the close application of mindfulness to the body and the Buddha in the Satipatthana Sutra, I am taking Sautrāntika view and applying this to the Satipatthana Sutra, Buddha's teachings on the close application of mindfulness. It's really a marriage made in Bodhgaya, haha! They just fit so beautifully together, you just savor it like fine wine. Because the Sautrāntika by itself does not naturally suggest this practice, but as soon as you see Satipatthana then you say, Oh man, those should go together, absolutely go together.

So what does the Buddha say about the close application of mindfulness to the body, referring to your own body, others' bodies, physical phenomenon at large? He says now – the term translated into English is “contemplate,” that is attend closely but intelligently and do not be afraid to think once in a while – contemplate the factors of origination, that is you're experiencing earth element arising in your body, you're experiencing water here, you're experiencing your body here, you're experiencing movement and so forth, your own body, others people's body and so forth. So what are the factors of origination? What are the substantial causes and cooperative conditions that gave rise to this effects that you are experiencing right now in the present moment? What are the factors of origination?

And then contemplate, – again: attend to closely, reflect upon, observe, investigate, analyze – the factors of dissolution.

So whatever it is, sensation of earth element in your knee or whatever it may be, they don't last. Number one they're not static, and number two they probably don't last forever. So when they vanish or when they're dissipating, when they're dissolving, what are the factors, what are the conditions giving rise to the dissolution, the vanishing of whatever you are attending to in the physical world? Because that's what the close application of mindfulness of the body is. I should quote it. I don't have it right here, but there's a very famous quote, where the Buddha says – and I paraphrase badly – within this fathom long- body you will find the nature of the origins, the nature of the universe. Here is the microcosm. Understand your body 100% and you get the whole picture. And really in a way that's not silly, because you consider from the cosmology perspective, where did the atoms in your body come from, where did the energy in your body come from? It traces back to the big bang.

(15:59) So there it is without pushing that too far. Nevertheless the Buddha was saying that there's a well of wisdom, insight, knowledge to be gained not only about what is enclosed within your skin but your body is embedded in the fabric of nature at large. There are no hard borders that separate the five elements of your

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body with the five elements of the rest of the universe. So understand this little microcosm and the implications may flow in all directions, big time, right?

So as we now attend to the body and we observe these emergences arising, the emergence of earth, water, fire, air and so forth, we observe colors arising and shapes as we bring in the whole show, all five sensory fields. We will get to the mind later right now it is just physical.

As we attend to the visual, attend to the auditory, you pick up anything, smells, taste and certainly the tactile, then we hold this thought in mind, these basic working hypotheses of causality and then we can not only observe it with bare attention but we can bring our intelligence – this is where he uses the word contemplate – and not just apply bare attention.

(17:23) [Alan snapping his fingers] The sounds you hear, the colors you see, what are the factors of origination? That's an effect (Alan snapping again his fingers), the colors and so forth, the taste, smell, the tactile sensations; these are effects. They are arising in dependence upon causes and conditions. Is it or is it not true?

Again, none of this is dogma and you do not get any prizes just by believing in everything I am saying. That doesn't liberate anything! That just gives you more heaviness in your head: I got a little bit more knowledge, I think it's on the right side of my head [laughter]. That's baggage! But a view is a way of actually transforming the way you engage with reality. That can actually have some practical benefit.

(17:56) So, Is it true? Is it true that these effects that we are directly perceiving which are real – colors, shapes, sounds, taste, tactile sensations, and so forth, earth, water, fire, air, and all of these as we immediately experience them – is it true that they are arising from a substantial cause and if so what is that? And what are the cooperative conditions if the substantial cause by itself is never enough, if it needs cooperative conditions to catalyze, to manifest, to make it come forth like the sprout from the seed? What are the cooperative conditions?

So bringing some real intelligence and bringing mindfulness now in the sense of bearing in mind, what are the factors of origination? In dependence upon what? And this is where the Buddhist analysis really goes and we see it is there when the Buddha discusses the 18 *dhatus*, the 18 elements or – hard to find a really good translation – 18 domains of experience, so we have:

- We have the 6 senses fields, the visual field, auditory and so forth but the mental field as well, which is called *dharmadhatu* on a relative level, the *dhatu*, the domain of *dharmas*, mental phenomena as well as the visual, auditory. We have six of those.
- And then of course we have 6 modes of consciousness, visual, auditory, right on through mental consciousness, now we have twelve.
- And then we have the faculties, the faculties in dependence upon which these various modes of consciousness arise. In other words we do not have an empty head here. We do not just have a lot of sound waves and photons and so forth coming in from the environment and an empty head and then just consciousness coming out. But there is something in here. Now clearly Buddhist physiology 25 hundred years ago – which is first person physiology after all – is going to be clearly different than the very sophisticated, marvelous knowledge we have thanks to neuroscience of the visual cortex, the auditory cortices, the olfactory lobes and so forth, different parts of the brain in dependence upon which visual perception, auditory, olfactory and so forth arise, right?

(19:45) One point before we jump in – and this is just kind of a sneak preview for later – and that is when it comes to the faculties, the *indriya*, the *faculties in dependence upon which consciousness itself arises*, the *indriya* or sense faculties in dependence upon which the five sensory modalities of consciousness arise are all physical. They're all physical. So there would be in principle very much in accordance with modern neuroscience. And therefore both would agree – and I do not mean to suggest they're simply the same, they're not – but in principle if we leave it on this level we are in agreement, so in principle here in the Buddhist tradition if you damage your visual faculty you're going to lose your sight. Damage your auditory faculty you will not hear any longer, right? That auditory faculty is physical; damage that, auditory consciousness will not arise any more or it would be altered, it would be damaged in one way. You'll start having hallucinations, what have you.

(20:43) So the Buddhist principle here is that the sense faculties of the five sense fields are all physical. Damage them, alter them and the consciousness that arises in dependence upon them will be modified or

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eliminated. What is the sense faculty, what is the faculty for the arising of mental consciousness? It is not physical! It is not the frontal cortex, it is not the hippocampus, it is not any part of the body. It is not your heart chakra. It's not physical at all. It is not material but it's not physical either. *It's just not physical at all! That faculty in dependence upon which mental consciousness arises.* So if that is true then the modern search lead by Christof Koch, who has a background in engineering and then in biology and then in cognitive neuroscience, he has spent now decades. I spent a whole day with him some years ago in dialogue with him and his colleagues and his students, fellow faculty and he has really devoted to his professional life now, with his own Koch laboratories at Caltech, to seeking out and identifying what are called the neural correlates of consciousness, the NCC. *And the NCC as defined are the minimal amount of neuronal activity required for the generation of consciousness.* So there are clearly many parts of the brain that are not necessary. You can damage your visual cortex, you can't see any more, but that doesn't mean you become unconscious. And you damage another part and another part you lose your memory, then you lose your intelligence, and then you do not have the same emotions, and you damage more and more and more, but you can still be somewhat conscious, right? Maybe not that interesting, right? (laughter) And so just by the process of elimination, you damage this, you damage that, how much do you need to damage to get to the point where you say: hey about now its consciousness is a cell phone? Zero. So what is the minimal amount? And they're assuming of course – because almost all of them without exception are materialists – *they are almost all assuming that consciousness emerges from the brain or is equivalent to some neuronal activity in the brain or is a function of some neural activity in the brain, one of those three options.* I mean those are really, within in the church of modern science, those are kind of the only the three hypotheses that you are allowed to even present. If you ask anything else they say: I am sorry that is heretical and you may not say that! Be quiet! We don't allow that kind of talk here. We will call you a Cartesian, which means go to hell! At least get the hell out of here. And this is the great limitation. This is where the blinders of the scientific imagination come down that either you are a materialist or you are a Cartesian Dualist,* which means either you are moderately smart or you're just flat-out stupid. And there is no third alternative.

*Cartesian Dualist:

First of all what is written below was not said by Alan Wallace during the lectures but may help shed light on the meaning of "Cartesian Dualist" and of course to understand the context. We are giving just some information and the source is: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renne_Descartes

"Cartesian" refers to the work of French philosopher and mathematician Rene Descartes. His views on what he called "mind" and "matter" are now referred to as Cartesian dualism. See more details below:

René Descartes (French: 31 March 1596 – 11 February 1650) was a French philosopher, mathematician and writer who spent most of his life in the Dutch Republic. He has been dubbed *The Father of Modern Philosophy*, and much subsequent Western philosophy is a response to his writings, which are studied closely to this day. In particular, his *Meditations on First Philosophy* continues to be a standard text at most university philosophy departments.

Descartes is often regarded as the first thinker to emphasize the use of reason to develop the natural sciences. For him the philosophy was a thinking system that embodied all knowledge.

In his theology, he insists on the absolute freedom of God's act of creation.

Dualism

Descartes in his *Passions of the Soul* and *The Description of the Human Body* suggested that the body works like a machine, that it has material properties. The mind (or soul), on the other hand, was described as a nonmaterial and does not follow the laws of nature. Descartes argued that the mind interacts with the body at the pineal gland. This form of dualism or duality proposes that the mind controls the body, but that the body can also influence the otherwise rational mind, such as when people act out of passion. Most of the previous accounts of the relationship between mind and body had been uni-directional.

(23:52) Well Buddhism says we have another idea. So the Buddhist answer is there are no NCC (neural correlates of consciousness) so that is a fool's errand, it is a smart fool's errand, it is not a silly idea, but it is an idea for which you'll never get satisfactory answer. *And they haven't yet! Because there is no minimal amount of neuronal activity that is necessary for generating consciousness because you can be brain-dead and still have consciousness.* You can be dead-dead and have consciousness! It is called the bardo. *So there is no minimal amount, which means that your psyche, your mental consciousness that you experience, is emerging*

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from something and of course it has cooperative conditions. The cooperative conditions are found inside the head. As your mental consciousness is arising from moment to moment is flavored in so many different ways: with emotions, desires, clarity, with dullness, with agitation, with sanity, with insanity and so forth. Your mental consciousness gets tremendously configured by brain chemistry, by genetics, the environment, food, drugs, alcohol and so forth and so on. *But they are all cooperative conditions. Where is your consciousness emerging from, what is the substantial cause that actually transforms into your consciousness?* Well, not your brain! Otherwise the older you got the lighter your brain would become, because your brain, which is made of matter, would be transforming into something that's immaterial and you'd become more and more light-headed as you got older! (laughter) which nobody believes.

(25:40) Is it true that consciousness actually emerges from nothing? You get a whole bunch of neuronal activities together as cooperative conditions and they actually transform nothing into something! That would be very magical. Buddhism says, yeah, it's magical it does not exist. Brain activity does act as cooperative conditions for the emergence of consciousness from moment to moment, conditions, configures, modifies, has tremendous impact on mental consciousness, *but mental consciousness does not and never has emerged from matter. Not the matter inside the head or anywhere else.*

(26:09) And if one studies physics and chemistry, if you just study physics and chemistry and say, Oh by the way those atoms you've been studying they actually give rise to emotions. Where the hell did you come up with that idea? That is so out... Why do you think that? I mean, that is just so bizarre. Because in the whole understanding of the natural world there are *emergent properties all over the place*. The notion of emergence just saturates the whole universe. *You have phenomena and then you have the compilation of a lot of aggregates coming together and then emergent properties coming out of large configurations of neurons, of stars. Galaxies do things that individual stars don't do, stars do things that individual hydrogen atoms don't do, and so forth and so on. Emergent properties are everywhere throughout nature. But here's also something that's true everywhere throughout the nature: the emergent properties of physical phenomena are physical.* That is true everywhere in the universe. The emergent properties of physical phenomena are themselves physical, which means they lend themselves to physical measurement. Mental phenomena do not lend themselves to physical measurement. They're all invisible! So that should really end the debate right there but it doesn't of course.

(27:10) So here we come back to our experience of being in the physical world and the close application of mindfulness to our immediate impressions, the appearances that arise that are the very constituents of this *lebenswelt*, of this lived world of being in the physical world and we can ask *Where do they come from, where are they emerging from, what are the factors of origination and factors of dissolution? Ok?*

So that was a mouthful! That was about 26 minutes!

So let's go back now. That is the theory but theory not in just something to think about, talk about and refute or agree with, because if you refute it, ok, that is fine but then you've just stopped the conversation and if you simply agree with it, that is fine and you've just stopped the conversation. In which case, what was the point? Just have more stuff to think about? You already had plenty to think about! You didn't need me! But if you take some of these ideas and say "this is interesting", let's take this into experience and probe closely and start examining closely our experience of the physical world and attending closely.

(28:19) And this is a very important point in Buddhism, the Buddhist notion of causality – and this is right in Sautrāntika, I'm still talking about classical Buddhist philosophy – it's simply:

*in dependence upon this, that arose,
in dependence upon that, this arose,
with this being absent, that no longer arose,
with that being absent, this no longer arose,*

It is purely phenomenological. Purely phenomenological. The notion of mechanism, that in order for causality to happen that two things have to bump into each other. Good old Newtonian mechanics, billiard balls going bing, bing, bing like that.

That's all very well for billiard balls! But it doesn't work well when you interface electromagnetism with classical mechanics. It doesn't work well at all. Electromagnetic fields are not billiard balls. So there is no mechanical explanation for the interface between electromagnetic fields and atoms. There is an explanation

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and it is intelligent but it is not mechanical. So this unfortunately seems to be lost on most people working in the mind sciences, because they keep on talking about the “underlying neural mechanisms” of subjective experience and then they insist that your subjective experience must itself be brain mechanisms, because otherwise how could the brain ever influence the mind if the mind is something other than the brain? And then they just stop thinking!

And if they'd look into the fact that in physics something interesting happened in the 20th century and maybe even in the 21st century, they would see that that notion of causality where the only way that events can take place in the brain is if something bumps into them, that notion went out with the horse and buggy in the late nineteenth century! No serious physicist believes that's the only type of causality any longer. It's quantum mechanics, relatively theory and so forth. It's totally passé. But we still encounter this! We encountered it in Hamburg, remember? That woman, that very sharp neuroscientist, and I asked her if they had some really clear empirical evidence to refute your materialistic assumptions, would you, like the Dalai Lama, throw out your beliefs in the face of compelling empirical evidence? And she was just very equivocal. But then she said I'm a neuroscientist, I believe the mind is the brain. That's pretty much a direct quote, remember? I'm a neuroscientist, I believe the mind is the brain! And I don't remember the exact dialogue but I said, “Why? Why do you believe that? I mean your mind and your brain are so different! It's like looking at Natsu, then looking at Danny, and saying You know, they're really the same person. I know they don't look alike, and they have really few qualities in common, but they really have to be the same person.” And she said, “Because I cannot imagine how there can be a mind-brain interaction if the mind were anything other than the brain.” And since she can't imagine it, case closed! It's just – and I don't mean to pick on one person who is representing a whole field, so I'd rather just pick on the whole field – severe imagination deficit disorder. Because it's so obviously, manifestly, flamboyantly false. And it's not even really debatable. It's really not even debatable.

Just this one thing, and then we'll go back to the meditation.

Have you ever heard the phrase, “We are living in the information era” Ever heard that one? Information age. We should start taking that seriously because information physicists know it, neuroscientists know it, psychologists know it, philosophers know it: information does exist. Information, what do you think? Does information have causal efficacy? Yeah. Do you know how I know? It's because I just asked you a question and you nodded your head. It wasn't the sound waves coming from my mouth that made your head go up and down. Because listen very carefully: (Alan makes gibberish sounds here). She didn't nod in agreement! She just started laughing at me! (More gibberish sounds). Does information have causal efficacy? The sound was pretty much the same. A little bit of hot air coming from my mouth, as usual. But in one case there was information, in the other case it was just some hot air with some noise coming together. What do you think? Does information have causal efficacy? She smiled and she nodded. And so, that was a moving of facial muscles, and moving of head in response to, catalyzed by what? Information! A question. Not the physical medium, the sound waves. The sound waves are physical, yeah, but that didn't cause her to nod her head. It was the information, and information is not physical.

Information has no physical attributes whatsoever, no mass, no location, no momentum, no weight, no charge, not a single physical attribute. It is not physical! It is not material or physical! It certainly has causal efficacy.

And my asking the question “do you think information has causal efficacy”, without a shadow of a doubt catalyzed – serving as a cooperative condition – certain brain events in her brain, which then they catalyzed more brain events, which then caused her head to go up and down. As well as, of course, thinking going on, and coming to a conclusion: Yes information does have causal efficacy. Information has no physical attributes whatsoever, and it clearly has causal efficacy. It influenced her brain, it influenced her behavior. Her behavior influenced my behavior, and so forth and so on. Information is there to stay. It's not physical and it has causal efficacy. It has impact on the brain, and the brain has impact on information as well. So information is part of the natural world.

So now finally we go to the practice, we're going to go right back to the close application of mindfulness but with discerning intelligence, being willing to reflect, to contemplate when it seems appropriate, through bare attention getting the raw data, getting good measurements and then reflecting on the substantial causes and the cooperative conditions giving rise to your immediate experience of the physical world with your body

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being in the center of the universe. And of course it is! Your body is in the center of your universe, right? Not everybody else's, just yours.

So there we are. So let's go in, I will just give a little bit of guided instructions for the practice. But no new methodology but just now more enriched with ways of viewing that with which we are familiar.

Meditation:

First of all we reboot, settle down and let your awareness slip out of the conceptual mode, the ruminating mode, and come right down to the ground. Non-conceptually settle your body in its natural state, your breathing in its natural rhythm.

For just a brief time simplify your mind, releasing concepts about the future and the past and even about the present, come and let your awareness rest in its own place, quiet, still and clear in the present moment.

And let the light of your awareness flood the space of your body with discerning intelligence, mindful presence.

We've already attended to the first of three fundamental marks of existence, and that is the ubiquitous nature of impermanence of all conditioned phenomena, arising and passing from moment to moment. Take note of that.

And now within this field, this fathom-long body, within this field of tactile sensations, let's turn our attention to the second of those three marks. It's called by one term: *dukkha*. *We are not looking here for suffering, but rather as you attend to the appearances arising within this tactile field, when you note either pleasure or pain, comfort or discomfort, closely apply mindfulness and see whether any of these tactile appearances are themselves by nature – objectively – pleasant or unpleasant.* We will apply this in between sessions as well, when we eat tasty food, we see a lovely sunset, we hear pleasant sounds and so forth. We will ask in between sessions: Is the pleasure actually coming from the object? Is it by nature a true source of *sukkhā*, of joy, pleasure? Is it by nature a true source of *dukkha*, suffering, dissatisfaction, displeasure?

Within the field of the body examine the very nature of the events you're perceiving, to see whether any of them, by nature, are intrinsically pleasurable or unpleasurable.

And now open up all five doors of sensory perception, that is of the five physical senses, and let the light of your awareness illuminate all of these five domains and let your way of viewing these five domains of experience be enriched with the question: is there anything here that is static, unchanging, and immutable?

We are not asking for example whether the molecules and tiles of the floor are permanent or impermanent, that is very subtle, perhaps too subtle for us to observe right now, it is up to the physicist to tell us, that is not the question.

The question is in the visual appearances, colors and shapes arising, do you see anything static, hear anything static, smell, taste, touch, anything unchanging?

And if you experience anything among these five sensory fields as being pleasant or unpleasant, examine closely. *Are those qualities right in the very nature of the phenomena themselves, in the appearances?* Are they there objectively? Are they the true sources of the pleasure or displeasure that you experience?

And now let's come back to a simpler question from before and that is in terms of the phenomenon that actually appear to your visual perception, the phenomenon that arise in the auditory field, the tactile field, is there any overlap among the phenomena arising in these three domains? Which is to say, is there anything that does actually appear within the visual that also appears in the auditory or tactile or vice versa? Or are these non-overlapping domains of appearances? It's a simple question.

For just a little time, let your awareness be totally still, illuminating all the five sense fields without going out to any of them or grasping onto anything, simply illuminating the appearances.

Instructions/teachings after meditation:

Summary: Alan returns to the 1st and 2nd marks of existence with the idea that when they saturate our mind, there's a profound shift in our world view. The 1st mark of existence: conditioned phenomena are impermanent. The 2nd mark of existence: any experience contaminated by disturbing emotions is unsatisfying.

Let's come back briefly to the first two of the three marks of existence, and relate it to a theme that runs through all of modern science, but very briefly. And that is the notion of revolution. So until Copernicus, until Galileo, it was widely believed the earth is in the center of the whole universe, the universe is about 7000 years old – that is, within the Eurocentric view, Judeo-Christian view – we're in the center, all of those are

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pretty much ornaments, thank you God, very pretty night sky. And that was it. And that's speaking with no joke. This was Newton's view, Galileo's view, though not with earth in the center. And then with Copernicus coming up mathematically and Galileo giving some empirical confirmation, then earth is no longer in the center. It's just one of the various planets going around the sun. Now the sun seems to be in the center. But nevertheless, we got displaced from the center, and so that doesn't really revolutionize a way of life, but in terms of your understanding of the place of our world within the whole universe, once you get that you simply cannot look at the universe the same way any longer. It's just different. We're not at the center. That's a big deal. It's a really, really big deal. If you don't understand, you'll be pre-revolutionary, but if you do understand it, then you simply cannot look at the night sky, or the place of our planet in the universe, in the same way anymore. *Your way of viewing reality is fundamentally shifted.* There is the first revolution in modern science. It was in astronomy.

The first revolution, the only revolution we've had, or at least beginning of a revolution in the life sciences, is Darwin. *Again, prior to Darwin, it's widely believed that species were static.* Even in the time of Darwin, there were still people who thought – not the very educated ones – that the universe is 7000 years old. Geology was proving that to be false, but it was tough to let go of, for those taking a literal interpretation of the Bible. But the notion of species being static was there, it was really right there until the mid-19th century. Darwin, based upon about 25 years of very careful research, empirical research, shows that's not true. And once you get it, once you really understood the empirical basis for his theory – and then Wallace was the cohort, he also did his research, not me the other Wallace, Alfred Russell Wallace, co-discoverer, did his own marvelous research, but Darwin's was more thorough, was richer, more sophisticated, more elaborated, so he really deserves to get primary credit – *but once you've understood that, you really cannot view life on this planet, or human existence, our own biological presence here, in the same way.* You just can't go back to pre-Darwin. So the way of viewing life on the planet, it's a revolution, you simply cannot view it in the same way any longer. And then in physics – now it'll just be really quickly – quantum mechanics, relativity theory. Anybody who really followed that, you simply cannot view space, time, matter and energy in the same way. If you've understood it, you cannot go back to 19th century physics. There are assumptions there that are just false, and you have to view reality in a new way. Second revolution in the physical sciences.

Alright? But that's what "revolution" means. It's not just an adding of ideas, or a new bright idea or a fresh discover. It's that the whole axis is shifted, right down to the core. Some fundamental assumptions you do not hold any longer: earth being in the center, species are static, we're all by ourselves, human beings are totally different from all the animals, you know? And likewise, absolute space/time/matter/energy: they're gone! They're as gone as the dodo! They're extinct. You cannot believe that if you know physics. You can if you don't know physics, but that means you're just not up to date.

If one really only believes, that's not a big deal. But if one really fathoms, so that it gets into the bone marrow of the way you view reality, right into the stream, the flow of the way you're viewing reality, if you really get this simple statement: **all conditioned phenomena are impermanent**, *if that's not just a belief, if that gets right into your view, it's saturating your view, your way of viewing reality, coarse impermanence and subtle impermanence, you cannot view reality in the same way.* And that is, even though we do project our evaluations, our judgments, our categories, our labels and so forth, "I'll love you forever, this relationship is forever, oh, now finally I got something I can really hold onto, now I'm really whole, oh I am so glad I am healthy", I'm locking onto all these things, all these superimpositions relatively static. People think they are attractive; don't hold your breath! You're losing it right now as you speak! I mean if you're not yet twenty ok, there's a little bit of good time left, but after twenty! The image, the idea is static, I am attractive, I am intelligent, I'm this, I'm that, other people, my relationship, this, this, this: *that which we superimpose is relatively static. But when we actually fathom the reality of impermanence you see that's just fluff, that's camouflage, and the reality is everything is just fizzing.*

(1:05:41) One of the meditations done in the Theravada Tradition – I've never seen it in the Mahayana – comes in Buddhaghosa's Path of Purification, it is really powerful. It's way up there in the vipashyana section. It's for people who are really, really professional yogis, I mean they've nailed their shamatha, probably got some of the dhyanas and they're deep into vipashyana territory. They this extremely high frequency, really high definition samadhi, and they select, they are very selective, they are observing impermanence. Within impermanence there's arising and passing, arising and passing, moment to moment to moment. Standard

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Buddhism. What do they do empirically? They come into a very narrow bandwidth, and they focus their attention like a brain surgeon, going down and doing something incredibly precise, *they focus just on the factor of dissolution*. Whatever they are attending to they just focus like with a laser view, just looking at that, just the process of dissolution, just the falling away. And they go into Samadhi on that, of just the falling away. *That just blasts any attachment you have to anything*. Any attachment you have to anything! Because you just see it all vanishing! Whether it is your body, your loved one, your reputation, your wealth, your home, your planet, your guru, whatever it is. *It's like going to a train station, and seeing the train pulling out of the station*. How attached can you get to that train? You're not going to catch it! Gone. And that's whole of reality. Bye bye! So long, farewell. I'm gone. And that's everything! *Now of course they can focus on origination too, but when they want to develop really intense, radically revolutionary renunciation, they'll focus on dissolution*. It just blows the crap out of attachment, just dissolves it, it is like trying to grasp onto a waterfall and you see that there is nothing to grasp onto, so you get radical disillusionment, I mean existential disillusionment of thinking that you can attend to anything that appears, and thinking Oh that's going to deliver happiness! *The train's leaving the station. It's not going to deliver anything. It's going. It's gone. Very powerful. That's revolutionary, to really realize the subtle and the coarse impermanence of all phenomena. That changes everything*.

Because here we are, we have this prime directive as sentient beings: avoid suffering and find happiness. And we open our eyes and say Oh, what's going to make me happy? First thing is mamma pretty much, right? Momma, and what she's got up here, upstairs. That's where happiness comes from, I think babies got that one figured out. And then we go from there, and you know, men never get over it (laughter). Sorry! Still looking for it, you know. But even if it's not that, we are still looking for the substitute, after that, after breast milk, after that, what's going to give it to me? So the attention tends to be focused there, and thinking with this ever-arising, fresh hope: That marriage didn't work out, but I bet this one will, I didn't like living there, but I'm sure this will work out better, that job sucked, but this one may be good. Wake up! Smell the roses, they are fading. And then you can either going into total meltdown of abysmal, existential, mind crunching *depression or you can see maybe there is another way you can find happiness that isn't by grasping onto objects and appearances*. If that doesn't work out, then you're really toast. You either got dharma, or you're really down the sewer. Really, there's no other hope. So but that's it, that is what dharma is for. That is when people come really authentic in their dharma practice. That's when they get irreversibly into the stream of dharma practice, when they say there is nothing else that has even a smidgen of hope, none, to really provide satisfaction, genuine happiness. Nothing else has any chance so therefore even if it's only one chance in a million for dharma go for it because it is the best bet because everything else is zero out of a million. One out of a million? I'll take that over zero out of a million. And if you have a Buddha-nature, the odds are looking even better.

So that is the first one: All composite phenomena, all phenomena that arise in dependence upon causes and conditions, that are formed, configured: they are all impermanent.

And then we have this one, which is the theme for today, because we're moving right through these pretty quickly. *But we'll keep on returning to these three marks of existence, because they are absolutely revolutionary*. Not just to believe in: then it's just more baggage. But if you actually let this into your way of viewing reality, they just change everything.

And the second one, which is – when you dumb it down to Neolithic brain damage, you call it “life is suffering.” Well please throw that one out, because that's just too stupid to talk about. I don't know. It keeps on cropping up. I just want to get a sledge-hammer, and just smash it whenever I see it. The phrase in Tibetan is (*syache tamje dukngelwa*). “Sakche” means “contaminated,” “tainted,” “defiled,” so that's just an adjective. That which is defiled. “*dukngelwa*” means “unsatisfying.” It doesn't mean suffering, like you know, getting a knife poked into your cheek. That's suffering, that's pain. That's not this work. “*dukngelwa*” is not just pain. It's a subtle distinction. It's unsatisfying. So what's defiled? *Any experience – there it is, vast, vast statement – any experience that is configured by, defiled, contaminated, tainted by mental afflictions*. You can just take three for starters: delusion, craving and hostility. Any experience of anything, your own mind, your body, your lover, your children, your parents, your home, possessions, your reputation, anything whatsoever, sunsets, nature, galaxies, *anything you experience, any experience whatsoever that is configured by, tainted, caught up in the network of mental afflictions will be unsatisfying*.

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You may look upon it and say, Oh this place really makes me happy, I've always wanted to live in nature, because living in nature just makes me happy. That lake, those trees, and the mountains, I just love living in nature because it just makes me happy. As if it's just oozing little pods, little puffs of joy, coming out of the water, out of the trees, the clouds. As if nature is actually making you happy. Oh I love nature, it makes me happy. Or I love you! You make me so happy! I'm just getting the happy vibe from you, I'm so happy you make me happy, because you are the source of my happiness. I cannot live without you, because if I didn't have you I wouldn't be happy at all, so keep it flowing! People talk that way! Not quite that silly, but that's what they say. You make me so happy. And then of course: You make me miserable. You just make me miserable, quit doing that! Quit spraying me with misery. You make me so unhappy. I just see you and I get unhappy. Don't talk, your voice makes me unhappy. I don't want to see your face, I don't even want to see your toenails! I just see your toenails, it makes me unhappy. I don't want to hear your name, I hear your name it makes me unhappy. Just, you know, "Fred". Ugh! Can't stand Delhi, such an unhappy place. Ever been to Delhi? Have you ever seen the sun in Delhi? I haven't in a long, long time. Doesn't matter what time of day. Have you ever been to Beijing? Have you ever seen the sun in Beijing? I've been to Beijing, I've never seen the sun. I don't even know where it is. And Delhi's the same. Three o'clock, nine o'clock in the morning, noon, you never know where the sun is. There's just so much crap in the air, you can't see anything except the crap in the air. Boy these places, they'll make you miserable. Beijing, Delhi, the list could go on. You know, they're just unhappy places. Whereas Santa Barbara – Santa Barbara is a happy place. In fact they did a whole soap opera that I first saw in Beijing, and it's quite obvious that Santa Barbara is just a happy place because number one, everybody's gorgeous. You see the soap opera, they're all young, or if they're old they age really, really well. They never go to the bathroom. They never need to bathe, and they all have such interesting lives. That's Santa Barbara! It's a happy place. But the happiest place in the world is called Disney Land. They said so! It's actually the happiest place in the world, because you go there and become happy because it makes you happy.

So that notion that is actually emerging from the side of objects, from appearances, it's all over the advertising industry. It sells, and it's utterly delusional. So sakche tamje dukngelwa, it's really like Ay caramba! If that's true, that changes everything. That is, no matter where I go, to Santa Barbara, to Disneyland, to Beijing, no matter what, whatever I experience, whatever I acquire, whoever I meet, wherever I go, it's never going to really deliver the happiness that I seek. When it says "dukngelwa," it means that you may focus on something, someone, something intangible like a gold medal in the Olympics, or fame, reputation, or power, or acquisition of this, that, or the other thing, or a relationship, and you may think, "This really does make me happy, this person really does make me happy, it's all very well that you're making light of this, Alan, but this person actually does make me happy." You can actually believe that. And is it true that when we're with this person, that a lot of happiness arises? Yes!

But the Buddhist premise here is this: if something is truly the source of your happiness, this means that whenever the person, some physical object, a place, if it's truly the source of your happiness, *then it should be like an artesian well of happiness*. An artesian well always gives rise to water. Whenever you go to it, you get water. Spend ten hours by it, you get ten hours of water coming out. That's an artesian well, that's a true source of water. If another person, place, reputation, tangible, intangible, whatever, is a true source of happiness, then the longer you stay with that person, the happier you should become. If this cell phone, which used to be a new one, if this really made me happy, I should just be able to hold it in my hand and just feel the happiness flowing, and I can just sit there and it just makes me happy indefinitely. If that's the true source of happiness, it should just keep on flowing, just make me happy, happy, happy, happy indefinitely. Is there anything you really want to do indefinitely? Hour after hour after hour? That you would expect would still make you happy? Think of your favorite thing. Now think about doing that for twelve hours straight. Is there a point when it's not quite so pleasant? And is there a point where you'll just be screaming your head off, Please make it stop! So that is unsatisfying.

It's not to say that there's no such thing as a satisfactory marriage, of course there are. Or friendships, relationships with teachers, with jobs. There are very satisfying jobs, for sure. I love my work, find it very satisfying. Do I want to teach all day? It is not a true source of happiness. So that's *dukngelwa*. *Any experience we have that is tainted by mental afflictions is unsatisfying. It's not a true source of happiness. It is not the genuine article.*

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And so once again, the easy response would be, Ah, so everything sucks and just become miserable, depressed. Or you may say, all right, if all experiences that are contaminated by mental afflictions are unsatisfying, how about taking the mental afflictions out? *And then it does not say that all things are suffering.* If your experience of other people, the environment, your body and so forth is not contaminated by mental afflictions then the unsatisfying quality vanishes. In other words, it's not there in reality, it's not Planet Earth sucks, or Beijing, or Delhi or Santa Barbara. None of these places intrinsically suck or intrinsically are sources of misery. They are not! *It is the way we experience them and insofar – and it is a gradient – insofar as our experience of anything whatsoever is contaminated by mental afflictions, it will suck!* It is only a matter of soon or later, but it will be unsatisfying. So then you say, Well that would imply that there is only one thing to do: purify your mind and then everything can be satisfying and don't purify your mind and you can be as wealthy as Carlos Slim and still be as unhappy as he is. Have you ever seen his face? Not a happy camper! I've seen him interviewed. I'm the richest man in the world, I own sixty companies, sixty billion dollars and counting. So what? So what?

So that's the second one. If one simply believes it, no big impact. *But if that gets into the way you're viewing reality, then it touches everything.* There's nothing that's left untouched. And it doesn't mean you become disillusioned with your spouses, your family, your job, your place of living and so forth. That's not the implication at all. *It is to say that if you'd like to find greater satisfaction, greater joy, greater happiness and meaning and fulfillment, it's not by going from here to there to there to there. It's by purifying your experience of everything. And that's really the only solution. So there it is.*

Whatever the question is, dharma is the only answer. That 's it! That's what this is about. It's not to learn a dogma or a doctrine to get all your beliefs right. It's to radically transform the way you view reality such that your whole experience of existence becomes more and more satisfying. And in the same breath, more realistic. Truth shall make you free.

Written Question from Student: Can you elaborate on the meaning of non-conceptual and conceptual thoughts?

Response: I don't usually speak of, in fact I never speak of, "non-conceptual thoughts." Say again? [someone from audience speaking to Alan] So "non-conceptual experience"? Non-conceptual and conceptual experience. Very good. It is a subtle issue, and that could easily take up our whole eight minutes. It's a very good question. It's a subtle question, too. And that is, number one, I'll speak right from the Mahayana perspective, do we have the option, can we simply decide to have a truly, utterly non-conceptual experience of anything? Can we decide? Ok I've had it, no more concepts. The answer is no. It's not within voluntary control. Even when you achieve shamatha, and through extensive, rigorous training in shamatha, your whole coarse mind dissolves into the substrate consciousness. That's a pretty big deal. Is it non-conceptual? On a coarse level, yes. Subtle level? No. It's not non-conceptual. Craving still arises. Attachment can still arise to the bliss, the luminosity and non-conceptuality of the substrate consciousness. And mental afflictions are always carried on the backs of conceptual mind. Very subtle, but still there. So Mahayana view – even in deep sleep, it's subliminally conceptual – so Mahayana view, it's only when you have a direct realization of emptiness: non-conceptual, that is totally, absolutely non-conceptual. Now interesting point, from Gen Lamrinpa. He's one of the most formidable yogis I've ever met. I had the opportunity to live with him for a whole year in the same cabin, and he was really a very deep meditator on emptiness. Lamrim generally, but with emptiness, he really meditated a lot. He was deep. And he died quite spectacularly. He wandered into the clear light of death, remained there for five days. So there was nothing phony about him, nothing, absolutely authentic. And he said You know, when you go into meditation on emptiness, and the conceptual mind goes totally silent, I mean it goes right down to zero, the whole phenomenal world vanishes. Not because you've withdrawn. That happens just by samadhi. You withdraw your awareness, you go into the substrate, the whole world vanishes from your perspective. It's still conceptual a little bit. It's not that. It's not a matter of withdrawal at all. It's realizing the empty nature of all appearing phenomena, and realizing that emptiness with the non-conceptual mind, the phenomena themselves vanish. The whole entire phenomenal world vanishes! So you see empirically the truth of the statement that all phenomena arise in dependence upon conceptual designation. And if the conceptual designation ceases totally, all phenomena just vanish. That's a big deal! Of course, when you reactivate the conceptual mind, they appear again. So that's deeply conceptual.

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Now in terms of modern cognitive psychology – and because of the Mind and Life Conferences that I’ve participated in – I think the general view, and it’s a very smart view, but they’re speaking within the bandwidth of normal minds. Basically there’s brain damage, mentally ill, and normal. That’s almost entirely the whole bandwidth that modern cognitive psychology deals with, with hardly any exceptions. Brain damage, mentally ill, and normal; everything above that is invisible. In other words, the most important part is totally invisible, which therefore doesn’t factor in, because why would they? It’s outside their database. Fair enough. The view, and this I learned from the world famous cognitive psychologist at Princeton, Ann Triesmann, she says all of our experience is saturated by concepts. All of our experience. That is, just open your eyes, and the conceptual configuration of phenomena into objects and so forth, is just saturated, it’s right there, you can’t stop it. So they do not make a distinction, and I think she speaks for a lot of people in her field, very, very smart, of course. But that our experience just generally is saturated by conceptual constructs. Lot of truth to that.

But then we can ask the gradient, just like with free will. I’m not going to try to answer that right now, but just broadly. If you’re drunk and somebody’s also just put three tabs of psilocybin into your drink, and you’re drunk, and you get into the car, can you exercise free will to drive safely? You don’t have a chance! You cannot exercise free will. You may say I want to drive very responsibly here. Lots of luck! You have zero chance of driving responsibly, because your brain is damaged by the drugs. How about if you’re psychotic, you’re schizophrenic? How much free will do you have? Very little. So let’s take these cases of person who’s brain damaged, doped, drunk, schizophrenic, and all the way then to a Buddha. It’s a smooth spectrum. The further you are along the spectrum to being liberated, an Arhat, awake as a Buddha, the further along that spectrum, the freer you are. And the more damaged, schizophrenic, psychotic and so forth, the less free you are. In other words, the Buddha has never even raised the question Do we have or do we not, just where are you in the spectrum? And not only where are you on the spectrum, but where are you today? Where are you this morning, this afternoon? Because we vary. So it turns into a very pragmatic question, and the question is not, What can I do to achieve free will?, but rather, How can I be freer? Because let alone being psychotic, if I just get so pissed off that my mind just gets caught up in rage, how free am I to fall asleep? How free am I to enjoy a good joke, or a pleasant meal? Or to even attend to the person I’m pissed off at in a reasonable, clear, unbiased way? I have no freedom at all!

So that goes for craving, it goes for delusion, it goes for anger, jealousy and so forth and so on. The more your mind is dominated by mental afflictions, the less free you are. And therefore comes back to the same thing. Sounds like a broken record, doesn’t it? Free your mind of mental afflictions, you become freer and freer and freer, in every matter, in every way that actually is meaningful.

So in a similar fashion, to be conceptual or not conceptual, well just for starters, wouldn’t it be cool to not be always inundated by the flow of rumination? Because rumination is really coarse junk, like the junk food of the mind. That’s conceptual. But you’ve had moments, five seconds here, ten seconds there, where it was like Oh that was refreshing! I had a period of no rumination, I was just being clear and present. So that would be relatively non-conceptual. And then we go from coarse excitation, medium excitation, subtle excitation, so we see it’s a whole bandwidth there, a whole spectrum of less and less conceptual. And then picking up thoughts and using them intelligently.

Question (continued): How do they relate to discursive thoughts and language?

Response: There’s very good empirical evidence, scientific evidence, that babies inside the womb during the last trimester, the last three months, can distinguish between the sound of their mother’s voice and somebody else’s voice, another woman. Good neurophysiological evidence for that. Now shall we assume that the unborn baby hasn’t learned any language yet? If we go along with that assumption, the baby is able to distinguish this from that. It doesn’t say “mama,” but does recognize that, which means there’s some conceptual process there that is labeling this versus that. Let alone pleasure and pain. And then animals, a wide variety, they may or may not have language but they certainly do conceive. Dogs can be jealous! Anybody who’s owned a dog, you know they can be jealous, and they can be angry, and they can be craving and attached and so forth and so on. So is the conceptual mind possible without language? The answer is yes. And we find this when we slip down beneath the veil of the rumination, which tends to be caught up a lot in language, and slip down to – how many fingers am I holding up? Before the language comes in, you already know. So there are layers and layers, subtlety upon subtlety of discursive thought, going from the coarse mind

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to rumination, caught up totally in your own language, down to the more primitive level, softer level, subtler level in the substrate consciousness, all the way right down to the total silencing of discursive thought in the direct realization of emptiness.

Overall, as we now end, core theme in this contemplative science, this inner knowledge, inner science, is to be able to get as clear data as we can, to use scientific terminology. That is, when we're having a conversation with someone, to be able to attend, to give somebody our whole attention. I'll quote again my dear friend, this Benedictine monk Lawrence Freeman, very dear friend of mine, we spoke at a conference just a few months back in London, and he made a statement when we were giving another workshop in Santa Barbara years ago. He said the greatest gift you can give another person is your attention. This means that you're giving them fully your attention, that is, not that you're attending to them with your commentary and your judgments and I hope you do this and I hope you don't do that, which is a little like sitting in a dust bowl. But actually going through the dust bowl and attending fully to the other person as that person is presenting him or herself to you as a subject. Giving your whole attention. Quietly. Drinking them in. I drink you in with my eyes. That's all from romantic talk, but how about setting aside the romance? I'm drinking you in as a human being, I'm giving you my heart, my ears, my mind, my eyes, I'm drinking you in. I'm as fully present with you as I possibly can be, and that's the greatest gift I can give you first. And after that I might give you a meal, or money, or education, or whatever, something else you need, but first I'll drink you in. First I'll give you my most precious and non-refundable and non-renewable asset, and that is my attention. I can't get it back after I've given it to you. Those moments are gone, but I gave you what was most precious, and that's my time. And I gave it to you as purely as I could. Not from what I can get from you as an investment, but what I can actually offer you, with no expectation or anticipation of kickback. Just what can I offer you. That's the Bodhisattva ideal, isn't it?

So with that, then, clearly once again it's a gradient, but this means we're attending fully and receiving fully what the person has to offer, whether it's their grief, or anxiety, their joy, their frustration, their sadness, their satisfaction, whatever it may be. Drinking it in, getting clear. So this is what you have to offer today! And being receptive to it. That's pretty sweet. That's very human. Human to human. That's the way it should be. Likewise with animals. Sentient being to sentient being.

Transcribed by *Rafael Carlos Giusti*

Revised by *James French*

Final edition by *Alma Ayon*

11 Mindfulness of breathing (6)

31 Aug 2012

Teachings:

Note for Readers:

There are some sentences or paragraphs about some themes that we have written a sum up and not everything literally as Alan Wallace said during the session, thinking that it would be useful for the readers better understanding of the themes. But if you are listening to the podcast and following what is written, and have any difficulty, please do inform us in order that we may transcribe these themes again and upload the new transcript at media.sbinstitute.com.

Dromtönpa's quote „Give up all attachment to this life, and let your mind become dharma. “

Many of you recall a story of Dromtonpa, the great disciple of Atisha in response to his fellow that was doing devotional practices and then studying and meditating and each time Dromtonpa said: Oh very good to do devotional practice, very good to do study and very good to meditate and even better to practice Dharma. The fellow exasperated said what is that?

The two liner, that is really worthwhile memorizing, Dromtonpa's quintessential advice: "give up all attachment to this life and let your mind become Dharma."

It may sound that giving up attachment to this life means suicide or depression or something like that. It is nothing like that. It is not give up this life it is just give up attachment, the mental afflictions that are clinging to the hedonic bounties of this life.

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Give up attachment to this life and then let your mind become dharma, the practice of shamatha, the simply practice of mindfulness of breathing really can epitomize that, it can but of course does not have to, it could be just attentional training for any purpose. But, give up attachment to this life, every time that your mind is caught in excitation, by definition excitation is arising from desire, from attachment, there are others kinds that mind is wandering, driven by faith, by devotion, by anger, all kind of things but generally speaking that which draws our mind off into distraction, which we call excitation, is desire, and the desire coming from attachment to this life. So every time you releasing that, you are releasing rumination, you are releasing, you are giving up attachment to this life.

And then as you settle right there, just resting in the nature of your awareness, whether you are attending to the breath, or observing the mind, you are resting in awareness of awareness, right there you are resting in the nature of your awareness, which by nature is pure, luminous, and by resting there, gradually the natural resources of your own awareness do emerge, in this non conceptual way, that is it is not discursive, it is not generated, it is just the simply placement, this placement meditation of shamatha, just by so doing then these so called five dhyanas factors naturally emerge.

I am in awe at the sheer brilliance of this, because on one hand we have these five obscurations translated as the five hindrances. But when you see obscuring, you can ask obscuring what? And what is obscuring is the natural luminosity, the pure nature of your own awareness, let alone rigpa, the substrate consciousness and it is exactly those five: ill- will, fixation on hedonic pleasure, laxity and dullness, excitation and anxiety and then finally afflictive uncertainty. That is the set of obscurations that obscure the nature luminosity and purity of your own awareness.

But then we have the natural antibodies:

1) sukkha vs. malice/ill-will

In terms of ill-will, as you become familiar with it, adept in the practice of mindfulness of breathing, a sense of sukkha, it is just a sense of well-being, it is not bliss, it is not ecstasy, it is just that sense of well-being, sukkah. A sense of well-being arises right from the nature of awareness, and it is genuine because it is not stimulus driven, you do not need something to make you happy, it is just a sense of well-being because it is a symptom that the mind is coming to balance, just like the symptoms of the body that is injured or ill, it feels bad and is really good that it does, because it catches your attention so you heal your body. But then when your mind comes into balance then you start to feel good, and that is sukkah, whereas the mind insofar is upset with mental afflictions it feels bad, and that is also good because it would be really rotten to have your mind just inundated by mental afflictions and feel really happy at the same time. Then you would not have any incentive to get out of samsara, you say, no, my mental afflictions feel so good, I mean I really like them. So it is really a wonderful thing that the mental afflictions afflict, because if it did not we would not have any incentive whatsoever for getting out of samsara.

You can see it, it is transparent when your awareness does rest in the center of well-being that is not stimulus driven, whether it's food or your sensory, your intellectual, pleasant memories, happy fantasies, or contrived optimism, none of the above, it is just a symptom that your mind is coming into balance. It is quite obvious when your awareness, your mind, has a sense of well-being , it will not at the same time be caught up in ill-will, malice. It cannot happen, one has to go and it cannot be together. So it is a natural antibody.

2) single-pointed attention vs. desire/attachment/fixation,

And then, there is the whole fixation on hedonic pleasure, it is the attachment to the bounties of the desire realm, it is not just sensual craving for ice cream or sex and so forth, it is just the whole range of the fixation on these facsimiles of happiness: I have this, I have that, etc, just getting over it. How do you get over it?

What is the natural antibody that comes right of the nature of awareness that surges as a direct remedy for this attachment, fixation, obsession with - all these symbols of happiness and none of which are actually the real deal? And it is simply the unification of the mind, the single-pointed attention, it is so interesting, but actually does it, see for yourself whether it is just dogma, speculation or whether this is really experimental. But when your mind gets unified just right there with thoughts like, "Oh, that one you make me happy", it is gone. It is a natural antibody.

3) coarse investigation vs. laxity/dullness

The natural antibody for laxity and dullness is coarse investigation.

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Pay attention, look, attend, observe closely. Laxity and dullness cannot be there when you are really investigating.

4) bliss vs. excitation/anxiety

Excitation and anxiety is where rumination lies. Bliss it is the natural antibody, a sense of well-being but the real sharpened one, it is joy.

Excitation by definition is always arising from attachment and craving. Craving for what? That one will make me happy, this one make me happy, etc.

When you already have bliss why do you go anywhere else? So actually bliss will act as a natural antibody for looking elsewhere because you already got it, and that is natural, it is transparent, right?

5) precise analysis vs. afflictive uncertainty

Oh, I am not progressing, I am progressing slowly, I do not think that I can do it, I doubt, maybe I can, I doubt it. It goes on and on and on, it will just never give you a break.

How long does it take? Other people have done it? Are they like me? There is no end to that discourse. That will screw you forever. It is not just for shamatha, this afflictive uncertainty is for anything, for developing the four immeasurables, for developing insight, for developing patience, to get a new job.

How do you overcome it? It is necessary to use precise analysis, then really now look at it and get sharp, get sharp. It is just shut up and look carefully, and let's get the answers from experience. Can I or I cannot, let's find out and shut up. I am busy now I am practicing now and I am practicing very intensely, I am really paying attention. So that is precise analysis, and that is a natural antibody. You do not have to get it in someplace else, it is built-in, precise analysis is a sheer habit that can be developed.

Then when you just practice shamatha then the five obscurations naturally arise. The five obscurations are gone, welcome to substrate consciousness. Give up attachment to this life -you come to rest in the substrate consciousness and that is where you wind up in the culminating process of death. But you are healthy, so there is nothing unhealthy about authentic shamatha practice. There is already some good evidence, if anything it increases your life-span, that was really an interesting discovery from the Shamatha Project, it actually increases your mental health, increases the sense of well-being, increases the balance, the harmony of your nervous system. And yet your mind, coarse mind, dissolves in the substrate consciousness, which where you go when you are dead. So you get a sneak preview at the death zone while you are still alive and vigorously well.

So give up attachment to this life, allow your mind to die while unveiling the natural luminosity of your own awareness. And then of course when you come out of samadhi you get your mind back, but will be a new and improved version, an upgraded version, because those five obscurations will be massively diminished, not eradicated because that requires vipashyana, but they will really be like gut punched. Each of your five obscurations, even when you come out of samadhi. Gut punched, that is what the five obscurations feel like. The five obscurations cannot screw you up because you really knocked them. You really knocked them, it is not a death blow, but you have really disabled the five obscurations for a while, and while they are gasping, then bring the sword of vipashyana and just put them out of their misery. And then you become arhat, foe destroyer. You have to be very macho to practice shamatha.

Meditation:

So the sense of giving yourself the greatest possible gift, then to enter into the practice in the pursuit of genuine happiness, to discover your own extraordinary internal resources. Let your awareness descend into and fill the space of the body, settling it in its natural state and your respiration in its natural rhythm.

Give up all attachment to this life as you release every vestige, every trace of rumination, speculation, cogitation about the future and the past, and even about the present, as you let your awareness rest non-conceptually, non-discursively in the present moment in stillness.

And then venture into any of the three methods of shamatha of mindfulness of breathing of your choice. If you find a lot of tension, a lot of tightness in body and mind you may go to full body awareness, phase one. If you find you are not particularly tight but the mind is quite agitated, a lot of rumination is coming up, you may go for phase two, the rise and fall in the abdomen. If you feel fairly loose, relatively calm, then focus on these increasing subtle sensations of the in and out breath at the apertures of the nostrils. And for any of these three methods you may count insofar as you find it helpful. Monitor the flow of mindfulness with introspection, identify the occurrence of laxity and excitation and apply the appropriate remedy.

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Let's continue practicing now in silence.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Revised Cheri Langston.

Final edition by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Posted by Alma Ayon

12 Mindfulness of the body (5)

Teachings:

Note for readers:

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This afternoon we go to the third of the three marks of existence.

As I mentioned yesterday insofar as we really integrate insight into any one or all three marks of existence, it really does create quite a revolution, a radical transformation in the ways we engage with reality in our whole life.

Just to recall, the 1st mark of existence says that all composite phenomena are impermanent - and the 2nd says all contaminated experiences are unsatisfying.

Whenever we look to any appearance, including mental appearances, self-image, reputation, ones accomplishments and so forth whatever may be, any appearances, when you look to any appearance, it could be another person, a home you would like to buy, an occupation, anything at all, you look to it and you think: "Ah, this will provide me happiness, that is dukkha", that is going to be unsatisfying just because you are looking in the wrong place. Then you say oh you look with in, what does that mean?

For example, artists usually say: I want to express myself, my uniqueness, my creativity. For example, I saw one artist that had a tank with a suspended basketball right in the middle of the tank, and he starts to elaborate, talking about his creativity and Alan thought : give me a break, it is just a basketball in a fish tank. There is that realm, and I don't ridicule it as silly, but I do say if that is where you are looking for genuine happiness, you are looking in the wrong place; my creativeness, my art. It is not deep enough, look deeper than that, even though you are looking for something truly satisfying that responds to your deepest desire, that prime directive, the deepest motivation for finding genuine happiness, it will be unsatisfying, and then when you see that is a wrong option, the wrong place, then you can either be falling into despair and depression or you can find now where I do look - and then practice dharma.

Look deeper for something that may respond to your deepest desire and motivation to find genuine happiness then you see that it is better to practice dharma and shamatha, and vipashyana may be a good trajectory.

The 3rd mark of existence: all phenomena are empty and non-self. This means that „me“ and „mine“ are conceptual designations empty of intrinsic entity (=self).

All phenomenon, not only all conditioned phenomenon, not only all contaminated phenomenon or experiences contaminated by mental afflictions, but everything, all phenomenon are empty and not self or devoid of self. That is if you look for them, if you look at anything whatever, brain, knees, heart, body, mental states and so forth, *you see they are empty of anything that belongs to the self. It means there is nothing in them that suggest they have some intrinsic ownership, they are empty of ownership.* And if you look and asked: Is that I? Is that me? Is that a person? Is there some intrinsic entity, some real inherent existence self, ego, individual? No, all phenomenon are empty and non-self, absent of self.

Of course it does not mean that we do not exist at all or this cell phone does not actually belong to me, yes, it actually does and stops to belong to me as soon as I say: Ok, John you can have it. It is just a conceptual designation.

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So there is the question: *Do I exist?* Sure, there is somebody talking and you know his name. But the question here is: is there someone inherent existence entity that stands apart from, has something like autonomy that is in control of the body and mind and have some very *meaningful real I that is something that you can actually observe* that is real actually does own possesses and therefore to some extent control? So that is exactly what it is said to be, empty of or not -self. My emotions are not a person, my personal history is not a person, thoughts, brain it is not a person and so forth.

I heard one neuroscientist say: every one of the nineteen hundred billions neurons in the brain, each one knows where it is. Alan said: I beg to differ, I do not think so, I do not think that are nineteen hundred billions of sentient beings inside my brain. I do not think so, it is superstition.

(6:14) let's see an example (the cellphone that was stolen) how you could release and retract the conceptual designation and relax or may stay being unhappy indefinitely.

Let's say that someone steals my cell phone and I just do not have any control over it and do not know how could I retrieve it. If I wish to make myself unhappy I will think somebody out there has my cell phone and I can just be unhappy indefinitely. I say, he has my cell phone and the other person that stolen it just says, I do not have your cell phone, I have my own cell phone, you are mistaken. I am entirely in charge of my cell phone and you do not even know where your cell phone is. You are mistaken and I am right. So there is a little bit of disagreement there.

On the other hand, clearly we can release, just saying: all right it is stolen and so the cell phone does not belong to me anymore, it used to and now it does not, ah, and then you can relax. And all of you have done is, you retract the conceptual designation.

Another example of conceptual designation, Alan's room at the Mind Center in Phuket:

Does anybody know where my room is? 2327 is my room. I did not even pay for it; they gave me a free room here. So exactly why is that mine? Just because they said: Alan you will stay here and it looks good to me. But we can see how light weight that is. Is that correct to say my room is right over there in the corner? Yes, it is but we see how light weight it is.

They could say, Alan we like to have someone else in this room and you move to that one over there and I say, Ok. That is no longer my room. That is easy, it was my room and now it is not anymore.

[It means, Alan just accepted to move the room, relax, release and retract the conceptual designation: "this is my room". If not, let's suppose he did not accepted/liked and think, how dare you? Maybe he would stay unhappy indefinitely.]

Another example of conceptual designation: I am the chairman of this place, chairman of the Mind Center. Could I say that is my center then? I get no salary, I do not have any authority at all, but I am the chairman, chairman of what? I cannot even rent out my own room but shall we say that, why not? I am the chairman, right?

So we are dealing with the lightest weight, I mean the lightest possible weight. I do not see any other lighter way to say it is my mind center, but in some conventional sense why not?

My cell phone and my mind center are trivial but when we get to the body where there is a little of discomfort, dukkha (suffering), my physical discomfort that seems to be more serious than my cell phone or my mind center.

But when comes to the closely held skandhas, closely held, closely grasped, skandhas and it is my body and my mind. When I think of my hand I think that is something more serious than that [for example cell phone]. You may give away part of your liver for someone else to save his or her life. So that is a pretty intimate organ I mean nobody else can claim that is their liver that is not negotiable, but you give away part of your liver and the other person say: thank you, now it is my liver. That is getting a bit more intimate, instead of giving away your cell phone, giving away part of your liver, right? So this is very serious and cell phone and mind center is more trivial.

But when you get to the body parts that are close in person, so my body, my feelings, my mental process, my thoughts, my memories, my desires, my sense of personal history, my anticipations of my future and then very powerful my emotions and my feelings of happy or sad or indifference, my consciousness and so forth, my attention, now it seems like there is something with more muscle, like there is something to take more seriously. It is not negotiable, it is not conventional. It is just real. Is there some sharp divide, like reality comes down with a guillotine - mine and not mine - just convention, not self? Is there such a divide?

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Another example, the mother's feeling which child was injured:

A Mother witnesses her child being injured and then cries loudly because it really hurts. It is not just mental, is it? Not just mental. It is not like to say; oh I am sorry for you. It is something closer, it is something deeper. If you look at the mother's face you will see that she is in pain. It is the identification with her child. That is powerful and it is obviously outside of the mother's body. That suggests that it is not inside her skin but there is a lot of intimacy much more than something like someone stealing my cell phone and I would not feel that is inside my skin.

So where is the gradient, examine the gradient, we know conventionally speaking, yes, ownership exists, conventionally, but is there something beyond that? When we look at things, at I and mine, is there something beyond the convention? Let's take one more example: When I hear a bird song, who thinks "oh that's my sound?" I don't think so. Even if the bird is deaf and you are the only sentient being who heard it, that still doesn't make it mine - just because I had a unique viewing? Just because you alone perceived it that still does not make it your sound. So likewise, from your vantage point, no one in the universe has your vantage point, no one is seeing your cinema. So do you look around and say - oh, those colors are mine because I alone have this perspective? I don't think anybody thinks that. You pick up a fragrance you think it is your smell? You don't think, oh that's my fish, or cinnamon, it is just a smell. It is not my sweet, my bitter. Yes no one else has their tongue in my mouth, I uniquely am tasting this food.

You have unique perspective, nobody else have those thoughts, those memories, those images and so forth. Yes, you do, Yes, you have unique perspective but does that make it yours and if you think so, why?

Yes, nobody else is experiencing your feelings, your tactile sensations, feelings of pleasure or pain, your sadness, your happiness and so forth, but just the sheer fact you are experiencing it, does that make it yours? *That makes yours for any other reason than that you identify with it.*

Another woman may look at the mother which the child was injured and feel very sad, and say, Oh I am sorry that your child was harmed I hope he gets a good treatment quickly. But if it was her child then she would feel in her body, it would be like a shock to her system. *The Buddha's term for this body and mind system, is that these are closely held.*

And they are closely held with the tentacles, the tendency, the fetters, the bounds of I and mine.

Are those tendencies or fetters, that closely held, grasping, is that built into the object, in another words is it inevitable, is it just something that is just the way it is?

For example when I show the face of my cell phone it is just pretty much black. You have no choice you cannot alter that, that it is its color, black. That is it all you get, it is a black cell phone. There is no malleability there.

Is ownership like that, the ownership of your thoughts, your memories, your emotions, desires and all of that, is that thrust upon you, is it inevitable if you are paying attention or is there a malleability there?

Could you withdraw the tentacles as we clearly can if your own stuff that you do not have attachment to it, you really don't have to suffer at all, you don't have to suffer if your stuff, your convention stuff is damaged? It is just a convention anyway. *So you really do not have to suffer at all if you release your identification, your serious identification with the stuff of your own so it comes and goes.* The body comes and goes you do not have to suffer if you just release the tentacles of identification of taking seriously "I and mine" seen them as anything other than conventional.

(20:42) So we turn to then the 3rd mark of existence not whether anything is I or mine because, yes there is a person here and it is me and this is my hair and this is my cell phone, there is nothing to debate about it.

But what is me? And is there a demarcation beyond the merely convention where it gets actually real? That is where we closely apply mindfulness to.

Meditation:

(21:50) So many of the questions raised in vipashyana is respect to impermanence, suffering, non-self. Much of this is found in the entry, that sense of release, of letting go, releasing grasping and settle your body and mind at ease. So settle your body in its natural state and respiration in its natural rhythm and for little while settle and balance your mind by way of mindfulness of breathing.

(24:56) We get to the mind later, but this week is for the close application of mindfulness to the physical, where the primary emphasis is on our own bodies but embracing now our sensory access to the physical, by way of the five physical senses. Direct your mindfulness now with eyes open to the visual field with discerning

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mindfulness, without conflating your conceptual projections upon the perception being given, in other words as the Buddha's counsel, in the seen let be just the seen. And then in this visual domain of shapes and colors do you perceive anything that appears to you as "you or yours" that is really from its own side by its nature, really belongs to you or are they simply shapes and colors and nothing more?

(27:42) Close the eyes; direct your mindfulness now single pointed to the domain of sound. In the heard let be just the heard and as you closely apply mindfulness to this domain of experience, pose the same question. Is anything here appear to be "I or mine" and if so why?

(30:28) And now come to this domain of body and mind system which is normally closely held with the bounds of I and mine, single pointedly focus your mindfulness on the space of the body, wherever tactile events arise into that domain. Again to the best of your ability release all imagery, all mental activity here, projections, designations, labels, constructs, *let it be pure tactile, in other words in the felt let be just the felt*. To be sure this may be indeed a private showing, may very well be true that you are the only person that experience this array of appearances arising.

And now with respect to the sensations correlated with earth, water, fire and air, do you apprehend any of these being truly by their very nature yours, beyond merely convention, truly, really, yours?

(34:42) *Is it a simply matter of control that over which you have control? Is it yours because you are controlling it? Is it that simply? How much control do you have really over these sensations arising from moment to moment into the domain of your own body?*

(36:49) When it comes to outer objects, possessions just as cellphones and so on, we can extend and we can retract the tentacles of mine, we can give them away, we can sell it, we can simply stop thinking that is mine. Is there any malleability here in terms of the extent to which we feel the sensations of mine? *What extent can we simply be aware of them, sensations arising in space with no intrinsic ownership, simply arising in dependence upon causes and conditions, substantial causes and cooperative conditions arising and passing, arising and passing, with none of those causes or conditions being a self, a person, an ego?* Is that true or not? Closely examine the phenomenon arising into the space of the body, this tactile field.

(40:43) Now with your eyes at least partially opened let your awareness illuminate all five sensory domains of experience and as you closely apply mindfulness to these five domains observe carefully. Are any of these appearances more or less yours, let alone you and if so why?

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Revised by Cheri Langston

Final edition by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Posted by Alma Ayon

13 Loving Kindness (1)

02 Sep 2012

O Laso! So, this morning we'll shift a little bit. Thus far we've been focusing quite entirely on shamatha and vipashyana, and in both of these modes we are attending to what is already real, what is already actual or actualized, the sensations of your breath and so forth, sensory appearances, and so on, but what just already manifested, actualized. And I think on these Saturday's as we come to the end of the week, what I like to do each Saturday morning is just take a little deep into the four immeasurables, and so this week we'll go to the practice of loving kindness, meditative cultivation of loving kindness, and here we're really venturing into the realm of possibility.

It's very interesting in Buddhism that one of the terms that's used, to kind of refer to this whole phenomenon world is "cipa", and the word means possible, the realm of possibility, and so one can ask, I'm not going to do a big philosophical thing here although I enjoy that, but are possibilities real? Or do possibilities exist? Put it that way, do possibilities exist? Of course they do, if there were no possibilities, then nothing would ever happen that hasn't already happened, because it would be impossible, because the possible would be impossible and therefore nonexistent.

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So when we venture into the cultivation of loving kindness we are attending to the realm of the possible, the realm of possibilities, of aspirations, of that which is not ready already true, not already actual, but attending to it, aspiring for it, and inviting the possible into the realm of the actual.

And so in this way, we actually expand the realm of the actual, by attending to the possible. Ok? So, I mean it's simple, it's very simple, but as we anticipate, and we envision, and we aspire for a greater sense of well-being, of joy, of fulfillment, and meaning for ourselves and others. We're attending to something that is not yet real, but which could be, and one way to transform it from a mere possibility into an actuality is by focusing on it, "for the moment what we attend to is reality", ever heard that one before? Williams James! So by attending to it, we draw it into our reality. There's a great power in that. We find it all over the place. In the placebo effect, it's one of the most innocuous, weirdest, most misleading, euphemism in English language, and so powerful, and that is simply by believing that some little tablet will bring about the desired effect in your body, lo and behold it very often does. You know? And yet there was nothing in that tablet that was going to make it happen. It was all by that fact of believing, aspiring, hoping, expecting, and lo and behold that is the great bane of the pharmaceutical industry, you know... because they can't sell it. So, there we are. So, terrible misnomer, of course it is not a placebo effect, it's the effect of your own mind, but you can't sell that, so therefore it doesn't even get called by its proper name.

So let's venture into, and draw from the luminous quality of awareness. Awareness has two qualities, right? It's cognizant, one of the defining characteristic of consciousness, it's cognizant. By way of consciousness we know. But consciousness is not only a knower; it's also luminous which is to say it's creative. So let's draw to the creative, the imaginative, the powerful quality of consciousness, and apply this to the cultivation of loving kindness, and let's start now.

(4:36) Meditation:

We begin the practice with an act of loving kindness, with the motivation to find greater happiness, and to cultivate the causes of genuine happiness within ourselves. We venture into the practice letting the awareness descend into the body, fill the space of the body. With this loving aspiration, settle your body in its natural state, your respiration in its natural rhythm, settle calm, suit your mind, by way of mindfulness of breathing for a few minutes.

(8:15) And now let's venture into the realm of the possible. And in a classic method drawn from to the teachings of the Buddha himself, and elaborated by the Theravada tradition, we begin the cultivation of loving kindness by directing these aspirations to ourselves, and we begin by envisioning our own well-being. The type of vision quest, if you will, but pose to yourself the question: what do you imagine would make you truly happy, realize your heart's desire, bringing the sense of fulfillment, of meaning and satisfaction?

(9:31) Seek out a vision of your own flourishing, and illuminate it, with the light of your own consciousness.

(10:41) Then if you will imagine symbolically, the natural purity and luminosity of your own awareness, as an orb of a radiant white light at your heart, could be as small as a pearl, in the center of your chest. And with every out breath imagine light from an inexhaustible source, radiant white light, emanating from this orb of light at your heart, filling your entire body, pervading your mind, your entire being. As with each out breath you arouse this aspiration: may I find happiness and the causes of happiness. Wish yourself well with every out breath.

(12:42) With every out breath imagine this light filling your entire being, dispelling all obscurations, all hindrances, all afflictions, all that impedes the realization of your heart's desire.

(14:20) And imagine here and now realizing, that quality of well-being, of fulfillment, that you most deeply seek or aspire for, invite this possibility into the realm of actuality here and now.

(15:31) And imagine your entire being completely saturated by this light of loving kindness, of natural purity.

(17:20) And turn your attention outwards, as if this light permeating your being, has filled to the point of superabundance, flowing over in all directions, flowing out. Open your attention now outwards, either specifically inviting someone to the space of your mind, someone who is very dear to you, a loved one, a friend, a relative, attend very closely, not merely to a mental image, but to the person, represented by a way of that image. Focus on the person, him or herself.

And with the question: what is your heart's desire? What is your wish, your aspiration? What happiness do you seek? And then with every out breath from this light at your heart, let this light flows out, embraced,

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suffused, permeate this individual as with every out breath you arouse the aspiration: may you like myself, be truly well and happy, and may you find genuine happiness and its causes.

May you find all the hedonic well-being that you need, and on that basis may you find genuine happiness, realize your heart's desire, and cultivate its causes.

And with each out breath imagine this person finding his or her own joy; finding the happiness that this person seeks.

Allow the appearance of this person to fade back into the space of your mind, and then for the rest of this session, you may invite another person and another, specifically invite them into the space of your mind, so that you may practice as before, or you may let your awareness simply be open, and see who comes to mind, who comes knocking at your door, and as soon as they come to mind, invite them in, focus closely, and practice as before.

(26:37) Open your awareness in all directions, attending to all sentient beings, and practice as before.

(27:57) Release all appearances and aspirations, and let your awareness rest in its own natural luminosity and purity, rest in the awareness of awareness.

(29:14) Teachings/instructions after meditation:

In between sessions as you continue to breathe, and always maintain this peripheral awareness, just lightly touching it with your awareness of the in and out flow of the breath, and practice close applications of mindfulness of the body, but especially when somebody comes into your field of vision. Here in the mind center, you're out for a walk, you go to the sport center, or you're just walking and you see people coming by in their cars, their little motor scooters, and so forth. You can always do this, just breathe out, imagine engulfing them, embracing them in the light of loving kindness.

Enjoy your day.

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14 Mindfulness of the body (6)

02 Sep 2012

O Laso, This is our last day, in this first cycle of the close applications of mindfulness to the body. *So as I mentioned before, we'll have one week for the body. Next week Monday through Saturday for feelings, then mind, then phenomena, and then we'll go through the cycle all over again, but at the second time rather than having the primary emphasis be on these three marks of existence, impermanence, dukkha (suffering), non-self, in the second cycle well then, we'll really be focusing more on the theme of emptiness.*

The 1st turning of the wheel of dharma, with emphasis on the three marks of existence to answer "what is real"?

So we'll have our full 8 weeks here, but as we wrap-up this week for the close application of mindfulness on the body, some just central themes of this overall practice, maybe worth noting, and I do find the union, or the bringing together of the Sauntrantika view, really Classic Buddhist Philosophical view very much in accordance with Abhidharma, which again there is the wisdom teachings corresponding to, or associated with the Sutras teachings and so forth. *That here this primary emphasis is simply on these three marks of existence, and the aim of this is to see simply "what is real", and "real" in Sauntrantika sense.*

Real means, the real actually does things, it's there, it has causal efficacy, it has influence, it arises independence upon causes and conditions, it in turns gives rise to further effects, so this whole nexus, this whole network of causality or "Pratityasamutpada", dependent origination.

The aim here, and I note this, I mean, it's just a marvelous union of the teachings from the Indo-Tibetan tradition, the Sanskrit Tibetan tradition from the Pali. Seeing how these two waves come together in the interference pattern, so to speak, between the two, is really quite marvelous, I think hardly anybody has done it yet, but it's really quite a celebration. So what's the point of these four applications of mindfulness is: *what do you finally see, when you are really getting a clear vision?* When you're seeing with the eyes of vision, and the Tibetan term is "chu tsam" *You're seeing simply phenomena.* What does that mean - simply, well

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whenever you see the “chu tsam”, simply, then you can ask, what’s being cut out? *What is being eliminated by saying, simply phenomena, and what is being eliminated here is the conceptual projections upon.* And so, it is very very common, or see for yourself whether this is common, this is so radically empirical, that in our relationship, in our attitude, our way of viewing our own bodies, our own temperament, other people, our jobs, our environment, our possessions and so forth, *it is ever so easy to be superimposing*, not deliberately but rather unconsciously, *superimposing a sense of more stability*, more immutability and more durability that is in fact there, *just a sheer projection, but then not just projecting, but then unconsciously conflating the projections with realities so we can’t tell the difference any longer, and that is called con-fusion.* There is a reality there but then we fuse it together, con-fuse with that which we’re projecting, *we’re seeing that which is by nature impermanent as being permanent, and why? Because there were cognitive hyperactivity disorder.*

(3:35) *And that is we’re superimposing something that isn’t there, and then conflating it with something that is there.* Now this happens all over the place in so many cases, psychology, it’s called transference.

Transference where we’ll be transferring experiences and so forth from one person, let’s say a father, and this is transferred over to a lover or to a friend or to a Dharma teacher, whatever you, transferring over and then conflating what we’re projecting with what’s actually there, and then of course becoming confused, it is a perfect term, right?

(4:20) So transference, very specific thing in psychology, gives rise to a lot of problems, unnecessary problems, stemming from literally confusion, but this is one’s really deep and is quite ubiquitous, it is not just with ones fathers, mothers, whatever you, but this way of viewing reality where we’re really seeing things, assuming things, apprehending things, as being more durable, static, unchanging that in the fact they are, and then being chocked when reality shatters that illusion. How could he die, he was so young? How could she get sick, she was so healthy? How could I be getting old, I used to be young a long time ago? And so forth, but being chocked again and again, Oh! I can’t believe it! I must be dreaming! Right? That kind of thing and that is just for one.

And then, a big one, enormous impact! I mean, talk about a revolution, and that is the ways we ever so often, *as we are seeking happiness, find some object, a person, a place, some idea, whatever you, and then imputing that as: that will make me happy!* Or this is making me happy, and the finger comes out: this is what’s holding me together, it is my guru, it is my girlfriend, it is my boyfriend, it is my job, is my status, that’s what’s holding me together, that’s what’s doing it for me. It’s delusion.

(5:45) And so, that’s the 2nd point of dukkha (suffering), not misapprehending, not superimposing, here is the source of my happiness, and then, lo and behold, then surprise, surprise, getting disillusion with the spouses, you know? After being married a year, two years, whatever you, ah! You’re not what you’re cracked up to be. You didn’t turn out as well as I thought! You were supposed to just bring me happiness every single day, and frankly you’re not living up the job description! It is crazy! But then, I think that’s probably the root of most of divorces, and the root of most crazy marriages. Is thinking you’re my better half, you complete me, as if there is somebody that only got 50% of a Buddha nature and the other Buddha nature is kind of wandering around like a stray dog, where is the other part of my Buddha nature? It is really crazy!

(6:38) And so there, to wake up and smell the roses. *Phenomena are phenomena, people are simply people, they’re not the source of your happiness, they’re probably not even the source of their happiness.* Most of them don’t have a bounty to spill over, “I got surplus fund of happiness, have some of mine” some people yes, but most people not so much.

(7:02) So this conflating of our expectation, as the Dalai Lama said, when he first led me in my lamrim retreat *“expectation is the foundation of failure”*, you might want to remember that one, expectation about relationship, expectations about getting a certain education, a certain job, a certain acquisition, a certain status and so forth and so on, and seeing, ah! dukkha (suffering), *I was wrong. Phenomena are just phenomena they’re not actually sources of happiness, and in fact the appearances themselves are not actually a source of unhappiness either*, it’s all built into the system, it’s how am I apprehending reality. Then this final one, and on the one hand it’s seems so superficial easy, totally easy to understand, and that is if I’m attached to it, take seriously, this is my cell phone and then it’s damaged then I really feel troubled by that.

In fact the Tibetans don’t even have a way of saying, “I have”, “I have a cell phone”, of course they can say that, but you know how they say it? “na la cell phone yo” - *The cell phone is present for me.* How substantial

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does that strike you? “na la” - with respect to me, “cell phone yo” – a cell phone is present, for me, and then it’s not.

(8:32) But the notion that I have it that somehow there’s something there, something more substantial than, “it is for me to use” because we’ve agreed upon that. It’s not there even in the language; of course Tibetans can be as possessive, selfish, greedy as anybody else. *But the language suggests already that the notion of ownership is not built in.* The simple point and that is, insofar as I’m identified with my gender, my race, my religion, my nationality, my ethnic group, and so forth and so on. People of my height, of my eye color, people named Alan, and people say, “People named Alan are really blablabla (gibberish)”, then if I’m identifying with that name, I say “oh...(sounds disappointed)”. Or (when people say) “those northern hemisphere people”, and if I’m identifying with that, then I can suffer, so wherever we’re identifying with, we’re kind of sticking our chin out into reality and saying, “hit me”. (Gives example of identifying) *“I’m a northern hemisphere person and I’m ready to suffer for any disparaging comments about northern hemisphere people”*. It can be anything. (9:51) *So on one level it’s easy, so just withdraw all these tentacles of “I am, and mine”, and personal identity, and ownership and possess.* Withdraw, give it up, after all it’s just a projection in first place. *What you projected you can unproject*, but then we get close and personal; then we get inside our skin, and inside our minds. Where it doesn’t seem to be mere conventional. If your knee hurts, it’s not like, “oh, well I’ll just decide it’s not my knee anymore, anybody wants a broken knee?” It’s not so easy, or you have emotions coming up, or some really troubling memories coming up, and say, “well, somebody wants my memory? I don’t want it anymore, I’d like to just release that one”

(10:32) *And so when it gets inside the skin, this closely held skandhas [the aggregates subject to clinging] then it gets a bit more serious. But we can ask, is it really fundamentally different? And that’s to be asked not with a lot of cogitation and reflection, there’s nothing wrong with that, but more probing into, really investigating closely.* In what sense, how is it that this appears to me mine? How does this get to me? How does it get me in its grip, or is that only because I have it in my grip of grasping?

So the point here is as one closely applies mindfulness, this is really, this whole 1st turning of the wheel of dharma, the four noble truths, close applications of mindfulness, as the core of vipashyana practice. *It’s really an exercise in radical empiricism, coming right down, scaling of all the dead skin of projections, conceptualizations, superimpositions and so forth and getting down to what’s real, and what’s real is what you can directly perceive, and what maybe existent, but not real is the ownership of this cell phone, and then we have all the others junk that we superimpose, that is not even true at all.*

(11:47) So we have three levels:

- *We have projections that simply have no truth, there is no reality to them, there’s no truth at all, we just make mistakes, we make projections, we exaggerate and so forth, it just happened in the Republican Conventions, there was a lot of that, just saying things that actually have no reality at all, just things that seemed like they good things to say at that time, but with no bases in reality.*
- *And then things like, this is my cell phone, yes that is true, yes it exists but it’s only conventional.*
- *And then things that are not just a convention, such as: this is solid, I can think it’s fluid, I can think whatever I like, but nevertheless there is something here that I’m directly perceiving, and I don’t have a whole lot of choice in the matter, it’s hard, right?*

So distinguishing that, and seeing through all of this, in this radically empirical sense of seeing things simply as phenomena, “chu tsam”, see them as phenomena. *So it’s not simply bare attention* like a woodchuck, just picking up sensations, mindlessly, just a little sensory detector. *It is attending very closely to reality, but with wisdom, with insight, with knowing what you’re seeing, knowing the impermanent as impermanent, knowing the dukkha (suffering) as dukkha, knowing the non-self as non-self*, then that seeing, that’s much more than bare attention, that’s direct perception imbued with insight, knowing things as they are, peeling off the layers by this close applications of mindfulness, peeling off the layers of all the stuff we pile on, in daily life.

(13:26) So there’s something quite fascinating about this, I mean so many fascinating things, and some of them quite diametrically opposed to the trajectory of western civilization going back more two thousand years, and what I’m referring to here is something that really saturated pretty much the first three, at least two hundred, and more like three hundred years of the rise of modern science. Let’s say since Copernicus, and that was a virtually unquestioned assumptions by the people, these natural philosophers or scientists, seeking to understand the nature of creation, and the overwhelming assumption from Copernicus right

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through Newton, and right through James Clerk Maxwell late nineteenth century, as a devout Christian, was that there is a supernatural agent, somebody who stands absolutely outside of nature, outside of nature and creates the natural world, and not only creates it, but imposes laws upon it which we then call the laws of nature, and then moral laws, ten commandments and so forth and so on, not only it creates it, and then superimpose the laws, and then also intervenes, supernaturally intervenes and then punishes and rewards, and so wow! Somebody is really in charge here, and then the natural philosophers having these aspirations, these apotheosis as I mentioned before, wanting to know what is this natural world look like, from a supernatural perspective, an outside perspective, an absolutely objective perspective, God's own perspective and that is not speculation, they actually said this. So this was very much a theological quest, especially for the earlier ones including Newton, he wrote, in the last twenty five years of his life, much more theology than he did in physics.

(16:08) And so there is something that is underpinning arise well western civilization, since going back to the Jews certainly through the Christian tradition, so that everything is steaming from a supernatural source, and there is a supernatural perspective on the natural world, that really undergirds most of modern science, and then together with this here we are, we creatures, we human beings that were created on the six day, and the notion that we also have a supernatural core, our souls, our immortal souls that carry on from this life time, to some eternal destiny, actually in roman Catholicism, limbo, purgatory, heaven and hell, you got four destinations, and that's it. In other words you're out for a long ride, and that which carries on is supernatural, it's your immortal soul standing outside of, and then the question is: does this immortal soul have free will or not. This separate entity that stands apart from the body, apart from the mind, does this entity, you, have free will?

(17:16) That's an awfully big issue, and the stakes are extremely high, because if you do not have free will, and God sends peoples to hell, that's a really raw deal, I mean that really cosmically, galactically stinks, that somebody would create somebody and say: I am creating you, and you don't have any say in the matter, but I'm just going to punish you forever, Just 'cause I kind of felt like it. To say that's mean is an understatement. So the stakes are very high, we better have free will, otherwise he's really a stinker, I mean a cosmic stinker to do that to sentient beings who had no choice in the matter at all, it's tough enough to live a finite little life for a few decades, and then go off to eternal hell, because you screwed up, that's pretty tough but if you get eternal punishment for not even screwing up at all, because you are programed to screw up, that really stinks. And so the stakes are very high, so we got this supernatural God, we have a supernatural soul, and then working out these two, you know the dynamic between these supernaturals, well guess what in Buddhism neither one of those is anywhere on the horizon, no supernatural, super ego, that creates the entire universe, and stands outside of it and has a supernatural absolutely objective perspective, nowhere, no evidence and nowhere positive, and then how about a supernatural little God namely the person, the ego, the soul? Not that either, so we've just solved two problems with one stroke, what a relieve!

(18:04) And what we're left with then, is not even any aspiration to gain a supernatural absolutely objective view on the nature of reality, independent of human experience, because that perspective is never even positive in the first place, and we know never even really worry about free will, as some absolute anthropological entity, but rather practically speaking, when we are more free, and when we last free? And that's a totally practical question, as I said before between psychosis, and being an arhat that's a pretty big bandwidth of more, more and more freedom.

So this theme that now crops up in some of the most delicious modern physics, namely Quantum Cosmology, the theme of observer participancy, the notion that it is completely futile to try to understand the nature of the universe independent of all systems of measurements, because the universe is always rising relative to systems of measurement, which means it's always a role of observer participancy, well that's just core Buddhism, not that they got it from Buddhism, but that is core Buddhism all the way through, that the subject and object are always entangled, what we're experiencing is always entangled with our experience of it, and so in a midst of that, this then is a thoroughly naturalistic way of viewing reality when in the Satipathana it said view things as "chu tsam" as mere phenomena it's saying as purely natural, no supernatural entities out there, who're creating it or doing it to you, no supernatural entity in here, that somehow stands outside of nature and is experiencing it, it's all within the web within the network, within the matrix of dependent

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origination and in a midst of that there are of course individual, sentient beings, people and so forth, this is my cell phone, this is my hair, these are my thoughts, all of that has a certain relative truth to it.

(19:52) *But the point here once again and then in summary is just simply to see that which is real as real, and not conflate it with our projections upon it. So it's quite simple! I know there have been a lot of teachings and you can study commentaries to the Satipatthana sutra and you can make it more complicated, but it really is coming back to closely applying attention in the spirit of a radical empiricism, to look ever so closely at the phenomena that arise in all of the six domains of experience, and to see them as they are, not con-fused by our conceptual superimpositions especially pertaining to impermanence, dukkha (suffering) and non self, to see them as they are. So, quite simple.*

2nd turning of the wheel of Dharma with the emphasis on the three marks of existence: use intelligence to uncover the ultimate nature of phenomena which still appear deceptively.

(20:40) Just a little sneak preview, when we go into the 2nd turning of the wheel of dharma, The Perfection of Wisdom, which is then systematized for example by Nagarjuna in the Madhyamaka the Middle Way View, then, *now the theme is really to realize the ultimate nature of phenomena, not simply whether they belong to a personal self, or whether they are by nature pleasure, whether they're permanent and so forth but kind of an anthological probe, how finally do phenomena exist? Do they exist by their own intrinsic nature by their own inherent identity, do they or do they not?*

And now a different type of methodology is going to be needed, most people, there can be rare individuals, but most people will not get that, simply by closely applying mindfulness to appearances, and why? It is actually quite simply, and that is if you are in the midst of a lucid dream, you're dreaming and you know you're dreaming and you're closely applying mindfulness to the appearances, the appearances still seem to be arising from their own side. You attend to them very, very closely, but they still lie to you, or to give the analogy in waking life on the Buddha's path, when you become an arya-bodhisattva so you've gained direct realization of emptiness, I mean it is pretty powerful, and you're a bodhisattva, direct realization, arya-bodhisattva and then you come out of your meditation on emptiness and you attend to the world around you and how does things appear? As if from their own side, things still appear to be really there from their own side, even though the arya knows they are not, they still lie to him or her, the appearances are still there. In other words you're not going to realize emptiness just by attending very closely to the appearances, because they lie to you the whole way through, even after you have realized emptiness they still lie, they still appear in a way that they are not, just as even after you become lucid in a dream, phenomena's still appear to be from their own side, you know they're not, but they still appear that way.

(22:53) So then we need something more than this radical empiricism, or the very close inspection of just the phenomena's themselves, *then we need really the eyes of wisdom, this onthological probe that's when we start probing into the nature of exactly how is it the phenomena emerge. What is their nature? How do they dissolve? Do they really exist by their own nature or to the extent that they exist in relationship to the subject, what's the nature of that relationship?*

So that second one is driven by intelligence, that 2nd turning of the wheel of Dharma, The Perfection of Wisdom, the Nagarjuna, the Madhyamaka *is not just paying close attention, closely applying mindfulness, that's way he has all of his syllogisms, he's taking your intelligence and say we just need you to max out your intelligence, use all of it, perfect it, developed better, better, better because you're going to need it for the 2nd turning of the wheel of Dharma, you really need all the intelligence you can, because you can't just take appearances at face value, and believe them.*

In the 3rd turning of the wheel of Dharma, rigpa recognizes rigpa.

(23:56) And then we come to the 3rd turning of the wheel of Dharma, which we'll just elude to now and then, during this eight weeks to come, turning to Buddha Nature, to rigpa, to pristine awareness, the tathagata-garbha and *here are teachings about the ultimate dimension of consciousness that transcends all concepts, transcends all words, transcends all imagination, all symbols, totally transcended even and that is most clearly I think, elucidated in the Dzogchen tradition, the Mahamudra tradition, that even transcends the conceptual demarcation of existence and non-existence, Buddha Nature does it exist or not? In even that you're already trapped because you're trying to capture it within a conceptual category of the existence versus non-existence and it is untrappable.*

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So to gain a direct realization of rigpa, pristine awareness, Buddha Nature, the tathagata-garbha, dharmakaya (mind of Buddha) well *it's certainly not just by looking at appearances* that won't do it, and *it's not simply by an ontological probe trying to find out*, how do phenomena exist, by their own inherent nature or not, that won't do it. It has to be another kind of faculty, and so it's with the perfection of wisdom taking our faculty of prajiana that we already have, and perfecting it, using it to the hilt, that you gain realization of emptiness, and so the close applications of mindfulness with introspection and closely discerningly, wisely attending to appearances, that we realize impermanence, dukkha and no-self.

But when it comes to Buddha Nature, it is not just the close applications of mindfulness, that won't do it, and it is not simply using your intelligence, inadequate. *So how then can you know rigpa, how then can you know that dimension of awareness? And the only way that dimension of awareness can be known is by itself, that is only rigpa can know rigpa, the only way of knowing it is self-knowing, because it does not know rigpa as an object, the knowing of rigpa is always by necessity, non-dual, it is rigpa realizing itself.*

So the path is the end, is the ground, and I would say, if we have to find a word in English, it would be just kind of *your deepest dimension of intuition, beyond mere perception, beyond mere reason and inference and intelligence, but kind of the ultimate mode of knowing which is vidya, which is rigpa in Sanskrit, and vidya simply means knowing, it's knowing on that deepest level.* So it's not going to be irrational or antirational it'll be trans-rational and, this is why I personally like Naropa who was already brilliant, he was a consummate scholar, tremendous teacher, great author, great pandit, knew everything, one of the greatest, in the eleventh century or so, but for him to realize rigpa after being already so accomplished, for him to then break through, *not only appearances, but break to the limitations even of his brilliant intelligence, his wisdom*, then when Tilopa came to him to lead him to that break through, to the deepest dimension of awareness, he didn't do it by debating with him, or giving him one more text, you haven't read that text have you? Read this one and that will do it for you! It wasn't a text, it wasn't debating, it wasn't attending closely to appearances, *it was a smack on the face with a sandal! Trans-rational!* You find that really clearly in the Zen tradition in the Chan tradition, where there again seeking to break through to that.

(28:08) *So it's quite neat, radical empiricism, intelligence come to full blown perfection of wisdom, and then rigpa realizing rigpa, and the avenue is intuition*, or it says in the teachings on the 3rd turning of the wheel of Dharma, that you realize Buddha Nature, or tathagata-garbha *by a way of, shraddhaa (sanskrit), faith.* You realize by way of faith, *well faith is another word for intuition*, because it's not just faith in somebody else's authority, or the grandeur of a tradition, or the magnificent of a certain text and so forth and so on. *Faith here is not faith in something else or someone else.* So it's shradhaa. It is faith but it's faith that doesn't simply culminate in belief, but faith that goes trans-rational, and opens up a dimension of reality, that you can't access simply by attending to appearances, or even with the power of your intelligence. So there is the larger framework for these four applications of mindfulness.

For each of the 4 applications of mindfulness, the Buddha mentions in the Sattipathana sutra to attend 1) internally, 2) externally, and 3) both internally and externally. This allows us to shine the light of awareness and mindfulness on domains of our own experience.

(29:13) We have just one more session in this cycle, for the close applications of mindfulness to the body, but bearing in mind, very important, *that is the close application of mindfulness to all of the five domains of sensory experience, by means of which we access or able to apprehend the physical world, so the four elements within, the four elements without.*

Central theme, which I've not mentioned yet, so I have to mention it 'cause it's very important and incredibly useful also, and that is we have this close application of mindfulness to the body internally, we've been doing that, what we haven't been doing yet, and this won't be the theme for this session either, because it's not so practical when you're just sitting quietly on your cushion, but the close applications of mindfulness to the body, externally, where, and I have eluded to this, when we're attending to another person to their physical presence, after all that's how we attend, is by way of their body facial expression and all of that, that close application of mindfulness that full attendance, I cited Laurence Freeman yesterday, the greatest gift you can give, so that close attendance of application of mindfulness to the body externally, and that is attending to somebody else's body. And that is attending to this, this is the outer display of this person, and so I'm giving you my full attention, and attending to what you can display, that I can actually directly perceive, and that's facial expression, tone of voice, physical activity and so forth and so on, so externally.

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(31:25) And then the culmination of that, and then we'll go to the meditation, internally, externally and then you might recall internally and externally. And that is when we're engaging with the person, not simply, for example when I'm in an airport, I mentioned this before I think, I spend a lot of time in airports, which means waiting for airplanes, or at least sitting before the airplane takes off, and I'll just often simply watch people passing through, observing people, and I'm not really much of a participant, that is I'm not trying to engage with them they're just passing by I'm just attending to, wow! a lot the people here, and so I'm simply attending the other people externally, on one hand, on the other hand, for example this afternoon Chudun (name of person) came to my room, we had a conversation, so there we are one on one talking back and forth and so as I'm speaking, I'm attending to her responding to my words, and then she speaking and I'm sensing my responding to hers, that she can be observing me. So now it's not just me observing her externally it's me observing her, facial expression, tone of voice, behavior and so forth, in relationship to what I'm bringing, as I'm responding in relationship to what she's bringing and so there's a really nice word for this in Modern Philosophy and Psychology, it's Systems, Systems Theory, and that is I'm not just looking at this person, this entity here or just that entity there, but now there is something that is unique that was not there already.

It is Alan Wallace arising relative to Chudun, Chudun arising relative to Alan Wallace only once in a while, because normally she is arising relative to herself, or other people and so forth and so on, but when we had our 15 minute conversation, then she's arising relative to me. I'm arising relative to her something unique is taking place and it's over when she leaves the room, and that was Chudun a la (in relation to) Alan, Alan a la Chudun arising dynamically in into relationship with each other in a conversation.

But then observing that whole system taking place, that I'm not just observing her, she is responding to me, she maybe observing me but it's not just me, it's me responding to her, and so that system there, that's right there on the Buddha's discourse, hardly ever even mentioned, as far as I can tell, and yet there it is, and it comes for every single one of the four applications of mindfulness of the body and right on through, *attending internally, externally, internally and externally*.

It's really brilliant! And it's simple, but then we see the pratitysamutpada, *the dependent origination, of other people's behavior vis-à-vis (facing) our behavior*, our behavior vis-à-vis of other people's behavior, my feelings, your feelings, my thoughts, aspirations, memories and so forth vis-à-vis yours and this whole codependent arising, arising, arising, quite amazing!

I hope I give some impression, some intimation of the tremendous richness of this practice, and the richness really comes not from some text, which is only a few pages long in Satipatthana sutra, not long, *but the richness comes just from the richness of our own existence here*.

And what the Buddha's doing is giving us a bright light, in fact he's not even giving us 'cause the bright light is our own awareness, he's not giving us that, but he is giving teachings here, to enable us to shine that light of mindfulness clearly, discerningly, sharply upon these different aspects of our own existence here, and our relationship with the world around us. So it becomes clear, and we move from the darkness of delusion into the clarity of awaking. It is very cool. Oh yeah!

So we'll have one session, I'll use few words, and not really much new this time, but kind of a summing up, as our last session for this cycle on the close applications of mindfulness to the body.

(35:08) Meditation:

(35:40) With the aspiration to awaken, to see reality as it is. To put to the test of experience the theme that only the truth indeed will make us free. Let your awareness slip into and permeate the field of the body, settling your body in its natural state and the respiration in its natural rhythm, and calm and balance your mind for a little while by way of mindfulness of breathing.

(41:12) Open all of your five sense doors, that is of the five physical senses of course, let your awareness be still, as free of grasping as possible, quietly, unmoving and non-discursively, attend to the comings and goings, the appearances and disappearances of phenomena within the visual, the auditory, the tactile. Moment to moment attend to what is real, that what you can directly perceive, which arises in dependence upon causes and conditions, substantial causes, cooperative conditions, and in turn gives rise to effects, ever fresh, unprecedented, momentary. As you observe these appearances, each one arising, within its own causal nexus, observe closely. Does anything here belong to anything else? Does anything belong to you? Is there

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within this field of experience anything that is you? Are you anywhere to be found, you as the agent, you as the observer?

(45:43) These appearances of shapes and colors, of sounds, of tactile sensations, are they anything more than mere empty appearances with no substance, no core, nothing really there absolutely, just the appearances themselves? Appearances arising from the space of awareness, some called the Alaya, the substrate, perhaps even nothing more than configurations of that space that emerge from the space, crystalize and dissolve back into that space.

(47:16) Within this relative context then, the emptiness of your own substrate, the emptiness of the space of awareness, taking on form, very much like a dream, emerging from the space of awareness, dissolving back into it. An emptiness of space taking on form, and yet the form being nothing other than configurations of that space, and the form being empty of anything other than space.

A relative interpretation of emptiness is form, form is emptiness apart from form there is no emptiness, apart from emptiness there is no form, observe closely. Is this true or not?

(53:30) And attend closely especially to the body, which after all, is in the center of your physical universe, these appearances arising here of earth, water, fire and air. Are they anymore yours than colors and shapes that you perceive, sounds that you hear? Are they anything more than phenomena arising in the space of awareness, dissolving back into that space? Is there something malleable here? Can you loosen your grip hold them less closely? Simply observe these phenomena with no owner, simple phenomena.

Teachings after meditation:

(59:50) O Laso, some final concluding comments on this practice, in broader context, nowadays, specially as Buddhism has become popularized, and to some considerable extent commodified, and it can't be helped, people have to rent meditation halls, they have to pay for airline tickets, meditation teachers have to make a living, so in a way, you have to charge, but it does get commodified, overwhelmingly it's almost always the case, and then it's a buyer's market, and that is you better offer something people want to listen to. If you offer let's say, a week long retreat on the ten non-virtues, and I'm going to really unpack them, come one come all (laughs), lot's of luck with that one..., so what sells? Dzogchen sells really well, it's so cool, so weekend Dzogchen, one week Dzogchen. I do it, I go from here to Australia, and we'll have a one week on Dzogchen, and I say it without embarrassment, people requested it, I'm happy to offer it. There is one beautiful short text by Dudjom Rinpoche, gives the view, meditation way of life, I'm going to do it, I will contextualize it.

(1:01:14) Some people listen to Dzogchen and say, I really like that and they may have no teachings at all, or none that actually got in, on the teachings of the Perfection of Wisdom, teachings of emptiness, Madhyamaka (Middle Way), just Dzogchen but they really like it. Is it possible if you've not had any rigors training in Madhyamaka, Perfection of Wisdom, teachings of emptiness, is it possible to receive teachings just on Dzogchen and gain realization of rigpa? Is it possible? There's a correct answer, and the answer is yes, it is possible for people of very sharp faculty. It happens.

On the other hand if you're not a person of sharp faculties, and this was from his holiness again, was when we were in Brisbane, last spring, we're having lunch together, it was a marvelous lunch, a number of people were there, and then we got up, he just spoke to me briefly about Dzogchen, and just made this comment. "If you don't have realization of emptiness, to realize Dzogchen is almost impossible".

So if you are practicing Dzogchen and say never mind all that teachings on Madhyamaka and so forth, then the chances are unless you're a person of very sharp faculties, you're not really practicing Dzogchen, but then you are not practicing anything else either, because there is not anything else, it is a false facsimile of Dzogchen, which means you're not getting that benefit, but you're not getting benefit from any other teachings, because you are not practicing them. Kind of simple.

(1:02:54) Then we have extraordinary teachings by some extraordinary teachers on, for example the six yoga's of Naropa, I've received those teachings by an extraordinary master way back in 1978, stage of completion practices, I mean incredibly profound, I say that with only faith. Geshe Rabten invited this great, I mean accomplished yogi to teach us this, and I was translating for him, the words were coming out from my mouth! I think I got the words right, and afterwards I went to Geshe Rabten and said, Geshe Rabten those were incredible teachings shall we practice them now, he said "no, no way, you're not ready for those teachings". He was the one that invited the lama, (Alan continues with the idea) I want you to have the seeds,

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meanwhile go back to your practice, that's for later. But I don't want those sutrayana teachings, that's for ordinary people, you know sutrayana people, I'm a six yoga's of Naropa person, I like those teachings. Is it possible to realize emptiness, to gain profound realization without teachings on madhyamaka, perfection of wisdom? The answer is yes, if you have very sharp faculties, and if you're not then you just going to be going through a routine, you won't really be practicing six yoga's, 'cause you're not capable! But you won't be practicing anything else, 'cause you're not practicing anything else. The same goes for chod, it's a marvelous practice. It's a deep practice. Could you without having a solid grounding in the teaching of emptiness, perfections of wisdom, just practicing chod, could you have realization of emptiness? You know the answer now, yes! If you're a person of very sharp faculties. And if not you're just engaging in a very cool ritual that you may like a lot. But then you're not practicing teachings on emptiness, and you're not really practicing chod, if you're not really prepared for it.

(1:05:00) Stage of generation, this is again directly from his holiness, stage of generation: dissolving everything to emptiness, arising with divine pride, pure vision, the mandala, your deity, hopefully a whole bunch of hands (joking). Is that Stage of Generation practice? if you've not realized emptiness, his holiness says, no, is more like a cartoon, if you've not realized emptiness what's the point of thinking I'm a big bull with lots of arms (joking), or I'm a beautiful naked lady look at my boobs (joking again), really what part of that is profound? If you've not realized emptiness it's just a cartoon, it's a play, it's visualization, it's a dance, very cool, maybe fun, really gives cool spiritual feelings. If you have not realized emptiness could you in principle practice Stage of Generation and realize emptiness? Now you know the answer, yeah! If you are a person with very sharp faculties, and if you're not, you're just going through a very rich, potentially very meaningful ritual, for which you're not getting the benefit 'cause you're not prepared. His holiness said you must have some genuine insight, some real understanding of emptiness. Otherwise that whole stage of generation is just a light show, rich with incredible symbolism, but it's still just a light show. Because there you are thinking, in my case I'm a Stanford PHD, oh by the way I'm also a vajrasattva. Vajrasattva by the way has a PHD from Stanford (joking), (keeps going) not a state university this is a real special vajrasattva a private university, best on the west coast, this must be a special vajrasattva, it's absurd!

(1:06:42) Then some years ago I read an article. It was quite a critical article, by Thānissaro Bhikkhu, he's an American monk, good scholar, reads very fluent pali, he's done a lot of good translation work. I don't think I've ever met him, but I know a number of his students, and he wrote an article it was published in one of the Buddhist journals. He was comparing the teachings on Satipatthana, the core vipashyana practice in the Theravada tradition to the teachings on Madhyamaka, teachings on emptiness. I didn't find it fair, but I find it useful.

He said, you know all that stuff about emptiness, and all the reasonings and syllogism, and so forth. It's all a very nice interesting head trip, but who's really getting benefit from that. Upon really reflecting upon the teachings of emptiness, who's actually finding their mental afflictions go down. And I think from his impression it really wasn't very effective; it was just really brilliant philosophy. Are your mental afflictions: craving, hostility, delusion, arrogance, jealousy, actually going down now that you had teachings on madhyamaka? And if the answer is yes, good! And if the answer is not, then what's the point of all that debating, and being so smart, giving all the syllogisms, and beating other people in debate if it's not touching your mental afflictions, so is the arrow striking your target? And I think he was making a valid observation, that in many cases it does not. And that's just a true statement.

I mean I've hangout with the Gelugpas for a long time, and there are marvelous Gelugpa Geshes, and yogis, I mean they are really spectacular. And there are other ones, who are very knowledgeable scholars, and can teach with great eloquence, articulate, precise, and so forth. No experience at all. That's true, and I'm not pointing any person, that would be just being judgmental, but it's a true statement. And you can be a professor of Buddhist studies, and write big books on madhyamaka philosophy and the arrows never strike the target, but you can get a full professorship and endowed chair and all of that, look at me I'm a hot shot (slang) Buddhist philosopher and they didn't even shoot in the direction of the target.

(1:09:02) So, it's interesting these four applications of mindfulness, 'cause it's coming right back to where we live. Do we on occasion apprehend that is which by nature impermanent as being permanent? Does that ever happen? Do we ever apprehend something that is not a true source of happiness, as being a true source of happiness? Do we ever apprehend, grasp on to something as not truly I or mine as being exactly that, I or

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mine, and do we suffer, or do we have our mental afflictions, craving, hostility and so forth, being aroused independence upon those delusions as ways of misapprehending reality? Does that happen or not? But this is where I live, interpersonal relationships, my job, my work, my possessions and so forth. This is where I live, and to what extent am I suffering unnecessarily, because of misapprehending the nature of reality? So I think Thānissaro Bhikkhu, on the one hand, I think he had an inadequate appreciation, this was years ago, so maybe now it's no longer true, but judging by that article, I would say at that time, he had inadequate appreciation of the cases in which teachings on madhyamaka really do work, and spectacularly, but he needed to step outside the Theravada cocoon, and spend some time with Tibetans, people like Gen Lamrimpa, people like Chadrrel Rinpoche, Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, Dudjom Rinpoche, Lingam Rinpoche, and the list goes on and on. These are spectacular individuals, and they have profoundly benefited by those teachings on emptiness, that he was kind of dismissing as an intellectual trip. Ok, we all have our limitations, maybe he doesn't have it any longer, or maybe he was simply making a point. That this is a danger, if you get totally caught up in philosophy as philosophy, it may never strike the target, in which case that's a valid point. (1:10:54) *So here we are on these four applications of mindfulness right where we live, and the teachings are simply saying, pay closer attention!* And not just with bare attention but with wise discerning intelligent attention, and use the philosophy, like a carpenter use his tool chest. Use the philosophy, to cut away the dead skin of all the junk we're projecting on other people, the environment, and ourselves, and see what's left over, when we're simply observing clearly, nakedly with discerning mindfulness. *What's real, and what are these mere phenomena that are arising in dependence upon causes and conditions.* And then I'll ask a final question, *if you have not achieved shamatha and you venture into these four applications of mindfulness, could you achieve liberation? The answer is yes, on occasion, remember Bahiya, he just heard the teachings...*, and this occurred on other occasion too, read the Pali Canon. People come to the Buddha they receive teachings, and at the end of the teachings they become stream enterer, which means they gained direct realization of nirvana, in other words it can happen!

(1:12:13) Tsongkhapa says: by way of vipashyana you may achieve shamatha, and if you're extremely ripe, very, very sharp faculties. By way of vipashyana, that may just pull shamatha right into it, and you may simultaneously realize union of shamatha vipashyana. That's for very, very sharp faculties. If you have very sharp faculties you may be able to practice just vipashyana and by that unveil shamatha, shamatha just springs up unifies with vipashyana and you gain direct realization. Mazal tov! (Congratulation). It could happen, bear in mind we go way back to Dudjom Lingpa teachings, stare into space for two weeks, you may realize rigpa, in which case skip all of the preceding stages, shamatha and vipashyana and skip trekcho, and go directly to togal, could happen, but if it doesn't you're not going to get there just be staring at space for six weeks, or for six years, or for six thousand years, thinking maybe if I just sit here long enough I'll become really sharp faculties. No, I think it's called just spaced out.

So this is why then, for those of us in my camp, who have extraordinary dull faculties, then step by step actually is a really good idea. *And then you see: is your practice that you're engaging in from day to day, is the arrow striking the target?*

We're suffering because of our own mental afflictions, so for practicing dharma it's to get those mental afflictions too soften; too attenuate, so we suffer less, we're happier, and the mind is more virtuous. And if you're practicing and you're not finding your mental afflictions are subsiding, and you're not finding virtues are increasing, and you're not suffering less, and you're not finding greater genuine happiness, you might want to shift your practice, so that the arrow is striking the target, because life is short.

These are the words of my teachers, these are not my words, I have nothing to offer. If I offer anything valuable you know it's not coming from me, I'm speaking actually seriously, sometimes a joke, that would be mine, but then you know how my jokes are, they're pretty corny (joking).

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Revised by Noa Leshem

Final edition by Rafael Carlos Giusti

15 Mindfulness of breathing (7)

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03 Sep 2012

Teachings:

This week will be devoted in the afternoons to the close applications of mindfulness to feelings, which is tremendously important to us since we care so much about our feelings every moment of the day and even in our dreams. *In the first three days of this week we will focus primarily on the feelings arising in the body, the feelings arising in relationship to our sensory experience and that is not just the body and then during the last three days of the week we will really focus primarily on mental feelings, happy, sad and indifferent.*

But the mornings will continue to be focusing on shamatha and for the first three days we will focus on the shamatha method that the Buddha himself specifically recommended for the four application of mindfulness namely mindfulness of breathing. I want to go back to basics here because some people, a few, rarely but it does occasionally happen, that a person goes through the whole 8 weeks training here and never learn how to breathe and then without that base it's really hard to have any successful, fruitful, joyful, transformative meditation practice. And learning how to breathe is learning how to release the breathing, it is not learning a new skill, it is learning how to disengage and allow the body to breathe because it is so much better at it than we are.

There are many ways we can damage our nervous system, we can damage it by way of meditation, damage by way of mispractice of pranayama, damage it with life style, damage it with drugs, damage it with mental afflictions, anger, resentment, rumination, there are so many different ways that we can cause our prana system, or objectively speaking, our nervous system to become dysfunctional.

(2:14) And then according to traditional Tibetan medicine if your prana system is out of balance nothing else in your body, or one can even say in your body-mind, will go very well. It is too core, and so it is ironic with this overwhelmingly materialistic view of the body that we have in modern medicine that prana - even existence of prana - is not even acknowledged. Well never mind that, at least a nervous system is acknowledged.

So in terms of healing and balancing, healing the injuries we have already inflicted upon our nervous system resulting in all types of symptoms, massive number of symptoms, obviously stress related disorders but a myriad of others as well.

Pranayama is like surgery and well-crafted surgery can be a life saver. Mindfulness of breathing is like naturopathy, and that is, it's allowing the body to heal itself and then we do everything we possible can, not to get in the way.

So for the breathing, we see this relates very strongly to the close applications of mindfulness to feelings, that is when feelings arise we tend to have very powerful habituation, deeply ingrained habituation to grasp onto feelings as "I" and "mine". I am in so much in pain physically, for example. We do not say my body is, we do not say pain is arising in my body, not very often, only when we're being clever. But when we're being spontaneous we just say I am in anguish, I am in pain. Or if it is mental we say I am miserable. That is almost like saying I am a man, I am Alan, *I mean a total fusion of identity.*

Well that is a habit that can be broken and we start with the breathing, we start where we can do it. We do not start with anguish or severe physical pain, we cannot do it but we can start with breathing. It is a skill that needs to be mastered; to be able to be fully witnessing the breath, aware of the breath and completely relinquishing control over it and by relinquishing control over it you stand a chance of not identifying with it, simply being present with it and that is the crack in the door, open that one up and see what bounty flows.

So in terms of finding liberation from pain in the body and pain in the mind there are two strategies and both have value; and one of these is doing everything we can to get rid of the pain or suffering, to get rid of it, get medical treatment and if it is necessary - if you are dying of bone cancer you need morphine, it will not heal you but it is better than just having unbearable pain. So if we can simply have the pain go away it is really very good. If we can heal it from its source by medical intervention, by psychotherapy and have some distress go away, very good. But even great yogis may die of cancer so they could not make the cancer go away by their meditation. So hedonic pain - that is stimulus driven pain - sometimes we cannot do anything about it, and if we can then we should.

But there is another avenue of liberation and that is release grasping, release the identification, and then the pain arises in the body and it is orphaned. You are seeing it like watching motes of dust floating in the air, they

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are not your dust, they are just arising in the space and *they have no owner and they do not grip you*. If you do not grip them, they do not grip you.

So let's try with breathing first. It is a skill and you really need to master it and it is more difficult in the sitting position than it is laying down because in the sitting you have to be tensing some muscles or you will fall over. So you are totally relaxed and see if you can breathe totally naturally, as if you are overhearing your breath, as if you happen to be simply witnessing, like witnessing the breathing of a person in bed with you: in and out, in and out, and you have nothing to do with it. Witness your breath like that. *First master it in the supine position, if you master that then you can see about sitting. Let's jump in.*

Meditation:

Joyfully as you set out taking the first steps and fully healing your body and your mind, irreversible and completely, joyfully let your awareness descend into and fill the space of the body. You are about to do something really good for yourself so do it lovingly and as soon as your awareness fills the space of your body you may be immediately aware of areas that feel tight, gently attend to them as you breathe in, simply take note of them, and as you breathe out, let go.

Soften all the muscles of the face and especially soften in the eyes. And in this stillness moved only by the breath, balance vigilance with relaxation.

And now for the breath, the entry here is the out breath, it is the easiest time to relax, to let go in every way, to relinquish all effort and just let the breath flow out like water out of a glass.

Then with every out breath relax and release more and more deeply in the body in terms of muscular tension. Like letting a dog, a frisky dog, off a leash, just release rumination, wandering thoughts, memories, images, just let them go with every out breath.

(12:14) And as you approach the end of each exhalation see especially then that your mind is quiet, that you are very attentive, as you release the breath to the last drop without expelling it; but do not inhale prematurely, in fact do not inhale at all, do not take the breath, do not pull it in, release, release and release until the next in breath is given, flowing in on its own accord and receive just what is given without pulling in anymore or without in anyway inhibiting the in-flow of the breath. Attend closely, but with no control or preference.

(14:15) Abandon all expectations and preferences as to how you think the breath should flow. Your opinions are irrelevant, just as your opinion on how the liver should function and how your stomach should digest food, just let it do its business. Keep out of the way.

(17:30) Set your mind at ease with an act of will, releasing all concerns, all ruminations concerning the past and the future. And for the remainder of this session continue with the mindfulness of breathing in any of the three modes of your choice, but most importantly release all control, all sense of identification of I or mine regarding the respiration, it is just the body breathing.

And let's continue practicing in silence.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Revised by Phil Gardner and Erik Koeppel

Final edition by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Posted by Alma Ayon

16 Mindfulness of feelings (1)

03 Sep 2012

Teachings:

This week we return to the second of the four applications of mindfulness and very briefly there is this highlight on feelings which could so easily be simply included in the third of the four applications of mindfulness, namely four applications of mindfulness to the mind, after all at least mental feelings are occurring in the mind but the physical and mental feelings are giving their own special category, their own special highlight. The reason is kind of obvious and that is that we care, whether we like to or not, *we care about feelings, we care about pleasure and pain and we have no choice in the matter, really no choice*. And

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from the Buddhist perspective we have no choice about it forever, I mean there is just no end to it, not death, not enlightenment, not anything: so it is really core and as His Holiness Dalai Lama said many years ago at one of the Mind and Life meetings, and my sense was it was a very individual search, his own quest, a kind of introspection rather than drawing on his incredible erudition, *but he commented that he felt that the deepest impulse we have as human beings is the impulse of caring*. It is more fundamental and more primal than the derivative experiences of let's say craving and hostility in a more afflictive mode, or in a more benevolent mode, loving kindness and compassion.

(2:39) Why do we crave *anything*? Because we care. And why do we get upset about anything, hostile, aggressive, hateful? It is because we care. And likewise for loving kindness and compassion: it is all stemming from this caring, so I really think he nailed it. And there it is, this prime mover that literally does move us and we will never relent, that it will never cease in terms of our own well-being until we have fulfilled our own interest, our own well-being, it will never let us rest, not even if you become an arhat according to Mahayana, even then you've not fulfilled even your own self-interest let alone bodhicitta in the interest of others because you have not realized dharmakaya. So even there, even an arhat from the Mahayana perspective cannot just rest, after sometime, timeless time, something moves and then the arhat is set, nudged, catalyzed, moves onto the bodhisattva path. So that is why it is said in Mahayana, there is only one final destination: perfect awaking. So it is very core, that is why naturally among the five skandhas, feelings gets its own skandha and among the four applications of mindfulness, feelings gets its own application.

This Mudra is so marvelous, this mudra of meditative equipoise, left hand beneath right hand above and the thumbs touching. Left hand symbolizes wisdom and the right hand symbolizes methods of skillful means and one could say compassion. So the left is supporting the right and if we look the array of practices that I am commonly emphasizing wherever I go, that is the array of shamatha practices, the four applications of mindfulness and the four immeasurable, *these four applications of mindfulness are the perfect basis for the cultivation of the four immeasurables, they are the cognitive basis*.

(5:00) And so as we closely apply mindfulness to feelings arising in the body, feelings arising in relation to the senses, the five physical senses, back to the physical domain again, so this is a kind of extension of our first week which was very much attending to the body and the physical field but now within those, or relative to these, there is something that really *catches our interest and that is our feelings: do you like it or not?* The visual, the auditory and so forth. Today we will focus on the tactile but boy we really care about it, even when we are dreaming and all we have is a mental body and are not even aware of our body lying in bed, even then we care about this little figment of our imagination and the so called physical feelings that are arising in a dream body – we even care about that. We care about mirages, feelings arising in mirages, in other words: we are really care.

So we are focusing today on *these feelings arising in the body and here is a cognitive basis for empathy*, because without empathy there is no such thing as loving kindness, if you do not have the sense that the other person is wishing for happiness, experiences joy, then you will never experience loving kindness for them if you do not know that they wish for happiness and they are experiencing happiness, they have potential for happiness, loving kindness is never going to happen - so there has to be that empathy. I can feel no empathy for a cell phone, I look at it, it just leave me cold because I am just assuming that it has no feelings, I just use it. It is an "I – It" relationship, I am the "I" and here (cell phone) is the "It", get over it, but there is nothing to get over because there is nothing there, it is just zero consciousness so there is no empathy for that.

As we are attending to the feelings arising in the body we are laying now a cognitive basis for empathy with all the sentient beings we are likely to encounter, let's leave out those in the formless realm, we do not need to worry about those, for the rest in the form realm, but really the desire realm, that is where we live.

There are 7 billion human beings but there are also all these others creatures all of whom are embodied and so when we look at the more primitive animals like insects, reptiles, others mammals and so forth, at least for myself I do not really know what is going on in their minds, if they are experiencing anxiety, hopes, fears and so on. We do not know what is going on in the mind of these creatures. But when it comes to physical pain of course I do not know either but I can draw some inferences. For example I can draw inferences even for earth worms as I see that they are struggling across the pavement and it is getting dryer and dryer and they are going slower and slower. I let my imagination play and my imagination says: "I bet they are not feeling so

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good because it is too warm and they are not getting enough water element. I bet they do not like it.” It is primitive but I know they are feeling too dry. I know they are struggling and are not getting what they want. Whether it is the worms or any other kind of sentient beings, here is something that I can say, *ok, I can empathize with you.*

I was reflecting this afternoon and I think when we are talking about *the feelings arising in the body* for all of us human beings and animals, *that my sense of it is: too much, too little, or wrong - of the four elements.* Too much of the earth element you feel crushed, it is too much, like this is hurting, lighten up. But if it is too little you may feel vertigo, you may feel disoriented and so forth. And then the wrong kind: sometimes, we just get pressure where we don't want it, or in a way we don't want it, it does not feel good, too much, too little and wrong, inappropriate, disagreeable. And then water, if you have too much water you can be drowning, you can be sweating; and then I was thinking of fish and they cannot have too much water but they can have too little, for example fish on the beach. For one little insect one drop of water is deadly so one drop is too much. Too much fire is painful, too little is freezing.

So earth, water, fire and air, too much, too little and wrong, that is true for all of us creatures here of two legs, four legs and so on; too hot or too cold, we all get that one. I think even the most basic primitive sentient beings. Even the most basic and primitive sentient being, like a hydra as Francisco Varela suggested, which is the simplest organism that actually has a nervous system, but we do not know if they have consciousness. But there are very primitive organism, that are conscious, and even they respond to too much heat or too much cold. We know because they move away or they move towards in the presence of too much heat or too much cold.

It is really basic. And just by the way, that too much, too little, and dysfunctional, that lies at the very core of Indian and Tibetan traditional medicine. So basically human disorders, physiological, psycho-physiological disorders are understood in terms of too much, too little and dysfunctional and I've applied that same format to the Buddhist model of mental health in terms of conative, attentional cognitive, and affective: too much, too little, and dysfunctional; seems to be a pretty good model that works again and again.

But the point here is that by attending to, really closely applying mindfulness to feelings arising in the body, we are establishing a cognitive basis for empathy for other human beings so we can easily get it looking at somebody else's facial expressions and we can start seeing what they are experiencing, inferring very, very well and so empathy for all other human beings so similar to ourselves and to other primates, it is very, very easy to see in the facial expression of chimpanzee, dogs and so forth. *There is no problem by seeing their facial expressions and we can empathize and see what they are experiencing.*

That is the foundation for the cognitive basis for empathy and empathy is the basis for loving kindness, compassion and the four immeasurable. So this is very deep, very important, these close applications of mindfulness to feelings. We are getting in touch with the feelings but we do not need to meditate to get in touch with feelings. Now again when we speak of vedana, translated here as feeling, feeling is a standard translation from Sanskrit and Pali, what we are referring to is very primitive. So we have emotions with tremendous nuance. I imagine, I know that Paul Ekman did this, when Eve, his daughter does the CEB Teacher Training, will go through this wide array of this tremendous vocabulary we have in English, this wide spectrum of the emotions which we feel – very, very nuanced, right? But when we are talking about feeling, vedana, *we are just talking about pleasure, pain and indifference, like, do not like and do not care,* it is really simple, really primitive, but those are the ones we care most about and that move us away, from or towards: like, do not like, and neutral.

(14:00) And so part of the brilliance of classical Indian is that they come up with the notion *that zero is a number and not an absence of number,* it is an enormously useful concept, imagine mathematics with no zero. As zero is a number likewise the Indians also brought that same kind of insight *out of the realm of quantity into the realm of quality,* and that is the feeling of neutrality, indifference and equanimity, it is not an absence of feelings. The cell phone has an absence of feeling, zero feeling, whereas feeling just neutral, at ease, neither happy nor sad, that is not no feeling, that is not an absence of feeling, it is a feeling, zero feeling. *As zero is a number, neutral feeling is a feeling. That is actually a very useful point.*

So as we now are about to begin the meditation, as we closely apply mindfulness to feelings, now I suggest on the skin and inside the skin so you have the borders are quite clear, the tactile, the somatic field, as you

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attend there it is not just feeling your feelings for which you need no training whatsoever, but rather it is closely applying mindfulness to them.

(14:50) When the Buddha addressed the first noble truth, reality of suffering, he said here is the reality of suffering, recognize it. It is a very simply statement but it is quite revolutionary because when we experience the reality of suffering, physical or mental, our first response tends to be as sentient beings, make it stop. I am going to try to move, I am trying to just make it go away, I do not want to deal with this and so whether medically just by taking a drug that suppress the symptoms like a depression or discomfort in the body and so forth, just make it go away, kill the messenger. *So that is a natural response when we experience pain or mental suffering, we just want it to go away*, we do not want to look at, we do not want to recognize it, we just want to stop it. If we identify with somebody else as a source of the pain we just want them stop or go away or vanish. We do not want understand anything: just stop, go away because you seem to be the source of my suffering: *that has not served us very well because exactly how far away from reality can we get?* That is why the Buddha said here is the reality of suffering, know it, recognize it, and so to recognize it is to closely apply mindfulness to it, to know it, to ascertain it.

(17:22) Now to the best of our ability simply to be aware it. And so as the Buddha said earlier to Bahiya: in the seen let there be just the seen, and so forth. So now likewise in the feelings of pleasure, pain and indifference arising in the body *let there just be the feelings of pleasure, pain and indifference*. Let them simply arise within the space of the body, simply be present with them, *aware of them without recoil, without dissociation, without retraction, without withdrawing*, but also very much *without fusion, without identification, without grasping, without thinking: my pain, my suffering, my body*, I hurt, I am in pain. *Neither going forward in grasping nor pulling back in grasping*, to be free of; just like space, simply be aware of and attending closely to the feelings arising within the space of the body.

Some of you reported in one conversation that in the practice of mindfulness of breathing pleasant sensations are arising, it happens, energy is flowing up, some bliss arising, pleasant feelings, sukka come up, sukka, sense of well-being arising in the body and so forth. It is good, that is pleasant, why not? Sometimes could even be bliss, frequently it is kind of neutral, and then especially when you have been sitting for a while, a sense of discomfort may arise here, there and everywhere and so then it is dukka, unpleasant feelings. *The idea here in this practice is simply attend to it, let it be, observe closely and closely apply mindfulness to the rise and passing of the feelings as much as possible without grasping but again not with disassociation, just being totally present*. So there is a key right there. When we are experiencing distress in the body maybe because of illness, injury and so forth, then the *hedonic response* is if you can to make it *go away* and if you can get to the underlying the causes of it, for example maybe it is an injury so you maybe need medical treatment or you have being sitting too long in one posture so you really need to move otherwise you may injure your knees and so forth. So that is a hedonic response of just doing what we can to make that feeling go away because it is an unpleasant one or *make a pleasant feeling stay and so that is the hedonic response*. But the *eudhamonic response*, or the wisdom response, would be - and these are not incompatible and both have their place -but when we at least for the time being see there is nothing I can do about the discomfort or maybe for the time being *I see there is nothing that needs to be done about the discomfort*, then we see all right, how about strategy number two, and that is *instead of resisting, instead of struggling with it, instead of identifying with it, instead of disliking it, be more like a scientist of discomfort, look at it with interest, look at it with inquiry, seeking to understand it. Is it static, is it changing?* And there are other questions to pose and you know what they are already. *But attend closely to it and then you may find the feelings arise and they simply arise in space but it does not get you in its grip*: it's just arising in space. So even if it's arising in space it may still be an unpleasant feeling, you recognize it as such but it is not seizing you and you are not seizing it. *It is arising in space and your awareness is like space*.

A very brief commentary, especially over the last four hundred years modern science and technology have provided a tremendous service for humanity as a whole to help us suffer less because of nature, the four elements, and this is actually a very prime directive, if you go back to Francis Bacon, early seventeenth century, one of the great pioneers of this great new quest of modern science, he made it quite clear that a prime directive, and he was very influential in kind of giving the tone, the orientation, the direction to what we now call modern science, but he was looking at nature as something from a very traditional perspective, and that was nature scares the hell out of us, I mean fire, earthquakes, floods, diseases and so on: nature was

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not a friendly place for going out on vacation, it was a place that was very frightening, largely unknown and could really cause damage to you, to your body, to your family, your village, it was very frightening. And so part of the motivation of modern science was: *let us understand nature so that we can start to control it; it is not a terrible idea*. For example, in New Orleans, Louisiana, it is very good they have dikes - that is controlling nature. When the dikes broke there is a catastrophe for the city. In the Netherlands, no dikes, no Netherlands. So we may say once again, too much, too little and wrong. Too much control and wrong control and we will have global warming and there will be all the environmental catastrophes that we have caused: too much and wrong. But too little control and our little shelters are falling down and we are freezing to death, or we are swept away by floods, and so forth.

So it is quite important to find the right amount and the right kind of control over nature, but in short science and technology have been a tremendous help to humanity, providing food for us, medical care, protection from the elements and so on. For example you can live and do retreat in Finland with the long winter there. Without science and technology it would be pretty tough. And even here without air conditioning it would not be so easy to live in Thailand and so all of that is good.

And for the eudhamonic we cannot criticize modern science and technology, saying that they have not helped us *also* with finding liberation, enlightenment and genuine happiness, since modern science was never designed to do that; it was not designed to do and does not do it and so people who think that is the only source of knowledge then have really put themselves in a very limited situation. *Happily we do not have to choose: are we going to be spiritual or are we scientific, we will be eudhamonic or we will be hedonic. We do not have to choose. We can actually be wise.*

Meditation:

Settle your body, speech and mind in their natural states.

(30:00) And now let your awareness permeate the whole field of the body and maintain an ongoing flow of mindfulness of the sensations throughout this field, of your body breathing, this whole ripple effect of the respiration going even into your legs and your arms. Maintain the flow of mindfulness of the system breathing.

As you have done before be aware of this flow of respiration, the sensations associated with it, but without being involved, caught up in it, identified with it, or of course without controlling or regulating in anyway.

(31:45) And with this being the constant, something you - in a manner of speaking - can hold on to, a point of reference, a point of engagement of your mindfulness with the present moment, maintain a field-awareness of the whole space of your body and take a special interest in any feelings that arise, not so much the tactile sensations of earth, water, fire and air, of course they arise and you are aware of them, but a special interest now in the feelings that arise in relationship to or in response to or in the way that you experience the tactile sensations of water, earth, fire and air in the body: attend to pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral feelings, observe them closely.

(33:40) *Every so often when we experience these feelings, especially pleasant and unpleasant feelings, we tend to focus on that which catalyzes, arouses, triggers the feeling, and then label and identify it as pleasant or unpleasant*, as if those qualities are intrinsic in the appearances or in the objects themselves. Consider that this may not be true. We say: *that's pleasant, that's unpleasant*, because of the way we experience it, and the subjective mode of experience, and not simply in the objective appearances. Observe closely, is this true or not?

(36:53) When you are experience pleasant and unpleasant feelings in particular, *these are the ones that catch the attention*, examine closely the sensations themselves, the tactile sensations of earth, water, fire and air. Examine to see whether the pleasant or unpleasant qualities are intrinsic to the elements themselves, these emergences in the space of the body, *or whether the pleasant and unpleasant is rather in your mode of experience. Examine closely.*

(38:41) *One experiential sign of an unpleasant feeling arising is the desire to move*. Note the desire then direct your attention to that which aroused the desire, the feeling, and closely examine its nature. *Is it static or arising moment by moment?*

(41:30) You are observing a system here, a field of experience. *But now take a special note: when you do direct your mindfulness to feelings arising within this field - does that influence your experience of the feelings,*

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in other words is there an observer participancy here? Does it make them diminish, increase or change them in any way, by the sheer fact of observing them closely, with mindfulness?

(48:00) If at times you want a bit of breather, a bit of rest, of course come back to the breathing, and deepen the sense of relaxation, stability and the clarity that are brought forth through this practice.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Revised by Phil Gardner and Erik Koepe

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Posted by Alma Ayon

17 Mindfulness of breathing (8)

04 Sep 2012

So this morning I'd like to talk about rats... which are very useful critters; I know, as an environmentalist, creatures all have their niche in nature. Rats are great [at] garbage disposal, but indoors they are not so useful; they tend to create more mess than they clean up. The analogy, of course, is: the rats are like thoughts and mindfulness of breathing is like a cat. Keep a cat in your house and the mice tend to leave!

Back in the 14th century, about one third of the European population was wiped out by the bubonic plague - it was rats! But wasn't just the rats, it was the rats carrying fleas, and the fleas are mental afflictions. But it wasn't the fleas that were the problem, that is, they carried the bubonic plague, and that's what killed everybody.

When we experience the symptoms of mental distress, two big ones are depression and anxiety. You might want to look for the cooperative conditions that catalyze it. You may find that every single time – just for those two, there's a broad bandwidth of mental suffering, but anxiety and depression are really very high in the list – you may check out, whenever you're experiencing depression or anxiety, whether it's not riding on the back of mental afflictions for starters (the answer is yes), and whether the mental afflictions are not carried by the rats of rumination.

So I'll remind you again, it's something really important, and that is Tsongkhapa points out – he's drawing on classic Indian sources, but it's not just authority, he's drawing on just generations and generations of tremendous degree of experience, contemplative experience tracing back to classical India – [he points out:] “if you want to achieve shamatha, not only during sessions, but in between sessions, you have to completely eliminate rumination”, or the Sanskrit term is *vikalpa*. You have to totally get rid of it. It's like an alcoholic just not drinking any booze any longer, at all, ever! That doesn't mean, of course, you never think; rats outdoors can be very, very useful. Indoors, let's call those rumination; the semi-lucid, the semi-conscious or non-lucid, thinking, rumination, which is just the fertile ground for the arising proliferation of mental afflictions which give rise to all kinds of mental suffering.

So the shamatha is just like a straight avenue, especially mindfulness of breathing. It's a straight method, not for curing the disease, but for totally suppressing its carrier, its host – mental afflictions. Just by doing that, [but] not by going unconscious. That's very peaceful, but that's all it is; you know, taking an anesthetic, drinking yourself into a stupor, falling deep asleep. It's all very nice, but nothing happens. It's not even blissful.

Whereas as in Shamatha, when you luminously, and lucidly, get your mind to calm down, and the conceptualization goes still, still, still... and your whole conceptual mind withdraws into substrate consciousness, then, lo and behold, it's not just peaceful – it's actually blissful! And luminous, and, of course, non-conceptual. So, by itself, does that cure the disease? No, it doesn't, but it gives you an awfully nice respite from the symptoms. Then, of course, the great boon here is by achieving shamatha, you're not only temporarily freed from, or have made dormant, the five obscurations; but you've also brought out the five dhyana factors. These are your tools, these are tremendous tools that you apply to vipashyana to really liberate the mind.

So this [point] cannot be too strongly emphasized: people who get depressed when they are in retreat, it's easy to get depressed in retreat. You're a junky who's been deprived of all of your stuff! No TV, no chit-chat,

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no work, no nothing! You're just sitting there in your cell. Like, "give me a fix, give me a fix!" and since you're not getting any fix, the body produces its own heroin: blah blah blah blah... you know, rumination. So, of course, you get depressed, but your depression is carried on the back of rumination. It's really true. This is where there's a marvelous compatibility, and not only compatibility but a synergy, with the four applications of mindfulness. Because it keeps on bringing us back to perception, which is not conceptualization and is not rumination. It keeps on bringing us back, and you come back; you may experience physical pain, if your body's in pain then sure you can certainly get that, but when you bring this laser-sharp awareness to it, even that can be attenuated. The degree to which physical pain grips you can definitely be influenced.

But so much of what troubles us when we are in solitude, when we are in retreat, is not so much physical pain – [although] that can be an issue – but mostly, it's mental. So coming back to the present moment, clearly, in perception, non-conceptually and attending closely in between sessions, [it's a] tremendous boon. [It's] almost like antiseptic, like washing down the halls with antiseptic between sessions. Then, while in your session, then you're really doing the deep work to tap right into the substrate consciousness. Bear in mind, this is tapping into, or leading us to, another whole dimension of knowing. It's called in Sanskrit *abhijñā*. "Abhi" means higher, like abhidharma – higher dharma. "Abhi" means something higher; also means manifest, [e.g.] Abhisamaya-alaṅkāra; clear, higher, manifest. And "jñā" simply means knowing, it's a higher knowing, like a higher frequency knowing, or what do we call that in English? Extrasensory perception. That is, we perceive by way of our ordinary five physical senses, and then we know all kinds of stuff on a coarse level by means of conceptualization. [It's] very useful, but mostly hedonic frankly; whereas tap into the substrate consciousness, you're now in a flow of knowing that is not sensory by way of the five physical senses, but is also not conceptual, because it is non-conceptual. You're just now in a flow of non-conceptual knowing and you're not knowing much, when you're just resting there, because you're just knowing the substrate, but you're ready to launch. From that vantage point, you can launch into remote viewing, clairaudience, past life recollection and so forth and so on, you can launch into a lot of modes of knowing, because that's your platform. Luminous, blissful and non-conceptual and – boom!

And Atisha says: if you don't have *abhijñā*, you really can't help other people. Did he mean you can't help other people hedonically? No, that would be crazy, of course you can help other people hedonically. In a zillion ways, in an inconceivable number of ways, we can help people hedonically. So many ways: as an accountant, running a hardware store; that's all very useful. If you need hardware, you need the hardware guy. So what's he talking about? This man was brilliant. Atisha, he was a genius! As well as a great Bodhisattva and so forth. Of course, what he's talking about is, if you really want to lead people to genuine happiness, on the path of liberation and to awaking itself, how are you going to do that without *abhijñā*? How are you going to do that without extrasensory perception? You're the blind leading the blind. So, shamatha's an axis to that, and then when we [ask], are there [other] dimensions to *abhijñā*? Oh yeah, definitely. There's another whole dimension of *abhijñā*: extrasensory perception. That comes only from the union of shamatha and vipashyana. That's way up there. That's really going deep. Is there anything beyond that, beyond the union of shamatha and vipashyana, vipashyana insight into emptiness? Yes, there is: the knowing from rigpa itself. It doesn't get any better than that. That's the path we're following here.

So, fasten your seat belts! Let's go. But let's not be tee-totalers. Tee-totalers, cold turkey. Rumination: public enemy number one. Use thoughts like rats outdoors; let them eat the garbage out there. Use thoughts, pick them up and put them down, but when you put 'em down, you keep 'em down. Don't let them take over and infest your mind because they just poop all over the place! Yes, they do.

Meditation:

(10:31) As an act of loving kindness for yourself, and indirectly for all those whom you may serve, in the near future and the distant future, settle your body, speech and mind in their natural states.

Then, following any of the three methods of mindfulness of breathing of your choice, arouse your attention with each in-breath. Focus clearly, non-conceptually, knowing, on the sensations of the breath. With every out-breath, relax deeply.

So, in a 24 minute session you have a myriad of very short sessions; one session for each cycle of respiration. Arousing the attention, thereby overcoming laxity; deeply releasing, relaxing, thereby overcoming excitation. Breath by breath, balance your mind, refine your attention and relentlessly dispel rumination.

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(18:50) Then, a brief reminder, and that is, in terms of the flow of respiration, see that you are not helping it along [by] reinforcing the in-breath, expelling the out-breath. On the contrary, breathe effortlessly, yet mindfully, but as effortlessly as if you're deep asleep.

And let's continue practicing now in silence.

Instructions after meditation:

Between sessions get real, stay real and enjoy your day.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Revised by Phil Gardner and Jim Parsley

Final edition by Rafael Carlos Giusti

18 Mindfulness of feelings (2)

04 Sep 2012

Teachings:

This practice of attending to the space of the body – to the emergences of the four elements, as well as the feelings that arise within the space of the body – is a very nice natural prelude to, or leads to, the more subtle practice of attending to the space of the mind; the thoughts, images, emotions, feelings that arise in the space of the mind. So as you recall, the general sequence within the four applications of mindfulness is from coarse to subtle, just like “mindfulness of breathing”, “settling the mind” and “awareness of awareness”. It's following that same trajectory.

So in the practice of “settling the mind in its natural state”, which we'll start in two days, the entrance to the practice, as so eloquently and precisely taught by Dudjom Lingpa, *is to be able to distinguish between stillness and movement. The stillness is of your own awareness. The movement is everything that's taking place*; all the comings and goings, images, thoughts, desires and so forth that are arising. [You] see through your own experience that they [stillness and movement] are not the same, that they're not melted, they're not merged, but in fact there can be stillness of the awareness even while the thoughts and so forth are in motion. That is, through the absence of grasping – it's actually a very simple thing, not easy but it is simple – *through the very absence of grasping, even while thoughts, memories, even troubling memories, or very happy memories, when these come up, through the absence of grasping, they don't catch and drag your awareness after them, dragging your awareness off to the referent of the images, back to the event in the past, or some happy thought for the future and so forth.*

Your awareness is just like “Teflon” awareness, so free of grasping, of clinging, of attachment. So loose! This is where we always come back to the first phase of relaxation. The implications flow all the way through the meditation. *That looseness, that ease, that letting-go that we're doing in phase one of mindfulness of breathing; we're going to absolutely need that in “settling the mind in its natural state” because it'll be precisely by that looseness, that ease, that relaxation that you're able to simply be present with whatever comes up, without being drawn into the drama, [whether it's] positive drama or negative drama.*

So as that is the case for attending to the space of the mind and its contents, which again we'll start on Thursday, here we're doing the prelude to that something, a bit more tangible, easy to find. Some people find the space of the mind difficult to find; where is it? How big is it? And so forth. Whereas the space of the body? Pretty easy. Pretty straightforward.

So, you're attending to the space of the body, but now within [that space], for those of you who have a background in Buddhism, you'll recall that there are three types of suffering: blatant suffering, suffering of change and this more ubiquitous, extensive suffering. (4:17) That third one, that ubiquitous, extensive suffering of conditioned phenomena, which is really kind of our ground level of suffering. That's what Buddhadharma is all about. It can be applied to stress reduction, to making your day happier, a better sex life, better performance in athletics, in business and creativity; and all that kind of stuff. But what the Buddhadharma is really about, at its core, is addressing that deepest dimension of suffering. Our fundamental vulnerability to suffering, even beyond the suffering of change; it's a deeper dimension of that and if you receive classic teachings on, well, what is the nature of that? *What is the nature of that fundamental vulnerability to suffering* that permeates all of our experience, in the desire realm, form realm, formless

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realm, what's the nature of it? What's the essence of it? *Zag bcas nye bar len pa'i phung po. The contaminated, closely held skandhas. It's contaminated. Why? Because our whole experience of them is bound up with mental afflictions.* Not contaminated because bad breath or something like that. *It's coming from, conditioned by, mental afflictions and the karma generated by mental afflictions.* That's the *Zag bcas* contaminated part, that is caught-up in, contaminated by, tainted by mental afflictions. But this *nye bar len pa'i, nye bar* means "closely" and *len pa'i* means "to take". *So we hold on to, we identify with, hold close, my body, my mind, my feelings, mental states and so forth. It's that very holding close that sets us up for vulnerability to all manner of suffering.*

So this practice of vipashyana is going right to that. Directly. *So, we're about to go back to the close application of mindfulness to the body and, specifically within that domain, to feelings.* Feelings arising in the body. Then, the challenge here, as in settling the mind and that distinction between stillness and motion, *is to be so loose, so free of grasping and so not holding closely, but just... letting be.*

So there's a mudra [Alan clenches his fists], *holding closely*, mine, mine, my country, my spouse, my body, my car, my, my, my... holding closely. If there was a mudra to just letting be, it would be something like this perhaps [Alan makes another hand gesture]. Just being present with, *not contraction, not recoil, not dissociation, and not plunging into either*, by way of grasping. *Just being present with luminously, clearly, discerningly.* But if you can see, as you observe the four elements arising in the body and then especially as you observe the feelings, because that is our topic for the day, the feeling arising in the body, *insofar as you can observe them without your awareness moving, without recoil, and in just ordinary English, without preference. That is exactly the practice in settling the mind in its natural state, happy thoughts, unhappy, virtuous and non-virtuous, what have you.* Since, in total absence of grasping onto all of them, the ideal there is to have zero preference. In this context, preference; I want that kind of image, that kind of thought, I don't want that emotion, and I don't want that desire and so forth – all of those are expressions of grasping. So in settling the mind in its natural state, when one says settle your awareness without distraction, without grasping, that's really a core element of it. Without preference, let alone without superimposing "I and mine" but even without preference. It's so loose!

(8:12) So again, as an analogy, imagine being radiantly clear, radiantly lucid in a dream. I mean you've nailed it! You've so thoroughly comprehended the dream, that you see that your own embodiment in the dream, others people bodies, everything taking place in the dream; you've really fathomed it. You're an accomplished dream yogi, or yogini, and your insight is so deep that you really know that this is just like looking at an array of mirages, or rainbows, or reflections in a mirror. *You simply know, not intellectually, but you really know experientially that there's nothing there from the side of anything that appears in a dream.* From the waking awaking state we know that, "Oh yeah, you're just dreaming" – that means there wasn't anything there. But when you're in the midst of the dream you don't know that at all.

Imagine that you really are deeply awake, thoroughly awake within the dream, and so not only the people, the situations that you encounter objectively but your own presence, that persona of you in the dream, who has a very short life. Maybe ten minutes, half an hour, ninety minutes, maybe two hours, but that's totally maxed out. According to sleep and dream researchers, the longest dream is maybe two hours, but that's really unusual.

So that's your life span. That little persona in the dream. You know, that's shorter than a gnat! Or a housefly. That's a really short life span. So, there you are, but you're aware that that little "you", that little persona in the dream, that there is nothing there from your own side, any more than if Miles was in my dream, there would be nothing there from his own side.

(9:40) The way that His Holiness does it, and it really gets me, if I were dreaming right now and there's Miles appearing to be substantial, but as His Holiness points [out], he says: *Zug ah zug sah.* It means "that which you are pointing your finger at". So if I'm really lucid in a dream, I point my finger at Miles and say: "that", you know "that", that which I am pointing my finger at, which really seems to be there from his own side, is totally empty! There is nothing there at all from his own side.

So if you really fathom that, in the dream, that means you are very, very lucid. Then it's obvious, if there's nothing even there from its own side, there's no possibility of something that's not there from its own side harming me in any way. But then if you, *Zug ah zug sah*, pointing the finger here – nothing! An appearance, yes, of course; but there's nothing here from its own side.

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So now if we have nothing versus nothing, how much damage can be done? Who's going to damage who? So if you have that kind of insight, you really are living in a kind of a flow of vipashyana within your dream. Then number one, you're going to be fearless, right? Because you know there simply is nothing whatsoever to fear here. It would be like going out and being afraid of rainbows. You think it's going to catch you in the eye? Like, "oh, I hate it when a rainbow jabs me in the eye!"

You're fearless, but not only you are fearless, but if you're really there as a scientist, if you're just keenly interested, in even more thoroughly fathoming the nature of dream reality. Then whatever comes up, you can imagine perhaps being totally without preference. Totally without preference. You're simply observing whatever comes up but you can be without preference because you're fearless. You're fearless because you know there's no possibility of harm.

And why? It's so simple! Can you be harmed in a dream? Sure, you can be physically harmed in a dream, you can really hurt, someone can punch you and it can really give you a bad headache or really feel bad, or pierce you with a weapon and so forth, can be very painful. Even in a dream, even though we [think] from the waking state, how is that possible, but it is. You can feel physically bad, you can be injured in a dream. And then emotionally of course, no difference.

Is it possible to be physically and mentally harmed within a dream by other people in the dream, or situations in the dream? Sure! So much so that if you wake up from a really rotten dream, maybe a nightmare, a traumatic dream, miserable anguish dream, it can ruin your day! If it was really vivid, it can linger right through the morning. [Someone might ask] "How are you?"

"Ah, really cruddy, I had such a terrible dream."

"But how are things this morning?"

"Great, but the dream last night really sucked!"

So the emotional overflow can carry right into the waking state.

How is that possible? How can nothing harm nothing and leave such a residue that it can ruin your morning, or even ruin your day? You know how, because there is the mudra, it's grasping. Coming from not knowing and then misapprehending, reifying self, reifying everything else. Now you're just ready to suffer in any which way, including, somebody can just grimace at you! "I respected him so much, and he just thinks I'm a jerk!" A grimace can ruin your day. A grimace from somebody who doesn't exist. That's pretty wimpy, right? But it's true, isn't it?

I remember someone attending the Dalai Lama's teaching and he just made her day, she told me afterwards: he looked at me, he looked at me. My eyes, his eyes. It really made her day. And then on another occasion, she was attending some class of mine, and she was very wounded. She said: Alan, you didn't look at me. She was very upset. I wasn't making any point, I was just doing what I'm doing right now. I imagine that right now, I haven't looked at Mary yet. There, she's grieving, you can tell! Why hasn't he looked at me? What's wrong with me? So even not looking at a person, let alone [grimacing at them] can ruin their day. That's how fragile we are with grasping.

So it's simple isn't it? I said it would be short, but OK, now we'll wrap up. [Laughter] And you do believe me don't you? I'm sure you believe me. Because you're so gullible [More laughter].

Now, we're going to the body, and we are going to try to emulate that. *We're going to try to be lucid with respect to the body.* Try to be as lucid as you can. That distinction between stillness and motion, bring that stillness of awareness, that Teflon awareness, that awareness free of grasping but full of mindfulness, clarity, discernment. *Attend to the space of the body, but attend to whatever's arising with as little grasping as possible, just being present with it and then we'll run a little experiment in the midst of that.* It's a surprise experiment. Find a posture.

Meditations:

(16:45) Your whole experience here in retreat will very likely be strongly influenced if you make a point at the beginning of each session to enter with a spirit of loving kindness. You're here not simply to follow with discipline, to work hard, but to do something wonderful for yourself. The first thing is to set your body and mind at ease. Let your awareness descend into the body right down to the ground. Settle your body in its natural state, relaxed, still and vigilant.

(17:50) Then we turn our attention to the breathing. We're still alive so we may think, "I already know how to breathe. I need no instructions there. Let's get on with it!" Of course we know how to breathe, but do we

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know how to let the body breathe? Apart from those occasions when we are in deep sleep? So once again, relax deeply and let go completely with every out breath.

If you're ruminating at the end of the out breath, you'll very likely inhale prematurely, before you really need to. As you come to the end of the out breath, be very quiet. Completely release the breath until there's nothing more to give away.

Then, as if you're receiving a gift, without even reaching out and taking it, but simply receiving it in open palms, receive the gift of the next in-breath, flowing in of its own accord. Receive just what's given, without taking anymore. Then, give back what you do not need as you breathe out.

(21:17) Now, setting your mind at ease, releasing all rumination, let your awareness come to rest in stillness in the present moment, clearly illuminating the space of the body.

Illuminate the sensations associated with earth, water, fire and air. These appearances that arise objectively to your tactile perception, just as colors and shapes appear objectively to your visual perception.

(23:59) Then closely apply mindfulness to the affective ways you experience the sensations arising within the field of the body. Pleasant, unpleasant and neutral.

Clearly distinguish experientially between the objective appearances, the tactile sensations themselves, earth, water, fire and air on one hand; and the feelings, pleasant, unpleasant and neutral. See if the feelings themselves are not intrinsic to the objective appearances, they're not simply presented to you, they are in your mode of experience, the way you apprehend the sensations arising within the field of the body.

Clearly recognize the different types of feelings, but to the best of your ability without preference, without grasping, without identifying with them. Observe them nakedly without superimposing upon them mental images, labels, constructs. Non-conceptually. Simply observe the feelings arising from moment to moment as they nakedly present themselves to you.

(28:40) To move from shamatha to vipashyana, introduce a question, some element of inquiry, probing into the nature of the phenomena you are attending to. These feelings, are they static, unchanging? Or are they arising moment by moment? *You may know the answer intellectually but now pose it experientially.*

(30:50) As you closely observe the feelings, see if you can determine whether they are absolutely as they appear. That is, is the unpleasant absolutely objectively without any context, with no relativity, unpleasant, exactly to the degree to which it appears? In other words, is the *magnitude* of the pleasant, unpleasant, neutral feelings you experience, *is this an intrinsic element or aspect of the feeling itself?* Or is that *magnitude relative to experiences outside of itself?* Probe right into the very nature of the feelings. Penetrate as if with a laser and see if you can determine their intrinsic nature. How they are all on their own. *You must do this with the quiet mind, clear, radiant and sharp.*

(33:13) If, for example, there are unpleasant feelings arising in the body and if they are *intrinsically, absolutely unpleasant*, then the more you penetrate, you focus right in upon their core, the more intensely you should experience the unpleasantness of that feeling. Is that so or not? Explore.

(34:30) Now here is the other side of the experiment. If, for example, there are unpleasant feelings arising in any part of the body, focus your attention on that part, and now do just the opposite of what we did previously. Visualize the *part of the body* that feels uncomfortable; imagine it. Tell yourself, this feels awful. This is really uncomfortable. I really don't like this at all. I hope it doesn't get worse. *Elaborate, ruminate, develop it.* Lay on the conceptual projections, all negative, as if you are a hypochondriac. Does this or does this not influence your experience of the discomfort itself? Examine closely. *When you do this, does the discomfort increase, decrease or remain the same?*

Now, terminate that experiment. Once again let your mind be utterly silent, clear, as free of grasping as possible. Letting your awareness be like space. Let it simply illuminate the sensations and feelings arising in the body, as free as possible from preference, from the superimposition of "I and Mine".

Post meditation teaching

Oh la so. Let's start with a truism. That is, if we really want something, and then it appears to us, we're happy. We think that's something good. A really good example of that that occurred to me is fame. Some people really like to be the object of other people's attention, like to be in the limelight, like a lot of people attending to them. And other people really just don't. They would much prefer to be invisible.

I was with Richard Gere once, years ago. We were in an auditorium, something was over, and he and I were just chatting together, and then a paparazzi came up. He wanted a photo or whatever, and I could just see

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that, from Richard's body language, he was like, "Will it never end?" He's been famous so long, that can you imagine he got much of thrill? Like, "Oh, someone wants to take my picture!" You can imagine. He was being gracious, but he really didn't have much time for that. Whereas if you're just starting your career as an actor, and you're hoping to one day become as famous as Richard Gere, and a paparazzi comes to you, you'd be like, "Oh, how much time would you like?" You know? And it's the same paparazzi! Right? But because you desired it, it appears to be pleasant. That's true, isn't it, much more broadly than that. That's just a good example. So, Richard Gere did not find that a pleasant experience, he would have preferred that person not to come, because he and I were just having a nice short conversation. Is it not also the case, that when we don't want something, and then it appears, then lo and behold, *it appears undesirable because we didn't desire it. So insofar as we can release the desire, then it's simply an appearance. And insofar as we can release the aversion, it's just an appearance.* That gets very up close and personal within the body, right? But there's something very empowering here, *that we are not simply the victims of the appearances, including the feelings, that arise in the space of the body.* So, anybody have any interesting experience when you tried to probe into the nucleus of unpleasant feelings? To find if you could find something that was 100% absolutely disagreeable? Or when you did just the opposite, you kind of zoomed out, and then just like a dump truck, piled on images, labels, dislike, imagination and so forth and so on, either way did that have any impact on your experience of the feeling itself? Anybody?

[An audience member reports that they found the pain increased with rumination, and disappeared when observed closely, without rumination.]

Well that's the profound message of the experiment, that you do actually have a choice. That is, when I hold up my hand and you see the color of my palm, you have no choice. You may want to see it purple, or have my palm be invisible, but really you have no choice. If your eyes are open, that's what you're getting. You have no choice at all. Isn't it true? Likewise [Alan claps] you have no choice! There's the sound, it's coming to you. It's a given. Pow! Delivered in your lap. *But a feeling is not like that.*

So I think there's clear empirical evidence that the feeling is not simply presented, it's in a mode of apprehension, but since it's in a mode of apprehension, then how are we apprehending? It is very much within our own hands. We can certainly modify it. So thank you, Titi. I wasn't surprised, but I'm delighted with your response. It's a very important discovery.

There's a statement too to make this very practical. There's one line from Shantideva's sixth chapter of *The Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, patience chapter. I memorized it a long time ago, probably about 40 years ago, and it's really stuck with me. It's pretty short. *"There's nothing whatsoever that does not become easier with familiarization, as you accustom yourself to it."* There's nothing. That is, through the process of familiarization, habituation, becoming accustomed to, everything can become easier.

He's couching that, inserting that line, in this patience chapter. So this is a good application of it. For most of us, maybe all of us I don't know, but most of us in this short session, the degree of discomfort in the body was probably not intense. I didn't hear anybody screaming, you know? I would really ask you to find another posture if that's happening! But I imagine quite a number of people felt some degree of discomfort, but not just white hot screaming pain.

Have you ever experienced incredibly intense pain? Probably have if you've been around long enough, sure. So in terms of developing this wisdom, developing this skill, *learning how to release grasping, we don't wait for some intense pain and then start practicing there.* We'll be overwhelmed by it. But if we can take an itch. That's about as trivial as it gets. That's about as lightweight as it gets. An itch is unpleasant, right? That's why you want to scratch it. It's hard to imagine a less magnitude of [unpleasantness]. *Start with an itch.* Then you can say, yes, I'm itch proof. I experience the itch, but it's just arising in space. And now it's subsiding.

Then go from there to something pretty intense, I think it's literally true, it's a story I heard, I think it was Gyatrul Rinpoche, and he, a man of impeccable honesty, one of my core Lamas, Dzogchen Lama above all, he told me of a Lama that was in Tibet during the cultural revolution. He was very accomplished. Captured by the Chinese communists, imprisoned, tortured. And, as it often happened, almost as if they were religious zealots, these Cultural Revolutionaries, they were zealots, they wouldn't call themselves religious zealots, but they really behaved like it. With this particular Lama, it wasn't the only case by any means, it continues to this day, but the people who captured this Lama and tortured him, they tortured him and said we will stop the torture, all you have to do is say I renounce the Buddha. That's all you have to do, just say that. They just wanted to

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break his will. They wanted to show that we can conquer you, you're a conquered people, you're one of the spiritual leaders of these people, and say that and you will demonstrate that we have conquered you. Say the words, and we'll stop the torture. The torture was they literally nailed him to the side of a wall. Not to a cross, but they nailed him. So there he was, spread eagled like a fly, on a wall, a wooden wall. He was spread-eagled there, nailed.

They said, "We'll let you down, we'll put salve on your wounds, just say the words!" And of course he wouldn't. His disciples came to him. They were in tears, they were in anguish, seeing their Lama being tortured in this way. They came to him, and said, "Lama, please. We all know you. We know your faith in the dharma, we know you'd never reject the Buddha, we know, so give them the words, the words don't mean anything at all, just say the words. We don't care, we know perfectly, but we'd love to take you down, try to heal you. So please just say the words!" And the Lama smiled at them, and said, "How can I say the words, 'I reject the Buddha? I am a Buddha!'" Pretty good punchline!

If this Lama was in a radiantly lucid dream, that is, as far as we're concerned, that actually took place, but from his perspective, if he was seeing this so lucidly, the non-inherent existence of the torturers, the wall, the nails, his body and so forth, he's seeing this all as empty of inherent nature. If he's lucid, if he's actually viewing this, and the chances are extremely high that he was, he was viewing this whole situation from the perspective of rigpa, which means that he was awake during what we euphemistically call the waking state, then he's awake. It's just an empty apparition that appears to be nailed on the wall. *With the pain, physical discomfort arising in space with no owner*, and so he can look with total relaxation. With ease, with a smile, and say "How can I reject the Buddha?" As if he's talking over a cup of tea.

So, you don't start there! You start with the itch, and then you gradually move along, but if you don't start with the itch, then you can be eighty five years old and say, "These itches are killing me! I can't stand it, I have one itch after another, I hate my life. It's just one thing after another. Life is suffering." You can be a total wimp forever. So start now! Especially the young guys, and young ladies. Start young. Because man it's so possible, it's so possible to age gracefully, nobly, with wisdom, with joy, it really is possible. Really possible, to just grow in wisdom, grow in depth, grow in compassion, grow in happiness, genuine happiness, right up to the point of death. And it's also possible to grow old miserably. So start early! Start early.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Revised by Phil Gardner and Jim Parsley

Final edition by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Posted by Alma Ayon

19 Settling the Mind in its Natural State (1)

05 Sep 2012

Meditation:

Please find a comfortable position, we can go right in.

Let your awareness descend to and fill the body. Set your body at ease in stillness and in vigilance. And then as you totally relax into the respiration, relax and release so fully as you breathe out, that you feel the beginning of the in breath way down in the lower abdomen. As you allow the breath to effortlessly flow in, feel the sensations associated with the breath rise up from the bottom of the abdomen, up to the abdomen and up to diaphragm and in a deep breath, if the breath flows in deeply, then up into the chest like feeling a vase of water. Let the sensations of the in breath flow from the bottom up.

(3:45) It's only when you completely release control over the breath that you can begin to find it interesting. If you are controlling it you know exactly what is coming up next because you are doing it, but if it's happening without your control, you never know what is coming up, and each breath is unique, and for that in breath you never know before it happens whether will be shallow or deep, faster or slow. So relax deeply into the breathing but with a high degree of interest, of clarity and looseness.

(5:26) Allow your mind to settle in its natural state of relaxation, stillness and clarity as you let the light of your awareness illuminate the whole field of the body, with a special interest in those sensations associated

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with in and out breath. Observe the ripple effect all the way through the body, and even into the legs and the arms, the whole body breathing.

(7:46) Direct your mindfulness single pointedly to the space of the body and within that space, to the tactile sensations associated with the breath, maintaining as continuous a flow of mindfulness as you can, while monitoring the flow of your mindfulness with your faculty of introspection. Noting whether thoughts are coming up, excitement, laxity, dullness, monitoring the mind with introspection while the main force of your attention is focused on the field or space of the body.

(11:04) Whatever thoughts arise, simply release them, especially during every out breath, and maintain of the best of your ability, a non-conceptual flow of mindfulness of these non-conceptual sensations of the breathe.

(13:01) And now let your eyes be at least partially open, vacantly rest your visual gaze in the space in front of you without focusing on any visual object, any shape or color. Let your eyes be opened, but as if you are totally absent minded or caught up in a day dream, but rather than being absent minded or simply mind wandering, now shift the focus of mindfulness to the space of the mind and whatever thoughts and images arise within that domain, but secondarily, peripherally, continue to be aware of the in and out flow of the breath, it gives you a point of orientation and even anchoring of your attention, but simply a general awareness that, the breath is flowing in, that is flowing out while your interest is really focused on the space of the mind, and right now what thoughts, images are arising, and attend to them closely, simply observing their nature without getting caught up or carried away by them. Let your awareness be still, while your thoughts are in motion.

(16:24) The level of interest here is not in what you are thinking about, whether it is interesting thoughts or boring thoughts, happy or sad, virtuous or non-virtuous, but rather taking on the role of the scientist of the mind we are simply observing the very nature of the thoughts, not their content. Observe them closely, without seeking to modify them in any way, without being distracted by them or grasping onto them, simply observe their nature.

(20:19) It is imperative to have a deep core sense of relaxation and looseness in the body and in your awareness, releasing all grasping. With this in mind, experiment in terms of your breathing to see whether you feel looser, more relaxed, breathing through the nostrils or through the mouth, at your choice.

(22:41) We apply introspection as before, monitoring the flow of mindfulness. As soon as you see that you have been carried away by thoughts, once again let your first response be to relax, then release your grasping onto the thought and return to the present moment. If you become spaced out or dull, apply the remedies as before: refresh, refocus and retain your mindfulness.

Comments after meditation:

(25:00) We have these couple of minutes, any questions about this transition from mindfulness of breathing, kind a smoothly shifting over to the focus on the mind, settling the mind in its natural state? Clear enough for the time being? Anything is coming up right now? Ok, school out early, enjoy your day.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Revised by Cheri Langston.

Final edition by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Posted by Alma Ayon

20 Mindfulness of Feelings (3)*

06 Sep 2012

Teachings:

Notes for readers:

- This recording is of minor quality since we had to recover it from another device. Thank you for understanding.
- There are some sentences or paragraphs about some themes that we have written a sum up and not everything literally as Alan Wallace said during the session, thinking that it would be useful for the readers better understanding of the themes. But if you are listening to the podcast and following

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what is written, and have any difficulty, please do inform us in order that we may transcribe these themes again and upload the new transcript at media.sbinstitute.com.

In this cycle of the close applications of mindfulness to feelings arising in the body or more broadly *easy feelings arising in conjunction with our experience of the sensory world*. In closely monitoring and seeking to probe into this your shamatha as we will see tomorrow in settling the mind in its natural state and closely applying mindfulness to the mind that your shamatha is your base, your home, your seat, you can rest there and then venture out so you can retreat in your seat, you retreat in shamatha and then what is seem more appropriate go to on expedition, venturing out and really attending to feelings arising here and so forth and likewise as we will see tomorrow, feelings arising in the mind and taking an special interest in them, focusing on them.

This is a very rich practice, this overall nature of the four applications of mindfulness, and one of the things that occurs for every one of the four, is that when you attend closely to *the factors of origination and factors of dissolution*, so this shows quite clearly that this must entail more than just moment to moment bare attention, because when seen, *the feelings arising are arising within a fabric, within a network*. In modern psychology looking for triggers for emotions is a central theme, what triggers the irritation, anxious, low self-esteem and what have you, okay there is the emotion, fine, but it didn't come out of the blue. What triggered a certain type of response? Certain people will trigger a certain kind of response in you. In anticipation, before you meet them, you will recognize - oh I am meeting this person, so you are aware of this person and what might be triggered here, so you are well prepared. That is included in the term is called contemplation – *the wise attending to, the discerning, reflecting, sometimes cogitating, sometimes thinking about the factors that give rise to certain feelings within the body*.

By closely and wisely attending to the feelings arising in the body and in your mind you will see what triggers emotions like irritation, anxious, low self-esteem and so forth, *it means you can discern, reflect about the factors that give rise to the feelings, in this case feelings arising in the body*.

By closely applying mindfulness in the body you may observe the concatenation, *a network of the substantial causes and cooperative conditions that come together and moment to moment are giving rise to whatever feelings arising in the body*.

So the factors of origination that correspond to feelings that we are attending closely to, permanent and impermanent, other feelings that the whole framework is sukha (happiness) and dukkha (suffering) and then of course is there anything intrinsic there as “I or Mine”. So these are few questions as background that inform, illuminate and provide a greater penetrating insight into the close application of mindfulness to the feelings and then of course the factors of dissolution. *How do they fade out but also its causal network? What do the feelings themselves arising in the body, what do they trigger? Because all substantial causes are also cooperative conditions for something else*.

And so there are feelings that give rise to more feelings but in the meantime feelings can trigger thoughts, they can trigger memories and they can trigger all kind of things acting as cooperative conditions for others types of things so it is really a kind of three dimension whole network, or matrix of causality taking place here. And so seeing the feelings arising embedded in such a framework then really drains us in a way of notions that somehow they are hard, they are intrinsic and they are absolute, they stand in and of themselves, they are real and inherent existent.

By the close attending to of these three factors - impermanence, the nature of dukkha (suffering) and the nature of non-self, *we are already softening up the reification of feelings as inherent existent, absolutely real from their own side*, by closely attending to the factors of origination and factors of dissolution and seeing why they are present and closely attending to the manner in which they are present.

Alan introduces an alternative translation for a key line in the Sattipathana sutra. Instead of the common translation “One views the body in the body,” Alan proposes the following based on the Tibetan “One views the body as the body. One views feelings as feelings. One views the mind as the mind. One views mental events as mental events.”

There is one more theme that comes up again from all applications of mindfulness and is often translated from Sattipathana sutra to English, I think incorrectly, this is a translators debate, a common translation is -: one attends to the body in the body, one attends to the feelings in the feelings, one attends to the mind in the mind and so forth, so the preposition “in”, they will often say that. Not all of them, but that is the more

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standard translation by very good translators. In my mind it just doesn't have much juice to bring to the practice: - okay - now I am going to observe my body in my body. That just sounds like bad grammar to me. How many bodies do you have? Here is the body, now you are in the body, like Russian dolls? I am not ridiculing anything here, it is just I think it more valuable, more practical, *if simply one views the body as the body. Views feelings as feelings, views mental events as mental events.* Instead of 'in' – 'as'. And I think that is very much in accordance with the teachings that Buddha gave to Bahiya: "in the seen let be just the seen". In other words you are seeing visual impressions "as" visual impressions. *You are just seeing them from what they are* and likewise for the sounds, for tactile sensations and mental events, you are seeing them as they are. Exactly like, for example, when you are dreaming you see a dream "as" a dream and not something else that is not, namely waking reality. I think that is what the Buddha's teachings to Bahiya: being lucid in the waking state and see things "as" they are. *See mental events as mental events and do not conflate them with their reference which we very often do*, when we are sitting there quietly and then *conflating our thoughts with whatever references of the thoughts are* and think is the same, and that is what happens in terms of OCDD, obsessive, compulsive and then delusional disorder, because we are actually conflating, thinking whatever I am thinking must be true – that's the whole truth and nothing but the truth - that is delusional. **Mental consciousness is unique because in addition to its own domain, it can also piggyback on each of the 5 sense consciousness.**

So here we are attending the feelings arising in the body, observe them, attend to them simply "as" feelings, with no additions, no ornamentation, no clothing, no cloaking, no superimpositions just see them nakedly, see feelings as feelings. *And as you do so, as you are seeing feelings arising in the body then notice that these are feelings which are a way of experiencing tactile sensations.* It is a way of experiencing earth, water, fire and air, whatever tactile sensations are presenting themselves to you within the somatic field. So now we are also aware, this happens every single day, as we have feelings arising in the body then we are attending, *we are experiencing those feelings not only with tactile consciousness, but also with other kind of consciousness - that is mental consciousness.*

So mental consciousness, of course we are thinking all the time, but when I am attending to, *when I am focusing on (Alan rubs his knee) I am feeling a tactile sensation, but I am paying attention.* My mental awareness is also going to those tactile sensations, so mental awareness, unlike all the others, can piggyback on the other five.

You can't visually attend to sounds with your auditory awareness, you can't piggyback on smells, there is no auditory perception on smells because they have their own category, they have their own domain and in the Buddha's view there is no overlapping, what you see, you see and not hear, what you hear you hear and do not smell and so forth so the five physical senses according with the Buddha's view, there is no overlapping. But when it comes to mental consciousness is like the monkey that goes to the all six windows [it seems that you have six monkeys within the room]. *You can't visually see into your mind, or hear into your mind.* Mental consciousness has its own turf. Mental consciousness can jump into any of the other five senses. So visual gets only visual and auditory gets only auditory but the mental consciousness it can and does score around for all of them including its own domain. .

So when you are closely applying mindfulness to feelings arising in the body, then there is a tactile awareness of the sensations and together with that tactile awareness there will be an affective quality, called pleasant, unpleasant and neutral. When you closely apply mindfulness which means you are really paying attention, what do you piggyback onto that tactile awareness? The mental awareness. Mental consciousness comes with its own feeling. Now very, very often its own feelings is a kind of *bleeds over from the tactile over to the mental*, where you are seeing something as your visual is perceiving something that is sensory of pleasure and then mental consciousness comes in and you mentally seek to view reality.

Alan explains the concepts of the mental awareness and mental consciousness using the example when you are receiving a massage where mentally you may enjoy it and physically it may be uncomfortable and said that this is a kind of the discomfort he wants because feel so much better after the massage.

(12.39) And it can happen that you injure yourself. Or you have arthritis or some other physical discomfort, and there is physical discomfort arising and on top of that – "ah gee, why do I experience this? This is such a drain, I hate this, poor me –". So then the mental awareness is taking on the feeling from the tactile, and you are getting a double whammy, you are getting unpleasant and unpleasant. *Unpleasant physically, and*

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unpleasant mentally. They don't have to go together. That is where the freedom is. If your body is injured, or ill, it should be sending you pain signals or you would have no incentive to face it. You could pluck out your eyes and not feel anything at all, not even mental. Nothing would trigger until you think – oh I can't see out of that eye anymore. Too late.

Simply let see the feelings as feelings and let your awareness have its own autonomy. If unpleasant feelings arising in the body you attend to them but mentally with the mental consciousness of those feelings, mentally you have a neutral feeling. So what you definitely can achieve here, in this practice is – unpleasant things are arising in the body, there they are, you are attending to them, but mentally, mental consciousness of those feelings, mentally you have a neutral feeling.

We must learn that mental feelings are not enslaved by physical sensations.

If you get an insight: Oh, this is an interesting practice let's go and investigate physical pain and you may act mentally since you are interested in the practice, mentally you are enjoying the practice, it is interesting, mentally I am actually getting to know the feelings and there is some mental happiness, even while the feelings in the body are painful, maybe somewhat unpleasant. If they are searingly painful – not so likely. But if it is mentally not so uncomfortable, good. So do explore. Often we may feel that our mental feelings are simply enslaved by, no freedom, enslaved by the feelings arising in the body and they are enslaved by the feelings arising in the body even if we do not let them, and you do not have to. *Because there is really the possibility of freedom there.*

During the practice, we should know that we know feelings as feelings until the insight shifts our view of reality.

(15:23) To enrich your practice of mindfulness let's see where is that demarcation, where is that border between simply attending, as you do in bare attention as in contrast to vipashyana, - *inquiring and concentrating, and the answer is the border is fuzzy, it should be fuzzy.* Sometimes insights may come just while you are quietly attending, then something really comes in, but *where the insight deepens is where you are knowing something*, for example you are just knowing the impermanent nature, constantly in flux, flux nature, fluctuating nature - the momentary nature of feelings, and you are experiencing them, *and then it is like knowing you are experiencing them.* You know you are doing them correctly. Then you have confidence. It is like when you hammer a nail in, then you counter sink it, so it goes beneath the surface of the wood, then it really goes in there.

(16:57) *So practicing correctly is good, but knowing that you are practicing correctly, that is counter sinking the nail, then it really goes in there.* So is fine to be aware, to know the impermanent nature of the feelings, to know that phenomena themselves are not intrinsically pleasant or unpleasant, and it is perfectly good to see them simply as events and to know that they are not "I or Mine". *But then to know that you know - that really goes deep.* That really goes deep and really penetrates, it is more transformable, you get it experientially, it is really penetrating into your Psyche. When we counter sink a nail it is very hard for that nail to come out, it is so deep it becomes almost part of the wood. *We want insights that go so deep that it actually becomes part of your way of viewing reality and not simply something you know, or you believe, but how you actually view reality.*

Meditation:

Step by step settle your body, speech, your respiration and your mind in its natural state and for a little while calm the discursive mind, stem the flow of rumination with mindfulness of breathing, relax and release the flow with every out breath.

(24:15) And now as a light filling the room, let the light of your mindfulness fill the space of the body, from the interior as well as on the exterior, let your baseline, the flow of continuity, the ongoing flow of sensations associated with the breath, just keep in touch with that, something constant, as if you are in a boat that gently rises, gently rises and falls as the waves pass through. Let that be more peripheral awareness, while with the secondary awareness, you turn your interest to the arising and passing of the feelings that are arising currently in this endless field of tactile experience. Beginners should not feel aware of this, because if you feel any impulse to move, chances are that it is triggered by a feeling, instead of moving, observe the feeling that triggered the desire to move. Apart from the movement of the breath, be very still.

(26:25) Now make use of the versatility of your mental awareness, it is your choice whether you focus your mental awareness on the tactile sensations themselves, earth, water, fire and air, or whether you focus on

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the feelings associated with your tactile experience of the sensations. Focus on the feelings and observe the impact on the feelings of your focused attention directed upon them.

The role of introspection is equally important in the practice of shamatha as well as in vipashyana. Now we are focusing on mindfulness of feelings arising within the space of the body. With introspection, monitor the flow of mindfulness. Noting the occurrence of exaltation or laxity as usual but also note, introspection is not only focused on the flow of mindfulness, in Buddha's meaning of the term of introspection it is also the faculty by which we monitor our own bodies. In this case our own posture. See that you continue to settle the body in its natural state.

Again with your faculty of introspection, monitor also the flow of the breath, the respiration, throughout vipashyana practice, the breath should flow effortlessly and as unimpeded as in the shamatha practice of mindfulness of the breathing.

As you closely apply mindfulness to the feelings in the body, observe them as feelings, just by what they are with no conceptual additions. Contemplate the factors of origination and dissolution and observe the three marks of existence, impermanence, nature of dukkha and non-self. And finally, any time during the session and you would like to retreat for a little while, just settle back into mindfulness of breathing, back to shamatha. Take a break, and you feel refreshed and ready to venture once again into the expedition of vipashyana.

Let's continue the practice now in silence.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

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Posted by Alma Ayon

21 Settling the Mind in its Natural State (2)

07 Sep 2012

So this morning we move into a different mode of shamatha, called settling the mind in its natural state. This will now be our basis, as we move over in the afternoons into the close applications of mindfulness of feelings arising in the mind, and also to next week, when we are going to the close applications of mindfulness to the mind itself, and even phenomena itself. So settling the mind will be a kind of basis, just like mindfulness of breathing is a shamatha basis for the close applications of mindfulness, especially to the body, or to feelings arising in the body.

Settling the mind will now be a shamatha base, which many of you are already familiar with, so you know that it's right there on the cusp, on the border between shamatha and vipashyana. So a lot of vipashyana teachers, if you just explain this practice to them, they will say that it is vipashyana, and we would not argue. It can be vipashyana, it can actually give rise to insights, as vipashyana is designed to wield, but in the Mahamudra and Dzogchen tradition, this practice is simply presented as shamatha, because at it least does that, even if it may give more. But at its baseline, the practice of settling the mind is a shamatha practice of relaxation, stability and vividness, designed to help melt your coarse mind into substrate consciousness.

Now when we are directing the attention, in a kind of shamatha mode, to the space of the body and the tactile sensations as we have done before, we are just attending to those sensations associated with earth, water, fire and air that are arising to meet us objectively. In this process, we look at the type of feelings that arise in our way of experiencing those sensations, knowing that these same sensations can be experienced as something pleasant or unpleasant.

But here's a close parallel, which is: as in the body we have these sensations just rising up to meet us, presenting themselves (so earth is earth, it is not water and it is not anything else, it's just presenting itself, like the color of the palm of my hand) but then, *how we experience them, that is where feelings arise.*

Similarly, as we will now in a few moments practice, we will direct our attention to the space of the mind and what is appearing there (like Patricia's form, which is appearing to me right now) and to which I have no choice about it (there it is, it is just coming to me), but then the feelings that arise to me, as I attend to her, then they're much in my mode of experience. And similarly, thoughts and images appear to us in the space of

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the mind, but then what type of emotions or feelings (we will just keep it simple, mentioning feelings as pleasant, unpleasant and neutral), but what kind of feelings are triggered by the memories, the thoughts, the images that come to mind?

So in this shamatha practice that we are going to do right now, settling the mind in its natural state, I would suggest that you would focus your primary interest, or attention, on the objectively appearances, which frankly are easier to observe. *“There’s a thought, there’s an image”* letting your awareness be still.

But as you are aware of them (since we are really preparing to go into the vipashyana practice of close applications of mindfulness to feelings arising in the mind), as you attend to these thoughts and images that present themselves to you, *then also take note of, and observe, the type of mental feelings that arise, being pleasant, unpleasant or neutral, that are triggered by those thoughts, images and memories.*

So in other words, make it three dimensional, as you are not only observing the appearances that arise to you, like they would in a screen, but you are also being aware of the more subjective emotional responses, or affective responses of *“I like it”, “I don’t like it”, “It’s pleasant”* and *“It’s unpleasant”* that arise with them. So you see that kind of system, not just images that can be flat, but also the feelings of pleasure and displeasure that arise in relationship to them.

And the idea here is really trying to, in a way, not being bound up in our mind. Just as in the previous practice, the idea was not be fused with the body, with the idea that *“you are”* your body, that *“you are trapped”* in your body, or you are *“totally tightly held in the body”*, but to be able to experience the body arising in the space. And likewise, not to be trapped in your mind, which as we know, can sometimes be a very bad neighborhood.

So don’t be totally embedded in it, captured by it, caged in it, but be aware that those are just thoughts arising (it is not *“Just what I am thinking”* and that’s it), but those are images, memories arising, and so I am not trapped in those memories.

And then, even more deeply, *“This is a feeling arising and I am aware of it, but I am not simply that feeling”*. I am not simply happy or sad, I am aware of that feeling arising. *And there’s an instant degree of freedom there, as you rest in awareness and observe both the objective and subjective impulses arising in the mind.*

Good, let’s jump in.

Meditation:

(6:07) Settle your body in its natural state, and your respiration in its natural rhythm. Settle your mind at ease, calm, quiet and clear, to make your mind serviceable. For a little while, practice mindfulness of breathing. You may count 21 breathes, if you find that useful for calming the discursive mind.

(10:50) And now let your eyes be at least partially opened, with your gaze resting vacantly in the space in front of you, which means you are not really even looking at the space itself, you are not directing your attention there, let alone to any other visual object, it is more as if you’ve let your eyes open, while being caught by a day dream. So there is no interest in the visual field, but nevertheless keep the eyes open to let some light in.

But now turn the full force of your interest, your attention, your mindfulness, to the domain of experience that is purely mental, the domain in which the discursive thoughts, mental images, memories and emotions arise.

If you are new to the practice, then it can be helpful not only once, but repeatedly, to give yourself a very distinct mental target. So one of the easiest ways would be simply to generate a thought, any thought. Here’s a very simply one: *“This is the mind”*. Syllable by syllable generate the thought, and as you do so, focus your attention single pointed on the thought. Allow the thought to fade back into the space of the mind, and when it comes to an end, very importantly, keep your attention focused right where it was, and see if you can observe the next thought, or maybe an image, that arises spontaneously.

And whatever comes to mind simply observe its nature, observe that mental event that’s arising here and now, *without letting your attention be carried off to the referent of that thought or image*. Focus right there, in the space of your own mind, and whatever thoughts or image arise in that domain.

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(15:10) Again, if you become disoriented or spaced out, not quite sure what to look at, you may deliberately generate a mental image, of anything familiar, a person's face, a vegetable, a possession, anything you like. *Focus your attention upon the image, allow it to fade, and then keep your attention right where it was, focused in the space of the mind, ready to observe the next thing that arises in its own accord.* Whatever arises, simply observe its nature, without seeking to modify it, without grasping onto or identifying with it. Simply observe the mental event, as a mental event.

(17:31) *And now, as you observe these objective appearances arising in the space of the mind, also be aware of the feelings (pleasant, unpleasant and neutral), that are triggered by these appearances that arise in the space of the mind,* and to the best of your ability, simply be aware of the feelings, without identifying with them, without being absorbed by them. Observe their nature, quietly, and sustain the flow of mindfulness without distraction, without grasping.

(21:07) *The focus of mindfulness is in the space of mind and whatever arises within it, both objectively and subjectively.* Also remember to apply introspection, monitoring the flow of attention, and applying the remedies as before.

Let's continue the practice now in silence.

Teachings/instructions after meditation:

(30:20) This practice is something enormously applicable, relevant and beneficial in daily life, whether or not, one's interested in achieving shamatha or vipashyana. And that comes up quite strongly from an entire secular perspective, namely from Paul Ekman's work (and his colleagues in affective psychology), where he strongly emphasizes even purely in terms of mental wellbeing, of mental health, *the importance of being aware of emotions, before they manifest in behavior.* As he says, "*between the spark and the flame*", so that when some emotion comes up, we can be aware of the emotion that has arisen before its effect comes out of our mouth, or manifests in behavior. According to Ekman, when we do not (and he's making a very obvious, but deep, statement), when we are not aware of the emotions until we express them, then that tends to give rise to "*regrettable episodes*", when you say or do something, and then maybe even seconds after, you wish you could have prevented it.

So whether it's speaking, whether it's a physical behavior, just give yourself a chance to make a wise choice, because if you are not aware of the emotion until it's already expressed, then whatever wisdom you have, it didn't even get a chance, because its consequence is already out there in the public domain, and then you cannot apply wisdom to regret it. So it is just really good advice, to be aware of the thoughts and emotions that come up, so that when you see emotions or desires (but right now we are focusing on feelings), but when you see emotions coming up, simply instead of just feeling "*I am unhappy*", be aware that "*Unhappiness is risen*". And then there are a number of other emotions like anger, spite, and so forth, but the goal is to be aware of them, and then if there is some impulse behind it to speak, *then we have that little interlude between the spark and flame* of behavior, to simply ask yourself a question: "*Is it something to act upon now or not?*" and then you can make a decision, but if you are not aware of the emotion until it comes out, then you do not have a chance.

So once again we are trying to become lucid, lucid with respect to whatever is arising in the mind. This is just a key to mental health, to mental wellbeing, and of course living harmoniously in the world.

I will close with a saying from the Tibetan tradition, which is: "*When you are with others, watch your mouth. When you are alone, watch your mind*". Here in retreat, for most hours in a day, although there are people in our vicinity, we're not actively engaged, so we can easily watch our mouth just being quiet. Which means we then have a lot of time to start to get acquainted, and move into the neighborhood of our minds, and see who lives there...

And bring your body guards! :-) Those that have already attended retreats with me (or have heard the retreat podcasts), know that I usually recommend that we bring four body guards: loving-kindness, compassion, empathetic joy and equanimity. These are really '*macho*' bodyguards that really protect us.

Transcribed by: Rafael Carlos Giusti

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22 Mindfulness of feelings (4)

07 Sep 2012

I suggest that during the retreat, in the morning sessions, students follow the guided meditations that cover one of the three methods of shamatha: mindfulness of breathing, settling the mind in its natural state and awareness of awareness. But then, throughout the rest of the day, I suggest that you follow the one of these three practices that you find most beneficial. And so, some of you may have already found that mindfulness of breathing really works for you, and that one of its three methods (or maybe even three) really work for you. And so, if you're getting benefit from the practice, why change? And what's benefit? It's relaxation, stability and vividness. If that's happening, why change? You are very welcome to just continue with the flow of mindfulness of breathing, because that's a good basis, that is the method that the Buddha taught at the beginning of his great discourse on the four applications of mindfulness. He didn't teach all of the others methods of shamatha, he just taught that one, mindfulness of breathing, so clearly that has to be good enough.

But having said that, not everybody likes mindfulness of breathing, not everybody gets maximum benefit from it, and some people as soon as they're introduced to settling the mind, they take to it immediately, so if that is the case, go ahead and emphasize that practice. If other people, in other retreats or through podcasts, have find most beneficial the practice of awareness of awareness, then go ahead right away to it (you don't have to wait until we explore it here), and follow that method.

So, in terms of your daily shamatha practice, I would suggest that this be kind of like a base camp for climbing a very high mountain: you maybe go up to 6.000 meters and there's your new base, and then you make expeditions up from there: so shamatha is your base camp. So whatever your base camp is, you can use mindfulness of breathing and settling the mind, or you may alternate between of these two. I call that balance earth and wind, so that could be a nice balance, *mindfulness of breathing is really good for relaxation and stability, and settling the mind is really good for clarity*. So having back to back sessions, you may go first to mindfulness of breathing probably, and then settling the mind. Or you can have a very nice combination of earth and sky, doing first mindfulness of breathing and then awareness of awareness... All of these are good.

(3:40) So this afternoon we are going to return to the close application of mindfulness to feelings, specifically mental feelings, psychological feelings, but still keeping it very simple. We have a wide array of emotions, very rich, very textured, very diverse, but when we are focusing on vedana, feelings, that is just pleasure: *"I like it", "I don't like it" and "It's neutral"*: pleasant, unpleasant and neutral, just keep it there. *Next week, when we are going to the close applications of mindfulness to the mind, then we will cover all others emotions, thoughts, memories and everything else*. But for this week, we're focusing on this kind of primary directive, this deep impulse that we share with all sentient beings. So it is easy to feel greater empathy for some people than others, that's true for all of us, and it's easy to feel more empathy towards mammals, than towards reptiles. They are just *'more like us'*, but reptiles too, are sentient beings. It is easier to feel empathy with the dog than with the cockroach, but the cockroach is still a sentient being. You look at the cockroach and you may say *"You and I, we don't have a lot in common"* but think that the cockroach doesn't like pain either, that it likes to eat, it likes pleasure. So there is, empathy all the way through.

(5:10) *So that is why we are lingering for the whole week on feelings, because that is our common ground with all sentient beings, even with arhats and Buddhas, because they too, have feelings*. So establishing this cognitive basis for empathy, which is the basis for loving-kindness, compassion and bodhichitta, and we are going from there, so that is a base camp, as we venture into the expedition of vipashyana to the body, now to feelings and then beyond that. But note that we can always come back to our base camp, we can always come back to straight shamatha practice.

And with this practice to which we are returning today, settling the mind in its natural state, as you well know now, although it is presented as a shamatha practice, nevertheless it is right there on the border, because it's so easy to start getting insights into impermanence, just for start, and as you attend moment by moment and you just say: *"Oh, there is nothing static here!"*, even the space of the mind. *And if you really attend to it, closely, you may find number one, that it's not black, and, number two that it's not a sheer absence of something*. It is a real space, out of which stuff emerges and into which things extinguish, it is three

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dimensional and you may actually find it has kind of a vibration quality, it is like an exciting quality, like a plasma.

And so, as you're just resting in settling the mind in its natural state as a shamatha practice, then it is good to know what is for. When you are taking that as a shamatha practice, what are you seeking to do?

I'll tell you: you are seeking to get your best approximation of observing your mind, your woman's mind, man's mind, specific old and young mind and, with all of that, that specific psyche, you are developing your best approximation to observe your mind with all the objective appearances and subjective impulses, desires, emotions and so forth. *You are seeking to observe your mind from the perspective of substrate consciousness, which is knowing - bear in mind substrate consciousness is not just spaced out, absolutely not that - would be substrate, but it is possible for the substrate consciousness to slip into substrate, and that is what it's like when you have general anesthesia. When you have a general anesthesia, you do not know anything, you are not absolutely unconsciousness, but all you have is implicit consciousness, but you do not know anything. But then, sooner or later the anesthesia wears off, the substrate consciousness comes out of the substrate, and out of the substrate consciousness, emerges like a sequence and there you are back to awaken reality again, so it is gone very, very dormant.*

(8:42) When you are practicing the settling the mind, you certainly do not want to go into the state of unknowing of the substrate, because that's just not useful. *But you are slipping into that state of knowing of the substrate consciousness, which of course when you fully realize it, is blissful, luminous and non-conceptual.* But we cannot simply turn on bliss, but consciousness by nature is luminous. You do not have to turn that on or turn it off, it is by nature luminous and *what you are seeking to do here is to observe your own mind from a non-conceptual perspective, that nevertheless is knowing.* So if I gaze here at a bit of hair, I do not have to think about it, I do not have to label it or anything, I just can look at it and I am knowing something and that is whether or not I have language to describe it, something is coming in so it is appearing. The Tibetan word is "Nhepa", *ascertaining*, so both things are happening and that is before any articulations, *so that is the type of immediate, non-verbal knowing*, one could say intuitive knowing, that you're resting in, *a kind of just getting into a flow of an immediate, non-verbal, really quietly conceptual, intuitive and quite immediate knowing.*

(9:50) So once again what is the purpose of settling the mind in its natural state, as a shamatha method? The purpose of course is relaxation, stability and vividness, but what is the purpose of that specific method? *It is the fact that you're actually observing your mind dissolving into the substrate, substrate consciousness, observing all appearances dissolving into substrate, all the appearances dissolving into substrate that is the space of the mind, and all your subjective appearances and all your subjective impulses dissolving into, substrate consciousness.* The subjective impulses, the mental process of this elaborated man's mind, woman's mind, psyche, course mind, all that now just getting simplified and dissolving back into substrate consciousness, which has no gender, no ethnicity, not old, not young and not even human, but still knowing, so that is what you are watching happen, and *it is actually a really interesting preparation for dying lucidly. But happily.* That is, practicing settling the mind in its natural state is not just one happy day after another, because you are dredging up a lot of stuff, so all kind of stuff will come up. It will be occasionally a rough ride, but you are doing it voluntarily and you have all kinds of ways to make it a smooth ride: the Four Immeasurables, refuge in all kinds of nice things to help, including having dharma's friends... and having desert! :-) Anything that helps.

But overall, as you just get into the flow and go deeper, deeper and deeper, then the blissful quality becomes more evident, and then there you are, *watching your mind dissolving into the substrate consciousness, which is exactly what will happen, lucidly or non-lucidly, when you die.*

But here you are, doing it when it is really good for your health, and we have seen now from the Shamatha Project, that it may actually increase your life span, so you get quality and quantity.

(12:20) *So the purpose of settling the mind in its natural state is to attend very closely, but not with the primary motive of gaining insight into the nature of emotions, images and so forth, but rather to develop relaxation, stability and vividness, as you watch your mind dissolve into the substrate consciousness.* And again, the perspective from which you are viewing your mind gradually dissolving is your closest approximation to the substrate consciousness, *which is clear, non-conceptual and knowing. Note that as soon*

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as you start thinking about the mind, then that is no longer a good approximation of the substrate consciousness, that is just the mind thinking about the mind, so it is being totally caught up in course mind. So that is why we keep on coming back and whatever thoughts arise, you observe them, but you do not conceptualize them, you do not get caught into the dialogue, the commentary, the rumination, you observe it quietly and as much as you can non-conceptually, until eventually your mind dissolves into the substrate consciousness and that richly populated dharmadhatu, the domain of your mind, is now being simplified, reduced, unadorned, unelaborated, un-configured, so it is reduced to the alaya, the substrate.

The dharmadatu, the relative dharmadatu, space of the mind, is now nakedly appearing as alaya, substrate, as your richly adorned, heavily configured psyche, your mind, your chitta, is now reduced down to bare bounds, which the great Penchen Lama, which was the fifty Dalai Lama's tutor said: *"Now you have ascertained the essential nature of your mind"*. He is not talking about emptiness and he is not talking about rigpa, but he is saying now you know the mind is all about, now you know it nakedly, all the elaborations of your mind, your memories, your personal history, all that stuff is your mind, it is very well, but you know in the next life you will not even remember what you have in this life, so that could not be essential to know thyself, which means, *"Oh, I know my personal history, I know about my character, my personality and so forth, it is just a short history, let's get over it"*. So it is not insignificant to know thyself on that dimension, but after all, you would like to see: *"Where is all that coming from?"*, *"What is keeping what is carried on?"*: So if that's true, and of course this can be checked, that is the beauty of the practice. There's no one scientific theory about the nature of consciousness that can be checked, that could actually be tested, because they are simply assuming the materialism view, they are not testing it. They are just saying that that's what they assume. That is fine if you are a theologian, we do not question God, we just assume God and we built everything on our God's belief, which is fine, there is nothing wrong with that. But I do not think science is at its best, when it has unquestioned assumptions. That is exactly what science is not supposed to do.

(15:38) So here we are, no-unquestionable assumptions, including Buddha's assumptions, but there it is, the hypothesis is that the substrate consciousness carries on through from lifetime to lifetime and if you can ascertain that, I do not mean believe or simply have faith in it - Lama Zopa Rinpoche once said, when *"Is it necessary to believe in reincarnation to achieve enlightenment?"* he replied *"No. You need to know it!"* So find a belief, but this is something to be known and not just to be believed just because a Lama or the Buddha said so, but let's go forward and put that to the test of experience.

(16:07) One incredible thing it is that just shamatha, not even vipashyana let alone Dozgchen or Vajrayana, it is just shamatha and that is enough to actually ascertain substrate consciousness, which is that deepest consciousness that carries from lifetime to lifetime and is the repository for all your memories, experiences, karmic imprints.

(16:40) *There is shamatha: to view, to be able to explore the nature of the mind from the perspective of having achieving shamatha, having your mind dissolving into the substrate consciousness.*

(18:28) Here, when we are going from shamatha in the next session to vipashyana, we are doing our best to approximate the perspective of substrate consciousness, but instead of turning it in words, to probe into the substrate, into the ultimate dhamadatu, into rigpa, dharmakaya, and all of that, we get to that vantage point which is quite free of distortion, subjective bias, *"I like"*, *"I do not like"*, and all the labels viewing from this rather distilled perspective, but instead of turning into the deep space of consciousness, and multiple dimensions of consciousness, but take that hub telescope and go and look right back the earth.

It is probably a crazy idea, by looking from that telescope I doubt it can be good for that, but we are doing something like that. You get to this very clear, very distill, un-contaminated, relative un-configured state and then you turn it right back on to the mind and say, *"Ok mind, now I am looking at you objectively"* that is, *not from with my emotions and my hopes and my fears and my personal history, but from this perspective of substrate consciousness, or my best approximation.* In a way, it's really scientific, it is really a perspective that is quite free of objective bias, and since you are viewing it non conceptually, then there is no bias, with the limitations of languages like Italian or Germany or French or Sanskrit, because every language has its strength and weaknesses, but also as soon as you are looking through languages, then you know you are configured by way of that language, whereas if you are viewing non conceptually, then you are free of the limitations from all the languages, and you are just getting straight on, direct, and relatively immediate experience.

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(21:03) So now, we are going back to settling the mind in its natural state, which will be our base camp, and then from that, we can make our expedition into closely applying mindfulness to mental feelings. Having said that, we are not going to try to do it single pointedly on the space of the mind, when we are doing in vipashyana, but when you are experiencing feelings come up (pleasure, pain and indifference), but when you experience that coming up, you may very well simultaneously experience sensations in the body. *“My heart is heavy with grief”, “My heart is feel with joy”*. So you may feel grief and joy, somatically, there are some sensations there. *So now, when we move beyond shamatha and vipashyana, it is perfectly fine to attend to both the mental feelings (pleasure, pain and indifference) but also to the correlated somatic sensations, looking to the whole system, seeing how they’re interrelated.*

Meditation:

(22:00) Settle your body in its natural state and your respiration in its natural rhythm, and for a short time, calm and balance your mind by way of mindfulness of breathing.

(26:00) Now according to the classical instructions on settling the mind in its natural state, let your eyes be opened. They may be wide opened if you wish, or partially opened, or when you’re just beginning, if you find it quite distractive, let them be closed, and as you get more familiar with the practice, then try opening them, for example in a dark room, and get used to the practice with the eyes opened. So I will speak more generically now: let your eyes be at least partially opened, and vacantly rest your gaze in the space in front of you.

And now single pointedly direct your mindfulness, your interest, your attention, to the space of the mind and whatever arises in that domain. Remember that the first challenge in this practice is to experientially distinguish between the stillness of your own awareness and the movements of the mind, of thoughts, images and so on. You can experience stillness of your own awareness only when there is a course sense of relaxation, of ease, of letting go. Resting your awareness without distraction, without grasping.

In order to clearly find the target, the space of the mind, if you are new to the practice you might find it helpful, as we did before, to very deliberately give yourself a target, a discursive thought, or mental image generated, and focus on it. Allow it to fade back in the space of the mind, and then be quiet, keep your attention right where it was, and see what comes up next, all on its own accord.

(30:25) It is very easy to be carried away by thoughts, just caught up in mind wandering or rumination. And so as soon as you recognize that with your faculty of introspection, let your first response just be to loosen up, and then without trying to make the thought vanishing, just release your grasping onto it, or onto its referent, and then very gently, happily, return your attention to the present moment, to whatever’s arising in the space of your mind, right now, and observe without judgment, without seeking to modify it, without identifying with it. Observe it without distraction and without grasping.

(33:25) And now as you sustain this flow of mindfulness, of the objective appearances that arise in the space of the mind, *be aware also of the feelings. How are you experiencing them in the mind?* How are you feeling altogether, mentally, psychologically? Recognize the feeling of neutrality, just feeling calm. But if you become bored, uneasy, restless, note the gradations of dukkha, of mental unhappiness, as well as the occurrence of pleasure, that arises in the mind.

(38:21) If at times you want to come down to a kind of a lower altitude, just to get a bit more grounding, you always come back to mindfulness of breathing for a little while, as it is more tangible, easier to engage with, and then return to the space of the mind, as soon as you are ready.

(40:03) *And then you may start running experiments: feelings don’t just happen to you, you can deliberated generate them, and so, why not start up with a pleasant feeling?* You may bring to mind someone who you love, the very thought of whom brings forth a happy feeling, or remember some happy occasion, some pleasant memory, or some inspiring fantasy or wish, or generate a thought, image or memory, and as the feeling arises, observe it, observe with the question: *“Is it permanent or impermanent, static or changing?”* Closely apply mindfulness to feelings, those that arise spontaneously and those you deliberately generate.

Transcribed by: Rafael Carlos Giusti

Revised by: Diogo Rolo

Final edition by: Rafael Carlos Giusti

23 Settling the Mind in its Natural State (3)

07 Sep 2012

Teachings:

This morning we return to shamatha. And we'll spend the first part of the session, really in the shamatha mode of simply attending to (but without any particular investigation) – attending to the space of the body, the tactile sensations that arise or *emerge* – these elements again (bearing in mind the Tibetan term [for] “element” really doesn't say “element” at all, it says something [like] an “emergence,” an “emergence” of earth, water and so forth.) So we'll attend to on the one hand, the emergence of these various sensations associated with the elements. But then also the coloration of our experience of what is appearing to us and by colorations, it means: how are you experiencing it, in terms of are you experiencing it in a pleasant way? In an unpleasant way or neutral way? In dependence upon that, then we say “that was pleasant” and “that was unpleasant.” It's really quite interesting, I think. How something is very much tied, totally into the subjective process and then we just flip the finger out and say, “you've done it, you made me happy, you made me unhappy, you're pleasant, you're unpleasant.” [It is] quite interesting. Stupid, but interesting. *So we'll observe both: the appearances and the way that we experience those appearances.* And, it's quite interesting. A little parallel quickly:

You remember I mentioned the zero point energy of the electromagnetic vacuum? I spent a couple of years studying it. And I did the mathematics for it as well. Because the question is posed: if in empty space itself there is energy (that is, the very energy of space itself and not something you add onto it), what's the density of that energy? How much energy per cubic centimeter? And I did the equations (I mean I didn't do fresh ones, I followed those of great mathematicians and physicists before me) and it turns out the energy density of empty space is infinite. And the physicists (especially in experimental physics) go “well that's very nice, but we can't do anything with that, we can't measure it, I mean we don't have any system to measure infinite. Really big, yeah but infinite, no.” And so the theoretical physicists got in there and they were aware of something and that is (setting aside general relativity theory), in all other branches of physics, quantum mechanics and so forth, the amount of energy in a particular system is relative. It's not an absolute. So you set the benchmark. And you say: “Okay let's say it's this.” And then, having set that, then you can say, “okay more energy, less energy.” So what they did is, they took those equations and they normalized them. Instead of “infinite,” they said “okay let's say it's zero.” Or “no let's say it's finite.” And so you can have any one of those three. Well, I mention that because number one, I think it's interesting. And also, this whole notion in quantum field theory that all configurations of mass energy – we're talking about galaxies, the whole Universe, cell phones and so forth – *that all configurations of mass energy are actually nothing other than configurations of, crystallizations of the energy of empty space.* Quite interesting... So might it be (I mean looking for poetic metaphors or analogies) that all of the sensations arising in the body are actually simply crystallizations of the energy of that space of the body itself, congealing into earth, water and so forth? It's a question, maybe a kind of cool question.

(3:48) Then we shift over to the space of the mind, the space of the mind, again being not merely a vacuity, but a space (now poetically speaking because I'm not speaking physics, but first person experience of the mind), that space of the mind being saturated by a kind of energy, like in science fiction the “holodeck,” that it's empty and yet you've turned it on so it's ready to form into all kinds of forms. Of course you know, it's science fiction. But holograms, holographic images are not science fiction. So there you have the energy field and there with lasers and then suddenly out of that space you have formation of forms, three dimensional forms that you look at from different sides, it's really quite beautiful.

(4:30) And so as we're attending to the space of the mind, then we may view all the appearances, all the events as crystallizations, formulations, configurations of that space of the mind of those appearances. And now, there's the way we experience those appearances and that has to do with feelings. Are you finding them pleasant, unpleasant or neutral? And so I mentioned yesterday (as Miles reminded us), *that the first challenge in settling the mind in its natural state is to distinguish between stillness and motion.* So this means getting the taste, knowing for yourself in your own experience, what's it like when your awareness is simply still and unattached? Like a flame, like a candle unmoved by the wind. If you look at the candle, you'll know when it's just straight up and then you'll know when it's flickering, when it's movement and that means it's been

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caught by the breeze. *So what's it like to have your awareness be like an un-flickering flame, still, luminous and at the same time illuminating the comings and goings of the mind?* So that's one distinction to be drawn: the stillness of your awareness and the movements of the mind.

But then as [UNKNOWN] pointed out yesterday, as we attend to the space of the mind sometimes we see all the cockroaches, we see the images, the thoughts and so forth and so on. But other times, as intently as we attend to the space of the mind, we just don't see any movement. We just don't see anything. So that's another thing to distinguish. When (as you are attending to the space of the mind) do you detect (at least relative) stillness? When do you detect motion? So even in shamatha, it's discerning, it's not just kind of sitting there in a kind of trance. Anything but [that]. So stillness and motion within the field, stillness and motion of your own awareness: when is your awareness in motion by way of grasping? When is it still by way of releasing of grasping?

(6:30) And then a final point, and it's really an important one. In terms of feelings (pleasant, so positive, zero and negative, pleasant neutral, and unpleasant). *When we identify these feelings in the body and mind, are we identifying something that is self-defining? That is, when we observe, when we experience, when we note a neutral feeling, is that by nature neutral, absolutely neutral?* And if you perceive it in any other way, well you're wrong? Is that the case? And likewise when you experience a pleasant feeling, is that absolutely pleasant? And likewise unpleasant? Or like energy in most systems of physics, is it relative?

Now remember this phrase from Shantideva: "There is nothing that does not become easier through familiarization."

(7:40) For example, some people have arthritis. I think the body never feels great, if it's quite chronic. Rheumatoid arthritis, I've never had it [but] I think it must be very unpleasant. And so your body would never feel really good. But if you have that or maybe a chronic injury. . . or my friend injured his spine and morphine doesn't help and so forth. Or just generally ill health and so forth. You set yourself a new benchmark. And [if someone asks] "how are you today?" "Today I am really doing quite OK. It's neutral. That is, I've had much worse and of course I can remember having better, but this is really an ok day, I feel pretty ok, I feel neutral." Whereas for another person, that might be just miserable. And for another person, whose getting tortured every day in a concentration camp for example, they might say: "Oh man, how lucky you've got only mild discomfort. Man what a sweet day you're having."

For an ordinary sentient being like me, we experience a mental affliction like anger, craving, whatever and when the mental affliction comes up it's kind like a hair landing in the palm of the hand and you kind of notice it, and think "oh yeah, that's craving, oh, yeah it's anger, oh, yeah that's jealousy." Whereas if you are an arya-bodhisattva and you experience exactly the same mental affliction, you say it's like that hair landing in your eye and that really catches your attention and you really can't bear it and you say: "get it out, get it out." Remember the story of Atisha when he was on the caravan (a whole bunch of people traveling from one place of Tibet to another) and he would suddenly hop off his horse (in the midst of how many people with him?) he would call the whole caravan to a halt, hops off his horse and he does a mandala offering. And people would say: "Atisha what are you doing, we're trying to get from here, what's up?" And he said: "I had a negative thought, I had to purify it. I don't know when I'm going to die and I didn't want to take that to my death. So I had to purify my thought before, so you just chill, hang in there, just [rubs forehead].....

That's how you purify negative thoughts by the way, you rub your forehead. I wish!

So I think we feel pretty good. I know when I was in Dharmasala in the early days, and heard about all the suffering (three types of suffering, six types of suffering, eight types of suffering, samsara is an "ocean of suffering"). And I thought, "my part of samsara really isn't that bad. I come from a really nice family, had my own car back in California, you know it was pretty good, India not too bad, really good circumstances there, I got sick a lot but you know, whatever. But you know, 'ocean of samsara'? That's really tough for those other people. And those sentient beings, but in my 'neck of the woods' (as we say in America), it's pretty Ok." From the Buddhas' perspective, they would be weeping buckets of tears for me. They would be looking on me with such intense compassion, [thinking] "the poor guy is wallowing in a mire of suffering and he's so dull he doesn't even know it." So they'd be feeling intense compassion for me, where I'm saying "I'm fine, I really like Dharma, I'm really into Dharma."

So it may be relative, eh? It may be relative.

Let's jump in and find out.

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Meditation:

(11:40) Settle your body, speech and mind in their natural states.

(16:18) And now for a little while let your mindfulness illuminate the space of the body. And whatever tactile events emerge within that space as well as the feelings that arise in your mode of experiencing the appearances within the body, identify your affective baseline that is, what's neutral? What's in the middle that you would deem neither pleasant or unpleasant, simply ok? Identify your baseline and then carefully note fluctuations, the emergence some pleasant feelings, unpleasant feeling...

And in the shamatha practice, simply observe both tactile sensations as well the feelings, moment by moment without distraction and without grasping, letting your awareness remain still.

(20:10) To have something continuous to attend to, you may maintain a peripheral awareness of the rise and fall of the abdomen or simply the rhythm of the breath altogether.

(21:05) And now let your eyes be open and your gaze resting vacantly in the space in front of you and turn the full force of your mindfulness to the space of the mind. Observe these fluctuations in that space in the form of thoughts and images and also closely attend to your subjective way of experiencing what arises in the mind, in terms of pleasant, unpleasant and neutral feelings.

Again note your baseline: *where is neutral? And then observe fluctuations away from that baseline.*

(23:00) With introspection note that your respiration continues to flow effortlessly without constraint releasing fully with every out breath all the way through to the end until the next breath flows in effortless.

(28:15) It's only by way of a core sense of relaxation of ease and looseness within the body and mind, that your awareness can hold its own ground, rest in its own place without being moved by grasping.

(28:37) *When your awareness is still recognize that and then note the distinction when your awareness is carried away by rumination, by wandering thoughts.*

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Revised by Aaron Morrison

Final edition by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Posted by Alma Ayon

24 Mindfulness of feelings (5)

07 Sep 2012

So we return to the close application of mindfulness to mental feelings. And as always, shamatha is something like a baseline, like a base camp, a place you can rest, a place you can have -- kind of a comfort zone, a place to come back to, something that's constant. *So, I've introduced the settling the mind in its natural state as your baseline for attending to feelings arising in the mind. But bear in mind, when the Buddha was teaching his great discourse on the four applications of mindfulness, he made no reference to settling the mind in its natural state.* He taught just one shamatha method and that's mindfulness of breathing. So I know, having met with all of you now at one point or another individually, you are all of course, unique. And some of you just naturally are more inclined to and maybe feel a bit more comfortable or more adept at mindfulness of breathing and others just naturally take to settling the mind and really enjoy it and you know, you can succeed in it. So what I'd like to do for this coming session is for me to give fewer words [and] give you a bit more freedom to find your own niche, your own approach. And so, I won't give much this time. But what I would suggest is, in terms of your shamatha, just go with whatever just feels most effective for you (whether it's mindfulness of breathing or settling the mind) and then you have that as your base. And if you're settling the mind, what I would suggest is that your base [is] something that is kind of fairly constant, is that field, that space of the mind -- so there it is at least as a backdrop (as in the conversation with [UNKNOWN] earlier), *at least that space is always there.* And then for most of us there are bound to be some thoughts, images arising at least periodically and they're not that hard to attend to, to ascertain.

(2:28) So there you are. So as you are attending to that space and when they come up and you tend to you notice the thoughts, images and so forth arising there is kind of your constant, your focus in that or relative to that, then of course take note of feelings arising especially psychological but that whole interface, that intertwining of feelings in the body as well as feelings in the mind. But, is that clear then?

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(2:45) Kind of have your base within the shamatha, attending to the space of the mind, its contents and with that . . . and then, now and again you'll be especially noting a feeling coming up, maybe triggered and this is where we go into vipashyana. Triggered by what? Well (as in the conversation with Steph yesterday or earlier), *sometimes you may not be able to tell, just the feelings coming up. But other times you can.* It's a memory that was happy or disturbing, it was maybe a sound, maybe it's . . . you know there's construction noise there's buzz saws, chainsaws over there and so that can trigger some "Oh when are they going to stop?" You know, a little bit of unpleasant feeling could arise in the mind triggered by sound. It could be triggered by sensations in the body. *So look at the cooperative conditions, the sound doesn't turn into a feeling, the tactile sensations don't, thoughts don't turn into feelings. Right? But those can all act as cooperative conditions to catalyze or trigger pleasant, unpleasant or for that matter, neutral feelings.*

(4:16) So watch the process of origination and then how they are present (your core vipashyana questions: impermanent, nature of dukkha [suffering], *anatman* (non-self)). And then how they dissolve, because feelings don't just linger on forever. And one other point there, I think of interest. I know from my long friendship now – it's a 12-year friendship with Paul Ekman . . .

(4:20) And he makes a distinction (I'll give very briefly, the overall distinction) [between] *emotions* (and of course that includes happy/sad – but it's broader than that) – as by nature and by definition, being fairly brief – that's how psychologists use the word "emotions", fairly brief ("That situation made me really unhappy but I got over it") and then a *mood* (so emotions maybe seconds or minutes). *Moods* can be many minutes or even hours ("All afternoon I felt kind of in a bad mood or I was just feeling really euphoric all afternoon or whatever.") But it lingers, it lingers, lingers . . . *So we have emotions – quite transient. Moods can really last for hours on end.* And then we have, temperament. And, have you ever met a gloomy person? I've met a cheerful person and I don't mind saying what her name is. Her name is Thubten Chodron. I've known her since we were like 13 years old. It's very unusual. From the same town. And she went off and became a nun. And in the late 1970s we connected again ("Oh, fancy that . . .") So we've known each other for decades. Well back then (and now I'm going to reveal one of her secrets) . . . Her name is Cheryl Green and she went by the name of "Cherry." So "take that" Thubten Chodron! I knew her through middle school and through high school. And she was just one of those people who's cheerful. Just, that was her nature. She was just a cheerful person. And what can you do with a name like "Cherry?" You know like [adopts morose voice] "my name's Cheryl how are you?" It really wouldn't work. So you kind of have to rise to the occasion. Like a girl named "Peaches." It doesn't happen often, but how could you be a sour puss? In any case, she's one of the people I've known that just by temperament is just very cheerful and I've met her over the decades since then. She *is*. Just a very cheerful disposition. And that was *before* practicing dharma. In other words, she practiced dharma in the last life. So there it is. So we have a wide variety of temperaments. Now let's cut back to it. *But we see emotions: minutes. Moods: maybe hours. Temperament can be decades.*

Open question for the psychologist: whether temperament can be changed? To my mind, it's "open and shut" I already know and the answer I'm convinced is true. Temperament can be changed. But of course it takes a lot of work or a life-transforming event. That can do it too. Something really big can come into your life and just set you on a whole new course. So, you can imagine that. A person is cheerful until a dear loved one dies or your only child dies or some other tragedy. And then gloomy for the rest of a life. That can happen, for sure. And if it can go down – there's always a symmetry here – then why not up?

(7:33) Well, what I'm getting at here is that as we're attending now to simple emotions of happy and sad, emotions arising and you may be able to see the cooperative conditions that catalyze it here and trigger it there. But if you see a mood setting in – and that could happen over the next (by the way we only have six weeks left) that you slip into a mood. It could happen (certainly you'll have emotions). But you may have a mood as well.

Now Paul Ekman says, (a very savvy affective psychologist), "I would be happy never to have a mood again. I'd like to continue to have a rich array of emotions (part of being human), but I could do without moods, I would really happy to have no moods because they get you stuck in a cognitive bias." And that – refractory periods and all of that – he said: "I would be happy . . . (of course you can't just choose not to have moods). But it's an interesting perspective.

(8:29) What I'm getting to is this – and then we'll go back to the meditation – and that is when you see a mood sets in. Just by the very nature of it, the fact that it's lingering for maybe hours on end, suggests that

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the trigger is nothing something that's happening momentarily, momentarily from the environment because the environment is changing, probably not. *If a mood sets in, that which is perpetuating it (here's a hypothesis), is almost certainly grasping.* Because bear in mind when we superimpose upon experience, my impression of another person, my impression of Thanyapura Mind Center, my impression of the Republican party whatever it maybe, our impressions, *our ideas tend to be static, relatively static.*

(9:14) Mine hasn't changed much since at least throughout the Bush era. Republicans are . . . you know, they're just ice men, they're just frozen in blocks of ice. In my mind, I mean, especially the right wing. They're frozen. Are they really [frozen]? No, but in my mind they're just locked in, like Neanderthals. "Tax cut, tax cut" it's always the same thing, I mean it is like a broken record. And I am telling you my own delusional mentality of just locked into a frozen attitude that I superimpose upon millions of people which is probably not very realistic. Or it might be (plenty of laughing in the room).

(10:00) But the point is, whether it's a political party, a country or a government, a person, a place and so forth that which we superimpose and sense tends to be static. And by clinging to that idea, that attitude and so forth, by clinging to it. Now when we say "clinging to it" we know we are dealing with something real, has causal efficacy, by clinging to it in that kind of holding pattern, some static pattern. That's I suspect is what sustains an emotion and it goes into the holding pattern of a mood, held with grasping, *held with the superimposition of something relatively static that is superimposed upon actual reality which is always fizzing, always effervescent, always in flux.*

(10:45) So if you've gotten locked into a mood you might want to see who is doing it? It's probably not anybody else doing it to you. *It's probably self-generated.* This is my hypothesis and it's not a metaphysical one it's one you can test. *See if you get caught in a mood whether it's not because you have superimposed on reality something relatively static and then holding onto that, fusing that with reality and thereby perpetuating a certain emotion and having it bleed over into a mood and very possibly not to your benefit, not to your advantage.* Ok? So I've given a fairly long preamble.

So now there will be relatively few words in the meditation itself, just a few punctuation marks here and there. So either mindfulness of breathing as your base (your shamatha base), settling the mind as your base, so there's something constant. *And then within that look for these fluctuations from the base.* And that is these uprisings almost like solar flares, a flaring up, an emergence of *some feeling, somatic or psychological*, either one, *watch them arise up, watch the factors of origination, what triggers them and so forth. Watch how they are present. Watch how they dissolve.* Ok? Twenty-four minutes.

Meditation:

(13:20) Settle your body, speech and mind in its natural state and at any time throughout the session if you find yourself just wandering or getting a bit sloppy you always come back and just count a few breathes, maybe count ten breathes, stabilize, get yourself grounded again and venture back into the practice of either shamatha or on the basis of shamatha, vipashyana.

(17:20) Continuing in either the mindfulness of breathing or the settling the mind in its natural state, find your meditative object and then practice as explained earlier in that ongoing flow of experience, take special note of or closely apply mindfulness to the emergence of emotions as well as the flow of just a neutral emotion or feeling.

Let's continue now practicing in silence.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Revised by Aaron Morrison

Final Edition by Rafael Carlos Giusti

25 Compassion (1)

08 Sep 2012

Teachings:

A very quick note regarding the shamatha practices. Some of you are finding in the Mindfulness of Breathing that the breath gets very subtle, very shallow, which of course implies that the sensations of the breath can become vanishingly subtle.

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When that happens, it's just an invitation to go to greater depth and to greater clarity, to greater calm, the whole synergy of relaxation, stability and vividness. So it's really opening the door there, so make you sure you go through the door. And how do you do that is by sustaining a flow of knowing; in other words, don't give up. If you lose the sensations, don't think, oh, you're not going to go someplace else. That was just the invitation to go deeper and so not a time to say, oh, I'll look someplace else now. And so if you're focusing at the apertures of the nostrils, and the sensations of the breath become so subtle you can't detect them, then look for your baseline, and that is whether or not you're breathing, if you focus quite intently there, at the apertures of the nostrils, you will pick up what I would call kind of a background radiation or just a kind of ongoing flow of sensation there that's just there because you do have nerve endings at the apertures of your nostrils. So that's always there, breathing or no breathing.

So if you can tap into that, if you can ascertain that, just the subtle flow of sensation there, that's just present because you have a nose with nerve endings, then as the breath does flow in and out, which it certainly does, then you will see little fluctuations in that background radiation, and attend to those fluctuations. So now in the Buddha's teachings, you are at that stage, the challenge is attend to the whole body, the whole body of the in-breath, whole body of the out-breath – very subtle, very shallow, but stay on the mark the whole time, and maintain the flow of knowing., right?

Even if you're doing full-body awareness, that's still fine, and now it's a bit easier. Even apart from the fluctuations of the breath, pick up the background radiation of the body, the sensations arising in the body, and then note those fluctuations corresponding to in-and- out-breath.

And then just a brief reiteration, and that is, if you're attending to the space of the mind and whatever arises in it, this is simply a reminder, even when you cannot see anything, number one; there's something there; you're just not seeing it yet. It's subtler than your awareness is yet, so make your awareness more subtle, and you will see it. But in the meantime, don't get frustrated; don't hit yourself on the head; just attend very closely to the space of the mind and know that. So that's your background radiation; that's something to know, and that is, there is something, and it's called the space of the mind, and you can ascertain it. And then holding that as your baseline, then you can see little fluctuations – a little flickering thought, an image, a memory, an emotion, desire – whatever it is – and those little perturbations, okay? So attend to that; that's for shamatha.

Now we are going into Compassion, and so we'll begin with ourselves; we'll extend outwards. We'll focus on hedonic suffering as well as genuine suffering, the freedom from it. Compassion of course is not an emotion; it is an aspiration, and all sentient beings want to be free of suffering.

We don't need to learn that; we don't need to practice that, but to arouse the aspiration to be free of suffering and the causes of suffering and for that to actually mean something, not a vague generality, but actually, when you say the causes of suffering you actually know what the causes of suffering are and then to arouse the aspiration to be free – now that's compassion with wisdom. So let's go there.

Meditation:

Settle your body, speech and mind in its natural state.

(8:08) And now imagine if you will that the very essential nature not only of your mind but even of the display of your body is an effulgence, an expression, a display of your own pristine awareness, by nature pure, primordial pure, luminous, radiant, the ultimate source of healing.

(8:50) Symbolically imagine this, if you will, as a radiant, incandescent orb of light in the center of your chest, emanating light out through your entire being, your body and your mind. And with each in-breath, arouse the compassionate aspiration that you may be free of all hedonic suffering and its underlying causes, hedonic suffering referring to that range of suffering that arises in response to something unpleasant – physical distress, mental distress in response to adversity. With each in-breath, arouse this aspiration: May I be free. And imagine all such adversity and the underlying causes in the form of darkness converging in upon this orb of light at your heart, and with each in-breath, disappearing there without trace.

(11:15) And with each in breath, allow your awareness to move into the realm of possibility and imagine breath-by-breath becoming free here and now.

(12:56) And then move deeper. Consider the range of what I've called genuine unhappiness, that arises even without being stimulated by adversity, by something unpleasant happening to us, but a dimension of unhappiness, of distress, that is internally generated because of the activation of mental afflictions within our

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own mindstreams. With each in-breath, arouse the aspiration: May I be truly and completely free of all suffering and its underlying, its essential causes, and imagine that domain of suffering also in the form of darkness converging in upon and dissolving into the orb of light at your heart with each in- breath, dissolving there, vanishing completely.

(15:04) And imagine being free not only from suffering but from all mental afflictions and all that obscures the essential purity of your own awareness, pristine awareness. Imagine being free.

(16:18) And now for the remainder of the session, you may deliberately call to mind individuals, groups of individuals, as you focus upon them, arousing this compassionate aspiration that they, too, like yourself, may be free of suffering and its underlying causes. You may deliberately focus your attention here and there, or you may simply open your awareness in all directions and see who comes to mind. Attend closely, and practice as before.

(27:30) Then release all appearances, all objects and aspirations, and let your awareness simply rest in its own nature, holding its own ground, resting in awareness of awareness.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Revised by Marti Hanna on 02/12/15

Final edition by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Posted by Alma Ayon

26 General Session

10 Sep 2012

Teachings:

I would like for this afternoon's session to be silent, so unguided, for you to choose whatever method you find most beneficial. So now we've completed two weeks and covered a fairly wide range of meditative practices and really looked into two or one could say four modes of shamatha: three mindfulness of breathing, settling the mind, and now we've looked at the close application of mindfulness to the body and feelings. We have a nice spread there in addition to two out of the four immeasurables. So if we have roughly 40 people in the room, what I would assume and expect to be the case is that you'll have 40 different schedules of practices that you're doing, that each one is really hand-tailored to you. So I'm giving you kind of "off the rack," here's a wide variety of practices, but how much you emphasize one or another – and then tomorrow, when you have a totally unstructured day, I'm sure it will be 40 individual and unique days – what type of practices you emphasize, the extent to which you might want to go out, just get a bit of a breather, entirely your choice. So do see that you're just being as kind, as wise, as loving as you can to yourself to choose exactly those methods that you find most beneficial.

Even among the four immeasurables, the Buddha himself made it quite clear that one could achieve liberation by following any one of them, that you don't have to have equal insight into all four, but by gaining insight into any one of them, that can lead to realization of nirvana, and nirvana by way of mindfulness of the body or feelings or whatever is still nirvana, so any one of the four is sufficient. Any one of the three shamatha methods is sufficient, but then I gave a variety so you can create your own menu, so to speak, your own balance.

So I'd like to make just a couple of brief comments about the first two of the four immeasurables that we've just dropped into. Loving-kindness: Among the four immeasurables, this is one that is specifically highlighted as a natural remedy for one of the false facsimiles of one of the four immeasurables.

(2:48) The false facsimile of empathetic joy is just the fixation, the attachment, the clinging, the craving and so forth to sensual pleasures, hedonic pleasures, the bounties of the desire realm. So when one just starts going really mundane, really focusing, oh, but this is where it's really fun, this is where I'm going to really find some happiness, and that is just focusing on the mundane, then this is the false facsimile: Isn't life grand? I just love my life. I'm doing so well; I'm just doing great, and so forth, and it's all hedonic. Well, okay, there's nothing wrong with having a good life, but if one is fixating there for finding your happiness, then that's going to be pretty limited.

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(3:36) So the antidote for that within the four immeasurables is so sweet. I mean, it's sweet, not in saccharine, but it's so kind; it's gentle; it's warm. And that is, instead of beating it to death with meditations on impermanence and the six types of suffering and the eight types of suffering until it's just beaten to a pulp and say, okay, I give, samsara really sucks, I mean, that's one approach, a head-on collision approach. But another one, kind of more nurturing, is that at any time, when we just start losing track of our practice, maybe just giving lip service to the practice, but we're just basically getting caught up in work and entertainment and frankly, whatever everybody else does – not everybody, but an awful lot of people – of the good life is just pursuing hedonic well being, success and all of that. When we start just going with the flow of samsara, then a very gentle reminder to restore our sanity is loving-kindness.

(4:30) Coming back to the simple aspiration, might I find happiness and the causes of happiness, and we bring some wisdom to that, and we say well, oh, I remember, simply having a lot of entertainments, work, wealth, fame, etc., those are actually not really sources of happiness; they may or may not catalyze it – so coming back to loving kindness in a very loving and gentle and wise way as we come back to our core aspirations. What is it you really seek? Was it really that hedonic stuff, or are you looking for something more meaningful? And so it kind of brings it back to dharma but in a very gentle way. So there's that.

(5:08) And then in terms of compassion, compassion is a natural antidote for equanimity gone astray. The false facsimile of equanimity is cold indifference, aloof indifference, stupid indifference. Remember, it's even. Equanimity is even, but it's an even with an open heart, equally caring, equally attentive, whereas the false facsimile of that is, yeah, even, but not really caring much about anybody. So what arouses us from that kind of apathy, that cold indifference, its kind of disengagement, disassociation from reality, is compassion, because when we attend to our own and others' suffering, it's hard to respond with apathy if we really are attending closely.

(6:24) So, and just in our daily lives, we'll see that here the practice of dharma and the four applications of mindfulness is to really understand and gain insight into the nature of the body, feelings, and so on, and the four immeasurables are really designed to really use the mind in a very beneficial way. So it occurred to me when I was meditating just before coming to the session that when we're born, and we have this brand new human body with a brand new human mind that's arising in conjunction with the nervous system, the brain and all of that, when we're just born, you know what we didn't get? And I bet it never occurred to you. We didn't get an owner's manual. Like, you buy a new computer, you always had, at least online at least, how do you operate this thing? It's more than a paperweight. You get a new car; you get a new cellphone, it comes with an owner's manual, tells you how to work it and not break it and so forth. And our bodies and minds are far more complex than even really good laptops, and we got no owner's manual, which means we're just screwing up all the time, not knowing how to use the body, not knowing how to use the mind, falling into all kinds of bad habits, rumination and so forth and so on. So an owner's manual would be good.

(7:45) So the four applications of mindfulness are really designed to understand the system. That's a good idea. And then the four immeasurables are really designed not only to understand but then to bring forth balance and including balance of feelings and emotions.

(8:02) So loving kindness, to overcome hedonic fixation which is naturally – when we fall into that syndrome, I think we already know, when we just go totally worldly; everything is just about our worldly success, just like a shadow, what's bound to follow that is restlessness because we are investing in the world over which we have almost no control. So how can we really be at ease if my happiness relies upon things that I have no control over? I'm always waiting, how's it going to turn out; how's it going to turn out? Because I am a gambler. A gambler's life cannot be very restful and at ease, unless you just don't care how things turn out. So on the one hand, restlessness, but also of course anxiety, and that is, oh, I hope this works out, I hope this works out; maybe it won't; maybe it won't. So those two – restlessness and anxiety or excitement and anxiety – those together are one of the five obscurations that obscure the nature of the mind.

(8:55) So these two, loving kindness and compassion are very helpful. In terms of the compassion, it came up in one of the individual meetings, and that is choose well between the loving kindness and compassion. If you're feeling a bit dark, a bit heavy, a bit blue, depressed or what have you, probably more of the loving kindness – more light, bring light into the system, spread the light out, uplift yourself, illuminate yourself. That's going to be more balancing. Whereas if you're just getting cold, indifferent, disengaged, and so forth, then the compassion will be very helpful. In terms of tonglen, so we're "tong," the sending out with

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loving kindness, the “len”, the taking in with compassion, but the point to be made here is a simple one, but very important, and that is, if you do attend to others, or for that matter, yourself, attend to others’ suffering, but also the underlying causes. Sometimes the underlying causes of suffering are malice, jealousy, greed, hatred, some really toxic mental states and also behavior, right? Really, I mean, frankly, the word evil is appropriate. And so as we are wishing, aspiring that others may be free of suffering and the causes of suffering, and then we imagine their suffering and the causes of suffering in this dark cloud, it’s a pretty heavy practice, because we’re imagining bringing in whatever’s causing them suffering, and that may be some really toxic stuff, of malice, of exploitation, of mean, and so forth and so on, greed, and all of that.

(10:30) So if you’re bringing in that darkness, from an individual or it could be a whole community, like a terrorist organization or whatever it may be, as you’re drawing in that darkness – really crucial point here – is draw it into this light at your heart, but imagine the light at your heart, even though it’s really quite small, like a pearl of light, as you draw it in there, no matter how large the cloud, how dark, heavy, black it may be, as you draw it in – here’s the crucial point – draw it in and extinguish it without a trace; that is, have it completely vanish, so you’re not carrying that in your heart afterwards like a residue – don’t want that. So bring it in; the metaphor Tibetans will sometimes use is taking a little fluff of down, a little feather, like from a down pillow or from a goose, and imagine taking that little piece of down and dropping it into a bonfire, just, and you go p-f-f-f-f-t! Well, that kind of went out more or less, without a trace, right?

(11:30) And so draw in that darkness, but then have it just extinguished. So the underlying symbolism there is whatever the enormity of the evil or the suffering that you may attend to, including the suffering of all of samsara or the Holocaust or, oh, many other human tragedies that we’ve done all over the world, no matter how large it is as you draw it into the light at your heart, this is greater. This is greater. They can consume it, and p-f-f-f-f-t, just, like, it smacks its lips afterwards. Like, it’s gone; it’s completely consumed. So you don’t carry it. It’s quite important.

So for eight weeks you’re getting an owner’s manual on how to be a human being and like it.

Good. We’ll have now a quiet session. If you’d like to go back to loving kindness or compassion, back to shamatha, back to any of the two of the four applications of mindfulness, it will be a quiet session.

Meditation:

It is a silent session, unguided. You choose the method that you find more beneficial.

Teachings/Instructions after meditation:

(38:12) In terms of the pursuit of hedonic well-being versus eudaemonic well-being, I think I’ve been quite clear; I think it’s an important point, that it’s not as if one is good and the other one’s bad, okay? Getting enough to eat, clothing, shelter, medical care – that’s all hedonic and extremely important. And likewise, just to take tomorrow as an example, there are all kinds of things you can do here. You’ll have a totally unstructured day, no expectations, and nobody monitoring you, right? And so to what extent would you want to be just totally zoning in in your room and just going into meditation all day – there’s one possibility, and the other one is escaping from the place, you know? Get out of the concentration camp, escape, and go off to the beach and just enjoy being out there, enjoying some nice meal, and the sun and the sand and the beach and swimming and all of that, and neither one of those is bad. I mean, there are bad things to do, but neither one of those is something bad. And so then, the choice.

(39:14) And there’s – tomorrow’s a choice, but we’ll have this every day of our lives, including, like, today and yesterday and so forth, and that is it’s this balancing of how much time do we invest in really the cultivation of genuine happiness, and how much time do we invest in the pursuit of hedonic pleasure and all of that? It’s a matter of striking a balance. So I won’t give the whole story, but many of you will remember the whole story, the Buddhist story of the elephant who’s enjoying the pond, and the cat that jumps into the pond and then just thrashes around in excitement or sinks down into laxity, and so the whole moral of the story being to morph from a cat to an elephant.

(39:51) So that when you go into solitude, in the solitude of your own room or go into a meditation hut for a six-month retreat or whatever, and you’re really divorced from or are taken away from the myriad of activities that stimulate you, arouse you, keep you uplifted hedonically, and you’re there in a very neutral environment, your body, your mind in your room, that in fact, you can really flourish, you can be very content, quite happy, even though you’re getting no props, almost no props at all.

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(40:19) The extreme case of this – I wouldn't say extreme in a bad way, but extreme in the sense of really intense, pure and unadulterated – is for example, this dark room of Lama Yeshe in his retreat hut on the Holy Isle, where you go in there for 49 days, and it's pitch black. It's hard to imagine being more divorced from hedonic pleasures than that. You get a bit of ordinary food to keep you alive, and that's it. And besides that, you just enjoy blackout. Lama Yeshe mentioned to me that not one of the students – and he's got, I'm sure, some very good students; a number of them have been through three-year retreats, multiple three-year retreats or four-year retreats, in his case – he said not one of his students has been able to cut it, make through 49 days, not one, not of his Western students, and he's really teaching Westerners. He said, two weeks, and then, let me out of here. And of course you can escape at any time. So that's something of a litmus test.

(41:14) I spoke with a monk in eastern Tibet eight years ago, and he was in a monastery where they focus on Kalachakra practice, a three-year retreat, and part of that is a 49- day black retreat, dark retreat. He said it makes you or breaks you; that is, if you can get through it, and you can make it through it, he said it really purifies the mind, and you really came to know your mind very, very well. You come out much more emotionally balanced, your mental afflictions subdued, and you really have your act much more together coming out than you did when you were coming in. Or you go in, and you go crazy. There's a certain parting of ways there. And before you go crazy, you just kind of say, okay, I have to come out, because nobody's going to keep you in there. But there it is.

(42:00) And you can see that if one can so morph from a cat to an elephant; that is, you can live in solitude, really having almost no props of hedonic stimulation and be really content having few desires, having contentment, two of the prerequisites for achieving shamatha; hardly any activities or concerns – another prerequisite of achieving shamatha; no rumination – another prerequisite of shamatha; living in pitch black, it would be pretty easy to be pretty ethical, because what are you going to do, after all? What a marvelous preparation for dying, because when you go into the dying process, you're heading into a dark retreat. So – good to die happy, having well prepared for it. It could be really good.

(43:50) So striking the balance, and that is we go out for the hedonic in order to, almost like a baby who is eating, you know, not solid food and then gradually goes to solid food, but not all at once, right, doesn't go from mother's milk to a steak. So if the idea here, the general dharma orientation is to gradually wean yourself from dependence, not that one should really accomplish, you'll never have any good food, never enjoy a sunset or music or anything else – that's not the case; that's silly, but the dependence upon it: I can't be happy unless I have work, Internet, people to talk to, blah, blah, blah, all the dependence. Your dependence is loosening, so when it comes, you enjoy it but without attachment. So to get there, it's very easy to be too intense, really, especially when one first takes ordination. I mean, I did that. Because you're – g-r-r-r – really tough, you know, none of hedonic; I'm a monk, boom, like that. You get really uptight and then also very condescending of people who are still mucking about in hedonic. Very easy to do – sense of superiority: Oh, we monks, we wear dresses. We're really austere. The nuns are not nearly as intense as the monks, because they wear dresses anyway. But you have to be really, you know, to be a man and wear a dress, and not be, you know, a cross-dresser? You have to have some real renunciation for that. All right.

(44:16) So to be able to gradually move away, so we're less and less reliant upon hedonic stimulation, so that we can just more, more live in, rest in just that flow of eudaemonic well-being that flows from the nature of a balanced mind.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

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Posted by Alma Ayon

Shamatha, Vipashyana and the Four Applications of Mindfulness – 2012

10 Sep 2012

This morning we return to settling the mind in its natural state. And again, some people take to this like a duck takes to water, very naturally, easily. Others find it much more challenging, with getting frustrated sometimes by just being carried away by every thought that comes up, not having much of the sense of really observing. It's important to have little steps, to be able to, like going into the shallow end of the pool so that you build on success and don't fall into failure and you're just feeling you're not able to do it. So in terms of the various types of events that you can observe in the space of the mind, I think there are some that are simply easier than others. For many people these mental images – like a television or a slide show with no soundtrack, or with mute, no voice – those are quite easy to watch, they just come up. Or you can of course just generate an image of anything you like and observe it. And it's hard to say that can't happen. Almost everybody is aware of that, not everybody, but almost everybody. So that might be the easiest.

(1:25) The second one will be more like listening to a radio and there is just a soundtrack and that is just being aware of the thoughts, the chit chat and so forth and so on coming up. So like a radio with no visual. It is also possible to attend to the two of them arising and interfacing with each other, so now like television or a movie where there's a visual and the audio. So there's a whole array of events arising as in a dream, objectively appearing to you and of course it's not just audio and visual, it could also be olfactory, it could be gustatory, it could be tactile. You can imagine, you can think of the touch of Jell-o! You put your finger in Jell-o.

(2:10) So we have these subjective appearances and then definitely more challenging to be aware of are the subjective impulses, desires, emotions, intentions and again what makes these a bit trickier is by the time you're aware of them, they've already occurred. So it's that very short term working memory, you're aware of an emotion just after it occurred so you're aware of an emotion that took place maybe 15 milliseconds ago. So you are aware of them, but they just went by. Ok? So there's that.

(2:42) So in terms of the sequence, I'd like to now just highlight one more stage – Miles reminded us a couple of days ago – about the very first stage in settling the mind in its natural state, that you have opened the door, that you are actually entering into the practice. An indicator of that is the ability to distinguish between stillness and motion. Primarily there is the stillness of your own awareness and the activities, the motion of thoughts, images and so forth, but also as you are attending to the space of the mind and its events sometimes you may not pick up anything so you may just sense, Ok, it's stillness. But stillness is not simply an absence. There is that space of awareness, which is still. Attend to that, and then you detect some movement within that space and you observe that. So that's a little bit of reminder.

(3:38) Now there are four types of mindfulness that Dudjom Lingpa highlights one by one, culminating in actually achieving shamatha. So there are only four steps rather than nine steps plus shamatha. And so the first of the four types of mindfulness is called single-pointed mindfulness. Single-pointed mindfulness. This is something you might experience this morning. It's not that exalted or advanced. And that is, it occurs when you are simultaneously aware of the stillness of your own awareness and the movement of thoughts. Ok? And how can that occur? By being deeply, deeply relaxed, releasing, so much at ease, so relaxed that you've let go of grasping and in that release of grasping then the thoughts, images and so forth cannot pull you. It's like your awareness is Teflon, there's just nothing for them to snag and so you remain still, thoughts and images come and go.

(4:38) So now we're going to spiral in, I'm going to give you again, because I like to make sure this is accessible and not simply frustrating, because I know it can be very frustrating. So I'm going to try to give a spiral coming into it, and we'll again follow the teachings of Buddha to Bahiya, where we'll attend to the visual, the auditory, the tactile, which we did earlier during the first week, remember? And we omitted the space of the mind, now we won't omit that.

(5:04) So we'll start by bringing the so-called bare attention to the visual, then the auditory, then the tactile, "in the seen let there be just the seen" and so forth and then we'll come to the grand finale which is: "in the space of the mind let the mentally perceived be just the mentally perceived." In other words become lucid with respect to your own mind. That's exactly what it is, just like a lucid dream. Recognizing dreams as dreams? Good. Recognize thoughts and images as thoughts and images and don't mix them up with what you're thinking about because they're really very different. Ok? Oh yeah!

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Let's jump in and I would suggest a comfortable position.

Meditation:

We begin as always by settling the body, speech and mind in their natural states and for the mind you may wish to establish a baseline of equilibrium and clarity with a few minutes of mindfulness of breathing. In the Tibetan tradition they'll often count for 21 breaths. See whether that's helpful for you.

(10:40) Now let your eyes be open and mindfully bring your whole attention to this elliptical field of visual appearances. Let your conceptual mind be silent and observe what is real, what is directly manifesting to your visual perception without adding anything on. In the seen let there be just the seen.

(12:19) And close the eyes and direct the full force of your mindfulness single-pointedly to the auditory field, the domain of sound. In the heard let there be just the heard.

(14:00) Now direct your attention to the space of the body and to whatever tactile events that arise within that domain, including both the sensations correlated with the four elements, also somatic feelings. And in the felt let there be just the felt.

(15:46) Once again let your eyes be at least partially open, but now through a process of elimination examine closely to note what do you directly experience, directly perceive, that does not come by way of any of your five physical senses.

(16:43) And the Buddhist answer is all that you directly perceive that does not appear in any of the five sensory domains appears in the mental domain, and is perceived with mental perception. This includes a wide array of phenomena: discursive thoughts, images, memories, fantasies, dreams, emotions and desires and so on. This is the domain of experience that remains even when your five senses are completely dormant, you're fast asleep and you are dreaming.

(17:37) So focus your attention now single-pointedly on that domain of mental experience, this relative dhammādu. Observe whatever arises in that domain, observing the mentally perceived as the mentally perceived. And again insofar as you still find it helpful, you may at any time crystalize your attention by deliberately generating a discursive thought or mental image. Generate it, allow it to fade and keep your attention right where it was, single-pointedly focused on the domain of the mind. This, then, is a deeper retreat, a retreat from all of the five physical senses, a retreat from the physical world purely into the mind as single-pointedly as you can.

(19:25) Let your body be as still as a mountain, your awareness as still as space and experiment with the breathing to see whether it's more helpful to breathe through the nostrils or through the mouth, whichever leaves you feeling more relaxed, loose, comfortable in body and mind.

(22:49) As always monitor the flow of mindfulness with introspection, applying the remedies as needed. Let's continue practicing now in silence.

Teachings/instructions after meditation:

(30:29) As your shield to protect you from the arrows and spears of rumination throughout the course of the day, what I would suggest is that you hold in one hand, so to speak, your awareness either of the breathing if your primary shamatha practice is mindfulness of breathing, just maintain that peripherally. It's very light, it's an easy touch, just being aware when the breath comes in and when it goes out. It keeps you real and then it gives you something else to do instead of rumination, because rumination comes in when there is nothing else to do.

Or if your practice, if your primary practice is settling the mind in its natural state, same thing. Just keep that window open, attending to the arising of thoughts, images, whatever is coming up there. Just stay in touch because that's just as real as any other perception. Maintain that flow of awareness. So maintain your lucidity with respect to the space of the mind. Oh yeah! Enjoy your day!

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Posted by Alma Ayon

28 Mindfulness of the mind (1)

10 Sep 2012

This week we turn to the close application of mindfulness to the mind. While the shamatha practice of settling the mind in its natural state is right on the cusp between shamatha and vipashyana, it has a different aim; and just to reiterate briefly – it's rather important – *and that is in settling the mind in its natural state we don't actively inquire, we're not posing questions, we're just sustaining the flow of awareness that you're very familiar with.* And the idea, the criteria of success in this practice – in addition to relaxation, stability and vividness – is simply to observe the knottedness, the tightness, the grasping and so forth of the mind gradually dissolving, the contents of the mind dissolving, all the appearances of the mind gradually – and not in a linear fashion but rather choppy – but gradually all the appearances of the mind dissolving into the substrate and the active mental process of imagination, memory, conceptualization and so forth, as well as the five physical senses, gradually dissolving into substrate consciousness. And so that's really what it's about. (2:42) Although a lot of insights are bound to come and it is quite fascinating to watch your mind heal, I mean actually be there and watch it happen as it unravels – the Tibetan term is “*randerl*” – *as it releases itself*, the mental afflictions, the tightness, the emotional blockages and so forth and so on. To find out: whoa! this mind really does have an extraordinary capacity to heal itself, and you're watching it happening, I mean you are right there like in a boxing match, you're just watching ringside, just watching the whole thing happen and that is what it's for.

(3:15) Although insights will come, primarily this is to dissolve the appearances into the substrate, active mental process or “*javana*” into the substrate consciousness, achieve shamatha and now you have a new base camp, a new platform for doing everything else you want to do: achieve spontaneous bodhicitta for example, uncontrived bodhicitta! Become a bodhisattva; that could be really a good idea! And then seal it once you've achieved that type of bodhicitta, actually authentic, you've actually become a bodhisattva. Wouldn't it be a shame to become a bodhisattva and then become an un-bodhisattva? And it's possible! It's possible! You can achieve that incredible state of actually being a bodhisattva, and then undo it and fall back. It's actually possible. So you wouldn't want that to happen!

(3:55) *And for that you seal it with the “four applications of mindfulness”.* Lo and behold! This is classic teachings! Hardly anybody is following it these days. Maybe we should. I think they're pretty good teachings. *Seal it with wisdom and the wisdom prevents your bodhicitta from ever deteriorating, from falling back.* In other words you're a bodhisattva forever until you become a Buddha. That sounds a really good plan to me. So that's the point of shamatha: the settling the mind in its natural state.

(4:27) Now the close application of mindfulness, attending to the same domain. Once again, clearly, applying mindfulness to that domain. *And you won't really be able to launch your vipashyana practice of the close application of mindfulness to the mind unless you are able to distinguish between the stillness of your awareness and the movements of the mind. Otherwise you're just going to be caught up in your mind; it's going to be rumination and daydreaming all the way through.* So that will never happen. So this shamatha, it's really indispensable. Otherwise vipashyana isn't vipashyana; it's just mind-wandering.

(4:52) And so there, that first criteria, distinguishing between stillness and motion, good. And then of course to be able to sustain that and not just get it and then just go right back, tumbling into mental states and processes, but actually to achieve that first of the four types of mindfulness taught by Dudjom Lingpa – single-pointed mindfulness – *where you are simultaneously aware of the stillness of your own awareness and the activities of the mind.* There is your platform for vipashyana. If you don't have that, you don't really have a platform. Just caught up. *And so you'll be in that same syndrome that we've been in since the beginning of samsara of closely holding not only our bodies, but closely holding our minds.* Remember that phrase from before. Through grasping, through identification – *and that is the very root of suffering, that is what makes you vulnerable to the deepest dimension of suffering*, ubiquitous suffering, the all-pervasive suffering of conditioned phenomena, *but conditioned by grasping.*

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(5:40) *So now in this vipashyana practice the idea is in fact not to quietly, passively observe your mind dissolving but rather be inquiring into it.* You may run experiments, you are contemplating it, in other words you're keeping it going just like in a lucid dream. Once you become lucid, you don't want it to vanish!

(6:15) In fact, once again it's an interesting parallel, if you are in the midst of a lucid dream and you start to see that the dream is beginning to vanish, just fade out, then – if you'd really like to explore the nature of a lucid dream you don't want it to fade out unless you really simply want to go and explore the substrate consciousness – in which case you want to re-instantiate or reconstruct, revitalize the dream. And who remembers how to do that? I'm sure Miles does; anybody else? Yeah, Nikola, how do you get the dream, if you're in the midst of a lucid dream and you see that it's starting to just fade out and you're going to lose it, what do you do? Do you remember? You can just call it out. Oh yeah! You have the microphone! [laughter] I called the right guy! If and only if you can turn it on. Ok you got it! So what do you do? Nikola: So if you're in the midst of a lucid dream, you just relax, don't get too excited that you've realized it's a lucid dream. No but I'm asking about, you've already realized but now it's phasing out. Nikola: Oh you just sustain your awareness of it being a lucid dream. *Oh! Keep yourself engaged with it.* There you go!

That's right, yes. So your first response was the right answer for another question [laughs], and that is: once you become lucid, hey! relax, don't get so excited you just wake yourself up. *But when you see it fading out, engage with the dream.* So a couple ways of doing this – this is straight from the modern discipline of lucid dreaming – *one is keep your eyes open and spin, just turn around and just flood your awareness with a whole bunch of sensory input, and that will actually get the dream to come back, to re-form.* Or you can give yourself a brisk rub-down, strong massage. Quite weird! Just go like that, and then your body will go [Alan makes goofy uploading sound], and you get your body back. One way or another.

So in a similar fashion, in the vipashyana practice, closely applying mindfulness to the mind, well you don't rub down the mind, but what you do is [audience laughter] – if you can find it let me know! whether it's fat or skinny, you know, all that kind of – *but what you do is engage with it.* Just like Nikola said, you engage with the dream to keep the dream going, engage with your mind. That doesn't mean identification; it does mean posing questions to it, looking closely, intensely, probing into, and so forth.

And so this afternoon, I think I'll front-load it a little bit, the meditation, so I'll speak less during it. This afternoon, let's just focus especially on two of the central themes that keep on coming up: *factors of origination, factors of dissolution.* But now, of what? When we say "the mind", what are we referring to? Well, we're referring – for these first three days of this week, let's really focus primarily on "javana" (you can spell it phonetically, ja-va-na, j, a, v, a, n, a, javana), *the activities of the mind, the kinetic energy of the mind.* So we've already looked at feelings but that was just pleasant, unpleasant and neutral. Now we look at the whole range of activities of the mind. That means all emotions: surprise, disgust, contempt, sense of humor coming up, all kinds of stuff coming up! So the whole range of emotions, they're all grist for our mill. Attend to them. Whatever type of thoughts, images that come up: all of them. Memories, fantasies: all of them. Desires: all of them. But then also states of consciousness, so for example, the mental experience of feeling restless, feeling bored, feeling dull, feeling excited, feeling edgy, feeling tense, feeling ill at ease, feeling cranky, or irritable: all of these.

So the idea here is that we're less closely holding the mind. We tend to, I mean habitually have a, I would almost say fierce identification with mental states. How are you? And then we describe our mental states: "Oh I'm feeling kind of..." and then "I'm feeling kind of..." Whatever it is, *but it's just the total fusion with "I am".* What have you been thinking? I've been thinking this, I've been thinking that. Especially among intellectuals. I mean very well educated, people in philosophy, psychology and other fields as well. *We absolutely get identified with thinking,* thinking, thinking. "I think, therefore I am", we've got a history there. And I find this especially among philosophers. I mean, they tend to be very good at thinking, and therefore they tend to identify with it. And I remember one neuroscientist that attended one conference that I helped organize actually defined "meta-cognition" as "thinking about thinking"! That's not wrong, it's not silly; I find it kind of useless. But it skips the whole possibility, it doesn't even dawn on, it seems, on such people that you

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can actually observe thinking. Ok? Now I don't need to beat that dead horse more, I think it's pretty – it's moldering, it's smoldering in its grave. But there it is.

(11:25) So we engage with it, we engage with this whole array of *objective appearances* arising in the space of the mind, the whole array of *subjective impulses* arising including the states of consciousness. States of consciousness: observing them as well. *And to the best of your ability observing them from this very simple and still place of simple luminosity and cognizance. Luminosity in the sense that it is your awareness illuminating all the appearances and other events taking place in the mind and cognizance is simple, non-*

conceptual – or at least non-verbal – a simple, quiet, direct, just knowing it, ok? This is the same quality of knowing we cultivated earlier in shamatha. You remember three fingers and all that business, without having to say three fingers. So as much as you can, maintain that, that stillness of awareness clearly illuminating the mind, *knowing whatever is arising in the mind but without getting caught up in the mind or closely holding it.*

(12:15) Final point, and that is among the thoughts that arise and for that matter images and so forth, but thoughts especially, some of the thoughts that arise you really may have a sense that “you thought them,” so the internal commentary which in coaching can be useful. So you may really have a sense, “Yep, I thought that one” and so note that. *What is it about the thought that gives you the impression that you thought it? So it's a grasped thought, right?* On the other hand you, maybe in your experience you may have already had the experience through settling the mind in its natural state of simply witnessing a thought coming up all by itself, just as if you overheard it. *So that is a thought you are aware of but it's not grasped in the sense of:* you are grasping onto it as you are the agent and that is something you did but rather you are simply the observer and that is something you witnessed. *So as much as you can then note the different ways these phenomena appear, some of them you may feel you have created intentionally and other ones you are more simply witnessing like hearing a sound or experiencing a tactile sensation in the body.*

(13:43) Alright. So your base here, your base here is settling the mind in its natural state so as much as you can, especially if you're rather new to the practice, try to get comfortable there – you know you're already quasi-practicing vipashyana just by doing that practice, again it's on the cusp – but see if you can maintain that, get some continuity of just resting there very loose, very soft, observing whatever comes up. And then as you get a little bit of stability there, a bit of continuity, then probe a bit more deeply into: How is it, *how is it these different mental events arise?*

So I will add this point: Buddhist psychology – again, quite interesting – we looked at causality, *we looked at substantial causes*, that is, in which *cause actually transforms into its effect; and then we looked at cooperative conditions, where the cooperative condition doesn't transform into the effects but it does catalyze it, trigger it, enable it.* Ok? So we have many, many examples. In Buddhist psychology thoughts, a thought doesn't trigger an emotion; a thought, as such – excuse me! I misspoke! A thought doesn't transform into emotion; it acts as a cooperative condition for emotion. An emotion may act as a cooperative condition for a memory, and the memory may be a cooperating [transcriber's note: sic] condition for something else. And so even within the domain of the mind there are substantial causes. Feelings turn into feelings, and thoughts turn into later sequence of thoughts, and desires and so forth, so there are these different strands, they're called *chetasikkha* in Sanskrit, or mental factors, and that's where you get these individual continua, almost like currents within a river: you know, one current here, one current there. So a stream here will turn into a like stream later down, you know, downhill so to speak.

(15:21) Whereas some types of mental events will simply be cooperative conditions for other types of coop – other types of mental events; let alone the mental events serving as a cooperative condition for my hand moving about and likewise my hand moving around acting as a cooperative condition for mental events. Ok? So it's quite an interesting mix there.

(15:41) Now in terms of substantial causes, that is where there is actually one transforming into another, let's take an afflictive emotion: anger. Afflictive anger. So right now I would say, I don't think I am angry at all; so I've just checked out, I don't think I'm angry at all; zero anger right now, in which case it is not manifesting. As far as I can tell – and I think I'm pretty clear here – I'm not subliminally angry, that is, it's not kind of, you

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know, just waiting to burst forth; because there can be emotions and mental states that we're unaware of, but they are there and they're already activated, ok? Sub-conscious impulses, but they're activated. So we can be unconsciously uneasy or anxious, and not even aware that we are uneasy, anxious, angry and so forth and so on. It's there, other people may be able to see it in our facial expression, tone of voice and so forth. So it is there but beneath the threshold of our consciousness. So there is that. So there is conscious anger and then there is, it's very possible to be unconsciously edgy, irritable right there but not even be aware of it.

(16:50) And then I would say for me right now, and again I could be wrong, but right now there is no explicit anger, I do not see any implicit anger. Are there seeds of anger, seeds of anger – that's the term, *bijhya* in Sanskrit – seeds of anger in my mind stream right now, such that if they were catalyzed, just like a wheat seed, if they were fertilized and got some water and so forth, could anger erupt and become manifest, you know, within a matter of seconds? The answer is yes, sure! The seed is there. That is not subliminal anger; that's now anger brewing, brewing, brewing. It's just sitting there dormant, ready to be catalyzed.

(17:43) *So we have explicit; we have implicit or sub-conscious; and then we have beneath that, the seeds.* The seeds will actually, just like a seed of wheat will transform into the sprout, *the seeds of anger will actually transform into the flow of anger and when the anger subsides it doesn't just vanish into nothing.* It goes right back into a seed state. Ok? And that's true for emotions and many, many other, many other phenomena.

Memories! You have the seeds of memories: right now I am not remembering my address where I lived when I was thirteen, but I could draw that out and then – oh yeah, that's it! – and so there it is. I had to catalyze it, kind of look, look, look, look and then [knocking sound] catalyze it, and then out comes the memory of something I have no reason to bear in mind normally. I have very little use for that information. But it's there, and so the seed is there as [snaps fingers], the memory is there as the seed.

(18:36) Now, is there an interface with the brain here? Of course there is. Of course there is. And this is one interesting point, and that is they found not only that they can apply a microelectrode, very, very low voltage electrode to a ganglia of neurons – that's a whole cluster of neurons – and catalyze or trigger some emotions, thoughts, memories and so forth, but I heard recently in some cases they can apply a microelectrode to a single neuron and even that will catalyze or trigger some memory for example. Quite interesting.

One was Pamela Anderson! Some guy had a Pamela Anderson neuron! Go figure! You know who she is? Miles, who's Pamela Anderson? [laughter] An actress, yes. She's known for being very sexy. Some guys regard her as rather sexy. But she's kind of like an icon, you know like sexy, big boobs and all of that. California, sexy Malibu, beach girl, right? Yeah. So there she is. So she's, I mean, what was that, I never watched it but there was – Baywatch, that was it! [laughter] That had international impact! Because you could not speak a word of English, you could be in the heartland of China and [laughter] you see all these floppy boobs, you know, going up and down, and men can relate to that regardless of the language! [laughs] But it actually was true, there was one guy who had [trans. addition: a Baywatch neuron].

And so does this mean that Pamela Anderson – or her figure or her face and so forth, her hair – were inside that neuron? That's really magical thinking, of course; it's crazy. And so was Pamela Anderson inside his head, or inside a neuron? It's really crazy thinking. But is it crazy thinking to think that a single neuron could act as a cooperative condition for triggering – almost like, frankly I think this is the closest one – like this: [holds up iPhone and manipulates touchscreen]. It's a keyboard! So what's happening now is that a lot of neuroscientists are mistaking the keyboard for the hard-drive, and the thinking that everything in the hard drive is actually in the keys themselves. As if Pamela Anderson is inside that neuron. It's really quite silly. It's just as silly as to think there are photos inside this little, you know, the keyboard on a cellphone, or in a computer. It's really quite silly.

(21:20) But so there it is. The activities in the brain, these can act as cooperative conditions to trigger or to enable mental events taking place. Now you may damage the keyboard of a computer and thereby no longer have any access – at least for the time being – to information stored in your hard drive. Oh my keyboard is broken! What'll I do? And you might think, oh it's gone, it's gone! I damaged my keyboard, oh all my information is gone! Well that means you don't know anything about computers, because there's actually no

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information in the keyboard itself at all, right? It's all back there, but damage the keyboard and you can't get access to your information.

(21:55) So likewise, get Alzheimer's, get a stroke, have senile dementia, have brain damage from an accident or drugs and so forth, or alcohol for that matter, and you damage the keyboard, in which case you may not be able to experience certain emotions, experience them any longer, access memories, intelligence may be impaired and so forth and so on. *But it's the cooperative conditions that have been damaged.* But damage them enough and then the sprout does not come up, it is disabled. The primary causes are still there, but they are not stored in the brain; they are stored in the continuum of consciousness, but you do not have access to them as long as you are accessing, you don't have access to them as long as you're accessing your mind by way of coarse mind. Because the coarse mind is – there's no question about it, and neuroscientists provide us with enormous amount of valuable information. *Coarse mind arises in dependence upon the brain;* damage the brain and you're going to damage your coarse mind, which does arise in dependence upon that. And give it good vitamins, and a rich environment and so forth, all of the good things for children the brain will develop better in which case the children as they grow older and as they grow up will have better access to their full potential. So there are major moral issues here and the neuroscientists are very well aware of that, and I say that with great respect. They say exercise, and good diet, an enriched environment, and interesting things to do and develop your mind and so forth, because that develops the brain and that will be good for the rest of your life. So the neuroscientists are really helping up out there; they have a lot of knowledge; very, very useful for education.

(23:20) So how do you really optimize your keyboard? Which is really important! And then keep it optimal? If we keep this brain working well into late years by way of meditation, crossword puzzles, whatever works, then that's also to our great advantage.

(23:36) But it is interesting though, and here is a big experiment, and that is: all right, let's imagine the keyboard is somehow damaged, the brain is damaged – may be just getting old – but then you access your hard drive, that is, you access all the information in your continuum of consciousness not by way of coarse mind, which arises in dependence upon the brain, but by way of substrate. Now wouldn't that be interesting?

(24:06) Then the limitations of your brain are now irrelevant because you are accessing the hard drive not by way of the keyboard but by some other access, more immediate. So this, from scientific perspective, this raises very interesting experiments that could be done if you have a large enough people really doing the hard work of achieving shamatha; let alone accessing memories that were not acquired in this lifetime that are stored in the continuum of consciousness but stored from previous life times.

So, a lot of interesting things! But right now, having had a long preamble, then I can speak much less during the session itself of close application of mindfulness to the mind. And let's focus, because it is a little bit easier, highlight or emphasize with this session more the appearances arising to you, because we've not really looked at those yet. So the thoughts, images and so forth, observe them, observe their process of origination and process of dissolution.

So, please find a comfortable position.

Meditation:

(26:06) Settle your body, speech and mind in their natural states, and calm your mind for a little while with mindfulness of breathing.

(29:33) And let your eyes be at least partially open, your gaze vacant and direct your attention to that domain of experience that is not sensory, that is, not the five physical senses and approach this with a core sense of ease, lucidness and relaxation in your body and in your awareness.

(30:10) First of all distinguish between the stillness of your own awareness when it is unmoved by grasping, and the comings and goings in the domain of your mind.

(33:45) And you may begin posing questions, at least one, to this domain of experience. Is there anything here that is *static, unchanging, or is everything arising freshly moment-by-moment? Don't be satisfied with an intellectual conclusion or mere belief. Observe closely.*

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(37:00) So in short, as you closely apply mindfulness to the space of the mind and especially to those activities arising within it, observe how they arise, the factors of origination; how they are present, including the impact on them by the act of observing them; and then the factors of dissolution, which is to say, how do they vanish? Monitor the flow of mindfulness with introspection as usual, applying the remedies for excitation and laxity as needed. And let's continue practicing now in silence.

O laso! I'm going to try to finally get through the mail today, then we can open up. This one's long! Complex, too! Maybe I should read it off. Ok, *awareness through pure tactile sensations, one dissolves into space and experiences oneness with everything*. That sounds like the hot dog joke. I won't go there. So, *endless, vast movement, no gravity, no borders, no limitations, just a sense of knowing. This is how it is. All sense of "I" and "mine" are felt as not present, just oneness; very clear and just speaks through different tactile intense-ness or intensity, a place and higher knowledge that comes as realizations later manifested as mental images and insights. Same place creativity arise from*. Hmm, well the space of awareness is the space from which creativity arises. *Here, uh, I also experience the greatest joy, not from any stimuli or reason, it just pours out, seems like an endless source. It's also not dependent on any physical or mental imbalance, not mental haha happy or spaced-out. Maybe also same place one can pick up other people, sentient beings, and other; nature's feelings, emotions, suffering, etc. Free from superimposed, even through existential sadness that is not connected with one's own, uh, "something." One's own, uh, one owns, exists there. Not connected to personal experience at all, it includes everything. Just tune in. Could there be a name for this space? It's called space of awareness. I don't feel lost. This takes place also in non-meditative state. I spent a lot of time there during* [transcriber's note: I believe the note read "dwelling," and Alan missed it] *there, but have not until now put this into words. I've been experimenting on space and place, don't wish to cultivate stupidity, or become Miss Delusion 2012, so please help clarify, if possible, where mental perceptions emerge and dissolve. Very clearly perceptual, as a substrate*.

Ok this is more like a montage. Um, if you'd like a really clear answer from me or response, it would be helpful to be a bit more discrete; this is more like a montage. It's very interesting, more like an impressionistic painting. So nothing really crystallized comes here in terms of response. I think it's a good description. I think I'm going to leave this one anonymous, and I know who it's from. Nothing wrong! Except for, in order to elicit, really, a clear and distinct response from me, I think if it were more itemized and succinct, probably it would be helpful. It all sounds good.

And that said, for the time being we're not really seeking a one-ness with everything. I will tell the joke, since I said it. What's the? The Zen master asking, coming to a, asking for a hot dog? And he says, make me one with everything. That's the whole joke! Not that funny, but whenever I see Mick [Alan is referring to one of the students in the audience] we want... Actually His Holiness, I think it was in Australia; I think it was in Australia, wasn't it? He was asked, How do you become one with everything? And His Holiness just absolutely could not connect with the question. He said, Why? You want to become, something like, Why would you want to become one with everything? Why? What does that mean? With garbage, and cockroaches, and earwax, and dandruff? Why do you want to become one with everything? It's a phrase that actually doesn't come up at all! I'm not ridiculing at all the question. We know that it means something in English, but it doesn't actually translate into Buddhism at all. There's just no – it's not anywhere there.

And so, the practices we're following here do entail a certain directionality of attention, whether it's in the shamatha – you know, each one has its own distinct object of mindfulness – and then we're closely applying mindfulness to the body, to feelings, to mental states. And so it's good to maintain a very clear sense of what you are attending to, ok? That's good. This is really foundational. I think I'll leave it there. Just that. So it wasn't a terribly helpful answer, but there is the point: if the question or observation

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could be more kind of a bullet item, or more succinctly stated, either as “this is simply my experience,” so it’s perfectly good, and then I can respond are you on track or not. Or a very distinct question. Ok? So this one’s from Steph. *In mindfulness of the mind, I seem to get stuck in spiral of thoughts mixed with introspection, leaving me with a headache at the end.* I’m sure you’re not the only one! And this, of course, comes from grasping. Otherwise the headache just wouldn’t happen. *Nothing arising in the mind for a while, introspection, coaching to stay present. A thought arises, introspection knows There it is! A Thought. Then mind, or introspection – or something – thinks “that was a thought too! So that’s the mind? But this is a thought as well, so is this the mind? And then I’m just not confused, think I have about seventeen minds.”* So, meditation as the method for multiple personality disorder!

Actually, I’ve wondered about this – this won’t be a long tangent – but this multiple personality disorder is a clinically diagnosed disease. I suspect that, as a person with no psychological training whatsoever in the Western tradition, I suspect here that there arises kind of a cluster of attitudes, desires and so forth. A cluster, and then grasping comes in and congeals them and then identifies with them. So there’s Joe, and now I’m Mary, and now I’m Henry, and then I’m Myrtle, and whoever. *But it’s all coming out of a grasping, right?* And so I suspect that’s the case. Multiple personality, so one comes down, another one comes up, a cluster comes up, and then one thinks, “I’m that. I’m that.” Alright?

I think much more ubiquitously we’re suffering from multiple personality disorder when we ever, whenever we experience, for example, low self-esteem. You know, self-contempt, self-hatred, self-loathing, all of that business of the witness “in here” thinking, “Alan, you’re really a schmuck.” And now there’s two of us in here! Right? The schmucked, and the schmucker. And neither one schmeck wood! [*transcriber’s note: This last bit is a joke; it is an allusion to an alliterative, English-language rhyme about an animal known as a woodchuck. jmf*] But it does look like there’s two people in there.

And so, ah, there aren’t two! And so there’s multiple disorder, that happens when we bifurcate ourselves into judging ourselves, but of course I’m not judging myself, I’m judging “you, you schmuck.” And I’m observing it from a somewhat elevated platform. That means there must be at least two people in there. But even having single personality disorder: that would also be a disorder in the Buddhist view. *Of just taking one cluster and thinking, “that’s the real me!”*

And so, in contrast to that, there’s a term that was coined by a Western – what is he, psychologist I think, or sociologist – Marvin Minsky. Sociologist, perhaps? Psychologist. But certainly in the human sciences. But the term is “society of mind.” Society of mind. Kind of useful term; it’s very – even though I think he has no connection with Buddhism that I know of – ah, in Buddhist psychology we have this whole array of mental factors, and they do come in clusters. They do come in clusters. None of them are people – none of them are a person. And clusters will come in, and then a cluster will vanish, go dormant, go into the seed state; and another cluster will come up, and so forth. So this is just common, a way of viewing the mind.

But none of them are a person, and none of them are the mind. So it’s not that you have seventeen minds, but rather that you’ll have many clusters of mental events taking place; let alone many thoughts taking place, emotions and so forth. And so all of these are these – they’re called *semjoong*. So you’ve – remember the term “element,” earth, water, fire, air, and that the term is *joongwa*. *Joongwa: something that emerges.* Emerges. Well these are called *semjoong*; same term, *joong*. But *sem* is mind, so these are emergences from the mind. These are eruptions – “emergences” is the best term. Emergence of anger; emergence of compassion; emergence of mindfulness; emergence of sleepiness; and so forth. They emerge and then they un-emerge; they dissolve back into the continuum. *So none of those is the mind, but all of those are emerging out of the continuum of mind.* So once again, we would say that all of these subjective processes, subjective mental events or processes, are all emerging from the substrate consciousness. Or if you like the New

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Translation School terminology, they're emerging from the continuum of mental consciousness. Which is primary; primary mind. "Primary mind" is that continuum of mental consciousness. Out of primary mind, then, emerge all these derivative *mental factors* – or *mental processes* – and multiple ones do arise at the same time.

So I may happily look, let's say, at dessert when I go to the canteen; I may look happily, "oh my favorite dessert!" And I look at it, and I'm attending to it with discernment, I'm recognizing that. One of my favorites is – and don't buy me any! – mangosteen. It's a very nice fruit. We've had it, I think, well we had it in the CEBTT. So it's a fruit. So I look and that, and say, "Oh yeah." If they're perfectly ripe, they're really yummy. So I look at it, there's *discernment* taking place, and then *recollections* of mangosteen that I have known, and then anticipation that I can have some. And so there'll be multiple mental factors, all converging in upon, or taking, having the same object. Ok? And they're rising, the term is "concomitantly." That is, together, focusing on the same object. And then I look over to the vegetables or the salad and so forth, and say, "yep, that's pretty familiar, the salad bar. Been there, done that!" And so then, but another set will come in there. And so, multiple ones will arise, and then they will pass again.

So that's it. So no one of them is the mind, but when we speak of closely applying mindfulness to the mind – classic Buddhist terminology – *chittasatipatthana*, ok? Or *semlamikpaysheeneh*: *sheeneh*, shamatha focused on the mind. What are we talking about? And we're using the mind here, *the term "mind" as an umbrella term for referring to this whole array of mental processes*. So, in attending to a thought, an emotion, and so forth, we say, "well, that's a good as it gets." That's what we call "attending to the mind": observing thoughts arise, feelings, emotions, memories, and so forth and so on. And at all moments, we'll say, generically speaking, that's what we call "focusing on the mind." Even though no one of those is the mind. But in the same way though – so I'm going to look at Miles' face, ok? So right now, I mean Miles can probably tell, I'm looking at his face, but no I'm not! I'm looking at his forehead! And his forehead is not a face. His forehead has no mouth; and his face does have a mouth. I'm going to look at his right eye: that's not his face! Nose? No, that's not his face. His mouth, and his grungy little beard [laughter]. That's not a face either! That's fungus! [laughter] That's young man fungus!

But, you know, but as I'm looking at, you know, as I'm looking at parts – but, at all those times I was looking at his face. I wasn't looking at something else! It doesn't get any better. Or I'm saying I'm looking at his head; but I'm not seeing the back side of his head. So who's ever seen a head? If looking at a head means looking at the whole, the entirety of the head, who's ever seen it? And the answer is: nobody's ever seen the entirety. Who's ever seen the entirety of a head? Ever single glial cell? Every neuron? Or even on the skin? Who's looked at all of it simultaneously? That'd be pretty difficult! To see the front, the back, and the sides, all at the same time: difficult!

So the back is not the head, the front is not the head. At the same time, we say, "yes, I'm looking at his face!" This is as good as it gets! You know? Even though, if I look at here where you are actually focusing – you know: that's not the face, and that's not the face. But, in dependence upon that – and now we slip a little bit into the second month here – in dependence upon looking at his, his two eyes I'm looking now eye-to-eye. You see, yes, I'm looking right at your face, I'm looking eye-to-eye; yes, I'm looking at his face, sure. It doesn't get much better than that. *And so, in dependence upon looking at his eyes, I say I'm looking at his face.* Ok? Even though neither eye is his face. And so forth and so on. And so likewise, observing clusters of thoughts and so forth, from moment to moment, yes, I'm looking at the mind; at the same time, none of those thoughts are the mind; the mind is something we conceptually designate upon any of those individual components, none of which are the mind.

And moreover, it's also not true that the entire composite is the mind! This gets a bit more subtle, and it's interesting too. It's also not true that the entire composite is the mind; otherwise we would never be

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able to observe the mind at all! Because when do you ever observe the entire composite, right? And that means nobody could ever look at Miles' head. ["nope" is repeated 19 times, in stage whisper] I'm always getting only part, and so I can never look at the whole composite of his head, which means I couldn't look at his head; if his head is the entire composite of all the parts, it's invisible! Nobody ever gets to see it. So that's quite interesting. It's not the – *the head is not any one of its components, but neither is it the sum total of all the components*. Moreover, if it were, if his head were the sum components of all the stuff above his neck, then if you just gave him a shave – which, you know, he's intensely in need of – then he'd no longer have a head! Right? I mean, if head equals the sum of all of the parts and you've taken some of the parts out, the sum of all the parts is no longer there! It's "sum-of-the-parts-minus-something," which means it's not the whole deal. It's like buying a radio, you know? It's not a radio unless it has all the working parts of a radio, but if you chip it, it's still a radio.

So it's quite interesting, isn't it, then? *That is, his head is not any individual component within the head, but it's also not the sum of all the parts*. And it's obviously true. He still has a head when you take away some hair. He could get more! He could get more or less, and it's still his head. So there it is! Quite interesting, isn't it? *No one of the thoughts is a mind; but then the composite all of them is also not the mind. The mind is simply something designated upon things that are not the mind*. And as for the mind, so for everything else. That was a sneak preview for month two! Ok? So very good.

Does the mind always need an object, or can it exist completely blank? Maybe I'm referring to coarse mind here. Not sure. Very good. Um, so, this goes over here [note: Alan slides the question-paper into a folder. jmf] Generally speaking, Buddhist psychology, if you're going to identify something as a mental state or a mode of cognition – *shepa* is the term, *shepa* as consciousness – *then shepa always has a referent*. It always has an object, ok? Just like, if we take a corollary; uh, if there's some information, *is the information always about something? Or could you have information that is about nothing whatsoever?* Well then it wouldn't be information, because it's not informing. It has no content. It's – and the philosophical term is "intentional" – not as intentional "I intend," *but referential; it has a referent*. *So if semantic information doesn't have any referent, if it's not about anything, then it's not information, right? So likewise, a state of consciousness is not a state of consciousness unless it's conscious of something*. It can't be conscious of nothing whatsoever.

Having said that, it does get very subtle. So if you go into the formless realm, into the formless realm, you have the first among the *samapatis* or absorptions in the formless realm. The first one is consciousness of infinite space. That's something! Second one, consciousness of infinite consciousness, just boundless consciousness; it doesn't mean omniscience, it just means the sense of just unimpeded, open, open, open consciousness, and that's what you're aware of. But the third one is consciousness of nothingness, *jianamepa*, nothing whatever. But that's what you're attending to! You actually are attending to a sheer absence, and that's what you're attending to! So even that can be an object. What are you attending to? I'm attending to a sheer absence of anything and that's what I'm attending to, to that sheer absence; *it's a simple negation!* A sheer absence of anything. That's what I'm attending to, right? And then beyond that is just beyond words, neither perception nor non-perception; so now you say ok, don't even, does not compute, does not compute. And it's still within samsara!

So this came up earlier, it came up I think from, I think from you, Mike. *And that is substrate consciousness. Is it aware of anything? The answer is yeah, substrate!* Now having said that, what about when you go deep asleep – or maybe you've even taken general anesthesia, like His Holiness had when he had the gall bladder removed. He was quite curious as a very experienced meditator, he was very curious when they gave him anesthesia – because he had general anesthesia, pretty major surgery – he was quite curious to see whether he could go lucidly into the state of, you know, comatose. And his answer was, "Nope!" He said when you get it chemically, it's so – he didn't use the word "violent" – but

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it's so abrupt, it's so forceful, that it just bludgeons your lucidity right into nothing. So [Alan makes a bludgeoning sound] then you're just out. And then after some time you come back in again, but he said he could not track, he could not track what it was like to gradually become unconscious – or conscious, less conscious, less conscious, and then unconscious. He said, just Wow! It just knocks you! Ok? So, not so useful for meditation.

And so, many people, when falling asleep, they just become not aware of anything; or taking anesthesia; or many people when they die. They just lose awareness of anything. And you might recall this – I think I've said it in this retreat – that when that takes place, when you go into stage 4, non-REM sleep, which is simply deep, dreamless sleep, what happens here – in the Dzogchen view – is that your substrate consciousness, which by nature is luminous, bright and luminous, it actually – of course it has to be somewhat metaphor – but it dissolves into, or it gets inserted into substrate. So it's no longer manifest, it's no longer explicit. The substrate consciousness itself dissolves into substrate, and the substrate's just a sheer vacuity; and the nature of the substrate – and this is straight from Tibetan – the nature of the substrate is unknowing. What's the nature of the *alaya*? *Ma-rigpa*: not knowing. Not knowing. Which means when you're in ordinary, deep, dreamless sleep, you don't know anything at all explicitly. You don't even know you're asleep, and that's the thing that should be most obvious, because that's all that's happening. And you're not even aware of that! In other words, you don't know anything! If you don't even know you're asleep, you don't know anything at all!

But is that state of unawareness the same state of unawareness of this piece of paper? And I would say this – until shown otherwise! – I will say this paper has zero consciousness. If consciousness were a temperature, this would be zero degrees Kelvin. Nothing whatsoever. Zero. Nothing there! Which means also that, no matter what you do to it – you know, pour neurons into it, add a microelectrode to it, shout at it, burn it – there's nothing you can do to a piece of paper to make it go, "What? You called?" There's just, there are no cooperative conditions. Not dakinis, angels, Buddha-fields, or anything that, you know, you can bring to bear to a piece of paper to make it wake up. And so let's say my last incarnation was as a piece of paper; there are no such cooperative conditions! Because there's nothing here that can turn into consciousness. And to be aroused to a state of consciousness, there has to be something that transforms into it. You can't get a bunch of cooperative conditions to make nothing become something! And that's equally true for mass-energy. If you had, if it were possible to have a volume of space that was absolutely empty, in other words – and this is not possible! – but that means empty even of the zero-point energy of empty space, which is right there in the very nature of space; if it were possible to get a straw and suck that out, and so you have an absolute vacuum - which Aristotle said nature abhors - if that were possible, there is absolutely nothing in that volume, there is nothing you could do to it to make something arise from that nothing. Not matter, not energy, space or time or anything else. If there's nothing there – it just makes, it's kind of just, after you've said it, it's kind of like "why did you say that; that's so obvious it doesn't need to be said!" And that is, there's nothing you can do to nothing to make it become something.

But if that's true, there's probably a symmetry there: and if you have something, what could you possibly do to it to make it become nothing whatsoever? That kind of makes sense too, doesn't it? The first one is more obvious; this is a little bit less obvious. But how could you make it actually turn into nothing whatsoever, if it was something? So, interesting.

So, unlike a piece of paper, if a person is, has general anesthesia, sooner or later hopefully it wears off, and then lo and behold you come out. And there you are. And so consciousness once again re-emerges, it becomes explicit. Even if you die, if you die in surgery while having general anesthesia, there's nothing you can do to that consciousness to make it become nothing. And of course, to make it become matter would violate the principles of conservation of mass-energy. If consciousness could actually –

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consciousness that's something non-physical – could actually transform into something physical? That would be bizarre! And that's just not allowed in modern physics.

So either – so there it is: it either becomes nothing, which seems kind of strange; become matter-energy, for which there's evidence whatsoever; or a state of consciousness just transforms into another state of consciousness, which is the Buddhist view, in which case you're in the *bardo* and there you are! You're on your way to your next, your next trip.

O laso! One final one and then we can hopefully have time for questions from y'all. So this is from, this is from Danny – Danny Morris (I can tell the handwriting) – where's Danny Morris? There you are! So *you have mentioned that when you achieve shamatha the prana converges in the heart chakra, although I've also heard from the Yogic perspective that the third eye chakra is associated with absorption and concentration meditation.* Maybe so. I've never heard that. Is that from the Theravada? From what tradition? [Danny now speaks, and microphone does not pick up all his words]. Ah ha! Yeah. [Danny again, inaudible] Then we just have to be aware that there are so many different types of *samadhi* and so forth. And this is a very powerful chakra; there's no question about that. Yeah. This – so we're in position right now to do any big comparative study with this. So *when you speak of* – and all we're referring to here, because bear in mind, in Buddhism we have the four *dhyanas*, we have the four *samapadhis* and the formless realm, let alone realization of emptiness, and rigpa, and so forth and so on. Here we're just talking about flat-out shamatha, where your coarse mind dissolves into substrate; just that simple. Boom, right to the heart. So, when your coarse mind is activated in the waking state, *pranas* converge in the head, in this *chakra* here, in the forehead. When you're dreaming, they converge at the throat, and in deep sleep they converge at the heart, and that's where they converge when coarse mind dissolves into subtle when you achieve shamatha.

So, when you speak of pressure building up in the head during mindfulness of breathing, which I agree is not good, if you are contracting and focusing too hard with the eyes – yeah, that's not good – but if you are loose and relaxed with your eyes soft and there happens to be some stimulation of the third eye chakra, is this always a bad sign, or could there be a situation where it is at least neutral or maybe positive from Buddhist perspective? What role does the third eye play, if any?

Yeah, the third eye – or just this chakra here, I mean, this one right here – in Buddhism, they tend to put it more in the center of the forehead, although there is something here right between fore— But this goes into, I mean too far outside of this eight weeks, because now we're into very subtle physiology and *Vajrayana*. Still a good question, but I think for another occasion. But to answer the practical question, and that is, if you have not simply pressure building up, like feeling like “this could turn into a headache, or maybe it is already a headache.” Kind of a sinus headache. If you have something that feels like it's going there, or just kind of a tightness in the head, then almost certainly, you're just putting too much pressure, too much effort, too much grasping and all of that. That said – and this has come up already in a number of one-on-one meetings – if you're doing mindfulness of breathing and you know that your eyes are soft and relaxed, your whole face is relaxed, your eyes unfocused, so that you're really just focusing just with mental awareness, maybe at the apertures of the nostrils, maybe elsewhere – and you feel some strange tingling, or maybe it's a, some really, some flow of *prana* coming up from, maybe coming here to the third eye, or up into the crown *chakra*. One person mentioned a lot of *pranic* activity in one hemisphere, one side of the head. Or others, many other people experiencing flows of *prana* – quite interesting, this came up not long ago – one person having some somatic experiences that were reminiscent of pains from much earlier in life: so one was in the abdomen, and another one was in another part of the body, but was long gone, and now just kind of just resurging a little bit, and then simply a *nyam*, then passing right on through.

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So through the authentic practice of shamatha, there can be a wide variety of somatic *nyam*, and these will almost of certainty be involved with the *pranas*, and when the practice is authentic – it's balanced, relaxation, all of that – then this would imply, or overall the diagnosis would be a breaking down of blockages of the *prana*, a flowing of the *prana*; and as if you had, let's say, an irrigation canal that was blocked, and then you suddenly unblocked it, there would be just a big rush of water, right? So likewise, when there's kind of a loosening, this deepening relaxation, like that, sometimes there can be a rush, a rush of *prana*. And you may feel it in the head; you may feel it in the heart; in the gut; it could be anywhere. And so overall, the practice here is just let it be; whatever comes up, just be present with it, and let the body sort itself out. In other words, don't really fixate on it, don't give it a lot of fierce attention, and as much as possible avoid hope and fear, and avoid grasping onto it. Just let it sort itself out. Ok? Good!

Alright, we have about ten minutes. Anything coming up? First, left hemisphere: observations, insights anything coming up? We'll start with Mike. And microphone coming!

This is a follow-up kind of to Stephanie's question about mind, about mind's being the nature of the mind; and also a follow-up to your description of the way that, in deep sleep, the substrate consciousness kind of dissolves into the substrate, or becomes implicit. Is the substrate – in Stephanie's question, is the awareness that you're using when you're settling the mind in its natural state, is part of the mind too.

It's simply mental consciousness. But of course, it comes with certain mental factors. Attention is a mental factor; mindfulness is a mental factor; you're monitoring with introspection, that's a mental factor. Back to you!

Yeah I just wanted to make sure I was understanding correctly that that is part of the mental state, but it's a part that you're separating out.

It is certainly the case, and I'll – as simply skillful means – I will suggest that it's still useful to have the kind of conceptual categories of “now let your awareness rest in its own place,” it's mental awareness of course, “and let it illuminate the space of the mind.” And that means, specifically what you're seeking to illuminate is, number one, that objective space in which appearances arise, right? But also to be illuminating these active impulses that arise: anxiety, fear, dread, joy, and so forth and so on. And again, their term in *javana*, the *javana* arising. And you're seeking to observe that from your best approximation – that's all it is – your best approximation of viewing them from the perspective of *bhavanga*, or - and Theravadins wouldn't go along with that, because they say *bhavanga* isn't even there when the *javana* are – but as I said yesterday, Savasavadin said Yes it is! Or we'll just stick with the Dzogchen. *You're seeking to approximate viewing this, the activities of the coarse mind from the perspective of substrate consciousness.*

Substrate consciousness is that from which your mind emerges; it's that into which your mind dissolves when you die. But overall, would we say it's mental? Sure, it's mental; it's subtle mental. Now beyond that, we could say, What's very subtle mind? What's very subtle mind? In the new translation schools – from Geshe Zubten and all of that – very subtle mind is the innate mind of clear light, which His Holiness Dalai Lama and others say, Yep, that's exactly the same as rigpa, pristine awareness, and so forth. Is that mind? Yeah! It's very subtle mind. But it's not absorbed into, or encapsulated in the substrate consciousness, let alone in coarse mind. Ok? Good!

And then, to continue with the statement you made about the substrate consciousness dissolving into the substrate: seems to imply that the substrate itself is of the nature of consciousness, if mind can arise from it.

It's more like – it is stated, and I found it quite perplexing for a while, and I think I feel a bit more clear than I used to – I first encountered this in the text, *The Vajra Essence*, from Dudjom Lingpa, his largest mind *terma* on Dzogchen, in which he said the substrate consciousness emerges from the substrate. And

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I think I now have a sense – I believe! – that I know what he's referring to there, and that is, when your substrate consciousness simply dissolves into the substrate you've simply slipped into a state of unknowing. But then, again, is it the same unknowing as a napkin? The answer is no. And again, we know this is true; this is not metaphysical speculation. And that is, even if you're deep asleep – stage four, non-REM sleep – you can be aroused from the sleep. Somebody could shout in your ear! Or hold ammonia, or smelling salts under your nose. That'll get you up! Or just jostle you, shake you, and so forth. But if you were as unconscious as a napkin, none of that would work. In other words, the metaphor that I like, the analogy that I like is the pilot light on a stove; and that is, you look at the stove, you just kind of casually glance at it from the outside, you say it's off, it's off. And it is! It's off! But of course, you turn the knob and you see, Oh, it wasn't entirely off. There was an implicit flame there. I mean, of course, there's actually a flame: you can lift it up and you see the pilot light on. The substrate – there's implicit consciousness, which means there's implicit knowing.

And I think, once again, there's compelling evidence to this effect. And that is, whether it's mothers who will not wake up when a fire engine drives by with its, you know, siren sirening; but will wake up when she hears the much quieter sound of her baby crying. I think that's just true. And she's in deep sleep when that happens! She'll wake up for the baby and not for a louder sound. Or her husband's snoring; that could be much louder than the baby! But there's implicit: snoring, no threat, needs no response; baby crying, needs response, there's no way he's going to get up! [laughter] Right, mothers? Rare occasion, but really rare! It always falls on the mother. And so there it is.

So she has – it's not only an awareness; it's a discerning awareness that can distinguish between a loud snore and a soft cry of the baby in the next room. *That's knowing!* And yet, if you woke her right up and said, What's the last thing you remember? She'd say, Well, when I was falling asleep, I guess. How long were you deep asleep? Don't have a clue. How was it while you were deep asleep? Don't have a clue! So *implicit knowing, definitely there. It's really fascinating. Ok?*

Sure, go ahead!

I'm wondering, is any way we can be aware – I'm not really sure what word to use here, but – just aware of this implicit knowing?

Aware of - ?

Aware of this implicit knowing –

Aware of implicit knowing, ok, yeah.

Yeah, because when I do settling the mind in its natural state, sometimes I get images going through, and thoughts, and sometimes – I'm not really sure what I'm looking, at the moment – but eventually I am. I'm not sure – I would like to make the distinction between if I'm aware, or if I'm just getting dull. It's possible to be aware of this not implicating knowing, or - ?

I think it is. I think it's possible. But only you can find out. If I simply express an opinion, then what you know is: ok, that's Alan's opinion. Which didn't really add much to your knowledge! So it's a good question; it's an empirical question. Which is to say, it lends itself to closer investigation and inspection, *to see whether you can explicitly know only explicit knowing, or you can explicitly know implicit knowing.* And what's your sense? Do you think you can?

Um –

You'll not be punished if you're wrong! [laughter]

I think I'm aware of when I'm doing that. It's just that I'm not aware in the moment. Or it's different awareness that I don't really know how to label.

You'll notice something I've done repeatedly now when I'm sitting there. As people can probably tell I like to kind of spend as little time in there as possible, because I'm really eager to go elsewhere – back to my room to meditate! But when I'm there, I'm pretty much focused on the food, but I have, like

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everybody else, I have peripheral awareness, I mean awareness of movement in my field, field of vision. And quite often, when I'm just focusing there – and of course, as you probably know, when we focus our visual attention, that area that we very explicitly know is very small. That which is clearly in focus, sharply in focus and clearly known: within the broader visual field it's actually very small, right? *That focus of attention.* And so if I'm focusing down on my plate, I'm clearly knowing that. But what I'm getting at is, while I'm attending there, I will sometimes just see a reflection in the glass of a person who's approaching the door to come into the canteen. Or I'll see people just out of the corner of my eye – and I won't look, I'll simply be aware, Yes I'm aware of some vague image there – and then I'll ask myself, "who do you think it is?" And about 90% of the time I'm right. And I'm not making any exceptional claim here, like Oh I have some special ability. Nothing of that sort. But if I should ask, "why that person?" Because I'm getting hardly any data; it's really, really peripheral. Really peripheral. I'm getting hardly any data at all. So, and yet – and it's not infallible – but about 90% of the time, then when I do look, it's Oh I got it right again! I got it right again, again, again! How interesting! Because the information coming in that I knew about was so little. And yet, when I came up with the thought, "it's this person," and then I look: it is that person. *So there may be some implicit knowing there, and then an explicit confidence: I'm probably right.* And then I look and say, Oh yeah, I was right again. It's quite interesting! So it's not the same as, but it may not be radically different than, this issue called "blind sight," where as far as the person with this – I think it's a specific kind of brain damage – is concerned, if you say, "what can you see in the right field of vision?" "I can see nothing at all! I'm getting no data; my brain's damaged; why are you asking me this? I'm getting only from the left; here I'm getting no information." And yet, they'll put things there, and they'll ask questions about what's there in this area where the person says I know nothing at all, and they'll give right answers! Again and again and again. Not just lucky guesses, but actually they are knowing something; they're not getting lucky guesses. So that's quite interesting as well. So that's implicit knowing, but then *can they have explicit knowing of that implicit knowing? Well, we'll leave some questions open here, ok? But very interesting.* And what it does indicate is multiple levels of knowing. I think that's quite clear. Multiple levels of knowing. *That is, not only explicit, it's implicit.* But then also one final point – now it's 6:01 – and that is rigpa. When we speak of rigpa, deepest dimension of awareness, pristine awareness, Buddha-nature, dharmakaya. Rigpa cannot become ma-rigpa; that dimension of consciousness cannot become ma-rigpa, "not knowing." *It's, by nature, knowing!* If it's not knowing, it's not it! Which means it's always there, and it's non-local and a-temporal, which means it's pervading all of space and all of time. *In other words your implicit knowing is very large.* Because it's always there, but then it's veiled; it's veiled, and veiled, and veiled. And the whole of Buddhadharma is designed to remove those veils until it's completely unveiled. Ok? *And then, all becomes explicit! And all of your knowing is perceptual, and none of it is inferential, and none of it's conceptual.* That's why we're trying to get into this mode of perceptual knowing early on, and cultivate it. Ok? Very good! Enjoy your dinner!

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Revised by James French

Final edition by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Posted by Alma Ayon

29 Settling the mind (2)

11 Sep 2012

This morning I would like to try to make the practice of settling the mind in its natural state as accessible as possible. I think some of you are already in the flow of it, and this is really just a matter of different

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dispositions and so forth, and although some people find it quite easy, others find it more challenging. So especially for those for whom this is still something of a challenge, to really be aware of the thoughts and so forth, without simply being drawn into them, what I would like to do is begin with mindfulness of breathing. And I'm going to say something again that I've said before, just because it is so important, and that is that: *it is the out breath, and in the out breath, it's the end of the out breath, that is key.* It is just totally releasing, releasing your shoulders, releasing your chest, releasing every little bit of extra tension or constriction in the body, that you possible can. It is almost like a ship: if the ship is sinking, you just throw overboard everything that is not necessary, to keep it afloat. So just throw overboard every bit of residual tension, whether it is around the eyes, the chest, the belly, wherever it is, just totally relax the body.

So with every out breath, and especially when it comes to the end of the out breath, that total release of the breath itself, make sure that for every single breath - do not miss any opportunity - when you come to the end of the out breath, *you are really quiet, you are not just being caught up in rumination, because that will ruin it.*

So be really quiet when it comes to the end of the out breath, releasing, releasing right to the last drop, and then without taking in the breath (almost as you have your hands simply opened and somebody lays a gift in your hands, and you don't even need to extend your arms, but just receive the breath) just let it flow in. And if it is a little gift, well sometimes little gifts are very nice. If it is a big gift, a big breath, that is fine too, but whatever it is... just let it be, just accept what is being given, and give back everything you do not need, everything, to the last drop that you don't need.

So we will start with mindfulness of breathing in that way, with that deep core of relaxation, which is gonna really set you up for settling the mind. Without it, settling the mind does not happen.

And then we will make this segway, this smooth transition from having the primary focus of attention on the breathing, but still being introspectively aware of what is going on in the mind, just as I shift my attention from Daniel to Nato, *but while I'm now focusing on Nato, I can still see Daniel from the corner of my eyes.* We are also focusing primarily on the breathing, but remaining peripherally aware of the mind with introspection. *And then, we shift the main focus of mindfulness onto the mind, and peripherally just keep some point of contact with the breathing,* so you don't start spacing out and being so easily carried away by thoughts, but just maintaining a peripheral awareness of your breathing, until you find you are so in the flow, so relaxed, really tasting that simultaneity of the stillness of your awareness and the movement of the mind, that then you can release, release any deliberate attention to the breath, and then focus single pointedly on the mind.

Meditation:

(4:55) Settle your body, speech and mind in their natural states, and you may follow the Tibetan tradition, if you wish, of counting 21 breaths. One brief staccato count at the end of each inhalation.

(9:49) Then continue in mindfulness of breathing, in any of the three modes of your choice. Focus your mindfulness, single pointedly, on the sensations of the breath, but with your faculty of introspection, monitor the mind, releasing rumination as soon as you note it. First of all relaxing, then releasing, and then returning your attention to the object of mindfulness.

(13:36) Then with your eyes at least partially opened, shift the primary focus of your attention to the space of the mind and whatever arises in that domain, while maintaining a peripheral awareness of the rhythm of the breath. You may, if you wish, arise your attention, and focus clearly as the breath flows in, and then soften, relax, loosen up, as the breath flows out, all while maintaining a steady flow of mindfulness directed to the space to the mind and its contents.

(15:49) Recall that in any practice of shamatha or, for that matter vipashyana, while mindfulness is focused on the primary object of meditation, you monitor the flow of mindfulness with introspection, applying the remedies as needed, when you see that attention imbalances have settled in.

Let's continue practicing now in silence.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Revised by Diogo Rolo

Final edition by Alma Ayon

30 Mindfulness of the mind (2)

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O Laso, so today we return to vipashyana by way of the close application of mindfulness to the mind, so it's really like, in a way, what seems like moving into a new neighborhood and checking out the neighborhood. The closest most intimate neighborhood, neighborhood of your own mind and we do so not only by simply attending closely from moment to moment getting a lot of snapshots so to speak, with bare attention which is certainly very, very valuable *but we also look for the patterns, the connections, the casual sequences* because if one wants to understand anything, you would want to not only understand what it is but what does it do and how does it interrelate with its context that which precedes it, that which follows it, that which is in its environment.

(1:43) If you take things in isolation and just take a little snapshots all by itself, well your understanding will be limited, so you might get it's impermanent nature, okay, it's arising pup- pup- pup-pup – staccato, but so much of what's going on you won't get if you're just focusing moment to moment in a whole series like staccato strobe light, little flashes of bare attention. It's the connections and William James made a very important point – I'm just jumping outside of Buddhism for a moment, but to something that I think is very important – William James made this point, and when you consider from your own experience whether this is true - when you have two things that are related, cause and effect for example, the cause if we go Sautrantika - the cause is real you can perceive it, it has casual efficacy, it does things; likewise anything that is a result is itself also a cause. So anything that is a cause is also a result, anything that is a result is also a cause of something else. So we have two real things - the cause and the effect, the seed and the sprout, *the emotion and then the behavior that is aroused by the emotion and so on.* (2:08)

But William James' point, which I think is really interesting for a radical empiricist, and that's the kind of person he was, he says that it's not only the relata - the elements that are interrelated - *but the relationships themselves are real, not just that which is related, but the relationships themselves are real.* Now, in ordinary language that seems perfectly obvious; is a marital relationship real, and who in his right mind can say – oh no that's just an abstraction? It's crazy, or a parent child, or sibling relationships, are they real or not? Oh, come on, what's more real than that? So, I think he's got something there which would suggest, but now it gets quite subtle – if we're going to follow this out, - (in Tibetan then Alan explains -) What I was saying here, in the Sautrantika, a relationship is not permanent, it's not unchanging therefore it's changing, being changing its real, being real it lends itself to direct perception, or one can say measurement. *But now, exactly how is it that you directly perceive a relationship?* I mean to perceive the relata, that's easy, there is the seed, there is the sprout, there is the emotion, there is the behavior, there is a mental affliction, there is an emotion and so forth. *But how do you perceive, not imagine or infer, how do you perceive a relationship?*

(4:46) What I would suggest here is that you may perceive the relata, the elements that are related, the individual cause, the effect, that cause, that effect, this primary cause, that cooperative condition; you may get those with snapshots with a little strobe, with a flash, a momentary gatcha. *But if you want to see the relationship, it's as if getting the individual components that are related, you can get those with the telephoto, but if you want to see the relationship you have to go to wide angle; and that is let your awareness smear, smear across time.* So you are not just getting little pop- pop- pop- pop- unrelated dots you are literally connecting the dots but not just with imagination because relationships are real whether or not you can conceptually designate them. Sprout give rise to, or seed give rise to sprout wherever you think about them, they do. And so now, to smear them, now this is an interesting point, just so many interesting things here – it really is true, but in Buddhism for example it is said - how long does it take for certain mental event to take place? How long does it take – well (Alan speaks in Tibetan) the very briefest duration of let's say- a pulse of cognition? And that's one sixty fifth of a finger snap, and I checked with finger snap experts and they say that a finger snap is about one tenth of a second, one sixty hundred and fiftieth of a second, that would be the shortest pulse of cognition, but for anyone unless you are an incredible highly advanced yogi, you'll not ascertain anything in *one sixty hundred and fiftieth of a second*, and neuroscientist and cognitive psychology bear that out, it's too short.

(06:23) You have to have a cluster of them, but then let's say, if you have about twenty milliseconds, about thirty milliseconds, or let's say *20 milliseconds, one fiftieth of a second, that's right on the edge of being able to ascertain something really simply like RED, that's very basic, red as opposite to blue.* Can you get it or not?

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And that would entail giving you a flash and then masking it. That's how they do it, they give you a flash and they mask it so that you don't have the reverberation effect, which is then something different. Let's say 20 milliseconds, one fiftieth of a second - that may be, right on the edge, long enough for a cluster of those very brief pulses of cognition to cluster together and be able to provide the knowledge that was RED.

(7:19) Right, but now they give an interesting one - *how long does it take to doubt something?* To doubt means to vacillate between two extremes, yes or no, maybe, maybe not. You can't doubt and think maybe yes, maybe yes, maybe yes, because then you're pretty much stuck on yes, which is not doubting it's just yes, yes yes. So it has to be weighing, alternating between two possibilities, right? For example, will my mind ever be quiet, will rumination ever settle down? Bla, bla bla bla bla – you won't get it that way. *So, how long does it take for a doubt to occur, for uncertainty to occur?* Well, it's going to be a heck of a lot longer than one fiftieth of a second because you're going to have to weigh two possibilities and be comparing them. So, there's a cluster, so that would imply in order to end doubt, of course exists, therefore it's perceivable, but not in 20 milliseconds it's not because your telephoto is too intense.

(8:19) It's too narrow a time to be able to pick up, to ascertain doubt. *It has to be longer, like a half second maybe, a quarter of a second, oh there I was doubting because I went* – yes, maybe not, yes, maybe not – and that takes a little while. So you have to have wide angle in terms of time, a wide angle to say, oh yeah, there was a flip-flop there.

(8:46) Having said that, now we look causality. *Because as we're closely applying mindfulness to the mind we should be very interested in causality* – what's causing what here, right? And this is just a fundamental issue underlying all of the Buddhadharma, and that is fundamentally it is just so much boils down to causality. If you just look at the framework for the whole teaching for 25 hundred years, it starts with an effect – suffering. Okay, there's the effect, we all care about it, so you've caught my attention, I don't want to suffer. Whether I'm a groundhog, a gopher, a locust, human being, yep, don't want to suffer, yep got that one, but then the suffering just arises because God made it happen or it just happens randomly, what have you? Or are there patterns, is there some orderliness there, in the generation of suffering?

Second Noble Truth – here are not the mere catalysts, oh I'm feeling bad today because it's cloudy; as if it's cloudy everybody has to feel bad, that's not a cause. That's certainly not a substantial cause of feeling bad, that's a cooperative condition for you, but not for you, because you like rain and you don't. And so all those cooperative conditions they are say okay, let's set that one aside, now what's really important? Because a raining day may make you unhappy, maybe not, but what always gets you? What always gut punches you, delivers the goods, for really providing misery? Suffering. And all it's waiting for is cooperative conditions, and boom it always delivers the goods. And then the Buddha in his brilliance said, well how about three prime suspects? The most wanted list in the FBI of samsara – delusion, craving and hostility. *I mean check it out, trace your suffering and see if you can't always find that mafia of mental afflictions*, they're always behind it, whether explicitly or implicitly, just trace it back – ah you again, you again, you are definitely on my hit list, public enemy, we have to bring you to justice.

(10:54) They and all their derivatives, all the derivative mental afflictions, jealousy, arrogance, and so forth and so on, primary, secondary mental afflictions, but it always traces back to three and among three it always comes back to one – *delusion. And that's rooted in unknowing.* So, for us to perceive the causal relationships, not just be figuring them out, *but actually perceive them*, then we have to have something with a wide angle lens – that is not going in just moment by moment, staccato moment of this- this- this, but a broader spectrum, a more panoramic spectrum that is able, and the technical term is – *working memory*. That is to be able to hold something in mind and to be able to see within it, to be able to work with it, understand it, so to see one event and then another event arising. *Now, the mere fact that one event precedes another event, does that necessarily imply that the earlier one caused the latter one?* No way. No, obviously not, this is the wellspring of so much superstition, I brought my rabbits foot and I had a terrific game, I hit a whole bunch of balls in the game oh man that rabbits foot, that's what did it, I always have to remember it, or this old pair of dirty socks, I wear this one when I win my tennis match, boy, these are my lucky sox; you know, this runs through all of sports, your dirty socks, a special pair of underwear, a little bracelet, the girlfriends ring you put in your pocket, whatever it is, you say oh but that caused it because it preceded it and then that happened. So there's the dumbbell approach to causality, if it preceded it, it must have caused it. I kind of like that though, because you know, the end of the age is coming on Dec 21st of this year; and I've just said that – and now you

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just watch, I have said the end of the age is coming and now just watch, on December 21st I will have caused it, right, because I said it first? I mean the silliness abounds and is the root of so much superstition, a tremendous amount of superstition.

(13:31) Of just thinking if A precedes B then A must have caused B. But if you're closely applying mindfulness with discerning intelligence then you can see, A preceded B but not casual related, but A precede B – ah, causal related. And then it gets more interesting still, because if you see it only once, how would you know? How would you know? But if you perceive it multiple times then a data base starts to grow.

So this is not answering a whole lot of questions, I think it is raising some really important ones.

(14:11) So when we closely apply mindfulness with discerning intelligence, with Prajna - wisdom or intelligence, then we are looking for the interrelationships, this is absolutely core to the Satipatthana, it is core to the Four Noble Truths, you just start with the effect and you look for the cause, not all those cooperative conditions they're endless; but what are the causes. Then you look for an effect – the achievement of liberation – that's an effect. And then you go for the cause, path to that achievement. So it's all causality, start to finish. Four Noble Truths – all about causality. And then, we find this, I think it's implicit or thinly veiled in the Satipatthana Sutta, when the Buddha says – for each of the four, starting with the body – *closely attend to or contemplate, the factors of origination and the factors of dissolution*; this, the probing, ontological analysis into causality, how things emerge, how they dissolve, when do they become themselves?

(15:11) When exactly is it, when is the first moment of a sprout? When a seed is germinated, a seed germinates right – then after some time you've got a sprout. Exactly when does that happen? And then you have the sprout, eventually it's going to die, it's going to get burnt, dried up, but one way or the other it's not going to remain a sprout forever, so when exactly does it stop being a sprout? In other words it's sprout-ness is finite, it has a beginning and an end, and that goes for seeds and for pretty much everything else, but exactly, what was that demarcation when we can say – now it exists – now it's a sprout – now it's no longer a sprout – so closely, with an ontological probe that is looking right into the very nature of existence of causes and the emergence – how does it emerge? If you do that deeply enough, you ride into the king of all syllogisms – Nagarjuna. You're up to your neck in Nagarjuna.

(16:06) *And that is, to realize emptiness by way of pratitysamutpada*; it's really like the royal carriage, the most noble the most profound, the most celebrated way of realizing emptiness is really to closely inspect, ontologically probe into the very nature of causality itself. We will get to that during our second month, but I just wanted to make this connection here. Now for this first month we're already working on the three Marks of Existence and not really going to emptiness, or emphasizing it, impermanence, dukkha and then non self, then as we are closely applying mindfulness to the mind, as we will do in just a few minutes now, what I would like to highlight is the following point. Yesterday we were looking primarily at the objective appearances, a bit easier, the easiest thing to observe for most people, the discursive thoughts, the chit-chat arising in the mind, the mental images – not that hard to observe. More difficult to observe, to clearly inspect, to closely apply mindfulness to – the subjective impulses, such as emotions. Well, when we were looking at vedhana (feelings), we are just looking at just the basic emotions of pleasant, unpleasant and neutral.

(17:19) Now that we're closely applying mindfulness to the mind, then that refers to all the rest of the mental process, so it's a great big umbrella term, and that is all the emotions.

But of course we can still attend to the emergence of pleasure, of displeasure, of boredom, of interest, of excitement, of dullness and so forth, these various states of consciousness.

(17:44) But the point I really want to emphasize and I think is pretty close to the last point is that as you experience some kind of pleasure arising – that is settling the mind and then focusing your mindfulness on the space of the mind, closely applying it to it, to the events arising therein, when you experience a feeling of pleasure or displeasure arising, *to my mind one of the juiciest questions is- one of the most fruitful, transformative, meaningful questions that can be posed, to my mind, and that is - you experience pleasure for example, then ask a question -*

Is this pleasure, stimulus driven?

(18:49) *So when pleasure arises, if it is hedonic pleasure recognize it as such, that's really useful, really, really useful.* And then as you look to perceive relationships look to see if you can identify what catalyzed it, the cooperative condition, a memory, a thought, a fantasy, whatever it is, see if you can identify the trigger, the cooperative condition that nudged, that boost that emergence of a pleasant response that we experience as

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pleasure. So, hedonic, but some of you have already experienced, maybe all of you for that matter, maybe during this retreat or prior to this retreat, all of you I think have experienced another kind of pleasure - still feels good, is pleasant, it's mental but when you look around for – who done it – that is what catalyzed it, what was the appearance, what am I responding to? *What am I finding pleasant?*

You don't see anything. It's not a pleasurable way of experiencing that, it's a quality of well-being, of sukkah, that you're bringing to whatever you experience.

(20:10) From brushing your teeth to taking a shower, to trimming your toenails, none of those are intrinsically pleasant, I mean they may be, they may not be, depends on your mood. *But what's the quality you're bringing to them prior to being stimulated in a pleasant or unpleasant fashion?* Sometimes it is sukkah, very possibly all of you have experienced that on some occasion, where there is simply a sense of wellbeing but it is not a response to something that happened to you, some appearance arising to the mind.

So we're going to call that genuine happiness, it's not ultimate; if it was ultimate we probably wouldn't have experience it yet.

(20:50) But the Buddha said - find what truly brings you happiness and follow it, so before Joseph Campbell said - follow your bliss, Buddha said something very similar, a long time ago. *Find what truly makes you happy and then trace it*, like the hound dog picking up the scent, hey that is genuine happiness, it may not be immutable, it may not be ultimate, it may not have to do with pranas going into the central channel but this is the scent, and then say ok, let's follow that one, see where that takes us.

So observe the occurrence of genuine happiness and observe the absence of any appearance serving as its cooperative condition, and see that it is more, more simply arising without being impeded, in other words observe what isn't there- that's not impeding; like if you start ruminating with some old resentment, oh that will definitely put a cork in your genuine happiness, that will just make it go right down.

(21:52) So in this regard, I find enormously useful something I've learned from the Theravada tradition, I've never seen it so clearly laid out in the Tibetan.

From Theravada, the nature of bhavanga which we call also the substrate consciousness is - bright shining mind- or mind of clear light, two translations of the same term, but it's not referring to rigpa, buddha nature, it's referring to substrate consciousness, but brightly shining and by nature pure. The same of the substrate consciousness let alone rigpa which doesn't come in the Theravada or the Pali Canon, naturally pure and luminous, right. And then of course when we experience it by way of shamatha you find a third quality and that is oh, it's also blissful.

What obscures it, why is it, if that is always there, the bhavanga, I would simply say substrate consciousness for sure, substrate consciousness is always there and its nature is bliss, luminosity and non-conceptuality, those are not add on-s that you get from someplace else, that's the nature of substrate consciousness. So why aren't we just walking around all day, blissful, luminous and non-conceptual until there is something to think about? And then we pick up, like picking up a tool, we pick up thinking – thank you very much, and when it's done and we're back to non-conceptual until we need to pick up thinking again. Why isn't that the case, in other words why aren't we naturally sane, because that's sane, luminous, non-conceptual, when there's nothing to think about and then blissfulness arising as a symptom of a well-balanced sane mind? Why are we not just already sane, what happened?

(23:40) And what happened were some little pesky critters called The Five Obscurations.

And they are obscuring this blissful, luminous and non-conceptual nature of our own minds, our own inheritance, because again, this is not something you get from Buddhism or anything else, not even from your parents, this is really yours, much closer than your body, you can start losing limbs and still being here, losing hair, losing your beard if you have the guts, you can lose all kinds of things, you can lose your memory, you can lose your intelligence, you can lose a lot of things, of course you can lose your mind but one thing you can't lose is substrate consciousness, there is no way to lose that one, so if anything belongs to you, that might be a good candidate, but leaving that aside, there it is, that's the keeper, that's the one that continues on, the substrate consciousness.

So what's obscuring it? Five obscurations that obscure, that make invisible to us - which means to take out of the realm of experience for us, on the top side so to speak, monkeying about in the coarse mind, makes the natural luminosity, bliss and non-conceptuality of the substrate consciousness invisible, unknown and therefore widely refuted; because why should I accept something that I've never seen and don't know

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anybody else who's seen it, then why should I assume it exists? That's not an unintelligent position, limited, but not unintelligent. And so, the metaphors I think, I find pretty useful, so what's one that just obscures, blanks out like putting a concrete lid on these the bliss, luminosity, non-conceptuality of substrate consciousness?

- Sensual craving.

(25:17) Sensual craving, that'll do it. Because here is bliss here, (Alan points to his heart chakra) here's where bliss is, and then I think, I've got no bliss, who can make me blissful? Who's going to make me happy, what's going to make me happy, where shall I move, what kind of job shall I get, what kind of an education shall I get, what friends? And clearly that's going to obscure what I already have because I'm looking exactly in the opposite direction. What I need to do is unveil here instead of going never mind veils, I can fix this. I can fix this, I just need somebody, you know, I need better food, better sex, better place to live, nicer car and so forth, that will do it, in other words just give a lot of cooperative conditions, who does need a primary cause? Why don't we just snuff that one out and just add sugar on top of a concrete lid. So it is said that this fixation on the bounties of the desire realm, because it's not just sensual craving, it's not just sex and food and so forth, it's much broader than that. It's all the fixations on the three jewels of the material world, remember the three jewels of the material world that many, many people take refuge in - *money, power and fame or status*. Look at modern education, look at business, look at politics, look at sports, look pretty much in any direction you like and see where are people really pinning their hopes,

(26:53) money and all that money can buy, that's a lot, but money can't buy power, I was about to say that you can't buy the American Presidency, I think that leaves an open question that we will know in a couple of months. But generally speaking you can't simply buy political power or buy others kinds of power, you have to be somewhat more crafty or clever or something. And likewise you can't simply buy status – the *nouveau riche* for example, aspiring, aspiring and then Aristotle saying - aspiring but not achieving - you are not where we are, your money is too recent, we're dead broke but at least we have good blood. So status money can't buy, you have to get there some other way.

(27:35) So there we are, I think that's pretty much the three jewels of mundane world, wealth and everything that wealth can purchase, power and everything you can do with it, and then status and everything you can do with status, prestige, reputation, fame, that's a lot, and for many people that pretty much defines – “that's the good life”. If you can just be wealthy, powerful and famous and it would be really helpful to be good looking too, then you can be really happy. And it's so wonderful that we have the entertainment industry, that all you have to do is look and see: “not true, not true”.

(28:19) So there it is, the fixation on that, the metaphor is- if the clear and luminous pure blissful nature of your own awareness when unveiled, if it is likened to a crystal clear pool of water, the sun just beaming through it, that's a nice metaphor, a limpid, transparent, luminously well lit, pool of water, clear, crystal clear. Then the fixation on hedonic wellbeing, hedonic pleasure is like throwing a handful of dye into the water and then all you see is the dye. You don't see the qualities of the water, it's no longer transparent, it's not luminous, it's not pure, you can't see through it, you just see dye, right. So that's one way of obscuring the clear and luminous nature of your mind, by throwing in the dye – oh if I could only be more wealthy – more people would love me, I'd have more respect, then there it is, it's totally obscured. There's one.

2) Ill will.

(29:14) Ill will, that really works. If you'd really like to totally obscure the natural luminosity and bliss of your own mind, ill will is a real killer. It really does the work. And this analogy here, keeping with the analogy of the clear pool of water - *boiling water*. The water is clear, that is it's not polluted but you can't see through it because what you can see is just the bubbling, ill will, malice, malevolence, enmity, totally obscures the actual transparency, limpid, blissful nature of the mind. That's the second one.

3) Laxity and dullness.

(29:47) Laxity and dullness is likened to *moss* that covers the surface, so it's right there on the surface, it's quite thin but then you can't see through it. So, likewise we all know it, we all know what laxity and dullness are like, you just can't see into the depths of the mind, because you're caught on the surface level of just that – laxity and dullness.

4) Excitation and anxiety.

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(30:20) Excitation and I will say anxiety. Excitation and anxiety is like a pool of water *where the surface is rippled by wind*, you're just getting a lot of wave action on the surface, you can't see through it. You can't see into the depths of the water all you're seeing is the waves. We all know that, right, and it's exactly what it's to think about when your mind is caught up in rumination, distraction, agitation, anxiety, guilt and so forth, it's all on the surface, it's all there on the vibration, all the perturbations on the surface of the mind and you can't see beyond it because they get you in their grip and they throttle you like a terrier throttles a rat. You've ever been the rat? It's really unpleasant.

5) Debilitating doubt.

(31:24) The final one is debilitating doubt. For example, how is has your week gone? Oh, ups and downs, sometimes kind of good, sometimes kind of bad, sometimes I might get really depressed, but sometimes I was inspired, sometimes this and sometimes that. I think that could achieve shamatha but probably not, etc. You know it's not like I totally, immutably, inherently suck at meditation and therefore I am spending the next five weeks on the beach. Now that's a decision, that's coming to some definite certainty – I am absolutely irredeemably hopeless as a meditator; it was a total mistake to come to the mind center, but the beach is waiting and I'll certainly be happier there than I am here. That's at least a decision, right? Or – the beach is just a beach, it's just sand and salt water, if you want sand and salt water, get a bucket of sand and a pool of salt and go home and just knock yourself out. If that's really what you wanted, sand and salt water, sit in your bath tub with a bucket of sand and have some fun, you know, if that's really your source of pleasure then your bucket of sand and salt water should you know, just make your day. Might even throw in a plastic ducky, if you really want some bliss you know. So that's the thing about afflictive uncertainty, it just doesn't let us rest. Wobbly, wobbly, so that's said to be like *turbid water*, where there's just a lot of silt, muck, grunge in the water and so once again, you just can't see through it.

(33:12) So I find those 5 metaphors very useful, and then the task here is to identify when genuine happiness comes up, it's coming you know on a relative level, it's coming from that place, I mean ultimate ok, it's coming from rigpa but rigpa is a little bit beyond of our scope for the time being I am going to assume, but this substrate consciousness is not that far away, you just tap into every time you fall asleep, how far away could it be?

Of course when you're deep asleep it's veiled by laxity and dullness so then you don't get all the blissful element but at least it's restful. So this genuine happiness on a relative level, it's just coming from that dimension of consciousness and it gets un-observed a little bit and then some ray of clarity, some ray of bliss, some ray of non-conceptuality beams out and you say – ah, that's my inheritance. And then the five obscurations like a cloud layer come and obscure it again. *So genuine happiness, it's substantial cause, its primary cause is nowhere else than your own substrate consciousness, not going to be anywhere else, because that's the very nature of bliss.* So to un-observe it is the task, not to try to add on more stuff and somehow concoct bliss with a bunch of cooperative conditions, that's called hedonic pleasure, all very well but then after while of course it tapers off, the novelty wears off, no longer interesting, whereas here's a well spring, it doesn't get boring, it doesn't get tired.

(34:11) Then the final point is while we have genuine happiness and hedonic, and also as you are closely inspecting your mind, look for and again I find this so fascinating, if unhappiness, boredom, restlessness, grumpiness, tiredness, just something, anything, some unpleasant feeling of any flavor arises while you're meditating, it may never happen again, but should it happen, (laughter) then check it out. *Is it hedonic unhappiness?* Is it your knees, is it your back? Are you just feeling heavy in the body? Is it your mind? *Is it the fact that you are restless or is there something arising in your mind that you are experiencing in an unpleasant way? In other words, are you getting some unpleasant stimulation? Mentally, sensorially, tactically, whatever, but it is something making you unhappy, restless and so forth, that whole bandwidth.* If so, good, let's call it hedonic unhappiness, okay then you see it. But then is there such a thing as genuine unhappiness? And I think we've already experienced that, we've all had that experience on many occasions.

(35:50) And Tsongkhapa makes this point, come back to Tsongkhapa once again. He said - insofar as the mind is dominated by mental afflictions, that is just habitual, that is just your normal state, you are caught up in one or another. You are just like basically going around getting into a bit of attachment and then a bit of anger and then more delusion and then a bit more attachment, and then anger, and a bit of arrogance and jealousy and so forth, if that's basically the swimming pool that you're swimming in, then even when you have no

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stimulation, even when nothing's happening to you, in other words you can be in Lama Yeshe's dark room or you can be in solitary confinement or you could be in a hospital bed all by yourself not even in any pain, but just by yourself in a room or in a meditation cave up in the mountains, *but with really nothing unpleasant happening to you, you can be richly unhappy, and it can have some staying power*. In other words you can really slip into some chronic depression there. And they say – what's making you depressed? I mean, you've got enough food, you've got a toilet, you've got four walls to look at, what's your problem, I mean there's nothing bad happening to you? And it doesn't even have to be bad things happening to you in your mind, that is I think the subtle point he is getting at, you don't even have to think unhappy thoughts, that is that just when the mind is conditioned by, dominated by mental afflictions whether or not there's talking rumination going on in the mind, you can feel bad anyway; even without being negatively stimulated by something happening to you or in your mind, you can just feel bad already, right? *That's interesting, and that's genuine unhappiness. That's what I call genuine unhappiness, it's not stimulus driven. Your mind is imbalanced, your mind is not well and this is a symptom of a not well mind*. As Pascal said - the problem with modern man is our inability to sit quietly in our chambers because sitting quietly in our chambers, with nothing bad happening to us, becomes unbearable.

(37:55) So what do we do in modernity? Say well, the hell with sitting quietly in our chambers let's get out and do something; at least work, at least be productive. So if you're Germanic or Scandinavian, Northern European - then let's get out and do something, let's get some work done. And if you're from Spain, Portugal, Italy, you say, let's have some good food and relax, let's party. But either way, whether it's going to work to occupy your mind or whether you are going to play to occupy your mind, and racking up your debts in the meantime, either way it's an escape. It's to occupy yourself, at least I am being productive, I may be a miserable person but at least I overcome it by being productive, and I maybe a miserable person but look at my shirts, look at my food and look at my car. One of the boyfriends of my stepdaughter, chick-mobile, chick magnet, that's what he called it – chick magnet. The Italians make chick-magnets like nobody on the planet. I mean a Maserati, Lamborghini, Ferrari, let alone the cheaper ones, and if that's not a chick-magnet, I don't know what is. Porches are very good machines, but a Lamborghini?

(39:25) I may have a lot of mental afflictions but nevertheless look at my car. *So look for genuine unhappiness and trace it to its root*. And instead of trying to cover it over, instead of trying to anesthetize it by hedonic stimulation, unveiled it. *And then unveil the veil and see if there's something beneath the mental afflictions. And that's where the really good news is*. Isn't it fascinating? I think it's utterly fascinating, I don't think there's anything more fascinating this unexplored massive territory, this wilderness of the mind, waiting to be explored. So, let's do it.

(40:18) A student talks.

(42:06) Teaching continues - There is a point for those interested in Buddhist philosophy, psychology, that is empirical, it's not just metaphysical, and that is when we're looking at the eighteen elements, remember those? The five sensory domains, excuse me, the six domains of consciousness, or domains, the six faculties and then the six modes of consciousness, *the sense faculty for mental consciousness is also mental consciousness*; it's not brain, and it's the only one out of the six, and it is called "Indriya", or faculties, in dependence upon which consciousness arises. So for all of the other five, for the five sense faculties they are physical, they are inside the head or tactile throughout the body and so forth. But when it comes to the faculty in dependence upon which mind arises, contrary to the belief of almost every living neuro scientist, not every single one but almost all of them, *the faculty in dependence upon which consciousness arises is not physical, is not brain it is itself consciousness, mental consciousness*. And so once again when I look at the mana Indra it's called in Sanskrit, manaindra, the faculty of the mind, the faculty in dependence upon which mind or manas emerges, I mean come right back to the same thing, substrate consciousness.

(43:12) Because that's it, if we look at the first moment that a person for example John, here is John, finite in duration, you've not been around forever, you will not be around forever, so there was, without pretending to know, whether that's at conception when the egg and sperm were unified whether it was that moment or for a minute later, or a week later, I won't pretend to know, I don't know but certainly from the time let's say that the egg and sperm were united, from that time, and then there's a point when you're dead, between those two points, there must have been, there had to be just logically, there had to be – a first moment of John's consciousness, this particular consciousness, he's a man, a human being so you, as this person, did not

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exist prior to the fertilization of your mother's egg, that's obvious, whether it occurred at that moment, possibly, but we'll leave that as an open question, but sometime from that point until now, there had to be a first moment, in which your mind, human mind, there had to be a first moment, because you do have a mind now and it wasn't there a second before the fertilization of the egg so there had to be a first moment of the emergence of your mind. And that's manas, your mind and that had to arise in dependence upon a faculty and so what was the immediately preceding cause for the very first moment of the emergence of your mind? Well the materialists would say, neurons, ok, prove it.

(45:00) And the Buddhist would say- not neurons, there are cooperative conditions that in dependence upon which it arose, preceding moment of substrate consciousness which was not human, but that's why I say substrate consciousness, bhavanga, subtle continual of mental consciousness is like a stem consciousness, like we have a stem cell that can turn into various types of cells, bones, bone marrow, blood, neurons and so forth and so on waiting to get in the right environment to take on that particular configuration, *likewise your substrate consciousness is a stem consciousness waiting to become configured, depending on the kind of brain, the type of physical organism and so forth whether it is a dog, a cow or human being*. And then it has its first moment and out of substrate consciousness arises the first moment of your human mind; because you have a human mind, and it had to have a first moment and it had to come from some place, so either a bunch of neurons got together and made nothing transform into something, or else they transformed into it, not very likely, or they act as cooperative conditions to catalyze your substrate consciousness to emerge as your human mind. Quite interesting.

Okay, enough talk, now let's actually look at the specimen, look the phenomenon, because you have a privileged access, it's your mind, you may as well know it, because it won't be around forever, your mind, John's mind, it's got book ends, it had a beginning, we don't know exactly when, we know when in principal, but you have to kiss that mind goodbye, so before you have to kiss it goodbye, give it a big hug, get to know it.

(47:01) **Meditation:**

Now release the agitation of the mind, the conceptualization, the turbulence, let your awareness descend into the non-conceptual space of your body right down to the earth element. Settle your body in its natural state, your respiration in its natural rhythm and calm the conceptual turbulence of your mind for a little while with mindfulness of breathing.

(52:50) And direct the full force of mindfulness to the space of the mind, to the objective appearances that arise within that domain, but also to your subjective responses, subjective impulses, and you may take a special interest in the arising of pleasure and displeasure and apply discerning intelligence *to distinguish if you can, the pleasure and the displeasure that are stimulus driven, as opposed to the sense of well-being that arises simply because your mind is balanced, relatively un-obscured*; or the genuine unhappiness that arises because your mind is afflicted, observe closely and connect the dots of individual moments of experience with the casual relationships that link those moments into coherent patterns.

(56:06) When you find that you've simply been caught up in rumination, return to the shamatha practice of settling the mind in its natural state, let your awareness find its own ground, its own place, in stillness. Recognize the distinction between that stillness and the movements of the mind, and when you feel ready then venture forth once again the closely inspect, the movements of the mind, the emergences of the mind and the relationships from moment to moment.

(59:40) If you are not yet familiar enough with the shamatha practice of settling the mind in its natural state, you can always return for a while to mindfulness of breathing. Establish your base camp, place to rest, place to compose your attention and then when you are ready, closely apply your mindfulness once again to the space of the mind and events arising within it.

(1:04:19) With discerning intelligence note the differences between grasped and un-grasped thoughts and images, those for which you feel you are the agent - that you did it, they belong to you and those that you sense that you simply witnessed but you didn't do them, you didn't intend them, and then apply that same discerning intelligence to the more subjective impulses, desires for example. Where you the agent of the desire, did you intend it, did you identify it, is it really yours or is the desire simply something that arose and you witnessed but without identifying with it?

(1:06:41) And finally as you closely apply mindfulness to these objective appearances within the domain of the mind such as discursive thoughts and mental images, carefully inspect the manner in which they arise.

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Can you identify the cooperative conditions, it could be an emotion it could be a sound, a tactile sensation? And then can you identify the substantial cause, that which actually transformed into the discursive thought or mental image? As the Buddha counseled - contemplate the factors of origination.

Two Questions for the Geshe-

(1:11:30)

Among the 12 links of dependent origination, the first one is the link of ignorance, avidya. The second one is the link of compositional factors, the third one is of course the link of consciousness, and then we have more coming after that, obviously. Here's my question for the Geshe – what's the distinction between that third link, consciousness and the bavangha? Are they the same, or are they qualitatively somehow very different? Okay, that's one interesting one.

And the next one, where I'm going to go here is – I was just translating one very brief section of a text that I translated in its entirety, called Buddhahood without Meditation, which was already translated, but I've now translated the big commentary to it, it's pretty much finished, we're just polishing it. In this text, Dudjom Lingpa makes a reference to something that is referred to many, many times in the Indian and Tibetan tradition, and that is – of illusionists. These are not like a David Copperfield or a modern illusionists that are doing it primarily with really good technology, according to Buddhist and Hindu lore, they're not just doing that by trickery, it's not just a trick they're using two things, no three things. What the illusionist is using here in order to create an optical illusion, a magical illusion, but an optical illusion, is number one a substance, some kind of a magical substance, and that's my question for the Geshe. I have always heard about this substance, okay, what kind of substance? LSD? I don't think so, what kind of substance, it's not a drug? But do they have any idea, what are they referring to when they say the name, it could be any kind of physical substance at all, I'd be quite curious.

Geshe responds – usually they are referring to a wooden object of the size of a pebble. That is actually what they are empowering.

Alan - So it could be any old thing, they are empowering it with the Samadhi and the mantra?

Geshe responds – Exactly.

Alan- That's good to know, thank you, that actually makes sense, that's interesting, okay good, that's one down, that's very helpful, I didn't know that, thank you, excellent, okay. You are released.

And now where I'm going with this – and he might find it interesting later, maybe he already knows, but I found it quite interesting.

(1:13:56)

It kind of caught my attention, and this is from Dudjom Lingpa's Mind Treasure on Dzogchen – it's called – Buddhahood without meditation. (Alan gives the Tibetan name for it) And he is referring to this, but it pertains to our practice here, in I think a very interesting way and we have questions but not a lot, and I think this is really worth the time and then you can decide after I've finished.

And that is, Dudjom Lingpa, it's in his presentation on nature of emptiness, but then he gives an analogy – for example the analogy for an optical illusion could be created by an illusionist who uses a physical substance; well now we know that's innocuous, it's not some high tech Indian something, it's just a piece of wood, but just kind of a platform, a basis, a mantra, that's going to have some power to it because it's not just fee-fi-fo-fum, there's going to be something sophisticated about the mantra, that I am certain of, and then Samadhi.

Okay, that's the laser technology. And it's a good metaphor, it's a good metaphor because holographic images are created by lasers; so of course it's just a metaphor, but I think it's a very good one. Very, very finely honed, sharply focused, refined light of consciousness. That's Samadhi. So you bring these two together, but what he's talking about here, why refer to it right now, is he is talking about the primary cause, or substantial cause, and then the cooperative conditions for what's bringing about that illusion.

(1:15:45) It's clearly an effect, so what's the primary cause and what's the cooperative conditions? Okay, the cooperative conditions that do not transform into it, but without which it doesn't happen, in other words they are cooperative they're the triggers, cooperative conditions, okay you have the substance, that's kind of innocuous, a piece of wood. The mantra, that's going to be high tech, the Samadhi, that's very high tech. And then the other cooperative condition that's necessary is the mind of the observer who is looking in the right

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direction. If you don't have a spectator, and the illusionist himself has his eyes closed, and nobody's around, there is no illusion. It doesn't stand all by itself, and he is not creating this for his own fun, the illusion was actually a performance. People would do that, so he is creating it for an audience, or at least for one other person. So you have to have the other persons' mind, which is looking in the right direction and then sees it, and then the substance, and the mantra and then the illusionists' Samadhi. Those are all cooperative conditions. *So all of those are helping something become an illusion. What is it?*

And this is what caught my attention – what is the primary cause that actually transforms into the illusion?

Not the stick or piece of wood, not the mantra, not other people's minds and not the yogi's Samadhi; could be but it's not. Any guesses? The something else is the cause, the primary cause. Bear in mind your substrate consciousness isn't even the cause, the substantial cause of your dreams. It illuminates the dreams. *What he says is the most interesting and it's right in front of you what he says is – space.* He doesn't go for primordial space, he doesn't go wooo wooo woo, he just says – space. There's a piece of wood, there's a mantra, there's Samadhi and the minds of the observers and there's space. So he's not going all metaphysical and weird on us, he just says – **space is the cause**. And there is only one way to interpret that and that is it's space itself transforming into the illusion, because otherwise it would just be one more cooperative condition. The mantra doesn't transform into it, the substance, the minds of the observers doesn't, the yogi's Samadhi doesn't transform into the illusion, his Samadhi is his mind-stream it's not going to transform into something that someone else can see. He actually said that it's the space that is the cause, the primary cause. And now let's pursue it a little bit.

(01:21:06) We know there are two types of space at least, I won't limit it to that, there are more than that but just for the time being, we know there is physical space, that's what physicists measure, that's what's expanding, from the time of the big bang space time is expanding that's why all the galaxies and stars are moving away from each other, why the universe is getting larger, so there's such a thing as physical space, and physical space is there whether you blink or not. Just like the atoms in this eyeglass carrier are there whether you are looking at it, whether you're touching it, it kind of doesn't matter, they are there, dependent upon our perception. And likewise space is there, whether we are looking at it or not, space is there, right, so what do you think? Physical space that physicists study, that's expanding, we know a lot about it, what do you think, do you think its physical space transforming into the illusion? Who is going to be bold? Yes or no, no - kind of in a manner of speaking – that's what philosophers often do – in a manner of speaking one might consider that this is a viable possibility – that means – I'm covered. If I'm right I get a little wedge, but if I'm wrong –of course I didn't really mean it.

Someone says – mental space, physical space is wrong.

Alan responds- you are right, there is no way it can be physical space. Physical space is physical, this illusion is not physical it has no physical attributes whatsoever. It's not physical, so I am totally convinced you must be right, it's not physical space transforming into that image, and therefore, what kind of space then would it be that is the primary cause that's transforming, taking on the appearance of that illusion? It's got to be Alaya. The space of the mind, and bear in mind that Dudjom Lingpa says elsewhere that all appearance, so now the appearance of eyeglass carrier, the appearance of the galaxies when you're looking through a telescope and so forth, the appearance of elementary particles when you're looking in a bubble chamber, and so forth, the appearances arise when you're looking through a microscope, looking at an x-ray and so forth, all appearances, not only appearances to the five physical senses, appearances of dreams and images and so forth – all appearances, according to Dudjom Lingpa, Dzogchen, all appearances are arising from, and manifest in, Alaya – substrate. Not eyeglass carriers, they're made of molecules. The appearance is emerging from the mind, the molecules emerge from other molecules, other configurations of mass energy, mass energy going back to the big bang. But the substrate did not emerge from the big bang; it's not physical, didn't arise from the physical, doesn't transform into the physical. So, if that's the case, it does bear a striking resemblance to this theme that I mentioned just briefly earlier of the within quantum field theory, of all configurations of mass energy. Now we're back into main stream physics, quantum field theory, very main stream. And the central theme of that is that all configurations of mass energy, including eyeglass carriers, and suns and planets and particles and footballs and so forth, all configurations of mass energy are nothing other than configurations of empty space.

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(01:24:33) That's straight quantum field theory, interesting parallel. So I hope that was worth your while, it was worth my while, even if I was talking all by myself I'd say wow, that was interesting. And if you didn't follow what I was saying then I was in fact talking all by myself.

Session of Questions and Answers:

Question- To the topics – substrate, substrate consciousness, lucid dreaming, please touch on all, including the process of death, dharmakaya and subtle consciousness.

Response – Okay, I've got 3 minutes for that, that shouldn't be a problem. (laughter) Happily we will have time to return to these, the latter half of this week; that is the first three days including tomorrow primarily about javana – activities, the stuff happening in the space of the mind. The latter half of this week primarily going to awareness itself and the substrate, and then we'll recycle those.

But in brief I think that kind of covers it, the substrate is that vacuity, that empty domain, but not a sheer absence, but a space, the space of the mind, that is what appears to substrate consciousness, and appears quite vividly once you've achieved shamatha and you've slipped into the substrate consciousness without in any way obscuring the natural luminosity of the substrate consciousness. And it does get obscured when you're falling asleep normally, when you're dying normally, when you take an anesthetic normally; you're slipping into the substrate consciousness but the lights go out as you're going there, okay.

So lucid dreaming, we'll return to this, one of the most interesting things, so lucid dreaming, it's simply recognizing mental phenomena as mental phenomena while you're sleeping, and then there is also of course the lucid dreamless sleep, which is also possible. That is to be in deep dreamless sleep and to know it simultaneously. Those are possible.

So the process of death, the end point of achieving shamatha is to tap into the same dimension of consciousness as the end point of the dying process, so in classic Indo-Tibetan teachings, when you're going through the dying process, and it's discussed in some detail, how the physical senses implode and the cognitive faculties dissolve, memory and so forth and so on, and then it's all dissolving and mind is dissolving, dissolving – the coarse mind that arises in dependence upon – we would say nowadays the brain, and Buddhists would say in dependence upon the whole energy system within the body – prana system and the body as a whole; what's happening there is that the coarse mind is dissolving into the subtle continuum of mental consciousness. And the point at which that mental dissolution is complete, at which now okay your coarse mind no longer exists, is after the white appearance, and then the red, chepa – red emergence, and then there's the dark neurotaintment, those are the just the straight, literal translations. But the dark neurotaintment is just total black out, just poof, blackout. And so for a normal person they'll hit that and it will basically be like just having fallen into deep, deep, non-lucid, dreamless sleep, just not knowing anything, just the sensation of experience, explicit experience. And from the Buddhist account of dying, that's when you're dead. You're dying, dying, dying, then you get to that point, that dark neurotaintment, where your coarse mind is dissolved into your subtle mind and now you're dead. Or we call it in Dzogchen terminology – now your coarse mind has dissolved into substrate consciousness.

Now, I've checked with my principal Lama for Dzogchen, and asked him if one has achieved Shamatha, then what are your chances of being able to die lucidly, and when you come to that dark neurotaintment, to be lucidly dead? To be resting in it and fully cognizant of – you're resting in the substrate consciousness and you got there not by achieving shamatha, you got there by dying, but having first achieved shamatha, in other words having the possibility to go through the whole trajectory of dying lucidly, get to the end point of dying – dying, dying, dying, dead – and still be conscious. He said – oh yes, if you've achieved shamatha that prepares you very, very well for that. And then Dudjom Lingpa he comments on this, and as I recall it's in the Vajra-essence, quite far into the text, he talks about this and he says – okay, how long can you stay dead? And unlike all the gravestones and tombs that say RIP (rest in peace) like you're going to stay dead for a really long time, and that's why you should enjoy the flowers; and Dudjom Lingpa says on the outside, about 6 hours. About 6 hours is as long as you get to stay dead, and then, so sorry, the time out is finished. The time out of samsara of just lights out, rest in peace, why so many people commit suicide, thinking that's really going to last – big disappointment.

One of my favourite aphorisms and I coined it is – the only real downside to being dead is it doesn't last. It just keeps on, then something else happens; and of course you're there in the substrate, and then the bottom falls out – speaking very poetically, the bottom falls out of the substrate consciousness, you have a

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breakthrough experience, techug, it's a natural techug experience, you break through the substrate consciousness and you get dish up to you – the clear light of death. And that's rigpa. But if you haven't already realized rigpa then that will be a very brief and unproductive experience, because it will be one, I think the best way I can talk about it would be – radical disorientation. Does not compute, does not compute; it will be very brief and then you move right on into the bardo. Okay, that's a brief account. It's good to have a mind, it's much more interesting than not having one, so understand it while you have it, because the next one, you know if you're born as a frog, it won't be nearly as interesting and you probably won't encounter the four applications of mindfulness as a frog. Even if you wanted to, it would be hard to find somebody that speaks your language to teach it. Enjoy your dinner.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti & Cheri Langston

Revised by Cheri Langston.

Final edition by Rafael Carlos Giusti

31 Settling the mind (6)

12 Sep 2012

This morning we return to settling the mind in its natural state; in which we seek to release the tentacles of grasping of identification, on to even our own minds, the psyche. That is, our personal history, our thoughts, our desires, our emotions which are very intimate, very close. Again Buddhism says they are closely held and it is exactly that closely holding of our aggregates that makes us so vulnerable to suffering. So we can see that the tentacles of grasping of “I and mine” can really go out; I mean, could go out infinitely.

If we had inter-galactic travel then we might strongly identify with our solar system, as opposed to those aliens, and having “us and them”. Or we might identify with our own galaxy, the “Milky Way”, and even have our own football team versus football teams from other galaxies; they're the “bad guys”. So one can see that there is just no limit to it. I could be identifying with people who have full heads of gray hair. We could have a special club. We know we're a little bit superior, we don't talk about it much. We know we have the edge on the other people like the bald people and those brown-haired people who haven't fully matured yet. I mean it could go anywhere, right? And it's that grasping, it's exactly there that we make ourselves vulnerable to suffering.

(2:25) So here we are, withdrawing the tentacles of “I and Mine” from outside the body and then we even withdraw it from the body itself. We are focusing on the mind in this retreat of shamatha, and then in focusing on the mind, instead of being caught up in the midst of it and identify with it, we seek to view it from the perspective of the substrate consciousness, which is not even human. So we are observing our humanness; that is, we are trying to approximate a perspective of our non-humanness that is itself not human, it is just sentient.

(2:57) So, there are two ways to win this game, because we are clearly losing. We are so vulnerable to suffering, physical suffering, mental suffering, suffering because people are abusing America, because I am American and so forth. We have two strategies and actually we can adopt both of them and win and have a double win situation.

(3:19) We see this, on one hand, in terms of the four immeasurables. I am referring specially now to something we identify with really intensely and that is, of course, our feelings; *my* pleasure, *my* suffering and what do we care about more than that? And then of course my family is suffering, my family's well-being and so forth. The strategy of the four immeasurables is to extend it out evenly and infinitely. It's really bodhichitta, and that is identifying with all sentient beings as our own family; as our own parents, as our own beloved mother, father and siblings and so forth, but having a sense “you're all mine”, every single one of you, not leaving anyone out. Otherwise we're right back into the mess. So... I identify with all of you now, you are all my family, you are all mine, all sentient beings and wherever you live that is our home. That is where we live, that is *our* home. We just do not leave anything out. That's interesting. That is the perspective of relative bodhichitta for which the four immeasurables are the preparation and then they come into full flowering in relative bodhichitta.

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(4:34) And then the other perspective is ultimate bodhichitta, where we totally retract one hundred percent; retract the tentacles of grasping and reifying “I and mine”. Not only from *my* country, *my* family, but then also *my* body and *my* mind. Then drawing into the awareness itself, and even saying: “awareness itself is not a person and it does not really have an owner”. So even withdrawing from there. Where we are going here is seeking to view our mind from the perspective of the substrate consciousness and then to break through the substrate consciousness and view even our own substrate consciousness from the perspective of rigpa. And what is that? Ultimate bodhichitta. In the Dzogchen view, rigpa is the ultimate bodhichitta.

(5:30) So there are two escapes routes here: relative bodhichitta, total freedom and ultimate bodhichitta, total freedom. So we really have a strategy here, and now we need some baby steps so I don’t just give you a grand talk that none of us can reach, and that is ok. How about settling the mind in its natural state and observe even the feelings arising, simply arising and passing. Seek to observe from that luminous, that loose, that non-grasping and non-reactive perspective of your substrate consciousness. Let’s jump in.

Meditation:

(7:09) And just a reminder: as frequently you can, enter the meditation in the spirit of loving kindness. Direct it toward yourself and then flowing out in all directions. Let your meditation itself be an act of kindness, something to bring you greater happiness and to alleviate your own suffering and its causes. In that spirit and with that motivation let your awareness descend into the body, settle your body, speech and mind in their natural states and for a little while calm the discursive mind with mindfulness of breathing. Count 21 breaths if you find that helpful.

(11:17) And now with your eyes closed, very deliberately withdraw your awareness from the visual, auditory, the olfactory and gustatory; that is, from four of your five physical senses and contain your awareness within the space of the body, in this tactile field. To your best approximation view the space of the body and whatever arises within it from the perspective of your substrate consciousness; almost as if you were having an out of body experience. Just observe that space without reifying it. Observe the sensations, the feelings arising within it without reifying them, without identifying with them. Simply observe them arise within this space, which is finally the space of the alaya, the substrate. Observe them without distraction, without grasping.

(14:20) And now let your eyes at least be partially open. Vacantly rest your gaze in the space in front of you, but to the best of your ability, withdraw your awareness from all of the five physical senses and focus your attention single pointedly on the space of the mind and whatever arises within it. Rest your awareness in stillness, in its own place, holding its own ground, as you observe the movements of the mind.

Teachings/instructions after meditation:

(30:41) If your baseline of practice between sessions, between the two shamatha practices we’ve investigated, is settling the mind, if that is the one you resonate with, and would like to maintain continuity in, then its quite clear that between sessions we are not seeking to silence the mind, to get all the thoughts to die down, but rather to have an out of mind experience. That is, just as in this practice, we allow the thoughts to arise freely with no inhibition, no censorship, no restraint, allow them to arise freely, freely but without identifying with any of them.

In other words let all your thoughts be lucid. As mental states, emotions, desires and so forth arise, be aware of them arising; so you’re lucid throughout the course of the day, observing the mind, whatever is taking place in the mind, again from the perspective of simply mental consciousness or your best approximation of substrate consciousness. That is a good continuity, a good baseline also for the close application of mindfulness to the mind, which, of course, you can also do throughout the course of the day.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Revised by Corinne Dobinson

Final edition by Alma Ayon

32 Mindfulness of the mind (3)

12 Sep 2012

Teachings:

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Today we will be very explicitly attending to the javana; the activities, the emergences in the space of the mind. Tomorrow and for the rest of the week we will be looking more to that from which all of these events, these javana, emerge. So to stabilize in the practice, to feel you're kind of grounded, there in space where there is no earth element, then it's good to have a baseline, a home, a reference point, a place to come back to; a kind of home. And we'll say there are two homes and they are interconnected, they both are very experiential.

(1:40) The first of these is really seeing what the taste is of your awareness. Just coming to rest, in its own place, which means not inverting inwards, not extending outwards, not looking here, not looking there, not doing anything at all just being what is already is and that is just being aware in its own place. So let's do right now, you do not need to move, don't need to move, just let your awareness be right where it is, illuminating and knowing itself, just for seconds.

(2:29) Develop the Samadhi; to be able to remain there, and you can withdraw at will from the pain that arises in the mind as well as in the body. Withdrawal is not a solution, it is not a healing, but it can certainly be a nice respite, to know that that's an option, and it takes work. Anybody can open the mouth and swallow and take a drug to suppress symptoms of this and that, but here is a very deliberate withdrawal, very much like in a military campaign, when you see that maybe the enemy just has the better ground, just in terms of sheer placement of yours and the other army; that the other army are just going to beat you, because they have just got you in the ground where you cannot win. What do you do? You don't just stay there and get beaten to death and you don't try to advance up to them because they'll just mow you down. What is the smart, wise and courageous thing to do? It is smart, wise and courageous to get the hell out of there. Just withdraw. Make a strategic withdrawal so you can re-group and find a better ground to wage the good battle.

(3:50) And so here it is. There are times when the mind becomes overwhelming, times when the body is overwhelming. To have a place to retreat to, is to have a sanctuary, a refuge. You need to cultivate it. It is not given to you. That is, it is given to you in the sense that is already there, but you need to develop the ability to be able to retreat there and stay there at will. And there it is. It's ever so simple; in that sheer luminosity, in that sheer cognizance of awareness, that is all there is to it. It is simple, unadorned, unelaborated. It is luminous and it is cognizant. Staying there, it is conventionally within conventional reality that is the ultimate retreat. Beyond that of course there is the transcendent (emptiness, rigpa and all of that) but just for the time being this is the place to retreat to, to develop that skill. As the Buddha said: develop and cultivate it. Cultivate the ability to make a strategic retreat. So your awareness just comes to rest in stillness, without grasping, without identifying with anything, resting in its own nature. There's your baseline. That's your primary mind. That is your mental consciousness. When it's unveiled, when is unconfigured, then it will reveal itself nakedly as substrate consciousness. But you can access already, this is not something for later. And so, we call that *sen, chitta*, mind, mental consciousness.

(5:32) Then as you are resting there, there's your baseline, you know what is like. You've got to know what it's like. If I am just talking and you're just hearing concepts then the arrow is not striking the target. But if the words lead you to the experience, and then you know it for yourself just like tasting chocolate, and you say, "ok that is the taste of chocolate" – good; this is the taste of awareness just resting in its own place. Good, there's your baseline. Now, as you are resting there, then, since you have a platform, you have a base, a base camp, a baseline (call it whatever you like), then when things emerge from that then you can notice it. You can notice by contrast, just like the earlier point of recognizing stillness and the distinction between stillness and motion, you recognize the stillness of your awareness and then the things that emerge from that flow of mental consciousness. And that is exactly what they're called in Tibetan *sen dzung*, "that which emerges from the mind" or, as we translate it, I do not know any better translation, "mental factors"? "mental process"? But it doesn't quite have that feeling of *sen dzung*. *Dzung* means to emerge but can we really say in English "it is a mental emergence"? It's not that great English, but that is what it is.

(6:48) So you recognize what is it, what is that from which the emotions and the thoughts, and the perceptions, and the memories, the imaginations and the dreams, what is it, what is it from which all these subjective impulses emerge and then dissolve back into the latent state? You see the ground, you see the source, that simple mental awareness and then the things that flow from it, emerge from it. Attend to them. Watch how they emerge and watch how they dissolve. But as you're attending to the mind, as you're closely applying mindfulness to the mind, you are not attending exclusively to the subjective impulses but of course

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you are attending to the domain right? So conventionally, dharmadatu, the domain of the mind. And what appears there? Is all these appearances, all the dreams scape while you are sleeping, all that appears to you in a dream all that is appearing in dharmadatu, OK? The domain of the mind. In the waking state, all the images that arise, the memories that arise, the chitchat, the dialogue, all that appears to you. So once again to attend those and how they arise and how they dissolve, once again you want a baseline and the baseline is space of mind.

(8:00) But when you are just attending to the space and when you do not see anything coming up, like for the time being it just seems vacant, fine. Now there is your challenge. When you are vacant do not just space out. Don't wait. Don't think, "ok, when something comes up then I will notice it". There is already something coming up; it's called the space of the mind. And so there, there is your subtle challenge. When all that remains is space of the mind, then know the space of the mind, engage, come and shake hands with it, engage with it, know that it's not simply nothing, that it's not a mere absence of anything at all. It is a domain, it is a space, and you can attend to it and you can know it, you can ask questions about it. Is it black, is it purple, is it flat, is it three dimensional, is it round, does it have a shape, how big is it? Those are not nonsensical questions, those are vipashyana questions actually, about nature of the mind.

(9:15) And so, here is our challenge; to establish a baseline, subjectively, awareness resting in its own place; and then, as you attend to the space of the mind, having that as your baseline, even when there is nothing much happening, there is an interval (or what have you), there is still something to attend to and to know; to maintain a flow of knowing, and that is that sheer vacuity, that domain, from which the events emerge and into which they dissolve. So when you get your baseline, subjectively, it is just a flow of awareness holding its own ground; and you get your baseline objectively in terms of the space of the mind, just that space. Then you can really follow the teachings of the Buddha when he said: "contemplate"; which is to say, closely examine with understanding the factors of origination. How do those appearances arise in the space of the mind? How do these mental emergences, these eruptions, these movements, emotions and so forth, how do they come forth? How does that take place?

(10:27) A quite natural response to that, when we are not paying close attention, is... when we are thinking whatever thoughts comes up, thinking, "I did that and I did that and I did that, I did that and I have this mind, I did that, I did that", whatever is coming up, taking responsibility for everything. Whatever comes up to mind, it is your mind. Do you think that anybody else did it? Nobody else did, so you must have done it. Bad you, how could you think such thing? You rascal you! You should not think thoughts like that, stop doing that, shame, shame. And this guy especially... as if there is a super natural agent there, you know, the real Nicola, the real Jochen that nobody knows about, the real Jochen, the mastermind that is creating all those things, standing apart from the mind and doing things to it.

(11:28) And then we project that on the universe and we say well after all since there is some supernatural guy in here, or woman in here...but it was men that wrote the bible so guess who He is? You know? I mean really... if all the women had been prophets, what gender do you think God would have? Speculation, but I've got to guess.... But if we get into this habitual mode of thinking there really is some kind of a supernatural agent in here, that is responsible for, that is creating, that is producing, spewing out all the stuff that is manifesting in the mind, including both the subjective impulses as well as: "I dream that, I thought that"... if you thought that, if you thought "all that rumination, why don't you just stop?" I mean if you started it then you can stop it, right? So if you think you are ruminating, good, stop now. And then if you can't then that kind of indicates that maybe you weren't doing it in the first place. It just happens. But if we are quite habituated, uncritically habituated, to the notion that whatever is happening objectively and subjectively in the mind that: "I did it, I did it, I am a little micro God here and I did it", then when we look around at the big scene then is quite natural to think "Oh a hurricane just struck the Gulf Coast, right at the time of the Republican convention. What message was God trying to send them?" Because it was right at that time. And do you think that was an accident? And now, "really what did God have in mind?" Did you think there might have been some Gays there at the Republican convention and that He wanted to send them a message? You know? I mean these kinds of questions come up by Evangelicals who really think God throws tornados and things at people who have been misbehaving. But whatever it is, tornados, sunamis, illness, plagues, earthquakes, and so forth, thinking that "well there must be somebody who did it and there must be a message in all of that", some supernatural, superego out there who is doing this to us. We are trying to figure out "what message are

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you sending so we can get you to stop doing that?” Or if you do it, at least do it to somebody else, you know, the other side, because after all God is in our side. God’s got to be on our side.

(14:03) So if we reify a super-agent microcosmically we are just bound to reify a super-agent cosmically and then wonder “why or why did you do that?” So it is not that we don’t exist and I am not here to provide logical reasonings to refute the existence of God; that is not my agenda at all. I do not refute the existence of God. First of all we’d have to define it and now is not the time for that. So, am I refuting the existence of God? No, I am not. Am I refuting the existence of Miles, of me, of Daniel, of Haspeta and so forth? Of course not. I am not refuting the existence of people, of selves, of persons, I am not refuting my existence, I am not refuting God’s existence, that’s for everybody to figure out for themselves but the notion that there is a supernatural self, that stands outside of the system and is spewing things into it, that is independent, that I would refute for lack of evidence..

(15:45) And similarly, so, I’m Buddhist, so I express Buddhist view, similarly refute there is some super natural entity outside of nature that’s throwing in thunderbolts and bouquets of flowers and doing this and tidal waves and good crops and bad crops and, you know, zapping it to us, punishing and rewarding from some super natural platform; you know, like that’s all he’s got to do, just punish and reward people. From the Buddhist perspective there is no evidence for that; we’re not going to get hung up there. So no supernatural super-ego, no supernatural micro-ego. Does that refute God? No it doesn’t. Does that refute my existence? No, it does not. But is suggesting quite clearly a very naturalistic view, a naturalistic view, that do I make decisions and am I responsible from my decisions? That is a really good question. The answer is yes. I make decisions, I act intentionally, I am responsible for my actions and lo and behold I get the fruits of my actions. It does not require me to be an independent agent for that to happen. I am an agent, but I am embedded in the system; and embedded in the system, then I make decisions, I am responsible from my decisions.

(16:24) So, enough of this. Let’s go back and establish a baseline, I’d like to make sure we have plenty of time for discussion today. Back to the baseline, I am going to give very little instructions for the session. You are pretty familiar with it by now, the three marks of existence, process of origination, dissolution, but now in this session see if you can establish the baseline that taste of letting your awareness rest in its own place, the ultimate retreat, a haven, a refuge, a sanctuary. And when you are attending the space of the mind, also then, ascertain, know that baseline of just the vacuity itself and then from that baseline, then you can see the fluctuations above it, that which emerges from it; thoughts, images and so forth, ok, let’s practice.

Meditation:

(18:10) Release into the body and release the body.

Release all concepts about the body; all formations pertaining to the body.

Release into the breath and release the breath.

Release into the mind and then release the mind.

Shantideva says: “releasing everything all, at once in an instant, that is nirvana”. So find your best approximation here and now.

Release it all and gently attend to the flow of the breath, relaxing more and more deeply, releasing more and more fully with every out breath.

(21:17) Then with a complete sense of release, of letting go of all appearances, even the appearances of the space of your mind, like a spring that released its own shape with no extension, let your awareness unfold back into itself, utterly soft, relaxed, without grasping.

And let your awareness hold in its own ground, resting in its own place.

(23:18) And then now with your eyes at least partially open, even open just a little bit, let the light in but now let the light of your awareness illuminate the space of the mind, as you direct your attention to that domain.

And if it is empty let it be empty and clearly note, pay attention to that vacuity, that domain, that space of experience which thoughts and images arise and into which they disappear.

There is not much to it but there is a little bit more than nothing.

(25:20) And now let your awareness illuminate this subject – object continuum, this system of experience, in which you are clearly aware of the space of the mind and whatever arises within it and without adding anything to that note that you are already aware of being aware.

(25:36) So the system’s awareness, not polarizing itself entirely on the subjective side or the objective side, but illuminates the whole continuum.

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On the baseline of awareness, noting the emergence of javana, the activities of the subjective impulses of the mind, and within this continuum also noting the emergence of appearances, of thoughts and images arising in the space of the mind.

Very simply, very gently, softly, but clearly, note how the subjective and the objective events emerge and that from which they emerge; how they are present and that in which they are present and how they dissolve and that into which they dissolve.

Keep it simple and let's continue practising now in silence.

Transcribed by *Rafael Carlos Giusti*, **Revised** by Corinne Dobinson, **Final edition** by Rafael Carlos Giusti, **Final edition** by Alma Ayon

33 Settling the mind (7)

13 Sep 2012

Between the two practices of mindfulness of breathing and settling the mind, there is a marvelous complementarity, or a kind of symmetry between the two in the sense that as you practice mindfulness of breathing, really in any of the three modes, through that very quality of awareness you're bringing to the respiration that is very attentive, very soft, very clear and non-invasive, just not messing with it at all, and what you are allowing to happen in this process is the breathing then settles in its natural rhythm. And then that's the avenue for the whole prana system to be settling in a finer and finer and finer state of equilibrium. And what that means is internally, is that the pranas are actually coming into the central channel and up to the heart chakra which is where they converge when your mind dissolves into the substrate consciousness. Right? So that just happens naturally and it's coming by way of the breath, so by way of settling your prana in its natural state. And it's really like they naturally want to come into the center and we just keep on elbowing, elbowing them out with craving, hostility, hope and fear, "no I don't want to achieve shamatha, I really don't want to achieve shamatha, go away shamatha," you know? If we just stop doing that and then they wanna come home.

(1:43) And so there we have it by way of prana the mind settles in its natural state. By settling the mind in its natural state conversely just by focusing in on the space of the mind then the pranas do the same thing the respiration also will settle in its natural state. Same quality of awareness and the complementarity there is really quite . . . well there's a certain beauty to it . . .

(2:09) So in both cases you will on occasion find it very difficult to detect the events arising, namely the sensations of the breath in which case it's very important that you do have a baseline, something that you can always ascertain, maintain an ongoing unbroken flow of knowing so within the space of body its the space of the body and the actually detecting that, whether it's the little background radiation at the nostrils or whether its simply apprehending the space of the body, because there is such thing and you can perceive it, not just imagine it. And you can perceive with mental consciousness. Right?

(2:40) So ascertaining that and then you can see, you can perceive the fluctuations within that space which are actually emerging from the space that are the fluctuations of the sensations of the breath. Now of course the corollary is obvious, when you're settling the mind in its natural state, the baseline, whether or not there are thoughts, sometimes there are, sometimes there aren't, right? But what your baseline, what are you always ascertaining? And that's the space of the mind, to ascertain that, to maintain that flow of knowing and then in that space then you see the fluctuations, the perturbations, right? And then you note them when they occur and then the mind just settles and settles and settles. Shamatha doesn't have to be that far away, really.

(3:24) But especially if the occasion arises for any of you here to decide, ok, I've had enough of life without shamatha I've been there, done that, it sucks. And now I'm ready to try life with shamatha, a whole new dimension. Then for that duration when you find the appropriate environment, companions, you put all the inner and the outer components together, it's very imperative that one of the inner components you really highlight and that is when you're really intent on progressing along the path of shamatha, I've emphasized various things

be totally free of rumination, you've heard that one before,

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being content, having few desires, you've heard that one before, but another very crucial point is having few concerns and few activities as possible.

One of the things that's a real killer is when (and I don't mean literally) is when you are in shamatha retreat and you have to engage with people who are not in shamatha retreat, who are not really devoting themselves to practice which means they are devoting themselves to something else and it's called samsara. And it's all their dramas, their hopes, their fears, their hedonic fixations, their emotional fluctuations, all their samsara. And if you are engaging with them, and I don't mean that you don't love them or you don't care for them, but if you are engaging with them, it's very unlikely you're gonna pull them into shamatha, it's very likely they're gonna pull you out of shamatha. Right? And they can just keep throwing boulders in your tracks again and again and again because there's no end to samsara. When people are not devoting themselves to Dharma, their samsara will go on indefinitely, I mean like eternally until you actually get around to Dharma.

(5:20) The practice of shamatha doesn't need to go on eternally but Atisha did say, you can practice for a thousand years and never achieve it if you live that long, a thousand years and never achieve it, if you have not satisfied the prerequisites, right? And one of those is keep it simple. Protect yourself. You're in an incubator here (retreat center), little babies in an incubator need lots of protection, they don't need to be exposed to outside viruses, and bacteria and contaminations and so forth, they just need protection because they're really fragile and you take care of them during that time and then the baby can get out of the incubator, out of the nursery, grow up and then live anywhere the baby, the child, the adolescent, the person wishes but there is a time when you just really want to take care of that baby because it's probably more vulnerable than any other time of his life and that's in the incubator.

(6:07) So when you are practicing shamatha, we call this the mind center, the shamatha retreat, I call contemplative observatories, we might wanna call them contemplative incubators, you really want to be protected and if you're not, you can just be facing an awful lot of frustration, just frustration, frustration, always getting these spikes, all the big oscillations up and down because you're engaging with the outside world and it's all ups and downs. That's what samsara is, just loopity, loopity, loopity, loop, up and down forever. So give yourself a break. If you really withdraw from the world for a while, really do that strategic retreat and radically transform your mind at least with shamatha, better go on to vipashyana, go on to develop bodhichitta, real, authentic and irreversible bodhichitta and then you come back. Oh then you can really be of benefit. Then they'll be glad that you were gone, thank goodness because [of] what you brought back. But if you allow the world to keep on nagging you, nagging you, nagging you, then when you come back you're just one of the gang. "Hey samsaric person, I'm a samsaric person too." You know? Not much benefit. Let's practice.

Meditation:

(8:13) In the spirit of loving kindness to really heal your body and mind to explore and to realize a deeper dimension of equilibrium, of balance, of equipoise than you have ever experienced before, to really do something very wonderful for yourself with such motivation settle your body, speech and mind in their natural state and calm the discursive mind for a little while with mindfulness of breathing.

(11:50) And now with your eyes at least partially open and your gaze vacant, single pointedly direct your attention to the space of the mind and whatever arises within it maintaining the flow of mindfulness without distraction and without grasping.

(13:14) If you are not yet accustomed to the practice and you may find it helpful to maintain a peripheral awareness of the respiration and making a special emphasis to relax ever so deeply and fully with every out breath, totally releasing the breath and allowing the in breath to flow in of its own accord without taking it, without encouraging it, without pulling it, just letting it flow in.

(15:20) And now take a special interest in the intervals between thoughts within the space of the mind that is most evident and observe closely that space.

(20:25) Consider that the space of the mind is always present and therefore always ascertainable, most evident between thoughts but consider that is the very space out of which thoughts emerge, the thoughts themselves are nothing other than configurations of that space present within it and it is the space into which

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thoughts eventually dissolve. Perhaps that is the very space that the Buddha was referring to when he said that: “all phenomena are preceded by the mind issued forth from the mind, consist of the mind”.

(21:18) Monitor the flow of mindfulness with introspection, apply the remedies as before and let's continue practicing in silence.

Instructions after meditation:

(31:56) Throughout the course of the day, between sessions, during sessions if you allow your breath to continue to flow in its natural rhythm and allow your mind to continue settling in its natural state and then regardless of what happens to you it will be a good day. Enjoy your day.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Revised by Aaron Morrison

Final edition by Rafael Carlos Giusti

For those non-native English speakers following the text of this lecture, the following explanation is given with respect to Alan Wallace's use of the phrase “boulders in your tracks.” “Boulders” are large rocks. The word “track” is another word for “path.” Thus, the phrase “boulders in your tracks” in this context refers to obstacles in one's spiritual or meditative path.

34 Mindfulness of the mind (4)

4 Sep 2012

Alan recounts the story of how Shariputra and Maudgalyayana first encountered the teachings of the Buddha: Two principal disciples of the Buddha, Shariputra and Maudgalyayana at the same time [and] in their youth, they both developed spontaneously [and] immersed [themselves] in some very strong renunciation and they decided to devote themselves to the pursuit of liberation. They followed a teacher (I think his name was Sanjaya) for some time who was probably quite brilliant, but a skeptic. But brilliant and a skeptic. But they just found that it didn't go anywhere. I mean being a skeptic, being a skeptic, so what do you wind up being? A skeptic. And so after a while they just got disillusioned with that as well. And they decided: “Look let's split up” – they were good buddies, really a team – and “let's split up. Because if we stay together we can only cover you know, half the ground. But you go your way, I go mine. And we both know what we want. We want liberation. So which ever of us finds liberation, finds an authentic teacher, really finds the truth, then we have a pact, that we're going to let the other one know real quickly, you know? But we're going to split up so we can cover more ground.” So they did. They went off as wandering ascetics – *sramanas* (they're called in Sanskrit).

And India contemplatively was a really a . . . a real civilization at that time. It was a contemplative civilization – not implying at all of course that the population was just filled with contemplatives. But the civilization of India 25 hundred years ago was mature enough, wise enough, that just as a culture they recognized that if there were people – and at that time there were only men (that's changed with the Buddha) – but if there were people (men) who wanted to devote themselves utterly to the pursuit of truth, to liberation, then they deserve a free lunch, a life time stipend. You know? And so they did. So that was really an option. If you just wanted to devote yourself to liberation, pretty much you just didn't have to worry about [things like] would you starve to death? No. The society recognizes what you're doing. They respect it enough that they're going to give you a free meal, they're going to keep you going. You'll not have the “lap of luxury,” but they're going to make sure that you can continue doing what you're doing. That to my mind is a contemplatively civilized society. And right now, we're in a pre-contemplative era of modern civilization. We haven't quite gotten there yet. Shariputra and Maudgalyayana at that time could follow an authentic path, an authentic teacher.

(3:51) So they set off and then in his various peregrinations, his wandering around India, looking for an authentic path, an authentic teacher, he was out walking and he saw a monk, a fellow *sramana* just walking on alms. His name was Assaji. And Shariputra basically took one look at him and it was just one of those intuitive things. That it was just by the way he walked. Just his sheer presence as he walked on his alms round... Shariputra just intuitive[ly thought] “he's found something, he's got something real.” So he went up

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to him, he accosted him, he approached him and said: “Friend, who is your teacher, what’s your teaching, what are you doing, what’s your practice? And as I recall, Assaji said “I’m only new to the practice so I really can’t explain but this is as much I can say.” And I’ll give you the Sanskrit. And my Sanskrit pronunciation is terrible but I’ll give [it] just for the imprints of it. Because it’s become really a tradition to pass it on from generation to generation to generation. I recite it three times every morning. And I have for decades now:

ye dharmā hetu prabhavā hetun,

teṣāṃ tathāgato hyavadat, teṣāṃ ca yo nirodha, evaṃ vādī mahāśramaṇa

ye dharmā hetu prabhavā hetun,

teṣāṃ tathāgato hyavadat, teṣāṃ ca yo nirodha, evaṃ vādī mahāśramaṇ

ye dharmā hetu prabhavā hetun,

*teṣāṃ tathāgato hyavadat, teṣāṃ ca yo nirodha, evaṃ vādī mahāśramaṇ**

*This quoted Sanskrit passage is taken from the Supplementary Notes to Alan Wallace’s Fall 2014 retreat in Phuket where he cites to this passage on page 18. These notes can be accessed online at : [HYPERLINK](http://www.sbinstitute.com/sites/default/files/Supplementary%20Notes-1sep20.pdf)

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Oh yeah, I’m not fluent in Sanskrit. Tibetan, pretty good. But the meaning of it is quite simple:

(5:01) “Of those phenomena that are causally created, the Tathagata, the enlightened one, has shown their causes and he has shown their cessation too. That is the teaching of the Great Sage.” Want it again? It’s pretty simple: “Of those phenomena that arise, that are causally created, the Tathagata, has shown their causes and he has shown their cessation too. Thus, are the teachings of the Great Sage.”

(5:55) Assaji just shared this very simple verse with Shariputra and Shariputra immediately realized nirvana and become a stream-enterer. That’s why I said it twice. I wanted to give you two chances! I gave it in the Sanskrit, I gave it in English, I gave it in English twice. You want German? [Attempts German as a joke]. I can’t do it but I can try. But of course Shariputra was enormously ripe. He was just like a fruit just ready to drop into your hand. And it did. Just that one verse. And the fruit dropped and he became a stream-enterer, had direct realization of emptiness, of nirvana and he knew he had found something authentic. He’d found it. He was not yet an arhat but he was a stream-enterer so now he was absolutely in the flow to become an arhat. And of course being the good friend that he was, he immediately sought out his old friend, Maudgalyayana [and] he found him and said: “Hey chum [recites Sanskrit passage referenced above] and Maudgalyayana achieved stream entry.

(7:18) Then, of course they knew where the teaching came from. This teaching – I mean it’s just causality, right? The cause of causally generated things and their cessation. That was it. It’s all about causality. But then of course, they said, let’s trace this teaching to its source, they sought out and quite quickly I’m sure, they found the Buddha. Within one week Shariputra achieved arhatship. And I was quite curious, I just read this today. He received it directly in response to teachings given to him by the Buddha. And the teachings the Buddha was giving that just triggered him to achieve liberation were teachings on the elements. The elements. It took him one week. And Maudgalyayana (being a little bit of a slow-poke, relative to Shariputra), it took him two weeks. And the teaching[s] that triggered it for him [were] teachings on the nature of feelings, the second of the four applications of mindfulness. So as I commented earlier, you don’t need to necessarily have insight in to all four to gain arhatship. One will do. Because if you achieve nirvana, you’ve achieved nirvana. You don’t have to achieve it multiple times through different avenues. So I find that quite inspiring. And then I was reading just [about] the rest of his life.

(8:46) Shariputra was such a noble soul, just a noble soul. Then you really see that this word “noble” – “noble one” for arhat, for *arya*, really has the right feel to it. He was really a noble soul. Compassionate, kind, caring, wise, skillful means. It was said that sometimes when the Buddha would be teaching, he’d get a little bit tired. And when he’d get a little bit tired, then he would turn over to Shariputra, and [say] “Shariputra, take over for me.” And then Shariputra would take over. Quite extraordinary...

(9:18) So the causes of causally originated things and their cessation – it pertains directly to our meditation for this afternoon, as we continue to closely apply mindfulness to the mind. And what I’d like to do, I’m going to give a short preface, we’ll go into it, we’ll have more time for discussion. I’d like to bring the awareness right into awareness itself and then allowing, not suppressing, not cutting off, but allowing subjective

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impulses, mental factors, thoughts, impulses, desires, emotions and so forth, allowing them to arise and then as they arise, see if you can identify that from which they arise and then whatever subjective impulse, and again this is called “*semjun*,” that which emerges from “*sem*,” that which emerges from mind. And what kind of mind? Principal mind. Which principal mind? Mental consciousness. So those mental factors that are arising or mental processes that are arising from the primary continuum of mental consciousness, observe what they are arising from. See if you can be right there, just observing their genesis and observe where they’re coming from. And then they flower, they come out, they manifest but then of course they vanish. Observe what they vanish into.

(10:33) So of these causally generated things, observe the cause and as they cease observe how they cease and observe that into which they cease. So that’s for the subjective impulses, the “*semjun*,” the emergences from “*sem*” or they’re called mental factors or mental processes, so observe that from which they arise.

(10:55) But then of course we have these objective appearances, the discursive thoughts, the images and so forth and so let this be a system’s type of awareness, that is you’re not just focused subjectively or just focused objectively, but really closely apply mindfulness to the mind which includes mental consciousness but also includes the dhamadatu, that domain in which mental events take place. So let this be a system’s kind of mindfulness or awareness, such that when these more objective appearances arise you observe them also, you’re taking note of them, closely applying mindfulness to them. And if you can, observe that from which they arise, in other words, what Buddha was calling, “the factors of origination.” See if you can observe that from which they arise, and then they play themselves out and don’t worry if what’s coming out is trivial like infomercial or just some mental junk, likely it will be, you know? Probably not going to be, you know, quotes from the Buddha, Plato Aristotle, it’s probably going to be just ordinary junk. But the content is not what is of interest, but really as a scientist of the mind, not a historian, or not a biographer, “oh tell me what’s your story, oh what an interesting story you have, what’s going on in your mind? Oh you have such an interesting mind, let’s talk about your mind.” That has its place. I’m not being sarcastic regarding that, but it’s a different deal. Here, we’re just interested in what’s the nature of mind, let alone your mind, his mind, her mind, but what’s the nature of mind? What’s the nature of thought, let alone interesting thought, uninteresting thought? From what do they arise, into what do they dissolve? Observe the cause of these causally originated thoughts and observe their cessation too. Observe that into which they dissolve. That’s vipashyana. That’s really vipashyana. That’s really core.

(12:30) In a couple of years if everything goes as imagined, who knows whether it will but we’ll will have an 8 week retreat when we really spend 8 weeks really going into vipashyana during the day time and dream yoga at night and we’ll bring up this central theme, it’s really central to [the] Mahamudra and Dzogchen approach to vipashyana, focused on the mind. And it’s simply called [gives Tibetan description]. How does the mind emerge, how is it present and how does it dissolve? OK, really central. And of course it’s all about realizing emptiness, the emptiness of your own mind, the emptiness of inherent nature of your own mind. That’s really core, right?

(13:13) But for the time being we’re being a little bit more modest, we’re going into the shallow end of the pool. If we can trace the origination of these subjective impulses, these emergences from the primary mind, the “*semjun*,” the subjective impulses, if we can just trace them right back to mental consciousness, trace them right back to substrate consciousness, that would be something, right? And then similarly, for the objective appearances, if we can observe what they are arising from and that into which they dissolve, for the time being we can call that dhamadatu, the relative dhamadatu or when it’s un-configured then of course they are arising from alaya, the substrate and dissolving back into substrate. On a conventional level, relative level, it’s a pretty big insight. A pretty big insight.

(14:02) So let’s jump in, where do things come from? And where do they go? Ok?

Meditations:

(15:04) First of all let your awareness descend into the body. And as soon as it does so, as if your body were a snowman under the hot sun, as you let your awareness descend into and pervade the body, see if you can experience a type of melting, a dissolving, a loosening up, an unwinding. And wherever there is tension in the body, release it, let it melt and settle your body in its natural state, relax, still and vigilant.

(16:55) And then totally surrender all control over the breath. Let it settle in its natural rhythm.

(17:59) Then for a short time, calm the discursive mind with mindfulness of breathing.

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(19:13) Now let your eyes be at least partially open. And evenly rest your awareness in the space in front of you without deliberately focusing on any object or subject. Don't meditate on anything, don't focus your attention anywhere. Just be present without wavering, simply sustain the flow of mindfulness in the present moment, without distraction, without grasping onto anything.

(20:52) And in that absence of grasping onto any sensory object, the absence of grasping onto any mental events and the absence of grasping altogether, a type of knowing may dawn on you like the moon coming out from behind the clouds, an unelaborated already present knowing. And that is simply the knowing of being aware, the awareness of awareness. Rest in that knowing without elaboration, without extending your awareness anywhere else.

(23:13) And as you rest in that nucleus, awareness resting in its own place, holding its own ground, knowing itself, note the mental events, the subjective mental processes that emerge from this flow of mental awareness.

(24:29) And if some subjective mental impulse arises, surges forth, don't impede it, simply observe its manifestation and observe its dissolution. When it fades away, watch that into which it fades and into which it dissolves.

(26:54) Now let the light of your awareness – your mental awareness – illuminate single-pointedly like a spot light, the space of the mind and whatever arises within that space. And as you attend closely from moment to moment, observe (if you can) the very process of emergence, of discursive thoughts, of mental images, observe that from which they arise. And as they vanish, observe that into which they vanish, observe their causation and observe their cessation too.

Summary of teachings after meditation:

(39:23) It's a very rich area of inquiry, potentially very fruitful as we gain clearer and clearer insight into how these subjective mental impulses arise to which we generally identify so strongly: my emotions, my desires, my hopes, my fears. . . kinda think it almost defines me, right? Let alone my thoughts, my imagination, my dreams, all of these things in my own personal cinema, all the appearances arising in my mind which we strongly identify, this is Ok. I may lose a limb, but at least I have my thoughts. At least I have my images, my mind. But when we carefully exam the manner in which both the subjective impulses as well the objective appearances arise, then it becomes just more and more obvious, [that] no one is doing it. There is no evidence that there is anyone doing it; that there's any agent pulling the strings of the puppets. They're just happening. They are just happening. The Tibetan term is you see them as [*gives Tibetan phrase*]. They are simply phenomena. They are simply phenomena with no additives, not mine, not male, not female, not human, they are just phenomena and they are just arising and then you see how they are arising and you see it's impersonal. That is, there is no subjective autonomous agent who made them happen and who controls them. They are simply arising in dependence upon causes and conditions and then their fuel is spent, and they disappear like fireworks. They just fade right back into the sky. And that is equally true for the appearances arising in the space of the mind as well as the subjective impulses, these mental states that emerge from the core mind, the principal mind or fundamentally the substrate consciousness.

(41:07) So in that way one can have direct insight into the "anatta," the not self, the not-self nature of that which emerges from the stream of consciousness, that which emerges from the dharmadatu, or the space of the mind. But then also as you are just lingering there, just staying home minding your own business, just being aware and since there is nothing else to do, you're being aware of being aware; and that's kind of your full time job. When you're just getting that very close intimate encounter with just the experience of being aware, you see that also has no personality. It's not old or young, it's not male or female, it's not human or not human, it's just none of the above. It is simply what it is and what it is, is transparent, it's luminous and it's cognizant. That is, it illuminates appearances and it knows and that's it. There's really nothing more to say about it. But it's not a person and if you say "yeah but it belongs to me," exactly where are you? Where are you, owner? I'm seeing all that you think you own, but what I don't see is you. Where is this owner? And then it's [*gives Tibetan phrase referenced above*], it's simply a phenomena, it's simply consciousness, it's not a person, an ego, a self, an "I," it's simply what it is. It is consciousness. Just like space is space, earth is earth and so forth.

(43:00) So in that way there can be a real freedom, a looseness, a relaxation, a spaciousness around this, not the tight cramped corners of feeling you're caught inside your mind like a very heavy person caught inside a

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telephone booth. “Well at least it’s my booth, I can’t get even get my hand to my mouth, but at least it’s my booth.” It’s expansive, it’s spacious. And you also then notice there aren’t any borders to it. That whole notion of borders is just like the border between, I don’t know, this property and the adjacent property, does anybody know where it is? I don’t, but if you find out, it’s only because somebody agreed it’s so. So it’s just – there’s no borders. Consciousness without borders. Just, there it is, open. And in that open space, awareness arising, mental events arising. So, not a bad prelude to allowing your mind to dissolve into the substrate consciousness. So as it dissolves, you actually know what’s dissolving, there’s no mystery there. You’ve actually fathomed it. You see conventionally speaking, you understand the nature of these mental emergencies, you understand the nature of the thoughts, appearances and so forth, you kind of “get it.” In other words you become lucid with respect to the subjective impulses and the objective appearances, you are seeing them as they are on this relative or conventional level. So when they dissolve, you say, “ok well at least I figured you out before you left.” And where they’re going to dissolve finally is at death and that’s when they’re going to dissolve right in the same place that they’re dissolving now. They’re going to dissolve right into the substrate consciousness and the appearances will dissolve right in the substrate. So if that’s all you gotten in a lifetime is to understand the nature of the events that arise from that substrate and the substrate consciousness and if you fathom the substrate consciousness and the substrate into which they dissolve, that’s pretty significant. It’s not liberation, it’s not nirvana, it’s not Buddha Nature, but boy, it’s better than yesterday’s is left overs. That’s really worth something. And if you’ve ascertained that and then you’re dying and you’re dying lucidly.

(45:08) And then you get dead and you actually know and say “yeah, I’ve been here before, this is familiar, this is home, this is comfortable, this is Ok, this is home, this is where all those things came from.” If you’re really relaxed there and knowing, maintaining lucidity, knowing substrate consciousness as substrate consciousness, you’re not that far. So when the next episode begins, one cinema has just come to an end, and now – what did they call it in the old days when they showed two movies back to back? Double feature, yeah. So the feature of this life’s mind has come to an end and then it goes dark and says, but it’s a double feature and now comes rigpa. That’s a pretty good show. And you are really quite poised to ascertain that, that would be very good.

(46:00) As a preparation for being able to venture in the teachings of Nagarjuna, The Perfection of Wisdom, The Madhyamaka Middle Way, this really makes it practical. Because my sense is that without this foundation in experience going into your own mind, not your thoughts about your mind, not your thoughts about Madhyamaka reasoning about the mind, but actually going into one mind and you can actually go into and actually getting some experience, some insight there, practical, then with that basis of knowing the conventional nature of the mind, you say, “yeah I know what they are talking about.” So the words are easy to say: primary mind, mental events, luminous and cognizant, nature and so forth, easy to understand and they’re devoid of an inherently existence autonomous controlling self. “Yeah but I not only know how to parrot the words, but I actually know what they’re referring to. To have that, to have as Lobsang Chokyi Gyaltsen Rinpoche, the tutor of the Fifth Dalai Lama says:

(47:17) If you have now through the practice of shamatha, you ascertained [*gives phrase in Tibetan*] the essential nature of your mind, what that means is you actually know the nature of mind, you know the nature mind, not just your mind, your mind, his mind, her mind but you actually know the nature of mind. You’ve got one and you’ve understood its nature which means then you understand the nature of everybody else’s mind, not the unique qualities, of course but if you’ve understood really one orange, then that pretty well takes care of oranges, right? And if you’ve really fathomed one mind, well that’s good enough, now you understand the nature of mind.

(47:49) But now when we leap ahead in this particular sequence, it’s probably going to be two years from now if things go as imagined, who knows? But having eight weeks or longer, eight lifetimes, whatever, to really do the ontological probe, really to try to realize the *shunya* nature, the emptiness of inherent nature of the mind, how exactly are you going to do that if you haven’t ascertained the conventional nature? How are you going to just say: “well I don’t really understand the nature of mind because all I’ve done is thought about it. But never mind that, I’m just going to go ahead and ascertain its ultimate nature.” I don’t quite see how that’s possible. I don’t really know.

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How do you realize the empty nature of a banana if you don't know what a banana is? I don't know how you could do that? It's just more words.

Trying to sum up what Alan said:

How could you understand the emptiness of the inherent nature of the mind if you have not yet ascertained the conventional nature of the mind, the nature of your own mind? In other words it seems that it is necessary to ascertain the relative nature of the mind through the practice of shamatha as a preparation to ascertain the emptiness of the inherent nature of the mind, the ultimate nature.

(49:30) I think that there is a lot to be said for actually understand the conventional nature of the mind and I don't know no of any other better methods, than our shamatha methods, settling the mind, awareness of awareness and then the close application of mindfulness to the mind, so it's pretty good. Namó to the Buddha.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Revised by Aaron Morrison

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35 Awareness of Awareness (1)

14 Sep 2012

Teachings:

This morning we return to the practice of awareness of awareness as a preliminary, a platform, a foundation to closely apply mindfulness to the mind to gain insight into the nature of the mind. Now, the Buddha himself taught such a practice, it was called *viñāna kasina*, just the awareness of awareness, consciousness of consciousness, he said this is the most profound of all shamatha practices. Don't expect me to disagree! So there it is in the Pali Canon and it runs all the way through Dzogchen. The most profound turns out to be this practice. And it's also the simplest! Not the easiest necessarily, but it's simplest. The awareness of awareness itself. So even though we are presenting this here as a foundation for engaging in this very fundamental, foundational approach to vipashyana, the four applications of mindfulness, nevertheless as you have been able to tell I think over the last three weeks, my *background* background for all of these teachings is all Dzogchen. It's Dzogchen. I can't help it! Dzogchen means "the Great Perfection" but I think another very useful translation is "The Great Encompassment," and that is from that perspective everything else make sense.

(2:03) So from the Dzogchen perspective, the biggest nest: what is the difference between a Buddha and a sentient being? It is kind like a Dzogchen koan. I'll just give you the answer: Buddhas know who they are and sentient beings don't. That's simple.

Ok, one more. Second noble truth, Dzogchen: why are we suffering at all? It's a simple question; deserves a simple answer. And the answer is twofold, so it's not quite as simple as one might hope, but you have to live with that. Twofold: why are we suffering at all? Because we grasp onto that which is not "I and Mine" as being "I and Mine". That's the half, first half. The 2nd half is that we fail to recognize who we are. And that's it, that's the whole story.

(3:19) But it does suggest then that there is a sequence, that it's not just go for initiation, *vajrasattva* or whatever it may be and then come out of the initiation thinking, "oh, boy that's a relief, I am a Buddha!" No, you're full of bullshit! That's the phrase. There is a lot of work to be done before you can authentically adopt this divine pride and pure perception. A lot of work to be done. It's like having a limb that's festering, that's rotting, but you want to save the limb. Well you don't wrap the limb – there's at least one medical professional here, so tell me if I'm wrong – you don't take this festering limb and then just wrap it in a gauze and say, "I'm sure it's going to turn out fine, and here's my healthy limb." No, you can't do that. So, whether this is medically correct or not, I would suggest that I'm going to stick by the metaphor, and that is you have to cut off all the dead tissue. You have to get all the infection out, right down to the last cell. You have to get all of it out, because that's not your limb, that's infection, that's disease. If you have to go down to the molecular level and get every molecule out; if you have to go down to elementary particle level, go down to the elementary particle level. But get it all out so there's none left. And when it's only healthy tissue, then you

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wrap it, and you let it heal. But you don't want a fusion, a mixture, and a growth of something that's a mixture. So is that ok, medically? Good!

(5:45) Which is to say we have to clean out completely right down to the last elementary particle, every bit of false grasping that we indulge in. Every bit. You don't bring one molecule of it with you into pure vision, into divine pride. You don't bring one molecule, not one bit. You have to clean it all out. Are you your body? No you are not even any molecule of your body. Are you your personality, your personal history? Not any of it; none of it's you. Are you your mind? No, not a smidgen. Are you your consciousness? No, I am not even a moment. Dissolve your whole coarse mind, die, die happily, lucidly so you come right back again but achieve shamatha and go right down to the substrate consciousness; now you've scraped out all the dead tissue of everything you thought you were in this lifetime, right? Because all of our identification: what differentiates Daniel from Martha? Why do you think you are different people? It is because you're identifying with stuff that is manifest to you, that is evident to you that you think this is what makes you unique and it is pretty much all the stuff that arises in your body and in your mind. Right?

So, well, scrape all of that and die, die, die, like a submarine going dive, dive, dive and go right down, right down to the ground so your submarine has hit the deck, hit the bottom of the ocean, and you've come down to an area that was pre-you. Everything you've identified with: man, woman, this, that, human being, not human being; deeper than that! Right down to the substrate, come right down there. So now you're looking up and say, "ok, all that stuff, that's not me!" That's just bubbles, little effervescent bubbles that last a few decades and then Pff! Gone! Never was me! But now you've come down to a ground and say, this ground, this has been around for a long time, the substrate consciousness, you look back and you do not see its beginning, look forward and you do not see its end, might this be who I am? Well look into it, probe into it, and see that's just more dead skin that is not me either, investigate it and see that all of these identifications look like dead skin, that is not me either. Is it unique? Yeah, so what! It is not what you are. It is just a continuum of consciousness, heavily configured by a bunch of memories, karma and all that stuff but it is not you and it is not yours.

(7:56) When you're probing to that level and you actually identify substrate consciousness, then you really have two options and it's not necessarily an option that you choose, but it is a fork in the road and you'll go this way or that way. Something is going to happen once you've achieved shamatha, once you've penetrated to that depth, to the substrate consciousness, and that is: one route – and they're both good routes, so this is not a good and a bad, this is just different routes, right? They're both good. And they may not be for you to choose anyway, but it's good to know that they're both authentic, and

- One is to tap into that substrate consciousness and recognize that beyond is simply self-grasping, the grasping onto "I am", the grasping onto the self of a person and the reification of that. That's one type.
- But there is something much broader, it is a like an ocean of delusion; while this is a nucleus of delusion, there's also an ocean of delusion and that is grasping onto the inherent existence of phenomena in general. That's the whole universe, everything else.

So there is "me", the grasping onto the nuclear "I am" inherently existent, and then there is the grasping onto the inherent existence of everything else too, and they're both delusional. So once you've tapped into, you really have ascertained that substrate consciousness, then you've come right to the nucleus of your personal existence; this is the one that's been around for a long time, out of which the mushrooms of this identity, this identity, this identity emerge from lifetime to lifetime, but they wither away and vanish leaving their imprints and then you just have that continuum carrying on. When you come to that level, that dimension, then you really have two avenues you may follow, and one is to probe like with a vajra and pierce it, shatter it, break through like breaking glass, shatter it, this envelopment, this enclosure of I versus everything else, of mine versus everything else, my continuum versus everything else and shatter it.

You break through, "tregcho." "Cho" means to cut and "treg" means something hard. So you take your vajra and you just smash the hell out of it. You break through and you just break through directly, having ascertained the substrate consciousness, you just break through that right into rigpa, then you are home, now you are really home, now you know who you are. That is one possibility! And knowing rigpa, viewing reality from the perspective of rigpa, then you just have to see, it is not possible not to see that all phenomena are empty of inherent nature. If you are viewing reality from the perspective of rigpa there's just no way you can

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be viewing reality from that perspective and simultaneously be reifying anything at all. It'd be like being really lucid and still grasping onto thinking someone is really over there in my dream. Well, that's not happening! If you think someone is really over there then you are not lucid. If you are lucid, then you know that someone is not really there from his own side and you as a persona in a dream are not really here from your side, everything is empty. How do you know that? Because you are awake, because you are lucid! So one possibility, straight, is just to smash right through that cage of an individuated consciousness, to smash it, to shatter it, to break through it, and to realize who you are. That's one possibility. That's good! That's very direct. This is Padmasambhava speaking. I mean, I'm just quoting directly from *Natural Liberation*, or if not quoting, it's saying exactly what he was intending.

(12:01) There is another route, absolutely authentic, and that is when you've tapped into this kind of nucleus sense of your own continuum, then realize its emptiness of inherent nature. Realize the emptiness of inherent nature of consciousness itself, your own consciousness, realize that emptiness and then from that emptiness, by having direct realization of the emptiness of your own mind, not only of your coarse psyche but the emptiness of your substrate consciousness, that it does not inherently exist, by really realizing that emptiness. I'm going to do something corny! You remember – you have to remember, otherwise you weren't alive in the latter part of the twentieth century – the Death Star? And how Luke Skywalker comes in and he finds that one soft spot, that one little vulnerable spot in the Death Star, and then he takes over in manual and he sends his nuke right into there, and by hitting that one spot it goes KA POW! Right? He hit the one spot, and it just reverberated, and the whole thing went to smithereens. The soft spot in your reification of the Death Star of samsara is realizing the emptiness of your own mind. You realize that, and the reverberation carries right on through, and it's kind of like a nuclear bomb: you see all the buildings just go WHEW from the center, out. The grasping onto inherent existence around that everything else just wilts, not automatically, but everything's a pushover. From that nuclear insight, everything else is a pushover. If my awareness itself does not inherently exist then how can any object of my awareness possibly inherently exist? WHOOSH! And that reification goes away. Realizing the emptiness of your own mind and then all phenomena, now you're ready for pointing-out instructions to realize who you really are. There's a sequence there.

(14:03) So as we go into this meditation, following Padmasambhava, we are going to be probing right into the nature of awareness and then releasing into space with no object and then probing right in, deeper into awareness, like a swing, like a father pushing his child on the swing. It's really for fun! You start a little bit gently, and then the child says, "More!" And then "More" And it's all fun, and the father's being very careful, taking care of the child all the way through, but the child wants that thrill. Going deeper, deeper and deeper; don't scare yourself but just keep on going deeper and probe through everything you ever thought you were until you see from your own experience that whoever you thought you were is empty; it is a fabrication, like a dream, like a hallucination, whoever you thought you were. Just probe right through it, right into awareness itself until you see that with our fierce, tenacious, obnoxious and stubborn grasping onto the sense, "I am a sentient being, I am a sentient being." It starts out on the thinnest, goofiest layers: I am a man, I am a woman, I am a human being, I am American. Ok, just cut through all of that, cut through all of that right through, cut through "I am a human being," you'll get over it, it's a short time, so don't get hung up there; it will pass.

(16:08) But come right down to the core, right down to the level of "I am a sentient being". What is your basis for saying that? Substrate consciousness! It's conditioned with karma, mental afflictions; it is samsara, it is your express train through samsara with no end. And go into there and see there is no one here who is a sentient being. There is no one here who is a sentient being. Your dream that you are a sentient being is something you have concocted. And then you're fiercely hold onto it and thinking "what can I do to become a Buddha?" Nothing! Get over it! You created the problem, delusion created the problem, so let wisdom undo the problem. But you cannot bring the problem into the solution. If you bring one micron of your ordinary sense of identity into "I am a Buddha" then you are – and sometimes these words are very well – you're full of bullshit. And then you delude other people as well. Some fusion of your ordinary sense of identity and you say: by the way I am also a Buddha. It is complete bullshit. It happens a lot, oh, look at me I am someone especial. Not only got a Stanford Ph.D, but I'm also a Buddha! You have to clean it out, all the dead tissue right down to the last smidgen, totally release all grasping onto that which you are not, and only then can you realize who you are.

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(18:22) It is very freeing! And so much unnecessary confusion just evaporates, but it is step by step. So first of all release all grasping onto everything that you are not and everything that is not yours, all of it, totally empty out, and then realize who you are and who you've always been and then you'll know you are free.

Find a comfortable position.

Meditation:

(19:44) Settle your body, speech and mind in their natural states, calm the mind, make it serviceable for a little while by way of mindfulness of breathing.

(23:09) Let your eyes be open and evenly rest your awareness in the space in front of you. But now is the time to reboot and that is, turn off your mind, all the activities of the mind, the focusing of the mind, outward, inward, anywhere else. Do nothing, focus on nothing, do not focus on anything and just be present. Do not be distracted, do not be grasping. Rest in unwavering mindfulness without meditating on anything or taking anything as an object.

(25:57) And now be aware of what is left over, when your mind to the best of your ability has been deactivated and you are no longer fixating on any object out there or in here. What dawns on you? Where is the sun that arises above the clouds of the obscurations of the mind? Where is that sun other than the luminosity of awareness itself, knowing itself? Rest in that luminous, cognizant knowing of awareness knowing itself.

(28:13) Whatever thoughts come up, you may simply allow them to dissolve of their own accord, fade right back into the space of the mind, or you may sever them as soon as they come up. Either way, sustain a flow of non-conceptual awareness of awareness itself.

(31:24) Now begin the oscillation – gently at first – by inverting, focusing, concentrating your awareness, arousing your attention, and focusing right upon your experience of being aware, which is to say withdraw forcefully from all appearances and withdraw your awareness right into the nucleus of being aware, awareness itself, sheer luminosity, sheer cognizance and then utterly release your awareness into space with no object, sheer emptiness and absence of thoughts and non-objectivity, but while ever so gently sustaining the flow of awareness of awareness itself.

(32:57) And then return back to the center, arousing, focusing, energetically concentrating your awareness right in upon itself and then releasing into space with no object, inversion and release, inversion and release. If you are new to the practice and if you find it helpful you may as a preliminary exercise conjoin the oscillation with your breath just to give you a point of orientation. As you're breathing in, of course, invert your awareness right in upon itself and as you breathe out, release; do this only if it is helpful. You may find it more helpful to set your own rhythm, perhaps much more leisurely than the in-and-out of the breath, but choose for yourself, inverting into awareness itself of the nature of luminosity and cognizance and releasing into non-conceptual, empty, objective space while all the time sustaining to the best of your ability a non-conceptual flow of awareness of being aware.

Let's continue the practice now in silence.

Teachings after meditation:

(43:28) So there are these two routes: to realize rigpa by way of emptiness or to realize rigpa and get realization of emptiness free. To realize the emptiness of the nature of your awareness, hard to imagine how you can do that if you have not gotten a very clear direct insight into the nature of your awareness, conventional level, relative level. What is consciousness? It's that which is luminous and cognizant! So do you know that or not? If you just think you know it, then you don't know it. It's like thinking you know chocolate without ever having tasted it. You don't know chocolate; there's only one way to know chocolate, and that's to put it in your mouth and taste it. So I really do not know how one can possibly realize the emptiness of your own mind if you have not realized the conventional nature, as Panchen Rinpoche is talking about, that is the culmination of shamatha.

(44:28) And likewise when comes to "tregcho", this breakthrough. What are you breaking through? It is good to have the right answer because there is only one right answer to that question and it is not my opinion, my opinion is irrelevant, I'm not an authority on anything except for my name and I'm not that sure about that! I was just told that's my name! So I'm not an authority on anything. But Garab Dorje? Ok, he is an authority on Dzogchen. What are you breaking through? There is only one right answer and that is your substrate consciousness; that is what you are breaking through. Not your coarse mind! If you want to break through

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your coarse mind, achieve shamatha, right? You are breaking through substrate consciousness; that's the breakthrough to rigpa. How are you going to break through substrate consciousness if you haven't found it, if you do not realize it? What does it mean to break through something you have not even encountered in the first place? You are probably going to be break through something much more superficial and then think, Oh, I've realized rigpa. Maybe not! It's not that easy. To realize rigpa is to realize something that an arhat has not realized while still alive; which an arya-bodhisattva on the sutra path has not realized. So maybe be a bit careful about making any claims in that regard. My realization on rigpa this, my realization of rigpa that! And you are making a claim now that an arya-bodhisattva following the sutrayana path would not make. But you are? An arhat would not make! But you are! "Vidhyadaras" make and they know what they are talking about. You are actually viewing reality from the perspective of dharmakaya, and an arhat doesn't know how to do that. An arya-bodhisattva on the sutrayana path doesn't know how to do that. A vidhyadara does. So to break through to that perspective you have to break through substrate consciousness. And that's Dzogchen. It's very straight, very direct, very unelaborated. It's for people who have short lives. For people who have a lot of time in their hands, then we can go for a much more elaborated path. But if you have the sense that maybe your life is a bit short, then you might want to go to the core and stay there. Good! Let's stay in the center. Enjoy your day!

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Revised by James French

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Posted by Alma Ayon

36 Mindfulness of the mind (5)

14 Sep 2012

This afternoon we'll put to the test of experience a hypothesis that is quite core to Buddhist philosophy and now very specifically to the Sautrantika philosophy, which I'll call the classical Buddhist philosophy. It's not the deepest level but it's a very practical hypothesis; not so esoteric, so subtle that it doesn't engage with our lives. In fact, this does engage with our lives. And here's the hypothesis. The hypothesis is a response to the question: Who do you think you are? Who do you think you are? That can be asked in so many ways! You know, all in the intonation. But there's the question. And I think the articulation of this question is just perfect, who do you think you *are*? And here is the response to that question; it's a hypothesis, and it's about our experience so you can test whether this hypothesis stands up to your own critical investigation or not. But you won't get there by thinking about it a lot; you get there by probing into it a lot. Like Galileo didn't figure out there were moons around Jupiter by just thinking really hard about Jupiter.

(1:20) So here's the hypothesis. The hypothesis is that we have an innate – that is, it's called *lengge*, we are born with it. So you can't blame your parents or society or anybody else, you're born with it. You are born with a mental affliction – that is, a whole host of them – but one of them is a delusional sense of who you are. And that is the assertion, of course, that it is delusional. And the sense here is, and I'll speak first person: Number one, "I am", of course I am, and I actually am. But not only am I, but the sense is "I can stand on my own" or "you can stand on your own". Who are you, are you a jelly fish, are you a wimp, are you just a follower or can you stand on your own? Are you really there or are you just a kind of a fluffy bit of imagination? Are you really there or not? Stand up and speak for yourself! Are you substantially there, are you really there? Or are you just some conceptual abstraction?

Now they [the Tibetans] flesh this out a little bit, and they're talking about our experience that, again, we already have. That's the hypothesis. Not that we'll get by joining some delusional philosophical club or religion or what have you. So how do you relate to your body and mind – and that was the wording, and it was good wording, wasn't it? When I say "how do you relate to your body and mind," I didn't just say gibberish. So how do you view your body? Are you comfortable with your body? Well that's a meaningful phrase if and only if you're not identical to your body, because "with" means "two things." So do you feel comfortable with your body? How do you feel about your body? So there's one.

And then, how do you feel about your mind? What do you think of your mind? Do you like it? Can you control it? Do you want to control it? And so your body, your mind. So now it looks like there's three of you there.

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You've got a body; you have one, only one. You have a mind; many mental factors, but only one mind. And then there's you.

So then now we ask the relationship. Now of course within the body, there are many, many parts; within the mind there are many, many mental factors, attention and emotion, desires and so forth. There's a whole society there. So these are not two single, how do you say, monolithic entities. Two kind of groups: the bundle of your body, the bundle of your mind. And then there's you! So now the question is, how do you fit into that? And of course the bundle of body and mind are profoundly entangled, right? Really very intimately related. We sometimes call it "embodied mind." Not bad. Or the Buddha himself said your body is the basis for the mind. Or in Tibetan Buddhism: the basis of a life of leisure and opportunity; a "basis," it's your body. So how do you relate? How do you as an individual, one person, how do you related to this conglomerate of your body and the conglomerate of your mind, which are profoundly entangled with each other. And the metaphor given here, in terms of this hypothesis, is that it's like a group of merchants, or a consortium of merchants, and among the consortium there's one who is the CEO, or the head merchant. And this one really is in charge. In other words, you could call it a corporation, you know with vice presidents and managers and all the way down to the – all the way up and all the way down. But when all is said and done, you'd have to say, in American English, the buck stops here. That is, there's the CEO. So if the company does really badly, then you blame the CEO, and if the company does really well, the CEO gets a raise.

But you're the CEO, the chief executive officer of the corporation of your body and mind. Which means that you can't act entirely autonomously, you're not entirely independent, and you're probably at war there, but nevertheless when all is said and done, you're the CEO. So that's modern terminology, but it's an old, old analogy: the chief merchant among a group of merchants who really is in charge of the consortium.

And so, you're amongst them, but you're not identical with any of them, and yet you do have some real – how do you say – authority over them; you more than anyone else there. So that's the hypothesis. And of course the hypothesis is that, although there is such a sense of being that person, that CEO, there is no such person! That there is the grasping onto the sense that "I am," but when you look for the referent of that sense of personal identity, nowhere to be found! In other words, it's a delusional sense of personal identity. So just to make that point really clear, because for some people this may be new, I'm going to give my silliest example, then we'll move right on. But imagine that I think – and I know this is really silly, but I can live with it – but imagine that I am the incarnation of Napoleon Bonaparte. And I'm taking it really seriously, so I'll go out speaking with a French accent, or at least my best approximation. And when you address me, I want you to say "mon general," I want you to salute me, and if you don't, then off with your head! So I can be walking around really thinking that I am Napoleon Bonaparte come back to life and I make sure that – you see my mudra – you've all seen the paintings, right? [unintelligible]

So I could be walking around thinking I'm Napoleon Bonaparte, and this can strongly influence my emotions, [unintelligible], and then if you show me respect as Napoleon then I feel really happy; if you think I'm a total idiot, that I'm not Napoleon at all, I'd be very upset.

And so is there any Napoleon Bonaparte here? There's not even a shred of Napoleon Bonaparte; there's zero Napoleon Bonaparte. Nevertheless, I may be tenaciously clinging – but I am, I am! So the grasping onto "I am Napoleon Bonaparte": is it real, or is it unreal? The sense that I am Napoleon Bonaparte: is it real or unreal? Real! It has efficacy; it's making me miserable! It's making me put my hand in my shirt! It's making me speak with a French accent!

So I'm doing all kinds of crazy things here because I think that I'm Napoleon Bonaparte. Is there Napoleon Bonaparte? No! Not even a shred. Nothing! So one thing is real, but the other thing doesn't exist at all. Napoleon Bonaparte here doesn't exist at all; but the sense "I am Napoleon," that is very real.

So in a similar fashion – that was a silly one, now we'll just set it aside – but to show one is real and the other one doesn't exist at all, and that is, and here's the hypothesis, we really do grasp onto ourselves as being that CEO of the corporation of body/mind. And is there any such CEO? No! Not even a shred. That's the hypothesis.

So now, let's put it to the test of experience. That's what we'd debate about when I was a monk 38 years ago; we'd just think and think and think! Now let's just put it to the test of experience. And it's very personal. Do you have that sense of grasping onto "I am the agent, I am the observer, I have a mind, I have consciousness"? "My consciousness gets dull; my consciousness gets clear; my consciousness gets agitated;

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my body gets too fat, too skinny, etc!” My, my, my! In others words, you’re describing your corporation. So is there such a quasi-autonomous, controlling, real, substantial person? And also, where the rubber really hits the road, really gets – ok I’m not going to choose any target here, sometimes I’ll say “Jack and Jill” so you know I’m not meaning anybody – ok, Jack, you’re just ugly! You’re just ugly! Yeah, my body’s fat. Jack, you’re just stupid. Yeah, my mind’s not very [can’t hear]. Jack, I just find you disgusting. That hurt! Insult my body if you like, I just inherited it, what am I going to do? And insult my mind if you’d like, it arises in dependence on my body, what can I do? But you got really personal when you said, “I find you disgusting.” You hit my body, then you hit my mind, but then you really got to me. You said, “I just find you disgusting.” You’re a real – here’s the word I like – you’re a real jerk! Your mind’s ok, actually, and your body’s just a body, but Jack, you... I’m not talking about your mind or your body here – Jack, you’re just a jerk! You’re really just a jerk. And if there’s anyone who says, “You talking to me?” “I know you weren’t talking to my body; you weren’t talking to my mind; you’re talking to me! I don’t like that!”

Or likewise – here’s good cop/bad cop – Jack, I’ve met a lot of people in my time, and frankly, I just think you’re the finest person I’ve ever met. I think you’re just great; you’re fabulous. I just stand in awe; I just find you amazing! You’re just one spectacular human being. My hat’s off to you. You’re just incredible! Unbelievable! I’ve never met anybody like you; you’re just an amazing person. Is anybody there enjoying that? Because I didn’t say a word about your body or your mind; I was talking about you.

So is there any resident? Does anything rise to the occasion? It’s like a fly fisherman: you throw out the flies, any fish come up and say, “I’ll take that!” Yes, you’re referring to me. And I don’t like it, or I do like it. Or Jack, I just find you boring. So now we’ll check. Now, why would we check? Is it just philosophical exercise, psychological fun and games? And the assertion here is that mental afflictions – there’s gradient upon gradient upon gradient of mental afflictions.

Even when you’ve achieved shamatha, you’re resting there in the substrate consciousness; while you’re there, all of the mental afflictions associated with the desire realm, they’re dormant. You’re not in the desire realm; you’ve crossed the threshold – when you’ve achieved shamatha – you’ve crossed the threshold into the form realm. Right? That’s why it’s called “access” to the first dhyana. So your cravings, your hostility, jealousy, pride, arrogance, everything, all the mental afflictions which arise within that bandwidth of the desire realm: they all fall asleep. They all just go dormant, hibernate, when you’re resting there in substrate consciousness, enjoying the bliss, the luminosity, the non-conceptuality. Does this mean that all your mental afflictions have gone dormant? Uh uh! I like that luminosity! I like that bliss! I like that non-conceptuality! And I don’t want to let go! That’s grasping; that’s attachment. Subtler attachment. So there it is. Level upon level upon level.

But there’s a whole bandwidth of mental afflictions, and then all the ensuing misery, the types of distress, anxiety and so forth that arise from this particular dimension of delusional grasping onto oneself. There are subtler ones. Grasping onto oneself as an inherently existing entity. So that’s subtle. That’s quite deep! It’s difficult even to identify clearly. But this one’s easier, and to identify the sheer absence of this self, that Napoleon Bonaparte, can cut right to the root of all the mental afflictions that arise from that level of delusion. And that can be very freeing. Much more peaceful life; much more realistic life; much more relaxed life. All the craving, hostility and so forth that come from that level of delusion – of grasping onto “I am the CEO of my corporation – that doesn’t happen, because the root’s been cut.

So, enough! Now let’s put that to the test of experience. We do that by probing right into the core.

Meditation:

First of all, establish your base of relaxation, an inner calm, stability, clarity, settling body, speech and mind in the natural state, and calming the mind with mindfulness of breathing. Let your eyes be open, evenly rest your awareness in the space in front of you, but without deliberately focusing on any object, external or internal. Just rest and be present in the present moment.

And now let your interest, your attention, converge in upon your most intimate knowing, your most indubitable knowing, and that is your knowing right now. The awareness is good [unsure if this is correct], the awareness of awareness itself. Intuitively, non-discursively, non-conceptually, simply rest in that flow of being aware of being aware, knowing the knowing. Gently initiate the oscillation that we practiced earlier, withdrawing your awareness quite forcefully – but not too forcefully! – from all appearances, right into that

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luminosity of awareness itself, the ultimate retreat from all appearances. At least relatively! And then release – relatively – into a space of non-objectivity; that is, just releasing, but with no target, no referent except the gentle continuity of awareness of being aware. Invert and release at your own pace.

See that your breath continues to flow utterly effortlessly, that you do not arouse your breath as you invert your awareness in upon itself, or expel the breath in release. Just let the breath flow in and out, effortlessly. And now as you invert your awareness, penetrate a bit more deeply, and with discerning intelligence, with a question: and that is, you are doing something voluntarily, if you are doing it, nobody's making you do it, this inversion and release of awareness. You're doing it. So you must be the agent, right? You're controlling your mind, directing your attention like a CEO in a company. So when you invert your awareness, invert deeply. See if you can get a glimpse of your sense of who you are as the agent; pull back the screen. Who do you think you are? You, who are in charge of your mind, controlling it, releasing and inverting it. Probe inwardly in depth, see what you see, and then release once again, inverting deeply in upon the very agent, and release. Bear in mind, we are looking for something that does exist – that is the hypothesis – an actual lived sense of being the agent who's in charge of your body, and in this particular case, in charge of your mind. When you invert, see what arises, see what comes to mind when you direct your awareness in upon yourselves of being the agent.

On occasion, you're going to think, "I'm a pretty good meditator." On occasion you may feel, "as a meditator, I'm a failure; I stink." Who are you referring to, as you invert your awareness? Who is this meditator? Show your face. And if some appearance comes to mind, ask of that appearance, "Is this I?" Or is it merely an empty appearance, like a reflection in a mirror, like a mirage?

Then probe even more deeply. Even when you're not doing anything, and you're just sitting there as inactive as you can be, do you have a sense of being the observer? Someone in here and now, a person, an entity, a subject that is observing over here on the subjective side. Invert your awareness, and invert it so deeply that you lift the veil on your sense of being the observer, and see what you see. And then release into objectless space, inverting and releasing as before.

And when you invert your awareness, if some appearance does come to mind, some impression, then ask of that impression, "is this really you; is this really a person; or is it simply an appearance?"

And now release the oscillation; release all effort. Let your awareness come to rest in the center, in its own place, holding its own ground, knowing itself.

Meditation ends.

Question and Answer Session transcribed by James French.

So I'm just going to go back and forth between written and spoken again. Here's one from Patrice.

When I'm practicing settling the mind in its natural state, the usual, fuzzy TV channel eventually appears about 3 meters in front of me.

That's good, your parents trained you well: not too close to the TV.

After watching that awhile, a thought often follows and eventually arises, usually from one of my four main topics of rumination. Yes, thankfully after three weeks, I have now wittled it down to four! In front, behind, to the left and to the right. These, however, do not seem to arise and dissolve from the fuzzy TV channel, as you have described, but from a place where awareness seems to exist somewhere within the seemingly true existent body labeled "I." Are even my delusions a bit more confused than the average bearer?

Well, I think we'd have to do a poll. That would be difficult to say. Well, maybe that just pertains to the point I made earlier this afternoon, and that is that mental afflictions arise from multiple levels, some of them utterly acquired, that we learn from other people. I don't believe – I think there's a little bit of data that could give rise to interesting discussion – but I don't believe that anybody's born a racist. I don't think so. I think we have to learn that one. There are just a lot of delusions that we acquire through life from various sources, without pointing fingers in any direction.

And in dependence upon a delusion – like thinking that people of one's own country are somehow superior to people from other countries. How about that just generically? You know, "I am from Guatemala, we Guatemalans," whatever. So that's an acquired [delusion], no one's born that way. But then, on the basis of that, then you can have a lot of mental afflictions stemming from that particular delusion.

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So there's very acquired, very superficial, and then there's deeper, deeper, deeper, deeper, until we get to the level that's connate. "Connate" means we're born with it. And even there, there are layers upon layers. And so likewise there are layers and layers of sources of rumination. We can have rumination stimulated just by hearing somebody else in conversation: quite superficial level. Rumination may be aroused as we start dredging the psyche, through deeper and deeper shamatha practice. It starts to bring up older memories, emotions, desires and so forth, and they'll just come with their own little parade of rumination. And then, I would say – from my belief system, my way of viewing reality – we can have rumination stemming from experiences from past life. And that's a pretty deep source; so that's really straight from the substrate. But if you go deep enough you can catalyze memories and so forth even from past life, and that again can give rise to ruminations. And often when we feel that ruminations are coming from out of the blue, so to speak – "I don't know where that came from" – I think the Buddhist understanding would be, well that just came from a dimension that you're not presently aware of. But there are layers and layers of activity.

But there it is. We just have to deal with it. And you can either simply continue releasing the rumination all the way through, which is the method for mindfulness of breathing. Settling the mind you know: be lucidly ruminating, that is, allowing the thoughts to arise but in the bright headlights of awareness.

And then – especially if we follow Panchen Rinpoche, in his teachings on Mahamudra and shamatha within the context of Mahamudra – then we he goes into the awareness of awareness, he gives two options. And I think it's very nice. A number of people I'm training in long-term meditation, they've found this really very inviting. And that is when you're resting in that awareness of awareness, you've got two options, and one of these, as soon as you see the little head, the furry top of some little rumination coming up, just cut it right off. There's no harm here; there's not a sentient being. As soon as you come up, cut it! Almost like – a nice one, without getting really bloody with, you know, guillotine and all of that – but the groundskeeper for the greens in a golf course, if he sees one little blade that's up too high – CUT! – don't want you messing with the golf balls here! Like that, right? No big swooping cuts with a broadsword. As soon as you see a little blade of some rumination come up – little cut! Really quick, like that. That's one possibility. Just cut them off as soon as you see them, but don't make a big deal out of it, just little sharp, staccato cut. Because they haven't really lunged up and grabbed you yet; they've just poked their head up, so give them a haircut. Give them a flat top. So that's one possibility.

And the other possibility is, while resting there, right in the awareness of awareness, if some rumination comes up allow it to rise, but don't go there. In other words, it's like, so you've got neighbors making noise? Ok make noise, but I'm not going there. So you don't need to do anything, and they'll just fade out of their own accord. They're definitely out on the hinterlands, out on the periphery. So you don't do anything about them; you let them rise up and pass, but you don't – you're not venturing into settling the mind in its natural state, now really attending to them, observing them arise and pass. You say, "if you want to arise in the neighborhood, you're welcome to do that, but sorry I'm just going to have to ignore you, because I've got a full-time job here: awareness of awareness."

So those are the two basic strategies.

Anybody on the right? Anything coming up? We'll start with Kathy!

I may have missed some of your explanation, but I'm not clear what you mean by "releasing" from awareness of awareness. Is that what that means?

I did say "releasing" but I've never said "releasing from awareness of awareness."

Ok, so what did you mean by "release" in this last meditation?

In this last practice? Yeah. When – and just by the way, if you want to know where this comes from, it's Padmasambhava, *Natural Liberation*. It's his culminating shamatha practice. He starts really easy! He starts on the shallow end of the pool. And he said, "put a stick, stone, or flower in front of you and look at it." I can do it! So it's really nice, really sweet. Will that take all the way to shamatha? No way! But can you get your mind to stabilize a little bit? Got it!

So he starts really coarse, and then he winds up at awareness of awareness, and when he comes to that one he says, "ok now just stay here until you achieve shamatha." And then the next chapter is vipashyana.

So in that regard, he's the one that teaches this inversion – there are others as well, but he's classic – and where you're inverting your awareness in upon awareness, then releasing. But when I just say

Padmasambhava's words, "invert your awareness right in upon itself," people wonder, "where am I going?"

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Where am I going to? Inside my head? Shall I go cross-eyed? Or go into my heart? Where the heck am I supposed to go? Inverting from what? And that's a good question. And so then I need to come up with an answer to give people, because people need a strategy. You can't just say, "invert it," and they're not knowing how to do it.

And so if we consider what are we inverting from? Well, we're going to stop doing what we have been doing, and that is, what we normally do is attend to appearances. That's what I'm doing right now! I'm looking over in your direction; I'm looking at you. So in other words, imagine that I'm a one-horned snail. I got in a fight with a snail; he nipped off the other bud, what can I say? Normally, my little tentacle's going here: "Hi Jordan! Hi Matthew! Hi Miles!" It's extending in all different directions: visual, auditory, tactile, mental, and so forth. So my little tentacle; going in all different directions.

And this one is just – [vacuum sound] – pull it in. And that is, pull it in from all appearances; withdraw from all appearances. And that's all six doors: pulling in from even the space of the mind, of course from thoughts, of course from the sensory. Just ... I'm no longer interested in any of you for the time being, and I'm withdrawing from all appearances, and I'm going to see what's left when I'm not attending to any appearances whatsoever. And what's left is what was already there, and that's just the awareness of awareness.

So that's releasing all appearances, which means a withdrawal from all appearances. Which of course, what we're seeking to do here is emulate what takes place as we're falling asleep, but we're seeking to do that lucidly. Because when we fall asleep, the awareness does withdraw from all appearances; when you go deep asleep, it even withdraws from the appearances of the mind, but it's non-lucid, so we just slip into the substrate consciousness, and the substrate consciousness slips right into the substrate, and then we don't know anything. But we have withdrawn from all appearances!

So we're trying to emulate the falling asleep process, emulate the dying process, but doing it lucidly. That clear?

And then when you release – this is a bit easier to conceptualize – you're releasing, but you're not releasing out to a target, like the blueness of the sky or any other target. You're just going, "Whew!" But with a caveat: don't just space out! Space out, but while holding the slender thread of the awareness of awareness.

And then you said the word "oscillate."

Yes.

What was that?

Yeah. For a while, I used the image of a pendulum, but I don't use it anymore because it's linear. A pendulum goes back and forth, back and forth. We don't want that, because it's not going out in front of you, and then inside. That's not a good image; it's a misleading image. It would be more like – if we want an image as a metaphor – it would be like a sea anemone. Just releasing into space, three dimensionally. And then, "whew," like all the light being sucked into a black hole, from all directions, into itself. And the oscillation is just that. In astronomy, there's something called a quasar, and they pulse. So this is kind of like a pulsing. That's the oscillation.

Ok? An easy one would be like a balloon, a balloon expanding and contracting. Or the universe! Expanding and contracting, like that.

So should we be feeling some kind of oscillation in that?

We shouldn't try to feel anything other than what I've just said, and that is doing what I just said. It's not tactile. And it's just that release into objectless space, and then withdrawal right into awareness, withdrawing from all appearances. And the oscillation just means expanding/contracting, expanding/contracting; that's all it means. And then you can set your own rhythm. Now, Padmasambhava doesn't say anything about how fast; should it be five seconds in, five seconds out? So again, when I've taught this to people who've never done it, once again they can just find it so novel, so new, so difficult that they need something to hold onto. "Give me some point of reference here that I'm familiar with, because I don't know how to do this at all." Ok, when you're breathing out, release; when you're breathing in, withdraw your awareness in upon itself. Which means you're multi-tasking, but then you're multi-tasking when you count breaths, too.

So as a preliminary exercise, when you're breathing out, just [Alan makes a "release" sound], and then when you just feel that breath naturally flowing in, then draw your awareness right in upon itself. So for a while, to get the hang of it, you can conjoin the rhythm of the release and the withdrawal with the breathing. And then

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when you get the hang of it, don't multitask anymore: release the breath, and then just do it at your own pace, whether it's 20 seconds out, 20 seconds in, or five seconds, do it at your own pace. Ok?

And part of it is, just do it more! Just practice a bit more. We've only done it for a couple of days.

And once you get there, once you get to the point of awareness of awareness, you just stay there, you rest there?

Yeah, Padmasambhava teaches this for two reasons, and he says so, so it's not my interpretation. And that is – in fact, in this particular discussion, he makes no reference to introspection at all, which is really part and parcel of shamatha practice. But he doesn't mention it. What he does say is that when you're doing this inversion and release, the very fact of the releasing, that totally letting go, that just takes all the energy out of, or releases all the energy underlying excitation. Just dissipating into space. But then when you're withdrawing, you're not just withdrawing into your nose, or your kneecap, or even into a mental image. You're withdrawing right into the nature of awareness, which is by nature luminous. So you're converging right into luminosity, so you don't need to add clarity to that! You're converging where clarity emerges from. So the point there is, when you're inverting your awareness, that is a natural antidote to laxity, and when you release your awareness, that's a natural antidote to excitation. So with every oscillation, with every cycle, you're overcoming laxity and excitation.

Now it's exactly in this phase of the practice - where you're coming right in upon the agent, right in upon the observer, when you're doing that – he said when you're doing this, he said you may actually identify rigpa. You may actually identify rigpa, pristine awareness, dharmakaya, Buddha-nature. It's possible. So again, just like Dudjom Lingpa says, if you're a person of – actually he said “medium” faculties. I think I said “sharp” before; he actually said “medium” faculties. If you're of medium faculties, and you just rest your awareness in space for three weeks, you may come out a vidhyadara. You'll come out with realization of rigpa. That's medium faculties!

Then you must be wondering, “well, how about sharp faculties?” And the sharp faculties is you just hear the instructions and you become a vidhyadara. Like Sariputra. He just heard that simple verse; he just heard the teachings. That was enough! He realized emptiness! Just by hearing about causality. So he was one very ripe guy. Dudjom Lingpa calls that a “simultaneous” individual. A simultaneous individual: those are the people with sharp faculties. That is, they hear the teaching and they get it. Boom!

So if you're not quite that sharp, then they said, “ok now go off into solitude, rest your awareness in space for three weeks, and then maybe you'll realize rigpa; if not, ok then you go back to the gradual, step-by-step.”

So likewise, this practice, for the person of pretty sharp faculties, while it's designed as a shamatha practice to help your mind settle in its natural state, dissolve into the substrate consciousness – that's what it's designed to do – if you're a person of very sharp – you know, at least moderately sharp, medium, whatever, a pretty gifted person – that practice there, right there, may be sufficient for realizing rigpa. And if you realize rigpa, as I emphasized this morning, if you realize rigpa, then you don't need to do something separate, in addition to realizing emptiness.

Just as if you're very lucid in a dream – you really know you're dreaming – then you don't need to learn something else to recognize the fact that there's no one really there from their own side. Because that's just part of being awake in the dream. You must know that, otherwise you don't know that you're dreaming if you still think that's a real person over there from their own side, and that's real mountain over there made of molecules. If you still think that, then you're not lucid! If you are lucid, if you recognize the dream as a dream, then you are already realizing the emptiness of yourself as the persona in the dream, and the landscape and the people and so forth in it.

So that's that. There was one other point. There was one other point, I'll just sit for just a second, see if I can come up with it. No, that'll do! Good! Let's read one!

This is from Frank.

When I do awareness of awareness with you, I feel like I get it fairly strongly. But when I get back to my room, I lose it. No traction; spinning my wheels; feel like I'm wasting a lot of time. What to do? I know part of the answer: relax more deeply.

Yes, if in doubt, that's always my answer. Except if the question is, “when I meditate, I just get really, really dull.” Then the answer isn't, “relax more deeply.”

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So, it's a good question, and I'm sure you're not alone there. And this is why we have all of these steps; it's like taking you from the shallow end of the pool right into the deep of the pool. This is the deep end of the pool. This is awareness of awareness. That's the deep end of the pool.

But I'll tell you, if that's just a little bit over your head, and you don't quite know how to swim yet and it's kind of going, "glug, glug, glug." You're just not getting any traction. There it is. It's deeper than where you are. Then take a step back towards the shallow end of the pool; take a couple of steps back and see, ok, do you get traction here? And that is, when you're settling the mind in its natural state, and you take a special interest in the intervals between the thoughts, you're attending to that space of the mind. Can you sustain a flow of knowing? Or have you just gone blank? Just waiting; not getting anything. Can you be attending to the space of the mind and maintain a flow of knowing? If you can, that's right next door. That's something. That's not so easy; that's pretty deep end of the pool. But if you can ascertain that, and know something such that you can actually pose questions about that space of the mind, and by attending closely, get an answer – for example, is it flat? The space of the mind: is it flat? Is it a screen? Two dimensional? Or is it three dimensional? That's a reasonable question. Is it black? Or does it have any color at all? Is it small? Is it like a television set, three meters in front of you? Or is it a big screen? Or is it – I think, when I was a kid, I think they had at least one cinema in Hollywood that was 360 degrees. I think so; I think so, yeah? You look in all directions, you see it all around you like that. So is that the case? Is it all around?

So, if you can pose these questions and get answers by attending closely, then you are maintaining a flow of knowing: that's pretty darn close. So if you're there, and you're attending to the space of the mind and you're knowing it, then if you release a little bit of effort, and your effort is your one horn of your snail that was looking at the space of the mind and getting it – that's a pretty sensitive little antenna there! And then, "I'm tired," and pull in. That is, space of the mind? You've had your time; I'm no longer interested. Bye! And see what's left.

And what's left was something that was already there. You already knew you were aware. That's not something new. It's unveiling something old.

Ok? Jolly good!

Anybody on this side? Yes, over to you, Danny.

So, a follow-up to that question. I actually have the same questions, so I'm glad it was asked.

And you're referring to whom?

To the one about the oscillating.

The oscillation, yes, from Kathy.

So, experientially, is the sense of that oscillation sort of similar to, let's say, tonglen? Where there's a sense of pulling something in and sending something out?

No. It's not. The tonglen, in a very benign way, is saturated by grasping. Benign way; beneficial way. But it is grasping, because I'm attending to this person, I'm bringing this person to mind; this person is an other person than myself, and I'm sending light out to that person, and I'm drawing darkness in upon myself. And so, it's filled with imagery; it's filled with an "I-thou" (*) relationship, "I-you" relationship. It's a very skillful means, but it's saturated by grasping.

(*) Note from the reviser about the meaning of the phrase "I-thou relationship" mentioned above, which is:

"An 'I-thou' relationship is something Alan mentions often. It derives from the English translation of the work of German theologian Martin Buber, who wrote a book entitled 'Ich und Du,' which has been translated as 'I and Thou.' The word 'thou' is an archaic form of the English second person singular pronoun, used back when the English language distinguished between informal and formal registers: it's the informal register. It's now used to indicate a certain amount of religious solemnity, ironically enough. When Alan uses the phrase 'I-thou relationship,' he means to regard the other as a being worthy of love, rather than as an object."

This practice is not a matter of sending out, but releasing. So sending out is what you do when you throw rice, right? And this, this release is what the little girl does when she releases the balloons. That's not sending anything. That's just – [breath out sound]. It's not going, "Ahhh," it's just [breath out sound]. Doesn't go anywhere. Just releasing. That's why it doesn't go for a while and then disappear. It just goes into space and just releases.

So there's no sending out; it's just release. And then the inversion is not drawing in anything; it's actually another kind of release. And that is, right now it's taking me some effort to direct my attention all the way

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over to you. Oh there you are, way over there! Like an old turtle. It takes some effort. But when you're withdrawing your awareness from all appearances, it's releasing that effort. Because now I'm having to know two things: I'm having to know you, but in knowing you I already know that I'm aware. So I'm knowing two things. Alright, that's just a bit too complicated for me; I'm going to release my knowing of you. It's more effortless. So I'm not drawing anything in; I'm releasing the extension, I'm releasing the effort of going out. So it's just kind of release, and release, and release and release; effortless, effortless, effortless.

And among the various methods of shamatha – and there's a wide variety – this is the one that is really the most unadulterated “discovery” approach to shamatha that I think there is. I think you've probably heard me use this model before, and it's quite useful for many people. But in the standard Gelugpa model – and it's classic, it's not just Gelugpas, it's all over Tibetan Buddhism – but we're really trying to develop qualities of attention that we don't have. We don't have the ability to sustain the attention on anything for more than a few seconds, so we're trying to develop that which wasn't there. And then when we try to visualize a Buddha image, we do not have clarity, and so we try to develop that which isn't there: a nice, clear, crystal clear, three-dimensional, radiant, high-definition image of the Buddha. We don't have that, so we try to develop it, and it's not there. And so that's very developmental. And it's a marvelous method. For many people, it's worked extremely well. Developing that which was not there: the stability, the vividness, and so forth. Here, it's really not a matter of developing anything. Really! Because awareness, when it's free of grasping, is, by nature, still. That which makes it restless, agitated, excited, ruminating and so forth, is just grasping. That's what jerks it all over the place; it's grasping. And so here we are, in both modes: releasing into objectless space, which means no grasping, and then inverting from all awareness, resting awareness in its own nature, that's no grasping! So it's doing two modalities of non-grasping. And both of these entail a releasing of effort, releasing of effort, which itself would be a releasing of grasping. Grasping and effort are very closely related. So this is not a matter of developing vividness and stability. It's rather releasing all grasping so you discover the natural stillness of your own awareness. And then by releasing all that obscures the natural luminosity of your own awareness, you discover clarity. And so it's discovering stability, and discovering clarity, which are innate qualities of your own awareness. In other words, it's discovering shamatha, which was already there. Something like that.

And once again, there was a little bit more! Kind of just teased me and ... Yeah, that'll do. Ok!

Good! Let's read. From Francesca. Ok.

Could you please clarify the following questions. All jhavana, all activities of the mind, memories, imagination, ruminations, five sensory perceptions –

Good! Nice list.

All jhavana arise from and dissolve into the substrate –

Of course, if we wanted to keep this really homogenous, then we'd say “bhavanga”. But since I'm saying they're identical, that will be our working hypothesis until somebody shows me I'm wrong. So,

They arise from and dissolve into the substrate –

Now, we should say this: substrate consciousness, that's what you said –

They arise from and dissolve into substrate consciousness, while thoughts and appearances dissolve into the substrate –

Yeah, now depending on what you mean by the word “thought.” So what I mean by the word “thought” is the discursive chit-chat, like overhearing a conversation. The appearances of sounds, of words, of conversations, commentary and so forth of the mind. That's what I'm referring to. Something you can actually attend to as if you're listening with your mental ear. That's a mental appearance arising to you. Likewise, seeing mental imagery, of colors and shapes, or mountains, landscapes, or again, appearances of tastes, smells, so forth. So yes, I'm saying those objective appearances, they arise from and dissolve into the substrate; while your subjective mental processes, the mental impulses, arising from and dissolving into the substrate consciousness.

Are thoughts and appearances different from other activities of the mind? Why are they not included among the jhavana?

They are completely conjoined with jhavana, completely conjoined with jhavana. They're simply kind of the objective pole of jhavana. So they probably are jhavana, because “jhavana” is referring to the activities of the mind. So they're linked. Just like there's no one who's informed without there being something about which

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you're informed. There are no thoughts, there are no appearances of thoughts without some subjective awareness, whether it's explicit or implicit. So the two are entangled all the way through. Ok? So jhavana's the whole system.

And moreover – this is where it's a bit simpler to keep with a homogenous vocabulary – and that is, the Theravada, they don't speak of the alaya. They don't even have a word for it. Or the alayavijnana: no word for that either. It's just bhavanga; all jhavana arising from bhavanga. So they're just taking that substrate consciousness as one unified system. And that's pretty much what the Gelugpas will do, too; they don't talk about "alaya" and "alayavijnana," they talk about "subtle continuum of mental consciousness." So then we say those appearances and all of that, they arise from that dimension.

Aren't all jhavana appearances to the mind, too?

In a manner of speaking, yes. And that is, when you're aware of an emotion arising, aware of a desire arising, are those not appearances? Yes they are. Of course they are. They are objects of awareness; you know them, you know that you're feeling upset, you're angry, you're happy, you're content. You know that. How do you know that? By way of some experience of feeling content, or what have you. So it is an appearance, but my point here is that our awareness of these subjective impulses – and these are the *sem jung*, that which is arising from *sem*, from the mind – but our awareness of them is always retrospective, just like awareness of awareness itself. So this is a point – and this is where the teachings on awareness of awareness are completely compatible with prasangika-madhyamika, otherwise Shantideva wouldn't accept it, Tsongkhapa wouldn't accept it. But they do! Tsongkhapa very explicitly acknowledges, yes, awareness of awareness, resting in the sheer luminosity and sheer cognizance of awareness, that is a shamatha practice. He tips his hat to it, and moves right along.

And so when you're aware of awareness, is it one pulse? One moment of awareness knowing itself? The answer is no. Not in prasangika, and I think, once again, I think they're right. No, it's retrospective. If these two fingers were two adjacent [Alan pronounces a Tibetan phrase], and that is "pulses of cognition" that actually ascertain something. So maybe it's 50 milliseconds. So a cluster, a cluster of those extremely brief moments, but clustering all in upon the same object. So if I've got one cluster here of 50 milliseconds, of mental awareness, and then in the next moment there's another 50 millisecond cluster, and they're both of mental awareness and they're both inverted right in upon awareness of awareness, the second finger is ascertaining the first finger. And the third finger is ascertaining the second finger, and the fourth finger is ascertaining the third finger. So each one is getting the immediately preceding one.

And since they're so similar – because they're all looking at the same flow of cognition – and since the cognition isn't going out to shapes, colors, sounds and smells and so forth, but it's just maintaining in samadhi a unified flow of awareness of awareness of awareness of awareness, then it's quite smooth, quite homogenous. That is, what you're aware of seems to be just, "I'm just sitting here being aware of being aware of being aware." It's just a smooth continuum, an ongoing flow of luminosity and cognizance, and it really seems to be the same flow, the same stream, quite homogenous. And that's true, because each moment is so similar to its predecessor, because each one is looking over its shoulder at the preceding one.

So as that is, I think, the clearest and most precise analysis – it's kind of a philosophical conceptualization of what's actually happening, when we try to make sense of awareness of awareness, as that's what occurs when you're practicing awareness of awareness – likewise, when you're aware of, "I'm feeling quite content," that experience, the appearance feeling content is retrospective. So it's just looking over its shoulder at a subjective impulse of feeling content, or angry, or agitated or what have you.

So yes, they're appearances, but here's the point of difference, and that is, when we are aware of the appearances of the immediately preceding moment of some subjective experience or mental process, that is retrospective. Whereas I would say, with a lot of confidence actually, that when I visualize an image, let's say, of my mother, the appearance of that image and my awareness of it are completely simultaneous. That is, the image wasn't there for 50 milliseconds and then my attention got caught up to it; it's not retrospective. They're actually right there, exactly simultaneous.

And likewise, the sounds that I hear mentally – when I'm in a dream, the appearances arising to my awareness, and my awareness of them, I would say simultaneous.

So that's a bit different.

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Which then, I mean when we're really going to really subtle vipashyana into the nature of this, then more questions could be raised that are rather interesting. And that is, is there any difference in impact when you are aware of an objective appearance – like a mental image – when you are aware of a mental image arising in your mind, does that awareness of it, that attentiveness to it, does that have any different impact on what you're aware of than when you direct your awareness in upon a subjective impulse? Do they affect that which you're attending to in any different way? So for example, you can be – remember the song, who was it? "I'm so glad; I'm glad, I'm glad, I'm glad!" Who is it? "I'm so glad; I'm so glad; I'm glad, I'm glad, I'm glad!" You don't remember? But you remember the song, right? Late '60's. Cream, there we are! It's Cream! You got it! Some of his neurons haven't burned off. [laughter]

But there it is. It's so nicely phrased, "I'm glad; I'm glad; I'm glad." This guy is just resting in the flow of being aware of being aware of being aware [laughter], and it's glad. And clearly, he's glad that he's glad, because that's what keeps it going.

Whereas, if you're enjoying some food, and then you invert your awareness right in upon the enjoyment that's arising, you may find that that just breaks the flow. Therapeutically, this can be very interesting. If you're depressed, and you kind of suddenly get, instead of just not liking being depressed, you say, "Oh the heck with it, why don't I just see what it's like?" And you invert your awareness like a probe to come right into the experience of being depressed, you may find it just evaporates. Not that it's healed, solved, and you're free forever. But you might just find that by probing right into, like with a sharp fork into the muffin of depression, it just deflates, you know? [laughter] Thank goodness they're getting this all on video! People in future generations will definitely want these incredible words of profundity! Yep!

So, now we have one from, yes, go ahead.

When we do awareness of awareness, when I do the oscillation and I analyze the nature of my awareness when the awareness is out in space, when it comes back in on itself. For me, I see the same thing. It's the same thing for me. Anyway, even if I say, "Am I doing this or not," I have the feeling it's the same. But when we finally release the oscillation, when we do awareness of awareness where we stretch in all directions and we release that –

Right, come back to the center.

There's something about awareness that seems to have a home. That when we finish all this, then it just doesn't move. It stays there; it's perfect. Why is it so – what is it about it? And even the thought, "awareness of awareness," when we bring it to the heart, we move it – it seems to have a home somewhere, a place where it's – anyway.

Yeah, it's good. She's referring to something I know you've heard from the podcast, and I've taught it many times in all of the preceding 8-week retreats here, and I've not taught it here and I don't think I will. That was just the culminating phase of this sequence from Padmasambhava, where you're extending above, below, and so forth. So we won't do that in this series.

But just one question for you. Because in that sequence of course, as you remember, you come into the heart, and then you just go supernova, right out into space. When you let your awareness, and as much as possible let the actual locus of awareness – not the object of awareness, but the locus of awareness – as if you're stepping into an elevator, and it's going down a couple of floors. And so you're actually just resting in the heart chakra. Do you feel there that you're home? Or do you feel that you've extended someplace else? *Home.*

Yeah. So, good. All of this is good; all is fine. And ...

It's a question...

I know it is.

Why is it like that? Why do we stretch it, and why, when we release the stretching, why does it just stay?

So that when you come home, you know it. We find the middle way by finding that which isn't the middle way. And then we find that there's – so, when we come to some realization of the emptiness of an autonomous, controlling ego, that's something of a middle way. But then, is there a more slender middle way? The answer's yeah, let's go into Madhyamaka. And then is there something – and so, the middle way gets narrower and narrower and narrower, right? In a way, you're bouncing off fewer extremes.

And so likewise, when we're normally just caught up in ordinary awareness, the attention's going all over the place. And then when we relax, we fall asleep. And so here, in this exercise, you're doing the oscillation, like

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so. And then just kind of like stretching, “just give me some elbow room here; to the right as far as you can go, to the left as far as you can go, up and down!” And you’ve done in and out. And so when you’ve done all of that, and you’ve done all these exercises – because it’s like working out in the psycho-gym – having extended yourself in these kind of subtle ways, and then you release all that effort of extending anywhere, all the effort of going even into space, all the effort of inverting into awareness itself, all of this is quite contrived. It is! It’s contrived. It’s something you have to make happen; it doesn’t happen all by itself.

So you realize that was just uncontrived, effortless, when you have extended your contrivances, your imagination, your extensions, your efforts. And having done that, you can see, now that you’ve done that, now what’s it like when you release that? You say, Oh, that’s home! So you find home by extending yourself in different directions away from home, and then seeing what it’s like to release all of that. And then you see, Aha, this is not one more thing to do. I think that’s a nice way to phrase it. Everything else was something to do! Do this, do that, do this, do that. And then finally, you mean this is not doing!

So it’s our closest approximation – within this relative framework – our closest approximation to rigpa. It’s not rigpa, but it’s a good preparation. Because you’ve probably heard in, when you’re authentically practicing *trek Cho*, you’ve identified rigpa authentically, and you’re resting there, two phrases come up: *chame*, and *jadel*, like Jadel Rinpoche! Of course, you speak Tibetan: *ja* means “activity,” *del* means “free of,” “disengaged from.” *Chame* means “no activity,” “absence of activity.”

And so once your awareness has now come to rest in its ground, *jirigpa*, in the ground awareness, then you’re absolutely doing nothing. You’re absolutely doing nothing. Which is to say that you’re not activating, at all, your conventional sense of who you are. Not even your – let alone delusional, like the CEO of the company. Or let alone delusion, as “I’m inherently existent.” Let alone that. Even conventionally; are you a sentient being or not? To be a sentient being is not to say something wrong. I mean, if you’re a sentient being, you’re a sentient being; if you’re a woman, you’re a woman.

But now, even that innocent, little statement – I’m a sentient being – even that’s being de-activated. So even a conventional truth is being de-activated. [Tibetan] Transcending all conceptual elaborations. So that’s the ultimate stillness. And when you’re there, there’s absolutely nothing to be done. Absolutely nothing!

So we can’t simply choose to go there. That’s why we have these steps. But this is a good approximation for that. That we’re resting there, doing nothing, but we do nothing by these various, subtler and subtler doings, until when we release the doing then what’s left over is just resting. [Tibetan] Just awareness, ordinary consciousness, but awareness resting in its own place, [Tibetan] holding its own ground. So it’s our approximation of Dzogchen.

And what this is – while you’re resting in rigpa, as in pristine awareness, you’ve completely de-activated everything about you that is a sentient being. Completely de-activated. Therefore, if you do anything to achieve enlightenment, you’re going in the opposite direction. So there should really be absolutely nothing to be done.

And here in this practice, this little old shamatha practice, we’re de-activating – completely – the coarse mind. Completely de-activating! That is, we’re not going to any of the physical senses – that’s coarse mind. But we’re not activating any of the jhavana of the coarse mind either: not attending to appearances, or subjective mental processes. We’re de-activating it all and just resting in relatively naked – “relatively” simply because it’s not *rigpa* rigpa – but relatively naked flow of mental awareness, unadorned by the desire realm, unadorned, unelaborated by the coarse mind, just resting there.

So ending I think, this is a long one, so we’re going to wait for tomorrow on that one.

But there’s an image I like, and it comes right back to the earlier point of, if you’re focusing on a Buddha image, then you’re really achieving shamatha. And for some people, that’s just the best way to do it. It’s absolutely authentic. Tsongkhapa taught it multiple times, and so did Karma Chagme Rinpoche, and so did Guru Rinpoche Padmasambhava; it’s not a sectarian deal. It’s not Gelugpas versus Nyingmapas. Not true. Both of them teach all of it. They all teach all of it, within the schools of Tibetan Buddhism.

I kind of just immersed myself in that; I have to pull myself out of it. Oh yeah!

So all the schools say that’s a legitimate, very effective method for achieving shamatha, developing stability and vividness: focus on a Buddha image. Could be self-generation; then you do it by way of Vajrayana, but it’s developing, by gum. You’re definitely doing something [uses Tibetan word], generating, developing something.

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But now in this practice, there's nothing to develop, and there's nothing to generate. And so the image that I like is taking a – imagine you go to your pot-belly stove, which has coal in it, coal, and it's red hot, just red hot – you take one of those red hot, glowing embers of coal out of your pot-belly stove and you go outside to a mound of snow, and you put that glowing ember right on the top of it. Release it, and stand back. What does the glowing ember have to do to achieve the substrate consciousness? Nothing! Just shine on! And just melt your way down, all the way down, until there's nowhere to go. So you just release and let the locus of your awareness just melt its way through, until it comes to its ground: substrate consciousness.

And then you're in your relative home, your samsara home. Like if every lifetime is a yo-yo: wheel! into human, wheel! into deva, wheel! into et cetera. And back to pow! The palm is your substrate consciousness, and all the other ones are short stories, even if it's, you know, formless realm for three eons – it's called "the sleeper." But sooner or later it comes back to the palm. And so your home in samsara that you keep coming back to like a homing pigeon as you fly out into all the six realms of existence, but the home you keep coming back to is your substrate consciousness. So conventionally speaking, it'd be really quite natural and easy to identify, well at least ok, I'm really a sentient being, this is who I really am. I take on the role of being a human being, a role of being this, that and the other thing, but when I'm unveiled, when I've slipped out of all my roles, then I'm just a sentient being, and my nature is substrate consciousness. And I've got a whole bunch of karma and mental afflictions and that's who I really am. So that's your home in samsara.

And then you blow up your home! Blow the basement out of your home, and see that's just one more construct. And then you, then you drop in to the *jirigpa*, which is really the foundation. Which is then beautifully stated: [Tibetan phrase], it's the ground of samsara and nirvana. Now that's home! And that's so home, that's even outside of time. Because when you're resting in the home of your substrate consciousness, that's in time. No beginning, no end, perhaps, but it's still in time. Whereas when you break through that to rigpa, well that's home outside of space and outside of time. So that's really home.

Ok? Good? Enjoy your dinner!

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti and James French

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37 Empathetic Joy (1)

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I imagine a lot of you will remember that the false facsimile of compassion, or the near enemy, is grief, is despair, hopelessness, depression. And so among the four immeasurables the natural antidote for that whole mindset is empathetic joy and in Tibetan is simply "gaua", or "mudita" in Sanskrit, which means simply delight, but it *does* means empathetic.

And so whether the sadness, the grief, despair and so forth that one experiences, whether it's genuine in the sense that it's simply coming right out of your own mental afflictions without any particular unpleasant thing happening to you, just emerging right out of your mind or whether it is a response to some depressing news or an experience - either way the cultivation of empathetic joy can really serve as a helpful remedy for that to restore the balance, the emotional balance of the mind.

Bear in mind my favorite English mantra, "for the moment what we attend to is reality", and especially when we get caught up in some kind of despair, depression and so forth that is oriented toward some memory or something taking place in the world - then what this means is the mind has gotten almost like into a cramp, like a spasm, like it's locked-in and it doesn't have that malleability, it can't do what a muscle should be able to do. And that's what is happening to the mind, the mind is going into a spasm; or Paul Ekman would call it a refractory period where we are locked into one particular aspect of reality, and then it's ever so easy to do for the time being, to take that as representative of the whole. For example, I met this awful person, people suck. I met this Mexican person, I met this American person, this German person and then: Germany – *kapow!* Mexico – *kapow!* Americans – *kapow!* And so that's a refractory period. Another example, life sucks, it's just hopeless, or politics is just terrible, or Buddhism is horrible because I met really bad Buddhists a while back.

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So how do we overcome that? Well we've slipped into a refractory period and we've locked onto one facet of reality, we've probably embellished it, we've almost certainly reified it, we're very likely exaggerating negative qualities and not seeing them in a larger context. And so we need an antidote, and it's not putting on rose tinted glasses: 'look on the brighter side', 'stiff upper lip', 'be happy'. It is attending to other aspects of reality that would balance you out, get you out of that locked-in cramp, cognitive cramp or spasm, and that's what empathetic joy is about. Empathetic joy is often translated as 'sympathetic', which is not bad but empathetic is a bit better because sympathy always implies something sad and empathy can go positive or negative.

Empathetic joy primarily is focused on others, cultivating that sense of resonance, empathy towards others by taking delight in their joys and their virtues. So this is actually in the Pali Canon and in the Theravada tradition, this one is explicitly cultivating an emotion, the other three immeasurables are not but this one is cultivating an emotion and it's empathy, it's extending that sense of self out and caring about the wellbeing of others. But there's something odd again, and we modern Westerners, we didn't invent this but we certainly have done a lot with it and that is this ever so familiar theme of self-contempt, self-loathing, low self-worth, sense of shame, I am such an awful person, and so forth. For example, thinking about himself, "I am such an awful person", it definitely seems like there are two people in there: I am such an awful person because when I think about myself and I think, oh, I am really awful and I am so ashamed and so forth. It seems that there are two people and one says to the other, "I am so ashamed of you" and the other saying, "what about yourself, I don't think much of you either, you know?"

(5:05) So if we can do this internally, and that is not even feel a warm and affectionate sense of empathy within, if we can internally be this stern, unloving, critical, judgmental parent, within ourselves; then if we're going to do that to ourselves, of bifurcating within ourselves, kind of two people and one looking down on the other, then the antidote for that would be developing internal empathy, for example one would say to the other, "yes, you screwed up but I love you anyway, yes you screwed up but it is forgivable" and so forth and so on.

So in this regard I introduce into this practice a theme that is very commonly taught, I think maybe still not strongly enough emphasized in the Indo-Tibetan tradition, and that is taking delight in one's own virtues, which is itself a virtue - that's straight Tsongkhapa. It is not some bizarre sect of self-congratulation sect, and it's not about self, it's not thinking "what a jolly good fellow am I". It's not that. It is simply as I can take delight in someone else's virtue, I can also take delight in my own virtue and it's both good. And neither one is idolizing the other person or entering into narcissism with respect to oneself. So that's where we'll go in this practice - be really quite a sweet friend [to yourself] and can up lift you. It is not to bring about something artificial but to restore balance where it has been lost because whenever we fall into guilt, shame, depression and so forth and so on we maybe, or we may not be, but we may be attending to some aspects of reality, it is certainly possible, but what is certain is we are not attending to the whole of reality. And at that moment we are not in a state of balance and to restore balance is very helpful. So let's find a comfortable position.

Meditation:

(8:05) We may enter into this practice at least with the sense of satisfaction, of contentment, and perhaps even beyond that with the sense of delight, appreciation, rejoicing in our present opportunity to have the leisure, and the opportunity to devote ourselves single pointedly to the cultivation of our hearts and minds to find genuine happiness, perhaps even to venture out on and reach a path to awakening; what greater good fortune could there be than this? So in the spirit of rejoicing, taking delight, settle your body in its natural state and the respiration in its natural rhythm and balance your mind for a little while with mindfulness of breathing.

(11:35) And then as we venture into the main practice, we begin with an integral aspect of classical Mahayana meditation on the cultivation of bodhicitta and that is recalling the kindness of sentient beings: do so now in a personal way, as you direct your attention back to your childhood, even your infancy, and you move your attention along the timeline through your childhood, adolescence, adulthood up to the present day, and be very selective, attend to the kindness that others have shown you, who supported you in your pursuit of hedonic wellbeing, providing you with food, clothing, shelter, education, medical care and so on, as well as those who nurtured you, supported you, guided you in your pursuit of genuine happiness. And as you attend

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to these virtues, these acts of kindness, with each out breath, breathe out a light of gratitude and breathe out a light of rejoicing in their own virtues.

(15:50) As you breathe out you may even imagine this light emanating from your heart taking on the forms of offerings, offerings of gratitude to all those who have shown you kindness.

(17:31) And now once again direct your awareness back to your early life, and now in the spirit of taking delight in one's own virtues, which as Tsongkhapa says is itself a virtue, is a way of increasing the merit, the power, the energy, the vitality of your spiritual practice, and enhancing the power of the karma from your own virtue, look back in time and move along the timeline to the present moment: What good have you brought to the world? What kindness have you shown to others, alleviating others' distress, bringing them happiness? In what ways have you cultivated your own heart and mind so that you yourself can follow the path to awakening? And breathe this light of rejoicing into your own life.

(19:10) Let this light fill your entire being, your body and your mind.

(22:30) And now direct your attention outwards once again to the world around you and either by deliberately directing your attention to the virtues of others far and near, in the present and in the past; or simply letting your awareness be open and see who comes to mind, those individuals, those communities who have blessed the world by alleviating the suffering of others, by serving others in the pursuit of happiness by profoundly exploring their own inner resources, discovering liberation, discovering awakening, and inspiring and guiding us all. With every out breath, breathe out this light of gratitude, of rejoicing.

(28:25) And release all appearances, all objects of the mind, let your awareness return to its own center, to its own ground with no object outside itself, simply being aware of itself, resting in the nature of awareness.

Teachings after meditation:

(30:50) I have been watching people practicing for a few decades and I've been able to draw some generalizations. First in terms of getting discouraged, depressed, and so on. Sometimes this is hedonic, hedonic depression, that is your meditation goes bad one day or something really unpleasant happens with another person, the environment, you get really bummed-out; so it is a kind of a spike, a surge, an eruption of sadness, despair, depression and so forth but then the episode gradually fades out, you forget about it and you move on.

And then there is genuine depression that just comes in like a big heavy cloud is following you like a shadow and wherever you go the shadow is following you and saying: I am going to rain on you. And then you look around and ask: Who done it? What is the catalyst? And there isn't a catalyst - you are bringing this to every situation, it's what you're offering to the world by saying: hello, my name is Alan I have depression to offer you, how are you? So that is genuine depression.

And likewise [it also happens] with gratitude, a sense of rejoicing, taking delight, mudita. And that is, it too can come up in spikes; you'll notice that a person does something very kind, another person is practicing very well and there is something really wonderful there, and then a spike of delight, rejoicing, satisfaction takes place and then of course it fades, it goes out. There is a sense of gratitude, for example, oh, thank you, somebody has done something really nice for you – oh, thank you, thank you. Next day you do not remember it at all, but at least today you are saying, thank you, I will remember you forever... what was your name again? So you get these spikes of gratitude, rejoicing coming-up and then they just fade-out, just like a wave in the ocean. So it is hedonic gratitude, hedonic rejoicing.

(33:02) And then there is the possibility of genuine gratitude, rejoicing, and that is just where you live. You just attend to reality, you wake up in the morning with the sense of gratitude, of rejoicing, of appreciation, and then you venture out the door and you just see somebody moving one of those little trolleys taking care of the rooms and so forth, and that is enough to spark a sense: oh, they're taking such good care of us.

Anything can spark it, nothing can spark it, it doesn't need a spark; it is what you're bringing, it is just a spirit of gratitude, a spirit of rejoicing, satisfaction, and that is what you are bringing to the kitchen, bringing to the meditation hall, your meditation cushion, you are bringing it to whatever you encounter. This is really very much in the core of the whole bodhisattva way of live. Remember what Shantideva said: "Whenever you encounter a sentient being, you attend to the sentient being and think: in dependence upon you I can achieve enlightenment".

(34:19) Whether it's in dependence upon your behavior helping me to develop the perfection of patience - get a lot of help in that regard in so many ways, it is just feeling that this is your modus operandi [mode of

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operation], this is how you are present in the world, so how can I do anything other than just be swimming in an ocean of gratitude because the blessings are always rising up to meet me and all I need to do is have the eyes of wisdom to see it and to appreciate it.

Over the years, I have seen that for people living in the spirit of gratitude, their practice always goes well, there is no exception; whereas for people who complain a lot or are just plain grumpy, they are never quite satisfied and their practice never goes well, regardless of their intelligence or renunciation.

As the Dalai Lama said, “It is better to find one fault in yourself than a thousand faults in other people.” He is not suggesting to feel bad about yourself, having low self-esteem – there is no such word in Tibetan, it never occurred in his mind. It is possible for us to fix that one fault in ourselves, and that is a cause for rejoicing.

So the Dalai Lama is not suggesting that you feel bad about yourself, having low self-esteem. It would never occur in his mind. Why would you then find a fault in yourself? Oh good, I found some area to correct,

another area to improve, and if somebody else pointed it out for me, Oh, thank you, I might not have noticed that. And it is one more area to find a greater happiness because if you find a fault you can find something that can be remedied. So that is what he is talking about. You are just finding that there is a problem, so good,

how can we solve it? Whereas if you find a thousand problems in other people, how exactly can you solve it? If you find one in yourself you really have a chance, especially if you encounter some good dharma and by the way, all of you have. But if you find a thousand faults in other people exactly what can you do about that? You could go out like a cowboy with a lasso and get the people by the neck and say, I found a fault in you and now I’m going to fix it and listen up because I’m going to make your day – shape up or ship out - and now you can go. I found a fault, now listen up, here’s your fault, you better fix it or I’m going to fix you. Now, where is the 9998th person to fix? Man, that can be a full time job and that is just with a thousand people, there are seven billion out there and they are always screwing up, at least most of them are, in other words you got a full time job and you better have a lot of lassos ready and some of them do not want to be lassoed. You may want to lasso them and fix them but they do not want to be fixed. So you have a tough job. So either really fix one person or be incredibly, geographically frustrated by trying to fix seven billion other people and finding that is not working out very well, those are your choices, one or seven billion... Your Honor, I rest my case.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Revised by Erik Koeppe

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38 Mindfulness of the Mind (6)

15 Sep 2012

This is our last day in this cycle for the close application of mindfulness to the mind and in a way we are breaching or encroaching onto this topic from the very beginning, in the very initial phase of mindfulness of breathing, the shamatha practice, because if you are engaging in shamatha then you must be applying your mindfulness not only to the meditative object but also you are utilizing and refining your faculty of introspection which in shamatha practice is primarily attending to the mind so you’re already peeking-in out of the corner of your eyes so to speak, it is not center stage but it has to be there otherwise you would not even know when laxity and exaltation are setting in. So we’re already venturing into the application of mindfulness to the mind in mindfulness of breathing.

(1:53) Then when it comes to settling the mind in its natural state where we are putting it in center stage, attending to really the psyche above all, or really attending to psyche: our own minds, our own thoughts, images, memories and so forth, it is quite personal, quite unique attending to them but just with that simple attentiveness without any real probing or analyses, investigation, simply being-present-with, and of course the idea which you all recall now is we are attending to it not primarily with the incentive to gain insight into it but with the incentive to allow it to settle in its natural state and come to the ground of your own mind, the relative ground of the mind - so there is the primary motivation, nevertheless while it’s a shamatha practice by sustaining that flow of discerning mindfulness to the mind you are just bound to get insight into it at the

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very least by that especially as the vividness begins to increase. The vividness bear in mind is of two kinds: I call them temporal and qualitative.

(2:53) The temporal vividness is that you are able to discern more and more fleeting events and in this case of course mental events, but these little sparks, these little bursts, little flashes of mental images, of discursive thoughts, could be a desire that just barely peeks-up, that kind of spikes through and then dissolves again and so we are able to discern, to identify, to ascertain briefer and briefer events. So that would be the temporal vividness or acuity, this is getting sharper and that is clearly being demonstrated in one very brief study at The University of California with two meditators and just showing that even though what they had been meditating on was not at all what the experiment was it showed that because they were experienced meditators they could detect very, very brief images on a screen that most people could not and they could not only identify them but know what the images were of, I think they did better than anybody else who hadn't been specifically trained in that particular skill. So it just shows that acuity had been developed - no big deal. But this is an important thing that we really can enhance; we can develop higher frequency attention so that you are able to ascertain briefer and briefer events. How brief could it go? I think the answer is we do not really know. Buddhist psychology states that we have on the order of magnitude about six hundred individual bursts or cognition per second and then scientifically we know that thirty milliseconds or so people can ascertain something. But then can it be twenty, can it be ten, can it be five, can it be two, and if it is two then we're right down to about six hundred burst per second. So that is an open question but that is one type of vividness and the other one is qualitative vividness. But now the temporal vividness may be something that is really quite a sharp vivid impulse but it is extreme brief.

(5:12) The qualitative vividness is something that may go on for a second, two, three, five, ten seconds or longer but it is a quiet murmur, it is really subtle so normally it would be beneath the threshold of what you're consciously aware of because your mind is probably caught up in something more course, tangible, easier to access. But with the increasing vividness - specifically qualitative vividness - when it comes to settling the mind you are able to discern, to identify, to recognize even subtle surges of a bit of emotion, or a very quiet murmuring of some discursive thought, desire, whatever it may be. So it is really developing high definition awareness, in this case awareness of your own mind and especially as you enhance the temporal vividness then you discern with greater and greater clarity, with greater and greater acuity the momentary nature of whatever arises in the space of the mind and I do not know how you can avoid having some insight into impermanence, subtle impermanence if you go that route of observing very carefully how they arise, how they pass, and how they do so ever so fleetingly. So in settling the mind in its natural state clearly we are closely applying mindfulness to the mind but without the investigation, without the probing, without questioning, without attending specifically to the factors of origination and factors of dissolution, without really posing questions about the nature of impermanence, the nature of sukhka and dukkha, questions of self and not self. We are not interrogating the mind, not probing into it with questions but simply in a way you are very familiar with now attending to it without distraction, without grasping: so again as you well know, on the cusp between shamatha and vipashyana.

(7:30) By the time we move on to awareness of awareness it is really as if you kind of look right through your mind, like the focus is just deeper, like if my mind were where this video camera is when I am practicing awareness of awareness it is just gazing right through it. It is a deep space probe and is going right into the nature of awareness of awareness, it is not attending to the things emerging from it, it is going right to the source and in shamatha of course simply attending to it, just resting there and knowing it with increasing clarity and then coming to know - just by shamatha - the essential nature of your own mind, without vipashyana, but of course it is the conventional nature - that is really something. In fact I think If we had psychology students all of the world learning how to observe their minds professionally, really developing professional attention skills, introspective skills, mindfulness skills and then going out and for their research, rather than doing questionnaires and so forth which has its place, then going on and actually discovering the essential nature of their mind, I think that would deserve an A, I think they should really graduate, I have a Bachelor's [degree] in knowing the nature of my mind, I actually know the nature of my mind, I'm ready to go on to a Master's degree and I will get that when I realize the empty nature of my mind and then I will be a true Professor of Philosophy when I realize rigpa, I will be a vidyadhara, PhD vidyadhara, that would be quite a graduate program.

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(9:06) So awareness of awareness, it is close application of mindfulness to the mind but if we go back to Theravada terminology it is between javana and the bhavanga out of which all those javanas are emerging and into which they are dissolving of course the focus there is on the ground, the ground of becoming, the ground out of which all the javanas become, emerge, manifest and into which they dissolve. So we have a nice word for that, depth psychology, it is not just looking at the fluff on the surface but kind of looking into the depths and I would say the bhavanga, ground of becoming, substrate consciousness, that is depth - not ultimate depth – but that's got some real depth to it and if that actually carries on from lifetime to lifetime that's got depth. If that is true - and of course I am totally persuaded that it is - but if that came into the public domain, if that become a public truth and that is people from multiple perspectives - simply humanistic, that is just open minded but not having alliances with any particular religious world view and so forth but coming in with an open minded, how about the three qualities: coming in with perceptiveness, an open mind and a great passionate yearning to investigate, to put into practice, the three prerequisites for being a practicing Buddhist.

(10:18) If we have humanists doing that, and Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Taoists, Buddhists and so forth - if we have people coming from multiple perspectives and - so frameworks - and this were corroborated and they are all coming in and discovering the same thing that in fact there is a dimension of consciousness that is not contingent upon the brain, but in fact rather the emergences from that dimension of consciousness are configured by the brain, the nervous system, culture, upbringing, education, diet, vitamins, and so forth. But if that came into the public domain and it is replicated, replicated, replicated from multiple perspectives so you see it is not just a Buddhist truth or a Hindu truth and so on and that is there are truths that are not contingent upon one particular ideology, on one culture or another: it is just the way things are. So what is coming up is not a Buddhist truth, it is just what is happening.

(12:00) And so as far as I am concerned this assertion about the continuity of consciousness, of that dimension, carrying on from lifetime to lifetime: either it is true or false. I do not care about it being a Buddhist truth, it is either truth or false, it cannot be a Buddhist truth and a Christian falsity, it is either truth or false and then it can be checked out, investigated. If that came into the public domain, that is something corroborated again, again and again [it means replicated] by people who are objective, open minded and rigorously sophisticated in their radically empirical investigation of the nature of the mind - well that would actually shake the foundations of not just mind science but shake the foundations of all of modern science. That would be quite radical. So the methods are quite clear, they're transparent and meaningful, they are perfectly intelligible, there is nothing crazy about them, so it is just waiting to be practiced.

(12:53) And then we have the actual vipashyana practice, the close applications of mindfulness to the mind, so all of the above still has mindfulness, introspection, still attending to both the javana and to the bhavanga, the ground from which the javana arise, but then also with the questions, the close inspection, the contemplation of the factors of origination and dissolution, nature of impermanence, dukkha and non-self. And then finally as one goes deeper, deeper internally, closely applying mindfulness to the mind internally - get an up close, very good look, get very familiar with, well acquainted with the one specimen that you can really exam closely, of all the mind streams throughout the universe here's one you can really get the inside-scoop, really get some deep insight by direct observation. On the basis of that, really becoming knowing a lot about, oh, this is how the mind works, and also so importantly when we see we never choose to have mental afflictions, we never wake up in the morning and say: I think today is a day for delusion, or I am feeling so good I think I am going to try hatred today, or I am so content, I am really missing craving and attachment. We just never choose mental afflictions; we have them but we never choose them any more than people choose to get flu or pneumonia or any other serious disease. So when we see that how that happens that they come upon us, then as we closely apply mindfulness to the minds of others externally and we see people displaying [the mental afflictions] by way of their behavior, their speech and so forth, it certainly looks like they are displaying mental afflictions and we may be right, when we see that then we may be less prone to saying:

(14:38) "What an idiot, I cannot stand that person; this person is so selfish, that person is so arrogant, despicable, really disgusting". It is very easy to do, to simply equate, to fuse a certain mode of behavior and its underlying mental affliction with the person. This person is *just* arrogant, he does not actually have any other qualities at all and he is just a carton of arrogance, if you know that he is arrogant then you know

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everything you need to know about that person. Well then we know that is not true because if we inspect closely - unless you're a very unusual person not like me - then you'll find all of these mental afflictions come up, it is just waiting like seeds, like a big garden full of seeds and it's just waiting [to germinate], as in my case I can go by for days and days and no envy or jealousy and think, Oh I am probably free and then: Oh, no I am not, I thought maybe that [mental affliction] was gone. And so it is just waiting for the right circumstances to come along like a little water pot to water the seeds of the mental afflictions that you thought you were free from.

(16:41) So when we see how these mental afflictions arise in ourselves, that we really are the first victim of our own mental afflictions, we are the first to be afflicted by our mental afflictions, then when we witness, we infer, we intuit the occurrence of mental afflictions in other people that are displayed by way of their behavior. If we really have deep insight into how the mental afflictions arise then we are not so inclined to think that person is just arrogant, any more than when I see the mental factor of arrogance arising in my own mind and I observe it, observe it arising, observe the factors of origination and how it influences other mental states, what kind of desires, what kind of anxiety it gives rise to and so forth. So I see that is not a person, it is not this person; it is not any person, it is a mental factor and then it (mental factors) comes and then it goes.

(17:21) When I've really seen that and then I see somebody else apparently displaying arrogance, then I am not going to jump to the delusional equation that this person equals arrogant, this person is the personification of arrogance, because I know that it is just not how it works. I am not a personification of arrogance when it arises in my mind stream therefore you cannot be either, and that goes for all of the other mental afflictions. So it kind of loosens it up a bit - and then there is the cognitive basis for empathy and then compassion. Because if you've really noticed how mental afflictions influence your own mind stream, they do exactly what it's said they do: they afflict. I've experienced arrogance and it is not pleasant because it's by nature that sense that I am superior and the problem is, probably hardly anybody else agrees with me, which then I should be anxious because I am holding a view that is an incredibly minority view. And that is just one, let alone anger, anger is like a poke in the eye, that is not pleasant, and craving and attachment - anxiety is just built into it, and likewise for jealousy, what a headache. It's like putting the break on and then hitting the accelerator at the same time: it's just the smell of burning rubber, because you're not really going anywhere, because you want and you don't want, you want what that person has and you don't want them to have it, but it's not effective for getting what you want and it's not effective for them not getting it. So it's just making us stink of burning rubber – hitting the accelerator while holding down firmly on the break. That's not pleasant.

(19:37) So there's the segue* – internally, externally, and then of course as we're dynamically engaging with others, then observing our own mental states arising, and then attending to other peoples facial expressions – for which people like Paul Ekman are world experts - or by the tone of their voices, their behavior and so forth, we can often infer or intuit what is going on in their minds. (**segue*, meaning 'to make a transition from one thing to another smoothly and without interruption.')

Meditation: silent session with practice of your choice, practice what you find more beneficial from mindfulness of breathing, settling the mind or awareness of awareness all the way up through mindfulness of the mind.

Transcribed by *Rafael Carlos Giusti*

Revised by *Erik Koepp*

Final edition by *Rafael Carlos Giusti*

Posted by *Alma Ayon*

39 Mindfulness of breathing (1)

17 Sep 2012

Teachings:

So this morning I'd like to elaborate a little bit more on a theme I have mentioned earlier, so just to strike the point more deeply, the profound complementarity between the practice of settling the mind in its natural state and mindfulness of breathing.

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In principle, when we engage in the shamatha practice of settling the mind in its natural state, bringing that quality of awareness to whatever comes up – emotions, desires, mental afflictions, whatever comes up – just by being present, in principle, that should be enough to allow all the knots, all the tightness, all the afflictions, all the misery and the causes of misery that manifest there to release themselves, to unknot themselves, like, it's often said, like a snake that's tied itself into knots just unraveling itself, like that. In principle that should be enough, and you could start in principle, what I'm saying, hypothetically, you could start with a very, very disturbed mind, disturbed maybe from outside abuse, from internal mental afflictions, like the perfect storm of having a lot of internal mental afflictions and having a really tough life – perfect storm to really just give maximum hedonic and genuine unhappiness, right? You could have that, and in principle, you could just by bringing that quality of clear, luminous awareness, your best approximation of substrate consciousness to that, you would simply watch the drama and finally, in the old classic Greek sense of the term, the comedy of your mind healing itself, a comedy because it turns out well; it's not a tragedy, right? Comedy means a happy ending. In principle, you would simply watch your mind; you would watch the extraordinary capacity of your mind to heal itself manifesting from session to session to session. And in many sessions, it would be like watching a lava field or a range of volcanoes, seeing eruptions of memories here and eruptions of emotions here and desires here, and anger's here, and so forth, and just watching the mind erupting, erupting, erupting, but overall cooling, cooling, cooling, as it untangles itself and then finally comes to a state of quiescence, calm – calm not, absolutely not because you've suppressed it, you've tamped it down. It's calm because all of its internal knots have been unraveled, and the mind is really settled in its own ground sanity, its natural sanity of the substrate consciousness, which then shows the symptoms of bliss, luminosity and non-conceptuality, the three basic symptoms of a mind that's in a state of balance. And that's not even liberation, right? We're not even talking about liberation; this is just sane mind.

(3:29) In principle, but of course in real life, the practice often winds up being more complicated than that, and we get caught. We know how to practice. We know what we should be doing, and that is whatever comes up, simply sustain that flow of mindfulness without distraction, without grasping – what part of that you don't you understand? You know, just don't be carried away by thoughts and simply have no preference for any of them, for or against, that's all. I mean, that's pretty simple, isn't it? And so we know exactly; we're bright enough. We know exactly what should be doing, and we know exactly that we're not doing it, right? We are being carried away, and we do prefer, and it's at that point when we encounter these snags, where we know what we need to do is just let it be and let go of the grasping. We know what we need to do, and we can't do it. That's exactly when it's time to come out of the session and either read some really helpful dharma teachings, like Shantideva's *Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life*, and so forth, or meet – I like this term – spiritual friend, a spiritual friend. His Holiness Dalai Lama may be your spiritual friend. He's definitely a spiritual friend. Your spiritual friend may be a great lama, a great yogi like Chatral Rinpoche, right? Your spiritual friend may be your psychotherapist or psychiatrist. If the person is truly wise and compassionate, why not? They're professionally trained to help you work through psychological problems. Your spiritual friend could be your spouse or simply a good friend who is loving, affectionate, accepts you as you are and is really happy to help you. So I like that generic term, from His Holiness the Dalai Lama to a wide range of people, but someone to help you get unhooked, to release those areas where you simply cannot release, you've not been able to release, and then “with a little bit of help from your friends,” oh boy. The Beatles came through with so many good slogans, right? Man, I mean, “with a little help from your friends,” and “let it be.” I mean, come on. I think they were onto something, right?

(5:40) And then there are occasions – again, meanwhile, back in this world in the 21st century, where counseling, advice isn't quite strong enough. The depth of the psychological distress is so strong that it's very hard for it to get in and very hard for one to be able to practice what is being taught, in which case, then psychopharmaceutical drugs may be very helpful – antipsychotics, Ritalin for ADHD and of course, I'm not a professional in that area at all, but there's certainly a wide variety of drugs to choose from for antidepressants, anti-anxiety, and so forth and so on, and so if those are needed, then let them be taken, right?

Now why would one take – I'm offering what I think is a sane approach to realizing profound sanity – why would one resort to drugs when chemical imbalances in the brain are not the true source of psychological distress? The materialists would have us believe that they're entirely the cause, and they're entirely

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wrong. The evidence does not support that view. I've checked with some of the finest psychiatrists in the world, and they say no, it's not true. Depression, for example, is not principally caused by chemical imbalances in the brain; it's not true. ADHD and anxiety and on and on and on it goes – psychological problems are not primarily caused by brain disorders. The materialists would like to just drum that into our heads that it is so, and I regard that as either delusional or psychopathic or sociopathic, one of the two. So what's the proper role for such drugs? They're to help you be able to derive the benefit from wise counsel, compassionate counsel from the psychotherapist, the psychiatrist, the lama, the spiritual friend, and so forth, so you actually can get benefit, because if your mind is so distressed that you can't derive benefit, you can't practice, then anything will help. Bring in the drugs. Okay, bring them in, so that you can get off them and truly be able to benefit from the therapy, from the counseling, and so forth, and then what's that for? To come back home so that you, when you come back to settling the mind, your mind really can heal itself. So to my mind that's a sane strategy.

(8:31) In the best of all possible worlds, you would completely heal your mind simply by settling the mind in its natural state, but in the actual world we need some spiritual friends, and in the actual world, in some cases, some psychopharmaceutical drugs may be helpful.

(8:47) But now, the drugs, so that we can get off the drugs, so we can have the counseling and the counseling so we can get off the counseling, and so that we can come right back home and see the one source of true healing, because everything else is simply cooperative conditions. And here's the substantial cause, here's the core, here's what actually heals – it's your own mind. It's the purity, the luminosity of your own mind; that's what heals you, and the psychotherapists, the spiritual friends, the lamas, the gurus and all of that, they're cooperative conditions, and the drugs are cooperative conditions at least to knock down the barriers so that you can actually get benefit from counseling. So to my mind that's sane. And you see this finally is all about empowering the individual, not in some macho, macho way, but empowering you to let you take refuge, let you really know from your own experience your mind is fundamentally sane, its ground is sane, and take refuge in that natural purity of your own mind. Ultimately of course in Buddhism we'll call that Buddha nature. That's empowering, empowering to you as an individual, like, oh-ho, I'm so strong? No, empowering to your Buddha nature, that you really know where to look for refuge, right?

(10:09) So what we do in this materialistic era? Something that I think is sociopathic, psychotic and demented. I think what I've just said was really sane, and now let's just turn that on its head. Let us assume or let – smother the notion that if you have any capacity to heal yourself on your own by yourself, never mind that. In fact, if you show any ability that your own mind can heal itself, like simply believing, placing your trust in your doctor, your therapist, and so forth, your faith, your trust, your confidence, and that actually does help to heal you, well, let's deny that, and let's call that the placebo effect, which is some dumb-ass little tablet that has no efficacy at all. So it's the lamest – I just feel outraged here – it's the lamest label to give to that which is actually the power of your own mind to heal itself and even heal the body, and without, rather than acknowledging that, that you as an individual, each one of you, has an extraordinary capacity just by the power of belief, of desire, of faith, of confidence, of hope, you have an extraordinary capacity to heal your body and mind, just let it be unleashed, you might even actually cultivate it, when that crops up in the medical profession, what do they call it? Placebo effect. What's a placebo? A something that has no causal efficacy at all; it's just the nearest material thing around, and so we call it a placebo effect. I think that's not only wrong, that's just flat-out delusional, and it of course directs the attention away from the actual one true source of healing, off to some dumb-ass sugar tablet! Oh, that's outrageous.

So when there's a glimmer of hope, they snuff it out and say that's a placebo effect. Oh, how savage! So, okay, well, we have no capacity to heal ourselves. If we're screwed up psychologically, we have no ability of our own, and if we have anything, we'll just call it placebo effect. Okay, where do we go? To the therapist, to the therapist – \$100 an hour to \$150 an hour – oh, by the way, your insurance won't pay for it, and, oh, that's if you have insurance. So what are you going to get? You're going to get drugs. In America, I mean, I think it's one of the least civilized places on the planet when it comes to healthcare, in some respects, not in terms of the quality of the medicine, but the system is just [broken]. You say what's wrong with that; I thought this was a civilized country, like, we take care of the weak; that's what civilized people do. Europe is pretty good at that, but they're socialist, right? Ai yi yi! Whew. Pathological debates going on these days.

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So in America, a person with psychological distress first of all has to go to their primary health care provider and often without even consulting a psychiatrist, the person will say, oh, you have depression? I know just what for you and then prescribe a drug. In other words, the primary refuge is a drug. In other words, they've turned it entirely on top of its head. After all, you're just a brain, and your psychological distress is simply brain disorders, so never mind the psychiatrist, this person who is professionally trained, or the psychotherapist, professionally trained to deal with psychological problems. We'll just skip them and go right to feeding the insatiable appetite of the pharmaceutical industry.

(14:01) I find that absolutely tragic, that it's got it all wrong absolutely. It took everything and turned it on its head. So the primary refuge is drugs, secondary is counseling, and third doesn't even exist, and we'll call it placebo effect. That makes me very sad.

(14:25) Okay, a parallel: Settling the mind in its natural state, mindfulness of breathing, that's where we're going. Bringing that same quality of awareness – attentive, clear, relaxed, mindfully present, not caught up in rumination – bringing this to the space of the body and bringing it to this rhythm of the breath, the rhythm of the prana, the rhythm so profoundly related to the nervous system, which is so profoundly related to the mind and all mental states and mental processes. That same quality of awareness that you have in settling the mind in its natural state you bring to the space of the body, and within that space, just like the space of the mind, within that space, there arrive these upheavals, these fluctuations of the inflow of the breath and the outflow of the breath. If one releases all distraction and all grasping with respect to the sensations of the respiration arising within the space of the body, attends to them, and I'll say this – without breathing; that is, is don't be the agent; don't be the agent at all. You know what that's like – settling the mind in its natural state. Settle the mind in its natural state, and don't think anything. And meanwhile, a flood of thoughts may be coming up, don't think any of them. Just allow them to arise, allow them to pass, but don't get into the drama; don't cognitively fuse with the thoughts, emotions and so forth. So let emotions arise and thoughts and memories, but don't think them. Don't get in there and try to do it. Likewise, exactly the same spirit, as the breath is flowing in and flowing out, don't breathe; don't breathe. Just allow the body to breathe, allow the breath to flow in, to flow out. Be simply present but without closely holding it, without identifying, without even having an iota of control or even preference, and let it be. Let the flow of the breath be utterly as it is. And as your whole awareness settles into this, and it's imperative in this, absolutely imperative, that you release rumination.

(17:05) If you have kind of a high tolerance for blah, blah, blah (psychobabble), and that's not a slur against psychology or psychiatry at all. Just psychobabble is rumination; it's the babbling of the mind, right? It's just blah, blah, blah. It's like, have you ever met a person who has an opinion about everything and cannot stop sharing it? And, like, would you just – sometimes you just want to say, would you please, sometimes, just shut up, you know? Really, your opinions are not even that interesting, and have you noticed how often you repeat yourself? Do you never stop talking? Can you just chill? And we find this obnoxious, opinionated psychobabble-mouth is actually our own minds. What an awful neighbor! I think we should have divorce. I'll start divorce proceedings right now. Just be present with the body. It's not listening anyway. If you're talking to it, the body's not listening back. It's just a nonconceptual space of somatic sensation, and so let it do all the talking. And whenever rumination comes up, I've got an idea (breathing out), just a nice ongoing gentle gust of breeze with every out-breath. Whatever you have to say, keep it to yourself (breathes in and out).

(18:43) Every in-breath, very gentle arousal of just awareness itself but not encouraging the breath to come in. It will do much better without you. So let the breath flow in, whether it's shallow, it's deep, utterly release, and continue to find the body releasing, relaxing, melting, unwinding with every out-breath. As you're more and more tuned with that whole space, you'll find, oh, there's an area of tightness that I just let go. Oh, there's another one I let go. Oh, another one. Oh, this keeps on going on and on and on.

As you truly let your respiration settle in its own natural rhythm, then you may find that just like settling your mind in its natural state, that the cycle of the respiration goes through its own eruptions, just like when you're settling the mind, eruptions of emotions and memories and angers and desires and so forth, these volcanoes spewing forth lava, and you just observe them and let them be and let them flow and then chill, relax. Similarly, you may find on occasion the breath takes on one type of breath – sometimes a great big breath may come up, and then w-h-h-h-e-w, and other times a gentle ripple, and other times this, and another time this. Frankly, it's not true you've seen one breath, you've seen them all. You've seen one breath,

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you've seen one breath, because the next one you really actually don't know what's coming out, unless you're controlling it, and that's what makes mindfulness of breathing boring. If you want mindfulness of breathing to be boring, tedious, heavy and uninspiring, let the flow of rumination carry on and control your breath. Man, it is that boring. I mean, that's boring within two minutes, let alone 24.

(20:35) Whereas insofar as you really release the rumination, you maintain a quiet mind, like a nice, clean kitchen, just, you know, no cockroaches. You truly release even the subtle level. It's really quiet in here, and then you're utterly letting that respiration flow of its own accord. Then watch the permutations, the fluctuations, the eruptions, the calming, the various manifestations from one breath to the next, always different, every breath different, until eventually, over time, without preference, without control, without an agenda, it is true that gradually the breath will go into that very subtle, short breath, sinusoidal pattern, very subtle breathing, very rhythmic. But don't prefer it. Just like in settling the mind in its natural state, it's really nice when it's quiet in the mind, peaceful, none of that rubbish, junk coming up. That memory again? How many times do I have to remember that? And that desire again, and that resentment again, and, whoa! You know, it's natural to prefer quiet, peace and quiet in the space of your mind. Don't. Not for settling the mind, because then you're just suppressing all the stuff that needs to work itself out, resolve and heal itself – you're just suppressing it. Likewise with the breathing, don't prefer. Quite a number of you have had some really good sessions in mindfulness of breathing, and you know how the breath flows things. Oh, I want to do that again. I want to do that again. When's it going to come? Not coming yet. It's still not coming. Okay, maybe next session. That one stunk. But, okay, maybe the next one. Aw, crap, it still isn't happening. I want those prana flows. I liked it. I had it once. It was good. Come on back! Come on. Hey! I'm waiting. It doesn't work that way. Now we come back to let it be.

(22:46) Now it's the whole prana system. The whole prana system is working itself out. It's settling itself in its own natural state, just like your mind settles itself in its natural state when you allow it. So let your whole prana system settle in its natural state and in its own way, and whatever comes up, just be without preference with respect to the type of breath that's flowing up and totally be with preference in terms of the quality of awareness you bring to it, and that is attend to it without distraction, without being carried away by rumination, without even tolerating the second channel of the commentary, the blah, blah, blah of the psychobabble. Release it with every out-breath and without grasping, utterly being present with it, just letting the body breathe itself, balance itself, heal itself. Now having said that, in the best of all possible worlds, you would just do that, and the body would totally un-kink all of its kinks, unblock all of its blockages and prana, totally sort itself out, and within a very short time, your body would go into total free-flow, and then the pranas would come into the central channel, and you would achieve shamatha, and that would be all there would be to it, right?

(24:05) And meanwhile, back here in our world, some of us have been subject to physical injury that might leave some kind of either literal or metaphorical scar tissue of blockages, okay? Whether it's from some injury in the past, could be an illness in the past, or it could be internally generated, because of course it's not only the pranas influences the mind, the mind influences the prana. And so in these cases, when we are doing the practice of settling the respiration in its natural state, when we're doing the practice, then there may be blockages, where we know what we are supposed to do in the body; we're supposed to totally relax into it, but we're not. There's still a tightness that congeals again and again around the breath, or just tightnesses, constrictions, and knots in the body that, as much as we'd like to, we know we should be releasing them, they're not releasing, in which case, chiropractic treatment, physiotherapy, yoga, tai chi, qui gong – that's only the short list. But then we get help from our spiritual friends, whether it's a chiropractor, whether it's a yoga teacher, qui gong teacher, whoever it may be, help from our spiritual friends to help us to get through those snags, so that we come back to the practice and let the body heal itself.

So once again, we find in this – I don't know; I feel a lot of disgust. This indoctrination in materialism, if your body feels bad, what should you do? Well, take a painkiller, stupid! Just take a painkiller, and take lots of painkillers. In other words, shoot the messenger. Just like so many of the drugs for depression and so forth, shoot the messenger. We don't want those symptoms! The hell with the causes; let's just shoot the messenger. Suppress it; muffle it; gag it! You'll never get better. You'll never get healed, but man, are we going to make a lot of money. Oh, and by the way, most of the benefit you're getting is placebo effect. Oh, well, yeah, placebo effect – hold that in mind – placebo effect, one more physical substance. Well, as with the

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mind, so with the body. What's more popular than painkillers, including alcohol and other kinds of drugs that heal nothing whatsoever; they just suppress the symptom, kill the messenger, so you'll never, ever heal. And you'll be impoverished, while those who are making the drugs are laughing all the way to the bank. Makes me very sad. It's really sociopathic, or, if not sociopathic, then it's just flat-out demented. But we don't have to go with the flow, don't have to go with the flow – the sludge of modernity going down the sewer. We don't have to go with that flow, you know? We really have options.

(27:25) So let's emphasize, once again coming back. The body-mind system, this extraordinary system, has an absolutely exceptional, inconceivable capacity to heal itself, and we need to learn how to get out of the way. Are painkillers on occasion very helpful? Definitely yes, right? So that you can get off those and then be able to rely upon your physiotherapist, yoga teacher and so forth. Is that helpful? Yes, definitely. So eventually you don't need your yoga teacher or your physiotherapist or any of that. You bow to them on the way out and say thank you so much, and now I can rely on the one true source of healing and take ultimate refuge there. It's your Buddha nature. Fundamentally, it's not your body, it's not tissue; it's not neurons or prana. It's always coming back to the same – Buddha nature. It's your one ultimate true refuge, and everybody else, including the person who's speaking right now, we're just cooperative conditions, that's all. Oh, yeah. Let's practice.

Meditation:

Let this healing agent of your own awareness descend into the space of the body, right down to the ground. Let this luminous awareness pervade the whole field of the body, illuminating those areas that feel tight, constricted, and gently, gently attend to them as you breathe in, and as you breathe out, to the best of your ability let go.

(31:10) And apart from this gentle undulation of the breath, let your body be still. And if you are sitting upright, see that you've adopted a posture of vigilance, such that your posture in no way inhibits the free in-and-out flow of the breath.

(33:13) Then turn to this ever-increasingly subtle challenge of settling your respiration in its natural rhythm, every cycle unique, unprecedented. The key is the out-breath. With every out-breath, relax more and more and more deeply in the body, including the release of all the tension in the face, the muscles around the eyes, the eyes themselves.

(35:24) With every out-breath, utterly release the breath, finding that gentle, slender middle way of avoiding the extremes of holding onto the breath, retaining the breath, and the extreme of expelling the breath. With utter relaxation, total surrender, simply release the breath, and you'll be able to do this if and only if in the same breath, namely the out-breath, you utterly release rumination, the wandering thoughts. Let your mind be still and clear.

(37:40) Make a special point, with every cycle of the respiration, to be especially quiet and attentive when you come to the end of the out-breath, that you continue releasing all the way to the end. And if there's a pause, let there be a pause. And remain there in utter stillness, without holding the breath out and without pulling it in. Let the breath flow in in its own sweet time in its own sweet way.

(40:16) And now for the remaining minutes of this session, allow yourself the freedom, give yourself a gift of releasing all concern about whatever's gone by in the past and whatever may come in the future. Let the present suffice. Let your awareness come to rest in stillness, nonconceptually, quietly, non-discursively noting when the in-breath is long that it is long, when the out-breath is long that it is long. And then on those occasions when the in-breath is short, noting that it is short, where the out-breath is short, noting that it is short. Keep it simple. And let's continue practicing now in silence.

Teachings after meditation:

(53:00) So the baseline of rumination, let alone when the rumination erupts into mental afflictions, this is what really throws off the whole nervous system, throws everything out of balance – the mind out of balance, the nervous system out of balance. And so to help protect yourself from that, like armor, then throughout the course of the day, maintaining that peripheral awareness of the in-and-out flow of the breath. At the very least, see that you're not fouling it up. So whether or not you're marching towards enlightenment, at least don't march in the opposite direction. So mindfully breathing, letting it flow of its own accord. So just throughout the whole course of the day, let alone the time you're on your cushion, let your whole time here just be ongoing flow of healing. Then the time's well spent. Enjoy your day.

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40 Mindfulness of phenomena (1)

17 Sep 2012

Teachings:

This week we turn to the fourth of the four applications of mindfulness. And as I mentioned before, one might think why do we really need four, why not three? We've covered the whole physical world with the first one; feelings that we care very, very much about in the second one; everything about the mind with the third one. Did we miss something? Maybe not, but the reason that I've heard – I've heard two reasons why there is this fourth close application of mindfulness to dharmas – dharmas just means phenomena.

And the first of these is that, while the first three of these applications of mindfulness were really probing into, investigating the very nature of each of these domains of reality to understand their specific characteristics, characteristics that are unique to the mind, unique to feelings and to physical phenomena, to really understand their own unique nature, but then also with respect to all three of those domains of experience, the three marks of existence, to see how they apply, do they apply? So again it's open investigation. It's not simply trying to take some piece of doctrine and hammer it in, you know, like a brainwashing: it really is inquiry. So we've done that one by one, and now we come to the umbrella; that is, close application of mindfulness to phenomena.

(1:33) And now one reason there is this fourth one [close application of mindfulness to phenomena] is that, while there is certainly "pratityasamutpada", there's dependent origination within each of the preceding three, body, feelings and mind quite clearly, now we're in a way putting the whole package together, right? So it's an encompassing; it's a meta-view, a large encompassing view of the dependent origination, the manner in which body, feelings, mental phenomena, all phenomena, all conditioned phenomena in any case, are all arising in this mode of dependent origination or the Tibetan "ten-ching drelwar jungwa". A long time ago, I found a translation I very much like, and that is viewing all such phenomena as dependently related events, "ten-ching drelwar jungwa," "jungwa," again, that term keeps on cropping up, doesn't it? Jungwa as in the elements, "sem jung" as elements, as in emergences of earth, water, fire, air, and then emergence, "sem jung," almost like elements of the mind, emergences from primary consciousness, displaying as the various mental factors, right? And then all phenomena existing as pratityasamutpada, dependently related jungwa, events, again, arising in mutual interdependence. And of course the nuances, the multifaceted nature of the ways that phenomena do arise in dependently related ways goes immensely deep. And during our second month here, our second four weeks, then we'll check out a whole, another domain of this dependent origination, the manner of dependence that I've hardly even touch on; I've kind of kept it to myself for these first four weeks, as we really try to focus in on the Pali Canon, the Theravada approach, and then the Sautantrika, the Sauntantrika view. So there's plenty to work with there, and I'm going to keep to that for this week. I'm kind of eager to jump into the other whole mode, but I am being patient, and we'll wait. We'll get to Shantideva, the four applications of mindfulness à la Shantideva during our final four weeks.

(3:48) But for the time being, plenty to work with – understanding the nature of substantial causes; that is, what's really, what's the primary cause when we are unhappy about something? There are all kinds of catalysts that may be involved, including brain chemistry for sure and so many other factors, so many cooperative conditions, but when it's all said and done, what is actually transforming into the unhappiness? Not neurons, not other people, not what people say, not politics, not the economy, not the environment, not, not, not, not, not, not. So what's actually transforming into unhappiness? What's transforming into happiness? What's transforming into anger? What's transforming into compassion? And so on, and then what are those cooperative conditions, never to be slighted, because they're enormously important? So this fourth application of mindfulness to phenomena is really looking at, in a very rich, multifaceted way, the manner in which physical phenomena, number one, here's the center of physical phenomena for each of us; here's how we identify the center of the world – it's "me", our own bodies. Of

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course that's the axis: you look in all directions, and everything is around you, including all the stars and planets and all the galaxies; you're all coming around "me." Thank you; we can bow, you know? Thank you, ladies and gentlemen and all extraterrestrials, glad to be at the center of the universe – at least my universe, probably not yours. And so there it is. Within that, from that central perspective of being located physically in physical space, here we are, and from that vantage point looking out at the physical, well, the first thing we get from the inside out is this intimate view, this insider's view of one physical entity, a very complex one. In fact, some scientists say that the human brain is the most complex unified entity that they know of in the entire universe, with a hundred billion neurons, and then it goes into oh, so many zeros when it talks about all the synapses and all the connections among the hundred-billion neurons. So there's no question it's an almost inconceivably complex physical organ, which has enormous bearing for our mental states, our well-being and so forth.

(6:01) So attending to the physical from the inside out, attending to feelings internally, externally – internally and externally, attending to the mind inside out, internally, externally, externally internally, right? All of those, and then in terms of this fourth application of mindfulness, then looking at the interface, the interdependence between the body and the feelings, both physical and mental, the feelings mental and physical, and the mind, the whole array of mental events and states of consciousness and how these all impact each other, all of these impermanent phenomena equally real. I think that's an enormously important point that goes counter to, again, the prevailing view that only material phenomena are real. So there we are. I won't belabor that point, but I think it's quite obvious experientially that our mental states are as real as anything else. And so that's one central theme.

(6:55) Is now it's not so much boring into or probing deeply into one particular domain while ignoring the others, which is exactly what we do in the close application of mindfulness to the body. Good. Good, then that means we're not looking at the mind for the time being; we're focusing there, so we're getting this, kind of this telescopic view, this probing view, investigative view of each of the first three individually, and then we step back and say okay, now, way beyond bare attention, what are the interrelationships, the causal interrelationships above all among these preceding three including self, others, self and other, how does it all fit together?

(7:35) So Pratityasamutpada, dependent origination, really the very core, the very, almost like the trademark or the most characteristic aspect of the Buddha's teachings are really Pratityasamutpada. And hence, that statement from Ashvajit to Shariputra, then Shariputra to Maudgalyayana, and that is the causes of causally originated things the Tathagata has explained and their cessation too; thus are the teachings of the Great Sage. He just summarized, I mean the essence of the Buddha's teachings, and for some people that was enough to achieve realization of Nirvana. And what is Nirvana? It's emptiness. So when I was reading this lovely little biography of Shariputra, I mean, I found it so inspiring, and they just commented, just by the by, just one little one-liner that, oh, often Shariputra would simply dwell in emptiness. He would just, having achieved arhatship, he would just immerse and just dwell in the realization of emptiness, right? So that's Nirvana. You would just enjoy it and then come out and be of tremendous service and then you'd go back and dwell in Nirvana again, in that direct, unmediated nonconceptual realization of emptiness.

(8:49) So that's one aspect. The second aspect, the second rationale for the fourth application of mindfulness is intimately related with that. So I've given the more generic one, and then, well, this is all very well if you're, like, a scientist of reality, if you are a philosopher, truly a philosopher, having a passionate love of wisdom, then of course you'd want to do this. You'd want to see not only what's the nature of this, that and the other thing, you'd want to see how the whole picture fits together. If you truly love wisdom, then wisdom is of course going to be found by seeing the entirety and not only the individual parts, and so that's one rationale. But not everybody is a scientist; some people are more artistic, musical. Some people like gardening, cooking, and so forth; not everybody wants to be a scientist. But regardless of one's own temperament, disposition, special interests, there's one thing we all have in common, and that is we all want to be free of suffering and find happiness, and when we bring wisdom to that quest, then we recognize there's more to happiness than simply hedonic well-being, and there's more to suffering than simply hedonic suffering, and that is just stimulus-driven suffering. There is such a thing as genuine happiness, and there's such a thing as genuine suffering as well. And we see, oh, we might actually be able to do something there, that we really may have some freedom. There may be just a lot of malleability in that area.

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(10:22) How much hedonic well-being here; how much hedonic wellbeing? I think of how many lamas there were in Tibet during the 1950s, you know, virtuous men and women – some were women – but also not just lamas, but monks and nuns, so many of them really virtuous. I mean, of course there were a lot of problems; there's no question, but it's just a factual statement, a lot of the monks, nuns and just general practitioners, but I'm specifically now focusing on monks, nuns and lamas. Many, many of them were truly virtuous people, really devoted to dharma, many, many of them. Six-thousand monasteries for six million people, and then how many of them suffered inconceivably as the result of the occupation, the genocide and so forth, and they were singled out. Oh you monastic ones, oh you lamas, oh you tulku, you're on our hit list; we're going to really get you. The mere peasants, the merchants, the farmers and so forth, well we'll pass them by unless they misbehave, but you, just by your very existence, the fact that you are a monk or nun, you're a lama, you're a tulku, well, you're on our "seek out and destroy" list. So for all their virtue, there was no guarantee that they would dwell hedonically. Right, so, that, and they had very little control over that, kind of like, in many cases, none. They were very virtuous, yeah, but could they control – I mean, Palden Gyatso. I think he was simply a good monk, and I mean, I know him; I translated for him. And before he was incarcerated, as far as I could tell, he was just a good monk. He wasn't a great scholar; he wasn't a tulku, he wasn't a great adept. As far as I remember – you can read his autobiography – *Autobiography of a Buddhist Monk*, I think it's called. But as I recall, I think he was just a good monk. But he said something like, "Long live the Dalai Lama," or something "awful" like that and then spent 33 years in concentration camp. So he really didn't have any control over the amount of hedonic well-being he would experience in his lifetime. But there was one area there where we might actually develop some control, some real influence, and that is the extent to which we attenuate, decrease, subdue the inner causes of misery, the inner causes of genuine unhappiness and cultivate the inner causes of genuine happiness. That you can do as my own lama, Yangthang Rinpoche did, only 18 years in concentration camp, but meditating right the way through. Or Choden Rinpoche, again, about 18, 19 years, that he was in the basement. Instead of being in the concentration camp, he just went into the basement of one of his patrons, I believe, and just stayed in the basement for 19 years and just turned that all into meditation, and now he is one of the greatest meditation teachers in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, traveling widely.

(13:27) So it's a simple point. So now we come back, to not stray too much, but I think those are important examples, and that is when you come to this close applications of mindfulness to phenomena, yes we're looking at dependent origination, but now specifically, there's all kinds of dependent origination – dependent origination in botany, how do plants grow? And zoology and geology, and there's so many things to be interested in, but this is not kind of like Reality 101, just check it all out, dudes. You know, life is so short, but you see, yeah, there are many, many things to be interested in, and there's no reason not to; if that's what you're interested in, go for it. We're not trying to put on blinkers on anybody's minds, but since life is so short, and we care so deeply already about finding happiness and being free of suffering, why don't we check out pratityasamutpada with respect to genuine happiness? What really are the cooperative conditions and substantial causes that give rise to genuine happiness? And what, and we should be focusing especially on our own behavior. It's so easy to be focusing on other people's behavior: I would be so much happier if you would change this way, and I'll tell you how you should change so I can be happier.

Odd how people are not generally all that interested in how they can change to make somebody else happy, you know? If you really want to be happy you may as well try to change the one person you actually really have a chance of changing, because anybody who's even been married knows if you want to change your spouse, like, I want to marry you, and by the way, here's the checklist of all the things I want you to change, so let's put on the rings, and then we'll just get right to it this evening, and I'll start telling you all the ways I can improve you. You don't think that'll work, huh? And that's a spouse; that's one where there's a lot of commitment to each other. It's not strangers; it's not siblings; they had no choice. They just got dumped in the same family by their karma you know? Oh, I got a sibling – who are you? We have a similar karma, huh? Okay, whatever. It's looking at pratityasamutpada very simply; here's the point. In terms of what I might actually be able to cultivate, where I might actually have some influence, in other words, the way I'm manifesting, by way of my body, my speech and my mind, what, coming from me, is contributing in a pretty core way to my own and others, because this is not selfish, to my own and others' genuine happiness? What's contributing? What's helpful? And in terms of what I'm bringing to the world, what is undermining others'

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well-being, obstructing or perhaps actually harming them? Clearly, my influence on others will be only as a cooperative condition, but cooperative conditioning can be pretty powerful, very, very powerful, right? (16:45) So that's it; that's the underlying question. So that's the rationale for the fourth application of mindfulness, generally, pratityasamutpada, the nature of causality, the nature of dependent origination. But then very specifically looking into, and you'll see if you read the Buddha's discourse and his treatment, his explanation of this fourth application of mindfulness, there are a lot of lists there – the four noble truths, I think the eighteen elements are in there, the five obscurations are in there, I mean, there's list upon list upon list, and it's really to try to gain as much clarity as possible, because all those lists are oriented around one theme, to understand reality so that we can be free, right? And there it is. And then specifically, in terms of our own mental states above all that, which are conducive to and which are hindering our evolution, our growth along the path to awakening and finding genuine happiness? So that's the rationale for it. (17:51) One point, and that is one of the lists in that fourth application of mindfulness is the five obscurations. I'd like to return to that because we are, over these last three weeks, now the fourth week, we're venturing into vipashyana, and I would say that, generally speaking, folks here have not yet achieved shamatha, in which case the role of ethics – leading a nonviolent way of life, benevolent way of life, is in the support of – number one, it's meaningful all by itself even if we never meditate, ever, it's still extremely meaningful. But then in terms of the path, the ethics is in support of, to nurture, to cultivate, to sustain, to nourish the cultivation of the second of the higher trainings, samadhi. It's there to support samadhi, right? And our practice of samadhi is especially by way of shamatha. It also includes the four immeasurables; that's also within samadhi realm, and so one might ask, well, then, why don't we just stay there? Why don't we just skip vipashyana, skip the wisdom teachings, and just try to achieve shamatha and not be distracted or getting too complicated? And I think it's too linear; I think it's too linear an approach. I think all vipashyana teachers – almost all of the Theravada teachers agree with that point, but Tibetan teachers also. I have not met one, including any of my teachers, who have ever said, oh, well, you know, don't move into vipashyana or any of these other practices until you've completely achieved shamatha. None of them has said that. (19:34) *Natural Liberation* is a good example of this. It's one of the earth terms of Padmasambhava. He starts with the preliminary practices. He goes directly to shamatha, says practice shamatha until you achieve it, goes to vipashyana, vipashyana to dream yoga and goes right on through the six bardos, right up to the threkcho and thogyal. So the whole path is right there in one text, *Natural Liberation*, with Gyatrul Rinpoche's wonderful commentary. So I asked him years ago, how should one, after he gave me the whole oral transmission, the explanation of the text, these magnificent teachings, then I asked him how should we approach this text? Should we take it step-by-step, and that is do preliminary practices until you've finished them, so to speak? And then practice shamatha until you've achieved it, and then go into vipashyana until you achieved it? Do we do this way or how? And he said no, that's too rigid. Go step-by-step, but sow seeds, sow seeds for all of the steps, okay? So move – primarily know where you are within that bandwidth, within that trajectory. Where are you? Have you already achieved shamatha? Already achieved vipashyana? Already achieved dream yoga? How far you have you gotten? So know where you are within that bandwidth, and so then focus primarily where you are, where you're getting the most benefit, right? Because you're really fully prepared to engage in this practice, but not fully prepared to engage in those more advanced practices because you haven't finished this one yet. Nevertheless, sow seeds for the later ones. That's what Geshe Rabten told me with respect to the Lam Rim; he said yes, focus 80 percent on practices for where you are right now, that are right for you, that purify your mind, primarily right there and sow the seeds for the Six Yogas of Naropa, and stage of generation and completion and all of that. He says, yeah, do that, definitely, but, again, keep focused on the practices that are relevant, appropriate, for which you are a suitable vessel. And so I've received this from Gelugpa teachers, from Nyingma teachers, and so forth. So likewise, here, it would be – this is why – it was my choice and only my choice what to teach during this fall retreat. It would have been ever so easy just to go right back and teach shamatha and the four immeasurables, but I thought, well, we don't have to stay there all the time. Even if people haven't achieved shamatha yet, let's go into vipashyana. But I would say for where we are in our practice right now, shamatha, number one, is valuable in and of itself for itself. It's rich with insight, which, the reflective life is more worth living than the unreflective life – insightful life rather than a delusional life, the lucid life rather than the non-lucid life, so it

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doesn't need a justification. It doesn't need well, okay, what's your excuse for teaching vipashyana, that vipashyana doesn't need an excuse; it's worthwhile in and of itself.

(22:11) And having said that, since it's quite clear that one cannot derive the full benefit of vipashyana without having achieved shamatha, then one can say for this phase of practice, what I would encourage, just an invitation, is venture into the vipashyana, but see how much you can let that vipashyana be in the service of your shamatha, just as your ethics is in the service of shamatha – mental balance, cultivating the heart, the four immeasurables, relaxation, stability, clarity, all of that – let it be in the service of that. So for the time being – it's your choice of course, and I'm happy with your choice whatever it is – but you may want to primarily emphasize the vipashyana between sessions, especially since for most of you, you're spending more time between sessions than during sessions, during the waking state, which means you may as well use it well. So let the insights of the four applications of mindfulness enrich, support, inform, clarify, bring insight to your various shamatha practices, which are tremendously rich in and of themselves.

(23:17) And now I just want to end with this point, and that is, among the five obscurations, this is one of the points to be highlighted in the close application of mindfulness to phenomena, those are the five obscurations; the five dhyana factors would be there too. Then among the five obscurations, the first one is that fixation on the craving, the attachment for hedonic well-being, stimulus-driven pleasure of all kinds, not just sensual, but, we've done this before – fame, renown, power, wealth, the whole thing. You know, like a deer staring into the headlights, thinking, oh, there's where my happiness is. I've been waiting for you for all my life. I've never been happy until I've met you, but now I've found my happiness. Come and just let me grab you around the neck, so you'll never get away. So, attachment, whether it's your attachment to a person, to a place, a job, your looks, all kinds of things, you know? But focusing on an appearance, an object, another person, a place and so forth with that fixation, or it could be an idea and thinking therein lies my happiness, okay? That's an obscuration because it points your attention away from where your happiness actually lies, because it doesn't lie in any other person, object or appearance of the mind. We know where it comes from, and so that obscures the luminous, pure nature of your own awareness. So we've looked at that before. And now among the five dhyana factors, one of the factors that arises quite naturally, through the sustained, intelligent cultivation of shamatha is the dhyana factor of single-pointed attention, the unification of the mind, the real focus. That's one of the five dhyana factors, okay? Single pointed. Again, just to ward off one of the errors around this, it does not mean, necessarily, pinpoint, tunnel vision, tiny, fixated. It doesn't necessarily mean that at all. It may if that's what you choose. If you choose to focus, for example, on the seed syllable, that's your choice. Then it is like a laser, it's pinpoint; it's very tightly focused. That's your choice. With that unification of mind, that single-pointedness, the point that you're singly focusing on may be as vast as all sentient beings, right, as in loving kindness practice. It may be the space of the mind; it may be awareness; it can be as large as you wish, as small as you wish, relatively stable or utterly in a state of flux. So it just means that that there is a real focus, a concerted focus, a composure, a unification on whatever it is. It may wide-angle, it may be telephoto, it may microscopic, it may be panoramic, but it means just that. So among the five dhyana factors, this one, this single-pointed mind, single-pointed attention that arises as the natural antidote, or I like to think of it as a natural antibody for the obscuration of craving and clinging for the bounties of the desire realm; in other words, hedonic pleasure. That's the one, and it's not intuitively obvious. But I think when you go deeper into experience, it actually becomes radiantly clear that it's true, that it actually serves as a direct antidote for it.

(27:06) So maybe you've already had that experience, in which case we could just go into meditation immediately. If not, a little bit more talk, but not much, and that is, within the context of meditation, let's say settling the mind in its natural state – that's a nice one; we've done it, close application of mindfulness to the mind right next door. If one is bringing, again, like a civil engineer who learns how to really bring all the flow of the water in one channel and not just have it spill all over the place, like our ordinary minds, all over the place, but learns, like a civil engineer, to really get the flow of your awareness directed where you will, whether it's a broad alluvial plain or whether it's a narrow channel, whatever it is – when you bring that quality of very focused, very composed, unified awareness, and you direct this to the space of your mind and whatever arises within it, then by that very fact, you're bound to start seeing clearly, at least more clearly, and then more clearly and more clearly the nature of the things to which you're giving such full attention. That is, as you're attending there to the mind, are these emotions, the thoughts, the desires,

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memories and so forth, are they static or they're changing? You don't need to go into a whole lot of cogitation about that, with that full attention, unwavering, focused, composed attention, permanent or impermanent. Boy, it kind of rises up to meet you, right? Therefore, if you turn that same attention to the object of some desire, fixation and so forth, you see: I'm thinking this person is going to be the source of my happiness, going to make me happy for the rest of my life? Are you kidding? How could that possibly be? You're no different than the stuff arising in the space of my mind; you're fizzy. You're just arising moment to moment to moment, and in fact, as far as I know, when you were designed, you were not designed as a product just to make me happy. So then why should you, since that was not the manufacturer on the label, you know? Here's Sally; she's there to make Harry happy, either when they met or any other time later on in their lives. You know, when Harry met Sally, it was a really nice meeting, but, you know, she wasn't actually designed just to make Harry happy. Even Harry wasn't designed to make Harry happy. It takes a lot of work. So just with that clarity, by seeing impermanence, that's going to already start to just take that full commitment out of the fixation, the grasping, the attachment to hedonic pleasure.

(29:52) But then also as one attends just to the space of the mind, the images, the memories, the thoughts and so forth that come to mind, just attend to it, just observe them with discerning intelligence, and it should become quite clear: are these appearances to your mind? Are they actually sources of your well-being? Are they actually sources of suffering? Yes or no, just look, but look closely, sustained, focused, clear, composed, and you might really get some clarity there, which is then insight into dukkha. And then as you're attending, and you're seeing how all of these events arise and arise and arise, just of their own accord, arise in dependence upon prior substantial causes and cooperative conditions, but they all arise of themselves without there being a director like you making them happen. You see, but, well, but these are just mental events; they don't have my brand on them. They're not intrinsically mine; they're certainly not I; I can observe them, so I can't be in two places at once. Oh, there I am over there, and I'm over here too, looking at myself? Not likely that's not a person; this is a person over here. And so then realization, some glimmering, some insight into non-self. As these insights start to percolate up, just by attending ever so closely, recognizing mental events as mental events, that's just bound to be counteracting the old tendency of looking upon anything – your body, another person's body, a place, a job, anything, and thinking, oh, if I had that, I'd be so happy. It doesn't make any sense. So there it is, natural antidote. So we'll have one obscuration per day. There's the obscuration.

(31:56) But Lama Zopa Rinpoche, somebody just quoted him to me, commenting about shamatha, and saying well, of course shamatha is important, but in order to achieve shamatha you really, you must have renunciation. That's simply true. I don't think it's really debatable; it's simply true. But then we can ask, how do you develop renunciation? And there are multiple ways of doing that, and one is by engaging in a lot of discursive meditation; the Lamrim is just classic, and it's just brilliant. It is formulated, conceived, that particular formulation by Atisha a thousand years ago and then through the Kadampa tradition and then in the Kagyu tradition. You find it in the Sakya, the Nyingma tradition. Tsongkhapa, of course, one of his greatest treatises, perhaps his greatest, who knows, but the great exposition of the path, the stages of the path, lays out this whole series of discursive contemplations, designed first of all to bring about a radical disillusionment with all of samsara, not only the desire realm, all of it up and down, and then arousing also a great yearning to realize liberation as a foundation for developing bodhichitta. So there's no question that system has worked for a thousand years, discursive meditations transforming the mind, transforming the way we view reality, shifting our priorities, shifting way of life and so forth, and so that one becomes very concerted, very focused on the path. So discursive meditation, no question, very, very helpful, can be. They can also make you incredibly uptight, strung out, lunged out, fretful, feeling I still don't have real renunciation; I still don't have bodhichitta, and I've been meditating for 20 years and 30 years, and I still don't have it. And I'm still – ah, I think I need some chocolate. Man, I know a lot of Lamrim meditators, and I know a lot of stressed out people. And I can't say they're the same set, but there's definitely a lot of overlap. So it has to be balanced, you know? It has to be balanced out.

And so what's the point of all the discursive meditation? Shamatha and vipashyana – to go non-discursive, right?

So an empirical fact, I think really is – I'm not willing to debate it; it's so obvious it's not worth debating, is that renunciation can arise in a wide variety of ways:

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Discursive meditations are methodical ways, systematic way, that's proven to be effective, in not all cases, but it in many, for many, many – well, a thousand years at least. And then of course, discursive meditation didn't start with Atisha. Go back to Shantideva, go back to Nagarjuna, go back to Buddha and others editions as well. Discursive meditations? Definitely.

But sometimes life events will unfold, such that powerful renunciation emerges, right? That can happen. Powerful renunciation can arise by just being, having tremendous faith, of just faith arising, for whatever reason, but in one's lama, for example, like a person like – who just so moves you from the depths, a person like his HH the Dalai Lama and the many – Khandro-la or Choden Rinpoche or Yangthang Rinpoche, Gyatrul Rinpoche, just feeling, ah! If one can become like that, I want to set everything else – I'm going to take my arm and go, whoosh, everything else is off the table. I don't care about any of that other stuff. Simply show me the path to go into that direction, because that's the direction I want to be. So renunciation can arise in that way, joyfully.

Shamatha. And what I have found, having taught shamatha, well, for 36 years and longer retreats for the last five years, is that, lo and behold, it's happened so many times, I can't doubt it any longer. If I doubted it before, I don't doubt it now, and that is by practicing shamatha from the inside out, you see through your practice of shamatha how shallow and effervescent and unreliable hedonic pleasures are. You just see it. You don't have to meditate on it; it's, like, I see it. And then when you tap into, you get the taste of just what it's like to have a calm and serene mind, let alone bliss. Just like, whoa, my mind could have been like this for the last 20, 30, 40, 50, 60 years? It could have been, but I was doing others things? You can have a mind like this, but this is kind of nice; this is a nice next-door neighbor. This is okay. Serenity's good – peace, quiet, clarity, relaxation, stability, whoa! Genuine happiness, huh? And it doesn't get boring – wow! How can I have more of that? I want seconds and thirds. I want do that for the rest of my life. So renunciation actually can come from the inside. That I found, and that doesn't mean, okay, which are you, an insider or an outsider? Draw from whatever is helpful. But it really is true that a profound shift of priorities, worldview, way of life can occur from the inside out through the practice of shamatha.

Balanced. Four immeasurables – wonderful balance, and then to augment, to support, to illuminate the four applications of mindfulness – very good.

(37:39) So now finally, I know you by now definitely don't take me seriously when I say just one more point, even though I think you know I always mean it. What I'd like to do now is have a silent session, and one session will be basically what we did this morning. Come back, and let this be your ground, your shamatha ground of breathing in and out mindfully, just your ground doing it, again, without – I gave detailed instructions this morning; don't need this it afternoon. Let that be your ground and almost like your tent. And when you wish to make a foray out to explore something, anything that comes up – body, feelings, mental states, whatever, go for it. Make your foray into vipashyana of any sort you like, and then when you finish, come back home again, back to your tent, right?

Nice, quiet place to hang out, in and out breathing, in and out breathing. When the spirit moves you, you can venture out into vipashyana and then come back. That's a possibility. So that's one possibility, and the second one is something that, again, it's not vipashyana, it's not shamatha; nevertheless, it's not bad, and a lot of people have found it beneficial, and I will call it proto- shamatha. And for some of you, you might just once in a while want to spice up your daily regimen of practices with this one, and let's call it open presence without Dzogchen. In other words, we're not pretending we're practicing Dzogchen, but there can be something very refreshing. I was critical of it only in the sense of people presenting this as the Dzogchen meditation, or this is vipashyana or this is that one. There are simply no grounds for that; they're wrong. But this open presence of sitting quietly, letting your awareness come to rest in the present moment, having settled body, speech in natural state, and then simply letting your awareness be open, relaxed, attentive, unmoving, clear, discerning, non-reactive, moment by moment. Not highly focused, more like a light illuminating a room shining in all directions, but still. It's spacious; it's refreshing; it's a nice complement. It's not vipashyana. It's not anti-vipashyana. It's not shamatha, because it's not selective and it's very much attending to the physical senses and so forth, whatever comes up, but it can be a very nice, very gentle, very soothing, refreshing, relaxing way to allow your awareness to really come and settle in the present moment. Now what you're not doing is being carried away by rumination; that's always a common denominator, because that's marching backwards, right? But just resting there with an openness, an attentiveness, discerning, clear, not dull, not spaced out,

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maintaining a flow of knowing, but a way of knowing that's like a lotus opening up in all directions and just being present there. So poised, if you so desire, to then focus in on shamatha, maybe the space of the mind, maybe awareness itself, maybe all sentient beings, maybe slip right into loving kindness practice. But it's a nice point of presence, a clear open presence. It's a lovely phrase, open presence, to start there poised to venture out into vipashyana, to venture out into shamatha, the four applications of mindfulness, the four immeasurables, and so forth, so a good substitute for just sitting quietly in rumination, okay? So you have your choice. Now finally, at long last, you've been very patient – no more words from me.

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41 Mindfulness of breathing (2)

18 Sep 2012

For the past few evenings I've been polishing and correcting a translation I did 27 years ago (never published) of Asanga's explanation of mindfulness of breathing. He lived in the fourth to the fifth century of the common era and together with Nagarjuna, he was really one of the two most important contemplative scholars of the entire Indian Mahayana Buddha's tradition. So he speaks with enormous authority – Nagarjuna for the prajña (the great authority in Madhyamaka and so forth) and Asanga for Upaya (for skillful means). And shamatha is definitely in the realm of skillful means. So his presentation is found in the Shravaka Bhumi, or the stages of the shravakas (so one that is seeking their own individual liberation). And just in terms of my own very limited reading, it's the most extensive and definitive presentation of mindfulness of breathing in the Indo-Tibetan tradition. It's really quite extraordinary and so I thought I would share that with you. I am polishing it now, each evening spending half an hour, an hour, just polishing an earlier translation. And so that's what I'd like to go to this morning. I didn't bring the text. I just want to highlight a couple of points, we'll go right to the practice.

I find it fascinating both for what he does explain – and he explains a lot of things that I don't find in the Theravada tradition – but also things that are very prominent in the Theravada tradition, Asanga doesn't even touch. For example the whole issue of focusing on the tip of the nostrils. He never mentions that. Or the acquired sign, the counterpart sign. No mention.

What he does say is – and I'm going to give just a synopsis of the beginning of the explanation – is in terms of the practice of mindfulness of breathing, what are you attending to? You are attending to the respiration. That's what he said. Not a visualization of the breathing, not anything else, but just – you're attending to the respiration. And then what's the respiration? He said it's the movement of vital energies from the tip of the nostrils down to the region of the navel. That passage way. He said: as you breathe in and the vital energies come from here, from the tip of the nostril, the vital energies then flow down to the region of the navel. As you're breathing out, they flow from the region of the navel up, ok? So that's what you're attending to: the flow of vital energy.

He said in terms of the inhalation and exhalation there are two types. There's (in terms of inhalation), there is the normal inhalation but then there's also the pause at the end, what he calls interim inhalation and that's the pause at the very end of the inhalation just before the exhalation begins. Think of it like a roller coaster. Been on a roller coaster? It goes up to the top and “wee” and then you go down. And then likewise, there's exhalation, the natural exhalation and then there is the interim exhalation and that's that pause at the end of the exhalation and he said a subtle respiration is still going on during those periods. What he doesn't say is try to make an interim inhalation or exhalation. He does not say you know, force that, make it happen. But rather the same thing we've encountered before. Let it all flow and when this happens then just be aware that it's happening.

Final point before we jump in because I'm eager to go back to the meditation, is counting, counting the breaths. He elaborates on this quite extensively. One method he gives is: end of inhalation [count] one, and end of exhalation [count] two, end of inhalation three, four . . . and in that way count one to ten. One count

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at the end of each in and then out breath. And then he says that's counting individually, so you count for each side of the breath, each aspect or half of the breath. But then there's counting by pairs and that's where you count, just one count for the whole cycle. Then he says if you really want to start getting into it, you can count in a forward direction (well that's one to ten), but you can also count in reverse: ten, nine, eight, seven and get down to one. So counting it forward and reverse and then he elaborates even more elaborate counting and I won't go into the elaborate counting. I think I'll read through it a bit this afternoon just so you get some impression of it.

(4:54) But he makes this point and that is, he said the counting is taught for people of dull faculties. Now I would invite you at this time not to immediately leap up and assume that you are a person of dull faculties. I generally do. But maybe not this time. Just consider, he says that this is for people of dull faculties because this helps them stabilize the mind, it helps their mind not to wander so much and so forth, for obvious reasons. But he said for those people of sharp faculties, they're not really drawn to the counting because they simply hear the explanation of counting the breath, they immediately get it and they don't want to do it. They just want to go to the gist of it without cluttering up the practice with all the invasion of the counting. And so he says what you get is [with] a person of sharp faculties, you get it. The count is like (and now I'm definitely interpreting) a speed bump. And it's a speed bump at the very end. That is, you're really taking note of the very end of inhalation and the very beginning of exhalation. And then you're specifically noting the very end of exhalation and the very beginning of inhalation. Now you can do that with counting, like dropping a stone there, bum, bum, bum. But then ok, but I get it. But now why do I need to drop a stone? I'm just going to be very attentive and especially attentive to the beginning and ending of every single inhalation and exhalation. And he said, so people of sharp faculties don't do the counting. They don't like to do it, they just go right, they get the point and then they go right into the practice. Ok, let's do that now.

Meditation:

Settle your body in its natural state and your respiration in its natural rhythm.

Set your mind at ease by releasing all concerns, hopes and fears, concerning the future and the past and even about the present. In utter simplicity let your awareness remain still in this present moment, clearly illuminating the space of the body and the flow of the breath from the nostrils down to the level of the navel. And here's the interpretation I shall now place on this, inspired by the practice of settling the mind in its natural state. I suggest that you do not follow the breath up and down, up and down but rather let your awareness rest in stillness like space. And attend to this sub-space of the body and within that sub-space the flow of sensations from the nostrils down to the region of navel, noting the flow of energy during the course of inhalation, during the pause (even if it's very brief) at the end of inhalation, the flow from the navel up to the nostrils during exhalation and the pause during interim exhalation.

(12:00) As always let the breath flow as naturally, as effortless as possible, releasing all the way through the end of the out breath until the next breath flows in all by itself. Then you may experiment with counting either with one count at the end of inhalation, second count at the end of exhalation or one count for the entire cycle, counting one through ten, one through ten. And you may experiment going forward order, one, two, three, or reverse order ten, nine, eight, etc. If you do count, see that the count is very staccato; that you don't let it drag through the breath, that it's just like a punctuation mark, just alerting you, stabilizing your attention, drawing you back from rumination in case you've strayed.

(15:45) So recall in the practice of settling the mind in its natural state that the entry is to distinguish between the stillness of your own awareness and the movements of the mind. And now, maintain the stillness of your awareness and attend to the movements of the breath. In both cases, utterly without preference, without involvement, without intervention, without control, without preference, just observe your body breathe impersonally relinquishing all control.

(19:11) Arouse your attention and focus during each inhalation so that there's no room for rumination to intervene and break up the continuity of your mindfulness. And then as the breath flows out, deeply relax while maintaining the flow of mindfulness, but so relax that if ruminations [and] wandering thoughts do occur, they're instantly released, blown away by the gentle out breath.

(21:32) While your mindfulness is focused on the respiration, periodically check up with introspection to see that your body remains settled in its natural state. Especially see that the muscles of your face are all relaxed, loose, the forehead open and spacious, eyes soft. And of course monitor the flow of mindfulness itself,

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recognizing the occurrences of excitation and laxity and apply the remedies as needed. Let's continue practicing now in silence.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

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Final edition by Rafael Carlos Giusti

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42 Mindfulness of breathing (3)

18 Sep 2012

Teaching: Alan elaborates on some points from his translation of Asanga's explanations for mindfulness of breathing, as advice for people with heavy rumination. Asanga mentions 4 stages in mindfulness of breathing: 1) inhalation, 2) pause at the end of inhalation, 3) exhalation, 4) pause at the end of exhalation. He notes 1) overly lax or 2) overly forceful engagement. Asanga also presents training in counting as support: 1) counting individually (at end of inhalation/exhalation), 2) counting pairs (at end of exhalation of 1 breath cycle), 3) counting forwards (either practice in ascending order), and 4) counting backwards (either practice in descending order). The point of this training is to cultivate an ongoing flow of knowing, covering all 4 stages of one breath cycle.

Meditation: mindfulness of breathing per Asanga. Settle respiration, by releasing deeply without preference or control. Set the mind at ease, without concerns of the 3 times. Let your awareness be still, illuminating the space of the body. Be aware of the space of vital energy (prana), in particular as it flows between the nostril and navel. Mind should be especially still at the end of each out breath. Experiment with counting if you wish. Monitor posture and mindfulness with introspection.

Q1. You mentioned that we should view the space of the body from the perspective of the substrate. Since we do not have direct access yet to the substrate, do you mean from the coarse mind?

Q2. This mindfulness of breathing practice per Asanga is required more attention than usual, in particular catching the pauses. What the difference between awareness and attention? Is it true to say that only attention moves and that awareness do not? My idea of oscillation in awareness of awareness means that something is moving.

Q3. In observing the space of the mind with eyes open, forms are present. Is this clarity of mind?

Q4. In settling the mind, you gave the analogies of a scientist and a movie critic.

Q5. I find it hard to be focused on the space of the mind between sessions. Either I am disengaged from the environment or I'm not focused on the mind at all.

Q6. In this mindfulness of breathing practice per Asanga, please explain the interim breath. Are vital energies equivalent to the tactile sensation of the breath moving throughout the body? If Asanga does not mention the acquired sign or the counterpart sign, how is shamatha achieved?

Q7. In awareness of awareness, we should be focused entirely on awareness, yet appearances of the other senses still arise.

Meditation starts at: 29:06

Teachings:

This afternoon I'd like to spend I think no more than one half hour reading through the initial part of this explanation of mindfulness of breathing according to Asanga in one of the greatest classics of Mahayana Indian Buddhism [regarding] mindfulness of breathing. This is certainly not intended that we now take an

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academic turn and all become scholars. But rather this text is entirely for the sake of practice and so I'd like to share it with you in the hopes that it can enrich your practice and also just come in from this complementary perspective (from the Mahayana perspective) which is really so wonderfully complementary to that presented by Buddhaghosa that we've covered thus far. And so this is from the Shravaka Bhumi. It would have been written about the fourth century so I think that it's quite remarkable that anything written that long ago [could] still be of interest perhaps [and have] real practical applicability today. And it's good to recall also that according to the Buddhist tradition, when we're going that far back, (to the fourth century) this was a time in India where it was really quite common for (within the Buddhist tradition) for yogis to be achieving first dhyana, forth dhyana into the absorptions and so forth, it was really a "heyday," a very powerful time in which many, many people achieved profound realization. So it's coming from a very juicy phase of Buddhist history in India. And so I'll jump right into the text and hopefully you'll find it helpful. That's certainly my motivation.

So he begins this presentation – this is within a broader context, of course, it's the stages of the path for shravakas, going all the way to liberation and within that, he highlights five different types of personalities (I think it's five). Tsongkhapa reiterates this in many Tibetan texts that go right back to this source, of people who are strong in hatred, people who are strong in this kind of temperament and that kind of temperament and among them are those who are very strong in rumination. Not strong in the sense that we're really good at it, but rather heavily encumbered by it! Right? Predominant in rumination. And so that's the only portion of the whole text that I've translated. And by the way Tsongkhapa cites the Shravaka Bhumi time and time again in his classic presentations on shamatha and other topics. So clearly he among all the great pundits of India and Tibet look upon him as really one of the greatest masters of all of Indian Buddhist history. So among the various temperaments I've translated just this fourteen pages, not that long, double spaced on his presentation on mindfulness of breathing. So he begins with the question:

(3:56) What is mindfulness of the respiration? And mindfulness of the object of inhalation and exhalation is called mindfulness of respiration. So you really are attending to the flow of the breath. In that regard what are the two inhalations? They are inhalation and interim inhalation. So I gave you a little sneak preview of that this morning. What are the two exhalations? They are exhalation and interim exhalation.

But now inhalation is the vital energy that is drawn inward to the level of the navel during exhalation. Breathing in from here, the tip of the nose down to the navel. Interim inhalation occurs during the time when the inhalation has ceased. So as far as you're concerned the breath has come in and the exhalation has not yet begun. So there maybe some times when you breathe in, and I've had this happen, when you breathe in and without trying to hold the breath in any way it just, almost like a balloon, it just stays up for a little while, could be actually a couple of seconds but you'd have to push it out for that little pause to not to take place and you don't push it out so it comes in and you just hold it for a little while and then it flows out. Ok? So it's just that interval. Vital energy similar to that is drawn in for a short time during the period of relaxation, and that is called the interim inhalation. So what he's saying here is when you feel that, the course breath, the breath you experience, when you feel it's already being inhaled then there's a time of just repose, of just kind of hovering there. But he says some vital energy (and I would surmise a subtler vital energy) is still flowing in, when you feel a kind of "the balloon is full?" On a subtle level, it's still flowing in. That's called the interim inhalation, exhalation, and interim exhalation are to be understood in a similar fashion. Here is this distinction: the outwardly directed vital energy moves from the region of the navel up to the upper lip or the tip of the nose and then outward from there. Ok? So especially for us now in the twenty first century (how many centuries is that seventeen centuries later?), in this very, very busy I mean dramatically different from rural India of the fourth century, my sense is that we are carrying around with us an excess of pent-up energy, so you are may very well find – this is not a recommendation but simply observation -- that you may find not infrequently that when you breathe out and as far as you can tell you just released everything that for a matter of five seconds and maybe considerably longer you just don't need to breathe in, the breath isn't flowing in, you're just resting there. And you don't feel at all short of breath. If you do then that means you're probably inhibiting the breath and you should let flow in, right? But if it flows out and you're just resting there, just relax at ease and so forth.

(6:45) And that would be interim exhalation. And that means that energy is still flowing off like excess energy is still kind of seeping out and enabling you to come to more of a state of equilibrium.

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(6:58) So what are the causes of inhalation and exhalation? They are two:

So one is quite interesting and I won't elaborate on it, but one of these is propulsive karma. So this is the karma that propels us in a lifetime and that would bring us deeply into Buddhist world view, but just, there's that. The propulsive karma is that which propels you into one type of an incarnation or whatever you like, an embodiment, as opposed to another. So that's one cause.

The other one is the space in the region of the navel. The Tibetan terms is "bu." It just means it's kind of like an openness or space down here and then the more extensive space or spaces of the body. So specifically here along this channel and down to the navel. But then also just the space on the body. Bear in mind I am quite sure that what he is referring to is not oxygen, because after all that just goes to the lungs. But this vital energy which is much subtler and deeply related (as is well known I think long before the Buddha) in the Hindu tradition. So they speak of pranayana. So there's something subtler going on here that I think thus far is not measured by the technology of modern science that is prana – they haven't measured it yet – that it exists I think is obvious for many people in Taichi, the martial arts, Vajrayana, Hindu Tantra and Buddhist Tantra and so forth. So it's that subtle level that is closely conjoined with the course breathing, that actual air that goes in and out. And he's referring to this subtler type of vital energy.

(8:19) What are the basis of inhalation and exhalation? They are two: the body and mind. How so? Inhalation and exhalation occur in dependence upon the body and mind and that is in accord with circumstances. So there's a little bit of technical stuff here. I'll just read through it. You may find it interesting. If not, settle your mind in its natural state.

So he poses a query, so a qualm ok, but what about this, a question:

What is being writing below between the marks [...] are additional comments that Alan introduced as explanations for better understanding of the Query/Asanga's response which are not included in the original Query/Asanga's response and you will see this in some of the transcripts where Alan is reading a text during the sessions.

Query: Might they [that is the in and out breath] occur solely in dependence upon the body?

And Asanga's response is: In that case [that is if that were the case] they would occur for one engaging in the state of equipoise devoid of discernment [so way up there in the formless realm], in the equipoise of cessation nirodha-samapatti [so incredibly subtle Samadhi], and in those who are born among the gods who are sentient beings devoid of discernment.

[That is they have minds and they don't have bodies. Might they occur solely in dependence upon the body? No, no, no these people, they're still embodied, they're still embodied. But the course mind is completely shut down. Might they occur solely in dependence upon the body? Well in these cases the body is there but the mind is not. That's interesting and I need to reflect upon this right now because I just retranslated and polished this recently. Devoid of discernment . . . So what he's saying is for these such beings they do have a body but the breath doesn't occur, Ok? So these are states of equipoise where the breathing completely shuts down.]

Query: Might they occur solely in dependence upon the mind?

Response: In that case they would occur for one engaging in formless equipoise [so these early ones were not formless equipoise but simply states of Samadhi] if they occurred solely in dependence upon the mind, they would occur for those engaging in formless equipoise or for those born in the formless realm, they have minds but not bodies but they don't have breath.

Query: Then might they occur in dependence upon both the body and mind?

Response: That is not always the case. If that were so, they would also occur in those engaged in the equipoise of the fourth dhyana and in those born in the fourth dhyana [where there is no breathing but there is body and mind], and in sentient beings in the oval, oblong, and round stages of embryonic development. [So I actually did some research on this to make sure I got it right and I think I actually have gotten it right. He is referring to week two to four after conception. Very, very early stages, so obviously during the first month, there is no breathing but he's saying there is a seminal mind. Seminal not with the male aspect of it, just a core mind. There's body and mind but there's no breathing. So as a technical point, I think we can move right on.]

Query: What are the movements of inhalation and exhalation?

Response: They are two: The movement of the inhalation downward and of exhalation, upwards.

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Query: What are the locations of inhalation and exhalation?

Response: They are two: coarse space and subtle spaces. The coarse space extends [now this gets more practical. That is, what are you actually attending to? You're attending to the space in which the sensations of the breath are occurring.] So the coarse space extends from the region of the navel up to the mouth and nose, or from the mouth and nose to the space in the region of the navel. And what are the subtle spaces? They are pores over the entire body. [I found that interesting. There are pores. So I just recently read a scientific report. Remember "Goldfinger"? Remember the, James Bond, "Goldfinger?" The bad guy painted the woman with gold and killed her that way because her body suffocated to death because she couldn't breathe through the pores. Well about a month or so ago I read a report saying, "well that's really good, she was beautiful and covered in gold so it's kind of cool. But, it's not true." That you actually do not breathe through the pores according to modern science. You don't breathe through the pores. Fair enough and I accept that. They should know what they're talking about. But of course they don't refer to prana. And so what he is suggesting here is that the prana even during the respiration there is some type of a pranic flow obviously in a very subtle level that's taking place through the pores. Now whether gold paint would cover that or not, I'll leave that to a James Bond specialist. I don't know.]

Query: What is the fourfold enumeration of the names of the inhalation and exhalation? **Response:** This consists of [1] the vital energies, [2] the in- and out-breaths, [3] inhalations and exhalations, and [4] formations of the body [the breathing itself is a formation, a *sanskara* of the body]. "Vital energy" is one word that is synonymous with other vital energies or pertains to them, and it is common with the other [three enumerations]; so that is it covers all the other three whereas the other three are unique.

(13:30) Now we get practical:

Query: What are the faults of exertions in inhalation and exhalation [that is, how much is too much, how much is too little]?

Response: [And the faults in terms of the degree of effort you give] they are overly lax engagement and overly forcefully engagement. [So you've heard this before. But it's interesting to hear 17 centuries ago.]

For purpose of study of the transcript the response was divided in two parts including Alan's comments as below:

Overly lax engagement

Response: Due to the overly lax engagement the lazy mind is shrouded with dullness or drowsiness or it is distracted outward.

Alan's comments:

I think it's pretty self-explanatory. I like the word "engagement." Remember some of you asked me: "How long should I have the sessions?" "Shall I extend them and if so how long?" And my answer has always been the same (at least for a long time). And that is, note your level of engagement. That's the best word I can find. Not "how well is your practice is going" because that's just going to vary. And your practice now compared to stage six or seven is terrible. So should you just quit? No, but it's where you are right now into your capacity. It's very relative. It's relative to where you are now, what's the level of your engagement? Are you casual, are you sloppy, are you bored, are you interested? So you bring that level of engagement where you're giving it your full attention, at the beginning (hopefully that will take place within the first minute or two): "Ok I'm in gear, I am [here] now, this is as good as I can offer. I'm really attending. And then when you see about extending or judging, or evaluating how long should the session be? Here's my answer: And that is the level of engagement – not the quality of the meditation because that's going to vary, you can't control that but you can control the level of engagement. Right? That's eudaimonic, that's coming from your side and not "oh, I was barraged with thoughts or images or emotions or memories." That happens. And so the answer is "let your level of engagement be fairly homogenous." That is to say, "ok, this is good, this is as well as I can do for the time being." Good. Ten minutes later, it should be right there. If ten minutes later you're still interested, you're still engaged and you'd still like to practice more, then why not? Extend it a bit. But if you see the level of engagement is tapering off, you're getting a bit sloppy, a bit casual or exhausted, whatever, then before that happens or right when it is happening, or preferably a little bit before you start losing it, that's the time to terminate the session. So whether that's twenty minutes, whether it's one hour or two hours, that is for you to decide. But you always want to go for quality over quantity. So don't pride yourself [thinking] "oh, I did a one hour session. The last forty minutes I was just sleepy, not really interested and

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bored but at least I put in the time.” You’re not getting paid. So you might as well get off the cushion. It’s all about the level of engagement.

So due to overly lax engagement the lazy mind, the sloppy mind, the casual, the complacent mind then is shrouded with dullness or drowsiness or is distracted outward. Either way, it’s going to fall to one of the attentional imbalances, attention deficit or hyper activity.

Overly forceful engagement

Response: Excessively forceful engagement inflicts bodily harm or mental harm.

Alan’s comments:

The earlier one you just feel drowsy or dull. Well, you do that every night anyway so that can’t be doing too much damage, except for creating a bad habit. But he said if you’re pushing too hard (yodeling up to us in the twenty-first century) then this can really harm you.

Query: How is the body harmed?

Response: Inhalation and exhalation are forcefully drawn in and released with difficulty [so again there’s just this constriction, you’re almost like gasping, pulling in and when it’s time to just release – it maybe a staccato release or a constrained or an inhibited release. In other words this is really not a healthy respiration], and imbalanced vital energies enter in the body. Right at the start they suffuse the major and minor limbs, and they are called “pervasive.” So once again, we’re talking about energy here that can really pervade the whole body. Moreover, when the pervasive vital energy becomes excessive (so really, I think you just get too pumped up, just like an over inflated tire, I’ve used that metaphor before, when you’re just too wired, just too pumped up, you know this is not going to be any good), this is said to create illness, and they produce physical imbalances in the major and minor limbs. That is bodily harm.

Alan’s comments:

When pervasive vital energy becomes excessive this is said to create illness and they produce physical imbalances in the major and minor limbs, that is bodily harm. So that you should avoid. It shouldn’t happen. If you really need to error, error on the side of sloppiness. But it would be better not to error. At least you won’t harm yourself, you’ll just develop bad habits.

Query: How is the mind harmed [with this excessive force]?

Response: With too much force the mind is overwhelmed by becoming distracted, depressed, or agitated. In those ways harm is done to the mind. So it sounds like “lum” disorder, pranic disorder, stress. Getting just, tapped out, fatigued.

Asanga also presents training in counting as support:

(19:21) Asanga’s text: In terms of mindfulness of respiration one should know these five kinds of trainings. This covers the big picture.

The five trainings of counting are:

Thorough training by counting.

Thorough training by engaging with the aggregates,

So now this is where he’s going to start delving into using mindfulness of breathing as your basis not only for shamatha, but actually as we’ll see using mindfulness of breathing as your basis for vipassana. So hence, very appropriate for this week.

3) Thorough training by engaging with dependent origination [now we are definitely in vipassana territory].

4) Thorough training by engaging with reality [and he is referring here to the four noble truths – vipassana territory].

5) And finally, thorough training by way of sixteen aspects.

And this where he unpacks mindfulness of breathing as a complete path, one practice, sixteen aspects culminates and becoming an arhat. Very cool. Same thing occurs in the Theravada tradition. Buddhaghosa gives a whole commentary on this.

So let’s see this session based on the text and Alan’s comments in addition:

Asanga’s text: What is thorough training by counting? The training by counting entails four methods: (A) counting individually, (B) counting by pairs, (C) counting forwards, and (D) counting backwards.

A. What is counting individually? When the inhalation has come in, one counts

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“one” with mindfulness applied to inhalation and exhalation. When the inhalation has ceased and the exhalation has finished, one counts, “two,” counting thus up to ten, so that the number of counts is not be too little or too much. This is called counting individually.

B. What is counting by pairs? When the inhalation has finished coming in, and the exhalation has finished going out, then one counts “one.” One counts up to ten with that method of counting. This is called counting by pairs. Combining the inhalation and exhalation as one, one counts “one,” so this is called counting by pairs.

C. What is counting forwards? By counting individually or by pairs, one counts forwards up to ten. This is called counting forwards.

D. What is counting backwards? One counts in reverse order starting from ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five...down to one. This is called counting backwards.

Alan’s comments: So he’s given four methods there, just to keep you engaged. I mean, let’s call it speed bumps, call it little mnemonic devices to trigger your memory. But the fundamental point is that you just don’t wander off so long. This is for rumination people. The mind tends to wander off a lot and get caught up in rumination. This is designed to just bring you back in a gentle, methodical fashion.

When one has done the practice of counting forwards and counting backwards by counting individually or by pairs, and one’s mind does not wander in between [counts], and one counts without the mind becoming distracted, then distinctive advanced counting should be explained.

What is distinctive counting? One counts two as one, either by counting individually or by pairs. Now with counting by pairs, four inhalations and exhalations become one. With counting individually, moreover, an inhalation and exhalation become one.

(23:28) **Alan’s comments:** [These methods] are a kind of rudimentary level of working memory where you’re breathing in and out, in and out and you know [that] now is the time to say “one” and then [continue breathing] in and out, in and out [and you count] “two.” Not that difficult. But you have to maintain that continuity of mindfulness. Otherwise by the time two breaths have gone by, you will have forgotten where you are. But it gets even better.

In this way one counts up to ten. Thus, one counts higher and higher, increasing up to counting even a hundred breaths as one. Then by counting a hundred as one, one counts forwards up to ten. Thus one counts ten of that practice of counting as “one” and goes up to “ten.” And with counting ten as one, if one’s mind does not wander in between counts, one is thoroughly trained by way of counting.

When applying oneself to counting, if the mind wanders in between counts then return to the beginning and start counting either forwards or backwards.

When the mind naturally does not stray away but is continually engaged with the object of inhalation and exhalation without interruption, such that when the inhalation begins one apprehends that it is beginning, when the inhalation ends, one apprehends that it ends and that there is no exhalation [Alan’s comments: it must entail an ongoing flow of knowing], when the exhalation begins one apprehends that it begins, and when it stops one apprehends that it has stopped and that there is no inhalation [Alan’s comments: Sot it’s really quite micro-managing, micro-attending to these rather subtle intervals], when one engages with the breath with delight, free of wavering, movement, and distraction—with that, one advances beyond the stage of counting.

Then one should not count any more, but direct the mind solely to the object of inhalation and exhalation.

During the breaks between inhalation and exhalation, one should simply comprehend and know the beginning and end of each exhalation and inhalation. That is called thorough training by counting.

Moreover, the practice of counting is taught to those of dull faculties, for it stabilizes their minds, brings delight to their minds, and prevents them from becoming distracted.

Otherwise, without counting, their minds would be enveloped with dullness and drowsiness, or their minds would be distracted outward. But by applying themselves to counting, that does not happen to them.

People with sharp faculties and clear minds take no pleasure in the practice of counting.

Simply by receiving the instructions on counting, they very quickly comprehend it, and therefore take no delight in it. By closely applying mindfulness to the object of inhalation and exhalation, they closely attend to the place, duration, manner, and time of occurrence of the in- and out breaths. That is how they train.

Alan’s comments:

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In other words, they just immediately see, “I see the whole point of the counting, I understand it all. And since I understand it, I can do exactly that, but without peppering it without all that counting. Which is kind of like, irritating. So, thank you and now I know exactly what I need to do. But that explanation was very helpful. Thank you.”

Noting when does the in breath cease and do you know that exhalation hasn’t begun yet and then likewise, that was the cessation of exhalation, inhalation hasn’t begun yet, that’s the interim inhalation, that’s the interim exhalation, and then I’m attending to the flow primarily here in this kind of channel but especially coming down to the culmination in the region of the navel but also having this peripheral awareness that there is a subtle level of vital energy of the respiration taking place through the pores themselves. So it’s a very embodied practice, probably the most embodied practice of shamatha that there is. And hence, the very therapeutic effect of it or nature of it in terms of the prana system.

Meditation:

Although you’ve heard this many times I will say again, let your entrance into the practice be one of release, of soothing and welcoming you into the practice by letting your awareness descend into the body right down to the ground. Settle your body in its natural state, relaxed, still and vigilant.

(32:21) Take on this subtle challenge settling your respiration in its natural rhythm knowing that it’s an ongoing challenge. It’s not simply a matter of getting it right but rather releasing more and more deeply, more and more subtly, all the way through the end of the out breath and more and more subtly allowing without intervention the breath to flow in just letting it be whether it’s shallow or deep, faster or slow, regular or irregular, just like in settling the mind in its natural state that you allow thoughts, images and memories to arise without control, without preference likewise, with the breath.

(34:12) And again with an act of will allow yourself the freedom for this short session to release all concerns about the future and past, all cogitations about the present, let your awareness come to rest in stillness, holding its on ground, resting in its own place, but illuminating the space of the body without distraction, without grasping. Be aware of this field of prana (how else to describe this energetic field), a space permeated by what we may call energy. And since it’s energy within a living organism, we’ll call it vital energy.

(35:58) Now recall the object of mindfulness: it is the respiration, the respiration is the flow of prana from the apertures of nostrils down to the region of the navel. But I would suggest that you do not move your attention like a train moving back and forth on a track, for shamatha is very much about stillness. Rather, let your awareness be still [and] so analogous to the practice of settling the mind where your awareness is still while attending to but not caught up by the movements of the mind. Likewise let your awareness be still and closely attend to the movements of the prana, the flow of energy from the nostrils down to the navel, the navel up to the nostrils. No need to visualize anything. You can immediately by way of tactile perception and coupling mental perception with that, attend to it without visualizing anything.

(38:21) And then in terms of the basic methods of counting, counting one, one count at the end of inhalation, the second at the end of exhalation, counting individually or by pairs in forward order or reverse order, experiment if you will and if you choose not to that’s fine. But know the meaning as described previously.

(41:18) From now and again monitor the body especially the face, especially the area around the eyes and the forehead to see that your body is relaxed and that the posture of vigilance is maintained with stillness. See that your mind is especially still as you come to the end of exhalation as you approach the interim exhalation allowing the breath to flow effortlessly in and likewise when you come to the end of the inhalation and note even if for only a second or so the interim inhalation and then the beginning of exhalation. So with or without counting remain continually closely engaged with each cycle of the respiration.

(47:00) And as always monitor the flow of mindfulness with introspection knowing that this does interrupt the flow of mindfulness. But insofar as it is still helpful that you do not become distracted for long periods or fall into laxity for long periods, apply it [introspection] with the frequency that is optimal. Not too interruptive, but not so slack that you fall into and stay in attentional imbalance. Let’s continue practicing now in silence.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Revised by Aaron Morrison

Final edition by Rafael Carlos Giusti

“Goldfinger” is the third spy film in the James Bond series released in 1964 starring Sean Connery as Bond.

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The Buddha classified the constituents of our worldly embodiment into five skandhas (aggregates) of clinging consisting of form, feelings, recognition, compositional factors and consciousness. (See p. 261 of *Minding Closely*)

43 Mindfulness of breathing (4)

19 Sep 2012

This morning we will turn briefly to one of the five obscurations, ill-will, that obscures the very luminous, blissful and pure nature of our own awareness, and look at the natural antibody [meaning: a substance produced by the body to produce disease] that is a quality that we already have that can counteract that and dispel ill-will. So it is very cool: you have the built-in problem, you didn't get that from Buddhism, I didn't give it to you, but the antibody also you do not get from Buddhism, I did not give it to you, so you are the package.

(0:45) The second of the five obscurations - now that I've already a couple of days ago discussed this fixation on hedonic well-being or hedonic pleasures - the second one is ill-will. So consider ill-will, enmity, resentment is a big one; all of that is in the same package and we can carry the seeds of that mental affliction or that obscuration with us whether or not we ever meditate, ever practice any kind of Dharma, that is a problem that we come to Buddhism with, we did not get it from Buddhism. But also when you practice any kind of meditation, but especially when you practice shamatha a lot, those seeds are just bound to be watered as you dredge your psyche and the mind settles and you start remembering things and emotions start coming up, it is utterly common, it is totally normal to be sitting there minding your own business in a nice pleasant environment and getting really pissed-off just by memories and just by stuff coming-up and just finding Woe! And so it happens, it's normal, get used to it. But then you do not want to wallow there, you don't want to stay there, right? So then look for the natural antibody, and what is that? It is sukhka, you should learn that word, and the opposite is dukkha (suffering), you already know dukkha. Sukkha means well-being. There are all kinds of sukkah for sure, but what we are referring to here is not some sense of bliss or ecstasy or mind-boggling inconceivable joy; sukhka is just a sense of well-being, and a number of you have expressed that even in your own meditation let alone enjoying this environment – what's not to enjoy? - but some of you have found oh, I'm getting to the point in my meditation where I actually enjoy it. I'm finding I'm starting to enjoy mindfulness of breathing: that is sukkah. When Elizabeth said yesterday, "Oh, I found that mindfulness of breathing interesting", that is sukkah. When you say 'I find this interesting', that is an expression of pleasure. If you get a rash, you don't say, 'Woe, that's interesting.' It catches your attention but you don't call it interesting.

(3:47) How then can we arouse sukhka? Well as I said this is a natural antibody that comes through the practice of shamatha and really comes into flowering when you actually achieve shamatha, achieve access to the first dhyana you get all five of the antibodies, a great bouquet of antibodies, the five dhyana factors. But within the shamatha practice itself whether it's mindfulness of breathing, settling the mind, awareness of awareness, we cannot simply, when we see resentments coming up, resentment, anger, hostility coming up, you cannot just say, "Oh, then I will turn on sukkah", it does not work in that way. So then how can we arouse sukkah? One thing is go back to the practice and find a way, be skillful, find a way to enjoy your meditation practice, find a way to enjoy it. As the Buddha said, when it's cultivated and developed - mindfulness of breathing - then it brings out this sublime state, an ambrosial state, and that is just through practice, it's by persevering, persevering to the point that you say, "Oh, I am starting to get into the flow, I enjoy that, I am starting to get periods when my mind is really calm, I like that, the mind is starting to get clear and like that, I am getting very relaxed in the meditation, I like that". That is sukkah. And so from the meditation itself, just by developing and cultivating it, sukkah will gradually start percolating-up, like water just filtering up in the sands of the desert, it is pretty nice.

But it is not just on the cushion doing shamatha; that is, we can give a little bit of help from the outside. So among the four immeasurables, mudita, empathetic joy, that is really helpful for just getting yourself in a different mindset, than the mindset of: what are all the rotten things that anybody has ever done to me? And what are all the rotten things that are happening in the world; and why can I be depressed, and *self-righteously unhappy and miserable at other peoples' behavior? There's one way of looking at the world. And

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then we look for an alternative and empathetic joy is a pretty good alternative. So just reflecting upon the extraordinary range of virtues in human history, that is taking place in the world nowadays, among your Dharma friends right here in this room (Mind Center) where there are a lot of virtues, very sincere. Nobody is coming here (Mind Center) for phony reasons. There are plenty of sincere people here coming to cultivate their heart and mind, that is a nice community to be in, that is something to rejoice in, to rejoice in your own virtues, to rejoice in your practice, to be aware of the opportunities that you have in this life, to take delight in those opportunities, to really very deliberately focus your attention on things that bring about a sense of gratitude, of appreciation, of well-being, of happiness, of satisfaction, take the reins of your horse, of your attention and direct it out to grassy meadows, if you really feel, “Oh, there is really a lot to be happy about” and you can settle there in this environment of empathetic joy. Actually there is a lot more to rejoice in than be grumpy about; there are a lot of people in the world where that it is not true, they have no dharma at all, how many of them are suffering in poverty, an enormous number, how many are right now suffering from really severe disease and do not have the medical care they need, that is tough, how many are really old and do not have anyone to take care of them, that is really tough and the list can go on, and we do have Dharma. *[self-righteously: a reactive emotion of anger over perceived mistreatment; confident of one’s own righteousness, especially when intolerant of the behavior of others.]

(9:52) You do not go from mother’s milk to a rare steak. So be gentle, let your whole approach to Dharma be loving, loving for yourself, gently transition, and so even here (Mind Center) there are enjoyments, number one this is a really beautiful place, and then just take it at your own pace; and that’s what Sundays are for also, if you can be happy on Sundays meditating ten hours a day in your room, then why go outside? But if that is a bit too intense, then that is not the right way, maybe you may enjoy going to the beach or going to the pool but that is for you to decide, to find that nice balance, but the orientation here is that we gradually wean ourselves - not off of hedonic well-being - because if you read the songs of experience of people like Milarepa and others there is a tremendous appreciation of the beauties of nature and the joys of many things in the world, they enjoyed that. And so it’s not that we should wean ourselves off of hedonic well-being, happiness, pleasure like enjoying a good meal, nice music, the beauties of nature and so forth, but rather weaning ourselves off of the dependency on them, the attachment to the hedonic pleasures.

To sum up then in terms of the shamatha practices: if you can take enough interest in the practice of mindfulness of breathing, noticing, being attentive to and enjoying the details of the in and out breath and the intervals between, if you can find that interesting, if you can enjoy breathing, then you tap into eudhamonia, you tap into a source of genuine happiness because you are enjoying being alive; that is, breathing is not something in addition to being alive, it is part of the program.

(12:48) So if you can enjoy breathing that means that you can enjoy simply being alive; that is a really good foundation for enjoying hedonic pleasures when they are dished-up, but not missing them when they are not [present], because you already have your little teaspoons full of genuine happiness coming in. And then if you can enjoy settling the mind in its natural state not by the entertainment value of what is coming up but by the quality of awareness that you are experiencing, then you really are in a position to enjoy the dying process, because you’ll stop breathing so you won’t be able to enjoy that anymore, it is finished. But there is more to come, there are coming attractions after the breath stops, there is a sequence, an ongoing flow of mental experiences in Samadhi. So if you’ve already gotten used to enjoying watching your mind dissolve into its natural state, boy I have good news for you, when you die that’s going to happen all by itself and you’re going to get natural Samadhi. You may be worried by seeing that you cannot see anything, you cannot hear anything. Of course you cannot, you are dying. But if you can enjoy what is left over as your senses are imploding and say, “yes, this is what I’ve been striving for all along, if I have not achieved shamatha already, ok, let’s give it one last shot”, then you can enjoy dying. So number one, mindfulness of breathing you can enjoy living, number two settling the mind you can enjoy dying. And if you can rest in awareness of awareness and enjoy that then you can enjoy being dead because now the mind has settled in its natural state, your course mind has dissolved into substrate consciousness, you are dead.

(14:57) Then I think we have a complete package here, you can enjoy living, dying, and being dead. Now the last one is the shortest one, because that’s only going to be a matter of hours and that is your little dark retreat will be finished. But if you’ve had some taste - by whatever practice it is, Mahamudra, Dozgchen,

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whatever it may be - if you've had some taste of rigpa, some glimpse, some genuine realization of rigpa, pristine awareness, then when the clear light of death spontaneously manifests, rigpa is unveiled following being dead, then you have a real chance of, and this is a lovely metaphor, of the child crawling up onto the lap of the mother. Or recognizing an old friend that you lost contact with and then you see Oh! my old friend, and that is sometime during the life you had some contact, some acquaintance with rigpa, you probably lost it, but now you recognize: here is my old friend. Of course it is only a metaphor, but it is now coming home, you are coming now to ground rigpa, the rigpa was always there and now finally is unveiled because everything else is gone, even your substrate consciousness has evaporated away for a while, so then this non-dual realization of rigpa, the clear light of death, and now if you can taste that and ascertain it you can actually enjoy being who you are and who you've always been. So enjoy it. Let's practice shamatha.

Meditation:

As if slipping into a cool swimming pool on a hot summer day let your awareness slip into the transparent depth of the space of your own body right down to the ground.

(18:25) Set your body at ease, culminating in softening your eyes.

(19:25) And now utterly release yourself into the breath.

(19:56) And release your mind into the present moment: simplify, simplify, releasing that which no longer exists, releasing that which does not yet exist, and settling into the one reality you can know directly.

(22:40) And now it is time to learn how to breathe by not breathing, by not being involved, not interfering. Let your awareness be as non-reactive as space itself, as non-possessive as space itself. As if you are having an out body experience where your awareness rests in the space of awareness itself, open and expansive.

Observe the flow of energy from the nostrils down to the level of the navel, flowing down as you breathe in, flowing up as you breathe out, and let your mind be especially quiet, silent. When you come to the end of each inhalation note exactly when that occurs, note the pause, the interim inhalation and the beginning of exhalation as you relax deeply all the way through. And especially as you come to the end of the out breath fearlessly relax in the body, totally release the breath, let your mind be pin-drop silent as you note the very end of exhalation, you note the interim exhalation whether it is short or long. And you are right there when the inhalation begins, allowing it to flow in of its own accord whether it is a very shallow breath or deep, however it may be, simply witnessing without inhibiting it or helping it along.

(32:37) There is a lot of momentum behind rumination, long-standing deep-rooted habit, but breath by breath like a flow of water carving a path through rock, with every out breath release and carve a new habit, a habit of quiet sanity and clarity, relaxed and still.

Final comments after meditation:

(41:39) I just had a flight of fantasy and imagined an education system where children from pre-school on were being taught like: mommy, daddy, eudhamonia. That would be part of their working vocabulary very early on, that would be part of the education system to just show children the avenues into genuine happiness by way of our conduct, by cultivating the mind, bringing in very, very gently, very simple, fun exercises, cultivating the attention, empathy and so forth, and then just having that continuing all the way through elementary school, secondary school, right into college, and through college so when students graduated in whatever field, it could be civil engineering but of course the students would always be minoring in eudhamonia. Why not? Because civil engineering is very good but will not ever bring you eudhamonia and why would you want to have only hedonic when you could always have both? So that would be flowing all the way through the education system so when students graduate from college they would be well equipped to face the modern world, making a living to find hedonic wellbeing but they also would have fifteen years of training, exploring their internal resources and graduating as happy people. Wouldn't that be weird?

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Revised by Erik Koeppé

Final edition by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Posted by Alma Ayon

44 Mindfulness of phenomena (2)

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19 Sep 2012

Returning and reviewing Asanga's text, is a complete explanation of mindfulness of breathing.

As you'll recall when he is discussing this practice overall he divides it up into five sections that are: 1) thorough training by way of counting, 2) thorough training by way of engaging with the aggregates, the five skandhas, 3) thorough training by way of dependent origination or pratitysamutpada 4) thorough training by way of engaging with reality, namely the four noble truths, and finally 5) thorough training by way of the sixteen aspects and that takes you all the way to arhatship.

We have already covered the training by way of counting and now we will move on to thorough training by way of engaging with the aggregates, the five skandhas.

[Just to remember, Alan made a brief summary of training by counting, as below:]

Asanga described everything about counting but also with that concluding paragraph commenting that people with sharp faculties and clear minds do not need it, just listen to the instructions and go right to the practice and that would be sufficient. Just to comment on the last sentence or so: By closely applying mindfulness to the object of inhalation and exhalation they closely attend to the place, that is where you are experiencing the flow of the prana, the duration of how long is the breath, long or short, the manner, how does it flow and the time, so when the inhalation is complete, when does the exhalation begin and so forth. They closely attend to the place, duration, manner and time of occurrence of the in and out breath, that is how they train, and then we go to part two, thorough training by engaging with the aggregates, he continues here.

[Alan introduces the second thorough training by way of the aggregates. Asanga begins by explaining the characteristics of achieving shamatha—i.e., 1) pliancy in the mind, 2) pliancy in the body, and 3) single-pointedness taking delight in the object.]

[Now we are going to section two of the text which is:]

II. Thorough Training by Engaging with the Aggregates

Asanga's text:

"By devoting oneself to that practice, cultivating it time and again with continuity, physical pliancy and mental pliancy arise and upon reaching single pointedness, one takes delight in the object".

And he has just finished the whole explanation of achieving shamatha by way of mindfulness of breathing; that was it. So no preliminary sign, no acquired sign, and no counterpart sign. It is about as homogenous in methodology as settling the mind in its natural state, it is so simple, it does not mean easy - we all know that - but it is not complex and once you've learned it you've learned it and that's it, and now just do it, practice time and again with continuity and just see how that unfolds but all the rest is just happening to you, it is not you getting more clever and now try this more difficult technique - it is not like that, just do this and then just see how the whole process unfolds. And of course in settling the mind you are watching, well just see how your mind then heals itself and gradually, gradually dissolves. The image that I like so much is the snow globe where in the beginning is just chaos, the globe is all shaken up and you see the snow swirling all over the place, and then without doing much at all, kind of almost doing nothing, just put the snow globe down and do not mess with it, do not try to make it go faster, just like shaking it more and saying, *come on snow*, do not do that, just attend with that quality of awareness and in its own way, some of the snow will swirl this way, and some will swirl that way but overall this all can settle down and you will be looking at a transparent luminous sphere, something like the alaya [substrate].

(5:42) Well in a similar fashion here this practice is simple, especially if you do not do all that counting, you know by hundreds and thousands. If you just keep it simple, (maybe it's time to be a person with sharp faculty – you really don't want to go there, do you, all that counting? Do it if it is helpful.) But he says, cultivating it time and again with continuity, physical pliancy and mental pliancy arise.

Well for those of you who have studied shamatha well, studied Tsongkapa, again in terms of just the detail, the sophistication, the precision, the authority of laying out the nine stages and what it is actually like to achieve shamatha, frankly, I do not think this is bias speaking, I do not think you could do better with Tsongkapa. I do not find that kind of detail in Dudjom Lingpa but laying out those nine stages and then exactly what happens - pardon the metaphor - when your water breaks. That is, you'll know the water breaks when you feel this pressure on top of your head; pressure like as if you were bald and somebody placed their hand on your head and you feel some real pressure there, and Tsongkapa says it is not unpleasant but it catches

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your attention. What it's catching is your water broke: that is, you are about to give birth to shamatha and that is the first indication so do not go out with your bike, do not go for a swim, now is the time just sit down and get really comfortable because something very interesting is about to happen. You've already achieved stage nine, you should know that by now, and your water has just broken which means you are now about to give birth, I mean now there is going to be a continuum, and watch it happen because you are giving birth to another whole mind and so what happens there: first that is the indicator and then the rest just happens to you and you do not have to do anything special - and the first thing is mental pliancy, this is a word pliancy, pliancy, buoyance, suppleness, malleability, but it is a lightness, flexibility, that suppleness just like as if you are an eighteen year old trained Olympic gymnast and you feel you can do pretty much with your body whatever you like. But you have a mind like that and it is so supple; so that is the first thing, unprecedented feeling of just the sheer suppleness - that is a nice word - and pliancy is another good word. So that is the first thing that happens, it is just, Oh!

(8:47) And then it just continues to flow on from that (having a mental pliancy). And then the next thing is a physical pliancy and here is where you find the energies going into complete free flow throughout the whole body, it is like your whole body is just a field of coursing unobstructed free flowing energy and you feel this lightness as if you could, one Lama who achieved it, he said when you achieve shamatha you feel like you can jump over mountains, you cannot but you feel like as if you could and it is that lightness, that bouncy, (it is a little mountain, what is the problem I am ready to go, you know) and so there is that lightness, a quality of lightness, buoyance, suppleness and so forth but now you are very aware of your body and it has that quality that it is unprecedented and that is called bodily pliancy or physical pliancy and that is very energetic, it is all about the prana now just flowing unimpededly, in another words you now with your twelve cylinder Maserati you are now finely tuned, that energy is flowing right where it should be flowing, unimpeded. And then out of that comes a physical bliss and this is something when the physical bliss arise you really do not have time for anything else because it totally captures your attention and that is a bliss that will saturate your whole body, just total bliss, blissed-in, blissed-out, body of bliss, that is the physical bliss.

Instruction for one that is reading the transcript: the next paragraph we are introducing part of the text in bold together with Alan's comments.

(10:08) And then almost as if you, like a pot of milk that is on the stove and it is bubbling, bubbling and then afterwards bubbles all over the place and spills all over the stove, well the bliss in the body is as if it just spills over and saturates your mind and then shifts, the locus of bliss goes from the somatic to the psychological, from the physical to the mental and then you're just blissed-out, I mean you're just totally, your mind is suffused with bliss and you are busy, your mind is just totally filled with bliss and then that happily - because if you just ended there that could really be a problem because you just feel uhmmmmm for the rest of your life and you couldn't do much, but happily nature takes care of that and that very intense bliss - that really saturating bliss - as if you've turned down the stove, then it just goes down to a nice quiet simmering, everything is calming down and it is still sukkah and there is also 'priti', a sense of bliss is there but it is kind of a nice quiet simmering bliss, simmering bliss such that you could do things with that, you are not so overwhelmed by the bliss that you cannot do anything else. So now those are the two of the dhyanas factors, the sense of wellbeing, sukkah and the real bliss, 'priti'; those are there, but frankly you have all of the dhyanas factors because you also have single pointedness and now you achieved shamatha when that bliss settles down, is simmering like a soup that you can keep on the stove for a couple of hours just quietly simmering away - well, you've now achieved shamatha and so now your mind is now right on the threshold, it's crossed the threshold over into the form realm, your senses are totally withdrawn, now totally into the mind, and there is right there at your fingertips the ability to engage in course investigation, subtle investigation, there is bliss or 'priti', there is wellbeing, sukkah, and then there is single pointedness of mind, the five dhyanas factors are all there and you've achieved shamatha, you achieve access to the first dhyana. Well that was a kind of detailed explanation drawn from an enormous amount of experience and Asanga just summarized it by saying: **"cultivating it time and again with continuity, physical pliancy and mental pliancy arise"**, he just described actually the day you achieve shamatha **"and upon reaching single pointedness"**, well that is the third, now we have three out of five, that indicates that you actually achieved shamatha. **"upon reaching single pointedness one takes delight in the object"**. Well he's put sukkah and 'priti' into one: delight, you take delight in the object. So there you are. That is how you achieve shamatha.

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I do not really see any other alternative and maybe it is just because my limitation in my own imagination of what is going on here in terms of your focus because he (Asanga) never says shift to a mental object, he says your object is the “in and out breath” and then he says: what is that? That is that flow of energy.

(13:40) But now we know what happens here and that is, there is especially when you breathe in deeply you have a really strong sense down there [belly] and back up here [chest] or you also experience and I know some of you may have the sense that actually starting from bottom and going to the top, they are both true, because when you breathe in you do have a sense of not first your chest is expanding and then your diaphragm and belly but rather on the contrary, you have a sense first your belly is expanding and then the diaphragm and then the chest, it is bottom up like filling a pot of water, nevertheless for the actual flow of prana it is coming in and start here [nostrils] as you breathe in and then goes down to the navel and then comes right back out here so both are true, but whatever that maybe the object is clearly, you are focusing on the flow of prana that is what he (Asanga) said, right? It is not an interpretation it is simply what he said. (14:11) But now as you move from “breathing in long I know I breathe in long and breathing out long I know I breathe out long”, then you are going to “breathing in short I know I breathe in short” and then one goes to “attending to the whole body breathing in and breathing out” and then “calming the composite of the body.” And so what certainly is happening here is that the volume of breath is just getting thinner, thinner and thinner, the sine wave having gone from long to short and then just getting shorter and shorter, subtler, subtler and subtler and you are not attending just to the tip of the nose, you are attending to the flow, but that flow that is just getting finer and finer, almost as if higher and higher frequency until eventually you’ve got to disengage, if you keep on focusing on the desire realm, you are not achieving shamatha that is clear in Theravada, in Tsongkhapa, and so forth - there is nothing to debate there, when you achieve shamatha you crossed the threshold over into the form realm, which means you are not engaging with or attending to the desire realm, that is not debatable. So what must be taking place here is the oscillation must be getting smaller, smaller and smaller and then where is the prana converged when you are actually right there on the cusp? Yea, into your heart, it cannot be anywhere else, it is not in the navel, and it wouldn’t make any sense that is converged into the nostrils; they converge at the heart and of course we know that is from the teachings we received that when you achieve shamatha your coarse mind dissolves into the substrate consciousness and the correlated pranas converge into the heart chakra. So my strong sense would be that the sensations that you are experiencing as you are attending to the flow of prana that the oscillations is getting finer and finer and then converges into the heart and then you release it. And there you are, and your coarse mind dissolves into subtle mind and the energies all converge into the heart chakra, welcome to shamatha. So rather like the seed syllable dissolving into the bindu and then the bindu just going into emptiness. So now you have a new base camp: congratulations.

Instructions for one that is reading the transcript: the next paragraph is part of the summary and we are using here as a title and subtitle to the next theme.

Having achieved shamatha, we return to the desire realm in an expedition to gain insight into the five aggregates: 1) form in terms of mindfulness of breathing, 2) feelings (positive/negative/neutral) arising with the mindfulness of breathing, 3) recognition associated with the mindfulness of breathing, 4) volition associated with the intention to sustain mindfulness of breathing, and 5) mind as composite.

Text: “One who has thoroughly trained the body like that engages with the aggregates by attending to objective and subjective phenomena.”

(16:24) One who has thoroughly trained the body like that, engages with the aggregates, this is all five of the aggregates starting with the body, feelings and so forth, engages with the aggregates by attending to objective and subjective phenomena. Okay, so let’s continue to read this (Asanga’s) section. ...Now that he’s got us to shamatha, let’s see whether he goes deeper into shamatha or whether he goes right over into vipashyana.

- **The first aggregate, skandha: form in terms of mindfulness of breathing.**

Text: “One who focuses the attention upon the body, which is the basis of inhalations and exhalations, engages with the aggregate of form.”

Alan comments about this paragraph:

It is the first of the five aggregates. Did he say in this phase that you are attending to objective and subjective phenomena? Well, there is an objective one, attending to the aggregate of form.

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- **The second aggregate, skandha: feelings (positive/negative/neutral) arising with the mindfulness of breathing**

Text: “One who does so [focus the attention] on the feelings that are conjoined with the mindfulness that apprehends inhalations and exhalations engages with the aggregate of feelings.”

Alan’s comments:

Quite interesting that still you are maintaining, there is something going on here and bear in mind he said that the respiration goes through not only the large cavities but also the subtle cavities and what are they? The pores of the body. So you are still attending to the breath, the breath is still going on, you’ve not achieved the fourth dhyana; that is where it really stops. But what level of the breath? When we have our contemplative observatories around the world and we invite some open minded, high quality scientists to investigate, it will be very interesting to know after we have people achieving shamatha and then moving on, what are they detecting? Is the person still breathing, breathing in a scientific sense of the term the lungs are going, pum, pum, pum like that or are they not? Is the breathing that is taking place now only on a subtle level through the pores? It is just a question that is one the scientists could answer well because they are very good at that kind of thing.

(19:01) But here we have “mindfulness that apprehends inhalations and exhalations”. But one who attends to the feelings, it would be with introspection because you are holding your mindfulness still on the respiration, mindfulness on in and out breathing, but you are attending to the feelings, and what are those feelings? The feelings that are conjoined with or working concomitantly with your mindfulness of the respiration and where your interest is, you are attending to the arising of feelings. What kind of feelings are arising, Monica, what kind of feelings are arising at this point? You’ve achieved shamatha: How about sukkah and priti, sense of wellbeing and bliss? So actually we have some pretty nice feelings to look at.

So, “one who does so on the feelings that are conjoined with the mindfulness that apprehends inhalations and exhalations engages with the aggregate of feelings.” So this is interesting, it looks like he is going to enfold all of the five skandhas within the context, within the system of mindfulness of “in and out breathe” and that is as you are attending to that, now you are moving into vipashyana territory. So now you are attending once again to the body, he said: one who focus the attention upon the body, that means you’ve not simply withdrawn into the substrate because when that happens you are not aware of your body at all as if you are deeply sleeping. Now you are venturing out, you have completed your retreat into shamatha and you are ready for your expedition into vipashyana and that entails among others things that you now once again are attending to the breath, the flow of the prana in the body, you are attending to the body and you are in vipashyana territory now, but you are coming back to gain some insight.

So it is now close inspection of the body, which is the basis of the breath, close inspection on the feelings that arise that are concomitant with or conjoined with or on the very nature of the way that you’re mindfully attending to the breath. What is the feeling that goes along with your mindfulness of the breath? That is what you are attending to and that means you are looking at the skandha (aggregate) of feelings, vedana (feeling) skandha.

- **Third aggregate, skandha: recognize your recognition of the qualities of the breath**

Text: “One who does so on thorough understanding engages with the aggregate of recognition.”

(21:20) One who does so, one who focuses the attention upon, thorough understanding, this discerning, this discriminating understanding, that is what he says here. One who does so on thorough understanding, thorough understanding of what? You are attending to the breath, so it is not only just placing your mindfulness on it but it is thorough discerning, discriminating, understanding or comprehension of the breath. But one who is attending to that subjective experience of thorough understanding, engages with the aggregate of recognition, the third skandha.

- **Forth aggregate, skandha: volition associated with the intention to sustain mindfulness of breathing.**

Text: “One who does so on mindfulness, volition, and wisdom engages with the aggregate of mental formations.”

(22:44) One who does so on mindfulness, volition and wisdom, one who focuses the attention on mindfulness, but also you are continuing to practice, not like a zombie or because you have to, but because you decided to. So there is an ongoing flow of volition, of intention, the mental factor; and that is really a core

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mental factor in the skandha of intention that is really highlighted when you attend to that skandha you are especially attending to intention, volition. One who does so, one who focus the attention on mindfulness, that very flow of mindfulness itself, focus the attention on volition and wisdom, engages with the aggregate of compositional factors, the fourth skandha. And one who does so, that is focus the attention on the mind, which is your primary mind, mental consciousness in this case, one who does so on the mind, on mental engagement, that is that very fundamental just engaging with the object, you are observing that process of engaging with the object.

- **Fifth aggregate, skandha: mind as composite.**

Text: “One who does so, on the mind, mental engagement, and consciousness engages with the aggregate of consciousness.

Those who engage with the aggregates and abide there many times are said to be thoroughly trained by engaging with the aggregates.”

(24:08) One who does so on the mind, mental engagement, and consciousness.

Perhaps mind here since he is covering consciousness, maybe mind means more the container, the composite. But what he does say is one who focuses the attention on the mind, mental engagement and consciousness engages with the aggregate of consciousness, fifth skandha (aggregate). Those who engage with the aggregates and abide there many times are said to be thoroughly trained by engaging with the aggregates. This is very clearly within the nest, within that context of continuing, now that you have achieved shamatha, because he made that pretty clear, now that you achieved shamatha you come out of your substrate consciousness, you reactivate your course mind because you are not just resting in your substrate, but this is a course mind that has had a major tune-up and that is, it is free of the five obscurations, not absolutely irreversibly but they are really dormant.

But very important you have those five dhyanas factors now at your back and call so the ability of course investigation, of subtle analysis, bliss, wellbeing and single pointedness, you are bringing now a very highly enriched turbo powered, empowered mind to this close application of mindfulness to form, feelings, recognition, compositional factors, and consciousness. In other words all of these constituent aggregates that make up our presence here in this world.

(25:59) So that is how he first uses shamatha, venturing into the realm of vipashyana and that is to really attend to closely and get to fathom to realize and understand clearly through your own direct experience the nature of each of those five skandhas. That is the first thing you do when you step out in terms of the wisdom side - of course you could be developing the four immeasurable and bodhichitta, incredible worthwhile - but on the wisdom side this is what he suggests. Step out but do not step out very far, do not step out to the galaxies and a lot of other interesting things, step right out into here you are, why don't you understand from the inside out what is going on here, by this closely attending to each of these skandhas, these psycho-physical aggregates and seeing each one for what it is. So even though he does not say this it would be very easy and I think suitable, appropriate to insert here, as you step out and you attend to the aggregate of form - of course you're form surround by form - as you do so you recognize form as form and you just stop there. Form is form not as form as my body, my overweight body, my old body, no additions, you are just seen form as form, body as body and likewise when you are attending to feelings you are not laying on any of the packaging, just seeing feelings as feelings, arising from moment to moment and likewise recognition and then this whole array of compositional factors, and you are highlighting a few of them that are especially important. Because we tend to identify very strongly with volition, *I* did that, *I* am responsibly for that and so forth and this is our volition, is at the core of karma, karma is at the core of what moves us from one lifetime to the next.

So closely attending there, just seeing compositional factors as compositional factors, not mine, not me, not anything other than what they are, just look at them nakedly in this purely and naturalistic way, just seeing them as natural events arising and then finally consciousness itself, simply observing it for what it is and seeing consciousness as consciousness. It is a really powerful first step to coming to know reality as it is by having this wonderfully refined, clarified, stable, lucid, non-reactive, non-smoggy, that is there is no rumination here, it is clear, it is like that Hubble telescope that is now launched beyond the atmosphere and just sees into deep space, there is almost nothing between you and what you look at, a whole bunch of empty space. And here you are, you're bringing this distilled, radiantly clear, non-discursive, that is without

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rumination, attentiveness, so then each is like shining a really bright light, one by one. And the point of this of course is to overcome con-fusion, where we fuse these various skandhas or aspects of our presence here into: “this is just me”, fusing them into an identity, into a person of having a lot of things and just then just glomming them altogether, con-fusing them, fusing them together, and this distilled, one by one recognition of each of the aggregates and you see what is there but in seeing what is there you also see what is not there and that is really crucial. So it is overcoming the cognitive imbalances of not seeing what is there but also the cognitive imbalance of superimposing what is not there and conflating it with what it is. Ok, let’s go back to the practice.

Meditation:

(31:03) Settle your body, speech and mind in their natural states.

(32:03) For the first half of the session I invite you to devote yourself to the practice of shamatha, mindfulness of breathing, in any way you find most helpful, for some of you this will entail focusing on the rise and fall of the abdomen, others, the sensation at the nostrils, others may wish to follow the method of Asanga, these are all good, these are all authentic practices: focus on the one that is most beneficial to you for the time being.

(42:30) And now as you maintain your mindfulness on the in and out flow of the breath direct your attention to the broader context or domain of your body which is the basis of the respiration and know this aggregate of form as the aggregate of form.

(44:40) As you sustain the flow of mindfulness of the in and out breath, direct your attention introspectively to the feeling that arises in conjunction with that mindfulness, which is to say: is the experience of your mindfulness of breathing, is it pleasant, is it unpleasant, or is it neutral. Closely attend to and recognize the feeling as the feeling, whatever it maybe.

(46:10) As you mindfulness attend to the breath you are in fact able to recognize, beginning and end of inhalation and exhalation, the duration, the place of the sensations, how the breath is flowing, able to recognize this with your faculty of recognition, discernment, discrimination, attend to the manner in which you thoroughly understand the in and out flow of the breath; by so doing attend to the skandha, the aggregate of recognition.

(47:38) So this entails discerning qualities of the breath and knowing that you are discerning, recognizing that discernment itself.

(48:43) As you maintain the flow of mindfulness of breathing, recognize that you still intend to do so; you’re not doing this mindlessly, there is a flow of volition that continues to impel you in the practice, see if you can discern, to recognize this mental factor of volition, of intention, representative of the compositional factors, the fourth skandha.

(50:11) This is closely akin to settling the mind in its natural state while you are practicing mindfulness of breathing, noting what is going on in the mind. And finally as you sustain that outward flow of mindfulness of the breathing direct your attention inward to the center to, the directionality of your attention, to consciousness itself, sustain the flow of awareness of awareness even in the midst of sustaining the flow of mindfulness of the breathing.

(52:35) And now with your eyes open continue to sustain the flow of mindfulness of the in and out breath while letting your awareness flood all the six domains of experience, illuminating each of the five skandhas.

Transcribed by *Rafael Carlos Giusti*

Revised by Erik Koeppe

Final edition by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Posted by Alma Ayon

45 Mindfulness of breathing (5)

20 Sep 2012

O Laso, this morning we turn to another of the five obscurations, it is a pair, in Tibetan it’s called “ching mo”, “ching mo” is laxity and “rmugs pa” is dullness. and so in terms of a very precise explanations of the nine stages leading to shamatha, as far as I’ve been able to see there aren’t any references to laxity before you get up to stage four, and at stage four then one of your major challenges to transition from four to five is to

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recognize and to apply the appropriate remedy for course laxity. So course laxity way up there in transitioning from four to five. So: does this mean that you have no problems of clarity before then? No, we're calling it a different word, dullness that's what you experience on stage 1, 2, 3 and it may still linger a little bit in 4 and so if you ask: is it possible to experience the great union of dullness and excitement? The answer is yes, and that will lead you to deep stability in samsara. Certainly, I mean you can be really totally dope and the mind going bla, bla, bla (rumination) so that's definitely possible.

Within this one obscuration, laxity the more subtle level, dullness on a courser level, what is the natural antibody there? In Sanskrit it is called "vitarka" or "dopa" in Tibetan, and it's translated from the Sanskrit Tibetan it would be "course investigation". The common translation from the Pali [Canon] is "applied thought" or "applied attention" and there's a nice analogy there from the Theravada tradition and we'll contrast this with the "subtle analyzes" or "sustain thought" little bit later on, when we get to "uncertainty", I think that will be in two days from now.

But for this course one they say, this applied thought or course investigation is like when you strike a bell, tooonnnnn, right there that is the applied thought, so it is contact [with the sound of the bell]. When they speak of subtle analyzes or sustained thought that is like the reverberation, ohohohohoh, afterwards, but that immediate impact, that is what we are talking about as the natural antibody, the natural remedy for laxity and dullness, just the opposite of that (sound of clap), that direct contact, direct application, or checking it out with, I think the closest in English, we just say "ah! Check out that bird". We are not talking about some detailed analysis, sustain investigation, but more casual, you are getting it (the thing you are looking at), you are directing your attention there. And the opposite of that, if we go back to Buddhaghosa, is floating, your attention floats. Where it's just starts to lift off (the attention), and then it gets muddy (gets unclear) instead of that contact.

I'm looking at Nicolas face (a person in the room), you can see it's eye to eye, and then I've done the cartoon many times before, where almost like a helicopter taking off from a pad, then your attention no longer clearly engages, it starts to float off, and the whole thing gets vague. That's dullness. So the remedy is quite clear then, it is really simply: "hey, pay attention, just focus!".

(3:56) It is kind of like an image that came to my mind in the meditation this morning was: like the light of awareness is already there, so it is like the sun over your back and then you've got this piece of paper, let's say the paper is that vagueness, that dullness and so forth, and then just direct your magnifying glass there with the sun over your back and of course what would that do? It's going to burn right through the paper, and so the light of your awareness would just burn right through the fog, and that would be another not bad translation of "rmugs pa", dullness would be foggy. So what burns through the foggy? The sun especially when you put through a magnifying glass, ok?

(4:43) One final point, if we continue to follow Asanga, if you find it a bit difficult to take in the whole system from the aperture of the nostrils down to the navel, bear in mind he really did emphasize that cavity, its Tibetan word is "boop" which means just kind of an empty space at the region of the navel. He did not talk about the empty space and the solar Plexus, the heart, the throat, he just said here is the course of it, but he did speak, emphasize that cavity, that empty space in the region of the navel. So what I would suggest to this session which we're about to begin, is if you like to go back to the method of Asanga, let be very similar to what we did in phase two of mindfulness of breathing, right to the abdomen, but keep that right in the region of the navel, right in the center and just see in this area how far you actually experience the sensations of the breath, whether at the navel of a few fingers beneath it, but do not try to visualize it, just observe closely, right in the center and how far down there in the abdomen you feel the sensations of that prana going. Let's jump in.

(6:12) Meditation:

(6:36) Letting your awareness descend into and fill the space of the body, settle your body step by step with the qualities of relaxation, stillness and vigilance.

(7:47) And with that total sense of letting go, letting go of tension in the body, letting go of the breath, letting go of thoughts, especially with every out breath, let your respiration come to settle in its natural rhythm as you allow your body to breathe itself.

(9:34) With your face in an expression of repose, your eyes soft, relaxed, unfocused, set your mind at ease by releasing all concerns about the future and the past, let your awareness come to rest in stillness in the

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present moment, and shine the spotlight of your attention on the sensations of the respiration, the flow of prana, as they flow down to the navel region. Keep your attention focused right there, single pointedly.

(11:42) Note the very end of each in and out breath, note the duration, be it ever so short or perhaps longer of the interim of the in and out breath, and the beginning of each in and out breath.

(14:35) Arouse your attention during each breath, each in breath as that cavity in the region of the navel is filled with prana, then gently relax as the breath flows out while sustaining throughout the entire course of the in and out breath the ongoing flow of mindfulness of the respiration. Let's continue practicing now in silence.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

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46 Mindfulness of phenomena (3)

20 Sep 2012

O Laso, we'll return to Asanga's text on the practice of mindfulness of breathing, we're now definitely into vipashyana territory, having looked at the aggregates very closely one by one with that basis, that shamatha basis in mindfulness of breathing, and then kind of making this forays, these expeditions out into the close examination of the five skandhas. But for our purposes here in this 8 week retreat, what I would suggest is that if you'd already all, for example already achieved shamatha, then I would say, ok your shamatha's now in total support of vipashyana, full speed ahead vipashyana. You know that's what we are really here for, vipashyana and what's the point of vipashyana - now that with your achievement of shamatha you've really subdued, you've made dormant your five obscurations, your mind is really working well, now come in and finish the job with vipashyana you know, to really cut these mental afflictions at their root, and with that union of shamatha vipashyana you're extremely well equipped to do that.

But I'm going to make a wild guess that you haven't achieved shamatha just yet, in which case I think it's still worthwhile, I speak for the whole tradition here, Theravada, Zen, Tibetan, none of them are so rigid that that they say, no I won't teach you anything more advanced until you absolutely finish this one, it's too narrow, it's too rigid and so while what I would suggest though is for the remaining 4 weeks, because as of today we have hit the midway point, for the remainder of this four weeks focus primarily like 80/90% of your time on the practices for which you really, you clearly are deriving benefit, and I would imagine that's probably going to be mostly shamatha. If you really get benefit from the vipashyana, absolutely go for it. But even if you're just really overwhelming focusing on the shamatha, maybe some of the four immeasurables to sweeten the soup, bring in the vipashyana just to sow these seeds, sow seeds of insight, because these like the four immeasurables, when you return to wherever you are going when you leave here, the four immeasurables are very applicable in daily life, all your social interactions and so forth they can be very, very helpful.

(2:19) And likewise the four applications of mindfulness, not with the full depth and the richness of investigating the skandhas, but in terms of the broad themes, they really can bring much more discernment, wisdom, intelligence, clarity to your engagement with whatever's happening in your life anywhere.

So in short for the time being the four immeasurables, and the four applications of mindfulness are kind of in service of shamatha, because I do feel shamatha together with the four immeasurables, will be the practices that bring about the greatest shift, for which you'll derive the most clear benefit from your meditation. So that said, now let's go right back to the text.

(2:54) As we go deeper into vipashyana territory, so we've covered the first one thorough training by way of counting, that was flat out shamatha of course, and then we had thorough training by way of the aggregates, so already looked at that, and now we go deeper into vipashyana with the third, and that is thorough training by engaging with dependent origination, so now we go into really the heart core of the Buddha's teachings, and also the realization that he himself gained, the direct experiential realization on the third watch of the night, that is when he's coming to the end of his night of enlightenment that which was the final breakthrough to full awakening, was his investigation of dependent origination. So this is really central to his own experience and to the core of Buddha dharma in all schools, there isn't any school that doesn't care

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about dependent origination, if there is they've lost the scent, they are no longer connected to the Buddha dharma. So back to Asanga's:

(Explanation for one that is reading this transcript: See below the complete text of session III in bold letters between quotation marks "... will be the text which Alan is reading and following by his comments to explain the themes of each part of the text.)

III. Thorough Training by Engaging with Dependent Origination

"When one sees and thoroughly understands the mere aggregates, mere formations, and mere phenomena, then one engages with the dependent origination of composites. And how does one engage with them? One seeks and inquires as to the basis and the cooperative conditions for the inhalation and exhalation. One considers that the in- and out-breaths depend upon and are conditioned by the body and by the mind. Moreover, by what are the body and mind conditioned? One realizes that the cooperative condition for the body and mind is the life faculty. {What is the cooperative condition for the life-faculty? One realizes that the cooperative condition for the life-faculty is previous formations. What is the cooperative condition for the previous formations?} One realizes that ignorance is the cooperative condition for previous formations. Thus, due to the cooperative condition of ignorance there are previous formations, which condition the life-faculty, which conditions the body and consciousness; and the body and mind condition the in- and out-breath. Now due to the cessation of ignorance, formations cease; due to the cessation of formations, the life-faculty ceases; due to the cessation of the life-faculty, the body and mind cease; due to the cessation of the body and mind, inhalation and exhalation cease. Thus one engages with dependent origination. One who dwells repeatedly on that is said to be thoroughly trained in dependent origination. This is called the thorough training by engaging with dependent origination."

(3:57) "When one sees and thoroughly understands the mere aggregates, mere compositional factor and mere phenomena (so mere phenomena at large) then one engages with the dependent origination of composites".

(5:15) Alan's explanation: so once again this is a short sentence but really loaded. When speaking of the mere aggregates, this term mere "tsam" in Tibetan, the mere aggregates what is he getting at here? It's something really clear, transparent, not complicated and that is having refined your mindfulness, your attention by way of shamatha, then like that Hubble telescope beyond all the distortions of the atmosphere, when then you bring that clarity, and that stability to the close examination of the skandha of form, of feelings, of recognition, compositional factors and consciousness, then bringing that clarity that inquiry of vipashyana then you see them for what they are, when he says "mere", he is saying just like the Buddha said to Bahiya, "you seeing mental events as mental events, sounds as sounds", here you're seeing each of the aggregates as they are nakedly without the superimposition, and the fusion of the delusional projections of permanents, of these things being inherently pleasurable by nature, and of course "I and Mine", you're seeing them empty of "I and Mine", you're seeing them simply as phenomena, that is why he says "mere phenomena", empty of "I and Mine", empty of all the stuff that we conceptually project upon them, and just see them nakedly, so this is the issue of "mere". You simply seeing them as natural phenomena arising in dependence upon prior causes and conditions but devoid of the delusional projections that we superimpose upon our own aggregates, the compositional factors in particular, then looking especially within, the factors, the processes of the mind and then phenomena at large. So with that basis now seeing clearly without fusing your projections with what is being presented then one engages with dependent origination of composites.

(6:04) For those of you, and I think especially for those of you from Germany, where you have such a wonderful center there for studying Buddhism well, a lot of you have a good solid basis in theory, Buddhist philosophy and psychology, then you'll see how beautifully this dovetails or how do you say, coincides, could be integrated with Sautantrika view, because Sautantrika view is saying that which is real is that which immediately presents itself to your senses.

Whoom, there it is, whereas all the delusional stuff is conceptually imputed and that's static, it's not real, it exists but it's not real, so once again the marriage of the Sautantrika philosophical view with the practice of vipashyana in this context, is really I think quite extraordinary, I'm surprised that it really has not been taught before. I am not making up anything here, all the components are there, so why in all the training as soon as they are studying Sautantrika, don't they say, hey this is not just a head trip or to get good at debating, this is to purify your mind, but you won't do that just by thinking a lot about Sautantrika, you need to practice, bring

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some experience to it, but let your experience be well informed, enriched with the depth, the sophistication, the subtlety of Buddhist view, and here's just a perfect marriage, Sauntranika with basic vipashyana, three marks of existence and so forth.

(8:25) But now we move on to dependent origination of composites, what are composites? They're the real phenomena according to Sautrantika, these are exactly those phenomena that arise in dependence upon causes and conditions. The phrasing here is always so precise, I do find in Buddhism just generally speaking, words are used very carefully and so when saying that phenomena arise in dependence upon causes and conditions, what this doesn't mean is that they are predetermined by whatever the past was now the future is locked in, why? Because of causality, it's not predetermination the Buddha is very explicit about that. So do things arise randomly? No. For no cause at all? No. Are they then therefore determined by whatever the whole matrix of what causes and conditions were? No. So it's something in between, arising in dependence upon the past but not determined by the past, and not happening for no reason at all. So once again one engages with dependent origination, the dependent origination of composites, those phenomena that arise in dependence upon causes and cooperative conditions. And how does one engage with it? One seeks and enquires as to the basis and the cooperative conditions for the inhalation and exhalation, so you start with the microcosm - what you are attending to, your basis in shamatha and say: ok, here's a natural event, here's a natural process taking place it's called breathing. So now how do we understand breathing within a causal nexus? What are the primary causes, the contributing circumstances giving rise to it? One considers that the in and out breath depend upon and are conditioned by the body and by the mind, good start. Moreover by what are the body and mind conditioned? So now we start going deeper, we start tracing this back, exactly in terms of links of dependent origination. By what are the body and mind conditioned?

(10:13) One realizes, now bear in mind and just imagine if you have actually achieved shamatha, this means, just like having a very obedient dog and you go shiiiiiii (Alan whistles) and the dog comes running, you say, hello substrate consciousness shiiii, yes there it is, I mean there it is, there's your current that links lifetime to lifetime to lifetime, that is the basis, the carrier, one way or another at least conventionally speaking, it is the carrier for imprints, for memories, for all of these pratityasamutpada from lifetime to lifetime. So you have immediate access to that, it is not an object of belief. Again it's like Lama Zopa answering when he was asked. Do you need to believe in reincarnation to achieve enlightenment? "He said no, you need to know it". Yeah, you don't get to enlightenment simply by believing all the right things, and believing too much could actually shut down inquiry. Oh, I already know the right answer, I memorized it, great, well then in this case let's all be Zen practitioners because I think there is a book out there that has all the answers to all the koans, we'll memorize those and we'll be Zen masters, no problem.

So the answer is interesting; by what are the body and mind conditioned? One realizes that the cooperative condition for the body and mind is the life faculty. As far as I can tell the life faculty is really nothing other than that continuum, that subtle continuum of consciousness and prana, that's the life faculty, it's in dependence upon the life faculty that your coarse mind emerges in dependence upon that, that there's actually a living organism, it's not enough just to bring together chemicals to have a living conscious organism, the sperm and the egg that's enough to have a biological organism but to have being a living organism that is conscious, there has to be that continuum. This is a hypothesis but that certainly is the Buddhist hypotheses. (12:30) So this life faculty, what is the cooperative condition for the life faculty? One realizes that the cooperative condition for the life faculty is previous compositional factors, so in dependence upon what is this continuum, this continuum of the subtle consciousness and energy in dependence upon what is that being propelled through from one lifetime to the next, to the next, to the next? The samskara, the compositional factors. Samskara in Pali, these are all of those imprints, all those imprints that are stored upon it, imprints propelled it, as it, so to speak carries the imprints. What is the cooperative condition for the previous compositional factors, so in dependence upon what do they arise?

(13:14) One realizes, now think about it for those of you who studied the twelve links of dependent origination, one realizes that ignorance is the cooperative condition for previous compositional factors. So just think about the first three is, first of all ignorance (avidia) and then its compositional factors, (samskara), and then its consciousness, this consciousness, and then we have name and form and then the rest flows on.

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(13:39) So we're really seeking, it's like that person what was his name, Drona, Drona in Sankrist who saw the footprints of the Buddha, extraordinary footprints and like a hunter he tracked him because he was so intrigued, and he tracked the Buddha to find him because he wondered who left those footprints, you know if you have 32 major and 80 minor marks you leave some pretty unusual footprints, and so he tracked him and then he saw him and then that gave rise to a very interesting short conversation and the culmination was when he asked, are you a man?

And the Buddha said: I am not a man.

Who are you?

He said – I'm awake.

Remember? It's a nice story that's just the punch line at the end

(14:43) But the point here is that in a way, metaphorically speaking, as Drona was following in the footsteps to trace him and then beheld him directly, as we seek through our vipashyana practice to venture, to explore these links of dependent origination we are exactly following in the spiritual footprints of the Buddha. We are seeking to replicate his realization, his insight; which then replicates the kind of liberation and awakening that he experienced. So we are trackers so to speak.

(15:07) So thus due to the cooperative conditions of ignorance there are previous compositional factors which, so now we go forward - ignorance giving rise to previous compositional factors which condition the life faculty which conditions the body and consciousness, and the body and mind condition the in and out breath. So now we've taken it forward. Now due to the cessation, so now there's forward, there's how samsara plays itself out.

(15:32) But now if we track this right back to its origin - ignorance, the not knowing, the unknowing of the nature of reality, back to ignorance, now due to the cessation of ignorance which can only come in one way, not by obedience, not by faith, not by compassion, only one way to remedy ignorance, only one way to remedy avidya with vidya, with knowledge, with knowing, with wisdom. So due to the cessation of ignorance, compositional factors cease, because the cooperative conditions are no longer there, therefore they can't get launched, due to the cessations of compositional factors the life faculty ceases, due to the cessation of the life faculty the body and mind cease, due to the cessation of the body and mind inhalation and exhalation cease, thus one engages with dependent origination.

(16:13) This is from the shravakayana perspective where it really is looking at the total termination of your whole continuum that is conditioned by karma and klesha. So an arhat, a person who has achieved arhatship, let's say in this lifetime, his mind is completely pure of mental afflictions, there's nothing you can do to him or her to arouse mental afflictions, they are gone but nevertheless that body and that mind of the arhat are still there, they're still being perpetuated by prior karma, so the arhat in that last lifetime is still subject, even though they are pure, completely pure, is still subject to karma from previous lifetimes.

Like Bahiya who with one paragraph achieved arhatship and then within a week he was dead because he was gored by a cow. Well there is a karmic connection with the cow.

Or a really striking example and I've mentioned it before, Mogallanaputa, incredible paranormal abilities. Among all the disciples of the Buddha, the foremost and yet he died by getting mugged, beaten to death. I mean just think what he could have done with his paranormal abilities, he could have turned them into mush, he could have done anything he wanted to, but no he couldn't, because he saw, when they kept on coming back for him, he would just disappear, say oh give me a break, disappear, evaporate his body, they would leave he would re-manifest, and then he saw – okay why are they being so persistent? What's behind this? Is this something I can escape from? Maybe I can teach them dharma, something? And then he looked back with his extrasensory perception and said – ah, I see, there is some karma here, this is the last little bit of karma I have to experience before I'm totally free. And so he just waited for them, like just some ordinary person, waited for these assassins to come, they came, they beat him to death, and that was the end of his life, that's how he died.

(18:25) But then with that, according to shravakayana, with that then that the whole continuum of his individual consciousness arising in dependence upon causes and conditions, conditioned by karma, by klesha, that is totally terminated and he'll never have a body like that again, because he'll never have a continuum that is, he'll never have the life faculty and so forth and so on. It's terminated, right? So there on there the hangs a tale: does anything linger over or not? And that'll be a discussion for another time.

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(18:54) So thus one engages with dependent origination, one who dwells repeatedly on that, in other words fathoms it, it's not just a catechism where you give the right answers, you have to actually fathom this by way of your own experience, one who dwells repeatedly on that is said to be thoroughly trained in dependent origination, this is called thorough training by engaging with dependent origination.

So there it is part core, heavy duty central of vipashyana but still you can see, still in touch with the breath, so it's still using the mindfulness of breathing as your vehicle but now plunging full head over hills into vipashyana.

(19:41) Let's read a little bit more and so now we carry on, the fourth training is thorough training by engaging with reality, well the term is "satia" reality, and he's referring specifically to four realities which are called four noble truths. Scholars have been looking at this translation, which has been around for I think over a 100 years, and I think there is a growing consensus that "truth" really isn't the right word, it's not a good translation, because the term "satia" can be translated as "truth" but also as "reality". But a statement is true, but these are not statements, this is not a truth about a statement, this is reality, and so it really isn't a good translation, I still use it just because everybody does, but if you'd like to know the actual meaning it's the four realities for "aryas, aryas are the noble part for people who have gained direct realization of nirvana. What rises up to meet them as being the most salient features of reality as a whole - that most profoundly catches their attention that requires their attention? The reality of suffering which they see all the way through. The reality of the source of suffering which they completely fathom. The reality of cessation which they know directly. And then the reality of the path to that cessation, ethics Samadhi and wisdom. For the aryas, these are the most important realities or aspects of reality in the whole of the universe and they are real for them. Therefore they're called the four realities for aryas so "four noble truths", a bit vague, but there it is. So here is the thorough training by engaging with the four realities for aryas.

And the text reads –

One who is thoroughly trained thus in dependent origination realizes that compositional factors, being dependently related events, are impermanent. Since they are impermanent, they occur upon not having occurred previously, (in other words they freshly occur) and upon occurring, they disappear. (so he is talking about their momentary nature) **Moreover, those phenomena that occur upon not having occurred previously and, having occurred, disappear, are subject to birth, aging, sickness, and death.** (he is referring of course to sentient beings, so now we are getting pretty person here because these are the four noble truths pertaining to sentient beings) **Those phenomena that are subject to birth, aging, sickness, and death are unsatisfying.** (Why? Because they are conditioned by karma and klesha. Not because birth is intrinsically, or aging is intrinsically, not true, but insofar as they are conditioned by karma and klesha they are unsatisfying, they are not wellsprings of genuine happiness) **Those phenomena that are unsatisfying are identityless,** (devoid of I and mine) **not independent, and without an owner.**(A rich statement) **Thus, by means of impermanent, unsatisfying, empty, and identityless properties, one engages with the reality of suffering.** (So there's the first noble truth) **Such a person thinks, "Everything that is suffering, illness, and a boil, resulting from compositional factors** (this again is the propulsiveness of karma) **is conditioned by craving.** (So once again we are getting to the root of it, we are moving to the second noble truth) **Moreover, the eradication of all craving, which produces suffering, is tranquil and excellent— that I know.** (So he has moved onto the third noble truth) **If one dwells thus repeatedly, there will be a complete eradication of craving."**(So one ponders in that way) **Thus one engages with the reality of the source, the reality of cessation, and the reality of the path. When one dwells on that repeatedly, one comprehends the Four Realities for Aryas. That is called the practice of engaging with reality."**

I think it's pretty deep, and that's the four noble truths in a very encapsulated form.

(24:05) So, what's coming up is quite detailed, we're not going to cover it now, our time is pretty much finished, it's the fifth and final of these thorough trainings, and this is thorough training by way of 16 aspects, and this goes right back to the Buddha's discourses, his primary discourse in Pali, it's called the Anapanasati Sutta, the discourse on mindfulness of in and out breathing. I've not seen this in Sanskrit or Tibetan; I imagine it must be there because he's referring exactly to it, it may be buried in the Vinya, I just don't know, it's a very short discourse but what Buddha does in this discourse, because I have read it from the Pali, English translation from Pali, and Buddhaghosa's commentary to it, is he takes this core practice, mindfulness of breathing, and then he unpacks it in sixteen phases. I've mentioned this before, the first four are straight

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forward shamatha, breathing in - out long, breathing in - out short, realizing the whole body of the breath, calming the composite of the body and the mind. The first four are all about shamatha, The last twelve then are penetrating into vipashyana practice. And that's what he unpacks here, as I said based directly on the Buddha's full scale explication of mindfulness of breathing as a complete pack, the whole works, to achieve shamatha and then achieve vipashyana, the union of shamatha vipashyana and the culmination of the sixteenth aspect or phase – you're an arhat.

So that's where we're going here, we're more than halfway through the text and I need to polish this next session, I haven't finished it yet, so a good time to pause. Now as we return to the meditation, obviously if we don't have direct realization of this life faculty or the substrate consciousness, then it's more a matter of intellect but let's venture into it and just again, having your home, your resting place, a place where you can really get some traction, feel that you can really engage with the practice, let that be in your shamatha, coming there going deeper, deeper, deeper, just making your incremental progress towards settling your mind in its natural state, realizing this life faculty, achieving shamatha so primarily working there, but we will just for this 24 minutes session making these forays into the vipashyana aspects that he was talking about here.

So please find a comfortable posture and we'll go right to it.

Meditation:

(27:45) Like stepping into a cool clear pool of water on a hot summer day let your awareness slip into this field of the body right down to the ground, this non-conceptual space, non-verbal. Settle your body in its natural state, relaxed still and vigilant and your respiration in its natural rhythm.

(29:30) And settle your mind with a quality of ease, of stillness and clarity. As you attend to the sensations of the breath, the in breath, out breath flowing through the body and perhaps focus especially on the terminus, the end point, as these vital energies flow by way of the nostrils down through the torso, the terminus is that space in the region of the navel, why not let your awareness come to rest there and observe the sensations of the prana coming, coming to the end of the line, filling that space and then like smoke going up a chimney, prana is going upwards again to the exit to the nostrils or to help stabilize your attention and may find helpful to keep it focused in one area, this is a good one.

(31:36) Like watching a train coming into a station turn around and depart from the station, observe the pranas coming to that level, the region of the navel and then departing from whence they come.

(33:54) Just to remind you of a key point as the breath flows out, don't inhibit it in any way, release it completely, and as the breath flows in don't help it out in anyway, don't pull it, just let it flow in, observe the body breathing.

(39:10) Now closely turn your attention to the aggregate of form, specifically that of your own body, and observe it for what it is, impermanent by nature, devoid of a self, devoid of an owner, simply perceive form as form.

(41:15) Direct your attention to feelings, feelings arising in the body and in the mind, and recognize this aggregate of feelings simply as feelings, impermanent by nature, devoid of a self, having no owner.

(43:55) Direct your attention to the aggregate of recognition as you focus your awareness on the space of the mind and the mental factors arising therein, while maintaining a basis in mindfulness of breathing, observe the process of recognition taking place with this metacognition, observe this mental process.

(45:12) While grounding your mindfulness in the flow of prana in mindfulness of breathing, direct your attention to the space of the mind and the various compositional factors, the mental processes, the impulses, the thoughts, the activities of the mind, observe how they arise and pass all of them being devoid of a self and having no owner.

(47:09) Now still resting in the flow of mindfulness of the in and out breath, bring your awareness right into the immediate experience of being conscious and rest in that awareness, seeing conscious itself rise by moment by moment, devoid of a self, devoid of an owner.

(49:30) Open your awareness in all directions to the realm of phenomena, the dharmadhatu, the domain of all phenomena, observe them rise and fall, none of them being a self and all of them lacking an owner.

Teaching after meditation:

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(52:05) I think this is a realm of vipashyana that's not out of reach because after all we all already have these five skandhas, it's not something that we'll achieve one day, and to bring even without having achieved shamatha, to bring, as a clear, as stable an attention as we can to the body, and certainly do that, and then likewise for the other aggregates and the core reason for doing this is to un-confuse, so a confused existence for example as a human being would be like having a body and like being a cook, and going into your pantry and saying ah, there's a body and put that into your vase, and oh, there's some feelings, oh, recognition, can use that, oh nice medley of compositional factors, ok, put that in. Six consciousness? Absolutely! And this is a mixer, and then put on the lid and hit high and you get a puree of you! And when you finish you just say: that's me.

But notice how this is really, this is actually I think how it works. I was just thinking especially for a woman and someone comes to a woman, especially woman to woman, and there is nothing derogative here, just one day it happens and says –oh you have beautiful nails, right, they say that sometimes, right? And what does the polite woman say - thank you. You have very pretty hands. Thank you. You've got great legs. Thank you. You are very intelligent. Thank you. You have good teeth. Thank you. You have a nice car. Thank you. You have great kids. Thank you. Nice house. Thank you.

Because you've just been praising me all over the place. And so it's the blender, that we're just saying, this is all mine. You've praised me every single time, even you live in a nice neighborhood. Thank you. My neighborhood, right? I mean it's my neighborhood because this is where I live, you know, the ripple effect goes all the way out right to the end of my neighborhood, unlike the other neighborhoods.

(54:30) But also there is a real pointedness here, when we say – I've been really screwing up my practice or I've done this or I've done that, and always giving all the agency - I meditated really well the last session or I do, I, I, I, it's like there's one entity in here that's responsible for everything. And so if it's bad, then I have low self-esteem because I didn't do well on the exam, this just didn't work well, when I was involved in that relationship, and I loused up that relationship, and so forth, the buck always stops in one place, it's an Americanism, but it always points to, okay, who is in charge here? Like in a company, you don't blame the janitor, you don't blame the secretary, say who's in charge, who's the captain of the ship, who's in charge? Or you know this happens in American Politics, the embassy in Libya was attacked, the ambassador was killed together with some other people and you know who is responsible, Obama and there are actually people saying that, Obama you are in part responsible for this, after all you're the captain of the ship, that embassy is your embassy. Don't look for Obama see that happens when Obama's in charge, embassies get blown up, or people get killed in embassies, so there.

(55:57) You know, so it's the point of sheer absurdity, sheer absurdity on a national level but also here, and here is where it really hits the road, is confusing everything, mushing it all together, me, my mental afflictions, my virtues, my body, my finger nails, my memories, my imagination and just blending it, hit high and get a puree of everything and then say, I'm the owner and operator. That's really disastrous, it's fundamentally delusional, but it's really disastrous. So if I focus on things that I've done well, then it naturally gives rise to an exalted sense of self, because who has done that well, I have a Stanford PHD why don't I identify with that? Much better than a UCLA PHD. Or whatever, you know, rubbish, rubbish, that's a good PHD, I'm happy to have that degree, I am honored it was paid for the whole way, so thank you to everybody that paid for my tuition because I didn't pay for any of it. So thank you all, it was a joint effort, it was paid by tax payer money, I had about 330million people helping me to get my PHD, and that's literally true. So that was a group effort, I did not have the money to pay for that tuition, it wasn't there.

And so it can either give rise to pomposity, arrogance, a sense of superiority when we are saying, I did that, as if "I" the autonomous agent, and of course the flip side. Oh I am such a terrible person. By the way, I want you to know that each one of you, because I've listened to you now, each one of you, is definitely the slowest, most backward, ungifted meditator here. (laughter) You will win F. Equally though, you are all the worst, so now you should be relieved that there is nobody beneath you. Oh, and I am the worst meditation teacher within a broad variety, in a whole range you know, I am definitely the worst one. So at least we are made for each other. So there you are, you see how silly it is? It really is silly. So there it is, so this is like, it was a beautiful experiment, cited by David Bohm – with his implicate order, this will be short, but it's quite beautiful. You put a viscous liquid with a dye, into a centrifuge, and then you turn it on and it goes vrrrr and you just get this grey soup, the dye merges with the paler liquid, the viscous liquid, and so you just get kind of

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grey, so that's confusion, where it's all blended together. But then he points out, it has to be just the right viscosity, but then if you turn it around, you turn it in reverse order, then actually they do separate again and you can say, oh here is the dye and here's what was dyed, you can actually turn it in reverse, and that's what he's saying, there's an implicate order, underlying, that you don't see obviously, but if you could unspin it then you could see how there's a distillation. That's frankly exactly what we are doing here. We are un-confusing, we are turning that puree back into – what where the ingredients that got all blended together into great big "me", and then, and this is the Buddha's brilliance, he emphasized this probably every year of his teaching for forty five years, he was coming back to these 5 skandhas again, again and again. Why? Un-puree them. So you are not just saying, oh I screwed up there, oh I'm so beautiful, and oh I'm intelligent, and oh, I'm so ugly, and oh I'm so stupid, I, I, I, just the puree, was something I feel good about or I feel bad about. Get over the puree, distill it back into its composite and see it clearly with discerning wisdom and you say, oh, but this is just a body, this arose in dependence upon my parents, sperm and egg, and then a lot of food, but I didn't do it. It wasn't sperm, egg and "me". Yes, sperm, egg and continuum of consciousness but that's not me either, that's just a continuum of consciousness.

And so the body is just a body, and then feelings arise in dependence upon causes and conditions in the body and the mind but they're just arising and arising and that goes for all the skandhas so when you see each of these heaps, that is what the word skandha means, you see all of these bundles, each of these aggregates, there is the bundle, the assembly of feelings, there is the bundle of compositional factors, a lot of them, the bundle of six types of consciousness, when you see them distinctly without smearing them, you see oh how interesting, form is just form, feelings just feelings, recognition, compositional factors, consciousness, now it's all clear, the only thing that's not there is there's no- selfamongst them, and there is no autonomous-self outside of them, how refreshing! And that is the experience, if you are well prepared for that experience. If you're not then you start freaking out, thinking, I don't exist, I don't exist, where is my rumination? And I think, therefore I am, I think a lot of therefore I am a lot, I think, I think, I think, therefore I am a whole lot. Then you get to be a clone of Descartes. Congratulations, to samsara you've now full membership.

Session of questions and answers transcribed by Cheri Langston.

Q- What stage of shamatha can we reasonably expect to achieve while living in the modern world?

A- Expect is a six letter word, look out for six letter words. This is a real killer, expect. The other, an eight letter word is just a killer, it's like drinking arsenic, you ready for it? Progress. You've been here for a whole month, so what's your progress? And what can you expect in terms of progress for the next four weeks? Just give me a rope and let me hang myself.

Okay, so what stage of the shamatha practice is it reasonable to expect to achieve while living in the modern world and being dedicated to the practice? And it is a good question, and again, it's all a question of balance, we're not meditating for no reason, if you are then find something else to do. At the same time if we're practicing always hovering around – am I progressing, am I progressing and with expectations I should be achieving stage three within two months and thirty days, whatever, then it's a recipe for failure. So where's the middle way there? I'd say broadly speaking, but I'm immediately going to adjust what I broadly say, so broadly speaking – there are two approaches let's say for Shamatha, because that was the question. Broadly speaking there is the psychological hygiene approach, and I say that with only respect. There is nothing dismissive, nothing at all about that, any more than I shower every day, I shave, I brush my teeth, that's physiological hygiene and there is nothing ridiculous about that, even though I am not getting any cleaner from day to day, my teeth are not getting cleaner, and what else do I do? Not much, I mean that's about it. I am certainly not getting any more handsome that's for sure, so basically I am just slipping down into old age but meanwhile I'm trying to clean and hold onto my teeth and that's good enough reason to shower and brush your teeth every day. Even though you are not getting better at it it's good to have a healthy body with teeth rather than a decaying body without any teeth. Right, so there's no progress but it's 20 minutes a day, very well spent, to keep your body clean and brush your teeth, right. And we're all accustomed to that, and on top of that if you do whatever it may be without being an Olympic athlete, if you exercise for 20 / 30 minutes a day, all the better. Whether it's yoga, whether it's jogging, whatever, then all the better, then you keep the system working. Even though you are not learning how to run faster, you're not getting better and better and better as the decades go by, in yoga and so forth, but it's good, and that's hygiene and it's keeping the system in good working order, so in a similar fashion then meditating, half an hour, 2 gatis every day,

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shamatha and then augment that one way or another, between sessions, on the cushion, four immeasurables, the best companions you can find in the world, and as you become more familiar with the four applications of mindfulness you see how this brings clarity, insight, wisdom, understanding, to everyday life, and that's a tremendous boon. Even if most your practice is in between sessions. So, with these two as kind of your support, the four immeasurables, each of these being so valuable in and of themselves, but focusing on shamatha, if you do one or two gatis every day in the midst of a very busy life, maybe tremendous demands on your time but you still do it because it's a high priority, what can you expect? To achieve shamatha? Extremely unlikely. In that lifestyle, two sessions a day? I can't say it's impossible, but the chances are so remote that I'd be willing to bet against it, and I'd probably win. But if you're not progressing, not marching along the nine stages to shamatha, then we think well it's a waste of time, if I am not progressing why should I do it? And then think of the analogy of exercising half an hour a day. Are you getting stronger and stronger so that by the time you get to 50 you'll look like Arnold Schwarzenegger in his good days? Even Arnold Schwarzenegger doesn't look like Arnold Schwarzenegger in his good days. It's not getting any better. But with a Gatica or two, preferably 2, one to start the day, one to end the day, could that enhance the overall quality of your day? The way you are engaging with other people, the quality of relaxation and stillness and clarity you bring to your work, interpersonal relationships, mundane things like driving and shopping, also entertainment, enjoying yourself, doing so with just those qualities of sanity, greater mental balance, and could that be enriched, could you mature, cognitively, could you become wiser and wiser, in your desires, aspirations, yearnings. Could you gradually be more and more attentive, engaged, could you do so with greater wisdom and insight and through all of that, as the years pass, not missing two gatis every day, could you find as the years go by, greater emotional maturity, balance, intelligence, resilience? The answer is yes. So I think that's a good enough reason. It just improves the whole quality of life, right.

(1:07:05) And then of course if you're raising children, as every parent knows if you're paying attention, what you're teaching your children primarily is who you are and not what you're saying, and so if you're embodying those qualities, mental balance, and manifesting by restraining impulses that could be harmful, and being benevolent in your activities, boy, good parent, good worker, good employee. Everybody will want you. So that's 2 gatis a day, that's not bad, and making no progress in shamatha, maybe stage 2, and just living at stage 2, right.

Now there's another approach, and this is for persons who really have as a high priority, in the midst of fully active, socially engaged way of life with lots of responsibilities and so forth, attending to that, giving unto to Ceasar, Ceasar's due, but in the midst of that, having in the back of the mind – I would really like to transform from a cat to an elephant. So in the midst of all of that, become less and less dependent on hedonic pleasures. Still engaged with the life, be in the world, but as they say, be in the world but not of it. Go to the movies, but if the movie breaks halfway though, you recognize the movie has broken halfway through, I think we're finished here, and leave the theater, without thinking *crap, why did it happen to me, I paid good money, ah man what a bummer, I can't stand* (moan, moan, moan) give it a rest, it's just a movie. So thinking just in the back of the mind, this whole way of life is not just to eat a lot of food and create a lot of stuff that gets flushed down, we can do that anyway, but the whole point here is to mature, to mature. Psychologically, spiritually, to lead a more meaningful way of life. And in the process of that, through that maturation process, more and more you're releasing attachment to this life, and more and more you're letting your mind become dharma. Such that when the time is ripe it's in the back of your mind, and you see the outer constellation of the circumstances of your life, and your inner constellation, what you are bringing to life, you see a real symmetry there. A harmony, a compatibility, and you're looking out and you're seeing is there any reason not to go off and achieve shamatha? No? Thank you! And you look inside, oh, no reason here either, I'm set! I really could live with few desires, with contentment, with few activities and concerns, ethically and I've really got the hang of releasing rumination. I think I am set, okay, let's bring these two together, and let's make short work of shamatha, not piddle around with it for years on end. And of course outward is also the conducive environment. So hopefully we'll have our contemplative observatories up so when that happens then, having lived a very active way of life, maintaining a regular meditative practice, then when the outer and inner mandala are ready, then you go off and achieve shamatha, and once you've achieved that, then I would have to say the sky's the limit. The sky's the limit, what can't you achieve if you've achieve

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shamatha? To say you can't achieve vipashyana is crazy, of course you can that's the whole point. But if you've really been developing the four immeasurables along the way, now why couldn't you achieve bodhichitta?

Genuine, uncontrived, authentic Bodhichitta, why couldn't you, what's in the way? And if you've got shamatha, you've got realization vipashyana style realization, you've got bodhichitta. Now tell me what your limits are? And whatever you say, it's wrong. It's wide open. Stage of generation completion, Thogyal I wouldn't place any limits.

So those are the two, the hygienic approach, and then when the outer and inner mandala are ready, go for it! 6 hours, 8 hours, 10, 12, 14 hours a day, as it just gets more and more alluring and you want to devote yourself and you don't want to spend any time off the cushion, then you just go for it, get into the flow and just flow right through the nine stages and achieve shamatha. So those are two large scale avenues that have been explored for a long time, throughout the whole Buddhist history there have been very, very dedicated lay people and monks and nuns who have many responsibilities but they are doing some meditative practice and they really do mature very well in practice. And then we've had for, since the time of the Buddha, people who retire into the jungle into the mountains, to the desert, full time contemplatives.

And they often, not always, but often, wind up being like beacons, lighthouses in the wilderness – look, there's one, there's one, that one achieved shamatha, that one achieved stage of generation, whatever, so there they are. But now is there anything inbetween?

Because what I just mentioned, those are two routes that have been well traveled, is there anything inbetween? And the answer is, yes. And it's not that this is virgin territory - that is we're the first generation to explore it, but something inbetween would be worth exploring more deeply. And that is not utter solitude, meditating 12, 14 hours a day, not just an hour or so a day while devoting 18 hours a day to activities in the world, but how about something inbetween, where maybe you are meditating maybe 3, 4 or 5 hours a day but still doing in the world what you need to do? But here's the catch, not doing anything more. And I don't mean being stingy, I mean every person that comes to you, that really needs you, you give them all that they need, but you don't give them more. Just like our dear friend Natsu, it's wonderful that you receive what you need, but not more, it just then gets pleasant, unpleasant, but it's not necessary. By definition it's not necessary. Give what's needed and then stop, because you've given everything needed so that's it, right. And so, a person who is meditating four or five hours a day, living as consciously, as mindfully as possible, a really contemplative way of life, while still having some social engagement, tending to this, attending to that, but just bringing the contemplative mind to everything, could a person achieve shamatha in that way? Four or five hours of formal practice a day, something like that, could be six or seven, could be three or four, but in a way of life that is truly a contemplative way of life, it's just not one of total solitude, could such a person achieve? Why not?

And here's the arithmetic of it – and that is – if you know how to practice well, then when you sit on the cushion, you should, incrementally, step by step, gradually be developing these qualities. Relaxation, stability and vividness, gradually moving along the nine stages. That's what it's for. So when you're on the cushion, there you are, giving your whole concerted effort to developing along the path of shamatha as you're moving forward. Inbetween sessions, if you are on the phone, talking to that person, on the internet going grocery shopping and so forth, chances are you'll probably slide back a little bit, just because there are a lot of pulls on your attention, so there'll probably be some diffusion, some entropy, that coherence you develop on the cushion probably dissolving somewhat. So here's the simple arithmetic – if you are spending four hours a day on the cushion, supine or sitting, are you progressing more in four hours a day than you are falling back in the other 20? If you are falling back more during the 20 so that when you come to your next session you are back where you were because you just fell back all the way, then no, that means you are having a good practice and you are getting a good benefit from those four hours but you are not progressing, so those other 20 hours may be much richer. More so than if you meditated only 1 hour. More mindful, more attentive more good, good, good, but not progressing because in terms of sheer relaxation, stability and vividness, you keep on unraveling it, right. And that means because there is not enough mindfulness. Not enough engaged, too much rumination, too much scattering so then that simply erodes or undermines that coherence, that anti-entropy, that Samadhi that you are cultivating while on the cushion. But if you're so mindful, so present, so engaged, so not marching backwards by way of rumination when you are off the cushion, if you take four

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steps forward while on the cushion, and only two steps backward the other twenty hours, and that includes of course, sleep, if you take four steps forward and only two steps falling back, well then do the math, as they say. You may not achieve shamatha as quickly as someone who is practicing 14 hours a day and doing almost nothing inbetween sessions, maybe gardening, walking and a little bit of yoga, maybe not as quick, but four steps forward and two steps back is definitely moving in the right direction. So I'd love to see that. As we have our contemplative observatories up, one easy trial would be that when we have these contemplative observatories up, somebody has to maintain them, somebody has to do the grocery shopping, hopefully not the yogis. Maybe there will be some building maintenance, maybe there'll be a garden, that's be nice, nice organic garden, maybe there will be other things, ways to keep the place going, administrative stuff, doing the accounting and so forth, answering emails about you know, do you have an opening at this center I would really like to come and so forth, doing administrative stuff, hopefully that would not be a burn out totally 12 hours a day kind of job. If it is then we'd better reconsider what's going on here.

(1:17:20) But imagine a person who is making right livelihood, probably very modest income, but is getting paid for it, this is you know, can't expect everything for free, imagine a person getting a modest income, enough to get the requisites, food, shelter, clothing, medical care, maybe some dharma education, and is working 4 to 5 hours a day to do whatever's needed and working 4 to 5 hours a day you're making enough to live on, that leaves you what? 20 hours a day. Not to be like a yogi who is in full retreat, gosh. So there is a lovely story, a really nice story it's during the time about a thousand years ago, nine hundred years ago, I think it was the disciples of Dong Dhupa, the great lay disciple of Atisha, and he had a number of disciples who were really dedicated yogis, those Kadampa Geshe, everybody loves them, they did not politics they were just purely focused on dharma, no monkey business, just straight dharma, they were just loved by everybody because they didn't make enemies, they just practiced dharma and shut up, they made no big deal, oh look at me I'm a vajrayana practitioner, they were just outwardly, it's very sweet, they were outwardly ordained, outwardly they would simply show that they were good monks. They were willing to just display that, not flaunt it, but just observing their behavior they could see oh yes, you are a good monk, a good nun, that's manifest, it's physical and verbal, you could see that, and they would be unabashed, unreserved about showing – I'm a good monk, like His Holiness Dalai Lama – he often says, I am a simple Buddhist monk, he doesn't say simply – practitioner. He's really a monk, a really good monk and you can see that, right. So outwardly they would display – I'm ethical, I am not embarrassed about that, I'm not hiding it, I'm not pompous about it, but this is what I am displaying, I am ethical, monastically ethical, raising the standard pretty high. Inwardly – Mahayana, bodhichitta, cultivation of six perfections. Secretly – Vajrayana, and nobody would even know, only after they died and somebody is going into their cave to pick up their belongings – oh, got a vajra and bell, guess they must have been practicing Vajrayana, but nobody would even know about it, that's the old style, that's the old school, that's the old stuff, that's the authentic Kadampa tradition. So, there was Dong Dhupa, had quite a lot of disciples who were of that caliber, meditating away, and then there was the cook who took care of them, brought them their food and so forth, and after some time Dong Dhupa called them all in, called in the troops to see how they're all doing, report, report, he is our meditation teacher, called them in 20, 30 who knows how many, how are you doing? And as they are speaking to their dharma teacher they'll be completely candid, so he called in all the meditators, the cook was there as well, and each one reported and Dong Dhupa said, okay, I have heard all of you, now the one who has done the best, progressed the most deeply – congratulations – cook. You can imagine it too, motivation – bodhichitta – every act, an expression of his bodhichitta, every act of getting the food, preparing the food, cleaning up, attending to with humility, because he's just the cook. With humility attending to each of the yogis, serving them to the best of his ability, with no attachment, in other words given up all attachment to this life, and his mind is totally dharma. Deepest realization. Doesn't Tibetan Buddhism have great stories? I think it does.

Q – At times part of the mind is wandering while part of the mind is still on the object, what should I do, should I multi-task?

(1:21:30)

A- Yep, called coarse or medium excitation, subtle excitation. Q -Is it better to focus the mind more on the object of meditation or to wholesome multi-tasking? For example focusing on awareness of awareness and at the same time, with a corner of the mind noticing the flow of the breath?

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A- A very good question, not silly at all. It's a matter of where we are in the practice, and that is - we've seen in Asanga's presentation of Vipashyana, it's clearly a kind of a multi-tasking. Because he is establishing that basis on the mindfulness of the in and out breathing, that's mindfulness and then with attention – then you're attending to the body, feelings and so forth. That's clearly a kind of multi-tasking, or like riding a bicycle and doing something else at the same time, maybe singing, or site seeing or taking photos, who knows what, and so there is a roll for going back and forth, and in fact as you well know, and it's good to remember, that the practice of shamatha up to stage eight, out of nine stages preceding shamatha, the practice of shamatha up to but not including stage eight, entails multi-tasking. What's multitasking? Attending to your meditative object, whether that's your breathing, whether that's the space of the mind, awareness of itself, but also attending to the flow of mindfulness itself, the quality of attention, recognizing whether excitation and laxity have arisen, those are two different tasks. They're two different job descriptions, one is looking this way, the other is looking this way, which means that when introspection intercedes, interferes, it does break the flow of mindfulness, because we have only one mind, and in Buddhist psychology, in one single moment you can't attend to two entirely different fields or domains of experience, in one single moment. In one cluster, like a 30 millisecond, 50 millisecond one cluster, you can't pick up, you can't turn your attention to the visual and the mental, you can't attend to the breath and be attending to the flow of mindfulness. Now, there are many, many clusters per second, so they get blurred together like a motion picture, and you feel like oh, I am doing these all simultaneously, and over the course of a second are you doing multiple tasks? Definitely. Yes, over the course of a quarter of a second, you're doing multiple tasks, but when you cut it finer and finer, you say – oh at this level you're jumping back and forth, your jumping tracks and doing this and that and that is multitasking. And that's what everybody does when they multitask. They are on the phone and they're looking at their child and they're watching the pot on the stove. So what are they doing? They are not doing all of that in one time, in one moment, they're going (Alan makes a fluttering sound). And so, for this practice, it's a given, it's not optional, it's a given that we will be multitasking, then the question is only, how much. Then as you progress along those nine stages, of course, slowly, slowly you can decrease the frequency of the intervention by introspection, until when you achieve stage eight, since even subtle laxity and excitation are no longer arising, then you don't break the flow of mindfulness at all, so now you are uni-tasking, mono-tasking. But for the array that we have here, when you are practicing mindfulness of breathing I would suggest that you do just the multitasking, of attending to the sensations of the breath and break that flow with introspection. That's multitasking, so it's simply that.

(01:25:36) If you're practicing settling the mind in its natural state, and you're still prone to getting a bit disoriented, a bit kind of spaced out or drawn away, sucked away, sucked away and feeling oh, I'm not quite sure that I am up to this, then feel free, to have a bit more multitasking, something a little more rhythmic, predictable, because when you're attending to the space of the mind you don't know what's coming up next, you never do, unless you did it, in which case then you're not settling the mind in the natural state, it was deliberate, it's coming up stircastically, right, by its own accord which means you don't know what, one second what's the next thing to come up, you don't know, so if you still find that quite challenging, then what I would suggest is that as within this vipashyana practice, ground yourself in the flow of mindfulness, and then from that nice undulating flow, direct more and more attention to the space of the mind, until you get into a flow there, it's not undulating but you feel – ah, I really am holding my own ground, in a flow of still awareness, watching the comings and goings of the mind, and I am maintaining continuity, good, now I can release that peripheral awareness of the breath and just do this single pointedly, and I am just multitasking mindfulness and introspection.

And likewise for awareness of awareness. I've introduced a contaminate into that practice, what Padmasambhava suggests is oscillating, releasing out into space withdrawing into awareness, that's his teaching, which is not multitasking it's just an ongoing flow of somewhat different tasks. I've suggested that if you're new to the practice, don't really have the hang of it yet, then you might conjoin, that rhythm of the release and contraction, with the breath. So as you breathe out, releasing awareness into space, as the breath flows in, withdrawing awareness into itself. I've messed with Padmasambhava's teachings just to provide people with some entry if that's just too subtle and they can't do it, that's why I've messed with his. But I always say, it's like the Wallace footstool, to get into the Padmasambhava carriage. So you just use it to get into the carriage, once you're in the carriage don't mess with the footstool any longer. So once you feel you

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really can do that oscillation and you've set your own rhythm, the duration of how long do you go, how long do you release, how long do you retrieve your awareness, then you set your own pace, and at that point, kick away the Wallace footstool and say – I don't need that anymore. And then just do the practice singlepointedly.

Okay? Good. One can see this also with Tonglen. That Tonglen is really all about the cultivation of compassion and loving-kindness, as a prelude to bodhichitta. At the same time, as you well know from Atisha, it's conjoined with mindfulness of breathing. The breathing out, the breathing in, so a bit of multitasking there, but it keeps you engaged, keeps you with a nice rhythm. And rhythm's good.

Okay, enjoy your evening.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Revised by Noa Leshem and Cheri Langston

Final edition by Rafael Carlos Giusti

47 Mindfulness of breathing (6)

Instructions for one that is reading the transcript: the next paragraph and others writing in black is part of the summary that we are using as title for the next theme.

Alan talks about the fourth of the five obscurations: excitation and anxiety.

Oh la so, this morning we turn to the fourth of the five obscurations. It is a pair; the first one is very familiar. It is excitation, the agitation, the restlessness of the mind driven by the mental affliction of craving. The second one is a bit more ambiguous or multifaceted. That is afflictive regret, a kind of lingering, ongoing sense of guilt or shame, which then ties immediately with low self-esteem. All of these being afflictive, undermining one's spiritual practice and often strongly associated with the agitation and restlessness - excitation of the mind. So there is one meaning of the term - afflictive guilt or shame, remorse - but the Sanskrit and Pali also suggest anxiety, so excitation and anxiety. Anxiety of course is very intimately coupled with attachment because as soon as we are attached to anything, anxiety is built into it, built into the equation. If you are not being anxious, you are just not awake, because if you are attached, you are in a precarious situation.

Bliss is the natural antidote for excitation and anxiety.

(1:52) So those are the obscuration, that is, the fourth obscuration - the pair of them - and they are put together obviously because they are intimately connected. Then in terms of the natural antibody, the natural remedy that is built-in, that comes right through the very practice of cultivating samadhi by way of shamatha. It is the fourth dhyana factor and that is bliss or joy, priti in Sanskrit, bliss or joy. Well, we cannot just turn that one on. It would be nice if we could, but that does not happen, it is something that does occur and some of you have tasted it, at least having the nice spikes of bliss, some real joy coming up in the practice but then it goes away and becomes a memory and you do not know when it will come again, you want to but you do not quite know which knobs to turn. So, I can assure you that as you go deeper and deeper and deeper in the practice, especially up to the heights, stages 7, 8, up there in that realm then it really becomes a much more steady state, you do not wonder where it is gone and when it is gone you wonder where it went. But then what do we do in the meantime? Because by the time you are up at 7 and 8 the problem of excitation is gone anyway. Well, it does not just start then, number one. That is, none of these qualities of bliss, luminosity, non-conceptuality, none of those simply start sometime much, much later. People in a one-week retreat may experience bliss. It can come up at any time and for some people it can come up more prevalently. It is part of the practice and likewise; relaxation, stability, vividness - these are part of the practice. So a sense of enjoyment, even if it is not really a sharp bliss, but really enjoying it, this can come up, and repeatedly along the path and the deeper you go then the more consistent it is. But in the meantime, the problem of coarse excitation is the big issue on stages 1, 2 and 3, and if there is not a whole lot of bliss coming right from the meditation during that time, it looks like you could be kind of stuck. That is, the antidote is way up there, as something really constant way up there at 7 or 8, you are stuck down at 1, 2 and 3 saying "hello antidote, could you come down here and give me a hand" and it does not work that way.

Discursive meditation on the pros and cons of the practice (in this case, shamatha) is an outside help as antidote for anxiety and excitation.

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(4:25) Then we need to call in some outside help, that is the antibody will arise, it will arise, and then it will ward off. Why do you think that all the excitation is gone at 7 and 8? Because something has taken over that is warding it off. The antibody is working, like an antibiotic that is finally really getting to the bacterial infection. But we need outside help until that bliss is coming right from your meditation, from the inside out. Then we need a little bit of help to arouse it from outside in and this is where intelligence comes in, intelligence, imagination, listening, faith, and confidence. With these all come in and specifically looking on, and this is classic, anybody who knows the lamrim teachings and so many of the others teachings. If you are aspiring for something very noble, whether it is realization of bodhichitta, of nirvana, of Buddhahood and so forth, what do you do? You reflect upon what are the disadvantages of not achieving it and what are the advantages of achieving it and you really reflect upon those again and again and again, and then that will arouse the enthusiasm, the zeal, the inspiration: “Wow, maybe I really could!” So that goes for everything, for getting college education, for starting a business and so forth and so on. You reflect: well, if I do not do it, then what is the downside, and if I do do it, what is the upside, and then get into gear, right? It is a standard practice. So let’s review this briefly.

As long as we have not achieved shamatha, we are subject to the 5 obscurations characterized as being: 1) sensual craving = indebted, 2) ill-will = sick, 3) laxity/dullness = bondage, 4) excitation/anxiety = enslaved, 5) uncertainty = lost in a desert track.

(6:04) Right now, for this practice of course is focusing on shamatha. What is the opposite of shamatha? All of your past lives until now, and pretty much your whole life until now, and highlighting because obviously our lives have many good qualities to them, many joys, successes, sorrows, challenges and so forth, but in the midst of that there are these five obscurations and the achievement of shamatha, namely the access to the first dhyana, that is the exact remedy to really subdue the five obscurations. So now what did the Buddha say about these five obscurations? From his perspective I have spoken of the four realities for arya. What things look like if you are an arya? Oh, the reality of suffering looms very large on all three dimensions and its source is this; the cessation they know, the path they know and so that is what looms large. From a Buddhist perspective, what is a Buddha’s evaluation, what was the Buddha’s evaluation, what is the impact, what is the significance of not having abandoned or really subdued the five obscurations?

(7:19) And he says so, he says exactly what he feels, what it looks like from a Buddha’s perspective, he said: “one who has not abandoned the five obscurations regards himself as indebted, sick, in bondage, enslaved and lost in a desert track”. Sound like fun? He gave five, so I think he probably meant five and he put them in a sequence, I’ll bet you, that he meant a sequence as in the sequence of the five obscurations. So consider it, try it on for size. The first of the five obscurations is fixation on hedonic pleasure, the bounties of the desire realm. And he says if you have not abandoned that one - and of course it is not enjoying - it is that fixation upon, that attachment to, the craving, the clinging to, wealth, fame, power, and all the stuff that could be got by that, the eight mundane concerns, and so he likens this to being indebted, in deep debt, and not just having debt here and I will pay for it tomorrow, but being in debt and not having the finances to get out of debt. How would you feel? There are whole countries that are dealing with this issue right now. I do not think that it feels good, and there are individuals all over the world, families and so forth that are looking at crushing debt, and considering they are losing their home, they are losing this and that and they cannot pay. So exactly how happy can you be when you are in debt and you do not have the resources to pay off your debt? I think anxiety is just coming in like a dark cloud over your head and there would be no lightness, no joy, no sense of being carefree because you are just screwed. I mean you are in a pit of debt and there is no way out. In the old days they just put you in prison, remember jolly good England? Maybe only two hundred years ago or so, and I don’t think it was unique. If you are in debt and cannot pay your debts, we will just put you in prison that will solve the problem - pretty tough!

(9:08) Well, is that a good analogy, and of course you can guess where I’m coming from. I think that it is spot on. That if you are fixated on, if you are investing your life in hedonic pleasure as really delivering satisfaction, fulfilling your hopes, leading the good life and so forth, well of course you are facing aging, sickness and death. You are screwed, you are just screwed, there is no way out, there is no good ending, it never turns out well. No dharma, aging, sickness and death - exactly how does that turn into a happy scenario? Let alone all the misery that you are encountering as you are pursuing hedonic pleasures and meet with frustrations, success but then you cannot hold on to it, wherever there is meeting, there is parting, whenever there is

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acquisitions, there is loss, wherever there is birth, there is death, wherever there is ascent there is descent. Exactly how is that cheerful? Am I speaking pessimistically here? And often it is said that Buddhism is pessimistic. Yeah, if you come to a doctor and the doctor says that you have terminal cancer, he is not being pessimistic, he is just telling you; “I am sorry, it is a brain tumor”. It is not being pessimistic, either it is a correct diagnosis or not. So we can simply look at this; is this correct or not? If you think it is incorrect, there is no reason for shamatha, enjoy your good life - and I’ll watch you. So there is the first one, I think it is a spot on powerful analogy. Insofar as you are just fixated, attached, totally invested in the pursuit of hedonic pleasure as means to the good life, then you are indebted and there is no way to pay your debts off.

(10:56) The second one is kind of obvious. Ill will, we all know what it is like, it is awful, when the mind is just filled with hatred, with enmity, and we are grinding our teeth because we want to harm someone else. Man, how is that anything other than sick. At least with the fixation on hedonic pleasure, sometimes it feels good. But this one, it is like having a sledgehammer land on your forehead. There is just no happy part of that one at all, that’s just sick. No one gets any benefit, none for you and none for anybody else, it is just misery. And why not just call that sick. Sick until death.

(11:40) The third one: laxity and dullness. It says you are in bondage. Have you ever experienced laxity and dullness? Do you know what is like when the mind is dull, it is foggy it is inert, heavy, sluggish, lacking clarity? Is it not like walking around with two fifty-pound weights on each ankle: “I need to go to the bathroom” and you cannot even go to the toilet. It is so heavy you cant get anything done, nothing mundane, nothing spiritual. The mind is bogged down in a morass of mucus. Like being one of those poor dinosaurs that get caught in a tar pit. Blub...blub...blub, “you see my bones”... So that’s in bondage, that’s for sure.

(12:41) And then we all know what rumination is like, nobody needs to tell you about it - the forth one we’ve just been looking at: excitation and call it guilt or anxiety. How is that not enslaved? You do not have freedom. You linger for the rumination, the excitation, the agitation and all of that. When you cannot sleep because your mind is so caught up, you cannot focus on anything because your mind is so topsy-turvy, so restlessness, so carried away, so enslaved. I think it is a perfect analogy; you are just enslaved, you have no freedom. You do not even have a mind - the mind has you. If you tie a dog to the back of a car and then you drive off, the dog does not have a car. It is just getting dragged to death and is not that exactly what it is like when your mind is just caught in the vortex of rumination, of excitation of blablabla and you think; “give me a break, cut the rope!” The poor dog is enslaved and there is no way out except to get the car to stop. That is the only way out.

(14:10) And then finally uncertainty. I have never been told this, but I think it is true. I think these five analogies are so spot on, one by one to those five obscurations and uncertainty is lost in a desert track.

(14:32) My wife and I went out to “the Gobi” (desert area) years ago, we were going out to some very holy site, especially to Shambhala. We arrived at the edge of the desert where the trains stop and the sun was going down. It was like Mars, almost no vegetation, it is red, and you see these little tracks going this way and then the tracks split and it is all dirt so you cannot really drive anywhere. Dirt, sand, it is like Mars, and you have just these different tracks going in different directions, and it is just wide-open vast desert. Our driver got on the road and said as we were heading out: “I am sure we’ll find it.”

“Oh, yeah? Where is this track we are going to take? There is no signpost, there is no nothing - just this little track in a flattened desert and the tire tracks are going in this way, that way.”

And the driver said: “I am sure we’ll find it.”

“And what if we don’t?”

You are lost in a desert track, that is what you are, in the middle of “the Gobi” (desert area) and that is uncertainty, that is exactly what it feels like and that is, you do not know whether to go forward or backward, left or right because the tracks are going in all different directions and it is like, Ah, Ah, Ah and meanwhile you are getting older, older, and older and you go ahhhhghhh... and you are dead - and that is what uncertainty does to you. It just leaves you nowhere, with no clear direction and meanwhile the sands of time are running out and then you are dead. So, welcome to “uncertainty-land”. It is “the Gobi” with no signpost.

So there it is. So those are the disadvantages, that is what we have being putting up with, that is what we have been tolerating and thinking “it is ok, I am not a yogi, I am not a tulku, I am not a Rinpoche, I am nothing special, it is ok, it is not that bad having five obscurations. After all everybody else does”. That is why it is called an ocean of samsara. So reflecting upon that, and the Buddha was giving these powerful analogies so

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that we would view these more from his perspective rather than from the perspective of “I am merely human, what do you expect, this is just human nature.” In other words, it is just the human nature to be wallowing in suffering and the causes of suffering with no way out. So, at one hand to be completely disillusioned, not with something that the Buddha has concocted or some believe system - and I am not saying that a believe system is incorrect at all. I am saying that what do we really know about the six realms except for our human and a little bit about the animals, but to build all of your renunciation upon a belief system that you do not know whether it is true or not. It is a little bit fragile, right? And insofar as our renunciation is based upon something somebody else says, even if that person is saying truth and I have a lot of faith in Buddhism and I think you all know that. Nevertheless, how stable is it really when we know some things and other things we merely believe and what the Buddha is getting at here is: “hey, do you know about these five obscurations or not?” and now start looking into them carefully.

Am I exaggerating or not? Because I am giving you a glimpse of what these look like from my perspective and my perspective is the most optimistic perspective that you will encounter in your whole life. Because pretty much everybody else says: Oh, just get used to it or maybe there is some medication that will do it. I think it is the most optimistic. The materialistic view I think is the most pessimistic. The most pessimistic. I think it is death on wheels. But I think you know my views about materialism.

And then we go to the other side of the ledger, really getting a clear look not by simply believing, believing, believing even believing people who has tremendous authority and believing doctrines that are true, but actually knowing by investigating your own experience and attending to the experience of others, is this true or not, are those five obscurations true or not? And then - the upside, the achievement of shamatha. Difficult, to be sure. But then why would it not be, otherwise everybody would have achieved it and nobody would talk about the five obscurations, except as some historical artifact. “You know, in the old days when people were really deluded they still had the five obscurations”. So of course it is difficult, what do you expect? But then consider that people have been achieving it for twenty five hundred years, minimum. That is just in the Buddhist tradition, and then reflect upon the qualities being able to just immerse yourself at will, take this ultimate free retreat vacation, just resting in the substrate consciousness. Even the Buddha himself would do that, it says in the Pali canon, sometimes when he would be tired. There was one case when some monkeys were bickering about some aspects of vinaya (monastic discipline) and the Buddha came and said: “can I help, you are having a big conflict, a big argument here, can I help to clarify?” And they basically said: “we will deal with this, thank you”. Can you imagine that? And the Buddha said, “ok”, and he went off to the jungle and just rested in the dhyanas. “Ok, they do not need me now.” He just went off and rested in the bliss of samadhi. Later the monks not being able to solve the problem by themselves, came asking the Buddha if he could help them and he said “sure, I will be happy to help” and then he solved the problem for them.

Achieving shamatha is the ultimate retreat, makes both body and mind supple, places the 5 dhyana factors at our disposal, and allows us to truly help others. It also greatly facilitates the realization of bodhicitta, vipashyana, and for Buddhahood in one lifetime according to Dudjom Lingpa, threkchö and thogyal.

(20:37) So having that at your fingertips but not just the ultimate retreat, being able to just rest there. Ever so more important is having a body that is supple, light and buoyant that is a good basis but then of course the pinnacle, what is the real point is you have all of these five dhyanas factors at your fingertips, coarse investigation, subtle investigation, a sense of wellbeing, bliss and single pointed total unification of the mind, and that is just normal. That is what you bring to every endeavor, every encounter, every situation, every task. The mind supple, buoyant, light and that is just shamatha. And of course you do not practice shamatha just for the sake of achieving shamatha. But now, as Atisha said, you have achieved shamatha, now you can simply open the portal, open the doorway right next door now, to achieving a wide variety of extrasensory perceptions, paranormal abilities, doing this with wholesome virtues, benevolent motivation, it is a tremendous beneficial. As he said, with that combination: shamatha and developing these powers, he said you can accrue more merit in one day than in a hundred lifetimes, that is Atisha.

So considering that, we all want to do good in the world I think everyone here (mind center) probably everyone listening by podcasts would like to be of service, good, one day versus a hundred lifetimes. What do you think the greatest service is? And without shamatha of course we can help in a myriad of ways hedonically, that is very important. Very important. But if you achieve shamatha and develop such abilities of the mind, then you are really poised to help people actually find the path to liberation, to awakening, to help

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them in a way to would be of benefit for all future lives. Whatever hedonic help you give to people is beneficial for this life at most and that is it, when you die it is finished. Whatever good health, education, money and all of that you accrue, that is all good, it is valuable, but when you are dead you lose it all. Whereas when you help people eudaimonically, help people in terms of dharma, this could be something where the gift keeps on giving until they are perfectly awakened. How to be effective? Well, gain these abilities, because Atisha said that you really cannot help, he raised the bar very high. He said, you really cannot help, unless you have such paranormal abilities.

(22:53) But then for your own benefit as well, thinking if I have achieved shamatha, achieved that level of purity and these five dhyana factors right there, oh, I am so close if I especially in the process of that I have been cultivating the four immeasurables, sweetening the mind, opening the heart. If you have been doing that all way along, how close are you then to bodhicitta, with such joy in the mind. The mind is so clear, so stable and so radiant. Why would you not then say, the first thing is I want go back to bodhicitta but I want to cultivate now with just this incredible and empowered and clarified, stable, lucid, blissful mind and I want to pore all the juice of the mind, investing in the cultivation of bodhicitta until it just arises spontaneously and my mind has become bodhicitta. My mind has become body and mind that is not something I practicing, cultivating, inspiring to - it is the mind that my mind has become [bodhicitta]. So now we fulfilled Dondumba's counsel: "give up all attachment to this life and let your mind become dharma". Well, when your mind has become bodhicitta, I think you can see that your mind is dharma and actually become a bodhisattva. So all the Buddhas throughout the three times would be throwing a party, they would be so happy seeing another bodhisattva has come, to join the party, join the family.

(24:25) But then of course you are poised, you have not gotten there yet but you are poised with shamatha and bodhicitta, you are so close now to bringing about irreversible transformation to truly setting on the path from which you will never fall back ever, in any lifetime, you are so close with bodhicitta and shamatha and then apply yourself to vipashyana, for example, the four applications of mindfulness, exactly what Asanga taught, that is, his teaching from Maitrea, the five paths: Achieve bodhicitta and then stabilize it, enforce it, make it irreversible with wisdom and specifically with the four applications of mindfulness and there you are and now you have achieved irreversible good, which means every lifetime from now until Buddhahood itself. Every single one without exception will be meaningful because you are a bodhisattava in every single one. Wherever you chose to be reborn wherever your prayers, yours virtues and so forth leads you, you will always be as a bodhisattva, every single one forever until you are a Buddha.

That strikes me as very inspiring, but let alone future lifetimes as important, immensely important as they are. Achieve shamatha, achieve genuine bodhicitta, and reinforce that with some genuine insight in terms of vipashyana, the four applications of mindfulness. Now this statement about achieving enlightenment, full enlightenment of a Buddha in one lifetime, this is not like communism propaganda, which His Holiness says, you know without those thinking Oh, yeah, three years, three months, three days you can achieve enlightenment. His Holiness, the Dalai Lama said, you know all of this stuff about three years retreat, Oh, yeah do a three years retreat is like winning a lottery. You too, take three years retreat maybe that would be enough, you may achieve perfect enlightenment and the Dalai Lama said: "yeah, that is communism propaganda". I just like the good old farty word; bullshit, because it is not going to happen, if you already so close to enlightenment then, ok, but otherwise forget about it. You do the three years retreat without having achieved shamatha, without bodhicitta and without realization of emptiness and in three years you can become omniscient. I think you are more likely to become Santa Claus, or maybe the tooth fairy. It is more likely. I can imagine dying and taking birth as a tooth fairy. I don't think it is likely, but I think it is possible. But achieving Buddhahood without these three qualities - that is not possible. And this sleek path, this streamline path with no barnacles, actually with no culture, with no accretions, nothing added on. Just shamatha, vipashyana and threkchö and thogyal. Shamatha is shamatha, vipashyana is realization of emptiness, threkchö is breaking through to rigpa and thogyal is fully drawing forth all the potential of the Buddha mind. There it is, there is the straight, direct, unelaborated path taught by Dudjom Lingpa tracing back to Garab Dorje, Padmansabava and so forth and that is all intended, exactly intended for those who wish to achieve enlightenment in this lifetime and then manifest it as rainbow body, so it is clear to everybody. And there it is, and if you achieve shamatha and vipashyana and bodhicitta then why not, what would hold you back?

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(28:07) So, if one reflects upon these, the downside of simply continuing the “same ol’ same ol’”, the status quo, “it is probably not that bad, I can get by, really, samsara is not that bad”. When you see it is actually pretty bad, it is in debt, it is sick, it is in bondage, it is enslaved and lost in a desert track, that is not a pretty picture, and that is what we call normal and then there is this upside. Then by reflecting, using one’s intelligence, as you can tell, I am not talking about blind faith here, not simply allegiance to authority or adopting some ideology or worldview, a belief system and so forth. I am not talking about that, I am talking about using one’s intelligence and seeing for oneself what is it like to have a mind so encumbered by the five obscurations and then considering: “gosh, maybe the whole Buddhist tradition has not been lying to us for 25 hundred years and there are people who have achieved shamatha and have achieved vipashyana, have realized bodhichitta and it is not just ancient history”. So, some joy arises and what happens here is through such reflections - now of course I am talking about discursive meditation - then one desire rises up and puts all the others desires into shadow, the desire of bodhichitta for what it really is; the aspiration to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings and in order to do that, to fully manifest the qualities of Buddha mind, in order to do that to realize Buddha mind, in order to do that realize emptiness, in order to do that realize shamatha coupled that with bodhichitta and therefore I will now sit down and I will practice shamatha like the luckiest person on the planet and that should be enough joy to focus your attention so you do not get caught up in the forest of rumination, of guilt and anxiety because this desire rises up and overwhelms all the other desires, they have no time for you, life is short and my opportunities here are precious beyond all descriptions, therefore I have no time for anything else. This is the one that inspires me. So let’s practice right now.

Meditation:

(31:31) As an act of loving kindness, directly for yourself and indirectly for all sentient beings, let your awareness come to rest, grounded, quiet and serene as you let your awareness descend into the body, right down to the ground, then settling your body in its natural state, your respiration in its natural rhythm.

(33:35) And settle your mind in its natural state: relaxed, still and clear.

(34:55) You recall that in the shamatha practice of awareness of awareness that it may be very helpful to enter into the oscillation of release and withdrawal, release and withdrawal until you sense that sense of balance, the mind becoming grounded, calm, clear in which case you simply come to rest in the center and let shamatha arise up to meet you. In a similar fashion now let’s continue with mindfulness of breathing, let’s say a temporary phase, let’s consider another interpretation of Asanga’s teaching and that is as you breathe in go ahead and let your attention move, the focus of your attention, from where you feel the breath first coming in at the aperture of the nostrils, then the sensations of the movement of the prana right down to the navel as you breathe in, noting the very end of inhalation, the interim inhalation, the beginning of exhalation and then without visualizing, simply focus your attention clearly on the sensations of the flow of prana from the level of the navel back up to the aperture of the nostrils, clearly noting the very end of exhalation, the interim exhalation and the beginning of the next inhalation.

(39:20) With each out breath see that you hold nothing back, that it is a total, complete release all the way through the end, allowing for the interim exhalation, without trying to extend it or cut it short, let it be and let the next breath flow in effortless and simply accept it without taking it. Receive what is given, whatever it may be - long or short, deep or shallow.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Revised by Joakim Gavazzeni

Final edition by Rafael Carlos Giusti

48 Mindfulness of phenomena (4)

21 Sep 2012

Teachings:

So, we will continue now, going further in this presentation of mindfulness of breathing from Asanga. In this afternoon session is going to be mostly for sowing seeds for the long term. If you are a farmer you might have your little vegetable garden where you plant seeds for tomatoes – and I think they come up in like two

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months, really short. So you really expect to get something nice to eat in a very short time. But if you are planting an orchard that might take 5 or 10 years, and if you planting seeds for lumber, that takes 20 years. So this might take a little while. We are sowing seeds, but these will not be tomatoes. It will be more like your lumber. Because now we see that Asanga is following exactly in the footsteps of the Buddha with his 16 phases of mindfulness of breathing as a complete path to achieving liberation. This is what Asanga turns his attention to now. And so, we just follow through this and then we will get back to our practice, which will be something really practical pertaining to our experience now.

But I think it might be helpful for sowing the long-term seeds. Alan read and commented Asanga's text about the 16 phases/aspects of this mindfulness of breathing.

The text below was transcribed from:

"Mindfulness of the Respiration" Excerpted from Ārya Asaṅga's The Stages of the Listeners (Śrāvakabhūmi)

Translated from the Sanskrit and Tibetan by B. Alan Wallace

V. Thorough Training by Way of Sixteen Aspects

Text:

When one who is thoroughly trained in the [four] realities has eradicated the attributes that are to be dispelled by [the Path of] seeing, those that are to be dispelled by [the Path of] Meditation still remain. In order to eradicate them, one thoroughly trains by way of the sixteen aspects.

Adding some Alan comments:

Four realities: the four noble truths.

The Path of seeing: in other words you are doing pretty well you are up there you already achieve path of seeing.

What are the sixteen aspects? It is the sixteen phases of mindfulness of breathing.

Text:

One practices mindfully inhaling, mindfully noting the breath being inhaled. One

practices mindfully exhaling, mindfully noting the breath being exhaled.

Inhaling, one authentically experiences (1a) long and (2a) short breaths and (3a) the entire body; and authentically experiencing the entire body, one practices noting the breath being inhaled.

Adding some Alan comments:

Three phases in terms of inhalation.

This is very classic that the Buddha settled forward in a very systematic way.

Text:

Exhaling, one authentically experiences (1b) long and (2b) short breaths and (3b)

the entire body; and authentically experiencing the entire body, one practices noting the breath being exhaled.

Adding some Alan comments:

(4:10) With that we go back to the shamatha practice and I do find interesting here that he makes no reference to experiencing the whole body of the breath as Budhaghosa does so it is a different interpretation there, one is the whole body of the breath, but now as you recall he is speaking of the exhalation, inhalation and interim but not just breathing into the cavity down here in the region of the belly but also all of the pores in that subtle breath, breathing through all of the pores, so I think he is taking the Buddha very literally, he is not putting in any square brackets in the whole body of the breath no just the whole body. So it is interesting. And again there is no reference to the acquired sign and no reference to counterpart sign.

Text:

Inhaling, upon (4a) really refining the bodily formation, one practices noting the inhalation upon really refining* [wonderfully refining] the bodily formation.

Adding some Alan comments:

(4:49) This is the four phase in the Buddha's core teachings, the initial teaching on mindfulness of breathing, breathing in long, breathing out long, breathing in short, experiencing the whole body and then calming, refining, subduing, soothing, pacifying the entire bodily formation. That's it! And that is the end of shamatha. So that is what he is referring to here, inhaling upon wonderfully refining the bodily formation. One practices noticing the inhalation upon wonderfully refining the bodily formation.

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*Where is written “really refining” Alan mentioned “wonderfully refining”. So it was changed in all the text. Wonderfully refining this is settling into a stage of really profound equilibrium, deep equilibrium.

Text:

Exhaling, upon (4b) wonderfully refining the bodily formation, one practices noting the exhalation upon wonderfully refining the bodily formation.

Inhaling, (5a) authentically experiencing joy, (6a) authentically experiencing wellbeing, (7a) authentically experiencing the formations of the mind, and upon (8a) wonderfully refining the formations of the mind, one practices noting the inhalation upon refining the formations of the mind.

Adding some Alan comments:

(5:47) Authentically experiencing joy, this is pretty, it is one of the five dhyana factors.

Authentically experiencing wellbeing, happiness, sukkha, translated as wellbeing.

Authentically experiencing which means you seeing as it is without any of the delusional overlay. You are attending to exactly these dhyanas factors that are arising in the course of your experience of dhyana, or at least access to the first dhyana. So the joy, the genuine happiness or wellbeing, then the formations of the mind that arise in that constellation of formations of arising and then the refining of this equilibrium, this calming, this soothing, experiencing all of these and one practices noting the inhalation during that refinement, that equilibrium of the formations of the mind. That is 5 to 7 and that is for the inhalation and then for the exhalation is exactly the same.

Text:

Exhaling, (5b) authentically experiencing joy, (6b) authentically experiencing wellbeing, (7b) authentically experiencing the formations of the mind, and upon (8b) wonderfully refining the formations of the mind, one practices noting the exhalation upon really refining the formations of the mind.

Inhaling, (9a) authentically experiencing the mind, (10a) bringing exceptional joy to the mind, (11a) concentrating the mind and (12a) liberating the mind, one practices noting the mind’s liberation and the inhalation.

Adding some Alan comments:

(7:40) Concentrating the mind, this is another dhyana factor, concentrating the mind it is single-pointedness of the mind and liberating the mind. So the concentrating, that is the dhyana. Liberating, now we are deep in vipashyana territory.

Authentically experiencing the mind brings exceptional joy to the mind, concentrating the mind and liberating the mind. That is 9 to 12. It is the same thing for exhalation, 9b to 12b.

Text:

Exhaling, (9b) authentically experiencing the mind, (10b) bringing exceptional joy to the mind, (11b) concentrating the mind and (12b) liberating the mind, one practices noting the mind’s liberation and the exhalation.

Inhaling, (13a) beholding impermanence, (14a) beholding the eradication [of obscurations], (15a) beholding freedom from attachment and (16a) beholding the cessation [of the aggregates], one practices noting the occurrence of cessation and the inhalation.

Adding some Alan comments:

(8:48) (13a) beholding impermanence, it is one of the three marks of existence.

(14a) beholding the eradication [of obscurations], now before, through the practice of shamatha, you subdue the obscurations, you make them go dormant. So they do not bug you that much, if they come up at all. As Tsongkhapa said: even in between sessions, once you have achieved shamatha, if the obscurations – the mental afflictions – come up. That is, they are not eradicated, they may come up, but if they do come up, number 1 they come up infrequently, not nearly so frequently as before, and when they do come up they just do not have much power. They come up and they kind of like ehhhhh, like the heart has gone out of them. And so they just do not have that power to grip you like they did previously. That is through dhyana. That is through shamatha. Now we are in vipashyana territory. We are not talking about subduing now we are talking about eradication. No matter what you encounter, the seeds are burnt, they cannot arise ever again and in Buddhism “ever” is a very big word.

(15a) beholding freedom from attachment, this is very deep freedom. If you achieve shamatha you are really at least temporarily free of attachment to the desire realm, but he is talking about freedom to all realms of

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samsara, desire form and formless, in others words really free. Beholding freedom, that is, you are seeing your own freedom from attachment, all levels of attachment.

(16a) beholding the cessation [of the aggregates].

That is Arhatship and that is for inhalation, and there is Arhatship for exhalation.

Text:

Exhaling, (13b) beholding impermanence, (14b) beholding the eradication [of obscurations], (15b) beholding freedom from attachment and (16b) beholding the cessation [of the aggregates], one practices noting the occurrence of cessation and the exhalation.

Text:

What is the classification of those [sixteen] points? If one observes the four practices, one achieves the four applications of mindfulness. In order to eradicate the remaining fetters, one begins to focus the attention on the object of the inhalation and exhalation. Thus it is said: “One practices mindfully inhaling, mindfully noting the inhalation.”

So there is the first line in the Buddha’s sixteen phase-instruction of mindfulness of breathing.

1. When focusing on the inhalation or exhalation, if a long inhalation occurs, one practices noting that a long breath is inhaled; if a long exhalation occurs, one practices noting that a long breath is exhaled.
2. When focusing on the interim (now here is a point that I have not seen anywhere else outside of Asanga, so this Indo-Tibetan tradition) inhalation or exhalation, if a short breath (now this is interesting, now it is a short breath, so he is relating the short breath with this interim exhalation – inhalation) (If a short breath) is inhaled, one practices noting the short inhalation; if a short breath is exhaled, one practices noting the short exhalation.

3. Inhalation and exhalation are of long duration, while interim inhalation and exhalation are of short duration. (So he just clarifies that one in a way I have never seen in the Theravada tradition.) One observes and recognizes them in the manner in which they occur. When one is intently focused upon the entrance of inhalation and exhalation into the minute cavities of the pores of the body, one authentically experiences the entire body; and when a breath is inhaled, one practices authentically experiencing the entire body and noting the inhalation. If a breath is exhaled while authentically experiencing the entire body, one practices authentically experiencing the entire body and noting the exhalation.

Alan’s comments: So he has given now his gloss, his explanation of what is meant here. Not the entire body of the breath - the whole duration of the breath - but now he has made it very clear; and that is you are experiencing this, the entire body, that is the breath going through all the pores of the body. One experiences, so I just read that part again: “when one is intently focused upon the entrance of inhalation an exhalation into the minute cavities of the pores of the body”, in other words, there it is pores all over the surface, “one authentically experiences the entire body, and when the breath is inhaled one practices authentically experiencing the entire body and noting the inhalation.” So that is his take on experiencing the whole body and then what follows after that of course is this calming, this whole settling into equilibrium. I will go ahead and read that, I have not polished this next little section, but I am going to read this and then we will stop. This is the fourth, so if you just go back to the core teachings on mindfulness of breathing as a shamatha practice here we go to the fourth and final, the next twelve being all vipashyana.

4. When the inhalation and interim exhalation have ceased, there is an absence of inhalation and exhalation, and one is focused on this circumstance of the absence of inhalation and exhalation. When the exhalation and interim exhalation. I think it should be: when the inhalation and interim inhalation have ceased there is an absence – but I will check this. When the exhalation and interim exhalation have ceased and when the inhalation and interim inhalation have not yet occurred, there is an absence of exhalation and inhalation. When one is focused on the vacuous circumstance of their cessation due to their absence—if a breath is inhaled upon **really refining*** the bodily formation, one practices noting the inhalation upon **really refining*** the bodily formation. If a breath is exhaled upon really refining the bodily formation, one practices noting the exhalation upon **really refining*** the bodily formation. Moreover, as a result of devotion to [this practice], cultivation of it, and frequent repetition, there occur rough inhalations and exhalations whose contact is painful for one who is not thoroughly trained. On the other hand, for those who are thoroughly trained, there occur

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gentle [breaths] whose contact is pleasant. Thus, it is said that when one exhales upon **really refining*** the bodily formation, one practices noting that one exhales upon really refining the bodily formation.

Explanation for one that is reading this transcript:

***It seems that Alan changed the original text since he said in all the text: wonderfully refining.**

We also introduced in some texts Alan's comments between parentheses.

Alan stopped reading the text at point 4 in this session and will continue to read the text next session from number 5 to 16 and made some few comments, as below, before begin the meditation session:

I think I was a little bit too stingy with priti this morning when I was talking about it being way up there in stage seven. Well, it is up on stage seven, quite unadorned, radiant, clear, very blissful, but we do not have to wait until then, and it is not like being cheerleaders for the practice. "Five obscurations really, really suck! Shamatha, yeah! Five obscurations suck! Shamatha, yeah!" With the discursive meditation, there is a place for that, but the engine does start getting turning over before the seventh stage. I mean, a lot of you figured that one out, not figured it out; you have already experienced that for yourself. It is a simple thing.

(16:45) I am going to make this distinction, and just for the sake of the recording and the podcast, I am going to give the short version of this tomorrow morning. But let us draw this distinction between sukha - a sense of wellbeing and - priti - joy or bliss (I am translating it here as joy). And sukha, I think wellbeing really is the best translation. It is that contentment, you are just sitting down, you are happy, and you are content to be doing so. I think the word is quite clear, there is a sense of wellbeing and it carries over in-between sessions because there is just this overall greater equilibrium, of balance. The mind is healthier, the mind is calmer, it is freer of rumination. So we bring this to the session and while in the session just an overall ambience of a sense of wellbeing. It is kind of diffuse - it does not have a sharp point to it. Then there is something a number of you, not all, but it will come in time, but a number of you have already experienced this. You have shared this with me in our one-on-one meetings. It is a simple point: "I am starting to enjoy the practice", not just an overall sense of wellbeing, but "when I am doing the practice, I kind of like it". That is priti, that is, joy. You are enjoying the practice - well, you find joy in the practice - and we are not talking here about inconceivable ecstasy or bliss or anything like that. It is just that "I am looking for the next session, I like doing this". It does have more of a point to it, but it is not hedonic pleasure like, "Oh, I wish I could find a breath so it could make me happy". But it is an enjoyment in the practice itself. And it starts out quiet, as the Buddha said: this leads to a peaceful state, a sublime state, an ambrosial dwelling. It is kind of like this crescendo of first a little bit of peace and quiet. It kind of feels good, even if it is not blissful and all of that - peace and quiet as opposed to just being assaulted by rumination and all the junk of the mind. Just some peace and quiet, I enjoy that. And that is how it starts.

And then as you gradually move along the stages, the mind becomes more refined, settling into more and more of equilibrium. Then from that sense of peacefulness serenity rises, what the Buddha called "a sublime state". Now, the sharpness of priti - of joy - is getting a bit stronger. You really like it. And then it goes from there to an ambrosial dwelling. Then you really do not want to stop because you really enjoying this much more than anything else. And after a while too, not at the early stages, but after a while if somebody said, "would you like to continue the practice or would you like to see this new blockbuster movie that just come out and it is getting rave reviews?" Back to the meditation cushion - you know that will be pleasurable, probably a good movie - but overall you rather do this, because you actually enjoy it more. You do not need that external stimulation. You say: "no, I think I will stay home and drink from my own well", so to speak. So that is when the priti really is kicking in. That may take a while to get to that point where you actually rather meditate than watch a really good movie. OK, that is some pretty steep competition, but that is where it goes. So I overstated this morning a bit when I said, "up there at stage seven, and until then really try to rev it up with discursive meditations". I stand by everything I said about the discursive meditation. Everything I said, I believe, was true. But it does also start self-generating, it does actually come out of the practice itself. And we should not have to wait weeks, months, years and so forth, for that to happen. When it does happen, when you really start enjoying the practice then that does, in fact, act as a natural antibody, a natural remedy for excitation, or just desire driven. Desire for what? Desire for something else! You are not going to have rumination like, "Gee, I wish I could practice shamatha", when you are practicing shamatha. That is not going to bother you. So it is going to overcome the excitation, it will just kind of smoothly edge out anxiety, guilt, low self-esteem - all that rubbish. "Why do I have to feel low self-esteem for? I am OK. I have done some

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rotten things in the past”. OK, try to purify them, but here there is nothing rotten, all good. Nothing to be guilty about, nothing to be anxious about – if I die this way, a good way to die – if I live this way, a good way to live. So, no downside, then you can be happy. OK, on that note let us go right back to our own practice, where we live.

Meditation

(22:28) Settle your body in its natural state, at ease, comfortable, still and vigilant.

(23:27) Now, let us linger in this phase of settling the respiration in its natural rhythm as our mindfulness becomes clearer, introspection more subtle. You may more clearly note the invasion into the respiration process of control, of effort on subtler and subtler levels. If you are in the supine position your posture is fine, if you are sitting see that your chest is wide open, your diaphragm easily expanding, your belly easily expanding. No constraints. Sitting at attention, so when the breath flows in there is nothing to inhibit its flow and likewise when it flows out.

(25:18) And as the breath does flow out, with body, speech and mind, with body, breath and mind release in every way and release completely. Until there is nothing more to release, even the subtlest thoughts have been released so they dissolve into space of the mind. The last vestiges of the breath, released to empty. Your body is soft, is relaxed, as you can possibly allow.

(26:25) And with a very quiet mind, pin-drop silent, approach the very end of the exhalation, so when it finally comes to an end, runs out of gas, nothing more to go. You know exactly when it ends. And if there is an interim exhalation, you are aware of just how long it takes, how long it lasts.

(27:00) And when the breath does flow in like the tide, you are breathing lucidly, you are there right at its inception, right at the first beginning of that inhalation. And without pulling it in and without obstructing it in any way, you simply watch it flow in. You watch it flow in until it comes to the end, whether it is a short or long duration, but you note the very end of inhalation. And if there is an interim inhalation you note its duration. And you are right there when the exhalation begins. Releasing deeply all the way through.

(31:12) Attend to the long in- and out-breaths and to the short interim in- and out-breaths.

(32:05) And attend to the entire body, the flow of prana is related to the in- and out breath throughout the entire system. And in this way settle the entire bodily formation, or all the formations of the body, in a state of more and more serene equilibrium. Refining the bodily formation. This is a simple path to shamatha.

(34:34) And now while mindfully attending to the in- out breath, direct your attention to the skandha, the aggregate, of form. Simply recognize it for what it is, free of all of the conceptual elaborations and projections that we superimpose upon it. Flow in a stream of pure perception, uncontaminated by preconceptions. And while sustaining the flow of mindfulness of the in- and out breaths, within this context, direct your attention to the rising of feelings, the factors of origination, the factors of disillusion. Closely observe the feelings as feelings, in the body and mind.

(38:02) Attend to the arising of the skandha of recognition. With metacognition note what you are discerning, what you are recognizing, one mental factor noting another.

(40:10) While sustaining the flow of mindfulness of the respiration, direct your attention to the space of the mind and the mental formations that arise from moment to moment. So we are embracing a type of multitasking here, which has been discussed before. Rest in the flow of mindfulness of the respiration, while attending closely to the arising and passing of mental formations. Observing them as they are.

(41:53) Continuing to sustain the flow of mindfulness of the breathing, now draw your awareness right into the core. Focusing your attention upon consciousness itself. Closely attending to its nature. Is it permanent or impermanent, is it a self or not a self, does it have an owner or no owner? Attend closely.

(44:03) And as we have drawn the awareness right into its core, now release it out into all of the six sense fields, out into space, while gently sustaining the flow of mindfulness of the breath. And attending to this whole matrix of dependently related events arising in all of the six domains of experience.

Some brief comments after meditation:

Alan addresses the sudden enlightenment of the Buddha's disciples.

(47:15) I was reflecting a little bit on these many cases in the Pali canon of people hearing simply a simple line or a verse, like Shariputra listening to Assaji just saying the causes of causally generated things, the Tathagata has explained, and the cessation too, thus are the teachings of the Great Sage. Hearing that phrase then Shariputra immediately realized nirvana and becomes a stream enterer. And then he just says the same

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phrase, exactly the same words then to Maudgalyayana, and then Maudgalyayana immediately realizes nirvana. And there are many cases like that throughout the Buddha's lifetime of him just giving them a short dharma talk and they immediately become (...?), or in Bahiya's case, achieve Arhatship. And one can wonder, well, what about shamatha, what about practicing vipashyana, what about all the stages of the path? How was it they were so lucky, was it the intonation, or what was it? And the only reasonable explanation is from a Buddhist perspective, there might be others but I do not know what they might be, but from the traditional Buddhist perspective it is quite clear – and there is a lot of indication, this is not speculation – that for these very close disciples, like Shariputra, Shariputra Maudgalyayana in Sanskrit, there was an enormous amount, and for Ananda also, an enormous amount of merit, of practicing from lifetime to lifetime to lifetime, prior to that one. This was just the harvest time - many, many lifetimes - and for those five, if you read the Jataka accounts, read various sutras, those five disciples that practiced with him, who became his first five disciples in Sarnath. They would have had many, many lifetimes encountering Buddha in his prior lifetimes, lots and lots of contact, lots and lots of practice. It was just harvest time. These were seeds that were sown not 20 years ago, these are 20 000, two hundred thousands, who knows how many lifetimes ago and just cultivating the merit, deepening and deepening. Of course, it is not just waiting - one day to have realization - there have been all kinds of realization along the way. So when I thought about it, this occurred, only an analogy maybe it is a bad one, but there it is, it is my analogy. Just focusing on that: "the causes of causally originated phenomena that the Tathagata has explained, and their cessation as well, thus are the teachings of the Great Sage." You know what it struck me like, is being hypnotized, into deep somnambulant state, deep, deep hypnosis. Like you do not know who you are anymore. Some people are very prone to that. I saw a performance, some young guy, he was very susceptible, and he could very easily be drawn into very deep hypnotic state, and so he was. Then the stage performer, the magician – but he is a genuine hypnotist – he told this young man they would do it as a kangaroo. And lo and behold you could see he slipped right into the persona of kangaroo and you could see him put up his paws in a very cute way. And then hopped around the stadium, and he was happy kangaroo too, he had a big grin on his face. Hopped all the way around the auditorium, and hopped up on the stage, almost like cartoon character. For that time, as far we could tell, he really thought he was a kangaroo. His previous identity seemed to have just slipped out. Another identity came in – "I am a happy kangaroo". What the hypnotist say: "When you hear me count 1 to 3, or whatever it is, when you hear me say jackrabbit, you will awaken and you are refreshed and then you will or will not remember anything that has gone by", they can make that suggestion as well. They may not remember anything or everything you have experiencing. "When I say jackrabbit you will come out slowly from hypnotic trance", and then they do, of course. That is an analogy, and when I say causes of causally generated things that the Tathagata has shown, you will come out of your trance and you will feel very refreshed and you will realize nirvana, thus is the teaching of the Great Sage. It strikes me it is kind of being like that, that there was this tremendous momentum from past lives for Shariputra and his childhood friend, Maudgalyayana, but when they were born did they say: "hey, buddy, let's find the Buddha". No, they became quickly disillusioned by samsara, they went off to another teacher, Sanjaya I think his name was, a skeptic. They hang out with him, not satisfied, then they made their decision, let's split up and so forth. It was like they forgot who they were, and then they hear "jackrabbit" – or, I am sorry, the causes of causally generated things and they wake up to Nirvana. I think it is more like that. Because just hearing those verses that is not vipashyana. That is just hearing somebody say a really commonplace truth. Yes, the Buddha did teach the causes of causally generated things and their cessation too, those are the teaching of the Great Sage. Now, what did he actually say – oh, you really do not need that you have already figured it out. So, quite interesting.

(53:08) And we see in Dzogchen, where Dudjom Lingpa repeatedly comments that there are people, the simultaneous people, and they just hear the teachings on Dzogchen and they just immediately have realization of rigpa – boom – they become vidhyadaras by hearing the teachings, that was no shamatha, no vipashyana. But what does this imply; that they were just lucky, they won the Dzogchen lottery? No, it is the same thing with Shariputra and Maudgalyayana, tremendous momentum coming in and when you hear the teachings of Dzogchen you will come out of your hypnotic trance of thinking you are a sentient being and you will realize who you are, and you will wake up and realize your actual identity as rigpa. You are very close. And one more point in Dzogchen, there it is, the pinnacle, the ninth Yana, the highest, the most sublime, I really think it is but it is very easy to be intimidated by that. Thinking, but I have looked at my meditation; I do not

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think I am a pinnacle kind of guy. Where is the lowest of the low where is it for the really, you know, kindergarten kids. I think that is maybe where I can get in and not get a failing grade. Dudjom Lingpa's response to that that, because that qualm comes up in the Vajra Essence, the text I have translated in its entirety. The question comes up, and he answers it and says, look; after he has already given some introduction to Dzogchen and he is teaching shamatha and he says; you know, once you have heard these teachings as you listen to them. If there just spontaneously arises faith, not blind faith, let us call it intuition, from some core place, not just "I like that theory", but from a very deep place. Call it faith, call it intuition, call it confidence, call it a profound inner core resonance, whatever you want to call it. Either you have experienced it or you have not. But if you feel that, if you feel this profound affinity, resonance like feeling this is my ultimate home I really want to engage in this practice. Then he says, you just passed the test, that was the entrance examination do not look for anything else, do not look for anything outside from a teacher, divination, or astrology or anything else do not look elsewhere, do not worry about it, do not second guess yourself. If you really have that longing, that affinity, that resonance, that natural, spontaneous faith in the teachings and you really wish to apply yourself to them, he said, then consider yourself qualified, that's it, that's all there is to it. And now go for it, and then he leads you right into shamatha, onto vipashyana and then onto the path. And he said it is possible that people may stumble upon Dzogchen teachings, that they just happen to be in the right place at right time, Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche or someone like that, or nowadays Chatrul Rinpoche or some other fine lama's teaching. They may be teaching and some person hears about it "oh, Chatrul Rinpoche, I have heard he's really great, let's see if I can get in, maybe I slip in", and maybe you slip in and Dudjom Lingpa says: you know even if you attend teachings on Dzogchen by profoundly realized master, if you are not ready for them, your body will be where the teachings are and your mind will be thousands of miles away. They will pass right just through you, you will not get it or if you feel a little stirring, I am kind of into that you know, you will pick it up and then the novelty will wear off pretty quickly, fade out. It will not have any staying power, you won't stay, it is not like you are bad, you are not ready yet. And he does comment, for Dzogchen, nobody is ready unless you do have a lot of momentum, unless you already from past lives already have some foundation the basic teachings the Mahayana, the Vajrayana unless you have a lot momentum these teachings will not connect, but then how do we know what our past lives were? We don't, that is easy, we don't, but then just go right to your heart again, Dzogchen is so intuitive. If you find, I am really, really drawn to it. Good, then you will see for yourself whether that attraction, that affinity and so forth withers on the vine and you get interested in other things, you wander off or it just has staying power and does not leave, if it does not leave then simply consider yourself qualified and go for it.

Q and A

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49 Equanimity

22 Sep 2012

Teachings:

Alan begins talking about bliss, pretty for overcoming exaltation and anxiety.

This morning is time to turn to the fifth of the five obscurations and the fifth of the five dhyana factors so it is its natural antidote or antibody, but before going there I'd like to offer just a footnote to the last one, the one we discussed yesterday morning, namely the role of bliss or this Pīti (in Pali (Sanskrit: Prīti)) for overcoming excitation and anxiety.

Bliss maybe is not the best translation in all contexts, especially when one says bliss, it is a pretty high level, ok how long do I need to wait for that? This term doesn't necessarily have that degree of power to it. I think probably the more appropriate term here would simply be enjoyment. So you may or may not have experienced bliss in your mindfulness of breathing or other shamatha practices, but you may have had a session that you enjoyed. Or at least a moment or two. (Laughter). That was a good second there. Oh, how sweet the memory.

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So enjoyment, this is kind of once again obviously true if one considers excitation as the mind is flying off in all different directions, being impelled by desires for this, that and the other thing, and then anxiety, then it is quite clear that if you are really enjoying what you are doing then the tendency to wonder off in pursuit of happiness with craving and desire or falling into anxiety would naturally be overcome. And there are all kinds of mundane examples of this: I fly a lot and see people on long airplane flights engrossed in their novels for example, one of those paperback thrillers, whatever, and when they're really into the novel, you can imagine that their mind isn't wondering and they are not thinking about their income taxes or other things as anxiety and so forth, they are totally into it and they're enjoying the novel. So excitation and anxiety do not arise as long as they are still focused there [in the novel] and it is because they are enjoying it. Whereas if you are studying something that you have to study that you do not find interesting, then the mind wanders all over the place.

(3:12) So in a similar fashion now for shamatha, rather than setting in expectation like, ok, "how long I have to wait until bliss comes in?", or "I had bliss a week ago last Tuesday where, where have you gone, when you will come and visit again?" Rather think more modestly, for example, remember the song that says: "if you can't be with the one you love, love the one you're with", remember that one? It is kind of like that: if you cannot get the bliss you do not have, enjoy the meditation you do have. But you may say: "yeah, but what's to enjoy, I am in stage one, and I got rumination, and I am restless, and my knee hurts, my mind is not very clear; which part of this is the enjoyable part?" That is not a rhetorical question.

I'm here to tell you which is the enjoyable part, ahhhhhhhhh... (sigh of relief). That is the enjoyable part, breathing out. And it is taking satisfaction in little things. [Let's see] a little quip from modern science, psychology of happiness, another parallel. I am wondering a little bit, but I like to wander, you know:

(4:05) Studies have been done about happy people whether or not they're practicing dharma, I do not think that term comes up a lot in modern psychological studies of happiness, maybe it does I do not know, but they found that when they've done polls or interviews with people who were just generally very cheerful, happy, they found something common among them and that is that generally happy people find a whole bunch of little things to be happy about, they are not waiting for the lottery, they are not waiting for the big one, they are just finding many little things throughout the course of the day to take delight in. And then it's just like oil and paper, which just starts to seep into the rest of the day.

So finding and taking satisfaction in little things, well how about even if you think you are the worst meditator here, like most of you do, and me too, I am part of the club, I am seating there for hours and then I think: "man, this sharp medium dull, and utterly retarded", that's me down there, but at least you know, I am still at it, still doing it, haven't lost heart. But finding little things to take satisfaction in, and that is when you breathe out, you can take some satisfaction in just releasing the rumination of the moment and taking satisfaction, not a whole lot, but enough that, Oh, that is relaxing, and then relaxing all the way through the end, which you've heard me saying so many times, and then that patient resting there, if there is something of an interval, interim exhalation, and then finding, "Oh, how nice! The next breath is flowing in on its own accord, I did not need to reach out and launch for it, I did not need to yank it in, I didn't need to exert myself, just flowed in, how nice!" One can enjoy breathing out and then receiving the gift of the in breath, you can enjoy that, enjoy just releasing rumination and say: well who knows how the twenty four minutes session will go, but that breath, that was a really darn good breath.

Let's do that right now, let's take just one breath, but let it be a good one. Yeah, that was not so hard, was it? Just to enjoy a breath. And so among the three qualities, to derive some enjoyment, leave alone bliss, it is too big a term, but some enjoyment of, among the three qualities, really learning how to release, to relax, to find ease and comfort in your body and mind, and to be satisfied. There is more to come, that is not the whole movie, it is not the whole show but that is a nice start. That's got to be in the right direction, if enlightenment is in that way this has got to be in the right direction, the opposite has got to be in the opposite direction. And then with that deepening sense of relaxation, then slowly as you really do unwind and release, then you might find that there is a bit more composure, a little bit more continuity, a little bit more peace and quiet in the mind because rumination is spinning out and there are some nice intervals between the rumination, the spouts, the bursts of rumination, and finding, Oh, it is nice not only to be relaxed but to have a bit of inner peace, a bit of quiet that is not dull. That is nice, you can enjoy that too. And then among the three, the easiest one to enjoy is when you see, Oh, the mind is quite clear, quite bright, that is nice, so enjoy, that is a

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natural antidote to excitation, which is always looking for something you do not have, getting off on forays, expeditions in pursuit of some kind of hedonic pleasure or just in sheer habit.

So I would suggest that we do not have to wait for the seventh stage and I stand by everything I said yesterday in terms of the value of reflecting upon the disadvantages of just being snared in the five obscurations and the magnificent opportunities, the advantages, the benefits, of actually achieving shamatha that is certainly worth going to in terms of the discursive meditation. But let's now overlook the possibility which is really like today, even in the next session, of taking some satisfaction in the practice itself and finding: Oh, I do not need to wait, this is already good. So that is for the fourth one, then we move on to the fifth one.

Instructions for one that is reading the transcript: the next paragraph and others writing in black is part of the summary that we are using as the title of the next theme.

Alan talks about the fifth of the five obscurations which is afflictive uncertainty.

(10:10) And the fifth one is afflictive uncertainty, debilitating uncertainty, being uncertain about something that is just naturally insane, what do you think, you think that it will clear this afternoon, there's going to be sunny skies or you think there will be more rain? Gosh, I do not know but that is not pinning me at all, that is not an afflictive uncertainty, I am uncertain because I do not know and I have no way of knowing. And so there it is. Will I live a long life or short life? Can't be that short, I've already made it to 62. I do not know, so there we are, I am uncertain, I do not know, that is not afflictive.

(9:34) But now let's take for example and that is only one of many examples since there's a big emphasis here on shamatha, big question:

If I practice shamatha, if I continue practicing shamatha, when I'm not compelled to come to these meditations in the morning and afternoon and have some real freedom, can I get anywhere among those nine stages, can I actually move along or am I just stuck, spinning my wheels like a Jeep spinning its wheels in mud and just "rurururu", Ah! Twenty four minutes gone by, mud all over the place. Did you go anywhere? No, I just dug myself deeper into a trench of dullness and excitation so ... Am I completely hopeless? That would be a really good question. Am I completely hopeless, so retarded for shamatha that does not matter how hard I try or how hard I try to relax (I like that phrase, the Germans specially, I'm sorry but you Germans you're hopeless (laughter). But you know I don't mean it, that you're hopeless). So there it is just on this basic thing, can I get anywhere at all in this practice or am I always going to be coming back to stage one or if there is such thing, stage zero, stages minus as well? I do not know how far back would be go.

And then we can ask the grander question. Is it possible for a person like me, myself included, to actually achieve shamatha? And like me, well how about, ok, if one is a Westerner, how about Westerners if one is simply living in the twenty first century or how about anybody, Tibetans, Bhutanese, Mongolians, Indians and so forth? Can anybody achieve shamatha nowadays or is this just a thing of the past? Are the times so degenerate and you will find people who believe this, that times now are so degenerate that the time of realization is finished? Anybody heard this before? The time of realization is finished so all you can really hope for is to study well, be an ethical person and then dedicate your merit to a really good future life? So that could be if one had a gravestone for Buddhадharma where it would be written: "Rest in peace, Buddhадharma." You should have been here during the good old days but you missed it by that much, how many years, or decades, or centuries.

(12:26) So it is suitable to be uncertain about that which is uncertain, and then there is the natural remedy, the antibody, and that is, it is called "vijrara" in Sanskrit, or "thopht" in Tibetan and means careful investigation, close investigation. So not just simply checking it out, but checking it out in depth, with continuity, with carrying through, and say like Sherlock Holmes I solved the case, he doesn't just look at the evidence and say "maybe this"; you track it down until you get something decisive, right? That's this. Or in the Theravada analogy I mentioned earlier, called the "sustained thought", sustained attention, and that is like the reverberation of the bell after you've struck it with applied thought, applied attention, then the lingering, the reverberation, "uuuuuuuu" like that, that is the vijrara, ok? And that is a natural antidote and this absolutely makes totally good sense to me and that is, it is through sustained investigation, we might use a modern term called research, rigorous, sustained, definitive research into issues about which we are uncertain.

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This is how science progresses, evolves, develops, because when an issue comes up, the scientists are uncertain, there's this hypothesis, and then if there is a scientific hypothesis then they find some mean to put it to the test and then they move beyond their uncertainty and they come to some consensual knowledge. I mean it is just a fantastic strategy that's worked incredibly well for certain domain of reality, the objective, physical, and quantifiable, for four hundred years, it's been spectacular.

But now applying this to the subjective, the qualitative, the non-physical, all the way to uncertainty about anything perhaps, but about for example the shamatha. Well let's take the easier one first: can I get anywhere here at all? Well, check it out. Is there some reason? Do I have brain damage? Am I genetically a mutant? Am I one of those anti- shamatha, sub-species? Is there any reason to believe that I am unlike so many others who really benefit from the practice?

(14:44) And then positively speaking, I mean you really solve this by sustained practice, doing it intelligently, learning the methods, seeing that you are practicing it correctly, you are looking for the outer and inner conditions and then seeing for yourself with continuity and just see, can I get any benefit from this at all? And frankly eight weeks really is a fair period, if after eight weeks here of doing your best, attending our morning and afternoon sessions, applying yourself as well as you can, you know how ever many hours or sessions per day, if after eight weeks you look back and say: boy, I just got no benefit out of those practices at all, then I would say find another teacher, find another set of practices, because eight weeks is really a fair trial, it is fair enough, right? And then you should know so that uncertainty should be dispelled, either, yeah for sure from those practices I do not get any benefit from, I gave it eight weeks that is really fair trial, and I just got no good benefit, I was just spinning my wheels the whole time. That is a possibility in which case this is not the right teacher or those are not the right practices and there are plenty of others teachers and plenty of others practices so I would suggest, you know, head out to greener pastures.

(15:45) But if over eight weeks, and I have found eight weeks turns out to be a really timely period, it does tend almost universally to be a sufficient time that people can really see for themselves whether or not achieving shamatha, that can remain uncertain, but are these practices beneficial, having put them into practice for eight weeks, have I derived any benefit at all, so see for yourself. But I have been doing this for some years now and I find people almost universally, find that the answer is yes. So that uncertainty is quelled.

(16:21) But then we go to the deeper issue which has some implications for people in this twenty first century, reaching the path, the path of accumulation for example, and proceeding on, developing authentic insight by way of vipashyana, developing genuine bodhichitta and so on. Is it possible for people the likes of us to achieve shamatha? And the likes of us we can say as Westerners (transcriber' sum up: Alan raises the question about which places/countries could be considered Western). But anyway is it possible for Tibetans, Mongolians, Singaporians, Australians, Americans and so forth, is it possible to achieve shamatha or not in these places? There is an uncertainty about it. And the stakes are high, because if it is simply impossible, then we need to recognize that and not get our hopes up or our hopes are going to be in vain, and say ok, it is not possible to achieve the path, it is not really possible to gain profound and irreversible realization in Dzogchen, state of generation or completion, not possible to achieve bodhichitta or direct realization of emptiness, all of those are impossible now because shamatha is necessary for everything I just said according to the greatest teachers of all the traditions. So since shamatha is impossible then all of those are impossible too; so what is left over? Well, there is something left over, that is to be an ethical person, you can make prayers to be born in a pure land, in other words you have a religion. Be ethical, do your devotions, do your rituals and pray for a good rebirth and I think if we consensually came to that conclusion, I think the Buddhas would weep. So anyone who draws that conclusion without compelling evidence is simply making a self-fulfilling prophecy, believe it and lo and behold it's true, it is true because you believe it. Or as H. H. the Dalai Lama commented in a different context, he said:

The situation is hopeless whatever the situation is, self-termination, human rights for the Tibetan people in Tibet etc.; the situation is hopeless exactly in that moment when you give up hope. Until that moment it is not hopeless but as soon as you get to the point, Oh, it is hopeless, then it is, congratulations, you've just put yourself into a prison and thrown the key away because you decided it is hopeless. So as for the freedom of the Tibetan people, the freedom to practice their dharma without fear of punishment, without fear of political indoctrination, without fear of torture, without fear of having their monasteries bulldozed when they

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get too large.... It becomes hopeless only when you give up hope. And that the Dalai Lama has never done and I shall certainly never do it myself.

(21:01) So what have we been doing for shamatha? Research. And this is the beauty of shamatha, it is so transparent, there is nothing mysterious about it, laid down by such great masters as Tsongkhapa and many, many others. Nine stages. Ok, which stage you think that is the impossible one? Where does the doubt really come in? Break it down like an engineering problem into smaller pieces and see where the uncertainty really kicks in, then research, investigate. What methods do people find most beneficial? This is the fundamental motivation behind a group of my colleagues and myself wishing to establish, doing everything we can, to create a constellation, a garland, of contemplative observatories around the world so that people who are really devoting themselves to opening the door to the path by achieving shamatha and then proceeding along the path, they can find what works, with sustained investigation, sustained research, what works. And moreover, the more the merrier. Because with Shamatha like with music, art, science and so forth, some people are just going to be more gifted than others, it is just the way things are. But even the not so gifted people can still develop it (shamatha). So it is not like can you or can you not, but how well can you. But the more people we have involved who really are passionately committed to this, there are bound to be some who are very gifted, and there are, I've met them. And so let's keep an eye on them and then they can come back and tell us what is working. So research, investigation. What kind of environment is really optimal? Which practices are really optimal? Is it better to be practicing entirely in solitude so you are not having any distraction from outside or is it better to have a small cluster, maybe three or four companions, or is there some real group energy by having twenty or forty people together, perhaps in smaller clusters amongst them but a larger kind of group effort? Is that more optimal? Is it necessary to have an experienced teacher right there right with you or is it enough to communicate by Skype and so forth or even e-mail.? So I think it is really one of the grand questions about which is worthy to be uncertain but uncertainty in a most vigorous, determined way to dispel uncertainty through research, through investigation. If this were hopeless then there is no doubt in my mind that H. H. Dalai Lama would not be encouraging and really supporting the establishment of a retreat center, a contemplative research facility near Bangalore which is solely, according to him, his wish, solely going to be focusing on shamatha and vipashyana. He would not do that, why, set up everybody for disappointment, I'm setting up all those research labs so you can all fail, we'll give it our best shot, find money, find land, get the support of the Indian government and so forth because we're really eager to get you all there and then fall flat on your faces, everybody will watch you all catastrophically fail. That's not in his mind, impossible. So if he thought that this is impossible there is no way he would do this. So let's dispel uncertainty the good old fashioned way, investigating, just like the scientists have, the great contemplatives of the past have, and the great contemplatives of the present do. Let's face the uncertainty squarely, and then get an answer. That's how research or sustained research or vijjara, subtle investigation dispels uncertainty. You move from skepticism, you move from uncertainty, to certain knowledge. Case closed. That is the way forward. Oh, yeah, I will never accept a case closed on the negative side, not me, no way.

There is a story about Edison, the great American inventor, and the story goes that as he was trying to create the first electrical light bulb he went through two to three thousand trials, trying, trying, trying and some journalist came to him and said: Mr. Edison I've heard you've run three thousand trials trying to create an electrical light bulb and you failed in every single one. Isn't there a point when you just want to give up, maybe this just cannot be done? When is enough enough? And Thomas Edison allegedly said: I have not failed three thousand times; I've succeeded three thousand times in finding how not to develop a light bulb. So some of you are now becoming very familiar with how not to achieve shamatha, congratulations. You might want to keep a log: this doesn't work, this doesn't work...Then we can compile: Thanyapura Mind Center's 500 page book on how not to achieve shamatha, written by experts! And then of course shortly after that he succeeded and it was one more fabulous invention he made. So it is uncertain but I refuse the certainty that it's not possible, because that just means we haven't been trying hard enough

Alan introduces the fourth of the 4 immeasurables, equanimity.

(27:30) It is Saturday morning and it is time to move on to the fourth of the four immeasurables, even-heartedness, equanimity, the grand culmination, the celebration of the four immeasurables. And as we attend to others, as they appear to us, other people for example, it will always be true I imagine that some

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will appear to us as more virtuous and some less virtuous, some friendlier, some unfriendlier, some with heavier mental afflictions and some with lighter mental afflictions, some will be physically attractive and some will not be physically attractive. That's going to be around probably as long as the human race is around, that people will just appear different, they'll manifest differently and that means some of the appearances whether in terms of attractiveness, or whether it's virtuousness vs vice, that some are naturally going to be more appealing than others as they arise to us subjectively. So in that regard it is uneven, because we have mass killers on the one hand and we have great saints on the other hand, and they're just not the same; and people who are genocidal, their behavior is not agreeable and those who are incredibly benevolent, that is (agreeable) and so in the midst of this tremendous diversity, not only in appearances but how people actually are, it's been true for all of human history and will be for the foreseeable future, people are cropping up in all different varieties. So how in the midst of all that do we possibly have an even-heartedness, that one taste, pretending that each one is equal when we are so obviously not equal? Greater virtue, lesser virtue, more intelligence, less intelligence, more kind, less kind, more attractive, less attractive, how is that possible? People as objects are, have been, and will be, widely diverging in how appealing, attractive, pleasant or unpleasant they are. That's going to be on for the long term. But as we see with each of the four immeasurables the point is not to look at other people as objects but rather as subjects. But then you may say, yeah, subject, but this person is very mean, and this person is hostile, this person is arrogant, this person is benevolent, this person is generous, subjectively too there is a tremendous variety so how can I look them evenly if they are not even, they are not equal, some people from the inside subjectively are really benevolent others are really malevolent so where is the evenness here, how can I respond evenly to a reality that is uneven? It is not a bad question, is it?

(30:00) And the answer is: look deeper, because all these appearances come and go, and mental afflictions come and go, and until one achieves the path virtues come and go, achieve the path and you actually have something irreversible. Until then it comes and goes from lifetime to lifetime, who can say. There was one Lama highly regarded by his students, they thought he was great, great Lama. He died. So one of his students was very keen to find the Tulku of his Lama so he sought out another great Lama, a clairvoyant Lama and asked if the Lama could help look for the Tulku of his Lama. And the Lama said, never mind, never mind, give it up, give it a rest, never mind. But the student persists, we need to find the tulku of our Lama, he was a great Lama, we need to find him. He persisted and finally the Lama said if you insist, ok, come with me. They went out to a pasture where there were some yaks grazing and the Lama said, call out the name of your Lama and the student did and one of the yaks went: Muuuuu!!! The Lama said: you have just found you Lama!!! Ethics was not quite what it could have been. Lama last time, yak this time. Lama said, I told you, not, no path, next life time who knows.

So with all the variations, how can we respond evenly to an uneven reality of the objective and the subjective reality of other people? The answer is look deeper, look deeper until you find someone who is fundamentally like yourself. Look deeper until you find a common ground, whether you are looking at a mass murderer or you are looking at a tremendous bodhisattva. Look deep enough that you can see with a great bodhisattva and say yes I found a common ground, I am not a great bodhisattva as he is but I found a common ground, I found yes like me so for you; and with a mass murderer, no, I am not a mass murderer either, I am not a great bodhisattva, I am not a master murdered either, but just as I attend to one I found a common ground. You have to look that deep and only if you find that deep can you really develop equanimity.

And what is that deep? All sentient beings wish to be free of suffering. Everyone wants to find happiness and in a way we are doing our best, the mass murderer is doing his best because he's got some idea, this is really going to be for the good, it looks bad I know but when all is said and done you'll see that this was really necessary and it's going to turn out well, and that goes for everything else. People have an inconceivability to justify whatever they are doing and think this is going to be for the good, at least my good, this is going to bring me happiness at least, or my Nation, or my political party, or my religion or what have you, the ingenuity of delusion staggers the imagination. But look for the common ground and then go into samadhi on that common ground. For myself, so for you, we are brothers, we are sisters, we're the same. Each of us here wishing to be free of suffering and doing our best using our intelligence, imagination and so forth and freeing ourselves of delusion, we are doing our best to overcome suffering, and thinking we've identified the causes and try to overcome them, seeking happiness, thinking we've identified the causes and pursuing happiness,

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like myself, so for you. And now may you, like myself, whoever you are, it is the whole spectrum, may you like myself be free of suffering and its causes, may you like myself find happiness and its causes. So let's practice.

Meditation:

(34:48) Settle your body, speech, and mind in its natural state, relaxed, still, and clear.

For a little while release the turbulence, the energy behind the rumination of the mind, releasing with every out breath, relaxing and calming the discursive mind.

And now with your eyes open or closed, as you wish, direct your attention to the space of the mind, and whatever images, thoughts and so on arise in that domain, as you allow your mind to settle in its natural state.

Many years ago when I asked one of my Lamas when we seek to cultivate loving kindness and compassion for all sentient beings, how should I understand all sentient beings, it seems inconceivable; and his response was: every sentient being you encounter, whether physically or those who simply come to mind, that will do, this is representative of all sentient beings. So now as you attend to the space of the mind, relax, release control over the contents of the mind and simply watch who comes, who comes to mind. And instead of continuing in the practice, the shamatha practice of simply observing mental events as mental events, when a person comes to mind which is to say a mental image, a thought, or a memory, use that mental image as a means to direct your attention to the person, him or herself, whoever may be, and attend closely with sustained thought, with carefully investigation. Attending closely until you find a common ground, you find someone just like yourself.

And now with the spirit of loving kindness and compassion, as you attend single pointedly to this individual with each in breath, arouse the yearning, the aspiration, may you like myself be free of suffering and the causes of suffering, or just as I wish to be free, so do you.

And with each in breath imagine the darkness of this person suffering and its underlying causes, its true causes not merely the cooperative conditions, imagine the suffering and its causes in the form of a darkness converging in upon your heart, this radiant orb of light at your heart, draw it in there and let it be extinguished without trace, do not take on the burden but rather dissolve it into this immeasurable source of light at your own heart, with each in breath arouse the spirit of compassion.

With each in breath imagine this person becoming free, the darkness vanishing.

And with each out breath arouse this yearning of loving kindness, the aspiration, may you like myself find happiness, hedonic and genuine happiness and its underlying causes, and with each out breath imagine a flow of light, radiant, pure, luminous, embracing and suffusing this person and fulfilling his or her innermost desires. And imagine this person being well and happy.

And allow the appearance of this person to dissolve back into the space of your mind but your awareness being loose and free, and see who else spontaneously comes to mind. Do so for the remaining of the session, following the previous practice.

And now let's all do the practice with each in breath, if you will, imagine the light of blessing, of loving kindness, compassion, wisdom, of all the awakened ones in all the directions in the form of a radiant white pure light converging in upon your own being, utterly filling, saturating you with this light of blessing, with every in breath draw in this light till you're filled to the brim, and with every out breath, breathe out the same light of loving kindness and compassion imbued with wisdom in all directions evenly, excluding no one.

As the light flows in upon your own body imagine it purifying all illness, all obscurations, all hindrances that obstruct you on your path, imagine total purification of your body and mind with each in breath, and breathe out this aspiration with every exhalation.

And now release all appearances, all aspirations and all objects of the mind and let your awareness utterly come to rest in its own place, holding its own ground, illuminating and knowing its own nature.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

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Posted by Alma Ayon

50 Mindfulness of phenomena (5)

22 Sep 2012

Summary: Alan made very brief comments about the first four stages that have already been discussed at session 48.

O la so! Just to touch in on the last section of the text that we are looking at, and by the way the text is now available, as the notes were previously. The text now is available [at] the front desk. You can either get it digitally or you can get a hard copy... just ask, and it's polished. [sarcastically] It doesn't have those awful mistakes, where Andre would definitely scold me. He saw all the mistakes in the earlier translations and he said, "Oh, I thought you were a good translator, oh, not so good." I think I've cleaned them up, so now I'm not embarrassed if he sees them.

So, in the translation, I'm not going to read much back, but just that very brief summation, the last section we looked at, where he's now enumerating, going through one point by one point. First one focusing on the inhalation or the exhalation, whether it's long or short, you remember? When it's long and the second one, it's short, and the third one, observing the entire body, including the pores of the body. And then when the... and it did read...there was a typo in the last one, "when the inhalation and interim inhalation have ceased" and then it continues on. So now he's talking about the refining, the wonderful refining, *raptujamba*, giving a total... *Raptu* means something quite wonderful, exceptional refinement, balancing, tuning of this bodily formation. One breathes in, one breathes out, and so those first four stages, those were out of the sixteen stages, stages pertaining to... shamatha.

Before jumping into the vipashyana section, [stages 5 to 16], I'd like to make a comment that I think might be helpful. (2:44) And that is, there are some people for whom coming from the outside in so to speak is really skillful means, that is: where are we going? We are going to the substrate consciousness everybody knows that by now, that's what shamatha is, your coarse mind dissolves into subtle continuum of mental consciousness, with the five dhyana factors and all of that, so that's our destination. And that is a matter of strategy, okay? So there is a strategy by means of which you really come in from the outside in, and that is through mindfulness of breathing, this full body awareness, right? And then with that quality of awareness and I've really now strongly emphasized the parallel between bringing in the quality of awareness to the space of the mind and watching the mind heal, bringing that same quality of mindfulness to the body and watching the body heal by way of its energetic system or call it the nervous system. But it's really quite remarkable that just by bringing that quality of awareness that's ease, loose and so forth and gradually enjoys the process that you actually are observing just the many, many imbalances, blockages and so forth in the body unraveling, dissolving just like in settling the mind but you're coming from the outside in, so it's physical, it's physical, it's energy within the body and then by the energy finding its balance, becoming refined, as he said wonderfully refined, coming from the outside in like in the yoga system, coming from the asanas. That's really outside, that's muscles and sinews and so forth and then coming into the prana system and then coming in culminating in samadhi of course.

(4:34) Well similarly here we're working by way of explicitly with the breath hyphen the prana system and by wonderfully refining this, because of this intimate interrelationship between prana and mind, by doing that you are wonderfully refining your mind by the power of wonderfully refining the bodily formation, specifically the prana system, and so it's really kind of a physiological approach to samadhi. And there, it leads you right to shamatha as he says, right?

So if your body is a rather pleasant neighborhood, we're hanging out in the body, being present with the body and all the sensations, all the population of your body, it's kind of a nice place to hang out and you enjoy the practice and you love this soothing quality of it, the restful quality of it. You kind of like it and you're starting with a nice neighborhood. Then why not? It's good, right? And then by that, kind of there arises this momentum, and it comes into the mind, the mind settles in its natural state and when the mind settles in the natural state of course that means the mind dissolves, and it dissolves into the substrate consciousness. So there's one strategy if you are starting out with a nice neighborhood, why not hang out there, got a good body, feels nice place to hang out, good, why not?

(5:40) Now some bodily neighborhoods are not that nice but the mind might be quite good, the space of your mind and the events coming up and so forth, maybe not too brutal, maybe not, you know, really dark part of

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town, in which case then you can let your primary practice be settling the mind in its natural state, disengaging, to the best of your ability, all of your attention from the physical entirely, I mean the whole physical world but of course your whole physical body as well. Just say, “Not now!” And you are really directing it away from all five sensory fields, very much including your body, and you’re focusing just on the space of the mind, doing the same practice And then you get to watch the show, you get to watch your mind heal, you get the front row seat of how with that quality of awareness, the many blockages, the knots, the tightnesses and so forth, the afflictions, the obscurations gradually settle, settle, settle, evaporate and you watch your whole mind dissolve into, that is, that space dissolves into the substrate and your mind dissolving into the substrate consciousness.

(6:50) So, by so doing you don’t have to practice mindfulness of breathing for one second. Padmasambhava never mentioned mindfulness of breathing, Lerab Lingpa never mentioned, Dudjom Lingpa never mentioned mindfulness of breathing, so you don’t have to practice any mindfulness of breathing at all, otherwise they would have said, “Oh this is one more thing that’s indispensable.” They don’t say that, right? So you don’t have to get to the mind by way of the prana, by settling the mind in its natural state that’s going to not only lead you into the substrate consciousness but that’s going to definitely necessarily, have the impact on your prana system that it gets balanced and your whole body system will get balanced because there’s just no way you can achieve shamatha with the mind and not with the body, because the whole system, an integrated system, all has to settle and that’s why you have this whole pliancy, the suppleness of body and mind taking place when you achieve shamatha but nobody achieves half of shamatha. You just get the pliancy and all of that and the bliss just in the mind but oh the body is a torturous, you know, dead end... not possible. But you can have that all implicitly, all that taken care of in the body by settling the mind in its natural state, okay? So two avenues, they’re very complementary.

(8:40) Now some of you may find even my mind is not a very nice neighborhood. Number one, they may be just boring. But number two, it may be really a place that you don’t want to hang out with, because, you know, “I’ve already seen enough.” You know, there are some movies, I mean I have seen some movies where after I’ve watched fifteen minutes I know I have no interest how this turns out one way or another. [laughter] “You lost me at hello.” [laughs] You know? Just the opposite of the old movies. Jerry Maguire movie, wasn’t it? “You lost me at hello.” You know? I just watched it start and I said, “This is going to be a lousy movie” Yep, you’re living down to the promise, you know? In which case, if you find out that even your mind is not really a neighborhood you want to hang out in, for whatever reason, then you really don’t, this is the message here, you really don’t have to be present for the mind to heal, that is you can be focusing on the body and the mind heals, right? Mindfulness of breathing... You can focus on the mind and watch the mind heal or you can just bypass the whole system. Whatever’s happening in this life, this particular unique configuration of body and mind... not interested. It’s really a short story anyway, and why should I get all that interested, I’ve had so many lifetimes before and this is only one more. So... and it’s short and I don’t even know how short, so don’t expect it to really engage my interest all that much because it’s so short. Let me attend to something that has some staying power, something that goes deeper and so just by going into awareness of awareness on a relative level you’ve gone now to your core. It’s by nature blissful, you don’t need to fix it, it can’t be fixed. So it’s this facsimile of rigpa, it’s not rigpa. But there’s nothing you can add or subtract to rigpa to make it bad or worse. And likewise your substrate consciousness is what it is, it is by nature when it’s clearly unveiled, it is by nature blissful, luminous and non-conceptual. That’s just how it is, right?

So if you just focus there, in that stillness, that serenity, the luminosity all the more if you can begin to enjoy it, that’s enough, you’ve gone right to the core and by staying right there your mind will heal. And by staying right there the whole energy system of the body will sort itself out and you don’t need to watch, it doesn’t need you as a witness. It will take care of itself. So we have really three options there and I mean of course there are many others techniques as well but these three are all legitimate, they all work, they’ve all proven themselves. Science, modern science, it’s still kind of experimental days. It’s only been around for four hundred years. So how’s it going to work out? Well, don’t quite know yet. You know. But this, oh this, this is three or four times the history of western science. This is old science. This is really old science.

(11:08) So I think It’s good to know that we have these options, each one is available to all of us and of course then we can do combinations, that works, combinations are fine. But any one of the three cannot be over emphasized, any one of the three is a standalone. It’s quite sufficient. It will do all the work, coming in from

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the body, coming in by way of the mind or just coming in by way of the center and staying there. So this final one, this awareness of awareness it's not Vajrayana, I mean it's straight Sutrayana practice, no initiations, no empowerments, no nothing like that, but it really has a kind of the taste of Vajrayana in the sense that one of the core characteristics of Vajrayana as a whole, just generically is [in Tibetan 10:57]. You take the fruition, the culmination of the path as your path, right? So it's like you're reaching a long arm out into the future and saying, "Where's my Buddhahood? Oh, there it is." You pick it up with the tweezers and then you say, "I'll take that right now, thank you." And you take your future Buddhahood and you make that your path right now. It's taking the fruition as the path, right? So, I won't elaborate on that, there are so many great Vajrayana masters in the world today, they don't need my commentary.

(12:17) But this little practice here, shamatha without a sign, awareness of awareness, it's saying, you know, I've already got a substrate consciousness and even though it may not be all that evident right now, with its bliss and all of that, nevertheless it's there and it's not only that I'll realize it one day in the future but it's already there right now so I'm going to take my tweezers and I'm just going to take the fruition as my path, thank you very much. And I'm not going to add or subtract anything from it, I'm just going to take the characteristics of the substrate consciousness and that's going to be my path. And so I'm going to do my best approximation of resting in the substrate consciousness from the beginning and then let the substrate consciousness simply unveil itself until shamatha rises up to meet me. The great big beautiful fish of shamatha comes. Swallow me. Okay? So it's quite elegant in its simplicity, okay?

O la so! Let's go back to the text. We finished the first four phases of the shamatha phase, now we move into vipashyana and I'll move very quickly here because this is again more sowing seeds for the future. They'll germinate in their own good time. So Asanga continues here:

5. Thus, if one who diligently practices mindfulness of the inhalation and exhalation. if such a person attains the first or second dhyāna, at that time, inhaling while authentically experiencing joy, This is the *priti*, the enjoyment. one practices noting the inhalation while authentically experiencing joy.

Now this authentically, it's [in Tibetan 12:52]. I think it's a really good translation. I'm kind of attached to it. [in Tibetan 12:57] You're authentically experiencing joy. What does that mean? With none of the junk piled on top of it, my joy, I, it's permanent, oh, uh, uh, uh. No, just taking it straight. Just there it is, you are authentically experiencing it as it is with no additions. This is naked joy arising through the practice of shamatha. It's one of the dhyanas factors of course. So,

one practices noting the inhalation while authentically experiencing joy. If one authentically experiences joy while exhaling, one practices noting that one authentically experiences joy while exhaling.

So now we are moving into shamatha territory but again it's reminiscent. Here we are way down at the bottom of the pyramid, Sravakayana, right, with those Hinayana people, right? And yet we're finding these reflections of, way up there in the stage of completion, the union of bliss and emptiness, right? Bliss and emptiness- whoa! That's way up there. You're doing facsimiles of stage of generation, stage of completion. You're getting the real deal, as the energy is coming into the central channel, you have the four blisses coming up. And it's all about the union of bliss and emptiness. Well, what's he doing here? This is not Vajrayana. This is Sravakayana. Nevertheless you are authentically experiencing the joy, you are experiencing egoless joy, joy devoid of self, pure unadulterated... whew! Straight joy and you're realizing it with wisdom. So there it is, it's bliss and it's wisdom. It's bliss and emptiness of a self, emptiness of delusion as you breathe in and breathe out so it's kind like this nice, luxurious flow of in breath, out breath and in the meantime you are mining the wisdom of your own mind by actually realizing the nature of the joy or the bliss that's coming up, okay?

Now we move on. Six. That was stage five out of sixteen. We just did five.

6. If one attains the third dhyāna, which is devoid of joy,

And that's why? Because it's gone too subtle. Joy has still got a real buzz to it. You know? But the *sukkhā*, the well-being is subtler. It's more like a field rather than the sharpness of bliss or joy. So the third dhyana, you've moved you've transcended to a subtler level so it's now transcended the roughness, the coarseness of joy but it is still embracing the dhyana factor of *sukkhā* or wellbeing.

If one attains the third dhyana, which is devoid of joy, at that time, inhaling, I have to add, I just see something, one more little typo. at that time, inhaling, authentically experiencing wellbeing, one practices noting the inhalation while authentically, I should probably send this out again. experiencing wellbeing. If

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one authentically experiences wellbeing while exhaling, one practices noting that one authentically experiences wellbeing while exhaling.

It's a lot of words but the meaning is very simple and that is: as you are going all the way to the third dhyana you're applying your wisdom, the vipashyana is right there probing into the very nature of the dhyana factors themselves. So while joy is still present, you realize its nature, empty of self, when joy is vanished because you've gone to a subtler dimension, wellbeing is there, sukka is still there and you then authentically experience it without delusion, without grasping, without clinging, without the *ahamkara*, the I-maker. Then we move on.

7-8. Beyond the third dhyāna there is no practice of mindfulness of breathing. For a very good reason, there's no breathing. Fourth dhyana - breathing ceased, right? **thus such states are declared and identified as being beyond the third dhyāna.** That's really the demarcation, okay? **Now if, while authentically experiencing joy or wellbeing, due to a lapse of mindfulness there arise such thoughts as "I exist. There is my self. I will exist. I will not exist. I will have form. I will not have form. I will or will not have discernment." or "I will neither have nor lack discernment."** If any such thoughts arise then the volitional discerning factor has been agitated by confusion So it's bringing up old imprints. **and one's agitated thoughts manifest and are formed together with the arising of craving. Immediately upon their arising, one ascertains them with intelligence,**

or prajna. So you see it's coming up I mean it's so similar to settling the mind in its natural state. You see the grunge arising but rather than being cognitively fused with it, you view it with the eyes of wisdom. Here really probing or gaining insight into them by way of prajna or vipashyana.

So, Immediately upon their arising, one ascertains them with intelligence, and not dwelling in them, That's the cognitive fusion. **not dwelling in them one abandons them, dispels them, and removes them.** Okay, so there's the real vipashyana edge. You're seeing into their nature. **Then one authentically experiences mental formations and inhaling, upon wonderfully refining mental formations, one practices noting the inhalation upon refining mental formations. Then one authentically experiences mental formations and exhaling, upon wonderfully refining mental formations, one practices noting the exhalation upon refining mental formations.**

So again this ongoing sense of just bringing wisdom right there into the dhyanas factors. Then nine.

9. Even if one does not attain the actual first, second and third dhyānas, one certainly attains the adequate access [in Tibetan] one certainly attains the adequate access to the first dhyāna.

I found that quite interesting. I haven't seen that term for a long time. [in Tibetan] means there's nothing it can't do. In other words, the first dhyana, very good if you've achieved the actual first dhyana, but what he's saying very explicitly here is even if you don't fully achieve the first dhyana, if you achieve just the access to the first dhyana, which we're all calling shamatha, in the Tibetan tradition, yeah, that's shamatha, access to the first dhyana. He says that there's nothing that that's incapable of. In terms of samadhi, that's enough. Now you can bring in vipashyana, bodhichitta, everything else you like. But that really is enough. If you would like to have more than enough, then okay, go for it. Actual first dhyana, second dhyana, third dhyana and so forth, but he says, even if you have not achieved the first, second and third dhyanas, this access of the first dhyana, that's sufficient, that's adequate.

Relying upon that this access of the first dhyana or simply shamatha. **Relying upon that, one examines what arises in terms of one's own mind: the presence or absence of attachment, of hatred, or of delusion, collected or scattered attention, depression or elation, excited or unexcited, calmed or uncalmed, evenly settled or unsettled, well cultivated or poorly cultivated attention, the mind liberated or the mind unliberated.**

So there it is. All of this sounds quite remarkably familiar, because again the embryonic form of this is settling the mind in its natural state, right? Observing the space of the mind and observing all of these events, evasion, depression, excitement, non-excitement and so forth, but without the cognitive fusion with them. This is settling the mind in its natural state but it's stepped fully over into the realm of vipashyana. So there it is.

Thus it is said: One authentically experiences the mind, and when one inhales, one practices noting that one authentically experiences the mind and the inhalation. One authentically experiences the mind, and when one exhales, one practices noting that one authentically experiences the mind and the exhalation.

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In other words you're gaining vipashyana style insight into the nature of your own mind, including the mental afflictions arising but also their absence. So that's nine, now we go to ten.

10. When, upon authentically gaining inner calm, the mind is veiled by obscurations of dullness and drowsiness, one presents it with one or another uplifting object, or inspiring object, one causes the mind to apprehend it, so really focus on it and inspires and gladdens the mind.

This is an interesting point. You can say, "Oh, well wait a minute. Haven't you achieved shamatha? That should be no problem." But in fact they come back. It's all like a spiral. I've seen this in the *Vajra Essence*, really clearly, as he covers the entire path there including stage of generation and completion. But focusing just on three, the achievement of shamatha, the achievement of vipashyana (insight into emptiness) and then going into the realization of rigpa and for each one of these he speaks of these having to move through the *nyam* and the *nyam* even after you've achieved shamatha when you're really moving into vipashyana territory, as you've dredged your psyche, moving from the surface level of your psyche down to the substrate consciousness, that brings up a lot of stuff, a lot. You think, "Whoa, I didn't know it'd be that much." But when you go into vipashyana you're dredging deeper than your psyche and so it brings up deeper stuff, from a deeper level than shamatha and it's bringing it up. Stuff like as he said right here, dullness, drowsiness and so forth, right? And lo and behold, the same thing happens when you, having realized emptiness and having realized shamatha you move into *threkchö* [the break through], once again he speaks of these *nyam* coming up. Whoa! You think it would be all smooth sailing by now. Well no, now what you're doing is you're dredging samsara from its depths. You're not just dredging your psyche, all the way down to the ground of samsara you're dredging it from its depths and you have to do that just as you need to dredge your psyche from its depths to get down to what is beneath it, the substrate consciousness, well now you need to dredge samsara down to its depths so you can see what's beneath that. That's rigpa, which is equally the ground from which both samsara and nirvana manifest. And so this is a recurrence but it's not just the same old, same old, "Oh, gee I guess I've no longer achieved shamatha, no you've achieved shamatha, but there's this spiraling motion of going dredging deeper, the purification taking place on a deeper, deeper, deeper level.

(24:49) This is why after you've realized rigpa, it's really intense; after you've realized rigpa, and you are now really fully accomplished and prepared, a suitable vessel for the practice of *thogyal*, the direct crossing over, lo and behold, there's another whole set, another whole domain of purificatory practices called *ruschen* isolating or differentiating samsara from nirvana and now you're doing the deepest dredging possible by doing that dredging. Now, my goodness you're a vidhyadhara. You think, "Oh now I just cruise in, It just sails smoothly, you know?" Not so smoothly. The *ruschen* is really important, deepest purification, the final purification before you go the final leg of the journey into the *thogyal* and you come to the end of that one and then you've fully manifested all the qualities of the Buddha mind, right? But way, way up there even there, there are things to purify. It just goes [to a] deeper, deeper, deeper level.

So here it is, he's talking about you've gained inner calm and yet still the mind may be veiled by obscurations of dullness and drowsiness so then you apply antidotes, you inspire, you uplift it.

Thus it is said: When one gladdens the mind and breathes in, one practices noting that one gladdens the mind and the inhalation. When one gladdens the mind and breathes out, one practices noting that one gladdens the mind and the exhalation.

In other words you're still balancing your mind but it's in a much deeper level now, really deep existential level.

Moving to eleven:

11. When one clearly sees that the mind has been veiled by the obscuration of either excitation or anxiety Oh, there's one of the five ... That's one of the five obscurations. Son of a gun! What are you doing here? Oh, the dullness and drowsiness, that was another... You're still...? You're like a rash! But then you might recall of course when you've achieved the first dhyana or even all the way to the fourth dhyana, have you eradicated any of the five obscurations? Nope, they've just gone dormant. But now you're eradicating them with the blade of vipashyana one by one. You're pulling them up by their roots. So this is the last you'll see of them. We're well into vipashyana territory now. So you've subdued them, you've [caused] them to go dormant by achieving access to the first dhyana or the first dhyana itself, but now with the blade of vipashyana we're really going in and cutting them off. But when you see that the mind is obscured by either

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excitation or anxiety when one forcefully grasps the object, this too should be familiar, that when do they come? When we are grasping too firmly, excitation and anxiety come. You recall that. When you don't grasp firmly enough then you fall into laxity and dullness. So when you see this,

one presents it (the mind) with one or another uplifting object. One solely draws the mind inward, calms it, and concentrates it. Thus it is said: "When one concentrates the mind and breathes in, one practices noting that one concentrates the mind and the inhalation. When one concentrates the mind and breathes out, one practices noting that one concentrates the mind and the exhalation." Still doing tiny little fixes here.

So there it is. But now this purification is not simply subduing. You're getting there now and really purifying. That's eleven out of sixteen. We're getting close. This is twelve.

12. When one has fully devoted the mind to this practice, cultivated it and engaged in it repeatedly, as a result, the obscuration of the source of suffering is removed, Now we're getting right down to the level of craving and delusion. **the obscuration of the source of suffering is removed and the mind is purified of obscurations.**

Okay, going right down to the absolute core here.

Thus it is said: "When the mind is liberated when one breathes in, one practices noting the mind's liberation and the inhalation. When the mind is liberated and one breathes out, one practices noting the mind's liberation and the exhalation." Now very deep. But we go deeper. Thirteen out of sixteen coming up.

13. One must eliminate the remaining propensities of obstacles to the path of liberation from obscurations. In order to do so, one accurately recognizes the impermanence of formations and by realizing the path.

Okay, so a deeper, more penetrating realization of emptiness, of impermanence.

Thus it is said: "When one observes impermanence and breathes in, one practices noting that one observes impermanence and the inhalation. When one observes impermanence and breathes out, one practices noting that one observes impermanence and the exhalation."

Thus, on the basis of the first, second or third dhyāna or adequate dhyāna You know what that is, access to the first dhyana. **one engages in shamatha.**

So all of those generically, first, second and third dhyanas, fourth dhyana for that matter, but the access, the adequate access to the dhyana - in those ways one practices or engages in shamatha.

Now by observing impermanence one engages in vipashyanā. Such a person's mind, being thoroughly cultivated in shamatha and vipashyanā, is liberated from afflictive propensities in the domains.

The domains for the Tibetan speakers is *ying*. Don't know a better translation. Maybe there is one, but in the domains. Okay, well what are the domains? Well then he says,

14-16. What are the domains? Ah, thank you. This is now very, very high practice so if you even have just a conceptual inkling, that'll be enough for now, the seeds, and we get back to our practice.

What are the domains. They are the domains of elimination, of detachment, and of cessation. Due to the elimination of obscurations to be overcome by the path of seeing in terms of all formations, there is the domain of elimination. So that first domain is associated with path of seeing. **Due to the elimination of obscurations to be overcome by the path of meditation in terms of all mental formations, there is the path of detachment.** Okay, so there we have a link there with the path of meditation. **Due to the cessation of all aggregates, there is the domain of cessation.** He doesn't say so, but that has to be associated with the path of no more training, the fifth path. **Focusing one's attention on the three domains in peace, wellbeing, and freedom from illness, one cultivates shamatha and vipashyanā. By devotion to such practice, by its cultivation and repeated practice, the mind is liberated from the remaining obscurations to be overcome on the path of meditation.** So now we're almost finished. **Thus it is said: "When one observes elimination, detachment, and cessation and breathes in, one practices noting the observation of cessation and the inhalation. When one observes elimination, detachment and cessation and breathes out, one practices noting the observation of cessation and the exhalation."**

Thus, upon dispelling the mental afflictions to be eliminated on the path of seeing and of meditation, one becomes an arhat, whose defilements have been exhausted. Now there is nothing further to do. One has completed the various aspects of the practice. Such a person is said to be thoroughly trained by way of the sixteen aspects. Whatever is included in these five thorough trainings is called "mindfulness of the in- and out-breath."

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If an individual who tends to rumination, who is totally involved in that, caught up in his internal issues, and is distracted, if such a person really applies himself to this practice, that person's disturbing ruminations will cease, very swiftly his mind will remain totally on the object, and true delight will authentically arise in the mind. That is the fivefold, purifying meditative object for individuals who tend to rumination.

That's it. So the seeds are planted, hopefully helpful. And let's return to our practice. You have your own practice.

Meditation

(34:45) Settle your body, speech and mind in their natural states.

(35:58) And now each of these three routes, these three paths to the substrate consciousness by way of the body, by way of the mind or by way of awareness itself which when unveiled, manifests as the substrate consciousness, by any of these three avenues they all lead to a state of clarity, to inner stillness which is the platform for exploring the very nature of reality, for gaining immediate profoundly transformative and liberating experience, realization of emptiness, gaining through your own experience, direct realization. What are the true causes of genuine happiness, where does it come from? And you will know. And what are the true causes of suffering, what is the true source of suffering? And you will know. And you will know that this body, this mind, and awareness itself are neither a self nor are they owned by a self.

We can throw off the shackles of such conceptual projections and experience the body, the mind and awareness as they are, free of additions, nakedly. So choose your own avenue, by way of the body, the mind or awareness. And when you settle in, when you come to something at least approximating, a state of flow then closely apply mindfulness with discerning wisdom, intelligence, ascertain the nature of that which you're experiencing.

And let's continue practicing now in silence.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti, Revised by Mark Montgomery, Final edition by Rafael Carlos Giusti

51 Loving-kindness (1)

24 Sep 2012

Teachings:

So we are now into the second half of our journey (the retreat). And now and then it may be helpful to be anticipating, going wherever you are going from here and if you are going back to a socially engaged, I never call it the real world, but the socially engaged, active way of life, and as I've mentioned before, and it's quite obvious, you can expect that the sense of the stability of attention, the release from the rumination that you may have experienced a little bit will diminish as your mind is caught up in many, many concerns and activities. Nevertheless, of course, as I've mentioned also before, maintaining some regular practice of shamatha even in an active way of life is very helpful, even if you are not progressing along the nine stages, it really should, you should see for yourself it will really be a great benefit to your whole day.

But as for the other practices, the four applications of mindfulness there is no real reason why that practice, that set of practices should diminish simply because you are actively engaged. Now if you take those teachings, the practices and the theories related to them as more like simply book learning that, ok, now I understand that if I ever need to I can teach that or I know that if I read a text I can understand it, then it is more just like picking up baggage and you're going to carry that with you but it's not really doing you any good.

Whereas if we take the theories and practices of the four applications of mindfulness as really learning how to view reality with greater discernment, greater insight, cutting through delusions, breaking old cognitive patterns of cognitive hyperactivity where we're superimposing our own projections, cognitive deficit where we are simply not attending closely to whatever is taking place. If we really shift our whole way of viewing reality by way of those four applications of mindfulness, well that will just get richer and richer and richer and it will change everything. It really will bring about a profound revolution in the way you engage with reality, especially if you attend to these aspects, these marks of existence, of impermanence, it is such a powerful

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truth or the realization of it is so powerful, subtle and coarse impermanence, to really be viewing reality in terms of what is the true cause as opposed to the cooperative conditions.

What is the primary cause, an essential cause for suffering and for happiness? And then exactly in what manner is anything really “I or mine” or is anything really “I or mine”? But viewing these things and in so doing letting your life itself be an expedition not a simply a meditative practice you pick up and put down. But your life itself is an expedition, a way to ex your peds, get your feet out of those old ruts where they have been stuck. Right? So as the four applications of mindfulness, the vipashyana practices do not need in any way to diminish as you leave this cloistered environment (Mind Center), but it can actually really radically transform all of your experience thereafter, this is equally true of the four immeasurables, No reason those should diminish.

So as we are now into the second half of our retreat I thought what I would do is rather than simply having silent meditations in the mornings, which is actually always my preference. I came here to be of as much service as I can and not simply to go into solitary retreat, I thought it might be helpful in these mornings sessions now to go back to the four immeasurables, cycle through them as I have in the earlier retreats, cycle through them, get more familiar with them because these, as I love to say, these will be your four best friends when you leave here, your bodyguards and if they are coupled with the four applications of mindfulness then you have a whole constellation of body guards, around you. And then you will really see the wonderful interface between the cognitive basis of the four applications of mindfulness and the way that the four immeasurables are supported by this deepening insight into ourselves and others.

(4:51) And then you will see that, “Oh! It’s not one way traffic.” That your four immeasurables, the practice of the four immeasurables opens up and deepens your practice of the four applications of mindfulness, deepens it as you are attending to the body, etc, externally, when you do so with the eyes of loving kindness, compassion and so forth, it deepens it. So in this way, we will really see I think the deeper meaning or more of the depth of the meaning of the mudra of the left hand, the mudra of meditative equipoise where the left hand symbolizes wisdom, right hand symbolizes skillful means, the four immeasurables, and then your shamatha is right there in the middle to unify them. And you will notice it looks a little bit like a pyramid. So then you know what that’s about. The pyramid has relaxation at its base, stability in the center and right there the tips where the finger nails are, that is where your vividness is. Okay?

Find a comfortable position.

Meditation:

Settle your body, speech and mind in their natural states. In terms of the mind calm the turbulence of the conceptual mind by way of mindfulness of breathing for a few minutes.

(9:40) As our motivation for the second half of this retreat let’s turn to the meditative cultivation of loving kindness and return, but as if for the first time, to the four questions leading to four quests and the first of these is: what do you envision would bring you the happiness that you seek, the fulfillment, the satisfaction, the meaning in your life, what would make you truly happy, hedonically and eudaimonically? Envision this clearly as you can, your heart’s desire.

(11:16) And with each out breath, breathe out this light from your heart and breathe it into this vision, breathing out with the aspiration of loving kindness: may it be so. May I find such happiness and its causes, may I be truly well and happy. And with each out breath allow this breath to flow out and utterly permeate your body and mind, dispelling, banishing all obstacles and obscurations.

(13:15) And with each out breath as this light suffuses your entire being move into that realm of possibility, transcending the realm of actuality and imagine realizing such wellbeing here and now.

(14:15) And now let’s set out on the second quest. In order to realize such wellbeing, such fulfillment, what would you love to receive from the world around you, from those who are near and far, in the short term and in the long term to enable you to find the happiness and fulfillment you seek? And envision it clearly.

(16:00) With each in breath arouse the spirit of loving kindness, the aspiration: “May I truly receive all that I actually need for my hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing.” With each in breath imagine the blessings of the enlightened ones and the kindness of all sentient beings flowing in upon you from all sides in the form of radiant white light. Imagine receiving all that you truly need from moment to moment, day to day.

(18:13) Each step of your path on the path to liberation, to awakening, imagine reality rising up to meet you, providing all that you truly need.

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(19:30) Then let's turn to the third quest: clearly it is impossible to realize our heart's desire, to find our greatest fulfillment simply with a lot of hope from outside, with a lot of cooperative conditions. There must be internal transformation, freedom from all that obstructs and the cultivation of all the genuine causes of happiness and wellbeing. And so in the same spirit of loving kindness, not simply a wagging finger saying what you should do, what you should do, but rather now envision what would you love, from what qualities of body, speech and mind would you love to be free and with what qualities would you love to be richly imbued so that you may transform into the person you would love to become.

(20:58) And with each out breath, breathe out the light from the buddha-nature at your heart, the light of purification, a light of joy, a light of loving kindness permeating your entire being and imagine breath by breath here and now transforming into the person you would love to become.

(23:50) And finally in order to endow your life with as much meaning as possible, the greatest possible degree of satisfaction, envision now what would you love to offer to the world around you drawing on your own unique background, your skills, your talents, your aspirations. What would you love to offer to those who are near and far in the short term and the long term. And with each out breath imagine this light from this inexhaustible source at your heart emanating out in all directions and imagine the light itself taking on the form of the goods you would love to offer. With each out breath arouse this aspiration of loving kindness with the yearning, "May we all find happiness and the causes of happiness."

(26:30) And with each out breath imagine it to be so, venturing boldly into this realm of possibility, transcending all the limitations of the past.

(29:00) Release all aspirations, all objects of the mind and let your awareness rest in its own nature.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Revised by Mark Montgomery

Final edition by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Posted by Alma Ayon

52 Mindfulness of the body (1)

4 Sep 2012

We return for this week to the body and in doing so we cannot avoid the whole question about the relationship between the mind and the body because the only way to know about the body is by way of the mind. So we will approach this from two directions that converge again. Overall these four weeks is going to the four applications of mindfulness once again but now with the orientation more within the context of the Madhyamaka view and drawing most specifically from Shantideva. So this can be the larger framework. But I would like to start today from two angles and the first of these is going to be from the perspective of the Pali Canon and the Theravada, the Theravada Abhidharma (roughly the first half or so of the talk today), and then the second half will be from the perspective of Dzogchen. So if we consider that the shravakayana is the foundation of Yana and the Dzogchen is the pinnacle so all of the intermediate yanas are right there like a sandwich. So we're just looking at the top bun and the bottom bun and everything else falls in between. So let's go right into this. I am going to be citing from a text which is actually a commentary to the Dharmapada by a man who was chief monk of a Singapore Buddhist meditation center. He was an accomplished scholar and his name is Aragoda Saradamatero but what he is addressing here is a theme that comes up a lot in Buddhism, actually in all Buddhist schools, and is "nama rupa", literally "name and form". But name and form does not tell us much at all. He will explain or unpack this in a way in a way that I found very helpful. So here's what he says first of all that "nama rupa" is commonly translated as mind and body, or literally name and form, are not in fact two entities that coexist in relation to each other.

(3:34) So already very briefly here we are dealing with this in terms of modernity, in terms of the rise of modern science. Our starting point in a manner of speaking is Descartes, who drawing from introspection, and also being of course a brilliant mathematician, a natural philosopher, he introspecting and as a physicist, and a mathematician. To him it seems there are two fundamentally different types of reality: the type of reality that is extended in space, let's call it the physical world, and then the realm of cognition, or the mind, and he saw each of these as being inherently existent, truly and absolutely existent but one being extended in

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physical space and being physical, composed of stuff, whereas the mind is soul, consciousness and has no physical attributes but it really, really exists. And so of course how do these two engage with each other becomes the big mind and body problem, which he never solved and which has not been solved to this day in modern science. And perhaps because the starting premise is false and that would be the Buddha's response. (4:38) So let's see what Aragoda Saradamatero has to say.

What about this *nama rupa*. There are, he says, only two ways of looking at the single activity called experience. This is a direct quote from his commentary which is in English:

Text: "There are only two ways of looking at the single activity called experience: *nama*, which he translates now as *naming*, is experience [in quotation marks] seen subjectively as the mental process of identifying an object."

This is entirely phenomenological so it would be easy to say it is Buddhist philosophy so let's start thinking about it a lot. Well there is nothing wrong with thinking but he is actually referring to our experience. What he is inviting us to do is, as in the spirit of four applications of mindfulness, to go right into experience and see whether what he says can be corroborated or tested with your own experience. So you can ask of yourself: is there due experience in the mental process of identifying an object? Does that ring a bell or do you have to say no I have never done that? Well if you can identify that process, this is where it gets fun because actually this is interesting. If you can recognize this in yourself that mental process of identifying an object then we can give to that the name of *nama* or naming.

(6:08) *Rupa*, which is not just form as in shape or color, but refers more generically, far more generically to all appearances.

So continuing the text: "*rupa* [appearances] is experience seen objectively as an entity [again entity in quotation marks] that is perceived and conceived through the mental process of identification."

So you can ask of your own experience. Do you ever see entities that you perceive or conceive through the mental process of identification? Like say, gee, your body! Is your body an entity that you perceive and frankly also conceive through the process of mental identification? Then we would call that, whatever that is, so body, galaxies, elementary particles, mind center, whatever it is. These are seen objectively, they appear to us, oh, there it is and it's perceived, conceived through the mental process of identification. Now he's using these 2 terms, alien terms from another language, but he's using them to refer to elements of our experience that we can identify.

(7:32) Now he brings in another term, "*Mano*" or another variation is "*Manas*" also translated as mind. So *mano* is another term from the Pali Canon of course. *Mano* refers to thought or the mental process of conceptualization which integrates and makes meaning out of the different percepts brought in by the different senses. So you check out one by one the different sense doors. So the shapes and colors coming in by way of the visual, sounds by way of auditory, right through the five senses and then mental images, thoughts, memories and so forth coming in by way of the mental sense door.

(8:13) But then we are not satisfied, we are not being able to live coherent lives if we did not make sense that all the appearances are coming in from six door kind flooding us, bombarding us. Even here [in the mind center] one of you mentioned that when I step off of the cushion everything is so busy, so much is happening. Ok, not that much, no but it is relative, I mean for another level, oh yeah that is quite lot, I mean vision, vision, and there is some sound, there are tactile sensations, there are thoughts, oh yeah I got a four ring circus going on here and that is when I am just sitting here, that is not even stepping outside of the mind center. So we want to make sense but we do not want to watch six movies simultaneously. Imagine being in the cinema and you got six screens each doing its own thing and you are just trying to see all the six screens simultaneously that would be very, very disintegrating and so you want to make sense of this and so it is conceptualization that takes us on that and then weaves us in a coherent hall, Ah, I am in the mind center, I know where I am. So that is "*Mana*" or "*Mano*" which integrates and makes meaning or makes sense out of the different percepts that is the sheer qualia, the appearances coming in through the different senses, this meaningful total experience, meaningful because *manas* has got in there and makes sense of that by way of concepts. And bear in mind as we have seen this before, concepts are not just at the verbal level, the unborn baby can recognize its mother's voice presumably not by talking about it, right? How many fingers am I holding up? You do not need to think about it, you get it conceptually but you do not need to say "F O U R",

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you just got it, right? And so conceptualization works at a very subtle level and gets right into and seems to witness itself into perceptions itself or certainly our experiences of the perception of the world.

(10:13) So we have the nana, process by identifying objects; rupa, the objects that are so identified appearing as entities objectively. And then “mano”, coming in and conceptually making sense of all that and so we have this meaningful total experience is viewed subjectively as identification of an entity, nama, the identification of an entity, nama. I need to get the intonation right because it is a very good final sentence:

This meaningful total experience is viewed subjectively as identification of an entity, that is nama, and objectively as the entity identified, rupa.

(11:00) So what he is saying here in this process of mano, the conceptual mind, we are actually having this ongoing flow of the process of subjectively identifying and the appearances that are identified, and then the conceptualization coming in and making objects and subjects, making sense of this so the world congeals into its parts and we can navigate through the reality that is populated with many entities. But we see there is a very powerful role of the subjective here, in others words it is not just: hey, here is my glasses, it is not just entities being dished up but appearances which are identified and then conceptualization getting in there and sorting everything out in a way that we can make sense of, that it becomes intelligible and then we can make ourselves a little bit at home.

(11:43) I wonder sometimes why so many people especially not only scientific community quite broadly, why so many people are drawn to and have a very deep allegiance to a materialistic view of the world in which there are simply brains, there are just bodies and they do not really exist, the mind is simply an illusion or a subjective experience but very illusory, deceptive, fundamentally we do not even have free will, we are brains that operate. I wonder unless we have to believe that how would anybody want to and clearly people do want to and cling to it tenaciously but that is not a very happy picture. Why would anybody want to believe that unless you are absolutely compelled by the evidence to do so but clearly that is not the case because there is a wide variety of philosophies among modern philosophers there are people like Thomas Nagel* among of a lot of very sharp people who are not reductionist, who are not materialist and they are very intelligent, they have also published in periodic review philosophical journals, there are scientist too that are not reductionist so if the evidence is simply compelling and totally compelling then every intelligent philosopher and scientist just should accept it just like they accept how many planets there are, how big the sun is, there is a lot of conceptual knowledge in modern science. Given the evidence and intelligent people accept it. Well there is not compelling evidences that all intelligent knowledgeable philosophers agree, they do not and its also not true that all scientists agree that we are simply brains and so forth and so on, they do not all agree. So I just want to find the reason, why does anybody want to believe this if they do not have to? It is so dehumanizing, disempowering and demoralizing and I think there is a very good reason why people do believe. We, not they, we all desperately want to make sense of our lives, we want to make sense of the world we are living in, so that is intelligible. I feel like I want to navigate and even it is bleak and if its meaningless it is just reductionist at least I know my way around and I have gotten some pretty nice hedonic pleasures, I can get by, it makes sense now, everything comes from the big bang and out inorganic matters comes organic matters and out of organic matter comes life and out of life comes consciousness we are evolved amoeba to me who I am, events amoeba but at least make sense, it is really smart and there is a lot of evidence behind it, not just loony and ok, now at least, now I can make sense of things and I think we have a very powerful earth institute [Alan is talking about The Earth Institute, www.earth.columbia.edu] and that is one story that a lot of people find very compelling and I think I understand why but so there it is.

***For one who is reading this transcript see below informations about Thomas Nagel:**

Thomas Nagel (/ˈneɪɡəl/; born July 4, 1937) is an American philosopher, currently University Professor of Philosophy and Law at New York University, where he has taught since 1980. His main areas of philosophical interest are philosophy of mind, political philosophy and ethics.

Nagel is well known for his critique of reductionist accounts of the mind, particularly in his essay "What Is it Like to Be a Bat?" (1974), and for his contributions to deontological and liberal moral and political theory in *The Possibility of Altruism* (1970) and subsequent writings. Continuing his critique of reductionism, he is the author of *Mind and Cosmos* (2012), in which he argues against a reductionist view, and specifically the neo-Darwinian view, of the emergence of consciousness.

Source: www.wikipedia.org

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(14:55) But one sees here then the whole notion of mind and body being two separate entities like in Descartes's view God infusing, sending a soul into matter and then linking them up (soul and matter/body) and then this immaterial soul controlling the body and then science finding no evidence for that and says well never mind the soul is just the body and the soul of consciousness is nothing other than function of the body. That problem since the very beginning because he is saying specifically the mind and the body are not two separate things that come together but rather we have this flow of appearances, a flow of the mental process of identifying, and out of that conceptualization, forms create the categories, matter, energy, space, time, consciousness, forms creates the categories, matter, energy, space, time, consciousness, mental process, memory, me, etc, conceiving all of these objects and subjects out of the flow of experience which is identified by the process of rupa, in other words the very categories of mind and body are formulated out of that flow which is not already disintegrated into two separate types of entity. It is through this interface of the nama and rupa and then mano, mano coming in and I think, my translation of mano would be mentation, I translated as far as mental cognition, I think mentation is probably good so the functions and the activities of the mind in terms of identify this and that by way of conceptualization. But again in short we have this flow of appearances, the flow of identification and out of that the formation of construct of mind and body flowing from the same source rather than two separate things, one absolutely physical and the other one absolutely non-physical coming together and somehow causally interfacing which nobody has never being able to figure out. So there is one and I cannot linger there, that is more less half of my time.

(17:10) And now we are going to another very juicy quote and this is from Dudjom Lingpa, 19th century Dzogchen master from his classic text, "Mind Treasure" on Dzogchen, the Vajra Essence. And this again, he like our Theravada master there, he is going to talk about our experience so let's see what he says. He is referring to the practice. The preface just before these two paragraphs is nature of reality and specifically the nature of emptiness, the nature of rigpa because the two are co-extensive.

Explanation for one that is reading this transcript: from now on Alan is reading a text and introducing his comments.

Text:

Ignorance of this nature is determined as the cause of delusion. How? Mere ignorance of the nature of the play of the all-pervasive ground acts as the cause. As that becomes somewhat fortified, it dwells as the true substrate, which is immaterial like space — a blank, unthinking void. Entering that substrate corresponds to states such as fainting, abiding in meditative absorption, a trance induced by meditative stabilization, becoming engulfed by deep sleep in the substrate, in which appearances have dissolved into absolute space, and reaching the point of death, in which appearances have vanished. That is called the *true substrate*. Free of mental clinging to actualization, one is absorbed in a ground that is empty of matter.

Alan's comments:

Ignorance of this nature, of this fundamental nature, the ground nature of awareness, fundamentally the ultimate nature of reality, ignorance of this is avidia, unawareness, not awareness. Ignorance of this nature is determined as the ground of delusion, in other words not knowing, being unaware is the ground, the fertile ground for the emergences of something active and that so this avidia giving rise to morra and morra, delusion is the active misapprehension of reality.

This is very familiar, this is classic Buddhism.

Ignorance of this nature is determined as the ground of delusion. How does this occur? Mere ignorance of the nature of the play of all pervasive ground acts as the cause, the nature of the play is a very literal translation.

Mere ignorance is simply not-knowing.

The nature of the play of all pervasive ground is exactly that total co-extensiveness of the dharmadatu, absolute space of phenomena and primordial consciousness (yeshe), they are of the same nature and they are co-extensive.

And then in the Dzogchen view, all appearances, all phenomena, everything is arising out of this primordial non-duality of the absolute space of phenomena, dharmadatu and primordial consciousness. This is all the play, it is called the play, the rupa, literally it is the play or creative expressions, effulgences, as you like.

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So mere ignorance of the nature, how is this the case? Mere ignorance of the nature of the play of the all-pervasive ground, primordial and non-duality of rigpa or yeshe, primordial consciousness and dharmadatu, mere ignorance of the nature of the play of the all-pervasive ground acts as the cause primary cause, fundamental cause, core cause as that becomes somewhat fortified it sets in, ok, that is ignorance. It sets in as that become somewhat fortified or crystalized, rigidified, locked in, as that becomes somewhat fortified it dwells as the true substrate, the alaya which is immaterial like space, it is blank, unthinking and void.

Now the substrate, this is not something you have to imagine, this is something we fall into every time we fall sleep, when your consciousness actually dissolves into, merges into and becomes veiled, lie a sword going into its scabbard. Consciousness is still there but you cannot see because it is veiled. So consciousness does not know anything it is just submerged into the substrate and the very nature of the alaya is avidia, not knowing, unawareness. So we know that is true when we are in a non-lucid dreamless sleeping, there we are resting in a state of not knowing anything at all not even that we are sleeping.

So that is that very nature of the alaya, you are the alaya, is that very nature of avidia, not knowing, being unaware. Being unaware of what? It is the nature of the play of all pervasive ground which is the cause of all phenomena, the source, the origin, the achievement as well of all appearances.

And what is the nature of this alaya? Immaterial like space so has no physical attributes whatsoever, it is blank, unthinking, void or vacuity.

Second part of the text:

Entering that substrate corresponds to states such as fainting, abiding in meditative absorption, entering a trance induced by meditative stabilization, becoming engulfed by deep sleep in the substrate, in which appearances have dissolved into the substrate, and reaching the point of death, in which appearances have vanished. That is called the *true substrate*, the actual alaya Free of mental clinging to actualization, one is engulfed in a ground that is empty of matter.

Entering that state correspond to states such as fainting, there is one way to get there, abiding in meditative absorption when you are sleeping into state away, beyond, beyond in the formless realm or entry in trance induced by meditative stabilization or becoming engulfed by deep sleep in the substrate in which appearances have dissolved into the substrate (absolute space), and reaching the point of death, it is one more opportunity where you tap into the substrate, in which appearances have vanished. So those are the vary occasions someone gets natural and someone gets only by cultivation.

(23:11) That is called the true substrate, the actual substrate, the actual alaya free of mental clinging to actualization, actualizing anything, anything becoming real, free of mental clinging to actualization one is engulfed (absorbed) in a ground that is empty of matter, it is just utterly immaterial, non-physical.

Text:

From that state arises radiant, clear consciousness itself as the basis of the emergence of appearances, and that is the substrate consciousness. Moreover, no objects are established that are not expressions of its own luminosity, and while it can give rise to all kinds of appearances, it does not enter into anything. This is like planets and stars

appearing in limpid, clear water; like reflections appearing in a limpid, clear mirror; and like the animate and inanimate world appearing in limpid, clear space. In the same way, appearances emerge in the empty, clear, substrate consciousness.

Alan's comments:

From that state, we are talking about the experience every night or whenever you faint and so forth or always you achieve shamatha, etc, sleeping into that substrate and then from that state arises the state of simply unknowing. Now you emerge from that state, soon or later, you emerge from that state, you cannot stay there, it is not an option, you emerge from that state that arises radiant, clear, consciousness itself as the basis of the emergence of appearances, and that is the substrate consciousness.

So the sword comes out of its sheath, radiant, clear by nature is a basis of the emergence of appearances and that it is a light called radiant, called luminous and it illuminates, makes manifest all appearances that arise in the substrate. That is the substrate consciousness, at this point all you are conscious of is the substrate and it's called substrate consciousness. I find it very useful, I have not seen that anywhere else apart from Dzogchen. The substrate consciousness is called that because its conscious of the substrate. I find it very useful and true to experience.

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(24:51) Moreover, no objects are established: established means to be identified, just like as in that earlier case of nama.

No objects are established: Ah, there it is: that are not its own luminosity, in other words there is no access to any object at all except by way of their illumination by way of or from substrate consciousness. And while it, the substrate consciousness, can give rise to all kinds of appearances, it does not enter into any object, It doesn't jump out of its own state and leap into the object, it simply illuminates them like a projector projecting images on a screen but without the projector getting caught up in the screen.

(25:39) This is like the ability of the planets and stars to appear in limpid clear water: he is referring of course to the reflections. So there they are but you look down there and say, ah, there is an illumination of those appearances, but they do not actually come down into it.

This is like the ability of reflections to appear in a limpid clear mirror and like the animate and inanimate world appearing in limpid clear space In the same way appearances can emerge in the empty clear substrate consciousness or by way of the empty clear substrate consciousness.

So he is talking about these transition which if you could be in deep dreamless sleep and be lucid, and then watch yourself come out of that then you could actually observe this process taking place. But actually if you are lucid in deep sleep then your consciousness has already come out. That's the difference.

Whereas if your consciousness is inserted in and dissolved into the substrate, there you are, you do not know anything so therefore you cannot be lucid. But you can watch yourself become lucid, that is a possibility. You may actually watch the sword come out of its sheath.

Now we have this transition from the substrate to substrate consciousness but now it is luminous, it is radiant.

Recalling, also those four mindfulness, remember? Single pointed mindfulness, manifest mindfulness, absence of mindfulness. We slipped into the substrate, natural luminous mindfulness when the substrate consciousness is reborn, come out of the substrate and you achieve shamatha, remember that, this relates.

Text:

From that state arises the consciousness of the mere appearance of the self, called *I*. There's some coagulation of the sense of *I*. Following the emergences of the substrate consciousness. Its preverbal, primal, not sophisticated. The self is apprehended as being here, so the ground appears to be over there, the ground being the alaya, thus

establishing the appearance of immaterial space. *I* attending to it. So something really primitive, some unfolding, some bifurcation, some splitting, some symmetry breaking has just taken place. Now, they're not equal, they're not the same. There's the sense of *I* over here, and that over there. That's not symmetry, bifurcation has taken place. As that becomes entrenched, hardened, fortified, it is made manifest, and so-called *mental cognition* or *mano* – the same term used earlier, *mentation*, *manas*, arises — which is the basis for the

emergence of appearances — and the aspect of luminosity is revealed. In other words the luminosity of awareness, the substrate consciousness which has no appearance, is now revealed, is now illuminated in the sense that it is illuminating all appearances. From that the five types of appearing objects arise, and with the reification of them, there is clinging and delusion.

Alan's comments:

From that state (from the substrate consciousness emerge) arises the consciousness of the mere appearances of the self, called *I* (so there is some coagulation of the sense of *I*).

Following the emergences of substrate consciousness the self is apprehended (this is preverbal, it is very primitive, not sophisticated) as being here, so the ground appears to be over there (the ground of being the alaya).

Thus establishing the appearances of immaterial space, immaterial space seems to be which *I* am attending to, "*I*" attending to "*it*". So it is something really primitive.

Now they are not equal, they are not the same there is a sense of "*I*" over here and a sense of immaterial space over there that is not symmetry that is different, bifurcation is taking place.

As that become entrenched (hard, fortified), it is made manifest, and so-called mental cognition or *mano* (the same term used earlier, *manas*, metacognition or *mentation*), mental cognition (*manas*) arises which is the basis for the emergences of appearances. So he is actually suggesting a causality there due to the presence of

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this mana or mano in dependence upon that all these different appearances can arise and the aspect of luminosity is review, in other words the luminosity of the awareness which of the substrate consciousness which by itself has no appearances, it now is reviewed in the sense that is illuminating all of those appearances.

From these arouse or these emergences of mano (mental cognition, mentation) the five types of objects of appearances arise (that is now the five sensory fields open up, let alone the mental which is already opened up) and reifying them (so now this is where conceptualization comes in), seeing them as they really are out there, really in here, there is clinging and delusional.

So that is completely phenomenological account, it does not mean that its absolutely true and we have to accept it but he is talking about our experience which means we can test it by closely examining our own experience.

I will read one shorter quote from Dudjom Lingpa and then we finish.

Instructions for one that is reading this transcript: see below the text that Alan read and his commentaries are together with the text.

(30:09) When all appearances and mental states arise in their natural order from the substrate to the substrate consciousness, from the substrate consciousness to this “I maker”, the sense this primal sense of “I”, bifurcating “I” from everything that is not I, and then mano or mentation arises and with that this whole array of appearances and then conceptualization comes in and makes sense of objects here and objects there such that the appearances now become attributes of objects and the appearances become attributes of subjects like my mind is really confused, my mind is clear, my mind is dull, the dullness, the appearances, the experiences of dullness, clarity and so forth are now attributes of something. The color of Patricia’s shawl is blue, oh, no, no, that is not just appearances in my substrate that is a quality of her shawl so this is mentation, mano and conceptualization that coagulates the world into objects and subjects where all the appearances now have owners, they belong to something, they are attributes of something else, of objects and of subjects. (31:28) When all appearances and mental states arise in their natural order the whole of samsara appears and by reversing their natural order (which is exactly what we do when we are practicing shamatha successfully), by reversing their natural order they enter into the womb of the substrate (that is the third type of mindfulness, absence of mindfulness) and they suddenly vanish without a trace, all those appearances dissolve back into the substrate.

That is the theory let’s now put into the test of experience.

Meditation:

(32:48) Step by step settle your body in its natural state and your respiration in its natural rhythm and settle your mind at ease in stillness and clarity for just a short time by way of mindfulness of breathing.

(36:25) And now withdraw your awareness which is to say withdraw your attention with your eyes closed not only from the visual field but from all the five sense domains to the best of your ability. Withdraw your awareness away from the space of the mind and the contents of the mind. Withdraw your awareness from all appearances which is to say do not deliberately give attention to any appearances of any kind like a snail going into its shell. Withdraw your awareness from all six domains of experience and just for a short time, an act of your best approximation, sit there without knowing anything at all as if there is a blanket over your head, just quiet, dormant as if you are deep asleep without knowing or paying attention to anything.

(38:30) And now arouse your awareness just enough to be vividly aware of your immediate experience of being aware. Draw forth your substrate consciousness, the awareness of awareness, and rest for a little while, clearly, knowing the experience of being conscious without attending to anything else.

(40:20) And now attend closely. Do you have a sense of being one who is aware, one who is present? Do you have a presence of being you, a sense of being you, a subject, single not-multiple and discreet, different from all else?

And continuing with your eyes closed but attending now to the space of the mind, do you have a sense of being something other than that space of the mind that objectively appears to you, a sense of being over here whereas the space of the mind is over there?

(43:01) The borders, the defining characteristics of that space of the mind may not be so clear, may not be any clearer than the actual nature of yourself as the subject rather amorphous, , perhaps embryonic, not clearly defined, nevertheless distinct, a subject over here and objective space over there. Is that true or not?

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(44:15) Now let your eyes be open, all of your senses open, let your consciousness illuminate, make manifest appearances in all the six domains. And can you identify this process of nama, of naming? This is not necessary implying verbalization rather simply the identification with or without labels of the appearances of sound, of tactile sensations, the visual impressions, thoughts, mental images and so on.

(46:07) The ability to differentiate one type of appearance from another. Do you have a clear sense of doing that, of mentation of sorting things out? And then the emergence of conceptualizations when you literally conceive of a world consisting of objects, having attributes, parts, located in space, and subjects, mental processes having attributes. This is the process of conceptual designation, imputation, the process of objectifying and subjectifying.

(48:17) This is a week for the close application of mindfulness to the body so let's apply mindfulness closely to our experience and our conceptualization of the body attending first of all to the appearances themselves. The appearances arising in the alaya, the substrate, the appearances themselves being non-physical having no physical attributes, no location in physical space, no mass, no velocity, no charge, no nothing, non-physical. Then observe how you conceptualize the body, experientially or phenomenologically bringing into existence by the process of conceptual designation as you think: my head, in which certain sensations arise. Has a shape, has a texture, has color, has feelings arising in it.

But apart from conceptually designating the head on the basis of appearances which are not a head, when do you ever perceive a head? Likewise observe how you conceptually designate your torso, your arms, and your legs.

(53:09) While these labels, these conceptual imputations, are designated on the basis of appearances, the appearances themselves are empty of those labels, empty of those conceptual designations. They do not exist in the appearances themselves, unless you can find them.

(54:20) As you attend to yourself as a subject experiencing your body. What do you experience apart from mental appearances? None of which are you, but on the basis of which you designate, you impute, you project, "I am". But apart from the conceptual designation, is there any evidence that you are already there in the very nature of these subjective appearances. Are you already there any more than the body is already there in the objective appearances of tactile sensations of forms, sounds and so on?

Teaching pt2:

Alan introduces the first 4 links of the 12 links of dependent origination.

(56:20) I am just adding a foot note to try to, something that is very easy to become just a matter of conceptualization, theorizing, something very objective, very intellectual and try to draw into experience and that is the first 4 links of the twelve links of dependent origination. For those of studying Buddhism, how does samsara unfold and in the reversible order how do you unfold or fold back in samsara and achieve nirvana? I'm just going to cover the first 4.

- **Ignorance – which is nature of the substrate.**

The first of these 12 links is avidia, not knowing, unawareness. If we bring this to experience, well we do not need to look any further than the substrate. It is the very nature of unknowing. In all those cases, when we fainted, when we in comatose, anesthesia, in deep sleep, in the dead zone when you come to the culmination of the dying process. In all of these cases, we do not just remain unknowing. But now very interesting, the sequence is really quite interesting, it is provocative, and that is in the very next link is actually the mental formations, samskara.

- **Mental formations (samskara) – karma or kinetic energy of the mind stir or activates.**

Samskara, activities, formations, configurations, kinetic energy of the mind, karmic impulses, something stirs. There is that mere vacuity, there is that mere amorphous unknowing but then something stirs it, activates it, stirs it into motion showing that there is no nothing. We can call that karma, we can call that by the generic term of mental formations, configurations, activities of the mind, samskara. Thus again bring it back to experience, and that is we've all been deep asleep Some people having practiced dream yoga or it happens spontaneously maybe in deep sleep and then become lucid. The transition from just being in a state of unknowing where your substrate consciousness has dissolved into the substrate becoming knowing, something needs to activate that, something needs to arouse it, to wake it up, that is called samskara.

- **Consciousness – substrate consciousness becomes explicit, yet it is luminous without illuminating anything.**

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And so then samskara activate and then the third link emerges and it is all this, it is not predetermination, it is simply saying in dependence upon the presence of avidia, unknowing, there is the activation of the samskara, in dependence upon the activation of samskara there is the emergence of consciousness, the third link consciousness and it is mental consciousness. Let's call that the substrate consciousness.

So now out of the substrate there is some movement and it is not happening for no reason. So again in Buddhism we never have an effect with no cause. The cause does not predetermine the effect but the effect does arise in dependence upon the cause. It is a subtle distinction and very important.

So there is some type of activation, call it karma, call it mental formation, and the third link emerges, mental consciousness emerges.

So now there is explicit consciousness. It does not make any sense to speak of avidia, not knowing, unknowing in the total absence of consciousness. It doesn't make any sense to say this paper is ignorant, you flatter it too much, it hasn't risen to the state of consciousness, it is an error to say it is ignorant or not ignorant.

(1:00:33) So in the state of ignorance, the first link, that has to be consciousness but it is must be implicit. It is activated with this samskara, the act of formations, karma call it what you will and then consciousness becomes explicit, raw, primal and not Buddha nature. This is within the conventional reality called samsara, it emerges that mental consciousness called substrate consciousness there is the third link.

- **Nama rupa which refers to appearances and identifying appearances. Mere labeling is not the problem, their reification is.**

(1:01:06) And then the forth link emerges in dependence upon the presence, the luminosity of the substrate consciousness or simply consciousness then arises nama rupa. Prior to that substrate consciousness simply being luminous but illuminating not much of anything, it is like having a brilliant bright light in deep space with nothing for it to illuminate, it is bright but it is not illuminating anything else, it is just bright. But how do you know that it is bright unless you are something else looking at it which you cannot do? And so in dependence upon that sheer luminosity of substrate consciousness, then nama rupa. Naming that very process by means of which we identify appearances. And appearances that manifest that which is identified, that is a color, that is a sound, that is the tactile sensations all of that without verbalization that is another layer on top of that.

(1:02:04) This becomes especial interesting if you are in lucid in dreamless sleep so the substrate consciousness has emerged from the substrate and it is knowing and it is knowing itself and the substrate and for the time being nothing else. But that is something that is explicit. And you are hanging out there lucid in dreamless sleep, this is possible. And then something moves again another symmetry is broken and then you see that vacuity emerging as a dreamscape having no existence apart from the alaya. But then all those appearances arise and then simply substrate consciousness manifesting as your mind, now you are a person, maybe you are the same person you were in awaking state maybe not, maybe you are older, maybe you are younger but you arise as a persona within the dream, the dreamscape having a mind. And then your mind attending to the various appearances, then starts labelling, this is this, this is that, that is her, that is him.

(1:03:27) And then not knowing the nature which you are experiencing you get it wrong and that is you apprehend it as being really there and this is being really you and you think this is who I am, this is all I am, this is me. And now you are now reified and completely cognitively fused with the persona appearing in the dream, you are not only identified and then labelled but you also reified all the appearances in the dream. Oh, there is my mama, there is a lake, there is my house and so forth, oh, there they are, they are really out there, really from their own side and I am really from my own side, ok, now what can happen? It is called the dream. So I think it is quite interesting to see how the Theravada account of nama rupa, it is not identical to but certainly dovetails with the Dzogchen account from the substrate to the substrate consciousness from the substrate consciousness just congealing of the sense of "I". That in turn triggering mentation together with the appearances and then out of that comes the further elaboration of conceptualization now identified, there is my mother, there is my father and so forth which is simply a label. And labelling is not delusional, The Buddha labelled, Arhats labelled, it is not a problem. But then the reification. And the reification where it gets fortified, it is locked in and we see that is really from its own side, that is over there from its own side and I am here really from my own side, and now how we do interact.

(1:05:15) So there is the sequence. To relate this to our very experience of the body takes us beyond the three ever so important marks of existence of the body, impermanent, by nature dukkha, by nature non-self

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and it moves us over into the forth characteristic and that is, especially it is there in a Pali Canon but it is much more elaborated and clear, developed in the Perfection of Wisdom sutras and then systematized by Nagarjuna and that is not only are our own conditioned phenomena impermanent, by nature of dukkha, not-self, but also empty. It is not really there from their own side objectively and not really there from their own side subjectively. It is all empty.

So that is where we are going this week, to try to see beyond the three marks of existence and venture into experientially as much as we can at least to get a tiny taste.

What are they talking about when they say the form is empty? Is that all appearances are empty? What do they mean by saying that the body, which is composed of molecules, atoms, that we never denied that, cells, neurons, all that is known by modern physiology. Is empty?

One of the great of Alan's Lama that taught Madhyamaka, said:

Alan, the Madhyamaka view we are never refuting the existence of atoms, we are never saying atoms do not exist but we are just questioning how they exist?

They are already there, these elementary particles, matter, energy and so forth, they are already there and we are simply placing a label on them, they are already totally there. It is just like saying that is Patricia, no, no, let's change her name, her name is Mary. But she is the same person. | We are just calling her Patricia or Mary, as if she is already totally there and we are just lightly lying a label on top. Is that how it is. Or the very act of labeling and conceptualization itself bring forth the emergence of objects and subjects into conventional reality.

(1:08:22) Such as if you are in a dream and you are lucid, clearly lucid you are awake in the dream. So just imagine right now I am dreaming and I am dreaming that I am teaching and here we are, and someone asked me: is Rose here? I say, yes, she is right over there. I could be utterly lucid and Monica says, I am looking for Rose have you seen her today? Yes, Monica she is right over there. And I can say that in a dream it would be perfectly correct and I am lucid. I am knowing this illusory Monica has asked the illusory me if the illusory Rose is here and I am saying, yeah, she is right over there. All of this functionality, all of this causality is taking place, she asked if she is here, I respond yes, and by the way she is taking notes of the teachings, etc. And all of this network of meaningful causality is taking place. She caused me to say this, I cause him to do that and so forth. All of this is taking place, causality, sequences going on meaningfully and she is not really there, I am not really here and there are no notes.

From the perspective of emptiness there is no Monica, there is no me, there are no teachings, from in the context of the dream I gave the right answer, Is Rose here, yes she is right over there. So conceptualization is not the delusion, the reification is the root of all mental afflictions.

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53 Loving-kindness (2)

25 Sep 2012

Teachings:

This morning we return to the meditative cultivation of loving kindness and among the four immeasurables you may recall that this is the one that serves as the natural remedy for empathetic joy that goes astray, namely, it falling into just

hedonic fixation, frivolous, a kind of frivolity, just totally focusing on mundane concerns driven by attachment. So this clearly is very relevant to just straightforward practice of shamatha. When we consider that excitation by definition is driven by attachment going all over the place in search of some kind of stimulation. Loving kindness actually is a very gentle antidote for that, just as it's an antidote for hedonic fixation which is the near enemy or the false facsimile of empathetic joy. That if when we really arouse the sense of loving kindness and bring our wisdom to it, not just, "May I be happy." but. "May I be truly happy, may I find genuine happiness." And envision this, then actually it draws the awareness in to the cultivation of the heart and mind, which means away from the hedonic fixation and away from excitation. So, a very gentle approach to focus on impermanence, nature of suffering and so forth. This is kind of like the tough cop. Bad cop, good

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cop, you know? Good cop: loving kindness. We can either do it the easy way or the hard way, you know? Right? We're going to subdue that attachment one way or another. The nice way is with loving kindness. The tough way is, "You're gonna die!" [laughter] And there's six types of suffering and eight types of suffering and three types of suffering. And I'd like you to dwell long and hard on all three of them before you get back on to that excitation wagon. [snarl sound] [laughter]

That's all very well, but how do we cultivate loving kindness? And we go back to Buddhaghosa we may recall the immediate catalyst, the trigger, the cooperative condition for the experience of loving kindness is seeing the lovable quality in the person one is attending to. Now if we follow the teachings of the Buddha as recorded in the Pali Canon, follow the Theravada tradition as recorded by Buddhaghosa, we start with ourselves which gives some of us a rather daunting challenge. [laughs] Can you find anything in yourself that's lovable? For some that may be easy, for which I congratulate you. This is not narcissism. It's finding something lovable in yourself which is any good basis, finding and attending to the lovable qualities in others which arouses a sense of loving kindness.

But what I'm about to say probably would never need to be said in Tibet, in traditional Tibet. They would just think, "What are you talking about? But in our modern society where low self-esteem and all of the synonyms for that are so prevalent, one may look within and say, I'm sorry I'm seeing an aging body, wrinkling, poor digestion - nothing particularly lovable there, it's just a mass of flesh, bone, tissue. That's what I hear from the Buddhas, anyway. And I look at my mind, a mountain of mental afflictions, lightly seasoned with virtues. I really don't see much to work with there! [laughs] And so if you look within and you just don't see anything to trigger, you know, really see something lovable, not attractive, that's for attachment but something truly lovable then you might want to consider, "Does anybody love you? Anybody at all? [laughs] Hello? [laughs] You know, does anybody love you as in loving kindness, genuinely care for you, have affection for you, and so forth. So if you can't imagine your own lovable qualities, then consider that other people love you and that they're not insane. [laughter] You have to take that one on faith. And consider what do they see lovable in you. You know? Do a boomerang effect. One way or another, either by looking within, or looking without and then looking from their perspective back on you.

There really is no way to meaningfully skip ourselves, beneficially skip ourselves as we seek to cultivate a sense of loving kindness that becomes boundless in which all the barriers are broken down. If the first barrier is for ourselves and we say, "Well never mind me, I'll just extend loving kindness to you and you and you." There's just something like the core isn't there. Right? So, it has to include ourselves. Which means we maybe need to kind of go deep, kind of go deep because we're not looking at just mere attractive qualities, you know, or a person achieve this or achieve that. How noteworthy, how laudable, how admirable. That's not it. So, let's return to loving kindness starting from ourselves, extending outwards. We'll follow the classic approach of the Theravada tradition. Please find a comfortable position.

Meditation:

(6:38) According to Buddhist tradition there are two indeed, two ways of cultivating loving kindness one is doing so meditatively and the other is through action, acting in a loving and kindful way. So let's begin with the second note, the second approach and that is with the spirit of loving kindness do yourself a service, render an act of kindness by settling your body, speech, and mind in their natural states.

(10:24) And now direct your attention inwards upon yourself as a person, and one who is worthy of finding freedom from suffering, mental and physical, and worthy of finding genuine happiness. According to your ability attend to your essential nature, the pure and luminous nature of your own awareness which becomes veiled by mental afflictions and other obscurations but is by nature pure.

(11:40) According to your ability seek to view yourself from that perspective and from that perspective pose the question. What is your vision of truly flourishing, your heart's desire what would bring you the greatest happiness and fulfillment?

Then with each out breath arouse this aspiration, this aspiration of loving kindness that you may indeed realize such wellbeing, such happiness, such fulfillment by cultivating its causes. With each out breath arouse the yearning, may I be truly well and happy and imagine light flowing from this incandescent orb of light at your heart with every out breath filling your entire being, body and mind, dispelling all obscurations, all afflictions, all that impedes you from realizing your deepest potential. With each out breath, breathe out this light of loving kindness filling your whole being.

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(14:50) And with each out breath imagine experiencing such wellbeing here and now. Move boldly into that realm of possibility. Imagine it to be actual right now.

(17:03) Then bring to mind someone who is very dear to you, and in whom you very easily see lovable qualities, for whom affection arises spontaneously, bring this person clearly to mind attending especially to the lovable qualities within this person.

(18:00) And with each out breath arouse the same aspiration, may you like myself find the happiness you seek, may you realize your heart's desire and cultivate the causes that lead to such fulfillment. May you like myself be well and happy.

(19:00) With each out breath imagine the light from your heart embracing, suffusing this person. Imagine with each out breath this person realizing here and now the joy and fulfillment that is this person heart's desire.

(21:00) Then allow the appearance of this person to fade back into the space of your mind and now at your own pace, in your own way, attend to another person who is dear, and another, gradually moving outwards to those who seem a bit more distant from you but with the recognition that each one is equally worthy of finding happiness and freedom from suffering.

(28:43) Then release all appearances and all aspirations and let your awareness rest in its own natural purity and luminosity, knowing itself.

Important comments after Meditation:

One of you wrote a personal note, which I shall certainly keep anonymous simply commenting, with a bit of elaboration, that through this practice a lot of emotions, memories, just mental stuff was arising of which this person was quite unaware coming as something of a surprise. It seemed to be suppressed for a very long time. I'm addressing this to all of us here, including on the podcast because I'm sure that person is not alone. That shamatha tends to do that, right? Any type of intensive meditation will. But this one, the practice of shamatha, all three of the methods we're doing, they're so uncluttered; that is they're not giving us mantras and visualizations and doctrines and philosophies and so forth to think about and keep us busy, it is just the opposite and so in that total lack of busyness, I mean how busy you have to be to watch your in and out breath or let alone to watch the mind and let it go into free flow, oh my goodness. Or bringing the awareness right into awareness and then seeing still memories and so forth arising?

And so sometimes that can be a bit overwhelming, not mention a bit shocking when one sees that one has a much broader repertoire of desires, mental afflictions, emotions and so forth than one perhaps had thought. And it really shows the lie of the notion that when we leave here (mind center) we're returning to a world that's somehow more real than where we are right now.

It's very easy to live an extremely artificial, superficial, phony life just by keeping busy all the time and keeping on focusing on little things. Like, "Oh, the cost of bananas has gone up by five cents, this really concerns me." And ruminating about that on the way home. And then, "Who left the dirty dishes in the sink? Well I know who, gosh how many times I have to tell ...? Ah, well let's watch the news. [laughter] That's the most handsome man in the world? I don't think so, I don't think so." That's the real world, right? I'm sorry, I have to beg to disagree.

But it's by keeping our minds totally filled with the little things from day to day to day to day, you just grow old and die without growing wiser, without growing more mature, without knowing reality as it is. You're just getting more wrinkles and poor digestion and then die. I don't see anything particularly real about that. Right? I'm speaking from personal experience here. [laughter]

So this is pretty real. We're seeing something of the reality of the mind which so easily gets glossed over not only by the media that keeps on telling us, "Don't worry, it's just the brain. We'll fix it with a drug." Not only with all the activities, the work, the work, the work and then the entertainment and then going comatose. You know? But just when we're so actively engaged with the outer world, for the moment what we attend to is reality. It's not so much that we're suppressing it, we're occupied with other things, which other people are occupied [with] and it is almost entirely external.

And here we are, there is not a whole lot happening externally, it is a pretty quiet place. And there we are sitting in our rooms and then we see, "Ho! There's a lot going on internally." It might bear witnessing.

So what to do when we do on occasion feel overwhelmed?

Well, first response: be loving, be gentle with yourself, recognize those emotions and all the stuff that's coming up. They are not you. They are configurations, they are habits or formations of your mind but they are

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not you. Attend to them but also give yourself a breather, go out for walks, get exercise. Let your awareness become spacious and then keep on coming back to loving kindness, the practice we just did.

Loving kindness is your best friend. Loving kindness for yourself, loving kindness for others, your best friend in solitude, your best friend when you're with other people, your best friend when you are a child, an adolescent, adult and when you are in your death bed you couldn't ask for better companion. So, yay loving kindness!

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54 Mindfulness of the body (2)

25 Sep 2012

Teachings:

So I said yesterday that today we will venture into the 21st century, so this one lecture of this afternoon I think will probably go on a bit longer and that is because I have to my mind a really very rich set of notes, I did not write any of them it is quotes from other people, and then this afternoon session I like to solve the existence of the issue of the nature of the physical universe, the mind and body problem and the placebo effect. So it may take more than half hour, it could take thirty five minutes, I never can tell.

(1:42) So where we left off was with the Sautrantika system, which I really am very happy to call classic Buddhist philosophy, just as there is a very strong parallel as we speak of classical physics which is Newton plus James Clerk Maxwell . Electromagnetism, and with deep respect for both because they both are tremendous systems, both with tremendous practical applications all over the place so they have proven themselves, and as modern physicists know, classical physics despite its splendor, its magnificence, its pragmatic applications, is based upon some assumptions that are just fundamentally not true and you only get that by really penetrating very deeply into subtle issues [which notes Alan will explain in this session] pretending to velocity or speed and going right down to the building blocks of physical reality.

(3:00) And likewise the Sautrantika system as we have seen it has tremendous applicability, it is very well thought out, very intelligent, it is very rational and from Madhyamika perspective, Middle Way perspective, despite all of its practical efficacy, its value, it leaves unquestioned , some metaphysical assumptions or assumptions about the very nature of reality that if one does not question them, then it certainly calls a domain or whole bandwidth of not only ignorance but delusion remains unchallenged, and there is no way you can achieve liberation and be fundamentally deluded about the fundamental nature of reality.

(3:41) So we have seen in this Sautrantika system a really penetrating approach, analyzing, investigating, realizing experientially the nature of impermanence, the nature of suffering as well genuine happiness, the nature of non-self as in all phenomena are devoid of a self and are not owned by self, self as someone autonomous entity that is controlling and stands on his own.

(3:55) Now recall as well this is the segue into the twenty first century that this Sautrantika system says that:- that which is real, as opposed to merely conventionally existent, that which is real, independent of any conceptualization at all, that is equivalent, that set of phenomena that is real, has causal efficacy, is equivalent to the set of phenomena lend themselves to direct perception, obviously we can perceive more things in the future than we have not yet, they are real, but they are, but they lend themselves to direct perception, they can be directly perceived.

Now let's look that one right there. Saying that things that exist but are merely conventionally existent; exist only because of conceptual designation, they cannot be directly perceived like - who owns these glasses? Well there is just no way you can investigate them, you won't see it, does not matter what method you use by looking at the glasses themselves you will never guess who the owner is. You might pick my DNA on it, but so what? All kind of peoples DNA can be on these glasses. So there is just nothing there, [in the glasses], from its side, that indicates its ownership.

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(5:04) But now let's just pause for a moment, in a spirit of truly radical empiricism, that is exactly the same empiricism that Buddha call for to Bahiya, "in the seen let that be just the seen", right? Well here is a statement, Buddhist philosophy, Buddhist psychology, Buddhist epistemology, and that is among the five domains of sensory experience, there is no overlap. That's a fundamental thing, you do not hear colors, you do not taste sounds, you do not hear smells and so forth. They are five non overlapping domains of experience, and moreover, to state something pretty obvious - colors don't have sound, sounds don't have tastes, tastes don't have tactile qualities of solidity and so forth. So among the appearances arising in each of those five domains of experience none of them owns another one. In fact they are not owned by anything at all, the colors are simply colors, "in the seen let be just the seen", the sounds are just sounds, they don't belong to anything else. And of course none of these are absolutely out there, in the objective physical world, all of these appearances, by way of the five sensory as well as mental; all these appearances are arising where? In the Buddhist philosophy of course. Where are they arising? Where do they occur? What's their domain? All these appearances, where they arising? They are arising at the substrate, the space of the mind, the space of awareness, which means all of these appearances are not arising in physical space, which is there whether or not we are looking at; they are arising in the space of the mind.

(7:10) Now, when I look at this computer right in front of me I see that the computer has a black screen, it just went dark, it went to sleep. It is silver colored, it has a silver color and it has smooth texture, it is rather cold, no, actually it is rather warm right now, it is quite solid and so forth, and it makes that kind of noise, and if I had a really good nose I would be able to detect some scent, some smell of the computer, probably had some taste, at least parts of it would, metallic and so forth, so the computer has all of these attributes, that is just flat out good English. I mean what else are you going to say? Right? What color is its screen? Screen has this color, right. Whoever perceives the computer, in terms of really perceiving of it, simply being a given?

Whoever perceives the computer that *has* the shape and *has* the color and *has* the texture and so forth and so on, (the computer) that now suddenly becomes an owner? A possessor of attributes including the attributes of the sound, the computer made that sound (knocking the computer with his hand), that is the sound "of" the computer, that is the color "of" the computer and that is the shape "of" the computer, it is the smell "of" the computer. Exactly when do you perceive the computer that has all of these attributes? And moreover how can it have the attributes? How we say the computer has these attributes, how can we say that the computer has a black screen when black is a color and black arises in my substrate, whereas the computer does not arise in my substrate, this computer was made in China, and I can guarantee you that my substrate was not made in China. And so how can that computer made in China, have an attribute that belongs to my alaya? That doesn't make any sense. It is smooth, it has a smooth texture and it has a smooth quality but smooth is a tactile sensation that arises in my alaya so how can that belong to the computer?

The computer exists in physical space, and so we are seeing the owner and of course I am just taking one of countless examples of objects that we assume to be out there independently, really out there in the physical world, that have all of these attributes that we pick up by way of the five sense doors. But how do they have when they are in the physical space and all the attributes are in my substrate? How do they actually reach out and grab them? It would seem that they should be devoid of, empty of everything that arises in my substrate because I bring my substrate with me, I go here and there and the computer can stay here.

(9:31) So this issue was addressed by Descartes by others in Seventeenth century, they were very well aware of the kind of colors we experience, the sounds we experience, the tactile sensations and so forth, are not simply out there in physical space, they knew this and so they called these - 'secondary attributes' - colors, smells, taste, smoothness, tactile sensations and so forth and so on. These are secondary attributes in the sense that they arise in the contact between the object which is out there in physical space, and our particular sensory faculties, and in dependence upon the meeting of those two, then we as human beings see this, this and this, whereas if you were a bat you would be picking sonar which we don't as human beings, if you were dog, I believe they are color blind so they do not pick up the colors but they will pick up a lot more scents than we do, smells and so forth. So they stripped it back, they said ok, the computer really isn't black, so now they kind of start violating language and say - well the computer screen is not really black because it does not have a color because the color is something that arise in dependence upon somebody visual cortex.

(11:08) And so now what is the computer have, and bear in mind there is an agenda here, there is a deep agenda, a profound agenda and that is: what's there when we are not looking and only God is looking? For

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the whole physical universe, including what is right in front of you? What we see is always by way of our human physical senses, human physical sense faculties, it is always anthropocentric. You are looking with human eyes, smelling with human noses and so forth and so on. So it is always that relative to human being, human being, human being, right? That goes from the five senses.

But these were devout religious people. Descartes were a very devoted Roman Catholic, it is true of all of them, Copernicus was protestant, Newton was a protestant, Galileo was a devout catholic and so forth, they didn't want to simply know what the universe is like from a human perspective, we are fallen creatures after all, we are sinful, we ate of the apple. Why would we want to make a big deal, why would we want to devote a whole life to know the nature of reality from an Italian perspective, or a German perspective or a human perspective, it is so limited, it is cramped? No, these were people with a very powerful theological motivation. They wanted to know what the universe looked like from God's perspective. Now we are getting somewhere. Now we are getting to what's real, because what we see as human beings? Ah, it's subjective it is so subjective. Whereas what's *really* going on, what does God see? When God views us, views our environment, views the Cosmos as a whole?

(12:31) So Descartes stripped this down to things like place, location, what's really there when we're not looking, when only God is looking? Location - ok, that's absolute. This pair of glasses – it's really located here, it's mass, what kind of density does it have, okay that's really there. It's shape, now that is really there. Its velocity, it is moving through space, ok that is really there; it does not matter who is looking. So they strip these down to primary qualities but they are devoid, these entities, the invisible eye glasses, the computer that has no color on its screen, and so forth.

[Subscriber's sum up: they thought: the real world must be out there because: 1) stuffs happens when we're not looking and 2) there is a commonality of perceptions.]

(13:09) Now they [Alan is referring to the scientists mentioned above] are trying to imagine computers with none of the qualia, none of the qualities of our five senses, stripped down, denuded to their primary characteristics which are (now we are getting into emptiness pretty quickly here) which are inherently existent, that is absolutely there from their own side and you can detect it or not, you can think about it or not, you can label it or not, it does not matter because that is what God sees, and God is absolutely out there. This is why H. H. Dalai Lama often says: teachings on emptiness are really not compatible with theism, theism of that sort.

(13:40) Now I would have to respond, there are many types of theism, not just one form any more than there is just one form of Buddhism, one Buddhist philosophy. But if one notion of God is an absolutely valid observer of what is absolutely going on in the universe, because after all he created it, absolutely, it took six days and now he is watching, then there is just no way that view, that there is God's eye view of what is absolutely going on out there, there is no way that is going to be compatible with the Buddhist teachings on emptiness.

(14:20) But now we come back to the Sautrantika , and then we will get to the twenty first century. From this perspective of radical empiricism, with my eyes I see colors and shapes, I don't see computers. With my ears I hear sounds but don't hear a computer, and don't smell a computer, I don't taste a computer, I don't touch a computer. I am picking up earth element and earth element is not a computer, I am picking up fire element, it's warm but fire element is not a computer. So exactly how is it that I am direct perceiving computer when I am not picking it up with any of my five senses and I am not direct perceiving it with mental perceptions either?

So if we go back to Buddhist causality, I find this point is really interesting and extremely relevant for modern science and for understanding reality, here it is: It has to do with inference.

(15:30) We are making inferences, we do it all the time, and we make inferences of the cause, that is we are knowing the cause on the basis of the effect that it produces. So a common example in Buddhist epistemology and logic - we see smoke billowing up from yonder hill, or over the hill, and so we know something by directly perceiving the smoke, we know something, be it beyond any reasonable doubt, we know there has got to be some combustion there, because only combustion produces smoke, so even though I can't see it, I am inferring the cause based on the effect. Fair enough, we do this all the time, it happens in science and it happens in everyday life, we perceive the effect and on that basis, we infer the cause.

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(16:16) Now here is the catch, Sautrantika. Buddhist epistemology says, this works, you can do this, we do all the time, but you can do it validly, you can come to certain knowledge, if and only if, you have the ability to on some occasion actually perceive, now we are back to perception which is a more direct way of knowing of course, if you can actually perceive that cause producing that effect, and you can perceive that it requires that kind of cause to produce that kind of effect. In the example of the fire, over where the fire is, there may be a man scratching his head, and that is right where the fire is starting, he is scratching his head and there is smoke.

Or the baseball player with the rabbit's foot. I took this rabbit foot out and I hit a home run. Wow. So the baseball player brings out the rabbit foot, a little lucky charm, right? Hits a home run and thinks – wow, that really worked! And then next time he brings a rabbit's foot with him, and he is now really confident. That rabbit's foot is going to do it for me. With that greater confidence, that belief, that commitment, that intensity, he stands a better chance of getting a home run. So he does it again. Now he sees the pattern. It happened twice. Maybe a third or fourth time. Now we see it, a rabbits foot causes home runs. It is not enough to see it once, but you have to see it multiple times, to see that that is a regularity, a pattern, or what scientists call - a law of nature.

Just seeing it once, how would you know? All kinds of things happen just before he hit the home run. His wife sneezed. Sneeze wife! (laughter) How many things are happening just before he hit the home run? An infinite number. How many are relevant to his hitting the home run? Well for that he will have to hit multiple home runs, right? And then you see the pattern, you see the pattern repeatedly and you say – ok I see it is the rabbits foot.

And likewise with the fire, the fire could be produced by coal, could be produced by wood and all kinds of things but then you look for the patterns but the crucial point here is that you actually see the fire is producing the smoke. You have to see that, there is the fire, there is the smoke, I get it, I am perceiving both of them now and I am perceiving the relationship. I am perceiving the fire producing the smoke, I am getting it. And then I am looking at other situations and seeing wow, that is simply a dust storm, that is wet wood and there is no fire and no smoke and you see the pattern then, and you say okay I have got it figured out now. In order for, and I have seen this repeatedly, I am seeing the pattern, the regularity and therefore I am seeing that without combustion you just don't get smoke, so there we are, we do that all the time.

(19:30) So that was all kind of obvious, now something that is not so obvious - Buddhist epistemology, if you cannot even in principle, see the cause, then there is no way you can infer that cause based upon an effect. All you see is the effect. It is called a black box situation, philosophically speaking. It is a black box, if things are coming out of the black box but you can't see inside the black box, just impossible and never will happen, then what inside of that black box is causing this to happen and that to happen? You can come up with all different kinds of ideas and the more intelligent and creative you are, as you see one effect coming at another, as you see one ingenious idea after another, what inside of that black box is producing that particular effect, but you never come to a resolution, because you are not seeing actually what is producing it, and you are not seeing that would be required to produce that effect, as you do when you are seeing fire and seeing it produces smoke and seeing you have to have combustion in order smoke arise. In other words, if you never can see the cause then you can never infer that cause, based upon perceiving the effect. Imagine that you come up with all kind of reasons, one cool hypothesis after another, but you will not be able to test them because you cannot see inside the black box.

(21:06) Now there are two areas now in modern science where this is flagrantly obvious, thus far, and that is we know there is life on the planet, that is an effect, all kinds of life. What caused it? What caused the initial emergence of life on our planet 3.5 to 4 billion years ago? Give or take 5 billion years, that's a generous sweep. They don't know. They come up with one ingenious idea after another, and they are really smart, these scientists are smart guys, one after another - and they are all incompatible.

(21:57) My favorite one is that the first life to emerge on planet earth come on a meteor. I love that one. It came on a meteor from some other galaxy perhaps and travelled through space in about three degrees kelvin, I mean it was like a really cold day and that meteor travelled for probably millions of years through space at three degrees kelvin, pretty close to absolute zero, and it had a little passenger, some little living organism. So imagine travelling millions of years at three degree kelvin, a long lonely ride and then finally, it was so lucky that meteor right comes and comes and it is drawn into the gravitation field of our earth, and it is drawn

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through our atmosphere, starts travelling thousands of miles per hour, and it heats up to something like two thousand degrees. Super hot. Zooming down at I don't know how many thousand miles per second, per minute. It was at three degrees kelvin, now it is flaming hot, the little microbe is going, wow, hot day. And finally the meteor hits the earth and the little microbe jumps off and goes – 'pew, home, thank God, I am home, let's start bifurcating! Is there anybody around like me or am I okay by myself?' That is possible...that is possible, but they have other ideas – that they started in volcanic fissures in the ocean, and have they every been able to replicate life? Now that would be a slam dunk. Out of inorganic molecules you could simply get really complex and then get out of inorganic non living stuff – actually generate, that you would do it, and you would generate a living organism, that would eat and defecate and reproduce. Then you really got it, because you did it. They haven't done it.

But they have others ideas but they are not even close. So thus far all the ideas, ingenuous as they are, it's a black box.

(24:15) And likewise what causes consciousness? The origin of consciousness whether in the planet or individual human beings? It is also a black box. We do not know, number one we cannot even measure it. That is a problem.

So let's come back to Sautrantika.

(24:13) When I am looking at right in front of me, the computer, let's put it in the 21st century - there are photons streaming in, and photons are not black, but they catalyze the complex sequence of electro chemical events starting in my retina culminating in the visual cortex - and I see black. So the photons coming in are serving as cooperative conditions and without them I won't even see black. But, they catalyze, they trigger a lot of electro chemical events, culminating in the visual cortex and then the neurons also serve as cooperative conditions because they don't turn black, they don't turn any color at all. Then they act as a cooperative condition for the emergence of the qualia, the vision impression - the color black. But none of those things actually transform into black, not the photons, not my neurons, not my eyeball, nothing here in the physical world transforms into black because black arising in my substrate which is non-physical whereas all of these is physical.

(26:00) But now beyond the veil of appearances, so we have these whole physical world out there and all the activities in that physical world of movements of matter, energy and so forth, are then acting as cooperative conditions, leading to, when they come in contact with our senses, the emergence of qualia, colors, sound, smell, taste and so forth. But we never see them. Those things in physical space that are absolutely out there independent of us, we never see them, all we are actually directly perceiving are the qualia, are the appearances through our five senses, but they are causing them, right? How do you know? You never see them. You never see a photon, all you see when you are looking a photon by whatever instrument of modern physics, you never see a photon, you are seeing appearances that arise in your visual substrate, the visual space. So how do you know that a photon is really, as it is really, out there independently of some real entity that is acting as cooperative condition for seeing black or red or anything else? How do you know? You never see it, it's a black box - the physical universe is a black box. You can never rip open the screen, the veil of appearances and see, ok, what's really, there from God's perspective? All you are getting is more appearances and all the appearances are arising in your substrate. So how do you know what's really out there, causing and necessarily causing, the emergence of the appearances that you actually see? The appearances are the effects. How can you infer on the basis of effects, the causes when you can never see the causes and you can never see the cause producing the effect, as you can perceive fire producing smoke?

(27:33) So the implication here would be that the entire physical world is fundamentally unknowable, physical world as it exist in and of itself, out there real and absolute, is unknowable because it is in a black box and all we are getting is appearances but you can't infer the cause on the basis of the effect if you can never ever see the cause. And the physical world as it exists really out there absolutely from God's perspective, no one sees, unless you are God, and none of us know whether the God even exists. Therefore, it's flat out unknowable. So the universe as it exist out there, in and of itself, presumably acting as cooperative conditions for the arising all the appearances we have, is unknowable, in principle unknowable.

(28:28) Moving to the 20th century, let's see one quick note from Heisenberg. He said, "let us not attribute existence to that which is unknowable in principle". Well the universe as it exists in itself, absolutely out there, is unknowable in principle. Because number one you can't see it and moreover you can't measure it

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either - because as soon as you do a measurement what do you get? You get appearances to your awareness. It doesn't matter which branch of science, you never say - never mind my being human, never mind my appearances, I am just going to look at nature itself – never happens. Whether you're a scientist, an artist, a mother, a farmer, whoever you may be, all you are ever getting are appearances. So if we follow Heisenberg's dictum, one of the greatest pioneers of quantum mechanics - "let's not attribute existence to that which is unknowable in principle", then the external objective, physical universe and whether is physical or not, that of course is a human construct, superimposed, is unknowable, therefore let's not attribute existence to the universe as it exists independently of experience. (29:26)

Now that seems strange. He said wait a minute. We navigate ourselves, through this real physical world, by way of appearances although they arise in the substrate. After all, there has got to be a real world out there, where things are happening, without our watching. So, to say that there is no world out there, independent of us, is flat out silly. So there is one point – that causality is taking place whether or not we are looking. Food rots in your refrigerator whether you are looking or not. And then also as we look around, human beings in this room, we look around, if we begin to describe what we see we are going to come up with some very similar descriptions, so what accounts for that commonality, consensuality, among different individual's perceptions? Well there has got to be something really out there. Acting as cooperating conditions for our perceptions and those cooperating conditions are absolutely out there. And we are seeing them with human eyeballs, canine eyeballs, or whatever, but there has got to be something, absolutely real. Give me a break. Right? So that is the response, there has got to be something out there. Kant got that far. But he said we will never know the universe as it exists in and of itself, the thing itself, independent of perception. So he was pretty deep. Scientists have pretty much ignored that, said we don't want to hear about that. We will tell you what is really going on out there.

But he did say, you know we don't know what's really in and of itself, really out there, by its own intrinsic nature, independent of percept and concept, but there has got to be something out there. Otherwise what holds the whole thing together? But then he couldn't say what because then he would have to start talking about the "thing in itself".

(30:00) Is it possible to even imagine physics, this granddaddy of all the natural sciences, is it possible to imagine physics that does not even attempt to make truth statements about what is really going on, out there, in the real physical world? Is that conceivable? Or would that just make it no longer physics?

Instructions for one that is reading the transcript: the next theme is a little complex so there are parts that we are trying to sum up the essence of the teachings.

Let's see Modern Physicist's thoughts about the nature of the physical universe.

[Modern physicists debunk this view it means to understand reality from God's perspective as did early scientists like Galileo and others that were devout Christians].

- **Anton Zeilinger.**

Just keep in mind let's see what is written in the summary made by SB Institute staff: Anton Zeilinger said that reality is based only on information we receive.

Now let's continue with Alan Wallace with a complete explanation:

Well let's ask one of the premier experimental physicists living today, in the field of quantum mechanics, a world renowned, there is no debate about this, he holds the chair at the University of Vienna. I know him personally, my privilege to say his name is Anton Zeilinger, he is really absolutely world class that is not open for debate, he is really superb, world class. Here is what he says, direct quote*:

(32:05) One may be tempted to assume that whenever we ask questions of nature, of the world there outside, there is reality existing independently, of what can be said about it, or maybe attempted to assume? We (Anton Zeilinger) we will now claim that such position is void of any meaning, it is obvious that any property or feature of reality, out there, can only be based on information we receive. There cannot be any statement whatsoever about the world or about reality that is not based on such information".

It therefore follows that the concept of a reality without at least the ability in principle to make statements about it, to obtain information about its features, is devoid of any possibility of confirmation or proof - that is as soon as you start making statements of the nature of reality really out there independent of any information we have about it, well now you may just as well go - bla, bla, bla, because you are not making any sense. Whatever you say cannot be verified or repudiated, which means you are making no sense at all. This

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implies that the distinction between information, that is knowledge, and reality, is devoid of any meaning. In other words just stop talking about the nature of reality out there, independent of the information we have about it.

(33:23)

- **John Wheeler**

Summary made by SB Institute staff: John Wheeler spoke of the participatory universe where its (physical world) come from bits (information). Based on bits, the conceptual mind makes the “its”.

Let's go directly to John Wheeler, a person whom Anton Zeilinger holds in high regard, who passed away, he had a long life and he is probably one of the two greatest theoretical physicists in America in the latter half of the twentieth century. He is very renowned. He was at The Institute of Advanced Studies in Princeton. So referring to him, another very fine contemporary of theoretical physicists, Master physicists Paul W. Davis, he writes, referring to John Wheeler and John Wheeler's theory here of quantum cosmology:

(33:54) A true observation of the physical world, he (that is that John Wheeler maintained) even something as simple as the decay of an atom must not only produce any indelible record, in other words has impact, it must somehow impart meaningful information. Measurement implies a transition from the realm of mindless stuff to the realm of knowledge, otherwise it is not a measurement.

(34:22) So it is not enough for Wheeler that a measurement should record a bit of information, that you have just some imprint on it, that lowly bit, that bit of information had to mean something, and that is - mean something for somebody who is intelligent, who understands. Applying as usual practice of extrapolating to the extreme, he envision a community of physicists from whom the click of the Geiger counter amounted to more than just a sound. It was connected via a long chain of reasoning to a body of physical theory that enabled them to declare - the atom has decayed. Only then might the decayed event be accorded the objective status as having happened out there in the physical world, in other words now information is primary.

(35:47) So he comes here with what he calls a participatory universe, it is John Wheeler's theory, melding the participatory universe with “it” from “bit”, “it from bit” that is one of the John Wheeler' slogans, and “it” is something like a photon, an electron, an atom, and bit of course is a bit of information, meaningful information that is it refers to something.

(36:35) John Wheeler's theory of “it” from bit” is that all of our concepts about what's really out there, from elementary particles up to galactic clusters, so from very small or the universe at large, all of our statement about the “its” out there, elementary particles up to galaxies – that is a big ‘it’, that is a small ‘it; and all the ‘its’ in between, all of these “its” arise from bits, that is they arise from information. What the scientist, the physicist, the astrophysicist, what does that person actually know, actually perceive, is information gleaned from making measurements. Information is not physical, has no physical attributes whatsoever, it is not located in space, no mass, no speedy, no-charge, no velocity, no shape, has no physical attributes whatsoever, and that is all the physicists actually are directing dealing with, something non-physical.

(37:35) And on a basis of ‘its’, information they gleaned from looking into a telescope, electron microscope, Hubble telescope and so forth, based on the information that they directly know, from the measurements that they are taking, based on the information then they conceive categories of matter, energy, charge, particles waves, fields and so forth and so on. But all of those “its”, electromagnetic fields, particles, galaxies, trains, stars, planets and so forth, all of those are derivative from information and have no existence independently of information. Information is primary and the “its” are secondary derivative.

(38:19) So he said that there is a strange loop here, I find this fascinating and it's really worth contemplating, he calls this a strange loop, the “its” from “bits”, and that is if we did not glean any information about the universe using our five basic systems of measurement as human beings, the measurement of the world around us, mainly five physical senses, those are our measuring devices and from them we are getting information, right, each one, the visual information, auditory information and so forth, from based upon the information, whether gleaned from our five raw physical senses or from the fantastic technology of modern physics; based on that, then “its” emerge in dependence upon information. In other words there would be no universe as conceived by the physicists with all of its “its” without the information that the physicists had gleaned by making measurements. The “its” actually arise in dependence upon the bits on the one hand.

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(39:17) On the other hand, the story that we have now of the physical universe based upon marvelous measurements and sophisticated analyses is that our universe is about 30,7 billion years old, our planet's about five billions years old, life on earth is about 3,5 billion years old, human species, homo sapiens about 100/200 thousand years old, and so for most of the history of the universe, according to the measurements that we have thus far, at least the universe we know about, our planet, there is no conscious life. I mean our planet didn't even exist for the first of 8,5 billion years, that is a lot of time with no life, as far as we know. And then for the first billion and half billion or so no life, and then how long it took consciousness anybody is guess, there is no scientific theories that could be tested. So after some time then we have the first consciousness organisms and then they evolved and here we are.

(40:13) So had it not been for the prior history of the universe, the big bang, formation of galaxies five billions ago, our solar system, the sun, its various planets, were it not for all of those 'its' and the evolution of life on our planet, then human beings would not have evolved, physicists would not have evolved and would not have developed their system of measurement to get a lot of information.

(40:53) You have to have the "its" before you get the bits. Physicists were not there at the big bang for watching the first ameba crawl out of the ooze or whatever they did. So you have to have the 'its' before the 'bits', right? But no, the "its" are actually derivative of "bits". It's "its" from bits, if there is no physicist then there will not be measurements, if there were no measurements there will be no categories of space, time, matter, energy, evolution, galaxies, big bang, inflationary period, and so forth. None of that would be anywhere so it is a strange loop, "its" giving rise to 'bits' and 'bits' giving rise to 'its'.

Just to recall in Pratityasamutpada, physics style – in the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination, which comes first?

(41:30) Melding the participatory universe with "it" from 'bits', participatory universe now, the role of the observer because there has to an observer in order to make measurement. Without someone who is informed there is no information, without having something about which you are informed, there is no information. So there's three - the one who is informed, the information, and that about which you are being informed. They are all mutually interdependent. If you don't have any information you are not informed. If there is nothing to be informed about, there is no information, but if there is no information there is nothing about which you are informed. Take away one and the other two vanish into thin air. They are all mutually interdependent.

So that's the participatory universe, there is no information without observers, and an inert entity cannot measure another inert entity. It is just called bumping. It is not a measurement, there is no information. It's just –bump, an indentation. Melding the participatory universe with 'it' from 'bit' reveals the key concept of information laying at the core. One the one hand an observer involves the acquisition and recording of information. That is how information happens – there has to be an observer. On the other hand, an observer, at least of the living variety, is an information processing and replicating system. In both cases it is not information per say that is crucial, but semantic information. So he is making a strong point here. There are other ways of understanding information but not those ways, semantic information, meaningful information that has a referent, it's about something. An interaction in quantum mechanics becomes a true measurement only if it means something to somebody. Similarly the information in the genome is a set of instructions, say to build a protein, requiring a molecular meilleur that can recognize the code and act upon it. The base para-sequence on a strand of DNA is just so much gobblydeegook, without customized, cellular machinery to read and interpret it. Whether machinery can read and interpret anything I think is an open question.

But it is now calling for, in a very deep or existential way, the role of observation, the very existence of the Universe as a whole. That is wasn't just out there, and if it is, it's forever unknowable so why should we talk about it? A world that is knowable is inextricably linked with the observer.

- **Andre Lindt – he is Russian, he teaches at Stanford.**

Summary: Andre Lindt asserts that perception is primary and that consciousness is needed to explain the physics observed in the real world.

Alan quoting what Andre Lindt said: "The standard assumption (whenever you see physicists say that you know they are about to say it is wrong) The standard assumption is that consciousness, just like space time before the invention of general relativity, plays a secondary subservient role, being just a function of matter,

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and a tool for the description of the truly existing material world.” Those are his words. That consciousness is just a little fluff, just a function of what is really there, matter.

In other words mind is what the brain does. But let’s remember that our knowledge of the world begins not with matter but with perceptions, backing to information, being primary.

(45:00) He continues, is it possible that consciousness, like space time, has its own intrinsic degrees of freedom? In other words, it is not just a function of something else, and that neglecting these will lead to a description of the universe that is fundamentally incomplete. And that is – a universe that is only objective. Where consciousness really plays no role at all. Where consciousness really, after all is said and done, is just brain function. And perceptions are brain function. And feelings are just brain function. In other words we are just like road kill. Flattening all subjective experience and demanding well after all, it has to be equivalent to something we actually know about.

The physical. And he said well maybe that is just not right, maybe that’s incomplete. He asked further, what if our perceptions are as real, or maybe in a certain sense, more real than material objects? Now bear in mind this is not a new-agey Physicist. He is really, really very main stream. He is asking one question after another. So, Roger Penrose, another man who is anything but a light weight, regarded by some people as the greatest living mathematician, Professor of Mathematics at the University of Oxford, he writes: “ One needs a theory of consciousness to explain the physics that we actually perceive going on in the world. “ That is what we don’t have. A scientific theory of consciousness, not one that can be tested.

- **Stephen Hawking** - one more person who is not a lightweight. He teamed up with another physicist called Thomas Hertog, and here is what they write:

Summary: Stephen Hawking speaks of the quantum world which is in a superposition state (in probabilistic mode or realm of possibility). He notes being inside (causality and linearity) or outside the system (quantum world where observer creates both past and future). Without an observer, the universe is frozen. The observer breaks the symmetry of the quantum world, giving rise to the classical world. In sum, both the observer and information constitute essential links in understanding the world.

Text and Alan’s comments:

(47:47) This is not necessarily a direct quote but I can give you the source for anyone who is interested. “There is only one world, and this is a quantum world and it is in the superposition state, superposition state means - what is there is a field of possibilities, it is a probability function, not concrete real absolutely objectively physical entity out there, superposition state means is still in probabilistic mode, potential mode, not actualized into concrete discrete entities. “ (Superposition is a big important term in quantum mechanics.)

They continue – “It is simply that every component of the superposition taken separately, corresponds to what our consciousness perceives as the picture of the classical world, and to different superposition terms there corresponds different pictures.

Each classical world, classical world again - it is really out there, prior to our measurement, prior to our observation and so forth, these different projections, each classical world is just one classical projection of the quantum world. “

So what is a manner of speaking mentioning that what is really out there is simply a world of possibilities, a superposition state.

(48:43) Then, when we make a measurement like looking I just make a measurement. I just made a measurement of his shirt. But when we make a measurement then we see classical world. He has got a real shirt, it is right there, it is made of molecules, it is absolutely out there, I just happen to see it. So now something that is probabilistic becomes an actuality by the act of making a measurement.

These different projections are produced. (Reading the last sentence) “Each classical world, that is something really out there, is just one more classical projection of the quantum world.

These different projections are produced by the observer’s consciousness.

While the quantum world itself exists independently of whatever observer. “

In other words the quantum world is not dependent on your perceptions, after all something has got to be out there independently of our perceptions. The world wasn’t created with man.

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(49:52) So something has got to be out there when we are not looking and what he is saying is yeah, quantum world and superposition state, only a world of possibilities. That is as soon a measurement is made, by us or people individual sentient beings on other planets, when they can make a measurement from their perspective, a classical world pops up, they are projected based upon their measurements. But what is out there independently? Possibilities!

Oh I love this one - Quote - "Like the surface of the sphere our universe has no definable starting point". Ever you heard of the beginning of the samsara? Now you have heard that again.

(50:46) Quote: "Our observations of the Cosmos today, (now it gets weirder and weirder, this is still Stephen Hawking so we haven't gone into 'Flakeyville', and it doesn't mean he is absolutely right, I am not citing these people as if – *now God has spoken*, I am citing these people as incredible, brilliant, mainstream, highly respected, physicists, who I think should be taken seriously. And then refuted, if we can. Here they go again:- "Our observations of the Cosmos today are determining the outcome, in this case, the entire history of the universe". Alan repeat: "Our observations today are determining the history of the entire universe."

Alan's comments: "it from bit", the history of the universe is an "it" and it emerges from the information we get about it and the information we are getting about it is now. So the history is arising relative to measurements we are making in the present moment.

And measurement made in the present is deciding what happened 13.7 billion of years ago. By looking out at the universe we assign ourselves a particular concrete history.

(51:00)

There is a middle way here, it is exactly a middle way, and that is one extreme is – this is a bunch of rubbish, the universe is already out there with or without God and it really absolutely happened and it was 13.7 billions years ago and we know an awful lot about it , even during the nano seconds after the big bang, we know about the galactic formations, the formations and everything going on, and we know what happened and it is all there independently of our knowing about it , and that is called metaphysical realism. It is already absolutely out there and we are just simply trying to reproduce or represent in our theories, what really absolutely happened. In the Madhyamika view that is called the extreme of substantialism, that it is absolutely out there, right?

(52:44) The extreme of nihilism is not just to say nothing exist at all, it is saying: whatever you think, it is your reality man, the hippies almost invented this. You do not think that George Bush is the President? Whatever man, whatever, it's your reality. In another words nobody is ever deluded, because they are schizophrenic and so forth and so on, it's your reality, let's not mess with it. Well that is nuts. That would make a complete mockery of all of science, and I do not think science should be mocked, and I do not think sanity should be mocked either, and if it is true that ignorance and delusional lay at the root of suffering, then we shouldn't be bowing and kowtowing to delusion. Unless we simply want to be perpetuating suffering.

(53:14) So , something in between those two: it is not just you make up as you go, and anything goes, and pass the dope, or is it absolutely out there, it is something in between and in between is, what I called, and I did not coin the term,anthological relativity. Given an certain system of measurements, a conceptual framework in which or by which you are making sense of your measurements, there are truths to be discovered that can be replicated and there are assertions that you can be made that can be repudiated, relative to your system of measurement, and the conceptual framework in which you make sense of, what you are measuring.

(53:40) Remember yesterday? It is nama that identifies objects and manas or mano that makes sense of them, right?And in dependence upon that we have categories of mind and matter and so forth and so on but they were not already out there. (53:54) Slapped together or something. So something in between, where there are truths to be discovered and maybe very expensive truths, I think this large Hayden Super collaborator is \$6B. That is expensive. These are really good physicists, superb technology, but are they finding about what exists absolutely independent of their systems of measurements? Not according to quantum mechanics. They are finding and making deep insights, maybe even practical insights, about the fundamental constituents of physical reality, down to the level of elementary particles, relative to the systems of measurement they have designed, and making sense within the conceptual framework of the standard theory and so forth. They are true for that context, they are true relative to that framework, but are they true from God's perspective, if God has an absolute perspective? No. No evidence. And moreover, if you say – yes

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they are – then prove it. You can't prove the validity or invalidity, you can't prove or disprove, any statement you make about reality independent of your system of measurement. Impossible. So you may as well stop talking, about what is meaningless, is what he said. Oh it gets better. If we could stand outside the world, we would be able to see the present affecting the past. If you could stand outside of time, we would be able to see the present affecting the past, as when an observer affects a photons path through the universe. That is a thought experiment that I think John Archibald Wheeler came up with. And it is fundamental quantum mechanics, and he made it large. That when you make a measurement, that act of making a measurement actually influences what occurred prior to that event in terms of the projector of the photon. That is just standard quantum mechanics. He applied this now to photos travelling through the universe, saying the measurement you make has a retroactive effect on the flight, the trajectory of the photon. An observer affects a photons path through the universe. That is from outside. But from inside the universe, here we are getting these classical pictures of the universe based upon our measurements, which we then reify, as being absolutely out there in and of themselves. From inside the universe though, from the only place we can possibly be, no observer sees because causality is violated; causality is violated if the effect is influencing the cause, you make a measurement and it influences something prior to that. That violates causality. Then go out and kill your grandmother and see what happens. That is the classic one – kill your grandmother then she can't give birth to your parents, and they can't give birth to you, and if you are not here then that means you can't murder your grandmother. So inside the system, no that can't happen. Outside the system? Oh yeah. What we observe in the present, the final state, is one entire causally consistent theory or another. And that's where the theory makes sense, it is true or false, you can test it. One causally consistent history or another depending on the system of measurement that you use, because you chose the system of measurement. From within any given history, cause and effect proceed in the usual manner, in dependence on that cause, then subsequently this effect arises. Now just one more quote from Andre Lindt : "The universe becomes alive, time dependent (which is to say that the universe evolves, the last 13.7B years the universe changes, things happen in the universe. So he doesn't mean literally alive. Alive, as in a sense of transforming, evolving, changing. "The universe becomes alive, that is time dependent, only when one would divided it into two parts, and observer and the rest of the universe."

(58.33) Then the function of the rest of the universe depends on time measured by the observer. In other words, evolution is possible, only with respect to the observer, without an observer the universe is dead. So the problem of frozen time, very well known in modern quantum cosmology, the universe would be absolutely static were it not for the role of the observer and the observer participant universe. Paul Davies has written a whole book on this, it is called The Problem of Frozen Time. The way it works is essentially quite simple - and that is to say that time is not out there, objectively, otherwise the universe would go on, with or without observers, it is not their objective, it falls out of the equations, that's a big deal. They took the standard equation for doing calculations of quantum mechanics and applied it to the whole universe. In which case time drops out of the equation, there is no objective time. And now we have 'its' from 'bits', the whole physical universe consisting of 'its' arises in dependence upon information, on the basis of information then the conceptual mind makes the 'its' and they causally interact with each other. But now there will be no time, apart from the intervention, on the part of an observer participant. And what does the observer participant do? What the observer participant does, is a little bit poetically, the observer says – now. Now. And now that I have said now, relative to now I can speak of the past, relative to now I can speak of the future and then the past is giving rise to the future, now everything flows through time.

But the Universe doesn't say "now", objectively, mindlessly, without measurement, without information. The Universe doesn't say "now", past present or future, it doesn't say years, it does not change, it's frozen. It takes an observer to break the symmetry, say now, which is different from not now, then and then, and now relative to the observer, you have a world that changes through time.

Let's just take one final look at this short statement: If we could stand outside the world, we would be able to see the present affecting the past, that would imply that one could see the future affecting the present. Ever heard the phrase – Take the Fruition as the Path? Take something that hasn't happened yet, namely your achievement of perfect enlightenment, and then saying, reaching in one or maybe a thousand lifetimes, I will take the effect as the cause, thank you very much, I will take the effect as my path. After all, time has no absolute reality anyway. There is no absolute time between now and the time when I

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achieve enlightenment. Is there time? Yes, but it is not absolute time. So he is saying, from that perspective, not from inside the system; so once again, if Alan Wallace says – “from my perspective”. Well one day I am going to achieve enlightenment, let’s take that one on faith, and therefore the Buddha that I will be, I, Alan Wallace am going to take that as my path, which means that I, Alan Wallace am a Buddha, (doesn’t feel all that different) and now I am going to super propel myself, put myself into warp drive, not three countless eons, I am going to put myself into warp drive and zip through three countless eons, of course accumulating merit. But if I try to do that from the perspective of Alan Wallace, it is just something to laugh at.

There is a perspective though, from which that is valid.

(1:03:40) There is a perspective from which that is valid otherwise all of Vajrayana would be a joke. Hey you can’t violate causality you can’t make the effect the cause, give me a break, from inside the system, from inside samsara, from inside space time, from inside our existence as human beings, but if you realize the emptiness of all of that of the physical universe, not just yourself, that is a small potatoes. Realize the emptiness of the entire whole works, the entire universe, that it arises only relative to measurement, only relative to information, it’s not already there, nor is a sheer whimsy. True statements, Tsongkhapa is so strong on that point, our valid and our invalid statements, valid and invalid cognition, boy he is strong on that point, within the system absolutely, just like in science.

(1:04:29) But if you see, (now it’s Tsongkhapa all over again, or any of the great followers of Madhyamaka), if you perceive or understand the entire physical universe and your presence in it, and consciousness, your mind, you identity, all is empty of inherent nature, none of them existing independently of measurement, independently of information, independently of conceptual designation, it is all constructed, then you deconstruct. That which you constructed you can deconstruct, from your perspective and you dissolve the entire universe, leaving not a single atom behind. You dissolve it into emptiness and you dissolve your mind into rigpa. Rigpa is out time. Rigpa is in the fourth time, it is not in the past, present or future, not even in the present, not within that demarcation of the past, present and future, it is outside the system, it is in the fourth time. Rigpa is viewing reality from the fourth time, outside of the time, in which the ground, path and fruition are all simultaneous. Dissolve everything, the entire phenomenal universe into emptiness, and then not there, that is not enough, then dissolve your awareness into primordial consciousness, viewing from that reality outside the system. Now the effect, the fruition, your Buddhahood can influence the cause, and you can take the fruition as the path, but only from that perspective. If you tried to take the effect from inside the system it is simply delusion, taking you in the opposite direction from enlightenment. You are your ordinary sense and oh, by the way, you are also the “manakaya”, you are a tulku, you are an enlightenment being, I don’t think so. So here is the final sense.

(1:06:30) So since science, since Copernicus, the rise of modern science, has aimed to model a universe in which we are mere byproducts, that is after all what we call ourselves, human beings, physicists, byproducts of a long, long evolution that never had us in mind, because it did not have a mind. I mean we are dealing with the modern twenty first century physics, God does not really play a role, so it is just a mindless big bang, and then 8,5 billion years of mindlessness, planet with mindlessness, planet with no appearances anywhere in sight, 3.5 billion ago mindless organisms, somehow, Merlin or somebody made them consciousness, and they don’t have a clue how, not in the scientific world, and then we evolve from the simple living organisms to where we are now. And this is pretty much, I mean I have heard this, consciousness is just byproduct, I mean I have read serious people, biologists, evolutionary biologists saying: what’s the use, what’s the function of consciousness, everything as we as evolved beings, as living organisms, everything we have, teeth, hair, genitals and so forth, they all have a function and function is to survive and procreate. That is bottom line, but was really necessary to be consciousness? Couldn’t we just kind of bumped around in the dark? What function does consciousness have? And then from the evolutionary biological framework, they try to conceive of what use is consciousness, like it could happen or could it not happen? And what is it good for? So in other words it’s just a byproduct. It is just one of those things. It made sex feel better. Or you know otherwise you could just have mindless sex. You could bump into another organism and go boink boink boink, and for no reason, because you are not experiencing anything, then you have more boink boinks and they are perpetuating all the planet, a bunch of little blind, mute, unconscious billiard balls, procreating. There it is I mean that is the view. That is just happened to have happened. Life just happened, whether it was that marvelous little traveler on a meteorite, long lived and very robust. Or one that pops out of a volcanic fissure,

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from lava, the chemical soup; they have got all kinds of very interesting ideas and none of them testable. And they take them so seriously, I am quite astonished. So the standard model is that we are mere byproducts. That this top down cosmology is look, everything we know about the universe is based upon measurements that are making in the present, because we were not there at the big bang, we were not there at the formation of the planet, we were not there before the human beings came along by definition, and so there is no such thing as bottom up cosmology. You can't call a physicist here, who was there when the planet was formed and said, yeah, I was watching, you got it right. You can't do it bottom up. There was nobody there to look at the causes.

(1:09:57) History is a black box. The present is an effect of the past.

Where do we see the past? All we ever see is the present, but the present is arising in dependence upon the past, right? When was the last time you saw the past. Remembering something? What you doing is perceiving images right now. The past is a black box; this is what Stephen Hawking is saying, the past, your past, the past of the planet, of the species, of the galaxies, of the universe, the past is a black box. The past exists in a superposition state, in the future and in the present are the possibilities waiting for a measurement and the measurement always takes place in the present. And who says *present* and who says *now*? Observers! Without their saying now, there will be no change, there would be no past and no future and no present. So the past is a black box. Your past is a black box, it didn't absolutely happen. Your past arises relative to the measurements you are making in the present. (01:10:48)

It is never too late to have a happy childhood! Because what is your childhood? As soon as you start talking what you are talking about is measurements you are making now, what do you remember now, everything you say about your childhood is going to be invoked by making measurements right now. You can't go off and make measurements five years ago. Five years ago you could, but who knows what you did then. And if you try to remember it, you are just envisioning, invoking images right now. You are making measurements right now. Your past exist in a superposition state, let alone your future, let alone the present.

(1:11:48) So, there is a moral here, lots of morals here, my favorite one is the following, I have not seen anyone else say this, it is so heretical, that if our community could burn people at the stake, I would definitely be a top candidate for what I am about to say. As a religious studies scholar, I was quite intrigued because I read 19th century philosophy and a lot of other things at Stanford. And one of the strong, quite very influential intellectuals was a man called Ludwick Lowenstein. A philosopher, very deep into theology, and he made a revolutionary hypothesis, it had a lot of impact on a lot of atheists, and his philosophy was that having read Christian theology, having read all the descriptions of God, God as a man, God as father, God as a punisher, a rewarder, a creator, God in charge with all of that, so you look at God, what is God? Who has ever God, this God that creates and punishes, who has ever seen him? This cause for which we are seeing only the effects? Who has ever seen that cause, who has ever seen the black box of God? And he said, what our 19th century vision, our concepts of God are, are basically just concepts of dad. Tough dad, but he is just, he can be mean as hell, and I mean literally, mean as eternal hell is pretty mean. But he can also be really benevolent, eternal life, salvation, when he wants to reward, man he can do a real number on reward. He is just, he is wrathful, but he is dad, what can you expect? He is jealous, but he is dad, what can you expect? All powerful? Yes, from a kid's perspective that is sure. God is just your notion of Dad, projected on the whole universe and nothing more. Man created God, and since men were running the society, they decided God was a man. No person in charge is a woman. Then they would have to start respecting women. Who would want to do that? That is a downer. So let's keep it in the gender, we men are in charge and the man who is super in charge, he has whiskers. So that really created quite a fuss. That God is nothing but a projection, superimposed on the universe as a creator. Nice Dad, powerful dad, infinite projection of a finite dad. Well.

(1:15:19) If the history of the universe exist in a superposition state then nothing absolutely happened, in other words there is no absolutely true account of what went on, because that is exactly the implication, that there are multiple histories. Stephen Hawking says elsewhere, you can choose your history of the universe based upon the system of measurement you choose, you get another history and another history all depends on what data you can collect and what information you are getting, and will be true or false, relative to, your cognitive framework of reference, system of measurement and conceptual framework. If that's true, if there is no absolutely true history of the universe, then what are the implications for the big picture?

Let's see the sequence:

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(1:16:03) And that is for the first roughly 10 billion years, at least from as far as we know, because the only life we know is this planet, so speaking from this perspective, for the first 10 billion years there was only physics. There was just inorganic physics, just matter energy, it's chemicals. No life, no consciousness, no nothing, just chemicals. And then about 3.5 billions of years ago then, out of those inorganic chemicals, and nobody knows how, then organic chemicals and then the first living organisms emerged, so there is a sequence there- first physics and then we have living organisms. Highly unlikely those first ones were conscious. I do not know any biologist who thinks they were. Single cell organism that is aware of its environment, I don't think anybody says that. Then with evolution from the single cell living organism, which was unconscious, they evolved, evolved, evolved, and at some point, we don't know when, when was the first emergence of conscious living organisms? We don't have a clue. Again, all is speculation, none of them scientifically testable, which means they are not scientific theories, they are just guesses. But at some point they had to have been, because we are consciousness and we weren't here 5 billions of years ago, presumably, and so those unconsciousness living organism evolved into consciousness organisms and now we have a mind, primitive mind and they, in dependence upon the nervous system evolved, evolved, evolved, and then we have Einstein. So really big brains and an incredible intelligence, he is a good example, twenty century. So there it is, that is the standard picture.

(1:17:45) I think that is not a coincidence, that over the last 4 hundred years the evolution of science, Eurocentric science, started with physics, dominated through until the 19 century, it was just physics and chemistry, and then around middle of 19 century then Biology coming up, and in 1859 the origin of the species, Darwin, the first great revolution of the life sciences, Darwin. Mendel, coming a bit later and genetics. And then we get towards the end of the 19th century, and now for the first time there is a science of mind. There wasn't for the first 3 hundred years of modern science. It took them a long time. It was a slow starter. William James and others pioneers began around 1875 started the scientific study, experimental science, making observations, applying the scientific method to mind. And so finally, having first the physical sciences very well developed, and out of them emerging the Biological sciences, reducing really understanding that biology really emerges from physics. And then psychology emerging. And then from the beginning many, many psychologists assuming that of course mind is really a function of the brain. They were assuming that from the beginning. A lot of them. Then out of Biology emerges the psychology, the science of the mind. And that is to this day then, they all continue evolving.

Physics continues to evolve the second revolution, how Biology evolves with DNA and marvelous evolutions of biology including neurobiology and then psychology riding that wave. Whereas psychologists many of them are intent on reducing psychology into Biology, and many Biologists, intent of reducing Biology to its fundamental components. So, there is a parallel there - that the history of the universe exactly corresponds in sequence to the history of the evolution of modern science for the last four hundred years.

(1:19:53) The whole history may be a projection of the history of four hundred years of Eurocentric investigation of the universe. We started with physics, the universe started with physics, then we got a good at Biology, then the universe created the life. Then we started to study the mind, and then the universe came up with mind. Ludwick Lowenstein all over again. We are saying that the entire universe, that the evolution of the entire universe reflects exactly, and is a projection of, the history of modern science over the last four hundred years. And that story has no existence independently of that four hundred years history of Eurocentric science.

(1:20:37) It is a really good story and it is a true story, based upon the measurement that we made. It was not whimsy. It was very expensive, and done by very brilliant people. Not whimsy, but it is also not absolute truth. Maybe the whole picture is simply a projection of evolution of our science for the last four hundred years and nothing more.

And then one could imagine what if the first scientist rather than like Descartes envisioning a mechanical universe, actually envisioned the fundamental core of the universe being a life principle. And out of the life principle emerging the inorganic, like the dead skin. That the universe is fundamentally alive, that life is the core, the bottom line, the fundamental principle of the entire universe. Serious thinkers have thought along this line. They have a principal that the universe actually formed in the way it did with precise laws of the past to enable life to emerge. That life was a driving force for the evolution of the universe to occur as it did, all of its laws, its physical laws enabling life to occur, life is primary, dead matter is the dead skin. It is just the dead

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inhabitation for life to do its thing, but life was demanding to manifest, and it required a physical universe to do that.

There is another scenario - if the first revolution in science had been in Biology, maybe we would all have that view, that a long time ago there was the emergence of life and then out of that, the catalyzation of that, would emerge the physical universe.

What about if the first natural scientists were contemplatives, or psychologists who considered that no, it is not actually life principal, life is a derivative of consciousness. Consciousness is fundamental, out of consciousness emerges life and out of life emerges the dead matter, like the hair and the nails of the universe. The whole juice is all consciousness for which life is an emergence property. What if the first scientist had been focusing on consciousness? Would we then not have another history based upon other sets of measurements, maybe contemplative measurements rather than measurements of technology?

(1:23:24) So to take Stephen Hawking's propositions seriously - that all of our classical pictures of 13.7 Billion years, six realms of existence, this that and the other thing, within the context of , all of these are classical projections superimposed by the observer, based upon measurements that seem to be absolutely real and out there, but they are all simply projections. We are participating in the creation of the universe that we experience. That independently of those conceptual designations, the universe is simply "cipa", nice word in Tibetan, the word is synonymous with phenomenal world, and "cipa" means possibility. It is a Buddhist term. Prior to making designations it is just a realm of possibilities. Make a measurement, make a conceptual designation, and now something freezes and you get a real world that you lock onto and think is really out there, independently of the conceptual designation, and that is the root of samsara. Not knowing what's going on and then imputing, designating, creating by conceptual projection, a world of "its", no problem so far, but then reifying them as being absolutely out there. That is the root of delusional, in dependence upon which craving and hostility and all of the mental afflictions arise, and all karma is accumulated. From that fundamental delusion of reifying the "its" and not recognizing they come from bits. But then you think, oh, you mean information is absolutely real? Information does not even exist apart from one who is informing. Then you think, oh you mean the one who is informing is absolutely real? The one who is informed does not exist independently of information. The universe out there is absolutely real, that about which we are getting information, that about which we are getting information has no existence independent of information, it has no existence independently of the observer, of the informed, in other words - all empty, all the way up and all the way down.

(1:25:20) But is there a perspective on the nature of reality that is not from the inside the system, not from inside space and time, not from inside an evolving universe, not from inside samsara, is there a perspective? Of course, it is rigpa that is the view from outside the system. So that is just the opposite of the root of samsara which is avidya, not knowing, the opposite of that is vidya which is the Sanskrit for rigpa. So know rigpa and you know who you are, and knowing who you are you know the indivisibility of your own rigpa or your own yeshe, primordial consciousness, the primordial indivisibility of primordial consciousness which is the dharmadatu, the ultimate dharmadatu, the absolute space phenomena out of which relative space and time emerge, in dependence upon designation, and then you know reality as it is and you know who you are in the same breath.

(1:26:45) So we just moved from classical Buddhist philosophy to relativistic Buddhist philosophy. And that is where we are going, from Sautrantika to Shantideva. Shantideva is where we will be going tomorrow and Shantideva is going to come right back to the body.

Tomorrow we are going to Shantideva's writing from the Madhyamika's perspective and he is going to attend to the body, closely applying mindfulness to the body, not from the Sautrantika's perspective, but from the Madhyamika's perspective, the Middle Way. So big shift; true revolution. As the rise of quantum mechanics was a true revolution, just like Galileo started a true revolution, the first revolution in modern science. Einstein and so forth, true revolution, and that is that if you understand the implications of quantum mechanics, Stephen Hawking is certainly going deep, then you simply cannot view the physical world in the same way any longer. You have to experience it differently. View it differently.(1:27:26)

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

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55 Loving-kindness (3)

26 Sep 2012

Summary: when you understand the causality of how others contribute to your well-being, a sense of happy indebtedness can arise. “How can I do more to repay their kindness?”

One of you wrote me a personal note commenting that, a feeling that you had received a tremendous amount of kindness, service from others over the course of your life, and felt a bit of grief or sadness at not being able to offer more back. So that is clearly a very noble perspective, it's one actively cultivated – the Bodhisattva practice of attending constantly to the kindness of others and feeling, as Shantideva writes, “That even when you are walking down the street and you see people passing by, attending to each one, feeling a sense of gratitude for total strangers, feeling in dependence upon such a person – this person – I can achieve enlightenment!” And being aware of this tremendous network – again causality figures so utterly central to, or centrally to Buddhism, and that is in terms of causality it is only a matter of connections to see how this person actually has contributed to your wellbeing directly and indirectly, but the network of causality of all of the causes that are coming together from around the world to allow us to survive, to flourish, let alone to find dharma and practice dharma, it pretty much encompasses the entire globe. But then in a sense, it can be a sense of happy indebtedness giving rise to really noble question and that is: how can I do more, how can I be in a great service? So it is a wonderful question.

Summary: we can contribute to others' well-being hedonically and/or eudaimonically. Most altruism in the world is focused on hedonic happiness/suffering, yet eudemonia is real and can be cultivated.

(1:42) Of course, what leaps to my mind is that there are different ways of being of service. Hedonically, for example, and that it is, people have material needs including the basic ones: food, shelter, clothing, education, medical care. Just meeting the basic requisites of life. These are very important, and depending on one's own person inclination, own talent, own skill, own interests, perhaps one may feel in this life time, “I think that is my calling.” And it is not a calling for somebody else. It is where I feel moved inwardly, that's where I think I can really make a contribution. And it could be in all different types of right livelihood. Shantideva says: “There is nothing a Bodhisattva won't learn.” There's no kind of...janitorial work...or...I don't know...any kind of thing! Obviously, not injurious behavior. That's not worthwhile, but that kind of goes without saying. But a bodhisattva can learn all kinds of things in order to be able to be of service to people in all different manner of ways. So there's no elitism there. Thinking, “Oh, we bodhisattvas don't do that!” Maid service... “Oh, not for us bodhisattvas!” No! Maid service would be terrific...a bodhisattva maid! So there it is. So there are these different avenues. In terms of serving hedonically, this would be acquiring, perhaps, more education, more knowledge, more skills. And then, the three jewels of the mundane world can be, actually, very useful. Just like any old jewel – like a ruby, a diamond, and a sapphire... Wealth can be very useful! If you have a real knack for making money, I want to be your friend! (laughter) Anyway...scratch that! It just slipped out! (more laughter) If you have a knack for making money, money can be used for a lot of really good things. There are a lot of wealthy people who are using their wealth for wonderfully benevolent things. Very helpful! Power, political power and so forth can be tremendously helpful. It's true, isn't it? And then fame, celebrity, status, prestige, renown – that's just like a jewel. You can use it to throw at somebody and put a dent in their head or you can use it to really do some good in the world as well. So there for the mundane. But then and, again, I think you see that I'm speaking with respect here. There's no disparagement, there's no “but...” No, it's “That's that!” It's really, really beneficial, really meaningful. It's an “and!” Can we serve others eudaimonically? Can we serve others to really help them identify and alleviate the true causes of suffering? Identify and cultivate the true causes of happiness? Could we find people and help people actually find a path to liberation and awakening and not only find the path but perhaps then take them by the hand and guide them step by step along the way? Really, is there any greater service than that?

And I think this is not a Buddhist sectarianism or anything like that. I didn't say anything about Buddhism. I said it is a path of liberation and awakening – awakening means drawing forth the full potential of the greatest depths of your awareness with wisdom, compassion, and there's this word “power” – and it is power! Power, guided or motivated by compassion, guided by wisdom is a fantastic thing – a “many-

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splendored” thing! And so, then, if we’re thinking along the lines of...if that’s where our heart moves us... Well, what I’d really love to do is to help people on this deepest level. And if we consider also, that how many among the 7 billion people on the planet, many of them quite altruistic, very level, really wanting to do some good...how many are really focusing on the hedonic because, frankly, that is all they know about? They don’t even know the word “eudemonia” or any synonym or anything related to that. They think “helping” is helping people get some food, medical care, shelter, education, and so forth. And that’s it. Okay! Well, of course, that’s going to be where the government funding goes. Check in terms of your government, how much money goes to the cultivation of eudemonia. (“Gulp!” ...Long pause... “Brother, can you spare a dime?”) Probably not there. So generally what the world is aware of is hedonic suffering and hedonic well-being and that’s where almost all the philanthropy goes. Almost all.

Summary: following Atisha’s advice, we need to achieve shamatha in order to help others find genuine happiness.

But then, if you’re aware that this is not just some doctrine or dogma or belief system, but that eudhamonia is real, it can be cultivated – then perhaps you feel called there. You’ve now joined a very tiny minority. And of course, it’s not just Buddhists and it is not just religious people. Socrates spoke with great depth about eudemonia. So did Aristotle. I don’t think they’re generally thought of as, oh, such religious figures, but such wise figures. So, happily, this eudamonia – I love it! Because it, and then, do scientists have any say? Yes, scientists are starting to raise this issue, too, of eudemonia. Psychology, it’s very...to say it’s in its infancy may be an exaggeration, but at least they are starting to ask really good questions. So scientists can bring in...philosophers have a long history, and then the contemplative traditions, religious traditions of the world... So it’s a unifier. It really is a unifier. It is really quite marvelous. So, perhaps one may feel moved there, and then if so, then consider Atisha: If that’s what your passion is, if that is what you’d really love to do, is to help people to find the authentic true causes of suffering and not only attenuate but eliminate them, find the true causes of genuine happiness and completely unveil them. If that’s your passion, then you might want to think about developing the four immeasurables, and you might want to think about achieving shamatha, and developing some of the abilities coming out of that. As Atisha said, if you’ve done that then you can accumulate more merit in one day than you can do without it in a hundred lifetimes. So that strikes me as a pretty good investment.

(8:35) So there it is! And then shamatha, of course, is just opening the door. Just opening the door! Then imagine that power, the clarity, the stability of shamatha flowing right into the four immeasurables and just swoosh – and having them all just go supernova! All the barriers just broken down. And then, why would you stop at the four immeasurables? Go to the four greats! Mahamaitri, great loving kindness, great compassion, great mudita, great equanimity! And on to bodhichitta. And why stop there? How about the uncontrived, spontaneous, genuine bodhichitta? Become a bodhisattva! Why stop there? For heaven’s sake, don’t stop now! You’ve just put your foot on the path. Now make it irreversible. Seal it with profound insight into the four applications of mindfulness. Don’t stop! Keep going. Gain the direct realization of emptiness. Don’t stop! Break through your conventional mind and realize rigpa. Don’t stop! Fully manifest all the potential of your own Buddha nature. Become a Buddha. Don’t stop!

And now for as long as space remains, for as long sentient beings remain, so continue to be present...in the world...to alleviate the suffering of the world. It is a simple agenda. It is really quite simple. Yeah? So...

Summary: genuine happiness is a symptom of a meaningful way of life, a balanced mind, and knowing reality as it is. Someone who acts in accord with genuine happiness—as the center of his/her own mandala—is living in a utopia.

(10:06) In the midst of all of that, one may feel that this, in the midst of the needs of the world, how much suffering there is, how much, how many causes of suffering...evil, malevolence dogmatism, closed-minded intolerance, and so forth, it may feel sometimes a bit trivial, just selfish to think, “May I be well and happy, may I be well and happy.” If one is focusing entirely on hedonic well-being, in other words, “Every day of my life may I be lucky, lucky, lucky! May only good things happen to me!” Well that’s a bit trivial. And even if you are a Buddha, it’s not going to happen. Right? Even if you’re a Buddha! Everybody doesn’t love you. You’re, I think, a very lovable person if you’re a Buddha! And still everybody doesn’t love you. What a raw deal! You would think, “Gosh! Finally, everybody will love me if I’m perfect!” No, they still don’t. It really sucks! They just get jealous of you and want to compete with you. Or even so jealous they want to kill you. It happens...a

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lot! So if one is focusing entirely on one's own hedonic well-being, well, that's pretty shallow water. That's for sure.

(11:32) Whereas if, in your vision of your own flourishing, as you arouse the yearning, "may I be well and happy," if you acknowledge the importance of hedonic well-being, which I've never, never doubted, but then you're focusing primarily on hedonic well-being for the sake of genuine happiness. And what is genuine happiness? It is a symptom, just as genuine unhappiness is. You are sitting in a room with no stimuli coming at all, and you are just miserable! That is genuine unhappiness. That's real! That's the real world. Grinding away some mind-numbing job, coming home, eating, and watching television and then going comatose. That's an unreal world. Sitting in a room and feeling miserable all by yourself, with homemade misery. If you're an American, "Made In America." If you're Chinese, "Made In China." And whoever you are, homemade misery. No help at all. "I did it myself!" Or as one slogan that came out, "I built it!"

Well, it's coming from one's own mental afflictions. You are seeing something real. You're seeing a symptom of a mind that is afflicted. That's a good thing. It would be so tragic if we carried all of our mental afflictions and didn't experience any symptoms, just felt, "I am fine...I am fine...I'm brain dead." That would be really tragic. So thanks goodness that mental afflictions afflict. Otherwise, they would be totally useless.

So recognizing that, then we say, "Okay, now I've gotten real. Now it's perfectly clear what's making me miserable, because there is nothing coming from outside at all. Therefore it has to be internally generated, and therefore I think I just figured out the source of suffering."

(14:01) And likewise, when you are sitting in solitude, as one friend of mine who went on to about a nine month retreat, totally solitary retreat, and when he came out of retreat, I saw this childlike delight in his face. I didn't need to ask it: "How did your retreat go?" And he said, "It was like a river of gold! Like a river of gold!" So there is a person who tapped into genuine happiness. It's a symptom! Genuine happiness is a symptom of a mind that is wonderfully balanced, rooted in a way of life that is non-violent and truly benevolent, the two of these giving rise to genuine insight, the type of insight that transforms and liberates.

So you see, just sitting alone for months on end, having just enough food to keep your body going, exercise, a bit of fresh air – that's all you need. In other words, you could be in a sensory deprivation tank. You could be in a dark retreat, because you really are not relying upon anything from the outside at all... It is like learning how to ride a bicycle, and at one point you just do not need the trainer wheels, those little wheels on the side, because you won't fall off. Hedonic pleasure is the trainer wheels. And a person who can go into a long term retreat, like the elephant in the pond, the cat who's morphed from an elephant, in the pond, and is simply enjoying solitude because it is time simply to be with your mind in the universe. And it is a balanced mind for which the natural symptom is genuine happiness. That is the trainer wheels taken off and having a ride. You now have a mind, and you can use it at will. It is supple. It is malleable. It is buoyant and light. It's serviceable. And then you go for the deeper genuine happiness that comes from knowing reality as it is.

(16:01) So the wish for one's own well-being, especially when it's focusing or recognizing that hedonic well-being is for the sake of the eudemonic well-being, and eudemonic being is a symptom of a truly wholesome and meaningful way of life – that's where ethics is – a symptom of truly balanced and composed and unified mind, which is samadhi, and a symptom of really coming to know reality as it is, and there is absolutely nothing trivial about wishing oneself well, wishing that one may be truly well and happy. And to end on a purely pragmatic note, psychology is studying this. Who is more productive? Who is getting the job done? Who is more creative? People who are glum, dour, merely hard working, determined, grinding their jaws, or the people who are joyful and happy? Happiness is actually much more productive. It is good for others if you are happy. And then, finally, one may feel that, oh, but I'm just one person in the world that's so vast, that even when I'm doing some...in some service occupation, for example, and really doing my best, oh, it just doesn't matter at all. It hardly counts. What I'm offering is so trivial, that it just makes me feel bad. And here's one of the symptoms of living in the modern world. That is, if we lived in Medieval Europe, as I've mentioned before, they commonly, the peasants would not travel far, no more than 10 miles away from home for their lifetime. So if they are tending their fields and are good parents and so forth, and they know their village and a few other villages, that is a pretty big wedge of reality. You are a good father, you are a good mother, and you make good bread. Wow! You're the only baker in town! Thank you! That really counts, because we like our bread! So you wouldn't feel that your life is insignificant.

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But now, here we are, we are getting 24 hours news about so much tragedy, misery taking place throughout the world that is ever so easy to feel that whatever we do is never enough. It's a drop in the bucket. It is insignificant... I don't think that is a very realistic way of viewing.

But if every one of the 7 billion people on the planet took as their fundamental priority, the first priority in terms of ways of being in the world, engaging with the world, if each one steps out of their room, out of their house each morning with the fundamental, the prime directive: "Today let me do no harm, and today when I have the opportunity to be a service, to be of benefit, may I do so." Now everything else comes after that, but that is the prime directive. If every person on the planet did that we would be living in a utopia. They'd call this the pure land, earth! And it really would transform the whole planet. So if one person does that, then at least in the center of your mandala, you've just begun a utopia, whether you're working as a waitress in a restaurant, or that woman in a Stanford bookstore.

(19:00) Alan encounters a woman in the Stanford University bookstore working in the stationery section of office supplies. He noted that she was so warm, so attentive. It was just a pleasure engaging with her. She was so nice, so pure. She was sheer benevolence. Kindness and warmth radiated from her. Some few months after Alan saw her in the bookstore, a journalist from the Stanford daily newspaper wrote an article about her. In describing her, it was clear that she was the same way with everybody else as she was with Alan. Alan said that he never had the sense that the way she interacted with him was because he was special. It never came into his mind. (And if it did, it would be delusional since there was nothing special about him at all!) She just treats one customer after another after another with this loving kindness, benevolence, warmth, happiness. This journalist found her attitude really remarkable enough to write a whole article about her. When Alan read the article, he immediately remembered her. ("Yeah, that is the one!") Selling stationery is generally not considered professional work for which you win the Nobel Peace Prize, but you could see that this woman, day by day, office supply by office supply, was really making a contribution. So, there it is! Let's practice loving kindness following the teachings of the Buddha.

Meditation:

(22:56) Motivated by the aspiration of loving kindness for yourself and others, and that, that aspiration by venturing into the practice and settling your body, speech and mind in its natural state.

(25:40) And now envision your own well-being...hedonically and eudemonically...bring to mind your heart desire...and attend to the causes that would yield such a fruit.

(26:38) And consider the possibility as a working hypotheses that when it comes to flourishing, comes to eudemonia, whatever you can imagine for yourself, you can realize, you do have the potential. For your potential has no bounds it is limitless. We may not know whether that statement it is true or not but as a working hypotheses, it has a tremendous potential.

And imagine this potential symbolically as an incandescent, limitless orb of light at your heart. With each out breath arouse this aspiration: "May I be truly well and happy, may I find the causes of happiness." With each out breath imagine...a flow of light from this orb at your heart, emanating out in all directions, completely filling your entire being with this light of loving kindness, a light of purity, a light of joy.

(29:14) Imagine this light throughout your whole being consuming everything that obscures...afflicts...afflicts the body, afflicts the mind. Imagine it dispelling all obstacles.

(31:00) Letting your imagination play, imagine this light flowing from the deepest dimension of your existence, the dimension of primordial consciousness indivisible from the absolute space of phenomena, the dharmadatu, indivisible from the energy of primordial consciousness, the three coexistencive.

And as this light at your heart, drawing from that source, permeates your entire being, imagine it entirely consuming the materiality of your body right down to the level of elementary particles. Imagine it all dissolving away, the materiality of your body settling in its natural state...of the pure energy of primordial consciousness.

(32:10) And where your material body was, imagine only this remains: a body of light, like a holographic image, luminous but empty.

(33:53) And now, as if your whole being is formed to super-abundance, to the point of overflowing with this light, with each out breath extend this field of light in all the directions around you, above and below. Imagine this sphere of light extending in all directions, expanding breath by breath, and as you do so, with every out breath arouse the yearning: "May each of us find happiness and the true causes of happiness." With every out

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breath imagine this sphere of light expanding, and as one sentient being after another is embraced within this sphere, imagine each one finding or realizing their heart's desire, finding genuine happiness and its causes.

(38:29) And imagine each individual, each sentient being who is embraced within this sphere of light of loving kindness finding the joy and the satisfaction and fulfillment they seek. Here and now expand this realm of possibility in all directions, greater and greater.

(41:10) Let this field of light expand to the extent that it embraces the entire planet and all the sentient beings inhabiting here. And then exponentially expand the field in all directions, all beyond our tiny corner of the galaxy, to embrace the entire galaxy and all the beings in it, and out in all directions stretch your imagination, to try to imagine imagining 100 billion galaxies, and all the beings who dwell therein. May each one be well and happy.

(43:58) And imagine each one realizing their innermost desire, realizing full awakening.

(44:40) Then release all appearances and all aspirations, and let your awareness rest knowing itself.

Transcribed by *Rafael Carlos Giusti*

Revised by Brian Malone

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56 Mindfulness of the body (3)

26 Sep 2012

Teachings:

Alan introduces an explanation about the placebo effect which is simply called mental effect that happens and is well-known.

So today there will be no marathon. I will keep much closer to half an hour, but I did say I would deliver something yesterday that I failed to deliver because we simply ran out of time, and that is an explanation for the placebo effect. Of course, whenever I say that I want to kind of gag because just the phrase itself is so misleading! They should simply call it the mental effect. That would be ok: the mental effect.

So imagine there is a mayor of the city and the mayor comes into a bank and he robs the bank! "Give me your money or your life." And he is the mayor, and everybody knows he is the mayor. "Give me your money!" And then he runs out and then the police come in and they know exactly who did it, but there is no way they could say the mayor did it. But the police find a little old lady in a wheelchair that was across the street from the bank when it was robbed, and she is the primary suspect. After all, she was there. And that is about all you can say of the placebo effect. Everybody knows that it is a mental effect. It is fictitious, faith, believe, desire, trust! Everybody knows that, but he is the mayor. There is no way that a materialist can say that something so intangible as trust, faith and so forth can be responsible for anything, let alone healing the body. So, the placebo, that little sugar tablet, an innocent bystander like that little old lady in a wheelchair,-- OK! It is a placebo effect, folks!

(1:53) And you actually find some people calling about the effects of the placebo. It is mind-numbing. I checked it out with some experts, one in Italy and one in America. Do you have any explanation for how does it work? That is, not simply I'll take this and I'll feel better. No. I take this for something very specific in the body, and, Lo! And Behold! it actually works. Exactly what you want. Even people taking a placebo, and having their cancer going into remission. Scientists do not know, medical doctors do not know how to make cancer go into remission, otherwise they would never use these awful, brutal techniques like chemotherapy and radiation. I mean, it is really violence against the body. They would never do that if they can say, "Oh, just take this pill and this will make your cancer go into remission." If they had a chemical like that they'd just give that to everybody. But no, there are cases where a person take a placebo, a sugar tablet, and the cancer goes into remission, and the scientists do not know how to do that and the person taking the placebo certainly doesn't know how to do that.

And so the flat out answer of the experts, the Italian and the American – if you hear something different, let me know because I am not here to promote a dogma. I am trying to find out what is true. There is simply no explanation whatsoever in terms of modern biomedicine for how the placebo effect can possibly work. It just shouldn't work.

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(4:25) And if it came out of the blue, the whole medical profession would say that is impossible, that it's magic, it never happens! Except that it happens so often that hundreds of millions of dollars are spent on a regular basis by the pharmaceutical industry to exclude the placebo effect, so they can find out what is the actual effect the chemicals are having.

(4:35) So, materialism offers no explanation whatsoever. To my mind, it is something like the purple catastrophe, black body radiation. It is something in classical mechanics, classical physics that simply should not have been the case. The empirical evidence is there. There is no explanation. It is called black body radiation. It is rather subtle, but it should not have happened and there is no explanation for it in all classical physics, and so they just said well, we will figure it out one day. Well, the man that figured it out is Max Planck, with a totally radical idea and that is: the energy is quantized. And then that opened up a whole revolution in modern physics which still has not finished, because nobody really knows the nature of what it really implies. What is the process of measurement and so forth? So to my mind, the so-called placebo effect is really like the ultraviolet catastrophe for materialism. It happens. Everybody knows that happens. It is extremely expensive to exclude it from clinical trials. That is why we need these double-blind experiments and all of that, but there is no explanation for it at all.

(5:30) Moreover, if we go back to a Cartesian model, some immaterial soul or consciousness coming in and getting inserted into, you know, in some extra substance, then there is no explanation there either. How does this soul know how to catalyze anything in the body – “I wish upon a star?” – I mean, there will be no connect, right?

(6:01) But consider what came out of yesterday's talk. What John Wheeler is suggesting about the whole universe, and that is the entire universe is best understood not as fundamentally composed of space, time, matter and energy, but information being primary, fundamental, and everything else being derivative from information. Then, therefore, with that in mind, the whole universe being regarded as an information processing system in which, again, information is primary.

(6:30) Well considering there is a microcosm and the microcosm is your body/mind system. It is not fundamentally that it is a bunch of cells, electricity, chemical electricity in an extremely complex configuration which the materialists have us believe, and then they have no explanation for the placebo effect. It is not that, nor it is a simply slapping together of totally different substances. Somehow mind and matter come together and nobody figured out how that works, but rather, considering your mind and body system being an information processing system, in other words: information is core and the matter and mind are derivative from the flow of information, mind as such and matter as such being derivative from information considering that possibility then if you tell someone, for example: “John you have this illness. Take this piece of paper and touch your head three times with it, and this will make your headache (or whatever you have) go away.” The placebo effect does not have to be something substantial. It can be, for example, reciting one phrase – and this will cure you in three days. It can be anything, it can be a gesture; it can be anything. But it is the information going in. If your system is fundamentally an information system, I just gave you information and from the inside out, the information will then catalyze exactly those physiological events need to make your headache go away, or any other kind of problem. The placebo works for an enormously wide variety of psychological and physiological problems. If your system, mind and body, is fundamentally an information processing system and not simply matter, then that makes good sense because you are going directly to the core, to information, information being transferred, and from the inside out that information in the system will then work its way out and manifest what is needed to bring about the expected result. And bear in mind, there is a complete symmetry here. The placebo effect occurs when you say something good is going to happen, you will be healed. It really works. You get over your headache and so forth. But just like karma, it works in both ways.

The placebo effect works in both ways. It is called the placebo effect for good things, like to heal a headache, but it also happens for bad things and then it is called the nocebo effect. There are people, it happens a lot, people diagnose themselves because they do not have any insurance in America and cannot go to a doctor because they cannot afford it. It is so expensive, so what do they do? They go to the public library and get on the internet and try to diagnose themselves, and then they see some symptoms they have and think, oh, yeah, this disease – these are some of my symptoms. I must have that. And then they get the rest of the symptoms of the disease they identified on the web, and they do not have them at all. It is called the nocebo

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effect, the technical term. You start getting the symptoms you believe you must have because you have the disease you identified on the web. It is so clear this is a matter of conceptual designation. So that actually solves the placebo effect. Not with the Cartesian Dualism not with the Materialistic Monism but understanding that information is primary, or as our Theravada master said yesterday that is a fundamental flow of experience out of which then nama rupa are two aspects of the experience out of which mano then differentiate mind and matter and conceptualization classifies them and label and reifies them, so flow of experience, flow of information, but that is fundamental and this is no mystery, no mystery at all.

(10:30) So, we return now to the close application of mindfulness of body, and we are looking from the inside observing the sensations arising, earth, water, fire and air, the visual impressions of the body, the sounds made by the body and so on. You may accept if you wish the working hypotheses: this is that, all of these appearances arising locally that is in your own substrate and we all have our own substrate but of course the body is there when you are not aware of it just as grass grows when nobody is looking.

(11:16) And so it is very helpful now as we are approaching the Middle Way, this is the Madhyamaka, whenever you are approaching any kind of the Middle Way, in practicing shamatha or anything else, from my experience the way to find the Middle Way is to get a very clear bead, a really clear recognition of what are the extremes and then vector in from that, so what are the two extremes? And they are not that difficult. Then at least I know where to look for the Middle Way.

- **Nihilism/Solipsism**

As per the summary made by SB Institute' staff: the universe comes into existence based on our perception. So what is one extreme: if you are not aware of something that does not exist, in other words: I am about to kill Miles. Are you ready, Miles. It will not hurt. Are you ready? Okay, Miles, he just disappeared.

Okay, when we are not looking, the universe vanishes. It is solipsism, nihilism; that is, the universe depends upon our perceptions. Okay, if you want to believe that, go back to your marijuana and have a nice day. But that is one extreme, it's nihilism.

This is one of the extremes...and that is: the universe needs us perceiving it to exist. In other words atoms do not exist unless you're perceiving them. (12:47)

Or, for example, and this is a bit tricky, the Higgs Boson and the large hadron supercollider. This was hypothesized a long time ago, the Higgs Boson, the particle that gives every other particle in the universe mass. Does it exist or not? They couldn't test it. It required such high energies to test. Very expensive to create such a device. The Americans gave up on creating one in Texas. They couldn't afford it. But the EU put its pennies together and built the [CERN] supercollider. Brilliant science, brilliant scientists, conducted their experiments and beyond reasonable doubt concluded that it exists. Did the Higgs Boson exist before they measured it? What's the Buddhist answer? Yes. It did. If they went to all that trouble – 6 billion dollars – to discover something they invented, that's a bad answer. They didn't just create it. Otherwise there would be no difference between making a discovery and just finding an artifact of your measuring system. They aren't just making this up as they go.

- **Metaphysical Realism**

As per the summary made by SB Institute' staff: the universe is already out there, waiting to be discovered.

(16:35) The view of the metaphysical realism is the Universe is really and absolutely out there and is simply being discovered and we are trying to represent it with our mathematics theories that illuminate, the mathematic regularity of the loss of the nature but also the existence of particles, waves, cells, galaxies and so forth and so on but it is all out there, it is a done deal and science is here to represent it and we are doing a better job at least to approach to a complete and correct map.

That is the idea of the metaphysical realism that is everything out there is inherently existent by its own nature and we are trying to label it. It is out there and we are just clever enough to be able to measure it, but it is absolutely out there and everything is, that is the metaphysical realism, that is exactly what Madhyamaka is refuting and that is exactly what John Wheeler and the others are refuting as well. For example, Stephen Hawking said no, that is not what is really out there (refuting metaphysical realism – the universe is already out there, waiting to be discovered) and said what is really out there is just an ocean of possibilities, the superposition state, a quantum reality which is all just an ocean, a probability field but no actuality at all if you are asking what is their prior to measurement.

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So one extreme is it's all really out there and we are simply representing it, and the other one is we are just making it up as we go, just as if in a vacuum. So where is the Middle Way here? Now that we found that, you know, we can vector in.

(17:58) Anybody who is interested in philosophy, read the works of a great philosopher, very distinguished, Hilary Putnam*, "The Many Faces of Realism and Realism with a Human Face", very deep, very clear and very close to Buddha's Madhyamaka view and do not think he had studied it. (Madhyamaka view) I do not believe so, it is a really quite remarkable philosophy, right?

For one that is reading this session/transcript see below some information about Hilary W. Putnam:

* **Hilary Whitehall Putnam** (born July 31, 1926) is an American philosopher, mathematician, and computer scientist who has been a central figure in analytic philosophy since the 1960s, especially in philosophy of mind, philosophy of language, philosophy of mathematics, and philosophy of science.^[2] He is known for his willingness to apply an equal degree of scrutiny to his own philosophical positions as to those of others, subjecting each position to rigorous analysis until he exposes its flaws.^[3] As a result, he has acquired a reputation for frequently changing his own position.^[4] Putnam is currently Cogan University Professor Emeritus at Harvard University.

Source: www.wikipedia.org

(18:15) But in terms of science, this anecdote I told many times about H. H. the Dalai Lama, when he first encountered Anton Zeilinger, and Anton Zeilinger talking about his experiments finding that when you look for the electron or the elementary particles as existent from their own side, that is, already really there, you do not find them because they are not already objectively existent, and he elaborated on this point, but based on experiment not simply being a very brilliant theoretical physicist like Stephen Hawking or John Wheeler. And the Dalai Lama, having heard this he said: how could come to that conclusion without understanding, without knowing Madhyamaka philosophy. And then Anton Zeilinger, that is a wonderful man, open minded as well, of course a brilliant scientist said: what is the Madhyamaka philosophy? Well fancy you should ask! You know, what better person on the planet to ask, please give a nutshell of just the straight goods. What is this Madhyamaka? Boy! Who would be better to ask this? So, His Holiness then gave this quintessential nugget (explanation) of Madhyamaka view, the Middle Way view that avoided these two extremes, nihilism and metaphysical realism. Anton, being this open minded man with a European education, trained in the Classics (school), read philosophy and so forth. He heard the Dalai Lama give a short exposition of Madhyamaka, and then Anton said: how could you come to those conclusions without knowing Quantum Mechanics?

So, these are two brilliant people, each one so well embodied in their own tradition. Anton is just kind of like an icon, really being a superb scientist but also being well versed in western philosophy. He embodied that tradition, and Dalai Lama embodies to my mind the whole bodhisattva ideal, and they come together, and just finding this tremendously complementary.

Alan introduces close application of mindfulness to the body from the Madhyamaka perspective following verses 78-105 in Ch. 9 of the Bodhicaryavatara.

(20:41) So, we are coming to the body. We come to the body, and we have our impressions, of course, but even if we are sound asleep and consciousness has slipped into the substrate, of course, the body is still there. But now that would imply you mean it is really there. It is really there, which means, I mean, is it really there, I mean it is totally there, absolutely there, independently there, right? One lying in bed, it must inherently existent, right? So let's do this:

(21:09) I am sure you played catch when you were kid. Remember when I was just introducing Sautrantika and saying look Sautrantika is anything that has causal efficacy and exists by its own nature...it does not matter what you call it, does not matter the conceptual framework and start banging my hand in something, the cell phone or something? For showing, look, that is causal efficacy, it is absolutely there, it is real and I can perceive it, right?

And now I like to do this: we will just play catch with this, so now watch here. (you hear a sound: Alan is banging his hand in something) Clear? There is nothing up my sleeve. Okay, you are ready, Miles? I am throwing to you. Okay? Ready? (Alan threw the object to Miles and he caught and you may hear the sound that it makes.) Uah, that was cool! Did you see or not see an inherently existent eyeglass case flying through the air? That is, if we all died and all of us are complete, you know, it will still be flying through the air I mean I

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threw it and we all died and it is still [flying] and flopped and lies into his lifeless corpse, but right (banging the case again) it is got absolutely there whatever you call it, whatever color you have to see, but (banging the case again), it has to be something absolute there. I mean, I threw it across the room, right? And does not that prove metaphysical realism? We all saw it, and it is in his hands. You heard the sound of my hand. Does it not have absolutely there, independently of conceptual designation? Are not the Sautrantika right, and has causal effects unlike the fact this is mine, but that does not do anything at all, that is just whatever, we agreed (Alan is talking about the concept of ownership) but we do not need agree on this you can think this is made of jelly and I throw it, it is not made of jelly (banging the case again) you discovered, no it is solid, right? So does not that this disprove Madhyamaka and prove Sautrantika and my answer is:

(22:47) Imagine right now that you are dreaming, a thought experiment, and the case is touching my hand – some object that produces a noise and there is also the sensation. It is the earth element, that you can hear the sound and feel the sensation in the dream, because you are dreaming. Now imagine that you are lucid. It still will be the same. You are still hearing the sounds and feeling the sensations of earth element, you are hearing and feeling causality and that is causality making the sound you expected, causality is all working, but in a dream is there anything here, from its own side? No, is zero, and yet it still makes the noise and so forth and so on. So that should make us pause. That we are fooled in a dream, lucid and non-lucid dream, we are totally fooled. You think that you are touching an object. Even when you are lucid in a dream it still looks that way, that is why even if you realize emptiness it still appears as they are inherently existent, appears that they are here from their own side. So, likewise, with the body.

(24:38) Now we come to the body of matter in the universe that frankly on whole we care most about and our reification is so intense because it is not like, say, John, here is my glasses and now it is yours and he takes the glasses so that is easy with eye glasses, computers, clothing and so forth. But if I say John you have a pretty body there, younger than mine. Would you like to change? I will give you mine and you give yours. That we cannot do, right, even if we want to. This is the one body of matter in the universe we are really stuck with it, and it seems to be really there, I mean absolutely there.

So let see what Shantideva have to say about that.

(25:39) This is from the Buddha's *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, a translation that my wife and I did. I have translated from the Tibetan. We are going to the 9 chapter and we are going to verse 78. I translated just those verses 78 to 105 of Chapter 9. Those are the verses in Shantideva's wisdom chapter of "A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life" that directly address the Four Applications of Mindfulness from Madhyamaka's perspective. So now we are going to the big leagues. We did the classical approach, the Sautrantika, we did the Theravada, we did the Pali Canon, and now we are going to the Perfection of Wisdom, because that is where in the Indo-Tibetan Tradition, in the Sanskrit, a text is attributed to the Buddha on the Four Close Applications of Mindfulness.

(27:48) So now this is the Madhyamaka's close applications of mindfulness, close applications of mindfulness always means with discerning intelligence with wisdom and you are not just practicing bare attention. Confining yourself in bare attention is not the Pali Canon, it is not Theravada, it is not anything else, only late twenty-first century Buddhism that has been popularized. Now we are brightening up and bringing now all the way to the Madhyamaka level, so let's read:

(28:36) What is the nature of this body as we closely attend to, this body that is there when we are not perceiving it?

The question here is, alright, the appearances arising in the substrate and are not inherently existent and are not really there. They are appearing at the space of the alaya that is already empty. Okay, case closed. It is kind of obvious and a lot of neuroscientists would accept that, you know. The appearances, they do not travel through space and so forth. But again there is a body, the body came from the egg and sperm of your parents. It has a history to it, and eats food, is made of molecules, is located in physical space, so when you are not looking, what is there when we are not looking? Because when we are looking we have all these appearances arising in our substrate but there is something there when we are not looking, what is that? That is the question scientists have been asking at least four hundred years, what is there when we are not looking, and they are assuming there is an absolute perspective, "God's perspective."

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(29:31) It is very interesting with Stephen Hawking, his own evolution, about twenty five years ago he wrote his best seller, “A Brief History of Time”, big best seller and of course he is an outstanding scientist, but he left open at that time, he was still hoping that would be a grand unified theory, the union of Genuine Relativity and Quantum Mechanics – never been done – and it would be one theory that counts for everything. And everything would have its place, everything would fit and so at that time when he wrote that he said: you know there is a possibility of God, a singular God who created the whole, triggered the big bang and all of that, so we will have both these together. There is maybe a God, there is maybe a role for that, and we are aspiring for a grand and unified theory, one theory that covers everything.

Now, maybe two years ago now, he published his book I think is called “The Grand Design” and he shifted on both accounts. He gives up the notion that there would be a grand unified theory and he gives up the notion that there could be a God, one God that created the one universe because he is taking Quantum Mechanics really seriously now. As I explained yesterday, what we have are these multiverses: a different system of measurements and the conceptual framework and the universe rises relative to that, which is truly relative to that; another system of measurements, set of questions, conceptual framework – another universe rises relative to that, and another and another and another... So, no one universe, no one grand theory that brings all together. In another words, it is all relative, ontological relativity in which there is no place for God because we are co-creating our universe and we are cultivating multiple ones with each system of measurements and conceptual framework to make sense of the information. So that is a big shift – much closer to Buddhism. Because Buddhism has been saying all along there is no outside creator. there is one phrase which is from the abhidharma that is very easy to memorize: In Tibetan: jigten la la le leh jung: the multiple worlds arise from karma. I want to elaborate on that but it would take the whole hour, but the multiple worlds and the karma is playing a role in arousing, generating the appearances and we in the present moment are making measurements and making sense of it in which case in that regard we are co-creators both ways, because there is a karma from past life but also activities in this life but the types of measurements, in other words what you are attending to with your six senses, what you are attending to with your instruments of technology, what you are attending to and how do you make sense of it, how are you attending to it, right? It is big, important, not just attending to it, but how are you attending to it. And so in dependence upon that, reality rises up to meet you, but it is reality you co-create both in long term in terms of karma, that is clearly the Buddhist belief. I am not saying it's not true, actually believe, but what we can see empirically and what John Wheeler is getting at: it is how we co-creating right here and now by the measurements we are performing now and the way we make sense of that information, so that is an interesting point.

(33:17) Back to the body. So, the question is then: what is there when we are not looking? Scientists have been working on metaphysical realism based in the Bible for the first three hundred years of science. Now it's no longer based in the Bible but there's still a lot of inertia. I mean, most scientists, most physicists I think are still metaphysical realists, they are really out there, especially the experimentalists feeling, you know, there must be already out there, and so metaphysical realists are simply discovering what is absolutely out there.

(33:45) But we come back to Buddhism:

When we are not perceiving the body what is there? And how do we talk about that, that it does exist even when we are not looking at it? Without being following in the other extreme that is inherently, absolutely objective by its own inherent nature? Okay, finding in Shantideva.

So we are trying to identify what is the nature of this body as we closely apply mindfulness to it with discerning intelligence and some of the working hypotheses that are coming from Madhyamaka view, so he starts and this is ever so familiar refrain finding in a Pali Canon itself in the Buddha's discourse on the four applications of mindfulness, namely the body, something very similar to what I am about to read.

Instructions for one that is reading the transcripts where Alan Wallace is using a text as a reference: you will see that he usually read the text part by part and add some comments to explain the themes. In this transcript and others his comments are coming after the text but in some transcripts his comments are inserted in the text between the marks [...]. That is the way it goes.

78. The body is not the feet, the calves, nor the thighs. Nor is the body the hips, the abdomen, the back, the chest, or the arms.

(34:30) The body is... conceive of it, I mean, you do conceive of it. I do not need to tell you how, you already have a conception of body, your body, so hold that in mind. That body that you are quite persuaded is really

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there when you are not looking, nobody is looking whatever, is really there in physical space, made of atoms, they are physical, they are material and it is there, hold that: this is classical Tsongakhapa. Think of the body, that real body, hold it in mind and now as you are holding it in mind like a specimen in a test tube, now let's investigate. Okay, what is the nature of this body that is there when you are not looking?

Well for starters, the body is not the feet. I think we do not have to debate that one. Otherwise for a start, Miles would have two bodies. This is not fair. So, a foot is not a body. We are talking about human body here, right? The body is not the feet, for starters. Okay, good start! Not the calves, the hips, the thighs...

Alan finished to read text 78 and began to read text 79.

79. It is not the hands, the sides of the torso, or the armpits, nor is it characterized by the shoulders. Nor is the body the neck or the head. Then what here is the body?

So from the feet to the head, we look all the parts. That pretty well covered it, and none of those parts are the body.

Then what here is the body?

(36:27) That is, if there is something here that is truly the body inherently by its own nature really there, independent not only of perception but independent of conceptualization, what here is the body? Because when we think of the body as we are reifying it, the body is one entity and has a lot of characteristics, some bodies are tall some are fat, skinny, or short, with hair, without hair, female and male bodies with some certain qualities and so forth. There is a body, has a lot of qualities but it is one entity and it is quite discrete. You can see its borders, you put it in deep space and say, yeah, it is a body. The contours are very clear, and seems that is absolutely there like the eye glasses case that is travelling through space all by itself. So what is that one thing because you think you have one body that is for sure you do not think that you have two bodies or more? So what here is the body? It should be identical to something you can actually identify.

80. If this body partially exists in all of these and its parts exist in their parts, where does it stand by itself? Does this body partially exist in all of these parts, and its parts exist in their parts? That is, the hand exists in the fingers and the fingers exist in the knuckles and the knuckles exist you know, right down to the elementary particle level. If the body partially exists, my body is partly in my forearm, my body is partially here and then the forearm partially exists in the skin, in the bone and so forth. Where does the body stand by itself if the part exists in each of the parts? Where is this entity that partially exists here and partially exists there, where does it exist? If you say just part of it exists here well then where it exist the entirely, the real thing, the one thing the body? He is leaving us these questions to investigate.

81. If the body were located in its entirety in the hands and other limbs, there would be just as many bodies as there are hands and so forth.

(38:12) If the body were located in its entirety in the hands and others limbs so there would be as many bodies as there are hands and limbs so then we would have four bodies. Obviously, okay, that is not going to work.

82. The body is neither inside nor outside. How can the body be in the hands and other limbs? It is not separate from the hands and the like. How, then, can it be found at all?

(38:33) The body is neither inside nor outside, if you say the body is inside I mean you have two bodies, the body and the body inside the body. If you say the body is outside the parts then where is it?

So you look inside you do not see a body you see the liver, the internal organs and all of that, you do not see a body in there, you do not find the body anywhere else. So the body is neither inside nor outside. So how can the body be in the hands and other limbs? I mean what more to the hands is there apart from the hand. Is there something else in there? Oh, yeah there is a body in there, too, or there are parts of the body in there too, oh no it is the hand and a hand is a hand and it is called the hand, it is not called the body, it is not separate from the hands and the like.

If you try as a thought experiment, as in the practice of Chod, chopping up the body, starting with the hands. No, you might want to hold off there. You might need them for a while! Start with the legs, chop them off, then the abdomen, etc, then throw them in all different directions. You've gotten rid of the parts, you should be left with only the body that was not the parts.

(40:53) If you say that the body is partially in the hands why are you saying that? What is this body that is partially there? Then he says: thus, the body does not exist.

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83. Thus, the body does not exist. However, on account of delusion, there is the impression of the body with regard to the hands and the like, because of their specific configuration, just as there is the impression of a person with regard to a pillar, as the shape of a scarecrow gives the impression of a person.

What is he getting at here?

(40:58) We are holding onto, I mean, it is a curious point in Buddhism, we're all born as metaphysical realists and we have to learn not to be, but you are born with that, it is native, you are born with it, I mean, of reifying everything you touch, reifying your emotions, reifying your body in the universe, your mama and everything else, that is an innate act of delusion and we are born with it.

And so when we say, and pretty much when the scientist says or anybody else says, something exists, for example, Galileo looking in the telescope and says: there are moons around Jupiter. What he is saying, you would say, as a metaphysical realist, he is saying: look, they are already there before I looked which means that they are absolutely there. Whether you call them moons or dwarf planets, they are absolutely inherently out there. We are born with that, and likewise with the body. So this is a very deeply ingrained.

(41:54) So, for the metaphysical realist, if you are equating existence with real existence, inherent existence, which is pretty much what we do, then if you demonstrate that something is not inherently existent the answer will be then you mean it is not there because if it was there, it would be inherently existent that is what I mean to exist is really there I mean it is really there waiting to be discovered from its own side that is what means to exist it's really there.

This, the fact that these eyeglasses are mine it is just a convention we all know that but the eyeglasses that is either really there or it is just not there at all. For the metaphysical realist it is an equation of true existence with apparent existence.

(42:37) So then he (Shantideva) is just kind of following that line: ok, this is what you believe the body does not [exist] and this is unlike Tsongkhapa and a lot of very refined thinkers of the Madhyamaka view, he (Shantideva) does not put any qualifier here.

Shantideva says: thus, then the body does not exist. What he is saying of course is that the body does not inherently exist but he does not say that. He says: the body does not exist. If you think existence means absolute existence then the body does not exist. It looks like he is following into nihilism, but of course it is Madhyamaka he is not doing that. Well, it happens a lot in modernity:

That is not real! (Have you heard that one before?) That is not real, it is only in your mind. Right? If it is real, it would be really there, independently of your mind, but if it is just in your mind, then it is not real. Take that to an extreme: all of your subjective experience is not real, only the brain is real, and that is called limited materialism, and there are people who are not insane who believe in that and actually get awards for believing in that. It is quite remarkable!

Reading text 83 again:

You are lucid in a dream and somebody comes to you and they are giving every appearance of not being lucid, and asks: this eyeglasses case you are holding in your hand – is it there? (and you are lucid, and they are asking you... (and they are not lucid) What would be your answer if you are lucid? No, there is an appearance, this is an appearance (banging the eyeglasses case, that is an appearance of tactile sensations, this is an appearance, it's called blue, and making noise it is an appearance and appearance is totally empty) so you say there is no eyeglasses because I am not here and you are not here with respect to emptiness, nothing is there, with respect to emptiness the body does not exist. When you are lucid you see, no, it is really not there however on account of delusion, that is being non-lucid, there is the impression of the body with regards to the hands and the like because of their specific configuration (you say that is the body), just as there is the impression of a person with regard to a pillar, like a person in the shape of a scarecrow. There is no "person" there.

Reading text 84:

84. As long as a collection of conditions lasts, cooperative conditions, the body appears like a person. Likewise, as long as it lasts with regard to the hands and the like, the body continues to be seen in them.

(45:40) As long as the collections of conditions lasts, these cooperative conditions, the body appears like a person, but how long is that, how many parts do you need for that still be a body here? Ok, a thought

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experiment again: oops! I just lost my two hands, Oops, lost both of my arms and so forth. How many parts can you lose and still say there is a body here?

I will give you a really touching example:

Not many years ago I was watching the news and there was a big fire in California in the mountains and somebody's house was burned down I mean absolutely burn down and there was just the stone chimney left and everything else was just ashes, and the owner came back and then said: Oh, my house is really damaged. They looked at him and said: "my house?!" How much of this would have to be destroyed? Do we need to take away the chimney? Do you need to take away the rocks, the soot? When are you going to release the conceptual designation: "my house is severely damaged?" Most people just see a pile of stones and you are still designating that as a severely damaged house which is definitely worth repairing! But for him that was a house and he was not wrong. It is a house as soon as you say that is a house, and it is not a house as soon as you say it is not a house.

We will continue reading the verses tomorrow, but we start with the body, the close application of mindfulness to the body and now we are going to meditation. Try to turn this into meditation and not just a head trip something you know some intellectual curiosity for entertainment and go into the body and closely apply mindfulness on the body but now not with just the bare sensations. As Elizabeth said you go in there and what you are finding is space when it is bare attention but then do you still think you have a liver, spleen, and a backbone, knees and so forth and so on even when you go there? So let's jump in and see if we can turn it into meditation.

Meditation:

(48:49) In the beginning of Shantideva's presentation of the same material in his other text, "the compendium of practices", there is a line missing in this text and that line is "having made one's mind serviceable in that way, now one begins to attend to the body." having made the mind serviceable in that way: he is referring to the preceding chapter that is all about shamatha. So now even if you do not achieve shamatha in a couple of minutes, you do your best to approximate and make the mind serviceable by settling body, speech and mind in the natural state, bringing forth the qualities of relaxation, stillness and vividness – getting the rumination to calm down with mindfulness of breathing.

(52:00) Now we return to this insider's view of this one body of matter, one physical entity that we can view from the inside and the outside. We can observe other people's bodies. If you are a medical doctor you may observe the internal organs, a neurophysiologist can look the individual neurons. We can look at the body from outside and we can look at from the inside. We have a three dimensional view. For all other objects we look only from the outside so let's take advantage of this privilege perspective of attending closely applying mindfulness to the body from the outside in and inside out. And as we do so as we attend to this physical entity which is so intimately familiar, it is so strongly identified, bring to mind now: what do you think is there when you are not looking because clearly something is there even if you fainted, you're comatose, even if you die, your body is in a grave there is something there, there is one body in that casket, but now it is alive bring to mind what is your sense. What comes to mind when you think "my body" the real one that is composed of atoms, made of matter; occupies physical space, what comes to mind?

(54:09) Now using your intelligence and your imagination, imagine Shantideva just guides us. Closely apply your mindfulness to the individual parts of your body starting with the feet. When you focus there, do you think, yes, I found my body, this is it, or are the feet just the feet?

We are now practicing the close applications of mindfulness to the body as the Buddha himself taught in the Satipatthana Sutta part by part. As Shantideva guides us, go from the bottom to the top, do it deliberately, consciously using your powers of imagination. You know your body has these parts, bones, flesh, blood, veins... Move right through from the feet to calves. Have you found the body? ...to the thighs... is this the body? Compare your notion of the body. What do you think your body is? And now compare that to the thighs.... Have you found the body?

(56:19) Hips, your abdomen, is it the body? Its intestines, which are large, small, your stomach, your liver and so on? Your chest with the skin covering, the blood, veins, the heart, the flesh... is it the body? One arm, the upper arm, the hands... have you found the body yet? Your back from the hips up to the base of the neck – is that a body, is that your body? The neck... and then the whole head, is that a body or it is just a head? It is very easy to conclude, none of those parts are the body. of course not. The body is the whole. it is the whole

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configuration, the whole kit, the whole system. that is my body. One body having many parts, it is the entire. But now there is this such thing the headless body? could you imagine that your body has no head? Would you call that a headless body? There are people with no leg we do not say they have no body, double amputees. No arms they can still be a body, cannot they? There is a corpse with all vital organs taken out, as in an autopsy, that is the body without the internal organs. So exactly how much need to be there for you to say yes that is a body?

The body has all these parts, but where exactly is that body that has the parts? And part by part, how many can you take away until the very notion of the body that has the parts vanishes into thin air and you say, ah, there is no body there. Sometimes when a person's body is cremated and the ashes put in a jar, then we say "this is the person's body. we are going to bury it now, or spread this person over the sea." Is that your body even being in this present configuration? What about an incinerated body? What a body decomposed in the tumult for years and decades, don't you still say that person's body is lying there in the grave? let's place some flowers to show our respect. Or it maybe it is just the powder and bones. Is that a body?

(1:03:16) A mother's egg, the ovum, is that a human body? How about the sperm all by itself? How about the sperm that is inserted into the ovum is that now a human body? Where did it come from? or it is just the ovum and the sperm and now they are unified and we say a new entity has come into existence? There is or it is just the ovum and the sperm. Where did this body come from? Do you think that is a body or that is just simply a fertilized egg, not a human body, it is just a fertilized egg. Is it very different?

And now imagine. Thanks to modern technology, we've seen a lot of images of the process of embryonic development in the womb. When do you say, oh, that is a human body! And why then, why not a day before, why not a week before that the body really comes into existence in some point? If so where does it come from, from outside? or did something that was not the body suddenly become a body, objectively from its own side? How does that happen?

As you hold in mind your sense of a real body, a real human body objectively inherently existent, that is really there from its own side, consider from the time of the sperm heading towards the egg and their union is there a time when that body objectively and inherently comes into existence? That something that wasn't a human body suddenly becomes a real human body? There is a total emptiness of the objective origination of that body, there is no time in which it objectively came into existence. And likewise from the time that a living human body becomes a dead human body which gradually decomposes, there is no point in time when an objectively existent human body, a dead one ceases to exist, a point which you can say there is no longer a body there. There is no moment in time, objectively speaking. The cessation of the body is empty, it never takes place. The origination of the body is empty: it never takes place, and now that which is without origination and without cessation: it does not exist.

It does exist only as a matter of convention, as in a dream, it appears, it is causally efficacious, the body. Things happens to it and it influences others things as in a dream, but it is not really there from its own side, for it never came into existence and never goes out of existence. Rest in the emptiness of your own body, nowhere to be found from its own side not really there.

O lasso. Interesting questions to answer in the last 15 minutes...

Q1. If the psyche is individually configured, yet the substrate's qualities are universal, does everyone have the same experience of the substrate?

Yes and no. The yes part is snowflakes are individual, but if you melt them they are just water, much like every other drop of water. Your psyche, absolutely unique. Trademarked! But when your psyche, coarse mind melts into the substrate consciousness, you experience bliss, luminosity, non-conceptuality. Not female, etc Individuals, however, may gravitate to one quality or more over the others: Non-conceptuality, serenity, bliss, or luminosity, biased by their karma. This is the continuum brought from your past lives, experienced with your subtle mind, massively configured! From Asanga, when you are resting there, achieved shamatha, in the subtle continuum of mental activity, the alaya, the substrate...is this totally non-conceptual? No. little thoughts may bubble up. No excitement, ... Physics analogy: this is not zero degrees Kelvin. The thoughts that arise are your thoughts, nobody else's.

Sutrayana path...totally non-conceptual. Two arya bodhisattvas, are they both having the same experience? Explicitly, it's totally non-conceptual. When you come out of it, can you say anything about it? No. Implicitly, is there a difference on any level. Yes. 1st through the 8th bhumi, you are realizing emptiness with the subtle

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mind. But yours is not the same as another's. Explicitly, the mind you realize it with is the same, but implicitly the subtle mind is not identical in the two persons.

OK. Two people become vidyadharas. Direct non-mediated experience of Rigpa. Total non-duality. Rigpa realizing Rigpa. Out of time. You are beyond the configuration of your subtle mind. Beyond conceptual frameworks. Is one person's experience of Rigpa different from another's. I don't see how it could be.

Mahayana perspective...following death, is one's experience different from another's? How could it be? The continuum of their 5 skandas are dissolved, but they (persons) have not become non-existent.

Q2. If rigpa is outside the system, can rigpa be considered God eye's view? Within rigpa, are my choice already made leading to a deterministic universe?

It all depends on how you define God. There's a wide variety. Mind in the Balance explores this. The last great one I've studied was from the 15th century, Nicholas of Cusa. The experience looks a lot like Dzogchen. There experience looks like Rigpa to me! So that's an open question. Good book: The History of God by Karen Armstrong, outstanding scholar. Abrahamic tradition, OT, NT, Apostolic tradition... Might one say that's a "god's eye view" yes, you've just defined God as Rigpa. Words do not suffice. We're venturing into a realm where the nature of pristine awareness cannot be captured in words. The fish of Rigpa will not be caught in the net of concepts. It transcends all conceptual constructs, existence and non-existence, birth and death. It is neither one nor many. Neither the same, nor different. When it comes to Rigpa, all words have a purely instrumental function, just to lead us to a direct non-conceptual experience of Rigpa. How does something outside of space and time affect that which is inside space and time? Shantideva: make your mind serviceable. Can we know Rigpa? Yes.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Revised by Brian Malone

Final edition by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Posted by Alma Ayon

57 Compassion (1)

27 Sep 2012

Teachings:

Especially when one is in solitary retreat having very little engagement, then obviously with anybody else it is quite easy actually for one thoughts, one concerns, for everything comes to mind, to be very much pertaining to ones own situation since after all you are not dealing with anybody else, they do not come up and they are not telling you the news. You are just there and all the news is from you, so what are you going to be thinking about between sessions? I, I my mine, I my mine, I my mine, I my mine, it is just natural, so it actually can take place when one goes into retreat to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings and winds up being really self-centered, and so to try to remedy that, that is a kind of built in problem, really can be a built in problem and to remedy that:

- Number one to be in a group retreat, it is really good, it is really cool because then we see there are people around us, and we are aware to some extent even in silence, we are aware of what is going on, so that already gives us a bit more spaciousness, but the mind becomes a bit more open, more attentive to those around us because there are actually people around us, that is actually the advantage.
- But at the same time we are spending most of our times meditating pretty much in our rooms here and so then to use imagination, to attend to, (for the moment we attend to is reality bring up my mantra again from William James) to attend to the reality of other peoples situations, their lives, their challenges, their struggles, and of course the reality of suffering. So to attend to that we can do

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this by way of the cultivation of compassion so we move on to the second of the four immeasurables this morning.

By attending to others situations, a kind of challenge, a kind of suffering they are experiencing both hedonic suffering just bad things happening to people, meeting with adversity and experiencing different hardship as result. But then also the genuine suffering that simply comes from within. By attending to others then our own sense of caring naturally expands, so our own challenges, all of you I know we all have our own individual challenges, struggles, issues coming up and so forth, difficulties, adversities, even while in retreat things come up we know, right? And they are as important tomorrow as they are today, the importance of our own struggles and issues, they are still important, but as we attend to others, and in others, broaden the scope, then we see it from a broader perspective, and the four immeasurables I think are just enormously useful, helpful, beneficial for cultivating greater emotional balance, and we can see that the practice of shamatha is not simply developing attention skills as if in a vacuum, that is our shamatha practice is embedded in our lives, and our lives are saturated by emotions, and all kinds of things trigger emotions, and they will continue, they will continue to trigger emotions.

And if our emotions arise like dropping a pebble into a swimming pool, something comes up, yes, it is a wave, it is a pebble, it created waves, but we can handle it because it is a pretty good size swimming pool, then not a whole lot of emotional disequilibrium, disturbance, upheaval, when stuff happens to us. Why? Because it is a much larger pool that we are attending to, and I am of any many, many sentient beings, whereas if I am spending my day most of the time just thinking about my circumstances, my issues, it is the same pebble but it is dropped into a teacup and it is a Tsunami. So the way that our own situations are experienced is all a matter of context, how big is your pool?

So that is where we will turn to compassion right now, to turn our mind from a teacup to a swimming pool, and eventually to an ocean, ok? Please find a comfortable position.

Meditation:

(05:03) In terms of genuine suffering, it is not easy to have the mind so commonly, so frequently, dominated by rumination let alone by rumination that is heavily conditioned by mental afflictions, anger, craving and so on, it is so tiring, so stressful. So as an act of compassion for ourselves, an act of kindness for ourselves, give yourself a break as you allow your awareness to settle in this non-conceptual domain, of the space of your body, gently soothingly, settling your body in its natural state and your respiration in its natural rhythm, and then calm this disturbed mind which is fatigued by so much rumination, quiet, soothe, calm the mind for a little while with mindfulness of breathing.

(8:22) As a reminder, in a Buddha's understanding compassion is not simply sympathy, it is not simply feeling sorry for , but it is an aspiration rooted in empathy, the sense of common ground, that resonance, the affinity with others, the sense that we are all of the same family. So now bring to mind an individual, a community, a region of the globe, whatever comes to mind, where you know there is blatant, hedonic suffering, and there is suffering in response to tragedy, to adversity, whether it's from war, whether from aging, sickness or ill health. Focus your attention clearly, intently, upon such people, who may not even know that we exist, but they certainly know that they exist, and they are facing hardship, just as we do. And with each in breath, arouse the aspiration: may you, like myself, be free of suffering and its hedonic causes. If it is illness may be healed, if it is social conflict may it be peace, whatever the outer causes may be for a hunger, thirst whatever it may be, may you be free.

(12:58) I offer you two options in conjunction with this practice, you may follow the traditional practice of tonglen : of imagining the hardship, the difficulties, the sufferings of others, and in a form of a dark cloud enveloping these individuals, with each in breath, imagine drawing this in, drawing in this darkness into this orb of light at your heart, with each in breath, imagine that darkness dissolving, vanishing without trace in the light at your heart.

However if you feel this brings too much pressure, a kind of heaviness to your heart, then with each in breath imagine the darkness of others suffering simply evaporates into thin air, each in breath lightening and lightening, and with each in breath imagine the suffering and its causes disappearing.

(14:57) And let your attention rove at will, attending to another person, another community, as you wish, identifying both the suffering and the adversity that arises, that catalyzes, that brings about such suffering.

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(18:11) And then turn your attention to another type of blatant suffering what is literally called suffering of suffering, which I call simply genuine suffering, that we all know about it, and that is the suffering and distress caused without any help from outside, that is directly generated by our own mental afflictions, direct your attention to those who are blatantly suffering because of the afflictions and obscurations of their own minds. Practice as before and with each in breath arouse the yearning: may you be free of this suffering and its underlying causes that which is so clearly identified as the afflictions of your own mind, may you like myself, be free.

(20:50) In terms of blatant suffering you may attend especially to those who suffer from anger, among the mental afflictions it is the one that is so evidently painful. However much we may wish to justify our anger, our outrage and so on, when all is said and done, it is simply an affliction of the mind. With each in breath arouse the aspiration may we all be free of this very, very toxic mental affliction of anger and hatred.

(27:40) Release all aspirations and all appearances, and rest your awareness in stillness, in its own nature.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Revised by Cheri Langston.

Final edition by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Posted by Alma Ayon

58 Mindfulness of the body (4)

27 Sep 2012

Teachings:

The sound of the podcast is not so good and is quite difficult to understand what Alan was saying and on the other hand the themes are a little complex.

There are some sentences or paragraphs about some themes that we have written a sum up and not everything literally as Alan Wallace said during the session, thinking that it would be useful for the readers better understanding of the themes. But if you are listening to the podcast and following what is written, and have any difficulty, please do inform us in order that we may transcribe these themes again and upload the new transcript at media.sbinstitute.com.

This afternoon we will continue with Shantideva's visitation of close application of mindfulness to the body. I think it is helpful to bear in mind here that there are these different levels of stratta of vipashyana insight and each has its own particular efficacy, so as H. H. Dalai Lama said - there is a whole kind of bandwidth of mental afflictions, craving, hostility and delusion that arise from the grasping onto, as per the Sauntrantika notion of the delusional concept of the self as being autonomous, self-existent, controlling and so forth, and together with that, grasping on the impermanent as permanent that which is by nature of dukkha (suffering), as being pleasant, so there is that basis, it is very practical and on that basis now we move to this other whole level of vipashyana looking right into, into, in a sense an anthological probe, into its actual nature of existence, into the empty nature which is much more profound. So we are going to return to the text here, Verse 85 in chapter 9. So he has covered the body – not to be found among any of the individual parts, not partially, that is – as a real entity, existing independently under conceptual designation, by its own inherent existence, the body is not to be found in any individual component, it is not partially in any individual component, is not in anywhere else, it is simply nowhere to be found and that's where we come to the emptiness of the body. And then he goes right on. Now we are going to the components of the body.

So he says, in the same way – since it is an assemblage of toes, which one would be a foot? So as he did this parts and whole analysis for the whole body, now the foot, we have two feet and which one is one entity? It has a bunch of toes, it has a heel, a sole and so forth, so which one of those toes would be a foot? And then we just keep on going.

We have gone from the body to the foot, now we go to a toe. The same applies to the toe, since it is an assemblage of joints, and to the joints, and to the joint as well, because the joint has its division into its own parts. So we are going right down and finding which parts, as we are going down, looking for the entity, the 'brass tacks', that which is really there, how far do we need to go? Because each of these is composed of parts in the same analysis as wholes. Then he is going to "cut to the chase" as they say in the movie industry, we have gone as far as a joint, but now we can just keep on going. He is going right down to atoms, so even the

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parts, even the parts can be divided into atoms and an atom itself can be divided according to its cardinal directions.

So even if you conceive of an atom, for which there is no real stuff to it, or maybe it is just one homogenous entity, imagine one absolute building block, a little tiny sphere, one sphere of hard core matter, and say - the buck stops here, this is as elementary as it gets, even there, even if you say pure atoms, you can still see the front part of the atom, the back, the sides, it still has parts.

It is not only that it has spatial components, let's bring in something from the 21st century - does this tiny atom, this basic, fundamentally, absolutely real building block of physical reality, does it have mass? Does it have charge, does it have spin, does it have a field, does it have size, shape? Does it have velocity, momentum? As soon as you can say that it has attributes, then the same parts and whole analysis, applies. He is saying this applies all the way up and all the way down. To galaxies, galactic clusters, the universe, right down to elementary particles, every time you find this object that has attributes. An atom itself can be divided according to its cardinal directions.

The section of a cardinal direction is space, because it is without parts. Space itself is undifferentiated but not inherently real. Therefore, then he says the same thing he said about the body, therefore an atom does not exist.

Looking at the Tibetan :

“ . . . Since the cardinal directions have no parts, they are like space. Therefore, atoms do not exist.” So it is a little clearer in the Tibetan. Since the cardinal directions have no parts, they are like space.

So either way, is Geshe wrong then? When he said we are not refuting atoms, we are just questioning how they exist. Is he refuting Shantideva? Not likely. He was a great master of Madhyamaka , he knew Shantideva inside and outside. So it is the same thing as before, when Shantideva said therefore the body is non- existent, and that is that if your notion of existence is – it is really there – from its own side, before we thought anything about it, before it was measured and so forth, - it was really there – then, if that is what it means to be existent, atoms don't exist.

Alan said: so let's back and see the Vaibashika system (view) and Madhyamika view.

Let's look at another system, I hope it won't be too technical, but it will be brief, and that is in the Vaibashika system, which is largely considered a bit more primitive, not quite as sophisticated as Sautrantrika view. In the Vaibashika system, for those interested in Buddhist philosophy, they are aware of the fact that when we with our senses, when we view the world around us, we are seeing these configurations of macro objects, eyeglasses and objects and so forth and so on, but what we are perceiving as these configurations are very much based on our ways of perceiving, especially the visual and tactile.

We see it and touch it primarily, and they are saying but that's relative, the fact that you are saying it is this and this, it has the attributes and so forth, that is all relative, after all we have a different mode of observation, different measuring system. And you won't be getting the same data, the same configurations. They say, that is real. And we call this 'Reductionism'. They are saying what is ultimately, physically real , absolutely there – are not the configurations, because they will be configured differently depending on the measuring system, who is looking, who is thinking, the measuring systems, and so forth, it is all relative, but what is ABSOLUTELY there? Let's get real, what is really, really there? And the Vaibashika says – the atoms, the absolutely fundamentally tiniest building blocks. That is not a configuration, that is what everything else is a configuration of. That is very much like Democritus, the Greek philosopher, who said everything boils down to atoms moving in space. Well that kinda sounds like Vaibashika. And then it is the configuration, it depends on who is looking and so forth. What's really there? Vaibashika says atoms, and one can understand why. That was a dominant view until 1900. According to a man who knows his quantum mechanics much, much better than I do, he said although the full implications of quantum mechanics are not yet clear, one thing that it demonstrated beyond any shadow of doubt for anyone who understands quantum mechanics, is that it totally refutes atoms and that the universe is not fundamentally composed, as Newton and other great minds thought. It refutes atomism and that is that the whole universe is, what it boils down to - configurations of absolutely real little nuggets of stuff. Quantum mechanics shows it is not true . There is apparently complete consensus there that seems to be one point where there is a lot of agreement.

So let's just go back, because we are talking about atoms here, we are speaking in the 21st century, not in rural Tibet or classical India. So I made this statement yesterday that should have been jarring, and that is – let's

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take this recent discovery, this empirical discovery, of something that was hypothesized a few decades ago, an elementary particle that gives mass to all other particles of the universe. Its presence was a very big deal, the physicists were very excited about this. And so it was predicted, there was no evidence, they finally got a piece of technology that was up to the task, high enough energy, and low and behold they did the most sophisticated measurements they possibly could, and a large group of very well informed, very intelligent, astute physicists agreed – yes. This is not compelling evidence.

So the question I posed yesterday was, did that big photon exist before they measured it? If it didn't then this is just a joke. You created it, big deal, what's that tell us about the universe? Nothing at all. None of them would accept that it was an artifact of the system, and that is exactly what they were seeking to avoid. I speak not only with total respect, these are really smart people, they know the difference between an artifact of the system as opposed to something they are actually discovering, it is spending an awful lot of money to discover it.

So the view of Madhyamika, I think I can say this with confidence, as per my teachers, Geshe Rabten, His Holiness and so forth, and that is that if photons existed before, if it is true, let's imagine if it really was true, that evidence was compelling, that they discovered it. Well according to Madhyamika and according to modern physics, well if they have been around for billions and billions of years, if they were, then how can they not be inherently existent? If they were already there before anybody measured them, then they must have been there, which means they were absolutely there which is why it is such a big deal to discover them. We are going right back to metaphysical realism? Are we going there? That is not Madhyamika that is Sautrantika. They were not really there and they were discovered? Yippee if so, give them a nobel prize. Or was it an artifact of the system?

Then we are back to well whatever your reality. So it is neither of those two. Then how do we find a middle way? To say it was there before they measured it but is not inherently existent? And I think, Stephen Hawking and others have all pointed exactly to the solution for this within modern physics. And to my mind it is exactly the same solution as we find in Madhyamika.

Here is the solution I think is the a sound one, both for modern physics and low and behold for Madhyamika, and that is, the very prediction, it was not just some guy dreaming it up all by himself, this took place in a very intricate, highly sophisticated, highly intelligent, internally consistent, conceptual framework. Called the Standard Model. A very successful model in many ways. A good system, an ultimate system? No one is claiming that, but there it was, the conceptual framework was in place, it predicts this, and this very year, that empirical evidence, we thought it might exist, we hypothesized that it may exist, and with the empirical evidence we now conclude it - does exist. From the cognitive framework, that is that conceptual framework of the standard model, and the systems of measurement being used, to put those predictions to the test, from that perspective, from that cognitive framework – they do exist, they are out there, they were out there a long, long time ago, relative to this cognitive frame of reference. But they say never mind the cognitive frame of reference, they were really out there, right? Really. Now we can see that statement is gibberish. It means nothing at all. In other words throw out all the standard model, throw out all the systems of measurement, say never mind all of that, it really exists doesn't it? Those words don't mean anything.

Independently of the conceptual framework those words, "does it exist or not" – don't mean anything. It is like asking if shrivels exist or not. You haven't defined it, and you have no way of measuring it so why are you asking this question? It doesn't mean anything. So independently of the Standard model, independently of the system of measurement, the question doesn't mean anything. So it neither existed nor didn't exist anymore than shrivels exist right now. You can't answer that question because it is not a meaningful question. You haven't defined it and you have given us no way of knowing if swarvels do exist. It is an irrelevant question.

In a similar fashion, electrons were discovered in the first part of 20th century, from that cognitive framework, which now continues in a kind of a lineage, from that framework, electrons have existed since shortly after the big bang. But independently of that framework, whether they exist or not, makes no sense. I will give one example that I like: As I have understood, in terms of theoretical physics, there is something of an awkwardness, something of a difficulty of bringing together field theory with particle theory – particles and fields, mashing those two fields is a messy, it gives problems, I won't elaborate, but it is messy, so I understand that Albert Einstein, recognizing this, he envisioned the possibility of doing away with all together

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the notion of elementary particles and replacing all such concepts with the pure field theory. Understanding everything within fields. Now he didn't succeed, maybe he didn't live long enough, but he really envisioned that it might be possible, a unified field theory, the notion that little particles would drop out and everything that we presently know would be in terms of empirical evidence, as well as things that could be predicted from this theory, would all be understood in terms of a field theory.

Let's imagine, out of whimsy, let's imagine some 16 year old girl from Bodhgaya, IQ just off the charts, she is finishing her PHD at MIT at the age of 16 and she comes up with this really bright idea, a field that accounts for everything known about particles and fields that is now completely consisted in pure fields, and since she is a Beatles fan, she calls the fields, Strawberry fields. The top guns at MIT, CAL Tech, Cambridge and so on look at her and think this girl is just amazing, this is amazing, how many noble prizes do we have to give her, this is incredible, this antiquates all our earlier theories on particles and the Strawberry fields cover everything. And then she gets her PHD like Einstein getting his PHD, and from that perspective, let's say this happens in the year 2020, the physicists say that is brilliant, we agree, she nailed it, and they say it is so good, maybe it has predictive value, maybe it predicts like the relativity theory, predicting things that nobody has ever expected before. So everyone is teaching Strawberry Fields. From that cognitive frame of reference, electrons, particles, don't exist at all, and they never existed.

But right now we don't have Strawberry Fields. So we have the Standard Model and it is the best one they have. There is String theory, they don't have any empirical evidence to support it, if they do, who knows, maybe particles will be out and strings will be in, but right now we are stuck with particles and fields, so from this cognitive frame of reference, particles and fields have existed since just after the big bang, they will exist all the way to the big Whimper, if the universe just goes out, dissipates into entropy. Or they will exist all the way until the big crunch. If the universe does expand and then contracts again, goes back into a singularity. All these elementary particles will have existed from then until then, in that cognitive framework.

So all that yes, but relative to a cognitive frame of reference. That is what it boils down to.

Can they exist, from their own side, by their own inherent nature? No. Do they exist? Yes. Do they have causal efficacy? Yes. Was it extremely good science that enabled us to discover them? Yes. Do people die when a hydrogen bomb drops and they are hit with particles photons and so forth? Yes. As well as providing nuclear energy to hospitals and so forth.

- **The Vaibashika view:**

Summary made by SB Institute:

The Vaibashika view contends that while we view the world with our senses and that configurations depend on our way of perceiving, atoms are truly existent.

Alan's Comments:

What is really there? And Vaibashika says: atoms.

- **The Madhyamika view:**

Summary made by SB Institute Staff:

The Madhyamika view understands dependent origination as follows: a) conditioned phenomena arise in dependence on prior causes and conditions, b) parts and attributes, and c) conceptual designations.

(21:26) Alan's comments:

Now from this Madhyamika view, what is the real essence of pratityasamutpada (dependent origination) and in what fashion are all these composite phenomena arising as dependent related events?

- First one as Shantideva here is highlighting is that all of these conditioned phenomena do arise in dependence upon prior causes and conditions.

They don't arise for no reason at all otherwise they would arise all the time or never, that is Buddha's view.

- The second step this is straight from Tsongkhapa: all these composite phenomena arise in dependence upon their own parts and qualities.

That is they are not equivalent to their components, they are not equivalent to their attributes, but were there are not parts and attributes then those phenomena would not exist therefore they are dependent upon the presence of their own attributes and also simultaneous dependence. That is, you don't have a box with all its qualities but first the box and then the qualities later. You don't have the qualities without the box. They are mutually dependent. The box is dependent upon its parts and attributes. That is the second kind of dependence, simultaneous. The other one is sequential. So far it is all out there, and so far, pretty much all of

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the physicists would say that is true, so far very comfortable. Now the part that is say what? That is that for all this composite phenomena : -

- The third indispensable element is that all of these composite phenomena are dependent upon the conceptual designation of them, without which they do not exist. And that is where you parted ways from all the other beliefs, they say it doesn't matter how you conceptually designate them, how you think about them and so forth, they are there - and that is exactly the object to be refuted. That it is already there, prior to and independent of, any conceptual designation. As His Holiness says, and it is so practical :
- **H. H. Dalai Lama comments:**

Summary made by SB Institute Staff:

The Dalai Lama says that which you're pointing your finger at and holding to be already out there from its own side does not exist in that way.

Alan is explaining H. H. Dalai Lama comments as below:

If I am reifying Daniel, I am pointing my finger to Daniel and say: Daniel is over there. It means that I am pointing my finger at someone who appears to be over there and I am grasping as being over there, from his own side, independent of anything over here, he is absolutely over there waiting to be discovered or not discovered, but he is waiting, it is called in Tibetan "Zugzussa", that which you are point your finger at. I love the practicality of this from His Holiness, the (Daniel over there right where I am pointing my finger - "that"), and it is exactly what Madhyamika says, doesn't exist. If that were to exist it would be in no way dependent upon conceptual designation, it would be already designated.

So think again about dream, because it is to my mind the most powerful metaphor or analogy. And that is that in a dream, and imagine we are all dreaming now, and everything appears to be inherently existent, right? Now I could dream Daniel and he could appear as clearly as he does now, a lot of you have had very vivid dreams, where you couldn't believe it's a dream, how can it be a dream? I can see the shininess of his hair. In the dream, even in a lucid dream I have looked at it and say – hey, I can prove it to you and walk over and touch him on the shoulder. See? He is absolutely there, he is really there. I will throw things at him, watch them bounce off his head and chest and so on, doesn't that prove it? But in a lucid dream you know, aha, dream you lie! And that is – Daniel appears to be there, but I know he isn't, because I know I am dreaming. And the fact that I can walk over and touch him on the chest, or bounce something off his chest, that doesn't prove anything. I am dreaming and I know there is no one there. I am asleep in bed. These are appearances, and all are empty. That is astonishing, absolutely astonishing hypothesis of Madhyamika.

I remember years ago, doing Geshe Rabten's biography, 1972 / 1973, he had been in a six year retreat, he had been meditating for a long time on the pillar right in the middle of his hut, that held up the ceiling, and he was just meditating on it. Having just four years of Madhyamika alone, and he was meditating on the emptiness of the inherent existence of the pole holding up his roof, and he told me, you know, if I should tell you Westerners how the world appears to me upon engaging in such analysis, you will think I am simply crazy, so I won't. Because he would be saying of course, from the side of the pillar, there is no pillar, any more than in a dream. Sure, it is firm and it holds things together, you have heard that one before, but pillars hold up roofs in dreams too, so what exactly is that supposed to prove, except that illusions can be very helpful. To actually have this type of analysis, with referencing to quantum mechanics and so forth, to actually have it strikes the target of our mental afflictions so that upon engaging in meditation, investigation and so forth, we actually see our mental afflictions subside. That is not so easy, but let's not lose that, that is the whole point. That is the whole point. (29.00)

His Holiness has had long conversations with highly respected physicists, one, a German Austrian with a really great mind, spending a whole day just talking about this, many other outstanding physicists, when that happens, you know something is afoot. What this raises in my mind, is an absolutely fascinating image, let's just imagine this hypothesis – that Dzogchen view, which is really the Vajrayana view which is completely in line with the Madhyamika view, is that when we tap into the ultimate reality, on the one hand is the Dharmadhatu which is equivalent to Nirvana, equivalent to emptiness on the one hand, but we are talking Dzogchen, Vajrayana, not only the ultimate nature of reality, this dharmadhatu, this absolute space of phenomena, but together with that and even indivisible from that, is primordial consciousness, pristine awareness, rigpa. They never intercept. You can realize one without the other, without realizing the other.

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Then there is a third component – Yeshegelung – The energy of primordial consciousness. That is undifferentiable from the primordial consciousness itself, and it is co extensive from dharmadhatu. Absolute space of the mind. So these three, ultimate absolute space, this ultimate dimension of energy, ultimate dimension of consciousness, and they are all at peace.

So imagine, that as in traditional Buddhism, we speak of 3 doors of liberation, imagine if this were true, that if we look only to the outside, if you look into the nature of space, and the material phenomena within it, and you probe to the ultimate depth, and you penetrate it through, which is deeper, deeper, deeper insight, then you might in principal, at least intellectually or conceptually penetrate through to dharmadhatu. If that's the reality of it and you are looking at the nature of reality which is emerging from that, then you penetrate right through to dharmadhatu, as clearly implied when His Holiness said: "How can you know that without knowing Madhyamika?" And he turned to the physicist Anton Zeilinger, and Anton Zeilinger said: "how can you know that without knowing quantum mechanics?" They really did have a sense that they were penetrating the same reality. But from such different avenues. And then just take this theme that I have elaborated on briefly

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For those who are really focused in on the very nature of space itself, not matter, but space itself, and finding that space – now we are talking about quantum field theory, a very main stream field of modern physics, going back to the 1930's. The notion that when you really look into the nature of space, low and behold there is not a bare vacuity, it is not general relativity, when you really penetrate into the nature of space, you see it is not empty, if you take the equations literally, which I did with every single step so I could really know what's going on, then you see that the energy density of empty space is infinite, that it is just right there in the nature of space, it is not an add on, like the energy of matter, or thermal energy, or electromagnetic energy, it is the nature of space itself, an infinite density.

Then you take the contemplative approach. Where there is no mathematics. Nothing more than addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, that is it, pretty basic. No technology. The best technology they had going in Tibet was the prayer wheel. That is all the technology we need to develop great compassion. Om Mani Padme Hum. We don't need Ritalin, we don't need an EEG, but we don't need prayer wheel 5.0 or six months later, 6.0, its faster, and you have not lived yet until you have got prayer wheel 7.0, compassion would go so much faster. (laughter)

There is another kind of technology that we don't have, which by and large is right there in front of us and we just don't see it, we are not ready to see it, we are just assuming that we know more about everything than anybody else, if you are not part of our group, then you are pre scientific, which means you are done. But as soon as you get one of our educations, then you are part of the team, exploring where no man has gone before.

But they had the technology of course with samadhi starting in India maybe 3 or 4 thousand years ago. So what if then, by using the contemplative technology of samadhi, and why not Dzogchen, but through that you are able to penetrate the coarse mind, all the way down to primordial consciousness, and by the way of that direct insight, draw a valid status about the nature of matter and space and the energy pervading space with no mathematics and external technology. And why, because you are coming through 3 doors of the same reality, the matter door of quantum mechanics, the energy door by being quantum field theory, by the consciousness door by way of contemplative inquiry. But all looking into the same and low and behold finding that the Dalai Lama and physicists have something to talk about all day. If the Dalai Lama were simply a religious man, talking about his religious beliefs, I think they would be short of conversation.

So right down to the elementary particle, they don't exist at all. If by exist you mean already there by their own nature, unrelated to a cognitive frame of reference It is a beautiful paradigm. With relativity theory you simply cannot speak of the true velocity or location, or mass, or energy or momentum, of anything, in an independent context. If you try, you are not making any sense. That was the belief until 1905 and since then, no reputable physicist believes that. You can see all of the things, mass, energy, velocity, location, sides, dimension also, you can speak of all of those only relative to a conceptual frame of reference relative to something else, but not absolutely. There is no absolute space, space does not provide an absolute medium of which you can say – oh yes, all by itself a single particle traveling 5 miles an hour, relative to what? Well space? Not possible. That is big, that is really big, that is relativity physics. And this is ontological relativity

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where you must now finally, bring consciousness back into the universe. Where it always was, and has always played a central part. Absolutely.

What discerning person would be attached to form, which is just like a dream? And attached to their minds, it is not simply - oh is this person attractive, that is a beautiful flower and so forth, they are, attractive people are attractive, beautiful flowers are beautiful, but attachment means AH, attachment is always based on reification, that sense [that it exists] from its on side.

What discerning person would be attached to form, which is just like a dream? If you were lucid in a dream you might be attracted to a beautiful woman, or a handsome man, she could be still beautiful, attractive. But what person in a lucid dream would think “oh, that person will bring me such happiness” – in a lucid dream? It would be crazy?

Since the body does not exist, then who is a woman and who is a man? It shatters sexism. It means, there is no inherent woman or man over there, get over it.

Meditation:

(40:34) Now that I have conceptually stirred up the snow-globes of your mind, conceptualization flying all over the place, see if you let your mind settle down and let your awareness descend to a non-conceptual space that is quiet, into the space of the body. Settle your body, speech and mind in a natural state and for the best of your ability makes you mind serviceable, there is important work to be done.

(44:00) To probe to the ultimate nature of any phenomena and be imperative, first of all recognize what is its relative nature, its conventional nature within the realm of causality, within the realm of space and time, once you identify that it does exist, then you can ask: how does it exist? Let's go back to the earlier course on the application of mindfulness to the body, attending to the elements that arise in the space of the body, the elements of earth, water, fire and air, this first person in physics, this first person physiology, it is said the body is materially composed of these elements - solidity, fluidity, heat, motion. Closely apply mindfulness to these appearances in your body.

Let your eyes be a little bit open and you will see your body, see the forms and see the colors and shapes. Is there anything more that you directly perceive of your body here and now, apart from these visual appearances and the tactile? Noting how different they are. And note while these elements, earth and so on have their own attributes, you can examine – are they are permanent, impermanent and so on, but that they don't have a body, they do not belong to something else, they are arising into space and dissolving back into space and the same is true for shapes and colors, they do arise in the visual space and dissolve back therein, space that dissolve into is the space of the mind so they can't belong to some body that inherently exists in physical space, which is two entirely different spaces.

These visual appearances do not exist, you do not see them. The tactile sensations and the elements do not exist in our experiences, there are bodies that do exist when nobody is looking, then what? That nobody is experiencing them.

Take a long look, closely apply mindfulness in terms of what you direct perceive in your body and bear in mind you are the only insider's view and in terms of what you can see of your body, composed of many internal organs, skin, fleshbone, blood and so on. Exactly what here that you direct perceive or conceive of, exactly what here is your body, what truly deserves the label - my body is this?

(51:20) Scan through your immediate perceptions of the body and ask: is anything here my body? Does it simply have its own label, its own nature, its earth element, its color, its shape, but not the body? Likewise, conceptually as you scan though the body conceptually, from the hair on top of your head down to the soles of your feet, is there anything here individually or collectively which you can say, yes I found it, this is a real body?

(53:26) Consider the Heart Sutra: “form is emptiness, emptiness is form” but they are conceptual forms as in the tactile sensations, visual appearances, they are simply appearances and there is nothing more to them. Appearances are arising in space and dissolving back into space, but there is no other substance, and likewise when we conceive of the body and parts of the body - once again we are presented with only appearances, conceptual appearances. They are just that, appearances devoid of substance that arise in space and dissolve back into space.

(54:50) And we can even say these appearances consist of space, they are not other than space. Space itself is empty and taking on form.

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(55:50) Release the conceptual designation of 'my' body, rest in the field of appearances that are the basis of designation or that label which are empty of that label and its referent, rest in the field of emptiness.

(59:00) Becomes obviously does not it? That you release conceptual designation, it's feasible, if and only if you have a serviceable mind in which you have the ability to release rumination at will.

Teachings after meditation:

A brief commentary of what Dalai Lama said in speaking on behalf of Madhyamika view:

(1:05:08) In order to eradicate mental afflictions, klesha, from their root so that they never arise again, it is not enough to realize impermanence, the nature of duhkha and the absence of a kind of autonomous, substantial self that controls the body and mind, it is not enough. That will do a lot of purifying because there is a whole bandwidth of mental afflictions that arise in dependence upon that domain of ignorance.

But could your mental afflictions still arise? Yes.

It is not enough to realize personal identitylessness, the absence of inherent nature, of just a self. This is why in the Heart Sutra it is said:

The five skandhas they also are empty of inherent nature. It is not enough to realize the emptiness of self and think, yeah but I am still surrounded by a real world, it is just me that is gone, me that is an apparition, that is a mirage, that is an illusion, it is not enough because you will still be grasping onto everything else which means you have not fathomed the nature of reality, all you realized is the emptiness of personal identity, it is not enough, you must realize the emptiness of all the skandhas, the body, all the others, bodies and everything else. So it is a big deal, it is going for the complete cure.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

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59 Compassion (2)

28 Sep 2012

Teaching 1:

- **Suffering of suffering or blatant suffering and antidotes**

So this morning we return to the meditative cultivation of compassion, you recall that yesterday in terms of the different types of suffering or dimensions of suffering, we tended especially to that it is most obvious to human beings, animals, really all sentient beings, and that literally is called the suffering that is suffering, or the suffering of suffering or in more ordinary English we can call it blatant suffering. It just feels bad. So whether is physical pain, whether is mental distress, we all recognize it, all sentient beings, you don't need any especial wisdom or anything like that, it is obvious. So in terms of compassion of course we would include that - may we all be free of blatant suffering of body and mind.

(1:32) Among the three root poisons of the mind, the one that strikes me as being most directly related to this blatant suffering, will be of course hatred, hatred or anger. And that is, hatred and anger is always responsible, a response to something that we don't want. Either we are getting something we don't want or we are not getting something we do want, but either way we are dissatisfied. But we are not simply dissatisfied, it erupts the dissatisfaction goes almost like a volcano, dissatisfied and then boom, and it blows up like a pot of boiling milk, it spills all over the place. In terms of afflictive anger, and there is such a thing as non-afflictive anger, but for the time being let's just focus on the mental affliction; it really is a symptom of an inability to cope with reality. It is not a symptom of strength it is a symptom of inability, of weakness. Here is a reality, unable to cope with it, instead of dealing with it, you erupt into a mental affliction and it hurts, it feels awful, the stronger the anger, the worse it feels. So quite clearly it is directly related to blatant suffering.

(2:53) But then in terms of remedies, what can we do just to overall decrease the amount of blatant suffering in the world, out of spirit of compassion for ourselves which we call renunciation, compassion for others which we call compassion, but what can actually we do, you know that is practical, that will have an

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immediate effect in terms of alleviating if not completely dispelling, but at least let's start by alleviating the suffering in the world, the blatant suffering that everybody can recognize?

(3:25) And among the three higher trainings, the three trainings of the Buddha, these are the structure of all the Buddha's teachings, Shravakayana Mahayana, Vajrayana you name it; ethics, Samadhi with all the richness of that term and then wisdom, that really does pretty well cover it. Bodhichitta fits into Samadhi, the four immeasurables fit into Samadhi, a lot fits into Samadhi category, right? And so ethics, among those three, the core principle is so simple, and it is practical, and that is as we wake up each morning just having the aspiration - at very least may I do no harm, may I not inflict any unnecessary and unhelpful injury. A surgeon inflicts injury in order to be of greatest benefit, good. Parents sometimes scold their children, they do not like it but it is for their wellbeing, good. So those are necessary, but so much of the injury we bring, the harm we bring to the world and to ourselves is not necessary and just coming out of mental afflictions. So bottom line: Ahimsa - may I live a non-violent life, having that kind of prime directive and then when there is the opportunity to be of service, when I can be do some good in the world, then I will rise to the opportunity. There it is, that is the whole of ethics and everything else is commentary, right?

(4:47) Well, if all did that, let alone religious belief, be a materialist, be a communist, be a Buddhist, Christian whatever, that didn't require any metaphysical background there, right? And if we did that, this world would be a radical different place.

(5:10) So I think in a conversation, or perhaps someone wrote a note and said - Oh, I feel like I can do so little. Well you can do awful lot in your little tiny corner of the world, and if all seven billion of us did that little tiny bit in our corner of the world it really would transform the whole planet, and that is with no meditation, nothing higher, no bodhichitta, no four immeasurables, no wisdom, nothing just being ethical, it will transform a lot.

- **Suffering of change and its antidote, Samadhi.**

Today, we look at the suffering of change which isn't obvious to most. Its primary cause is attachment, especially to the impermanent as permanent. The basic remedy for attachment is Samadhi.

(5:38) So now we move on and today will again in terms of meditation on the cultivation of compassion, but this time attending to a dimension of suffering that is simply not obvious, that is invisible to many people, including many people in the mind sciences, in clinical psychology and so forth. It's not a judgment of the whole tradition at all because it is so diverse, but it is a dimension of suffering that is not visible, that is not obvious to many people, it is called the suffering of change. Literally it is called the suffering of change. Well again the term itself could be a little bit misleading as if the very reality of change necessitates suffering. It doesn't.

(6:28) So what's up with change and suffering? Oh, it's attachment. Among the three mental afflictions what's the culprit, what's the most directly related to this so called suffering of change? It's attachment and it's especially the kind of attachment that grasps onto the impermanent as permanent. It sounds very abstract maybe philosophical, but the clinging, the grasping, the mental affliction of craving and attachment, of greed, and as I have mentioned before, when one experience it, wanting something desperately like to win a lottery, to have any type of pleasure in this desire realm for example, that very aspiration - Oh, maybe I will get it - there is some happiness in that - maybe I will get it, maybe I will get it. Or if we do get it, we get the new car, we get the new relationship, we get the new something then - oh, I've got it! Happiness, happiness! Totally wound up in, wrapped, bound, all up in attachment but you feels good, I like it, I am so glad I got it! I heard a man who is a quite very prominent politician in America, and this is a direct quote, he says: "when I was a boy I thought if I could be rich and famous I would be happy and boy, I was right!" From a Buddhist perspective - congratulations, you have our deep sympathy. Because you are totally immersed, you are drowning in the ocean of samsara, you have completely conflated attachment with genuine happiness, and you are completely deluded and you are enjoying it. Which means you are really, for the time being - hopeless. Just for the time being. That too will pass. There will come a point in your life where your wealth and your fame are not doing it for you anymore. When you will have been diagnosed with a disease you did not want, etc. Now how is it? Boy does it make you happy? Just wait! It is not a matter of if, it is only a matter of when, that's it. So attachment, it feels good. Just like soda pop, your favorite soda laced with strychnine. It tastes great. Until you get the after effects. Not so nice.

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(8:50) Among the three higher trainings what's a direct antidote? What's the most direct antidote for attachment, that mental affliction? You guessed it. It is Samadhi, right? Among the five obscurations what's one of them? That attachment, that fixation on the bounties of the desire realm. And what's the direct antidote among the five dhyanas factors? It is the unification of the mind, that's Samadhi. Boom, head on collision. (9:18) One of those is going to give. If they have a head on collision, either your Samadhi is going to fall apart, I think you have experienced that on occasion. Or, your fixation on hedonic pleasure is going to fall apart. But one of the two is going to fall apart because they cannot co-exist. So, get a good big Mac truck to drive into the VW of your hedonic fixation; a Mac truck of Samadhi to smash the little Ugo of attachment. Otherwise it will be the opposite - chugging up the hill, becoming road kill with all my attachments to samsara.

Sadly, Samadhi has become somewhat neglected in Buddhism with many teachers and students alike believing that just a dab will do, yet not achieving Samadhi breaks one of the bodhisattva vows.

(10:12) Samadhi, poor Samadhi. If Samadhi were a person I would feel a lot of sympathy, poor Samadhi especially in Buddhism. I mean in Hinduism, Samadhi, eh, if you are not interested in Samadhi you are not a good Hindu, you are not practicing yoga. I mean it is all about Samadhi, you can't say I am following yoga tradition, real yoga, not just doing some asanas, without Samadhi. But Buddhism it is the second child, it's the one in between you know? Samadhi, "shila", Samadhi, prajña, you know prajña, prajña - that is the culmination, right?

And so in the Zen tradition even though the word Zen comes from "Chan" and "Chan" comes from dhyana and dhyana is what? Dhyana? Ah, nevertheless especially in the modern Zen tradition, samadhi, samadhi. Whether it's in the Zen tradition, this modern vipashyana tradition with the poor emphasis on momentary Samadhi, or whether a lot of Nyingma teachers nowadays - eh Samadhi, a lot of Gelugpa teachers nowadays - eh Samadhi. I think there is something in common there, and I think I will give it a new name, I coined it this morning, it's the Brylcreem approach to Samadhi. Now only Americans of my generation and Patrice being one of them will have a clue what I am talking about: the Brylcreem approach, the Brylcreem back in the nineteen fifties. Patrice, do you remember the slogan for Brylcreem? Does anybody remember? I do: 'a little dab will do you', a little dab is just like a little squirt, a little dab will do you, a little dab will be enough. The Brylcreem approach to Samadhi is: a little dab will do you. Awful of lot of Zen go for that.

(12:36) Oh, Who need shamatha and Samadhi we are practicing Zen. We are just sitting.

The Nyingma approach: who need Samadhi? We are Dzogchenpas.

Vajrayana; who needs Samadhi? We are practicing Stage of Generation and Completion.

Gelugpas: who need Samadhi? We practice Lamrim. But lamrim without shamatha vipashyana is foreplay with no union, of samadhi and of shamatha and vipashyana. It's all foreplay. I mean what was all that drumroll about? The renunciation, the bodhichitta was for what? To go back to more renunciation and bodhichitta, or to finally have union of shamatha and vipashyana which is the grand culmination? It's the flowering, it's the fruit, and to say I am a lamrim practitioner, but oh no we don't do shamatha because we just do discursive meditation, which means you are not a lamrim meditator. What did you learn? Forget how to read? When you got two thirds of the way through, settling your mind just went blurb like a dead fish on the sand? Why do you call yourself a lamrim practitioner? Why do you call yourself a Gelugpa if you are not following the teachings of Tsongkhapa? There is a gold standard here it's hard to find here in the modern world. So a little dab will do you whether you going belly up on the Pali Canon where the Buddha taught the dhyanas so frequently, never once mentioned momentary Samadhi let alone that that was sufficient. So you are abandoning the Pali Canon with that. Or how about the Mahayana, whether is Zen, whether is Chan, whether is all the four school of Buddhism that take the Brylcreem approach to Samadhi? Sorry, we really don't need that you know, just go to Dzogchen, just go to lamrim, just go to Stage of Generation and Completion, oh, you do not worry about Samadhi you will achieve it in the Stage of Generation, good, how many of your students have done that? How long have you being teaching, how many of your students have achieved shamatha by way of Stage of Generation? Please line them up, I would really like to meet them. If it is only talk then what is the talk for? Is it dharma?

(14:45) So Mahayana teachers who take the Brylcreem approach to Samadhi are missing out something, they are not only missing out on something namely Samadhi, they are also missing out on something called "Shila",

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it's called ethics, it's called Mahayana ethics, it's called the forty six secondary precepts of the bodhisattva, and I will read a few of them.

If you break these you are breaking a precept which from the Mahayana perspective is more serious, heavier, karmically than breaking any of the Pratimoksha precepts. So what's one of them?

- Not seeking the means for achieving Samadhi. That is one of the bodhisattva precepts, if you are doing that you are breaking a bodhisattva precept.

How about another one:

- Not ridding ourselves of the obscurations that prevent the achievement of dhyanas. Those are the five obscurations, how about that?

Let's take one more:

- Forsaking of the "Shavrakayana".

That was three out of forty six, that is a good percentage. Forsaking of the Shavrakayana, you know those Hinayana people, the Hinayana path: no, no we are beyond that we are practicing Dzogchen, no, no we are Vajrayana practitioners, we don't need that shravika, that is for inferior people, not people like us.

That is three out of the forty six. Ignoring those and you still call yourself a Gelugpa? Bullshit! You call yourself a Nyingmapa? Bullshit!

Read a really wonderful text by Dudjom Rimpoche on the three sets of vows that includes Pratimoksha, Mahayana and Vajrayana. Do you think he skipped those because he is a Dzogchenpa. He is a Dzogchenpa. He is a real Dzogchenpa, not a bullshit Dzogchenpa, that just wants to say something popular. That's really tragic. So how many people are just abandoning in Buddha dharma to find something they find easy, that is not so challenging, or that sells better?

So compassion for all those who call themselves Buddhist and yet sabotage the Buddha's own teachings. Compassion, compassion for ourselves as we fall into the pit of attachment, clinging, craving and so forth, enjoying it.

Let's practice compassion.

Meditation:

(18:10) Settle your body, speech and mind in its natural state and calm the conceptual turbulence of the mind for a little while with mindfulness of breathing.

(20:20) And now as we are venturing in the cultivation of compassion, without any sense of superiority, let's attend first inwardly to the extent that we ourselves are subject to this mental affliction of craving, and attachment and review in your own life - is it true when we fall into that habitual pattern of craving and attachment - it invariably leads to suffering? Is it true or false? Let us not leave it at simply a religious belief.

(22:20) It may be awkward to say that we feel compassion for ourselves, but it is not at all awkward to arouse an aspiration to be free of the suffering of change, which is suffering because of the domination by mental affliction of attachment and craving. If you will arouse this aspiration with each inhalation - may I be free of that whole dimension of suffering that arises from attachment and craving, and may I be free of its underlying causes.

(23:30) And imagine if you will that dimension of suffering and its causes of craving, attachment as darkness veiling the pure and luminous nature of your own awareness, and with each inhalation, imagine drawing that darkness into the orb of light at your heart and imagine it dissolving there without a trace, with every in breath.

(26:45) And turn your attention outwards and call to mind if you will, someone or some group of individuals who you can see with your eyes of wisdom are suffering because of craving and attachment, whether or not they know it, whether or not the symptoms have manifested, they are right now subject to the suffering of change, and rather than having any sense of superiority or condescension, arouse the compassion aspiration: may you like myself, be free of this dimension of suffering, free of its causes of attachment, and may be all apply ourselves diligently, enthusiastically to the remedy, the cultivation of Samadhi with all the richness of that term, may we be free.

(29:30) Breath by breath imagine each one becoming free, as you let your attention rove from one person to another, a group of people to another, one realm of existence to another.

(39:56) Release all appearances and aspirations and let your awareness rest in its own nature.

Teaching 2:

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Summary made by SB Institute Staff:

The 20th century has been the worst era for Buddhism. Communism dealt a nearly lethal blow to Buddhism in several Asian countries. Some teachers say that the times are so degenerate that one should not even try to gain any realizations. Such an attitude would finish off buddhadharma. The Dalai Lama supports the creation of a contemplative observatory in Bangalore open to contemplatives of various traditions and scientists alike with the aspiration to revitalize the contemplative traditions of the world, so that each one can rediscover its own treasures.

(40:52) The 20th century was the worst century in the whole history of Buddhism. It is a historical fact. It started in 1930's in Mongolia, that is where the first symptoms started to show up, where something like 12 hundred monasteries, tens of thousands of monks killed, monasteries demolished, crushed, by the Stalinists who had taken over Mongolia. Killed maybe 30,000 monks. Just shot them. That was just the opening salvo to the Holocaust that has hit Buddhism throughout Asia, and is still continuing, thanks to the policies of the Chinese Communist government. In China as well as in Tibet. Not only Tibet. In Russia also, North Korea, wherever communism spread, it was the Nazis to the Jews, it was to Buddhism and all forms of dharma, one final solution. Wipe it out. You think something is poison, Mao told His Holiness the Dalai Lama that religion is poison. What do you do with poison? Eradicate it until it is gone. So it was an awful century.

And we are tremendously fortunate that there are qualified scholars and contemplatives practitioners, from these different traditions. From Mongolia, South East Asia, from Korea, from Tibet, who survived the holocaust. So we are tremendously fortunate. But it is almost as if Buddhism was dealt what might be, a lethal blow, a lethal blow. That is pretty savage. It looks like it could go either way. It could either perish, or with a lot of emergency care, it could survive. It could get robust again. It could happen. But those Buddhist teachers who that say that - the time of realization is over, that there is no point in trying to practice Samanatha, you won't achieve it, that there is no point in trying to really realize emptiness, you won't do it, these are really degenerate times folks, and the most you can hope for now is well, study well, be ethical but don't really get your hopes up because these are really degenerate times, you won't be able to achieve the path even if you try - they are finishing off what the communists started. They are just letting the patient die. So if the heart is trembling, we don't just watch it die, if the heart even stops, we don't just watch, maybe a little bit of shock therapy, we don't give up on it until it is decomposing. Buddhism is shila, Samadhi, prajna, Buddhism is the six perfections, all six, that includes the 5th one, which is Dhyana. Vajrayana includes stage of generation and completion, all the four schools of Tantra, there is Mahamudra there is Dzogchen.

So, I think these are really critical times, as for a critical patient you can go either way. But those that say don't even try? Thanks for nothing. You have given up on the patient before the patient is even dead. You are not a healer. You are a casual bystander. So let's really preserve dharma by practicing it.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama, when he proposed this center for the practice of Shamatha and Vipashyana, not only for the practice but for achieving of Shamatha and Vipashyana, near Bangalore, but inviting practitioners of Shamatha and Vipashyana from all the contemplative traditions of the world – if you are intent on that, refining your attention, developing Samadhi, by whatever name, we are not going to call it Samadhi if you are a Sufi a Taoist and so forth, no problem, we are not going to quibble over terms here; but if you have that type of technology to really refine the mind and then use that refined mind to explore the nature of reality, welcome! Come on in! You scientists come on in, let's join this all collaboratively, to explore our inner resources, to fathom the nature of consciousness, that is a celebration. He would never say that if he thought that this was just going to be one big fiasco.

So, let's practice. Refresh life. His Holiness, when I spoke with him just a few weeks ago, he didn't quite use the word 'renaissance', but that is exactly what he meant, to revitalize, to bring fresh life into, that's what he said. His motivation to bring fresh life into, not only Buddhism, but the contemplative traditions of the world. So it is not just something we just read about – the great saints, the great siddhas, and so forth and so on of the past, the further they get away the more they look like fairytales, the closer they are it looks like some of the most sublime science that human beings have ever explored. But a renaissance, a renaissance of Buddhism itself, a renaissance of all contemplative traditions, which means a renaissance of all the great religious traditions of the world so that each one can rediscover its own treasures, so not trying to corral them. You know His Holiness, he is never an evangelist, he has tried to dissuade Westerners from becoming Buddhist, - stay with your own tradition, if you really want to, then okay, otherwise stay home - boy that's

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anti-evangelism. I think he must be the least sectarian man on the planet. And yet his passionate devotion, his faith, his reverence for his own tradition, coupled with deep respect as he meets with Muslim leaders, Christian and Jewish and scientists who are Atheists and materialists, and treats them all with respect. Looking for the common ground. So - Renaissance.

So the people who are abiding by, adhering to, holding to, their own doctrines, Muslim, Buddhist, Christian, Toaist, whatever it may be, and their institutions – good, go for it. And they are very different, there is no question about that, even Theravada Buddhism to Varjrayana Buddhism, they are very different, so no problem.

Where is the common ground? Gosh that would transform everything. From my limited perspective I see two large looming issues on our horizon right now. One is that now that we are just forced to live together, which for a long time wasn't true, but now in terms of this global village where Muslims have to encounter Christians, Christians have to encounter Jews, Jews have to encounter Buddhists, Buddhists have to encounter Hindus, and Atheists and Materialists and so on and so forth, we are all in the same soup now. We can't ignore each other, it's just not possible. We could for a long time, now we can't. Thank you airplanes, thank you internet, thank you telephones and all of that transportation, communication. So what do we do when the differences are so obvious, in our face, really obvious, and they are real, and they are not going to go away? His Holiness is not trying to make them go away, not trying to smooch all the world's religions into one big smooze, that doesn't make any sense and nobody is going to do it. It is a ridiculous idea. But the differences are so obvious, in the midst of all of those is there an area of convergence, an area where we can really learn from each other all by way of experience, by sharing experience? This could really be spectacular. So there is one area. What do we do about the diversity of religions in the world with people so passionately, existentially committed to their own traditions? Which very often leads to contempt, hostility and then warfare, militancy, violence against everyone who is outside? Happened everywhere, including Buddhist countries. I wish we could say we were free, not true.

Then the other one is tradition and modernity, science and spirituality. We can't ignore each other. I think the Atheists were kind of playing this like a waiting game - all religions are so stupid they will just die off. No, Marx died off. Marxism is dying off, bye, bye blackbird. Lots of luck. So the Atheist materialism, oh we just give them enough time, religion will die off – not in your life time baby. Not happening. So live with it. This is part of reality why not study it rather than hoping it will go away? Live with reality, it is not going away. The reality is that religions of the world are strong, they are there, they are not going away. So what do you do about science and religion, generally? Very different. Different methodology, different beliefs and so forth. Is there any common ground where they can actually work together? Rather than just fighting to the death, the creationists against the atheists, this fundamentalist group against that one, and so forth and so on. Terrible history. And so boring. What's more boring than a hard core, militant Darwinist with a hard core, militant creationist? Like dumb and dumber. Really. I don't know why they haven't bored themselves to death.

But there again, His Holiness gives this one symbol, this center envisioned for Bangalore, invite the scientists, whatever your world view, be agnostic, and atheist a materialist, a Hindu, a Jane, a Buddhist, whatever you may become, let's look at that experience and find that common ground so that the contemplative traditions of the world can enrich science and science can enrich, sharpen up, bring integrity, precision, sophistication to evaluating and understanding contemplative experience.

So, if you regard yourself as a follower of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, there is something really like a north star that he has presented to you. Something really healing, nobody is left on the outside, except people who say no, no, I am holding to my dogma, I don't care about the facts. Ok, well we have invited you, you don't want to come to the party, if you are not interested that is okay, we are not going to fight you, there it is. Enjoy your day, let's practice.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Revised by Cheri Langston.

Final edition by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Posted by Alma Ayon

60 Mindfulness of the body (5)

28 Sep 2012

Teaching 1:

So we finished the session on the close applications of mindfulness to the body in the Wisdom Chapter of Shantideva's: "A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life". (00:14)

I thought I would share a story that probably many of you have already heard, it is always nice to hear again, and whether you take it literally, metaphorically or as poetry or a lovely superstition, it is your choice. It is about Shantideva coming from a princely family, a royal family, making his way to Nalanda. He was at this huge university it was like Cambridge, The Sorbonne, the apex of education for all of Asia at that time, 7th – 8th century. So here we have all these industrious monks, the tremendous knowledge, just like a mandala, an extraordinary system of education that His Holiness is so strongly promoting nowadays. But here he is in this incredible center of learning, and all the monks see him as a big goof off. He just seems to be doing three things, eat, pooped, peed and slept. That was all he did. So they were kind of getting fed up with him, they don't see him doing anything else, just a loafer. So they are getting fed up with him but they need an excuse to kick him out and so it occurred to them that it was part of the Monastic routine that on a regular basis one of the monks would be asked to give some kind of a public presentation.

So they figure okay they will get him there because obviously he doesn't know anything, so we will put him on the spot, he will be so embarrassed he will decline, and we can then say that he can't stay here because that is part of the Monastic responsibility – so have a nice day go loaf somewhere else. So they came to him and said that they would like him to give a public lecture, a presentation, so he asked them – "what would you like? Would you like an original composition or would you like me to recite some Sutra? They said, "give us an original one" – knock yourself out, you know they were sure he couldn't do it, he just sleeps, eats and poops. So it is all set up, and he is supposed to give an original composition and all they see him doing is sleeping. So the day comes, these monks really had it out for him, they wanted to humiliate him so they could get him out quick, so when they prepared a throne for him, a really high one, almost like sarcasm, and with no ladder. It was like 6 or 8ft tall, like go for it. They really wanted to humiliate him.

So the day came and Shantideva approaches this throne and you can just imagine all the monks smirking back and forth, so Shantideva approaches the throne and they suddenly see him up on the throne, and they never saw how he got up there. It was just like whoosh and he was up there, up on the throne. And then he starts giving a dharma talk, and the dharma talk that he gave was The Guide to the Bodhisattva way of Life.

He gave it just free flowing, right from his heart to his mouth and out it flowed, and anyone who reads Sanskrit, it is beautiful, it is beautiful poetry, much better than any English translation, it's metered, it's fluid, it's poetry, it's literature, it's profound, spiritual, wise, it is incredibly benevolent, but it's beautiful also, it really is poetry. So this exquisite masterpiece is just flowing from him, spontaneously. Then the monks saw, and some of them are starting to take notes real quickly, like man oh man, we didn't see this one coming! So they are writing their notes down, and it's a rather long text, it would take probably an hour or two to read through. He gets to the Wisdom chapter, there are 10 chapters, the ninth chapter is the Wisdom chapter, then there is a final chapter of dedication of merit. He comes to the Wisdom chapter, and that's where our text here is located, all about the perfection of wisdom, of course. Then as he is reciting it, their jaws continued to drop even more, this is the story, I take it literally, you can take it any way you like, he started to elevate above his throne. The dharma throne. He just started to hover, and he continues to recite the 9th chapter, the Wisdom chapter, and he hovers like a helicopter, just slowly higher, and higher, and higher, and he continues to recite, and the monks are taking notes but his voice is getting fainter and fainter, and he literally, has anybody seen that movie Angels and Demons, where the helicopter just goes up and up and up and then just vanishes? Well, he was a human helicopter with no blades, he went straight up, straight up, until he gets toward the end of the book and they can't hardly hear anything it is so distant, and then he just disappears into a dot and vanishes.

The monks were rather surprised. They might have thought – we probably misjudged him. And so now they are desperate, they have to find this guy, he is a mahasiddha, a poet, a scholar, a contemplative. He is incredible, we want to keep him here forever but he just disappeared into a spot. So they are running all over

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the place looking for him, they have got to get him back, shower him with praise, and honor and so forth and so on, and he just disappeared.

But he left one text behind, and legend has it that he even took off the outer accouchements of a monk, and took on the guise of a wandering aesthetic. A sharma, invisible, incommunicado, and just traveled around India he just disappeared from history. But there is one story, just one that I know of and that is that he took up residence in a cave, and was meditating there, and the surrounding villagers saw that wild animals of all kinds would go into the cave, they would be drawn into it, but they wouldn't come out. And so they had their own thoughts, this guy is eating all the animals, chowing down! They thought this was terrible, he was supposed to be a holy man, and here he is a big carnivore. So they complain and they find all these animals just gathered around him, like St. Francis of Asisi, they just wanted to be around him, they just wanted to be in his field.

That is the only story we have but, when he learned that this monks really desperately wanted him back, to come and teach at Nalanda, he said no, that time is passed, but he left one text, he said this will be your teaching, and then he disappeared from history.

And the one text he left behind was the Shikshasamuccaya Compendium, an extraordinary edition, showing he knew all the Sutras, he also had this splendid kind of mosaic, this mandala, of the nature of the whole Bodhisattva way of life. So this was the more elaborate version. There was the Guide to the Bodhisattva way of life, but by the time he got to the 10th chapter they were hardly hearing anything, and they wanted to get a complete copy, so I think they got a complete copy of that, but he left behind this Shiksha-Samuccaya, composed within his spare time, okay that will have to do, and then he just disappeared and we don't hear any more about him.

But the larger text, the Shiksha-Samuccaya, the compendium of practices, that he just composed two texts that we know, this is the second one, and in terms of Western translation it was translated by a man name Bendal about 80 years ago, it's rather beautifully written but also a lot of inaccuracies, the Tibetan lamas were unavailable back then so a lot of things the two translators didn't understand the meaning of, how could they? They had no one to consult with., so that text is really in need of a new major translation all the way through, nobody has gotten to it yet, but it's a classic, well known in the Tibetan tradition, although not that commonly taught, and so there is a wisdom chapter there of course, and there is a whole chapter dedicated to the four applications of mindfulness.

So I am doing a fresh translation just for you all, of just that one section. So for the first time, in English, a new translation that I think is pretty accurate. This is chapter 13. You can get the Bendall translation on Amazon, you can see the older translation, it is quite lovely in many respects, sometimes written in King James English, which is charming.

Summary: Alan shares his translation of Ch. 13 of Shantideva's Compendium of Practices on the 4 applications of mindfulness.

(10:57) This is the Chapter Thirteen on The Four Close Applications of Mindfulness, A Compendium of Practices (*Śikṣasamuccaya*) by Śāntideva Translated by B. Alan Wallace. So it is right in the midst of the Wisdom Chapter just as in the A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life (*Bodhicaryāvatāra*), The Four Applications of Mindfulness explanation is also in a midst of the Wisdom chapter.

So we now turn to this text, we did the short version, the concise version and now we go to elaborate version. This one is about 10 pages, this section on the Four Application of Mindfulness and the other one is about three pages then we finished that is we finished the body session.

Alan is reading some texts which are being written in black and between the texts you are reading Alan's comments about each part of the text.

So now we begin:

(11:14) **"Once you have made your mind serviceable in that way, engage in the close applications of mindfulness."**

So a mentioned this little opening line earlier on and that is the preceding chapter as in the Bodhicaryāvatāra, preceding chapter on dhyana, samadhi, shamatha. So that is the place to make your mind serviceable, in a myriade of ways. And so the same is true here, it is natural that the chapter that precedes the chapter on vipashyana is on shamatha and he says: once you have made your mind serviceable in that way. So that really cannot be over emphasized, you can study Madhyamaka (Middle Way), you can study all the wisdom

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teachings without having your mind made serviceable by subduing the five obscurations, you can do it. But then will the wisdom teachings sink in? Well that is an empirical question it is not a dogma question, if it does then great, congratulations, if somehow you can pull that one off, but the type of investigation here, that is done, and is not true only for Buddhism, it is true for other traditions as well. The type of investigation done here, unlike pretty much all scientific investigation, again each one has its strengths and limitations, I am not saying one is better than the other, but unlike all types of scientific investigation, the technology of course is your own mind, the technology you bring to bear to engage in investigation is your own mind, so that is what needs to be refined. If you don't refine it (your mind) then you conceptually engage with material and get a lot of bright ideas, but do they sink in do they transform your view, do they transform the way you view reality, do they sink in so deeply, do they actually dispel the obscurations and afflictions of your mind? Scientific enquiry is not designed to do that, so we should never blame it for not doing something that is not designed to do. Scientific enquiry was designed to gain insight into the objective physical quantifiable world and they have done a really, really good job. Does it provide eudiamonia? No, it was never designed to do that. Does it radically transform and purify the mind of the people that investigate it? No, it was never designed to do that.

(13:40) So it is like looking at a tractor and saying why can't you go as fast as a Maserati? Why can't you fly like a butterfly? But wait a minute it was not designed to do that. So to make, to draw this distinction is not a criticism of science but it is saying, look everything has its limitations, if you want to build a Mac truck don't go to Buddhist sutras.

So once you have made your mind serviceable in that way, then when you engage in the close applications of mindfulness, you'll not only gain insight but the insight you gain will transform the mind that's gaining it, transform and liberate, that is the whole point.

"In that regard, I have already explained the close application of mindfulness of the body in the preceding discussion of impurity."

So in the Buddha's discourse of the Sattipatthana Sutra there is a whole long section on really reflecting upon the impure aspects of the body to overcome the craving, the attachment, the clinging, the obsession with one's own and others bodies where there is craving and lust, so it's skillful means, but you say - I do not need to do that now because I have done that early, and that was in Samadhi session for people who are really heavily bound by lust and craving, by sensual desire, it is a medicine and if you actually take the medicine it works, it does, but that is not where he is going now. So he said I have dealt with that already, so we do not have to deal with that now, so he goes right in, what he does commonly throughout the entire text, he is citing a lot of the classic Mahayana sutras, so that is what he does now, he says:

The *Dharmasaṅgīti Sutra* presents a brief discussion of its divisions: the divisions of the close application of mindfulness of the body. So here he is quoting a sutra:

"Moreover, son of good family, a bodhisattva closely applies mindfulness to the body while contemplating, 'This body is simply a configuration of feet, toes, calves, thighs, chest, abdomen, navel, spine, heart, ribs, sides of the torso, shoulders, hands, forearms, upper arms, the region between the shoulder blades, neck, jaws, forehead, head, and the skull.'"

Those are the basic components. [of the body referring to the components of the body mentioned above.]

"They are assembled by the agent that arises from karma, and they are the location of mental afflictions, derivative mental afflictions, speculations, and various ruminations, numbering in the hundreds of thousands."

So I think having spent 5 weeks here you are in a position to judge is there an exaggeration or maybe underestimation? So there it is so far that is numbering in the hundreds of thousands.

"Many types of substances are brought together in it, including the hair on the head, body hair, nails, teeth, bones, skin, flesh, fatty secretions of the flesh, sinews, fat, oil, lymph, spleen, liver, urine, excrement, stomach, intestines, blood, phlegm, bile, pus, saliva, brain, and spinal fluid. Thus, it is a compilation of many substances."

This whole term skandhas, the aggregates, it has an absolute connotation, sometimes actually it is even called a sac but more broadly speaking it is a compilation, it is just an aggregation of a whole bunch of parts in a skin sac. It really puts romantic love in a very different light.

"In this regard, one closely applies mindfulness with the question, 'What is called *the body*'?"

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(17:39) So we are back to meaningful information. And so meaningful information always has a referent, it is about something, the big term is intentional in modern philosophy. Intentional means not just volition it does not mean that, intentional means is about something, it has a referent. For example I say flower, which flower? Oh *that* flower! So the word refers to something. So here we are, nice simply exercise really straight forward, and that is when we think body, the body, make it personal, my body - that is not just noise, that is a word with a referent. So this first major venturing into the realm of vipashyana with respect to the body saying, Ok, here is a body here is a word I've used a lot, this is not some external import from the Orient, from Buddhism, from some mystical tradition. In any language you probably have a word pretty close to - my body. We already are using that term, it is part of our vocabulary, part of way of thinking. Good, what's the referent of the term? Where is the target? Where is the point to, where is it? So that is the question. What is called - the body?

“When this is analyzed, one considers, ‘This body is like space’ and closely applies mindfulness to the body as being like space.”

(18:48) When this is analyzed, one considers this body is like space: again, when you get insider's view again we can only do with our own body. You just sit down and say why should I look from outside, anybody can look from outside? Miles can look at front of my body and see pretty much what I do, but what he can't see, what nobody else can see from the outside is - I close my eyes and say: oh. That's private. I've got the insider's view, I am inside the auditorium, I am getting the insider's view. So then, there you are. Elizabeth pointed this out some days ago, you look in there as you are doing so this is it, this is good as it gets. I am in a position of course I can look at the body and then look all those individual parts, the spleen, the hair the gallbladder and all of that, okay we can do that, but it is all looking from the outside. But now when we look from the inside and consider 'the body is like space'.

So one considers this body is like space and closely applies mindfulness to the body as being like space. One perceives everything to be like space bearing in mind, you remember this from earlier on - when we are closely applying mindfulness to the body it's not just one's own body is it? Internally, externally, internally and externally but in that category - the body of all physical phenomena. And so here we take the one physical body for which we have the insider's view as well the outsider's view. One may be a doctor who practices satipatthana and then does autopsies or does surgery and opens up bodies and looks inside and so forth, so we can look from the third person perspective, the first person, but here is the one entity in the physical universe we have the first person perspective from the inside, and then consider - this body and then you look outside and everything else is like space.

(21:03) Now he is assuming of course that you have some background, this is not a beginning chapter and this is not beginning text, this is for people that have been around the block for a while and he is assuming that you have some basis there, on the fundamental teachings of Shravaka Yana and so forth because this is Bodhisattva Yana. And so he is assuming, it is safe to say, he is assuming that you already have some sense you know the three marks of existence, you've already look into this.

And so now you may be poised to see how all of these phenomena that congeal into entities that have attributes, they're actually emerging from space, dissolving back into space, and they consist of nothing other than space, just like the appearances themselves, the appearances being the basis of designation and the conceptual mind locks onto them, makes things - objectifies and subjectifies but is all happening in space and there is nothing there other than space.

“One perceives everything to be like space. In order to thoroughly fathom the body, mindfulness is not closely applied to anything else, it is not focused on any other aspect, and it is not allowed to become distracted.”

(22:10) Right there you can do that if and only if you have made your mind serviceable in the preceding way. That is what all the shamatha is about. There is the first theme.

What I would like to do is probably keep the meditation that is coming very shortly keep it pretty open to you to venture, so I am front loading the meditation and recall the first part is familiar now we had a number of times, looking through conceptually, that is when we, within the conventionally reality, does the body have a spleen, head, bones and all these kind of things? The answer is yes, so ok, sweep through it that way and you see, oh, sure there are a lot of parts and there is a skin sac holding them altogether but again where is the body to be found in that?

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I was thinking in the United Nations that just convened recently, they maybe still there I don't know, but so these delegates, these representatives, ambassadors from nations all over the world convening in New York city, and so the assembly, the United Nations assembly, there is only one, just one general assembly, not more than one, there is only one for the whole planet, it is one entity, it is singular and then how many delegates, how many ambassadors, how many representatives and so forth, and then who is the chief of it, who is the head of it? But exactly when has the United Nations convened, at what point can we say, oh, the assembly is now there, when does that take place? There are a lot of countries on the planet, so what if an ambassador of one of them just falls ill, and says to the general assembly, sorry I can't come, my apologies, but I am sick, I am in hospital, does that mean that the general assembly does not happen because Mauritius did not show up? Okay, go home, we can't play because Mauritius didn't show up? Or Iceland, what do we do without Iceland? No we can do without them, we will still go. Well how about Mauritius and Iceland? No we can still go. How about if China does not show up? We will get by. How about nobody from Europe shows up? Are you boycotting? This is getting dodgy now. Is it still assembled or not? If every single country in Europe decided 'no', or they all got sick at the same time? So exactly how many do you need to say, ok, the general assembly is there, the United Nations is now in session? When is it in session? When is the United Nations, there? When you say it's there. And when is it over? How many people have to leave the headquarters before you say, oh, the assembly is gone? When you say so! It is not one, it is not 99 percent is not 100 percent it's exactly when you say so.

(25:24) Just like how much of your body can you have removed and still say this is a damaged body? A damaged but still a body, a body, body? How much of a house has to be destroyed before you say it's no longer a house? When you say so. When you say so.

So it is interesting, so with the body, so with the general assembly, so with the house, it comes into existence when we say so, but that means there was nothing really from its own side they come into and became it.

(25:50) I was thinking about that in my meditation before here, imagine that there is something that's really absolute there, so we go back to Tsongkhapa's approach, lock on to – what is it you're refuting? Oh, I know what it is, something inherently existent by its own side, it's independent of any conceptual designation, it's already there. So imagine there's something already there which means it – intrinsically, by its own nature, it already holds its own attributes, it has its attributes, it has a real lock on that, it's inherently existent, it really is whatever you're going to say it is. But it is not a body because it's going to turn into a body, but not yet, it's inherently existent. And then cause and conditions happen, but this is inherently, there is something really there, and apparently bearing its own characteristics. How can that turn into something else, if it inherently bears its own characteristics? That's it, it's stuck. How does it turn into something that it's not? By an act of volition? From its side, ok, I am going to get rid of some of my attributes? How can that happen, how can one thing ever turn into anything else if it is intrinsically holding on like a vice gripe like a fist? Holding on to its own attributes? How could it ever transform into something that it's not? And if something is really there, inherently existent? How could it become something, how could it at the end, you know when it comes time to die, how could that ever stop being itself if it is inherently existent? This is the implication from the Madhyamaka that is if it's inherent existent it's unchanging. The realization of impermanence itself is a slam dunk proof, if you really understood it. Realization of impermanence immediately implies that it can't possibly be inherently existent, which means that it can't possibly, if it were inherent existence, it couldn't possibly engage in casual interaction. There would be no give. It would be more like one isolated titanium billiard ball that's got absolute barriers and just goes around the world like this - I am, I am, I am and will not change, and I will not change, I will not change - because it can't, it's got a vice grip on all of its attributes. Which means it can't really be influenced by anything. That's inherent existence - a dead world.

(28:09) So there is the first theme of meditation - really reflecting on wholes and parts. When does the whole come into existence and then you look into a part of a whole, see that is also a whole, as a spleen is a whole, yet one spleen per body, but then the spleen is made by many, many cells, and so which of those cells is the spleen? And then he goes to the cell and that is made of many molecules, good but molecules are made by many atoms and atoms are made of elementary particles and particles have different features and different attributes on their own and none of those attributes being identical to the elementary particle. So do the whole - parts analyses. And then look for the referent as you holding in mind - my body - then probe in, look right in, can you find a referent, can you find a target of that word, [body]? And then in the absence of

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finding, you may come across space and then rest there, closely apply mindfulness of the body as being like space, perceive everything to be like space and do so without distraction.

Again it is said, here is another quote from the sutra, oh that is so interesting and it is the same theme now, right from the sutra now:

Again it is said, “This body has not come from the past. It does not proceed to the future. It is not present in the past or the future. Otherwise, it would arise from something unreal and erroneous. It is devoid of an agent or one who experiences, it has no beginning, end, or middle, no fundamental location, no master, no owner, and no possessor. It is designated by the transient labels ‘assemblage,’ ‘body,’ ‘enjoyment,’ ‘abode,’ ‘basis,’ ‘dwelling,’ and ‘sense base.’ This body has no essence. It arose from the semen and blood of one’s father and mother, is by nature impure, putrid, and foul-smelling. It is troubled by the thieves of attachment, hatred, and delusion and by fear and despair. Closely apply mindfulness to it, thinking, ‘Always subject to dissolution, separation, dispersion, and destruction, it is a container for a hundred thousand different diseases.’”

Alan is reading each part of the text and making some comments:

(29:35) **This body has not come from the past.** So this body has not been around forever obviously, it is not that old. So there is a point at which it did not exist. But then, did it come from the past before it existed? Where did it come from?

This body has not come from the past, it’s not an entity frozen through time, it is not ‘it’.

It does not proceed to the future. It is not present in the past or the future.

This entity, it does not proceed to the future. It is not present in the past or the future. But of course when you look for it right in the present moment, you come up with space. It is not present in the past or the future, otherwise it would arise from something unreal and erroneous.

Otherwise, it would arise from something unreal and erroneous.

If you try to find something inherent existent from which it arose, you are on a fool’s errand.

It is devoid of an agent or one who experiences, it has no beginning, end, or middle, no fundamental location, no master, no owner, and no possessor.

(30:21) This body, it is devoid of an agent, the CEO, the controller. True or not? Check it out. It is devoid of an agent or one who experiences. Remember, the awareness of awareness? When you probe inwards with the cognoscopy, when you are probing in do you have a sense of being the agent? When you probe in do you have a sense of simply being the observer? With respect to the mind and now he is doing the same thing with respect to the body. As you are attending closely to the body from any angle, you see anything here that is the agent? Something separate that is the agent in charge of the body? It is devoid of an agent or one who experiences.

It has no beginning, end, or middle. No fundamental location, no master, no owner, and no possessor.

The transient means adventitious, that is - the Italian could call it this, the French could call it this, the Germans could call it this and so forth, they are just adventitious labels, called by various labels. It is called by these. It is designated by transient labels, ‘assemblage,’ ‘body,’ ‘enjoyment,’ ‘abode,’ ‘basis,’ ‘dwelling,’ and ‘sense base.’ This body has no essence.

It arose from the semen and blood of one’s father and mother, is by nature impure, putrid, and foul-smelling. It is troubled by the thieves of attachment, hatred, and delusion and by fear and despair. Closely apply mindfulness to it, thinking, ‘Always subject to dissolution, separation, dispersion, and destruction, it is a container for a hundred thousand different diseases.’

(32:30) That should be enough. This is medicine designed to overcome two things simultaneously, that are both profoundly interrelated. One of these is attachment. It happens at all ages, but attachment to the body, the clinging to the body and thinking this is the very basis of my enjoyment, this is my key to the good life, this is my key to be able to enjoy life. And I want to look good, I want to be attractive, I want to hear the people say – oh you look so young. That is actually quite a Western thing, it really is. To feel happy about that I think is really quite charming. Tibetans find that alien, traditionally speaking, if you are 80 you want to look 80, then people say – oh you look 80! If somebody comes to somebody who is 62 and says - oh you only look like you are 40, the response would be – oh I am so sorry I deceived you! I didn’t mean to!

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So it is the grasping, the clinging the identification with the body that is one element. We are enormously distracted - it is such a magnet to carry us away from the cultivation of that which is really meaningful. So there is one aspect, attachment.

So largely it is attachment to the body that makes that so painful. I remember from the Lamrim when I first heard it, we can be so upset, if you have a hundred thousand dollars and you lose a thousand dollars. Someone just steals it. Oh, I don't like that. It bothers me. Somebody steals a hundred dollars - Oh! Someone steals your car - Oh! Then you lose your family – oh! Then you lose your homeland, you become a refugee – oh! Then you lose your reputation, people think you are a total dope, oh! One by one you see that wow, this really hurts, one by one, losing everything you are identified with it, everything you think you have. But when you die you lose it all at once, everything you have, all your money, your family, your reputation, everything you have acquired, all like one Guillotine coming down. Here is you, and here is everything you had, CUT. And the thing that is closest there, is your body. Your own body. And it is ugly and it's wrinkly, and it smells bad – decomposing bad, but it is **my** body. Why do you want to hold onto that? There is so much suffering because of the attachment to the body. That is one element, attachment, loosen that up.

And the other of course is the reification. Let alone my body, it's just the reification of the body – it's *really* there! So the strength of the Pali cannon of the Theravada tradition in particular, the strength of the Sravakayana is to recognize this body is devoid of an owner, a controller, a substantial agent who is controlling it. It is very clear on that. But it doesn't challenge that much – is the body really there? Is it an entity from its own side? It is not strongly emphasized. The emptiness of phenomena, it's there, but you have to look for it. Because now that we are Madhyamika, front and center, it is not enough to realize this body is empty of the agent, the self, the controller that is not enough, you must see the body itself is just as empty, and no more empty, that is the interesting part.

The body is just as empty of inherent existence as you are, and that doesn't sound true the first time we hear it, at least it didn't for me, and you may think: no, I know I can't find myself, I look for myself and I just find mental phenomena, physical phenomena, ok, I don't exist, I don't really exist, got ya! “but my body? Give me a break! When I had my motorcycle accident and I had a head on collision with a truck, on my motorcycle, I can tell you my body existed. It REALLY existed, especially my left knee. That is the one that went into the grille. Bang. Man don't talk to me that my left knee is not inherently existent, it was screaming at me. “I hurt therefore I am”. So the body, no matter whether the body has an intrinsic owner or not, the body, Oh, when the body when is ill, when the body is injured, what do you think? You are kind of inherently existent? That is my impression. That's a harder nut to crack, and that is exactly the nut that needs to be cracked.

Look for the referent just as earlier here, you look for the referent of “I”, this word that we use that is being used in all languages, “I” or use your own name, Alan, whatever you name, it means something, so what's the referent? If it means something so what is it pointing to? We think I am somewhat elusive, but the body? Put it there! My body! All 180lbs of it. That is something real. Until you start looking – oh, that's the kneecap is that what you are referring to? Or you come in from the inside, you see earth, water, fire, air, space – or maybe you open your eyes and see visual impressions. Doggone it I know I left it here some place, where is that body? That body that has

all of these attributes and has all of those parts? It has got to be here somewhere, I am sure. Look for it. And if you don't find it, one final point here, I can't remember which one of my wonderful teachers, perhaps Geshe Rabten, really an important point for exactly this - In this room, forty people or so, if I ask – is Stanley here? I guess not. Is Jeanni here? I guess not. Is that not enough? I glanced around and did not see her. Can I now be confident, can I come to certainty that since I asked the question is Jeanni here, and I looked around and didn't see her, can I be confident now that she is not here? Or could it just be that I didn't look carefully enough? And of course she is here. And so we are talking about Jeanni for example, she is not that small, a little petite but not that small, you can see her without a magnifying glass, so within this room, you can imagine coming to an absolutely conclusive certainty, if you know what Jeanni looks like, you can scan through this room, meticulously with your eyes wide open and knowing what to look for, if by the time you have checked the whole room you didn't find Jeanni, then you could safely conclude that it is not only that I couldn't find her, but I looked and had she been there I would have seen her, and I didn't. Therefore, she is not there. And that is knowledge. His Holiness the Dalai Lama strongly emphasizes this – it is not just not

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finding something, it's recognizing that it is not there. Not finding something isn't knowing something. Knowing that something is not there is knowing something. I know she is not here because were she here, I would have seen her. There is no way she could be in this room without my seeing her, after I have scanned through the whole room. But now that I have done so, and there is a total absence of let's say Danny, because he is large enough and we can all see him easily, if you look for him, you can say with certainty right now, Danny is not in the room. If he were here, one of us would see him. Somebody would see him. But since he is the kind of person that you would see and no one sees him, then you have definitive knowledge – absence of Danny. And then you rest in that.

(42:12) If you scan through your body internally in terms of the elements, you scan through your body conceptually all the parts from the hair to the feet, if the body is here it's got to be some place here. That's the room. Either the body is evenly distributed through all of it or in one part or another, or if you think it is outside, check it out, but here is the container, here is the room, and if you can't find the body through the entirety of the room or anywhere individually in the room, body isn't there. In which case you know the absence of an inherent existent body, that exists independently of your mere conceptual designation. And then you rest in that spacious quality, that sheer absence, that spaciousness, the body is space. And then if you want to extend your application of mindfulness outwards, you may turn to any physical phenomenon that you like from a galaxy to an elementary particle. It's the same story, you look for it, you can look for it in terms of sheer appearances, sheer appearances are not a galaxy or an elementary particle, or you can look in terms of parts for analyses, or you can investigate in terms of its factors of origination and factors of dissolution - exactly when did it come into being? Independently objectively by its own nature, or simply when it is designated? And when did it stop being inherently objectively so we simply have to witness it, or when we say so? And if is merely when we say so then it is never there from its own side in the first place, it never came into existence from its own place, it was never there from its own place, and it is never dissolves from its own place, it's not there at all, it's space, and rest in that spaciousness, the emptiness of inherent nature. So let's focus on the body, let's jump in.

Meditation:

(44:15) But first of all let's take a breather, as if we are about to set out on an expedition, which can be quite challenging, first of all retreat to your basecamp, to refuge, a place of peace and quiet, to collect yourself, to set your body, speech and mind at ease, calm the turbulence of the mind and make it serviceable.

(46:15) And at your own pace, pose the question to yourself as Shantideva suggests: what is it that is called the body, what is the referent? Scan through the body part by part conceptually, attending to components that are conventionally real, they are there, but asking: are you the body, are you the body? What is the referent of the term "my body"?

(50:50) If your mind becomes vague, a bit spaced out, just bring to mind what comes to mind when you think "my body", does nothing come to mind or something? An image? Holding that, whatever it may be, holding that in mind, your sense of what your body is, and return to experience and see if you can find that, anywhere within the skin or outside.

(53:00) Having scan carefully, meticulously through the entire space where your body should be, if you find nothing there, objectively real that you can identify as "this is my body", if that body is not to be found, and you have scanned thoroughly, then rest in that not finding, in that knowing its absence, rest without distraction in that knowing of the absence of a real body.

(54:50) And then with your eyes open or shut as you wish, adopt the insiders view, moment by moment arising earth, water, fire and air. Is there anything in here that warrants the name, that deserves the name: this is my body? If there is nothing there that really is your body, then as Shantideva suggests, actually view your body as being like space and rest in that awareness without distraction.

Teaching 2:

(1:08) There are questions waiting here but I think some comments might be helpful to kind of expand and also contextualize this practice and the importance of this practice of gaining some realization of the emptiness of physical phenomena starting with the center of our own universe, our own body.

We are using the summary made by SB Institute and add some of Alan's comments thinking that would be helpful for understanding the themes, as below:

- **Vajrayana Practice: it is imperative to realize emptiness**

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- **Summary made by SB Institute**

Alan comments that for Vajrayana practice, it is necessary to realize the emptiness of both self and phenomena. Realization of the emptiness of phenomena is needed in order to transmute our body, the environment, and beings into pure appearances. Our ordinary appearances arise from karma. In Vajrayana, all appearances are dissolved into emptiness, and through the power of Samadhi one is able to overwhelm ordinary appearances with pure appearances. In this way, one takes the result as the path.

- **Alan's comments**

A point very important for Vajrayana and that is to engage in Vajrayana practice, really any of the practices - for example Stage of Generation and Stage of Completion, it is simply inadequate to realize only the emptiness of your own personal identity but to leave everything else pretty much untouched. So I exist only as a convention but of course it is a real world. If that is where you are then you really cannot practice Stage of Generation or if you do,

it will be just a game, it would not be authentic or a profound transformative practice. Because bear in mind in Vajrayana practice you are transmuting not only your sense of personal identity but you are transmuting everything, body, speech and mind, and that includes the body, you are actually transmuting your body and this is by the power of visualization in large part. Going into manual override in terms of conceptual designation. But for that you must realize the emptiness of your own body. If you are still grasping in the notion that you have a real body here composed of molecules, cells and so forth that is really there and while, without challenging that, without seen the emptiness of that, if that remains unchallenged and you are still reifying your own body and then you pretend to dissolve into emptiness but you know it is just a little visualization exercise, and then you visualize yourself let's say as Vajrayogini or whatever, or as a vajrasattva, it is like having a dog turd and dipping it in chocolate, it looks like chocolate from the outside but it is not, it is a dog turd covered in chocolate, it is the same old impure sac of stuff of the human body, one impure substance after another thinly veiled as Vajrasattva, Vajrayogini, Tara, Avalokiteshvara and so forth, but it's silly.

So it is absolutely imperative to realize the emptiness not only of your body, but the entire environment because you are never simply transmuting or generating pure vision of your own body but possibly the entire environment. So that means the entire environment and everybody in it, so it is a big deal.

His Holiness was asked when he was invited to Greece in 1979, he was asked about preliminary practices, Vajrasattva, Guru Yoga and so forth, because this is the first thing, if you want to practice Tibetan Buddhism, here you are, 200 thousand – hit the deck, you know, (prostrations). But the people knew almost nothing about Buddhism, because the only books in Tibetan Buddhism in Greece at that time were books by Lobsang Rampa. That was it, so they didn't have a clue. So these people were very frustrated, they were trying to visualize Mt. Meru, that don't quite know where that fits on the globe, so His Holiness made a very strong point – these preliminary practices are not preliminary to the practice of buddhadharma, they were never intended as such, and if people teach them that way they decontextualize the whole of Vajrayana. Once again, if you are one of those incredibly sharp faculty people, then maybe that will do it, you will go off and realize stage of generation and completion and in one life become a Buddha. But if you are not there, and you don't even know the Four Noble Truths, you haven't developed renunciation, bodhicitta, developed shamatha, realization of emptiness, and you are going directly to guru yoga and vajrasattva and so forth, phew, talk about decontextualization? These people were lost. So he said the real preliminary practice for Vajrayana are the Sravakayana and Mahayana. The six perfections, the Four Noble Truths and so forth, then once you have that foundation, a good theoretical understanding, really had some experience, ok now there is a whole level of purification that is specifically for Vajrayana. Here we go, now you really understand what Guru yoga is, it is not just idealizing your Guru, having blind faith in your Guru, thinking your Guru is infallible because he is your guru. That is religious fundamentalism. That is not guru yoga that is blind faith. So, quite strong point. For authentic practice, your real preliminaries, the Four Noble truths, practices like the Four Immeasurables, and so forth, then the six perfections, returning more deeply to shamatha, realizing emptiness, and then from that perspective, there are a couple of routes to go – one is the classic developmental approach. It's awesome, it's produced superb results, to my mind there is no question, it is an authentic path, and that is – from this foundation, go ahead do the preliminaries, good, see the signs of purification, see for yourself that this is really purifying, and not just that you have made it through a hundred

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thousand, because a computer could do that, a robot could do that. And so, with that preparation, then, dissolve all phenomena into emptiness, bearing in mind that the kind of appearances we have arising to us right now, by the time we are talking about Vajrayana, we really have to put this in the Buddhist context, there is no way to secularize Vajrayana, you can secularize shamatha, you can secularize the four immeasurables, you don't need Buddha world view. Vajrayana I am sorry, that is within Buddhist world. So there we know.

(1:14:39) Within the Buddhist world the type of appearances arising to us, for example the appearances here in Thanyapura – of Phuket, appearances of other people, how do they appear to us, how does our own body appear to us and so forth? These appearances are coming from where? These appearances are generated by karma and that is in all schools of Buddhism, Theravada, all schools of Buddhism., generated by karma the appearances arising, the seeds are sewn and now the seeds are germinating, they are maturing, they are ripening and we are getting this flow - illness, good healthy, bad healthy, adversity, felicity, there is the flow of karma arising up to meet us, karma, karma, karma, nobody is doing it to us, not God, not Buddha, not devils, not anybody else. Karma maturing, maturing those are appearances all of them empty of inherent nature. So we lock onto them, we put them into a grid, a conceptual grid with a samsaric mind, the ordinary dualistic mind, then superimposing a familiar grid of conceptual designations, then we live in a world we call our universe, which now seems to be absolutely real out there, inherently existent as we are really in here.

(1:15:44) But of course if you realize emptiness then you see although there are those appearances, the appearances themselves are empty, emptiness taking on form and the forms themselves being empty. That is why karma is dishing up is a whole bunch of empty appearances, but they are still arising. So now in Vajrayana practice when you have received the empowerment and so forth and you dissolve everything in emptiness then by the power of your Samadhi you are dissolving everything in emptiness. If you have realization of emptiness all the better. Dissolve all appearances into emptiness but now when you come out and open your eyes, your appearances powered by karma are still going to be there, they don't suddenly vanished just because you had an empowerment, right? What do you do, and these are the appearances driven by impure karma from kleshas (mental afflictions, obscurations) and so forth in past lives, so what do you do? Since you realize that they are mere empty appearances, you go into manual override and that is to say: "I see you and I am going overpower you by the power of my Samadhi". If you don't have Samadhi your Stage of Generation practice is going to be really half baked because you have this massive flow of appearances from karma and you go ic, ic, ic [it means we go too slowly] with a little tiny of visualization, I am sorry that is going to be one voice shouted out by a mob. But if you have Samadhi then you have these appearances arising and then you meet, like two waves coming and you overwhelm the sensory appearances with mental appearances, visualization, mental appearances of pure perception.

You do this, it is not that dog turd covered with chocolate you see their emptiness, their empty appearances, there is nothing being covered over. They are just appearances and you overwhelm them, you override them with pure perception, with your best approximation of visualization. And then you engage by the power of imagination, by the power of faith, by the power of realization of emptiness and so forth, then you generate, and this is hard work, a lot easier if you have achieved shamatha, you generate a whole environment, you generate all the people within that environment, viewing them with pure perception, and viewing yourself with pure perception and divine pride, in which case then you are taking the fruition as the path, that incredibly brilliant and very profound maneuver to do so. And if you continue in that practice and go deeper, deeper and deeper into it, then by the power of your bodhicitta, your realization of emptiness, your power of visualization, all of these together they can really totally override, overwhelm the appearances that arise simply by way of karma. And your environment for you, then gradually shifts from an impure realm in the desire realm, the dharmadatu where you are, where you happen to be, you can be in Detroit, you can be in Buenos Aires, you can be anywhere you like, a ugly city, a beautiful place in nature, anywhere, and because you've realized the emptiness, that everything around you is sheer space, that you are an artist and your canvas is space, and although there are appearances there, you override them by the power of visualization with pure vision, you override them with Stage of Generation, generating the mandala and then where you are, step by step transforms into a pure land. So in Mahayana Buddhism there is a lot of references of pure land. Pure lands of the different directions, Sukhavati, Dewachen of Amithaba in the West, West from where? The North Pole? Where is west from the North Pole? I think it is only South. If you are right on top of the

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North Pole and you take one step in any direction you just move south, so I guess if you are living in the North Pole you cannot go to Sukhavati because you can only move south, there is no other direction, right? Silly. And Dudjom Lingpa said don't take this literally now, the west east business. Conventually, yes, in a manner of speaking.

(1:19:43) But wherever you are if you have transformed, transmuted, in a kind of a spiritual alchemy, transmuted not only your identity of your body but your environment then where you are, that becomes for you – Sukhavati. You are in a Pure realm, where everybody around you might be in a middle class neighbourhood, or an ugly city or in the beauty of nature, that is where they are, your next door neighbor, but where you are is downtown Sukhavati. Actually the center of Sukhavati. You are right in the center of the Mandala. But if and only if you realize emptiness otherwise again it is just a superimposition, an overlay, a covering, a quilt. The chocolate coating.

- **Dzogchen**

Summary made by SB Institute as below:

In Dzogchen, when one breaks through to pristine awareness, pure perception arises spontaneously.

Now in Dzogchen it is so interesting, in the classic procedure of Dudjom Lingpa, Dzogchen is so profound, for me to even say this is my view of it, it would be silly, it would be trivial, you would be wasting your time. So let's by pass Alan Wallace, let's go to Dudjom Lingpa, I will try to simply be interpreter for him, and that is that in this really streamline path, Shamatha – make your mind serviceable. Vipashyana – realize the emptiness of all phenomena, got that one? Good. Now we go right into rigpa without any visualization at all. Now you just break through the substrate, to pristine awareness and then naturally, as you are the locus of your awareness, the perspective, where you are looking from, as you break through the conventional mind, the relative mind, your continuum of substrate consciousness, never mind your coarse mind, as you break through even the substrate consciousness to Rigpa, this ground awareness, then from that perspective, as it becomes clearer and clearer, more and more unveiled, then without any visualization at all, pure perception arises spontaneously. Your own identity as Buddha arises spontaneously. And you are in a pure land, wherever you are, spontaneously, because that is how things are from Rigpa perspective. Equally pure from all directions. No visualization. You can do visualization of course, many people do, stage of generation and completion and Dzogchen. And Dudjom Lingpa says, if you want an unelaborated path, simple to the point, life is short – this is sufficient. You just drop into Rigpa and everything displays itself spontaneously.

It's quite profound. But we see also from whatever path one is following within the Buddhist context, the realization of emptiness of the body is not trivial, it is very, very important.

I would like to see that we are not decontextualizing anything here, it is not just Sravakhyana by itself that is what they do in South East Asia, like putting them in a pocket, but in Tibet we practice Vajrayana and in classical India they did the Bodhisattvayana, it's all of the piece, all of the piece.

Session of Question and Answers:

(1:23:21) Question: In to what extent is a program of regular study of Buddhas principles and philosophy, for example, mind, mental factors, etc supported to shamatha practices and vice versa, shamatha supported to study to move beyond to shamatha eight levels? Does not it need a solid understanding in mind and emptiness, etc?

I will answer the, it is a very good question, I will give Padmasambhava's answer and so Panchen Rinpoche's answer. My perspective does not count.

If you ask anyone in the physics community, well what do you think about Alan Wallace, they will say who is he? And the answer would be - nobody. If you had to go to any of the Ngingma masters and asked them – what do you think of Alan Wallace's ideas on Dzogchen? They would say – who is he? A Tulku, a Rinpoche? I have never heard of him. He is a nobody. Then go to any of the great Gelupa Geshe, ask what do you think about Alan Wallace perspective – they would say who is he? I have heard of him, yeah but. So I am equally nobody. So at least that is something you can count on here. I am not an authority on anything at all, but if I can pass on the teachings of these sublime beings without distortion, then I think okay, that is good enough.

So Padmasambhava, natural liberation, beginning of a section of shamatha, which is right by the preliminary practices, he says – There are two routes, first one is – Study. Hearing and reflection, by studying become a Geshe, whatever, but study well reflect well, learn the Buddhist world view, first learn the view. Then experience. That is one way. Quite common in traditional Tibet. 10, 20, 35 years of training. One of my Geshe

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took 35 years in training, and it took him one year to hike, from Mogolia to Lhasa to get to school, then 35 years before he graduated. There is one route, really learn well, hearing thinking and then meditation. But it is not the only route.

And Panchen Lama says the same thing. Panchen Lobsang Choyki Gyaltsen, tutor of the 5th Dalai Lama, offered this great text on Mahamudra, says there are two routes. One is that they are rehearsed then experience. Meditation, meditation. By the way Panchen Rinpoche is regarded as an emanation of Padmasambhava, Atisha is regarded as a speech emanation of Padmasambhava, all in the same family. On the other hand there is the other approach, instead of having meditation emerge out of the view, rather go directly to the meditation and let the view emerge out of the meditation. And that is the other route. These are two of the greatest masters of Tibet, one 17th Century, one 8th Century.

So it is good to see the flexibility. It is one of the things I really love about Tibetan Buddhism, about this tradition, that there are so many avenues, so many variations so you can really, like walking into clothing store [with lot of choices], you are sure you can find something that fits perfectly, you know. To answer the question – do you need to really understand, to have studied well, the nature of mind and emptiness before you can move beyond the eighth stage of Shamatha? The answer is no. Hindus, Christians, and lots of people can achieve Shamatha, and lots of them have without having studied Buddhist world view, don't even believe in it necessarily. So no, it is quite clear, one must be free of the five obscurations, one must have those inner requisites, but none of them say you have to have a good understanding of Buddhist psychology, let alone emptiness, you don't have to realize that, that's for sure. Could it be helpful? There is the answer. Could you, if you had pure motivation, good renunciation, pure ethics, contentment, few desires, few concerns, completely eradicating rumination, practicing in a conducive environment, practicing with support, companions and a good teacher, could you achieve Shamatha? The answer is yes. And then the view comes out of that, and then you will understand the reference, the meaning of the Buddhist psychology, from your own laboratory, you will say – oh those are mental factors, that's consciousness, that's impermanence and so forth, and so on. You will have the Buddhism start growing out of you, growing out of your own experience, so the view can emerge from your meditation. And Padmasambhava said – that is my approach. That is what I am presenting here in Natural Liberation. Go for the meditation first and let the view emerge out of that.

It is like those people in the Pali cannon who came to the Buddha requesting teachings and he gave them teachings and they realized nirvana, became stream enterers, and after they reached Nirvana they came to the Buddha and said I take refuge in you. They became Buddhist after they became stream enterers.

And for a very good reason, if someone just led you to Nirvana you would take refuge in them. It's a good refuge, they know it now, not because they have had very good teachings, intellectually engaging and stood up to analysis and so forth, but they tasted Nirvana. Anyone who led you to Nirvana must be a good doctor, a great physician.

So the two are complimentary and then it is a matter of temperament, inclination and so forth. I will end with a story, a favorite story from my own life, it was from one of my private interviews, audiences with Kyjbae Trijang Rinpoche, one of the two tutors of His Holiness Dalai Lama. Incredible being, I can't even remember the context of the meeting, just sitting and this one explanation he gave to me. The explanation was imagine three people are very hungry, want some food. The first one they bring out a Tibetan picnic, nice variety, all sorts of good stuff, and the person chows down and says that was good, I am full, good meal, thank you. Second person comes in, just as hungry, and they say – here is some Tsampa, here is some cheese, here is a some nice veggies, some dried peaches, chows down, very nice meal, I am full, thank you. Third person comes in just as hungry as the other person, gives him Tsampa, butter tea and says chow down. If you eat enough Tsampa and butter tea you do get full, I guarantee. It is good food, lots of grain butter and barley.

So each one got fully nourished, got full, got a good meal. One elaborate, one medium, one plain.

He said in a similar fashion, with authentic practitioners, some come to the dharma and they just come with an enormous appetite, they want to study everything, they just want to drink the whole ocean of dharma in, and by the time they have studied, and then they put it all into practice, they do just what Tsongkhapa said, acquire great learning and then synthesize that all into your daily practice, so all of that learning is put into your practice, it is not something else, it's all poured into your practice, you practice day and night, you achieve enlightenment. That is one approach. The Geshe approach.

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But another person will come and say life is short, give me some of the core teachings, give me Lamrim , give me 37 practices of Bodhisattva, give me Lojong, give me Heart Sutra, life is short and I really want to practice. This person gets a moderate meal, and learns well and practices day and night, and that person achieves enlightenment. Same result, exactly the same result.

Third person comes in, life is really short, you are the lama , I am the student, fill me up, give me teachings that I can put into practice, now, you teach I practice, I am going to rely on you for oral teachings, but give it to me straight, I have no time for elaboration, that person, just following the Guru's oral guidance, step by step, achieves perfect enlightenment. All the three achieve the same. So then, which one?

Which approach?

That's our choice. And none of them is better than the other or otherwise we would have to say Tsongkhapa was better than Milarepa. Nobody says that. And nobody in their right mind says that Milarepa was better than Tsongkhapa, that is ridiculous. It is foolishness. One writes poetry and touches the hearts of millions of people, the other writes 18 volumes of brilliant dharma and touches the lives of millions of people. In very different way, but all leading to dharma. So the answer is, they are complimentary, but whether you start with a lot of teaching and go to the practice, or just a little bit and go to the practice – it gives rise to great insight. Either way is good.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

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61 Compassion (3)

29 Sep 2012

Teaching pt1. Alan introduces the 3rd and deepest level of suffering called all-pervasive suffering which is the fundamental vulnerability to suffering of body and mind caused by closely holding the aggregates.

Compassion requires more than just sympathy. Just as we must have a sense that there's another source of happiness than hedonic pleasure, here we must have a sense that liberation is possible. These direct tastes provide us with a platform for attending to that very suffering in others. The cause of all-pervasive suffering is delusion, and the antidote for delusion is wisdom—i.e., the wisdom of viewing reality from the Middle Way.

Meditation: compassion preceded by vipashyana. Release awareness from the network of rumination into the space of the body.

1) vipashyana. As the cognitive basis for attending to the deepest dimension of suffering and wisdom, practice mindfulness of the body to attend to the experiences of the 5 elements for what they are. Now examine closely, can you find a referent for “my body” in any of its parts or in any of its appearances? Not just finding the referent, but the referent is nowhere to be found. Rest in that awareness of emptiness, and view the body as space.

2) compassion. With this awareness, arouse the aspiration “May I be free from all dimensions of suffering, including its deepest dimension caused by delusion.” With every in breath, visualize them as darkness dissolving into the white orb at your heart chakra. Imagine becoming free here and now. Turn attention outwards to those around you. “May we be free from all dimensions of suffering and their underlying causes.” With each in breath, repeat the visualization. Finally, attend to someone especially burdened by delusion and its resultant suffering, and repeat the practice.

Teaching pt2. NASA is working on a warp drive that would allow spaceships to travel to distant galaxies. In Buddhism, several practices can give us warp drive on our way to enlightenment: shamatha, bodhicitta, and vipashyana. In stages of generation and completion, we collapse the space-time between us and enlightenment. In trekchö, we break through directly to rigpa which is beyond space-time and all conceptualizations.

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Meditation starts at 20:30

Teachings 1:

- **Summary of the session:**

Alan introduces the 3rd and deepest level of suffering called all-pervasive suffering which is the fundamental vulnerability to suffering of body and mind caused by closely holding the aggregates. Compassion requires more than just sympathy. Just as we must have a sense that there's another source of happiness than hedonic pleasure, here we must have a sense that liberation is possible. These direct tastes provide us with a platform for attending to that very suffering in others. The cause of all-pervasive suffering is delusion, and the antidote for delusion is wisdom—i.e., the wisdom of viewing reality from the Middle Way.

b) Alan's teachings:

Oh la so! Today, this morning we return once again to the meditative cultivation of compassion, for those of you who know your lamrim well, you probably know the next phase I'd like to attend to and that is this deepest dimension of suffering. It's hard to get a really good translation of it but the ubiquitous or all-pervasive suffering of conditioned phenomena but what it really is, I would call it existential suffering it's not a good translation but it actually is the meaning, existential suffering. It refers to our fundamental vulnerability to suffering of body and mind and it's most clearly illuminated by pointing to the cause of it, or what's the very nature of it and it's said these closely held [Tibetan], the closely held aggregates [which are the five skandhas: body, feelings, recognitions, compositional mental factors and state of consciousness]. The fact that we are so closely identifying with, "I, Me, Mine", with respect to our bodies and mind that's it, right there. That's why we are vulnerable to suffering, right, that grasping, and the clinging. So we can see that this operates on two levels at least:

- **Three marks of existence**

One is that which we attended to for the first four weeks here, attending to the three marks of existence and then especially the third one: of is there anything in the body in terms of the four elements, the body parts and so forth, anything there that by its own nature is "I or Mine", that it really is "Me", or really is "Mine" by its own nature, is there anything or not? Of course the Buddhist answer based upon investigation is no. And so in that regard as one attends to one's own experience of the body then one sees it more simply, as we say in the fundamental teachings on the satipatthana, these phenomena, one perceives them simply as phenomena, [Tibetan] merely as phenomena rather than the elaborations mixed with them of being "I and Mine" so there's one whole dimension. And so one can simply experience the phenomena of the body arising then it's really as if they're orphaned as if they have no possessor, because they don't. They're arising in space, they dissolve back into space and with that mode of perception, from that perspective, freedom is alleviated.

- **Emptiness of the body**

(3:00) But then there's this whole dimension that we've been looking into for this past week going into the teachings of emptiness that not only is this body devoid of a possessor, an agent, an individual person who is autonomous and controls it, but when one looks into the very nature of the body itself, is there anything really there from its own side? And so the emptiness of the body. If one fathoms that then all the more so is one really, truly freed of suffering with respect to the body. It's said that for arya-bodhisattvas, so those bodhisattvas who have direct realization of emptiness, they can give away their limbs. They can chop out like an arm, an elbow, an eye, whatever Aryadeva apparently gave away one of his eyes and so forth. They say an arya-bodhisattva can give away his own limbs, his or her own limbs, as easily as other people give away vegetables, you know, because they're just there, just kind of lying around. "I have two arms, I do have a spare, would you like the left one or the right one? You know? [chopping sound] And would you like that minced or diced, or how would you like it?"

And so when we attend to suffering, and when we seek to arouse compassion, a very important point brought to my attention some years ago is that for compassion, for there to be like a rocket taking off, for there to be lift off, that we don't simply remain earthbound, in empathy, in sadness, in a feeling with of sorrow and so forth, feeling you know, sympathetic and all of that. That certainly shows some humanness there, that we're not cold and indifferent to others' plight. But if it remains only at that level, weeping with others, weeping, feeling sorrow with others' sorrow, feeling pain with others' pain. It just looks like one more person is in pain

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now. There used to be one, now we have two, you know? So exactly where is the benefit? I mean that's better clearly than just being aloof. But then if just two people are in pain, then, "I'll feel sorry for you if you feel sorry for me. Here's my shoulder [crying sound], you know? Not very helpful. [laughs] Right? And so that's not lift off. We've all seen those rockets. Have you seen them? They go [rrrrr... explosion sound]. They almost get lift off and then it's just a ball of flame, you know? It's really I'm sure very sad for the people you know who are looking for something really fun. And all they have [is] this big kaboom. That's a kind of empathy with no compassion. It looks like lift off and then, uh, uh, maybe not. Or one of those that goes uhh..., uhh....,[laughs] over on its side and then it crashes again. So compassion is lift off, compassion is lift off, but for the lift off to occur and here is the point that I think is ever so crucial. There must be some vision, some confidence or even knowledge that liberation is possible. If that's not there then it's just sympathy. And so there it is.

(6:08) So if we look at these three modes of suffering, blatant suffering, or the suffering of suffering, if one can see well, there's some people in poverty, "What could we do to help?" Then there's a way. If people are ill and we say, "Ah, there's a way." And so forth, for these various modes of hedonic suffering and one sees, "Oh, help them out this way." Then of course people get inspired, but if you look at something and you see no possibility of hope, then people when they turn off the television, turn off the news, "What can you do about it?" You know? Just turn it off. There's no compassion. [They] say, "I just don't want to get sad." You know? But if you see an avenue, then compassion arises, out of compassion comes benevolent, altruistic activity, right?

And so likewise for the deeper dimension of suffering that mid-range of suffering that arises directly as a result of attachment and craving, the suffering of change. If it were true that attachment and craving, this mental affliction, not simply desire, but the mental affliction of craving and attachment, if these were absolutely hardwired, we're just animals, this is evolutionary, we have just no escape, you know? If that were the case, then we just have to say, "Well doesn't it suck, you know? Isn't it too bad?" But of course that is not the Buddhist view that none of these mental afflictions are hardwired, are intrinsic, are indelible. But then to take that not as simply an intellectual stance but actually to experience, get some taste of what's it like to experience that freedom from attachment, the freedom [from] craving. And how would you possibly do that and not just be, how do you say, apathetic or depressed? And to my mind the practical method - find another source of happiness! Because if all the happiness we know about, every single time we've experienced happiness it's hedonic because something happens nice to us, a happy thought, prestige, money, sensual pleasures and so forth if that's it, then how would you not be attached? I don't know how you would ever do it? If you think, "If that's the only water faucet in the house." How are you not going to be attached to that one if you want water? There's no place else to go. So, I don't think it's possible. I think you're stuck, right? But if through your own experience, not just reading texts or doing discursive meditation but through your own experience you really find it's true. There's another tap in the house. There's another source of water, another source of happiness. It's not stimulus driven. It doesn't entail grasping on to and holding an object, whether that object is a person or a place or a material object, or what have you. When you tap into eudaimonia and just get a little few drops coming out. Quite a few of you have at least gotten some drops, where you say, "You know, I'm sitting there practicing mindfulness of breathing and I kind of enjoyed it. Wow! You're weird!" [laughs] How can you possibly sit there watching your breath and enjoy that? This California guy must be hypnotizing you. [laughs] But of course I'm not, you know? In fact you find it and you don't have to explain it to anybody else. If they've never experienced it they might just think, "Well, you're just weird." But of course this has nothing really to do with the breath. I mean that's not the crucial point. It's the quality of awareness that you're bringing to the breath. The mindfulness of breathing, the quality of awareness, and finding: "Ho, when I attend to my breath and then I attend to other things I'm finding there is more of a sense of ease. One of you told me something so nice, it was very meaningful to me, in one of our personal interviews. This person just simply mentioned the other day this person had to go out to, I think a shopping area. And just sitting there felt very much at ease, you know? Coming out of this very contemplative environment and then going into the other one, which is not at all contemplative. But he said, "You know I've never felt so at ease, so relaxed in a public environment." It made me really happy, really happy. Good! Good! That's genuine! That wasn't because you went to an especially good mall or shopping place, right? It's the

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quality of your awareness you brought to it. And then you can be at ease in a situation like that where otherwise there may be a bit of tension, nervousness or what have you. Really good!

(10:25) So as we're tapping into this eudaimonia you know drip by drip, little teaspoon by teaspoon, experiencing some enjoyment of the soothing quality, the release, the relaxation of the body and the mind, enjoying the free effortless flow of the breath and finding, "This is nice, I like doing this, I'd like to spend more time doing this." Well you can, you don't need to rent it. You don't need to buy it. It's built in, you know? One of those free ones. So as you experience this and it goes deeper and deeper and then you experience of course it's not just shamatha, it's cultivating the four immeasurables and finding this too, a kind of quality of well-being arises from there. It's from the inside. It's not because of the people you're attending to, but the quality of awareness you're bringing to it, right? And of course for vipashyana itself. And so as one tastes in various ways, subtle ways, by way of ethics, by way of cultivating the mind, by way of insight that, "Wow! These are real!" These three modes of eudaimonia they're real. Then you say, "But then that means I can still enjoy sensual pleasures and so forth and so on. Why not? I don't have to hold my nose. But I'm not really dependent on them, I don't need to be attached to them because I've found something else that's actually much better, so I'll use them both. So in that regard one sees the light at the end of the tunnel, one sees a real possibility of freedom, freedom from that dimension of suffering, the suffering of change because you see for yourself attachment is not necessary, we can be freed of it. But I don't think it's possible really, I don't think it's possible unless we do tap into some other type of well-being. Otherwise you just become a sourpuss, wouldn't you? "I don't care about fame. I don't care about sensual... I don't care about... I don't care about... I don't really... I know it sucks. I know it sucks. [laughter] Uhhh..." I don't think that's the path to enlightenment. It's just a path to suckiness. [laughter] But if you've found something else, you say, "Okay, then I can release this and go on to that."

(12:27) And then from that platform when you attend to other people who really are very fixated on the notion, "My happiness lies in getting this!" You know? And single pointedly focused on the hedonic. Then you'll start to really resonate with statements by Shantideva such as: "While seeking to free ourselves from suffering we hasten after the causes of suffering and while seeking to find happiness we destroy the causes of our own happiness as if they were our foe". That's a bodhisattva speaking. And I think you sense he's not speaking with condescension, or contempt or [the attitude of] those people down there. There's nothing down his nose. He's simply recognizing, here we are, you know? We've all been there.

(13:06) But when you gain some elevation, some elevation, and you see well that's one way (hedonic) but it never works out very well in the end, but here is another way and it does then genuine compassion, arises, the genuine yearning, "May you be free because you see that freedom is possible because you've tasted at least the scent. At least you've gotten a few drops on your tongue and you know this is not just some religious belief system or just blind faith. You're the hound dog. You've picked up the scent. It's a real scent and you know where to trace it to. And so then compassion, compassion because you really see it is possible. And so, "May we all be free of that suffering of change." Because it is not necessary. And then this deepest dimension, and we'll end on that, go to the meditation. But the suffering that comes from grasping on to, identifying, fiercely holding on to our own bodies and mind as truly and intrinsically mine. Or even at a deeper level, we've just begun to explore this, the deeper level, the very reification of the body as something real, independent, substantial, inherently existent. As one gains the glimmering, if it's just even the faintest, the faintest glimmering. And number one, that may not be true, the body may actually not exist in that way and in fact I have maybe some sense of it. I think maybe I'm picking up a bit of scent there and if that were true, if I could thoroughly realize it, if I could live there. [Tibetan] If I could actually view reality from the Middle Way view, from the Madhyamaka view, if I could view reality from a perspective that neither reifies nor falls into nihilism, if I could view reality right from that Middle Way, there'd be such freedom, such freedom. I wouldn't experience suffering by way of my body, if I realize the emptiness of my mind I wouldn't experience suffering by way of my mind. Wow!

(15:05) And so if one has some glimmering there and then one attends to all sentient beings who are still prone to this grasping, this reification onto I am, I, Me, Mine, and the reification of phenomena as existing inherently. If one gets the glimmering that some intuition, some insight into the emptiness of all phenomena then with that cognitive basis you really have a platform for developing compassion, the aspiration, and it really could happen. We really could be free even from that deepest dimension of suffering that stems from

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delusion. So we have that blatant suffering, not confined to anger, but certainly strongly affiliated with it and the remedy is ethics. We have this middle one from yesterday, the suffering of change, related very strongly to attachment, and samadhi really is the remedy. But now we go to the deepest level, and this obviously is related to delusion, the kind of suffering that comes from misapprehending reality, right? And then obviously, this is now perfectly clear, the remedy is wisdom. The remedy is wisdom.

So Shantideva says at the beginning of the Wisdom Chapter all that is preceded, all, everything that comes prior to this, prior to the ninth chapter, all of this is for the sake of wisdom. Everything is for the sake of wisdom because if wisdom provides the key, knowing reality as it is, that provides the key for genuine liberation, freedom from suffering so that compassion can then celebrate that this really is possible. So this is where at this deepest level of compassion attending to the deepest level of suffering, this is where there just must be a union of wisdom and compassion. If there's no wisdom there you're walking around in the dark, you know. And so when there arises that glimmering, there's real possibility of freedom here from this deepest dimension of suffering. And one arouses this yearning to be free, arouses this for oneself. "May I be free." Because after all, I'm just one more sentient being. That's why any notion of condescension is crazy. Just one more, out of an ocean of sentient beings, one more.

(17:18) But if I see the possibility of freedom for myself through wisdom, through insight, because I have already gotten some glimmering. That insight is authentic and there's no need to suffer by way of the body or mind, when one realizes that they are merely phenomena and moreover they're empty phenomena, one has some glimmering of that then powerful renunciation or the spirit of emergence, [Tibetan] this spirit, this intention, this resolve, of definitely emerging from samsara can be very very powerful. I mean really kind of all consuming, because when you get it, when you see that real possibility of freedom I have to say really nothing else matters. It really doesn't, just nothing else matters. I mean it's all about that in terms of your own, how do you say reality here, your own locality, your own individual presence in the universe. When you see there is a possibility of freedom then nothing else matters. Everything else is subordinated to that and so there's renunciation, there's the spirit of emergence, of definite emergence. Definite means you emerge from samsara and you do not just fall back. You're not like a fish that jumps out of the water and then just goes right back in. You're like a rocket that achieves escape velocity and gets out of the gravitational field and just takes off. I'm gone, "hasta la vista," Never! You know? You're gone you're free. And that's our ideal, that's the Sravakayana ideal. I'm going to achieve escape velocity from this sphere of samsara and never come back. "Thank you very much. Nothing there for me." And then we shift over to the bodhisattva ideal, or simply to the four immeasurables. And one sees, "Oh, but wait a minute. Just hold on. I'm not the only one here. And one opens one's eyes to the world around us, and we say, "Oh, my goodness, we're all in that same situation aren't we. All of us, all sentient beings and therefore here comes immeasurable loving kindness, [Tibetan] immeasurable loving kindness with no barriers, no boundaries, because on this level it's a total flattener whether people are friendly, unfriendly, evil or virtuous, whatever they are, this is more fundamental than all of those variations, all those fluctuations which we've all been through. We've all had previous lives when we were awful and had these previous lives when we were marvelous, ugly and beautiful and so forth. And so we've been through it all, we've seen it all. But when it tends outwardly in this way, from this level, from depth to depth, then there arises based upon wisdom the aspiration, "May we all be free of all dimensions of suffering including this most foundational one that is rooted in delusion but for which the antidote is wisdom." There's the fusion of wisdom and compassion. It's quite extraordinary isn't it, isn't it? I think it's just utterly amazing. I do, I just haa... [sighs] It makes you wonder, "How I could be so fortunate to encounter such a Dharma as that. What makes me so lucky?" I don't know. That's the answer, but I certainly do feel fortunate. Let's meditate.

Meditation:

(21:40) Let's enter into the session by tasting this sweetness of releasing the awareness from this whole network of rumination, releasing it into the non-conceptual space of the body, settling the body in its natural state, the respiration in its natural rhythm by whatever means you find most effective, settle your mind in its natural state, relaxed, still and clear.

(24:51) And now let's lay ever so briefly a cognitive basis for the cultivation of this deepest dimension of compassion, focusing on the deepest dimension of suffering, let's lay the cognitive basis by closely applying mindfulness to this space of the body and whatever events arise within that space, observing earth as earth,

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water as water and so on, observing the phenomena that arise in the space of the body simply for what they are, as mere phenomena with no owner, with no personal identity.

(26:55) And then shift to this deeper dimension of vipashyana examining closely to see whether you can actually find the referent, an objectively existing referent, that exists by its own nature for this term “my body.” Do you find it in any of the body parts individually or collectively? Do you find it amongst any of the appearances that directly arise to any of your five physical senses? Is this body truly existent, anywhere to be found? And can you not only not find it, but can you find that it is in fact nowhere to be found? And if so, rest in that emptiness, that awareness of the emptiness of the body and view it as space, an array of empty appearances arising in space and dissolving back into space.

And with such an awareness then arouse the aspiration directed inwards, we call it the spirit of emergence, many call it renunciation, the aspiration, “May I be free from all dimensions of suffering even the most profound that stems from delusion itself, may I be free from all suffering and its causes.” With each in breath arouse this yearning, with each in breath imagine the darkness of delusion being drawn into and extinguished in the orb of light, of pristine awareness, at your heart.

(32:42) And with each in breath imagine becoming free here and now.

Then turn your attention outwards in all the directions, the individual in front of you, to your left, and your right, behind you. With this full awareness that we are all in the same ocean, we’re all equally vulnerable and we all equally have the potential to be free. Attend closely to those who are around you with each in breath arouse the yearning, “May each of us here be free of all dimensions of suffering together with their underlying causes.” With each in breath imagine drawing in the darkness of suffering and delusion siphoning it into this immeasurable orb of light at your heart where it dissolves without in any way being dimmed, with no depletion. And breath by breath expand this field of compassion to embrace all those around you expanding the field with each breath arouse the yearning, “May we all be free of suffering and the causes of suffering”.

(39:18) With each in breath imagine yourself and all the sentient beings around you becoming free here and now. Boldly venture into this realm of possibility. Attend to it closely, the possibility of freedom.

You may attend especially to those individuals whom you know personally or you know only by way of the media who are especially burdened by delusion, the mental afflictions that are derivative of delusion and the suffering that stems from delusion, hatred and craving, especially attend to them and with each in breath imagine them becoming free.

(44:03) Then release all aspirations and all appearances and let your awareness rest in its own luminous and pure nature.

Teaching 2:

Oh la so! It’s Saturday, let’s hang out for a little bit, for a little while.

To take that analogy which is just for pure fun, nothing more. Because who knows whether it’s at all possible. But that analogy I gave the other day from this research being done at NASA of a warp drive. If they can’t do it, it’s still a really cool idea, [laughs] you know. The space-time in front of you you’re contracting, space-time behind you you’re expanding and then you just go into warp drive. Just travel from one galaxy to another in a matter of days, a couple of weeks. It’s a really cool idea. And it has to be, you know, serious enough that NASA wants to spend money on it. They don’t have money to throw away.

Of course you know where I’m going here, is okay, how can we find really cool analogies in Dharma. And that is for all of you who have studied Mahayana Buddhism, actually it’s Pali canon and so forth. When you’re just first starting out and you have this vision of achieving awakening. How long will it take as you gradually, you know, develop virtue, try to purify the mind. Order of magnitude, three countless eons. And as His Holiness the Dalai Lama pointed out, it’s not necessarily that quick. [laughter] He said it could take you as many as seven countless eons. [laughter] I figure after the first three, who’s counting, but you know. [laughter] But some people have very large minds. His Holiness is certainly one of those people. But to suffice it to say, I mean it’s a finite period of time, but three countless eons, we’re talking about whole periods of expansion and contraction of the universe, many many times over. In other words, don’t hold your breath, right? But then when one attends to, and this is where we really are making the segue over into Mahayana, which

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cognitively in terms of vipashyana we already have, this past week. And we'll do something similar next Monday, in a couple of days.

When one gains some intimation, some sense of the enormity of suffering that's going on right now in the world, just our planet, let alone the rest of the universe. Then a sense of urgency can arise, a sense also as Steph [?] so eloquently wrote in her note some days ago, of just feeling the ocean of suffering. And when I attend to it with my capacities right now, it just feels like you just want to start screaming, "This is not enough, whatever I can do is not enough." To say it's a drop in the bucket, no it's a drop in the ocean, no it's an elementary particle in the ocean. I mean what I can do with my capacities to alleviate the suffering right now is so miniscule that either one should start screaming or one wants to stop screaming and say, "How can I increase my ability so that I'm not so ineffectual, so impotent, so helpless in serving the needs of others. So to take the analogy imagine you just use a conventional rocket. And I think when they escape the gravitational pull of the earth, they get escape velocity from our earth I think then they're just cruising out there in deep space. I think it's something like eighteen thousand miles an hour, I think something like that, eighteen thousand miles an hour. Well if you should look at a distant galaxy and say, "Okay, let's get in our rocket and go eighteen thousand miles an hour and let's try to get to the nearest galaxy." Well no for three countless eons, but you know, really long. And so where's the warp drive? Where's the warp drive for finding liberation and awakening. How within a finite, very, very finite, a matter of decades [snaps fingers] and it's over, of a human life span, how can one take that three countless eons of space-time and try to click into warp drive? You don't have to do every step, step by step by step but you get some big boost that just by orders of magnitude exponentially increases your velocity, right, towards enlightenment.

Atisha gives us a great big hint when he addresses shamatha and the abilities that naturally, quite easily, readily are developed on the base of shamatha. I'll say it again I've said it a couple of times already - direct quote from Atisha, Once you've achieved shamatha and the abilities that arise simply from shamatha let alone vipashyana, bodhicitta, Vajrayana and so forth. Just shamatha, and it's the natural abilities stemming from that, in one day you can accumulate more merit than you can without it in a hundred lifetimes. I think we just clicked into warp drive. Merit means power, it means surging. You're at super thrust towards enlightenment Right?

So there's a big one. So the distance that you could otherwise travel in a hundred lifetimes you can now do in one day. It's sounding like that warp drive, and that's just shamatha. Right? But then with shamatha, then you're really now well poised in so many different ways to develop great compassion, not simply boundless compassion, but great compassion. And great compassion is an immediate catalyst for arousing bodhicitta. And then as Shantideva describes so eloquently, especially in the first chapter of *A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life*, once you've developed bodhicitta, and it's actually, the engines, the afterburners are really going. I mean it's really going. It's not like an old car where you turn the ignition - it goes arrr...[unsuccessful car starting sound] arrr..., arrr..., arrr... and you only get it when you're turning the key, you know the engine turns only in it... After a while of course the battery goes dead. But actually you turn the key of your bodhicitta and then it goes rmmm...[successful car starting sound] [laughter] "Oh, the engine's running now and I can take my hand off the ignition and I can get into gear." So the engines running is called the spirit of aspiring for enlightenment the bodhicitta of aspiring for. Remember? And then you get it into gear, now that it's turned on, you have genuine bodhicitta of aspiring for enlightenment and it's turning over, it's uncontrived, it's spontaneous, it's humming, it's going, it's there. And then you just put it into gear. And that's the bodhicitta of engaging, engaging in the bodhisattva way of life, right, proceeding along. It's into gear. Well, once you've achieved those kinds of bodhicitta, the aspiring, the engaging bodhicitta and it's spontaneous, it's effortless, it's uncontrived, the engine is running. Oh, now you've just... It's another warp drive. It's another warp drive. The amount of ... The perfect way power of bodhicitta ... He says it's like the fire at the end of an eon, or like a supernova that just engulfs everything near it. It consumes so many obscurations, so many, so much negative karma and so forth. It's just almost cataclysmic for the power of purification of the mind. And of course the more the mind is purified the more powerful your warp drive towards enlightenment. Right? And in terms of accruing merit, you know, now it's just gone off the charts, you know, with bodhicitta. You're a bodhisattva. Oh, man! That dwarfs shamatha. Shamatha's this little dark black hole behind you. Right? You're now really absolutely going. Well why don't you just couple that with vipashyana. With your shamatha, with you vipashyana, with your bodhicitta then why not of course do the

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most important thing for which all the other teachings are designed, and that is realization of emptiness, realization of the nature of reality: vipashyana, and gain some realization of emptiness. And now, once again you've got a third warp drive. Boom! Now again zooming off. And we haven't even touched Vajrayana yet. We're still Sutrayana, but now it's really warp drive. Finally there's three times warp drive. Pow! Pow! Pow! So with this motivation now one's really ready for stage of generation and completion and on this developmental model of stage of generation and completion, that it's really there. That you're collapsing three countless eons into a lifetime or just a couple of them. It's right there - stage of generation and completion. All the others, it's still three countless eons. shamatha, bodhicitta, vipashyana- it's Sutrayana. It's still three countless eons which you can imagine how long it takes if you don't have shamatha, bodhicitta and vipashyana. Your beard would get very long. [laughs] But now with those preparations, the shamatha, the bodhicitta, vipashyana now you apply yourself to stage of generation-completion. One lifetime, why not? If not this lifetime, next one, two or three, whatever, short time. That's just now with those, with the, that wisdom, that fusion of wisdom and method that we find- that non-duality: wisdom and method, and stage of generation-completion, then it's just like poof! Inconceivable! The fourth warp drive, the stage of generation-completion. Amazing! That's where you absolutely collapse space-time, between where you are and enlightenment. [snaps fingers] Just collapse it down, like an accordion. Like taking thirteen billion light years and just squeezing it into, you know, a room.

Or, if you want a less elaborated way: shamatha, bodhicitta, vipashyana. Then just break through. "Break on through to the other side!" Break on through substrate consciousness right over to rigpa. And that's just kind of a warp drive that's just off the charts. Because now you're beyond space and time. You're not traveling through it exponentially, you're just beyond it, you just stepped out of the whole system directly into rigpa. You can achieve enlightenment in one lifetime. So the imagery, the parallels are simply fun. They're just fun, that's all but the image that we have from modern cosmology is of the universe expanding, and of course it's not that the... all of the galaxies have some kind of little engines on them driving themselves away from each other because they're just sitting there, but in fact the space-time continuum in which all the galaxies and so on are so-called embedded like raisins in a muffin. In the oven where the muffin is rising, rising, rising and then all the raisins in the muffin are all moving away from each other. So if you were sitting on a raisin, in any of the raisins, in the muffin you'd look at all the other raisins and say, "Why are you leaving? Why are leaving?" [laughter] They'd all appear to be moving away from you, no matter which one you were on, they're all moving away like, "Was it my breath? Something I said? [laughter] You know? But of course that's because the dough itself is expanding. It's rising, and so all the raisins are getting further and further away from each other. So that's the present vision. Very much in accordance, I mean in principle with Buddhist vision of expanding universe. It's right there in the sutras - expanding universe without the elegance of mathematics the technology and so forth of modern physics. And I love the modern physics. So here we have this expansion, but when I was studying cosmology I asked my professor, a very, very fine professor, I said, "What's it expanding into, this space-time continuum, this sphere of reality?" If it's expanding, then what's it expanding into? Because if there weren't any room then it couldn't expand. It would be bumping into something, like, "Let me expand." You know? "Get out of the way." But there's nothing in the way which means there must be space beyond space so that space-time can expand so there's enough room for it, you know, like a balloon. There has to be space around the balloon, otherwise you could never expand it no matter how much you breathed into it. And he said, "Well, we just don't have any answer for that in physics." And that's a fair enough answer. It's a perfectly good answer. Given our system of measurement we just have no way of addressing that. It's not a silly question, but we have no way of addressing that whatsoever, because all of the measurements of course are within the sphere of expanding space-time. It's fair enough. Every system has its limitations, right? But nevertheless the question lingers. If space-time is expanding, what's it expanding into? How about Dharmadhatu? How about Dharmadhatu: absolute space of phenomena out of which relative space and time, matter and energy all emerge, Dharmadhatu which is beyond space and time. What if relative space-time is actually just expanding into Dharmadhatu? Well, then the path of liberation would be going beyond what Buddhists call the peak of existence, which is still within the sphere of samsara. Breaking through that to the other side, to Dharmadhatu, which is indivisible from Primordial Consciousness, which is indivisible from the energy of Primordial Consciousness. And so the path of awakening in Buddhism from the Sravakayana all the way up to Dzogchen is to achieve escape velocity from

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relative space and time, that you're not just traveling across the universe. You're getting out of this sphere altogether to a space of awareness that is beyond space and time and absolutely beyond all conceptualization. So if you'd like to experience that - shamatha, vipashyana, trekchö, thögal will do it. And relative bodhicitta says Dudjom Lingpa comes right out of rigpa, the realization of rigpa, because the realization of rigpa is ultimate bodhicitta and relative bodhicitta emerges spontaneously out of that so he says you don't need to look elsewhere. It's already there, it's part of the package. So, now if you all and people listening by podcast you want to say, "Now it's proven, Alan is definitely a space cadet." [laughter] You're right! [laughs] I'm totally a space cadet. [laughs] So I want to travel to the space of Dharmakaya, the space of Dharmadhatu. And I think we've found the right formula. Enjoy your day. See you later.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Revised by Mark Montgomery

Final edition by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Uploaded by Quinn Comendant

62 Mindfulness of the body (6)

29 Sep 2012

Teachings:

I like to have the meditations on the final Saturday afternoon be silent and so as we look at the concluding section in this Compendium of Practices by Shantideva on the Close Application of Mindfulness of the Body.

Subscriber's note: Just to remind Alan began to read this Compendium in the session 61 and the source is: Chapter Thirteen: The Four Close Applications of Mindfulness, A Compendium of Practices (Śikṣāsamuccaya) by Śāntideva, Translated by B. Alan Wallace.

Let's regard this as a kind of front-loading the meditation itself. So he's providing us with the fuel and then we'll run for twenty-four minutes on that fuel, okay?

So, we're about half way through this section on the body. And now he continues, citing another sutra. So this text as a whole has many, many sutra citations so you're always seeing where it touches down in the Mahayana teachings of the Buddha.

So, we're about half way through this section on the body. And now he continues, citing another sutra. So this text as a whole has many, many sutra citations so you're always seeing where it touches down in the Mahayana teachings of the Buddha.

So another sutra here:

Text (sutra):

The *Ārya Ratnacūḍa Sūtra* states, "Alas! One who knows that this body is impermanent, not remaining for long, and that its end is death, does not engage in antagonistic behavior for the sake of the body, but takes the essence of life."

This phrase the taking of essence of life, we see this also in the Shantideva in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra**, the essences of life, the essence of life, so where's the juice? And while the pursuit of hedonic pleasure and the avoidance of hedonic suffering can be considered something of the husk which has to be taken into account. Nevertheless if that's all that one does through the whole course of a life is just deal with the husk then you never got down to the core of it and you kind of never, you missed an opportunity. It's called human life. And so taking the essence of life of clearly is really eradicating the very, actual sources of suffering, cultivating the very sources of well-being and setting out on a true path, an authentic path to awakening. So one does that recognizing again the impermanence of the body.

* Source of Shantideva in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*: The Four Close Applications of Mindfulness, Excerpted from the Wisdom Chapter of

A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life (Bodhicaryāvatāra) by Śāntideva, Translated from the Sanskrit and Tibetan by Vesna A. Wallace and B. Alan Wallace.

So one takes the essence of life (continuing the text):

Text:

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(2:57) “One takes three kinds of essences: the essence of the body, of enjoyment, and of life. So considering that the body is impermanent, one agrees to be the servant and pupil of all sentient beings and strives to do whatever one can to serve them.”

When I read that sentence, I mean it’s a classic Mahayana sentence one finds that same theme of course in the *Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life*, but this whole notion of being “the pupil of all sentient beings”, um, just one person just leaps to mind, and it is His Holiness, the Dalai Lama.

The first time he ever traveled to the West was 1973. I wasn’t with him there, I was in Dharamshala at the time. But he came just to Europe, the United States wouldn’t give him a visa, you know. Dangerous people like him, you have to be careful. And so, but he traveled to Europe, to various countries there and he was asked well, “What’s your purpose, what’s your mission here?” And one can imagine, a religious figure, he’s got a real mission, you know, convert the heathen. And he said, “Oh, I would like to come to the West, to visit the West, to meet the wise people of the West. So on that trip, I don’t know that he ever taught. I don’t think so, that he ever gave any teachings. He came first of all, to learn from the wise people of the West.

And then I’ve witnessed him now, many, many times, of course a number of these happened in different contexts, but where I’ve had a special privilege is to see him ever since 1989 in this whole series of Mind - Life meetings. Where he’s meeting with philosophers, psychologists, neuroscientists, physicist, biologists, and so forth, really very fine scientists, and he’s always the same. And that is, he’s always there with respect, but with this eagerness to learn. And these are very well designed, these five day meetings that we’ve held since 1989 every other year in Dharamshala. We’d have a small group of scientists, like five scientists, maybe six but one philosopher and they have a whole morning, they have two and a half hours to present.

I’ve been to a lot of academic conferences. Sometimes you get to speak twenty minutes, you know. You travel around the world and you talk for twenty minutes and then you go home, you know? Hopefully, somebody else said something that was interesting, otherwise that’s a lot of traveling for a very short time. Um, and so twenty minutes is really common, right? Well here they have two and a half hours, and their primary audience is the Dalai Lama. And I’ve seen him just time and time again, now it’s more than twenty years, and he’s listening as a pupil. He’s really there to learn, you know? And never gullibly, of course. You would never expect that of the Dalai Lama. He’s never saying, “Oh, whatever you say.” He’s listening with a lot of attention, a lot of curiosity, and what I’ve seen time and again that’s blown the minds of the scientists, is, you know some physicist is telling the cutting edge research, or a neuroscientist, and as the Dalai Lama is listening along, he has no qualms at all about jumping in and asking a question. And time and time again what’s happened is when he does that then the scientist, knowing that His Holiness has no formal Western education whatsoever, not elementary school, no middle school, no high school, no college, nothing, right? His only formal education was to become a geshe, in Tibetan, in Tibet that ended in 1959, that’s when he got his degree. And what I’ve seen is when he pops in with his questions, the expression I’ve often seen on the faces of the scientist is, “Well, it’s interesting you should ask that, because that was the next phase of research we were already anticipating, but we haven’t gotten there yet.” Or, “Oh, well we hadn’t thought of that. That’s actually, that’s a very good question, I don’t know how to answer that.” It’s just again and again he’s right there and he’s pushing the envelope on areas in which he’s had no formal training whatsoever. Okay?

So there’s a wonderfully cultivated mind. And he will refer to, and he’s done this for years now, he’ll refer to, there was a neuroscientist, a Robert Livingston, he and I became good friends. He was one of the pioneers, he’s passed away now, years ago, but one of the pioneers of modern cognitive neuroscience, and uh, lovely man, and he and His Holiness really struck up a friendship. You know? And then His Holiness would refer to him as his friend, as his teacher. Richard Davidson has now met with him now many times, another very fine neuroscientist. The Dalai Lama says, “Oh, here’s my teacher. Here’s my teacher.” I’ve never once, of course I don’t hear everything he says, but I’ve never once ever, in knowing him for forty-one years, I’ve never heard of him ever referring to anyone as his student. Never! [laughs] But multiple times, “Oh, yes, this is my teacher. This is my teacher. This is my teacher.”

So, he’s setting an example, and yet can be very critical, critical as well. Questioning, questioning, and if somebody says something not substantiated or supported with empirical fact, you know, “I heard you. That doesn’t mean I believe you.”

Oh, la so! And now we come back to this theme.

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Text:

“Considering that the body is impermanent, one avoids all faulty physical behavior, including crooked, hypocritical, and contrived behavior. Considering that the body is impermanent, one does not disdain one’s own life, nor does one commit evil even at the cost of one’s life. Considering that the body is impermanent, one does not crave or cling to enjoyments, but completely offers up everything one has. Son of good family, a bodhisattva meditates by closely applying mindfulness to the body, observing it as a body.”

(9:00) So again that phrase and we’ve seen it right from early on in the one paragraph discourse to Bahiya: in the visual let there be just the visual, in the sounds, in the heard let there just be the heard. Well now view the body but what if you look at it, and it’s almost like having an out of body experience, or some kind of exotic experience, like, “Oh, interesting, where did you come from? What is the nature of this thing anyway? It moves! Wow! And just seeing it as radically other, like it’s just a body, it’s just a body. So one simply views the body as a body, a liver as a liver. Imagine if somebody took out your liver and put it together with three other people’s livers, how would you know [which one is your liver]? It’s just a liver, or sometimes, you know, women ... I know my wife, she really has taken care of her form very, very well, and has beautiful skin. But if one asks her to loan it, you know, “You have such nice skin, could you just loan your skin to my wife, just for this evening because I’d like to take her out and have her look nice?” [laughter] You know and just rolled it up, you couldn’t tell if that’s Vesna’s skin. It’s just skin. So observing it as a body designated, but now here we move on. So all the preceding one could say, well this is Shravakayana, this is Shravakayana. It’s true, that is a common basis, there’s commingling of Shravakayana with the Bodhisattvayana and now we move on:

Text:

“Designating the bodies of all sentient beings as one’s own body, one thinks, ‘I shall establish the bodies of all sentient beings as bodies of the Buddha.’ Just as the Tathāgata’s body is undefiled, so one regards the ultimate nature of one’s own body. By knowing the quality of freedom from defilement, one recognizes the bodies of all sentient beings as having that characteristic.”

“Designating the bodies of all sentient beings as one’s own body,...

Comments:

So if there is nothing intrinsically mine about this body, if it’s just a body, if the liver is just a liver, hair is just hair, skin’s just skin, and so forth all the way up and all the way down, neurons are just neurons, right, glial cells and so forth and so on. If there’s nothing here that from its own side says I am Alan’s, or I’m Chojun’s [?] or I’m Grand’s, if it’s just a body, then we see that there’s something kind of arbitrary about designating mine on something that’s not intrinsically mine rather like a pair of eye glasses, “Yeah, there are mine they do have prescription for my eyeballs, but it’s a designation. And so if this is a matter than one can impute and un-impute on one particular body then one can also, why not, designate others body as ones own body. (11:45) After all, this happens all the time in football. I think in European football, also. But the Rams used to belong to Los Angeles, the L.A. Rams, a Los Angeles football team. You know we didn’t have a good stadium and what is it, New Orleans? No, that’s the Saints. Saint Louis, Saint Louis, right. So Saint Louis bought a football team and so then they all moved on and they’re still called the Rams. And so now the people in Saint Louis used to think, “Oh, the Rams, they’re just California, you know? Whatever. West coast hippies.” But now that the Rams have come to Saint Louis, “Our team! Our team!” Right? And in England, I think bloodshed, there’s bloodshed over, you know, Manchester United versus other teams and then, you know, “Our team, our team!”. How did that happen? Only by the power of conceptual designation. Right? It’s really wonderful and how they’ll trade players, you know, yesterday he was the enemy and now, “Yay!” because you’re on our side. All conceptual designation and the passion that goes with that is quite intense so Shantideva is doing something much more significant than identifying with a football team here, [laughter] saying designating the bodies of all sentient beings just as parents will designate the bodies of their children, “These are my children, my children. Oh, these are my adopted children. These are the children of my neighborhood. These are the children of my church. These are the children..., etcetera, etcetera.” And you can impute it and you can take it off but as soon as you impute it then you really start caring about it. Who cares about the scores of other peoples football teams? Whatever! Right?

Reading again:

"Designating the bodies of all sentient beings as one’s own body, one thinks, 'I shall establish the bodies of all sentient beings as bodies of the Buddha.'

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So just as one wishes for oneself, “May I transmute my own body into a Buddha’s body.” Then identifying with everybody’s body, “Well, let’s do it just for everybody. They’re all mine.

Reading again:

So, “Just as the Tathāgata’s body is undefiled,” Oh, interesting, now he’s putting a new spin on it. “Just as the Tathagata, the Buddha’s body is undefiled, so one regards the ultimate nature of one’s own body. By knowing the quality of freedom from defilement, one recognizes the bodies of all sentient beings as having that characteristic.”

(14:10) So this whole emphasis on impurity, impurity, impurity, it can sound kind of like really a downer, like what’s wrong with these Buddhists, don’t they appreciate like the Greeks, the ancient Greeks. Look at their art. Look at Michelangelo. Look at Michelangelo’s David, the statue of David, I mean it’s an exquisite piece of art. Right? And it’s not just the marble was good, but the form, the shape. And so many women, such beautiful form, such beautiful form. And so what’s wrong with these Buddhists, don’t they get it, you know? But we’ll see, I mean, just big emphasis on the impurity of it. So why are they doing that? It’s to overcome an obscuration and that is insofar as we’re fixated on, infatuated by, there’s a really good word, infatuated by our own form. When I was training with one yoga teacher, there were mirrors around the walls, and you know, you’ve seen it, yeah? And people doing the asanas and then...[strikes a pose ... laughter] [laughs] Right? And then watching to see if it’s men, especially men, especially men, watching when the ladies come in. {striking a pose... laughter} [laughs] You know? So yoga for the sake of hedonic pleasure. Okay! Whatever! You know. But it can be a real infatuation, a fetish, a fetish for the body builders, you know. Is it a six pack or only a four pack or is it a keg? [laughs] [laughter] It’s just a keg. [laughs] So to overcome that because it’s an enormous distraction and especially as one gets older, maybe one was attractive when as young and then not so much attractive in middle age and then thinking, “Oh, hold on where is the plastic surgeon, where’s the diet, where’s the exercise, Where’s ..., what vitamins do I need to take? Oh no, I have to turn back the tide.” It can consume you right up to death. Will you have an attractive corpse? That’s the final question. That people will look at your corpse and say, “Wow, looks almost alive. [laughs, laughter] And you’ll be hovering up above in the bardo saying, “Oh, crap!” [laughs, laughter] It’s just meat! [laughs]

(16:28) So, is there something really intrinsically impure about, you know, any part of the body, and you know all of the parts? Is there anything intrinsically impure? And the answer is no. I mean, molecules are molecules, liver is liver there’s nothing inherently that’s impure about anything in the body, and anything that comes out of the body but in human view. So what they’re doing is really saying, “Hey, you humans, wake up to what you believe. So imagine going into, you know, when we go to the cafeteria this evening and see some really nice fresh fruit, maybe something really nice, you know? And you look at it and you say, “Oh!” And you take a piece, and you say, “Oh, that looks really tasty.” You know what I’m going to do. Then put it in your mouth, chew it up, and then come up to somebody else and... “Put out your hand, I want to...” {mimes spitting food out?} [laughs] {laughter} and spit the fruit out that you just ate. It was so fresh into your mouth. It’s just saliva in it. And then, “Will you hold out your hand? [laughs] [miming spitting out the fruit?] “This is disgusting! What did you spit that fruit in my...? Yechh! Where’s some soap and water? I want hot water. He spit this chewed up fruit in my hand! It’s disgusting!” Where exactly did the disgusting part come? It was just fruit. Oh, I know, it wasn’t from the fruit it was from this big peg of filth, here! That’s where it is.

Sometimes even a hair falls into a soup. The waiter’s hair falls into the soup. “Take it back. This is disgusting, did you see that hair?” You know? And so it’s just a human fact and this is in India, you know, twelve hundred years ago. [laughs, laughter] It’s the same now, you know, that if it’s somehow gotten inside the body and it comes out again, we don’t want to touch it. Right? Which implies that’s already in our view so it’s massive override since this is the human view, massive override to then look upon that as something pure and attractive.

There was an article I didn’t read, but I saw the title of it. I think it was Time magazine, and it was, the question was, “Why is that when women are sexually aroused, they’re able to do things that are really disgusting,” [laughs] “that they would never do when they were not sexually aroused?” That was the question. And then I’m sure some doctor got into that and explained why [laughter] they would do things that they do when they’re sexually aroused, that they would never do just walking down the street. [laughter] So it’s kind of a temporary insanity, isn’t it? When suddenly [one] goes into just massive override and do things afterward say, “Not me!” Walk away quietly. [laughs]

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So all of that it's skillful means, that's all it is. It's not to say that the body is ultimately something disgusting and abhorrent and we should destroy it and be, you know, disgusted at the body, it's just skillful means. Bring just enough of clarity so that you completely overcome all infatuation, but not so much that you start not taking care of your health. So it's a real Middle Way once again. Take care of the health, we want this body to be healthy for as long as possible and that's really good, this vessel, this vessel, this is why I wish the Lamas would take better care of their bodies. They're really precious, the authentic Lamas. Oh, I want them to live healthy and long, so I'm saddened when they get overweight, they have diabetes, high cholesterol, high blood pressure and so forth. "Oh, please don't! You know we cherish your presences here." So that's not infatuation, but these are carriers of great wisdom, of compassion and so forth.

And so, I think sometimes they go overboard. Gen Jhampa Wangdü. Wonderful Lama! Hardly taught anybody. He was a yogi. Did you ever meet him? Gen Jhampa Wangdü He spent all his time up in the mountains. But I was up there with him. He actually let me move into his cottage and I lived there for months when he moved down to Geshe Lamrimpa's [?] cottage. And, ah, such a yogi! Just yogi's yogi of a yogi! And there was one point in his life where he said, because he always lived in poverty, and he told me, but very happily, very happily, he said, "Oh, when I was living in this especially poor period of my life, I would take some atta, some brown flour, put it in my little ceramic mug, you know, that everybody has. Pour in some hot water. I'd stir it with my finger, and that would be lunch. And then I would eat it with my finger and that would be lunch." So, I mean perfect, perfect renunciation, but he also died in his fifties. You know? So there's a middle way now. Maybe he would have died even if he'd had, you know excellent diet the whole time. It's not for me to say. But it is a middle way.

(21:30) And so this whole issue that you'll find so often in Buddhism of the disgusting qualities of the body it's not to make us despise the body, it's only use it like filling up a tank but not too much. Use it just enough to overcome the infatuation, the attachment, the fixation. When you've done that then stop, and then shift gears, and say, but now the ultimate nature of the body, is there anything impure in that? Absolutely not. And then think about moving into Vajrayana where you dissolve your coarse body into emptiness and out of emptiness you arise as a pure body and viewing the bodies of all others as pure. So all of this needs to be understood in context.

(22:05) So another Mahayana Buddha's text:

Instruction for one that is reading this transcript as well it is being doing in others transcripts: in the text below we are including Alan's comments in the text between the marks [...].

As it says in the *Viradatta-paripṛcchā*, so another Mahayana Buddhist text, "This body gradually comes into being [so there we know it, from the union of the egg and sperm] and is gradually destroyed, [sometimes suddenly, but sometimes just gradually, gradually, just fading out] it is composed of atoms, hollow inside, flexible, and discharging through nine orifices and pores, like an anthill inhabited by snakes. Like Ajātaśatru's monkey, [I don't know the background story on this. I just have to leave it, but like Ajatasatru, he was the prince who killed his father and he was buddies with Devadatta who tried to kill the Buddha, that one] Like Ajātaśatru's monkey it is contentious with its companions. [so I guess he had a nasty, mean-spirited monkey, That's the implication] Like a bad friend, it is devious. [And that is you can be treating it so well, good diet, good exercise and it can still screw you over. Right? You were taking really good care of your body. Yoga teacher! And that doggone body still split open! (laughter) It's bugging you ever since. Bad body!] Like a bad friend, it is devious. Like a clot of foam, it is fragile by nature. [With our sixteenth inch, sixteenth, one sixteenth of an inch thick armor, fragile by nature] Like a water bubble, it arises, dissolves, and melts away. Like a mirage, it is deceptive, and like a plantain tree, it has no core when cut down. Like an optical illusion, it is misleading, like a king, it is imperious, [The body can be so demanding. Right? So demanding. Right! So demanding. Bugger!] and like an enemy, it seeks its chance. [The food here is really healthy. I've hardly had any problem, but just once we had some of that white salad dressing that went rancid. My body was just waiting for the chance. (snarling sound) Bad stomach for three days. Just give it a chance it will leap at it and make you sick] Like a thief, it is untrustworthy, like an executioner, it has no affection [You may love it, it doesn't love you back!], and like a foe, it wishes you no good. Like a murderer, it obstructs the life force of wisdom, [Because if we get infatuated with it and we're just totally lost in hedonic pursuits] like an empty village, there is no one there, and like a potter's vessel, it finally breaks. Like a pond, it is completely full of impurities, and like a container of bugs, it excretes impurities...Like a tree on a riverbank, it fluctuates and

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shifts, like the current of a great river, it finally ends in the ocean of death, and like a temporary dwelling, it is an abode of all kinds of misery. Like a homeless shelter, it is not owned by anyone, and like a jailer, it can be bribed... Like a little child, it must always be cared for.

[It also states, same text,] “He who is proud of the appearance of his body, which is an assemblage of impurities has the mentality of a fool, while manifestly going about carrying a vessel of vomit. Snot drips from his nose, unpleasant odors are constantly emitted from his mouth, and his eyes are rimmed with worm-like gunk. Who would be attracted to and cherish that? Although a fool may take a piece of coal and rub it, thinking it will become white, [I... just to clean it off. I have to clean it off, more. Right? Think it will become white?] it never turns white but rubs away, for the fool’s notion is obviously mistaken. Likewise, when an intelligent, hygienic person decides to clean his body, even if he washes it by anointing it and wiping it off a hundred times, the Lord of Death will annihilate it and it will never become clean.

Thus, a bodhisattva constantly regards the body as subject to destruction, while leaking through nine orifices [Two eyes, two ears makes four, two nostrils makes six, mouth makes seven, front and back makes eight and nine. (laughter) And they all leak. (laughs) And whatever comes out of any of them, you would not want on your dinner plate. (laughter) You wouldn’t want to touch it with your finger. Imagine any of them. Somebody trudges in here, says, “Alan here’s some goop of mine from my eye. Would you like to touch it?” (laughs) “No, thanks!” (laughs) “How about just some wax from my ear? Would you like to touch that? I got a little bit snot going.” (laughs) Would you like to touch that? How about (spitting sound)? How about (throat clearing sound)? Like to touch that? And we won’t go any further than that. (laughter) And the answer is always, thanks, but no thanks. Whatever is coming out. Hide it. Put on some perfume. (laughter) “Trick me.” This is what men are always telling women. “Trick me. Here, have some perfume, (laughs, laughter) and put it on.” (laughs, laughter) Because in the medieval period, that was the old way, you know when they thought that bathing was unhealthy, they would just slather on more and more perfume. It must have been really a complex odor. (laughter) So...], a bodhisattva constantly regards the body as subject to destruction, while leaking through nine orifices and he regards his body as an abode of 84,000 kinds of minute organisms. [It’s quietly, just in passing, an interesting point that... and I learned this I think first from Doctor (Tibetan name) a Tibetan doctor drawing on texts that have been around for a thousand years, it’s quite interesting, that’s according to Tibetan medicine that goes right back to Buddhism it’s been understood for hundreds and hundreds of years that there are so 84.000, thousands upon thousands of minute living organism in the body that are too small to be seen with the naked eye. Nowadays that’s just a common place we have microscopes but it’s quite interesting they came up with that same conclusion not that they saw little bits of crud, you know, impurities and so forth but actually they’re living organism. How on earth would they know that? We can’t have a conversation with them. So, but that is, that’s it. And then, you try to keep the friendly ones and expel the unfriendly ones, okay?] A bodhisattva regards the body as the food of wolves, jackals, dogs, and other carnivores that devour raw flesh. A bodhisattva regards the body as being like a contraption held together with bones and sinews. A bodhisattva regards the body as arising from food and drink and not as something independent.” [This is to be understood in detail in that text so obviously there is a further elaboration. And that brings us to the end of the discussion of the close application of mindfulness of body. So we see its root system of this Mahayana presentation in a classic Mahayana text, the root system of that whole presentation there of the body is absolutely in Sravaka soil. The whole emphasis on the impurity of the body, classic, really classic. It runs the whole monastic theme of viewing the body’s impermanence. So, young men, you know I was a young man as a monk, celibate, age twenty-three. You have desires like any other young man. They don’t go away just by shaving your head and putting on a dress, you know? (laughter) It was a good try, but (laughs) it doesn’t work all that well all by itself. And so the desires are still there. I remember when I was in Switzerland, there was one monk who came to me, I was the senior Western monk. So and I was the disciplinarian. I got to crack the whip. It didn’t crack much, but... And one monk came to me. He just had tears in his eyes. He was really weeping and he said, “Alan, the lust is coming up so intensely. It’s just driving me nuts!” So miserable! Lust, just sexual craving. And he became a monk because he wanted to practice Dharma, but it became kind of like a demon possession coming in. And so clearly, if one really wants to devote oneself single-pointedly to studying Dharma, reflecting upon Dharma, practicing Dharma and you’re looking for an utterly simple way of life without all of the myriad complexities of romance, of marriage, of children and all of that, then you really don’t want to experience lust. Other people really do. And then they

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go out of their way to cultivate it and consider that's a major source of hedonic pleasure which it can be for a while. But the monastics have simply decided that's not a route of hedonic pleasure I want to pursue. Too much baggage! And so they like to be here, but then the biological impulses, just the hormones come up. And so that's why, because that's what they chose, that's what they chose. Not somebody else making them, for a true monk or a nun. Then this strong emphasis on the impurity of the body, just, it really does help. I was a monk for fourteen years. It really does help. It does the work, you know. You just start focusing on what's really there when I'm not projecting all the desirability, the attractiveness and so forth. So it works.].

So we see Shantideva who was a monk of course, his root system is there but then he doesn't stay there. Then he moves into compassion. He moves into identifying with others bodies, so moves the whole thing into compassion, into bodhichitta, "May I transmute the body of every sentient being into a Buddha body." Right? And then even goes into purity from there realizing the emptiness of the body then seeing its essential nature is not impure, right, and then goes there with respect to one's own and others bodies.

I find it because I really am doing my best to follow the Mahayana way, I find it refreshing, that I see the value of looking at the impermanence - very, very, helpful, seeing the impurity. If you don't want to have the lust that really is helpful, but then not staying there, rising above and transmuting this all into compassion, realization of emptiness and then even pure vision, there's kind of a freshness there, an expansiveness which I think is quite extraordinary. And then you can see how utterly smoothly, as he made a totally smooth transition from the Shravakayana, Shravaka perspective, impermanence, impurity, non-self, there is no owner and all of that, just classic Shravaka. He embraces that but he doesn't stop there and he goes into emptiness, into purity, into great compassion. But by the time he's gone into emptiness and purity you can see it's going to be a completely smooth transition from there right into Vajrayana. I mean that's not going to be a bump.

So you go from a monk who is meditating on foulness and impurity of the body off to pure vision of Vajrayana and you say, "Wow! Well, that was a smooth spectrum all the way through. Quite spectacular, quite amazing! Oh, la so! So let's meditate.

Now we can have a quiet meditation. Practice whatever you find helpful.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

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63 Empathetic joy (1)

01 Oct 2012

Teachings 1:

Alan revisits the 3rd of the 4 immeasurable, empathetic joy.

This morning we return to the next of the four immeasurables, empathetic joy.

The emphasis there in the Pali Canon of course is taking empathetic joy in the virtues, the joys of others, but since the overall orientation of shamatha practice just for starters, is to be viewing our own body and mind from the perspective of our substrate consciousness, a continuum of consciousness that carries through from one embodiment to the next, then it actually makes quite good sense to practice from that perspective, with empathetic joy for ourselves. That is empathetic joy for this particular incarnation, this particular embodiment with this very fleeting body that is here just for short time and frankly this very fleeting mind that arises in dependence upon - that is configured by - the body. Both of them are very short stories, in some cases they are merely a poem, there is good poetry and bad poetry, all they have in common is they are short.

(2:15) But the perspective from the substrate consciousness, that's our home in samsara, we are like homing pigeons, we fly off to one embodiment and then come back and roost for while in the substrate consciousness, and then we fly off to another embodiment thinking each time, thinking this will last, this will last, but we are like the yo-yo that always comes back to the palm, sometimes we sleep a little while. Remember Sleeper? Hangs out but always comes back.

(2:37) So to view our own present existence from the perspective of substrate consciousness is in a way to view our present existence from the perspective that has seen it all. You know if we can really tap fully into

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our memories, that are conventionally speaking stored within that continuum of consciousness, within the domain of samsara, there is really nothing we haven't experienced, we can just say, been there and done that, from the highest to the lowest and everything in between: Been there and done that.

So there is tremendous amount of wisdom. Plato, referring to this transmigration, he said everything that we know is really, everything we have a sense of learning, it's really simply brushing off knowledge we have from past life, past lives, that is within the mundane context.

(3:34) So as we venture into empathetic joy this morning I'd like to bring forth, or highlight a practice many of you are familiar with, because it is right there, right towards the foundation, right towards the beginning of the Lamrim. And that is focusing clearly in upon, what in especially in Indo Tibetan is called - this precious human rebirth, this precious human existence, life actually they say - body. So what is so precious about this body, everybody has got a body? My body is not very especial, old, I mean that is not very special, there are a lot of old bodies around, right? Some of us have better bodies, some of us have worse bodies, but even better bodies get worse. So then that kind of levels us all out.

But the body is the basis. In dependence upon which arises, the mind we can use now, and in that regard, this coarse body, but more importantly the subtle body, the subtle body is the flow of the prana, of the channels, the nadis, the bindus, that makes this kind of a special body, not so cheap, not so easy to acquire. That is just a human body. Well, there are 7 billion of them on this planet a lot of them don't look all that precious. It is just hard when we see the number of people living in poverty, struggling in one way or another, so many struggle, so many challenges, it doesn't seem like that great a deal just to have a human body in and of itself, I would have to say that is true, so many people they are born, they struggle, they die.

(5:42) But when we figured Deshung Rinpoche, this precious human rebirth, imbued with leisure and opportunity, and that is that for those of us right here in this room right now and I suspect people listening by podcast, we are so enormously fortunate that we have actually proven it by the fact that we are here, or even now listening back to the podcast, we already have demonstrated by that fact that we don't have to spend every single moment of our waking hours just trying to survive, because you would not have time to listen these podcasts, right? You couldn't spare the time, you'd say - I am sorry I am too busy, just too busy. Now many, many people are just too busy just seeking more and more hedonic pleasure. From the hedonic perspective, it's just the opposite of dharma, it is really quite remarkable, from the hedonic perspective when it comes to the two types of wellbeing, hedonic and eudemonic, when comes to hedonic there is never enough. There is never enough, there is always something more, even if we have some acquisitions we want that something more, something more, something more to our last dying breath, a little bit (trying hard to have one more breath), a little bit more, a little bit...ah (and die), you know it really won't stop.

But when it comes to eudemonia nothing is fine - thanks I am already full, thanks no problem I do not really need that. So when comes to eudemonia we are completely satisfied already with none, that is the hedonic perspective. It is never enough with the hedonic, but eudemonic, ah, none is ok, because the hedonic is working out pretty well.

And the dharma perspective is just the opposite of that, the monastic ideal: be satisfied with that which is merely adequate for all of the hedonic, be satisfied. Be satisfied with that which is just enough and it is really enough, again enough is different from different people, if you have children it is not enough to not have enough for them, right? If you are in ill-health it is not enough to have no medicine and so forth, different countries, different places, different contexts means enough is different, widely different. But then when you see in your circumstance you have enough, then be content.

(7:44) But when comes from the dharma perspective when comes to eudemonia, genuine happiness following the path - there is never enough. As Tsongkhapa said: when it comes to learning and practice never be satisfied, never be satisfied, be a dharma "preta". Never satisfied - never enough. So even when you are dying even when you are breathing your last sigh, I not finished, I not finished, so you may have my final breath, I not finished, I am still practicing dharma, I not finished I'm never finished until enlightenment.

(8:37) So precious human rebirth. It is precious because one has found the leisure, one does not have to spend all of one's time as an animal just surviving and procreating, and one has the opportunity to actually find genuine happiness, that requires of course outside and inside, it is not enough to have the longing, but one must find then, ok, who can help, where is a light that can shine the path, illuminate the path, where's there some companions? It is hard to do on your own.

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(9:10) Individuals like Dudjom Lingpa I think he can by his own. He came in turbo charged. He can get it all directly from his own rigpa, that is rare. For the rest of us having teachers, having spiritual friends, having the outside support, when all of those have come together, the outer mandala and the inner mandala have come together, the yearning to find the path, and then meeting all that is needed from outside to find a path, then that forms which is called the wishing fulfilling gem, and it's basis is this body, and to recognize that if you have found such a gem, to recognize that first and then recognize in its broader context the rarity of it and that is an empirical fact. There is no point that I am saying here - now you just have to believe, have to believe just because the Buddha said so, authority, tradition, no! Look for yourself - how rare is that? And then just use your imagination, again no blind faith, how precious, how precious. Such a life or having all the wealth of a Bill Gates, which is more valuable? Or having the fame of a Steven Jobs or some movie star something like that, which is more valuable? Which? It is a simple question you can answer yourself, then you see.

(10:31) So once you find such a body, such a life with such opportunity, then if you are a perceptive person then you see: Ah, then this must be cherished. Sometimes that which I am cherishing is very difficult, the body can be very difficult, the mind can be very difficult, better to be very difficult than not have it at all.

(11:29) So let's not be like the ancient mariner of Tibet of Indian legend, the ancient mariner who went out to great ocean in search of a wishing fulfilling gem, an actual gem, some kind of a high tech device maybe left by some people from UFOs, I don't know, but a wish fulfilling gem, an actual entity, this is believed widely in classical India, believed by many traditional Tibetan Buddhists, but there is such thing as they say, whether it is literally true, it does not matter so much to us now, but some gem, where if you can find such rare, rare device, you can simply polish it off, you clean it up, you treat it with respect, and then you just focus your intention, you do not need Samadhi, you just focus your intention: may I have this – and any of your mundane desires - wealth, fame you know is the Genie in the bottle, but it doesn't give you three wishes it gives you as many wishes as you want. You just focus your intention, on some super high tech device maybe from some other galaxy, who knows, but just by focusing your intention, whoa, then it comes out. And any mundane you want, you want women, you want men, you want money, wealth, fame, whatever you want there it is, why not, you know. So wish fulfilling gem, that's a wish fulfilling gem.

(12:57) And so the ancient mariner, this Tibetan in the old Indian legend, goes out to the great seas and years and years go by, always looking, especially in the ocean. How do you look for them? I don't really know. But after a long, long time the ancient mariner drops his nets down, and lo and behold, he finds it! He pulls it up and says - Oh, I got one, I got one, I found one, I found what I have been looking for all these years, I got one! And he tries it out, is it really a wish fulfilling gem? Yeah, wow, I've got a wishing fulfilling gem. He takes one long look at it, recognizes it, throws it over his shoulder and says - I hope I find another one!

That is us if we do not value this life.

So let's begin there and extend outwards, empathetic joy.

Meditation:

(14:28) As an expression of delight, of satisfaction taking full advantage of this present opportunity, let your awareness descend now not into the body, not into this mass of flesh, or this field of feelings, pleasant, unpleasant and neutral. Let your awareness descend into the space of the body, and come to rest in these empty appearances of tactile sensations, of the earth element, as substantial as a cloud or rainbow, a mirage. Let the light of your awareness fill this empty space in which empty appearances arise and pass, let you awareness illuminate the entire space. As you release your body, release all grasping onto the body, release all grasping on the sensations arising in the body, release all grasping onto the feelings arising in the body, let it all go and release the grasping that there *is* a body, *really* there, and that there are really feelings arising in the body. All of these arise in dependence upon conceptual designation - withdraw the conceptual designation and the reification together with it.

(16:50) And likewise release the breath, the sensations of the breath are more empty appearances, devoid of an owner, devoid of a controller, devoid of inherent nature, appearances of movement - arising in space. Release with your body, speech and mind with every out breath, as if it were your last, total surrender. And once you have given it all away, this out breath, if a breath flows in of its own accord, receive it as a gift, receive just what is offered without taking more and without inhibiting what is given.

(19:00) Let the breath flow in and out without an owner, with no one in charge.

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The mind itself can be such a burden, so heavy, so claustrophobic, so harsh, so let's release it, together with all of its cares and concerns, and all of its ruminations, resting in the flow of awareness release your mind, let it dissolve away, you don't need it for now, maybe later. And take as a very essence of the instruction for this practice - with every out breath - relax more and more deeply, find fuller dimensions of release and letting go. You've not come to the ground yet, there is more to let go, with every out breath relax more and more deeply and simply, without losing clarity, with nothing to be achieved, simply don't let the natural clarity of your own awareness be obscured by dullness.

(21:58) And now from this perspective of relative stillness and clarity, as if you are having an out of body experience, and an out of mind experience, you with your own intelligence, with your own powers of discernment, what are the opportunities that lay in the palm of your hand in this lifetime with this body? What value would you place on it?

This life in which there is leisure and there is opportunity not only to practice dharma, but the opportunity to venture onto a path, a path of irreversible transformation, maturation, liberation and awakening. How rare and how precious is that? As if we are practicing pure perception in Vajrayana, we look through the veils of hedonic suffering, the challenges that rise up to meet us objectively, we see through that to a deeper reality, a reality of immense opportunity, precious beyond all reckoning.

(26:14) And rejoice in the opportunity that lies in the palm of your hand, cherish it with the resolve to take the very essence of this life, by putting the body and mind to the greatest possible use for your own and everyone's else benefit.

(27:30) And then turn your attention outwards, avoid any possibility of any sense of elitism, of superiority insofar as we have a special opportunity the only realistic response is gratitude and a sense of responsibility. And turn your attention outwards to others who also have found such leisure and opportunity. And with each out breath, breathe out the light of your heart, a light of appreciation, of satisfaction, of joy at the flourishing of others, especially those who take full advantage of the opportunity that lies before them, and take the very essence of what means to be human being, this precious fully endowed human life.

(30:48) You may attend to those who lived in the past who took the essence of this life, found the path and followed the path, some even to its culmination, to those in the present who are doing so, and those in the future, as if we stand up and give them a standing ovation, applause, delight, rejoicing and with each out breath embrace them with the light of gratitude, rejoicing in their virtues.

(36:00) Release all appearances, and release all effort to extend your awareness out to any object, total release of effort, and let your awareness come and rest in its own nature, naturally still and naturally clear. .

Summary:

Times were already degenerate at the time of the Buddha who taught mindfulness of breathing more than any other shamatha practice for those prone to rumination. Breathing out long may be associated with the peaceful. Breathing out short may be associated with the sublime as the pranic system settles.

Alan comments:

(37:22) Already during the time of the Buddha 26 hundred years ago, it was already said then, from the Buddhist perspective, that was a degenerated period. The other bodhisattvas said oh, too degenerated for me, I am staying up here, but this one - Gautama said - I come, so he came down, 26 hundred years ago, degenerate India. And within that society, within that time and place, he identified those who were especially strong in rumination, of course he recommended and taught more than any other practice during those times, according to the pali canon - mindfulness of breathing, which in a way is so effortless, I mean we don't have to try to breathe, just be with what is already there. And he laid out those four stages, attending - breathing in long - one note - I'm breathing in long, breathing out long, so you remember, but then and I also noticed just this morning that he gave four descriptions and it just suddenly struck me, oh they'd have to be a match, that they have to be a match.

(39:08) He said - in that analogy, when he said - this mindfulness of breathing, when practiced and developed, remember when he said - it was like a great cloud out of season, that suddenly expels and vanquishes all the dust and grime and smog in the air, just in an instant, poof, like that? And then he said, - this practice, when developed and cultivated, it's peaceful, that's the first thing he said, it is peaceful. And that it is soothing, it's relaxing, it is like, ah... Breathing in long one notes I breathe in long, breathing out long one notes the long exhalation, ah..., after all the hurly burly, after all the agitation, all the hectic-ness of the outside world, that's

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peaceful. And then as a number of you already found gradually the whole system settles, your whole pranic system your whole breathing system settles in natural state, you may suddenly kind of drop down a floor. Breathing in short one notes breathing in short and breathing out short one breathes out short and the Buddha said - it's sublime, it's sublime, he just knocked it up a notch, you really want to do this, I don't want to stop. Strangely enough I am really enjoying breathing, who would have ever thought?

Summary:

The whole body (of the breath) may be the flow characteristic of the ambrosial dwelling. Once shamatha is achieved, any unwholesome thought is dispelled.

Alan's comments:

(40:37) And then attending to the whole body when one breathes in and attending to the whole body one breathes out, you get into flow. Whether you are attending to your whole body as Asanga suggests, whether you are attending the whole body of the breath as Buddhaghosa suggests, both are fine. But you get into that flow and then he said this is an ambrosial dwelling - just want to go with that flow. And finally you come to the culmination of this practice where your pranic system settles in its natural state, your mind settles in its natural state, the coarse mind dissolves in the substrate consciousness into, to use Pali terminology, into the bhavanga, the ground of becoming, your home in samsara, which is by nature pure and luminous only adventitiously or temporarily obscured.

(41:26) And when you come to that stage, breathing in long, breathing in, one soothes, one calms, one settles the composite of the body, in other words the whole system, the composite, and breathing out long one settles, one calms, one soothes, one rests in equilibrium, in its natural state, the whole system of the body. The body has been brought to balance and you've achieved shamatha. And at that point he (Buddha) says, in reference to his metaphor of the cloud - a cloud burst, the rain coming and purifying the air, he said - and it dispels in an instant any unwholesome thoughts that might arise - in other words your body mind is becoming pliant, the mind becomes clear, the mind is free of the five obscurations, so even if some little creepy crawly mental affliction or some unwholesome state should arise, it comes up, and then you just can't stand it, and it just floats downstream, it doesn't have the oomph.

(42:32) So once you have achieved that, let alone the actual dhyanas, let alone the four immeasurables, let alone vipashyana, stream entry and all of that, once you achieved that, just that, if you are living in a degenerated era during the time of Buddha, you are no longer are living in a degenerate era because your home is not in your body which is in a degenerate era, your home is not in your mind which is heavily conditioned by your degenerate era, your home is in your substrate consciousness which is not in that time or in any other time, it's the keeper, it's the one that carries through all the times, good times and bad times and by nature - luminous and pure, that's your home.

(43:14) So it doesn't matter what time you are living in, and does not matter what place you are living in either, because that is not what the substrate is. All of those times and places those are the appearances arising to the substrate, but you're home. So now whatever characteristic there may be about your time and place - no longer relevant, not your business, at least not for you because your perspective, your home now is not there.

Summary:

In the 19th century, 1860, Dudjom Lingpa taught taking appearances and awareness as the path for those whose mind is coarse and nervous system shot.

Alan's comments:

(43:49) Let's jump to the 19th century, 1860, Dudjom Lingpa out there in the wild lands of nomadic Tibet, wild cowboy country, really sparsely populated. Speaking to his nomadic fellows, living in a tent, he never even had a monastery, living in his yurt. And he speaks about the methods of shamatha, visualization methods for focusing on a bindu at the heart or a Buddha image and so forth, very good no problem but he said he said you know if your mind is coarse, if you are really prone to prana or problems that is imbalances in the nervous system, then really applying yourself to such practices, such shamatha methods may make you just go catatonic, which is exactly not the purpose of shamatha practice. In which case he said, for those of us living in a degenerate time with strong rough minds, minds heavily prone to mental afflictions, the modern word would be neurotic, and with a lot of mental afflictions he said - those other practices are not going to work out so well for you, for you - better to just sit back and watch the show and take appearances and

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awareness as the path and let them be, and just watch the movie, and watch your mind disappear, settle your mind in its natural state. So that is what he taught to his nomadic contemporaries out in the wild lands of Tibet. When actually dharma wise things were pretty darn good. There were these incredible masters of different traditions, all of the traditions, and there were six thousand monasteries, and you can say well, that was contemplative center for planet earth. It is not saying that Buddhism is better, it is simply saying that I don't think there was any society on the planet that had a higher density of contemplatives, monasteries, people utterly devoted to dharma, than Tibet in the mid 19th Century. It is just a historical fact. Mongolia might be a runner up, and of course adjacent Bhutan, all part of the same culture.

Now let's see what is being recommended in Modernity:

Summary:

Don't look for clarity in the mind. Discover clarity by releasing everything that isn't. Awareness is by nature clear. Just stay at home, and relax in the present moment where it's real, without losing the flow of knowing. Don't strive or hope for anything. The present moment and luminosity will rise up to meet you, until awareness is all that remains. There is nothing to achieve, nothing to meditate on. For the substrate consciousness and rigpa, simply release all that obscures that which is already there.

Alan's comments:

(45:46) So that was about 150 years ago, and now here we are in modernity. Where the norm is neurotic, that which is considered to be healthy is neurotic and the primary antidotes are entertainment and drugs and work. Did I leave out anything? Maybe if you are religious, rituals once in a while. So in this modern world the pace of life, the multitasking, the bombardment, everything that we already know, the normal person has a nervous system that is pretty well shot, I mean not to the point of total dysfunctional, just modern dysfunction. And the mind that rides upon that nervous system, the pranic system, the nervous system also - the normal is quite neurotic from the perspective of the Buddha, from the perspective of many, many others cultures, that were not caught in this morass that we call home. Mind's neurotic and the body is sick. That's normal. And degenerate times - pretty intense.

(47:28) So what to do in these times? When we look within and we try to practice and we can't find clarity. We are looking for it in the wrong place. You are looking for clarity in your mind - that is kind of like going to downtown Los Angeles in September and looking into the sky and looking from clarity, it's all smog. You are looking in the wrong place the awareness that's looking for clarity, is looking in the wrong place. The awareness that's looking for clarity *is* clear, it is clear, it is by nature clear; it can't help it. It's the substrate consciousness, so don't look for clarity - discover clarity by releasing everything else it isn't. Release, don't strive, release. So if you are looking for clarity you are looking in the wrong place that with which you are looking *is* clear. The effort to balancing the mind is so difficult, so difficulty, maybe impossible. If you can't balance the mind get rid of it!

That is my motto. If you don't like your mind disown it. I gave you a chance and you haven't lived up to my expectations, you are fired! I am just resting in awareness now, mind you can fade off, you are not my problem, mind, go and entertain yourself.

(49:02) Don't strive to balance your mind, maybe is not possible, too screwed up. Then release it, release the identification with it, release the reification of it, just let it go and come to rest. When all the releasing has taken place, come to rest in the place that is left over and that is just the nature of your own awareness.

(49:27) It is easy when we strive, not only for 6 weeks, but when we strive for 6 years or 40 years or longer, it is easy to lose confidence in our ability to accomplish anything, shamatha, bodhichitta, vipashyana, any of these glorious things we hear about. It is really so often feels like being a beggar with no money and wandering down this famous road in Beverly Hill, the Rodeo Drive, I have been there, I didn't buy anything, but I watched where the rich people shop, I watched the rich people in their restaurants, I just drove by, because they didn't tax me for driving by, I got to drive by for free, they didn't have a toll. You too can look at the rich people, it was free. But I knew that if I got out of my car and looked at the menu, I would have said oooh.

So often, listening teachings from wonderful Lamas it often feels like being a beggar and they are showing you menus, wonderful menus, look at the menu, wonderful menu: it begins with shamatha, it costs only three thousand lifetimes, and then we move to the main course, vipashyana, bodhichitta, they are a little bit more expensive, and then we move to Stage of Generations and Completion, or if you would like a desert we have

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threkchö and thogyal. And to the beggar it is all looks really good, and makes you just salivate until you are drowning in your own saliva because you cannot afford anything. All you are doing is drowning in your own saliva, choking on your own drool, gosh I wish I could afford any of that, but I can't afford anything! (51:48) So it is very easy to lose confidence that we can't accomplish any of these things, so I would say give up, give up hope. That's what I would say. Give up hope that you can accomplish anything, in this day and age I think it's maybe impossible, except for really rare people like Dudjom Lingpa. Maybe impossible to accomplish anything so don't accomplish anything, discover what is already there, which cannot be accomplished. If you don't have it you will never get it, not in three countless eons, or ten times that. If you don't have a substrate consciousness you can't buy it for love of money. This poor piece of paper? Out of luck, never get it. The sheer luminosity, the purity of your own substrate consciousness, you will never accomplish it, if you don't have it, you will never get it. But since you already have it, there is nothing to be accomplished. Just release and let go everything else and of course that is true all the way down to rigpa, if you don't have it, you will never accomplish it. So give up any notion of accomplishing anything and just release all that's obscuring that which you already have.

(53:04) Some of you find it difficult to meditate for longer sessions, asking if it is okay if the session is only this short, or this short. One of you mentioned 5 minutes. Is that too short? No, I think it is too long. I think five minutes may be too long. How can you meditate for five minutes? I just tried. I just failed. I will try again. I am always failing, I am never meditating for five minutes. I am just failing, failing, failing. I am still failing. I am still not able to meditate for 5 minutes. Because 5 minutes is a concept and I can't meditate for a concept. I can either meditate now or not, that is my only choice. But I don't want to meditate, I am tired so I just want to stop meditating. I don't want to do anything, I just want to sit here. What's left over is awareness, home. Five minutes is much too long, maybe if you are beginner, maybe one breath, one whole in breath out breath, don't move a muscle, but for one in breath and outbreath just let your awareness just rest at home, don't move a muscle, you don't have to change your posture, one in breath, out breath, stay home. Now how hard was that? I think the answer was - a little bit. That means the session was too long, one in and out breath. I can't meditate for one in breath one out breath. I can only meditate for part of one in breath, and another part, and another part, then part of an out breath. When my sessions have almost no duration at all, then I feel – okay, I'm getting pretty close. Now I think I've found the right direction. But 5 minutes seems like an eternity.

In one whole in breath out breath seems like all day, hard to meditate all day unless you've achieved the first dhyana. So don't meditate, and don't practice shamatha and give up all hope of achieving shamatha, you'll probably never do it, just stay home and relax. Right there in the present moment, it's really easy. Any of you who still think that awareness of awareness is difficult, you simply haven't understood, you are making it too complicated. Just rest without doing anything, without slipping into non reality of the future because it has not happened or into the past which has already happened but no longer is, so just stay where it's real, relax there without exerting yourself to go anywhere else, even out to the sense fields, if they arise let them arise, big deal!

Don't strive for anything, don't try to accomplish anything don't hope for anything, you probably will be disappointed, so give up already. Give up all hope ye who enter here. Just relax without losing the flow of knowing, without losing the natural clarity of your own awareness which is your birth right, just rest there. And if at times you get drowsy, and you feel like you want to fall sleep, then fall sleep; sleep as long as you like, just like if you get hungry, eat until you are full. And if you need a lot of sleep, take a lot of sleep, some people are quite skinny, they should eat more. If you need a lot of sleep, you need a lot of sleep, be happy. Don't try to achieve anything. Whether your eyes are open or shut, you can't shut the eyes of awareness anyway so don't worry about it. The eyes of awareness never close.

So that's the path with no accomplishment, nothing to achieve, nothing to meditate on.

(57:38) At this point Alan talks about one image which he associated with awareness of awareness. Let's try to summarize this image making some adaptations.

Imagine a barn, an empty barn, no lights, all dark and in the middle of the barn, something called a forklift. A platform that has an engine that makes it go up and down. And so imagine laying on your back in the supine position, on that forklift, and you are looking right at the top of the roof, right at the middle of the roof, and in this dark barn, you see there is a crack, in the very top of the roof where the two sides meet, there is a very

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narrow crack, you can see the light coming in all the way through and the rest of the barn is dark, and in fact the crack is right above your eyes, so you decide to focus there, it's very thin, very narrow, you are totally relaxed, and you just let your gaze where the light is. And you relax and simply rest there, attending to that narrow band of light. And then somebody turns on the forklift, and gradually elevates you so that your eyes, your whole body, and of course your eyesight, gradually ascend, ascend, ascend up, to where that band of light is, that crack in the roof. And that which looked very, very narrow, almost just paper thin when you were down at the bottom of the

barn, as you are coming up, it seems to actually get broader because you are getting closer to it.

And broader and brighter until eventually the forklift takes you all the way up, until your eyes are right next to that crack, and then it's so close you can't even see the barn anymore, you can't see the roof anymore because all you can see is space filled with light, and it's open in all directions. Focusing on the present moment in awareness of awareness, resting right there in the immediacy of the present, it seems like you have no will or room, it seems like such a narrow bandwidth of time, how long is it? One second? Half a second? How much of a fraction of a second? Really small right? Because it's closed in so tightly from the future, and the past, that when you are trying to rest there, the mind is so easily slipping into some fantasy about the future, or memories about the past, it seems like a very small bandwidth in the present moment. But as you rest more and more deeply in it, and the forklift rises, as your awareness settles more and more simply without elaboration, without any encumbrances, in this immediate present moment, releasing all else, then the present moment in its natural luminosity and space rises up to meet you, until your eyes then are no longer seeing the barn, and all there is, is this space and luminosity.

So rest in that present moment and rest more and more deeply until all that remains is the open luminosity of your own awareness, and you see there was nothing to accomplish and it required no effort or any hope and when all is said and done it really doesn't matter how damaged or screwed up your body and mind is because they are both in the barn. And that is not where you are attending, you are attending something beyond the barn, it was never encumbered by this barn, or any other barn, wide open, clear and pure, never to be achieved only to be discovered and to be discovered by releasing all else.

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64 Mindfulness of feelings (1)

01 Oct 2012

Teachings:

The teachings below is composed by: a) summary of each theme and b) Alan's comments of each theme

Summary:

Alan begins by exploring why it is said that Dzogchen is particularly effective in degenerate times. He suggests that when the teachings are degenerate, society is degenerate, the mind is shot, the body is shot, and they become difficult vehicles to transmit the dharma. By going directly to awareness, Dzogchen bypasses culture, body, and coarse mind.

Alan's comments:

I'd like to give a footnote to the whatever that was this morning, and the footnote pertains to Dzogchen and the statement that I alluded to briefly, and that is a kind of in the air in the Dzogchen tradition. I've heard this a number of times, that when times become very degenerate in multiple ways, mental afflictions are very strong, society very degenerate and so forth, during very degenerate times, that's a time when Dzogchen will be especially powerful, a very powerful means, very effective in bringing about profound transformation, liberation, awakening. So one might wonder why not in good times, why degenerate times? I have some thoughts about that that may be true, maybe not, but I will share them and you can try them on for size. When dharma is really flourishing, when the institutions of dharma are really healthy and there have been many occasions when they have been, it kind of comes in ebbs and flows, it is not homogeneously bad or homogeneously good, but there are times like when a great reformer like Tsongkhapa comes, and suddenly

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there are just bursts of clarity, or there is just the extraordinary, the golden area of Nalanda University. The time of the Buddha of course, but there been these surges in these eras of history throughout Asia because that is where Buddhism largely flourished over the last twenty five hundred years. And then other times when it really goes into decline, the 9th, the 10th century in Tibet, there was a lot of decline, but when dharma is really, when society is really flourishing, when there is not really much in the way of degeneration, the dharma is there, the institutions of dharma, practitioners, the teachings, the transmissions, when it is all very healthy, then to practice dharma by way of the culture when it is really healthy, then why not? Practicing heavily acculturated dharma where there is a lot of your own culture in the dharma, a lot of Tibetan Buddhism is very Tibetan, a lot of Japanese Buddhism is very Japanese, and Chinese, and now frankly a lot of Western Buddhism is very western, so much so you are kind of wondering which is the Buddhist part? It looks like a homeopathic dose! So when it's really healthy then you go by way of culture and there is no downside to it.

(3:15) But when there is a lot of degeneration when the institutions themselves have some pretty strong degenerate elements to them, when the society itself is degenerate, when the transmission often is degenerate, heavily commodified, commercialized, trying to please the customers - that kind of thing. That's degeneration, that's clearly degeneration. So in such cases where the society around is quite degenerate and then because of the impact of society on one's mind, one's mind is quite degenerate, strong mental afflictions, strong delusions, strong craving, hostility, because they are not even regarded as mental afflictions they are regarded as just being normal. So when one's mind is degenerate and then when there are so many contaminates in the environment, pollutants, pesticides, all kinds of ways where we are monkeying with nature. And the myriad ways through which, the beating that our nervous system takes by just adopting the modern way of life, I mean that goes by way of the nervous system and then how many stress related illnesses are there? Probably too many to count, and so when there is degeneration of the body by means of injury, by way of society, by way of life and so forth, the degeneration of the mind for so many reasons, the degeneration of the society one can look – well if you went in by way of society, by way of cultural institutions and so forth, you are going to pick up a lot of grime on the way. If you come in by way of your mind it's going to be a rocky road. By way of your body – it's a damaged body, by way of the nervous system and so forth, so that's going to be a tough road to hoe, you know. And overall developmental approaches where you roll up your sleeves and you ask: ok now, let's go, what can we do to achieve enlightenment, what shall we do, what shall we do? Well those are very well when you have a really healthy body, a really healthy mind, very pure mind, developmental approach really works.

(5:26) If you have watched the movie The Yogis of Tibet, that guy doing the Yogic exercises for Tumo, man oh man, I was thinking, who could do that here, and I was thinking maybe just Alonso, maybe Alonso, but Alonso's mamma? Forget it! I mean that takes a really young body, a really healthy body and you'd have to really work out. The rest of us over twenty, probably over the hill - so sorry Cassia, over the hill Cassia. But if you got a really good body for that, that is incredibly developmental using these strong asanas, jumping up into the air, going into full lotus, slamming down, holding your breath and while doing visualization and realizing emptiness, so if you are up for it, it works, it's fantastic.

("6:20) Likewise the developmental approach to shamatha, ok here is the Buddha image focus on it and it is almost like being a wrestler and saying there is your mind, there is you - go for it! And if you've got a strong healthy and virtuous mind, supple, vigorous you just take your mind and you wrestle and you pin it. And you pin it to the Buddha - I give! And you achieve shamatha. But if your mind is the big powerful wrestler, and you are coming in as a little 90lb weakling, guess who gets pinned?

(7:05) So when things are well with your body, with your mind, with society and dharma institutions and so forth and so on, the development approach has proven itself, this is not speculation, it is true. It has proven itself to be effective in many, many times.

(7:11) But when outer and inwardly there is a lot of degeneration then that may actually not work, not work very well, just may be a struggle and then lots of stress, lots of lung, lots of struggle, struggle, struggle, depression, fatigue and so forth. In which case then Dzogchen is kind of like the one thing left over we haven't tried, and that is instead of asking what can we do to achieve enlightenment, the question is what can we stop doing to achieve enlightenment, but no, not to achieve enlightenment, to realize enlightenment, to unveil enlightenment, a way that bypasses culture?

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(7:46) Of all the teachings I've had in Buddhism for the last 42 years I don't know of any really that I can say are more culture free than Dzogchen, I have heard Dzogchen teachings from early on - the 8th century, 14th century, 19th century and 20th century, it's just timeless, I mean for actual practice I am sure a scholar can get in there and find some syntax or something, but overall it's just timeless teachings. And again whether it's Tibetan, Mongolian, Indian, it's placeless, also its location free and culture free. And so none of the downside of the culture and minds degenerate that is it's outside the culture, it does not degenerate, and doesn't entail getting there and working with the mind but rather releasing the mind, it doesn't come by way of the body, by way of the mind, it does a double bypass and goes right to awareness. So in such degenerate times you might want to just skip culture, skip history, skip our location, skip our bodies, skip the mind and do a quadrupled bypass and go right into awareness itself and then let the path rise up to meet us.

(8:47) Now Dzogchen of course when presented as something that is free of effort, spontaneous, all of that, that's really good, what is the word - branding, marketing, it's very good for marketing because nowadays people are very busy and so if you tell them we have something called Dzogchen, it's a Rolex of all of Tibetan Buddhism, the Rolls-Royce, and by the way it's effortless and people are really busy and lazy think: count me in, count me in. And so they receive the teachings on Dzogchen and lo and behold they like them because they are really likable and so then a lot of people come to retreats because they really like them.

(10:02) And if the teacher that popularized Dzogchen, picks on that, says - Oh I will just teach Dzogchen all time and just tell people, never mind the other more basic teachings, I am just giving the pinnacle of teachings, the highest teachings, I am just giving Dzogchen, never mind shamatha. The sutrayana? That is for inferior people, not like you, my clientele. So just practice shamatha, you don't need six perfections, you don't need the sutrayana business and you really don't need all that visualization and so forth. No, just go with Dzogchen, and if one is a person of superior faculties and you hear the teachings and you gain realization of rigpa, then they are right. But if you have medium faculties and they tell you just to rest in open presence and you do that for three weeks and become a vidyadara, then they are right. But if you are not of superior or medium faculties but you have dull faculties and then you just hear: Oh, I just practice Dzogchen all the time, I'll just practice Dzogchen. Well that is about as realistic, I mean if you really think you are going to achieve enlightenment, it is about as realistic as thinking I am going to watch Nova on the Discovery channel for the next thirty years and get a Nobel Prize when I finish - in science. It's really the same, you are not doing any of the work, you are not getting the education, there is no path to that, you are watching Nova, there is no path, there is no sequence, why should there be? It's entertainment. It is educated scientific entertainment, and it's very good, but likewise there is no path, they don't say watch this for a month and then we will give you the next month, it is not an education, there is no degree and you don't have to do anything, you are just sit there and practice open presence in front of the television. So as you can see I am very skeptical of teaching Dzogchen devoid of context and Dzogchen without any sense of a path.

(11:50) Because the great teachers like Dudjom Lingpa and Lerab Lingpa and Padmasambhava and Karma Chagmé Rinpoche, absolutely no question, there's a path there, and again if you are of sharp or medium faculty, you do not need the path, Boom, you just go right into rigpa, you realize it and on you go. But if you are not one of those rare, rare individuals, then let's not kid ourselves. And it goes right back to doing whatever preliminary practices necessary.

(12:09) Now I think of my own precious teacher, my primary Dzogchen Lama, the Venerable Gyatrul Rinpoche, for whom I served as principal interpreter for about 7 years, from 1990 to 1997, and he just taught during this period of teaching, that one phase of his teaching, because he taught for about forty years, not teaching much anymore because he is quite old, but for that period he just went back to text after text that laid out the path. That's all he did. He went through two texts, it was really one long text but it became two volumes on the union of Mahamudra and Dzogchen, all laying out a path. It was exquisite. Preliminaries into shamatha, boom, and then you go on to vipashyana and on you go. We finished that and then we went on to Padmasambhava, Natural Liberation path, into shamatha, vipashyana, boom! When we finished all of those and I asked him if he wanted to translate something more, he said okay, Vajra essence! A one line reference too, during the preliminaries, he didn't even unpack them, just saying - do them, and then shamatha, vipashyana, boom, on its way! That is all he taught, for 7 years, I was translating for him, he took that nail and pounded it into my thick skull and counter sunk it, and counter sunk it three or four times, to make sure at least the interpreter got it!

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(12:27) There is a path here and there is a sequence to it, and just to do a little bit of shamatha, a little bit of vipashyana and a little bit of Dzogchen and just kind of doing that over time, well it's a Nova all over again. You are not really following a path you are sowing a lot of good seeds and hoping for the next life that maybe one day, in a future life, you'll get around to the path, by sowing a lot of good seeds this time. Now that's very wishful thinking.

(13:50) So there it is, but I think that is why it is said that Dzogchen is very, very powerful in degenerate times because then we give up hope, we give up hope on the external refuges, and this is in no way suggesting that we do not rely on Lamas, but very, very mature guru relationship recognizes really fundamentally going for the non-duality of your own mind and that of the guru and not idolizing the guru that is somebody outside.

(14:38) But I think during the degenerated times in, it's cut us lose from all of the lovely ornamentation that can grow up around the beauties of Tibetan Buddhism and Indian Buddhism and Japanese Buddhism and Chinese Buddhism and South East Asian Buddhism, and it just cuts like a knife right through that to the core and say, ok, now here is the ultimate refuge, and here is the path, free of ornamentation, unelaborated, straight and direct, there it is. So that was a little footnote. (15:13)

I found a very interesting question that was not asked. I don't know why this particular question came up that wasn't asked but it came up, so gosh what can I do?

I have to answer, right? The question was – Arthur C Clarke is a brilliant science fiction writer, very ingenious mind for science fiction. The question was – what were Clarke's 3 laws? So here are Clarke's three laws. Let's see if this is worth spending our precious time on.

- **When a distinguished but elderly scientist states that something is possible, he is almost certainly right. When he states that something is impossible, he is very probably wrong.** (Alan - I think it's a true law)
- **The only way of discovering the limits of the possible is to venture a little way past them, to the impossible.** (Alan – I think that one is true too, I really like that one.)
- **Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.** (Alan– of course for whom? For the person who doesn't understand the sufficiently developed technology. For an outsider – oh it's magic, right? Lasers are magic. I just checked out a little bit of history, the first one was developed in the 60's using a ruby crystal. The fact that it should be possible in principal was already laid out by Max Planck, a great pioneer in quantum mechanics and Albert Einstein, lo and behold. So they laid it out, it's theoretical possibility, and then from 1959 to 1960 there was really a concerted effort. People picked up the sense this should really be possible, and a lot of research went in there in 1960, developed the first laser and then so many different types of lasers since then, but if you don't understand the technology, and it actually relies on quantum mechanics, then lasers are just flat out magic. If you understand the technology then you understand it's just really cool technology.

So those are the answers to the unasked question. We have another unasked question - this question is in light of that (previous one). – Do miracles exist and what are they? This is not from Arthur C Clarke, this is from B Alan Wallace, fresh out of the oven. You want to know what a miracle is -

(19:00) A miracle is simply an event that stems from a dimension of reality you haven't yet comprehended. So clearly I was inspired by Arthur C Clarke. Magic is just technology you don't understand. A miracle is something that does happen, miracles happen all the time but we call them miracles because we don't understand how they happen, and they came from some place we don't understand, let's say some dimension of reality that we don't understand. The word is used rather frequently - miracles of modern medicine.

And so for a person that was not medically trained, your jaw drops and you say that is just amazing, look at he can do, fantastic it's a miracle, miracle of modern medicine, right? For those who devise that technology, that treatment what have you, there is nothing mysterious about it - nothing miraculous about it at all, because they actually understand how works. Or miracles of modern science, same thing if you are not a scientist you look at that and say, Oh, that is a miracle of modern science! If you are a scientist and have been working in that field, nothing mysterious, nothing miraculous about it, so it's all a matter of perspective. If you are an outsider it is a miracle, if you are an insider it's just something that happens.

(20:36) But what dimension of reality have we largely not comprehend in a modern world despite all of the marvelous breakthroughs of modern science? Is there anything that looms large, that has an enormous

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impact on our lives, on reality as a whole, on our joys and our sorrows, on the flourishing or lack of flourishing in human civilization that we simply do not understand at all, that is one of those un-comprehended dimensions of reality? And I would say that which looms largest above anything else is consciousness. So intimate, so clear, so obviously existent and yet scientifically speaking, there is no consensus about any definition, they cannot define it, they have not agreed on any definition, that's an empirical fact. They cannot measure it by any instrument of technology it's immeasurable, thus far, maybe one day but not yet. They don't know the necessary and sufficient causes for it, they don't know when it emerges and how it emerges, they don't know what happens at death, they don't know how it interfaces with the brain and they don't know its role in nature. So I would say scientific knowledge of consciousness hovers marginally above zero. Although there is plenty of literature out there, but philosophically and scientifically speaking, this is the great frontier, and so much of what we call miracles that are not miracles of science, miracles of medicine. But just say – well it's just a miracle, person who was healed or this happened, or that happened, it is a miracle, it is a miracle! Well I can't imagine every single case but I will imagine in many, many, many cases the dimension of reality from which that apparent miracle or that apparent magic arose is this almost entirely unknown dimension of reality called consciousness.

(22:25) So it is unknown, but the unknown quality, the extent of ignorance about consciousness I think is largely unknown. So it's one of those sad cases where you are not only ignorant but you are ignorant about how ignorant you are. Because you cover it over with illusions of knowledge, pretending whether consciously or unconsciously, I think it's mostly unconsciously because I don't think there are that many dishonest people in modern science. Confused? Sure, but dishonest I sure there must be some but I don't think they are a significant factor, I don't think so, or in modern medicine. People really deliberately out to deceive? The pharmaceutical industry I think there are quite a few people deliberately out to deceive. There is just too much money at stake, and they really do deceive. To say it is criminal is just way too wimpy a term because they are harming so many people. When they put drugs on the market that they know are harmful and they cover it over like Gyatrul Rinpoche often said, like a kitten that poops and then covers it over with sand. They shit and then they cover it over with advertising and lobbying and so forth, so I think that is really sociopathic. But of course there are also many benevolent, altruistic and honest people in the industry as well, so it gets very complicated.

(23:41) But in terms of one of the miracles that really should be called flat out a miracle, I want to return to a horse that isn't quite dead, so I am going to beat it a little bit longer until it's totally dead, and that is the placebo effect.

(23:52) If you thought it had any life in it at all, if you are willing, in a public context, to say those words, 'placebo effect', again, I am now going to try to beat it out of you, so you'll immediately break out into hives as soon as you start to say it, because it's too humiliating, it's too deceptive.

(24:18) I just read this afternoon of a case that is not terribly unusual but quite interesting. It was in an article published just this year about some trial for the treatment of Parkinson's disease which is a terrible debilitated disease, a neurologic disease and the trial entailed placebo. By the way I made an extended analysis in the chapter called, "Restoring Meaning to The Universe", in the book "Meditation of a Buddhist Skeptic" by B. Alan Wallace.

See below a brief summary that Alan made covering the article about the trial for the treatment of Parkinson disease:

Back to this, a more recent article that I could not have read when I wrote the book, but a quite an interesting study - and that was treatment that was given where there is placebo effect manifesting from the treatment of Parkinson's - in another words what the patients got who had Parkinson's had no therapeutic efficacy whatsoever, zero. And in a significant percentage of the population of those who took this non-entity, I mean this sugar pill, whatever it was, what turned out be placebo, a significant percentage the symptoms as well as the underlying causes of Parkinson's, clearly and dramatically decreased, and there was actually as result of, I am going to say it - not placebo effect, mind effect, there was new growth in the very neuro fibers in the Parkinson's effects. That is those neuro fibers that are affected by Parkinson's disease and are damaged, or destroyed, those were regenerated by the power of the mind effect. Taking some ostensible medication that wasn't medication at all, and moreover was lingering, it went on for years, years and years. By believing, expecting, and hoping and desiring of course, that this would work just exactly. We need to linger

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here, because this is not getting in the headlines, in the New York Times, nor in the New England Journal of Medicine and so forth, they are not shouting this from the roof tops, it's a miracle, it's a miracle! That people merely believing in something, will help their Parkinson's. It doesn't just make them feel better, like you know a pacifier, an anesthesia, no, that belief targets exactly those neuro fibers that are damaged by Parkinson's disease and revitalizes them! Now that is smart, but they do not even know what those fibers are. (27:02) Maybe we should just say, okay this is a miracle, but it is not a miracle of modern medicine because they don't understand, and it is not a miracle in modern science because they don't understand it at all, it is a miracle of the mind and that's what we don't understand. It's a miracle of consciousness, that's what we don't understand. So fair enough, but what is really quite awful when we have this marvelous frontier about which we know almost nothing, the actual nature of mind, not its behavioral expressions as neuro correlates, actual nature of mental events, actual nature of consciousness, within this vast territory, to say it is in our front yard is too objective, it is in our back yard, it's where we are, it's where we live, it's the very core of our existence here. A true miracle and it happens not only for Parkinson's disease but such wide variety. Where just exactly you'd expect somehow, somehow mysteriously, miraculously, let's use the word after all, it is a miracle, but it's a miracle that not many people have been able to market. And then it is covered over with an illusion of knowledge.

(28:09) Here it is, here is a direct quote from a psychiatrist, - the name of the article is Ethological factors and Placebo Effect, published in 1964, not in some new age journal, but in the Journal of American Association, so top notch. This article had to go a peer review process, in other words, highly intelligent editors who are deeply trained in medicine, allowed this one to slip by. You want to get the definition of a Placebo? Here it is from one of the most authoritative journals on the planet. *"A Placebo, is defined as any therapeutic procedure that is objectively, without specific activity for the condition being treated."* (so far so good, in other words it doesn't have to be a pill, it can be a gesture, it can be all kinds of things, it could be a medical intervention, a surgery that doesn't do anything. I am going to read it again) *"A placebo is defined as any therapeutic procedure that is objectively, without specific activity for the condition being treated"*.

It doesn't do anything. It has no effect. And then, a little later - *"A placebo effect, (so we have defined placebo, now the effect) - A placebo effect, is defined as the changes produced by a placebo"*.

I think I am going to throw up. That got through the peer review. It has no effect, but that's its effect. That is called illusion of knowledge. That is called dementia. I really do think that adherence to materialism induces a type of stupefaction, or dementia, or at the very least a severe case of imagination deficit disorder. Because materialism says that the only things in the natural world that have causal efficacy are material things. It is called the Closure Principal. The only things that can influence the brain, the body or anything else, are material things, period. Otherwise you'd violate the principal and conservation of mass energy. That's the shtick.

And so you take something, like this placebo for Parkinson's effect, and it actually helps to alleviate symptoms, and the only physical thing you can find anywhere in the neighborhood is a little old lady in a wheel chair – the innocent bystander, the sugar tablet, and then you say – placebo effect. Not joking. That was 1964, once might think that ok well we have certainly outgrown that. You know what is coming. Here is an article from 2012 - *"A placebo effect, even if caused by a well- intentioned sugar pill"* (laughter, that is why you have to be very selective about your sugar pills, you have to make sure that they have a good motivation, ha-ha, you don't want any sugar with bad motivation, oh where is the wall I can bang my head against! How dumb will this get?) *"A placebo effect, even if caused by a well-intentioned sugar pill can bring real improvement in a patient's condition"*. But make sure you have chosen your sugar pill well, right? Oh I think that is absolutely marvelous. And yet there is hope on the horizon, oddly enough, interestingly enough, from the same article.

And this is refreshing. Study is designed to recognize the possibility of real interactions. The just of the article was, the person who wrote it actually has Parkinson's, and saw that when certain types of treatment were used and proved to be ineffective, and yet a certain percentage still got benefit, in other words, the treatment didn't work, it was one of those negative results, but some percentage, 15% - 20% still got benefit, some lasting for 20 years later, still getting benefit from something that didn't work. In other words they got benefit from someplace else, like their minds. The person who has Parkinson's says – you are throwing this all out, you are saying that the chemical didn't work so ignore it and throw it into the garbage bin when 15 to 20% got

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benefit, and they didn't get it chemically, they got from the placebo, the mental effect, so don't throw that out, we need help here, dammit, stop throwing out beneficial results when they are attributed to the mind as if they are scientifically irrelevant! People still got benefit, not from you, from some other source, so continue the study, don't discontinue the study because you can't make any profit on it. That's a really harsh way of saying it. So this is a lovely statement, and I want to end on a positive note here, this is positive, no sarcasm here – 'Study is designed to recognize the possibility of real interactions among all factors, including placebo effects where to harvest the effects of hope and expectation for patients' benefit, rather than dismissing them as detrimental to science.' It is a wonderful statement. But also the statement shows the awful situation to which this is a response, and that is if you can't market it, don't research it.

The notion that the mind is what the brain does is one of the greatest superstitions clogging the arteries of the scientific mind today, because if the placebo effect is simply something that the brain does, (and of course it is a mind effect, that should go without saying, they should start calling it that today, or in 1955 when the term 'Placebo effect' first came out) but since it is clearly a mental effect, if the mind is what the brain does, then the placebo effect is what the brain does, in which case the placebo effect should be able to be induced by chemical or surgical or electrical intervention. You should be able to do that if the mind is what the brain does, it's a mental effect therefore it's a brain effect then you should be able to give an actual drug that would induce the placebo effect. With nothing from outside at all, no information transfer. In other words you go to the Pharmacy and say, what kind of Placebo would you prefer? One for arthritis, rheumatism or Parkinson's? And some of them are much more expensive because they have much greater effect.

(laughter) So there should either be a drug, or you should be able to induce the placebo effect by some surgical operation or electrical stimulation. If the mind is what the brain does, then that should follow. Well? Now I have got a hypothesis – they will never, never, ever bring about the 'Placebo effect' by inventions on the brain for the very simple reason - the mind is not the brain, and the very simple reason is that the brain is influenced, causally, influenced by non- physical agents. And top of the list is information, and so that refers back to the earlier talk, where information is primary, and if we understand that – that information is primary, think of conceptual designation, now that we are into emptiness realm, think of conceptual designation. How smart do you need to be to think – this will definitely be – I am certainly hoping and expecting, will alleviate the symptoms of my Parkinson's? That's a conceptual designation. And you believe it. And lo and behold, that conceptual designation targets exactly what needs to be done, and then does it on a physiological level. That is a miracle. Because we don't understand, scientifically we don't understand. Contemplatively ya it is understood, it's the emptiness of all phenomena. It is the emptiness of the brain. Some brains are a little bit emptier than others (laughing, that was sarcasm).

So, whether we call it the placebo effect or we call it faith healing, the medical establishment, the scientific establishment has not been able to find any way to get credit, or money, for studying something they had nothing to do with. Placebo effect - that is why there is almost no research on it. But faith healing? There is some money in there. So money in faith healing. When you can say – (Alan mimics a preacher's booming voice -) when you can say – "just have faith brother, brother Miles, just have faith, come on right over here and I'm gonna put my hands on your shoulders, are you with me brother! Do you believe!? Do you believe!? Hallelujah! And make donations to my institution." Whether or not you get the placebo thing.

So if somebody has found a way to make money out of placebo effect, call it faith healing, once again they attribute it to somebody outside of you, in other words – the head of their institution. God generally, or the CEO of the church. Of course if God did it for you, then you are disempowered, again. Just like you are disempowered in the other cases, the placebo effect, after all you didn't cause it, a little old lady in a wheel chair caused it. So no matter what, big institutions are out to - frankly disempower individuals and it has been going on for centuries. In the medical establishment it is almost like they are giving sacraments. You cannot get healed without taking our medicine. And if it is a sugar pill, we are going to call it, and I actually saw this term – Placebo Drugs. I actually saw that term in a serious article, they were not being sarcastic. They use the word without tongue in cheek. And so if you come to a hospital and you get cured, they want to make sure that you got cured because of something they gave you and because there is a market value in it.

Scientific community wants some more prestige, some more credit? Well the three jewels of mundane world – wealth, prestige and power. So there it is, it all stems from a dimension of reality that we have not yet sufficiently comprehended. And the Dzogchen practice, this is where we loop back, and the Dzogchen practice

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comes right into that and says that is what this is all about. Dzogchen, first of all to fathom, either through your mind or bypassing your mind, settling your mind in its natural state – that's through your mind, awareness of awareness is saying I am not interesting, I am going to bypass and just go right to awareness of awareness. Either way you are getting to the core, the actual the essential nature of consciousness. As Panchen Rinpoche said it's the essential nature of consciousness, and you are seeing it directly. And you are seeing its nature that it is pure and luminous, by nature blissful, and that should give a strong, strong suggestion that the source of the mind effect, the source of faith healing, you are looking out in the right direction, you are looking out into a pure luminous space of awareness. Break through that it's even more pure and luminous, break through to rigpa itself.

Summary:

Alan revisits the 2nd close application of mindfulness to feelings by commenting on verses 88-92 of Ch. 9 of the Bodhicaryavatara. Does suffering truly exist? If so, one could not experience joy. Can suffering and joy exist at the same time? No, as there is no such thing as an inexperienced feeling. This type of investigation benefits contemplatives who have achieved dhyana. Because of OCDD in our ordinary mind, we cannot merely choose to stop conceptually designating, nor is it a serviceable basis for investigating the nature of phenomena. When probing into the nature of feeling, it dissolves. Feeling is a way of experiencing/apprehending, and is not in the object itself. Suffering is designated as suffering, and once the conceptual designation is released, it is liberated.

Alan's comments:

(40:10) We will return now to Shantideva, "A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life", we are going to spend just four days, today through Thursday, on the second of the four applications of mindfulness, it is a powerful one, it's a big one, it is one we enormously care about, this is in the Bodhicaryavatara and we start now having finished the section on the body ever so concisely. Go down to verse 88 and by the way, as of today I made this section of the ninth chapter available for all of you here, you can get it either downloaded or get a hard copy as usual from the front desk, so I just took this out of my translation and it is translated from the Sanskrit either from Tibetan, it's the only translation that draws from both that we have today.

(41:44) So we go to feelings, and we know this is now going to be feelings viewed from the perspective of Madhyamaka Middle Way, focusing in on the emptiness of the inherent nature of feelings. So we are jumping into deep, deep waters immediately. When we just step back to where we came from, that was pretty deep already. This body that has mass, that has location, that is filled with elementary particles, atoms, cells and so forth and so on. Boy, here we are incorporated, here we are embodied, that feels about as real as it gets, right? Feels about as real as it gets because again we have the insider's view, and the outsider, the first person and the third person perspective, even in our own bodies, because when we look our hands what we see as we look our hands is pretty much what other people see when they look our hands so that is the third person. But from the insider's view by way of tactile perception, well that's really a first person perspective, but seems awfully real, and of course when one considers, yeah, where did that come from? Egg and sperm development through the formation of the fetus in the womb and so forth, so it seems awfully real, and there was only just a few lines devoted to, seeking to fathom, the absence of inherent nature of the body and all of its constituents right down to the atomic or elementary particle level. And now we move right on to something that does not feel quite so substantial, so tangible, so located in space (as the body) nevertheless looms extremely large on the horizon when we are experiencing, or experiencing them, and that is of course feelings. So we start on verse 88.

88. If suffering truly exists, why does it not oppress the joyful? If delicacies and the like are a pleasure, why do they not please someone struck by grief and so forth?

(43:24) If suffering truly exists, again what does that mean? It's awfully clear because this is like doing surgery, we are not here to refute the existence of suffering which would be idiotic, and yet we are seeking not to reify suffering, not to view suffering as we have been viewing suffering, as something that exists by its own nature that is simply dished up all by itself, just presented, thrown on our lap! Here it is - have a big chunk of feeling, suffering or joy, pleasure or pain, it seems that the experience is something massively overwhelmingly, and sometimes unbearably real, independent of any kind of conceptual designation. And he is going to challenge that. It seems like a hopeless task to try to persuade anybody when they are

experiencing very strong emotion and especially suffering, you try to persuade anybody when they are suffering physically and or mentally that this arises only in dependence upon conceptual designation, it does not give from its own side, it sounds like an absolutely hopeless argument, like don't even open your mouth, I know what you are going to say is going to be false. What's he going to say? Because everybody is aware of this, he says: "If the suffering truly exists, why does it not oppress the Joyful?" It is not transparent but I did check the commentary, I read His Holiness commentary because I translated this years ago, just the ninth chapter again from Sanskrit and Tibetan, just on my own, just this ninth chapter. So what is he getting at here? If suffering truly exists why does it not oppress the joyful? Here is what he is getting at, and that is: If suffering arises let's say in your mind, so misery, anguish, despair, depression, sadness, grief, and it's inherently existent, then if this is true, and of course this is not obviously true, this is going to be a very short presentation, nothing here is going to be obvious, if it's true, it is going to come through only very, very penetrating investigation,

but he is throwing this out like Madhyamaka koans. Why does it not oppress the joyful? And that is - if suffering takes over your mind, and it certainly feels like that way sometimes, and it's inherently existent, then it should not be possible for it to give away to joy, to gladness, to cheerfulness. If it's inherently existent it should just be absolutely there. But we know in fact that one can be grief stricken, and then after some time the grief is gone and joy comes in. But if the suffering, the misery is inherently real, then and joy tried to arise, the suffering should loom so large that the joy, all the life force of the joy should be strangled, it should be oppressed. If you are really suffering there should no possibility for joy, that's the implication, I don't suggest that it's obvious, but that is the implication. Let's read a bit more:

(46:53) "If delicacies and the like are a pleasure, why do these not please someone struck by grief and so forth?"

If delicacies are by nature pleasure, then why don't they simply overwhelm the grief? So either way, if either pleasure or sorrow, happiness or misery, if they are inherently existent, it would suggest that one could in no way supplant the other. They are inherently existent, which by implication means – immutable.

Let's see if we can unpack this in any way and give you more of an in.

89. If it is not experienced because it is overpowered by something more intense, how can that which is not of the nature of experience be a feeling?

(47:35) If it is not experienced, so here is the response, If it is not experienced because it is overpowered by something more intense, so for example as somebody is suffering some grief, loss of a one loved one, whatever it may be, and then you say: well never mind, have some ice-cream! But it doesn't make their suffering go away, surprise, surprise. That is if it is not experienced because it is overpowered by something more intense, that is intense grief, and then you try to, or you say something - oh, but you look so attractive today, you try to give them some mental joy - I know you are grief stricken but that is awfully nice lipstick you are wearing. Somehow you know it might work in another situation, but here it doesn't cut the mustard. So he is saying if that's the case, if it's not experienced because it is overpowered by something more intense, how can that which is not of the nature of experience be a feeling?

What he is saying is it's this whole casual dynamic. How does one give way to another and the hypothesis here is: you are getting some subtle pleasure but it's overwhelmed by coarse misery, so you are actually experiencing both simultaneously. And that is - you are getting something pleasurable, somebody complemented you or you are seeing a beautiful cloud formation or a beautiful painting, or what have you, and so one hypothesis is - ok, well you are getting pleasure from this pleasurable thing, a good hedonic response, after all it is a really tasty food or whatever it may be for hedonic pleasure of the mind, and so what he is suggesting here is that on a subtle level you are experiencing the pleasure but it is overwhelmed by the coarseness of the grief. And his (Shantideva) response to that is - look, a feeling is not a feeling if you are not feeling it. There's no such thing as unexperienced feeling, it's either there or it's not. It is not too complicated, it's there or it's not, so let's not talk about there being a subtle feeling while it is overwhelmed by coarse feeling because if it is overwhelmed, then the subtle feeling is not there at all. But how does this gets displaced? Well he continues: (49:21)

90. Objection: Surely there is suffering in its subtle state while its gross state is removed.

Mādhyaṃika: If it is simply another pleasure, then that subtle state is a subtle state of pleasure.

Objection your honor.

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“Surely there is suffering in its subtle state while its gross state is removed.”

So you could be really happy about something then something makes you miserable, but on the subtle level, subtle happiness or subtle suffering, subtle suffering continues. So in other words he is saying that it can actually be working on two multiple bandwidths. Coarse and subtle simultaneously, and they may be incompatible, incongruent, happy here and sad here and vice versa.

The Madhyamika response is: if it is simply another pleasure, then that subtle state is a subtle state of pleasure.

He is simply coming to the same statement, same statement that if it is not experienced it is not a feeling, so it's just a way of talking, but it's not experiential.

91. If suffering does not arise when the conditions for its opposite have arisen, does it not follow that a “feeling” is a false notion created by conceptual fabrication?

(50:12) “If suffering does not arise [now here we get to a really reasonable response that might seem to be - okay this is the final word] If suffering does not arise when the conditions for its opposite have arisen.”

So there you are cheerful, you are feeling mentally happy and then you hear some incredibly bad news, so some cooperative conditions come in, and your cheerfulness vanishes immediately and you're grief stricken. In other words if a feeling does not arise when it's conditions, the conditions for the feeling for happiness doesn't arise. When its opposite, opposite conditions have arisen, you just heard some bad news then happy feeling vanishes and miserable feelings arises. Does it not follow that a feeling is a false notion created by conceptual fabrication?

That is, does a shift in feeling not occur simply because of a conceptual designation or is it something more real, more inherent than that?

Therefore, this is the final verse and I do not expect this to be, and I explained why, I do not expect this to be like - oh, I read that, yeah you persuaded me, yeah, feeling definitely has no inherent existence. It is not so easy! But the final verse with this line of thinking:

92. Therefore, this analysis is created as an antidote to that false notion. For the meditative stabilizations that arise from the field of investigations is the food of contemplatives.

(51:12) “Therefore, this analysis is created”, he is presenting this way of thinking as an antidote to that false notion. For the meditative stabilizations, the Dhyana, that arise from the field of investigations are the food of contemplatives.

So he comes back to Dhyana, the degrees of meditative insight or Dhyana, that arise from the field of investigation is the food of contemplatives. In other words somebody is going to benefit from this type of investigation, this line of reasoning, this type of investigation, but it is for those who experience the meditative stabilization, the dhyanas that arise from that type of investigation. Those are the food, the nourishment, the healing, the food of contemplatives, but if you are not a contemplative and you have not developed dhyana, namely shamatha, then this medicine may not work. It is a tough sell to my mind, it is a tough sell. To talk about elementary particles, to talk about quantum mechanics is cool really fun, entertaining, especially if it is true because it is quite distant from our experience. And some of you have experienced this and that is - in the body - having that sense of earth, water, fire and air arising and seeing that they are just empty appearances arising in the space of the body. Get some taste of that, not by powerful logical analysis, but some experience, and then compatible, illuminated perhaps by logical analysis. But when it comes to pleasure and pain in the body, especially pain, when it comes to pleasure and pain, especially pain in the mind, to persuade anyone that it's not inherently real, has no existence from its own side, it arises purely in dependence upon conceptual designation, which is to say if you withdrew the conceptual designation, the designated suffering would vanish, that is a tough sell. And that is exactly what he is getting at, exactly what he is getting at, by implication. So he is really giving us a steep road here, by implication, if it did inherently exist it would be inert, it would be impervious, it could not be influenced by cooperative causes and conditions, it would be inherently real and that is the implication for true existence across the boards of any kind. It is said to be so there in the realm of physical reality, that entity, that physical entity that inherently exists would be then impervious, would be cut off, isolated from all kinds of causal interactions because it inherently holds its own attributes, which means it won't budge, it is what it is forever and it cannot be influenced because it's got a vice grip on all of its inherent attributes, the whole is seizing onto its attributes.

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(54:15) So the implication of the immutability of a frozen universe, go back to that quantum mechanics theme. It kind of makes some sense, but when one gets so up close and personal, as physical pain or mental pain, it's tough, I think, I think it's tough for such lines of analysis to make a dent in our reification of these feeling that we so profoundly care about. I think it is difficult. If is true what I am saying, if you find it is easy, I congratulate you, but if it is not so easy, if it looks like a word play, just word play like a crossword puzzle, but if you are miserable, you're miserable - that's inherently real, there is nothing more real for you than your misery, or your physical pain. If you have been injured, if you have being damaged, you're ill, what's more real for you, more real than in your body itself is the misery arising in that space of sensation and feeling. How could there be even a way to prepare ourselves so that we can take that type of reasoning seriously? That it will actually have an impact, actually get through, actually shift our way of viewing, which mean experiencing suffering and joy? How could that possibly happen?

Well Shantideva says it he says it in so many words, crystal clear in the other text. How he began this whole section. It is good to memorize, he said: "once the mind has been made serviceable in that way then proceed", right? Shamatha.Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey, who first taught me shamatha and vipashyana, he said: if you achieve shamatha, vipashyana it's easy, that's what he said.

(55:59) But you can imagine if your mind is still as usual, business as usual, caught up in the ordinary ruminations, caught up in just the spasmodic oscillations between laxity and excitation, all of it filtered by the dense haze in smog of rumination, in the midst of that you take this completely dysfunctional mind and say - I want to understand Madhyamika. You can't stop conceptually designating you are in an obsessive compulsive mode of designating all the time with rumination. You don't step outside of that cloud, you are going through all of your studies of Madhyamika in this cloud of delusion, ongoing flow of rumination, which tires you out and so you fall into laxity and then fall sleep and wake up next morning so you can be you know, experience once again obsessive compulsive delusional disorder. And that mind which is totally stricken by obsessive compulsive delusional disorder says: I am going to roll up my sleeves and I am going to understand Madhyamika? Maybe well enough to write a paper, even a dissertation, and you might even get an academic position or be able to pass your Geshe degree, maybe. But will the arrow strike the target? Shantideva suggests not, and Tsongkapa suggests not, that is why vipashyana comes after the shamatha and Tsongkapa, Ah, that is Padmasambhava, that is Dudjom Lingpa, and that is Buddha, Lerab Lingpa, and so forth and so on. So hard to imagine why that so obvious truth is being so ubiquitously ignored.

But on that base of making the mind serviceable so you can use it like a sharp knife, then consider also the incremental steps, large steps actually to be able to move into that type of analysis, and that is - sharpen your mind, make the mind serviceable, relaxed, stable and clear, and then apply that closely as we did so fleetingly for first four weeks. Apply that quality of awareness, our best approximation, best achievement, but in the meantime our best approximation, and probe right into the nature of feelings that you experience. Mental and feelings, now pleasure, pain and indifference, feelings arising in the body, and just take that laser mind, without any of the Madhyamaka reasoning, just some shamatha and then close application of that mindfulness that you've developed through shamatha, and like a stiletto, like an ice pick, like a laser, something sharp and pointed and very bright, penetrate right into as Elizabeth did, right into the feelings arising in the body, discomfort arising in the body and you start there not with mind numbing anguish, pain that just makes you almost pass out, but start out with moderate ones, pain that arises after sitting for fifteen, twenty minutes and your knee hurts, tolerable – that's where to start. Alan quotes Shantideva:

(59:15) "There is nothing that doesn't become easier by familiarization". So you start with the little pains, start with a little pain from the body and a little unhappiness, the malaise, the perturbations, little spices of dukha that arise in the mind and you rise to the occasion rather than immediately wanting to apply an anesthetic, an antidote, move away, please go away and all that, all of that avoidance techniques, saying ok, this level of physical discomfort, this I can investigate, this level of mental dismay, this I can investigate, it doesn't scare me, it doesn't make me want to simply flee, so apply that, apply that sharp, stable clear mind and penetrate, and see if you can find, like Elizabeth and many people have found, even in a weekend retreat, one week retreat, four week retreat, and that is when you probe right into the nature of that feeling it dissipates. It kind of vanishes, it doesn't wind up having any nucleus, if it is hit hard like a hard strike, a hard landing, got ya! When you probe right in to it, it more dissolves fades away and then you don't find it.

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(1:00:17) If it were inherently real, if that feeling were inherently real, the more closely you inspected it the clearer it should manifest, is it not true? If it's really there then the more closely inspected, penetrated, it should just rise up to meet the occasion and you would have a smack on hard collision with suffering, if it's inherently real. But penetrating in that way without the conceptual designation, without probing and thinking: it is going to hurt, it's going to hurt, it's going to hurt, no just go in without the conceptual designation, without the commentary, without the verbalization and just go in nakedly then lo and behold it evaporates. Do the same thing with mental suffering, a little bit of unhappiness, a little bit of boredom, a little bit of anxiety, a bit of something unpleasant, and instead of identifying with it, probe into it and see whether it stands even a close empirical investigation, boom! Just looking at it with Samadhi, see whether it withstands it, and if does withstand it, if you observe it and it's still there, it may be, then good, closely apply mindfulness and investigate, permanent or impermanent? Is it static? Is it there like great big immutable fist or when you look is it made a little staccato moments? Could you already suggest some kind of breathing space? Permanent or impermanent? That starts to loosen things up a little bit, to un-reify when you see it wasn't solid as hard as mutable as I thought. When I really went in there with some power of shamatha, investigated, I saw staccatos like strobe (light) prrrrr, like that, all fizzing, fizzing, fizzing and then probe right into its nature. Is it by nature, intrinsically, is it right there, does it have a nucleus inherently existent? Probe right into it, probe right into that which seems to be the real cause. If we take seriously the notion that feeling is a way of experiencing an object and is not in the object itself, I think it's a very powerful insight, basic one on one Buddhist psychology.

(1:02:36) Feeling is not in the object, feeling is not in the sensation, the tactile sensation, feeling is in the way of apprehending it. It's a really powerful hypotheses, I think actually of course, I think it is true. If that's the case then bypass the feeling and go right into that which seems to be the very source of the feeling, the feeling seems to become – why are you hurting- because I got such intense earth element sensation in my elbow, or I've got such fire element, I've got such water element –it's going to boil down to one of the four combinations,. And if you had that sense of a feeling actually arising from the physical, from any of the four elements, then skip the feeling and go right into to the element and check: did you do it? Is that feeling actually coming from the physical? And that's where you may find that the feeling just evaporates because you are finding - no it is just the physical. In the felt there is just the felt in the sense of the tactilely perceived there is just the tactilely perceived, but the feeling is just a way of experiencing it. But when you focus in on the tactilely perceived, the feeling alters and you find, aha, the feeling actually isn't arising from the object, it's coming from the way of experiencing and that may have to do with how I am conceptually designating it.

(1:03:55) And let's go to the third mark, we did the impermanence, we did just straight samadhi then we did impermanence then we look into is it sukha or dukha, is it true source, what are the true sources of sukha and dukha? And then we go on to anatman, non-self and that is so the feeling is arising. Does it conventionally exist? Sure, it does, of course it does. Nobody here is saying that suffering does not exist at all, that is idiotic. But the question is: when it arises in the space of the body, when it arises in the space of the mind, does it by its own nature have an owner? Does it have an owner, does it belong to you? Is there something in its nature that says: I am yours you are mine we are a couple? Is it really there?

Does it really have an owner? The colors you perceive don't have an owner you are just witnessing them. The sounds you hear don't have an owner you are just hearing them, the fragrances you smell they don't have an owner they are just fragrances. Are the tactile sensations any less, and are the feelings in the mind any less, or any more, or they are just the same? If they are ownerless they are a lot easier to bear. And that's basics vipashyana, three marks of existence.

(1:05:10) So imagine, just let your imagination rove, imagine having the stability and clarity of just samadhi itself, so you can go in with that laser pointer and see what can that do? That actually is one way, one way of getting at least some respite, and that is if your suffering is here - as in case of that yogi with throat cancer and when the doctor went in to probe it, it was anguish, and he said stop, because it was really, really painful. And then the yogi went into Samadhi and while sustaining the Samadhi, he said now you can go. Because (my interpretation) he directed his attention elsewhere and then the doctor could fiddle around as much as he liked and there was no pain because unfelt feeling is no feeling, there was no feeling there because he directed no attention to it, which means - probe away while I am directing my attention to a nice neighborhood, because this is really a bad neighborhood. So that's one way, power of Samadhi, that's without

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wisdom. That's actually just having a mind you can direct at will. It doesn't cure anything but boy it's a nice side effect free way of not experiencing suffering when you don't want to.

But then bringing in just the three marks, just as if this is a kind of child's play or something, but the three marks of existence of impermanence, dukha and non-self, just imagine gaining some really experiential realization in each of those three, with respect to suffering. So you are actually viewing the suffering that arises in body and mind as just moment by moment pulses arising, arising and vanishing but nothing really tangible, nothing really immutable, nothing really, like trying to grab a waterfall, not substantially there. And then seeing that that which is the seeing basis for it - something in the mind that's making you unhappy, something in the body, some sensation that's giving you misery. You look and say but actually it isn't the source of either the misery or the pain, it's not because all you have to do is do that anthropological probe into it, and see no, it is not, it is not true, it is not there in the object, not in the mental object, not in the physical object. Imagine having that insight and then on top of that, realizing that the suffering arising in your mind has no owner, it is not you and it has no owner and the suffering arising in the body is not you, and has no owner, imagine you've done all that ground work and then you come in with the Madhyamaka. Then you could do some major damage, major damage, this could be real. Where you could see - aha, given that Samadhi and that fundamental level of insight that I have already gained into the three marks of existence, now I see - conceptually designated on a very subtle level. Release the conceptual designation, it does not arise! On a very subtle level the experience of that suffering has to be designated as suffering. Release the designation - see its empty nature - suffering vanishes because you've seen through it. Let's practice.

Meditation:

(01:09) And now I would like to suggest a perspective that you've heard before but maybe I could more clearly articulate it, a perspective of all of the three modes of shamatha we have been exploring and whether it's shamatha directed to the field of the body and the sensations of the breath arising therein, or shamatha directed to the space of the mind, the mental events arising therein, or awareness of awareness, in all three of these modes of mindfulness of shamatha, here's a suggestion:

Let your awareness remain motionless, let your awareness illuminate the space of the body without entering into it, illuminating the sensations arising of earth, water, fire, air - without entering into them. Observe the feelings arising in the body without entering into them, the sensations of the breath within the field of the body, and let your awareness remain in its own place, holding its own ground like a king or a queen on a royal throne. Don't move from your throne, let your awareness remain still, illuminating the body and whatever arises in it. And settling the mind, illuminate the space of the mind but without moving from your throne. Resting in the awareness of awareness, and of course you stay right where you are. So begin by recognizing the stillness of your own awareness as you allow your body, speech and mind to settle in their natural states, observing them from awareness' own place.

(1:11:50) Let your awareness rest in its own space, the space of awareness without collapsing into any smaller space, the space of the body, the space of visual impressions or even the space of the mind. Rest your awareness unmoving and let it illuminate the space of the body and first of all let it brightly shine upon and illuminate the tactile sensations - earth, water, fire and air that arise within this domain.

(1:14:10) And observe these tactile events nakedly. Having observed them clearly withdraw the conceptual designation. Is there anything here in this whole field of the body that is really there from its own side, substantial, real, physical? Or even in the contours of the body, are they real, inherent existent? Or is everything of which the body is composed simply an array of empty appearances arising from space, vanishing back into space? Let alone with no owner, not even with any inherent identity or existence of their own, empty appearances, configurations of space.

(1:18:10) Is there anything here perceptually or conceptually, as you imagine the various parts, the components of the body from the large vital organs right down to the atoms that constitute? Is there anything here, to which you can point and say this is the body? This is the real body that's absolutely there from its own side. A purely given- something presented to us already packaged, existing in and of itself? Can you find it anywhere?

(1:19:35) There is no doubt that feelings arise in the body, and the ones that really catch attention are the painful ones, there's no question that they exist, the only question is how do they exist? And we must we simply be their victims? Attend closely to the feelings arising in the body now. With the sharply pointed mind,

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with Samadhi by sending a missile into its target, penetrating the feeling and see if you can find its core, something that's really there regardless of the way you experience it, it demands because it is by nature suffering. Can you find that core?

(1:21:19) Penetrate through the feeling to that which appears to be its objective source, some sensation in the body that is giving us misery, seems to produce misery, penetrate through the feeling, to the tactile event. Examine ever so closely, is the feeling right there intrinsic to the objectively appearance, appearing sensations arising in the field of the body? Are the two immutably and intrinsically fused that there are tactile sensations in feeling of pain?

(1:23:04) Quiet your mind like a stealth missile that comes in under the radar and go right into the origin of the pain. Can you find it? Can you find the pain emerging from some source beyond your control that is purely objective, existing in and of itself? Step back and observe. Is the very investigation a pain itself, does it have any impact on the experience of the pain? Does it accentuate it, intensify it, leave it untouched unchanged or does it diminish the pain? Examine closely, the observer participancy of the experience of the pain in the body, are you dancing with it or is the dance of pain a solo, simply being presented to you?

(1:26:41) Once again the balancing act of clearly illuminating the feelings in the body, clearly illuminating the tactile sensations which arouse such feelings, illuminate the space of the body and whatever arises within it but let your awareness remain in its own place, like sending out lasers of light but without becoming embedded, immersed in the body its sensations or feelings.

(1:29) Relax, let the light of your awareness illuminate the space of the body and whatever arise therein without moving, without projecting, without grasping. Sustain the flow of mindfulness without distraction and without grasping.

Teachings after meditation:

(1:32:58) So I hope it becomes clearer and clearer through experience, this natural sequence that has been heralded for the last 26 hundred years, authentic Buddhist teachings of shamatha being the precursor to vipashyana. And the Madhyamika view is a theoretical framework for engaging in vipashyana, it is to vipashyana what theoretical physics is to experimental physics; the Madhyamika view is to vipashyana, it's the theoretical framework where we actually do the hard work, but you can't do the hard work, you can't do it effectively. Really exploring the role of conceptual designation, conceptual imputation, what role does this have in the observer participancy? What role does it have in our experience of the body, the feelings, the mind, other people, the natural environment, the universe at large?

What role does conceptual designation have? How can we possibly explore that if the mind is totally mired down in a morass of obsessive compulsive and delusional thinking? It is just seems impossible, that you can't explore something that you are suffocating from, that you can't turn off at will. So I think it's very hard from Madhyamika view to really strike the target of mental afflictions, to dispel them, to dispel the result of suffering. If one doesn't practice vipashyana, it's just philosophy - it is denuded decontextualized philosophy, which by itself - there is no reason to believe that's going to be effective in alleviating the sufferings of the mind. And for the vipashyana to be effective, having a mind where you can have some real control over the degree of conceptual designation including turning it off, and then turning it on and then seeing what it's like when you have not only conceptually designated but you've reified it, and seeing that steps, no conceptual designation, reification, but if your mind is like a rat in a clothes dryer, can you imagine? That would not be pleasant. Full speed ahead and that poor rat can't get traction anywhere, he is going oh, oh, oh, oh bouncing off the walls. If your mind is like a rat in a clothes dryer, how can that rat possibly investigate the nature of the clothes dryer? I don't think is very feasible. So there we are. Let's continue practicing, enjoy your evening.

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65 Empathetic joy (2)

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Alan recounts 2 favorites' parables from the Buddha's tradition and will return to the meditation of cultivation of empathetic joy. The parables are in the book that Alan translated called Naked Awareness which was written by Karma Chagme Rinpoche.

Instructions for one that is reading the transcript: the next paragraph, point 1 and others writing in black we are using part of the summary to introduce the titles of the themes.

- **Foolish prince who likes horses but develops renunciation.**

So this morning I'd like to share with you one of my very favorite parables in the whole of Buddhist tradition and then we will return to the meditation of cultivation of empathetic joy. The parable I read from a book that I translated, is called Naked Awareness written by Karma Chagmé Rinpoche. There is a whole chapter, it's just a parable which I really love, and this is my favorite one of them all, it will sound in some respects quite familiar, and some number of you may actually have heard it before, it's worth hearing again. It's kind of the Buddhist version of the prodigal son and so the story goes, it is a parable that – There was once a King, very wise king but who had a foolish son as his crown prince, and the King knowing this prince would one day ascend to the throne, was quite concerned, that he'd have a fool as the next king. (Alan changes his mind - he has two parables and decides to tell both of them) I just switched tracks, I guess that's okay, I guess this one had to be told as well. There are two parables about foolishness you are going to get both of them, what can I say? It's like one said – move over, it's my turn! You will see they are rather similar, this one is not the prodigal son that one, but it is a little bit similar, that one is coming, this is what they call in the old days when they had two movies - a double feature for the price of one. So, the King was very concerned about his foolish son and he called the minister in, very wise minister and said what can we do? And the minister said, well ask the son, what does he like, and the king said, well, he likes horses. You know like a modern teenage kid who likes sports cars, what can you say? And so the minister, was also a great yogi said, oh, he likes horses, good then leave to me, leave to me. The king said, cool.

The next day they are having the royal banquet, the son is there and the minister brings into the royal dining hall this amazing stallion, I mean like the king of horses, stellar, the Maserati of horses, the Lamborghini, you know the Italian cars have to be good because they have such cool names, Lamborghini, Maserati, the Alfa Romeo, in any case, back to the horses! And the minister presents the horse to the prince and says – I'd like to make this an offering to you and would you be happy to accept? And the prince said yeah, absolutely! May I take him for a ride? Absolutely. The prince hops up on to back of the horse and the horse immediately just takes off, has a mind of its own, takes off outside of the palace and runs and runs and runs and the prince is on for the ride but he just has got no control over this horse at all. And the horse runs all day and runs all night, and all day and all night, until finally they come to the end, the edge of the kingdom, they come to a sea shore, no more place to run and then the horse kicks him off and swims out to sea. And so now here is this prince deserted in a place where there is like nobody around, nobody around. He's lost, he's homeless, so he just scavenges around, but then but after sometime he bumps into a young woman and she said - oh, I will take you, my father and I live over here, I will take you in. The prince was incredibly relieved, lovely young woman so he moves in there and falls in love with the young woman, gets her father's blessing, they marry, they have one child, two children, because he has not a clue how to come back to his kingdom, he is really lost, this is far, far away. So they grow up, the children grow up to the level of children, beyond infancy. (5:48) And one day he is out by the river with his wife and his two children just enjoying a picnic and one of his children goes splashing in the river and then is swept down the river.

And so the father, the prince panics, jumps into the river to try to save his child. He swims and swims as fast as he can to try to save his child but never reaches the child and the child is swept down the river and lost. But then while he was out in the river trying to save the one child, and in vain, he looks back and he sees that wolves have come, and they have attacked his wife and his other child, killed them both and so he swims back to shore, and he utterly grief stricken, utterly grief stricken, he lost everything.

(6:59) And then suddenly he snaps to in the dining hall – and he says, you won't believe it but I have been away, I have been away for a long time, I had a wife and I had children and they all died. And everybody around at the banquet table was saying, you are out of your mind, you have been here the whole time! And he says, no, no, really, really, and they say no really, really, you didn't go anywhere, do you want this horse or not? No. And in that moment he experienced profound renunciation and then set out on the path of wisdom. So that is the first episode and now for the main feature.

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- **Foolish prince who becomes a beggar due to amnesia but rediscovers his true identity. Remain in the castle of your own awareness while beholding the kingdom of your own body.**

The parable:

(8:02) There was once a king who had a very foolish son, and the son went out because there was one of this wonderful illusionists who was a performer and creates these fantastic illusions, so he was a performer, people from the village would come around and the young foolish prince who very, very keen, really want to see this because he loved this, just like people nowadays love movies. He wanted to see it so he went out with his little entourage and it was a spectacular display, one illusion after another so life like, so literally mesmerizing that the prince was simply in trance by this guy, totally absorbed into these wonderful illusions one after another, almost like a zombie, just swept into it and then after sometime the illusion is gone, the illusionist leaves and the prince looks around and he can't remember who he is, he got so immersed in this marvelous array of illusions that it actually took his mind away and became amnesiac and he couldn't remember for the life of him who he was and he is looking around and he does not recognize anyone. We know from outside that he somehow slipped away from his entourage and they are looking for him and they can find him, and in the meantime when the whole thing is over and the entourage is now really upset, they can't find the prince, they can't find the prince, and so they are sending out search parties but the prince has wandered off, the prince doesn't know who he is, and he is completely bewildered! He doesn't know how he got here he doesn't know where he is, who he is, or anything. He is seeing his very fine clothes and that's about it. Then after a while he just gets hungry and he sees some beggars over yonder and he says, well they like me, are unskilled, because he doesn't seem to have any skills at all. So he joins the beggars and says, can I join you? And they say yeah, give us your clothes and we will let you join our group. He says sure, sure, I can't eat my cloths and he gives them his fancy clothes and they let him join them. And then he learns the trade, he learns how to beg, what kind of houses to go to, how to present himself, how to be a beggar, he enters a guild, gets his beggars guild card. And so after while he really gets into the flow of it, he really learns how to become a professional beggar and he goes from house, to house to house so now he has figured out who he really is - he really is a beggar, he is good at it, he is recognized by his fellows as a good beggar.

Months go by, who knows how long goes by, and so then after a while he is really striking out on his own, he knows how to beg, he is professional, and he comes to one very nice really something of a mansion, and says ah they could have some good grub, I am sure if they are decent people they'll give me a piece of bread or something. So he comes to the front door and knocks on the door rather timidly ready to perform, please give me some food. Actually the head of the household opens the door, not a maid, the head of the household opens the door for whatever reason and he takes one look at the beggar and he says – your royal highness! This is the minister, this is the chief minister of the king, he just happened to drop in, and the chief minister takes one look and says - your royal highness we are frantic, we have been looking for you from months, thank you for coming back, welcome, welcome!

And the beggar hearing this he just says – wo wait a minute all I want is some food I did not need your sarcasm. If don't want to give me any food I understand but you know the royal highness is a bit much so you know, would you like to give me a piece of bread or not, but please cut up the crap I don't need the sarcasm. And the minister said no, no, no, really, really I know you, you are the prince you are the crown prince, and the guy says - look that is it, either you stop or you know, put up or shut up, give me some food, but please stop I do not need the sarcasm I don't need you to make fun of me!

So then the minister being wise recognizes that he is not getting through but he certainly is not going to let this guy get away because they don't have anybody to replace him, he is the only crown prince, the only prince there is.

(12:35) So he figures he has to be asked very skillful in means and said - Oh, I am sorry, I am sorry, mistaken identity, I didn't mean to upset you, I didn't mean to be sarcastic and so forth, but by all means, linger a little bit, I would like to have a conversation with you first, but tell Mr. Beggar, I am really quite interested in you, tell me, where were you born? You are a beggar, so where were you born and who are your parents? Tell me about your childhood? Certainly you remember these things since you are a beggar? So tell me how did you originate (what are the factors of originations)? Where did you come from, who are your parents, where did you grow up, where is your neighborhood? Tell me about your youth. And nobody has already asked the beggar such question before and he had never asked them of himself and he knew these were reasonable

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questions and questions for which he really should have the answer. So he probed backwards, probed back into the origins of his own identity as beggar. And he found not only that he couldn't remember, but then he recognized that there was nothing to remember, of his childhood and youth as a beggar. And then, not only not remembering, but then recognizing that there was nothing to remember of his childhood and youth as a beggar.

Suddenly that enquiry into the very nature of his own identity and the origins of his identity as a beggar, that enquiry broke through his amnesia and in an instant then he recognized who he actually was, and he acknowledged this to the minister and the minister then, with tremendous jubilation, with great joy invited him in and said with great joy, let's just take you immediately to the royal court, we would like to enthrone you right now, the king is ready to step down.

So he was brought to the royal palace, he was greeted with great rejoicing, great respect, he was enthroned and in an instant, he became King.

Remain in the castle of your own awareness while beholding the kingdom of your own body. Take satisfaction in awareness resting in its own place. After rumination, take satisfaction in recovering awareness and coming home.

(14:37) We all have all been mesmerized by the notion that we are sentient beings, wondering hopelessly, surrounded by others beggars in samsara, and when we hear about our Buddha nature we think of it as something we have or don't have, but it seems simply ridiculous, almost like offensive to hear - oh, you are a Dakini, you are a Buddha, you are Buddha nature. It is almost like piss off, who do you think you are? You are just making me angry either give me a little bit of dharma teaching or shut up, but I do not need sarcasm. So this leads us to empathetic joy.

I spoke yesterday of practicing any of the three modes of shamatha from the perspective of a quiet, luminous and pure awareness. As if you are sitting on your throne awareness sitting, resting in its own place, holding its own ground, holding its own throne. And from that vantage point attending to the kingdom of the body, the kingdom of the mind, observing, illuminating, clarifying, but not stepping off the throne - remaining in that clarity, in that stillness, but illuminating these different domains of experience. So we try, resting the awareness in its own place.

(16:17) And what I like to suggest for the first part of this session is – recognize it - recognize that when your awareness is sitting in its own throne, resting in its own place, holding in its own ground, and take satisfaction, this isn't realization of rigpa yet but this is the direct route, without detours, without embellishments, without contrivances. Direct route - let your awareness just rest in its own place and then releasing. If you can take some satisfaction whether it's for one second, whether it's for three seconds, but while your awareness is there on its throne - quiet, clear, present, uncluttered by rumination, naked, take satisfaction in that, learn to enjoy that, be satisfied. And when you inadvertently, as if mesmerized, as if kidnaped, abducted or carried away on a wild horse, you fall into rumination, well when you have fallen into rumination, you've lost your mind anyway, as soon you find your mind again then don't be upset about having been carried away by the horses of rumination, but as soon as you find your awareness let your first response be satisfaction, delight, relief, rejoicing. Ah, I've come home again. So whenever you've lost your mind, don't worry, you've lost your mind, but as soon as you've found it - just be happy and rest right there, and hold your throne, hold your throne, take satisfaction in that.

(18:14) So let that be our launching pad, when you can take real satisfaction that can grow into enjoyment that can grow into bliss, simply letting your awareness rest in its own nature then everything else will flow, if you can really take satisfaction in that, be content there, everything will flow from that, right? So just, it could be one second, three seconds but when you are there you don't need to count the seconds, just be happy you're home, home again, the prodigal son, the prodigal daughter who keeps wandering off getting mesmerized. When you are mesmerized, you are mesmerized don't worry about it. As soon as you are back take delight at being home again and put on a seat belt.

Meditation:

(20:10) Settle your body, speech and mind in the natural states and let the culmination of this process be letting your awareness come to rest, releasing all grasping, releasing all effort, coming to rest in its own place and having done so, let it hold its own ground.

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(21:56) And taking satisfaction in this rare and precious opportunity to explore your own inner resources, to experience genuine happiness and for a little while enter into any of the methods of shamatha at your choice, but whatever your choice take satisfaction in awareness holding in its own ground, still, relaxed, luminous and content.

(24:55) Release all concepts of achieving or accomplishing anything, release all concepts and simply take satisfaction in resting in this very ground, in this very well- spring of sanity, exceptional, extraordinary sanity, and in its own good time allow your substrate consciousness to rise up to meet you, embrace you and welcome you home.

(30:25) As you even begin to gain some insight, experiential insight, into the nature of your own consciousness, your own internal resources, the potentials of consciousness there may arise a vision of loving kindness, imagining the benefits, the bounty, if there were as H.H. Dalai Lama envisions a true renaissance of the world's contemplative traditions, as they themselves rediscover their own riches, the richness of their own heritage, so much wisdom covered up. Imagine the benefits for all of humanity and as you gain such experiential insight you may see also not only the need but the real possibility of there being a true revolution in the mind sciences, in which we overcome the ideological imbalances and blinders of the present, and move in a spirit of radical empiricism, a great collaboration between scientists, contemplatives and true lovers of wisdom, philosophers. As we arouse such a yearning and aspiration, this constitutes loving kindness, but that renaissance, that mind revolution have not yet take place but already we can take satisfaction, take delight as we attend to people around the world, we are sowing the seeds with of such a great breakthrough for all humanity, people of good will, of vision, of inspiration, of benevolence, within the fields of philosophy, science, contemplatives around the world and others as well, to be sure.

Let your attention roam and take delight in all those who are applying themselves, devoting their lives, their hearts and minds to identifying the true causes of suffering and to finding the true remedies. To discovering the true causes of genuine happiness and applying themselves to it. Attend closely, and with every out breath, breathe out a light of gratitude, of satisfaction, of delight, of appreciation.

Teachings 2:

Who's there according to the 3 turnings of the wheel of dharma?

- **In the 1st turning, the autonomous agent is not there.**

(43:16) Knock knock. Who's there? What are you asking me for? That's for you to find out. Or we can ask the Buddha, if you haven't figured that out yet.

First turning of the wheel of dharma, four noble truths the basic teachings, who is not there is an autonomous, substantial, controlling, ego who owns and runs your body and mind, not there. If it is there, if that's who you are, show yourself, show me that self, show me that personal identity. If it's not to be found then it doesn't exist, first tuning of the wheel of dharma. What is not there is this autonomous agent.

- **In the 2nd turning, there is no sentient being to be found.**

Second turning of the wheel of dharma.

Where you are, right where you are, there is no sentient being, not really, not from your side, there is no sentient being, no Nato, no Chrita, no Patrice. As a sentient being you know - poor deluded screwed up sentient being, neurotic, mental affliction -find! Find that screwed up sentient being; nowhere to be found. Where you are, right there where you are there is no sentient being to be found. If there is a sentient being there it's one you've imagined and then reified.

You remember the story about the person that wanders off in the desert with a prison kit, remember? No? Oh then I'll have to tell you another parable.

A person, for whatever reason, quite strange, buys himself a kit to build a prison, you know just a nice square prison, bars, basically a cage, he buys himself a kit, prison bars, and then he wanders off into the Sahara as far as he can go, nobody ever sees him leave, and he wanders deep into the Sahara with no supplies, no water, no nothing. A person quite confused. And out there in the middle of the Sahara then he gets industriously to work, and puts together the whole assembly. All the bars firmly in place, bolted and locked, everything, a really solid cage, prison. And then he gets inside of it with the only key for the prison, slams the door shut and then takes that key and hurls it as far away as he can into the sand, and says wow, it is sucks to be locked in prison!

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And that is what we have done to ourselves, we have concocted a prison of our own identities, we've assembled it all ourselves, threw away the one key and then say, help, help!

That is my parable, that is my trademark.

The second turning of the wheel of dharma, where you are there is no sentient being to be found, not really, nothing more than a non-lucid dream and they don't really exist at all. So you might want to just give that a rest. Unless you can actually reveal there's a sentient being right where you are, I would like to meet that person, if you can find such a deluded sentient being that is really there.

- **Third turning wheel of dharma.**

c.1) Where you are, there's Buddha mind, rigpa, or dharmakaya,

Where you are there's the Buddha mind, there is rigpa, there is primordial consciousness, there is dharmakaya. Where you are there is dharmakaya. First point.

c.2) The ultimate nature of your mind and Buddha mind is no different.

Second point: the ultimate nature of the Buddha's dharmakaya, ultimate nature of your mind are in no way different.

c.3) All sentient beings belong to the same family, Buddha family. We can either adopt and identify with mind and body arisen through karma and mental afflictions or Buddha mind. We need insight into emptiness of self and the guru in order to practice guru yoga which leads us to Buddha mind. Guru yoga isn't blind faith idolatry. Even in the 1st turning, we are advised to check the guru carefully before viewing him/her as an emissary of the Buddha.

Third point: all sentient beings belong to the same family, Buddha family, nobody is left outside of the family, every single one.

(48:39) So as long as we are still holding tenaciously, and it takes so much effort to do it, like a claw, holding so tenaciously, "I *am* a sentient being, I *am* a sentient being" and letting the sound track of rumination keep on reinforcing that, sealing it, sealing it, sealing it, then we are sentient being as far as we are concerned. But when we see through that self-created prison and deconstruct it, then we see we actually do have a choice. What would you like as the basis of imputation for yourself? The body you are born with, the mind you are accustomed to having, arising in dependence upon karma and klesha?

That's a choice, if you want to identify with that you can, it's not you but if that is what you'd like to adopt, just like adopting a child with whom we have no genetic relationship at all, it's simply another child on the planet, but you can adopt that child as yours, likewise, this body, this mind, it's not yours - but if you want to adopt it, this little sack full of human sausage, and the mind like an anthill filled with snakes of mental afflictions and so forth, if you'd like to adopt that and say, "that's me", then you can. Conventionally speaking if you want to be a sentient being then you have that choice. But right where you are there is also Buddha body, Buddha speech, Buddha mind, right there you are. If you would like to have that as your basis of designation that is also a choice, that's your choice.

(50:45) So a very crucial point here, I think the stakes are very high, and that is where you are there is no sentient being, not really. Where this teacher is, there is no sentient being, there is no difference, it's like there is not a little bit less of no sentient being, there is just no sentient being, here, from this person's side anymore than from Patricia's side, Nicola's side, from the side of Nicola there is no sentient being, not really, not at all in fact. Not inherently existent, from his side, nowhere to be found.

There is Buddha mind there, there is Buddha mind here - there is Buddha mind everywhere. So if one has some insight into that, insight, intuition, if that's your world view, then you have a foundation for one of the most transformative and profound, magnificent practices in all of Buddhism, and that is the Vajrayana approach to guru yoga, of viewing your guru as a Buddha. If you have that insight into the emptiness of yourself as a sentient being and where your mind is, there is an indistinguishability between your mind and the Buddha mind. If you have realized that, you've realized the symmetry, no more Buddha mind on the side of the Buddha of your guru than there is on your side, it's not unevenly distributed.

And you are no more or less inherently a sentient being than your guru is. If you realize that then to view your guru as a Buddha, very powerful, very powerful. As many Lamas say that is really, that is the heart essence of the whole practice, incredibly deep, radically transformative on one hand, on the other hand if you are still stuck in your own self constructed cage, reifying yourself as a sentient being, and then you turn to some guru and think - you are perfect, you are Buddha, I am a schmuck, but help, help. You are a schmuck. You are a

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Vajrayana shmuck, this is a ridiculous, stupid, blind faith, idolatrous parody of Vajrayana guru yoga. I am sorry. But that's the turd covered in chocolate all over again. If you think, I am a Buddha and I am also Californian. If you still holding onto the ordinary reified sense of a self then you adopt pure vision for yourself, you're an idiot. But if you've not realized the emptiness of yourself, don't have any realization of the emptiness of your guru, whoever that Guru is, unless it actually happens to be someone like Buddha Shakyamuni.

Simply by viewing somebody as a guru and then thinking because he is my guru therefore he is omniscient and everything he does is pure and everything he says is infallibly, literally absolutely correct, even if he speaks broken English, that is now the Oxford King's English because my infallible guru just spoke what other people call bad grammar, but now we know they are all speaking bad grammar because my guru is infallible. It frustrates me a little bit to see a practice so profound, so magnificent, turned into blind faith idolatry, that's what it is.

That is Vajrayana guru yoga, you don't practice that guru yoga unless you are a Vajrayana practitioner and you are not a Vajrayana practitioner unless you have some real insight into emptiness, and intuitive embracing, as part of your world view of the ambiguous nature of dharmakaya, if you are just stuck in ordinary world of view, I am an ordinary shmuck, but at least my guru is omniscient – well maybe you are lucky. Or maybe you are just a shmuck. But you are a self-constructed shmuck, so you can stop at will.

And then start from scratch - first turning of the wheel of dharma, guru yoga, how do you view your guru if your guru is authentic? And you'd better check because there is a lot of them who are not, they think they are but they don't know what they are talking about. So first you really check, how many times have we heard that? Before you view a guru, a certain person, a man or a woman as your teacher, how long do you investigate? They often say 10 years, right? Make sure, in other words you're looking for a solid basis of designation before you enter into that kind of guru yoga. You don't go – eenie meeni miny mo – oh gosh you are charismatic, or I really like your smile. Come on!

So even for the Sravakayana level, this first turning of the wheel of dharma level, is there such a thing as guru yoga? Yes. But first you check, is this person worthy to be regarded as a guru, a true teacher, an authentic guide for this first turning of the wheel of dharma? Yes or no, because most people aren't. A lot of people who think they are, aren't. So you really must check. Authentic basis of designation or not? And then if upon careful investigation and seeing that there is good affinity, good personal connection and you are definitely getting benefit from the teaching, then if you want to have good disciple relationship with such a first turning of the wheel guru, then what's the authentic way of viewing the guru from that perspective? Since we have not even moved into Mahayana territory, realization of emptiness, let alone Dzogchen, Uttarantra, Buddhanature and all that, no, we are coming into, we are taking this as a path, what a novel idea. So what is the authentic way of viewing the guru? There is an answer to that, hardly ever taught, so weird, such good teaching, entry level guru yoga – view your guru as an emissary of the Buddha. An emissary, an ambassador, a representative. That is 26 hundred years of space, that is a lot of space, there is a lineage, a transmission, teacher student, teacher student, all the way to the present and if you find someone who bears that lineage, the genetic strain so to speak, of authentic teachings of Buddha of the first turning of the wheel of dharma, then whether this person is articulate, not articulate, has good sense of humor no sense of humor, ugly, handsome, short, fat skinny, strong, weak, whatever. If the person is authentic, living in accordance with the teaching, teaching with altruistic motivation, teaching authentically, then you regard that person with all the respect, all the reverence as if this were an emissary sent by the Buddha. This is as close as you get for the time being, this is the Buddha's ambassador. You show that kind of respect to that kind of a teacher. Then you get much more benefit, because that is the whole point. Guru disciple relationship is A symmetrical, it is all for the sake of the student. If the teacher needs students the teacher should stop teaching and go into retreat.

Enjoy your day, or else

Or else you won't enjoy your day.

Note for the readers: using the SB Institute summary to finish the session:

We need insight into emptiness of self and the guru in order to practice guru yoga which leads us to Buddha mind. Guru yoga isn't blind faith idolatry. Even in the 1st turning, we are advised to check the guru carefully before viewing him/her as an emissary of the Buddha.

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66 Mindfulness of feelings (2)

02 Oct 2012

I hope you are getting comfortable this will take a little while. Yes, you just said you were warning me. I am going to try to spring together today in a coherent and actually somewhat integrated fashion, and return to the session of the Shantideva's text and actually I am going read over the earlier lines, I don't think I did them justice yesterday so I want to go through them again try to shed clear light on them. And I can say that I was reading both translations that I've been evolved with, one I did primarily and then actually had Vesna herself, it was a long time ago, my wife, long before we married when we simply had a friendship but she is expert in Sanskrit so she helped me out, a very good friend. So an earlier one that I did actually as part of my thesis at Amherst that was submitted in 1985, the 9th chapter with His Holiness's commentary, so it has that extra perk, it has been published for a long time, it's called Transcendent Wisdom, just the 9th chapter with His Holiness Dalai Lama's commentary. And then also consulting on the translation that she and I did more recently in late nineties, where she really did full scale, did a full translation from the Sanskrit and I then integrated that with the Tibetan. But I really found His Holiness's commentary very helpful here so I am going be reading that. So I presume, I hope by now you have, I have not yet got confirmation from the front desk but has anybody checked to see if you get the text? It is there, very good, ok. So the text that I will be reading, slight variation but nothing significant, because I look both, they are both good, they are both fine so it is just grammatical, tiny, tiny differences, so there is that. So we will get to that and this is classic Buddhist philosophy which I find to be timeless and really definitely worthy of very deep investigation calling for our all over intelligence, no blind faith please, all the intelligence we can muster.

(2:45) But the other one is very contemporary and it's a matter of enormous importance and I shall really try to speak in a level fashion, without letting my passions get carried away, because I know they do at times, especially when something is very, very important. So I will try to keep the level here, because it is easy for me to go like URRRH, as you have might noticed on occasions. So I am going to link this with a comment a made yesterday that if you were listening carefully you might have had some qualm, thinking- nobody could say that. I just made a very fleeting reference yesterday to having read in major media, the term 'placebo drugs', and that this is being used seriously, the term I came up. And if you are thinking about that you might really have some serious qualm, like - Oh nobody is that stupid, I mean really, nobody can be that stupid and not get published in major media because the placebo by definition is not a drug, if it's a drug it's not a placebo, it's like dog and apple, you can be one or the other but can't be a dog apple, it is just complete incompatible, if it's drug is not a placebo. So nobody in his right mind would say 'placebo drug', right? I must made a mistake a slip of the tongue, Alan does that sometimes, I should never refer to myself on the third person, I do that on occasion. Well it was not a slip of the tongue and I am going give you a direct quote and that is could be the launching pad for the first part of what I'd like to share with you this afternoon, and I am very much holding in mind people listening by podcast. I've heard from various sources that they are really all over the world and a wide variety of people. So I am really very explicitly, very consciously holding you in mind as especially for, well for the whole thing, but I invite you to listen carefully and the implications are very large, and they really call for dramatic action, benevolent, compassionate but really dramatic action. I will make the case, I will make my case that we are facing a real crisis here.

(5:16) So back to back up my statement earlier that this actually occurred, this was in published in Reuters, so major media publication, Reuters, APA and so forth, and here is the statement - placebo drugs, direct quote, and the name of the article was - "Anti-depressants give drug makers the blues", and to give them the blues means makes them depressed. Antidepressants make drug makers depressed. That sounds like a vicious cycle. But here is just a quote from it, and by the way it's on "Reuters" and it's March 23rd 2012, so it is very

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recent - and here is the statement, so just to show that I didn't have a lapse of memory or slip of the tongue - here is the direct quote:

(5:59) "Placebo drugs or sugar pills [so now sugar pills become placebo drugs, remember that next time you buy a sugar cube, you just bought a drug] Placebo drugs or sugar pills typically have [and listen to every word here] Placebo drugs or sugar pills typically have a massive impact in lifting depression, under scoring the subtlety of the of the disease and the suggestibility of patients, that makes it very, very hard to prove that a particular drug is actually working. " according to --- who would you guess, who would make a statement like that? And I am going to be very critical here, but my point is not to criticize individuals, so I probably won't mention any name of a person or any name of any pharmaceutical company or university or anything like that because the point is not to attack people or institutions, the point is to attack delusion, falsity, greed, arrogance and the policies that come from them, and there I will be absolutely ruthless, absolutely merciless, but with no harm intended to any person. . So any guesses who would make an idiotic statement like that? I mean it is sheer idiocy, is it not, to say that sugar has a massive impact in uplifting people from, and of course it does not matter whether it is sugar, could be salt, it could be chalk, a placebo really does matter what it is but now they are called 'placebo drugs'.

(7:36) So, no I won't hold you in suspense, but I am going to keep it anonymous, research head at one of the major pharmaceutical companies in USA, head of research. So not a person in a mental asylum, not a person who is a babbling idiot or maybe babbling idiot but nevertheless the head of research for major pharmaceutical industry. So there it is, he actually said that - that sugar pills typically have a massive impact in lifting depression. I mean there is no way to read that other than, this man is delirious because he's actually attributing the efficacy of this to a sugar pill and calling it a drug. That is just flat out idiocy. This research head for one of these large you know billion dollar pharmaceutical companies, I know the name, it's a big one, doesn't matter which one, it could be any of them. So this I always find interesting, when really foolish people with very, very low intelligent say stupid things it doesn't perturb me at all, and when very intelligent people say very wise things that doesn't fluster me at all, but this man has got to be really smart. You don't get to be head of research of a major pharmaceutical company by being stupid, and yet this is an idiotic statement, right? So then that really raises my interest. What makes intelligent people make idiotic statements? And there is an answer to that, it's called ideology it's called dogma induced dementia. So, why is this more than just a time to ridicule an anonymous person from an anonymous pharmaceutical industry? I am not here to ridicule any person at all, much more enjoyable ways to spend time, especially our very precious time together.

(10:01) I will share with you a little bit of statistics from the World Health Organization, so I think they speak with some objectivity and authority and they report recently that one in four persons will develop one or more mental or behavior disorders during their lives. In other words - mental disease is a very, very large scale issue and this is worldwide, one in four. So how we are treating mental disease becomes a matter of enormous importance, I continue:

Mental ill health is increasing and so for all of the growth of, how many more psychiatrists do we have now than fifty years ago, how many more psycho therapists and how many more drugs do we have, simultaneously mental disease is on the rise. Something isn't working. I mean if you got polio and you have more and more doctors you have a successful treatment for polio, more and more doctors, more and more medicines, less and less polio, that's just how it always works, right? TB, Polio, AIDS and so forth and so on, more doctors, more good medicine the disease goes down. We have more doctors and more and more psycho pharmaceutical drugs and mental disease is going up, connect the dots!

(11:06) Mental ill health is increasing and by the year 2020 neuropsychiatric conditions will account for fifteen percent of disability worldwide. Quite a large percentage. And again by the year 2020 depression will be the highest ranking cause of disease in the developed world. So that shows this is nothing just to joke around or be a bit sarcastic or what have you. This is an enormous amount of suffering that we are talking about here, and the whole point of suffering for medicine, for all of medicine is to alleviate suffering for all the Buddhadharmas is to alleviate suffering, so this is our job and it is not happening.

So to take a smattering, my pick, what are some of the kind of mental diseases, mental disorders just rise very large on the horizon that are very commonly spoken of, for which there is many, many people suffering? That's why I am talking about this, not just because I've got an axe to grind. But there is suffering here that

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could be alleviated and is clearly not being alleviated, depression, anxiety comes in many flavors but general anxiety disorder, big umbrella term, two. Post-traumatic stress disorder there is so many things within a family within a community, within a nation and so forth and for so many reasons, natural calamity, social strife, war and so forth, abuse of all kinds. Post-traumatic stress disorder that you not only harmed at the event but you have lingering effects that can go on for decades perhaps actually, oh damage your whole life, so there is the third one.

(12:43) ADHD is on the rise and for many obvious reasons, many of them have to do with the environment, we live in an ADHD world how could not. So there's four, and then a simply thing, insomnia, if you can't sleep, if you're tortured every night because you are tossing and turning, frustrated, anxious, fearful and so forth. These are psychological disorders and so what is the nature of intervention, what is primary mode especially in terms of getting it paid for by insurance, for any of these psychological disorders? You use drugs. I mentioned before in the USA first if you have a psychological disorder, any of the above for example, you require first of all, as I understand it, I have insurance, you need to go your personal physician and then that physician may, if he or she feels it necessary, then refer you to a psychiatrist but in many cases they don't. They say, oh you are suffering from anxiety disorder, well I know what the psychiatrist will say anyway, and so here is the drug and I am a doctor and I can prescribe it, and they will.

(14:28) So I went eeny meeny miny mo , but not quite, because I knew of a certain drug, and again I am going to keep it anonymous, I am not here to beat up on any particular drug or any company, but this is a drug like many others, and if you really wanted to check it out you can find out which one I am referring to but that's your choice, my point is not to pick out one particular drug, but this one happens to be a drug that you take if you have been diagnosed as having anxiety or panic disorder. So how many people are experiencing anxiety or panic disorder, sometimes it is really troubling and you go to your physician and think I am really desperate here, can you help me? And the doctor, maybe gives a referral to a psychiatrist and says yes and your insurance cover it, good news, and here is the drug and hopefully this is will help, because this is a drug that is specifically designed to alleviate your anxiety and panic disorder. Well, what the doctor may or may not tell you is that drug comes with side effects, possible side effects. I checked out this drug, I checked it out on multiple websites and from website to another the list of detriment side effects just got longer and longer and longer, I thought is there any end to it? I found a website and these are good websites, which had the longest list and it said at the end this is not a complete list of all the detriment side effects. It was really long, I mean one of them with 27. So here is one drug, you have just gone to your doctor because you are suffering from anxiety or panic disorder. And you go to your doctor and the doctor gives you this drug and you are taking refuge, because what do you know? You are just taking a little tablet that is very, very easily to swallow, right? Here, are, and this is just not even a complete list, but you are feeling anxiety and maybe some panic attacks, you've take the drugs and what you may or not may be told are here are some of the possible sides effects. Are you ready?

(16:04) Sexual dysfunction, okay well for some of you that is the end of the story, I am not taking it. Liver problems, seizures, giant hives, muscle spasms, you cannot focus your thoughts, loss of memory, slurred speech, mania, difficulty in breathing, confusion, hallucinations, new or worsening mental or mood changes, depression, irritability, anxiety, suicidal thoughts or actions, and paradoxical excitement, so basically - bipolar mania. That's not the whole list.

Now when I read one of the medical websites, it was a medical website, it said should you experience any of these symptoms, seek medical attention right away. But you got those symptoms by seeking medical attention right away. What do you imagine? Let you imagination just fly here, you've got one or more those side effects and you do exactly what the website says, you seek medical attention, and you say doctor I am experiencing confusion, hallucinations, mood changes, depression, irritability, anxiety, suicidal thoughts and I cannot flow, I have loss of memory, slurred speech, mania. What do you imagine the doctor will give you? Is maybe the same drug and when you tell him – no that's the drug I already took. What do you expect will be coming? Another drug. What do you expect its list will look like? Do you think it's going to be any better? And if so why on earth you think that? It is laughable, it makes one just belly laugh and then just not know when to stop, weep. That this is poison, it's hard to imagine one substance being poisonous in so many different ways! Strychnine just kills you, arsenic just kills you, this is poisonous in two dozen ways. How could they make a drug that can be poisonous in so many ways? That takes some ingenuity or stupidity. I find this very

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concerning, that this continues to be the major intervention, drugs like that, and I can see the name of the drug and I can see the producer. If this were an isolated case then I will say, hey nail that one, those people are bad people. But no, there is nothing special about this drug it's just one more psycho pharmaceutical drug.

(19:10) So why is this head of research at one of the major pharmaceutical companies, why is he so concerned? That it makes it so very, very hard to prove that a particular drug is actually working? The pharmaceutical industry have been producing antidepressants just for starters, for decades. They've made hundreds of millions of dollars, I mean it's one of the most lucrative general industries in the modern world, pharmaceutical companies can't count the money it is coming in so fast. And they have tremendous lobbying power in USA, fantastic lobbying power. And for something like 30 - 40 years they are producing this one after another, this antidepressant drugs and only a few years ago, and this is from the American Journals, I think I cited it earlier, where finally, some people in the medical establishment did this mega study of this whole range of psycho pharmaceutical drugs for depression, and they found they are all worth nothing, except in extremely severe cases of depression, and besides that they were marginally better than eating sugar tablets. This is after forty years or so of the pharmaceutical industry peddling this snake oil, at very high prices, in an enormous profits and shall we really believe that the pharmaceutical industry that created these drugs and had to test them, shall we really believe that they didn't know? Are we really that gullible? When they are testing their own product, shall we really believe they didn't know that their drugs are no better than placebos? How could they be that stupid? I don't think so. I think the only reasonable conclusion is they know perfectly well, but they saw they can pull the wool over the government's eyes, they got the FDA approval for all of these drugs that they produced, because they didn't harm anybody except for those minor side effects like you might want to kill yourself.

(21:30) So the government went along with it, not government not goes along with it, the government provides them public funds to help them out, researching such drugs. They had to have known all along, I can't imagine they were so stupid that they didn't know that their own drugs weren't working but they recognized people who are really depressed and suffering from other mental diseases are stupider, and not just stupider, but they will trust, they will trust their physicians, they will trust the pharmaceutical industry, they'll trust the government to protect them from charlatans. So we're all taking refuge. That came up earlier in one of our discussions, you don't start taking refuge when you become a Buddhist, you've already been taking refuge. We all take refuge, we take refuge in our dentist when we need a filling, when we need our teeth cleaned we take refuge, we are not going to study dentistry long enough so we can clean our own teeth but it would probably be a botched job anyway. So we all take refuge, especially when we are suffering, mental suffering, physical suffering, but I want to focus here on mental suffering, we are desperate, we need help and we need to call upon, we need to rely upon, place are trust in people who know more than we do. So naturally the first line is the medical sangha, the doctors especially because they are the only ones that are going to prescribe these drugs, and I am talking right now, medical, mental disorders. If you go to the psychiatrist, psychotherapist can't prescribe drug but the psychiatrist MD, is the medical establishment you take refuge there. Where is the drug is coming from? The doctor didn't invent them. So that is your sangha. What are you really relying upon? What's your real refuge? Not the doctor, the doctor, the doctor is simply conveying, like the sangha, like the nurse, like the medical personal is conveying to you the real refuge. That which you are really placing your trust in, and that's what you are putting in your mouth, that's the drug. Your dharma, your path, is the drugs you are taking produced by the pharmaceutical industry, and you are trusting in them. That they are not there just to make a buck or a billion bucks, but they are there doing what they say they are doing, that is that they are doing their very best, to come up with medications to help to alleviate suffering and the causes of suffering. You are placing your trust there that is your dharma, the pharmaceutical industry is your dharma, the medical establishment is your sangha.

(24:02) But now who is behind that, who really knows what is going on, all these drugs, these complicated drugs. These are having an effect on what organ? Well detrimental side effects on your liver and so forth and so on. But what are they explicitly designed to do of course? They are targeting the brain. So who's your Buddha? Who really knows what is going on here? The neuro scientific community, those who really speak with the greatest authority about the brain, because that is what the drugs are designed to treat, your brain. And so your Buddhas are the neuro scientists, specifically the cognitive neuro scientists, but generally the

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community as a whole. The professionals that we rely upon, you know, you are the ones who know, you're as close to omniscience as you can get, you are not omniscient yet, but you are the best we get. Tell us about the brain because the pharmaceutical industry is learning from you, they are not brain scientists, they are producing drugs and the medical doctors are not pharmaceutical people nor are they brain scientists, they are healers, trying to be healers. And so our refuge the proxy to the Buddha is the neuro scientists.

(25:03) Ever since George Herbert Walker Bush declared the 1990's to be the decade of the brain, there's been this exponential growth in USA, of funding for brain science, just enormous amounts of money. Very deliberately, there must have been tremendously good lobbying to get all the way to the president to declare a whole decade for your own particular discipline. That took some major clout, and it succeed, a decade for the brain. So the neuro scientists must have been singing and dancing in the streets when that happened because they now know the money is just going to flow in, and it did, and as a result a lots of money coming into science, you generally get a lot of knowledge and that is exactly what's happened. Since 1990 the knowledge about the brain, specific parts of the brain, functions of the brain, global activity of the brain and so forth, technology for studying the brain, exponential increase, really good science something to rejoice in. We know so much more, we, the scientific community they let us know by way of the media, know so much more about the brain than we did just twenty two years ago. And really money talks, having really good science as we all know is very expensive, one case in point -neuroscience is not cheap. And so exponential growth of knowledge, consensual knowledge, valuable knowledge about the brain.

But it's startling somewhat to neurologists, to brain scientists, fully aware of the tremendous progress they've made over these past 22 years and of course before then, but boy the last 22 years has been a jackpot, a bonanza. They have been troubled, puzzled by the fact that while their knowledge of the brain in so many aspects of the brain, its functioning and so forth, chemically and electrically, while the knowledge has increased exponentially during these 22 years, there has been no, not even any remotely corresponding increase in the efficacy of psycho pharmaceutical drugs for effectively treating even the symptoms of mental disease, let alone getting to the causes and actually healing them. So you take the drug for while it gets to the root and then you are free, you no longer have that mental disease because you actually went to the root. It's not there.

Anybody studying this area knows that's the case, I read just recently in an article, solid article, neuroscientists saying, I am really perplexed by this, we know so much more but this no corresponding growth of the production of affective psycho pharmaceutical drugs, it is not happening. Fancy that, how could that be? Well go figure. So where does ideology come in? Let's ask a few questions first, okay - nature of consciousness, because clearly consciousness has to be implicated in any mental disorder. If you are not conscious of the mental disorder, then you don't have it, and the mental disorder must have to do in terms of the etiology how arises must have something into with consciousness, because that is its home, that's where it's manifesting.

So what do we scientifically know now after a hundred and thirty five years of mind science, which started at a hundred & thirty seven years, we started in 1875, ah, somewhat arbitrary but pretty close. So a hundred and thirty seven years of mind science, experimental science in psychology, neuroscience, behavioral science and so forth. Now after all that time, decades upon decades, the whole 20th century which witnessed the greatest exponential growth of scientific knowledge in the history of humanity, absolutely fabulous, so in the midst of that and the mind science is being no exception, part of that exponential growth, now after all that tremendous progress, now what can the scientific community say - please now tell us what is some of the core discoveries that you have made about the nature of consciousness? Well we covered that one, can't define it, we have no consensual definition. We can't measure it at all, in anything, not in a developing human fetus, not in a person who is brain dead, not in senile, not in healthy adults, not in animals, not in primitive animals, if insect eating plants are consciousness we have no way of knowing, our core consciousness, the annals, we don't know, in another words complete 100 percent ignorance. We can't measure it at all scientifically. We don't know there's necessarily sufficient causes to produce it, we don't know what causes consciousness, we don't know what happens to it in death, since we don't know the causes it then you really don't have a clue what terminates it, there is a symmetry there.

(28:58) And then on top of that we have this whole mind and body issue, and so what we know from these last 20-22 years and before then of course, it's just increasing an exponential growth of scientific knowledge,

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really good knowledge about - this is correlated to this, this is correlated to that, and so these wonderful correlations between very specific neuron activities and very specific subjective mental experiences, fantastic science. Now we ask the question, good, what is the nature of these correlations? What is the nature of them? William James laid down three possibilities. What's nature of these correlations? Because all we know is that they are correlated, but that is a very big category, all different kinds of ways of things can be correlated. What's the nature of the correlations? If you find any honest reflected neuroscientist and pin him down – and say, what exactly are the nature of the correlations? That honest neuroscientist will tell you - we don't really know. We would like to know but we don't know, this is a young science just give us a time, but we don't know. It's fair enough. If you don't know something you simply say you don't know, that is only honest. Good.

(31:00) Now that we've had this serious conversation, when in front of a microphone, when they are reporting to the media what are they saying? "The mind is what the brain does, I am a neuroscientist". I am not saying this is my bullshit opinion, I am not saying this is my speculation, I am not saying this is one of many hypotheses that I prefer. I am just telling you this is the way it is, or to quote another neuroscientist, world famous - "you are a brain carrying a body on your back, human beings are brains". To quote a psychiatrist quoted in the New York Times: "all psychological disorders are neurological disorders they are nothing other than neurological disorders". So it seems like you know after all, because you are saying the mind is the brain, is the function of the brain, a phenomena of the brain, but pretty much the mind is the brain. So you do know, right? Because that is what are telling everybody in the media. So when did you find this out? That's a really important discovery. When did you discover that the correlation is actually a correlation of identity, that in fact they are same thing, viewed from different sides? When was that discovered is made? What is the evidence? Who has got a Nobel Prize for that? That's an enormously important discovery. And then you find that nobody made that discovery. We just think you are stupid. No, we don't mean that. This is short hand, it's just a manner of speaking. But what about when you say: the brain is doing this, the brain is doing that and these neurons are communicating with each other and they are sending messages to each other and the neurons know where they are, and this part of the brain feels this and your thoughts are in this part of the brain, your emotions are in this part of the brain. Where is the evidence for any of that? All you know is correlations but you just said that they actually don't know the nature of the correlations, so why are you saying that? That the brain now is the agent and everything is happening is really the brain is doing it and you don't even really exist and if you do you are just watching the show as an illusion? Where is the evidence for that? Oh, you don't have any, that is more short hand is it? You are talking to children who really don't understand, you think we are all stupid?

(33:25) Do we or do we not take literally your statements that neurons talk to each other, they communicate, they send messages back and forward? Do we take that literally or is this a children's story? You're treating us as we were in kindergarten, the entire population of the planet, and you are talking down to as we like we have crap for brains. When do you talk seriously, when do you talk honestly, obviously not to the press? Because every time you report, and I mean virtually without exception that - the brain is the agent, not you, and not your mind, the brain is the agent. How can you train your brain, brain makes the decisions, the brain does this, the brain does that, the brain is the agent, it's ubiquitous now in the media. In another words the mind is the brain but again when did you discover that? Oh you haven't. Then why are you saying this as if you know what you are talking about? Why don't you simply say - we really do not understand the nature of the relationship between mind and brain? And we going to repeat you of this because we are honest and humble people and we want to acknowledge where we don't know something. Why are you doing the opposite, deceiving everybody and telling everybody they are brain? You are now taking on the authority of telling us what our human nature is and who we are, one of the biggest philosophical problems, questions in all of the human history and you are saying now you have a franchise, that you are the go to people. You who know about the brain and don't have a clue about the actual relationship between mind and brain, but you are taking on the authority now, that if we want to know about human nature, who you really are, what is your identity, who are you, what is the nature of your mind, and where is it come from? You are taking on the role of being authority, the press is treating you as an authority but you don't know what are you talking about. Are you or are you not deceiving everybody on the planet? And if so, why are you doing this? Do you not know better? Have you deceived yourself? Are you so deluded that you don't you even know that you are

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deluded? And how do you justify this? Because this is not children's play, this is not like having some flippant notion about something distant from human existence, because you are telling us that we are brains. You telling us as brains, and you often frequently say that in fact that we have no free will because the brain already has done it before you have the feeling to make a decision and that is fluff, that is an epiphenomenon, it's an illusion because the brain has already done it after all the brain is the agent and your experience is illusory, you keep on telling us that, psychologists, neuroscientists alike - our first person experience is illusory, don't take it seriously, rely upon the neuroscientists because they know the underlying neuro mechanisms of your illusory first person experience. So who you going to trust? Your own experience or the neuroscientist? Don't trust your own experience at all, because all you are dealing with is illusions. Trust in the neuroscientist, take refuge in us. It's fraud and it's tragic because even they are not following out the implications of their own position. If you really are a brain you are making no choices at any time. Robotics don't make choices, your computer doesn't make choices, if your brain is a computer, which is what they say it is, and you are your brain, you are a computer, which means you never make any choice, free will or no free will, you are not making any choices at all, the brain is the agent after all not you and not even your mind.

So you are making no choices at all. How does that sit? Would you like to be depressed now or should we wait a little while until I speak more? Shall we trace the growth of depression to this mind numbing soul killing ideology that is snuffing out any type of imagination for looking outside the box of the materialism, that's dehumanizing, reducing us as to robots or animals at best, who never make any choices therefore we have no moral responsibility whatsoever because you never imprison a computer, you never punish or never imprison, you never bring to trial a robot or a computer because they no free choice, they are just programs, and that is exactly what you telling us here, that we are genetically neuro physiologically programmed. And then you wonder why morality seems to be slipping? Are you not a major cause of this? You've given us an ideology as our refuge, as the authority, which you are grasping, you are clinging to dangerously, look to us - we are telling you the underlying neuro mechanisms are your illusory experience, you are giving an ideology that depersonalizes us, dehumanizes us, disempowers us and demoralizes us. And you don't seem to notice or you don't seem to care. Out of this ideology it natural follows that when I come to my medical doctor and say I am feeling very depressed, I am feeling quite hopeless. The medical doctor goes to the pharmaceutical industry, the source of the dharma, the pharmaceutical industry is saying - what is the nature of the mind? It's the brain, can do! We'll find a drug because after all psychological disorders are neurological disorders, that means they are now functions of chemistry and electricity. So therefore all psychological disorders should be treated most effectively with drugs. Then when they don't work, then you now have really good grounds for being depressed. Because if they don't work and you are a brain, you are screwed. Because if the people who know the most about the brain, about the chemicals in the brain, if they can't help you then you are hopeless, you are screwed. Who has screwed you? Not people, not institutions, it is delusion, all comes to delusion. So I find this enormously sad, not hopeless.

(39:33) We found the three refuges- they are - Buddha, dharma and sangha. And then we find who is spreading the word? Why is this not confined just to them? Why is this now on everybody's lips? Common people, with no scientific training whatsoever using the words mind and brain interchangeably, all over the place, globally. How did this happen? How does this mental disease that seems to be extremely infections, like typhoid of the mind, bubonic plague of the mind, how is this being transmitted? How do people of Mongolia catch it? And Bhutan and Singapore and China, India? How are they catching this virulent, incredibly toxic virus of the mind? By way of the media, international media, BBC, New York Times, Time Magazine you name it, The Guardian, the London Times and so forth. And they are pretty much homogenous. I read this closely, I watched it closely, I'm not an expert but I read a lot in this area, you know what I find? The media never challenges, they never challenge, the science journals in particular, they never challenge this, that statement by this head, published in Reuters, do you think the journalist said - Ah, Mr. Head of research of this major pharmaceutical industry, what you just said is utter nonsense, would you like to rephrase that or you are just stupid? They never say that, they pass it on as if the word investigative journalism has no reference in reality at all. They pass it on uncritically always, I mean I am reading this constantly, and I don't see them ever criticizing the metaphysical beliefs and assumptions even when it is a sheer idiocy, they just pass it on. The modern media is the propaganda arm of the church of scientific materialism and they don't tell you that, but

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they never question, they never question. One of the most prominent, and I won't give the name, but one of the most prominent propagandists of the mid 19th century, it's a commonly quoted statement, he said - if you tell a lie frequently enough, it will be accepted as truth. If you heard it before you know where it comes from, not a good source, a really incredibly vile and evil source, the person who said that. If you say a lie frequently enough it will come to be accepted as common knowledge. Well I have just been narrating a bunch of lies, or the very best, the most charitable delusions uncritically accepted, uncritically transmitted, directly over the pharmaceutical industry, directly to your doctor, directly to the pill you put into your mouth, that is poison.

(43:08) And now refer to these pharmaceutical industries, especially the psycho pharmaceutical - as drug cartels. Psycho pharmaceutical drug cartels. Which is really more destructive, the cocaine dealers, the cartels in Mexico for example or in Afghanistan, which is more endemic, which has a bigger impact on society as a whole? How many people do you know that are taking cocaine? And how many people do you know that are taking psycho pharmaceutical drugs? Where is the larger damage? And which side is going to jail? So there is a triad here, as if there were a conspiracy theory, this - I scratch your back and you scratch mine of the neuro scientific community, because this empowers them. If you've got one community now, that said we are the go to people now, if you want to know about your own identity, the nature of your mind and whatever ails you, what will make you happy, it's all your brain, in another words - wherever your question is we have the answer. Whatever your questions is about your identity, your happiness and your suffering, we care about, that segues into Shantideva, whatever your question is, we already have the answer. And the answer is - it's the brain, stupid. That is what Bill Clinton called - ideology. An ideologue already has the answers before the question is ever posed, whatever your question is, we have the answer - it's a brain and leave to us, we will tell you who you are, we will tell you where you came from, we will tell you what happens at death, we will tell what your potentials are, we will tell where your sufferings comes from, where your happiness comes from, we will tell how to lead a good life. We are the go to people - give us more money, we will do the research for you, in another words power, prestige and money, these are intoxicants, and the whole notion of value as science in any way, any imaginable way being value free, becomes a lacking stock. Even in the most benign way, value free in a sense of being free of prejudice and bias, it's a laughing stock. They don't even try. Come to the society for neuro science, a big annual convention, thousands upon thousands, try to deliver a paper that presents any view of the mind and brain outside of the materialistic paradigm, try it. Try to get to the podium and see what it's like to get the door slammed in your face. Try to go to any scientific preview journal of neuroscience and present something that is non materialistic and see what it's like to see the door slammed in your face. They already have the answer before you pose the question. The answer is you are wrong, because we already have the answers, and they are all within the materialistic paradise. By the way this is rooted in 19 century physics which goes hand and hand with mechanistic materialism.

(46:00) Neuro scientific community is immensely empowered by this and enriched, and its prestige goes through the roof. The pharmaceutical industry is making billions of dollars selling us poison to alleviate mental suffering. The medical industry, caught between a rock and a hard place because but I think so many people in the medical industry come out of the sense of altruism, caught between a rock and a hard place, what are they supposed to do? The insurance won't pay for it. If you really need top therapy your psycho therapist, your psychiatrist may know this is what you really need, you went through tremendous trauma and what you need is not a drug that can suppress the symptoms, you need understanding, you need warmth, you need compassion and this may take two or three months but I am sorry your insurance will not pay for it.

(47:24) So with tears and lamentation take this drug with my apologies, because I just screwed you. I am not a healer, I am a drug peddler and I work for the cartels, but it's legal anyway. Enriching for the pharmaceutical industry, money flows in to the medical industry. The journalists are the propaganda arm of this whole mess. Why did they go along with it? Why, and I am going to answer the question, evening news, watch evening news in USA: CBS, ABC, NBC those are the three big ones, then there is Fox new, you can skip that one, the other ones at least make some pretense of being objective. Watch! Watch not the news watch the commercials in between, every night and see who is paying for the news. The pharmaceutical industry figures very, very, very large. They will show you little cartoons of a depressed little blob, and how happy the blob becomes when it takes a certain drug and everybody who has an IQ less than that of a turtle, is watching and

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thinking – I want that drug because I want to be a happy blob. They're talking down to us like we have crap for brains.

(48:44) But they are so cunning, to sidestep the people who actually access, professionally with compassion and knowledge and high training - is this drug good for my patient or not? The medical doctors, they are so clever they manage to get legislation so they can slip around the medical doctors, all medical establishment and go right to the general public who has no medical training at all of course, but which is suffering from insomnia, from anxiety, from depression. They go right to the people with no training at all and they give a cartoon and some asinine pitch about how this is going to make you happy and at the bottom line in a quietly murmuring voice: this makes you nauseous, gives liver problems and so forth. Have a nice day! But of course they can't give the whole list because the advertisement couldn't last that long, it would be too expensive.

(49:25) So you are the news media and you are getting a major slice of the pie, a major percentage of your revenue that pays your salary from the pharmaceutical industry. What do you think will happen if one of the anchor people for the major news starts blowing the whistle on the sociopathic behavior of the pharmaceutical industry? Gosh, do you think they might pull their ads? Might that be a reason why the media, the journalists, are utterly uncritical except for the most extreme cases, they just pass it on as if they're all evangelists for the church scientific materialism. So the media, the journalists are absolutely culpable in all of this. And then there is a fifth wheel, the government. The government goes along with all of this, allows the pharmaceutical industry to advertise to the general public in an area they really have no ethical business doing that at all. The government using tax payer's money actually pours millions upon millions of dollars, just give some donations to the pharmaceutical industry to come up with more drugs to poison us.

(50:53) The insurance industry pays for it, because they are looking at the short term, they figure: this is cheaper than psychotherapy, that can go on and on whereas give people a drug it's cheaper. So the insurance industry says look: we got to follow the bottom line here, and it's cheaper if you just give people drugs rather than months and months of psychotherapy, that can be a hundred dollars an hour or more.

So it's a collusion, the problem here is in the system, neuro scientific community, pharmaceutical industry, the medical establishment, the media and government. But the victims in all of this are the general public, including people who work for all of those industries because they get depression and anxiety like anybody else. So this whole system is pathologically delusionally dysfunctional. So I've spoken of a need for a renaissance, contemplative renaissance among the world's religions, I spoken of the need for a scientific revolution in the mind sciences, which has been warded off successfully for a hundred and forty five years by the dogma, the ideology, the close mindedness, and bigotry and flat out stupidity of proponents of the scientific materialism, and now I would suggest the third component is necessary for the sake of all beings especially as humans. We really need a protestant reformation, protesting the, vehemently, passionately, intelligently and with a level head, an absolute core reformation of the way this whole system, the neuroscientists start telling the truth and don't blow smoke in our eyes, the Pharmaceutical industry try to heal instead of suppressing symptoms and never lie. The medicals establishment don't be lackies, don't be drug peddlers for the pharmaceutical industry, they just want to make a buck. Government, start protecting the people, you are here to protect us not collude with these big business, and the media get a brain, start being critical this is your job. You are pathetic, you don't deserve the name of journalists, call yourself secretaries, propagandists, you are doing a terrible job, and the impact on humanity is disastrous.

(53:29) And now we go to a deep ground. That was contemporary, it's not always been true but it's true now and if we don't face it I think the consequences will just be more and more dire and everybody suffers including neuroscientists, people working in the pharmaceutical industry, everybody suffers and if the suffering were necessary then I'd practice equanimity, but compassion stems from the possibility of seeing that there could be freedom, and there could be freedom here, with good science, with good pharmaceutical research, with good medicine, with good government and with good journalism, all of those we have experienced in the past, it could happen again. So everybody listening by podcast if I've over stated it, I've tried my very best here, not to speak in hyperbole, fly off the handle and so forth, I think this is too serious, I reflected on this a lot before I came here. I said Alan hold your passions in check here, don't over state, then you discredit the whole thing and this is too important, this is really important, so I've tried my best. Any

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people listening by podcast and of course here, if I've over stated, if I've said untruths, open up a blog and demolish what I said, if you can't then pass the words because this is important. (55:00)

Then after that Alan returns to talk about the the Shantideva's verses 88 and 89 as you may see below.

(55:00) Now we go to Shantideva, Oh, Oh, we are not going to finish in four days on feelings, it's too important. I'm going right back now I'm reading my earlier translation but I can also look at the same page to His Holiness' commentary. I think I can do it more justice than I did yesterday, I thought it was pretty superficial yesterday, my own explication. So here is Shantideva verse 88 people listening by podcast we are back to verse 88 and I am reading now from my early translation published in the book: Transcending Wisdom [by H.H. The Dalai Lama, translated, edited and annotated by B. Alan Wallace].

Instructions for one that is reading this transcript: first you have the more recent translation of verses 88 and 89 and then Alan is reading his early translation of verse 88 and 89.

88. If suffering truly exists, why does it not oppress the joyful? If delicacies and the like are a pleasure, why do they not please someone struck by grief and so forth?

See below the early version of the verse 88 and we are adding Alan's comments between the sign [...] as below:

"If suffering exists in reality, if it inherently exists, truly exists, why does it not prevent joyful experiences". Ok, just for starters.

(55:23) Well let's take the analogy. I think this actually makes really good sense, it's not that esoterical or abstract, it actually can make an impact. Think about the analogy, we have already looked the body, right? That was the first of the four applications of mindfulness, the body and going right down to atoms, atomistic theory Democritus, Vaibhasika – that what the physical world fundamentally consists of, down to brass tacks, reductionistic mode, is fundamental absolutely core little pellets of physical reality. Atoms a little tiny billiard balls, and they get configured in complex configurations and they manifest as in plants, animals, inorganic chemicals and so forth and so on, oh yeah and there is energy, they interact with energy. So there it is, so envision that, envisioning is not hard to do but what I am asking you to do now is bring to mind the object of refutation in Madhyamaka, envision a very, very tiny, essentially a billiard ball, may as well make it spherical, it seems that even electrons are spherical last time I read, incredibly tiny but spherical, so that's a nice shape, and so imagine now the fundamental constituents of the entire universe, physical universe as these little tiny billiard balls, they are hard, they are gnarly, they are tight, they are homogenous, they are absolutely there, and then with energy, whatever gravitation energy, electromagnetic energy, they congeal, they form complex configurations and voila! So Richard Feynman a man of the brilliance, Richard Feynman said: all of life can be understood in terms of the configurations of atoms. So he expressed his belief, as a true believer of scientific materialism, not his brightest moment. He should have known better. But what can you say? It's part of the education, the education indoctrinates. A friend of mine, a research psychiatrist, a very bright guy and very good man, good altruistic man, and we've had conversations about this, he's really top, I will keep him anonymous, he has my admiration, my respect, psychiatrist, research and I said you know really, where is the evidence that the mind is the brain and so forth, he said - you know it is not there but my whole training taught me that is the only way to think, in my whole training, graduate level, all the way through, medical training in through psychiatry and so forth and all of my colleagues ever since, he is a senior researcher, they never question it, I really don't know how to think outside that box because I was never exposed to any alternative view of the mind brain relationship other than the mind is the brain. So it's hard for me, I am open but I really don't have a handle on how to think otherwise and still think scientifically, because scientifically seems to be thinking materialistically. And that's the great fraud.

(58:16) So here we are. Imagine that billiard ball, back to that, there it is and imagine it's inherently existent and absolutely real out there in absolute space and in absolute time moving on, bumping into things. If that's inherently existent, that is inherently has its own attributes, then there was never a point that it came to existence, it had to be always there, and there is never a way that's going to pass away from existence because again, it's inherently got a vice grip on its attributes, they will not change, it is inherently there. So that's a little permanent phenomena, and wherever it goes there it is, in configurations all by itself, all by is lonesome, well that's exactly what quantum mechanical has refuted, but without pursuing that because when we looked into that already at some length. Now, but holding that as an analogy, now imagine that there is something analogous to that, an atom, a very large atom, maybe it's a very large molecule but let's take a

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very large atom of misery. It's inherently existent, it has its own properties, it's absolutely real and it's moved into the space of your mind, and Chodron now feels miserable and why? Because this great nucleus, this titanium nucleus of misery has moved into her mind and says - I feel depressed. Because her mind is possessed by this inherently existent entity, this great big atom of misery. So if that's the case, if her mind has been possessed by this inherently existent atom of misery, then why does not it not prevent joyful experiences? Because we know in an actual fact, Chodron might be miserable at 5 pm but then at 6 pm something really nice happens, and she becomes cheerful, but that's not possible - because we know where that atom of miserable went, it lodged itself in her mind and as long as it's there, there is no possibility of being miserable and joyful at the same time, each can't do that anymore you can be a placebo and a drug at the same time.

(1:00:42) So if she really has this great big titanium core of misery embedded in her mind, that should make it impossible forever to experience anything else, because there will be no way for an atom of joy to come in. But you do feel joy. So one can imagine there is a possibility, what you need is a pool cue, a pool cue and need to get that pool cue and come over to Chodron's mind and find that billiard ball of misery and go ping! and in Elizabeth - it pops out of Chodron's mind and pops over to Elizabeth's mind and she goes UHHH, you just made me miserable, that doggone pool cue! Because it's got to go somewhere, it's inherently real, you can't just make it go away, it's inherently real, so if it's not staying in your mind you need to go (cough sound) and hope it comes out at your mouth and goes over to somebody else, because it has got to go someplace. But if it can't go anyplace else, then I'm sorry but you are stuck with misery because somehow that got in there, I don't know how it got in there, but you are stuck forever because it's inherently real and unless it goes someplace else and makes them inherently miserable, you're stuck, you're screwed. So there we are.

But now in the same verse, this is a very tight packed - "If happiness is truly exists, why do savory things and so on and not brighten up the pain of grief?"

Or the alternate translation: "If suffering truly exists, why does it not oppress the joyful? If delicacies and the like are a pleasure, why do they not please someone struck by grief and so forth?" This can be a better translation as my wife is super in Sanskrit

So now we are attending to something that we take very seriously: and that is that happiness – *that's* a really happy place.

Disneyland is the happiest place on earth. There are cars that are ultimate driving machines and they will definitely make you happy, just get behind the driving wheel. If it's not a BMW, it's definitely a Porche. There are people that just make you happy, there are places, there are jobs that are just happy jobs, and there is medicine, that's happy medicine, so that's what Shantideva is challenging, as we say it all the time, this person makes me happy, this is delightful, that's happy, that's wonderful, that's a cheerful place, Acapulco is a cheerful place, right? Vladivostok? Not so much.

If that is true, if there is happiness and pleasure in the food, then you could have just learned that your loved one just passed away, oh never mind open up, have some chocolate or whatever your favorite is, have some happy food. And if the happiness is actually in the substance, that should make your grief just vanish because, Oh, chocolate, Oh Lasagna, but that doesn't brighten up the grief, so that should show right there that's not true, that happiness is not in chemicals, happiness is not in objects, it is not in appearances, it is not in places, things or other people.

89. If it is not experienced because it is overpowered by something more intense, how can that which is not of the nature of experience be a feeling?

Let's continue (the early translation of verse 89): "you may say that such pleasure is not experienced due to being overridden by intense suffering"

And that is you may say that there is intense suffering but there's still pleasure because if you are taking something really that make you happy, like some really good food or listening some really nice music, listen to some happy music, you have all heard happy music, polka, who listens to polka without wanting to get a smile on your face and starting to move along? Isn't it happy music? So the argument here is that you still grief stricken but there still occurrence of happiness because you just got some happy input. And his response is:

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But you are not experiencing that underlying happiness all you are experiencing is grief and say it is not making me happy, turn off the music. The food is not making me happy, stop stuffing my mouth. Turn off the sitcom, it's not funny. And Shantideva response is:

"Then don't call a feeling that you are not experiencing - a feeling, it's not there". You are not getting happiness from that substance.

I want to meditate, we are going to speak a little bit longer than I thought about feelings but I think the time will be well spent, I don't have more big agendas I think now we've covered contemplative renaissance, scientific revolution, the protestant reformation in the mental health care industry with all of its five branches so we don't need to go there again, and now you see somebody actually did say, placebo drugs. Let's meditate.

Meditation:

(1:07:19) And now take executive control of your attention, over your mind or at least your awareness, release the conceptual turbulence if it is there, settle your body in its natural state, relaxed, still and vigilante, your respiration in its natural rhythm and your mind let it be loose, still, clear.

Let your awareness hold in its own ground, know the taste, know the immediate experience of your awareness hovering motionlessly in the present moment, free of grasping, unmoved by appearances and yet illuminating all appearances and activities of the mind.

Some of you already began to experience the fact that the more you release grasping and allow your awareness to rest in its own place, allow your mind to settle in its own natural state, with a sense of wellbeing and even joy that emerges from the very nature of your awareness itself, independent of any type of stimulation or activity of the mind. Rest in this clear luminous nature of awareness itself, and let it illuminate both the sensations as well as the feelings arising in the body, and observe that while your awareness illuminates those feelings and sensations, the sensations and the feelings are not in the very nature of your own awareness itself, nor do they intrinsically belong to you, they arise in space in dependence upon prior causes and conditions, they are simply what they are, with no ego and no owner.

When a feeling arises within the body examine it closely, the very feeling itself. Is it like an atom of pleasure or pain, inherently real, discrete self-defining? Simply witnessed passively, or are you a participant? Which suggests some possibility of degrees of freedom rather than simply being the victim of the suffering and pain arising in the body.

When you eat tasty food you can when you closely apply mindfulness to eating, that the pleasure you experience is not intrinsically within the nature of the taste itself, you know that if you keep on eating and eating until you don't want to eat anymore, no more pleasure but the food tastes the same. If you hear lovely music you can distinguish between the pleasure of hearing the music in the actual sound of the music, hear it too many times pleasure vanishes, pleasure is not in the music and pleasure is not in the food. How about then the sensations that arise in the body whether they are pleasant or unpleasant, is that feeling embedded in the very nature of the sensations themselves earth, water, fire and air? Are they already there simply being presented to you? As the sensations simply presented to you, are the feelings also simply given? Or not? Examine closely.

With discerning intelligence, with discerning intelligence examine closely, closely apply mindfulness to the feelings arising in the body and the sensations that act as cooperative conditions for those feelings, which is to say they don't predetermine them, they simply catalyze, trigger or contribute to the emergence of those feelings which are in the very nature of experience, your away of experiencing the sensations. Probe right into the nucleus of the feelings, is there a core like that hypothetical atom that is 100% homogeneous atom. Can you find the core of feeling? Can you find its nucleus? Is it internally homogenous? Is it in any way influenced by your observation of it?

Can you detect something very subtle, and that is not only your identification with the pain or whatever feelings arises in the body as *my feeling* but on a subtler level, the conceptual identification of a feeling as suffering, as painful or as pleasant? Can you detect this conceptual imputation and can you detect that upon which you are imputing this label, this concept - this is painful - this is pleasurable - and can you see that the basis and the imputation are not the same?

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And can you see that when you do not designate it conceptually as pleasant or unpleasant, it was not already inherently so. This takes or requires very, very subtle investigation, close analysis to see the objective emptiness of what that is designated.

Let your awareness be like space, view your body as space and observe the empty appearances arising from space and dissolving back into space within this field of the body, and be in peace, free of grasping, free of reification.

Teaching pt2:

Summary:

Meditation on emptiness leads to the Middle Way. For someone who is well prepared, realization of emptiness leads to compassion and bliss. For someone who is still self-centered, direct insight into emptiness can lead to grief and fear.

Alan's teachings:

(1:31:04) What is extraordinary about the meditation on emptiness, is that when it's done properly, when you really have found Middle Way, rather than leading to some sense of emptiness, like life is empty, a kind of a nihilism some kind of a sheer vacuum, that the realization of emptiness actually naturally emerges or displays itself or gives rise to compassion, quite remarkable.

And how just on the contrary, when we reify ourselves, when we take our own personal identity as something inherent real, absolutely real, absolutely separate of course, then that undermines all compassion, because that means we're unrelated, your problem, your problem, my problem, my problem, good luck! Quite interesting, but it's also interesting at least one of you has already discovered this experientially, that if one really makes a point of probing into nature of reality, to see whether or not phenomena are indeed empty of inherent nature, when you start gaining some glimmering there, some insight, some experience, it can give rise to different types of emotions. In one case grief, sadness it's all empty, or in other cases fear, I am going to be annihilated! And yet other people experience bliss. Same realization. Once experience fearful, miserable, another person blissful, radiant, joyful, so why, how can that be? What's the taste of emptiness? Terrifying or blissful? They are very different tastes. And this just highlights a whole market of contemplative science, radically unlike third person science. It's just an observation, not a criticism.

(1:33:22) But contemplative science, you must make your mind serviceable, you must prepare the mind for the deepest insights so that when you are cultivating the four immeasurables and going deeper and deeper there, cultivating bodhichitta and you bring that mind to the investigation of emptiness, it gives rise to bliss. Bring a mind that is not so well trained, a mind that's really quite habituated and unchallenged in its habituation, to the fixation of my wellbeing, self-centeredness, prioritization of one's own wellbeing over everybody else, so that my mind always does that, it always goes into the mudra of self-grasping, it's a fist. Let that mindset go unchallenged and now say - "I really want to realize emptiness", and you get a bit of taste and it freaks you out. Instead of finding the great possible treasure which is what the bodhisattva finds, you find when you get some glimmering into the very emptiness of a separate, autonomous, inherently existent self, you feel like you just lost your most precious treasure. The one who was seeking emptiness winds up being devastated. That's why, two wings to enlightenment, two hands in mudra, skilful means and wisdom, together.

Happy, sorry for being so happy, but not very. I won't do it all the time, I promise. Enjoy your evening.

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67 Equanimity (1)

03 Oct 2012

This morning we turn to the fourth of the four immeasurables, equanimity. And broadly speaking it's understood in two ways, both are very, very useful. In the Theravada approach the emphasis is on this "upecha" the Sanskrit term or "upeca" in Pali, seems to point more towards just imperturbability, the feeling

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of equanimity, the feeling of an inner strength, unflappability, really maintaining, keeping you cool whatever is coming up so that you are not responding with wild emotional oscillations or craving or hostility.

Whereas in Indo Tibetan current, the emphasis there, as I am sure many of you know, is much more on that even open heartedness, that is towards other people in particular that instead of responding with craving to those we like and hostility to those we don't, we more even that out.

So what I'd like to do for this morning which is fairly short, would be to go to or emphasize this first sense, this imperturbability maintaining emotional equilibrium, emotional balance, which we all value, and what I would like to draw the attention is to a relatively short passage from one of the mind treasures, perhaps the most quintessential mind treasure of Dudjom Lingpa on Dzogchen. I think I've referred to it in the past it's the Sharp Vajra of Conscious Awareness Tantra. And it comes in seven phases starting with shamatha and culminating in achieving perfect enlightenment of a Buddha.

The first phase is all about settling the mind in its natural state, or as he says taking the impure mind as the path, in other words the only mind you have, starting from where you are, where you live, that mind, and then we will see as we go deeper then he says -now we take ultimate reality or emptiness, now that's your path and then you go deeper and you take rigpa as your path. So at no point are you directly taking Buddhism as your path, it's not Hinayana, Mahayana, Vajrayana in any kind of way, it's taking your impure mind and you didn't get that from Buddhism, and emptiness is either real or unreal but ok, I am going to assume it's real, that's your path and then rigpa or pristine awareness. But so he's just unpacked, in this phase one of the text and it's only 10 pages long, from summarizing the entire path to enlightenment. In this first phase he describes settling the mind in its natural state or taking the impure mind as the path and of course we all know, all of you have now practiced that, it does tend to cause, not like a side effect of drug, but merely catalyze something that's already there, ok? A drug may give you problems that you didn't have before, but settling the mind in its natural state I really do believe it has no detrimental side effects at all, but might it catalyze if practiced correctly of course, but might it bring forth, make manifest imbalances, physiologically pranically, psychologically that were already there? Oh, definitely yes.

(3:54) So what to do when you are practicing settling the mind in its natural state, taking the impure mind as the path and it's dredging up a lot of stuff that is pretty upsetting, emotions, memories, desires, all kind of stuff - oh man, I didn't think that I was going to get hit by a hurricane here, it was so peaceful when I started. This seems to be going away from shamatha into hurricane territory.

But of course it's not only for those who are really seriously devoting themselves to shamatha practice, let alone the shamatha practice of taking the impure mind as the path, let alone those who are doing it for 10 hours a day, you know for weeks and months on end, they really will wind up dredging the psyche to its depths, all the way down to substrate consciousness. But let alone such people, people who are not meditating at all, people who have no interest in dharma whatsoever. Are they experiencing circumstances that arouse over the course of their days and months and years of their lives, strong emotional upheaval? Do you know anybody who has not gone through that? Isn't going through it now and is not destined to go through it in the future? So in others words the teaching he is about to give is relevant for everybody, from the most dedicated hard core yogis, absolutely focused on achieving shamatha and proceeding on the path, to those with no interest at all but they would really like to suffer less. Well, these teaching that he is about to give are really for people, this particular antidote, the issue is relevant for everybody, this particular antidote, he's now, who's his audience? And we'd have to say for this – tantra. And that is what it is, Sharp Vajra of Conscious Awareness Tantra. Who is his audience? Where is the dart being thrown? Who's he really directing this to? Well I think it's pretty clear, when he summarizes the entire path in 10 pages his intended audience is people who are really intent, committed like Gautama under the Buddha tree to achieving enlightenment in this life time, that type of commitment.

So the teachings he is about to give is not going to be relevant or is not going to be practical, applicable for everybody, but we can see – I am like a shoe salesman, here is a shoe, see if fits. So here's what comes, he just described, he is coming to the end of the presentation of taking the impure mind as the path and now we have a session, recognizing the essential nature of that which is to be abandoned, and its direct remedy, recognizing this as the foremost path. So what the foremost paths, the best of paths to recognize what is to be abandoned and the remedy for that? The root text, the Tantra reads:

Text:

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“Whenever you proudly hope for good things and cling to them and fear bad things and reify inflictors of harm, you have stumbled upon a dangerous juncture that can lead you astray. “

Really powerful, and that's the root text, happily there is a commentary which I've also translated, so now that's what you are going to get. It's rather short and this will then launch us into our meditation for this morning. And what you'll see here is that we are now just right on course, we've come to, in a timely fashion, to the forth to the four immeasurables, equanimity, and in the afternoon it just turns out golly gee, that we are focusing on the close application of mindfulness of feelings and, by crickey we're doing it by way of Madhyamaka and seeking to realize the empty nature of feelings. All of these are of one piece, blessings of the Buddha, I didn't plan them. So the commentary reads:

“Whenever you have fallen under the influence of proudly hoping for and clinging to things that seem to be good, [that you have conceptually designated as good,] such as material gain, respect and renown and fearing things that seem to be bad [so that's your conceptual designation] such as misconduct [of the peoples way of treating you that you don't like] abuse and slander by your enemies, whenever you follow under such influence this makes for misery and suffering”,

In other words you are the person that went to the Sahara created your cage, got in and through away the key.

In short: “Insofar you reify all Gods and inflictors of harm”.

Now this is actually being revealed in the 1860s in Tibet when the existence of all kinds of demonic spirits and angelic spirits and all kinds of densely populated and where there was a lot of sense of - oh, this is must because of this deity, this entity, and it is attributed always looking for something out there.

So we give it viruses, and we give it political parties and politicians, we find something to blame, it is always out there. And we do it. With often things we can't see, like bacteria and viruses, and I do believe they exist.

But I can't remember seeing one. I'm a believer. I do believe. And so likewise Tibetans say most of us can't see the demons and gods and all the incredible array of intangible spirits and so forth, but we have those who have achieved shamatha and vipashyana, people who broaden the bandwidth of mental perception, they actually see them, they recognize them, they know what to do with them. So Dudjom Lingpa is couching this in mid 19th century Tibet and there are people in his immediate audience for whom this is totally ordinary. Like me talking about viruses and bacteria. Nobody goes – why do you believe that – have you ever seen one? Because we are all true believers here. And so they were all true believers, nobody among his audience were saying – what do you mean gods? I'm an Atheist. They'd say what's an Atheist?

(10:22) Insofar as you reify Gods and inflictors of harm, the more generic, and all joys and sorrows, so not only reifying that which you see as causing the joys and sorrows, the political party etc, but also insofar as you are reifying joys and sorrows, pleasures and pains you've stumbled upon a dangerous obstructive juncture that can lead you astray.

Now bear in mind he is talking to people, I think it is a safe assumption, his intended audience is people now who've come to him and said - lead us on the path to enlightenment we want to achieve rainbow body in this life time, what can you share with us? Can you give us a path and by the way please don't just give us a smattering of practices, we can go anywhere for that, but from you, Dudjom Lingpa, please give us a path and we are willing to do the hard work.

Then Dudjom Lingpa continues:

“Thinking, I will be unable to ascend to the supreme city of liberation, take this to heart”.

“Take this to heart”: you come to this very important juncture, a crossroads, a parting where the trail splits and if you go this way – you're screwed and if you go this way you are actually on your way to the great city of liberation, so I mean it's left or right, it's perfect directions right? City of liberation this way, forever screwed that way. And forever screwed is just continue the status quo, continue reifying everything that makes you happy and sad and continue reifying all your pleasures and sorrows all your pleasure and pain, here we are.

Text:

“So thinking that I will be unable to ascend to the supreme city of great liberation, take this to heart, whatever good and bad experiences, joys and sorrows and so on arise, there is no need to counteract them, for mere appearances cannot bind you. As Aryadeva wrote, these are mere appearances and are not to be blocked, instead stop reifying them.”

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(12:35) Now if a psychotherapist said that to all his or her patients, what do you think Jerry? Or a physiotherapist? Yes, I could give you a lot of techniques but ...oh, to hell with it, just stop reifying and go home now and that will be sixty dollars, pay on your way out. That's not going to wash. But then those are not his intended audience, his intended audience are people who are really serious about achieving enlightenment in this lifetime in which case, cut to the chase, give us the essence, give us the tough medicine. We are ready to take it and this is the tough medicine, this is the core medicine, this is where the healing is to be found, this is where you are going to primary cause and not merely the cooperative conditions. As Aryadeva wrote - these are mere appearances and are not to be blocked, instead stop reifying.

Commentaries continue and conclude on this one session:

“The real root of the thing to be blocked is the mind that reifies appearances, outer, everything that appears as demons, malevolence spirits and deceptive maras, arises from nothing other than this root. Consequently without subduing it, your own deluded mind that reifies everything it touches, without subduing it there will be no end to subduing all the outward demons and malevolent spirits one by one.”

What essentially to be blocked, counteracted, remedied, what's the real problem that needs to the antidote? Is the mind that reifies appearances.

That is the core medicine.

So let's meditate.

Meditation:

(16:00) It is commonly said throughout the Pali Canon as well as the teachings of the Buddha regarded in Sanskrit - the following statement: the mind settled in a state of meditative equipoise comes to see reality as it is, the balanced mind, the balanced body, speech and mind. So with this in mind, settle your body, speech and mind in their natural states.

(18:48) And now let's move from this relative state of quiescence into the more dynamic mode of using the mind through our memory, intelligence, imagination. I invite you first of all direct your attention to your own past, any phase of your past that springs to mind but specifically target some period of your life you found very difficult, you were dealing with a very difficult unpleasant person or place or job or circumstance or a quality physical healthy you met with adversity and in response suffering arouse.

To cultivate equanimity by way of wisdom, the wisdom of which Dudjom Lingpa speaks, it's imperative to distinguish sharply and clearly the difference between the event that arose up to meet you, the circumstances, the person, the place and your response to it. And your response very simply put was one of suffering. And therefore identifying the event, the circumstances, the place, the person, as miserable, difficult, awful.

(21:51) Coming back to the theme, “in the seen let be just the seen, in the heard just the heard”, coming back to this theme of observing phenomena simply as phenomena. Can you distinguish between the basis of imputation and your designation, verbal and conceptual, “that was awful, that was horrendously difficult, that was miserable”? And when you investigate closely, can you see that the basis of designation is empty from its own side by its own nature, empty of that which you've imputed upon it, it's not to say that you were wrong conventionally, relatively from your perspective, but that from the side of the object, objective appearances, they are empty of that which you've imputed upon them.

(24:02) And as you closely examine the feeling itself, your recollection, how did you feel? And you recognize too - but this by nature is empty, an empty appearance with no owner, no identity, no intrinsic nature on its own, that too is designated, imputed.

And has this not been true of every other adversity that you have experienced in the past? Adversity itself was not thrust upon you from outside, you did not received it passively but you took an active role as an observer participant and you designated it as adversity and you suffered in dependence upon that designation.

(26:29) Bring your attention now to the present for those who are here in the Mind Center. We know this is a very serene, very friendly, very comfortable environment; we are being served in so many ways and nevertheless is there anything here and now that troubles you? Arouses anxiety, distress, sadness or grief? With the sharp knife of wisdom scrape off, shave away the conceptual imputations of adversity, hardship difficulty, and observe what is it upon which you are imputing these designations that makes your life so difficulty. Which appearances among the six fields of experience is the basis of designation?

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(29:11) Can you see the equal emptiness of the basis of designation and all that you impute upon it? And when you withdraw that reification, you see the meaning of the Heart Sutra Statement: “form is emptiness, emptiness is form”, all these consist of nothing other than empty appearances and in which there is no benefit and no harm.

(32:10) And now direct your attention if you will to the future. Is there anything you dread, do you have any anxiety about what is to come? Is there anything in this imaginary future which is not yet real, already bringing you distress, misery, sadness? What is the object that you fear that arouses distress in the mind? What is it objectively that you deem to be unpleasant?

(33:38) And then with discerning wisdom ask the question. Is my unhappiness lodged there, is that where it's located? Out there in the objective world lying in wait like an ambush, waiting to be delivered, suffering on a dish, or is that situation, person, place and so on, which doesn't yet exist at all, merely serve as basis of designation for the imputation of my own fears, my own conceptual elaborations, emptiness piled on emptiness, emptiness giving rise to homemade suffering, concocted in the prison of our own fabrication.

(35:46) With the eyes of wisdom you see that the bars on the prison that you've constructed for yourself are in fact no more substantial than mirages. Like in a non-lucid dream you can be trapped in anguish, in prison. But from the perspective of being awake there is no prison, there is no prisoner and the anguish itself is an empty appearance arising in space.

(37:40) And now release all those empty appearances of the past, present and future and let your awareness rest non-conceptually, timeless in its own nature.

Teaching pt2.

Summary:

Once hopes and fears are released, the mind settles in the center. In the center, there is neither pleasure nor pain, but a sense of equanimity. Beware of falling into dullness and indifference. Maintain lucidity while resting in the center and it dissolves into a well-spring of bliss.

Alan's comments:

(39:36) When we release the hopes and fears and the craving and the aversion then the mind quite naturally comes to settle in the center, the Mind Center, welcome! Whether you know it or not you've actually been here for six weeks, but you might have had other things on your mind, like everything else.

So come to rest in the center and the center of course means neither pleasure nor pain because it's in the center. By not getting caught up in desires - that will make me happy, we are not getting caught up in aversion - that's going to make me miserable, we just give it a rest. And we come to the center and what is left over is not nothing but the zero feeling of equanimity, which is a feeling - keeping on coming back to that, it's not an absence of feeling and it's not devoid of feeling.

So we come back to that, but if we come back there and then don't fall into the easy habitual rut of falling into a stupor, that is when something pleasant happens, then we fall into the habit “give more, I like that”, and then clinging and attachment arises. And if something unpleasant happens, “give me less”, and that's aversion, fear and so forth; and then we are not getting neither one, “I do not care”, and just fades out into dullness, so it is craving, hostility and then ignorance, not knowing anything because well nothing's bothering me, nothing's pleasure I guess I can go to sleep now.

(41:15) If you can come to the center and not fall into the old rut, come into the center and maintain your lucidity, then lo and behold the center is one that slips down into the substrate consciousness and lo and behold like a geyser coming up, another type of wellbeing arises that's not stimulus driven, that's not hedonic, that's genuine. But the way to it is not by pursuing the hedonic or by getting caught up in the misery and the aversion, but coming right into the center and then finding: Ah, that's the way to open the door to another type of wellbeing, another type of feeling, because it is a feeling, a sense of wellbeing, that's a feeling, it's something you experience, it's pleasant, nice and let alone “pretty” which is really enjoyment. That's the way to open the door and the more lucidly you come to rest right there in the center, then of course your coarse mind dissolves and you slip right back into the fountain, into the artesian well of genuine happiness. And the Buddha said: “that happiness, that bliss of Samadhi is not to be feared”.

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Posted by Alma Ayon

68 Mindfulness of feelings (3)

03 Oct 2012

Teachings pt 1:

Summary:

With respect to the Madhyamaka, 1) hearing means that you understand the View as presented; 2) reflection means that you relate the teachings to your own experience, and 3) meditation means investigation based on shamatha to penetrate to direct realization. Alan elaborates on verses 90-92 of Ch. 9 of the Bodhicaryavatara. Suffering arises in dependence on causes and conditions; however, neither suffering nor joy is inherently existent. They are conventionally there without investigation, without analysis. However, upon analysis, neither is there from its own side. Just as causes and conditions can shift to produce either suffering or joy, conceptual designation can also be shifted by the observer participant. Reification is the problem, and this is the antidote to reification.

Alan's teachings:

In terms of the type of lectures or teachings that I've been offering here, some of them, I think it's rather a minority, are really directed to us as people living in the 21st century and if we weren't living here and now, we could just skip it altogether. So most of what I said yesterday afternoon if you are not living in the 21st century, if you are living in 19th century Tibet, that would be a total waste of time, they wouldn't believe that anybody would be that crazy.

But we are living here and I do have a very strong conviction that's actually imperative, if one wants to have a very flourishing dharma practice and that one's understanding of dharma is thoroughly integrated with one's actual way of viewing reality, not your Buddhist view but the way you actually view reality, that we must have these in dialogue, must be in dialogue, they must be on speaking terms, so that's why I spent good deal of time yesterday afternoon doing that, on the one hand, and I don't feel any regrets, I made a couple of minor errors, and I thank Patrice for pointing out a couple, so just for note, and extremely brief, that nurse practitioners and physician's assistants can also give prescriptions, and not just psychiatrists, thank you, correct? So there we are.

But the really central, the theme, I would say something like 80% of what we are doing here, it doesn't matter whether you are living in Tibet in the 19th century or you are living in India in the 8th Century, or now let's say in Manhattan in the 21st century, the teachings are right there. And so that is where we are going to return this afternoon, back to teaching that are really, to my mind they are spot on, they are relevant, they are contemporary at any time and they are relevant wherever you are living and frankly from my perspective in this galaxy or another galaxy, the teachings on Madhyamaka, Middle Way, because they are either throughout the universe or they are not true at all, so that is where we are going today.

(3:42) And then occasionally I think less frequently than I have really addressed us as people living in the twenty one century, some of the teachings when we are brushing up on the teachings of Dzogchen, the parables for example, those parables are not 21st century parables and I would say this, these teachings that you are about to hear, they are addressing us as sentient beings, sentient beings who are subject to the Four Noble Truths, right? And this is to get to the root of those and to eradicate suffering and its causes. So I can address you as a 21st century person or simply as a sentient being, specifically human being, that's who these teachings are for, and then the teachings where we brush up against Dzogchen, they're not addressing you as a 21st century person and they are not addressing you as a sentient being either, it's calling to you from afar - is there someone from your side listening? That is your own Buddha nature, and that's almost like a harmonic vibration, some kind of a resonance sets up, that somehow this seems right and that's weird, so that is it. And now we go back to addressing ourselves here as sentient beings, I'm going to keep this pretty close to a half hour so we can get more back to our own rhythm, old rhythm. We're returning now to Shantideva's texts, the first one that we are looking at, so I've re-covered the first I think three verses here, and now we go to verse 91, some of you may have it and so here we are - close application of mindfulness to feelings, and this is an absolutely Madhyamaka critique, and there's further practice, and that is as I mentioned here and there in the classic and very rigorous monastic training, whether in Nyingma tradition or they spend maybe ten ,

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fifteen years becoming Khenpo, which is the culmination or in the Gelugpa tradition fifteen, twenty, twenty five, thirty five years one of my geshe , one of my teachers spent thirty five years of formal training to get his Geshe degree. Those studying Madhyamaka standardly for four years, and if they are people like Geshe Rabten or Geshe Ngawang Dargye , or outstanding scholars and they really become yogis, then they will take that four years primarily of hearing and reflection, hearing / reflection and the reflection, the contemplation the second of hearing and thinking and meditation is often done on the debating courtyard. So that is where you are doing your reflecting, you're drawing it out and there is a lot of energy in that, they are most, I wrote a whole book on this, Geshe Rabten's biography, their most intensive phase of the whole training, Geshe Rabten's was twenty four years, the most intensive phase of that twenty four years of training was the four years of Mahyamaka, really intense. And so what is the point of all of that?

1) Hearing means that you understand the view as presented.

(6:31) First of all to get crystal clear, understanding by way of hearing, and that is you now understand what the teachings are saying, whether you agree with them or disagree with them, maybe you are studying something else and want to refute them, whatever but you really have understood and if somebody gives you an exam - ok, what is Shantideva's position about the non-inherent nature of feelings? Whether you believe it or not, you can give a correct exposition of what he was getting at, and if somebody quizzes on you, grills you on it, you can still say things that are correct about his view. Whether or not you've really reflected deeply to see whether any of it is true or not, so you can pass the university exam in that way, the university exam in the class get a good grade. So that is the first point, you can't skip that one, right?

2) Reflection means that you relate the teachings to your own experience.

(7:15) And then we have the second one and that's really understanding the teachings as something objective, something from outside that you hear, somebody else's, Shantideva's teachings in this text, but then if you want to go further you like that and you'd like to take a big step towards letting this be of benefit to you own mind stream then you go into the seeking the cultivation of prajña, wisdom understanding by way of reflection, critical analysis, thinking and what you're doing now is you're taking your own experience, your own intelligence but especially own experience and what you think you know of reality, and then relating it so now it's like a wrestling match between the teaching of Shantideva on Madhyamaka and your own experience, your own intelligence, your own understanding.

That's why I draw from 21st century physics. That's my understanding, I take 21st century physics very seriously, that's part of my world, right? I was trained in physics and I have a great respect for science, I cannot ignore that and say well never mind that, let's just deal with 8th century notions of atoms. I can't do that because then it is not real. And then this creates a bifurcation between how you are when you are outside of the dharma center and then when you are back to the real world. Phony baloney, right? It is really totally phony. So nothing's really going to happen, interesting out of that, it has to be a total integration.

(8:28) So my reflection by testing, this is where His Holiness is quoting the Buddha so many times, you test it like a person who is buying gold and you want to see, you melt it, you rub it, you do everything you can to it, to see is it really gold or not, because this is a lot of money, this is ten thousand dollars to buy that piece of yellow metal, and if it's not gold man I'm getting slopped here. So I am going to put it to every test that I can and when I've fully tested it, say man ok, it stood up to every test, ok here is the cash give the gold, right?

(8:49) And that's just gold, what we are talking about here is our lives and our way of viewing relating. So to accept the Madhyamaka view cheaply, say ok, it sounded good to me – that aint going to work. It is not going to become your view and will be merely a part of your belief system, like my believing that Jupiter has moons. That hasn't influenced my view of reality at all, and I think it is true but there it is – just the belief, and I am not even testing it, maybe I did once, but a long time ago.

So there is hearing, and that's what they'll spend four years doing, hearing, and thinking, thinking by way of debate, sharpening. So people sharpening, Miles and I get into a debate, he sharpens his sword on my sword, and I sharpen my sword on his sword, and it is a very, very effective way of learning. I went through it myself and it is very effective.

(9:40) But from the really fine Geshe in the really fine campus, what's all of that for?

Is it when you've finished your formal education with all of the talking, the reading, the memorization and all of that, what do the authentically ones do? That knew what this was all for? They get their degree perhaps and then they are gone. And they are off then to the culmination, the flowering and that is meditation. So

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there is one way of doing it, now getting a 15 year Khenpo training or twenty five year Geshe training, maybe not so feasible for us, number one you really can't do it if you don't speak Tibetan. It's not available, not even Hamburg, not quite the same, right? Or London, Geshe Tashi and so forth, wonderful teaches and all of that but will we get a Geshe degree out of that? Not by a long shot.

So is there another avenue? The answer of course there is, and that is (see below):

3) Meditation means investigation based on shamatha to penetrate to direct realization.

(10:41) If you've achieved shamatha and that shouldn't take 25 years, if you have together the causes and conditions, find a super environment, it may not take as long as becoming a Geshe, but if you achieve shamatha you have a mind that is so superbly tuned, that you can use that in a very piercing and effective way to penetrate right through to some experiential realization of impermanence, the nature of dukkha, the nature of non-self, because those entail the very investigation of appearances themselves. Closely, closely, scrutinize appearances and then you see their momentary arising. I have never been persuaded by one of the things the Gelugpa tradition says, never been persuaded that just by doing a lot of analytical inference you will somehow realize subtle impermanence. I am sorry, I just don't believe that. Subtle impermanence by thinking a lot? I don't believe it. That it will have an impact and purify? Maybe for other people but I have total confidence that will not work for me, no way jose, I'll just come to an intellectual conviction.

(11:37) Whereas if you've developed shamatha and you are probing right in with the high frequency and is high resolution, extremely high vividness of awareness, that you get through shamatha and you don't get through debating, and you use that to penetrate into the nature of mental events arising and passing, earth, water, fire and air arising in the body, subtle impermanence, you bet you. I think there is really a good reason to believe that. There is no reference in a Pali Canon and in the whole Theravada tradition of using syllogisms to gain direct realization of subtle impermanence. I don't believe that, right?

(12:08) And then for non-self, can you get a conceptual understanding by way of debating? Yes, you can. Direct realization got to be, got to be by the power of shamatha. So you have that kind of preparation and then you take your shamatha trained mind, your shamatha mind and you apply it to what he is saying right there, that would work. I think it's day and night, I really do, day and night, take the same syllogisms and then engage in the investigations that he is suggesting but do it with the shamatha mind, then that is another route and this was suggested to me years ago by Geshe Rabten Rinpoche. Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche, the geshe approach's for the person who wants the eleven course gourmet meal, but it's not the only way, so we shouldn't give up on ourselves and if anybody else wants to give up on you, wish them well and find another teacher.

Well we cannot really take you seriously, after all you don't speak Tibetan, you are not a geshe you are not a monk, so well why don't you do some pujas? Find another teacher because there are other ways, there are other ways, and I having spent a lot of time with Asians and with Westerners, I've encountered quite number of Westerners, I think, I am just totally persuaded, have authentic renunciation without having spent years and years and years studying, and some who I have known have spent years and years studying with no renunciation at all.

(14:03) So renunciation can come from the inside, it doesn't come just by lots and lots of study and so forth. So there it is, if one has a shamatha base this becomes a lot more accessible and this is what Geshe Rabten told me almost forty years ago, achieve shamatha vipashyana, and he was referring to this type of vipashyana, not so hard.

So back to the text. Now here and again it is subtle, verse 91, and the challenge here is that when we are investigating impermanence, dukkha, non-self, we really are investigating appearing reality, we are investigating appearances and we can get insight by investigating, probing, penetrating into those appearances. Quite true, you really see it, you can observe thoughts and you can see they have no owner, you can see, by observing them, they are not self and have no owner. But when comes to Madyamaka, now we're doing the core healing, it's like the disease has multiple layers and you heal the outer layers, and the person feels a lot better but there still some nucleus, the nucleus of something that will just keep on, in other words – chronic, it will continue giving symptoms forever even though you've healed the outer stuff.

(15:10) This Madhyamaka vipashyana is going for that nucleus, and to eradicate that completely and irreversible that's what vipashyana is for. So this is deep healing that he is talking about. And this means that we have to more than closely exam appearances because this is contrary to appearances, just like in a lucid

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dream, you know you're dreaming, and doggone it, there is Bram in my dream and he still appears to be there from his own side. In other words if I'm in a lucid dream and I say - Well, I'll figure out that you're not inherently existent by just gazing at you is really hard, the appearance of existence from its own side does not vanish, because the appearance itself seems to be from its own side. So therefore you have to use intelligence, prajna, prajñāparamita, transcendent wisdom of the culmination of intelligence.

So here we go finally:

91. If suffering does not arise when the conditions for its opposite have arisen, does it not follow that a “feeling” (a so called feeling) is a false notion created by conceptual fabrication?

(15:58) Of all the sentences in the book, this is one of the least transparent. That if you understand it, then okay, this is really deep in a very few words. “If suffering does not arise when the conditions for its opposite have arisen”, and that is -so you are experiencing something really pleasant, a lovely day, good companionship, some pleasant conversation and there you are, and pleasant feelings are arising then you say, well suffering is not arising, why not? Because the conditions for it to arise have being shoved aside and conditions for pleasure to arise have arisen. If that's the case, and it seems really common sense how is anybody going to refute that? Duh? He said, well if that's the case - does it not follow that “feeling” is a false notion created by conceptual fabrication?

The Sautrantika says - “you just lost your mind”. What you've just said is gibberish! Because that's exactly how a pleasant feeling arises, in dependence upon causes and conditions, and then those causes and conditions change, and other causes and conditions arise and absolutely inherently real suffering arises and then the conditions change and the absolutely real, inherently existent pleasure arises, so what part of this don't you understand, you Madhyamakas? (17:18)

(18:24) And we see that this is about as sensible as classical physics. I mean it just makes really, really good sense. And he says it's completely wrong. Not conventionally. So, Sautrantika says – oh, you mean you are still giving that some credence? That suffering arises in dependence upon causes and conditions which change and then? Yeah we are. But, and the BUT is enormous, big but. Not inherently real.

Have I squeezed that one dry? Then on we move.

He is pointing now to something that, he is saying - of course this is conventionally true, we already knew that, I meannobody doubted that in the first place, but he is pointing now that issue of origination. What he is refuting here of course is not feeling, pleasure or pain, suffering or joy, he is refuting its inherent nature. So we again, as Tsongkhapa highlights so clearly, I have never seen anybody highlight it as clearly as he does, he and his followers, and that is - you must hold in mind, get a clear sense, what's being refuted here. Not feeling, not joy, not sorrow that's stupid, Shantideva is not stupid, what's being refuted? Reified feelings. That is - suffering existing in and of itself, by its own inherent nature. Now crucial element is when we merely, every word is really important here, and that is - if I look around and say - is Betty Rose here? Oh yeah, she is right over there. How do we say in Tibetan, Alan mentioned a phrase in Tibetan which means “without investigating and without analyzing”. Is Betty Rose here or not? Oh, yeah, she is here, she is right over there. So without investigating and analyzing that's a perfectly conventionally true statement in our framework of Betty Rose being here or not, and the answer is yes, and that is end of the conversation.

(19:46) But now we say, Oh, you mean she's really here, ok, exactly good, where is she? Is she in a head, in a chest or torso or legs, is she in a composite, is she in her mind? When we do the anthological analysis - nowhere to be found. There's no sentient being there, there is no Betty Rose, there's no woman, there's not even any molecules from their own side independently objectively. But when we say - but conventionally speaking: is Beth Rose here as in a lucid dream, exactly as in a lucid dream? In a lucid dream you know you are lucid, you know it's a dream and within your dream within that cognitive framework if Patrice says, ‘Alan is Beth Rose here?’ And I am lucid, I say yes she is right over there and I know there is nobody really over there, but you know that I've just give the right answer because you can now go over and shake her hand or give her some chocolate whatever.

(20:55) So the point here is holding that notion, holding the reified entity in mind, if suffering, we've already done the atom and all of that, but now suffering, it's so intimate, so close and so powerfully real when it arises, it's hard to find anything more real to a person who is really suffering, physically or mentally, atoms seem, even in a physical world can fade out. When suffering overwhelms you even the physical world seems to be rather a theory, but suffering man oh man, and if that's not inherent real, so what is this when we grasp

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onto or reify suffering, how does it appear? As self-defining, as having its own contours, its own intrinsic nature existing by itself and what reification does in essence it decontextualizes. If we consider that the nature of suffering and all other phenomena is that they are all dependent related events, pratityasamutpada, that their very existence is one of interdependence with that which is around them. Interdependence upon prior causes and conditions, interdependence in relationship to their own components, their own attributes and so forth, interdependence in terms of the way they are apprehended, conceptual designated, perceived, that they are everything arises within a mesh, within a network, within a system but it's not only a bunch of individual autonomous things coming together, their very existence is mesh like, right? So that is the reality of things.

(22:16) It is not that Tracy doesn't exist but Tracy is arising within this context, this whole Indra's net of causation and conceptual designation, Harry, Miles and everybody else that's here in this room, that's reality, but then when I reify Tracy, first of all I label here, "mata mashe", without investigation, without analysis, is Tracy there? She is right over there, no problem. The Buddha would do that arya-bodhisattavas would do that. Is Tracy over here? Yeah, she is right over there, right? But then when I reify, then I lock her in, with the reification I've now put absolute contours around Tracy and not Tracy, and there's the rest of the universe – that which is not Tracy, and now there are these absolute borders around Tracy, and I have isolated her in space and time, because Tracy is just really there, which means the past is irrelevant and the future is irrelevant because Trace is just really there, like one of those billiard balls that hangs in outer space all by itself absolutely independent and real. So there is the notion of an inherently existent Tracy, decontextualized from time, decontextualized from space, from causality, everything around her and with absolute contours, and she's absolutely bearing her own attributes. And then I look over and say, Yeah, there she is, I just pick it up, I am just a simply witness here, I am not a participant, I am just a passive observer, an objective observer and getting what is absolutely out there from her own side, that's the reified Tracy.

(23:49) So for a person, so for an atom and now Shantideva saying this is exactly the same for feeling. When we reify feeling we decontextualize it, we don't see past, we don't see future, we don't see causation, when don't see its interrelatedness with anything and certainly not with our own conceptual designation, it seems to be absolutely there, in and of itself, and arising if arises at all, it arises in dependence upon absolute real objective cause and conditions.

(24:23) And his point here you might recall remember the when do you call when an egg and a sperm come together and gradually when would you call it a human body? So that point of it didn't exist and now it does, that's exactly the point here. It's one of the primary modes of investigating emptiness is the emptiness of origination, objectively speaking, independent of conceptual designation nothing ever comes into or out of existence, it's either absolutely there or absolutely not there, but there's no way, just pause for a moment - if something is absolutely not there how could it possible become absolutely there? That's kind of a knuckle punch, isn't it? If it's absolutely not there how can you bring a lot of contributing circumstances to make something that's absolutely not there - absolutely be there? Isn't that just totally impossible? And if it's absolutely there, how can you bring other cooperative conditions to make it absolutely not be there? IT'S THERE! So that's it, that's the reified object. You can't do anything with it, it is absolutely there which means there was no point in which it could originate because that would entail something absolutely not being there - absolutely being there. But how would that transition ever take place? It conventionally takes place when we say so, right? Now it's a human body, now it's a galaxy, now it's this, now it's that, but it's the conceptual designation that comes and ok, now! Now it began and now it ended, conceptual designation. It's that whole point of frozen time again for which I will make an extremely brief foray.

(25:53) If there is no observer participant that says now – there's no past and there's no future and there's a frozen universe and it's amazing that they came up with that conclusion with no knowledge of Madhyamaka at all, it really is astonishing, and then for a person like Anton Zeilinger who spent so much of his time in the lab, he was just, it was a jaw dropper for him. That so many, it seems actually identical conclusions can be drawn by monks out there in the debating courtyard getting it conceptually and then all the more importantly, because this is the real jaw dropper, I mean Hillary Button does a fantastic job, conceptually, but that's where it stops, and then he moved on and did, to my mind much less interesting philosophy than during that incredible phase during the nineteen eighties it's just my opinion of course.

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(26:28) But what is really extraordinary here and you do not get to this level without shamatha, is you apply your shamatha mind to that vipashyana investigation and you gain some insight, and you find by that insight you can actually shift the reality you are experiencing. Like Chandrakirti, when he was debating with a Hindu and after a while, yeah it was Chandrakirti, debating with somebody who was a metaphysical realist and they're debating back and forth and I think Chandrakirti just got bored after a while, you know like me debating with materialists, after a while I just yawn and say oh, whatever, and just want to walk away, it's just boring because it's just like, oh man, how long do we have to stay in kindergarten for retarded children. So Chandrakirti is debating with this guy that you know won't give up and finally you remember Chandrakirti comes over to the wall of his little hut right there and he draws, he makes a drawing of a cow and then he milks it. So that was the end of the debate.

(27:45) So it's raising, this is now, what I am about to say is an empirical issue, and that is if you have realized emptiness and that's backed with this fusion of shamatha vipashyana, if you withdraw conceptual designation, that reality vanishes for YOU, it's not at all to say that it vanishes for other people, of course not, but it vanishes for you, because if that phenomenon does not exist independently of conceptual designation and with you being in the center of your mandala, if you withdraw the conceptual designation from your perspective, that phenomena vanishes.

(28:46) Now where is this actually quite evident? Lojong, lojong, mind training, Seven Point Mind Training, Eight verses of training the mind, where they are bringing people like Atisha and so forth are bringing the Madhyamaka right in there to lojong to shift to alter, to purify, to train our attitudes, our ways of viewing reality such that when we encounter adversity, something that we have, what we have actually encountered is a situation. Don't they say that in politics, Lady and Gentlemen we have a situation. It's probably not a good one, They are probably not going to say from now on we are going to hold Christmas twice a year. And they say it's a situation, they are preparing you to conceptually designate it as a catastrophe, it's an adversity, it's something we didn't want, right. So the conceptual designation comes out, there is some situation, some circumstance and then we conceptually designated it as this is awful, this is terrible, and then the course emotions arise together with that, and then now we have to deal with major adversity. All the sadness, greed, anger, hatred and so forth that may arise. And Lojong is saying go back to the situation, go back to the basis of designation before you designated it as adversity, catastrophe, miserable, awful, horrible, great misfortune, go back to the situation, remove the conceptual designation, and give it a new designation.

(30:17) This is so helpful for my practice, it helped me develop renunciation, this is a great boon, this helped me develop greater compassion, this gives me greater faith in following the path, greater inspiration to find genuine happiness, this is preparing me well for death and so forth.

(30:29) And now the adversity is gone for you, other people may be commiserating for you – oh so terrible, I heard about what happened to you, I am so sorry. Feel sorry if you like but for me it is not an adversity, I decided otherwise because I saw that it was not inherently existent, from its own side it was not already an adversity that simply landed on my lap like a poisonous snake, but the poisonous snake of adversity was something I designated and having seen the emptiness of adversity I withdrew the designation and I designated in a way more favorable, more fruitful and more beneficial, that is Madhyamika in action, that is where the rubber hits the road. That can transform your life, and that is what Lojong is about, and so there it is, for you it disappears, one thing disappears and then if you then re-designate it - this is not adversity for me, this is a boon for the cultivation of deeper compassion that's what it is for you, because you've designated now the same basis of designation is now designated in a different way which means you've shifted not only your perspective but you shifted the reality you are experiencing. Now keep on doing that and you can shift yourself right over into Sukhavati, you know that can be your neighborhood, Dewachen, a pure land, it'll probably take a few incremental steps in between, so there is.

(32:03) So he is getting at something this one short sentence very, very deep, and that is - if this is the case, that cause and conditions can shift, then what happens is when they shift enough then the designation of suffering is removed, and then the designation of this is really nice is imputed, and now you are experiencing pleasure. But it takes the conceptual designation for that shift to take place and if the conceptual designation isn't there, it's not there already objectively, which means therefore - does it not follow that a so called feeling - that which we verbalized, that which we conceptualized as feeling - is a false notion, false in the sense of misleading, we didn't just discover it, we didn't just get it, we co-created it and not out of the blue,

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this is why it's co-creation, observer participant. We didn't sit in the dark imagining- I think I am happy. Something arose in dependence upon which we conceptually designated pleasurable, un-pleasurable and so forth so it is not a false that is to say misleading notion, created by conceptual fabrication, conceptual designation, so he's evoking here the role of the observer participant and saying without that you do not have any inherently existent suffering or joy. So that is 91. We have to do one more verse at least one or two.

92. Therefore, this analysis is created as an antidote to that false notion. For the meditative stabilizations that arise from the field of investigations are the food of contemplatives.

(33:28) Therefore, this analysis is created as an antidote to that false notion, this analysis is created as an antidote to reification; this is deep medicine, this is going to the very nucleus of the disease and nuking it.

For the meditative stabilizations, that is dhyana. For the dhyana that arise from the field of investigations are the food of contemplatives. So I checked this out, read His Holiness' commentary and what it is, and it's explicitly making the point that I made earlier based upon this work is - with this union of shamatha vipashyana, those two, when you are engaging in the subtle investigation super powered with shamatha, so it's a shamatha vipashyana investigation, then through this there arises some realization of the emptiness of feelings, emptiness of matter, emptiness of physical world and so forth in this case emptiness of feelings and in that realization, that shamatha vipashyana realization of emptiness, there arises an exceptional pliancy, buoyancy, suppleness that same term that we referred to early to shamatha (Alan mentioned the name of it in Tibetan) that and the shamatha of just having that extremely healthy mind but now another whole dimension, another whole order of magnitude of pliancy, suppleness, buoyancy arises from the union of shamatha vipashyana, it's off the charts it's another whole order of magnitude of it and this is a pliancy, something that just feels wonderfully good, it is a type of nourishment which you are actually being nourished now by a sense of wellbeing that is coming from your dhyana, the fusion of shamatha vipashyana so you are getting nourished by that, right, of course what you are being nourished by is by genuine happiness. Ola so, one more verse. Oh this is a big one though, we are going to try to do all the rest tomorrow, that's enough for today. The rest has to do with the origination, it's quite a deep analysis, and it's about 8 verses, so we will finish this section tomorrow, but just as a preview, the remaining section of this analysis of feelings goes right into a very detailed ontological investigation, right into the mode of being, of how is it the feelings arise. We say in Buddhist Psychology, all over the place – feeling arises in dependence upon contact – and what he is doing there is he is deconstructing contact, but it's a very precise investigation. And it really struck me, to make sure I pass on something authentic that this calls for a really sharp scalpel. This is micro surgery. To get in there, the middle way here is very slender, right. Because what he is doing is he is coming to the conclusion – that in fact contact, real contact of a real object and a real subject, or even of two real objects – never happens. Two independent inherently existent material phenomena never actually touch, let alone immaterial consciousness actually touching something physical. And all the materialists will go along with that. That's why they say there can be no mental causality if mind is not physical because how can something that is not physical possibly influence the physical? And of course that's because they are reifying everything and the answer is – it can't. So therefore they are just bogged down in mechanistic materialism which is saturated by reification. And it seems to work with a few little bits of collateral damage. So he is denying that any inherently real contact takes place amongst molecules, any inherently real contact takes place between your sensory organs, and any object. And then he is looking for a subject and not finding any inherently real subject as an experiencer. So right back to that triad that we looked at with John Wheeler and all of that information, there's one who is informed, there is the process the flow of information and that about which you are being informed, right? And moreover, if you take out any one of those, just take the tweezers, just take it out, the other two do not remain. Oddly enough you kill just one of them and the other two just vanish. Which means they COULD NOT possibly have been inherently existent. If by taking something else out – they vanish, but you didn't touch them! How could you destroy them if you didn't even touch them? They can't possibly be inherently existent if they can disappear by touching something else. Right? So that, as for information, so for feeling, if there is nothing out there that is inherently real that you are feeling, that you are contacting, that is arousing the feeling, if there is nothing inherently there, then there can't possibly arise an inherently existent feeling, arising in dependence upon something that isn't there. And likewise, if there isn't an inherently existent feeling, there can't possibly be an inherently existent feeler, one who experiences

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feeling. So take out any one of those three, an inherent agent or feeler or experiencer of feelings, if that is not there, there is no possible way there can be inherently existent feelings. Cause it can't be orphaned. A feeling saying – somebody please feel me. Where did you go? I am lost. So he is tying this in. It is really quite extraordinary. Because this is based upon the prior insight into the emptiness of physical phenomena, something you are actually contacting physically, that being empty – then no really existing feeling can arise in contact with something that isn't really there. So those three, the felt – that which you are feeling, the tactile sensations, the tactile sensations in your head when you have a migraine, the tactile sensations in your foot when you have an injured foot, the tactile sensations, right, and in response to how you are experiencing those tactile sensations, it hurts! What hurts? The tactile sensations hurt. And that is the information being transmitted, the tactile sensations coming up, but what's getting really across? My foot hurts, my back hurts, my something hurts, and so there is the transmission and it's the feeling, and there is a sense, a reification, I am the victim here, I am the one suffering, I need some help, I am really hurting here, I am real, and I am in pain. We have three fists. Take away any one of those the other two fists vanish into thin air, which means they never existed in the first place, not inherently. Very powerful stuff. So, to ask that we go from a 40 minute talk and now meditate on emptiness, maybe you can, maybe the words are clear enough, maybe Shantideva there is a blessing there, maybe you can, and maybe you can't, in which case you may feel, oh I am not keeping up. I tried to meditate on it and I couldn't, because by gum when I feel pain, it feels just about as real as anything. And that just means that this has to be taken step by step. So if you have already achieved Shamatha, that step will be much faster, not achieved Shamatha then what I would say now as we go to the meditation, is if you wish, your choice, let the meditation be a time for some reflection, some examination, some investigation, that is in that mid phase, having heard the teaching – some conceptual understanding. Then okay, then what you do is you take that conceptual understanding say from a book, right and then you apply that to actual feelings you are feeling. This is my feeling, I didn't get that from Buddhism. Then you take those teachings and you apply it to your feelings and you start checking – do those teachings there, which may be make conceptual sense, are they relevant to my experience here? And you start doing investigation, sharpening the mind, but you are sharpening on a wet stone of your own experience, and not just clapping your hands with other people. Investigating, putting to the test, because if this is true, I mean it is absolutely radical, really it just radically changes everything, not only is it a conceptual idea like you know quantum cosmology, a very cool idea, but your whole way of viewing reality, and the whole malleability, I mean you are really virtually stepping into a lucid dream during the waking state, that reality should become that, if you really gain the realization it really would imply that you can start modifying physical reality here with pretty much the same degree of freedom, as you could change a lucid dream, now if that's true, man! That really changes everything. So this will not be an easily won truth, Shamatha's not easily won but if you have that it will be a tremendous advantage, in the meantime just take it where you are, reflect upon it, investigate, and if at some time you feel that I have gone as far as I can right now, maybe I need to learn a bit more, whatever, then release it and then go back to your experience. Go back to the first four weeks here, attending closely to the feelings, the body, for example, and continue there. Okay, let's have one session.

Meditation:

(44:21) Bearing in mind the words that the mind settle in meditating equipoise comes to know reality as it is, settle your body, speech and mind in equipoise and for a little while calm the conceptual turbulence of the mind with mindfulness of breathing.

(47:07) Now let the light of your awareness clearly illuminate the space of your body, this field of tactile sensations. With discerning mindfulness note earth, water, fire and air. In Tibetan these sensations are called "recha" that which is contacted, so note clearly the nature of which is contacted when you direct tactile perception to the tactile field and see what arises, what appears.

(49:45) And when the mind is very quiet, conceptually uncluttered, unelaborated you may be able to nakedly perceive these tactile sensations simply as tactile sensations - having no feelings, devoid of feeling not by their own nature - pleasant or unpleasant, earth is not pleasant, water is not pleasant it's just earth and water.

(51:05) These are the appearances that we conceptually and validly, designate as the emergences of earth, water, fire and air in the domain of space, so far so good. But do the sensations call themselves by those names? Are they self-defining, waiting to be passively discovered and superficially labeled that are already

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bearing their own intrinsic identity, is that true or false? Examine closely in this first person perspective from the inside out, on your body where you live.

(53:17) But of course there is more in the space of the body than tactile sensations, that which we contact, feelings also arise, we experience those sensations - pleasurable, un-pleasurable and neutral. So before we engage in an anthropological analysis - seeing if you can view the ultimate nature, the absence of inherent nature of these feelings, let's closely apply mindfulness simply to the feelings as feelings so we get a clear sense, a clear understanding, experiential of what's the relative nature, the phenomena for which we'll seek their ultimate nature. Examine closely the feelings that arise in the body. Are they by nature static or in flux, intrinsic pleasurable or un-pleasurable? Do they intrinsically have an owner or not? This is simply establishing their conventional nature let's examine this first, by the close application of mindfulness to feelings.

(56:00) Identify feelings arising in the body whatever is most obvious to you be it pleasant or unpleasant, located it, find your specimen. If you've clearly identified what part of the body it's located in, if you see clearly how large a space does it occupy, once you've set your sights on something that you know to be a feeling, as if you are putting it into a microscope, a specimen between two glass slides, and then peer through the microscope of your samadhi, and as you do so, to the best of your ability, withhold any conceptual designation at all, any label, any thought - just observe. What do you see through the lens of samadhi as you examine closely the very appearance of the feeling that you've located? Observe very closely and see what you see.

(59:10) Does your withholding of the conceptual designation have any impact on what you are experiencing when you sharply focus your attention in that pleasurable or un-pleasurable location?

(1:00:10) Now experiment, this is your laboratory and the subtle investigation is the feelings arising within the body, within this space, go back to that same location with some type of feeling that is manifesting and then very deliberately label it. Is it unpleasant, call it unpleasant? You can elaborate - "I wish this would go away, this is tiring me out, I really don't like this, this is such a drag, this really doesn't feel good at all". Give yourself a script and see if you can deliberately reify, grasp onto it as really absolutely there from its own side.

(1:01:40) And now very deliberately utterly withdraw the conceptual designation together with the reification, observe now but with the quietest mind that you can muster, intensely clear, highly focused, stable, interested but utterly quiet and as free of conceptual designation as possible, and see what you see, does this alter your experience of that location within the body?

(1:02:55) Hand in hand with withdrawing the conceptual designation, do your very best to withdraw the aversion, the sense of not liking, wanting it to go away, see if you can release that, it's subjective, it's coming from your own side, so see if you can withhold that as well, the subjective response of aversion.

(1:06:23) When some clarity arises, some insight, for a little while stop seeking, stop investigating and simply rest in the flow of knowing, sustain that insight, let it seep in, this is your facsimile of the union of shamatha and vipashyana.

Teaching pt2:

Summary:

By withdrawing conceptual designation, reification is also withdrawn, yet it is possible to conceptually designate without reification. No reification means no kleshas, and no kleshas mean no suffering.

Alan's teachings:

(1:08:40) Tsongkhapa makes a very subtle and I think a very brilliant point in drawing a sharp distinction between simply withdrawing the reification, withdrawing the conceptual designation and then withdrawing the reification and in so doing, that if you withdraw the designation, you have withdrawn the reification, let's look it piece by piece. It's possible to withdraw reification without withdrawing conceptual designation, as in a lucid dream, in a lucid dream knowing perfectly well this is a dream. If Elizabeth asks: - is Danny here? And I am lucid, I say - yes he is right over there. I designated it. But I am maintaining my lucidity so when I point my finger over - he is right over there, I know there is nobody really over there from his own side, I know that. I know there's no Elizabeth, I know there is no Alan Wallace but within this context that was a reasonable question, within this context - is Danny here? Yes, he is right over there, case closed. But I know right there where I am pointing my finger and I say he is right over there, there's no one there, not from his own side! No one there, not right there where I am pointing my finger, not there. And so is possible to make the conceptual designation without reification that's a crucial point because some people don't get that. They figure that if

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you are conceptually designating that is already delusional. Wrong! Then the Buddha could never speak because as soon as he speaks, Oh, hello Ananda, Oh, I am sorry. As if he just reified Ananda by recognizing Ananda as Ananda, right? So that's not true. You can reify, you can withdraw, withhold reification without necessarily having to withdraw conceptual designation, as in a lucid dream, right? Or you can withdraw both and that is simply by withdrawing conceptual designation then you withdraw the reification of that conceptual designation.

(1:11) You can do that and the point I was about to make there is that in withdrawing the conceptual designation, withdrawing that grasping because even conceptual designation itself is a type of benign subtle grasping - oh, that's Jerry over there – that's grasping. Subject - Object duality, he is over yonder and I am over here, in a lucid dream but it is still a kind of grasping, it's not delusional but nevertheless it is a kind of grasping. So one can withdraw the reification and the conceptual grasping, conceptual designation and in so doing you might find some real respite from suffering and from mental afflictions, because this is a really core theme, it's incredibly strong, and I think it is true that all mental afflictions, this is Madhyamaka, all mental afflictions arise out of the reification of whatever you are attending to, if there is no reification, it's really strong statement, enormously strong – that if you don't reify, no mental afflictions will arise, if you do not grasp onto existence - no mental afflictions will arise. Which then define clearly then mental afflictions have to be rooted in delusion because if there is no delusion, mental afflictions don't arise, that's the assertion, that is an empirical claim. It is really strong one, right?

(1:12:20) So by withdrawing, holding in abeyance, holding back that tendency like a contagious disease or something that spreads, the reification, then the mental afflictions that would arise in dependence upon that reification don't arise. I am going to finally say now what's Tsongkhapa's point - and that is to withhold reification so that the mental afflictions that arise from, are derivative of reification, don't arise. And since the mental afflictions aren't arising - the suffering that they gave rise to doesn't happen, then you feel good, you feel better because you've gotten down there to the root, you withheld the root. So there is one possibility, you really can do that, but he said doing that and actually realizing that that which you are reifying actually does not exist, those are two different things, subtle distinction. One is more like a truce, it's a truce, you just stop fighting but all you need is for Christians day or holidays to pass then nothing is resolved, all the problems that gave rise to the war in the first place, I am referring of course to 1914 World War 1, look like really peace had broken out they were playing soccer and singing Christians carols together, it look like jolly good - that was too short war until the circumstances changed and then of course nothing had been resolved at all, and all the mental afflictions come out again and they fought for another four years. And so similarly in samsara we can temporarily withdraw the conceptual designation, the reification, the mental afflictions that arise in dependence upon, don't arise and if you feel jolly – good, hallelujah, and that I think is what they come up with before the Buddha. Because when you go into deep samadhi you go into the form real you go into the formless real, man, oh man, conceptual designation that's gone so dormant you can't even find it, and then the reified objects, when you are resting in the absorption of nothingness, what are you going to reify? Or infinite space, infinite consciousness, man there's not much to hold onto there so no wonder that these brilliant, contemplatives prior to the Buddha, they'd go into the state where conceptual designation is profoundly withdraw and gone into the deep freeze, really out of sight, and they can stay there almost like timelessly it seems like, no wonder they thought that was "moksha" right? Emptiness, freedom of suffering, no mental afflictions arising at all they can see, but then you of course eventually come out of Samadhi and then you find, yeah, they were in deep freeze and now Neanderthal man has come out, it's melted down and he is beating the crap out of you all over again. So that was the point the mere of holding reification doesn't actually yield insight into the sheer non-existence of anything inherently existent. You've just subdued the symptoms and you have not touched the underlying cause. So this will be a really brief foray into what I discussed yesterday.

(1:15:20) But when I spoke of drugs having all this side effects, Patrice very rightly pointed out, it's an important point - that is that some of those side effects maybe be one out of thousand, you think well, that is a pretty good averages, I take this drug, it alleviates my anxiety and I got one chance out of a thousand of feeling suicidal, and maybe blowing my brains out, well I'd really like the anxiety to go, and that seems like pretty good odds, one out of a thousand not bad, right? If that and the other night, and other, night, other

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night if that was and congratulations you've taken this pill and this is now healing your anxiety, I'd take the pill. One chance out of a thousand I would commit suicide, nine hundred and ninety nine chances that I actually can get healed from anxiety, I think I will take that pill, those are odds I can live with. But what if the odds of having taken the pill are zero that you actually going to heal anything at all? I mean no chance because all you're doing is suppressing symptoms? And now consider that there is not just one terrible side effect there may be forty, and consider you are not taking the pill once, but maybe for years on end – you've got yourself a revolver with a thousand cylinders in it, and you've got forty bullets and you are pulling the trigger once a day for months and years on end thinking – I'm going to be lucky, I'm going to be ...uh, not lucky. The odds aren't that great if you've got forty bullets in the gun and a thousand chambers but you are pulling it again and again and it especially sucks when you know that even when you don't blow your brain out you are not even moving one inch towards healing anything. I don't want that revolver. Is that fair? I think that's fair because it's an important point, it wasn't like one out of two people feel suicidal if they take that drug, that would be very misleading, small percentage but I think it's absolutely certain that taking these psycho pharmaceutical drugs do not heal anything and they do have side effects, and if you have to take them year after year for years, which is the wet dream of the pharmaceutical company - that you are going to have to take it for the rest of your life, then the chances of being unlucky, that the wrong chamber comes up, get higher and higher as time goes by. So all this is about, I am going to drop that, but the point here is that this is an issue of healing, not suppressing symptoms, and it's healing in deeper, deeper levels, and this now, now we're going to the final cure, that's how deep this is, that it's not just this profound technology of samadhi to so profoundly withdraw conceptual designation that physical pain vanishes, mental pain vanishes in the form realm there is no suffering, no explicit suffering, no blatant suffering at all in the form realm for as long as you stay there no physical suffering, no mental suffering whatsoever so just hang out there as much long as you can, right? And there is no bad cylinder in that gun, you know, it is just one good day after another but eventually the karma just fizzles away and you are back where you are.

(1:18:58) So this is actually healing, and gosh if there's a way, because hardly anybody nowadays believes that there's a way to actually get to the root of suffering and eradicate it from its sources that it never arises again, hardly anybody believes that. But this is a response to the unasked question - how do you get to the root of suffering and cut it so that it never arises again? Even if it arises in the body, arises like a mirage so it doesn't get to you, doesn't get you in a grip, you are lucid. This is the medicine, this is the medicine for completely, irreversibly and from the very root, knowing reality and by that knowing cut the root of suffering from its very source so that it never arises again.

(1:19:50) I was in the temple in Dharmasala years ago, and I think it was to receive teachings, and there was a book I think it was my book, an old, old book on Bodhiaryavachara, Tibetan version, book form, and I had my jola, my shoulder bag and it was next to a pillar, and it was leaning up there, next to the pillar inside my jola, and I was listening to whatever the teachings were, and some Tibetan pointed to the jola and said – what's in your jola? I pulled out this Bodhiaryavachara, and he said – oh, take it off the ground. He was right. If it is that precious, take it off the ground, put it in a high place, this is the medicine of medicines, even the book. Such reverence, we don't find that very frequently on this planet, but it's very precious, it's authentic. Back to basics.

Answering a question on keeping the eyes open during meditation, Alan makes important points.

In terms of keeping the eyes open. It's a good idea, and remember, when His Holiness was asked it on one occasion, the question was posed - If you are doing one of these practices where the instructions are keeping your eyes open, and you are sitting in meditation and you find that your eyes just are really focused and you are doing the meditation and you find that over the course of time, you find your eyes just naturally close, should you make a real point of opening the eyes? His response was – oh no, just let them stay closed. So over all, this I find so often, this is what I love about Tibetan Buddhism, there are the guidelines, then there is some malleability. Monks should not eat after noon – after midday, and nuns too, it's a vow, but when I was in the monastery in Switzerland and I was a disciplinarian, man I knew how to chew people out! I know how to set an example so everyone else would feel guilty if they are not being as good as I am, I am good at that, I know how to do that, just make people feel as guilty as hell. So I was setting the standard, strict monk, following all the 253 precepts, thank you very much! And Geshe Rabten saw all the monks not eating in the evening and he said – okay now cool it! You are all getting uptight, stressed out, irritable, all of you start

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eating in the evening, and that goes for you too, Wallace. So there is the rule, and then there is wisdom. Any dope can memorize the rule, any robot can follow a program, and then a person with wisdom knows when to follow it straight and when not to. And so back to the question, when the eyes are open, that's the idea, but if it screws up your practice, if you are not sleeping so well, if you are getting insomnia, if you are having gnawing hunger in the evening from not eating, how is that supposed to be good for your practice when it is clearly not good for your practice? So then for the sake of your practice you take a bit of food because that's what your body needs. So, for this here, keeping your eyes open, yes, that's better, but on the other hand if you do find it distracting, the conflation with mental appearances and consciousness and so forth, then one easy segue into it is keep your eyes open but be in the dark. Then there is not much competition, eyes wide open, don't see anything. Almost as good as having your eyes closed, so in the dark or in a very dimly lit room, make sure there is nothing interesting or any strong colors, and let alone lights, in your field of vision, that's a nice way to do it. So moving gently. Another way is let your eyes be hooded, a little bit of light comes in from the bottom so there is not much distraction. So moving step by step.

In answer to a second question which in summary is: what criteria can I use to determine whether I should receive a Vajrayana empowerment and do the practice?

I have to tell a story, during that first year or so, maybe the second year at most after I'd moved to Dharmasala, I am studying the Lamrim, studying Bodhiaryavachara, getting a real foundation, and then hearing, because Geshe Nawang Dhargay would spice it up, he was a truly gifted teacher, a fine scholar, he knew how to teach, he loved teaching and he loved his disciples. So that is a perfect dharma storm, rain of dharma. But when he was teaching straight Lamrim, he would bring a bit of Vajrayana here, a glimmer there, little sneak previews of coming attractions. The more I heard about Vajrayana, the more daunted I was. I at least had the understanding, man am I in kindergarten! I can see oh man, these are high peaks here and I knew I was way down in the foothills, if that high. And so I went to him one day and said—man I know Vajrayana is really profound, I know I'm not ready for that, to receive a highest yoga tantra empowerment? Man I know I am just not qualified. He said, very good insight, I am going to arrange for you now to have Vajrasattva empowerment by His Holiness. What? I thought we'd just agreed I am totally kindergarten and you just told me to go to graduate school. So he could see that I actually knew where I was in the practice, I had no pretense thinking—oh I am somebody special, I am a tantrika, give me a bone to put through my hair, and where is my consort? So he knew I was not delusional, he knew that I had some faith, some basic understanding and he knew that I was qualified, he must have. And he said, okay, good place to start, we are going to sow some seeds now. So if you have conceptual understanding of the foundations, basics—renunciation, bodhichitta, some conceptual understanding of emptiness, teachings in buddhanature, if you have a good connection with the lama, then have the confidence. We are not talking about blind faith here at all, but confidence. When I was studying physics, it's different but similar, when I was studying physics at Amherst in 1984, I had a lot of confidence in things I didn't yet understand, relativity theory, quantum mechanics, advanced calculus and so forth and so on, I didn't understand it, I had never done the experiments, I did not KNOW, but this is a pretty impressive tradition. 400 years of physics, I think it's really, for myself, I think that it deserves a lot of respect. That's why I am citing the Hubble Telescope and this and this, because I think they've earned that respect, that's my perspective. I don't expect Tibetans would believe it just because I've said it, so likewise, when you have that, when you've moved in well enough, when it's earned your respect, and if you would really like to, that is a crucial point, if you don't want to, when I was there in Wisconsin, 1978, I'd received a number of empowerments already and commitments that go along with them, lifelong commitments that I am still keeping, these marvelous Lamas were then giving more higher Tantra empowerments, and each one would have its commitments, and I went to Geshe Rabten, my teacher, he was there, I was translating for him as well as other Rinpoches, I was translating 8 hours a day, and I went to Geshe Rabten, and I said, Geshe-la, I think I have all the empowerments I can handle right now, of what I would like to do, and I know this is a great Lama and I know these are incredibly profound teachings and I know that I might receive them, and I know I am the only interpreter here, and I said, I really don't want to get the empowerment, because I don't want to try to take on another empowerment, I've got my hands full already, of these tantric empowerments for which I am not qualified anyway. I am sowing seeds here, so I would like your permission to translate for the Lamas, and not receive the empowerment. He said okay, fair enough. And I am so happy I made that decision. So choose carefully, if you go for an empowerment see if

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there is a commitment or not, and if there is a commitment, I would suggest that, and this is just friendly advice, not authoritative, make sure that it's a practice you would really like to do, that you would really like to be sowing the seeds for even if the practice doesn't mature for another 20 years, but you feel you will enjoy the process, it is a process you will embrace, it is meaningful, and you would like to do it, and if you don't feel that, then I would say don't take the empowerment. And I don't care who the lama is, or what the empowerment is, I would say don't do it. Because very quickly you will find – oh man, I 've got to do that commitment and I'm so tired, it's been a really long day, aw man, okay, sigh, bla bla bla, good I have finished my commitment. And that's it, as if you are flipping a bird to all the Buddhas. Does that satisfy you? You satisfied now? I went bla bla bla, I did my oral recitation, are you satisfied? That is low grade, that is like cheap, I can't imagine that's what the Lamas had in mind. Fulfilling a commitment mindlessly, reciting some sadhana that we don't want to do, so let's avoid that.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Revised by Cheri Langston

Final edition by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Posted by Alma Ayon

69 Equanimity (2)

04 Oct 2012

Teachings:

Summary:

In the Mahayana, equanimity is a sense of evenness or equality between self and other. In order to practice guru yoga where there is non-duality between your own mind and the guru's mind, pure vision for both self and guru is needed.

Alan's comments:

So yesterday we turned our attention to the cultivation of equanimity in the sense of imperturbability or just an emotional balance, a calm, a cool evenness of mind that doesn't fluctuate in an exaggerated or unhealthy way emotionally, or of course in terms of craving and hostility. And today we'll turn to the other sides, the other aspects or face or facet of equanimity, same term is used but with very different meaning, same term *upecha* in Sanskrit or *tang nyom* in Tibetan and that is – this evenness, this sense of evenness, evenness in terms of prioritization of evaluation, a sense of evenness between self and other as a direct antidote here as one embarks on the Bodhisattva Way of Life, cultivating bodhichitta the very first step, and in fact the first discursive meditation I was ever taught by Geshe Rabten he said: almost all your problems rise from having an uneven attitude towards others, so develop evenness, start now. I am still working on it.

So the “*tang nyom*”, as the foundation, the evenness, the quality itself and others, the foundation for developing bodhichitta which is the foundation for everything that follows, Vajrayana, Mahayana Dozgcen and so forth, so that's where we'll turn our attention today.

Now a number of you who have been trained in Vajrayana then you are very well aware of the enormous importance of authentic guru yoga, I've addressed this a little bit in the past but you're aware also that the core of that practice is really having a sense, as much you possible can, a sense of the non-duality of your own mind with that of your guru's mind. So once again it becomes quite obvious - if you're still reifying your own mind as being a little grungy garbage pit, and that's my mind whereas the guru's mind is pure and celestial and now I want to merge the two minds, does anything strike you as a bit odd there? Like - please let the garbage dump of my mind merge with the pure land of your mind and don't mind all the trash that I bring to yours? It doesn't really make any sense, does it? So this is why the pure vision really has to be equal. And you're not practicing Vajrayana guru if you are still reifying yourself as a cruddy little sentient being with a crappy mind, you have to un-reify that.

So there it is, when practiced authentically then practice is enormously transformative and profound, profound because it is profoundly transformative.

So I thought this morning I'd like to invite, since I definitely don't want you to merge your mind with mine, I mean I don't that that would be a great service on my part, I already have so many problems and I have his problems too. I want to protect you from my mind. But so since that's not really a very reasonable option I

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thought I would invite in a guest, a special guest star as they say in the entertainment industry, a person with whom you might be very happy to merge your mind with his.

So the guest lecture this morning, the guest meditative guide will be Shantideva. I am inviting him here in person and what I'll be doing is reading

verses 90 through 119, meditation chapter from - A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life, it is his meditation, he's inviting us to join him in his own meditation, laying the foundation to bodhichitta. Please find a comfortable position.

Meditation:

As always let's begin by settling the body, speech and mind in its natural state, make our own minds suitable vessels, to hold and be transformed by the teachings on equanimity, the evenness, the equality of self and others.

And let's now let Shantideva guide us in this practice, so clearly he speaks from his own experience. So we will begin with verse 90.

90. One should first earnestly meditate on the equality of oneself and others in this way - all equally experience suffering and happiness, and I must protect them as I do myself.

91. Just as the body, which has many parts owing to its divisions into arms and so forth should be protected as a whole, so should this entire world, which is differentiated and yet has the nature of the same suffering and happiness.

92. Although my suffering does not cause pain in others bodies, nevertheless that suffering is mine and is difficult to bear because of my attachment to myself.

Or an alternative translation - even though my agony does not hurt anyone else's body, that suffering of mine is unbearable because I cling to as mine, as my own.

93. Likewise, although I myself do not feel the suffering of another person, that suffering belongs to that person and is difficult for him to bear because of his attachment to himself.

94. I should eliminate the suffering of others because it is suffering, just like my own suffering. I should take care of others because they are sentient beings, just as I am a sentient being.

95. When happiness is equally dear to others and myself, then what is so special about me that I strive after happiness for myself alone?

96. When fear and suffering are equally abhorrent to others and myself, then what is so especial about me that I protect myself but not others?

97. If I do not protect them because I am not afflicted by their suffering, why do I protect my body from the suffering of a future body, which is not my pain?

Or a variation of translation - then why do I guard myself, or guard against future suffering when it does not harm me now?

A tiny commentary - how other is other? If we draw a strong line between ourselves and others then shouldn't we draw an equally strong line between ourselves now and ourselves in the future let alone future lives? The demarcation between self and other in space and time is merely a convention with no inherent existence of its own.

Regarding the sense of our own personal identity in the future, Shantideva continues.

98. The assumption that "it is the same me even then" is false; because it is one person who has died and quite another who is born.

99. If one thinks that suffering that belongs to someone else is to be warded off by that person himself, then why does the hand protect the foot when the pain of the foot does not belong to the hand?

100. If one argues that even though it is inappropriate, it happens because of grasping onto a self, our response is - with all one's might, one should avoid that which is inappropriate, whether it belongs to oneself or to another. [In other words avoid reification, avoid this dualistic grasping or delusional grasping wherever it may crop up].

101. The continuum of consciousness like a series, and the aggregation of constituents like an army and the like, are unreal [which is to say non- inherently existent, they are unreal]. Since one who experiences suffering does not exist, to whom will that suffering belong?

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Of course he is referring once again to inherent existence, since one who experiences suffering does not exist, to whom will that suffering belong?

102. All sufferings are without an owner, because they are not different. They should be warded off simply because they are suffering. Why is any restriction made in this case?

103. Why should suffering be prevented? Because everyone agrees, if it must be warded off, then all of it must be warded off and if not, then this goes for oneself as it does for everyone else.

Shantideva raises the qualm:

104. [Qualm:] Much suffering comes from compassion, so why should one force it to arise?

A brief commentary - When we profoundly care about others then it seems that the magnitude of our own suffering increases, why go there? And his response -

[Response:] After seeing the suffering of the world, how can this suffering from compassion be considered great?

105. If the suffering of many disappears because of the suffering of one, then a compassionate person should induce that suffering for his own sake and for the sake of others.

106 Therefore, Supushpa-chandra, although knowing the king's animosity, did not avoid his own suffering as a sacrifice for many people in misery.

107. Thus, those whose mind-streams are cultivated in meditation and who equally, accept the suffering of others, dive into the Avici hell like swans into a pool of lotuses.

108. They become oceans of joy when sentient beings are liberated. Have they not found fulfillment? What is the use of sterile liberation? [which is to say liberation for yourself alone.]

109. Thus, although working for the benefit of others, there is neither conceit nor dismay; and on account of the thirst for the single goal of benefiting others, there is no desire for the result of the maturation of one's own karma.

110. Therefore, to the extent that I protect myself from disparagement, so shall I generate a spirit of protection and a spirit of compassion toward others.

111. Due to the habituation, there is a sense that "I" exists in the drops of blood and semen that belong to others, [of course namely one's parents] even though the being in question does not exist.

Even though that is, there is no inherently existent self here.

112. Why do I not also consider another's body as myself in the same way, since the otherness of my own body is not difficult to determine?

Short commentary –If there is nothing in our own body that is inherently I or mine, but rather simply comes through habituation of identifying with our own body, then why not extend this to the bodies of others in exactly the same way. Neither the others body nor our own body is intrinsically mine or intrinsically other.

113. Acknowledging one-self as fault-ridden and others as oceans of virtue, one should contemplate renouncing one's own self-identity and accepting others.

Or varying in translation - having recognized oneself as faulty and others as oceans of virtues one should practice discarding self-grasping and accepting others.

114. Just as the hands and the like are cherished because they are members of the body, why are embodied beings not cherished in the same way, for they are members of the world?

115. Just as the notion of a self with regard to one's own body, which has no personal existence, is due to habituation, will the identity of one's self with others not arise out of habituation in the same way?

116. Although working for the benefit of others in this way, there is neither conceit nor dismay. Even upon feeding oneself, expectation of reward does not arise.

117. Therefore, just as you wish to protect yourself from pain, grief and the like, so may you cultivate a spirit of protection and a spirit of compassion toward the world.

118. Therefore the protector Avalokita empowered his own name to remove even one's fear arising from timidity in front of an audience.

119. One should not turn away from difficulty, since owing to the power of habituation, one may have no pleasure in the absence of something that one previously feared to hear mentioned.

Now simply let your awareness rest in its own space and be still.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Revised by Cheri Langston.

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Posted by Alma Ayon

70 Mindfulness of feelings (4)

04 Oct 2012

Teaching pt1:

Note for the readers:

We have not transcribed the interval between 00 to 5:18 where Alan is talking with the students about the sequence of the retreat for the next days.

(5:18) Now let's see if we can conclude this very, very dense, very, very sharp and very challenging section on the close application of mindfulness of feelings, by cutting right through to the emptiness of the inherent nature of feelings, so he is not dealing so explicitly with impermanence and all of that, not here. This is now going to the origins of feelings and I must say there is just a very beautiful very smooth transition, a seamlessness between the teachings of the Buddha on the Satipatthana Sutra in a Pali Canon, straight kind of Sharavakayana teachings where metaphysical realism isn't frequently explicitly challenged, that there's a real world out there and that the mind is real and the feelings and the five skandhas are real, it does come up, teachings on emptiness are there, but they're not really highlighted, you have to wait for the Perfection of Wisdom, the Madhyamaka and so forth and then that really gets challenged.

(7:19) But even there in that context where the central theme is impermanence, the nature of dukkha, the nature of not-self, even there of course, and I think you recall this clearly, that in the close application of mindfulness to body, feelings and so forth there is always for every single one this emphasis on - examine the factors of origination. And then you look into phenomena itself, permanent, impermanent, the three marks and then factors of dissolution. Now in the Satipatthana Sutra there's no suggestion that - since it originates therefore is not really there at all, since it originates it's pratityasamutpada - it's arising in dependence upon impersonal causes and conditions, and not including some personal self - that's coming in there and making them. So that seems to be the strong import or implication or message from examining the factors of origination - that it's happening by themselves, remember like my rather silly example, my pretending to conduct an orchestra when in fact they are doing fine without me and I'm just having the sense that I am in charge, but really I am actually not doing anything at all, in fact I don't even exist because I am not on a podium and because I am not a conductor.

(8:16) **So here we go now to the factors of originations that Madhyamaka analysis, anthological analysis.**

So overall, and this is true for all schools of Buddhism, at least **Vaibashika** Sauntranika and most of Madhyamaka, that when we're dealing with perception, perception of the physical world around us, how does this occur? In dependence upon a tripod, three factors coming in and this is for valid perception. So ok, I'm perceiving the plaid color of the Graham's shirt, so for that visual perception to take place, what needs to be there? There needs to be a plaid shirt, okay? That's for starters, otherwise I am hallucinating. So there is a plaid shirt then I need to have a visual faculty, and since we are in the 21st century, let's just go right for the visual cortex and not pretend like you know the brain scientists don't know anything about perception, which is clearly they do know a lot about perception. So we have Graham's plaid shirt with its colors, we have my visual cortex, and now for the materialist - that's enough. That's enough, bring the photons, activate the visual cortex and somehow images are generated. Now how they're generated how do you get images, colors out of neurons, nobody's got a clue but they cover it over, again like the kitty covering poop with sand, they don't have a clue but they say never mind, they are in there, even though they are invisible, so it's kind of magic, ok, enough of that. So the materialists say that's it, that's all there is because after all everything consists of matter and its emergent properties, and the images of colors are simply emergent properties of the brain, ok, now we're finished with that. This actually makes no sense to me at all and there is no empirical evidence to support it, so why should we talk about it?

(10:18) So the Buddha said no, that's not at all sufficient, there needs to be also a continuum of consciousness. So there is the tripod, you need the object, you need the sensory organ and then a continuum of consciousness that gets configured, it's a nice term, gets configured by what types of photons, again the 21st century, what kind of photons are coming in? And how is your visual cortex doing, is it a sound, is it

damaged and so forth? Are you hallucinating? Have you taken drugs and so forth and so on? So these factors then are configuring the type of perception that arises, because you have a visual cortex therefore mental perception, because all the five sensory modes of consciousness emerge from mental consciousness, right? Then visual consciousness arises in dependence upon the visual cortex and it gets specifically figured, I'm seeing plaid, I am seeing Patrice's baby blue color of her shawl and so forth, but so the three, the three together, a flow of consciousness which does not come from the brain, comes from the preceding flow of consciousness, the outside object and the various sensory organs or faculties, clear?

(11:26) So that in Madhyamaka, Prasangika Madhyamaka which Shantideva is embracing, they accept that, that's standard classic Buddhist psychology or epistemology call what you will, not being challenged conventionally speaking, but now he's saying, of course he is doing a Madhyamaka anthological analysis - is this really true, inherently, independently of conceptual designation? So for that then we turn to factors of origination but now in a very different way than you'll find in the Abhidharma in the Pali, the Pali Canon, the Theravada, the Theravada doesn't touch this at all, they are just happy with metaphysical realism, well not Shantideva. So here we go, so this will be challenging you might want to just rest a little bit, ok? Don't work too hard, this is all in podcast, later, mañana, mañana, ok?

This is really calling for our best approximation of perfection of intelligence, this is not easy, ok? But I'll try to make it as clear as I can so at least there is something here for you to work with.

So he says:

93. If there is an interval between a sense-faculty and its object, where is the contact between the two? If there is no interval, they would be identical. In that case, what would be in contact with what?

Alan's comments:

(12:28) "If there is an interval". Now the assumption here is – we're assuming what we brought to the table is - but everything is real after all, I mean there is a real plaid shirt there and I really do have a visual cortex, absolutely inherently there. The neuroscientists discovered it and then there is real consciousness and the three come together and there we are. And so assuming metaphysical realism, assuming inherent existence of all three factors – that's our baseline and then if it makes no sense on that baseline then the baseline is no good, clear? Ok. Now let's go:

(13:11) "If there is an interval between a sense-faculty and its object, where is the contact between the two?"

(13:15) So the object, what's the object? Okay, the plaid shirt, and I've got a visual cortex over here, so if there is some, and if there is an interval, if there is absolutely, now everything is absolutely here, if there is absolutely empty space between Graham's shirt and my visual cortex then I'll never see a shirt, we may as well be in different galaxies, because how's there going to be any contact? They are absolutely separate. If there is an interval, there's no contact.

(13:47) Now bear in mind, where he is going with this? Is the feeling, vedhana, arises in dependence upon contact? So in dependence upon contact then feeling arises, classical Buddhist psychology. But now Graham's shirt is away over here, away over there, 4 meters away and my visual cortex is hidden inside my skull, well how are they ever going to get together? I'll never perceive anything. Well, let's bring this into the 21st Century, we have that solved. Photons are being absorbed and emitted by Graham's shirt and so therefore the photons come and strike the retina, so they strike the retina. Now let's just make this a little simpler because clearly the eyeballs are also part of the visual mechanism, we can't say that the sensory organism is only the visual cortex otherwise you can have no eyes and you can still see. So let's just make this a little simpler philosophically speaking, not pretending to over simplify neuro physiologically, which is very complex.

(14:44) Now a photon's coming in, photons are coming in, from the shirt and they are striking my retina, let's say the visual organ starts there, I think it's a reasonable way to talk, starts there, right at the retina, where is the first contact, ok? Photon comes in, it's making contact with the molecules in my retina, but now let's assume those photons are inherently real and let's assume that the molecules or atoms in my retina are inherently real, okay so we've got inherently real little be-be's of energy coming in and striking an inherently real atom, let's just take it photon by photon and atom by atom. So a photon's coming in and smacking an atom in my retina, Ok? And let's assume that the photon is inherently real, absolutely real and the atom that is just being struck by the photon is also absolutely inherently real. If that's the case then if there is a, now we go to Shantideva, we are leaping from the 8th century to the 21st which is a bit of a dance but I think I'm being

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true to Shantideva in the 21st century. So now photons coming in so now we say this is where the contact is, not that his plaid shirt has to strike my eyeball. That would be awkward, I can't see until you smack me in the eyeball. So where's the actual contact? Now in 21st century, where's the actual contact? Photons striking atom – that's where the real contact is, right? And then everything else after that -electrochemical sequence events, starting with the retina culminating in the visual cortex, that's detail. Incredibly complex and important detail, for the neurophysiologist, for us, ontologically, because we are not trying to do neurophysiology here, we are trying to find out what's real and what's not real. Where's the contact? The contact is, that is with something outside it's the photon striking the retina. It's striking an atom or a molecule in the retina. Now we ask - when that contact happens, photon is just struck, contact is made, if there's an interval between the atom in my retina, if there's an interval between that atom and the photon that's just struck it, if there is still an interval, empty space - then there's no contact. If there's still, if it gets really close and then says, just stops and says, I'm not touching you, if it doesn't actually touch, then you may as well be a million miles away. Because if you've not contacted, if you've not actually touched, the photon hasn't actually touched the atom in my eyeball, then it doesn't even matter if it came so close, it's called a swing and a hit. No, a swing and a miss, missed it by that much, nevertheless, any baseball player knows if you've missed the ball by one inch or 3 feet, it's still a swing and a miss.

(17:55) So if there's an interval, now we are back to Shantideva, we've just gone now time machine, 21st century back to 8th century, and here we go. If there is an interval between the sense faculty, my retina and its object, the photon, where is the contact between the two? Well there isn't one. If there is no interval, so he is doing this purely logically, if there is no interval between the photon coming in and the atom that it strikes, like the ball coming into a catchers net, if there is no interval they would be identical. They would be identical and of course we have to think about this conceptually, if that photon comes in and there is no interval and it actually merges with the atom, then you say the atom got a little bit bigger. But there are no longer two things, they merged, if they touched, now there is like there is one thing, in which case that would be a problem. If there is no interval they would be identical and in that case what would be contact with what? Because there's not two things being in contact there's actually one thing. They merged into like two pieces of jelly that are going right into each other and there's no contact there's one large piece of jelly. So there is one anthological analysis. And again, I am not even remotely suggesting that by having read this through once you are going to realize emptiness or you are going to find it's absolutely compelling and you don't have to think about it again. The idea here is that we sow seeds – that you at your leisure, at your own time can return to and investigate with greater depth. What I would say with very great confidence is that this is not trivial, if it doesn't make sense the first time you pass through consider that maybe there is more to it than you got at first glance. I am not saying that it is therefore absolutely true and you have to believe it, I am not going there but this one, this takes some wise rumination, ok? Now again:

94. One atom cannot penetrate another, because it is without empty space and is of the same size as the other. When there is no penetration, there is no mingling; and when there is no mingling, there is no contact.

(19:53) "One atom cannot penetrate another". Think about again the classical atom whether is Democritus, whether it's Vaibhashika, one atom cannot penetrate another, because it is without empty space. So think here, if we think of 21st century, think of not the whole atom or the electron going on which is almost all space, go on to the nucleus. Right there with the proton, the neutron, where the quarks are. So, that will be the closest that we get to in terms of modern particle physics. I am not in any way of course suggesting that Shantideva knew about quarks and so forth, but in the atomic theory that was prevalent that he is critiquing in his time in the 7th 8th century, one atom cannot penetrate another because it is without empty space, it is packed, it's dense, it's spherical, it's homogenous, it's a baby billiard ball, a tiny, tiny billiard ball. Because this atom is without space and is of the same size as the other. So very Democritus. (20:11) A whole bunch of teeny, teeny billiard balls and they do not interpenetrate. When there is no penetration, there is no mingling, that would make sense, and when there is no mingling, there is no contact. If they are not touching then they aren't touching, so if they're touching they'd have to be one but they don't mingle, they don't mingle, in another words, neither way in terms of assuming inherent existence, it makes no sense that you have causal interaction if they don't touch, but if they do touch then they're one thing, which means they are not touching, they're one thing. There is the analysis.

95. How, indeed, can there be contact with something that has no parts? If partlessness can be observed when there is contact, demonstrate this.

(21:28) How, indeed, can there be contact with something that has no parts? So that one, there's your Madhyamaka koan for the day. How can there be contact with something that has no parts? I mean no front part, I mean the front of the atom and the back of the atom, and the sides, the ten cardinal directions and so forth, a sphere even when you say, no that's just one billiard ball, that's one thing, yeah, does it have a front and a back? Then it has two parts. So if something really had no parts and there is that theory and among various atomic theories in Buddhism and in India at this time, that the most fundamental basic constituents of physical reality consist of partless particles, they are absolutely there but that they have no parts, no components, just one tiny homogenous little piece of grit, but then how would you ever have any contact with that? So how indeed can there be contact with something that has no parts? And the implication of course - contact would be impossible.

If partlessness can be observed where there is contact, if it's really true that atoms are partless and they do have contact, he says, demonstrate it! Then he goes right to empirical evidence, show me the evidence.

(23:16) So it would be interesting to say have a Madhyamaka philosopher and a person who really know their atomic physics, elementary particle physics, inside and out it would be quite interesting. I don't think we'd have that level of dialogue with His Holiness and the various physicists because it's two and a half hours presentation, discussion so you have to move on, but it would be interesting to see well okay, let's bring in a professional, I am not even remotely a professional of atomic physics, so I think what I am saying is true, but I'd have to stop quickly because I don't know much more than I am saying right now. But if we brought in a person who really knows okay what's the nature of particles and what's the role of fields here, I know a little bit about it, what makes for the density of my forehead, it's the electromagnetic bonds or fields holding the atoms together, correct? Yeah. But now, what's a field, what exactly is a field, and how do fields, if we are going to regard fields as inherently real, if they are really there, objectively there, they're simply being observed, and if the fields are inherently real and the particles are inherently real, how do they interact? And if a particle of matter has gravity, when gravity works by inverse square law, the closer you are by squares, then the power exerted goes up by squares. But wouldn't this imply then, that as you got closer and closer, coming into the gravitational field of the particle that when you got infinitely close, the force exerted on it would be infinitely great? And how does that make any sense? That when you get extremely close with the gravitational field - the numbers kind of blow up. So that's what I have heard. And this is a serious question, I have an under graduate degree here but I try to be careful, that I don't just go off into la-la land. What I have understood here is this is why people like Einstein, recognizing these difficulties, because he was a metaphysical realist - it's out there, independent of consciousness, that can't be debated. That if we are going to take the atoms, the elementary particles, as inherently real, and the fields as inherently real, they took fields very, very seriously, then you have this real problem, of how do they interface? So that would be a very high level conference someday, to have people who know relativity theory, elementary particle physics and Madhyamaka Philosophy, and just get them together to talk, that would be interesting.

(26:19) Here we go back, back to Shantideva:

Bear in mind this all about feelings but he's looking now in the factors of origination. Why do I have a neutral feeling really because I am not really attracted to or repelled by, by Graham's shirt, it's a shirt, I feel I think quite even about it, quite neutral, I don't crave it or feel yuck. Some feeling's arising in dependence upon my contact, my visual awareness of it, but now exactly how does that feeling arise? All of Buddhist psychology says it arises in dependence upon contact, but if there is no inherently real contact then we've got a problem. How do you have an inherently real feeling arising in an absence of inherently real contact - if there is no real contact then you are not going to have anything resulting from no real contact. That is - nothing inherently real.

That's now, that's his analysis, just in terms of our feelings about the world, what's happening in the physical world and very much what's happening in our bodies, that also the visual, sound, smell and taste, all of that, is that where is it possible for there to be any real contact with an absolutely real physical world out there composed of atoms somehow interacting with the absolutely real atoms that constitute our visual sensory faculty? It looks like a problem, now one might want to spend months or years on that problem, to really get

some clarity, some certainty, but he's laid it out in little nuggets. But now he's going to raise another issue that has been tormenting Western Philosophers and cognitive scientists for some time now and that is:

96. It is impossible for consciousness, which has no form, to have contact; nor is it possible for a composite, because it is not a truly existent thing, as investigated earlier.

If consciousness is immaterial and it's really hard to conclude it is material, if it were you should be able to measure it for heaven sakes, and nobody can measure it, they all know that, and it has no physical properties, there is no location, no mass, no momentum, no electrical charge, I mean none whatsoever and you can't measure it, so all of those are pointing to consciousness is immaterial. But then if it's immaterial, it has no physical attributes whatsoever, and that's what Descartes believed, then how can something that's utterly immaterial, absolutely non-physical, how can it have any causal interaction, how can it be influenced, touched by the molecules in your sensory faculties, visual cortex, retina, auditory whatever? How can there be any contact? It just seems like a categorical impossibility.

(28:25) And so what does he say? It is impossible for consciousness, which has no form and by no form here he really means has no physical attributes, he's not just saying it has no shape and color, consciousness has no physical attributes at all, that is the Buddhist position, it is impossible for consciousness, which has no form, to have contact with the physical. Oh, oh, but it kind of makes sense, and people have been saying this for a long time and it's a major, major reason why the great majority of the people in the cognitive sciences are saying - "we just can't deal with it". Therefore, consciousness, in some slippery, tricky, strange way has to be equivalent to something that we can understand, that we can measure because if it's something, if it's really there, this would be a smart cognitive scientist who is just trying to make sense of things but of course it's coming out of the materialist framework because that's all they were educated in. If consciousness really is immaterial, has no physical attributes, then it couldn't possibly influence the brain and the brain couldn't influence it, how would the molecules in the brain influence something non-physical? It doesn't make any sense and how could something non-physical influence the brain? Mass, energy, it just doesn't make any sense. So therefore even, since that really just makes no sense, therefore consciousness, all states of consciousness, all mental states must be physical, they must be equivalent to something is physical, otherwise they can't be participated in, there can't be any causal interrelationship between states of consciousness and the brain, so you see. So I made a misstatement yesterday, I thought maybe I wouldn't mention it, but maybe I must. I might mention sometimes words just kind of flow out of the mouth, when I said I really do just get bored debating materialism, because it just makes no sense at all, and the other really makes an awful lot of sense and gives you protocol, strategies for putting the theories to the test. And none of the materialist views, philosophies, or theories and so forth of consciousness, not one of them can be put to the test. Not one. They can't validate or repudiate, so why call that science? When none of them can be tested, they just - oh no, mind is the brain, the brain is what the mind does, etc, etc. So I said, in my exasperation and that brings out my mental afflictions - oh sometimes it's dealing with mentally backward kindergarteners; that's not accurate. Let alone being a poor choice of words, it's also not accurate, it is not fair and it's disrespectful. There are people who are really locked into the materialist framework, they are not backward, they are not foolish, they are not low IQ, hey, these are intelligent people, but they remind me more, I'd say, don't recognize the limits of their own methodologies and their theories. That's very different and I think that's fair. I don't think they recognize the limits of their own methodologies or their own theories which just have no way of wrapping themselves around nonphysical phenomena of any kind whatsoever. So they remind me more of, rather than some kind of mentally backward kindergartener, reminds me more of my beloved, dearly beloved grandson who is 7. We are in the car about a year ago, driving along in the fast lane on the freeway, and my adorable little grandson said - I can run as fast as this car. I said, Troy, this means you can run about as fast as a cheetah, and he knows his animal kingdom, Troy, you really can't run as fast as a cheetah. Yes I can, grandpa, yes I can. Troy looked up as the road's going by, and said yes I can grandpa, I really can. Now how long does this wind up being an interesting debate? It's kinda like just give him a hug and a kiss and say let's talk about something else, and that's what I feel with the closed minded neuroscientist and others who are absolutely locked into, and can't see any option other than scientific materialism. I think that much more benign would be - give them a hug and a kiss and let's stop talking, and find somebody with an open mind, then we can open dialogue all afresh. So my apologies for misspoken word yesterday, but I think

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cocky kindergarteners would be a more accurate analogy. That's a couple of steps up from what I said yesterday.

(32:56) Back to Shantideva: it is impossible for consciousness, which has no form, to have contact; nor is it possible for a composite, because it is not a truly existent thing, as investigated earlier.

He is saying it is not possible for composites to have contact. This is like a series of Zen koans, it's so concise, so dense, so high density, so it needs a little bit of unpacking not a whole lot, we are coming to end here. A composite, now there are two types of composites, one is a composite within space like a mob, let's say a mob of a thousand people. We speak of a mob, the mob is doing this, this mob mentality that arises that doesn't happen when the people are all scattered, but they all get together and this is standard psychology - that the mob acts as a unit, the mob goes here, the mob goes there and there is mob mentality almost like a zeitgeist for that mob, then it acts in different ways, that none of the individuals would.

(34:11) What Shantideva is getting at here is, ok, he's not denying that mobs exist, he is not denying that composites exist, what he is denying is that mobs inherently exist. That they inherently exist just like your body is a mob, it's a whole bunch of parts and the body as a whole as the mob as a whole, does a whole bunch of things that an individual hand can't do, molecules can't do, blood cells can't do, the individual can't do but the mob can. But then he says, as he did before, look for the body. Do you find this inherently existent real body in any of the individual parts, in any collection of the parts, apart from the parts? And through that parts whole analysis - there's no such thing as an inherently existent aggregate of all the components of the body. It does not exist - therefore your body doesn't exist, inherently. A mob doesn't inherently exist. If you see a mob coming, you see them coming towards you, when do you have contact with the mob? Okay, let's imagine you're a mob, you kinda are, and Chodron's leading the pack, those fiery militant nuns you know? So the whole mob is just coming toward me, they've just had it with all of my attacks on scientific materialism, because actually they all really like scientific materialism, they just can't agree with the Shamatha, and so the mob comes with their pitch forks and tar and feathers and so forth, and Chodron is leading the pack, growling, and so she is the first one that gets to me, and she pokes me with a pitch fork - stop attacking scientific materialism many of my friends are scientific materialists - she pokes me! So I've got the tip, the sharp edge of the mob, it's Chodron and she is holding a pitch fork, but wait a minute, a pitch fork isn't a mob, and Chodron is not a mob, so I haven't gotten the mob yet, but then they bring on the real heavies, after Chodron, she's a nun. The heavy is Natu, have you seen her biceps recently? Don't mess with Natu, she looks frail, I know she is not. So after Chodron has not been able to break me down, they bring on Natu, and she comes in and says - okay buster, now you have to deal with me - and there it is, there is Natu coming in, but I still haven't met a mob. She is just Natu. Then we bring in Chitra, and she works me over, but I still haven't met the mob, and then after her they bring Will, and he looks like Mr. Clean, and he works me over, but I still haven't met the mob. You see I never meet the mob. The mob is never met, not from any side, not from the inside, not from the outside, you never meet the mob because a mob is conceptual designation.

(37:41) So what he is saying is - when you are dealing with a composite of things existing at the same time in space, there is no contact, not between inherently existent composites. And likewise sequences, series, a series also, again as when talking to Nato, those five minute sessions, when have you ever have a five minute session? Not now, not now, not now, not now, not now, not now - that can go on forever and you've never had a five minute session, it never happens, not at any time, right? So there's no such thing as a five minutes session, not really, it's something that we conceptually designate upon looking at a clock, right? An atomic clock, digital clock, whatever you like. So that's what he's saying -whether you have a sequence in time or whether you have an aggregate in space, if they are inherently existent there is never any time when they can contact, they cannot causally interact, they can't touch each other, inherently existent, conventionally of course, ok, moving on. And now we go to verse 97:

97. Thus, when there is no contact, how can feeling arise? What is the reason for this exertion? Who could be harmed by what?

(38:35) Thus, when there is no contact, how can feeling arise? Because the Buddha's core theory is feelings arises in dependence upon contact. I see Mile's shirt and I see it and I either find pleasure, displeasure or neutral feeling arises. But relative to, how do you feel about his shirt? But I don't feel anything about the shirt if I have no contact with the shirt. I say what shirt?

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But that's what he's saying – if there's no real contact, how can real feeling arise in dependence upon something that never took place, inherently? Never doubting that it takes place conventionally.

(39:10) And then he moves on even deeper (verse 98 below), so what about the experiencer? Now just think about the conversation we've had multiple times now, the person who is informed, the transfer of information and that about which you are getting information, take one away and the two vanish, right? We have been through it repeatedly. Well how about feeling? If there's nothing that you are feeling for which you have feeling - I feel great about his cool T-shirt - if there is no inherently existent T-shirt with which I have some inherently real contact, then there's no inherently existing feeling that arises in dependence upon that. But how about a feeler if there's no inherently existence feeler experiencing a feeling, then there is no real feeling because feeling can't hover there all by itself without somebody experiencing it. And so if there is no one to experience feeling, and if feeling does not exist, that is if neither of these is inherently existent, one to experience the feeling and the feeling itself, then after understanding this situation, why oh craving are you not shattered?

98. If there is no one to experience feeling and if feeling does not exist, then after understanding this situation, why, o craving, are you not shattered?

(40:13) Because craving is for those objects that makes us feel happy. We crave people sexually or personally or socially, intellectually, aesthetically, for so many reasons. People can be our object of craving and everything else can. But then if there's no real contact with that object that you crave, if there's no inherent existing feeling and if there is no inherent existing experience of the feeling, then why are you getting caught up in a completely deluded state of craving that which isn't really there in the first place? And it is so similar. I come back to my favorite metaphor -

If you are in the midst of a lucid dream, if weren't lucid of course you crave everything in a non- lucid dream, oh, look at that beautiful woman, oh, look at that great car, whatever it is, just as in the day time in a non-lucid dream you think -oh -if I don't get that I am going to be miserable! I am going to kill myself if I don't get that! I really want that so much. You know? Like people in a waking state. But if you're lucid and you're still craving oh, I want that car over there, you're crazy! You are lucid but come on get real here, you know there is no car there from its own side so if there is any happiness to be found it's not in contact with that because it's not even really there at all, only within the context of the dream do we say - is there a car over there? You say yeah, that's what I was dreaming.

(41:53) So: "why, o craving, are you not shattered?"

The point here as the His Holiness Dalai Lama pointed out , is that this whole array of mental afflictions that is the derivative ones, all stemming from ignorance and delusion, delusion being reification of course grasping to true existence, but the entire bandwidth of craving and hostility, and all derivative mental afflictions, and it's like 84.000 when you get the full bandwidth, all of these arise, stem from, they are derivative from this fundamental misapprehension of reality, of reification, grasping onto inherent existence of the subject, of the object and the absolute bifurcation or duality of the subject and object, all mental afflictions arise from that. So what he is getting at here is if you can nuke, if you can completely destroy that one fundamental tap root of delusion of reifying subject, object and the duality of subject and object, then all of the derivative mental afflictions they're gone, they cannot arise.

(42:50) And then H. H. Dalai Lama pointed out in his commentary - now conversely there're all kinds of antidotes for craving, but they may leave your delusion pretty much untouched. A whole big chapter earlier on, on patience, antidoting anger, hatred, hostility, resentment, but they leave the tap root untouched. So all, for jealousy, for pride, and so many other things , this great pharmacopeia, this great array of medicines from the Buddhist tradition for antidoting so many, many mental afflictions, but those that are specifically designed to antidote the derivative mental afflictions don't touch the root. I am going to say this very briefly, let alone if you have a drug that only treats the symptoms, that doesn't even treat the root of any mental affliction, only treats the symptoms of whatever and maybe most of that's placebo and then there's the side effects. So that is why my passion arises so strongly, but even when they work in a way, and I know they are necessary, pain killers are sometimes necessary, I know these are necessary, but in a way let it be necessary only so that we can get to the point that we can move beyond them to start actually healing people, ok? That is not too dramatic is it? I'm not slipping into hyperbole or being melodramatic. Just use the drugs when you really, really need them but let's get beyond them as soon as we can because they'll never heal anything, when

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we're talking about mental disease. Antibiotics? You bet ya. They can actually heal something they clear out the infection, hallelujah, that heals something. But mental disease I don't think there's a single psycho pharmaceutical drug that heals any psychological disease at all, which then shows the lie that all psychological problems are simply neuro physiological problems, that's a lie, said so many times that many people now believe it but it's only because it's said so many times, like parrots chattering in a jungle (44:49) Coming back here to the deep medicine, antidote delusion all the other mental afflictions vanish, including craving. You, craving, derivative of delusion, why are you not shattered?

So we are almost concluding here:

99. The mind that has a dreamlike and illusion-like nature sees and touches. Since feeling arises together with the mind, it is not perceived by the mind.

The mind that has a dreamlike and illusion-like nature sees and touches. So conventionally speaking, relatively speaking, the mind sees the color of Graham's shirt, it touches the computer screen.

Since feeling arises together with the mind, so awareness and feeling, bearing in mind feelings is a mode of apprehending, I am visually perceiving Graham's shirt and simultaneously, in my visual perception there is the coloration of my visual perception, the coloration of that, is the feeling. My visual experience of your shirt is actually here a neutral feeling, find something – hmm, I actually like Burgundy a lot, so I look at Chodron's robes, I see yeah, I do like Burgundy, beautiful color of wine but better, color of Sangha, and so I attend to Burgundy color and I like that color. And so my pleasure of attending to the Burgundy color of Chodron's robes is right there, it's right in the midst of awareness, it's not something that comes and arises and meet awareness, it's in the very flavor, the flavoring of awareness itself. That is what he is saying here:

"Since feeling arises together with the mind, it is not perceived by the mind". My visual perception doesn't perceive feeling, it's fused with feeling, my mental perception of my mother, I'm thinking it's not a mental perception, but my mental awareness right now by way of concepts of course of my mother, also has feelings that goes, the appearance of my mother appears to me, my feeling about my mother is not something that appears to me as an object, it's in my mode of apprehending my mother. That being in the case:

"Since feeling arises together with the mind, it is not perceived by the mind". It is not simply an object of the mind. We've looked at that earlier. What happens earlier is remembered, but not experienced by what arises later.

100. What happens earlier is remembered but not experienced by what arises later. Ifsdoes not experience itself, nor is it experienced by something else.

If by experience we mean something in real time. In real time I observe the images arising in my mind, I mentally observe with mental consciousness I observe the images of my mother, of bananas, etc, etc that's called- I'm experiencing it, I see it, I know it, it's in real time. But when I know my means of knowing feelings is never like that, my knowing of the feeling is never simultaneous with it, my knowing of feeling is always a recollection of a feeling that just went by. So he is drawing a distinction between experience - in real time and remembering something that just went by maybe fifteen milliseconds minutes ago. So it does not experience itself, feeling does not experience itself, feeling experiences the color of Graham's shirt, it's together right there with the perception of Graham's shirt. So feeling doesn't experience itself nor is it experienced, that is in real time, by something else. So, once again, it's not really there - something that you experience and perceive.

Final on, finish and get to meditation:

101. There is no one who experiences feeling. Hence, in reality, there is no feeling. Thus, in this identity less bundle, who can be hurt by it?

"There is no one who experiences feeling." Now you know perfectly well he is talking about – ultimate, inherently – feeling. There is no one who experiences feeling. And now we are right back to that triad. The informant, the information, the informato. There is no inherently real experiencer of the feeling. If there is, show it, demonstrate it. Where is this inherently existent subject - that is the experiencer of feeling? He said - not to be found. If there is no, all within this context of inherent existence, if there is no one experiencing it, hence in reality, there is no feeling". And he said, in reality, if there is no inherently existent experiencer of the feeling, then there is no inherently existent feeling, itself. If one vanishes the other two vanish. – Thus in this identity-less bundle, in this triad of the object, the feeling and the experiencer of the feeling, identitylessness, means not only personal identity, but each one identityless in the sense of being devoid of

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inherent identity. Inherent nature, no inherent nature in the contacted object, no inherent nature in the contact, no inherent nature in the feeling, no inherent nature in the experiencer of the feeling, if it's all empty. In this identity-less bundle, who can be hurt by it? Who can be hurt by feelings? Phew, that should keep you busy for a few years.

Short exposition, Shantideva. Let's take a break and meditate.

Meditation:

Meditation: mindfulness of feelings preceded by mindfulness of the body.

(51:04) It's time to let the body settle, relax, still and clear. And relax deeply and fully, thoroughly with every out breath releasing it to the last iota, until the next breath flows in effortlessly, given without being taken. And settle your mind at ease, give it a break from the future and the past, settle in stillness in the present moment.

Rest in the stillness of your own awareness, let it hold in its own ground, not by effort, not by straining, but by releasing all grasping and letting your awareness rest in a mode of knowing that was already there when it was not clothed in all other kinds of knowing, and that is the very knowing of being aware, rest in that knowing, awareness holding its own ground.

And from this vantage point of stillness let your awareness illuminate the space of the body, which after all is simply a derivative of space, a sub space of the space of awareness, a configured space emerging from the alaya, the substrate, illuminate the space of your body.

Let your awareness be as free of concept as possible, allow the best approximation of a naked awareness without conceptual elaboration, and observe the arising of sensations within this field of the body. You contact these earth elements, the water, fire and air by way of the sensations, tactilely perceived, and in dependence upon the contact arises feeling, an affective mode of apprehending the sensations; see if you can distinguish between the sensations which themselves are empty of feeling, feelings does not lay in the object, in the appearances, see if you can distinguish between the sensations that arise to meet you as appearances and the feelings that arise in response to them, catalyzed by them, in other words examine the factors of origination of feelings arising in the body.

Closely examine by applying mindfulness to the feeling itself, even if it's by way of recollection, nevertheless closely recall the feeling that has just arisen and examine its nature.

If something is inherently real, the more penetratingly you examine it, investigate it, probe it, the more inherently real it will appear. Whereas in contrast, if something is not inherently real the more deeply penetratingly you probe into its nature, its very absence of inherent nature becomes more and more evident - so probe as deeply as you can into the sensations that are the object of feelings, the feelings themselves which are a way of experiencing those sensations. Does either one withstand this type of anthological probe, this penetration to the core?

And then turn your awareness inwards upon the experiencer, the one who suffers, the one who enjoys, the one who experiences the feelings, can you identify yourself? Are you really there in and of yourself?

And when some insight arises into the empty nature of the object, the experience of the object and the one who experiences, then for little while stop investigating and just rest quietly in that insight, in that awareness, that space like emptiness.

Teaching pt2:

Summary:

Geshe Rabten's advice on dealing with kleshas: 1) the best way is to observe them directly, sharply, without entering into cognitive fusion, 2) if that fails, apply other antidotes, and 3) if that fails, move attention away from the object. Fighting kleshas is like guerilla warfare.

Alan's teachings:

Many years ago, in the 1970's I remember receiving some very quintessential advice from Geshe Rabten, a revered teacher, referring to how to deal with mental afflictions, angry, craving whatever and he said, when they arise, if you can, he gave this as, my impression was this was the optimal – when the mental afflictions arise, observe them. Just go right into them. They arise, like – you want to fight? And the answer is – yeah! I am going to face you right on, give me your best shot! But you look right at him, it comes up like hey I am angry, want to fight? I want to punch your lights out, give it your best shot. Bam, right back at ya. Investigate,

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probe, do not identify, do not enter into cognitive fusion. Face it down. Bam, right head on. If you are up to it, he said that's the best. You shatter it, mental afflictions do not withstand that type of sharp penetrating investigation, they don't. He said on occasion you may not be able to do that, sometimes they are just too strong, in which case okay now you have this whole pharmacopeia, here we have whole array of remedies – consider it this way, consider it this way, consider it this way, so we bring in, bring in loving kindness, bring all the troops, the one on one didn't work out too well, backup, here comes the cavalry. So bring in the other methods and hopefully that can do the work, there are all kinds. Those of you who study Buddhism well know there's a lot. So many remedies for mental afflictions.

And he said, sometimes enemy is too strong despite, that is just in this context, your ability to implement the remedy just isn't strong enough, they're too strong, they are overwhelming you, they are climbing over the walls, they are going to capture the king.. You have to look at it, you have to look at it realistically, and say – I am not up to every battle, I can't win every battle, and if this is a battle I could win by staring it down it made me road kill, then I tried to apply antidotes and all my antidotes got smashed, then he said, okay in that case, what to do - get your mind off of it. Head for the hills, get your mind away from it, whatever you are angry about, think about something else. Whatever you craving, think about something else, whatever you are feeling, angry, jealousy and so forth, change the channel, get off of it, you're not going to win it, they're demolishing you, don't stay there, get your attention elsewhere, including and he didn't quite say this but it was a message, watching a sitcom on television, you know, better that than just getting beaten up by mental afflictions. So it's silly, so it has no really big significance that won't lead to enlightenment, at least it's not dragging you into the lower realms, or whatever, hopefully. Just watch something innocent. Direct your attention, make a cup of tea, go get a snack, jog, something else, but get your attention off of it.

When I think of Geshe Rabten I think of a Kharpo warrior who never fought in any battle with guns, he was tough, he was really tough, but tough in a really good sense, a Dharma warrior. So he knew, when do you advance, when do you retreat. Okay? That was some of Geshe Rabten's core advice.

Then I will turn core advice from a person for whom I feel mostly compassion – but I would never want him as my guru, except for one phrase, because he was a master of something, he was a master of guerilla warfare, he was really, really, really good. And that was Mao Se Tong. So no he is not my guru but even from the minds of people who are heavily, heavily deluded, and he was, words of wisdom can emerge for what they are good at and he was good at guerrilla warfare, I mean he won after all, and his little two liner, which is good advice, good strategy – he said – when the enemy advances, I retreat. When the enemy retreats, I advance. And that is – when you are outnumbered, if you've got an army of 50,000 and you meet an army of 5,000, then wipe them out in a conquest, but if you've got an army of 5,000 guerilla warriors and you're meeting a well- trained army of 50,000, and you are 5,000, that's not going to work out well. If you do a head-on collision you are going to get wiped out, probably to the man, so with that 50,000 troupe , when they start advancing, head to the hills. Dissolve back into the woodwork, make yourself invisible so they are looking and don't know where you have gone, make yourself invisible, withdraw, and then when they say okay, we can't find them, and they withdraw and they are sitting around eating their bacon and eggs, then box their ears, come in and then attack, come in and then attack and chop them off limb by limb. In that way a war of attrition, you are not going to knock them out with one big battle, not when it is 5,000 vs 50,000, but nibble them off a hundred here, a thousand there and 1500 there, just keep on doing that and 50,000 turns into 25 turns into 20 turns into 5 turns out to 2, when it's 2000 you still have 5,000 so you just go and wipe them out. So that is how you win guerilla warfare, we have to fight guerilla warfare, unless you are an arya bodhisattva, unless you are already a very accomplished practitioner, we have to be smarter than our mental afflictions, and when they advance we need to retreat, and when they retreat, we need to advance.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti, **Revised** by Cheri Langston, **Final edition** by Rafael Carlos Giusti, **Posted** by Alma Ayon

71 Great Compassion (1)

05 Oct 2012

Today we'll move from the kind of - the dimension of the four immeasurables to the dimension of great compassion, great loving kindness and so on. One of the very inviting aspects of the four immeasurables is

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that they're not necessarily hinged with or connected with any particular world view. For example when His Holiness asked a group of psychologists, and was in the room, to create something that could be helpful for everyone in a secular fashion, and we developed cultivating emotional balance, since I choose all the meditations for it I could choose the four immeasurables because whether you're a fundamentalist Christian or Atheist or Jew, Moslem whatever you may be, they're wide opened, it's not asking you to change your world of view but simply opening the heart in these various ways; then we move into, so there's a great advantage there, and they all culminate in a sense of an aspiration or empathetic joy to simply taking delight. But when we move to the Four Greats, The great, Great Compassion and so forth, then these clearly they have their root system in Buddhist world view.

I don't quite know how one could develop these without embracing some of the core themes of the Buddhist world view, so let's look at them.

The meditation is really focused right on a core kind of liturgy that just hits four points.

So it starts out in a familiar fashion and I will start out with compassion. I do think and I mentioned this before that among the four immeasurables I think there is a very meaningful sequence starting with loving kindness. A lot of people start and stop right there mettābhavana, the Vipassana tradition, very, very often they just go for mettābhavana, never mind the other three, why not? Very good, nice entry and so at the same time there is an immense richness among all four, so there is the sequence, "meta" and then compassion, empathetic joy and equanimity.

(2:19) When we move into the Four Greats I've never seen that there is necessarily any particular sequence to them but just intuitively and I don't think that can be anything seriously wrong here, that if we consider that there is continuity, or there can be a continuity, a smooth transition from the Four Immeasurables to the Four Greats then we see that the Four Immeasurables culminate in a sense of evenness, this equality of others among friend, enemy and indifferent person; equality among self and others and so with that foundation then you may move right into more the bodhisattva realm and to my mind it's just quite obvious this first step would be more naturally - Great Compassion because as one senses, really gets some taste, some experience of the equality of self and others, so you really do start moving to the realm of caring equally about the wellbeing of others as you do for yourself. I think as soon you open your eyes and look around, and you don't have to look very far, what is most evident in this world of sentient beings, humans, animals and then others, is not what a great time everybody is having, some people are having great time and then of course it's time for empathetic joy, but rather there really is a reality of suffering and if you understood those three dimensions of suffering then you know, well there it is. Whatever is on the surface there are underlying dimensions of suffering that are very, very real. And so Great Compassion seems to my mind a very natural and meaningful way to venture into this Mahayana realm.

(4:36) And with that now before I recite the liturgy, I would like to recite two very short statements from the Sutras, one is from the Accomplishment of the Dharmadatu Sutra, so a Mahayana Sutra and here the Buddha states: "through meditative equipoise one will come to see reality as it is".

So we've heard that one before, it's a very common refrain - when the mind is balanced you come to see reality as it is, by seeing all of reality as it is, a bodhisattva will develop Great Compassion toward all sentient beings. So that's the sequence, one doesn't hear necessarily so often, but first of all develop your, the dhyana or the meditative equipoise or let's just call it shamatha, call a spade a spade, shamatha, first develop your shamatha and then develop Great Compassion.

(5:13) Now there's a little refrain, a little liturgy that I've heard many, many time because I fly so often that is, when you're getting the introduction, when you're fastened in, remember the flight attendant comes along and says, and I haven't memorized it, certainly I've heard it more than 100 times, but she says - in the unlikely case that there's a sudden drop of air pressure, right, you'll find this little dingle-dangle, drop from the ceiling, and it will be oxygen, and she shows you that and says - fasten it firmly over your own mouth and nose first before you attend to those around you even it's a mother and child, mother don't pass out, don't think, oh my child, my child and then pass out...oh, oh, then you don't save your child or yourself, right? So save yourself, put it on yourself and then save everybody else but if you pass out, you're not going to be good for anything, clear? So I think that's what he is getting at there, achieve shamatha first, save yourself, because man if you've achieve shamatha, no you are not out of samsara but you've definitely put on your oxygen mask, right, you're doing okay, you've really found some genuine and real deep relief from suffering, physical

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and mental, if you've made it to that new base camp of shamatha, you're really doing pretty well within samsara, you are in one of the definitely one of the penthouses, one of the penthouse suites in the nicer neighborhood, right?

(06:25) So once you're there then he says develop Great Compassion, ok? Because you really then, as you develop it, then you won't just suddenly meet with a sense of frustration, of dismay, of despair, a sense of - oh, I'd love to but I can't, but I can't, but I can't. Now wait a minute, if you've achieved shamatha maybe you start - can, can, can, you know get into the action, there is the motivation now, use this wonderfully tuned mind of yours and get to work and really be of some benefit. So it's a very simple statement but I think a very profound one.

(7:29) And then one very short statement, on from a text called "The expression of the Realization of Chenrezig", and here the text says, and maybe it's Chenrezig himself - "If one had just one quality it would be as if all the Buddha's Dharma were in the palm of your hand". What quality is that? Great Compassion.

(7:32) So the classic liturgy, which I've heard many times, but when I've heard it from outside it's kind of like people just pass right through it, you know they just(whoosh) as part of the sadhana or something but blup...and strikes me as something very, very worthy to dwell in, to linger in, to really turn into a meditation; so I'm going to give you just a short preamble and then I will unpack it a bit more in the actual meditation, ok? But it starts with, and I will give the whole thing in Tibetan, (Alan gives the Tibetan), which means:

Why couldn't all sentient beings, or why couldn't we all, be free of suffering and the causes of suffering? It's a question. Why couldn't we be free? And it's not a rhetorical question; when one sees a person who is suffering a lot, or a group or a community, whatever it may be, when one sees - there's the suffering; now why couldn't there be freedom, not only from suffering, as maybe a drug would give you temporary freedom from the suffering, that's good we want freedom from suffering, but freedom from the causes of suffering, right? Why couldn't we be free of suffering and causes of suffering?

So it's a question which then calls for an intelligent answer, not blind faith, not blind belief or disbelief, but really investigation. Why couldn't we be free? There is a problem, why couldn't that problem go away right together with its underlying causes?

(9:32) And I want to come back to the theme of all sentient beings. Again who are we talking about? Seven billion human beings on this planet, should we include the many, many more billion animals on the planet?

How about we go into the Buddhist world view then we have pretas and hell beings and the asuras and devas and that's just for one world system. Then we have our galaxies, then we have a hundred billion galaxies, ok, at what point does the mind just go wheeeeeee? Like, may no sentient being anywhere, because I can't imagine that many number, at what point is so many become none at all, you know just because there is no target? So I come back to this ever so helpful statement by Ge Losang Gyatso our teacher and our Abbot in the Buddhist School of Dialectics, thirty eight years ago and he said:

All sentient beings, practically speaking refers to every sentient being you encounter, every sentient being you encounter, not only in the flesh, not only physically but can you encounter Mother Teresa, can you encounter Napoleon, can you encounter Augustine? Yeah, in your mind's eye, mentally can direct your attention to these individuals from the past, or that you'll never meet, maybe they are far away in some distant country but mentally can you attend to them? Ok, you've just met them. Your mind has gone to them, so anybody who comes to mind, anybody who comes into your field of experience. Well if you include all of them, then for all practical purposes, if you leave no one out, everyone who comes to mind and everybody you encounter - then that's all sentient beings, quite powerful, right? So I was reflecting on this and so as we consider may:

(11:26) why couldn't all sentient beings be free of suffering and the causes of suffering? Then when you toss that up into the space of your mind then see who comes to mind, and maybe some very difficult person maybe has some really strong mental afflictions, maybe in the way they behave it's really harmful, maybe one could say evil, or maybe you just see somebody in very dire suffering, either way, whether the person is manifesting more the causes of suffering - you really think this is boy a very, very disagreeable person, contemptible behavior and so forth, maybe that type, or this person is suffering so much, either way you are dealing with suffering and the causes of suffering.

So when we bring anyone to mind, anyone to mind, then we bring them to mind then we ask - why couldn't you be free of suffering and the causes of suffering? Then there's a, maybe the word target is not a good

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target, it's like something you would shoot but you know what I mean, someone to whom you're really directing your attention. Then you really have something to tend to:

(12:08) Why couldn't you? Because we meet people, don't we sometimes say – oh this person is impossible? This person is impossible, so mean and selfish, greedy or whatever, forget this person, it's a right off, impossible. Or suffering, their suffering is may be so intense one may think, oh, what can one do and just throw the hands up. What can one do after all? Like that, as if that is the final answer; and the Maha- karuna comes back and says: think again, think again. So there's the first question: why couldn't we all be free of suffering and the causes of suffering?

(12:51) (Alan gives the Tibetan) – May we be free. So then having cleared that one out then finally there is no reason we can't be free of suffering. So now don't put a time limit on it, five years, five months, five lifetimes and now we're Buddhism. So Paul Ekman, a very respected friend of mine doesn't believe in reincarnation and I think he's simply open minded, he is a very fine scientist, a very fine human being and within his framework, his working hypothesis is-when you die that's it. And so from that framework, and he's a very knowledgeable man, he's recognized certain individuals who seemed to be so entrenched in what one can say is really evil habits, or maybe they are serial killers or what have you, they show no repentance, no remorse they have a life sentence in prison and Paul says you know, I think there are some people they're just, they're not going to turn around, I mean you'll have to be just totally airy fairy to think that's going to happen, they're not going to turn around, they maybe even still rejoice you know, feel- no problem and they have a life sentence in prison whatever, or people who are not in prison, they're out there in the world doing the same thing over and over again, evil, greedy, malevolent and so forth, they're getting away with it, no remorse, oh heads of drugs cartel and so forth . Do they really look like they're going to turn around soon when they're just enjoying their wealth and their power and their fame and intimidating other people and so forth; so, might there be people, for whom one can say, well within the framework of this life I don't see any hope? The answer is yeah. Does this mean that they're absolutely hopeless? Who can say, who knows that much? Whenever we point to an individual -you are the head of a drug cartel, you with this disease, you with that mental affliction and so forth, who knows enough to say - yes I know this person even in this lifetime - totally hopeless? I can't say that, I don't know enough. What are the odds? I'd say oh probably very small for some individuals here and there. So there it is.

(15:01) But then when we move in the Buddhist world view, say well, this is one life, continuity is there, then we say ok, if the continuity is there and the underlying core is Buddha nature ,then no one is hopeless, so therefore since no one is hopeless - my we all be free of suffering and its causes.

So now let's move into aspiration which kind of bring us to that same level of immeasurable compassion: may we all be free of suffering and its causes. So it looks like that was replication, true, that's shows the segue, the transition, the smooth seamless movement from the Shravakayana approach then into the Mahayana, but then the third one brings us deeply into Mahayana territory and now you are really in Buddhist world view and that is:

(16:06) (Alan gives the Tibetan) And that is – May I free us all, from suffering and the causes of suffering. As soon that arises now we see it's not simply an aspiration, that's an intention: "I shall do it". Sometimes in the Mahayana tradition they say - arouse this and don't rely on others; - don't think oh some other person, the Dalai Lama will get to it, or one of the great Rinpoches or Tulkus or Desmond Tutu, you know some of those really great people, at least somebody with a lot of power, Obama get elected again – you do it, Mitt Romney (laughter) may you be free of suffering and the causes of suffering? (laughter) Sincerely, may we all, because we all have the causes of suffering. So it is very easy to say, who? Little Me? Ah shucks not me and point to the other guy, or the UN, they'll do it, or whatever, you know thinking somebody else and the Mahayana says no, stop pointing the finger outwards, take it upon yourself.

Now clearly if one is adopting that, within the framework of this person, within this lifetime - I will liberate all sentient beings throughout the universe from suffering and the causes of suffering, then this is major psychosis, because it's just silly, it's completely flat out very sweet but totally sappy, crazy, whacko megalomania. So Mahayana Buddhism is not whacky, etc etc. Now we can ask, alright, so now we see this merging of wisdom with compassion again. If this is to be sincere, this is a real, an actual resolve, an intention. How can we move out of the realm of Loony-Tunes - of craziness? That is if, as I just said - if that resolve comes from identifying with this body, I Alan Wallace, imputed upon this body and this mind, I should do

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that? That's crazy. It's not going to happen, it's a nice thought, it's better than – May I kill everybody, but it's not going to happen, it's almost would be really a kind of a lie.

18:49 I and I alone will resolve the world debt and we'll start with Greece and then move to the United States and so forth and I and I alone will do that. You'll just sound like an idiot, so let's not create idiotic resolve.

Then if we go to the level, but this is one base of imputation, this body, this mind, it just doesn't make any sense; to wish that we all may be free? Sure. To take on the resolve? Forget it, silly.

(18:40) Let's go to a deeper dimension then, my substrate, consciousness carrying on from lifetime to lifetime to lifetime that little slender current of consciousness and energy of prana moving through time, hopefully gradually evolving towards enlightenment, it's that and but, it's a samsaric continuum of consciousness, it is my basis in samsara, right? So if I say that; if we say in my past life I was such and such, in my future life I will be such and such, I, I, then the I is being designated upon that basis, that continuum; otherwise I can't possibly say I had any previous lives because this body and this coarse mind didn't have any previous lives, it had no previous lives at all, right?

(20:02) The only thing that had a previous life is that continuum of energy consciousness, energy mind, and so that could be a basis of designation. May I experience maturation of a good karma, I'm accumulating in this life may I experience this in future lifetimes? Okay may I in future lifetime – the basis of designation is the continuum of consciousness. Does this make any sense still? And Miles I think has heard me say this before, you are quite right it's just not realistic, one little one smidgen, almost like a cosmic worm, slithering through space time, choo-choo, like the Little Engine that goes – chug-chug- chug, one little unenlightened sentient being. I will relieve all the sentient beings, I will dispel all the suffering of the universe ...chug-chug-chug - like all sentient beings would say that's a nice promise, but man we would have to wait a long time, it's going to be like this is going to be forever; so that doesn't really strike me as quite realistic either.

21:11 So then of course where do we go? Basis of designation for I am - only one possibility and that's down to the deepest level, down to rigpa, down to primordial consciousness; on that basis designating "I am". I shall relieve all sentient beings from suffering and its causes. Now it actually is realistic. The dimension of consciousness transcending time, transcending space, embracing all of space and time and having from that dimension infinite capacity of wisdom, of power, of compassion.

(21:26) So my strong sense here is that when one arouses that, obviously with one's consciousness mind, this is a meditation, when one arouses that resolve; some of you with background in Tibetan Buddhism, you know the phrase - calling the Lama from afar, there are various poems, various prayers, very sweet, really touch the heart when you've been separated from your Lama, maybe your Lama's passed away, and having that sense: calling your Lama from afar –it's a devotional practice of guru yoga and then it stirs the heart and then it opens up that conduit of blessing.

(22:17) Well in a similar fashion as we arouse this resolve: "May I free all sentient beings from suffering and its causes" - and that's all dimensions of suffering, it's like you are calling your own Buddha nature from afar, which in a way is kind of silly because your Buddha nature is not in someplace else. But it's afar in a sense that we can't see it, unless we have realized rigpa, it's there but it's hidden by veils, so it seems very far away, it seems simply to be an object of belief, of hope, of trust, of intuition. But it's almost as if by calling it from afar, calling it from near, it stirs - because if you really understand when I say - may I do this, it makes no sense to say that from the superficial level or the medium level, it makes sense only from the deepest level. So if I'm going to arouse that response, something must stir from the depths, like – you calling me, you calling me? Because I hear you; and so something stirring there, something arousing, something motivating, activating this deepest dimension that is not simply luminous and clear and pure, but has tremendous potential, infinite potential.

So that's that third phase. If one doesn't believe in Buddha nature I think it makes no sense, I think it's kind of hypocrisy, silly, sweet but empty resolve; but if one has that, that's part of one's world view, One can intuitively affirm that dimension - then makes sense.

(24:03) And then finally, (Alan speaks in Tibetan) now we are definitely deeply into Mahayana Buddhist territory when we come to the fourth, and that is:

May the Lama, and La literally means the deity or manifestations of the Buddha, so let's just say the guru and the Buddhas. May the gurus and Buddhas bless me that I may be so enabled, I may have that ability - so calling the blessings of the guru, one guru, all gurus, one Buddha, all Buddha's, they're calling on them -

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please bless me that I may have that ability. There's my resolve – but I can't do it now, I can't do it with my current limitations, so please bless me that I can have the ability, be endowed with the ability to carry through with that and then it becomes a very powerful resolve.

So that's run through, let's take it to the meditation.

Meditation:

(26:08) So before seeking to realize great compassion this text that we've read advises that we first settle our mind in a state of meditative equipoise, so let's approximate that to the best of our ability by settling body, speech and mind in the natural states by quietly calming the conceptual mind with mindfulness of breathing. To venture into this meditation in a most affective and meaningful way possible let's dissolve, to the best of our ability, our ordinary sense of identity which will just get in the way because of its severe limitations. According to your ability reflect upon the emptiness of your own body that it consists of nothing other than empty appearances arising in space; upon your own mind - your coarse mind when you seek for it all are appearances, empty appearances arising in space; and when you look for yourself as something imputed upon the body and mind – there's no one to be found. Dissolve your body, speech and mind and your own identity, your own personhood into emptiness.

Where you were there is emptiness and in that same place is primordial consciousness, all pervasive, and the energy of primordial consciousness; with this as your basis of designation, imagine that energy of primordial consciousness becoming crystalized in your own current form but purely a body of energy, radiant, incandescent, transparent, devoid of substance, empty of inherent nature.

And to the best of your ability rest in meditative equipoise, in the sense of your own presence in body and mind, luminous, clear, transparent, free of all obscurations, all afflictions of body and mind.

(32:45) Then arouse in your mind if you will, the first line of this liturgy:

1) Why couldn't all sentient beings be free from suffering and the causes of suffering?

And reflect deeply with respect to the whole world but specifically, with respect to people and individuals who come to mind, of course including yourself. Why couldn't we all be free of suffering and the causes of suffering? And if you can embrace the reality that all sentient beings are imbued with Buddhanature, the potential for perfect awakening, then therein lies your answer - and let this lead to the second line of the liturgy -

2) May we all be free from suffering and its causes.

3) May I free us all – and when you arouse such a resolve, imagine once again symbolically, your own Buddha nature, your own pristine awareness as an infinite source of light at your heart, a small orb of light, and as you direct your attention outwards to others who are in suffering, imagine their suffering and its underlining causes in a form of darkness, and with each inhalation as you arouse this resolve - may I free each one - Imagine this darkness being drawn in, but in no way diminishing the light at your heart or of your entire form, drawn in and extinguished without trace, and with each in breath arouse this resolve of great compassion.

And then we move to the fourth line of lethargy:

4) May the guru and Buddha's bless me that I may be able to carry through this resolve, that I may do so.

And let's shift the visualization - with each inhalation imagine light converging in upon you from all sides, from all the enlightened ones above and below and from all the cardinal directions; with each in breath imagine cascades of radiant white pure light converging in upon you, the light of blessings of compassion, filling, saturating and empowering body and mind; and with each out breath, imagine this light then flowing out from your body mind, out to all sentient beings, relieving the suffering and the causes of suffering of each one, breath in the light breath out the light, vanquishing the darkness of suffering and its causes.

Teaching pt2.

(49:16) This practice highlights the enormous importance, significance, impact of motivation. That is in shamatha practice if we look to some of the classic literature like the Lamrim Chenmo, the great Treatise by Tsongkhapa, when choosing an object it's commonly said choose (Alan gives the Tibetan for -) a virtuous object, like a Buddha image or Tara, Manjushri, an object that really arouses faith, that arouse virtue, right? A very good reason for doing that. At the same time Tsongkhapa himself and really all of great Lamas of Tibet, great, great gurus of India, they acknowledge that other practices like mindfulness of breathing are absolutely authentic, I mean they are referred to by Tsongkhapa himself, but there's nothing virtuous, I mean, the sensations of the breath, is that a virtuous object? I don't think so.

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So how do we bring those two together? And the way we do it is kind of quite obvious, and that is - a Buddha image, of Shakyamuni Buddha, of Tara, Chenrezig, whatever, - virtuous by nature? If they were then anybody looking at it, Taliban, Al-Qaeda, anybody - Buddha nature, oh, there's an image of the Buddha, they wouldn't be thinking about blowing it up, right? So clearly an image of the Buddha doesn't arouse virtue in everybody's mind. And for the Art connoisseur - I think I can probably fetch five thousand dollars for that one. So some may be animosity, some greed, some I don't like Tibetan art, I don't care for it, it's not my cup of tea - so indifference. So an image of the Buddha could arouse hatred, greed or indifference, right, quite clearly. So there's nothing intrinsically virtuous about it, and is there anything really intrinsically virtuous about any object whatsoever? I don't think so. So then it all comes back to your own mind, right?

(57:18) So with the practice of mindfulness of breathing, or settling the mind, are you just attending to an ocean of virtue when you settled your mind in its natural state? Oh it's so inspiring! If so then I congratulate you where are you so I can start offering prostrations. Likewise awareness of awareness, so it's luminous, so it's cognizant, that luminosity is not a virtue, not a virtue - virtue. Cognizance is not a virtue - virtue. It's nice to have it although sometimes it's nice to go to sleep too. So not by nature, no, it all comes back, it keeps on coming back, it always keeps on coming back to the quality of awareness that you bring to it and then simply that, the motivation.(53:03)

So I know at least a few of you have been challenged, even those who listen by podcast, those who are in retreat, not here, but elsewhere, a number of aspiring yogis around the world who are listening to the podcast here, and I know some of you sometimes receive some criticism, or some at least skepticism from loved ones around you, friends, people around you saying - You're being so selfish, you took eight weeks off to come to Phuket when you could have been doing something good for the world, and there you are just doing something for yourself, going to a nice tropical place hanging out, watching your breath. What a slacker, you lazy people, while we're all working hard you're just hanging out there and then you finally found a teacher that said that you can even lay down while you do it. Man, you really had to reach to find a teacher, to say that, at least a real meditation teachers say you have to sit up, but you found someone from California, used to laying on the beach, you've found the most light weight meditation teacher on the planet and in one of the nicest places on the planet. Gosh, that's so selfish!

So have a nice day, enjoy, because here we are laying down in a tropical paradise, and lunch is coming up in two hours.

(53:54) So on the other hand even for a noble profession like medicine - is it always one hundred percent pure altruism and motivation that inspires people to go into such a professional? It's clearly not, not in every single case, or any other service like becoming a school teacher, maybe it's just because it's a really secure job, really secure, you got a nice pension.

(54:10) So there's no activity out there that one can say - oh yes, anybody who goes into that, that line of work, that type of activity volunteering in a soup kitchen and so forth, there is no activity out there that simply guarantees - oh if you go there then your motivation must be pure. It's not true. It's always keeps coming back to the motivation. And so here it is, even for a simple practice, one that by nature seems to be quite ethically neutral, watching sensations in and out breath can become, really venture, can become a bodhisattva activity; or activity of tremendous significance of also impact, of consequences, spending 24 minutes watching your breath with the motivation of great compassion. But there it is, with the motivation of great compassion watching your breath, going for a walk, or by simply taking care of your own health. People take care of their own healthy for many, many reasons.

One can take care of one's own health out of great compassion, thinking if I can balance and restore my body from illness, from injury, whatever it may be, if I can do so, I'll be so much more effective to be able to follow the path myself and to be able to serve others.

(55:45) So in order to relieve the suffering and the causes of suffering of all sentient beings, I'll do all I can to restore my own health. And a simple act that anyone would do, you don't have to practice dharma to want to restore your health, that itself, every act you take to restore your own health, bodhisattva it, an act, an expression of great compassion so that's virtue. Lying down I see - oh my body's tired, I think I need to rest now, good, expression of great compassion because that's the best thing you can do for a sentient beings right now. Don't strive, don't work, don't arouse yourself, don't exhaust yourself, that's not in the service of sentient beings because you'll damage your health, you'll prevent it from being restored. Even lying down can

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be an expression of great compassion so there's no limits here, no limits, always comes back to motivation, good? Now enjoy your day.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

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Final edition by Rafael Carlos Giusti

72 Mindfulness of feelings (5)

05 Oct 2012

This afternoon we return to the close application of mindfulness to feeling, this time we turn to Shantideva's other text, he composes as far as I know only two, there's of course the text we've already looked at in terms of the close application of mindfulness to the body, and now we turn to his close application of mindfulness of feelings and after the pretty significant heavy lifting from yesterday, that is if you weren't intellectually challenged then you're already realized or not up to it at all, for the rest of us in between, that was pretty heavy lifting. I translated this a few days ago and then reviewing it again, it's kinda like okay now just sit back and relax a little bit. It's the same author, but he's coming in with a very different mood, and so you don't have to work out quite as hard, I think, but deep, deep. So you'll see for yourself, let's just go right to it.

Text:

"Regarding the close application of mindfulness to feelings, the Ārya Ratnacūḍa Sūtra states, "Son of good family, to summarize a bodhisattva's regarding feelings as feelings, by closely applying mindfulness to them, he experiences great compassion for sentient beings who dwell in the feeling of happiness."

Text: "a bodhisattva's regarding feelings as feelings":

In other words it already implies, what immediately springs to mind is the statement by Dudjom Lingpa of the first entry into taking the impure mind as the path, where you clearly distinguish the stillness of your awareness, versus the movements of emotions, thoughts, images, memories and so forth and so on, you see they're not the same, in other words you're already getting some breathing space, you're not just slipping automatically and semi consciously into full-fledged cognitive fusion -

I am thinking this, I am feeling this, in other words I, I, I, I. What are you feeling? I am feeling, feelings as I. I am feeling, experiencing thoughts as I. I am feeling, etc, etc, as I as Mine. That can be overwhelming, it can be overwhelming. I mean here's the closest implement in hand, but a pretty expensive cell phone, I guess it's still called a phone, it's mostly not phone. If it should be damaged, what's the overwhelming thing that arises in the mind? Oh a cell phone was damaged? I don't think so. It's "MY" cell phone was damaged. Something of MINE was damaged, that's all that really matters, is that it's MINE. My blade of grass, the door of my room, but that's what really matters, so we're experiencing the cell phone as MINE, right, country as mine, anything as mine. And of course for the five skandhas, of course for these four objects of mindfulness. So the first thing is get it straight. Get it straight, just see feelings as feelings, it's a really good start. So there's that point, which then suggests that you might do that from the perspective of stillness of awareness; clearly it's harder than observing simply tactile sensations; it's harder because the feelings are not appearances arising to you, they are in that subjective mode of experience. You've heard that many times by now. So therefore of course, the cognitive fusion is going to be like super-glue, you know, it's going to be very strong. Nevertheless, this is the hypothesis here, verified so many times over 2600 years that we can actually be aware of feelings without totally being sucked into them.

Then he says:

Text: "by closely applying mindfulness to them, he experiences great compassion for sentient beings who dwell in the feeling of happiness."

This is from the sutras so once again we can expect, as in the case of Shantideva, Nargajuna and so forth and Dudjom Lingpa, they're choosing their words carefully.

So, 'Dwell' What may we surmise from that? (5:22) Probably attachment, identification, some happy feeling arises, and when a happy feeling arises then we're perfectly happy to identify with that, when an unhappy feeling or pain arises, we say – oh, let's practice Buddhism. I'm going to see pain as pain, hello pain over there; happiness – oh come to papa! Come close and stay close, you're my happiness, I like happiness, pleasure. So we're perfectly happy to identify our pleasure as permanent, true source of happiness, and

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MINE. Right? We don't really want to practice dharma all that much, it doesn't seem like there's much of a need when things are going well, right? So who was it, it was another great Dzogchen master, the name will come to me in a minute, he said - "sentient beings can handle a lot of adversity and they have a hard time handling felicity".

We can handle misfortune, well we rise to the occasion and we need to, what other option is there? But when the good times are rolling we have a hard time handling that. We throw dharma to the wind, that was my insurance policy but I'm healthy now and we're on with it. So there's a complete asymmetry there, I think in terms of the incentive to practice dharma, when things are going well we don't need the dharma don't bug me, I'm enjoying this. That's dwelling in happiness. Among The Four Immeasurables, I want you to weave everything together among the four immeasurables, which is the false facsimile he is referring to? The false facsimile of what? I know Miles knows because he always knows, so Miles gets an A even for being silent; Elizabeth? Yeah, what's the false facsimile of empathetic joy? Dwelling in happiness.

(7:20) Dwelling in happiness, I live here, I'm one of the fortunate people, I'm one of the happy people, not like most people, I'm really one of the privileged. So he feels compassion. He experiences great compassion – MahaKaruna,

"he experiences great compassion for sentient beings who dwell in the feeling of happiness." They are just getting fat and comfortable, identifying with that, thinking they own it, thinking it's theirs. They're not like those other sentient beings, and so he feels compassion for them. What dimension of suffering is he attending to when he is feeling compassion for those who are dwelling in suffering (Alan meant to say happiness)? Suffering of change, exactly right, it feels good, but then it genuinely is suffering. Okay, so good so far.

(8:16) Text: "He practices, thinking", so once again this becomes so obvious, that the mindfulness, you know, if there was any shred of doubt, here's a master – Shantideva, citing one of the great Mahayana sutras, and he's talking about the close application of mindfulness and while doing so, one practices thinking, in other words there's no possibility of this being bare attention. Bare attention's the opening of the door. And then you want to come in with full wisdom, at time contemplating, reflecting, considering, thinking. So mindfulness is such a rich practice. He practices thinking, oh, now this is interesting, I'm going to turn this into a, I'm going to let you unpack this passage from the sutra – okay.

Text: He practices, thinking, 'One who has no feeling is happy'.

Now I've already, you remember I took out my machete and I wacked the translator from Singapore who was translating mental afflictions as emotion, and saying the ideal now is to have no emotions, a terrible, terrible translation. Bad translation because that simply is not the ideal of any school of Buddhism, that the Buddha has no bliss, the Buddha has no happiness, give me a break.

But now he's saying, it looks like he's siding with the bad translator, and against me, and you know he wouldn't do that (laughter) he says – one who has no feeling is happy. Now, considering all that you know from your dharma background and even you know from the first six weeks here, what's the, I mean obviously we're going to read it literally, and then it's foolish, what's he getting at? One who has no feeling? I know Nichola knows, when he says one who has no feeling is happy, the emphasis probably should be a giveaway. (Alan asks the students) Exactly right, it can't be anything else, can it, by a process of elimination, is this literal, okay the achievement of enlightenment means you have no feelings whatsoever, you're like a zombie, like a robot? That's impossible, so Yorgen has it right on, by a process of elimination it has to be that emphasis on HAS. One who is not identifying, who is not owning, not owning feelings, that person, because there it is – one who HAS no feeling is happy – what's happiness? What kind of a mental process is happiness? Is it attention, is it memory, it's a really simple question. Yes, it's a feeling, exactly right, it's a feeling, no sarcasm at all. (10:46)

But there it is, that's why it's ridiculous to read this literally. One who has no feeling is happy, which is a feeling, right? So now we know there's only one way to interpret it.

(11:18) One who releases all grasping onto, a possessiveness, identification, cognitive fusion now with what kind of happiness? Well pretty much if you identify with any kind of happiness that's going to be a problem, but for the likes of us who aren't already advanced yogis, what's the kind of happiness that he's really going to target – don't identify, don't own it, don't grasp onto it? I'll answer that one – hedonic pleasure. Things are going well, you're encountering good fortune, you say good, give me more, I'll hold onto that, that's mine and

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that's mine; so one who releases that, especially releasing the grasping onto the identification with the ownership of hedonic pleasure, and simply sees it as arising and passing in the space of the mind - that person is happy. What type of happiness is arising? (Alan asks students) When he says that person who has no feeling is happy, what kind of happiness is that? It has to be eudemonia. What else could it be? That you're going to get some hedonic pleasure from that? It's not a stimulus. So exactly. Isn't it lovely to see how the cream is coming to the surface of the milk?

(12:08) You know very nice, good. Otherwise the person who is reading this cold, with no background could say- man this is really stupid, this makes no sense, man, I don't want to follow this tradition, this is a bummer! This is a bummer tradition – no feelings!

(12:36) And now we see, now that we're sorting this out, making good sense of it, letting our wisdom rise up to meet his wisdom, right, he continues -

Text:

In order to eliminate the feelings of all sentient beings, he regards feelings as feelings by closely applying mindfulness to them. In order to bring an end to the feelings of sentient beings, he dons his armor, but he does not bring an end to his own feelings. Whatever feelings he experiences, he embraces and experiences all those feelings with great compassion. Whenever he experiences pleasant feelings, he realizes great compassion for all sentient beings who indulge in attachment, and he completely abandons all of his own propensities for attachment.

(12:38) "In order to eliminate the feelings of all sentient beings": (now we know what that means, you know, not damage to the frontal cortex and whip out the left prefrontal cortex - no more feelings for you - brain damage – not that.)

Alan reading the text again as below and commenting -

In order to eliminate the feelings of all sentient beings he regards feelings as feelings by closely applying mindfulness to them. (It's almost like a Sherlock Holmes here.)

In order to bring an end to the feelings of sentient beings, he dons his armor, (that is, he is about to get to work) but he does not bring an end to his own feelings.

(Okay, please unpack that Sherlock, and he does -) Whatever feelings he experiences, he embraces and experiences all those feelings with great compassion. Whenever he experiences pleasant feelings, he realizes great compassion for all sentient beings who indulge in attachment, and he completely abandons all of his own propensities for attachment.

There's a meditation right there; really this is lojong, this is lojong. So when joy arises, you encounter felicity, good fortune and all of that, you allow that feeling to arise, you experience it richly, embrace it in a sense of fully experiencing it, being totally in touch with it – so to speak. But then rather than saying – I feel happy, I feel happy, then you transmute that happiness itself, that feeling of happiness itself, into great compassion for all those who indulge in attachment while at the same time abandoning all propensities for attachment him or herself.

(14:21) Whenever he experiences painful feelings, (so here's another big Lojong practice coming up, this is the mother of all Lojongs in my understanding that is in the Bodhicharyavatara, I think they're the template the paradigms of the whole lojong literature of Tibet, Shantideva I believe more than anybody else,) Whenever he experiences painful feelings he realizes great compassion for all sentient beings who indulge in hatred, and he completely abandons all of his own propensities for hatred.

So when suffering arises in body and mind rather than simply resting in his own little tea cup with the big tsunami of – I'm in pain, my mind is miserable, I miserable, I miserable – rather than resting in that, he just lets it go supernova; and his awareness, his attention doesn't deny his own feelings but it extends out like rings in all directions and realizes great compassion for all sentient beings. That's what we focused on this morning, having that great resolve that just when one experiences suffering oneself, one doesn't simply aspire – oh gee may I be free of suffering. I mean some people may leave it there, but the smart person, the wise person goes beyond that; if you're experiencing suffering - may I be free of suffering and the causes of suffering. And I shall make it so, why couldn't I be? Might I be and I shall do it! What you think I'm going to wait around for somebody else to do it for me? Could be a long wait.

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(16:14) So it's easy, it's quite natural for the wise to develop not only an aspiration but an intention, a resolve - I shall free myself from suffering and the causes of suffering, good, but then does he leave it there as if there is some kind of titanium casing that separates him or her from the rest of the world, and of course not. So there it extends out in all directions: "I have that resolve that I must heal myself, this is renunciation of course, I resolve to free myself from suffering and the causes of suffering. Who else is going to it for me? Even the Buddha can't do it; come over and touch me on the head, I wish I could touch Natu on the head, have all the headaches go away, I'd love to do that, but even if the Buddha were here, I don't know, I don't think so, it's not how it works.

(17:03) Rare occasions, rare occasions, Jesus would heal here and there, the Buddha would heal here and there, it does occur whether there's special karmic connections, whether strong faith, special praitiyasamutpada, then it does happen; but if we didn't need that, then just come and give mass healings you know, come one come all – heal everybody; no one's ever done that. Not Jesus, not Buddha, not anybody else.

(17:31) So then finally when all is said and done it comes back to ourselves, we must make the resolve which is renunciation, the spirit of definite emergence – (Alan gives the Tibetan for the spirit of definite emergence) now I will do everything needed however long it may take to release myself from suffering and its causes; but here this bodhisattava then takes that resolve and then just lets it expand in all directions. So when he or she experiences suffering and expands it out as the field of awareness expands out in all directions and that which had being limited to renunciation now transform into Great Compassion for all beings. And so the experience of suffering itself is transmuted into virtue, otherwise it is just suffering. Suffering is not non virtue, it's not virtue, it's just suffering, but when transmuted in that way your very experience of suffering and the motivation that goes with it, transforms into dharma practice, powerful dharma practice, transforms or catalyzes Great Compassion.

So he feels Great Compassion for all sentient beings who indulge in hatred, and he completely abandons all his own propensities for hatred; recognizing of course the connection that hatred, the most virulent of the mental afflictions just naturally cannot help it; it gives rise to blatant suffering so then abandoning propensities for hatred himself. And finally:

Text: Whenever he experiences feelings that are neither pleasant nor painful, he realizes great compassion for all sentient beings who indulge in delusion, and he completely abandons all of his own propensities for delusion.

So there it is, when we're not really beset with either pleasant feelings or unpleasant, neither good fortune nor misfortune, it's easy then to just slack off, say – how you doing? Oh okay, no problem, no big deal – so then we just kind of slip into laxity, into dullness, into delusion, and then we just coast. And so therefore compassion for all sentient beings who indulge in delusion. So the Sutra continues -

He does not become attached to pleasant feelings, for he is skilled at vanquishing attachments. He does not become angry [or upset, or resentful, impatient, hostile, aggressive, there's a lot of words you could pack in there – he does not become angry] at painful feelings, for he is skilled at vanquishing anger. He also does not become ignorant [or simply unaware] in response to feelings that are neither painful nor pleasant, for he is skilled at vanquishing ignorance [or again unawareness – Ma-rigpa]. Whatever feelings he experiences, he knows them all to be impermanent and experiences them as such. He recognizes (and of course that goes on so many different levels, that is on the coarse level, simply knowing what feeling it is, these catalyst driven, these hedonic pleasures, pains and so forth, knowing that they are arising in dependence upon causes and conditions, in a world of flux. Then on the gross level, knowing whatever is coming up, just knowing – this too is going to pass. So over time it's going to fade away, it'll be finished. But then of course when mindfulness is closely applied, even right there while it's present, then you see it's not just something stable, static, that's captured your mind, but rather when you micro investigate it, then you see it's just a whole bunch of staccato moments. It's already almost like an ice flow, or like an ice pack – when you don't look at it then it just looks like it's solid ice, right, but then when the spring comes we know it breaks into chunks, and so it doesn't look quite so formidable, just a whole bunch of chunks, starting to thaw. So when one closely applies mindfulness to feelings, then the solidity, the firmness, the immutability of it fades away and then you see – ah, this isn't quite as horrendous, quite as formidable. As the French would say – not quite so intimidating, because after

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all it's just a bunch of staccato moments, so the reification already gets softened. So-Whatever feelings he experiences he knows them to be impermanent and experiences them as such.)

He recognizes and experiences them as unsatisfying. (that is as though experiences themselves are not true sources of genuine happiness). He recognizes and experiences them as identity-less. (so we can read that on the one hand from the Pali Canon, the Shravakayana account, so now this should be familiar, you should be – oh ya, I know what's coming and kind of relax a little bit. From the Shravakayana account, what does that mean? What does it mean that these feelings arising pleasure, pain, indifference, that they're identity-less, what does that mean? They have no owner, they're not a self and they have no owner. Exactly, and then when you slip over into the Madhyamaka, which we were looking at pretty intently yesterday, then what does it mean that feelings have no identity – dakmepa - from Madhyamaka? From the Madhyamaka perspective? Exactly right, they have no phenomenal identity. That's why as a translator I think it doesn't make any sense in English to say – phenomenal self – because nobody thinks that a sweater has a self. Not in English anyway, I don't think in German either, to say it has a self, but does it have an identity, does it have some self- nature? That's why I say Dak (Tibetan) in that context I say identity rather than self, so it's phenomenal identitylessness. That feelings of course are not a self, but they are empty of inherent nature, phenomenal identity, exactly right, yes. So that's the Madhayamaka, the deeper realization that not only do they have no owner, not only are they not a personal self, but they don't even have any intrinsic identity, independent of conceptual designation. Woa, suddenly the bottom fell out, that's such a deeper statement, an awesome statement. That if one could realize that then one could say oh, this means you really could be free of those feelings. I mean they don't even need to arise if you withdraw the conceptual designation; and if they dependent for their very existence on conceptual designation, you've just pulled the rug out from beneath them. That's very empowering.

He recognizes pleasant feelings as impermanent (so it's interesting that we are seeing here the three marks of existence, that he is going to pair these with the three types of feelings.)

(24:29) So when we have pleasant feelings we want to hold on of course, we want to think – this will last – this relationship will last – this will be the last cell phone that Apple makes, they'll say – we did perfection this time, the one that Alan Wallace bought, that's the final say, that's the ultimate final cell phone, we'll never make another because that's the perfect one. That'll not happen. Not in my lifetime.

So what's the antidote for that clinging, that grasping that – this is really a keeper, this will really always make me happy, this relationship, this anything – recognizing hey- they're impermanent. So that's head on collision to attachment to pleasant feelings.

He recognizes pleasant feelings as impermanent, he recognizes painful feelings as unsatisfying, (by nature Duhkha) and he recognizes feelings that are neither painful nor pleasant as peaceful.

(and once again we come back to that theme that the door to eudemonic well-being, to genuine happiness is not by finding something that gives you hedonic pleasure, and then trying to really pursue it and nail it down and pin it. Because that's not going to work, certainly not by pursuing unhappiness or pain, that doesn't make any sense, but rather by attending to something neutral like the sensations of the breath; neither pleasant or unpleasant by nature, but attending there without attachment without grasping or aversion and the mind calming, coming to equilibrium, and then finding – I'm still attending to the breath, but now pleasant feelings are arising, pleasant feelings are arising. I just received an email from one student who's now in retreat, full time retreat, she said I'm just repeatedly experiencing a sukha fest. And sometimes tears come to my eyes, just because so much happiness is arising. Is it because she dropped me as a teaching and found another kind of meditative object that really makes you happy? Maybe but she didn't tell me about that one. I think it's continuing right along with the same practice we've been doing here, it's shamatha, mindfulness of breathing, same old same old, but now so much joy arising, even bringing tears to the eyes. Of course that makes me very happy, she experiences happiness I think Mudita – so it spreads. It means some really happy virus is going via the internet. She may be really happy – oh she's doing so well, it makes me so happy! Another one I received mail from just a few days ago, she's achieved stage 7, stabilized on stage 7 and then on to shamatha – so happy! Stable, solid, happy, speaking of the ambrosia of the dharma, ah. That makes me happy, really. Another one struggling – well that's what I'm here for. When they're there they don't need me anymore, I just want to go Yay Team Shamatha! Nothing much for me to do then, but other one struggling then, another one just recently struggling with so much noise, very dedicated, very sincere, full time retreat,

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so much noise in the environment, and he said is this a conducive environment? He gave a whole list of all the noise coming in. I said, well it's a safe bet that's not optimal. So there, for starters, but then that's where a spiritual friend comes in, if there's something you can do about it why be unhappy, and if there's nothing you can do about it why be unhappy? So I asked him, is this tolerable, because he's been there for some months? Then carry on, why be unhappy about it? It's trucks going by what you going to do? And so if it's tolerable then what I suggested to him, to share the obvious, is when you find emotional responses or cognitive responses, thoughts coming up – doggone why the motor cycle? Why're they having a party? Why are they sawing down the trees, why are the trucks making so much noise? When you see the conceptualization, the rumination coming up, when you see some unhappy feeling, some frustration, some irritation arising, so beyond unhappy feeling to anger arising, good! This is called settling the mind in its natural state practice. You see that come up what do you do? Let your awareness be still, observe the comings and goings of thoughts, emotions and mental afflictions without cognitive fusion, and take it as grist for the mill. Transform this into your practice if it's tolerable and if it's not tolerable, okay here are two email addresses you can check out for places to go; but either way, deal with it, and if there's nothing you can do about it, why be upset? And if there is something you can do about it, why be upset? Gosh who said that? Shantideva. So there it is – he recognizes feelings that are neither painful nor pleasant as peaceful; so right there, sensations at the tip of your nose of the breath, neutral. But then what arises as you're attending to that something neutral, likewise awareness of awareness, not by nature blissful immediately, slowly, yeah; but when you're attending to something neutral and you're doing so, but with the equipoise, with the balance, without falling into excitation or laxity, when you're doing so, then okay, it's peaceful. And now again, I'm just weaving everything like a weaver; it's peaceful, that's the first thing the Buddha said about mindfulness of breathing. You remember? (30:18) When cultivated and developed it's peaceful. That's kinda nice, not blissful, not enjoyable, this is okay; and then continue right in that groove, you've just opened the door of peaceful, continue right there. Continue refining your mind and it becomes sublime. Continue and it becomes an ambrosial dwelling, continue and every unwholesome thought and mental affliction is dispersed on the spot. So it actually transforms the mind away from unwholesome and afflicted tendencies, into the wholesome. Powerful stuff!

But it's an inside job, all from the inside. So that's why he is saying here, these feelings that are neither pleasant nor painful – peaceful. Thus we will end here, Thus, whatever is pleasant is impermanent, whatever is painful is unsatisfying, and whatever is neither pleasant nor painful is identity-less.

And I think we'll stop there, there's just a little bit more for tomorrow, but I'd like to have more time for a bit of discussion. So with that, let's go to the meditation.

Meditation:

(32:37) Once again let your very entrance into the practice be an expression of compassion for yourself, you're opening the door to alleviating suffering and its cause as you settle your body, speech and mind in the natural states and calm the rumination for a little while with mindfulness of breathing.

(36:10) And with the clear light of awareness closely apply mindfulness to the field of the body and the field of the mind, noting the sensations that arise - earth, water, fire and air that arise within the space of the body and the thoughts, the images, the appearances that arise within the space of the mind.

And now observe how these somatic and mental appearances act as cooperative conditions contributing to the emergence of feelings, pleasant, unpleasant and neutral, they don't turn into the feelings, they're not substantial causes, but where they are not there - the feelings would not arise, they contribute to them without transforming into them, closely apply mindfulness to the causal relationship between these appearances in the body and mind and the feelings that arise in response to them.

And then as in the same spirit of letting your awareness be still while observing the motions of the mind - as in settling the mind in its natural state, to the best of your ability let your awareness be still, as you recognize feelings as feelings, arising in the space of the body and within the space of the mind, simply recognize them for what they are.

If pleasant feelings arise recognize them as impermanent, and if painful or unpleasant feelings arise simply recognize them for what they are, the unpleasant as unpleasant but to the best of your ability without cognitive fusion, without being sucked in, fused with feelings; and see if you can identify feelings that are

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neither pleasant nor unpleasant and recognize them as having no owner, having no inherent nature of their own.

(43:41) Then exactly following the counsel of Shantideva - let's weave this practice together with the one from this morning on great compassion exactly as Shantideva advises; when pleasant feelings arise in the body or mind then expand the field of your awareness beyond your own personal feelings the ones you directly experience, expand the field of awareness to embrace all beings around you with great compassion for all of those who are caught up in attachment, craving, greed. Why couldn't all sentient beings be free from suffering and its causes? May they be free, may I free them and may I be blessed by the gurus and the Buddha's to enable me to do so.

And you may as we did this morning breathe in the light of these blessing coming in from all sides, and breathe out the light of compassion - may each one be free of attachment.

As unpleasant or painful feelings arise in the body and mind, recognize them as such, feelings as feelings, expand the field of your awareness to embrace all those around you with great compassion, with the aspiration and the resolve - may each one be free of anger, of hatred, of aggression, hostility.

And moving boldly into the realm of possibility with each out breath, as you breathe out this field of light of great compassion, imagine those around you being freed of suffering and especially the underlying cause of hatred and anger, imagine they're experiencing such freedom here and now.

And finally for all those who experience feelings that are neither pleasant nor unpleasant, arouse great compassion with the aspiration and resolve - may we all be free of ignorance and delusion. Breathe in the light of blessings and with each out breath imagine suffering and its underlying cause, the most fundamental causes of suffering - ignorance and delusion, being dispelled and imagine freedom.

And release all aspirations, let your awareness come to rest in utter stillness, illuminating the space of the body and mind but without entering into these spaces or fusing with their contents, and rest in that pure luminosity of your own awareness, unmoving, free of grasping, free of concepts and conceptual designation.

Teaching pt2:

Summary:

Simply being present with won't change conventional reality. Conventional reality needs to be challenged with direct realization of emptiness. Only then, can withdrawing or changing conceptual designation alter your reality.

Teaching 2 - So there are a few questions here, but I'd just like to make a brief review, of a very central point in this Madhyamaka mode pertaining to feelings but everything else. This whole role of conceptual designation, I mentioned before that long before the Buddha appeared in India, the technology of Samadhi was already very, very highly developed, extremely sophisticated and my strong sense is, as a scholar of Buddhist studies that I think it was un-replicated anywhere else on the globe. The Mayans the Chinese, the Greeks and so forth, I don't think anybody did it, I think that that was one of the major contributions, of the contemplative heritage of civilization in India. And so they had developed by way of these very profound technologies of Samadhi of so withdrawing the attention away from the whole dharmadhatu, this whole desire realm, all sensory experiences; drawing it entirely into the realm of the mind and then even in the realm of the mind, drawing it out of the desire realm, into the form realm, well then there's no pain, there's no blatant suffering at all of any kind. And then even beyond that into the formless realm, where even beyond pleasure, just into equanimity, they got very good at that and of course conflated that or mistook that for Moksha – liberation, because it certainly felt like liberation, it certainly felt like freedom from all hedonic pleasure and pain. And even for that matter any pleasure of any kind, or pain of any kind, when they go into deep equanimity, but of course then there's a problem when's the Samadhi going to be over. And so useful, but not the solution. Now this statement I've made a couple of times now could very easily be taken simply literally and then be grossly mistaken. And that is – if phenomena depend for their very existence upon the conceptual designation, then I propose if you withdraw the conceptual designation, that is if the Arya Bodhisattva, the one who has gained realization of emptiness withdraws the conceptual designation, then that phenomena can vanish for him. Gen La Rimpa told me when I was living with him back in 1988, as a person who had spent years and years meditating on emptiness, he said – when you go into emptiness, gain realization of emptiness, and it's non conceptual, the conceptualization really just goes flat. And for you, even though you are not withdrawing into some form realm, or formless realm, even without that profound

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withdrawal into the face of Samadhi, just by the power of your insight, the insight and that release of all conceptual designation and conceptualization altogether, the world vanishes for you. It vanishes, because for you, you being in the center of your mandala it no longer arises because it does take that conceptual designation.

(59:21) But now let's imagine a person without such realization, just practicing open presence, you know, no Buddhist view, none of that mumbo jumbo, as some people like to refer to it – that is any aspect of Buddhism they either don't understand or don't accept. And so just going into open presence, never mind all that other stuff, let's just sit in Samadhi, who needs that? Let's just practice open presence and make the mind go really quiet. So as far as you can tell – just no thoughts arising at all. Is anything vanishing? I don't think so. I don't think so. Feelings, tactile sensations, feelings of all kinds, the mind is quiet, you may have a sense that you're withdrawing conceptual designation, all it is, is they've just gone quiet, nothing's vanishing and of course the world around you hasn't changed in any way, not the world you're experiencing. Because the reification is still there, the reification hasn't even been challenged, right? So there's really no movement, you're not moving toward enlightenment, you're not moving away from enlightenment, you're taking a respite. And sometimes a respite is really nice. Like taking a nice hot bath when you're feeling tired or a bit stiff. It doesn't heal you from anything, it doesn't make you sicker, it's just a nice hot bath and there's a time for that, so I'm not against open presence. We should just never I think, exaggerate what it is, it is simply that. So simply being quiet and withdrawing conceptual designation as much as one can doesn't bring about any radical shift in view of reality let alone the reality you're experiencing.

(01:01:14) Let alone, and now I'll say something really silly but I'm going to say it anyway, let alone without realization of emptiness, if someone looks at someone like say, Betty Rose, okay that's Betty Rose, she's simply a conceptual designation, she has only a nominal existence, alright, Betty Rose – brace yourself, no longer Betty Rose – hmmm Michelle Pfeiffer! - it didn't work! (laughter) Michelle Pfeiffer again, simply conceptually designating, simply relabeling, well then we're right back to how many legs does a dog have if you call a tail a dog. Now what's the right answer? (Alan asks students) Calling a tail a leg doesn't make it a leg. And so merely designating something with no realization of emptiness is just kind of nothing at all, it's just word games, that's all.

But now let's take the example of a person, coming back to my all-time favorite metaphor or analogy – you know where I'm going – dreams! So let's imagine you're in the midst of a non-lucid dream – which means you're reifying everything – you think this is who you really are – and these are real people around you and this is real environment and this is all happening to you, reifying everything, that's what goes along with being non-lucid in a dream; and then you just remember a little snippet from Madhyamaka, - phenomena arise in dependence upon conceptual designation – and you're standing out in the middle of the road and you see a big truck coming right down on you and you're non-lucid, and you think - it's a cloud, it's a cloud, it's a cloud – oh that hurt!

(1:02:50) If you're not lucid and you conceptually designate a Mac truck as a cloud or as a rainbow, it doesn't work because you haven't seen the emptiness of the Mac truck coming toward you. So you're just throwing little paper wads at it, a little label here and a little label there – please be a rainbow, please, rainbow, rainbow, rainbow, Oooh, and then you're road kill.

So if you're not lucid, you have no freedom. Withdraw conceptual designation you have no freedom, you're just sitting there not thinking. Change the conceptual designation, that's not freedom, you've just given another label for something you've already reified.

But now if you're lucid, if you're lucid, you know you're dreaming, and since you know you're dreaming you know there is no Mac truck, no 18 wheeler coming towards you, then as it's bearing down, you have a real chance.

And some of you, one of you recently told me – oh getting really good at transformation, transformed something I can't remember what- transformed it into a lion. But then you don't want to transform something into a lion and have it eat you. So transformed it into a happy lion and in fact it worked and the lion smiled.

Cool. If you're going to create a very large carnivore in your dream, make it a happy one who's got a full tummy.

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This is possible, I mean this is clearly possible, it happened just very recently to somebody here, but this is just the first major phase of dream yoga, is that once you become lucid and you stabilize it, then frolic, start having fun, fun vipashyana – that's not an oxymoron. Fun vipashyana within the dream to explore the nature of the dream reality through transformation and emanation. So if it's a crocodile transform it into a puppy, if it's a great big Mac truck about to kill you, transform it into a flock of butterflies. And find oh – since I've realized that they're not there from their own side, therefore if I think and I designate – it's a flock of butterflies, lo and behold the Mac truck breaks apart and you're like that movie, transformers where it suddenly just transforms into something else. From a truck to butterflies, that's a big transformation. If, and only if you've realized that there's nothing there from its own side, in other words there's nothing really there that you have to get your hands out and start twisting around manipulating – lots of luck transforming a truck into a butterfly. But if there's nothing there from its own side, power of conceptual designation you really can, you really can change the dream as you wish. And I strongly suspect that the culmination of that phase of dream yoga, because it comes in multiple phases, that phase of transformation and emanation, comes when you have so thoroughly investigated all manner of objective and subjective phenomena that your own presence in the dream, how you appear in the dream, when you have so thoroughly investigated it, really like a scientist, you become a dream scientist, or like Stephen LaBerge calls it – a Nironaut, an Astronaut of dreams (1:05:39) that when you've so thoroughly explored it, not by applying ontological analysis to it, but by actually getting in there and transforming things; when you've so thoroughly explored it by working it with that you simply know, you come to a kind of a comprehensive certainty, there's nothing here I can't change including dissolving the whole thing into substrate. That's one of the easier things to do, just dissolve the whole dream, into the sheer vacuity, back into the hollow deck, with the electricity turned off, just dissolve the whole dream back into the sheer vacuity of the substrate; you know you can do that, but you also know within the dream that you can transform it as you wish. When you know that, that there's nothing there that's too gnarly; you might have tried to walk through a wall in the beginning and you couldn't do it, you get stuck halfway through that happens a lot or you have to walk through backwards, you get very clever, but when you really get good at it, and some people I've taught have gotten very good at it. They couldn't at the start they got stuck and bounce off, even though they're lucid, but then you just keep on experimenting and then just finding – I know it's a wall and I'm just walking through the wall and they walk through it, casually, eyes open.

Let alone walking on water, etc, etc. When you've done that, congratulations, you've just passed first grade in dream yoga and you're ready to go onto more interesting things, yet.

So for people who have a knack, some people do, some people are gifted in music, mathematics and so forth, some people are just naturally gifted in lucid dreaming, in dream yoga. If we look to the teachings of Padmasambhava, in the book Natural Liberation – where he discusses six bardos, one of the bardos is the bardo of dreaming. The bardo of lucid dreaming, and any one of the six bardos, including being alive as a human being, simply being alive and practicing shamatha vipashyana, but one of the six bardos is of course the dreaming state and what he is suggesting is that any one of the six bardos can be your launching pad to gain realization of rigpa and become enlightened.

(1:07:49) So back in 1992 when we had a really quite a marvelous Mind and Life Institute meeting on sleeping, dreaming and dying, we invited and unfortunately it was in India, so the communication wasn't all that great, but we learned about one yogi up in Shimla, in Northern India who was just so naturally gifted and became expert in dream yoga, that he would spend as much time as he could, day and night, sleeping. If he could possibly get a nap, like - am I a little bit tired, ah maybe, let's try - he would always be looking for the opportunity to take a nap because that was his best platform for practicing Shamatha, vipashyana who knows, stage of generation, who knows what. So for some people that can actually be your primary vehicle for gaining really profound insight. So one little segue related to that, I know one person who was listening by podcast, he's gotten really keenly interested in hypnotism, self-hypnosis and so forth, and it's an area I've never seen any, maybe some of you have, I've never seen really some really thorough, well informed research done on the relationship of hypnosis and the power of hypnosis, for overcoming nicotine addiction or just having fun you know. Going into the deep state of hypnotism, where you can be really creative. But I've never seen really any well informed, comparative study done of hypnosis versus let's say – Buddhist meditation as in shamatha and vipashyana I've never seen that. One day I imagine it will happen because it's a juicy topic for

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research. But here's a true statement, and this relates to, maybe I should take a vow, I will not call it the Placebo effect, I will call it the Mind effect, then nobody will know what I'm talking about. That effect that people call, erroneously, placebo. But there it is, by believing that some very specific events take place, and again, it's so interesting, so mind boggling, that you have Parkinson's Disease and you actually believe this will work, that it effects the nerve fibers affected by Parkinson's, that's just astonishing, right?

(1:09:46) The power of suggestion. So we have lucid dreams, we have hypnosis, and we have placebo effect, all tapping into something that has to be similar. So what might be going on, especially in the most interesting dimension of hypnosis and in my understanding it's called the Somnambulistic state, some people and apparently a professional hypnotist, like for example a performer, I was just told this by a person who really knows about this field, I think he himself is a hypnotist, told me that a really accomplished hypnotist performer who really does this a lot, can just go like this to an audience, and just by gazing around can recognize just who is likely to be most suggestible, and then – can we have a volunteer from the audience, for example you young lady – and generally does a very good job of inviting somebody who's never been hypnotized, but just by intuitively taking them in, getting them on stage, and within a matter of minutes inducing the somnambulistic state of hypnotism which is really deep under and it happens within a matter of minutes. Most people are not that suggestible, some are and a real professional has a good chance of identifying who's who without just trial and error, trial and error. I saw this once just on television, where the hypnotist did exactly that, brought somebody up, young black guy, and very quickly brought him into this very deep trance. Now I might have mentioned this before, it's just performance, but it's interesting, that he gave the suggestion – you're now a kangaroo, very happy kangaroo, and this young stud you know, strong young guy, he gets this happy little smile like a kid, and he puts his hands up, and then we see him hopping around the stadium, around the auditorium, and he really kind of like looked like a kangaroo.

(1:11:59) Then he comes back up on the stage and slowly, slowly, or whenever the hypnotist wishes, brings him out. But you know, biting into an onion and being told it tastes like an apple, and it does for you, it completely over-rides, I mean that's done frequently. You'd think – no way – you've made contact with contact with onion, doesn't taste good, but for you it tastes just like, it's the spitting image of an apple. Total over-ride by the power of suggestion, by the power of conceptual designation.

Now to be hypnotized does not mean that you've realized emptiness of course, otherwise we'd just do that, but my strong intuition, my strong intuition, or hunch is that by going deeply into Samadhi, bearing in mind you can develop various paranormal abilities just by shamatha without realizing it, by to some extent, at least for your own personal experience, you can transform that experience by being deeply hypnotized, my strong suspicion is in these cases as in hypnosis or as in a lucid dream, that your awareness is hovering near the substrate. It's not locked into its completely frozen pattern of solidly reifying everything. It's softened up, again the ice flow has broken up into chunkiness, it's more like slush, and then that slush as you're like somewhere in between ordinary coarse absolutely reified, frozen mind, and the more fluid, plasma state of the substrate consciousness, you're somewhere in between but in that context then you can actually start to modify (1:13:34) your own personal reality, in ways that ordinary people up on the surface, cannot. And people with deep realization of emptiness or within the confined reality of a lucid dream, can, dramatically. So it's a very interesting area. Okay, enough of that. I hope that was useful.

Q1. I have chronic tinnitus, and the severity of the whistling is normally correlated to my stress level. Here in retreat, I'm feeling very relaxed, but the whistling is quite loud. Is this being produced by shifts in prana?

A- Okay, you're not at all the first person to report this, no qualms, no question that you're practicing incorrectly because I have heard this many, many times. Oh stop doing this you shouldn't be having tinnitus symptoms during meditation, especially the fact, and this is the giveaway – bear this in mind two weeks from now when we're all gone, - if certain somatic experiences, psychological experiences, Nyam, if these arise in your meditation, but they arise mostly, most prevently most frequently when you're deeply relaxed, when the mind is quiet, relaxed, composed, collected, and that's when they come up, almost a sure sign, this is a Nyam and not a dangerous signal, not an oh oh look out you're doing something wrong. It's the ones that come out when you're tighter, when you're pushing, when you're stressed, when you're a bit unhappy, and then you're getting Nyam, you're getting a headache, whatever it may be, okay that's most certainly because you're pushing too hard. But if it's coming out of relaxation then assume – this can't be harmful. Really, the body would have to be crazy to start harming you because you're so relaxed and mellow. (1:16:05)

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It doesn't make any sense, so the question is do I know of or can I conceive of a correlation between this change and the prana, which maybe currently sorts itself out? You've named it, you've gotten the symptoms and the diagnosis as I understand it, and that is - when we are deeply relaxed, especially in the supine position, that total melt-down, that releasing, that breathe really flowing in its natural rhythm, the mind getting quieter, ruminations subsiding, quite a few people, well if they had tinnitus, would experience it more loudly. But moreover many people who have no tinnitus at all, they will start hearing some strong sounds in their head, it seems to be located in their head, very, very common. And then as soon as they stop meditating it's gone. They don't get tinnitus as a result of meditating, I've never heard of anybody getting physical disorders of tinnitus because of practicing shamatha correctly. I've never heard it happen, so it wouldn't make much sense if it did, otherwise all the great yogis would be saying – what, what, I can't hear you over the roar. So I think you've diagnosed it already, that is – when you're really there, relaxed, when the prana starts to flow, the blockages start to break apart, and what I call the auditory correlate of some kind of fresh flowing, of movements of the prana is very internally generated sounds, and if you already have tinnitus it will probably manifest that way, because that's kind of a pattern. Even if not, a high pitched whistling sound, a roaring sound, they're coming up, but the nature of the Nyam, they're transient. Now something I don't know, and maybe it will be found out over the next five years or so, are people who have tinnitus, when then apply themselves to shamatha, and not just for eight weeks, but who then really go for it, might it get to the underlying root of the tinnitus, and might the tinnitus itself, since nobody has any treatment for it, that's my understanding, it's a symptom with no treatment, and no really clear understanding of the cause, otherwise they'd zap the cause; might a really deep shamatha, with a really deep, a sorting out, the free flowing prana that comes incrementally and then big time in the practice and achievement of shamatha, might that dispel tinnitus? The answer is I don't know, good to find out.

(0:1:18:49) Question 2 – Just want to check if my understanding is getting any clearer. How does the body exist? What we meditate on.

For me, as a specific composition of particles, space energy, or space energy matter, all of the above, that when it appears to substrate consciousness is called body, it only exists as appearances of the body, with, from the perspective of a substrate consciousness; without substrate consciousness it still is there, that is it exists as a composition of particles, molecules, or smallest building blocks – whatever they may be.

Response – That's exactly right. So I'm glad you expressed this and put it in such a nice concise way, because when you fall deep asleep, or you pass out, just go unconscious – there's some relief there. If you have physical distress, arthritis, headaches, physical injury, whatever, it's one of the sweetnesses of deep sleep, you just don't have any experience of your body at all. It's a little bit of time out, that can be very welcome, but does that make your body heal in anyway? Not really, except for getting a good night's sleep as part of the nourishment we need; but it does make all the appearances of the body – earth, water, fire, air, and the feelings arising in the body – vanish. That can be a nice respite, but that happening, all the appearances dissolving into the substrate, does that have any impact, or any bearing or any relevance to the body lying in bed made out of molecules?

(1:20:14) Clearly not, clearly not; but having said that, then it would be very easy, and it's something you've not suggested, but it would be very easy in conclusion to say - aha, I got it, so all the appearances of earth, water, fire, air, they are arising in the substrate, they exist only relative perception because if you are not perceiving them, they are not there, right?

So that's all relative, those appearances of the body, like the appearances of colors and shapes and the appearances of sounds, smells and taste, all of those arise from and dissolve back into the substrate – they're all empty of inherent nature, because there's nothing to them, inherently from their own side, they're just appearances, arising in the substrate, dissolving into the substrate, so I think I've realized emptiness, but in the meantime of course the body really exists. Now you didn't say that, but it would be very easy to conclude that. In other words the emptiness pertains only to dreams, only to the substrate, but meanwhile – and we start throwing things back and forth – meanwhile, hey there's something really there, namely the molecules; and that's exactly what's being challenged in Madhayamaka.

So the Madhayamaka is saying here, the Madhayamaka-Prasangika is saying – is the body there when you're not perceiving it?

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How about if nobody is perceiving it? You're alone in your room, nobody else is looking at your body, you're in deep sleep; so now let's just say, let alone omniscient Buddhism and all that, let's just kind of keep it within our world; neither you or anybody else that we know of is perceiving your body, and you're deep asleep, is your body still there?

From the Madhayamaka perspective?

The answer is yeah, of course, you're getting older, when you wake up in the morning you're a little bit older than when you went to sleep. How would you get older if your body wasn't incrementally getting older, hour by hour as it's laying there in bed? Or likewise, you can go to sleep with let's say a muffin you put it on your bedside table, you didn't eat it, and so as you fall asleep, neither you nor anybody else is perceiving the muffin, but when you wake up it's dryer than it was when you put it on the night stand when you went to sleep. So what was that? Magic? The muffin went into non-existence and then just was reborn as a dry muffin? So it makes no sense, so it sounds right there so far, this is what I already believed, that okay the taste of the muffin isn't there when nobody is tasting it, but the muffin's there, my body's there. So what we have so far is a refutation of naïve realism - that the appearances, the colors, the tastes, the tactile sensations, the appearances themselves are already out there and we're simply picking them up. To believe that is naïve realism. Well, that's refuted of course, but now the Madhyamaka is refuting metaphysical realism – it's not saying that things are not there when you are not perceiving them. But then we ask, and we've done this before so or just has to be a brief run-through – we ask – so what comes to mind, to your mind when we think, we say – your body, for example?

(1:23:31) What's there when neither you nor anybody else is looking at it? Apart from the appearances that arise in your substrate, that need consciousness to arise at all; what's there? Well that's the question that scientists have been asking for at least 400 years, I mean the whole of modern science is based upon, going back to Descartes and Galileo, what does God see? When we're asleep, or when we are not here, or for the first five days of creation when we weren't here, what was God seeing? He was seeing the whole of nature without us, and then he just added us as a really important footnote. But the whole thing was already a done deal, so by the literal reading of the Genesis account, the world is absolutely real, and how it is real is by the way God views it. But then we go back alright, to what comes to mind, molecules, and this is where Shantideva was going – what is your body made of? He doesn't say appearances and tactile sensations, he doesn't do that in Bodhicharvatura, he didn't go there, he went to what is your body made of when nobody is looking at it? Liver, spleen, lungs, skin, bones, tissue, blood, etc etc, he went through a standard list that any physician or any person performing an autopsy would say – okay, that person's not aware of his body anymore, but here's the liver, here's the lungs, and so forth and so on. So he went through that list, and shows that none of those are the body, and then he goes right down very quickly, he was a very quick study, he goes right down to the molecular level, atomic level. And you say now that's what's really there, isn't it? When nobody is perceiving it, the atomic level?

(1:25:12) And he's saying – this too does not exist by its own inherent nature. So put it this way, perceptual phenomena do not exist independently of the perception of them. So no vision – no colors. Those phenomena that we can see as objects bearing attributes, like a liver, like a human body, like an elementary particle, like a galaxy, those phenomena that we conceive of, that we objectify, and that we define as having certain attributes; we go back to the whole and the parts; those phenomena that we conceive, that we objectify or subjectify – me – my mind- my feelings – those phenomena that we conceptually designate, as – my body that is there when nobody is perceiving it – does not exist independently of the conceptual designation of it.

So you may not be perceiving it, but the very presence of that body, with its contours, with its properties, it holding certain attributes, parts and components; the existence of that body does not exist independently of the conceptual designation of it.

Now do you have to conceptually designate it? No, of course not, when you are in deep sleep you're not conceptually designating anything. But your body is there, present within a whole field, a conceptual framework, shared by everybody around you. And that conceptual framework is in place. So this is something where eight weeks may not be enough to gain a really clear understanding let alone gain a realization of it. But I think if you come back, come back anyway you like, come back through the Buddhism door of Madhayamaka, come back I think as an avenue, come back to John Wheeler and his saying our very

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categories of matter and energy, that which the body is made out of, right, matter and energy, occurring in space; John Wheeler is saying our very categories of matter and energy are ones that do not exist independently of information. They are derived from information, they are conceived, they are created, they are constructed. We don't just observe matter and energy, what we pick up is information. Whether you are working with an electron microscope, whatever it may be, an x-ray, whatever it may be, what you're actually getting is information and information consists of appearances. The appearances are not physical, information is not physical. Based upon the information and our making sense of the information, then we conceive of – body, matter, energy, molecules, atoms, electromagnetic fields, and so forth and so on, and they do exist when nobody is looking, but they don't exist independently of the conceptual designation of them, they don't exist independently of the conceptual framework, in which they're conceived.

(1:28:01) Now the fascinating thing, and there's so many fascinating things about this, but one of them is that when we conceptually designate something it works retroactively, and the example I gave was – it was something like 1910 or so, give or take a few years, that the particle that we call an electron was defined, it became embedded in the scientific understanding of elementary particles, it's a very tiny particle, one basic unit of negative charge, they got the empirical evidence for it, it was conceived, they got the empirical evidence, and so now that's been part of our physicist, atomic physicist, our elementary physicist's working vocabulary and conceptual framework ever since. So let's say it was 1910. Now electrons move through a copper wire, you get electricity coming, and so on and so forth, so it's very much embedded in and makes sense and electrons are there, I will say, electrons are there even when we're not looking; when nobody is perceiving them, when nobody is measuring them, but electrons are there, right? Okay now let's go into a time machine and ask, okay but 1890, so now we are just put you in a time machine, and I come up and ask you – do electrons exist? And you say – I don't know what you're talking about, what's an electron? Their neither exist or non- exist. It's a question that has no meaning because that term doesn't have any referent, it's just sound, it's like bla-bla, right. But from 1910 on, and it's pretty close to that date, from 1910 on there's now a broad consensus, an agreement among those who are taken as authorities for very good reason, that electrons do exist; they were discovered in 1910 and from that conceptual framework which persists to this day, because we still believe and have good empirical evidence for the existence of electrons. That from that cognitive frame of reference for electrons, that began in 1910 and continues now more than a century later, from this cognitive frame of reference, electrons have been around since very shortly after the big bang, long before 1910, and if all of humanity were obliterated by some asteroid, wiping us all off the planet, if you ask a physicist when the asteroid is about to come in and terminate all human life at least on our planet, "physicist, will electrons be here when we are all dead?" The answer is yes, they will be, they will be from our cognitive frame of reference, which is about, by the way, to vanish, from our perspective. So that's it, they work in the future, from that pool, from that cognitive frame of reference, electrons have existed since shortly after the big bang, they'll exist until whatever happens, the big whimper, or the big crunch, one of the two. But then if it shifts, because we have good empirical evidence that it exists, it's not just a whimsy or fantasy, good empirical evidence, I would say there's good inferential evidence, knowledge that electrons exist based upon compelling evidence, it's not just a guess; but then again if we go to the woman who discovers strawberry fields, for which the then this new improved, much more encompassing, much better, like quantum mechanics, relativity theory is better than classical physics, it explains everything there but it explains things that classical physics does not. So therefore the scientific revolution took place, well, if another revolution took place in physics, where now the whole notion of elementary particles is antiquated, because we have a much better theory that accounts for things that the earlier theory could not explain, this one does, and it's accepted; because there is strong empirical evidence for this unified field theory, from that perspective, starting in the year 2020, with this hypothetical woman, from that perspective, electrons have never existed, and they never will exist. So they did exist, but in dependence upon and only relative to a cognitive framework of reference. So that's why I call it ontological relativity. They do exist, they exist when you're not looking, but they do not exist independently of the cognitive frame of reference, in which they are conceived.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti & Cheri Langston

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73 Great Loving-kindness (1)

05 Oct 2012

Teachings 1:

Great compassion is the principal practice of the 4 greats. Alan continues with great loving-kindness. We are going to move this morning from great compassion to this great loving kindness, definitely moving very deeply into the realm of possibility here. It is good and as we envision ourselves and others rising above in the ocean of suffering, getting to some peace, equilibrium, relief, then it's quite natural that one's horizons would expand, one's imagination, possibilities arise of finding a far greater sense of well-being, happiness. When you are really overcome with suffering it's hard to imagine happiness, and my sense too, maybe I am just odd, maybe I'm not, how shall I phrase it, this is my own unique perspective, I don't know, but just generally speaking I find spontaneous compassion easily arises, when I see somebody suffering, compassion arises, that's just I think, normal. Loving kindness – a little bit harder, you have to look a little more carefully to see the lovable qualities. For suffering, oh, kind of in your face, when it's blatant suffering. And likewise when one is suffering oneself, being explicit, you really know it, hard to really be caring all that much about others, and hard really to envision one's flourishing when you are just feeling like you are road kill. So good I think this is why just intuitively I feel among the four greats, the great compassion and so forth, the Great Compassion is maybe most practical, and it is the one that's emphasized, that is moving into Mahayana territory, of course there is great loving kindness yes, but mahakaruna as you saw from the quotes I cited yesterday, that will be one that he really, really highlights.

So what are the roots of suffering for which we wish freedom with this great compassion? Mental afflictions. But if we let our imagination soar, into the limit, in terms of wellbeing, then it would be the wellbeing, not simply of an arhat which is quite extraordinary but actually the wellbeing of a Samyak sambodhi - one who is perfectly awakened. That is really exceptional, and so to move beyond the peace, the serenity, freedom of suffering of an arhat to the fulfilment, the wellbeing, of one's own interests, I mean completely expanded, realizing one's own interests as well as the interests of others, the capacity to be of service to others. Then for that a much subtle level of obscurations needs to be dispelled so the coarser level, obscurations of mental afflictions, obscurations to the liberation, to nirvana.

But to realize our full potential, to completely unveil the capacities of our own Buddha nature, pristine awareness with that in this most subtler level of cognitive obscurations, that must need to be dispelled and with the vanishing, the evaporation, dissolution of those, then the full splendor of our primordial consciousness comes back at us. So as long as we are reaching for the stars, we may as well reach for the galaxies.

So let's go right into the cultivation of Great Loving Kindness. Mahamaitri .

Meditation:

Quiet, calm and balance your body speech and mind by settling them in their natural state and calming the discursive mind with mindfulness of breathing.

As it was mentioned before, the cultivation of great compassion, great loving kindness makes sense only if one enters into such practice with the view of emptiness, with the view that awakening, the perfect awakening is truly possible, and has been realized by many beings of the past, Buddha Shakyamuni, and continues to be realized to this day.

So I invite you if you wish, and to bring to mind and visualize as clearly as you can the primordial Buddha, the embodiment, the personification of your own pristine awareness, Samantabhadra, the primordial Buddha, deep-blue in color, seated in full lotus, hands holding a vajra and bell, symbolizing skillful means and wisdom, embodied with the wisdom and compassion of the essential nature of your own mind.

And now until the day of clear light when we realize perfect awakening, trust and take refuge in the primordial Buddha Samantabhadra, the dharma revealed by all Buddhas, and the sangha, those who've realized the primordial dimension of consciousness, the vidyadharas, for the sake of all sentient beings throughout space that realize perfect awakening and call the blessings of Samantabhadra to enable me to do so.

Inviting him at the crown of your head, sitting in the same direction, Samantabhadra melting into light, streaming down to the central channel, and reforming in Samantabhadra in your heart chakra, merging my

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body, speech, and mind with Samantabhadra, and from this perspective, the best approximation of viewing reality from this perspective of pristine awareness, raise the question:

- Why couldn't all sentient beings find happiness and the causes of happiness, perfection and perfect awakening itself and allow our awareness to attend to the world of sentient beings. However they may manifest, they are so transient, one by one to the next. Each one is imbued with this dimension of purity, pristine awareness, equally. So why couldn't we all achieve happiness, perfect joy of full awakening, essential we already have the cause, simply awaiting the contributing circumstances.
- May all sentient beings find genuine happiness and its causes. With each out- breath, imagine boundless streams of light emerging from Samantabhadra reaching out in all directions, inviting the cooperative conditions, leading each sentient being to their own fulfillment. And with each out breath, arouse this resolve if you will - I shall make it so; I shall do it to all sentient beings, every sentient being, genuine happiness and its causes. And with every out breathe imagine a light contributing to flow from this inexhaustible source, flowing out in all directions and imagine here and now, sentient being by sentient being, each one finding their own fulfillment and finding perfect awakening.
- May I lead every sentient being to the perfect happiness and its causes, and imagine each one finding perfect awakening.
- May the guru Samantabhadra and all the manifestations of Buddhas all bless me, so that I may be enabled to carry through this resolve, and with each in breath imagine a light emerging in upon you from all sides above and below inviting wisdom and compassion from enlightened beings emerging to one point, flowing in, as a gift without being taken. And with every out breathe the same light flows out in all directions to all sentient beings, going out effortlessly, and imagine each one finding the path of awakening and following that path to its final fruition.

And release all appearances and aspirations and let your awareness rest in its own natural luminous nature.

Teaching 2.

If you go to any lama, qualified Mahayana teacher, and ask, is it possible to achieve shamatha nowadays in these degenerate times? You will of course get a variety of responses, one response you may well get is – it's possible, but it takes a lot of merit. That's a good answer. Completely true. It's like setting out on a long journey, you need a great big tank full of gas to be able to go that far. From that stand that is really quite reasonable, okay thank you for a good answer, solid, true, authentic answer. But then the question comes up – how do I get a lot of merit? How shall I accumulate a lot of merit? By teaching dharma? Starting a business, getting a lot of money and giving it to dharma centers? So then I just have to tell you my all- time favorite dharma story. You may have heard it many, many times but you get to hear it again. Dromtonpa, disciple of Atisha was out and he saw someone circumambulating the stupa, doing some devotion practices, om mani padme hum, doing some devotions, he said ah, very good to do your devotions, circumambulate stupas, all very good, even better to practice dharma. The man was somewhat perplexed, he thought he already was, but out of respect for Dromtonpa he put on his thinking cap and thought about it. How can you really practice dharma if you haven't studied dharma, learned about dharma? So he sat down and really started studying dharma, reading and studying. Dromtonpa saw him doing this, he said ha, very good to study, read texts, memorize, very good, but even better to practice the dharma. The guy thought some more and then finally he thought, what's the point of teaching, of doing devotional practices, of studying, of all of this, it's all for the point of cultivating your mind, it's meditation. That's where all the roads are pointing to, that cultivates your mind, purifies your mind, so he sat down and started practicing meditation, this time probably with hopeful anticipation that Dromtonpa would come and finally say – good! So there he is meditating away, maybe waiting for Dromtonpa, and Dromtonpa does come by and says, I see you're meditating, even better to practice dharma. So now he is really totally perplexed because I think he thought he had gone through his whole rolodex, gone through all the options – shall I teach dharma, start a dharma center, build a statue of a holy being? So he really doesn't know. Dromtonpa said – give up all attachment to this life, let your mind be comfortable. That is really the most quintessential dharma advice I've ever heard. So it is true, in order to achieve Shamatha, we must improve right now. Is there really any more effective way to improve our abilities and limitations, is there anything that we really can do, this is an open question, not a rhetorical question, is there anything that we can do that would accrue greater merit than devoting ourselves, 100 percent, full

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time, to making the mind serviceable so that we can use that for everything else? So that we can one day accrue the merit that would otherwise take us a 100 lifetimes? Devoting ourselves to the cultivating, the realization of shamatha, but of course not as an isolated single practice, but empowering us, strengthening, the cultivation of the four immeasurables, great compassion, great loving kindness, bringing with whatever wisdom we have to the practice, day by day, breath by breath. Is there anything we can do that would be more powerful or accumulate merit, now that, I think, in order to accumulate enough merit to achieve shamatha, the way to do that is not by not practicing shamtha, not by not meditating, not by not developing the four immeasurables, is there some other way that's more effective to accumulate merit, I would really like to know about it. So, I see no reason to say oh I don't have enough of that, I can tell you, you can hold that position, I probably don't have enough merit, you can hold that position and just hold it for countless lifetimes, and unfortunately it will always be true. That is one of those self-fulfilling prophesies. Oh I don't have enough merit – yeah, you don't, sit down and start meditating! Let's get tired of just doing a bit of practice and dying. Unless you have something better to do, then you should do that. I just can't imagine, maybe that is my imagination deficit.

Summary:

Qualified teachers of the Mahayana and Vajrayana usually say that one needs a lot of merit in order to achieve shamatha. This is true. However, we shouldn't think that we don't have enough merit, so it's not worth trying. As Dromtönpa said, give up all attachment to this life and let your mind become dharma. While you are actually cultivating shamatha and practicing the 4 immeasurable, you are accumulating merit.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Revised by Cheri Langston

Final edition by Rafael Carlos Giusti, Posted by Alma Ayon

74 Mindfulness of feelings (5)

06 Oct 2012

Alan's comments/teachings:

This afternoon we return for the last time, for the time being anyway, to the close application of mindfulness to feelings returning to a couple of paragraphs from this second text of Shantideva, A Compendium of Practices - and I can mention that I finished the translation of that chapter 13 on the four applications of mindfulness, finished the first draft anyway and we have already have it at the front desk.

So right so it's straight forward, just two paragraphs and then we can go directly to the meditation, two paragraphs of two citations from different sutras. The first of these is:

The Ārya Akṣayamati Sūtra states, "When one is struck by a painful feeling, one arouses great compassion for all sentient beings who are born into miserable realms of existence and who have no leisure. They fixate on feelings, totally identify with them, hold them close, attend to them, misapprehend them, and ruminate about them."

Alan reading and commenting:

The Ārya Akṣayamati Sūtra states, When one is struck by a painful feeling, one arouses great compassion for all sentient beings who are born into unfortunate realms of existence - remember I'm changing 'unfortunate', it seems a little bit weak, we are going into 'miserable' realms of existence because it's not just unfortunate if you are born into hell realms, like – oh shucks, it's a bit heavier than that. Okay, so one arouses great compassion for all sentient beings who are born into miserable realms of existence and who have no leisure. So that would include of course, human beings - so called fortunate realms of existence – but if you have no leisure, no opportunity, then you're born, you get old, you die, that's it. So I have already modified this a little bit since I have sent it to the front office, so you might just want to remember this, the current version says - "They fixate", that is - these beings for whom you are arousing great compassion, they fixate on feelings, or one could say - we can fixate on feelings- it's the tendency of the sentient beings in samsara. But we will just leave it at 'they'. Because it is those beings for whom one is arousing great compassion, Mahakaruna. They fixate on feelings, totally identify with them, hold them close, attend to them, misapprehend them in a myriad of ways – grasping at them as permanent, as inherently one way or another, as being, having an owner, having, being a self and so forth and they ruminate about them.

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So what are the myriad ways in which we are really afflicted by feelings? Because we fixate on them, totally identify with them, hold them close, tend to misapprehend them and ruminate about them. So there is the whole topic for meditation.

(4:02) And when one is feeling suffering oneself, then you already have something to work with, as you know exactly what other people are experiencing, but the bodhisattva - because this is what he is referring to - the bodhisattva is experiencing feelings like anybody else, if one is like a basic bodhisattva, but then has all of the wisdom, all the insight to apply to it to really being able to learn from it and to transform it onto the path. So one experiences pain but then uses it as a spring board, as a launching pad for developing great compassion for all other sentient beings, who also experience painful feelings but not having the wisdom of dharma, they fixate on them, totally identify with them and so on. So there's the first meditation, just one paragraph but it's a full meditation.

And then our final paragraph in this presentation:

(4:59) The *Dharmasaṅgīti Sūtra* also states, "Feelings are revealed as experience, but apart from the feeling, who is the one who feels? If the one who feels it is not other than the feeling, then who feels it? Just as enlightenment is peaceful, pure, and luminous, so do the wise closely apply mindfulness to this feeling." That is a summary of the close application of mindfulness to feelings.

"Feelings are revealed as experience": so an unfelt feeling is no feeling, it's a mode of experience.

"Feelings are revealed as Experience": so again as experience - they are in a subjective mode, they are not something simply appearing to you, so we've looked at that repeatedly.

"but apart from the feeling [the experience itself], who is the one who feels?": so now we turn this into vipashyana practice once again. The feeling is very obvious, we are vividly aware of it, sometimes it seems to engulf us, but again there's always that person pronoun in there, the "I", the one who is tormented by the feeling, experiences the feeling, troubled by the feeling and so forth; great - what he is suggesting here is now probe right in, do that cognoscopy, probe right into your experienced sense of being the one who is experiencing the feeling, the agent, the subject, the one who has it, the one who feels. Examine that closely of course, where there's no question that such being does conventionally, or relatively exist - but the problem lies in the delusion of reifying the feeling, the referent of the feeling - that is the actual object about which we are having feeling, and then the one who feels. The sutra continues:

(6:14) If the one who feels is not other than the feeling, then who feels it? So if one just wants to collapse the one who feels with the feeling, then whatever became of the subject? The person who is actually experiencing, who feels? So he's leaving that as a subject for investigation, and I would suggest that again we can keep on weaving all the teachings together, I don't know how many people would read that and think - oh yeah, this is just like John Wheeler. But then we have been there repeatedly, the whole notion of the informata, that is - that which about we have information, the whole flow - the experience of acquiring information of being informed. Like the experience of feeling, it's a transmission, it is a feeling, it is a subjective experience, and then there is the one who is informed, the scientist, the person who is experiencing suffering and so forth, so the parallel is actually perfect. And so what holds for one of those processes holds for the others as well, if you take out any one of three, I mean it's really astonishing, but if there is nothing about which you are gaining any information, then suddenly there is no information and there is no one who's informed. Remember? Take out the one who is informed and then there is no information, and then there is nothing about which you are getting information, because you couldn't posit it without having information about it, you can't just say it hovers there all by itself, because it's an empty set, there's nothing there. And then take out the flow of information, well then there's, you can't possibly speak, it's meaningless to speak of that about which you are gaining information when there isn't any.

(7:57) And likewise - take out the flow of information and then there is no one who is informed. So it's one of those really, that's kind of a sharp edge, that difficult entrance to realizing the mutual interdependence. It's not a sequential dependence like the sprout depends on the seed - yeah, first came the seed then comes the sprout, no they're all simultaneous, and they seem to be quite separate. There's that which about which you are giving information, here is the one who is being informed, they seem totally separate, oh yeah, then there's the experience - with the information. It seems that way, but then when we probe in we see - no, that's not the way, right?

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(8:32) So as with the flow of information - likewise with the flow of feeling. Flow of feeling, the experience of feeling is a subjective mode of experience and you must be experiencing something, there has to be an object. You cannot experience nothing whatsoever, absolutely nothing because then there would be no experience of absolutely nothing, in which case the experience would vanish and also the experiencer would vanish. So, when we're experiencing some feeling - there has to be some referent, it has to be knowing, apprehending, engaging, something has to be appearing to you so that there is a feeling component in your experience of that appearance object, whatever it may be.

(9:12) So he is giving us multiple angles here to come in and really probe into and realize the emptiness, either of the feeling itself, then the other two vanish, or here he is suggesting - why not come in and just kind of probe right into that sense of being the autonomous self-existent, inherently existent, feeler of the feeling, experiencer of the feeling, and at that, upon you, not just intellectually or verbally and what have you, but if you actually gain some insight into the sheer emptiness, the sheer absence of this separate self-existent, inherently existent, experiencer of the feeling, if that's found to be nowhere to be found, that's found to be empty, then how can you have a self-existent feeling hanging out there with nobody experiencing it? So one will do it for the two, you don't need to necessarily clobber all three, clobber one and you get three for the price of one, because the others can't stand on their own. So very profound, very short almost like again a koan quality.

If the one who feels it is not other than the feeling, then of course you don't have one who feels it, then who feels it? In other words it collapses it's really like a koan. And then we move on, and there is a surprising direction:

Text: Just as enlightenment is peaceful, pure, and luminous, so do the wise closely apply mindfulness to this feeling.

(10:55) I think what he is suggesting here, again the analogy is in the awareness of awareness or also the settling the mind in its natural state, would be even closer.

In settling the mind in its natural state, oh – sister Mary, Venerable Mary. In settling the mind in its natural state what's the first criteria that you open the door into the practice and you're now venturing into it correctly? What's the first criteria before the four mindfulnesses? If you don't remember, you don't remember, no big deal. You don't remember? Okay, now's a good time to remember, it's actually quite important. Jean what's the first criteria? Okay, got ya yeah, exactly – it's noting the distinction between the stillness of awareness versus the movement of the appearances of the mind, those are thoughts, images, memories, desires and the emotions which then includes feelings. So there it is already in that simple shamatha practice, simple but incredibly profound, is if you've got the taste of that, if you know what's like - to be resting in the stillness, unmoved by the feeling, experiencing the feeling, your awareness illuminating the feeling, but not absorbed by it. It's almost like, like take an emotion - being grumpy, sometimes grumpiness just happens right? But instead of simply being totally absorbed by grumpiness and viewing reality from the grumpy view, you know, not even aware that you are grumpy, just grumpy and not even aware of it, like you kinda suck today, Daniel, I don't know what's wrong with you today but you suck. And so does Chitra, yeah, so does she for that matter, Judy kinda sucks today – and not noticing that it is not in the object, you know because you are totally immersed in the grumpy view, ok, well that's just samsara - where we are totally fused with whatever emotion, mental affliction and so forth, comes up.

(12:58) But if you are aware with stillness - aha, I see that the mind is grumpy, you little rascal! And if through that grumpy lens I look over there at Judy, she is going to appear not at her best, because of the lens, because of the lens stupid, you know it's kind clear, but it's clear if and only if you have been able to distinguish the stillness, the natural clarity, the luminosity of your own awareness, with that temporary veil. Because nobody can be grumpy all the time, it's too tiring, so you recognize - ah my mind is now, right now, filtered with the lens of grumpiness and I recognize that, from the luminosity and clarity of my own awareness, I see my mind is grumpy therefore probably as Shantideva says, going back to the fifth chapter, introspection chapter, - when you see with that clarity of awareness - ah, my mind has become grumpy, my mind has become petty, my mind has become sarcastic, my mind has become self-centered and attached and so forth, he gives a whole list of mental afflictions.

(14:03) When you recognize that, Patrice what do you do? What does Shantideva do? Because you must have heard those teachings, what do you do when you see that your mind is overcome by mental afflictions? Think

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of wood. Remain as still as a log, remain as still as a piece of wood, so in other words, when you see that your mind has gotten caught in what psychologists call - a refractory period, being grumpy is a refractory period, everything looks grumpy, even nice looking Judy there, sitting quietly like a little Buddha, even she can look grumpy, anything can, a snowbank can look grumpy if you are viewing it through the lens of grumpiness, right? So when you see that and you see - if I should act upon this, if I should view the reality through grumpiness and then start responding, snarling here, being impatient here, irritable there, then there's nothing good coming out of that. So when you see that your mind is dominated by some mental affliction, the best favor you can do to everybody, be still let it pass. Very much like having contagious cold or flu, you can't just make it go away, you can't snap your fingers and say be gone, but what you can do is not sneeze on people, quarantine yourself- you know it's just basic – it's just good manners. So when you see that your mind has been dominated by some contagious mental affliction, be courteous and keep it to yourself. But we can do that if only if you do have that distinction, and that is the stillness of your awareness and seeing the various moods almost like seeing clouds scuttle across the sky, sometimes it's dark, sometimes it's gray, sometimes it's clear but just recognizing, ah, it's darkness now I think maybe now is not the time to act, or oh now it's clear, okay now full speed ahead, now I can talk again I am temporary out of the refractory period.

(16:10) And so in that same fashion, now we return to this text here: **“Just as enlightenment is peaceful, pure, and luminous, so do the wise closely apply mindfulness to feeling.”**

And that is, they are viewing their own feeling with the best approximation of viewing it from enlightenment, from rigpa itself, and that is enlightenment. Rigpa could see and it does, rigpa does see that is if you are not enlightened yet but you've gained some realization of rigpa, the sheer fact that you've gained some realization of rigpa, you're dwelling in rigpa, doesn't mean that all mental afflictions suddenly never happen again, that they are completely eradicated, it's not true, they'll arise but you're viewing them from the perspective of rigpa which means that you are viewing them from a perspective that is peaceful, pure and luminous, right? In which case those mental afflictions cannot afflict. So perhaps I am reading it too much but what I'm reading is, I know it's very good because it's from the Dzogchen tradition. So,

“Just as enlightenment is peaceful, pure, and luminous, so do the wise closely apply mindfulness to this feeling.”

What kind of mindfulness? Mindfulness that fixates on feelings, totally identifies with them, holds them close, attends to them, misapprehends them, ruminates about them, of course not, that would just be more samsara.

Attending to same feelings, but to your best approximation, at least your approximation of the substrate consciousness, clear, luminous, not ultimate but nevertheless not bad, and if you penetrate through to rigpa then your best approximation of that.

Again I am going to read that one more time: **“Just as enlightenment is peaceful, pure, and luminous, so do the wise closely apply mindfulness to this feeling.”**

Whatever the feelings of the moment is, attending to it with the purity, the luminosity and the stillness, the freedom of grasping, of your own awareness, attend closely apply mindfulness with that awareness and then you don't get bogged down in it. It would like a biochemist or a medical researcher very carefully handling some kind of a toxic virus or bacteria but keeping it in the test tube, or if it is not in a test tube, then covering very well, protecting it very well. So you are handling a lethal substance here, that if you breathe it in, it could give rise to dire consequences, but you want to understand it, if you really want to understand it, maybe you're trying to find an antidote whatever, maybe you could use it for something good. I saw a headline, I did not read it but some apparently poisonous snake venom they found out can be useful, medically for something. I didn't pursue it, but that's interesting and that was enough for me. But there it is, it's poisonous, yeah but then some scientist, wonderful medical researcher said – yeah it's poisonous, but might it be good for something? And they found, lo and behold - it was. But when they were doing the research, would they touch it with an open wound? Oh that would be ridiculous, you handle it with great care understanding you might actually be able to use it for something.

(19:09) Oh, isn't that exactly what they do in Vajrayana where you, from that perspective of rigpa, Stage of Generation and Stage of Completion, you observe the five poisons arising, delusion, craving, hostility, envy, pride, you observe them arising, these are toxins, but rather than just slipping into the same familiar rut of

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identifying with them and then suffering, and sowing the seeds of suffering, you see them arise and then if you are a Vajrayana practitioner, then it's defined, if you are a genuinely, authentic Vajrayana practitioner you must have some understanding of emptiness, if you don't then you are just not practicing Vajrayana you are going through a shallow charade. That's the breaks, that's the way it is, but if you really have some realization some at least clear understanding of the lack of inherent nature of these five poisons, these five really fundamental mental afflictions, then you see there is nothing from their own side that is inherently afflictive any more than this snake venom is poisonous all by itself, does that even make sense? You've got snake venom in a vial, why is it poisonous? It's just a complex chemical compound, it's not poisonous until it comes in contact with something that it poisons, and then you say oh, that was poisonous, and it is, but all by itself is that intrinsically poisonous?

Well peanuts are really tasty and nutritious for some people and for other people who are violently allergic to them - it's death, they take a handful of peanuts and the throat can constrict so quickly they can be dead in a matter of minutes, they have a very strong allergy. So what's the scoop? Are peanuts poisonous or not? Of course, you can't ask the question all by itself, if they are poisonous, nobody would eat them, if they are intrinsically, if they were good, intrinsically, everybody could eat them. So for peanuts - so for snake poison - and so for the five poisons of delusion and so forth, not intrinsically.

(21:43) So what do you in Vajrayana? You first of all you must realize the empty nature, realizing their empty nature - then you may designate them a different way, view them in a different way - with pure vision, and then see each one as a manifestation of one of the five facets of primordial consciousness. In which case even the mental afflictions are like turbo power to propel you along the path of awakening, even the mental afflictions let alone bodhicitta, realization of emptiness, the six perfections and all of that.

(22:11) So by the time you most virulent toxic mental afflictions can also propel you to enlightenment as well as virtues like compassion and wisdom, then you're really set, you are in a good shape. But it all comes down to developing the basic tools, and you get those in shamatha, so if you don't have shamatha then you are not able, I mean you can't, how would you do it, how would you separate the stillness of your own awareness with the movements of the mind? If you say - oh no I can't do that but I am a Vajrayana practitioner. Yeah, I don't think so, I don't think so.

So there it is, that's the complete presentation of the close application of mindfulness of the feelings we go from there onto the mind which we will start on Monday. So for a meditation what I like to do on Saturdays is have them silent, so I will just give the quintessence again - of these two very rich paragraphs. When suffering of any kind arises in a body or the mind, it's very easy then for the mind to go into a kind of bunker mentality, when you're being attacked the mind then closes down and says, don't bother me, I'm busy, I've got some real problem of my own I really can't deal with your stuff. And then what we do? We fixate totally identify, etc, etc, don't bother me I am really busy, I got a world of pain here and it's a full time job. It is very easy to do, very understandable, right? But it just perpetuates the cycle.

(23:33) When that happens, and again, such important point, and that is to make this practical so my teaching right now doesn't sound like a taunt, or like scolding, that is that sometimes we go into bunker mentality and feeling, oh, yeah, I am doing exactly the opposite, I am really a crappy practitioner, and then compounding one's own suffering. But as a dharma strategy where can we take this on? We, deliberately when we have the possibility, we take this on when the suffering is not too overwhelming. You don't look for the biggest suffering you experience and say - I'll try that one. Not going to work, you'll just be slammed, right? But when we are more mild discomfort arises in the body, yeah that's suffering but it's not overwhelming me, or there's some mental dismay, some discomfort, some unhappiness in the mind, yeah but it's not crushing, good ok, I'll take that on, this one I think is more my size, you know middle way, middle weight or so called light weight, bantam weight vs bantam weight, bantam weight doesn't take on heavy weight, you'd just get crushed every time, right? So if you are a bantam weight take on a bantam weight feeling, especially of the unpleasant sort so here you have a real chance of then applying the dharma to it, gaining understanding and actually winning some rounds, right? And then just like a boxer who is learning how to box maybe puts on a bit of flesh, a bit of weight, maybe goes to a higher weight class, as he is really getting better and better,

(25:14) then as you become adept at really applying dharma, you're understanding exactly this type of suffering, with this kind of practice where you are turning it into compassion, if you find yes I've succeed, I

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had some mild discomfort in the body, mild discomfort in the mind and I took Shantideva to heart and then I extended this and then instead of going into the bunker mode, into the closed down mode, I extended this out and extended this to compassion to all beings, and actually it was helpful, I could transmute it, that is really lojong - I was shifting, transforming the mind, through training.

Then as you do that and you succeed - I can do that and actually it was helpful, then when the next type of suffering comes up, maybe it's a bit higher a bit more intense, see if you can transform that one and after some time then Shantideva says: "there's nothing that doesn't become easier with familiarization". And even when really intense suffering comes up, if you're well prepared you can transmute that as well. You want to find a gentle path here, that we don't simply feel overwhelmed and then feel, oh I failed, I tried to do the practices, I just couldn't do it; of course we can, not when the bantam weight gets in the ring with the heavy weight.

(26:12) So there's the first meditation, very much transmuting the experience of suffering into compassion, and then the second one - straight wisdom approach, when the feelings are revealed as experience then probed right into who is the one who is experiencing the feeling, and seeking to do so from the perspective of an awareness that is peaceful, pure and luminous, therefore does not get caught in cognitive fusion with the feeling itself, so while closely attending to the feeling when one doesn't become absorbed by it.

Our session will be silent, those are two options, and having said that I'll reiterate what I've said other Saturdays, and that is, if there is another practice you'd rather do, maybe a simple shamatha practice, whatever's most helpful.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Revised by Cheri Langston

Final edition by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Posted by Alma Ayon

75 Great empathetic joy (1)

08 Oct 2012

Teachings pt 1:

This morning we turn to the third of the four greats, "mahamudita", or great empathetic joy. You will note that in the Theravada approach the empathetic joy truly is an emotion, it is taking delight, a sense of satisfaction, appreciation, rejoicing, whereas now as we move into the Mahayana mode, this great mudita (empathetic joy) is like the other three, is an aspiration, the format is the same and we are already familiar with the great compassion and great loving kindness but now the phrasing is, I give the whole thing in Tibetan. [Alan recited the first line in Tibetan as the translation below].

So the first line, four lines is usual, the first line is:

Instructions for one that is reading the transcript: we are using the paragraphs 1 to 4 below as titles of the themes.

- **Why could not all sentient beings never be parted from happiness, free of suffering? This does not refer to hedonic pleasure but eudaimonia. It also refers to freedom from all three kinds of suffering.**

So the first line, four lines as usual, the first line is: Why could not - and again, not meant as a rhetorical question, but really a real question to investigate – why could not all sentient beings (or we all) never be parted from happiness, free of suffering? Devoid of suffering. Why couldn't?

Well, I have been teaching for a long time and a lot of people come up with interesting questions and that is the very notion of being free of suffering and experiencing only happiness. I remember years ago somebody, it has happened multiple times since then, somebody saying, you know this is a kind of logic impossibility, it is like saying may there only be left but no right, may there only be up and no down, only light but no darkness, and the whole Buddhist ideal does not really make much sense, that you can have only one and not the other, what is suffering, what does happiness even mean without suffering?

(2:25) If one approaches this practice in a superficial way, namely thinking only of hedonic wellbeing, then it really is silly and it makes no sense and is probably impossible and that is; may we all only encounter good fortune every day, happy day, never anything bad happening - in other words may we all be born in a deva

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realm and stay there for eternity, because deva realm is pretty much all nice, right? But then many of you have good solid background in Buddhism, and you know that being born in a deva realm while very pleasant while you are there - in the big picture it actually is not very advantageous because you have no inspiration from the inside, from that domain of experience. So in that realm of existence you really have no inspiration, no motivation, no reason to really want to apply yourself to achieve liberation, samsara is swell, you know - if that is all there were to it - just hanging out in a deva realm, which would be awfully nice. But because it is awfully nice, and homogeneously nice until you come right towards the end of it, let's say in a deva realm of the desire realm, then again there is no inspiration for practicing dharma, no renunciation, no renunciation there is no great compassion, no great compassion there is no bodhicitta, no bodhicitta there is no progress on the path, so, many of you are very familiar with this. But clearly this is not a foolish aspiration and so I think it is quite obvious, I think all of you have already guessed it if you did not already know it.

(4:05) When speaking of happiness devoid of suffering, of course he is not referring to hedonic pleasure, he is referring to genuine happiness, eudaimonia, the deepest level will be the joy that arises from wisdom itself, from knowing reality as it is.

So if we consider an analogy and that is - would it not be wonderful if all types of sickness could be banished, just sickness altogether? That we could just be healthy all the time? And would there be something wrong with that, that is, physical illness is that really part of rich life, to be physically ill, mentally or physically? Or would you really be very happy by just having one healthy day after another and with that platform deal with whatever life presents to you? My sense is thumbs up on good healthy; I just do not see any intrinsic benefit in being ill, mentally or physically and so there is no logical inconsistency there, anymore than now that certain types of diseases like smallpox have been wiped out, polio I think pretty much and a number of other diseases you know really very much under control too, thanks for the wonderful research, applications of modern biomedicine. And so if we consider in that regard that, sure, good health makes sense only if relative to illness, but illness could be something only in the past just like smallpox I think now just existing in a few vials here and there under intense guard I hope. My understanding is there is no smallpox on the planet, nobody is suffering from smallpox, they are keeping the virus alive just for research purposes so does that somehow impoverish or diminish human existence because "gosh, we don't have that to deal with it anymore" and I don't think so, I think it is just fine. And likewise HIV, imagine HIV simply vanished, that there is no more of that.

(6:04) So when we consider or we aspire:

- **May we all never be parted from happiness, genuine happiness, devoid of suffering.**

How might that come about: genuine happiness, eudaimonia? And then I will not fill in the blanks for that, I leave you that for the meditation. And then, why couldn't [we] come up with an answer?

May it be so!

Clearly, the Buddhist tradition says it is possible and it is moreover a worthy, a noble aspiration.

And then:

- **I shall do it.**

(6:47) Ok, good luck with that, and that is if you have not found and not even tasted, do not even have a hint of such wellbeing yourself, a sense of wellbeing that is free not only from *blatant suffering*, we all experience that, sometimes we just feel good, but also: free from *the suffering of change* - and that can happen only by freedom from attachment, but also: the suffering, *the existential suffering*, the deepest suffering coming from reification, coming from delusion. So clearly, never being parted from happiness, free of suffering, would be all three levels.

So how can we take on the resolve, how can we commit ourselves to freeing, to enabling all sentient beings never to be parted from such a quality of wellbeing, free of all three dimensions of suffering, unless if at the very least we have a taste of such wellbeing ourselves?

(7:40) So then we have a strategy, we have a plan, we know what to do, right? But if you do not even have a taste then it is kind of an empty resolve. So I think then, if we can bring as much wisdom into this aspiration as possible, to envision it and then call on the blessings of all the enlightened ones (as below and the forth liturgy) to enable us to follow that path so that we can be leading others to the path of their own happiness, devoid of suffering. And bear in mind, if one person like a Buddha, like Buddha Shakyamuni, achieves perfect bliss, immutable bliss, it still means something, because sentient beings are still in suffering. That is, within

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the continuum of Buddha he or she does not have to continue on going back and forth, oh yeah happiness is there because I have had really bad days. The bliss of a Buddha, the immutable bliss of dharmakaya (mind of Buddha) is there and it still means something because there is still suffering in samsara.

Alan has not mentioned it but see below the fourth line:

- **May I receive blessings from all the enlightened ones to do so.**

Find a comfortable position, please.

Meditation:

(9:00) Happily let your awareness descend into the body, filling the space, settling the body, speech and mind in their natural state.

(10:56) Let your awareness illuminate the space of the body and all the appearances that arise within that space as well as the space of the mind, and whatever appearances arise therein.

And according to your ability, recognize that though we may fashion, using our power of concepts, a human body imputed upon these appearances and a human mind imputed upon these appearances. Although the conceptual mind may fashion a body and mind based upon these appearances, these appearances are empty of body and they are also empty of mind, they are nowhere to be found anywhere among these empty appearances arising in space.

Symbolically imagining your own pristine awareness as a radiant orb of light at your heart, let your imagination play and imagine dissolving or withdrawing all the appearances of your body and your mind into this pearl of light at your heart, empty and luminous. Then like projecting a holographic image, imagine your form emanating out of this orb of light at your heart, your human form, your familiar form, but imagine it purely of light. Radiant white light, empty luminous, transparent but in your own form, but of the nature of Avalokiteshvara, the embodiment, the personification of the compassion of all the Buddhas.

Moving deeply into this realm of possibility, an aspect of reality, arouse then the question:

- Why couldn't all sentient beings never be parted from happiness, devoid of suffering, free of suffering? And consider deeply what would be needed to bring that about from what would they all need to be freed in order never to be parted from genuine happiness?

When you see the possibility that there is actually a strategy, a means for bringing about such lasting wellbeing, then arouse the aspiration:

- May we all never be parted from such happiness, utterly free of suffering.

And then from the depths of your awareness, from pristine awareness itself, arouse if you will, the resolve, the commitment, the intention:

- I shall make it so, I shall see that they are never parted from such wellbeing, devoid of suffering.

4) May I receive blessings from all the enlightened ones to do so. With every in breath, blessings in the form of light come in from all directions and fill your body. With every out breath, light flows out in all directions, bringing sentient beings to happiness without suffering. [Subscriber's note for the readers: this paragraph is not included in the podcast but as you may see it is included in the summary and it is part of the liturgy of this meditation so we are including it here]

And then if you will call upon the blessing of the guru and all the awakened ones to enable you to carry through with this resolve and with each in breath imagine light, the light of blessing converging in from all sides, in upon your body, filling the body and converging upon the heart and with each out breath imagine this light of blessing flowing in all directions, realizing this aspiration and resolve, and breath by breath, individual by individual, imagine each sentient beings, all sentient beings, realizing such wellbeing free of suffering.

And then release all appearances and aspirations, and let your awareness rest in its own nature, still and luminous.

Teaching pt2.

Let's try to make as much continuity as we can between the formal sessions, whether the supine, sitting or however you may do that and in between sessions. So that when you are coming out, you do not feel like you are really coming out of meditation, you are just going into another mode of meditation, and when you are coming into meditation you do not feel like an abrupt discontinuity, like "oh, now I have to stop ruminating". Try to make it as smooth as you can and you might recall now also the closing line from Atisha's Seven Point Mind Training (written down by Chekawa but I was tracing it back to Atisha): the closing line in his section on

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wisdom, on insight, and he says: “in between sessions act as an illusory being”. Act as if yourself, your physical presence here, even your mental presence here, were just kind of an array, like an holographic image, moving through the mind center and going for walks, swimming - whatever you are doing, but as if you are here in the sense of like in a lucid dream, you are present someplace, but not really, not substantially, more as if you are a bardo being, hanging out, but not very tangible. So, as much as you can see if you can pull the plug, withdraw the reification of body and mind in between sessions, a much lighter mode of being. Enjoy your day!

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76 Mindfulness of the mind (1)

08 Oct 2012

Teachings pt 1:

Summary:

Alan revisits the 3rd application of mindfulness to the mind. Mindfulness means recollection. Here, we are taking the impure mind as the object of investigation. Specifically, we are examining the reified sense of “my mind”. Alan continues with verses 102-103 of Ch. 9 of Shantideva’s Bodhicaryavatara. The mind is not located in the sense faculties, sense objects, nor in between. It is nowhere to be found. Therefore, it is non-existent. As this impure mind which keeps us in samsara is actually non-existent, we sentient beings are by nature liberated. Realizing the empty nature of your own mind is realizing nirvana.

Alan’s teachings/comments:

So this week we turn to the close application of mindfulness to the mind, and it would be good to refresh our memory of the meaning of mindfulness. The term, in classic Buddhist philosophy and psychology, entails a holding in mind of something with which one is already familiar, so you cannot practice mindfulness of something you have never ever seen before. You can gain a fresh acquaintance once you gain the acquaintance with, made some contact with, ascertained - then you can practice mindfulness, now it is familiar. So it is almost like having to be introduced first, then you can practice mindfulness afterwards - because of course the primary connotation of the term, “sati” in Pali, “smṛti” in Sanskrit, “trenpa” in Tibetan, is recollection and you cannot recollect anything you did not collect in the first place so it is recollection, right? And so with this in mind here we have the closely application of mindfulness to the mind.

(1:38) So in each of these cases, the body, feelings and now the mind, it is really quite analogous to taking an specimen and putting it between two glass plates and fixing it firmly. The last thing, if you look through a microscope, I have done so of course, as I think we all have. The last thing you want is have it jiggling around and then you could not make any interesting observation especially through a microscope. So you want make sure it is well mounted, that is, pressed between the plates for example like a drop of water with little amoebas and so forth in it. And so get it firmly fixed, then you want make sure it is very well lit through microscope. There is your stability, there is your vividness and then bring it into sharp clear focus and then as you are gazing through a microscope you are really closely applying mindfulness to something you have seen before but you are sustaining that flow of mindfulness, you are holding it in mind so you can take a good long look, so to speak, a good long look, hold it in mind. Or in terms of kind of doing this in a short term is called working memory, where you take something and hold it in mind for a matter of seconds, it is quite a neutral concept that you hold it in mind in working memory and while holding in mind you can if you wish manipulate it, work with it, play with it, so you do not just keep it static. And a study was done quite recently showing that there are methods for developing working memory, this is straight psychology now and very brief foray outside of the Buddhism, but I found quite interesting and that is by engaging in exercises, mental training, to develop your working memory, within a matter of couple months you can increase your IQ by up to twenty points and all the time I was growing up, we always heard IQ is locked in. You get your IQ measured when you are in high school maybe, and then that is your number, kind, like you social security number, it just doesn’t change, right? Well, one more area where they got it wrong. So many areas, the twentieth century when it came to the mind, was really big on the notion that the mind and brain being static. No new neurons, for example, that went unquestioned for about a century until a man I met, Fred Gage at the Salk Institute in La Jolla, California, discovered; well that is not true. There is such a thing as neurogenesis, I believe it is the hippocampus, which is kind of the generator of new neurons by the hundreds of millions and then you ask interesting questions: “Ok, what are the circumstances under which fresh neurons are generated?” So this is a really fascinating branch of one more area of neuroplasticity.

(4:26) Coming back here though, coming back, so working memory whether you are holding just for a matter of seconds or whether you develop shamatha and then maybe you hold it for matter of minutes or hours - but you hold it in mind and if you wish to work with it, probe into it, investigate it, and analyze it, you got it there between the glass plates. So you can really probe deeply, well of course, it kind of goes without saying; for that, the for more developed you are in terms of attention skills namely shamatha, then the more rigorous,

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refined, replicable, sophisticated, penetrating and incisive will be your actual investigation of that which you are holding in mind, bearing in mind, such that the tether of your attention is fasten to the object of mindfulness and the tether is mindfulness itself. So your attention, how do you keep on in the object? With the tether, with the rope of mindfulness. It is really classic Buddhist teachings and it goes across - I have seen the same metaphor used in Theravada tradition as well as in the Indo-Tibetan.

(5:22) Having said that, now we move into interesting territory in some ways very familiar; number one we already gone through the citta satipatthana, but then more underlying that, we have already spent some time and will spend some more time this afternoon in this practice which is basically getting the specimen between the slides so that you can view it from a stable position even if it is moving, it is kind of a neat analogy, I have not really thought of before, but even if the little amoebas are moving around, squiggling and doing all kind of interesting things, as you are gazing through the eye piece you are not going oh, oh, oh [whirling]... you keep still, let the amoebas move, do not jitterbug with them, right? There you go, you have heard that before: stillness of your awareness, observing the activities, the amoebas of your mind, and do not get infected. You know, so the metaphor is there of course the method, the perfect method for this is settling the mind in its natural state, also known as taking the appearances and awareness as the path and then the third one; taking the impure mind as the path - or shamatha focusing on the mind, that is the Gelugpa terminology, .All refer exactly the same practice with the same method, the same purpose. There it is, but it is just that, it is basically before you engage in the investigation, the probing into really, let's say a cell biologist or maybe your profession is to study single cell organisms from primitive organisms. The first thing you need do in that profession would be, I mean in terms of sheer technique, do you know how to put it between the plates, do you know how to get it stabilized there, do you know how to get the right light and focus and so forth, so that when you look it is there in a steady fashion, steady and clear, that is shamatha, that is shamatha through microscope, right?

(7:25) So here we are looking now into to the space of the mind for all of the little creepy colored things that come out of that but what we have been doing thus far is basically just learning how to use the microscope, the microscope of your own mind or the telescope - whatever metaphor you like, but that we can maintain that stillness of our awareness, keep the object in focus. That is, we are not drifting off to the sensory fields, we are not drifting off to the referents of the thoughts, images and so forth. We are staying here and now and we have a lock on the objects, space of the mind, whatever arises. We are able to sustain that in a clear and - and interestingly enough - as an inside job - in an objective fashion, right? Because it is objective, you are observing without, hopefully without bias, that is without likes and dislikes - just like you would be a ridiculous cell biologist if you say "oh, but I don't like those amoebas, kill those, I want to watch these". If it was just out of whimsy - that would be ridiculous.

So in a similar fashion here we are seeking to observe whatever comes up without preference, without bias and then of course without the overlay, without the conceptual projections upon it so that already, the kind of the sheer contemplative technology of learning the shamatha method of how do you focus on your mind, pretty formidable. Let alone the fact that the mind heals in the process, which is then a pretty spectacular perk or side benefit, right? It is not just learning something, actually you are healing that which you are attending to, and that is very rare. So there is the technology of it and before we go to the text, we will return to Bodhicaryāvatāra [The four applications of mindfulness Excerpted from the Wisdom Chapter of A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life] very few versus here but very substantial, very hard core.

The gentle vase breathing:

What I would like to do now is share with you something I have not shared in this retreat. Some of you are already familiar with it, some of you maybe not. But now that we have a week for the mind, more or less, then I thought now is a good time to share it. And that is the gentle vase breathing and it is taught in conjunction with this practice of settling the mind in its natural state and it is not necessary, so of all the teachings I received from multiple traditions, Nyingma, Kagyu and Gelugpa - only in one text have I seen the gentle vase breathing taught, so clearly it is not indispensable. Having said that, Lerab Lingpa, the great teacher of the nineteen-century Dzogchen master who taught this, did suggest it and it is a very good practice and having said that it is going to be for some of you like counting the breath. Some of you may find very useful, some of you not useful from the beginning and you will never like it and some of you may not really get the hang of it early but then get familiar with it and say, "hey it is kind of useful," ok? (10:17)

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So, gentle vase breathing. It is not the full **[lung bumbachen]** or vase breathing that you use in tummo. I would not teach that, I would be disallowed from teaching it, without you having Vajrayana empowerment. Anyway, I have been trained in it, but it is a very strong practice. And again you can see it being practiced in the movie “Yogis of Tibet”. It is pretty formidable, very demanding, practice. It entails kumbhaka – restraint, and so forth, I will not go into any more detail. Suffice it to say is that it is a very powerful practice, an authentic practice of course, within the Six Yogas of Naropa, especially stems back to Naropa of course. So that is the full one to develop tummo. And then tummo as a means to realizing emptiness and the clear light nature of mind. So, pretty big deal. This gentle vase breathing is safe, it is very gentle. So if you learn it here, you practice it, the chances of this harming you in any way are so remote that I am not going to lose any sleep over it, I am not going to worry, OK? And so, here it is, it is very simple. I like to do this so when we are doing the meditation you do not have to try to be looking at me, which could be quite a distraction. So, here is a practice to be done only when you are sitting upright, not in the supine position. I would not even try it in the supine. So you are sitting upright, you really want to be having settled your body in its natural state. So with the erect posture and then, before you do so, make certain that you have already settled your respiration in its natural rhythm. So the gentle vase breathing is not a controlling of the breath, a manipulation of the breath. You are allowing it to flow effortlessly as you did before, but with one small caveat or one little characteristic. And that is that as you are breathing in and then as you breathe out you allow there to be a fullness, kind of a pot shape, like an earthen jug or a pot right where your belly is. So we can call it a potbelly, right there in the abdomen, the lower abdomen area and so as you are breathing in – I am putting my hands on my abdomen just so it is a little bit more obvious, but you do not do that, put your hands wherever you normally put them in meditation, but just to accentuate the movement of the abdomen – so here I am sitting quite erect, and I am just breathing in normally now. And so in doing this, so you just see the obvious, no surprises here. The belly comes out, I am leaving it nice and loose so the sensations of the breath come down to the belly, down to the navel. And as I breathe out of course the belly falls back again. So there is simply normal breathing. And the gentle vase breathing: so I breathe in normally again ... and as I breathe out you see the belly did not go in. It did not quite stay as full as it was. Here I breathe in again, fullest, and then out. It is round. And so just a very, a teaspoon full of effort, just to hold that roundness in the belly and as you breathe out – having done this for a number of years now off and on – when you breathe out you may very well, like me if your body is like mine, you may have that sense of kind of settling. Like a soufflé that rises and then does not and then kind of falls back in. So kind of a rising but then, maybe not, and then kind of just settles back down. So that is just what it feels like inside; breathing in, and then breathing in again. The belly gets a little bit bigger as you breathe in, not much, and as you breathe out, again that settling sensation. Now it is such a simple task, it requires so little effort that when you first are doing it you have to pay attention to it. It is a skill to be learned. But once you have learned it, it is so simple. It is about, it is simpler than riding a bicycle, which means that after you have learned it you should be able to give less attention to the abdomen and the holding of the abdomen than you would need when riding a bicycle which means then once you have got the hang of this, you have got accustomed to it then you should just be able to let that go naturally, spontaneously, and give your full attention to the space of the mind and its events, cause it is so simple. Then you just kind of put it on autopilot and let it run by itself. So now why? Why do this? In doing this obviously you are creating a fullness in the abdominal region, the center of which is right there in the navel. And so having that fullness, there is just a bit more, literally, breathing space in the belly and so any type of contraction, tightness, knots, blockages of prana associated with or around this navel chakra, they could be loosened up just because you are giving them more space. It would be just like having a traffic jam and then suddenly adding more lanes and then the traffic could flow better because you are giving them more space to move. This is the purpose of it, you loosen things up there, the prana flows a bit more easily and then as it does – and of course you are not just sitting there breathing in this way but also settling the mind in its natural state. Because you are doing that, then the pranas will of their own accord - without any visualization, no manipulation of the breath, but you may very well feel the pranas – actually converging in upon the center. As they do so, then you might just find that they are gravitating up, that is, gradually just flowing like well-trained sheep into the fold and coming up to the heart chakra. So that is the purpose of it, a little physiological boost on the pranic level or energetic level. A little bit of a boost, a little addendum, an augmentation to help the pranas coming into the center. Well, as the pranas are coming into the central

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channel, up to the heart, that will have this synergistic quality as your awareness helps to bring the pranas into the center, creating the circumstances so that the pranas do come into the center. Then from the prana side and its influence on the mind, that helps your mind also get more centered and your mind to settle into its natural state. That is the whole of it. It does not get more complicated. There are in two postures, no; actually there are in three postures you can do it. Standing, walking and sitting, but for shamatha practice; standing - you might fall over, walking - you walk into things. So by process of elimination then just sitting. If you try to do it in supine position, of course I have tried it, it is just too contrived because you having to make the belly go straight up into the air rather than just laterally and so I would not recommend it. I do not think it is really dangerous but I think it is too contrived and so do not recommend it. OK?

(17:07) So all of that then is the prelude to the vipashyana practice of the close application of mindfulness to the mind. Now we have already done this considerably, some of you a lot, because it is maybe one of your main practices for the last almost seven weeks, six and half weeks now, in which case then you are very familiar with observing the space of the mind and then the thoughts, the images, memories, and then perhaps the emotions, the desires, so you are very well aware of seeing this come up, that come up, that come up rather like a physiologist looking into the body and say – oh, yeah there is the liver, yeah there is the stomach, there is the heart, there is the lungs and so forth - so just seeing them one by one, all very good for stabilizing the mind for developing your attention- and mindfulness skills. But now of course this being vipashyana and this being Madhyamaka vipashyana - then the real question here is to try to bring to mind what comes to mind when we think “my mind”, when anyone of us thinks “my mind” - because I think we all have opinions about our mind, we have a sense what our mind is, do you have an very intelligent mind, creative mind, peaceful mind, aggressive mind, harsh, dull, energetic, serene, etc, etc, ok? So we have being experiencing our minds for a long time and then if I ask – what do you think, do you have the mind of a Buddha or do you have the mind of a sentient being? I think most of you perhaps have a pretty quick answer there, the one you are familiar with.

(18:58) And so there it is, as we have Dudjom Lingpa beginning his Sharp Vajra of Conscious Awareness Tantra - beginning with taking the impure mind as the path - here Shantideva is taking the impure mind as the object to be investigated, to be understood, to be probed to see whether or not it is really there or whether it is just a concoction, just a concoction, a creation, a myth, a superstition. Like the silly example I gave, thinking that I am Napoleon, and walking around thinking I really am Napoleon and being very convinced of that, but then if you said exactly where is this Napoleon? Then of course not to be found.

(19:34) And so, do we really have a mind? There is a question.

And for that as we found with the body, thinking that we really have a body and what did he do? He took the parts, he took us through the whole, he took us through the process of origination and dissolution, saying if you really have a body then it should be really findable and likewise if you really have a mind and the mind you think you really have is certainly one that is samsaric, subject to mental afflictions and so forth, then it should be possible to find it. But for this then once again the task here is to be able to hold in mind and it is a subtle maneuver, it is more subtle than shamatha of course, and I am following straight classical Tsongkhapa here, to be able to hold in mind when you think, “my mind” and you do so in a reified sense, taking your mind very seriously, something that is really there by its own nature - that you have, that torments you sometimes, “oh my mind torments me, I am really upset, my mind is so agitated”, etc. We are talking about something that seems very real, that has causal efficacy, that really beats us up at times, or sometimes is a nice neighbor. But the idea here in this close application of mindfulness of mind is to hold in mind your own reified sense of “my mind”, holding that in mind, which Tsongkhapa would call the object to be refuted and then scrutinize that, to see whether it exists at all.

So he has very few verses here. So we start with the verse 102, and he starts with the whole issue of location. That is, if the mind is real, if anything is real; a spirit, a ghost, anything, a galaxy, elementary particle, anything: if it is real - exist by its own inherent nature, it should be someplace, it should exist someplace. And so this mind, we go to verse 102, the mind and he just says point blank: this is the way it is, but now, not as dogma but to be investigated.

102. The mind is not located in the sense faculties, nor in form and other sense-objects, nor in between them. The mind is also not found inside, nor outside, nor anywhere else.

(21:55) The mind is not located in the sense faculties. So just for starters so the sense faculties well there are five, he is referring to five sense faculties. If we bring in this in the 21-century, then we have a visual cortex back here, we have the auditory cortices on the side, we have a couple olfactory lobes, I don't know exactly where they are, but I know there are two of them, yeah, quite sure – two of them. And then we have the parts of the brain associated with taste, the gustatory, and then of course a host, a whole field of neurons that provide us with, that act as a sensory basis for tactile sensations. So we have these various forms of the aspects of the nervous system, parts of the brain and in the 21 century we say these are the physical sense faculties in dependence upon which visual perceptions, auditory and so forth arise.

(22:58) And his first point is that the mind that arises in dependence upon, or the six modes of consciousness or simply the mind where we are focusing - "citta" - the mind, he says, is not located in any of the sense faculties, which means nowhere to be found in the brain or the skin or the neurons in your gut, or the neurons in your heart. There are neurons in various interesting places about the body let alone nerve endings throughout much of the body. But the mind is not located in any of those, and why? Why does he say this? Because there is no evidence that the mind is located, if you look at those sense faculties, whether contemplatively or scientifically. So here is actually a congruence. Either look at it objectively or subjectively, do you find the mind in any of these physical sense faculties? And the answer is no. So this is why, I am not going to elaborate on this, but this is why I find it exasperating that the people keep on saying "it is, it is, it is", saturates the media with no evidence whatsoever but because it is said so often everybody just starts believing it, it is a really creepy propaganda and it is beneath science. Science deserves better than that, science has a noble lineage for four hundred years rather than letting a little cheap shots like this slip in and go unchallenged, so that is it. It is out of my love for science that I have such a passion about this. Not because I denigrate science at all, which I absolutely do not. But sloppy science, sure - just like sloppy Buddhism. I think I have been a bit critical of that too. Do you recall a chocolate covered turd? I think it is a bit - critical. So the mind is not located in the sense faculties. If you think it is, good, demonstrate; show some evidences of any kind, first person, third person or anybody.

So for starters not located in the sense faculties, **nor in form and other sense-objects.**

So it is not in anything you see, not in - in my case - the computer right in front of me, not in the sounds, not in the smells, not in the tastes and so forth - nowhere to be found there. So the objects being out there that we experience in the surrounding environment. **And nor is the mind located in between.**

We have kind of looked at that already but in a very limited fashion when I asked (and I get burgundy here): the color of Elizabeth's blouse there, so the color that I see, is it in the molecules that constitute her blouse? The answer is no, not from a neuroscientific perspective or physicist perspective, the molecules are not red, the photons are not red and no part of my brain turns red, so the image, the color, the qualia of red is of course not mine but it is a mental kind of event. And it is quite clear, is not in here, not out there and not in between. So would that not imply the red does not inherently or really exist at all?

He is now moving into a much bigger, a bigger realm, and that is the mind itself. Simply the mind.

The mind is also not found inside, nor outside, nor anywhere else.

Not inside the head, not outside the head, not in between the two, so he summarizes: "the mind is not found inside, nor outside, nor anywhere else."

If it were real, you think it would be findable. So in the next verse he says:

103. That which is not in the body nor anywhere else, neither* intermingled nor somewhere separate, is nothing. Therefore, sentient beings are by nature liberated.

*** subscriber's note: in the original text it is written "neither" but here Alan says "nor".**

nor intermingled: somehow a blending of the two

It does not exist, if it is not anywhere it is kind of like I do not know – unicorns? I do not know whether they exist now, but they do not seem to. If you look for them then, if unicorns really exist you should be able to find them. Or yetis, maybe they exist, but you think they would have shown up by now. At least to get a social security number so they could be legitimate. I do not know. So, "nowhere to be found, therefore not existent". And then he has got a real clincher, he really throws these things in just when you kind of think you are getting into the flow of it. Ok, I am getting a hang of this, and then he says something like this, I am going to read the whole verse it is a very short verse, 103.

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That which is not in the body nor anywhere else, [neither*] intermingled nor somewhere separate, is nothing. Therefore, sentient beings are by nature liberated.

***Subscriber's note: again Alan says "nor" while in the text it is written "neither".**

Alan reading the text again and introducing comments:

"Therefore" is very important.

Therefore sentient beings are by nature liberated. It is kind of making sense. He did say therefore.

That which is not in the body, nor anywhere else, nor intermingled, nor somewhere separate - is nothing.

Therefore, sentient beings are by nature liberated. You did not see that one coming, unless you had memorized this text already, I did not. Therefore sentient beings are by nature liberated. It kind of makes sense, he did say "therefore".

(27:20) What keeps us in samsara? Why are we here, why are we suffering? Because of our minds, the mind that is the impure mind, the mind that is dominated by mental afflictions, that creates karma, that propels us from lifetime to lifetime. The mind, dharmapada: "all phenomena are preceded by the mind, issued forth from the mind, and consist of the mind" [which is the first verse of the dharmapada containing one of the most frequently cited aphorisms of the Buddha]. Boy the mind must be really important in Buddhism, right? But then if you cannot find it in anywhere, this samsaric mind, that torment us and so forth and so on, if it does not exist and if it is the mind, the samsaric mind that is "the thing" that keeps us in samsara and if it does not exist, therefore by nature you are not in samsara and by nature therefore you are liberated in one stroke, well does any cool parable come to mind? (28:18)

Cool heh, the beggar, the beggar prince coming to the minister's house and the minister immediately recognizing him knowing he already is liberated from being a beggar because he never was a beggar, knowing that he is already of a royal lineage and is suitable to be put on the throne right now, but the young man, the so called beggar, does not recognize that so he says: good, where are you from? What is your history? How did you become a beggar? If you are really a beggar then you should have a real history. And if you cannot find it, if there was no point at which you became a beggar, if you have no history, no childhood as a beggar. Then, if you have no history as a beggar then you have no present as a beggar and of course no future as a beggar. Therefore you are not a beggar. Welcome home, here is the throne and you by nature are liberated. It is so strange, it is really like that cage out in the Sahara, the mind creates his own cage and then throws away the key and then screams: "Bloody murderer, I am in suffering, I am in suffering". So interesting.

(29:29) So if we consider that this line of inquiry; it is not just reasoning. I think it gets a bit arid, a bit too conceptual, a bit too locked up in a head when we confine it to thinking and debating and talking and talking and thinking more about and thinking more, more, more. At some point it really has to go into meditation, right back to your experience, to investigating: when you think "I have a mind that is deluded, that is prone to anger, suffering and all of that". Good, bring it to mind and now see; does it really exist or not, or is it a simply a self-imposed kind of punishment. And if you see, even gain some glimmering, into the total absence of any real samsaric mind, any real mind of my own, "my mind", you see its total absence and you see the emptiness of mind, emptiness is synonymous with nirvana, shunyata – nirvana. Two words for the same reality, ultimate reality, right? According to Prasangika Madhyamaka the two are the same. So to realize the third noble truths is to realize emptiness, to realize emptiness, perfection of wisdom, is to realize nirvana. Therefore if you realize the shunya nature of your own mind, you have realized liberation and you have realized liberation and nirvana and emptiness that was already there, because of course your mind does not become empty simply by investigating it, it was already empty, which means it was already by nature free. So in a way it looks, it makes liberation look very close not something you know many lifetimes distant, how much merit do we need to have to accumulate and so forth.

(31:21) When nirvana is simply the nature of your own mind, the empty nature of your own mind and your mind is already empty of inherent nature then how far away can liberation be, nirvana be? So we can come at it cognitively exactly in this way and we can also come at it more pragmatically, these theme runs throughout all of Buddhism, Theravada Buddhism, Indo-Tibetan Buddhism. And that is for those who are more cognitively inclined, he just served up a big dish there in just two verses, but we find especially in the Pali Canon but elsewhere as well, another way of approaching nirvana is primarily the pragmatic aspect: "give up all attachment, all grasping, give up all attachment and grasping", it is pragmatic, it is not a big head trip, it does

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not take powerful investigation, investigation. It is pragmatic; give up all grasping and all attachment and then that is the way to liberation.

(32:17) So Shantideva, I think it is in his first chapter, and I cannot quote exactly it would probably take me three minutes to find it so I will not take that time right now. But he said: releasing everything at once, just releasing all attachment, like a little girl releasing the handful of balloons, ok I give them all up, bye. That sense of just instant total release of every object of attachment, my body, my mind, my personal identity as well everything that I own, either literally, like a computer, or mine, as in spouse, family, nation, religion, religious community and so forth and so on. Everything that I identify with, grasp onto, am attached to. He said, instantly releasing everything is nirvana.

(33:50) So once again, it does not look like it is so distant, not so distant. Just like for the prince, he did not have to go to king's school, he did not have to go through a whole detoxification program to learn how, that he really is, you know like long, long therapy, that you are not really a beggar, you are not a beggar, let us talk about this let us analyze it and so forth, he did not have to go through a whole detoxification program of his notion of being a beggar and then he did not have to get a whole royal education, you know you really are a king believe me, I am serious and so forth.

(34:17) It was bam! Realizing emptiness of him being a beggar in that instant. Then he recognized who he was. What is left over? What was left over when he recognized, when he cleared away the veils of grasping on to his identity as a beggar. Just clearing that way, what was left was then the glimmering of an earlier memory, mindfulness of who he actually was, because the amnesia did not get down to his marrow, it did not get down to the core and completely obliterate his memory of being the prince he had being just several years earlier which just had been heavily covered over, but in the instant that he cleared away those veils by recognizing who he was not. That what is left over immediately became apparent and then instantly he was put on the throne. So, it is a very interesting juxtaposition, I think I will end here. It is a very interesting juxtaposition of these two themes that runs through multiple schools of Buddhism and that is, is enlightenment gradual or sudden, right? And we find this in Theravada it is largely gradual, read the Visuddhimagga, that is a long gradual very intricate path, on the one hand. On the other hand Bahiya gets it in one paragraph. And the Gelugpa tradition, the lam rim, the great lam rim. I mean, it is a masterpiece of sequence, of path, of path, of path and yet in the Gelugpa tradition, as in other traditions of Tibetan Buddhism there are those individuals, they just (Alan snap his fingers) get it.

(35:31) Karma Chagmé Rinpoche, the author of a large volume that I have translated most of under the titles "Spacious path to freedom" or "Naked awareness". A consummate scholar, great scholar, and in the text that I have translated lays out step by step, here is the path, here is the path, preliminaries - lays them out in detail. And then into a brief foray into the stages of generation, Chenrezig, then marching through shamatha, vipashyana, Mahamudra, Dzogchen and right through Dzogchen to, you know, rainbow body. Very sequential, very much the path on the one hand. On the other hand there was Mingyur Dorje and Mingyur Dorje was a boy that took birth when Karma Chagmé Rinpoche was already an accomplished master, renowned for his erudition and realization. And this little tulku showed up, Mingyur Dorje, and this child was just naturally liberated, he was already awake. He was an awakened being from the time he was a child and Karma Chagmé Rinpoche recognized that and then at the same time recognizing; although you really either have extremely powerful realization or else you are simply a Buddha and let us not worry about the details, but here is a person with incredibly deep realization in a body of a child and so what did he do? Something not unique but quite interesting took place between the two of them. It is Karma Chagmé Rinpoche wanting to train this child, bring the child into the seventeenth century into the current of the guru lineage and so that he can really pass on the lineages, the transmissions, the empowerments and so forth, then Karma Chagmé Rinpoche took him on as his disciple, right? Good, I mean he is the senior, senior Lama, realization and all of that so quite naturally you find a precious tulku then you offer them the guidance to bring them in, just like great geshe, great lamas in the Gelugpa tradition, who pass away, they are still brought through the geshe training most likely - the "tsennyi" - but they will have it collapsed down and instead of twenty five years maybe ten years but they still get a refresher course, right?

(37:45) And so that is what Karma Chagmé Rinpoche was doing with this Mingyur Dorje is, ok, you are going to be an incredibly fast student but I want to download the transmission from the seventeenth century here because he was a great vessel of dharma so he is pouring the transmissions and so forth into this child but

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what is making the relationship interesting is that the child had such profound intuitive spontaneous wisdom that the child was the guru for his guru, because he was just teaching it straight, you know, right from his own wisdom, spontaneous, so a guru disciple relationship, it went both ways.

(38:17) I have met at least one individual like that and I spent one hour with this person, at the end of the hour then said, “please be my Lama”. I have never done that in my life and that is Khandro-la who lives in Dharamsala. I had the opportunity, I thought it was just going to be a meeting, getting a head blessing, but I did have the audacity to ask her to give some teachings and after her saying “no, no I don’t know, I don’t know, I don’t know” and I kept on pushing: “more than I do”. Then she did and what flowed was like miraculous, I never seen anything like it, it was really [?], because it was just like nectar, absolutely spontaneous, very, very deep, full of light and punctuated with laughter, just like dakini laughter, just like the tingling of bells, I mean it was just beautiful, the teaching was simply beautiful but they were so deep and there were just about five of us in the room and her teachings went to all of us just to our heart immediately, and all of us just went up one by one with no consultation amongst us and it was just one by one and we each asked her to be our Lama. So it was a little of a reminiscent, it is a stretch but nevertheless I will say it: The five disciples of the Buddha, they simply rose to meet him but after he gave the teachings, you know ...boom there they were, they had not been his disciples before, more like comrades. So there it is, so if you like to meet someone, she is happily still quite young - Khandro-la living in Dharamsala. Quite young I still think she is thirties, maybe late thirties but in terms of spontaneous wisdom flowing forth, with just extraordinary purity, absolutely exceptional purity, she is a very precious being. So, namo to Khandro-la. If you have an opportunity to meet her, to receive teachings from her, I really recommend it. And she has tremendous guru devotion for His Holiness Dalai Lama, really quite extraordinary. There is nothing about her that is not extraordinary. Let’s meditate.

Meditation:

Settle your body, speech and mind in their natural states.

And making a point of letting your breath continue to flow in its natural rhythm, without any deliberate modification of any kind. Experiment if you will, with the gentle vase breathing.

Let your belly expand quite naturally and with each inhalation, without forcing at all, just let it be, but then as you breathe out with just a minimum of effort; hold that roundness of the belly and again let the breath flow out completely without forcing it out, just let it flow out until the next breath flows in and you feel the belly expand a little bit, but still holding that roundness as you breathe out.

Letting your eyes be at least partially open direct the full force of mindfulness to the space of the mind and its contents.

We observe the mind with the unflickering, unwavering flame or light of awareness itself and like looking into the body and identifying specific organs, blood, tissue and so on, we look into the space of the mind and we observe events that are said to belong to the mind to be parts of the mind, aspects of the mind, functions, properties of the mind. Thoughts, images, memories, emotions, desires, dreams - all occurring in the mind, produced by the mind, consisting of the mind, but you have only one mind, one body, one mind, one person. So with the power of retention, the power of mindfulness, hold in mind your sense, your concept, that which you grasp onto as your mind and see if you can find it. You may make quick work of trying to find the mind in the body because it is so obviously not there and obviously not in objects and obviously not in between but is your mind, this one mind that you have, the samsaric mind that torments you, gladdens you, and bores you. Can you find it here in the space of the mind? Is it anywhere to be found among any of the individual events arising in the space or in all of them collectively, or anywhere else? Seek out that which you grasp onto and reify as “my mind”, your mind.

If your mind grows still, all the activities of the mind, the snow in the snow globe, if all the activities of the mind subside, mind grows quiet, do you still have a mind? And if so, what are its qualities and how is it that the mind has thoughts, images and so on?

Investigate the mind in terms of the whole and its parts and attributes.

If you do have a mind and it is a conditioned phenomenon arising in dependence upon causes and conditions, at what point and in what way does the mind arise? What are its factors of origination? When you look for how this truly existent and inherently real mind comes into being, how does it happen? Do you ever observe it?

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If upon careful scrutiny you cannot find your mind, this reified object, well then turn to the components of the mind, anything that comes up, a thought, an image, a memory examine it closely. Does that mental event exist by its own inherent nature; does it have attributes? Apply the whole and parts analyzes to anything that arises in the space of the mind. Is it really there? That includes mental impulses such as anger, desire, craving, fear, sadness. Does anything here stand up to such critical ontological analysis, looking for the essential nature that exists in and by itself. Examine it closely.

Observe right down to the most elemental constituents of the mind that you can identify, the most fleeting thought, the surge of an emotion or simply a moment of consciousness. Do each of these events no matter how brief, do each of them not have their own attributes? Can any of them be identified, found, in terms of their own intrinsic nature, independently of our conceptual designation of them?

If the mind itself is empty and if all that arises in the mind is empty, consisting of nothing other than empty appearances if even single moments of cognition are empty - then it is all empty. Where the mind presumably was there is only emptiness and emptiness is nirvana, simply waiting to be unveiled.

Alan's teachings after meditation:

So in Shantideva's soliloquy, his internal meditation, which he shared with us in the Bodhicaryavatara; at one point he addresses his own mental afflictions, his own kleshas. I have not memorized the verse. It is a verse in chapter 4 or 5. When he fully confronts them [mental afflictions], he kind of stares them down and does not fuse with them, does not identify with them, it is almost as if he taunts them, and says "now that I have seen you, now where are you go, where will you go?"

Just by that, by not reifying our own mental afflictions and by not identifying with them, they become powerless. Very wonderful strategy!

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77 Great Equanimity (1)

09 Oct 2012

Teachings pt 1:

Alan's teachings/comments:

This morning we return to "mahaupecha", great equanimity. So I'll first just recite the Tibetan phrases that are the guide for the meditation. So the first line reads:

Why couldn't all sentient beings abide in equanimity, free of attachment to those who are near and aversion to those who are far?

And the rest continues as you would expect. So clearly this is referring to attachment and hostility, primarily to our fellow sentient beings, to other human beings and so on. So we've cultivated this already but now of course here it turns into an "aspiration" that all sentient beings may indeed abide in such equanimity, the resolve to do so, and then the call for blessings. So quite straightforward; we could just immediately go into meditation, but you know I am not gone do that.

(1:35) Let's follow a parallel here of this equanimity, "upecha", "tanhon", it is similar but it is not the same as another word "nhamshot", which means meditative equipoise: "nham" means equal, placing equally, the mind that is settled in equipoise comes to know reality as it is. So this whole issue of equilibrium, of balance runs through all of Buddhadharma and one of the facsimiles of this is found in our practice of settling the mind in its natural state. It is really core and if one does not capture this core then you've missed the practice, you are not doing the practice, right? So as you settle your mind, doing your best to observe the mind like an unflickering candle flame and observing the comings and goings, the stillness of your awareness observing the comings and goings of the thoughts; so that is very good, you've opened the door to the practice. But now if you are going to continue on that path, and if the mind will truly settle in its natural state of its own accord in its own way, it is absolutely imperative that you maintain an equality, an equanimity, an impartiality, a lack of preference and therefore a lack of grasping to anything that comes up: that is, an image of your dearest loved

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one or perhaps a person who is an object of great attachment may come to mind. Similarly a person with whom you have tremendous difficulties, maybe very strong mental afflictions arise toward that person, or memories that are pleasant, memories that are unpleasant, fantasies, fears, hopes and so forth. You will certainly be dredging your psyche, you can count on that. If you go deeply into this practice you will dredge the psyche, your worst nightmare will come up, your fondest dream will come up, they will all come up in their own way.

(3:33) And in this practice if you respond with any type of preference, with anything other than equanimity, impartiality, evenness: then you've stopped the practice, then you're just sitting there doing something else, probably attachment and hostility. So we see there is a strong facsimile of the practice right there, but that very quality of awareness that is still, that is alert and that is even: that is the key to healing that which you are attending to. Your awareness itself does not need to be healed because it is luminous and cognizant by nature so what is to be healed? But the mind which is heavily conditioned by samskara, by compositional factors, karma, mental afflictions; all of that needs to be purified and here is a natural purification of mind. But it takes that very specific quality of awareness, still, clear, luminous, discerning, and impartial, even. Now these are just to the appearances that arise, not the actual people, bear in mind of course there is a difference. But then we go deeper, yesterday in the afternoon we were going to vipashyana in the close applications of mindfulness to the mind, but now with the view to realizing the empty nature of the mind.

(4:57) As one gains some glimmering, some insights, some taste of the emptiness of inherent nature of one's own mind, bearing in mind again this mutual interdependence of the mind that is informed, the process of information, and that about which you are informed - take away one and the other two vanish, none of the three are inherently existent otherwise they would not vanish if you just took away one, right? And so then it stands to reason, doesn't it? That if you gain insight, if that is true, that your own mind, the subjective awareness, the mind that is apprehending all of these appearances and so forth, if that is empty, it *that's* empty, then all the appearances that arise to the mind must be empty. How could they not be? But if all the appearances are empty then that which they are referring to, that which is appearing, that which is out there. But Patrice is not an object of my mind, she does not exist in my substrate, clearly she is another person, right? But I access her by way of information, the appearances arising to me. But if the appearances themselves are empty then that which is the source of those appearances, the person or the place and so forth, must be equally empty.

(6:18) So here it is, if one realizes the emptiness of the mind then the contents of the mind must be equally empty and the referents of the mind must also be equally empty, which implies that subject and object are both empty of inherent nature which must imply that the distinction between subject and object must be equally empty of inherent nature, only conventional, only by the power of conceptual designation is there any distinction at all between subject and object; if the subject and object are inherently empty of inherent nature, existing only by the power of conceptual designation, of course the distinction between the two must be the same.

(6:55) So now we move into a deep realm of equanimity beyond the realm of shamatha into the realm of vipashyana. Now if this is true let's keep on moving here, let's take one of the biggest dualities in all of Buddhism, samsara and nirvana, renunciation is all about definitely emerging from samsara and definitely emerging towards nirvana. So nen jun, nen definitely, jun emerge, emerging from this to that, right? So it is a big transition. That's one we should have our hair on fire about, right? A passionate all consuming yearning, aspiration, commitment, resolve to gain freedom from samsara and to gain the immutable bliss, the transcendence, ultimate reality of nirvana. Good, good, and of course bodhichitta stems from, and is an extension of, such renunciation. May I achieve enlightenment so that all beings may be liberated? Samsara and nirvana: if samsara is empty of inherent nature, and you can be certain from the Madhyamaka perspective of course it is, and it nirvana itself is empty of inherent nature, which Nagarjuna is very explicit about it, the emptiness of emptiness - if samsara is empty and nirvana is empty, the distinction between the two must exist only by the power of conceptual designation. The logic is tight, in which case another type of equanimity and evenness of mind with respect to samsara and nirvana, no attachment for nirvana and no aversion to samsara, a deeper equanimity.

(8:49) Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche, the late very, very great Dzogchen master, one of the Lamas of H. H. Dalai Lama, I think his principal Lama for Dzogchen, he wrote a marvelous book, his commentary to the seven point

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mind training; I believe it was his last teachings, his last teachings to western students and he offered his kind of final testimony, this is the keeper – you've received all kinds of teachings but this is one, this is the take home, really practice this, this will provide good food for you, and in this wonderful oral commentary then he makes this comment: when a bodhisattva comes to the end of the journey, he is almost about to achieve enlightenment, you are right there just about to slip over into perfect awakening, the final veils, veils of cognitive obscuration, when you are right there on the cusp of transcending samsara forever and achieving enlightenment, Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche says: at that point actually you have no preference, you have no preference for nirvana over samsara and then you just slip into non-abiding Buddhahood, the awakening that is non-abiding, non-abiding in samsara but also not abiding in, not absorbed in nirvana, seeing both simultaneously in a way that is simply inconceivable to the mind of a sentient being, no way to conceive, no way to imagine, but that strikes me I think as an extraordinary degree of equanimity, no attachment for nirvana, no aversion to samsara, completely even and then slipping right over into even, non-abiding enlightenment or awakening.

(10:57) Now we go one final step before going to meditation, in the Dzogchen, a Dzogchen view of samsara and nirvana: not only are they not inherently different, there are no inherent distinctions between the two, but from the Dzogchen perspective which is the perspective of viewing reality by way of rigpa, rigpa's view, the view of dharmakaya that all of samsara and nirvana equally, equal purity, all of samsara and nirvana is of equal purity and all that appears in the phenomenal world and in nirvana is equally an expression of rigpa, pristine awareness - from the most miserable states of existence to the pure lands, nirvana itself, all equally of one taste. And therefore one could say, I don't know how, I cannot even imagine a deeper sense of equanimity than this - is not only seeing the ultimate nonduality of samsara and nirvana but seeing them as equally pure and equally expressions of one source, the effulgence, the play, the creative expression of rigpa. And then rigpa is the nature of your own awareness: amazing! So I think many, many levels of equanimity. So let's go in [meditation]...

Meditation:

Step by step settle your body, speech and mind in their natural states, relaxed, still and luminous, while allowing your breath to flow effortless, unimpededly.

Let your awareness rest in its own nature, in stillness, naturally luminous, illuminating the space of the body and the space of the mind. And as you attend to the space of the mind, be without preference, not even preferring stillness, emptiness of the mind over activities of the mind, and among the activities of the mind again, rest without preference, without grasping.

And in all the appearances that arise within the space of the body, note neither that space nor any of the individual appearances nor all of the appearances collectively actually are a body, they are empty of body, body is simply a name, a concept imputed upon bases of imputation that are in fact not a body. Attend to the emptiness of your own body.

And likewise the space of the mind, it is the space of the mind it is not the mind itself, and all the appearances and mental impulses that arise in that domain, none of them individually nor all of them collectively is the mind. And looking for the inherently existent referent of our concept, the mind, there is nothing to be found, your mind does not exist, not really. Rest in the emptiness of your mind. If your mind doesn't really exist *in here* subjectively, then all the appearances to your mind, all the objects apprehended by your mind that appear to be *out there* must be equally empty of any inherent nature of their own. Rest in the emptiness of the entire environment and everything with it.

Releasing all grasping, even onto the notion of my awareness. Let your awareness come to rest in its ground state beyond duality, beyond individuality, and let that which is without form, manifest in form as a radiant incandescent orb of light at your heart and letting your awareness rest there arouse the question:

Why couldn't all sentient beings dwell in equanimity free from attachment to those who are near and aversion to those who are far? Arouse the aspiration:

May we all abide in such equanimity, such equipoise. And if you will, arouse the resolve, the commitment, from this perspective of your own rigpa:

I shall make this so, I shall bring us all to such equanimity.

And then if you will, call on the blessings of your guru and all the Buddhas to enable you to carry through with this resolve.

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With each in breath imagine drawing in, or accepting, the light of blessings from all directions, above and below, from all the awaked ones, empowering you, inspiring you, energizing you to carry through with this effectively.

And with each out breath, breathe out this light in all directions.

And whoever comes to mind, individually or collectively, embrace them with this light and with the aspiration that they may dwell in such equanimity, perfect balance.

Release all appearances and let your awareness rest in its own nature in stillness.

Teachings pt2.

Alan's teachings/comments:

Alan talks about that in certain occasions the environment do not help you for practicing shamatha because it is too noisy.

(37:12) In Atisha's Seven Point Mind Training, he said constantly remain in good cheer, a sense of wellbeing. Of course he is not referring to something superficial here, always putting on a happy smile - nothing like that, but abiding continually in a sense of genuine wellbeing, of flourishing, kind of your ground, your home. So one of the clear signs of a person whose practice is maturing, is really a true practitioner of dharma is that sense of groundedness, of imperturbability, of equanimity, of resilience, emotional balance. Whether one is so called Hinayana, Mahayana, Vajrayana, if one is practicing for months, years, and that's not happening, there is something wrong with the practice; it doesn't matter what you call yourself, Vajrayana practitioner, highest yoga tantra, Dzogchenpa, Mahamudra, Theravada, vipashyana, Zen, Chan - it is just one of the characteristics that your practice is maturing – that's one of the signs, right? Balance.

(38:32) I'd like to just for a couple of minutes to address not only the people here but quite explicitly those listening by podcast and especially those who are in retreat - there are about thirty - that especially if one is focusing on the cultivation, and really determined to achieve, shamatha: this gives rise to very strong preference with respect to environment. As we all know there are conducive environments for shamatha and other environments that are just not conducive, and we do need that union of the outer mandala and the inner mandala - internal circumstances, qualities, outer, and then the union of those two in a sustained fashion and then you really have a real chance of moving along the nine stages of shamatha and fully realizing shamatha, but the environment is important, right?

(39:18) And then there is a problem: we are not practicing shamatha in a pure land – unless you already have pure vision you're not - and so we're practicing in *this* environment. I spent years in India and spent months and months in Sri Lanka, lot of time in North America also; one thing you discover when you are in retreat is you have very little control over your environment. And so what you would like? Oh, that is easy, I want my environment to be like this, my neighbor I want to be like this, I want the weather be like this, my meditation cabin to be like this, my food like this, my health like this, ok Santa Claus yes or no. It doesn't always turn out that way and then one may become very frustrated. I am such a pure dharma's practitioner, my motivation is so good, I have definite renunciation and reality is not rising up to meet me, reality is smacking me in the face with the dead fish. I don't like it. Where are all the Buddhas when you need them? All I am getting is a big bucket full of samsara thrown in my face like dirty dish of water. So then it's hard to maintain equanimity of course because if you have a strong motivation, strong aspiration to achieve shamatha and then the environment isn't conducive, then you may think, ok where is the conducive environment and then you rise like a preta from your meditation place, where is the place? Where is the place? Big belly, a little tiny mouth, looking for the conducive shamatha place. It can be quite difficult. So it is still true that the conducive environment is very important, very, very important, because you need that quiet. One of the aphorisms from Tibetan Buddhism is noise is the thorn of Samadhi; even with ear plugs and noise canceling head phones it still comes in like an ice pick, RRRRR...(great noise) how about this RRR...(great noise)? In comes the noise and I know it well, I won't tell this story but some of you may recall the famous and infamous Yorkshire terrier (a breed of dog) who managed to staccato beat himself into my meditation repeatedly.

So what to do when you are meditating, maybe you're not in a big long shamatha retreat and maybe you're just trying to get a little niche, one half hour, that's all I'm asking samsara, just a half an hour, a little bit of peace and quiet in my own home where I can just do a little bit of shamatha, my little facsimile of nirvana. And then, does not happen, something comes up: traffic noise, family, whatever it is. Upecha, upecha

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is more important than that shamatha session. Upecha is more important than that month or two when your environment is really heavily inundated with noise. If you can change, and comes down to Shantideva's simple, simple two liner: if there is something you can do about it why be unhappy and if there is nothing you can do about it why be unhappy. You may as well just come back to equanimity and show the world you are actually practicing dharma and not just trying to achieve shamatha because practicing dharma is more important than achieving shamatha, the larger includes, encompasses the smaller.

(43:15) So if in the practice of settling the mind in its natural state, if the ideal to be realized is to maintain that complete equanimity with regards to whatever appearances arise and that's within that sub-space of the mind, right? Just the mental images and so forth, well then just expand and be aware that all visual impressions, auditory, tactile they're all arising in the space of your awareness; and so then develop equanimity with respect to *all* appearances and not just those in your own private domain, the space of your mind - so develop equanimity all the way across. And if sometimes reality is not rising up to meet your shamatha practice, and sometimes it doesn't, sometimes it doesn't, it's too noisy or whatever, then what to do? Recognize that the practice of dharma is not equivalent to the practice of shamatha and that is why in this so far seven weeks or so we have now really had the luxury I think all of us including me because I listen to the teachings too of having the good fortune to really be introduced to a very, very balance array of practices: the four immeasurable, now venturing the four greats, the four applications of mindfulness, Theravada, Pali canon style, Mahayana style – that's really quite variety, that's very, very balanced.

(44:30) So if on occasion in this retreat, people listening by podcast in retreat or living in the world that are more active, socially engaged world, if on occasion your environment is not arising up to meet you in your shamatha practice, be sure that it is rising up to meet you to respond with some other form of dharma which may be on that occasion more valuable to you than shamatha. So whatever comes up there is no occasion that one can say, oh, the four applications of mindfulness are not appropriate to this circumstance, that never happens, not when you are living, not when you are well, not when you are sick, not when you are dying and not when you are dead and not even when you are post-dead, practice the four applications of mindfulness in the bardo, it will be very good for you - empty appearances big time.

So there is no occasion in which the four applications of mindfulness cannot be practiced except maybe when you are sound asleep, or you are comatose, you fainted, ok, then you get a break. And likewise the four immeasurables and the four greats whether you are in solitude, whether you are with other people, there is no time, no time when they are not appropriate. So there we are – we really have quite a banquet here.

So, as your understanding of dharma becomes multifaceted, rich, textured, flexible, resilient then you will see because of the quality of awareness you are bringing to reality, you will find lo-and-behold reality is rising up to meet you every step of the path, every step of the path, always rising up to meet you, and the path opens before you and you do not have to wait, it's right now. Enjoy your day.

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78 Mindfulness of the mind (2)

09 Oct 2012

This afternoon we return to the Madhyamaka approach to the close application of mindfulness to the mind, continuing with verses 104-105 of Ch. 9 of Shantideva's Bodhicaryavatara.

Verse 104, chapter 9 Bodhicaryavatara: so this is investigating, this ontological probe into the very nature of the mind, he says:

104. If cognition is prior to the object of cognition, in dependence on what does it arise? If cognition is simultaneous with the object of cognition, in dependence on what does it arise?

"Cognition" here is just flat out awareness, the awareness that is being present with something.

"If cognition is prior to the object of cognition." So whatever that maybe for example visual perception: I am aware of Daniel's shirt, so if my awareness of Daniel's shirt, if that awareness of Daniel's shirt actually

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precedes the shirt - or the shirt is arising moment by moment so everything being in a state of flux - if the awareness actually precedes that which is aware of, it becomes clairvoyance, kind of weird. So he is suggesting, so he's going to write that one off quickly. **"If cognition is prior to the object of cognition"**, which means you already having pre-cognition at all times, **"in dependence on what does it arise?"** If think it is transparent that it does not work but he is going through a process of elimination here. So that does not make any sense: that first you are aware and then the object comes afterwards, that would be a very strange universe.

"If cognition is simultaneous with the object of cognition". So your awareness and the object of awareness, if they are occurring exactly in the same moment, perfectly simultaneous.

"In dependence on what does it arise?"

(3:12) And then how could there be any connection if they are actually simultaneous, how would they meet? And so that really doesn't make much sense either. And then if it, that is awareness, arises after the object of cognition, so in dependence upon it, there is a lapse there, cause and effect, then from what would cognition arise?

(3:29) Once again what he is doing here is exactly along the same lines of inquiry that the Buddha set forth in his Maha Satipatthana Sutra, the great discourse on the four applications of mindfulness: "examine closely the factors of origination". But rather than looking at it simply in terms of impermanence, dukkha, sukkha, and then self and not-self, he (Shantideva) is going: is it *really* there from its own side? And so if it is the case, now of course he is not challenging the whole of Buddhist psychology that says: "in dependence upon the object then awareness of it arises and that object acts as cooperative condition". So he is not challenging that, but again as usual - and you really have to bear this in mind firmly - what he is critiquing here is not whether awareness, perception and so forth arise in dependence upon the objects that they are apprehending, which Buddhism never, you know by and large does not question that. But whether if we assume that everything is inherently existent which is really pretty much everybody's working mode, working hypothesis from almost all the world is: it's a real world out there and I am really here and then how do we get together? So if you have an inherently existent object out there and then in dependence upon that some real inherently existent cognition arises, then what does it come from? What does it arise from?

(4:39) So clearly it does not really make any sense that it actually emerges from or arises from the object, there is no evidence that it actually arises from the brain, I would love to see such evidence so many people believe it, I'd love to see their evidence, but so far none. And so then we can say, but no I've studied this already, right you know, where does it come from? It arises from the preceding moment of cognition if it is your first moment of visual perception when you wake up. So let's imagine you are in a deep dreamless sleep, all the sensory modes have gone dormant and then while you are deep asleep someone comes and shakes you - "get up quickly there is ice cream in the kitchen" - you should know that you are dreaming. But if you suddenly wake up out of a deep sleep and say, "what, what?" and then suddenly your visual awareness of course is flooded with visual imagery: where does that first moment of visual perception, what is it arising from? Or is it magic that arises out of nothing whatsoever? Well the Buddhist view is it's not arising from neurons, from the brain, from anything physical because physical phenomenon really just frankly do not have that capacity, there is just nothing in the whole physic and chemistry that suggest that mental events will arise from them. All kind of physical processes, yes. Mental? It is magical chemistry and magical physic - you will not find any course on magical physics and chemistry in any university that I know of, you get the magic only when you're in another field like psychology.

(5:53) And so in any case not from there [brain or any other physical phenomenon]; so from what does it arise? Well if you study Buddhist psychology say, I know, I know, it arises from the previous moment of mental cognition. But now bear in mind he is not challenging that, right? And this is kind pretty much straight Buddhist psychology as well, but he is not challenging that, he is a very savvy scholar but he is saying consider. Consider that mental consciousness is inherently real; if that is the case mental consciousness will continue to be mental consciousness. An inherently real atom will continue to be that same inherently real atom right through and will not turn into something else because then it would lose its identity. How would it lose its identity when it is inherently bearing its own identity? So he is has just demolished the very notion that an inherently real cognition or awareness arises at all, right? It does not arise prior to its object, simultaneous

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with the object or after its object; it does not arise from anything so therefore awareness in terms of true origination, inherently existent origination, well, it never happens.

105. If it arises after the object of cognition, from what would cognition arise? In this way it is ascertained that no phenomenon comes into existence.

(7:28) So **if it arises after the object of cognition**, which Buddhist psychology says is conventionally true, **from what would cognition arise?** Inherently, from nothing, that is it would not arise at all. Conventionally, ok: preceding moment of cognition.

The final line here: **In this way it is ascertained that no phenomenon comes into existence.**

That is really a very tight, high density koan because he is not backing it up from any reasoning at all, he just says: “in this way it is ascertained”. It sounds like more like if you are following this line of inquiry this is what you will discover, so either follow the line of inquiry or don’t but if you do this is what you’ll discover, if you don’t well, that is your problem. But he is not backing it with any kind of reasoning at this point but the reasoning is there, it is ascertained that no phenomenon comes into existence.

(8:09) Back to that triad again, the object, the transfer of information or flow of appearances, and that which is aware of the appearances: if there is no inherently existent subject or awareness, consciousness, mind, then there is nothing to receive any inherently existent flow of information or appearances, and then there will be, again, no inherently existent object out there.

So the problem of causality, this is what he is getting at all along here, is that as long as one is reifying anything, as soon as you reify anything: yourself, mind, atoms, space, time, consciousness, *anything* - as soon as you reify it, assume that it has its own inherent nature, then you’ve isolated it from, conceptually in your mind, in your delusional mind, you’ve isolated it from any kind of fabric or network of causality.

(8:52) You’ve had it kind of implode in upon itself like an ontological sow bug. A sow bug is a little bug that creeps along and if you bump it, it rolls into a ball; it was a little bug and now it’s just a bug ball and it looks like it’s totally sealed on the outside. So all of reality would be consisting of little sow bugs that have rolled into a ball and they are would all be holding their own inherent existent but they couldn’t causally interact with anything which is exactly what the sow bug would like to do, not causally interact with anything, especially that which wants to eat it. So it is the reification is kind of sow bug approach to reality.

(9:22) And so in terms of the whole mind-body problem, it continues to be a problem, it’s been a problem for centuries in western philosophy, it is a problem now, and so many kind of attempts to solve it so that people can stop thinking about it I think because it is so irritating.

So one group called ‘eliminative materialists’, they say do not worry, subjective experience, the mind, it’s an illusion so therefore no problem, all that really exists, inherently exists, is the mind so there’s one way. If you do not understand something, just say it doesn’t exist. I like that. If you do not understand something say it is an illusion, it is not really there. Oh, that was easy. Any other problem you would me like me to solve? Cancer, Alzheimer, it is just an illusion. It does not really exist. So there is one approach.

(10:21) Another approach is, if you don’t understand it equate it to something you *do* understand or at least you understand better, so just say it’s the mind, the brain, actually have techniques for studying the brain and getting consensual knowledge about the brain, that is a real science, brain science, outstanding science; that they understand, they don’t understand the mind, so if you want to solve the mind-body problem just take that which you do not understand and just say, Oh, doggone it, it is the same as what we *do* understand, let’s get to work and give us more money to study what we like to study. So that is another cheap solution.

(10:54) But the problem lies in reifying anything at all. If you reify the brain, which is absolutely standard modality in all of neuroscience - there may be an exception here and there - but that it is an inherently existent, really there, incredible complex configurations of neurons, synapses and so forth, inherently really there waiting to be explored - then the notion that this chunk of mass-energy would somehow causally interact with some inherently real consciousness which is absolutely immaterial, absolutely non-physical, just calls for magical thinking, because it is just hard to imagine how that could possibly occur. So this is the “conundrum” that Descartes setup for us, he reified the mind and reified the body and then he said: Oh gee, how do they interact? (11:33)

(11:48) But the problem is not Descartes, the problem is not the eliminative materialists, the problem is not the materialists that just want to say: ok, it is just brain, or the dualist; the problem is the reification because as soon as you reify anything causality becomes horrendously difficult, I think frankly insolubly difficult.

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(12:01) But if you cease reification then you can see: all right this means there is no inherent difference, intrinsically existent difference, between mind and matter, you do not have inherently existent matter or inherently existent mind, one with physical properties and the other not, so therefore you do not have them at all, then causality on a convention level - which we know to be true, nobody can doubt causality, not if you keep your eyes open and just watch hey, there is something that makes sense here - if it is on a conventional level it can't be doubted and then you can say: Ah ha! maybe that's all there is to it, the causality, the flow of events, how they interact with each other is all taking place on a conventional level but with nothing there being inherently existent or reified.

(12:43) So final note on that and then we want to go to retreat [meditation] is: if we go back to Sauntrantika saying, there *are* things that really exist and that means they are inherently there, they are absolutely there and those are the things you directly perceive and of course it's not just material phenomena, that is ridiculous, mental phenomenon of course, anybody who's not brain-washed in materialism knows that mental phenomena have causal efficacy, all you have to do is look, I mean look for five seconds and it gets pretty obvious. But the Sautrantika says here, alright, real phenomenon, physical, mental and then other types that are neither physical and non-mental, they all have causal efficacy, they are inherently there, they lend themselves to direct measurement or observation, that is, they are perceptible.

(13:27) But then there is the whole class like the ownership of this pair of glasses and that is not perceptible, it is not real, has no causal efficacy, because it is just because we agree again I can say: Miles do you want these glasses and he says sure, and they no longer belong to me. Something merely conceptually designated, according to Sautrantika, has no causal efficacy at all. Why? Because it is not really there, it is just something we agree on - it's that light. Do you want it? Sure, why not. Ok, then they are yours. Ok. But we see nothing really happened except for the ownership shifted just because we say so. It's purely convention.

(14:35) So the Sauntrantika says there cannot possible be any casual interaction between something that is real and something that is merely conceptually imputed or designated, agreed upon convention, is how is that, you know the fact this is mine, the ownership of this pair of glasses and the pair of glasses or the computer, the glasses and the computer, sure they causally interact like that (tapping the two pieces together), but the ownership of these two, they're going to casually interact with anything? Kind of doesn't make any sense does, not it? That is a good metaphysical realist stance, that anything that is conceptually designated, it is just a way of speaking but there is nothing there, nothing that has any causal efficacy that could transform into in an effect as a substantial cause that can contribute to, really contribute to the real emergence of something else - mere convention - forget about it, it is just words.

(15:25) And the Madhyamaka turns it right on its head, right on its head. The only way that causality can possibly occur is if none of the things involved in a causal interaction are inherent real. If anything is inherently real it's sealed off from any kind of causal interrelationships. It is only because things are conceptually designated that they can have causal efficacy. So this is the king of reasoning, *pratityasamutpada* (dependent origination) according to Nagarjuna, the royal path to realizing emptiness is to just follow straight down that track of attending - and in a way it's very scientific in the sense that scientists since Galileo, and certainly before, have been so carefully observing phenomena, taking them seriously, observing the nature of phenomena and then of course looking for patterns, regularities, which we call laws of nature and these tend to be casual, ok, talk [?] casual.

(16:15) So science is very much about causality within the physical world and then struggling to find, you know to understand, but not struggling too hard right now because they don't have a handle on how to pursuit it, but the causality between mind and brain, the placebo effect, how does it work. I think there is not much research there because I don't think they have a clue, how do you proceed? What exactly should we study to understand how the placebo... It is look like magic. So they say well never mind let's exclude it from all the trials and then we can find out what's really working and that is the chemicals.

(16:41) So but the scientific way is really looking closely at the phenomena with as much sophistication as possible, examining very closely the causal interrelationships among them and then lo and behold by the most mature of all the sciences, physics, within physics the most cutting-edge physics, which is in quantum mechanics and quantum cosmology, then coming there *by way* of studying phenomena and *by way* of studying *pratityasamutpada* in the natural world, then coming to conclusion that without the observer participant time is frozen and there is no change, which means there is no causality. Introduce the observer

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participant who says, 'now' and now relative to now there is past and future and then let the games begin and then evolution of the universe rolls and now you're talking about causality but you've got to have the observer participant. It is really quite amazing. So that is a brief introduction and tomorrow we go on to the *Śikṣasamuccaya*, his other great text, and the close application of mindfulness to the mind in that text. (17:55)

(17:55) But right now what I'd like to do is go somewhere else entirely – I'm going to surprise you. A little bit of history first, but I think I've mentioned it so I'll be very concise. But it was just about exactly forty years ago when I was studying in the library with this wonderful lama, Geshe Nawang Dhargyey), after having gone through the entire lam rim, beautiful presentation, and then he went through all the entire *Bodhicaryāvatāra* – "Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life", did a marvelous job, of course he's a fantastic lama. Then he went on the *Abhisamayalankara*, one of the five works of Maitreya, "Ornament for Clear Realization" delivered by Asanga, so very much as Dudjom Lingpa delivered a lot of mind treasures on Dzogchen, well so did Asanga deliver these five treatises of Maitreya, the five works of Maitreya, and this *Abhisamayalankara* was one of them and a very central and all-abiding theme throughout the whole text is laying out, systematically step-by-step, the entire path to enlightenment. That is, what are the stages of spiritual evolution that you transform that you go through as you achieve, say focusing on Mahayana, the Mahayana path of accumulation, and then preparation, the path of meditation, the path of seeing, the path of meditation, and then the path of no more training. Any you come to the culmination of that fifth path – and that's Buddhahood. So this is the most detailed, systematic, precise exposition, and then the commentaries and sub-commentaries go on for thousands and thousands of pages. So Geshe Nawang Dhargyey introduced us to this text and so that was my first introduction to the five paths, the ten bhumis, the ten arya bodhisattva grounds. But it was, when he described just the first one, the Mahayana path of accumulation, and then within the Mahayana path of accumulation, the first of the five, and they're sequential of course, then it breaks down to small, medium, and great. So then you go to the small stage of the Mahayana path of accumulation. And when you achieve this, when having cultivated the four immeasurables, cultivated bodhichitta – when your bodhichitta, the mind of a bodhisattva – when it arises spontaneously, effortlessly, triggered by *anything*, when it's uncontrived, effortless, then you're a bodhisattva.

And when you become a bodhisattva, that's when you step over the threshold and you are now, you have just entered the great highway, 'lambo che', the great highway to enlightenment. Stage one, it's called 'earth-like bodhichitta', because it's the foundation for all the developments, and refinement, and maturation of bodhichitta from that point on. And so as soon as I heard about that, I must say I was really enamored by that, I was quite thrilled and inspired, I thought Woe! There it is, there's the target, that's the onramp, that's the entrance to the freeway, right there, that small state, I just want to focus there. So he introduced us to that and I got very inspired and I want to, okay: spontaneous bodhichitta, okay, good, good, good, and oh by the way, you need shamatha, okay, whatever. And so shortly after that, just about that time I was fluent enough in Tibetan that with the encouragement of His Holiness who was at that time my lama, primary lama, he encouraged me to enter the Buddhist School of Dialectics. So I was no longer going to the library so about the time that Patrice showed up I was already vanished into this freshly established monastery with just thirty monks. And after studying all the basics of logic, Sautrantika view, Buddhist psychology, laying a foundation, kind of getting it, and learning how to debate. That took about fourteen months of very intense study, very intense training: five hours a day of meditation, memorizing hundreds of pages of material – so we all did it. And once we'd finished all that, I finished all that, then the very next day after I finished all that preliminary training, the very next day, then we were to begin six years of study, single pointedly six years of study on the *Abhisamayalankara*, with its commentaries, sub-commentaries, sub-sub-commentaries, and debating five hours a day on all of these five stages and 10 bhumis. And but I'm still looking at small stage of the Mahayana path of accumulation, and they're talking about this! So what I felt like, I went off and did a Goenka course just before this six years was to begin, and there I was meditating, observing the sheer chaos, the garbage dump, and the cesspool of my mind for eleven hours a day for ten days just before I'm about to start studying the five paths and the ten bhumis.

When I came out of that ten days, even before the ten days was over, I had already asked for a personal audience with His Holiness, saying there's no way I can study those five paths and ten bhumis, not when I've

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got a trash yard as my own mind – it's impossible and I can't do it. I didn't even ask him, I just: I can't do it. Because I've got this mess to deal with and I would like to just focus on the small stage of the Mahayana path of accumulation. And the rest of it – I'll get to it later! But I really felt - and here's the closest analogy – imagine you're a beggar, a real beggar, maybe you're a prince in disguise, that's for you to find out, but as far as you know you're a real beggar, and you're there on Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills. You know they can't tell you that you can't walk on the sidewalk, even if you're a beggar; I don't think they can tell you, 'You're too poor to walk here.' I don't think they can say that. So even as a beggar, a homeless person, you can still walk down the sidewalk on one of the richest streets in the world, and some of the fanciest restaurants in the world, and you can look at the menu, even if you're a beggar they can't say, 'Nope, your eyes cannot touch this menu.' So imagine there you are as a beggar, you don't have five cents in your pocket and you see, ah, there's the hors d'oeuvres, fifty dollars for an hors d'oeuvre, wow! That must taste good. And there's the main course, oh, three hundred dollars for the main course. And those are the side dishes, a hundred dollars a piece; the dessert itself is thirty dollars – wow! How about some drinks? Wow! Alcoholic drinks can be much more expensive than the entire meal. And so you're seeing that some of them will be laid out in five courses, ten courses, and you see I can easily spend a thousand dollars here for one meal, and I don't have five cents. Why don't I study the menu for six years?

And meanwhile of course I'm going to starve to death. But man, will I know that menu! And if anybody stops by, they can say, 'Do you know the menu? Have you studied the menu of this restaurant?' And I say, 'You bet ya! Would you like to spend six years with me, I can tell you about the menu, it's a fantastic menu. Believe me! And I've smelled some of the food – because the smell came free – and it really smells good. So if you'd like to starve to death with me, sure, six years, three months, whatever you like. I can tell you about all of the five main courses, and then the ten desserts.' And I just thought: no can do. I can't do it.

And so I spoke with His Holiness and said, I can't do it. I just can't do it. I've got to, what I want to do is just focus on the foundation and try to find the way to the path. And he said, 'Good! Very good! Go do it.' And one of his, Kushi Lati Rinpoche wonderful scholar, his consultant, doctrinal and all that, he said Kushi Lati Rinpoche, he'll help you. So that's what I did; just went off, and like that. And so this has been a source of inspiration for me ever since, that the earth-like bodhichitta, there you've actually gotten onto the freeway. And then if you move beyond that – now the corresponding wisdom practice on that initial stage of Mahayana path of accumulation is – any guesses?

(26:15) What is the wisdom practice on the small stage of the Mahayana path of accumulation? You have bodhichitta of course, earth-like bodhichitta, but what's the corresponding wisdom practice? It's the Four Applications of Mindfulness. Out of the 37 wings, the 37 facets to enlightenment, the Four Applications of Mindfulness, right there on the small stage of the Mahayana path of accumulation. So that's what I told His Holiness that I wanted to study and practice, I just want to focus on that. He said 'good, very good - there's the Kangyur, there's the collection of Buddhist teachings, you can go to the main temple', and they let me take down these great big volumes, I think I was maybe the only one, and started chowing down.

And so, what is the four applications of mindfulness? What is it that enables you to turn this earth-like bodhichitta into gold-like bodhichitta? Because if you achieve only the small stage, of Mahayana path of accumulation, you could conceivably lose it, and then fall off the path and then wander elsewhere. It could happen, by just encountering some atrocity, something that would so break your heart, shatter your spirit, demoralize you, that you just say - it's too generate, I can't deal with this and I'm just going to go out and achieve my own liberation; good luck everybody but that's just one task I can't take on because no can do - and then just follow your own path, it could happen. But if you seal, if you reinforce, that's a nice word – if you reinforce that initial bodhichitta, that earth-like bodhichitta, with the four applications of mindfulness, then not only does your insight grow of course, but your compassion, your bodhichitta grows and it turns into gold-like bodhichitta, on the medium stage of the Mahayana path of accumulation.

(27:59)

When it's gold-like bodhichitta that means it doesn't matter what happens, nothing will ever happen that will cause you to lose your bodhichitta; in other words from now until you're a Buddha, you will be a bodhisattva every single lifetime, you'll always be on the path. So whether it's 3 countless eons, 7 countless eons, 1 lifetime, 10 , whatever, you're going to be a bodhisattva until you are a Buddha, there'll be no deviations, you'll be on the path until you're a Buddha. That really, I must say, that really struck home to me. So that's old

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history for me that goes back 40 years. 20 years ago Gyatrul Rinpoche taught a text by Karma Chagme Rinpoche – The Union of Mahamudra and Dzogchen and as I translated it, translated his oral commentary we broke this into two volumes. The first one is Spacious Path to Freedom, the second one called Naked Awareness; but both are about the union of Mahamudra and Dzogchen.

When we come right towards the end of the second volume, just a culmination of the entire volume, there's a couple of chapters just before the concluding chapter, which are all about the five paths and the ten bhumis from a Mahamudra perspective. How do you move along those, practicing Mahamudra, and there's a very detailed account there so anybody who has the book – you can read it at your leisure. But the basic structure of the path of Mahamudra is just four yogas. (Alan gives the Tibetan names for -) 1. The Yoga of Single Pointedness; 2. Freedom from conceptual Elaboration; 3. The Yoga of One Taste; and finally, 4. The Yoga of No Meditation, and when you finish that, then you're a Buddha.

(29:55)

So the whole path, the 5 paths the 10 bhumis are now all synthesized into four categories, just those for yogas.

So the first one is the Yoga of Single Pointedness – I always focus, just by my predilection, the other ones sound really good I'm sure; How do you get a table in that restaurant? How do you get a table and have enough money in your pocket that you can at least order a basket of bread, maybe a hors-d'oeuvre? But how do you get a table and not always be standing just outside the door? Picking up the fragrances and getting hungrier and hungrier. And so among these for yogas, the Yoga of Single-pointedness that covers Mahayana path of accumulation and preparation. The Yoga of the Freedom of Conceptual Elaboration – the path of seeing. The Yoga of One Taste – most of the path of meditation; the Yoga of No Meditation – culminating bhumis – arya-bodhisattva bhumis, and then buddhahood itself. That's how they map out, so I hear that, sounds cool, a map upon a map, but now let's just go back to the beginning because here we are, this is Rodeo Drive, here's the restaurant, how can we get in and at least order some bread? Get in the door.

(31:57) And so Gyatrul Rinpoche re-inspired me all over again, it was really like my second wind, after 20 years primarily of Gelugpa, Theravada and some Shakya, then the last 20 years primarily Dzogchen, but with Gyatrul Rinpoche – big dose of the Mahamudra tradition from the Kharmas Chagme from the Kagyu tradition. So I wanted to share this with you to provide context, and I think you'll find it dovetails with everything we're doing here, but very explicitly with- close application of mindfulness to the mind.

So I'm going to try to be concise here, if you're even one tenth as inspired by this as I am, the time will be well spent.

So Karma Chagme Rinpoche is the author of the text, and he writes up and until single pointedness, and so as long as you are doing practices of all kinds, whatever you're doing, it doesn't matter what you're doing, any kind of practice that you're doing up and till but you've not yet achieved the Yoga of single pointedness, which means – okay how do you get in the door? The small stage, little stage, if you've not achieved that yet, up until single pointedness, primordial consciousness that realizes the path has not arisen. It means you're not on the path, so that is not genuine, meditative equipoise. You do not have meditative equipoise until you've reached that yoga of single pointedness.

(32:56)

I recall, the Buddha said – the mind that rests in meditative equipoise comes to know reality as it is. Well you don't. If you haven't yet achieved the yoga of single pointedness, you've not achieved that yet and you're not on any path. You may have been practicing for 40 years, you're still not on any path you've just done a whole bunch of practice. This, that the other thing, all very well, all very virtuous, definitely a whole bunch of good imprints but you're still not on the path and you've not achieved meditative equipoise.

Thus as subsequent appearances - so that is, in meditation you've not yet achieved meditative equipoise and then we have the post meditation state.

(33:20)

Thus as subsequent appearances do not arise as illusions- that is if when you come out of meditation you're not having bone fide illusory like Samadhi between sessions, there is no genuine post meditative state. In other words without having achieved single pointedness, you don't have meditative equipoise in meditation and you don't have authentic post meditation experience either. You're neither here nor there, you're really nowhere at all. You're wandering around samsara with a whole lot of good karmic, dharmic karmic imprints.

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So Gyatrul Rinpoche in his oral commentary, he comments here, this is when my ears perk up. 'The first stage, small stage, the first stage of single-pointedness occurs with the accomplishment of - shamatha' - and I'm quoting. Otherwise, how do you say, I would never want to de-form his own statements, these are his words. **'The first stage of single-pointedness occurs with the accomplishment of shamatha, wherein one single-pointedly attends to one's own awareness which is primordially unceasing and luminous.'** Unceasing and luminous, in other words the conventional nature of your own awareness.

So it's shamatha without a sign, sooner or later you have to get there, if you are going to embark on these four yogas that are the Mahamudra, the Mahamudra route, then sooner or later you'll be coming to shamatha without a sign. Awareness of awareness. Come by any means, Buddha image, mindfulness of breathing, whatever, but sooner or later you have to come there otherwise you've not achieved the first stage of single-pointedness, you've not achieved the path.

(35:20)

Now here I found it especially interesting, this is from Randjung Dorje and he's the 3rd Karmapa. He lived back in the 14th century as I recall, in a text called the (sounds like Tachen) or The Great Instructions, he comes back to this same point, just what Gyatrul Rinpoche referred to – you gain access to that small stage with shamatha on the mind, on awareness itself. Now Randjung Dorje, one of the again most formidable voices, greatest authorities of the whole Kagyu tradition, and he lived from 1284 to 1339, he says, and now I quote again, he says – **"at the stage of small single-pointedness (that's the small stage, the first stage) there are four applications of mindfulness"** – I bet you've never heard of that, I've never seen it anywhere else. We've looked at the four applications of mindfulness from the Pali cannon – Theravada, then we've looked it by way of Madhyamika, by way of Shantideva, now we are returning to the four applications of mindfulness via Mahamudra. What's distinct? It's very cool isn't it? Very cool! So here's what he says – **"There are four applications of mindfulness, the application of mindfulness of non-compositeness, free of any thought of the body as being either clean or unclean."**

So you see now, where's your vantage point? Where's your lighthouse? On what island is your lighthouse by which you're illuminating your body? Your lighthouse is resting in awareness of awareness; it's the substrate consciousness. And then you're turning the light of that pure luminous awareness and illuminating your body, but it's a non-conceptual awareness, so the very notion of clean and unclean, which is it?

Full of fill and feces and organs and all that kind of stuff, all has its conventional reality, but not from your perspective; the very categories of clean and unclean do not arise. The very category of is the body composite or non-composite does not arise, you're viewing it from a deeper perspective, just pure awareness. So there's the first one, there's your close application of mindfulness of the body, which from this perspective, the category of composite, non-composite doesn't arise. The categories of clean and not clean don't arise. Quite interesting, quite unique, I've not seen it anywhere else.

Let's continue, how about feelings? The application of mindfulness, of taintless bliss, without regarding feelings as being either suffering or joy; so you're just dwelling in this genuine flow of happiness, of wellbeing, of sukka arising, but then without superimposing upon them, any category of suffering or joy. In other words do not reify feelings that arises, it's taintless bliss, free of the superimposition of reification; because you can assume this is resting on Madhyamika. It's not just leaping Madhyamika and coming from the Pali cannon to this. This is just as Shantideva is rising in dependence upon, built upon, the teachings in the Pali cannon. Likewise here, moving into mahamudra, this is resting upon, the Madhyamika, the middle way view that Shantideva describes. Because all of these now are imbued with some understanding, some taste of emptiness, gained by way of this close application of mindfulness, exactly as Shantideva was describing; so it's an utterly smooth continuum.

(38:37)

We move to the third, the application of mindfulness to the mind, free of conceptual elaborations concerning the mind being either permanent or impermanent. So those categories too are not being superimposed on your own mind. And then finally the application of mindfulness of phenomena. Cutting off superimpositions considering the reality of Nirvana without thinking of phenomena as either having or not having an identity; an identity of their own, even that is left out. In other words it's a non - conceptual view that is - not slipping into any of these conceptual constructs, but viewing them from outside those boxes. So that's for starters. If you have the patience for it, let's read a little bit more.

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(39:26)

So single-pointedness in these phases of small, medium and great, these are comprised in the path of accumulation and preparation, and the freedom from conceptual elaboration comprises the path of seeing. Gyatrul Rinpoche comments here in his oral commentary –

“The defining characteristic of the first yoga – single pointedness, is recognizing the nature of your own mind. Further you realize that appearances are none other than the nature of your own mind, and that nature is space- like emptiness.”

So this is the wisdom characteristic that’s moving right through the path of accumulation, the path of preparation; all on this straight track of Mahamudra. If we go back to the primary words of the Great Instructions, I think this probably also by Randjung Dorje.

“Abide in the reality of single pointed, indivisible, Shamatha and Vipashyana” – so you enter into it with shamatha but then your first task on the wisdom side is – start developing Vipashyana, and (Beirgud??) was right, it is emptiness all the way through. But now, by this close application of mindfulness ala Shantideva – but now moving into the Mahamudra mode, that union of Shamatha Vipashyana, attending to the body, feelings, mind and phenomena, and the union of these two, indivisible Shamatha Vipashyana. The meaning is that single pointedness entails abiding in the space-like reality of emptiness and luminosity.

(41:02)

Emptiness and luminosity, this persists all the way through; it’s that non-duality of emptiness and luminosity, emptiness and appearances. At that time you realize the essential nature of meditation as space like emptiness and luminosity; but the vipashyana of ‘certain knowledge’ has not arisen from that space-like emptiness and luminosity, in other words you’ve gained some glimmerings, some insight, but it’s not yet got a lock, it’s not this ‘certain knowledge’; that’s with single-pointedness, because you don’t have that full non-conceptual, un-mediated realization; you pointlessly wander around in darkness, relative to the later states. At that time your subsequent post meditative consciousness reifies phenomena, by grasping onto them as ordinary and real. So when you’re in meditation, luminosity and emptiness, emptiness and luminosity, but then you come back and say – ‘oh, hi Miles, hi Tracy, what’s up?’ And you slip right back, it’s like what so many of you are dreading – going back to the mundane world, where everybody around you reifies everything, and they think they’re sane, how can you handle it! When you step out of this abode, where everything seems reified – you’re back to what they call ‘the real world’. Which is of course the delusional world, because that’s where everybody reifies everything, okay.

(42:34)

But here it’s something similar, when you’re off the cushion, the old habits come surging in again, you get on the cushion, you have these wonderful phases of sanity, but you get off the cushion and then the old delusions come in again. Hence, even though you attain empty luminosity during meditative equipoise, your subsequent consciousness in between sessions becomes confused concerning ordinary things. So there is the stain of grasping onto them as if real, and the stains of karma are not purified. So in between sessions if you’re not mindful, you disengage from meditation, so all of this actually, even though this is a bit further from where we are right now – very relevant to leaving this retreat. Very relevant you know, microcosm, macrocosm all over the place. If you’re not mindful you disengage from meditation, which brings about separation. And even if you are mindful- the essential nature is not seen during the post meditative state, so there’s no attainment; you keep flipping in and out. It’s almost like a person who is insane and has moments of sanity, then insane again, so you haven’t stabilized yet. **“You’ve not dispensed with superimpositions upon experience and you still have the sense of an object, an agent of meditation. So this is a time of meditation in which the ultimate reality of the mind is reified.**

The form aggregate and the five avenues of consciousness are purified, they’re cognized as naturally empty, ungrounded in any, in an essential nature. Since you are inevitably subject to grasping you’re experiential realizations are stained by that, the old propensities of reification. In terms of the appearances to your limpid awareness, you precisely discern subtle and gross causality, but because this is grasped as being real, causality is reified. When you are undistracted you are in meditative equipoise and when you are distracted you’re in the post meditative state. At this time you disengage from characteristics and you chiefly cultivate shamatha, in a state that is free of the intellect.

(44:17)

You know your own essential nature of empty luminosity.”

It's a little bit more, so there's the entry stage, quite clear I think, where you are going just in a seamless fashion, slipping right into the substrate consciousness, realizing the cognizance, the luminosity of your own awareness, and then plunging right on through to the emptiness of your own awareness, wherein the luminosity is still present. Because your awareness of emptiness is luminous, so you are simultaneously experiencing the luminosity of your own awareness and the emptiness of your own awareness, simultaneously the two. Let's just take a sneak preview.

I will not be going into the three higher yogas, that's again reading the menu too far. But in the medium stage of single-pointedness, and I think this is interesting, I mean it's all interesting, **'you occasionally enter into Samadhi even when you're not meditating'**. So now you see that divide between meditative state and post meditate starting to get blurry. The meditative state is kind of melding over into post meditative.

(45:27)

So you occasionally enter into samadhi even when you're not meditating, and stability comes when you are meditating. **In the limpidity of the training and the Samadhi of bliss, clarity and non-conceptuality;** the quality of the substrate, here's so interesting, in the limpidity, which means transparent and luminous, in the limpidity of the training and the Samadhi of bliss, luminosity and non-conceptuality, you can display numerous kinds of tainted, extrasensory perception and paranormal abilities. This is the medium stage, path of accumulation. Tainted why, because there is still some element of reification going on. But extrasensory perception, paranormal abilities are coming right in there on this medium stage, where there's that gold-like bodhichitta. **In that state, ideation or rumination arises less than before and whatever,** and of course that's in between sessions; and **whatever arises, proceeds in its own limpidity.** Just a sheer display of luminosity. **Afterwards, whenever you are mindful of spacious appearances that are imbued with a sense of empty luminosity, at times this arises as meditation, and at times it arises more substantially.**

So again you're wavering in and out, empty luminosity, and then again the old habit of reification comes in, then it loosens us, empty luminosity again. Dreams occur less frequently than before. At times you have such an experience, and at times you do not, and you become fascinated with this meditation.

Shall I read a little bit more? I'm enjoying it, if you're not you can always settle your mind in its natural state, don't mind me, I'm going to read more.

(47:20)

The middling stage of single-pointedness in which the facsimile of empty luminosity is maintained with mindfulness, facsimile in the sense - this is not yet an unmediated, direct realization of emptiness, but it is something similar. In this middling stage of single-pointedness, although there may be occasional distraction, during which it is not maintained continually, it is called the warmth and pinnacle stages of the path of preparation. So this middling stage is equivalent to the first two of the Four Stages of the Path of Preparation. Warmth, and pinnacle. **Once the experience has become stable, if that empty luminosity is maintained with mindfulness, it will become constant, even if at times it is not intentionally maintained.** So you just get that flow going.

This is also called warmth and the pinnacle. That is the teaching of Gotsama, one of the great mahamudra masters. So what he's just locked onto the middling stage, is these first two stages of path of preparation. So the small stage of single-pointedness, is small, medium, and great stage of Mahayana path of accumulation. Go to the middling stage, great stage then you're in the first and second, third and fourth stages of preparation.

Just a little bit more – Karma Chagme says – **by cultivating that meditation for a long while your mind will turn away from the eight mundane concerns, you'll be freed from outer and inner parasites,** much better than antibiotics, **and you'll be able to display paranormal abilities such as meditative manipulation and domination of the elements and so forth.**

So mind over matter, big time. When that happens the qualities of single-pointedness have arisen. You've really nailed the first yoga. **If the mind is not serviceable, if the essence and draws of meditation are not differentiated, due to a lack of mental peace, and if you are incapable of bringing forth the common signs of warmth,** that's the first stage of path of preparation, **those qualities have not arisen.**

Final one, it's short.

(49:29)

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Karma Chagme again – **The difference between single-pointedness and freedom from conceptual elaboration**, that's the one that corresponds to the path of seeing, the next yoga; **is in the former, rumination, ideation does not arise**; so thoughts, rumination and so forth, in the former one – single pointedness, path of accumulation and preparation; **when thoughts arise, they do not arise as the Dharmakaya**. They do not display themselves, you do not see that these are actually nothing other than the effulgence, the play, the display of creative expressions of rigpa. You don't see that, you see they're empty but that's all you see, they're empty, okay, cool; but when you achieve by way of this Mahamudra, and this path right now is the same path as Dzogchen, they don't differentiate until much later on, this is Threkcho phase, you've not yet realized rigpa, you've realized emptiness. But thoughts appear simply as empty, but when you move into the Mahayana path, let's say the Mahamudra path of seeing, then you see not only the emptiness of all thoughts and so forth that arise, but you actually see them, you don't visualize them, you see them as simply displays of rigpa, dharmakaya. Well from what perspective could you possibly see all appearances, thoughts and so forth as displays of rigpa? From what perspective could you see them? Rigpa. So that's when you become a Vidjradhara, a holder of Vidja, a holder of Rigpa. You are now an accomplished Mahamudra practitioner.

Or if you're following Dzogchen, this is all the same as Dzogchen right now it's all the same there's no difference. Terminology, that's it, no other difference than that. So that's when you become a Vidjadhara, the four levels of being Vidjadhara, I won't go into those now.

So there it is. So that's the entering of the path, the great path, how to get in the door, how to get a table at the Mahayana restaurant. That's the path. It goes from the small stage, to the medium stage, to the great stage. And then the onramp, if you've ever been in a big city, I'm sure you all have, in Los Angeles we have this incredible maze of freeways all over, because we have so many cars and eight million people all jumbled in the same place. So I have been there many times, I used to live there, and it can be very frustrating at times when you are downtown, and you see the freeway you want to get on, and you say yep, that's the way home, that's the direction, that's the freeway, and it's about fifty feet above where you are, and you say, I wish I were a helicopter, how do I get my car up there? And you drive and it's still up there, and you drive and it's still up there, and then you get a one way street and go off in another direction, oh oh, I can't see the path anymore, and then finally you do a lot of one-ways and finally you get back and – oh there it is but it's still fifty feet above me.

You'd give anything, it's the end of the day and you're driving in Los Angeles traffic for hours, you'd give anything, oh lord bless me with an onramp! My kingdom for an onramp! Please, it's just painful, to see the freeway I want to be on and see those cars going woom, woom, woom, and I'm sitting behind a red light, oh where's the on ramp, please somebody show me the onramp?

Any guesses what the name of the onramp is?

Shamatha onramp. If you don't have shamatha you don't have an onramp. The onramp is not the freeway. If you just get on the onramp you know you're not on the freeway yet, it's called an onramp, right. You could be ticketed right there, towed away, so close, or you could just be so happy, you know a lot of onramps in Los Angeles have a little light that goes red – green, red – green, and you can't get onto the freeway until it gives you green. But if there's really heavy traffic you might be stuck with red for a while, and then you might fall asleep, in which case all you've gotten is the onramp; you could die there, you know, one of the many casualties on the onramp, then you never make it onto the freeway, you got that close, but if you didn't have that final surge to actually get into the flow of traffic on the freeway, then you're just on the onramp. Which just really means it doesn't matter. You did get on the onramp or you didn't, it didn't matter because all you did was the onramp, you didn't get onto the freeway, and that was the whole point of the onramp. You might just love the flowers next to the onramp, you might all kinds of things, so there it is, same thing. Shamatha is the onramp, it's that which makes the mind so serviceable, that you can transform the contrived, the effortful, developed bodhichitta into something that just flows, spontaneously, effortlessly. And then with that Shamatha, especially that shamatha right on the nature of awareness, then you're just perfectly primed to apply that right into the Four Applications of Mindfulness, thereby sealing your bodhichitta, getting it irreversible, and then it's – get into the fast lane. Cool?

Good, let's meditate, try to find that onramp.

Meditation:

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(55:40) So lay your mind down to rest, the mind that is so energetic, turbulent, active restlessness, lay it down to rest in this non-conceptual space of your body, let your awareness come to the ground, settle your body, relaxed, still and vigilant; utterly surrender all control over the breath, simply observe the body breathing.

(59:26) Settle your mind in the immediacy of the present moment, free of grasping let your awareness be still. As if you are stretching before setting out on a marathon run, warming up, spend just a couple of minutes releasing your awareness into space with no object, utter sense of relaxation, of letting go; with your eyes open but your gaze vacant, utterly releasing all conceptualization, rumination as you breathe out, with no object but as the breath effortlessly flows in, let your awareness withdraw from all appearances and converge in upon itself into a radiant clear, unmediated experience of awareness itself, luminous and cognizant; and as the breath flows out release out into space with no object and as the breath flows in - concentrate, inverting your awareness right in upon itself, a simple unelaborated experience of being aware.

(1:02:16) As you arouse, invert and concentrate your awareness right in upon itself, this naturally serve to dispel all laxity, and as you utterly release, especially releasing any thoughts that may have arisen, releasing your awareness into space with no object, this is the natural remedy for excitation, so balance your awareness in this way.

(1:04:13) And while you may have some sense of the emptiness of your mind, this construct, this label that we superimpose upon a myriad of mental events, none of which are the mind, but that we superimpose upon the space of the mind which is an attribute of mind but not the mind itself, you may have some sense, some intuition, perhaps even some experience of the emptiness of inherent nature of your mind. What about awareness, that transparent, luminous, perpetual flow of cognizance, doesn't that seem inherently real, absolutely real - independent of any conceptualization? Isn't this one thing you can count on that's really there? Closely apply mindfulness to awareness itself.

(1:06:34) So try to place awareness itself between the glasses plates that you place beneath the lens of your microscope, stabilize it, clearly illuminate it, this awareness of awareness; so that you sustain that flow of knowing of knowing, knowing of being aware with continuity and clarity. There is nothing to think about here, just as if you're drinking a glass of cool pure water, there's nothing to think about, just taste it and taste it continually, this flow of awareness of awareness, know it immediately.

(1:09:45) And now shift it into vipashyana mode of enquiry with the simply question - This awareness that you've been attending to so closely, does it have attributes or is it devoid of attributes? What are its attributes? These are identified by way of shamatha. Attend closely.

Is it static or is it arising in a series of staccato moments of awareness? Does it have a quality of knowing? Does it have a quality of luminosity and clarity? Is it created? Do the thoughts, memories and images emerge from it?

Is your awareness sometimes still, sometimes emotional, sometimes relatively free of grasping, sometimes carried away by grasping? Is it restlessness or calm, clear or dull, agitated or still? And examine very closely - what is the nature of this awareness that has these many attributes? If it is true, if awareness takes on one or more of these qualities and has some of these qualities perhaps all the time, then examine very closely, what is the nature of this awareness, that has these many attributes? Can you find that awareness among the attributes, any one of them individually, among all of them collectively or can you identify awareness as something separate from all of them while awareness possesses all of them? See if you can identify awareness itself, that has these multiple qualities.

(1:14:50) There is awareness and there is everything else that is not-awareness, which means that must be a distinction between awareness and not-awareness, there must be boundaries. So examine closely what are the boundaries of your own awareness? Where is it, how far does it extend and where does it stop? Where do you meet the border beyond which - not-awareness? The border between awareness and appearances that are illuminated by awareness, where's the border? They're not the same. Where's the border? If upon thoroughly looking for this real awareness that is inherently real independent of all conceptual designation, if upon thoroughly looking for it right where it should be, if you cannot find it, rest in that knowing of the absence of awareness, the emptiness of awareness, and rest non-conceptually in that awareness of emptiness which by nature is luminous; and luminosity which by nature is empty.

Teaching pt2:

(1:20:47)

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Just as a footnote, I find it quite interesting that in this Mahamudra account of the path of accumulation, and then specifically the small stage of this yoga of single-pointedness that there is already this emergence of paranormal abilities, and extrasensory perception, but with no reference to achieving the actual state of the first jnana, the second, third, fourth, there's no reference to it all, there's just shamatha and specifically shamatha focused on awareness, that's it, but there's no more elaboration about the jnanas. If you go back to Buddhaghosa, the path of purification the Visuddhimagga, he's got a whole chapter, it's quite fascinating actually, a whole chapter like a cookbook, like a chemistry test book, it's so prosaic, so mundane, and that kind of makes it more appealing to me, there's nothing mystical, or spooky or weird about it; that you achieve the first jnana, second, third, fourth jnana so you achieve all of those jnanas, but then you achieve the jnanas multiple times, with respect to if you'd really like to develop a full spread of paranormal abilities and extrasensory perceptions, there's a whole chapter about it. And how you do that is by gaining mastery over the counter-part signs, or these archetypes so to speak, from the form realm, of earth, water, fire, air, that'll be a good start, you can do the other ones as well, the primary colors, but you gain mastery of them and you gain mastery of them in the first jnana, the second jnana, the third jnana, the fourth jnana, in multiple ones, so it's really working out in the jnana gymnasium, you know, because you are working through all of these one by one, each of the four elements but in the four jnanas so it sounds like a lot of work! It could be a lot of fun.

(1:22:18)

People like to work out in the gym, you know, this is working out in the jnana gym. And then once you've mastered all of them, with these multiple states of jnana, then you move, oh gosh, I haven't memorized it, but it's like okay now that you've learned the finger exercises – more advanced finger exercises. Go into the first jnana in the earth element; into the fourth jnana in the fire element, now come back to the water and now come back to the first in air, ready? Okay and now we're going to go, it's kind of – da-da-da-da-da; da-da-da-da-da – you're really working out! And so you just gain this complete, kind of suppleness of being able to lock onto these different nimittas, these different archetypes of all the elements, in different jnanas, so you just completely master them, and then once you've mastered them, then the fun begins, because then for example, you go into one of the jnanas, let's say the fourth jnana, let's say in earth element, you get a total lock on it, like you own it, right, so there you are, you've captured it, and then you come back, but like holding some like peripheral awareness, you hold that, but then you come back to the desire realm, the physical environment and you find for example a body of water, right, so you get your target, it's like you're a bomber, you're about to do a bombing run, so I'm going to bomb this lake, so it's a lake, right, so you find your target in the desire realm with your eyes open, you're seeing something with your eyes, okay there's my target. Then you go right back up to the fourth jnana, and you get a lock, once again you reaffirm your lock on the form realm archetype of earth element, and then like dragging something across a screen with a mouse, you drag the nimitta, the counterpart sign of the earth element, you drag it from there and you superimpose it with the power of your Samadhi, on the lake, and then you walk on it. As long as you hold the Samadhi. And if you're feeling generous, you say – Miles, or Thomas, whoever happens to be your companion at the moment, who may doubt very much your abilities, come and walk with me. And if Thomas gets into your flow then Thomas can walk with you. You're holding the whole scene with your Samadhi. As soon as you release the Samadhi, and let that archetype from the form real just whoosh, like a yo-yo, flip right back into the form realm, then your water goes whoop and Thomas or Miles takes a bath.

(1:24:46)

That sounds like a lot of work, really interesting work, and if you have a thousand years to live that might be a good way to spend fifty of them. It would be fascinating, really, I mean if this is true, man everything's different! But then you find no reference to any of that, here it is, I mean here in these two chapters in Naked Awareness he lays out all the five paths and the ten bhumis, but puts on the grid of these four yogas. But there it is, right in the medium stage of Mahayana Path of Accumulation, you're already getting these powers, they're arising spontaneously, and no reference to jnanas, so how are you getting it?

Again it's not by magic, there's no magic, there's no woolly anything like that. Magic is simply a technology that's not sufficiently understood. Or a miracle, simply an event that takes place, that stems from a dimension of reality you haven't yet comprehended. So what would be the best interpretation, how would you make sense of this? And of course if you don't want to take it seriously that's your business, I don't care. I take it

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seriously as you can tell. If these paranormal abilities, extrasensory perception, if this is arising right out there, out of the medium stage of the Mahayana path, the path of accumulation, how are you getting that without doing all of this enormous gymnastics of the higher jnanas and so forth? Well it's transparent. By the one thing you are developing and that is the union of Shamatha Vipashyana right on the nature of the mind. By realizing that, by gaining insight into the empty luminous nature of your own awareness, and by the power of that, the empty and luminous nature of all appearances, ah, you are becoming quasi-lucid.

(1:26:38)

Quasi-lucid. So the metaphor, my all-time favorite metaphor. Being non lucid, so you're kind of lucid when you're meditating but as soon as you get off the meditation cushion you slip right back into non-lucidity, within your dream, meditative state, post meditative state, right, that's when you're right there at the beginning. But then you start getting into the flow of it, but imagine there you are, in a non-lucid dream, but you're coming into such a deep insight; number one you have this sublimely stable, clear, luminous mind, but you're really probing into the very nature of awareness itself, and seeing that your own awareness within the dream; imagine practicing vipashyana within a dream, and that's definitely possible, definitely possible; but imagine you're doing this in a non-lucid dream, and you're starting to not only rest in awareness of awareness but probe into, vipashyana wise, into the empty nature of your own awareness and gaining some realization, and holding that realization, to some extent you come out of, in this post meditative state, sustaining the awareness of the empty, luminous nature of your own awareness, and lo and behold, you're getting these strong glimmerings, from insight, experience, a taste of the empty and luminous nature of everything you're experiencing. And when you know that, when you know there's really nothing there from its own side, it's empty and luminous, then, all you have to do is start conceptually designating differently. If you see there's nothing there, that has already designated itself, labeled itself, demarcated itself, solidified all by itself, when you see there is nothing out there, what you're looking at is a world of potentiality, an ocean of possibility, waiting to be designated, right. And simply appearing as empty appearances, but nothing really there. So when you see it's empty, it's luminous, and you're not going into the jnanas and capturing the form realm and all of that; right from that desire realm, within the dream, you could then start to shift the reality you're experiencing. As long as you're sustaining that flow of insight supported with shamatha, you can then start modifying that which you're seeing – mind over matter. All of the elements in the dream, you can start changing them at will, and you're still not lucid. But as you continue on that trajectory, and maintaining more and more of a continuity, a depth, a certainty of the emptiness of all phenomena within the dream; as you are moving into the path of preparation – the warmth, the pinnacle, the patience, and then supreme dharma, the four stages of Mahayana path of preparation, which now you're coming to the end of the first yoga, first out of four yogas. When you're coming to the culmination of that and you've really have realized Sharvashunya - the emptiness of *everything* you're experiencing – yourself, your own awareness, your mind, other people, phenomena, appearances, everything! When you've now thoroughly, you've now comprehended – there's nothing here that exists from its own side, and you're maintaining a continuity of knowing that while you're in formal meditation, and in between sessions. When you're there, then you are about as perfectly ripe, for pointing out instructions, it's possible. Because in between sessions you're seeing everything as dream-like. It's no syllogism, it's not logic, it's no inference, you're *seeing* things, everything is dreamlike; yourself, your mind and all of phenomena and all you perceive. So then how far away are you from some Dzogchen master coming to you and saying – you're very close, but you're wrong on only one point – this isn't dream- like, this is a dream. And with that the bottom falls out of your perspective. Because conventionally speaking, as an illusory being, you've still located yourself within the dream. Conventionally. You know it's convention but that's where you are, that's your perspective, still there. And then the master says – or you can read a text, whatever it is- this is not like a dream, this is a dream. And then you break through your locus, where you feel you're located, you break through awareness itself, that conventional, relative awareness, you break through that; and you break through to the ground from which the entire dreamscape appears. And now you're viewing that same dreamscape from the perspective of rigpa. And you see – aha, that's not dream-like at all, that really is a dream, and now I see - all the appearances and all the thoughts are really nothing other than, displays, creative expressions of rigpa. And now you're a Vidjadhara. Enjoy your dinner.

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Transcribed by *Rafael Carlos Giusti*, Erik Koeppe and Cheri Langston

Revised by Erik Koeppe and Cheri Langston

Final edition by Rafael Carlos Giusti

79 Great Compassion (2)

10 Oct 2012

Teachings:

What I like to do now we have gone to the cycle once, I'd like to go to the cycle once again of the great compassion and so on but this time put a kind of especial emphasis on it this theme of course being may we all be free of suffering and the causes of suffering. I want to highlight to different theme each of the four greats. In some, one of the causes of suffering, something that is very practical, something we know a lot about and the mind as now I think after seven weeks we're all very familiar, the mind is caught up in rumination, is just so vulnerable, to anything it's just kind of sitting and there is no skin at all waiting to be captivated by even the wimpiest little mental affliction said "oh, I'll swallow you", just like ready to be devoured by anything.

And so the vision "might we be free of suffering and the causes of suffering" focusing specially in that particular aspect, the causes of suffering, of having a mind that does not work, a mind that is dysfunctional, that's how the mind is characterized before you achieve shamatha or you maybe doing three retreat or going to ten years retreats vipashyana and whatever you may be doing all the good work you are doing on the world and all of that is virtuous so no disparagement at all but you are doing a lot of virtue with the dysfunctional mind that frankly doesn't work.

(1:47) So to be free of that, to have a mind that is serviceable that has recovered its own birth right, since after all every time we die we return to the substrate consciousness, to recover one's birth right, a mind that is supple, that is buoyant, that is radiant, still, clear, and while resting in its own natural state, it is just naturally blissful, that is in that state there is no explicit suffering, there is no blatant suffering when you are resting in the substrate consciousness. No blatant suffering at all, not of body, you don't feel your body, there is nothing in the environment, you are just for the time being, you're just taking a break from the entire universe, all the outside world - do without me for a little while - right?

(2:31) And then of course there is no blatant suffering in the mind, the mind is blissful. And, so to have, it's kind like to achieve shamatha is like to acquire your own little idyllic retreat cabin, a place you can just you know can go back to, that is quiet, that is peaceful, it's serene, and is blissful and luminous, and so for least a little while you have some kind of breather, some respite, again a retreat so you can regroup, revitalize and temporarily really feel what is like not to be beaten up by samsara and not be beaten up by one's own mind. So that would be good start, and of course the longer venture of being free of the causes of suffering is to be free of craving, hostility and delusion but in order to do that, in order to really set out on a path that purifies the mind so it does not just fall back into the same ruts all over again. Then, as I think all know very well by now based on the best authorities there are in Buddhism, that the on-ramp on to the great freeway is shamatha and the way to approach shamatha is just seeing it not as, never, as a moment as an end in itself but simply, there's the route to get on to great freeway, the great highway to awakening. So let's practice.

Meditation:

With the aspiration to free ourselves from suffering and its causes as a means to be enabled to liberate others from suffering and its causes, let your awareness descend into the body, right down to the ground. Let your awareness illuminate the whole space of the body, without entering into the body. Let your awareness rest in stillness and illuminate this tactile field as you settle the body at ease and stillness in a posture of vigilance. And then take on the ever so subtle challenge of relinquishing all control and even all preference, all effort in terms of the flow of respiration as you relax deeply and fully all the way through the end of the out breath, releasing all thoughts, quieting rumination. And simply allowing the breath to flow in whether it's short or long, whether there is a pause at the end of the out breath or a pause at the end of the in breath, let it be, let the body breath and simply observe the flow of the respiration.

With the same spirit of renunciation or definite emergence release all concerns about the future and the past. Give up all attachment to this life and let your awareness come to rest in stillness in the present moment.

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Continue to let the light of your awareness illuminate the space of the body and particularly the sensations of the flow of prana, the in and out breath. You may focus if you wish especially in the region of the navel, end of the line, the terminus of the flow of prana as you inhale.

Then turn your awareness outwards, the world around you, arouse the questions:

1) Why couldn't we all, all sentient beings being free of suffering and the causes of suffering? Since all sentient beings have a substrate consciousness, why couldn't each one, clearly, luminously, discover this dimension of their own awareness and have access at will, to this place of serenity, of calm, of bliss and luminosity? Since it is the birth right of every sentient being, why couldn't we all realize this?

2) May we realize this freedom.

3) May I free each one.

4) May I receive blessings of the guru and all the Buddhas and all the awakened ones to enable me to do so.

As you arouse this aspiration bring forth the supplication. With each in breath imagine the light of blessings from awakened ones converging upon you from all sides, empowering you, enabling you in this way to carry through with this resolve. And with each out breath, imagine this light emanating from your own body, and imagine as you venture boldly into the realm of possibility, carrying though with this commitment and freeing each sentient being you encounter.

Release all appearances and let your awareness rest in its own nature.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Revised by Diane Strully

Final edition by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Posted by Alma Ayon

80 Mindfulness of the mind (3)

10 Oct 2012

Teaching pt 1:

This afternoon we return to the close application of mindfulness to the mind so clearly a vipashyana practice and the parallel once again is very, very strong with Tibetan medicine practice by a lung real master and that is:

If the patient is very frail or has some very serious illnesses that take the energy then and all of that, then the system, the person's body, the whole system will not be able to probably assimilate or benefit from really strong medicine, it just won't be able to take the impact, so therefore very gentle medicines are given that don't have that deep an impact, not really powerful medicines, but they make a little bit help and then gradually they nourish the system, they strengthen the system, a bit more balance and then he gives strong medicine. This way a tradition of a Tibetan doctor one I lived with a quite long time, meet with his patient once every week and each time brand new fresh diagnosis by seeing the urine, the pulse, questioning and so forth and then week by week if the healing process is going well, then you see one medicine change, there are usually three medicines, one medicine change and another one will change, gradually given stronger and stronger medicines until eventually hopefully a complete cure is brought about.

(2:11) It is very similar here and that is we start just learning how to breathe, that's not going to purify or eradicate any mental affliction to its root, but learning how to breathe, learning how to settle body, speech and mind in the natural state is anything but trivial and a lot of you I think now experienced that in eight weeks where we learn this is what like to breathe, this is what like to have the body, the mind at rest and so forth with clarity and then this whole domain of shamatha. Of course everybody knows, no matter how good you are at it if you become the world expert, it won't eradicate a single mental affliction not even one but it does make some pretty formidable obscurations go dormant so it is almost like hibernating in which case then you can bring a much strong medicine and of course that's vipashyana. And if that's working if that does its work and it's really more attenuating the mental afflictions getting to pretty deep level, and you just keeping moving right on you can bring in, for example, one route very developmental state of generation and completion, very, very powerful. Or in another route or you can do both complementary and that is going

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right into Dzogchen, or Mahamudra (Great Seal), as we have seen and this goes right down to the core, the ultimate ground of awareness and the deepest medicine there is.

(3:30) And so this vipashyana really is intended as we see in some many text, Shantideva makes it clear in both of his great treatise that this vipashyana; the cultivation of the perfection of wisdom is really intended for those who have already made their mind serviceable so it is not at all to imply, he doesn't imply and I have not have heard a teacher say – don't start it until after you have achieved shamatha, way too straight. I have never heard one teacher and I had a lot of teachings over 42 years but not one said – oh no, don't touch it until you achieve shamatha. At the same time all the classic teachings say - but the time when you can really fully benefit from it. And then of course what is the whole point of vipashyana methodologically is to have that total fusion, union of shamatha and vipashyana.

(4:18) So we saw earlier here from Rabten Rimpoche's commentary to the Mahamudra teachings on small stage of yoga single pointedness, the first one is getting that shamatha, rather a nature of awareness and then immediately apply it to vipashyana and above all vipashyana right to the nature of the mind and that's where we are going now. So it is good to sow seeds.

As I mentioned, I think it was Jochin asking about receiving Vajriyana empowerment, that's beyond vipashyana, that's beyond cultivation of Bodhicitta but according to all my teachers without exception, within the Tibetan tradition, all of them say go ahead and sow the seed. When you feel you're ripe, you'd like to, the faith is there, go ahead and sow the seeds and then as you're doing the groundwork, the only problem is if you don't do the groundwork and you keep on doing the facsimiles you can do those indefinitely you'll never do the work they're designed to do and you're not laying the groundwork. Then you have a lot of good mental imprints. That's about it, which is certainly something but when you consider there really is a path here right within arms reach, then why not go for it.

(5:20) So we turn now to Śikṣasamuccaya the Compendium of Practices by Shantideva. We covered the close applications of mindfulness to the feelings, we turn now to his presentation and of course he is really primarily is citing sutras one after another. This one's quite formidable. The close application of mindfulness to the mind is discussed in the *Ratnacūḍa Sūtra*, so here now the Buddha is speaking:

Instructions for one that is reading this transcript: below it is being written each part of the text read by Alan followed by Alan's comments about each part that was read.

Text: "Consider this, 'While thoroughly experiencing the mind,'"

(6:28) thoroughly experiencing the mind, - how would you go about doing that? Gee, maybe settling the mind would be a good way. There you are just attending to whatever comes up, the space of the mind, subjective impulses, objective appearances, that is pretty thorough, when you get very custom to it, you see, ok, like a plantation owner, standing up on the hill and looking out over his whole plantation - ok, that is all of it, I've seen it, and he'll say "that is my whole plantation" and what is not saying is you mean that tree or you mean that piece of dirt or you mean that rock, you mean the borders. He is not doing ontological analysis, right? He is not saying 'I thought I had a plantation but I guess I don't after all, why did I spend so much money on it?'

So there is this phase - you're looking out over the plantation and you say: where is your plantation? It is right over there, you can see there is the border that is my plantation. And you leave it right there, in Tibetan it is called: "*don't investigate, don't analyze*" just, you've said something true – that's my plantation, that's my neighbor's plantation, there's my other neighbor's plantation, that's my plantation. True, leave it right there within this cognitive frame of reference, that's enough and you should know where the borders are. Good borders, good fences and all that make good neighbors and so forth.

(8:01) And likewise with the mind, in the Gelugpa tradition they 'call this settling the mind in its natural state', [Alan mentioned the name of settling the mind in its natural state and one of the words in Tibetan is] "shine", shamatha, which means focus on the mind. So when we are doing this, we are not saying, ok, which one is the mind, which one is the mind? We are saying, no, I am looking at the space of the mind whatever, and that it is as good as gets for observing the mind, that is what we call observing the mind. I am looking over Cassia, I am looking at her face and, yes, I am, there's Cassia's face. But which part of the face is her face? Her nose, her mouth, her hair and so forth. No, we're not doing that, no, "matamache" (in Tibetan) there she is and we leave there, then if you want to probe into, ok, does she exist from her own side, then you are bringing in the vipashyana.

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So it's very important to see, there is the face which has its legitimacy, it's truth, it's conventional truth, a relative truth, but it is a truth and it's never negated - this is the actual point, the crucial point, it is never negated by the ultimate analysis. Direct realization of emptiness does not say, wow, I was ever wrong before when I thought that's Cassia right over there, she is still right over there, even after you realize emptiness, there are still sentient beings and there still suffering and as far as their concerned, they're caught up in what an awakened person would call a non-lucid dream, and for them, they're calling 'reality' because that is as good as gets.

(9:22) So when **thoroughly experiencing the mind**, then you can see it is just a perfect platform, the shamatha platform is 'settling the mind in its natural state' and maybe bringing in a bit of 'awareness of awareness'.

So now we continue:

Text: 'While thoroughly experiencing the mind, what are those minds that become attached, or hateful, or deluded?

So here it is, we'll often say that, I'm just tormented by my mind, I am depressed, and anxious, my mind it fitful, my mind is restless and so forth. And so the mind also becomes dominated by these three root poisons, but then he says: 'what are those minds?' So now we are going into this ontological analysis which we're probing in.

Text: Do they arise in the past, future, or present?

(10:04) Now clearly this really has a power to it, a power to transform, a power to deconstruct your experience of your own mind, even only if you actually apply this to your own experience of your own mind and don't just think about somebody else's mind and then write an article or win a debate, ok?

So these minds, sometimes the mind feels full of craving, attachment and so forth, other times malevolent, hostile, aggressive, hateful, other time is dopey, deluded, stupid and so forth.

So do they arise in the past, future or present? Any mind that is past has vanished so it cannot be that

Text: Any mind that is past has vanished.

Vanish, means it is not there anymore.

Text: Whatever is in the future has not come.

So you do not have to worry about that.

Text: Whatever arises in the present does not last.

So when your mind does become dominated by any of the mental afflictions probe right into that way, posing this kind of questions, see if you can find that mind that by its own nature really is attached, hostile, delusional, see if you can find it.

Text: Kāśyapa, the mind is not found to be present inside, or outside, or both inside and outside.

"Inside" of your body for example or outside or both inside and outside, nowhere to be found in space.

Text: Kāśyapa, the mind is formless, undemonstrable, intangible, devoid of a basis, invisible, unknowable, and without any location.

Kāśyapa, the mind is formless, undemonstrable, which means you cannot point to and say, ah...You cannot do that, you cannot say, oh, there is. The mind is formless, **indemonstrable, intangible, devoid of a basis**, so this whole, this is why sometimes I get such, how would say, passion arising when I hear these heavy, heavy terms, like "this is the underlined neural mechanism of the mind" as if they found really the basis of the mind and all they found is the correlates. So I say 'wait a minute, wait a minute' that is what he is saying here: "it has no basis, correlations to neural activities of course, I mean the Buddhist literature doesn't talk about neural correlates but it certainly speaks about very strong correlations with your pranic system for as long as you are embodied, forever, subjective experience taking place in the mind there was always a correlated state of energy or energetic that is process in the body, that is classic Buddhism.

(12:33) So the whole notion of mind/body correlations very specific and detailed right down to the, whatever type of experience you have, realizing rigpa there is something taking place in the body, right? The prana going into the "bindu", at the heart, experiencing anger, malice, compassion, realization of emptiness, no matter what it is from the grossest to the most sublime as long as we are embodied there is something taking place.

One would say in modern medicine there is a neural correlate, something's happening in the body that is correlated to that, in first person physiology we speak about the movements of the prana, but to say that

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there's a correlation does not mean this one is really the ontological basis for the other and that is what he is critiquing here: it's devoid of a basis. It's "invisible, unknowable, in terms of really finding it, and without any location. It is not inside the head, the heart chakra. It is nowhere to be found.

(Kasyapa – it's a powerful statement coming)

Text: *Kāśyapa, the mind has never even been seen, is not seen, and will never be seen by any of the Buddhas,* as something existing in and all by itself, really observed.

Text: *Apart from phenomena that arise from mistaken identification, how can one know the kind of process of anything that has never even been seen, is not seen, and will never be seen by any of the buddhas?*

Kāśyapa, the mind is like an illusion, for it apprehends many kinds of events by way of unreal conceptual projections...

(14:15) Unreal means they're not really there from their own side.

Instruction for one that is reading this transcript: Alan read practically directly the text since 14:20 to 18:13 minutes and the main comments are included in the transcript after he finished to read the text:

(14:20) Text: *Kāśyapa, the mind is like the current of a stream, for it does not remain, but arises, passes away, and vanishes. Kāśyapa, the mind is like the wind, for it goes on for a long time and moves without being able to hold it. Kāśyapa, the mind is like the radiant light of a lamp, for it arises in dependence upon causes and conditions. Kāśyapa, the mind is like the sky, for it is temporarily obscured by mental afflictions and derivative mental afflictions. Kāśyapa, the mind is like lightning, for it instantly vanishes and does not linger... Kāśyapa, because the mind produces all suffering, it is like an enemy. Kāśyapa, because the mind destroys all the roots of virtue, it is like a sandcastle. Kāśyapa, because the mind mistakes suffering for happiness, it is like a fishhook. Kāśyapa, because the mind mistakes the identityless for an identity, it is like a dream. Kāśyapa, because the mind mistakes the impure for the pure, it is like a blue-bottle fly. Kāśyapa, because the mind inflicts many kinds of injuries, it is like an adversary. Kāśyapa, because the mind always looks for faults, it is like predatory goblin. Kāśyapa, because the mind always looks for its chance, it is like an enemy. Kāśyapa, because the mind is imbued with attachment and hostility, it always vacillates. Kāśyapa, because the mind robs all the roots of virtue, it is like a thief. Kāśyapa, because the mind is attracted to forms, it is like the eye of a fly. Kāśyapa, because the mind is attracted to sounds, it is like a battle-drum. Kāśyapa, the mind is attracted to smells like a pig that likes disgusting odors. Kāśyapa, the mind is attracted to tastes like a maid who eats leftovers. Kāśyapa, the mind is attracted to tactile sensations like a fly stuck in a dish of oil.*

Kāśyapa, even though one looks for the mind everywhere, it is not to be found. Whatever is unfindable is unobservable. Whatever is unobservable does not arise in the past, or in the future, or in the present. Whatever does not arise in the past, or in the future, or in the present really transcends the three times. Whatever really transcends the three times is neither existent nor non-existent..."

Alan's comments about the text above:

(18:13) It is quite interesting in this analyze of the mind that we do experience but probing into its actual nature. One finds that it is unfindable, unobservable, does not arise in the past, in the future or in the present, that's exactly true of awareness of rigpa, pristine awareness, unfindable, there's no way, there is nothing can ever observe rigpa other than rigpa, and rigpa does not observe rigpa, rigpa does not find rigpa anymore than the tip of my finger find itself. The only way that rigpa is ever found, ever known, ever realized is through a non-dual awareness of itself, but no other mind, not the substrate consciousness, not coarse mind, no other mind can possible make contact with or find or observe rigpa. It is invisible, invisible too close to be seen. Hidden in plain sight, so to speak.

So it is quite interesting here that the statements he's making about the mind then actually directly pertain to the ultimate dimension of mind. This rigpa, pristine awareness does not arise in the past or in the future or in the present, it is beyond the three times and that is what he says 'whatever does not arise in the past or in the future or in the present really transcends the three times', that is exactly it - rigpa is in a fourth time, transcending the three times.

(19:26) And then finally:

Text: *whatever really transcends the three times is neither existent nor non-existent..."*,

That's one of the crucial features of rigpa. And it is not just pointed on now and there.

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And that is classic Dzogchen literature says of: rigpa that transcends all conceptual elaborations, it's free of, divorced from all conceptual extremes, all polarities, such as, and the first one is, it neither arises nor does it perish, just for starters.

(20:27) And then it neither exists nor does not exist. In other words, there is no invitation at all if you can even go that far, ok among existence and then in what kind, it won't even let you in the door of conceptual elaborations because that is pretty basic, Ok, is it there or not? Does it exist or not? Let's get out on straight. And the answer is, sorry that question is not computed. Even that question cannot get in and then it is neither one or many, so the rigpa of Maitreya and the rigpa of Buddha Shakyamuni. Are they the same or are they different?

(21:10) Tracy's rigpa and Tania's rigpa are they the same or do each have their own rigpa? It does not compute, neither the same nor different, don't go to either one. So even the notion of 'it's all one', which is very appealing and reflects a natural articulation of many very deep authentic experiences, this is deeper than that because you cannot even say 'it's all one' versus 'all two'. It doesn't lend itself to numerical categorization, right?

(21:42) And then finally, no going and no coming. It's free of going or coming, transcends that.

So why one would resist (It is one last one and we go to meditation) is the question of my Gelugpa training, a question arose in my mind a long time ago, a central Madhyamaka theme, pinnacle of Buddhist philosophy by wide, not universal, but by wide consensus in Tibetan Buddhism.

That all phenomena, conditioned phenomena and unconditioned phenomena, have no inherent nature of their own, they arise in dependence upon conceptual designation. In other words, there is nothing there subjectively, objectively or anywhere else, that already exists independently of any conceptual designation whatsoever. There is nothing, and they say from the most minute elementary particle, this is straight out of the classic literature, they call it, an atom, a quark, whatever you like, but the most minute particle of matter up to the mind of a Buddha, so that's a pretty bandwidth I think. They try to cover everything in that bandwidth and they say this from the most minute particle of matter up to the omniscient mind of a Buddha, there is nothing there that exist by own inherent nature, it is all empty of inherent nature.

(23:13) So, how do these phenomena arise? -

They arise in dependence upon conceptual designation. In other words, they can be said to exist only relative to a cognitive frame of reference and that cognitive frame of reference is activated by conceptualization, by this is this, that is that, ok? That activation of the observer participant. But you cannot speak of anything having any existence whatsoever independent of this cognitive frame of reference or conceptual designation. That's the statement, now - true or false, that is the statement.

So then the question arises, with my twenty years of Gelugpa background and then having roughly twenty years of Dzogchen background on top of that, one of the questions came up early is: what about rigpa - Comes a Gelugpa to debate with Dzogchen master, 'what about rigpa'?

Does rigpa depend upon conceptual designation for rigpa to be there, for rigpa to be present? Does it arise in dependence upon conceptual designation?

Well, that just make no sense at all, zero. It is absolutely by nature non-conceptual, transcending conceptualization, to say that it exists in dependence upon conceptual designation really just does not make any sense, right? And then we say, Ah ha you mean it exists independently of conceptual designation which means therefore the Dzogchen teachings must be incompatible with Prasangika Madhyamaka therefore Padmasambhava and Tsongkhapa have a real problem with each other, right? So which is it that is, doesn't exist inherently by its own nature independently of conceptual designation, in which case you are refuting Nagarjuna let alone **Chandrakirti** and Shantideva and Tsongkhapa and so forth or does it arise in dependence upon conceptual designation in which case you are just refuting Dzogchen, so which one? (25:08)

(25:32) Nicholas, what is the way out? What is the way out here because His Holiness Dalai Lama and many, many, Dudjom Lingpa, his teachings in emptiness are complete in accordance with Prasangika Madhyamaka, I would say that. And there he is, one of the greatest Dzogchen masters of, I think of any time, but certainly in the nineteenth century. So, the teachings on Dzogchen, are they incompatible, the Dzogchen teachings on rigpa, are they incompatible with Prasangika Madhyamaka because they're saying that rigpa does exist independently of conceptual designation which means it is inherently existent and therefore Nagarjuna is

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wrong? Or are the Dzogchen teachings of rigpa internally inconsistent because the Dzogchen teachings say it's completely beyond conceptualization. So what is the way out?

(Alan is asking questions about this issue and making considerations about what the students is responding and it seems that the right answer is:)

(27:38) Mike said the way out of this is just take seriously and literally what the Dzogchen teachings said about rigpa in the first place and does not fall into either category of existent or non-existent therefore to ask in what manner is it existent: dependent upon conceptual designation or independent of conceptual designation, what part of the early statement didn't you understand?

And Mike got that right, exactly that you are working when you are asking that question in what manner does rigpa exist? Dependent upon conceptual designation or independent of conceptual designation there is a built in assumption and that is it does exist, which means you've already planted it in the conceptual framework in which the word exist means something. But who defines the meaning of the word 'exist'? Conceptual minds, the word 'exist' does not define itself - this is really important - it kind of seems like it does, like it is either really there or not, but not so simple. Look at different philosophical traditions west and east throughout the ages, look at modern psychology and modern philosophy of mind, look at physics, look at physics, does a tachyon on exist? A tachyon is a particle that travel only faster than the speed of light, does it exist? Does dark matter exist? If it exists, then why can't you measure it? And so forth. And so the only point here is no criticism of any of these system but is to say that none of the terms that we use define themselves and that includes fundamental demarcation between: to be and not to be, to exist and not exist. Even those two categories don't define themselves, they haven't already defined themselves so we simply come and discover them but rather the very categories of existence and non-existence are categories conceived by the conceptual mind and moreover different conceptual minds conceive of them in different ways and that is the way it is.

So that being the case rigpa does not fall into any conceptual category conceived by any conceptual mind, it transcends them all.

(29:27) Then one may wonder, well then, why talk about it at all if it transcends all words and all concepts which is the statement that is find hundreds of times in Dzogchen literature, it transcends all speech and all conceptualization then why then do people keep on talking about and conceiving about, and writing about rigpa so extensively when what part of 'transcending words and concepts' don't you understand? And I think you know the answer of that, too?

Why use words if not to describe something if words are no good for describing the nature of rigpa? So what other use my words be for in using words relating to rigpa? Elizabeth?

(30:26) The philosophical term is instrumental, the words are a tool so the finger pointing to the moon, no matter how large a tome you write like the Seven Treasures of **Longchenpa**, the greatest classic in a whole tradition in Dzogchen, tremendous mind, tremendous insight, tremendously large body literature but no matter how many words are there, none of them capture it but all, from every single sentence, is designed like medicine to point you, to get you there, as an instrument to move you towards realization, as an instrument.

Let's go in meditation.

Meditation:

But before venturing into these deep investigations we take the gentle and soothing medicine, settling the body, speech and mind in its natural state and gently calming the turbulence of the conceptual mind, quieting the flow of rumination.

And let your eyes be partially open at least, very relaxed, soft blinking whenever you like but let your gaze be vacant, don't latch onto any visual form, any object. As if you are day dreaming let your gaze be vacant and in this initial practice of taking the impure mind as the path, taking our own mind, the mind which we are very familiar, taking this as the path to realize shamatha, direct your attention to one of the six domains of experience, turning away from the 5 sensory domains so this is clearly not open presence and direct your attention single pointedly as possible to the one non-physical domain that of course is the domain of the mind. Attend to that space of the mind and whatever arises in it, just like looking on someone faces and recognizing, yes, that is Cassia's face, that's Mike's face and it is a valuable recognition and in a similar fashion look at *the face of your own mind* and observe whatever arises within that domain, moment by moment to

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clearly distinguish between the stillness of your own awareness as you sit upon your own throne, awareness holding its own ground, remaining in its own place and illuminating the space of the mind and all the movements therein.

Like a falcon flying into the wind but remaining stationary with respect to the ground, facing into the wind of the flow of thoughts, memories and so on and sustaining the flow of mindfulness without distraction and without grasping.

Briefly return to the first line of vipashyana investigation in terms of the space of the mind and whatever arises in it. Is there anything that is stable, unchanging? When carefully examined, are any of these impulses or appearances in the mind by nature veritable, true sources of suffering or happiness intrinsically? And anything whatsoever can appear to us as mine if we grasp onto as mine, my country, my planet, my friend, etc? But it is mine only because we grasp it as such, is that true for the space of the mind and the contents? Is there anything here that by nature belongs to you, that is really yours by its own intrinsically nature or does it appear to be yours only because you grasp onto and identify with it?

And now turn your attention to your mind which is so deeply and habitually reified, grasped onto as real we see these many things, these many actions or functions attributed to the mind as in the *Ratnacūḍa Sūtra*, the mind does this, the mind does that, mind as an agent, the mind that has these many functions, these many qualities. And now examine closely, does such mind really exist at all or is merely fabricated by conceptual projections, superimpositions which are then grasped onto as real from its own side? Turn your attention once again to the space of the mind and whatever arises within it but see now is there anything here that really is the mind. Is it anywhere to be found? If the mind really exists, captured in the past, in the future, it must be now. So what in this present moment can you identify as really being my mind that is not only being vanished by the time you bring out the label? If the mind is indeed findable, if it's observable, identifiable, you're looking in the right place it must be here. If it's not here, where else could it possibly be? And, if it is not here, then it's nowhere. Is there anything here really, as we attend to for what we call the impure mind, is there anything here that we can say from its own side, by its own nature that is pure or impure or are these merely conceptual projections on something that is not there at all?

When we look for the mind and ask, is it permanent or impermanent, is there anything there by its own nature that's either is permanent or impermanent or are these two simply conceptual projections that we superimpose upon space?

When we ask if the mind is by nature suffering, *duhkha* or *sukha*, happiness, do we find anything there of which either statement is true or is it empty of both, neither one to be found. And finally when we look for the mind itself, can we say that is either a self or not a self that has an owner or has no owner or are these two simply constructs, projected into empty space, that which is nowhere to be found and has no attributes of any kind, it is empty.

So, rest in the awareness, the knowing of the emptiness, the un-findability of your own mind.

Teaching pt2:

Summary: Paranormal abilities are cited as the 4 legs of miraculous activity attained within the first yoga of single-pointedness.

(56:20) So a very brief reference to something I elaborated quite extensively yesterday and that is this yoga of single pointness for which the small stage spans the entire Mahayana path of accumulation, the medium stage covers the first two phases of the path of preparation namely warmth and pinnacle and then the great stage of the yoga of single pointness covers the final two stages of patience and supreme dharma. And I was, just kind curious, I checked this afternoon, I think I might misspoken yesterday, and that is – where, just brought casually, the author all over the place, the (name of the author) says at this point then a range of paranormal abilities and extra sensory perceptions arise, right? Without saying “and this is how you get them.” I actually know one of the finest researchers in this field, (name of the researcher), he is very, very good, a physicist, used to be where Will used to work ...The Stanford researcher institute, used to be involved there, got millions of dollars grants from the CIA, the Defense Department, to do research on exactly this - remote viewing, pre cognition, and then he found, he is a very good researcher, I think, he wrote a number of books. But then the question comes - ok, why do some people have it and some people don't, because they are basically calling people off the street. One woman they called in simply as a subject to compare to these

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people that were well trained. And the woman they called in as a subject was off the chart better than anybody they trained, you know and they had no idea, is like “eeny, meeny,miny,moe” would you like to come in, oh, great, you’re fantastic. But, I mean, as a scientist or anybody trying to make sense of this, then, what gives rise to that? With Budhaghosa then we have this very detailed whole series of exercises, very arduous exercises and the dhyanas that frankly, to my mind, that make conceptual sense when one ask does that work or not. But there is no such recipe, such sequence, disciplines, this is how you do, this is exactly how you do it, it is just flat out ‘go for the union of shamatha and vipashyana’ which you begin to get there in the small stage. You’re applying your shamatha and immediately putting it into vipashyana but then you might recall in that medium stages when you are not on the cushion, when you are not in formal meditative equipoise then the tendencies of reification come right back in, it’s almost like you’re lucid when you’re on your cushion but as soon as you’re off the cushion you’re not lucid or as if you’re sober when you are on the cushion and then as soon as you get off you’re drunk, like you fall off the wagon, so to speak. And you remember he says that and then as you moving along the stages, small, medium great stages of the Mahayana path of accumulation, moving through the small stage of yoga of single pointness then you’re getting more and more consistent, so that you’re getting more clearly, more definitively, decisively when you are on the cushion in meditate equipoise but then it’s starting to flow over more and more into the post meditate state. So by the time you get to the middling state, this can be very short so don’t worry. The middling state, or the medium state of this yoga single pointness, now you are in the stage, the path of preparation, not bad, path of preparation and you might recall, for those of you who study this, that the culminating phase of the path of accumulation is characterized by what we call ‘the four legs’, ‘the four foundations of miraculous activities’ or ‘siddhis’, so you are developing those ‘four legs’ but right through this process of the union of shamatha and vipashyana as it deepens, deepens, deepens and gets clarified or you’re removing the veils of conceptualization. So that by the time you get to the path of preparations, the medium stage of yoga of single pointness this is where the siddhis, the paranormal abilities or sidhis and extra sensories perception are just arising spontaneously , so it’s quite interesting, but it kind make sense then, if the realization is deep enough, that is there you are, dwelling in space-like awareness of emptiness and luminosity on the cushion but then even when you are off the cushion you still see things as empty appearances on the cushion and off the cushion, it’s getting more homogenous even though you really do have a clear distinction, this is meditative equipoise, more space-like, and this is post meditative, this is more illusion-like, it is getting stronger and stronger, which means you are not falling back into the ordinary, the old patterns of reification, it is simply by that, that the paranormal abilities and extra sensory perception arise spontaneously . So that is kind of cool because for those of us who are very intended on liberation and awakening, frankly I wouldn’t do it. When I take some time out, you know achieve shamatha, achieve vipashyana what have you, and say now is take time out never mind the main track the main freeway, let’s go off and get some paranormal abilities, I would not do it. Life is too short, I don’t know when I would die, I don’t want say, I am dying today, tell me, so I would not spend the time,? What do you do, join the circus? You know, look at me, look at me, I can do that without being David Copperfield, without having a million dollars of technology, look at me. It’s not worth it, not worth the investment. But if it’s coming out purely as a derivative, a natural emergent phenomena, coming right out of absolute main stream union of shamatha and vipashyana, then that it’s good and not time wasted, no time going off to a thing of a secondary importance. Ollaso, now one question for Birghete.(1:02:09)

Note for readers: just to remind, the session question and answers are not included in the transcript.

Transcribed by *Rafael Carlos Giusti*

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81 Great Loving-kindness (2)

11 Oct 2012

Teachings 1:

Summary:

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Alan continues the series on the 4 greats with great loving-kindness. Hedonic well-being is important, and the understanding of cause and effect in the natural world by modern science has made important contributions. In union with shamatha, knowing reality as it is through the wisdom of dependent origination and emptiness leads to durable eudemonia.

Alan's teachings/comments:

This morning we return to Mahama three - great loving kindness, the aspiration and the resolve that we can all find happiness and the causes of happiness. So now just to say that few things are familiar - hedonic wellbeing ever so important, to feel well in the body, well in the mind, live in a peaceful surrounding, have enough to eat, all of our basic needs being met. And for this understanding cause and effect is really crucial, absolutely central, and to my mind that is just the tremendous strength of modern science, of navigating - that is learning what's going on in this natural world, what's going on in the natural world of our bodies and the bodies of other people and surrounding environment. What's going on and what are the patterns, what's the pratityasamutpada the patterns of causality of dependent origination within the natural world? And how can we understand these so that we can flourish in this world, and follow those causes that give rise to our hedonic wellbeing and avoid those like illness and poverty and so forth, social unrest, conflict and so forth, that we can avoid those? So humanity really has benefited tremendously from science and the practical application of science and technology, especially these last four hundred years, tremendous boon.

(2:09) And then for dharma, I have been wondering, what kind of label shall I give to science, and I am really not content yet, but you know one that might not be bad – Hedonic Science. And then, dharma, of all kinds, Christian, Jewish and so forth and then some that don't have a religious name to them, maybe if we could just call that Eudemonic Science – maybe, because what are the causes and conditions that give rise to eudemonia? Not the strength of science, just as agriculture and so many other things are just not the strength of any spiritual tradition, it's not their strength, but then there we are living in this world where both are so crucial.

So the pinnacle of this pursuit of eudemonic wellbeing of course is wisdom, as Shantideva says in the 9th chapter - everything that has preceded this, the teachings on bodhichitta and all the first five of the perfections, the paramitas, are all for the sake of the 6th one – the perfection of wisdom, right?

So as we move to this cultivation of great loving kindness, let's link this up now with realization of emptiness and specifically the union of shamatha vipashyana, because that's where you get the lasting value, which is durable, profoundly and irreversible transformative. Vipashyana by itself just doesn't have that and shamatha by itself doesn't have that, right? But that union of shamatha vipashyana.

(3:40) If we really wish for ourselves and others, may we find genuine happiness and its causes, that's durable, that's lasting, that's not just a little peek and then we lose it, it's there it is, the strategy is perfectly clear and transparent, the fusion shamatha vipashyana, the realization of insight, the realization of emptiness by way of insight, dependent origination, and because of the reality of dependent origination therefore everything that dependently arises must be empty of inherent nature.

(4:10) I think there's a strong link there, as with compassion, may we all be free of at least blatant suffering, suffering that's in our face, that hurts. Shamatha is really the great boon, the great retreat, the great respite, right? A moment of peace, where when you're just dwelling there luminously having achieved shamatha, there just is no suffering in sight, you're there in this really quite spacious domain of your own substrate, but there in your surrounding environment, this empty vacuity, this luminous vacuity, there's no suffering, you really have a time out, right? But then we must venture back into the world and for that the only way to be in the world actively participating and to find happiness is really to know reality as it is, and so that calls for the realization of emptiness. So let's link those two, let's plunge into the practice.

Meditation:

Releasing grasping all the way through, body, speech and mind, settle each one in its natural state.

Letting your awareness rest in its own state, sitting upon its own throne, let your awareness brightly illuminate the space of the body and whatever appearances, whatever sensations, feelings arise within that domain, this sub domain of the substrate, closely apply mindfulness to this space and the appearances that arise within it, while withholding all conceptual designations, all labels, observe that which is empty of

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concept, empty of names and therefore empty of body, and sustain the flow of this mindful knowing, without distraction, without grasping.

And then with your eyes open or closed as you wish, direct the light of your awareness to the space of the mind and to whatever mental events objectively appearing phenomena such mental images, mental conversation, subjective mental impulses, observe the space of the mind and whatever arises therein, once again while withholding all conceptual designations all thoughts, all names and observe that which is empty of names, empty of concepts, empty of mind.

Now withdraw the light of your awareness from the space of the mind, from its contents, withdraw the light of awareness into itself, withdrawing from all appearances. And now attend closely to this awareness right now, awareness of the past no longer exists, it's not real, not now. Awareness of the future doesn't yet exist, so it too is not real, not now, and the awareness of the present is incapable of being aware of itself in the present, just as the blade of a knife cannot cut itself, a flame cannot illuminate itself, a fingertip cannot touch itself, so can a present moment of awareness not ascertain itself either. So examine closely where is awareness to be found, this real awareness that exists in and of itself, if it is not in the past, not in the future and if it's unobservable in the present, is it not utterly unfindable and therefore unknowable, and therefore empty of any true existence?

And now let your awareness illuminate the world of sentient beings, each one striving like ourselves for happiness, hedonic and in some cases eudemonic, each one wishing to know - what are the true causes of happiness, what will really make me happy? And since the essential nature of the minds of all sentient beings is pristine awareness, primordial consciousness, then

- 1) Why couldn't we all, all sentient beings, find happiness and its causes? If it is so within our reach.
- 2) May we all find happiness and its true causes.

And drawing from the depths of your own awareness, the ground of your awareness arouse if you will, the resolve, the commitment, the promise:

- 3) I shall bring each one to happiness and its causes.
- 4) And may I be blessed by the guru and all the awakened ones to enable me to carry through with this resolve.

And with each in breath imagine this light of blessing in a form of radiant white light converging in from all sides, above and below, in upon the space of your body and mind, permeating, empowering, energizing, enabling, filling to saturation point, and as you breathe out, breathe out this light in all directions and imagine each ray of light doing exactly what needs to be done, to guide each one, to help them to find their way, find the path.

And with each out breath let this aspiration and this resolve flow, and moving into this realm of possibility, imagine each sentient being finding the path by knowing reality as it is, following the path to their own awakening, their own perfect flourishing.

Release all appearances; let your awareness rest in its own luminosity.

Teachings 2.

Alan's Teachings comments:

So returning very briefly to that first yoga, among the four yogas on the path of Mahamudra, the yoga of course of single pointedness, that one out of four covers a lot of territory, covers the entire path of accumulation, small, medium, great stage and all four stages of the path of preparation, in fact Karma Chagmé Rimpoché says - when you come to the culmination of that first yoga, you'll feel like you are almost a Buddha, you'll feel, this must be the yoga of non-meditation, which is the culminating one – uh uh. But that shows how grand it must be, but that's covering a lot of territory, the whole path of accumulation, the whole path of preparation, that's a lot, and it's said throughout all of Buddhism, this takes an enormous number of merits, call it energy, call it momentum, call it whatever you like, but it needs a lot of jazz, a lot of energy there to move through to that degree of purification of the mind and that evolution that takes place.

And so practicing vipashyana, and of course the practice of vipashyana, the realization of emptiness going into and meditative equipoise, the realization of emptiness coming out and practicing this dream like Samadhi, so as much as possible you're maintaining that insight as you're attending to what everybody else calls - the real world, that would be, that is actually crucial, and there's great merit in that, clearly, but it's just not possible without the union of shamatha vipashyana, that's just utterly fanciful, right, got to be the union of those

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two. Therefore shamatha is obviously indispensable, but it's not enough as powerful as that is, there must be also of corresponding growth, a maturation, a ripening, a development of bodhichitta, and so how better to cultivate, to deepen the bodhichitta than through these four immeasurables, and then the four greats and it's with those two together, skillful means and the wisdom, and then, especially it's through Vajrayana, as much integration as possible of those, that moves you through.

And to finish the session and reminding that the retreat will be finished in one week, Alan said:

So today's Thursday, which means we have one more week here, so we've had 7 weeks of breathing in, 7 weeks of being in retreat, withdrawing from the world, with a few hiccups on Sunday, I think, but more or less, withdrawing in, a time to come into shamatha, a time to cultivate our best approximation to meditative equipoise, really going deeper, temporary withdrawal – a 7 week retreat. But of course the time is coming soon when we must go out, we must breathe out. And it's very likely that as we're breathing out into Phuket airport, and breathing out into anywhere else we are going that we will find that the mind center is receding in our rear-view mirror. And that is where my shamatha was – I think I left it in that room over there some place, oh bye – bye, as we're heading off over the horizon. So, we may feel we are leaving our shamatha behind, that is as they say, when one door closes, another one opens, time to breathe out. Time to breathe out. Breathe out into the four immeasurables, breathe out into the four greats, embrace fully what's coming. Because without the breathing out, there is no breathing in. And if we are really quite intent on moving on this path and not just having an 8 week retreat, it's got to be that balance. So for those of us here, for those, I know some of yogis around the world, in full time retreat now, listening by podcast, and others as well – there are times when reality rises up to meet us and it's telling us – now is not the time for shamatha, at least that's not the primary emphasis, not time to let it go, not time to say okay I will just give up and ruminate, but reality is not presenting itself as something quiescent, quiet, solitary, simple – a conducive environment. In which case reality is rising up and telling us - you need to balance out now, now engage, mindfully with relaxation, stability, vividness, but then manifest it, manifest it above all through the four immeasurables, the four greats, because it's only in this way that you are going to be able to develop enough merit to actually achieve shamatha. And it is only through shamatha that you will be able to deepen your practice of the four immeasurables, the four greats and finally bodhichitta. So, we can be so like a gymnast, or a very fine adept of yoga, people who have really trained their bodies, or some dancers also, there's this body it seems like it's all water, not in a sense of lacking strength, but just so fluid, so resilient, so adaptive, that whatever's coming up, reality is always being in flow, reality is never rigid, it's always flowing, changing moment by moment. And if we are responding in a similarly fluid way, saying – okay, what's up reality? And we are always there, flexible, smooth, resilient, supple, ready to rise up, like a dance, but let reality lead. Don't try to lead and then follow the steps, and see if from moment to moment, day to day, how can I dance with this? Because reality is always dishing something, one more opportunity to practice dharma. Sometimes it's pleasant, and sometimes it's hard, it's really hard, but it needs to be, it needs to be. So let's practice dharma all the time. Give up attachment to this life, let your mind become dharma.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Revised by Cheri Langston

Final edition by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Posted by Alma Ayon

82 Mindfulness of the mind (4)

11 Oct 2012

Teachings 1:

This afternoon we return to the close applications of mindfulness to the mind, we'll look again at the presentation of this topic in [Ch. 13 of Shantideva's Compendium of Practices].

It is helpful to remember once again that in the Pali Canon, of the Theravada tradition, basically the Buddha's teachings, in the Pali Canon that one may achieve liberation, arhatship, by gaining insight into any one of the four applications of mindfulness.

(1:10) And now among the four we're focusing on the close application of mindfulness of the mind and of course from this Madhyamaka perspective with one central theme, overwhelming theme, and that is to

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realize its emptiness of inherent nature. That's liberation right there, if you gain insight into that, if you really get the fusion of shamatha vipashyana just on that one point, the emptiness of your mind then you're free, it is like a free pass throughout all of samsara, that's enough, that's really enough, it's kind of a big deal, the stakes are high, the benefits are enormous. So what does Shantideva have to say and not a whole lot I mean he is citing the sutras but what he has to say is very quintessential. He is cites once again here from the *Ārya Ratnacūḍa Sūtra* which states:

Note for the readers: when Alan is talking about the fusion of shamatha vipashyana that means they are one, so he does not use the word AND in-between the two words, they are no longer two separate things, that is why he sometimes refers to them as just shamatha vipashyana.

The *Ārya Ratnacūḍa Sūtra* also states, “By looking everywhere for the mind, one does not really see it inside or outside, nor does one really see it both inside and outside. It is not really seen among the psycho-physical aggregates, or among the elements, or the sense-bases. Since the mind is not really seen, asking, ‘From what does the mind arise?’ one looks everywhere for the continuum of the mind, and one considers, ‘Perhaps the mind arises from the presence of an object.’ Further, one ponders, ‘whatever object that might be, is it other than the mind? Or is that very object the mind? If the object were different from the mind, then the mind would be bifurcated. On the other hand, if that very object is the mind, then how could the mind see itself? It is implausible that the mind sees the mind. Just as the blade of a sword cannot cut itself, and a fingertip cannot touch itself, I think the mind is incapable of seeing itself...’

By looking everywhere for the mind:

It's not like looking for something you haven't found at all, just like with the banana, it is a silly example but it is very easy, very simply. And that is there is no way you can meditate on the emptiness of a banana, absence of inherent nature of a banana unless you can recognize a banana when you see it, you really kind of understanding the conventional nature of banana, right? And so banana and human being, and body, and galaxy and elementary particles, before you seek out its ultimate nature you must get that phenomena between the two slides to look in the microscope, get its conventional nature, and then probe to its ultimate. But you can't skip the conventional, you can't say - well never mind that I'll just go for the ultimate, I don't think that works with this strategy at all. So here it is, to gain insight, to understand, to recognize, just like recognizing someone's face, Cassia's face, I recognize her face, pick her out of a crowd, right. So the conventional nature so once you've found it, you say yes I recognize it among all faces, I can look at thousand faces I'd know Cassia's face, I'd know Daniel's face, I'd know Gabi's face, once you know it, you know it, right? And then so once you've identified it, then you say - ok now we're probing in, is it really there or not? So what does he say?

(4:12) By looking everywhere for the mind, one does not really see it inside or outside, nor does one really see it both inside and outside.

By looking everywhere for the mind, one does not really.

By looking everywhere for the mind, one does not really see it -So there it is emphasis on **really**, that is – are you apprehending it as it really is by its own inherent nature.

One does not really see it inside: for example inside of the body **or outside, nor does one really see it both inside and outside.**

In terms of seeking it trying to identify it within physical space = unfindable.

Instructions for one that is reading this transcript: sometimes we are writing Alan's comments in the text between the signs [...]. And as you may see below sometimes Alan read part of the text, introduce some comments and return to the beginning of the text and begin to read it again. And that is the way it is and we are doing the same here.

Text:

It is not really seen [again everything in that little adverb, **really**]. **It is not really seen among the psycho-physical aggregates** [the five skandhas], **or among the elements** [the eighteen dhatus], **or the sense-bases** [the twelve sense bases].

It is nowhere really to be found among any of these basic categories or classes of phenomena.

Since the mind is not really seen, asking, ‘From what does the mind arise?’ one looks everywhere for the continuum of the mind, and one considers, ‘Perhaps the mind arises from the presence of an object.

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(5:18) So there it is, you're looking for it, I mean you're looking for it as something that is already present, right? And if you can't find it anywhere, then you feel – okay I can't find it but let's see if we find its origins, it's got to be here someplace. So if you can't find it, itself, but at least find out where it's coming from, maybe you know like Sherlock Holmes, you can trace it to source and ah, that is it.

So from what does the mind arise? It's a really a good question, a scientific question, people asking from what do galaxies arise? It's a very good question. What do planets arise from? What does life arise from? There's a big unsolved question, the origination of life in this planet. Where did it come from? Is really true that it came from inorganic, organic chemicals and something happened to them and they suddenly just became alive? Is that how it happened? Good, where is the evidence? Of course where does consciousness come from, where does the mind come from? So there it is, asking very deep, very important questions but again the questions are not rhetorical. The really great thing about this is that there are answers to be found and the finding of which will radically transform and purify your mind, so this is not simply a philosophically exercise, right?

And reading again: **'From what does the mind arise?' one looks everywhere for the continuum of the mind, and one considers, 'Perhaps the mind arises from the presence of an object [Maybe that's where it's happening from].**

Text:

Further, one ponders, 'Whatever object that might be, if the mind is it other than the mind? Or is that very object the mind? If the object were different from the mind, then the mind would be bifurcated. On the other hand, if that very object is the mind, then how could the mind see itself? It is implausible that the mind sees the mind. Just as the blade of a sword cannot cut itself, and a fingertip cannot touch itself, I think the mind is incapable of seeing itself...'

(7:01) Further, one ponders, 'Whatever object that might be: if mind is really appearing from some object whether it's the brain, whether it's some object outside of the body, some other internal organ maybe the heart, who knows. If it really does arise from some object?

(7:15) 'Whatever object that might be, is it other than the mind?

So bring it to the 21st century - if the mind really arises from the brain, there's so many people who believe that now, okay, that's not a ridiculous idea, so take that as an example. Perhaps the mind arises from the presence of an object, a functioning human brain. Whatever the object that might be, is it other than the mind? Is the brain for example, you could say your kneecap or a football, or anything you like, but if really comes from an object, is it other than the mind? Taking the example of the brain, is the brain other than the mind? Are they two? Or is that very object, the mind, is the brain itself the mind? Brain equals mind - look the brain you're looking at the mind, many people believe that. If the object were different from the mind, I mean why not take the example the brain - if the brain were different from the mind, then the mind would be bifurcated, that is it would be kind of split in two, and that is there's the brain you can look at objectively, and here is the mind that you experience objectively and so then would be Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde - split personality or Janus Faced, according to one of the most prominent philosophers of mind in the United States, I'll keep him anonymous because I'm not really picking on people and I'm not about to pick apart his position. Is it the neurons in the brain, the neurons actually are Janus Faced, that's what you call Janus - like two faced, and that is looked at objectively - they're chemicals just physical stuff but looked at subjectively lo and behold they have a split personality, the same things are actually also subjective experience, ok?

(9:02) There's no evidence for that whatsoever, but people can believe in all kinds of things for which there is no evidence, and this philosopher is one of them. So is it bifurcated, is it bifurcated? This mind is actually the brain but of course the mind is also feelings and perceptions and dreams and love and anger and frustration and sorrow, the richness the whole tapestry of subjective experience, and by the way there are also neurons, maybe? But it's really quite far-fetched, I mean one of the most prominent neuron scientists we have in the world, Christof Koch has his own laboratory with his name on it at CALTECH, very bright guy, met him and we spent eleven hours in conversation a couple of years ago, he and his colleagues and he's looked at this and said - no, come on. And he is a pretty dedicated materialist, by process of elimination I don't think he's really encountered any other view that seems at all feasible, but he said you know look at the qualities of the mind and look at the qualities of the brain they are so different, where's our justification for saying they are the same thing? And that's a rhetoric question, so he leaves it opened, to his credit.

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(10:09) So there it is - if the object were different from the mind, then the mind would be bifurcated, and on the other hand if that very object is the mind, that object the brain whatever you, then how could the mind see itself? Does a brain really see itself? Which part of the brain, the brain as a whole or a particular neuron or the frontal cortex? How's that happening?

But coming back to experience he said it's implausible that the mind sees the mind, the mind as one single entity, one reified real entity sees itself, and this is a position of another very prominent philosopher of the mind in United States, his name is John Searle, and he said: "the mind can't see the mind". And then he throws that introspection entirely because his notion of mind it seems is completely monolithic reified notion of one entity, and he says that one entity can't see itself, he said introspection is not like visual perception, where, as I'm looking over at

Patrice, I'm seeing something other than my awareness, something other than my brain, something other than my mind. "I am seeing a person!" she is quite different, he said.

(11:15) But so introspection not like that, of seeing something quite different from itself. And if introspection is some faculty of one monolithic real entity of the mind perceiving itself, then he's right. But of course this is all hinges on the delusional notion that the mind is one reified entity which Descartes seemed to believe in and even some contemporary philosophers, and that seems to be the primary justification for throwing out introspection, which is the most catastrophic move of modern philosophy of mind and cognitive science, is they don't do what all branches of science do, social sciences as well as natural sciences, and that is if you want to understand something, of any kind whatsoever, your primary mode of investigation should be to observe it to the best of your ability, and that's exactly what's not done by philosophers of the mind and by cognitive scientists of all sorts. At the most they will glance at it casually, but no rigorous training. So I don't think we have a science of consciousness and one could argue, if one wanted to be really quite stingy, we don't have a science of mind either.

We don't know what the nature of the phenomenon is, we can't measure it and we have no rigorous ways of observing mental phenomena themselves. How can you say this is science when all the others sciences do have what I just said, and the sciences of the mind don't? So why do you call yourself of a science, when you call yourself speculation about stuff we don't understand? That would be more accurate.

(13:07) So it is implausible that the mind sees the mind, if we are assuming as we assume generally that if something exists, it inherently exists, it's implausible that the mind sees the mind, just as the blade of a sword cannot cut itself and a fingertip cannot touch itself, I think the mind is incapable of seeing itself, right on, as long as you are reifying the mind, it's true.

Text:

Son of good family, furthermore, that which moves swiftly, ever so swiftly, without remaining still, like a monkey, like the wind, like a waterfall, and like the flame of an oil-lamp, travels far away. It is incorporeal, craves objects, experiences the six sense bases, and is conscious of one thing after another. 'A stable mind' is said to be one that is still, single-pointed, not agitated, not scattered, single-pointedly quiescent, and free of distraction."

Alan is reading the text above in parts and adding comments:

Son of good family, furthermore, that which moves swiftly, ever so swiftly, without remaining still, like a monkey, like the wind, like a waterfall, and like the flame of an oil-lamp, travels far away.

Doesn't it feel like that? It feels like that sometimes, doesn't it, when you are really totally carried away by thought. Oh where were you? Oh, I was thinking about - in a land far away - in a time that has never existed. So we get carried away and we speak of people losing their mind. So the mind travels far away, **It is incorporeal,**

So it's interesting this mind, it really is, isn't it? It is really a ghost, it is incorporeal. It craves objects, like a ghost.

experiences the six sense bases, and is conscious of one thing after another.

He has just described the undisciplined mind, the ordinary mind, the turbulent, dysfunctional mind. But then in the very sentence he says:

A stable mind is said to be one that is still, single-pointed, not agitated, not scattered, single-pointedly quiescent, and free of distraction.

A stable mind

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That which is called a stable mind

is said to be one that is still, single-pointed, not agitated, not scattered, single-pointedly quiescent, and free of distraction.

I'd like one of those, in fact I'd would like two just in case the first one breaks, I got a spare.

And then finally:

The Ārya Akṣayamati Sūtra states, "One resolves, 'I shall strive to achieve this, and I shall not lose sight of this ultimate reality of the mind.' What is the ultimate reality of the mind, and what is achievement? The mind is like an illusion. Devoting everything to that is called the ultimate reality of the mind. Renouncing all one's possessions and totally dedicating oneself to the purification of all the Buddha-fields is called 'achievement'..."

The Ārya Akṣayamati Sūtra states, "One resolves, 'I shall strive to achieve this, and I shall not lose sight of this ultimate reality of the mind. So quite a strong resolve.

I think if one were to ask - if you could only understand one thing in the whole of reality, what would be the most important thing you could possibly fathom? I can't think of anything more important - the mind. And then the conventional nature of the mind, no if there is something beyond the conventional nature, give me the real core, give me the essence, what is it like really, the nature of your own mind? So that's what he says. **I shall strive to achieve the mind and shall not lose sight of this ultimate reality of the mind.**

What is the ultimate reality of the mind, and what is achievement? The mind is like an illusion. Devoting everything to that is called the ultimate reality of the mind.

To strive to achieve this and I shall not lose sight of the ultimate reality of the mind. What is the ultimate reality of the mind what is achievement? So these are two things, I shall strive to achieve this and I shall not lose sight of this ultimate reality of mind. What is the ultimate reality of the mind? And what is achievement? The mind is like an illusion

Devoting everything to that is called the ultimate reality of the mind.

I checked, it's an unusual statement, devoting everything to that is called the ultimate reality of mind. I just checked, the word is Jinba, which means to offer, offering everything, giving everything to that, that's the ultimate reality of the mind and it just triggered, my mind is something of a network, so if you ring a little bell over here, little bells ring over there – Shantideva, first chapter, pretty sure, first chapter Bodhisattvacharya - (17:00: "giving up everything all at once." That is, if you give up, if you renounce, if you release grasping onto everything all at once. What's that? Liberation, exactly right. That's giving. I think the verb there is "tan ua" which means to release, to send. All at once, everything, that's not only renunciation, that's liberation. And here he says devoting, and that is a similar word, Jinba means to give, giving it all, I give myself wholly to this endeavor, completely, totally to this endeavor, that's the ultimate reality of the mind.

Renouncing all one's possessions [which means of course giving up, all the attachment to all possessions] and totally dedicating oneself to the purification of all the Buddha-fields is called 'achievement'..."

So these Buddha fields, purification of the Buddha fields, and he really ends on a strong statement.

(18:00) And of course the theme here runs through all of Mahayana Buddhism, very explicitly in Vajrayana, Dzogchen and that is if you sense that you're not living in a Buddha field, something less - then something less is not due to what is arising objectively by its own nature, but it's all tied into observer participant. That if we're seeing anything less than a Buddha field, then it's from what we are bringing to the experience and not what's just being thrust upon us.

(18:34) And so the purification of the Buddha fields is simply nothing more or less than purifying one's own perception, purifying one's own awareness, removing all the veils of mental afflictions of obscurations and then seeing what's left. What's left, and when we simply take away all the configurations, the distortions, the conditioning of our mental afflictions, of our karma of our conceptualization, what's left when all of those veils are removed? And what's left is Buddha field, and then there you are in Sukhavati, Akanista, Tushita [purelands]. So that's it, that's achievement. That's transforming your entire environment, the world you live in by transforming one thing. There is a wonderful complimentary here, that is if we compare, I am kind of content for the time being with the distinction between hedonic science and eudaimonic science because I think you all know that I am speaking of both of them respect, not like one is for stupid people, not at all, modern medicine, communication, agriculture so many aspects of science are so valuable, valuable for everyone, it was never designed to veil eudaimonia so we should never criticize it for what was never

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designed to do. And Buddhadharma really wasn't designed to build better tractors, airplanes, telephones, cell phones and so forth so we shouldn't really blame Buddhadharma, hey, where's your technology, it was never designed to do that, it was really all about eudaimonia, finding liberation, finding awakening, but then happily we don't need to make a choice.

(20:15) So in terms of the hedonic approach, it's been going on for four hundred years go back to Francis Bacon one of the great minds in English I think he was a lawyer, attorney, but he was one of the great architects of this new vision of reality, this new vision of how shall we understand the nature of the world, and it was a vision of science of natural philosophy, and a very core theme was - let's understand nature so we are not beaten up by it, mauled by it, tormented by it, tortured by it, by disease, by all of the threats, all of the adversities, the natural world of hurricanes, of droughts, famines, pestilence, contamination - all kinds of things, so science rose up, and there is really an altruistic strain on it, not just manipulation, domination something big ego, big ego business, that might have been there too, but it was really for the benefit of humanity, for the benefit of the humanity let us now develop this natural philosophy so that we can understand the natural world around us, and then frankly protect ourselves from it and get benefit from it.

(21:22) So there it is, it was really something of a vision of trying to create pure land from the outside in, better agriculture, tame nature so that it doesn't eat us up, and that is, you know if you have a river that continually floods villages, wipes out crops, kills people, might be nice to have some channels, so when there is a big flood it stays within the channels and everybody can live happily near it. I don't see any downside to that. So that kind of thing, science has been doing that for four hundred years and in many ways very successfully and nature is awful awesome, so often we can't control it obviously, but it's certainly made our lives a lot more comfortable and better in many, many ways from the outside in, and was never designed to purify from the inside out, so again we shouldn't criticize it. But there it is, seeking hedonically to create a Buddha fields, a pure land, a benevolent field of experience around us from the outside, and then if we rise up from the inside, to transform our environment by purifying our mind, get the best of both worlds, why not? So that's called achievement. Where you transform not only your mind, your body, but you transform the entire environment and every one in it by purifying one thing and that's your mind.

That concludes his presentation on the close application of mindfulness to the mind.

(23:18) One final point before we jump into meditation. There is a very clever, very smart method that Stephen LaBerge and his colleagues have developed, and teach very effectively, in terms of developing the ability to become lucid in dreams. And these are, developing your dream recall. Where you just make a point of really trying to remember your dreams by writing down dreams, keeping a dream journal, and then getting a bigger and bigger data base, and then going back and doing a meta - analysis, going back over your various dreams and seeing if you can find these dream signs. You may know what you dream sign is? A dream sign is very interesting, a dream sign is some person, a place, an advent, a situation, an emotion, an activity, that you see crops up time and again in your dreams, again, it could be a place, it could be a person, it could be an activity, a situation, and it could also be a state of mind, like an emotion, like anxiety, or happiness or fear, anger, what have you. But you see - oh, that keeps on cropping up in my dreams, not once or twice but oh, that is something of a pattern, not in every dream but you see that - oh, it's time and again, there must be something there. And so that is a dream sign. And so, in this very nice systematic step by step, little steps of venturing towards really developing the ability to dream lucidly, while one chronicles a lot of dreams, teases out of them ones dream signs, memorizes them, and then throughout the course of the day you take as an example, as an exercise in prospective memory, this is remembering something in the future okay, and that is for example, traveling but things going all haywire, all cockeyed, things going bad, losing my luggage, losing my passport, forgetting my ticket, completely lost, don't even know what city I'm in any longer, missing the train, whatever it is, that's something going amiss while traveling. Probably traces back to the fact that I started traveling on my own at a very young age, in very, very alien countries and with hardly any money. And so, for whatever reason, past life too, I don't know, but there it is, there's a dream sign. You are traveling, you are anxious because things are going wrong, so then throughout the course of the day, see if that dream sign comes up. Well, not here because I'm not traveling, but then I do travel a lot, so when I am traveling, and often traveling is very smooth, no problems, everything is fine, I get to my destination, no big deal, but once in a while something goes bad, you miss your plane, whatever, and so maybe some anxiety comes up, or some disturbance in the mind, that would be a dream sign for me. So following Stephen LaBerge's advice

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here, knowing this is a dream sign, and it's not just traveling, it's when things are going screwy, then as soon as I see that – ah I am traveling and things are really going amok, what do I do? I do a state check. I do something that will clearly indicate –am I dreaming or not? So there I am in the middle of the airport, and suddenly I look like a jumping bean, and if you are dreaming, the chances are extremely high that if you jump up you will not come crashing down like you do in the waking state. You'll most likely float, or hover down – just gradually come down like a feather, or you might just kind of drift off. The last time I tried it, I just went up and then I hovered there and then I just thought okay, I am going to go into a little fetal position here, but that was a pretty clear indication that you're not awake. Unless you've developed siddhis when you weren't aware of it. And so that's it, but if you come crashing down the chances are pretty strong that you are in fact in the waking state, whereas if you remain hovering, that's pretty much a 100% guarantee that you're dreaming. Or, another one – the time, if you have a digital watch you can look at it twice, any printed matter, read it then take it out of your field of vision and look again, the chances are about 85% that it will have changed. Do it twice then it pops up to about 92%, do it three times you are getting incrementally closer and closer to 100% certainty that if it doesn't change you are not dreaming, but if it does change then that's pretty well guaranteed you are dreaming. My favorite one I heard about only recently, it's really cute and it works – is pulling your nose. If you are dreaming and you pull your nose you will find that you've turned into Pinocchio, and your nose gets longer, it really does, it feels like silly putty, then you know that you are dreaming. So there are various other tests but those are some that you can do, and the whole point there, and now I am going to come back to the main point, is that you look for the dream signs, and when you see one of your dream signs then, and here it would be better to find something else, maybe it's a person that you know who happens to be here, maybe it's a situation that is more common place, so it might actually occur here, but the idea that as soon as you see a dream sign, do a state check and make a habit of that. So you are anticipating, before they happen – maybe today I will see one of my dream signs, you probably have more than one, and as soon as you see any of them, then do a state check. Make that a habit so that just every time (snaps fingers) it happens you do a state check, you jump, you pull your nose, you do something, and then, by making that habit in the waking state, it's going to carry over to the dream state. And you'll be cruising along in your dream, non-lucidly, and since it's a dream sign, the chances are pretty good it will occur in your dream state, and then not believing you are dreaming, saying oh, this is one of my dream signs I should probably do a state check, then you'll jump and you'll have a big happy surprise because you'll find you're floating. Wow. You've just had maybe your first lucid dream. You've developed the habit in the waking state, it carries over into the dream state, dream sign shows you actually are dreaming, you become lucid, congratulations! So now, where is all this going? On the one hand that was just a little introduction to dream yoga, to lucid dreaming which is the entrance to dream yoga which is a very profound practice, but my point, why I am bringing this back to this – close application of mindfulness to the mind is to awaken in the waking state.

To come out of the non-lucid dream of reifying everything we engage with. If you want to find a dream sign, consider any time that you experience the mental affliction of craving or attachment. Not simply desire, if you are thirsty or want water, that is not craving, it doesn't have to be. But I think you know now, the mental affliction of craving – attachment. Or the mental affliction of anger, hatred, hostility, mental afflictions, either of those, consider those are dream signs and whenever you experience either craving or hostility and you know it's a mental affliction then take that as a dream sign and do a state check.

And the state check is – don't bother me, pulling your nose, that will not help. But rather take that as an indication, I am angry with that person, I'm craving that person or that thing, that place, what have you, when you see the mental afflictions coming out then turn your attention fully to that object and see if you can find it, because that object, the point here is that mental afflictions are always rooted in the reification of their own object.

The mental afflictions of craving and attachment will not arise unless you first reify that which you crave or attached to. The mental afflictions of hostility, anger, aggression, hatred, will not arise unless you reify the object of your anger or hatred. Therefore as soon as you're angry or full of craving say – wow, what an opportunity! This means the object of refutation shouldn't be too hard to find, because it's what I'm attending to. And then see if you can find what is it that is your object of craving or hostility, see if you can find it. Probe right into it. See if you can find your object and when you can't, because Madhyamaka

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guarantees you will not find it, that thing that's really there, that you are really angry about or that you really, really want, because it will make you so happy, or if you lose it, it will make you so unhappy. You see – ah, it's a complete concoction of my own mind - it's nothing more than an illusion, a fantasy, a fiction. It has no existence whatsoever, I'm sitting here craving something that doesn't exist, how odd, isn't that called insanity? Or I'm so upset, vengeful, angry, pissed off at something that doesn't exist. Isn't that called insanity? I mean at least be angry about something that's real. But if there's nothing that's real by its own inherent nature, then every time you fall into a mental affliction you really have become insane. And similarly, bringing this a bit closer to home, does your mind ever upset you? A little bit? A little bit bothersome once in a while, like gnat that comes at your tea, oops, where's the teaspoon? I want to fix it. Some people are luckier than me, some people are more like me, and that is just get mugged on a regular basis, big Godzilla of Alan's mind saying – where's that little wimp, I want to beat him up!

If your mind ever torments you, look for it. Where is that mind that's upsetting me so much, that's keeping me awake if you have insomnia, where is this mind? Who's doing that, upsetting me making me so emotionally imbalanced? Agitating me, making me unhappy. Mind is doing it. Okay, mind, show up! You've been creating a lot of problems for me, where are you? Find it. It would be quite a relief to see that it's not there, just an illusion, and then you can relax. When you see the emptiness of your own mind, then you're seeing the freedom that's inborn. Natural liberation, the emptiness of your own mind, because if your mind can't torment you then you aren't tormented, if your mind can't afflict you, you are free of afflictions and one who is free of afflictions is called Arhat. So it's Arhat in a palm of your hand. Let's practice.

Meditation:

To find balance is to find healing, allow your body to begin healing by resting it in a state of posture at ease, of stillness, vigilance, body in equipoise, loose and relaxed. To find balance in the respiration just release anything that would inhibit the breath either in or out and anything that would force the breath in or out and allow the respiration to flow naturally, effortlessly. Thereby allowing your whole prana system, energy system of the body, to find its own balance in its own way, and settle your mind in equipoise, releasing the imbalancing tendencies of fixating on the past or the future, release it all, all at once and release it to what's left over, the present moment and rest there in stillness, naturally clear and naturally still, natural shamatha. Let your awareness illuminate the space of the body, relaxing deeply releasing in every way with every out breath. Phase one mindfulness of breathing - relax more and more deeply with every out breath and the balancing factor is to relax without losing the clarity with which you began; happily releasing thoughts with every out breath and then narrowly focusing the attention on the sensations of the rise and fall of the abdomen with in and out breath relaxing with every out breath, arousing and gently focusing your attention with each in breath, attending to the whole course of respiration.

Seeking continual engagement, without ever falling away from the breath or being distracted elsewhere explicitly seeking to enhance the stability of attention without losing the sense of ease and relaxation. Then elevate and more narrowly focus your attention on the sensations of the passage of the breath at the aperture of the nostrils, keeping your eyes soft and unfocused, your whole face relaxed, open, focus just your mental awareness on these tactile sensations, arousing with each in breath, relaxing with each out breath. While sustaining the flow of mindfulness of the breath, monitor the flow of mindfulness, recognizing as quickly as possible the occurrence of either laxity or excitation, applying the antidotes as needed, introspectively taking note of thoughts, of mental images that arise in the space of the mind.

Give a little more attention to the space of the mind and the thoughts and images that arise within it, going back and forth between the mental space and the tactile field where there're sensations of the breath. And give a bit more attention to the space to the mind, maintaining just the peripheral awareness of the flow of the breath. Closely observe whatever arises within this mental space. Watching it come and go. Now give your whole attention, your undivided attention, single-pointedly to the space of the mind and whatever arises within it, take your impure mind now as your path as you settle your mind in its natural state.

This is called shamatha focused on the mind. And among the various types of mind, a bodhisattva's mind, a Buddha's mind, the mind of an ordinary person, you can attend to the only mind that's presenting itself which we call the impure mind, conditioned by mental afflictions, veiled by obscurations, samsaric mind. Now look more closely, more penetratingly, if you have an impure mind it could be taken as the path, a mind that could be taken as the object of shamatha, show it to me, show it to yourself. Where is it? When do you ever see it,

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this truly existent, real mind that troubles you so, and in so many ways? Now show your face, this thought, this image, that desire, that emotion, this space, where is the mind, show yourself. What do you know more intimately than your own mind, experiencing it constantly throughout the day? So now identify this ever so familiar mind. Where is it and from what does it arise? But you may ask how can the mind find the mind, how can a fingertip touch itself, how can the blade of a sword cut itself?

So invert your awareness right in upon that which is seeking. Who and what is it that's asking the questions? Show yourself. Is there a real subject here, the one who seeks? Where is the subjective awareness that illuminates the space of the mind and its contents? Is it inside the mind or outside the mind, inside of your head or below or outside the body? Where is this awareness? Is the awareness still or is in motion? If it's still you should be able to get a good look at it and tell me what is its nature, what is it that has these qualities of luminosity and cognizance? Or is your mind in motion, is your awareness in motion and if so, where is it moving from, and where is it going?

Rest in the emptiness and the luminosity of your own awareness, free of concepts.

Teachings 2:

In Atisha's Seven Point Mind Training, there's a verse right towards the beginning, it seems to have gotten lost, it seems to have vanished in the later versions. But I have a very, very old copy, the earliest commentary, going way back, almost a thousand years, and in either the first line or right at the beginning - "Having achieved stability, stillness, let the mystery, the secret be revealed." In other words it's no longer a mystery, it is revealed then it is clear, and what can that possible mean beside shamatha?

Why does the introspection failed as a method of inquiry in modern science since 1875 when they first started using it? I mean they tried, they gave it a good shot, these are intelligent people, but it failed and they gave up on it about a hundred years ago. Why did they fail? Intrinsically is it just a crappy way to observe the mind? Since it is the only way to observe the mind then you are out of luck. I will suggest that there actually is a simply reason, they had no means whatsoever for stabilizing the attention. They had no techniques, so it's left at a completely amateur level of course they never got any really good data because they were all amateurs, who according to William James couldn't sustain their attention for more than three seconds, it's hard to make a science. Imagine poor Galileo getting his telescope out – oh there is Jupiter, oops, where did it go? There's Jupiter, oh I lost it again, ah crap I think I just want some Lasagna, at least it stays on the plate! If you couldn't focus on anything more than three seconds I think I would get frustrated, right?

So there it is, that was the key to success which they didn't have, so they had the key to failure and that is why introspection to this day is not a rigorous mode of enquiry in any branch of modern science. Thank goodness that's not the only civilization on earth.

(1:04:03) So stabilize your mind just as he said there, I won't read it again, but he said - stable mind, still, single-pointed, not scattered, not dispersed and so forth, ok, now you've got a tool, now you've got something, an un-flickering flame of awareness so you can actually sustain your observation, closely apply your mindfulness and then hold that mind in mind, and then examine closely.

(1:04:27) And so Atisha goes from there and then it's quite interesting because it's just the opposite of Lamrim. Lamrim starts with renunciation, bodhichitta, first four perfections and then gets to shamatha and then finally, finally vipashyana, perfection of wisdom, very skillful means, so it is taking relative bodhichitta first which again Geshe so strongly emphasized and for good reason, and then once you've really developed that then develop the ultimate one, the realization of emptiness, right?

Atisha just did the opposite. Atisha who invented the first Lamrim set the format set the templet for Gampopa and all the traditions that had Lamrim, and they all do. It was Atisha who set the templet. There is one method and actually it's for people of dull faculties, and then for people of sharp faculties, which in fact he did not have as a public teaching for quite a long time, seven point mind training for people of sharp faculties. Ultimate bodhichitta first, relative bodhichitta second, quite interesting, and that's exactly what he does - read the text, there it is. It's first teaching on emptiness, when he is finished that, the final line when he finished all of the teachings on meditative equipoise, what do you do when you are in formal meditation, then ok then you have to come out of meditation, in between sessions, what? In between sessions acting as an illusory being, right? But before that, when he's coming toward the end of his investigation to understand the nature of emptiness, of course he finds primarily focusing on the nature of the mind, and then I remember one phrase, I haven't memorized the whole text but one that really caught my attention (text in

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Tibetan) Gnyen-po is the antidote, the remedy. Nigyan, even the remedy itself, rangsar- dhur, is liberated right where it is - which is to say it's already liberated. In another words you don't need to bring another antidote to it to liberate it. It's liberated right where it is.

(1:06:19) What is, if delusion is that to be vanquished, if ignorance is that to be vanquished then that which is the remedy for delusion and ignorance is wisdom. Wisdom is implemented by means of closely applying mindfulness, awareness, intelligence, investigating in. And so what are we investigating with? Awareness. That is what we are closely applying to the mind with discerning intelligence, probing into its nature, but the gnyen-po, the antidote is this awareness, luminous and cognizant by nature. Investigating the mind, is it inherently existent or not, but there is that gnyen-po the antidote, and then he is saying - that which you are using to investigate the nature of reality to investigate the nature of the mind it itself is liberated right where it is, it's empty of inherent nature, liberated, non- intrinsically bound, non- intrinsically afflicted. It's very encouraging, that's a little taste of Atisha. Ola so.

Alan answers a question about Buddhism and the arts.

Q: Does Buddhism contemplate arts as a tool to implicit knowing?

A : I must say my heart soars when I even think of it. It's the education I always wanted when I was living in the West and that I couldn't find anywhere and that is an education that actually had a center a periphery that was meaningful and not just a whole bunch of disciplines like throwing mud at the wall, you know, how about some history, how about some literature, how about some chemistry, how about some math, how about some music, okay, here is your BA. So that is why I left Western Academia, I didn't see didn't see any center, I just saw a whole bunch of pieces but there was no center, there was no point, except for okay I could get a job, get old and die, you know, get old, sick and die. Mazel tov - you succeeded, you're dead. You've made it to the end of the road. It just wasn't a satisfactory for me, and so when I first learned about the Nalanda tradition, which His Holiness the Dalai Lama is so strongly promoting, I must say I was thrilled, I really was thrilled. And the core of this is, there is a structure. I may have mentioned this earlier, but there is a core to this education, a pinnacle, I think it's probably the pinnacle of higher education in Asia, in let's say the 7th 8th 9th 10th century, around there, it lasted for some centuries, Nalanda, Vikramshila, these incredible monastic universities that drew students from all over Asia, even from as far away as China. And what it is, is there is a core, it's called (sounds like - na rigpa), inner knowledge , that was the core, appropriately named. And what's that? It's the knowledge of the mind, the nature of the mind, the source of suffering, the source of happiness, the way to liberation and awakening - that was the center of the whole education. If they had it laid out as a quad, that would be the central building, all the classes would be held there. Everybody knows, it's all for this, all education is for this, right, yes you need to make a living, but it's really all about this. Why make a living, so you can get old and die? No, make a living so you can practice dharma. And so there it was in the center, but then, if you look at this like a Mandala, there were four, also primary fields of knowledge, that's one of them of course, right in the center, but I'll come in on your question, and that is that there's knowledge of healing. So medicine, it's one of the primary ones, there are five primary fields of knowledge, that's one of them. Anybody who is sick knows that should be primary, because if you're sick it's hard to do anything well. So a really good one, that includes everything related to healing, the various types of herbs, other medicines and so forth, treatment, diagnosis, physiology, everything you need to know for healing, that goes in there. So it's a big and enormously important topic. The second one is - (sounds like - densig rigpa) and that's the knowledge of clear thinking, rational thinking, drawing inferences, how do you think clearly, investigate, analyze? It's a central theme of liberal arts, thinking clearly, problem solving, so that's the second one, Logic and epistemology all come in after that, so now we have three. A mysterious one, that's in a way one of the most intriguing, is Sapta Vidya in Sanskrit, knowledge of sound. So that's where you learn about mantras, you learn about music, you learn about language, you learn about Sanskrit grammar very centrally Sanskrit, sounds and it's multiple facets including mystic, the whole notion for example that in classic Indian culture, Hindu and Buddhist, that when you're performing illusions, creating illusions, not with technology but with the power of samadhi, the external basis and mantra. It's not fee- fi- fo- fum- fiddly dee, you know it's not just any old sound that comes to mind, it's a science and in fact in medicine itself, I have a book at home, a big fat book and it has dozens and dozens of mantras that are specifically, that is used one mantra per illness. There's a mantra for hemorrhoids. Of course it won't work if you don't have samadhi. But so a wide variety of physical imbalances and so forth, and if the physician is a physician and a yogi, has strong

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samadhi, then will fuse his or her medical knowledge with the power of samadhi, using mantra and come in and there's some very, very high tech healing. Almost no medical doctors in the Tibetan tradition are trained in that way anymore. But in the good old days, that was it, you would kind of have like lower division and then upper division, upper division okay now it's time for a yogi. But I have left the best for last, that is the best with respect to your question, and it's simply called (Sanskrit word sounds like - svork) - knowledge of creating things. So that goes from bridge building, all of technology, but it goes to making statues and prayer wheels, and visual arts like paintings, and drawings and sculpture, art all together. And of course music was already taken care of in the knowledge of sound. So the point here, and I have just contextualized your question, and that is the idea here is that all of these four, knowledge of clear reasoning, I would put mathematics in there, that's quantitative reasoning, powerful, powerful tool, together with qualitative reasoning that's logic and epistemology, that can be an avenue into the center. Just read the works of Dharmakirti and Dignaga, two of the greatest, probably the greatest epistemologist and logicians in all of Buddhist India. What are they doing that for? To achieve liberation and enlightenment. The greatest physicians, Yuthok, one of the greatest Tibetan doctors in all of history, great yogi, and Nagarjuna was a healer as well, and so they are using medicine, not just to heal the imbalances of the body, but they'll trace imbalances of wind, bile and phlegm, to attachment, hostility and delusion. So if you really want to heal you don't just heal the symptoms, the imbalances in the body, you go right to the root, and that means purifying the mind of all mental afflictions. So you are only healed when you are at least an Arhat or better. So then medicine leads you into the center. (Shakta Vidya) The use of music, of sound, mantra and so forth, of language itself, can be an instrument, a vehicle, an avenue into the center. And then finally, and the answer is yes, definitely and unequivocally and undebatable, yes, it can be used as an instrument, a vehicle for coming into the center. And that's why in all of Tibet, frankly until very recently, I mean just the influence of modernity, I can't say that I have ever seen any secular art in all of Tibet. Secular music, sure, folk songs, but art, where it's really a discipline, and it's a very highly developed discipline, it's all for the sake of liberation and awakening, all of it. Whether you are drawing the wheel of samsara, of a deity, of mandalas, of anything, it's all for the sake of liberation. And it is never more clear than when the monks are doing sand mandala, if they are not just a technician, if they are serious practitioners, that creation of the sand mandala, the use of the sand mandala, and then the destruction of the sand mandala, it's all dharma. All dharma. Then we have performing arts, Chum, performing arts, dramatic arts, performance, that's part of dharma. And then the dance of the hands and the mudras and so forth, the very kind of liturgies and all of the aspects of the very well presented ritual. One can say that's a kind of creative art. All for the sake of liberation. So all four of these peripheral, or surrounding, I don't want to say peripheral like they don't matter, but surrounding fields of knowledge, they are all designed to bring you into the center. At the same time as one goes into the center then lo and behold that fountain bursts forth and enriches, waters, nourishes all the other four. So you find people like Tsongkhapa, profound realization and out of his realization it flows out into epistemology, or some of the great Lamas were superb artists, others were great healers, great magicians, and then one who I heard just recently was the incarnation of my own lama Gyatrul Rinpoche, Chok Sampa, the one who created something like 50 iron bridges all over Tibet. He was a civil engineer, great lama, 56, 57 iron bridges all over Tibet where they have got these chasms that if you don't have a bridge you have to walk another 50kms, until you find some way to get across the river. He created bridges all over Tibet as part of his display of his profound realization. Now there's a civil engineer par excellence. So from the inside then flowing to the out, to enrich, to deepen, so that the healing is seen, aha, this is really coming from a deeper place, it's not just healing a physical illness, this is to heal you all the way through. And likewise use of logic, likewise the creative arts, music, all of these, all flowing into the center, all for one, and one for all. And now that's where you get your education, Nalanda, Vikramshila and so forth, and then once you've gotten your education, after you have stream entered the center, and sat some years there, then you stream out and you go out into the world, whether it's out to a yogi cave or out to engage in Bodhisattva activity of any sort, as a doctor, as a logician, as a philosopher, as an artist, as a musician, all flowing. So how's that for a bigger answer, yes! So let's bring back the good old days, that's when they had an education that was really meaningful. So you could spend your life, and I know people, Yeshe Dhonden, boy from the age of 6, his parents decided he would become a doctor, and he did, he was trained from 6, he's now well into his 80's, he's spent his whole life in

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medicine, that's his life. And other ones in art and so forth, but it's always rooted in Dharma. So, there's a meaningful education.

Q – During settling the mind practice, I'm attending to appearances in my mind and my question relates to noticing experience of feelings, emotion arising.

Feelings are a mental state associated with physical sensation.

In many, many cases, that is when you are having a feeling, let's broaden that, a feeling in Buddhism, pleasant unpleasant, neutral, or feeling as emotion means excited, agitated, depressed, surprised, afraid and so forth, much broader array, are these mental states? Yes they are mental states, they are mental emergences qualities to emerge forth from consciousness, and in terms of the feelings, is there, very often if not inevitably, at least during the waking state, a somatic cord, you are really experiencing something in the body that is clearly associated with the emotion, the feeling that you are experiencing in the present moment? And the answer is yes, and the reason, for that from a Buddhist first person physiology is – prana. Whatever mental state you are experiencing there is a corresponding state of prana. And the prana will be experienced and it will be experienced as somatic sensations. When attending to a feeling we are aware of body, so if you are attending to a physical or somatic feeling we're aware of the body, physiological change at the same time. If you had to micro analyze this you would find that your attention is flicking back and forth, between the mental domain and the physical domain. But very, very fast, so it feels, just like we did earlier – okay now attend to your breath, but also attend to the mind, it feels pretty simultaneous, and only when you do a micro analysis do you see that it's a really, really fast oscillation back and forth. So it gives a sense of doing it in the same moment, and if you say, during a quarter of a second, are you attending to both the mind and the body, the answer is yes. How about 20 milliseconds? Then you would say no, you are probably in one or the other, but you are zipping back and forth, so quickly that it seems simultaneous.

Q - So, more or less at the same time, this is often how I notice a feeling, through change in my body.

Very true, you pick it up, it is a bit easier to detect in the somatic field, and then you say – oh anything mentally happening and you see oh, yeah.

Q - But I want to check if this is compatible with settling the mind practice which is only focused on the mind.

Sure. That is when you are engaging in the shamatha practice of settling the mind in its natural state you want to be as single pointed as you can. So this means that sounds are bound to impinge upon your auditory consciousness. Your eyes are open, hasn't probably gone blank, probably have some visual sensations coming in, tactile sensations, so they are rising to meet you but you deliberately don't give any attention to them, even if they are somatic experiences correlated with mental feelings. They are there, but you don't deliberately give any attention because the idea is to focus single pointedly on the space of the mind, so that eventually, almost like you have to put a magnet there, all the iron filings of your awareness that's slipping off into other sensory fields, are all drawn into the magnet in the space of the mind, your senses implode and you're totally in the mental space, which means your coarse mind dissolves into substrate consciousness. That's the idea, and that's why you don't deliberately give attention to somatic sensations while doing this practice. Now if you are practicing close application of mindfulness to the feelings knowing that feelings arise in the somatic field as well as the mental, then sure. Attend to both of them, examine their factors of origination and so forth, and do the practice.

Q- So when noticing that agitation and anger are rising in my mind now, I'm noticing my body is tense, can these two be separated so the appearance of feeling emotion in the mind is purely mental? Yep, but it takes some work, and that's what samadhi is all about, it's the unification, single-pointedness of attention. So when you choose to focus on the mind, that's all you're attending to. But that'll take a while. Until then, the body, and somatic sensations are bound to be calling out to you, and in that particular practice you don't deliberately give them any attention. But then you can say, okay I want to give them some attention now, then you go into vipashyana, and then you attend to them there, but with the mode of inquiry of trying to understand.

Q - One more question: Is it possible to recognize emotions before they manifest as sensations in the body?

Yes. And for example, when you're dreaming. Have you ever recognized an emotion when you're dreaming? When you are dreaming are by enlarge you are oblivious of your body lying horizontally in bed. You may be, of course, experiencing your body walking around upright in your dream, but that body is completely in, your

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experience of it, is completely in the space of your mind. Which means to attend to that is attending to the space of the mind and the events arising within it, including your bodily sensations within the dream, but they're not bodily sensations, they're mental sensations because that's where you are experiencing them. That's quite interesting.

Q - So should I ignore the emotions as long as I only recognize them by way of the body, because then it is no appearance of the mind, although I know that there must be something colourating?

Yes that's the answer. There was a lot of overlap with the question. Once again to summarize, the simple but important point, and that is in settling the mind in its natural state as much as possible, making it very clear, this is not open presence. Right? It's not just equally aware of anything that comes up, say oh well everything is in the space of the mind, yes everything is within the six domains of experience but among those six, in settling the mind, we're attending to only one. Space of the mind. And so we are seeking to single pointedly focus there as we earlier tried to single pointedly focus on the sensations of the breath at the nostrils, but might you be experiencing simultaneously the sensations of the rise and fall of the abdomen? Yeah, probably. That just means your mind is moving, going back and forth. But we try to stabilize it, really try to stabilize it, so single pointedly. And likewise, in settling the mind single pointedly on the space of the mind, as you get better and better at it, then the other sense fields, they do eventually fade out and then all of the juice, all of the luminosity is all coming into the domain of the mind. Which means that – prepare yourself for this – as you get better and better at this, this means that anything that is in the mind is going to come quite powerfully, because it's getting heavily illuminated. So emotions will come very strongly, and imagery will really be strong, memories very, very vivid, fantasies, fears, angers, joys, faith and so forth. You're turning up the aptitude, because all the energy, all the luminosity, the flow of mindfulness is all going into that one domain. So that means the experiences will be more intense. But, in the meantime before you're way up there, you'll have all this competition coming from all the sensory fields, they arise, don't give them any attention. Again it's like that conversation in the Italian restaurant focus on this conversation, the other ones – not interested. Having said that though, bear in mind that shamatha is really primarily for the sake of vipashyana, of course Bodhichitta, but right now we say vipashyana, which means we are developing the stability and clarity so that we can then take that finely honed serviceable mind and apply it to, and really understanding – how do feelings arise, what are the factors of origination, how do they dissolve, do they have an owner, are they permanent, impermanent? And then in terms of factors of origination, am I having a certain mental feeling, an emotion that's been catalyzed by a somatic experience, something happening in my body? It's somatic but can that trigger a mental emotion? Absolutely yes. But then we can ask, a mental emotion, or how do belief, trust, faith, placebo effect, purely mental. Could this be influencing physiological states in the body as well as somatic experience in the body? Absolutely yes. So now, understanding placebo effect is really vipashyana applied to the mind body relationship. To looking to - how do they interface with each other as co-operative conditions? Because the mind doesn't turn into the body, into molecules, and molecules, cells and so forth, they don't turn into mental states that's silly, you know, it would be magical, it just doesn't happen. And so how do they influence each other as cooperative conditions? Influencing but without actually transforming into? So cells conform into other configurations of mass energy, a cell dies, it doesn't just go poof! It transforms into something else physical. And mental states also, they don't go poof either, not at death or at any other time, they also always transform into some other configuration of awareness. Quite spectacular.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

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83 Great Empathetic Joy (2)

12 Oct 2012

Teachings:

This morning we turn to Maha Muditā - great empathetic joy and in this particular cycle that we're going through, I've associated the Maha Karuna - the great compassion which is having that respect from blatant

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suffering that comes by achieving shamatha and resting in the substrate consciousness, but there simply is no pain, there is no suffering at all of body or mind. And then with great loving kindness Maha Maitri, associating that with realization of emptiness, and then as we turn to this aspiration of great mudita, empathetic joy, it is the aspiration, the resolve - may we never be parted from happiness devoid of suffering, free of suffering, and as you might guess I will associate this with realization of rigpa - pristine awareness. And let's go back to my all time, utter most favorite metaphor and that is - becoming lucid in a dream. And that is once you've become lucid, then there is by that very fact of becoming lucid, I can't say for every single lucid dream, but generally speaking, there is a euphoria, a sense of wellbeing, there is happiness, there can actually be a bliss and it's not coming hedonically, it's not coming from some happy things that are occurring in the dream, it's coming from knowing the nature of the reality you are experiencing, so it's really a eudemonic wellbeing, a little microcosm of actually being a Buddha, a little facsimile.

(2:16) So what's your task, what's your primary directive if you're really intent on practicing dreaming yoga and using this as a platform for moving along to full awakening? Your prime directive is now that you've gotten lucid, stay lucid, don't lose that recognition, don't lose that knowing, that's your prime directive, stay there sustain that, sustain that flow of knowing, the nature of reality you are experiencing at that time, namely recognizing the dream as the dream.

(2:49) So in a similar fashion, I'm really now laying out the fundamental structure of the utter essence of Dudjom Lingpa's path of Dzogchen, which is really representative of the entire tradition, there's nothing iconoclastic about his approach that is in terms of the formal meditation, first of all achieving shamatha, resting in the substrate consciousness then realizing emptiness and then thirdly, breaking through your conventional mind, breaking through the substrate consciousness, melting it so to speak, shattering so to speak and then breaking through to this dimension of awareness, of pristine awareness, primordial consciousness, and as soon as one has made that breakthrough, you're a bona fide Dzogchen practitioner and you're actually ascertaining rigpa. Then you really have one prime directive, you become awake, you are viewing reality now from the perspective of Buddha mind, perspective of rigpa. Don't lose it! That's it. You really don't have any other practice, now just sustain that flow of knowing, sustain the flow of viewing reality from rigpa, therefore you have the Dzogchen view which is the view from the perspective of rigpa and Dzogchen meditation is nothing more or less than sustaining the view, now that you've broken through to rigpa just don't lose it, sustain that.

(4:11) And then allow the whole path to rise up to meet you. Some people don't even practice thogyal I mean the very right points, they do not even need the direct crossing over of the thogyal, they can simply break through and that will take them all the way to perfect Buddhahood, it happens. So there's your simply practice, and it is called (ja de la) devoid of activity, inactive, and why is that? Because we see, wait a minute, wait a minute, wonderful accomplished Lamas like Jadrel Rinpoche his name is actually ja del. The Rinpoche who is devoid of action. But no he's not, he's got a wife, he's got two daughters, he is very active teaching, he has lived a long life, teaching and so on, so maybe he isn't really an authentic practitioner since he is inactive? Well that's about as likely as nothing. No, what does it mean Ja del? It means you not are activating your conventional mind, your ordinary mind, you are not slipping back into non-lucidity and working within that manifold. So you are leaving, you are di-activating your ordinary sense of I am, di-activating the ordinary mind, just turning it off and just dwelling in rigpa. And then whatever activity flows from that, that is spontaneous, that's just flowing. And so we find great masters, Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche incredibly active with so many, many projects and Dudjon Rinpoche and so forth. They are very active. But for those who are truly accomplished in Dzogchen, the activity's coming right out of rigpa.

(7:35) So you asked for some names of still living and authentic Dzogchen masters, Yangthang Rinpoche, still alive, still teaching, I heard just recently, maybe within the last six months or so he was teaching at Lerab Ling in the South of France, this is one of Sogyal Rinpoche's main centers, he is extraordinary, realizations – Shamatha, Vipashyana – Dzogchen, genuine realizations. Khenpo Namdrol, very, very knowledgeable, authentic, absolutely straight, impeccable integrity, he is one of the co- Abbots now of Namdroling Monastery, the primary Nyingma Monastery I think probably in all of India, something like 3,000 monks there, in the South of India, he is absolutely authentic. And another one who has more recently come from Tibet is Getse Rinpoche, also absolute integrity, straight, knowledgeable, so there's three. That is of course not an exhaustive list, but they are all on active duty, still teaching, giving Dzogchen empowerments and so forth.

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There are others of course, but those three – total confidence. So, there can be our aspiration - why couldn't all sentient beings never be parted from happiness, devoid of suffering? When you are resting in rigpa, you are now devoid of suffering, I mean you are beyond suffering, you are resting in a state of awareness that's beyond time, beyond space, you are free, and it's only a metaphor of course, but imagine being really deeply lucid in a dream, what exactly, where does the suffering come from? Where does suffering come from if you're really deeply lucid, profoundly lucid in a dream? What's going to make you suffer, alligators, cobras, bubonic plague, bad neighbors, a cold? There's nothing there, you're just surrounded by a field of empty appearances, none of those can give you any harm at all and your mind is dwelling in a state of being awake, which is by nature blissful. So there's no in, there is no in for suffering, not from outside, not from inside, you're free.

(8:37) So once again just to highlight, I know you've heard it before but just to make this absolutely transparent, some of you I know have had them in a non-lucid dream and then something happen, Tsongkhapa says the easiest way to slip into lucidity, to recognize a dream as a dream is while you are just cruising along, fairly ordinary person and then something really unpleasant happens, nasty, a nightmare, a shock, something really terrifying or whatever and also bizarre, really bizarre and then you recognize, oh, I must be dreaming, I am, I'm out of here! And so you have just a very short, or maybe you get excited, oh I'm dreaming, no I am not. Where did it go? Where did it go? So that's the most common way to have your first lucid dream, is they're really short, right?

(9:37) And as is often, if it's a Dild, what Steven La Berge calls a Dild – a dream induced lucid dream, something happens in a dream that somehow kicks you into lucidity and there you are in the dream but knowing that it's a dream. Well for most cases it's very brief, because you just don't have the preparation, number one you get really excited, your mind is scattered, it's not relaxed, it's not stable and so you get that insight and then it's gone, a matter of seconds and it's finished, right?

(10:07) And so you can see first of all how useful it would be for lucid dreaming and for gaining the realization of rigpa, that you've got a vessel there that when that realization comes up, and you actually do break through, you can sustain it, and that's because your mind's stable, so shamatha. But then of course if all you have is shamatha but you've not really challenged this incredibly deeply ingrained tendency of reifying everything, including yourself as you are now, ordinary person, ordinary environment, my mind, oh poor my mind and my big yucky mind full of mental afflictions, I can't stand it, it bugs me so badly, all of that, if you're reifying everything, the Midas

Touch, which means you turn everything to mud. If you're not out of that rut, even if you temporary break through, the old habits are just going to come in and freeze it over again and lock right in, it's going to shut it down because you reify once again.

(10:59) So therefore it's kind of common sense that if you'd like to break through to rigpa and then to be able to actually follow the Dzogchen teachings and that is now your only practice is to sustain the view, to dwell in non-meditation because there's literally nothing for you to do with your conventional mind that you used to achieve shamatha, developing bodhichitta, the six perfections, practicing Lojong doing this and doing that all the same, but don't do anything because there's nothing to achieve, if you're viewing reality from the perspective of rigpa, there's nothing to achieve, just be awake and let the fullness of that, rise up and totally embrace you.

So shamatha then break down all the barriers of reification through realization of emptiness and then go to rigpa and then you are a Dzogchen practitioner, you really are a vidyadhara, you are holding rigpa, vidya means rigpa in Sanskrit, you are holding rigpa, you are holding your own ground in rigpa, not just your substrate consciousness, but you are holding your own ground, your deepest ground, your fundamental primordial ground, your home, ultimately home so don't go anywhere and let everything flow out of that. So there it is individually and then this aspiration of great empathic joy is - since this is the essential nature of every sentient being, why couldn't we never be parted from that happiness which truly is utterly devoid of suffering, might we be, why not, it's not like we have to acquire something we don't have, it's what we already are, so there is no acquisition. Why couldn't we be, I shall make it so, of course that means I have to practice myself.

All right, whatever is needed, and then ok blessings, blessings, all the blessings, knocking down all the obstacles.

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Good, let's practice.

Meditation:

Let your awareness descend from the head right down to the ground, this non-conceptual ground, let your awareness permeate the empty space of your body not permeating flesh and bone, but permeating just space. Settle your body in its natural state, relaxed, still and vigilante.

Settle your respiration in its natural rhythm and releasing all thoughts pertaining to the future and the past, non-conceptually let your awareness come to rest in the immediacy of the present moment without conceptual elaborations. And then in the space in front of you visualize and bring to mind as clearly as you can, the iconic personification of your own pristine awareness, Samantabhadra, deep blue in color and holding a Vajra and bell, seated in the full lotus, blazing with such sapphire light. And as if looking into the mirror and if you will, take refuge, take refuge in this primordial Buddha, the dharma revealed by Samantabhadra and all the great vidyadharas of the past, present and future as our guides, our companions, spiritual friends along the path, you're never alone. From now until my own perfect awakening, I take refuge in the guru, Samantabhadra, Buddha Samantabhadra, the dharma of Samantabhadra and all the vidyadharas, who've come to know who they truly are, Samantabhadra.

And in order to lead all sentient beings to liberation and awakening, may I myself ever so swiftly awaken to my own nature of Samantabhadra. Then inviting the guru Samantabhadra to the crown of your head, and facing in the same direction as yourself, imagine this primordial Buddha dissolving into indigo light, flowing down your central channel, and reappearing on a lotus moon and sun disk at your heart. Imagine your own body, speech and mind indivisible from that guru, Samantabhadra. Let this light at your heart permeate the empty space of your empty body, the empty space of your empty mind.

And from this perspective, arouse the question:

1) Why couldn't all sentient beings never be parted from happiness, devoid of suffering?

[Then arouse the aspiration.]

2) May we all never be parted from such well-being.

[Then arouse the intention.]

3) And for as long as space remains, for as long as sentient beings remain, I shall do whatever is needed to bring this about.

4) And by the blessings of the guru Samantabhadra and all the awakened ones, may I be enabled to carry through with that resolve.

And with each in breath imagine the light of all the Buddha's flowing in upon you, from above and below and all the sides utterly saturating your entire being and purifying all obscurations, all illness, all afflictions and all that harms.

And with each out breath, breathe out this light in all directions, dispelling all afflictions, all obscurations and doing whatever is needed to bring each sentient being to such a lasting state of wellbeing, utterly free of suffering.

And release all activities of the mind, release your mind, and rest in the natural luminosity and purity of your own awareness, empty and still.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Revised by Cheri Langston

Final edition by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Posted by Alma Ayon

84 Mindfulness of phenomena (1)

12 Oct 2012

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Teaching pt1:

So we finished for the time being with the close application of mindfulness to the mind, and we go to Shantideva's presentations on the Bodhisattva way of Life and The Compendium of practices. And we will return to Shantideva's text, the Bodhicaryavatara, and we will get to the other one a little bit later. So this is, because it's real philosophy here, this is hard ball philosophy, hope you enjoy it, it is really quite extraordinary and extremely concise. Shantideva's root verses are again almost quoniam, that is, so concise they are almost like koans. But what I'm including this time is His Holiness' commentary, which I am going to read, and these were actually teachings he gave to a group of about one thousand Tibetans or so, and just a small handful of Westerners, given in Switzerland in 1979 during his first visit to Europe, or to the West to teach. So he visited Switzerland and Greece and then off to a much more extensive tour in the United States. So Jeffrey Hopkins, who was one of my mentors, one of my Tibetan teachers, a very dear friend, senior scholar, elder scholar, he translated for His Holiness throughout the entire American tour and I had the privilege of interpreting for him in Switzerland and in Greece. These teachings that he gave on the Bodhicaryavatara in Northern Switzerland that was with no interpretation, no translation, just straight Tibetan. I attended those teachings, it was my great privilege, and then some years later when I was doing my undergrad at Amherst, part of the my thesis was translating from the Sanskrit and Tibetan, this Wisdom chapter, and then I decided also I had recordings of His Holiness' oral teachings, that I would translate those. It was quite challenging and very, very rewarding. Jeffrey Hopkins, again a very dear and revered teacher of mine, he made a comment years ago, probably about 40 years ago to me, when he was teaching me Tibetan grammar, I could not find anyone better on the planet, literally than Jeffrey Hopkins at Tibetan grammar, he is absolutely outstanding, he said if you really want to understand a text well, translate it. It turns out to be true. That's one of the reasons I translated so many texts. So the segue of course is verse 105 which I read earlier, but you might have been a little bit surprised if you were looking, you have your version whether on line or whether you have it written, where's the close application of mindfulness to phenomena? And verse 105, to reiterate, because I have read it before, he's referring to mind, this is the close application of mindfulness to the mind.

If it, the mind, arises after the object of cognition, so in dependence upon it and after it, then from what would cognition arise? So, I've already commented on that, so that is the question, from what would it arise, and of course you don't find anything from which it really arises. So that's the first half of verse 105, 105a. And then here is 105b, the second line in this verse. In this way it is ascertained that no phenomenon comes into existence. He was focusing everything on the mind and then suddenly then and oh by the way, everything else! And it's quite interesting, and then again this if one is sloppy, or gets tired, you know you are venturing into this very challenging mind of reasoning, mode of inquiry, which is a combination as you know now, from rational and experiential, to breathing and reasoning, that you'd better be probing into your own experience otherwise it's just a head game, and I just frankly do not just believe that it really strikes the target of mental afflictions if you keep it purely at a conceptual level and don't bring it into your own experience, maybe it will hit someone else's mental afflictions but it won't hit yours because you know you're not the same.

And so in this way to ascertain that no phenomenon comes into existence, so I was about to say, if one just gets tired, or maybe even lazy, and just says oh well His Holiness must know what he is talking about, or Shantideva's so wise, he is quoted so often, he must be true, and if you just kind of slide in, then you don't get it. If you say, "oh I believe all phenomena are, umm what do they say, inherently, yeah that, - whatever he said, that's what I believe in." Good luck with that, that's not going to work. This has to challenge every one of your intelligence, you can't hold any in reserve, think well I don't want to investigate too hard otherwise I might come to the conclusion that Shantideva's wrong, then I'll be very unhappy. He calls on your best, your best shot. So as a hypothesis, a working hypothesis, if it turns out to be true, that our very perception of reality, of whatever it is, other people, our mind, galaxies, elementary particles, if it turns out that our very perception of reality, our very awareness itself has no inherent nature, is devoid of any intrinsic nature of its own, then it immediately follows that whatever you perceive cannot be any more real than your perception of it. If your perception has only nominal existence, conventional existence, but doesn't exist by its own intrinsic nature then nothing that you apprehend will exist by its own intrinsic nature. So, I'll leave it there, just leaving it there is not saying, okay just leave it there, now believe. It's there, now reflect on it. I was reflecting on it myself this afternoon, I was thinking, because I do love skirting around disciplines, this really

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quite extraordinary cosmologist, astrophysicist, a Russian, Andrei Linde, and he made a comment, and he is questioning, maybe scientists should take consciousness more seriously, and consider that maybe it's not just a function of, a derivative of matter, maybe it's one of the fundamental issues of the entire universe and it should be taken seriously, in its own right. He said, after all, what we know primarily is our own perceptions, and out of our perceptions comes our perception of, matter, space, time, energy, anything else. But it's our perceptions that are primary, and everything else is something that – oh you perceived it. If that which is primary is empty of inherent nature, then how could it possibly be that what you're apprehending is somehow more real than your apprehension of it? To my mind it doesn't make any sense and that's exactly what Shantideva is suggesting here. That by ascertaining the emptiness of your own awareness in this way, it is ascertained that he should come to a certainty that no phenomenon comes into existence if your own cognition, your own awareness of red, of people, of planets, of particles, space, time, matter, society, justice, beauty, anything, if your own awareness of what it may be, doesn't really come into existence by its own inherent nature, truly come into existence, then no object that you truly apprehend will truly come into existence either. That's the end of the discussion, he just says it in one line – that's that, I've finished, tea time.

What? What? A little bit more? No, that's it. So it reminds me again the statement from the Mahamudra traditions where, remember the analogy – the tree from which you want to get dry fire wood, if you cut the one tap root, if you realize the emptiness of your own mind, then the ripple effect will go out and you will quite rapidly see that if that's the case, then no phenomena that you apprehend can possibly be inherently existent. So by cutting the tap root, the whole tree of delusion dries up. So I was going to stop there because that's the end of the formal discussion before applications of mindfulness, but then I looked again and said no, there's a little bit of addendum here and it is what is called, refutation of objections, and I thought, this is really sharp, and this is where I want to bring in His Holiness explicitly, and simply read his commentary because the first verses here are really like koans.

So these were objections that Shantideva, one can imagine they are objections that are arising in his own mind, and then, if someone is thinking that, then - how would I respond to that? So what we have here is there is a middle way here and it's really slim because metaphysical realism, the notion that hey there's a real world out there – that's just common sense. And it's common sense that almost all scientists barring a few people like Stephen Hawking, John Wheeler and some others, but almost all of science, and I think all of the cognitive sciences – psychology and neuroscience, virtually all with no exceptions, they are assuming – there's a real brain, there's a real body, there's a real world out there made of mass, energy, space, time, and that's what we are mapping, that's what we're representing with scientific theories, that's what we're really investigating, and it's common sense, right? And that's exactly the common sense that's being refuted, refuting the very existence of some inherently existent, objective world, or some inherently, subjective awareness of it. And saying that no phenomenon thinks this by its own nature, phenomenon come into existence in dependence on and by the power of, verbal or conceptual designation, imputation, saying it's so, thinking it's so. So if one is coming from metaphysical realism, and I think this objection is coming directly from that, I would say it's coming from the Sautrantika view, which is like classical physics, (11.09) it is, and I have said before, Sautrantika is to Buddhist philosophy what classical physics is to physics, I would say it's a very strong parallel.

Then from the Sautrantika you could say – what you say, you Madhyamikas, Shantideva what you said just doesn't make sense! And that is you're saying that phenomenon exist only because we can conceptually designate them, they're not already there, this is so problematic I hardly even know where to start. That's what the Theravadans would say they call the Madhyamika – advocates of nihilism. You are saying with respect to emptiness the reality of suffering doesn't exist, the source doesn't exist, cessation doesn't exist, well thanks a million, you've just demolished all of the Buddha's teachings, you are nihilists, you've gone too far, you've gone way too far, hello come back to reality. So, what's his objection? If conventional truth does not exist, and that's what he's been saying if you read it literally – body doesn't exist, feelings don't exist, mind doesn't exist, and then phenomena are apprehended not to come into existence. Because if it exists literally no phenomena comes into existence, wow. So if conventional truth does not exist, then how can there be two truths? You've just knocked out one of them you've just said it doesn't exist, so the other one is just hanging out here by itself? This is the objection. If it does exist, due to another conventional truth then

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how could there be a liberated sentient being? Let's now read what His Holiness says, and he's really quick. So here is His Holiness' commentary -

(13:10)

Objection:

You Centrists (*you Madhyamikas*) claim that no imputed object is found under analysis, and that emptiness itself does not exist (is not really there). Upon seeking imputed objects, (*body, feelings, mind, phenomena*) you conclude that there is no form, sound, smell, taste, tactile object nor mental object, and that there is no truth of suffering, truth of the source of suffering, truth of cessation or truth of the path. You say that everything does not exist.

You seem to maintain (*he continues the objection*) that all conventional realities that are involved in causal relationships are mere apparitions appearing to deluded minds, since they have no intrinsic existence. But if they are not intrinsically existent, they do not exist at all. (*and that's the position of metaphysical realism. It's either really there or it's not. But if you are saying that it's really not there, then frankly it's not there at all, to be there is to be really there, if it's not really there, bam you are out, as in using the baseball mudra, and it makes sense, if they are not intrinsically existent, they do not exist at all*) In that case, how can there be the two truths? Ultimate truth would be out of the question, for it must be established on the basis of something that exists (*and we have seen this, I mentioned this in respect to the mind, if you want to realize the ultimate nature of the mind, empty nature of the mind, first you must ascertain the mind, otherwise what's the point? You toss up something fuzzy that you don't know whether it exists or not but say oh now what's its ultimate nature? It's a ridiculous strategy. So for there to be an ultimate truth there must be a conventional truth, in that case how can there be two truths, ultimate truth would be out of the question for it must be established on the basis of something that exists*). But if that basis does not exist (*if that basis of imputation doesn't exist by way of its own nature*) it has no ultimate nature (*it's not there, why? Because it's not really there, that's what it means to not be there, not really there! I get it, I understand*). Thus, relative and ultimate truth could not be posited (*because you just obliterated relative truth and you can't just have ultimate truth hanging out there all by itself. The opposition continues*)

If, according to you, everything that exists, that is posited consists purely of apparitions appearing to confused minds, (*like we're all psychopaths, we are all schizophrenics, we are all completely delusional, and that's the only nature of conventional reality, things appearing to crazy people, if that's what you're saying and it really seems like you are,*) then Nirvana would be impossible. Indeed, worldly judgements of "good" and "bad" would not hold up. (*I mean everybody's crazy, so good or bad, whatever you say it is*) Moreover, a cosmic primal substance, (*a creator god, the three jewels, they would all have the same status*) if one of them exists, they all exist (*and that is, if this is just a free for all, whatever you think that's what exists, then anything, creator God, no creator God, anything because it's just you've designated – it's a free for all, who needs science? Who needs reason? You have a delusional mind, whatever you cough up, whatever you vomit up, that's your reality*) For a confused mind such a primal substance may God, the Three Jewels of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha would all have the same status may exist, God may exist, the horns of a rabbit may also exist. To a mind that conceives of rabbit horns, they exist. (*Like me walking around thinking - I am Napoleon, that is your reality dude, bonsoir, so we are all just smoking dope and everyone's reality is as real as anyone else's reality, they are really whacking Madhyamika here, just demolishing everything*) In short, if you say that something exists simply because it seems to be real to a deluded mind, nothing could be denied existence. (*in other words there's no such thing as mental diseases, there's no such thing as psychology, schizophrenia, psychosis, there's no such thing. This is all by the way, direct translation by His Holiness.*)

In that case (*he continues the opposition*) "true" and "untrue," "good" and "evil," conventionally "existent" and "non-existent" all lose their meaning. One could no longer speak of false views, such as denying something which does exist and asserting something that does not exist. Thus, by undermining the distinction between "good" and "evil," there would be no liberation by means of correctly avoiding evil and adopting virtue. Moreover, liberation itself would be nothing more than an apparition of a deluded mind. (*it's a strong opposition from Sautrantika, it doesn't say explicitly Sautrantika but this is clearly within the Buddhist framework. And if someone said – this Madhyamika, this is dangerous stuff, this is demolishing the whole path and the very notion, the very meaning of liberation altogether, so Madhyamikas how are you going to respond*)

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to that, that was a pretty tough critique? Here comes the root verses-and it's again like a Koan, so be patient, when we get to His Holiness everything will become clear.)

One is an ideation, a concept of someone else's mind, one does not exist by one's own conventional truth. (*so simply put, it's not make it up as you go, it's not whatever you say is true.*) After something has been ascertained, it exists. If not, it does not exist as a conventional reality either.

(okay, hard to pick that one apart but His Holiness now does it , he says now)

The objection is that if something is said to exist merely because it is conceived by a deluded mind that grasps onto true existence, it would not be able to render help nor inflict harm. It would simply be an illusion. (*okay the summary, now the response, here's Shantideva's Madhyamika response-*)

Response: One cannot claim that something exists simply because it is conceived by a deluded mind. (*that's a kind of a relief, okay so there is such a thing as psychosis, there is such a thing as false beliefs, like believing that one race is intrinsically better than another ,and so*), So according to our Centrist system (*Madhyamika system*) that is not the criterion of conventional existence. (*in other words, you have misunderstood us*) When speaking of a "conventional truth," its truth is determined not by objective reality (*and that is what the metaphysical realists believe, it's out there really and so how well your theory corresponds to what's out there absolutely, that's what determines how good your theory is. It's a brief presentation, he said well we're not going there, you do, we're not but we are also not a bunch of smoke doping hippies who just say well whatever's your reality, so something in between so*) but by the mind. Objective reality cannot be the criterion for truth, for truth is of the mind.

Alan Wallace comments – 21:14 *What springs to mind here – Anton Zeillinger, he said – what we have are measurements, what we have is information derived from our measurements – that is what we scientists have. And frankly he is speaking for all scientists. He is speaking as a brilliant mind in his field, he may as well be speaking for neuroscience, geology or anything else. What we know, what we have are our measurements, appearances and the information we derived by making measurements and experiments, that's it. Now with these measurements the information we have, how does this correspond to some reality that exists independently of our systems of measurement? Independently of all the information we know, independently of all appearances? He said – there's no way to answer that question. It's not a meaningful question. Therefore to think that there is some objective reality out there independent of all system of measurement, all appearances and all information, and we're going to judge the validity of our theories in terms to how well it corresponds to that objective reality, this is a fool's errand. It's not meaningful, you will never be able to refute anything, so give it a rest! Metaphysical realism is delusional. It's an inside job. You are always making measurements , getting appearances, information and maybe measurements but you never get a leap out of that and say oh ya, from a Gods perspective, no can do. So that is really quite interesting, that's exactly what His Holiness was saying here in 1979. So objective reality cannot be objective as it exists independently of our system of measurement , appearances information cannot be the criteria of truth, determining whether your theory is true or not because truth is of the mind so don't look there, look back here, and that is why Anton Zeillinger says this is why you must bring back together ontology and epistemology, ontology is the knowledge of what is, epistemology is the knowledge of how do we know. You can't separate the two. And that was done artificially, to think that you sometimes speak of what's really there, but that has nothing to do with our way of knowing if it's really, really there, totally phony, fool's errand, red herring, false lead, don't go, doesn't work, never has. So find some other criteria to find truth, His Holiness said okay, it's back to the mind, he continues -* The conventional truths of the mind can be established only by the confusion of grasping onto true existence. So when one speaks of "conventional truth," that is true for the mind that grasps onto true existence. (*so briefly coming back to the non- lucid dream, let's imagine this is a non- lucid dream, I look around and ask – is Betty Rose here? And within the dream, Martin says – ya, she is over there. And so, we are all deluded, within the non-lucid dream because we don't know we are dreaming, but within that context well that's a true statement. Taking place within the context of misapprehending the nature of reality of the experience, namely you don't know it's a dream.)* However, the mind that establishes conventional reality must not be deluded. (*in other words you can't be psychotic, it can't be mistaken*) It must be verifying. It may be deluded with regard to its apparent object, but it must not be mistaken with regard to its chief object.

So, it's not that difficult, that's to say now let's take for example a lucid dream, in the midst of a lucid dream you're looking around and all the appearances, I see Mike over there in my lucid dream, and if Martin asks me,

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Alan is Mike here, yes he is right over there, within the context of this dream which I recognize to be a dream, I am looking for the appearance of Mike and Mike absolutely appears to be over there, that's how he appears, he is over there, and I walk over and touch him on his shoulder and by god I was right, that's how he appears, he appears like he is really over there. That's really awesome, then I walk over and I touch him on the shoulder and tactile sensations arise – it seems that way, and so in that way then, I'm deluded in respect to appearances. That appearance is misleading. And I can't help it, I keep seeing him whenever I look at him, that's how things appear, and I'm getting it wrong, it's misleading, it's like lying to me, but within the context of this lucid dream – if Martin asks is Mike here or not, I say yes he is right over there – Mike is the person he is referring to, the referent of the word Mike, that person over there, and so within this context – Is Mike there? Yes, I am not mistaking him for Paul. So then I am not mistaken. So Paul is the chief object, the referent of the word, how he appears is misleading. So you may be mistaken with respect as to how things appear, but if you are mistaken with respect to the chief object, like mistaking Paul for Mike, then you are wrong. Subtle.

When establishing our own Prasangika conventional reality, a cosmic primal substance and God do not exist even conventionally. (this is our view, they don't exist at all), Likewise, in terms of other Buddhist views, we Prasangika Madhyamika Centrists do not grant even conventional existence (27:49) to the "foundation consciousness" (that's the alaya-vijnanaas advocated by the Chittamatra , which Prasagika's refute, they don't refute Dzogchen, we refute totally self-cognition, again an element of the Chittamatra view posited by the Idealist or Chittamatra system. We say they are completely wrong, they have got it wrong, there is no truth to what they say with regard to those two entities, they are like things believed by some scientist and then realized that they have no truth whatsoever, or a better example, I am quoting Lord Kelvin, saying here is one thing we are absolutely certain of if there is anything we are certain of it is the true existence of the aether* , and then just a matter of seventy years later aether doesn't exist at all. So now I don't think the physicists are lying who believes in the kind of aether that Lord Kelvin thought was absolutely certain because the whole population of light didn't make any sense without it if you didn't know relativity theory, so there it is). We regard things like jugs as conventionally existent. Both entities and non-entities are mere conceptual designations (things that do exist and don't exist, rabbits horns, unicorns, aether , etc and flowers and dirt and so forth, they are both mere conceptual designation), and neither exists from its own side. In that sense they are alike; but there is a distinction as to whether or not they are conventionally able to render help or inflict harm and whether or not they are established by a verifying cognition (a very dense philosophy), now he brings in a pragmatic element- not only are you perceiving correctly or not, but that which you are holding to be true, to be existent, does it do anything? He says specifically, since all this is couched within the Four Noble Truths, are they able to help or inflict harm? It's a pragmatic criteria, if you think something exists and it's one of these conditioned phenomena that arises in dependence on cause and conditions, then does it have any causal efficacy, does it do anything, does it influence anything, does it have the potential to be helpful or harmful? If it doesn't at all, then you might want to look at that again. It may be purely a figment of your imagination, having no existence apart from just fanciful thought. So there's a pragmatic criteria, does it do anything? Is it pragmatic? So that's one point, there is a distinction between are they able to render help or inflict harm is one point, pragmatic, and whether they are established by a verifying cognition, there's where the heat comes in, the heavy, pramana, verifying cognition. (31.24) And that is if you ascertain something as being existent, then you must then be self- reflective, and that is – how did I apprehend it? Now this really calls for introspection. How did I apprehend it? If you're a scientist and you just measured something traveling faster than the speed of light, oh that's going to be revolutionary , you could win a Noble prize if that's true, but how did you come to that conclusion, what was your mode of knowledge? And a scientist will look at two things, the experiment apparatus, the measurement system but also, since mathematics is heavily involved, what's your data analysis, what's your data collection, depending on those two you are drawing conclusions. If either of those two are faulty, if it's not a valid mode of apprehension, if you just got bad data because you're picking up artifacts of your system, or your data analysis was just off, either one of those, then whatever you conclude isn't accurate. That's science, really good science, and it's exactly how the subsequent scientific enquiry scrutinizing their claim, came to their conclusion – you're wrong. You did not have verifying cognition, I think it was in the data analysis if I remember correctly, the measurement hardware, if that is true, then nothing after that matters. So their analysis is good but what they are analyzing was an artifact , so there it is. Either your perception or your way of making sense of it, if either one of those is off that's not valid

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*cognition. As then is true of particle physics, is true everywhere else. Everywhere else, studying the hippocampus, your girlfriend, studying plants, anything, are you picking up clear data and are you understanding in a valid way? And that means you must check your system. This is where, pardon me for saying it, but Shamatha is so important. It's not sufficient. It doesn't mean oh I've achieved Shamatha now whatever I see will be infallible. Uh Oh. But if you don't have Shamatha, Uh Oh. Because you are just going to have so much junk, so many artifacts of the system you're just like an ongoing vomit machine. So much rumination, how can you clear out all the junk when it's just spewing vomit all over reality? So your data collection is going to really suck, if you don't have a relaxed, stable and clear mind. But then you must have more than that, and boy the Gelugpas are really strong on this and rightly so, Shamatha is not enough, you should really study, you should learn what is valid cognition, pramana, pramana by way of perception, pramana by way of inference, that's why they spend so many hours clapping their hands in debate. Data analysis, then it doesn't matter what your Shamatha is, the way you're making sense of it. To my mind this is simply spectacular and the fact that it's all just put right into practice, then count me in. (34.58) That cognition is indeed deluded insofar as it is deluded with respect to the appearance of true existence. (so that's looking over there at Mike as in the dream and he certainly appears to be there from his own side, but I am deluded on that. To overcome that delusion, you have to overcome cognitive obscurations which you start purifying only on the 8th bhumi , until then you may know reality but still the appearances will lie to you, that's why Shamatha is not enough. Because if you say no, I saw it, I saw it – yeah, fine, but what you saw was misleading, therefore not sufficient, we must bring in wisdom, and then that's the fusion of Shamatha Vipashyana. So yep, it appears to be true existence, but it's not.) But apart from that, there is a distinction between being mistaken nor unmistaken with respect to its chief object; (Mike, is he there or not?) and that is what determines whether it is a verifying cognition. (so the verifying cognition may still be deluded with respect to appearances, but get it right – is that Mike over there? Yes it is – so you are wrong about how he appears but nevertheless is he there or not? Yes he is. And that's sufficient, enough to be a verifying cognition) *(Reviser's note: The concept of aether was used in several theories to explain several natural phenomena, such as the traveling of light and gravity. In the late 19th century, physicists postulated that aether permeated all throughout space, providing a medium through which light could travel in a vacuum, but evidence for the presence of such a medium was not found.)*

The criterion for conventional existence is the presence of a mind that is unmistaken with respect to its chief object. *(what is actually apprehended)* While ascertaining emptiness, one does not establish the existence of other entities. *(he's talking about no-conceptual direct realization of emptiness, when you're there, your conceptual designation apparatus is completely shut down. From your perspective no other phenomena arise, you are experiencing Nirvana alone, that's all. Because from your perspective, from the center of the mandala, there is no conceptual designation therefore no phenomena appear at all you're just ascertaining emptiness)* But upon rising from such meditative equipoise, *(from out of meditation, so you've just realized emptiness, as an arya, direct realization, then you come out of meditation)* if something appears clearly to the mind; *(first point, appears clearly to the mind, oh, there's Mike)* if its conventional existence is not repudiated by any other conventional knowledge; *(and that is- does anybody disagree that that's Mike? Anybody at all? Almost like at a wedding ceremony, speak now or forever hold your peace, nobody's saying that's not Mike, okay, so far so good. First of all it appears, secondly it's conventional existence is not refuted by any other conventional knowledge, two)* - if it is able to yield benefit or harm; *(I think so)*, and if it is established by verifying cognition-*(visually perceiving, that's him. If I hear his voice then it's the spitting image of Mike, so then yes, correct perception, if those are filled)* -then it exists. If not, it does not exist even conventionally. Alan continues - So that's the Madhyamika response to repudiation of the Madhyamika view from within Buddhism ,such as the Sautrantrika view. Let's continue. (38:56)

108. The two, the conception and the conceived *(the conceptually designating mind and that which is conceptually designated , we have been there before haven't we, the mind that is informed and that about which you are informed and the process of informing, taking subject and object here, conceiving mind and that which is conceived, this is Madhyamika, this is still Shantideva,)* are mutually dependent. Just as every analysis is expressed by referring to what is commonly known. *(that is within the conceptual framework, cognitive framework, that is where there is consensus, straight from Holiness, you ready?)*

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Subjective conceptual cognition (the mind that conceives) and conceived objects are mutually interdependent. (*isn't it now a little bit comfortable now that you've heard it so many times?*) *it makes sense doesn't it? They are mutually interdependent, take away one the other one vanishes, either one, which already indicates that neither one is inherently real because if Mike were inherently real and I was inherently real, take me away and what's left? Mike. What's the big deal, right, but if two things are mutually interdependent, take away one and the other vanishes immediately, therefore they can't possibly be truly existent. That's what he is getting at, if the mind doesn't truly exist then no object of the mind can truly exist.so-* Action depends on an agent of action, (*so this is true not only for cognition*), action depends on an agent of action and the agent depends on action. For example, a tailor is identified on the basis of his [of her] activity of tailoring; and since there are tailors, the activity of tailoring occurs. (*if there were not tailoring, there would be no tailors*) This is not to say that the agent and the action are causally related, (*that one precedes the other, because they don't, you don't have first the tailoring and then the tailor comes afterwards, or visa-versa, simultaneous, mutual*) but they are mutually dependent. (*take away one the other one vanishes instantly.*)

109. Investigating the analysis of a subject of inquiry leads to infinite regress, for that analysis would also be subject to investigation.

In order to establish the ultimate mode of existence of some entity, one must first determine that the entity in question exists. (*that was the point earlier, you want to understand the ultimate nature of mind, ascertain the mind.*) On that basis one enquires into its mode of existence.

(*so that's a total refutation of that earlier objection from the Sautrantika. So if your mind is not completely exhausted, we go to a second objection -, if one analyses by means of analysis that which is analyzed, in other words you are inverting, inverting, inverting, then there is an infinite regress because that analysis can also be analyzed, there would be no end to it, an endless loop, maybe we should just avoid that all together, that's the objection. So His Holiness paraphrases this, again from the metaphysical realism .*)

Objection: You Centrists first analyze some subject like a jug; then you investigate the ultimate nature of the jug. In this way you enter into an infinite regress of analysis. (*because then you can investigate the ultimate nature of that, and that, and that, and that, you never end. So what's the answer?* The Madhyamika response – Shantideva -)

The object of analysis is analyzed, no basis for analysis is left. (*You're finished.*) Since there is no basis, it does not arise, (*that is your koan, and here comes His Holiness -*)

Upon analyzing a subject such as a jug, one ascertains the intrinsic emptiness of the jug. (*That is when you are applying ontological analysis, you've just realized the emptiness of inherent nature*) That awareness apprehends the simple negation that is the mere absence of the true existence of that subject. (*so you're realizing emptiness of the jug, you are realizing the sheer absence of its intrinsic identity.*) It cognizes only that emptiness. It apprehends no other entity; it does not identify "this" as opposed to "that." (*it's just realizing emptiness*) As long as that mode of cognition lasts, (*that is, this awareness of the emptiness of the jug, as long as that mode of cognition lasts*) the subject, or basis, whose lack of true existence was investigated, is not ascertained by the mind.

(44:30) (*If you've really penetrated emptiness you're not still holding in mind – jug. When you penetrate to the empty nature of your own mind, you're no longer apprehending your mind, it's an emptiness, which means you're apprehending Nirvana.*)

Upon establishing the lack of intrinsic existence of entities of form and so on, if one further proceeds to analyze that ultimate reality of the lack of intrinsic existence, (*that is the emptiness of inherent nature of emptiness,*) one ascertains the lack of true existence of ultimate reality. (*the emptiness of emptiness, standard Nagarjuna*) In this case the subject of analysis is emptiness, (*that is that which you are analyzing is emptiness*) and one ascertains the ultimate reality of the ultimate reality of forms and so on. Thus, one speaks of the emptiness of emptiness.

Alan continues - And that's it. There is no infinite regress. The problem's a non- problem. (45:39) So there you are apprehending the emptiness of Daniel, the mind, elementary particle, so there is an awareness there, a knowing of the emptiness of that phenomenon at which point you are no longer aware of the phenomenon, you are aware only of its empty nature. Now you may invert that awareness, that investigation into your awareness of emptiness and you see that it is itself empty, your awareness is empty, emptiness is empty, there's no point to go further. There is just no reason to slip into infinite regress because that's the

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end of the story. The jug is empty, your awareness is empty, emptiness is empty. Finito. So in case you were rooting over the past couple of days, raising these objections in your mind, Shantideva and His Holiness Dalai Lama just punched your lights out. Okay, food for thought. I will say it once again, for that really to strike home you need Shamatha. That's where the arrow strikes the target. You may soften up, because I don't want to denigrate people who investigate and study Madhyamika, my own lamas have, Geshe Rabten, Geshe Dhargyey, and so forth and so on, years of study about Madhyamika, where they wasting their time? Of course they weren't, I never suggested that. In the Nyingma tradition they will study Madhyamikavatara and so forth, not for four years, probably for 2 years they take Madhyamika very seriously. So does that do nothing to attenuate, to diminish your mental afflictions? No I think it would soften them up. If you're really sincere. Geshe Rabten was such a paradigm, really this is how a Geshe should turn out in so many ways, he was an outstanding meditator, very accomplished, a brilliant commentator, but when he was telling me his life story many years later in the early 70's, he said, when you come off the debating ground, and this was just about a year or two before I started heading out on the debating ground, he inspired me and that's why I did it for years and a lot of it under his guidance, he said – when out debating, number one it's highly competitive, there is just no doubt, people win and lose debates. You are there to crush the views of your opponent, demolish them, make them a laughing stock, and if you have an audience you'll really get a kick out of it, people really laugh, just TSA! So there is definitely a little ego in the process, and when I was in the monastery, I got so inspired by Geshe Rabten's story because nobody had ever written any one, as far as I know, on that whole training, that whole education, what it means to become a Geshe. First one, so he told me his life story, at my request. So I got inspired by His Holiness, so I asked shall I go down to Sera Monastery where Geshe Rabten is, shall I go down there? And His Holiness knowing full well I was what 22, 23 at the time, I went down there and entered the first class to study basic Buddhist logic, debate and so forth, Sautrantika view, I'd be debating 12 year olds. That might not work out at all well. And so happily His Holiness himself created a school, right at that time that was primarily aimed at young Tibetans who did have a high school education and who were monks and really wanted to devote their lives to dharma under his supervision. So that's where I went. So I spent 14 months there before I took 10 days, 11 hours to look at my mind and went up the mountain. But for those 14 months it was really an extraordinary education and I am ever so glad that I had that. And especially you get into a flow, you learn the ropes (50:35) in six months, eight months, whatever, and then once a month you have the damcha, and this is where instead of debating for hours every night, once a month we would start about six in the evening and we would be reciting verbatim the Abhisankara, all of us together, that's the The Great Treatise on the ten bhumis by Maitreya. We would recite that for a while, I think we went one third of the text a night, and then instead of pairing off which is what we normally do, one on one, or two sitting and one attacking the position of the other two, then as the sun was going down, then two monks would have been chosen for the month, once a month, and they would be answering questions, they would be defending themselves, defending their position for the whole night. They sit there and then one by one, all the other monks of the monastery, about 30 monks, a small monastery, all the other monks would then come one by one and all the other monks would have been thinking for the past couple of weeks – what's the hardest question I could possibly put to these guys. So when I present it I would so humiliate them that everyone would laugh and I would completely demolish them in debate. So they are going to come with their best shot, and of course we don't know what it's going to be. You don't have a clue, all you know is okay we are studying Sautantrika, or we are studying Buddhist psychology, or we are studying this, you know the general domain but you have not a clue what any one of those 28 would say. Monks are going to nail you, as it goes on and on, you start at 7pm and it goes till 3am in the morning, there might have been a pee break, I don't remember, I did sit through that, and so there it is and one after another they come and they are bringing out their best artillery, and you've got two guys there and they do their best to respond and take a position and then defend it. But then if the defenders are going quite well, just handling it well, knocking them away like fleas, then the instructor, the Abott of the monastery, he would come in and help give them more of a challenge here. He was the one with Geshe Dhargyey, two of my lamas would take part in this. His Holiness would chose two of the top debaters from anywhere around to debate in front of His Holiness and a whole congregation of about three or four thousand people. So he would be hosting up the attackers side, and the defenders were really good, but the point that I'm getting at is that at the end of the day you would probably have done better in some of the skirmishes

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than others, sometimes you might have got demolished, sometimes you might have done really well, but Geshe Rabten's point is what I am really getting at and that is that if, now that you have been in a debate and maybe you have done very well, very proud of yourself, very happy and all of that, maybe you are humiliated, either way, if your motivation is that you go back to your room and then study those books again, so that you can perform better in the next one, you've missed the whole point. You may be very sharp, turn out to be a famous debater because you've prepared so well, the next time you demolish more and defend better and you may wind up being #1 Geshe, who just knows how to debate everybody into the dirt, but if that's all you did after the debate, is just learn how to be a better debater, missed the whole point. He said the point of the debate was to sharpen your own intelligence, it's like two blades, and the blade of the others is their intelligence and they're coming in to help you find your intelligence and as you respond you're there to help them to find their intelligence, their understanding, their insight. This is all for mutual benefit, it is not one side wins and the other side loses, everybody wins through sharpening your intelligence, very high energy, interchange, energy, communication, Geshe Rabten said if you want to know the whole point of that, is when you come off of the debating court, you'll go back to the quiet of your own room, and you take it right into meditation. And that's when the arrow starts going in. So, this is the true teaching of Tsongkhapa, and that is you study, you learn, you investigate, all for the sake of practice. Everything you debate, everything you study, everything you memorize, all for practice. So, with that, we've really had a dive into the deep end of the pool, Shantideva and His Holiness Dalai Lama are our guides, let's return to meditation.

Meditation: (56:34)

Such investigation, such activation of conceptual mind, intelligence, discernment, they all stir up the mind. Not intrinsically bad to energize the mind, the mind should be serviceable, when we wish to rest, that should be also our prerogative. So rest your mind now, as usual let your awareness descend back into the non-conceptual space of the mind, settle your body speech and mind in their natural states. Whether you are sitting or lying down in the supine position, rest in the infirmity in this phase of mindfulness of breathing, full body awareness, emphasis on every out breath on relaxing more and more deeply without losing clarity. Now let your eyes be open, and evenly rest your awareness in the space in front of you, without focusing on any object, not even space itself, do not meditate on anything, simply be present in the present with unwavering mindfulness, free of distraction and free of grasping.

Now, while withdrawing your awareness, your attention, your interest from all appearances and objects of awareness, the reality of your own subjective awareness may dawn more and more clearly. Immediate awareness and knowing, of being conscious, rest there in that knowing, of being aware.

This is what is involved in tasting awareness, knowing awareness, experiencing awareness. Knowing its conventional and relative nature, luminous, cognizant, knowing those you know the nature of awareness itself.

And now enter into Vipashyana. Probe into the very nature of that which you have identified, and really now, what is the referent of this word awareness? That which has the attributes of luminosity, that which is cognizant, which becomes restless, still, agitated, dull, which follows after this object and that object, does all of these things. What is the referent? Of awareness, has these attributes, performs those functions, many functions, many attributes, what is that one thing – awareness – that performs the functions, that has the attributes?

Identify awareness and then penetrate right into its nucleus, its intrinsic nature that we grasp onto and that we reify; is it to be found or not? This awareness that is separate from all appearances, demarcated, separate from all appearances and objects of awareness, standing on its own, can you find it? Awareness in and of itself. You can perceive its qualities, you can perceive its functions, if upon the most careful scrutiny, you cannot find awareness existing in and of itself, then know that absence, that emptiness of an inherent nature of awareness. Separate, intrinsic, existing on its own, from its own side. Rest in that emptiness and sustain the flow of knowing.

Then return your attention to the objects of the mind, appearing within any of the six domains of experience, objects in the surrounding world, people, places, mental objects. Let your attention alight where it will, come to rest where it will, focus on an object of your choice. And then investigate. Bring to mind the object,

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(73:43) it has a certain set of attributes, probe right into the nature of that object, whatever it may be. That object that appears to exist really from its own side, really be there, see if you find that which is really there, intrinsically by its own characteristics, existing from its own side. Investigate until you come to certainty. Is it there or not? Like a bee, moving from one flower to the next in the garden, at your leisure let your attention rove from one object to another, investigating each one sufficiently, until realizes and ascertains a certain knowing – is it really there from its own side, or not? And if not, sustain that flow of knowing, of the sheer absence of that phenomena existing from its own side.

(81:50) Teaching pt 2.

So in the mental gymnasium of Buddhism, you will find there are different exercise forms, one type of mental gymnastics of achieving shamatha and then developing the Jhanas, mastering, heavy lifting, Samadhi lifting, then we see also on the vipassana side, heavy lifting. I remember Gyaltsen Rinpoche making this comment, quite striking, flew in the face, this was in 1974, that by engaging in this type of exercise, and he was talking to monks in the monastery, memorizing scores and scores of pages of material, verbatim 5 hours per day debating, one and a half hours a day sitting instruction, he said, engaging in this training will make you smarter, it's true. Use it or lose it. People who are naturally very intelligent and then watch soap operas, hang out watching television, do a really low demand job, they may actually lose the intelligence they were born with. And other ones who use it to the hilt, just pushing the envelope, exercising, refining, challenging, challenging, intelligence gets better. So the notion that intelligence is set is an unintelligent conclusion based on inadequate data.

So over the past few decades I've met quite a few people, who believe, report that they've achieved shamatha, they've achieved jhana, realized emptiness, realized non self, realized rigpa. One person I heard about he said he felt he'd realized Sambhogakaya, people believe a lot of things. On the whole I don't think they were deceptions, on the occasion that can happen if you are just trying to deceive that can happen, in the cases I know, I don't think that was the case. I think they are being sincere, they've read something of Buddhism, they have some experience, here's my experience, there's a description, oh I've achieved the first Jhana. Oh, I've realized emptiness, I've realized rigpa and so forth. How are any of us, not just them, how are any of us to determine, have you achieved this or that? Because you find something similar in a text? Descriptions of substrate consciousness are frankly very similar to descriptions in many respects to rigpa. Luminous, blissful, spacious. Descriptions of the substrate sound in some respects a lot like emptiness, Shunyata. So might we conflate the two? there's a very, very helpful, pragmatic question, and that is, if you realize shamatha, then go back to the text, go back to not just the text as a text, as a text; the text reports of people experiencing authentically achieving shamatha and what were the pragmatic benefits? What afflictions, what disturbances of mind, were attenuated? What positive qualities came forth? What came, when they were reporting from their own experience, what was it like in meditation, what was it like post meditation? Go to Tsongkhapa, go to so many of them you will see oh boy, it doesn't get any more definitive than that, and then see – okay you think you've achieved shamatha? Great, then see, can you sit for four hours in Samadhi effortlessly? Are your mental afflictions strongly attenuated? And so forth and so on, pragmatic criteria. People thinking they've realized emptiness, that would be wonderful, good, if you think you have realized emptiness look at the effects that realization has on your mental afflictions. The arrows are just striking the bulls eye, one after another, your mental afflictions are taking a beating here, and more over the passage for compassion, loving kindness goes through the roof. Let alone, realization of rigpa. All the popularization of rigpa, all over the place, people spouting out, oh my guru, I'm resting in rigpa, oh I am going to take a half an hour break and do some rigpa. Very cool, you are resting in something an Arhat can't realize in this life time, congratulations. You must really have accomplished something. Or are you sitting there like a marmot? Check, what's the effect, if you think you've realized rigpa that's fantastic, I applaud you, what was the demolition of your mental afflictions? So there it is, pragmatic criteria. And then there's the understanding, William James, introducing something so revolutionary that it died. And that is that he said, when it comes to scientifically understanding the mind we should rely on introspection, first, foremost and always. And let brain science and behavioral science come in as back up because neither of them has any access to mental phenomena of any kind whatsoever. Behavioral expressions yes, what you call effects, neural-correlates, yes, those are called causes. What is it that is being caused and what is it that is producing

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the effects? Namely the mind, mental events. They are getting at it only indirectly, but introspection is looking right at phenomena itself, this is science. This is the whole spirit of science at that time 300 years. Introspection, and then people do, quite rightly, they do what scientists do well, they criticized him, they said but introspection is strongly subjective, prone to subjective bias, to projection, to distortion, to suppression, to all kinds of stuff, it's really problematic, that's one of the favorite words – it's really problematic. He said you are right, introspection is not infallible, and oh by the way, it is no more infallible than any other mode of observation. Cognitive psychologists study perception all the time, lots and lots of studies of visual perception. (88:25) number one, colors really seem to be out there, they're not, just for starters. It's already illusory, so auditory illusions, optical illusions, tactile illusions, illusions that come through hypnosis and so forth, wait a minute, which part of this is not problematic? Data collection, incredibly sophisticated scientists, really sophisticated, getting the wrong data, giving the wrong treatments, they perceived wrong, measured wrong. So William James' point here is yes, introspection is fallible but then how do you improve it? And that is you let later introspections monitor, test your earlier introspections with later ones and see if they withstand scrutiny. And what he didn't have, but now what Buddhism, Hinduism and other contemplative traditions do have in spades, and Western psychology still doesn't have, frankly at all, any more than at the full psychology level, is a refined measurement system of introspection, its data collection, it's getting better and better and better. Less and less rumination, greater and greater stability, greater and greater vividness, temporal equality, this is measurement, this is data collection, that's what they didn't have at all and still don't. Shamatha is still not part of modern psychology, or let alone neuro science. And he said, and if he'd known that, then he could have charged ahead, but he didn't have a clue how to train attention. He knew it should be trained, he knew the education system that taught it would be the education system par excellence. Didn't know how to do it, and then he died and then they buried him under a ton of dogma. They said we will no longer talk about subjective experience, mind refers to something that doesn't exist, we will just study things that are objective, quantifiable and objective. But William James was right, if you have the means of refining introspection and refining more, then you take your earlier observations and you subject it to scrutiny. And then you are not working on your own, just like mathematicians, it's an inside job. If I am thinking mathematically and Miles is a mathematician, how on earth is he possibly able to judge how well I 'm mathematizing? How can he tell? He can't, until I start writing on the blackboard. And then he writes on the blackboard and now you are expressing, and he says – Alan right there, you got that one wrong that's why this is false, right there, and we call in other mathematicians. And then next year, some mathematician comes along and says – no look, there was a fault there as well, and so mathematics grows. By the subsequent sometimes validating, sometimes invalidating. So there is outside as there is for inside, and that is that, remember that criteria, when something appears, the effects of black holes, nobody ever sees a black hole by definition, but you see their influences on the environment and by inference you say that is a very sophisticated theory. And then we have things that are even more mysterious, like dark matter and dark energy about which they know nothing, except that there must be something like that otherwise phenomena can't be explained, well maybe that will be the right answer, or maybe it will be like aether, that nobody ever measured but thought had to be there or otherwise you couldn't explain something. Maybe dark matter and energy will turn out to be something that's real. And maybe not, maybe they will say you thought that but that's because you never thought of this?

As for outside, so for inside. People who are meditating going back and forth and doing the theory and investigation (93:22) you get to Sautrantika (and think this is it) until you come and blast it apart with Madhymaka reasoning and penetrating analysis and then suddenly all your assumptions that were universally accepted by your peers are totally false. But you still maintain those elements that were true as modern physics does with many elements of classical physics. So the point here is that it is an ongoing adventure and as it is for science so for contemplative science, science isn't just about knowledge acquisition, that's how they get grants, but sooner or later it would be really cool if they could do something, and they do, very, very often, it's technology, we have cellphones we have digital clocks because of quantum mechanics, no quantum mechanics no digital watches, that's very handy, they are cheap and they are accurate, and so many things. Insight comes in and then you have something practical, hedonically beneficial, knowledge that gives some pragmatic benefit, protecting us from harm or giving us some benefit. That's why people are still so keen on science, why it gets so much funding, because it helps and there is this growing body of conceptual

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knowledge. And they keep on refuting each other, but not just out of whimsy, out of a true growth of knowledge. So this I think is, ah the greatest adventure of all, that there is a whole other avenue of enquiry, that is almost invisible to modernity, and that's contemplative, with all these scientists study the brain effects of this kind of study, the neural correlates of that, the behavioural expressions of this type of meditation, and it's hardly dawned on any of them – oh gosh, maybe meditation could lead to a discovery that you may not be able to get by neuroscience or psychology. That hasn't come up yet, but it will. Give His Holiness a chance. That contemplative, scientific observatory in Bangalore, get it going, and then we will not allow the Eurocentric, ideological silence, gag of contemplatives voice when they say – we have discovered something. And we can discover it, you can't because you're just looking at the brain and we are looking at phenomena itself. So that will be, I think one of the greatest celebrations in the history of science, seeing these two great ways coming together. One is so powerful for getting to the root of suffering and giving true freedom, so spectacularly successful itself for 2500 years, that's a pretty good track record. Then the other one for 400 years, spectacularly successful for understanding physically quantitatively objective and providing us this tremendous wealth, a technological dynasty, advances of medicine, transportation, communication and so on. And seeing that in fact there can be a union of these two, that's never happened, not in recorded history. Just waiting. Want to join the party?

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti and Cheri Langston

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85 Great Equanimity (2)

13 Oct 2012

Teaching pt1.

This morning we come to the end of the cycle of the four greats for the second time we return to great equanimity, the essence of which is may we all abiding in equanimity, “dwell in equanimity”, literally free of attachment to that which is close and aversion to that which is far. One is very literal. So we all know the normal meaning attachment to one's loved ones, to one's friends, possessions and so forth. But let's move it up a few notches. I related the first three of the greats to the achievement of shamatha, dwelling in substrate consciousness, realization of emptiness, realization of rigpa of the tregcho that is achieve by way of breaking through the conventional mind, the relative mind, the substrate consciousness to rigpa and so then there's only one step left and that is the thogyal which is translated as the direct crossing over. Now, first of all, the epistemology is not at all clear that is by listening to it, the break through, that's kind clear, right? Breaking through. But the ‘direct crossing over’ I used to translate it as the leap, ‘leap over’, either one is fine, I just listen the people to know more about this than I do, but the meaning of this, this ‘crossing over’, ‘direct crossing over’, is that having gained realization of rigpa, if you have not achieved that, you're not really a qualified thogyal practitioner, it's something very easily missed. You might want to pause right there for a moment. But if you gain realization of rigpa then you are really prepared, you have the vantage point, you have the perspective to be able to authentically engage in thogyal practice. If you don't - you don't, it really is that simple, and again this is Dudjom Lingpa speaking, and all those whom he represents and so what are you leaping over? If you've achieved direct realization of rigpa, you are a vidyadhara, you have achieved path of seeing.

Now you have these nine bhumis in front of you, path of seeing is the first bhumi and this ‘leap over’ is you don't incrementally step by step, by step, by step, move gradually, gradually through each of those nine bhumis. You leap like a deer bounding through a forest, you just jump over and then jump right into awakening.

(3:23) And that is what that's about, that's an enormously quick mind bogglingly swift way to move through those nine bhumis. But of course, if you have not achieved the first bhumi then you don't have a ticket to enter in that club. But if you do, then this is extremely rapid. And what I find so remarkable about this thogyal, I mean it's remarkable in many ways, is that once again one can say it's effortless, it's effortless, you're not really doing anything, you're not constructing, you're not visualizing, but with this preparation and adopting a

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certain set of postures and doing the practice, which is actually very very simple, images directly from, emerging from, dharmadhatu arise, arising from this ground dimension of reality and there arises the five Buddha's family without visualizing anything, they just arise as the five Buddha's family. And then they elaborate, they elaborate, it's visionary, it's just an elaboration, an expansion of visions stemming purely from the non-duality of primordial consciousness and dharmadhatu until your world is filled with such pure vision. And this entails four visions on the Thogyal, four sequential visions and the final one is called the "vision of the extinction of phenomena into ultimate reality" and what that means is that all impure appearances, you being in the center of your mandala, all impure appearances, all appearances that are conditioned by your own mental afflictions and by karma, all of that are extinguished, they dissolve without trace forever irreversibly into dharmata, into 'ultimate reality' and you are finished forever. You are now in the center of your mandala and all appearances are only pure appearances and yet in some inconceivable way, because, after all, dharmakaya is inconceivable, while in the center of your mandala all appearances are pure without visualizing anything that is simply how they arise - unmediated, unfiltered, unconditioned directly from rigpa without configuration by karma, kleshas or anything of that sort. At the same time you have a non-dual awareness as everybody else's reality and that is, of course, where compassion comes from, everybody, each individual being in the center of his/her own reality.

(6:03) So from that vantage point we're now really going to into the pinnacle of "upeksa", equanimity attachment to that which is close, it doesn't even say people who are close, so attachment to the near. What is nearer than our own awareness? What is nearer than that? And if you fathom the nature of your own awareness, you really penetrate to its nature is really there or not, then you realize the emptiness of your own awareness, that does not inherently exist and the emptiness of your own awareness is *nirvana*. It doesn't get much closer than that, if you're looking for something really close, there's nothing closer than your awareness and there's nothing closer than the essential nature, the ultimate nature of your own awareness, there is nothing closer than nirvana. So, relative to nirvana everything else is far away like all impure appearances, samsara, is over yonder, my thoughts, my feelings, my dreams, my mental afflictions, my, my, my, as I am pointing my finger at this object and that appearance and so forth and so on, and he is not very nice but she is really nice and that place really stinks but that is really lovely and all out there, that's just distant.

(7:23) So the challenge in Dzogchen is to give up attachment to nirvana and give up aversion to samara and to dwell in 'the one taste and equal purity of samsara and nirvana'. And, of course, that is possible if only, if you're just dwelling in rigpa, if you're not then in this make believe, right? So it is quite extraordinary. Ola so, do you want to practice? A bit of stretch.

Meditation:

Settle your body in a state of equipoise, balance between relaxation and vigilance, sustained with stillness. Settle your respiration evenly, free of the effort to expel or to inhale the breath, free of any constraint that might inhibit the effortless flow of the breath.

Release all thoughts and concerns about that which no longer exists and does not yet exist and let your awareness non-conceptually come to rest in the present which is so fleeting and one may wonder is even this real.

With an utter sense of mental release, let your awareness be still, naturally clear. And rest in that flow of knowing that is so near, so intimate, the knowing of being aware.

This present awareness as you examine closely, can you identify that from which it emerges?

That which does not arise, not really arise from anywhere, is unborn.

Can you identify as you closely scrutinize your own awareness, the boundaries between awareness and not awareness, awareness is present and awareness is absent? Can you identify where it is and where it stops, the real abode of awareness? Where is it to be found?

That which is really not found anywhere, is not present, does not exist. And as you closely examine your own awareness, observe closely. Does it vanish, does it dissolve, it pass away, does it cease? And that for which no cessation is found, is unceasing.

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Release all grasping onto awareness and not awareness, rest in unborn awareness that is unceasing and nowhere present.

And from this perspective arouse the question.

1) Why couldn't all sentient beings dwell in equanimity, free of attachment and aversion to that which is close and far?

And arouse the aspiration:

2) May we all dwell in such equanimity.

3) I shall lead all to such equanimity. I shall lead all to such equanimity free of attachment and aversion even to samsara and nirvana.

4) May I receive the blessings from all awakened ones, from the guru, to enable me to lead all beings to such state of equipoise, of perfect equanimity.

Arouse this aspiration and with each in breath as you imagine bringing in, drawing in or simply accepting the light of blessings from all directions, suffusing and saturating your entire being and with every out breath, breathe out this light of purification that all obscurations may be dispelled.

Teaching pt2:

(32:49) So this morning I received the very encouraging response from the personal secretary of His Holiness, a very strong encouragement to move full speed ahead, definitely there is an endorsement from His Holiness for creating this contemplative scientific research facility in Bangalore so it is encouraging. But yesterday I received a message from very close friend of mine in India, very well educated at the, I think is probably the premier institute of higher learning in India, it is called the India Institute of Technology. It is more competitive than MIT or Cal Tech, it's really up. He's being graduated there, obviously streaming bright and when I mentioned to the possibility of bringing in some Indian neuroscientists psychologists into this endeavor, he was very hesitant to say the least. He said 'you know, when I was studying at my own institute, took a course in cognitive science or some sort, maybe psychology, and he said the professor would not allow us to use the word 'mind', would not allow, you talk about -behavior that is scientific, you talk about the brain - that is scientific, you talk about the 'mind'- not in this classroom buster. To say that is a form of dementia would be universally true, but that this should occur in India, it kind breaks my heart because I really do actually feel India has great heritage for something like four/five thousand years of any culture on the planet for rigorous, rationale and profoundly empirical, exploration of the nature of the mind, the origins of suffering, the origins of the genuine happiness, multiple dimension of consciousness, the role of consciousness in the universe. I don't think China, the Aztecs the Mayas, let alone the Europeans, the Jewish, I don't think any them matched, I really don't. And there it is, can you imagine? At the pinnacle of the higher education, the Eurocentric ideological domination of this country is so thorough, they strangled them to death. There is all kind of imperialism, it's saturated by racism and that's just for starts, in economic and so forth but ideological imperialism perhaps is the most pernicious. Of course it is not uniform statement, there are psychologists, in fact I wrote today to a friend of mine who knows a lot of India's psychologists, neuroscientists, said 'give me some names', they got be there, definitely there, who have not been brain washed, at least open minded and highly trained, very professional. I want know who they are and inviting to the party and all the rest that could not even talk about mind could stay home, you will die of soon or later.

(35:31) So this whole mentality was formulated, crystalized by Thomas H. Huxley in nineteen century when he formulated what he called 'the church scientific'. It is the institutionalization of the scientific materialism, he said, and insists, there are only four gospels in the book of nature and they are the gospel of matter, energy, space and time, and nothing else is allowed therefore consciousness, mind subjective experience either is simply denied altogether because you can't find in it space, time, matter, energy, is nowhere to be found in which, ok, then it doesn't exist. So you've just actually performed this massive lobotomy on yourself to deny the existence of your own subjective experience. It really, really boggles the mind. You can either do that which quite a number of people have done, the radical behaviorists, the elective materialist, subjective experience doesn't exist. One very prominent mind scientist said: qualia don't exist. Qualia, you know, actually experiences of color and sound, they don't exist, it is just photons, photons, sound, waves and so forth. Amazing. So either you just simply deny it exists altogether and say, as I said, there's space, time

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matter, energy and that is all. And emergent properties of course. Or you can say, ok, we'll let it back, it just feels a little bit too embarrassing to actually say in public that subjective experience doesn't exist, mind and consciousness don't exist but we allow in consciousness through the back door and we'll allow it in if and only if, we equate with something that is space, time and energy, in another words the brain or behavior then you come back in and that is what is happening now. That is the state of the affairs. Globally, China, India, South America, I have been there, North America, Europe, Australia, pretty much this is the absolutely dominant world view and what they're so keen on this: we banish the supernatural, we deny the supernatural for lack of evidence there is no supernatural, no God, no soul, no heaven, no hell, no transmigration, reincarnation, none of that business. As we said, matter, energy, space, time, that is it, emergency properties, ok, they get really complex. It's an interesting view, I mean it's complete psychotic but it is very interesting because if one looks to the origins of the physical universe, go back to the big bang, 30.7 billion years ago, it's a magnificent theory, it's a brilliant theory, very good working hypothesis based on empirical evidences, superb math, but then you ask, ok, what have caused it? I mean, that is a simply question, we have – here it is, this is an event, our universe - what caused it? These are various ideas but none of them are scientific, because scientific theory unlike philosophical speculation, a scientific theory is one you can put the test. If you can't, then there is no reason to call it science then anything goes fairies, leprechauns, anything. Oh, this is my scientific theory of leprechaun - they are green but invisible or whatever. That is not science, that is your belief, cool.

(38:48) There is no scientific theory of the origins of the universe, so it's kind of assumed it just came out of nothing and so that is supernatural nihilism, so supernatural nihilism is how you start science, it's based upon science. This scientific view of the universe is based upon on supernatural nihilism. Then eventually, at some point, like on our planet here, we have the emergence of life 3.5 or 4 billion years ago, something like that. There is no scientific theory of the origins of life in the universe. There's all kind of ideas, they all contradict each other, none of them have been tested and no one has ever even really gotten close to replicating, actually creating life, living organism that reproduce, eat and poop and all of that, out of just organic chemicals. Nobody's done it, they're not even close, they've been saying they've been close for more than fifty years and they're not. So they haven't been able to do it and they have no scientific theory of how it happened because a scientific theory is the one you can test. So modern Biology asks the origins of life, this is based upon supernatural physics and chemistry. Because they're insisting: all of life emerge out of complex configurations of organic molecules and electricity. In another words, physics and chemistry - and your theory is? We don't have one.

Is there anything in physics or in chemistry that would predict that life would emerge from inorganic chemicals and electricity? No!!

So, it's not the physics and chemistry we know, it's supernatural physics and chemistry. The kind of physics and chemistry that nobody knows about, but, that's the origins of life. But give us more time and money and we'll find some way to prove what we believe and we'll absolutely refuse to doubt.

(40:40) So Biology is based upon supernatural physics and chemistry, then we have the mind sciences. And the mind sciences have no theory whatsoever for the origins of consciousness, not on the planet, not in human fetus, not in anything else. There is no scientific theory. Tons of books, tons of speculation pretty which mutually contradict, no consensus, no knowledge and no scientific theory that can be put to any test whatsoever and moreover they certainly have not been able to generate consciousness in robots, computers, or anything else. In another words, the mind sciences, but nevertheless just take my word for it, consciousness, all mental states arise out of the sufficiently complex configurations of biological processes, neurons, synapses dendrites and so forth. In another words the mind sciences are base in supernatural biology.

(41:42) It is all based on supernatural views for which there is no scientific evidence, no scientific theory, it is science base upon supernaturalism. Gosh, when I look at that, I'm disappointed. I expected more from you because I love science but you're really letting me down here. No theory for the origin of the universe, no theory for the origins of life, no theory for the origin of consciousness. I was hoping for more. That's why I left Western civilization and went to India.

(42:16) So here is an alternative theory. That is – with the materialists, they've taken consciousness out of the universe and either not allowed it in at all or let it in as the lowest of the lowest of the lowest, a mere secretion of complex neuronal activities in the brain. In other words 'sit in your closet and shut up 'cause

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we're really busy here understanding the real world.' You know? So they demote is down beneath the janitor of the universe and it doesn't do anything and if you do anything we going to call it a placebo effect. So just shut up. We will not give you credit for anything because you don't do anything

So the absolute demotion of consciousness into either nothing or marginally more than nothing needs some 'fresh air'. Whew – Good. Thank goodness Eurocentric civilization is not the only one on the planet.

(42:59) How about this other view, that you can put to the test of experience, it is called, how do you do this?

Maybe shamatha, vipashyana and thecho, that may do it. To realize directly through your own experience the existence of dharmadhatu, that is emptiness. To realize through your own experience primordial consciousness that is thecho and then to realize Togyal, the power, the capacity, the infinite capacity really of that dimension of consciousness, the energy of primordial consciousness which manifests big time in Togyal, you see it and also then it flows through you and you are able to start displaying some of the powers of the Buddha. And those three, the absolute space of phenomena, dharmadatu, primordial consciousness and the energy of primordial consciousness, primordially non dual, non local atemporal, but that out of which the entire phenomenal world emerges. Now, there's a theory that you can actually put to the test.

Of course you had to invite consciousness back in and put it on the throne and take it out of the mop room, put it back where it belongs as absolutely fundamental to the whole universe. So there it is.

And I want to end on a note of whimsy – I'm really god at whimsy, if you hadn't noticed.

(44:25) What if the emergence of all consciousness throughout the universe, fundamentally that is, in terms of its ultimate taproot, all consciousness, consciousness of all sentient beings, of course of all Buddhas, is none other than primordial consciousness that crystallizes as substrate consciousness which then further crystalizes as individual consciousness that is humans, animals and so forth and so on, but its taproot, fundamental ground, nothing other than primordial consciousness. That is Dzogchen view. But further now, and this is where the whimsy comes in because I don't know if it is true or not but might be, what about this energy of primordial consciousness, this prana. What is that the origin of all life in the universe when a planet first forms and so forth? What if all life consists of configurations, crystalized configurations of this fundamentally bio-energy, vital energy? That is non-dual from primordial consciousness? What if life emerges not just from the sufficiently complex configurations of chemicals and energy, but from a fundamental energy? That is right down there at the ground of the universe, in other words, life is intrinsic to the universe itself, as consciousness is intrinsic to the universe itself? And when it comes to dhamadhatu, absolute space of phenomenon.

(45:55) What if all configurations of space, time and inanimate mass energy are all emerging out of that as the environment? So, every so often I have seen this in the Dzogchen literature but many other places as well. Speak of the nisho, the ni is the inanimate environment and the cho literally is the vessel and the cho, is the kind of the nutrition, the vital essence, that is all about, the cho, like the cho of food is the nutrition, that is that makes the food, food. And so the cho of the ni, the cho the vital essence of the environment, the sentient beings. This is all created for sentient beings. The notion 'we just kind of happened along because some chemicals got sufficiently complex, and they said: oh, I am life, nope!

(46:55) Life is right at the core, consciousness is right at the core and the manifestation of the environments, of the universes, space, time, mass, energy, configurations, the vessel that's also at the core right there in dharmadhatu, manifesting when catalized. So there's a theory you can actually test. (47:28)

But it means that we are not casual and very brief interlopers in the universe, here for a few decades and then snuffed out like a light, which is the ultimate nihilism of materialism. We came from nowhere, we are going nowhere and in the meantime have a nice hedonic pleasures but you probably won't much.

That is one view extremely sad, pointless, nihilistic, dehumanizing, demoralizing, disempowering but if that's the best as you got, OK I guess, you can live with that. The other one seems a bit more lively, has a bit more potential, upward mobility.

Enjoy your day.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Revised by Diane Strully

Final edition by Rafael Carlos Giusti

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13 Oct 2012

O la so

Come to the end of the week and we return to the close application of mind to feelings, sometime this afternoon moving on to Shantideva's other text – but as a preface, and I think you'll find the transition of the segue quite smooth, as a preface to this, as I've been meeting with you all one on one, a number of you've mentioned your anticipation of dread, anxiety, happiness of returning, or leaving here, and going someplace else. And the someplace else, I've heard it referred to as the mundane world, so – I want to debate with you. You think you're in the mind center, Claus took me to this piece of land about 4 years ago there was I think a beginning of a school and that was it. The sports center was just an idea and this was an idea. When Claus took me to this land it was scrub, just scrub, flat flattish and scrub and he said 'Alan, I'm imagining the meditation hall will be here' and I'm just looking at a lot of dirt and scrub thinking you've got a good imagination but there was clearly no mind center there, it was just dirt and scrub nothing spiritual about it at all. I took off and maybe a year or year and a half later I came back and the morning of the day that we started the first retreat 2 ½ years ago they laid the grass at 3 that morning and then we had 36 people move in and I moved in so exactly when did this become a mind center – when the grass was laid? There's a sign out there that says mind center, but if putting a label on something – I'd just get a tattoo that said Buddha on my forehead and then I'd be a Buddha, you know if just putting a label is just enough. I'm afraid that doesn't work just saying a mind center you can say the rolls Royce center of the universe you can call it whatever you like, but putting up a sign is just print. So if you think you've been living in a mind center for the past 7 ½ weeks, exactly when did it come into existence? And then when we leave here, Thursday Friday Saturday I imagined none of us will be here any longer – you know what this is really? It's a 3 star hotel, a 3 star hotel and they'll be having athletes coming here and they'll be working out in the gym, they'll swimming, preparing for their Olympic events and so forth, this is a 3 star hotel.

When will it stop being a mind center and when will it turn into a 3 star hotel. So mundane world, where does it start, that is when you return to the mundane world is it a gravitational field, it is incrementally aware of the inverse square law? Or is it suddenly spiritual 'uuuuuugh', I'm in the mundane world again. Where exactly does the mundane world start that you're going back to? And I can tell you that, it's not a rhetorical question – as soon as you think 'this is the mundane world' that's where it starts, and as soon as somebody thought this is the mind center that's when there was a mind center and as soon as were gone if the hotel staff really needs to adjust and recognize the people coming in are athletes and not meditating and no interest in meditating then this is Thanyapura Retreat, that's the name of this hotel, and they will adjust, they're very flexible, very supple people they're always gracious but then go to any other really nice hotel, and I think I've been to some of them, the staff are very gracious. That's how the Thai people are in the service industry, they're very gracious people. So the mundane world does it exist or not, it exists as soon as you say it exists but it's not something confronting you it's not something objectively rising up to meet you to beat your Dharma practice to death. The mundane world starts as soon as your mind becomes mundane and that's whether you're in a meditation hall in the middle of a session and your mind going blah blah blah blah I want more money, I'm anxious about this, I fear that – you're not in the mind center, you're in the samsara center.

So we turn to Shantideva and of course what he's doing here is really simply citing one sutra after another, this is kind of a garland, it's a garland of sutra citations but boy he knows how to weave a nice lei [Reviser's note: Hawaiian garland of flowers] or a nice garland.

So let's go to that – he starts now, the 4th contemplation, the 4th application of mindfulness.

Text/ 1st paragraph:

He said the contemplation of phenomena is explained in the same text and here is what the sutra has to say:

Subscriber note for the readers: first you have the complete text, as below, then we are transcribing part of the text that Alan Wallace read followed by Alan's comments about the part that was read.

"A bodhisattva who contemplates phenomena as phenomena and dwells upon this does not see anything from which the qualities of a Buddha are absent, anything from which enlightenment is absent, anything from which the path is absent, anything from which liberation is absent, or anything from which

deliverance is absent. Knowing how all phenomena arise, he reaches the entrance to the Samadhi of great compassion in order that sentient beings may know freedom from obscurations. He comes to recognize all phenomena and all mental afflictions as illusions. These phenomena are devoid of mental afflictions; they are not imbued with mental afflictions. Why? When considered in terms of definitive reality, mental afflictions are not assembled or aggregated. There is no reality of attachment, or of hatred, or of delusion. In order to realize these mental afflictions, there is enlightenment. The essential nature of mental afflictions is also the essential nature of enlightenment. Mindfulness is closely applied in that way.”

(6:40) A bodhisattva who contemplates phenomena as phenomena and dwells upon this does not see anything from which the qualities of a Buddha are absent, anything from which enlightenment is absent, anything from which the path is absent, anything from which liberation is absent, or anything from which deliverance is absent.

(7:25) So, it looks like the bodhisattva never stepped outside the mind center.

That if viewing phenomena as phenomena, but now in this Madhyamaka approach, viewing phenomena as being empty of inherent nature, as having an illusion like nature, he is bringing another element here and from the Nyingma’s perspective the third turning of wheel of dharma is not so much associated with the Chittamatra or yogachara view, there is nothing wrong with associating, there’s ground for that but there is another way of viewing the third turning wheel of dharma and that is, the third turning is really all about Buddha nature, tathagatagarbha, so the first turning is really all about the four noble truths and whole Shavakayana, the second one is all about perfection of wisdom with multiple interpretations, Madhyamaka, Chittamatra. And the third turning of the wheel dharma is all about the tathagatagarbha, the Buddha nature.

(8:32) So it strikes me that he (Shantideva) is really bringing in this in this *Ārya Ratnacūḍa Sūtra* [chapter 13 of Shantideva’s Compendium of Practices] something intuitive and that is he’s coming back to that first turning, the four noble truths, the four applications of mindfulness, the four immeasurables, this is so utterly, really, truly, empirical, it’s experiential, it’s attending closely to appearances, the phenomena of your life, your body, other people’s bodies, phenomena of feelings that do arise, mental states that do arise and other phenomena that do arise, and saying look: be a radical empiricist here, be a scientist of life and closely apply mindfulness to the phenomena that rise up to meet you and understand their nature, impermanent, dukkha [suffering], non-self and so forth. So that first wheel of dharma, it is just really radically empirical, it’s very scientific.

(9:22) But when we go to the perfection of wisdom [second turning of the wheel of dharma], it’s not enough to closely examine phenomena, it is not enough to closely examine appearances because appearances lie, they deceive – go back to the appearance of Mike way off yonder, way off there yonder, that is how he appears, well just keep on gazing at that and they lie all the way through. Wake up in the morning and gaze, it will lie until you fall sleep and it will lie the next morning as well - the appearances themselves are deceptive, therefore you have to use intelligence to investigate the incongruity, the incompatibility, the dissonance between the way appearances are manifesting and the way phenomena actually do exist so that’s quite rightly called the ‘perfection of wisdom’ which also could be glossed as ‘perfection of intelligence’ because it’s really using your intelligence and not simply closely examining being mindful of appearances.

(9:54) But when we return to the third turning wheel of dharma, this very nature of tathagatagarbha [Buddha nature], is equivalent with Buddha mind, dharmakaya, as we see from the Ratnacūḍa Tantra; three characteristics:

- The first is that the dharmakaya, Buddha mind, is omnipresent, there is no aspect of reality that is not pervaded by Buddha mind
- Then in terms of the ultimate nature of the Buddha mind, there is no differentiation whatsoever, there’s not a smidgen of any difference, between the ultimate nature of your mind, man, woman, deva, insect, preta whoever you maybe, there is absolutely no difference between the ultimate nature of your mind and ultimate nature of dharmakaya. There is no distinction, no difference, there is no separation or division, this is the second point.
- And the third point is that all sentient beings, every single one has a potential for perfect awakening, is of the family, of the family, the family of those who are suitable, fit to awaken to perfect enlightenment.

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(11:09) So those three characteristics really provide the core, that is the core of the whole understanding of Buddha nature. But how do we approach that, by observing appearances? I do not think so. I'm looking around and I don't see dharmakaya, right?

By sheer intellect, by reason, by investigation, ontological analyzes? I do not think it is enough, I don't think cuts the mustard, I don't think it does it. I do not think it is sufficient just to use intelligence, even profound penetrating incredibly fine analytical skills, I don't think you get to it that way. So, then are we dealing with blind faith? We can always do that? But that's just not a flavor of the Buddha's teachings.

(12:00) So I think it is that this third turning of wheel of dharma is really speaking to a different dimension. I've addressed this in the past but it's really important and worth lingering a bit longer on it. Those teachings on the third turning wheel of dharma, the Tathagatagarbha Sutra, Maitrea Sutra and many other texts. If you ask: who is the disciple for whom these teachings are intended, who's the audience, where's the target? If these are the arrow, where's the target? My sense is the target is your own Buddha nature. That as much as you can, you listen from that dimension of your awareness, call it intuition but a deeper, the deepest in fact, way of knowing, and that is if this is true for the third turning of the wheel of dharma it's emphatically true for Dzogchen in the 'pointing out instructions', rigpa, when an accomplished Lama, Dzogchen master gives pointing out that is, 'pointing out' is fine it is not a bad translation but "**modipa**" means introduce for example if Tushe didn't know Patrice and I thought they might be good friends and say, 'Ah, Tushe I would like to meet Patrice, she is friend of mine, Patrice this is Tushe he is very sincere Mexican student so you know each other', good I am in my way. And so I will have introduced the two of you, it is just that. So it is the Lama, the Dzogchen master saying: 'hello Nato I would like to introduce you to your rigpa, rigpa Nato' that's what it is to introduce you to a dimension of reality that we so over, and over looked because we are fixated on others things, right?

(13:48) So that whole genre of teachings with this utterly smooth transition from the third turning of the wheel of dharma right into Dzogchen, Mahamudra, it is utterly smooth. In fact in terms of view essentially the same and the primary distinction as I have being told by own Dzogchen teachers, especially Geshe Rabten Rinpoche, is "upaya" 'skillful means', that in Dzogchen you really get the methods, there is the view, it is not really fundamentally crucially different from the view of Buddha nature that you find elsewhere, but like in the third turning, but the means, the method, that is unique, that is unique.

(14:25) So I think this, in this citation here, that is what he is referring to, not something you can simply observe, not something you can figure out analytically, something that may speak to your heart of hearts, that there is nowhere, that the mind of the Buddha is not present, the qualities of the Buddha are not present. Nowhere the enlightenment, the awakening, of the Buddha is not present, nowhere the path is not present.

(14:50) Whose path? The Buddhas do not need a path they've already come to the conclusion of the path. So whose path? Wherever you go, whose path could that possibly be? Whose path, Nato? Your own, who else? The path is always there, path is always there. There's nowhere that the path is not. Because the Buddhas have a very simply job description, have only one thing to do - for as long space remains and so forth, they have only one thing to do with all that extraordinary wisdom, the compassion, the powers of enlightenment, they have only one thing to do, one task, lead all sentient beings to enlightenment. And their awareness permeates everything which is the implication here, it's not heavily veiled, I don't think it is veiled at all perhaps. The path is already there, the blessings of the Buddhas are already there, the path is right in front of us but it does take eyes of wisdom, eyes of Yeshe, primordial consciousness to see it.

(15:48) So there is nowhere the path is absent, nowhere that liberation is absent, that is, wherever you are your mind is there. Your mind is empty of inherent nature, the emptiness of your own mind is nirvana, so wherever you go liberation is there, closer than the palm of your hand and there is nowhere, there is nothing from which deliverance is absent. So it shifts it entirely over into, one can say, pure perception. It is quite interesting because this is the sutra, not Vajrayana, it is the sutra of stepping out of the mind center and stepping into a domain of reality where there is nowhere that the qualities of the Buddha, enlightenment, the path are not to be found. In other words you can't find mundane reality if you look for it, you can't find it, it's not there. Look for, find a referent of mundane reality - Phuket airport? The taxi? Phuket? Where is it, where are you going to find it?

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So intuitively, if just from our heart of hearts, we say I do, I affirm there is something within me that stirs and says, yes. I sense it, I intuit it, that's my working hypothesis, then you view reality in that way. And you view yourself as always being present in the field of blessings, the path always present, qualities of Buddha always present.

I was reading just a couple of days ago one great Mahamudra master, he's saying that the stages of the path, the methods of Mahamudra, I think he said that they're like a lion, so incredibly powerful but they must be augmented, they need some support just like shamatha, shamatha is not really a stand-alone practice to do that alone and not do any other practice, you're a bit fragile, having a few friends around, like the four immeasurables, something like that could be really very helpful and some other practices like the ones we've explored here. Likewise, in another whole order of magnitude, of dimension, Mahamudra is incredibly profound but never really intended as an absolutely stand-alone.

So, if we look at that first yoga, the yoga of single pointedness, we see that it spans the whole path of accumulation and the whole path of preparation – That's a lot of territory. And that's just the first one of four yogas.

Classic Mahayana teachings, when they say for the time that you become a Bodhisattva, from that first moment when you're experiencing uncontrived spontaneous effortless bodhicitta, welcome to the path of accumulation, you've just become a Bodhisattva. The stop watch just started clicking – *tick tick tick* – now how long did it take you to achieve enlightenment of a Buddha Satrayana? Three countless eons. That's with Shamatha and Bodhicitta. Three countless eons. And the Dali Lama said some people seven – some people seven countless eons. So if you get to three countless eons and you say 'hey, where's my enlightenment?' – I told you so. It may take longer. There's no guarantee it'll only be three countless eons – it could be longer – right?

So, how does it break down, three countless eons. Not four, not seven and a half – three is kind of like – ok, get to it, get cracking, roll up your sleeves.

One countless eon from the beginning of the Mahayana path of accumulation up to the path of seeing. That's one countless eon for the path of accumulation and the path of preparation. One countless eon. One countless eon from the beginning of the path of preparation up to the eighth Bodhisattva bomi, the pure bomi – one countless eon. You think – 'oh, I've achieved, I'm now on the pure grounds, Arya Bodhisattva. Super duper! Arya Bodhisattva. Eighth ground Bodhisattva. That must be a piece of cake, that must be easy. I'm almost finished. I've got just to complete the eighth, ninth and then tenth and I'm finished. One more countless eon.

It's a really nice countless eon. I mean it's really the best countless eon you've ever had, 'cause it's really nice being an Arya Bodhisattva on that level. But nevertheless, one countless eon. I mean that's what they say. And why? Because the cognitive obscurations are so subtle that it takes an awful lot of cleansing to purify them out until they're totally gone. Three countless eons.

But the first one was just for the yoga of single pointedness – one countless eon for that one – *doggone (indicates frustration)*

So, how does that get speeded up a little bit, like down into one life? Not just by meditating a lot. Lots of shamatha and lots of vipashyana. Lots of union of shamatha and vipashyana because that's what it takes – one countless eon. So how do you super charge that to collapse that down into, you know, like one life time. Practices like this – pure vision, that's what does it. You have to go the extra mile. So this is quite important. Which means that you're always always always dwelling in a conducive environment, a Buddha blessing saturated environment. You're transforming every moment into Dharma.

Note for the subscriber: Alan continues to read part of the text and we included some Alan's comments between the marks [...]

Knowing how all phenomena arise, he [the bodhisattva] reaches the entrance to the Samadhi of great compassion in order that sentient beings may know freedom from obscurations. He comes to recognize all phenomena and all mental afflictions as illusions [as not existing from their own side]. These phenomena [other people's behavior, others people mind state, your own mind state] are devoid of mental afflictions; they are not imbued with mental afflictions [how can he say that, you are floundering, drowning in the ocean of samsara and he says this phenomena are devoid of mental afflictions]. When considered in terms of definitive reality [but actually is going on], mental afflictions are not assembled or aggregated [they are

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not really there, they are not inherently existent]. There is no reality of attachment, or of hatred, or of delusion [so bye, bye second noble truth]. In order to realize these mental afflictions [in order to realize their nature], there is enlightenment. The essential nature of mental afflictions is also the essential nature of enlightenment. Mindfulness is closely applied in that way.

I think we just took it up quite a few notches.

(22:57) Let's pause there for a moment, let's bring back, back to shamatha practice, sitting there settling the mind in its natural state, you're seeing the mental afflictions coming from the front door – hello I am anger, I am hatred good to see you again - you practice mindfulness of breathing, they come in the back door – sneaky sneaky sneaky - and come in by way of rumination, dominate you, carry you, kidnap you when you aren't looking. When you are practicing shamatha then and you actually do identify, face to face, 'ah, I see you anger, hello attachment, yes I have seeing you before, delusion, oh yeah you are quite familiar'. When you really peer onto their nature, even without the Mahayamaka view let alone Dzogchen view, or the view the third turning of the wheel of dharma, if you really probe right into their nature, just empirical, straight empiricism, and you penetrate right into the nature of attachment, craving, desire, greed, arising, when you see through its afflictive manifestation, what do you see? It's good to remember this one, it can serve you well because attachment might arise again – it could happen. So what do you see? Among the three qualities of substrate consciousness, what do you see? What is attachment springing from when you don't look to rigpa, don't look to primordial consciousness? Never mind that for the time being. When you consider that all the emergences, the *senjun*, of the mental arises, the subjective impulses, when you consider that all of those are arising from substrate consciousness, they cannot arise from anywhere else, right? And so, among the three qualities of the substrate consciousness which one is attachment, desire, craving, which one's it arising from? It arises from bliss think about when you really want something, you're craving at it, you're thinking that will make me happy, all I have to do is win the lottery, that'll make me happy and I'll be so happy. There is happiness in attachment, there is happiness in craving or if you got a real nice computer or a new nice car or anything else I've got, it's mine, I like it, I want to keep it. It's happy. Craving feels good, that's why we keep on doing it, that is its nature.

(26:07) And then anger arises, I am so pissed off and can hardly sit, I can hardly stand - still. I am so anger I am ANGRY – rrrrrggghh. Look right at the nature of anger what do you see? Luminosity, it's sharp, it's clear like a flaming sword, it's really sharp and maybe totally delusional but it's very sharp, very clear, bright, luminous – really is, isn't it? Got some real 'juice behind it, some real energy behind it. Who can be bored and really angry at the same time? Can you be really angry and really really sleepy at the same time? It is hard to do them both simultaneously. Try being really dull and really angry simultaneously. I dare you. Double dare you. And then it is just called ignorance, *marigpa*, unawareness. Look into its nature and what do you see? You see non-conceptuality. And if you consider for the ordinary conceptual mind, when we know something, 'oh yes, that's Monica, oh yeah', whatever, maybe, when you say 'oh yeah I know Frank, I know Frank', that knowing is completely enmeshed like a fly in a spider web, it's totally enmeshed in conceptualization, framework, context, associations, memories and so forth.

(27:34) My knowledge of view is embedded, like a raisin in a muffin in an over, totally embedded in a field of conceptual network, conceptual designation and so forth. But, I could stop conceptualizing if I could find a switch and go, you know, (wind down) and there's not a thought in my mind. For many people, if you only home is the course mind, you just slipped into a state of unknowing because you know everything by way of conceptualization and now you are not conceptualizing, you are just sitting there like waiting to know something, it is called deep sleep. So the nature of ignorance of unawareness is non-conceptuality.

So there it is, the three root poisons. When you penetrate into nature they are three salient features of substrate consciousness. But, he [Shantideva] is saying more than that, he is saying: so that's just in the shamatha domain.

But now we go deeper into the realm of vipashyana, the realm of Dzogchen, the realm of Vajrayana all of these stemming from, that is Vajrayana, Dzogchen, Mahamudra all of these are stemming from this third turning of the wheel of dharma.

When he says 'the essential nature of mental afflictions is also the essential nature of enlightenment', then you have to go beyond the substrate, because substrate of course is not enlightenment, it is the ground of your samsara. So, in that regard, when you really penetrate right down to the ground, not the relative ground

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but really ground of pristine awareness, the ultimate ground of your own awareness, then from that vantage point, from that perspective, if you are viewing from the perspective of rigpa (pristine awareness), and you are seeing anger arise, and that is possible, then anger manifests to you as mirror-like primordial consciousness, a facet of Buddha mind, unafflicted, because you are seeing from the perspective of rigpa, therefore it is not afflicted, you are seeing as simply a display, a manifestation, an emergence of Buddha mind, a mirror like primordial consciousness, often called primordial wisdom, I prefer yeshe means 'primordial consciousness', that's what I'm going to call it, "she" does not mean wisdom, means knowing or consciousness.

Attachment arises, craving and so forth, quite interestingly, the primordial consciousness of discernment. I won't try to explain all of these right now, but I'm going from top to bottom. The chakras are- the crown chakra for the 1st, for delusion.

No – actually for Anger, I should start from the heart – Anger's the heart – blue. At the throat – red for attachment, primordial consciousness, discernment. Let's go upstairs, to the top –Crown chakra, delusion, primordial consciousness of the absolute space of phenomena, primordial consciousness of the Dharmadhatu, ultimate reality, Emptiness – white.

And then if we expand that out to the five poisons. Then we have pride or arrogance – yellow, navel chakra, primordial consciousness of equality. Then we go down lower to the base chakra – envy, green. So it's interesting that we say, in English, and I think in other European languages 'I'm green with envy'. See into its nature and it's the primordial consciousness of accomplishment.

So that is what he (Shantideva) is saying here, if you are seeing through the outer display, before that, how could you possibly see into the innermost essence of these if you've not seen the emptiness of them as mental afflictions. If you see them as inherently, intrinsically, objectively afflictive then there's just no way you're going to see, you won't even see to the substrate, let alone to rigpa. So there it is. A very unusual, extraordinary close application of mindfulness to phenomena. But the transition is smooth because we had the close application in terms of Pali canon, impermanence, dukkha, non-self, but the fourth quality of emptiness and we go right there to Shantideva's other text that's all about the emptiness of phenomena. And then we go right into another text and he's going right from emptiness into the view from pristine awareness. very smooth.

Let's continue a little bit more. So now another Sutra – the *Ārya Ratnacūḍa* sutra, which he sites frequently states:

Text/ 2nd paragraph:

Subscriber's note: again we are including Alan's comments in the text between the marks [...].

The *Ārya Ratnacūḍa* states, "Son of good family, when a bodhisattva closely applies mindfulness in the contemplation of phenomena as phenomena, he thinks, 'When there is arising, only phenomena arise. [and that is without all the embellishments, the ornaments, the clothing, the projections, the labels, the conceptualizations, categories and so forth. Just phenomena arising] When there is cessation, only phenomena cease. In them [in these simple phenomena] there is no self, or sentient being, or life force, or being that is born, or one who is revived, or person, or individual, or man, or android, or one who is born, ages, dies, transmigrates, or is reborn. This is the ultimate nature of phenomena. If they are brought about, they are established as existent; and if they are not brought about, they are not established as existent. However they are brought about—whether virtuous, non-virtuous, or undisturbed—they are established as being so, but there is nothing that brings about phenomena, nor does anything arise without a cause...'"

So it is also again a Madhyamaka koan.

"There is nothing that brings about phenomena, nor does anything arise without a cause."

Ultimately speaking, there is nothing that brings about phenomena. There's no point in time, at which something that wasn't there really wasn't there, really is there. Think of the mind center – if you think of it as really there exactly what moment was it, this is a big place, I think it's about 5 million dollars, the mind center. It's one entity, it has multiple buildings and if this one entity with multiple buildings, with a lot of labor and a lot of costs going into it, if there was some point in time when it absolutely was not there and then a moment later it was there. How could that, which is absolutely not a mind center suddenly become a mind center. And then of course when we leave here there could be a time, a phase, when this is not a mind center. It could last a week, it could last longer, but there could be a time when everybody coming here does not think this is a

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mind center. They think ‘oh, too bad it’s such a long walk from the sport center because that what I came here for’ and so it’s a hotel. This is a 5 million dollar establishment with lots of buildings, lots of construction stuff went into this. But then suddenly ‘poof’ there’s no mind center anymore – just a hotel.

It is just mundane reality – what you think you’re going to, this is what they’re coming to. They’re coming to mundane reality, 3 star hotel. There are much nicer ones on the island, I’ve been to them. I’ve never paid for them but I have been to them.

So ultimately the mind center never came into existence objectively, really, truly, the mind center never come into existence, just when people start thinking something, and it will never cease, not when it’s burned down, it will not cease. If the whole place burned down and all you had is ashes, Klaus could come here and say the mind center is in ashes, this is my burnt mind center, thank goodness I have insurance. So this is a burnt mind center – you want to see my burnt mind center? It’s not as nice as it was yesterday, but, hey, you’ve got to go with what’s there. And, here’s my burnt mind center. You can tell, there’s the ashes. That’s the basis of designation for a burned down mind center. Do burnt down mind centers exist? Do burnt down hotels exist? Is a burnt down hotel a hotel? You have a burnt down hotel in front of you. What kind a hotel do you see in front of you? You see a burnt down hotel. Yeh, it’s got an adjective in front of it. What kind of hotel do you have? Burned down. How much is it worth? Nothing, but it will be once I rebuild it and then a burnt down mind center will be a rebuilt mind center.

So ultimately speaking it’s not really there, it is never come about, there is nothing that brings about phenomena but then on a conventional nature, did this mind center come into existence in dependence upon a lot of labor and money and collaboration and of a fine staff and so forth and having a dharma teacher here, having dharma students here? If I were here all by myself it wouldn’t be a dharma center, it wouldn’t be a mind center. It would be Alan hanging out in a 3 star hotel watching television. I can finally turn on the television, nobody would be looking.

So in that one sentence, see ultimately speaking in terms of reality, in terms of inherent existence, nothing bring about phenomena, conventional existence in the same sentence, nor does anything arise without a cause.

The same text, states:

“Even when he analyzes phenomena with little profundity [things that don’t seem to have much significance, whatever it is, the price of grapes], he never forsakes the recollection of the bodhicitta of omniscience.”

So, it is another whole meaning of mindfulness which is almost entirely overlooked in the modern popularization of mindfulness, the popularization of vipashyana, the popularization of the four applications of mindfulness, it is almost entirely overlooked.

And that is mindfulness is not simply being aware of what’s manifesting. Mindfulness is bearing in mind a way of viewing reality.

In so far, and so, if we can, intuitive affirm that wherever you go there is no place that is devoid of the qualities of the Buddha, of Buddha mind, no place devoid of path, no place devoid of nirvana, and that mental afflictions are not inherently real but in fact when you probe into the nature you see, there is nothing other than enlightenment and enlightenment is for the sake of realizing the nature of mental afflictions as facets of primordial consciousness. When you can embrace that, when you adopt that as your of view reality, then, when you venture forth and engage with phenomena you’re viewing phenomena from that perspective and that is bearing in mind, it is mindfulness, it is holding in mind, bearing in mind a way of viewing reality, that whatever you’re encountering, if it’s unpleasant, it is not intrinsically unpleasant. It’s not adversity begin dished up to you objectively and absolutely – it’s a bitter pill – swallow it! It may be a bitter pill but it’s arising in interrelationship and not simply objectively.

Mahayana Buddhist perspective, the teaching on karma, the shravakayana – the first turning of the wheel of Dharma, are at no point negated, they’re not abandoned as cause and effect. And the strongest parallel that I can see, since I would have been an ecologist, an environmental biologist, had I not met Buddha Dharma, would have been my dharma, would have been my whole dharma, only thing I could really believe in.

The strongest parallel for karma is the way that, for example, especially we human being as a species and as individuals are treating our environment. I just saw something on BBC news that it would cost like \$86billion a

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year to protect the environment so that we don't have more species vanishing every year. \$86billion a year! And they said that is one percent.

But the very notion again, given my old background as an environmentalist, and thinking – why's there any discussion? Why's anybody even talking about whether we can afford to preserve our environment so that it is alive and healthy for the next generation. Why's it even being debated – can we afford to slow down global warming, can we afford to stop depleting the oceans of fish, can we afford to stop polluting the ground water, the air and so forth. Can we afford it? It's kind of like – can I afford a second pair of shoes – that's optional. So I really find it quite astonishing that there's debate about that – Environment – what you sow, you reap. And that is you contaminate out and you may not get it. You may not get the karmic results, the environmental, the ecological results, you may not experience it. My parents, their generation, they could do things with pollutants of all kinds and their generation may not actually experience much of the results. And maybe mine will, or maybe the next generation or maybe the next generation but what goes around comes around, that's just the nature of ecological reality. It's a closed system so that whatever you're throwing out there, the ripples in the pond will ripple around in this globe because it can't ripple anywhere else.

So all of our unwholesome activity in this planet in respect to our environment, you send it out, it will come back and that which comes back as suffering, as misery, as illness, sickness, drought, famine, and for forth, we'll call that 'oh, the cause was unwholesome' 'cause we really don't like the result at all.

And those impacts, those activities, that we impose upon reality, that turn around to the environment to be healthy – biodiversity, species not vanishing and so forth, that which we do to preserve a well balanced environment, a healthy environment, then looking back, then we say 'ah, this turned out really well' and we'll look back at the cause and say that was wholesome activity.

But you label the cause based on the effect, not just because DDT is somehow evil, it's not, it's just a chemical. Put it in a test tube – not even a poison, it's just a chemical. Put it out in the environment – now it's a poison. So, with karma, there's a little microcosm but it's a powerful one because it's not god or angels, or demons, or anybody punishing us, we just sowed the seeds and then some of the seeds we've sown turn around and kick us in the teeth. Our children are dying of leukemia, for example and species are vanishing, etc. It's just a natural sequence – you put out and then the consequences come back sooner or later, they do come back and then you experience it. But by then you might have forgotten or you may not have ever know what caused it and then you're really stuck because you're getting suffering from the environment and you don't even see how you contributed to causing it. That's quite sad. And that's how karma works. Often karma manifests in a second life in which you've forgotten what you did that's causing the karmic fruitions you're experiencing now.

So, all of this is relating to Shantideva's text, and that's from one perspective – the Shravakayana perspective, especially where the Buddha is viewed as one from the Theravada, the Pali Canon, the Shravakayana, as Buddha's one who is enlightened and then *swoosh* he did a vanishing act. Gone into paranirvana, absolute stillness, absolute transcendent, inconceivable. So, Theravada Buddhist, on the whole, they don't pray to the Buddha, nobody's listening – Buddha doesn't answer prayers. That's why they'll go to a Hindu deity, at least they're hanging out. They may not have the Buddha's enlightenment but at least they have more power than we do. That's true of all the Theravada countries. They don't pray to the Buddha, they go to the Hindu deities, 'hey help me my wife is having problem with her pregnancy, my field is not producing good, you know, give me some more money I want to get my kids to good school, ah, Hindu deities help me out here.'

But, if you come back to Buddhism, there it is, it look like oh, this really is samsara, this is really an ocean of suffering, saturated by ignorance and – there it is. And you're on your own, be 'an island unto yourself'.

Practice Dharma because that's your only hope.

Reviser's note: 'an island *unto* yourself' is an older style of English and quotes a poem.

But we move on to the Mahayana. Of course it's still true, Dharma is your only hope. Move onto the Mahayana as we see it in this citation

There is nowhere that the Buddha's mind is not present

There is nowhere that the Buddha's path is not present

There is nowhere that the blessings of the Buddha are not present

Falling in upon us so it looks like, how can there not be some kind of a tension here, and that is, do the Buddha's have the ability, so I've done something really evil, something really unwholesome steaming from,

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maybe ignorance and greed, that's a powerful combination and out of my ignorance and greed, I've done something really unwholesome, right? And then the karmic seeds are ticking ticking ticking away, waiting to germinate, because something had to catalyze them so they can come to fruition. Can the Buddha come in and say 'Ah shucks, Alan, I have so much compassion, I'll just clear the ledger for you, I'll clear out your debts 'cause, after all, I'm a Buddha.' Can a Buddha do that?

The answer is no. Otherwise nobody'd ever have to experience the fruition of karma, the Buddha would say 'I'll give you a free pass, I'm omniscient, I'm a Buddha.'

No way it works, not for many schools. Nor for Theravada, Mahayana, Vajrayana. Buddhas don't have that ability. So, how does that workout? Blessing of the Buddha at all time, karma maturing – where's the interface?

If the Buddhas can't simply wipe away karma, does that mean we can find the two extremes. The Buddhas can simply wipe away karma and simply have faith and you'll have a wonderful life from now on, 'cause now that you're a Buddhist no hedonic ill will come your way, because the Buddhas are protecting every step of the way. OK? That's one extreme – that's not true. The Buddhas have no ability what so ever. Tough luck, pal, it's your karma and the Buddha can't clean out your karma, so the Buddhas are really pretty much out of work, because you're just living in an ocean of karma and the Buddhas are wringing their hands, saying 'I wish I could help, I really wish I could help but, it's your karma, so good luck. I may as well just slip back into paranirvana because there's nothing for me to do. What can I do? It's your karma. Ah.'

So I think we just found the two extremes. If that's what it is to be a Buddha, it means you're totally useless for the sake of all sentient beings. I'll become totally useless forever. I think that's a pretty lame bodhicitta, right? So, there's one, and the other one, you can do everything? No. So something in the middle – there's got to be middle-way there.

What gets dished up in terms of appearances, Buddhist teachings in terms of pleasant appearances and unpleasant appearances – I like this and I don't like that; that's good fortune and that's misfortune; that's karma. The Dalai Lama's been very, very exact though, because he's had such high level engagement, even though no formal training in science, with so many of the worlds best. So things like the 'inverse square law of gravity', the charge of an electron, electromagnetism, the way properties of electromagnetic fields and so forth, are these caused by somebody's karma? Somebody did something and therefore it's inverse square law, if you'd just done it differently it'd be inverse cube law?

No – not true – not everything that happens is the result of individuals karma - wholesome karma, unwholesome karma – not true.

Somethings are just say 'that's the way things are', that's just nature, that's natural. Leave it to the physicist, leave it to the chemists, leave it to the biologists, DNA, the structure of DNA and so forth and so on – leave it to them. That's the nature of the physical world.

But when appearances arise up to us and the arising is good fortune and misfortune – that's a result of karma. But then we move into Mahayana, if we stop there. we'd have to say 'that's why the Buddhas retired and that's why we're just in an ocean of karma and roll up your sleeves and strive diligently to achieve liberation and get the hell out of here. Just get out, 'cause this place sucks. 100% - all the way from the top to the bottom. This is just an ocean of misery so just get out. Just go into a state of immutable changeless bliss. So, that would be the best solution, not Mahayana.

So, what's arising? Fruition of karma but has no inherent nature, neither the seed nor the effect – no inherent nature. There's nothing that is intrinsically evil, nothing intrinsically virtuous or ethically neutral, not intrinsically, not by its own inherent nature. Therefore, whatever the fruition is, the result coming out is not inherently this or that, not inherently suffering, not inherently pleasant or unpleasant, adversity or felicity, none of the above. So the appearances are there just inviting us to reify, almost speaking anthropomorphically, say "Hey, would you like to identify me as adversity? You can, you know.' And, of course, normally we do. But with the wisdom of the perfection of wisdom, the teachings on emptiness, the teaching in lojong, the teachings we've just seen here – this is the appearance but it's not inherently real, it's no objective. Not even my mental afflictions are objectively inherently afflictive, therefore, how I dance with these appearances, even the appearances of my own mind, how I dance is up to me. How I respond is up to me. How I view them is up to me. And that's not predetermined by karma. We're not robots with a program written in some past life – not true.

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So, how should we rise up to meet reality as appearances of good fortune and misfortune arise? That's where our choice is, but the choice can come only if we see that there is a choice and we see that only if there's wisdom and the wisdom has to include the awareness, the recognition, the insight, that none of these phenomena – subjective or objective – are inherently real. And therefore, from moment to moment, whatever we're encountering – it's just an ocean of possibilities.

I find that I love this and it's very, very, brief. Heisenberg, one of the great pioneers of quantum mechanics, he was that generation exploring the absolutely mind boggling implications of quantum mechanics, that no elementary particles out there, in and of itself, are already predetermined before the act of measurement – that was a big deal. And, so you have the Schrodinger wave equation, which describes a field of possibilities of the probability of function. But then, Heisenberg nailed it. He was a deep thinker and he said 'now that we've come to the conclusion, these elementary particles, fundamental constituents of physical reality are not already out there in and of themselves with real location, real speed, real velocity, real momentum, in and of themselves as objectively real – not true. We know that's not true. What we have is the probability function, a wave function. He said, now we have the Schrodinger wave, a wave function, which is equivalent, it's mathematics, he said- this is a mathematical formalism, Schrodinger wave equation or Heisenberg's own matrix equation. The mathematical formalism referring to possibilities, probabilities but then, here's his point – don't reify, thinking there really is something out there inherently real that is a probability field. There isn't even that is empty. That's Heisenberg! Not bad for a person that never studied Madhyamaka.

Not only are electrons empty but even the probability field from which they arise, even that's empty, it's not objectively real. It's just a manner of speaking and saying that the probability function collapses when you perform a measurement and then you can say – ok, now there's an electron here and there's a proton there. It's all only a manner of speaking. There was nothing really out there that collapsed. And, likewise, when we identify – there's Mike, there's Patrice, there's Daniel, a probability function is collapsed because I could be giving all kinds of labels and multiple ones would be correct. And I could be viewing you from a perspective of a Preta, of a Deva, of a Buddha, a human being – there's all kinds of possibilities. As I look at three different people, how will you arise to meet me? It's a field of possibilities. But then I say 'Oh, this is my friend Patrice from Wisconsin, here's Daniel, here's Mike. Probability function has just collapsed and something's crystalized. But nothings really crystalized, nothing's really collapsed and even when I designate, nothing's really there from its own side.

Meditation:

Settle your body, speech and mind in a natural state, one by one, step by step and calm, subdue the conceptual turbulence of your mind with mindfulness of breathing.

Let your awareness withdrawing upon itself, withdrawing from all appearances, all objects of the mind.

More and more subtle release any notion pretending to the future and the past, let your awareness walk the tightrope, the slender line of the immediacy of the present moment.

You know that you are aware, good, but now what is the very nature of this awareness that you know? You have the word 'awareness', exactly what is its referent? Point it. Can you find this awareness that has the qualities of luminosity and cognizance? Can you observe it arising can you observe it passing? Can you find it anywhere, this truly existent, really there awareness? Can you see the border line between awareness and the appearances to awareness? Appearances are not awareness, it is something else. But can you draw the line where does one start and the other begin? What are the borders of your own awareness? Surely it must have some if it's really there, if it really exists.

And according to your ability with the awareness of the emptiness of your own awareness direct your attention to the world of phenomena, whatever comes to mind and examine closely, closely apply mindfulness and see if you can discern the distinction between the appearance that is the basis of designation of the object, or for that matter the subject, and that which you designate upon that basis. The set of buildings, with rooms, a hall, a dining room and a sign, may be but are not necessarily, is the basis of designation of the mind center, but the mind center and basis of designation are not the same, one is imputed upon another, and the basis of designation is empty of that designation.

Taking that as an example, whatever else comes to mind, see if you can identify what is the basis upon which you designate, the object that comes to mind. This may include yourself; designated object, it may include your mental afflictions, what is the basis of designation? Can you identify that and see if it is utterly empty?

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There is nothing there that already was what you designated it as? The designated object is nowhere to be found, it is simply an imputation, a way of thinking, a way of talking.

And whenever any mental afflictions such craving and hostility arises, examine the object of that mental affliction, that which you crave, that which you're angry at. See whether you have reified it and if so, unreify it by identifying the basis of designation that which you designate upon that basis and then reify, imagine that it's somehow out there in and of itself and you're simply witnessing it, there's the delusion.

All phenomena, without exception, are by nature nameless, even pleasure and pain they do not have their own borders, they do not define themselves and therefore all appearances are empty, luminous, manifest but empty of their own identity.

All subjective states of consciousness and mental processes are nameless, empty of inherent nature. All objectively appearing phenomena empty of inherent nature and the demarcation between subject and object - empty of inherent nature. All empty.

Rest in that flow of knowing of the emptiness of all phenomena which is not other than the luminosity, the manifest appearing of all phenomena, empty and luminous, empty and manifesting, sustain that flow of knowing. Nothing arising and nothing passing. Nothing existent and nothing non-existent. Nothing coming and nothing going. Nothing that is singular and nothing that is plural

Rest your awareness is a state free of all conceptual elaborations, all constructs, all labels, let your awareness rest in utter stillness, a stillness beyond stillness in motion, stillness that is always there, primordially still, and primordially luminous.

Alan's comments/teachings:

What is the Buddha's good for? It is a quite important question especially for one that does want to become a Buddha for the sake of all sentient beings you want to know – ok, I can actually do something.

It is quite true that in so far as we realize the emptiness of the phenomena that we're experiencing and we see that they are not simply being 'dished up' something that is adversity, something that is felicity, something that is unpleasant and pleasant, is not inherently real, it is just 'dished up' objectively. Good.

What does that have to do with the activities of the Buddha's? It does show that insofar as we realize the emptiness of the phenomena then we can reboot, we can reconfigure, we can view them [phenomena] in a different way what other people regard as adversity, we can see as aids to the path. That is Lojong.

But you could be a Shrakayana, realize the emptiness of nature, I want to achieve enlightenment therefore I can make lemonade without lemons, I mean I am going to put the best face on it, I'm going to make the best of things by designating phenomena, situations and so forth in a way that help me along the path to enlightenment, and doesn't just fill me with frustration and sadness and grief and anger.

But what is the Buddhas good for? That is certainly loosened things up, it liberates us from the notion of being simply victims of reality. What are the Buddhas good for? For the blessings of the Buddhas to arise and being recognized, I think that must come in response to a question or a supplication. I think if there's no quest, just hanging out in samsara, you're already getting the blessings of the Buddha's by hanging out and pursuing the three jewels of wealthy, power and fame and the blessings of the Buddhas will be really help you along [to the path]. Oh, don't think so. I really do not think so at all. You're gambling, you're playing in the great casino of samsara hoping for the best, hoping to be lucky, hoping to be a good and very clever gambler. And there are such people, very clever gamblers, they still lose on occasion. There are clever gamblers and foolish gamblers but when all is said and done, it's still gambling.

But insofar as the question we are posing to reality and the request, the aspiration we are putting to reality, in so far that is in accordance with reality, insofar as that stems from pure renunciation, authentic motivation to achieve awakening, liberation, insofar as in an even deeper level it stems from bodhichitta, the most majestic of all aspirations, insofar as the motivation is there, the supplication is there, the aspiration, the resolve is there and that is what we're bringing to reality, because it's a gradient, insofar as, and especially if we complement that bodhichitta, or our best approximation of bodhicitta, especially insofar as we complement that with some wisdom of ultimate bodhichitta, realizing emptiness, bring those two together, so not just the realization of emptiness but bringing in the aspiration, the pure motivation I think that's when we open the portal, open the gateway to receiving blessings of the Buddhas.

But does this mean we only receive blessings of the enlightened ones after we're already quite advanced along the path? That's just clearly not true.

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I know from my own experience, the first time in my life that I had some empirical evidence that made me think this is not just a great big mindless machine, really, reality, it was when I was 20. Many of you know this story, I'll keep it short.

But I picked up a book on Dzogchen, it 'spoke' to me, passed my intelligence, I couldn't make sense of it., and it sped right into my intuition and I knew this is what I want to devote my life to. I didn't understand but I knew 'this is it'. 'This is it.' And I was just reading, this book – The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation – one of the treasures of Padmasambhava. I was reading that as I hitch hiked around Western Europe, got way up on the west coast of Norway. I was reading this, just drinking it in, and just knowing 'this is it, this is it. I don't know what it is, but this is it. For sure, this is it.'

And then it just kind of hit a crescendo where I felt now the book is not enough. 'Thank you book' but now I need something more – I need a human being. And the human being I need is a wise old man, somebody I can meet and talk to me and give me some guidance, because that book got me started, it got me revved up, turned me on fire, it lit me up. But I need direction, I need some advice, I need some guidance. And it needs to be a wise old man. Reality – are you listening? A wise old man, make it snappy! I'm feeling something quite urgent here, I wrote in my journal that night.

Reviser's note: revved up - is an expression - 'being energized', comes from revving a car engine to make it go faster.

The next morning my roommate and I, we'd hitch hiked around Europe, he headed off to Scotland for his 3rd year at university, I'm about to head back to Germany for my 3rd year.

Next morning for the first time in 2 months of hitch hiking with my friend, I'm hitch hiking by myself. First time, on a long road – not much in between Bergen and Asaneveien, about five, eight hours It's a long hitch hike. So I got about 1/3 of the way, I'm in the middle of nowhere. Somebody dropped me off, no body picked me up and I waited for hours. Gave up. I'm going to the nearest train station, get out of here and hitch hike from someplace else. Walk against the traffic holding out my thumb. A little black VW bug pulled over, I didn't know why, because I'd forgotten about my thumb. And this funny little man gestured me 'you want a ride? I saw your thumb.' Oh yea, I was hitch hiking. I got into the car, threw my big back pack and my big guitar into the back seat - filled the car, sat down and we drove for 10 minutes. Ten minutes on that road means nothing. And in 10 minutes I learned he was a Buddhist monk and he was a wise old man. I didn't want a wise young woman – I would have wanted something else from her. But a wise old man, that's just what I'd asked for and there it was – dished up! And he was a Buddhist monk and there were probably 3 or 4 Buddhist monks in all of Europe at that time. And he'd lived in Nepal, and he'd lived with Tibetan monks and he gave me just the advice I'd needed. I mean exactly - no more, no less. Just what I needed but no more and no less. And I looked at that and I said 'this just can't be a coincidence.' and I wasn't wise. I had understanding of emptiness? Emptiness is a glass with no water in it. I knew what empty was – there were no deep insights there. But I looked at that and said, 'there's something going on here, something really mysterious, because this just – to say that's coincidence, that just sounds foolish and then, I won't tell the rest of the story, but the very next step, I got to Göttingen planning on studying philosophy and ecology. Ecology they didn't offer at all, and philosophy – so boring. Old men thinking dry thoughts, most of them dead. It had no appeal. But there was one Tibetan lama who had just been appointed to that university by the Dalai Lama. I became his only student.

So, I won't tell you all the other coincidences that arose after that, but these are ones that just kind of rose up to meet me, like – are you awake at all? Hello?

And then another time, I got hepatitis, was when I was in Dharamsala. I was almost dead. That didn't feel like much of a blessing at all. I mean, it didn't feel like a blessing at all. It felt just like I'd been sick an awful lot, suffered an awful lot. And I was suffering to death and I was really not happy with that, 'cause I was only 24, no 23. Really didn't want to die. That didn't feel like blessing to me at all. Felt like being really so weak, my urine the color of coca cola. Really sick.

But a friend Sharpa Rinpoche, I was kind of well known. there weren't so many people around – westerners – and I was the only one. I was the only one at that time at the Buddhist School of Dialectics, the other two had gotten sick and left. They both got hepatitis, they split. Lars and George, they both left. They left.

I got hepatitis for the third time, so Sharpa Rinpoche, who knew me rather well, everybody I know was dying. So he went to Khyabje Trijang Rinpoche said 'Alan's dying, what'll we do? Say goodbye? What'll we do?'

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Trijang Rinpoche did an ‘mo...’, a divination – said ‘he’s not going to die, go to another doctor’.

I wasn’t going to Yeshe Dhonden, I was going to another doctor, a very good one. ‘Go to that doctor and he’s going to live’. So, he went to Kaybje Trijang Rinpoche came up and told me ‘Go back to Yeshe Dhonden’. I was taking his medicine, it didn’t work. That’s why I freaked out and went to another doctor, Lama Losang. But her herbal medicine wasn’t working either. I was really freaking out. He said go back to Yeshe Dhonden. So the next – I started getting well.

So the point here, a long story, is that we’re in the beginning of phases that pass. It’s like, the sun comes out and you say that’s manifesting the blessings of the Buddha. Meeting that monk in Norway, having the Lama in Gottingen. Having the Monastery right there, having the letter come from Dharamsala, having the library open just when I needed it, having the Buddhist School of Dialectics open just when I needed it. Having Geshe Rabten getting me back to Switzerland just when I needed it, His Holiness bringing me back to India just when I needed it.

The timing was always impeccable. But, as one’s eyes of wisdom become wider opened, less veiled, less filled with dirt, then you see it more often.

And then the clouds come over again, it feels like there’s no blessing, like you’re on your own and it’s just crappy karma. But, as you develop wisdom more and more deeply and the intuition and heart opens at that deepest level, the ‘two’, the prajna, the wisdom of seeing the emptiness and the Yeshe, primordial consciousness of intuiting the omnipresent blessings of the Buddha, then you start to live more and more in the flow, that it’s every day. It’s not really good story in Bergen in 1970 and then another good story in 71 in (unknown), and so forth and so on. It’s just an on going flow – all of it empty but all of it saturated by blessings every single moment.

And the whole notion of karma appears now, just as empty appearances. What’s actually manifesting, that you’re tasting, you’re drinking in, is an on going flow of nothing other than blessings of the Buddha and you’re living in a pure land because there’s no place that enlightenment of the Buddhas is not present. There’s no place that mind of the Buddhas is not present. There’s no place that the path is not present.

Always there, when you’re in good health, when you’re sick, when you’re dying and when you’re dead.

Always there.

So, that’s my view.

Not that I’ve realized that, but that my view.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti and Diane Strully

Revised by Diane Strully

Final edition by Rafael Carlos Giusti

87 Mindfulness of breathing (1)

15 Oct 2012

[There was some talk about adjusting the sound equipment]

All right. Since what I’m about to say is not utterly essential, um, I’ll go ahead and say this now as we hope to get that fixed.

It’s just a little anecdote but it’s one that’s part of my own life and it’s obviously remained with me for a very long time, I think I was maybe twelve or so when this happened. It was in school and so the class gathered, I can’t even remember which teacher it was but the teacher said, “Alright class we have now a very limited time for you to, and this is going to be a test on how well you follow instructions. And there’s a set of directions of things that you need to do and you have a relatively short time to do them. So I want you to follow the instructions very, very carefully and you will be tested on this or graded on this and before you begin read through all the instructions and then begin. Okay?”

(3:05) So it was rather a long list of things, trivial kind of mundane pointless tasks. Um, and so I like I think every other person in the class, every other student in the class glanced through the whole set of instructions but it was a lot of them and we knew that the time was very short and so basically just started to work and it was like, “take this piece of paper and rip it in three places here, and now do this.” Just one meaningless task, but a lot of detail and one step by step and looking at the clock, and we’re running out of time ...and now do

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this, and write three little lines here, and just one trivial meaningless task after another, one after another, after another and then finally as we see that the hour has about come to an end, I came to the final point of instruction and that said, “ignore all the previous instructions and sit quietly.” [laughter] And I looked at all the others students and they also had shredded pieces of paper and all kinds of... all the crap that they put us through and I was one of them and there was no way you could hide it, no way you could kind of [demonstrates hiding] like, you know [laughter]. And of course the instructions were at the beginning, “read through all the instructions before you begin.” And not one of us did it. And in the meantime we spent the whole hour devoting ourselves to completely meaningless trivia. Only to get humiliated at the end. That was our reward. [laughs] All right. And so, what’s the moral of that story?

This whole eight weeks has begun with a very, very simple practice that’s very very easy to forget entirely about and that is: settling your body, speech and mind in its natural state. Right? And one could almost say that the whole of the teaching is included there. So that’s what I’d like to do this morning. Now as you well know, we’ve finished with our one on one meetings, but what I’d like to do now for the remaining four days, including Thursday of course, is I’ll stay with you until 10 o’clock, and we’ll have a guided meditation each of the mornings and we’re going to do shamatha for each of the mornings, just do a twenty four minute session and then I’ll try to deal with the mail here and also try to find some balance of responding to live questions right here, okay?

So that will be the mornings, the afternoons will be something different each afternoon. And so, it’s pretty reasonable now, the echo’s gone. Comme ci, comme ça, yeah? Just okay. But our time is very precious so let’s just jump in. Danny if you can continue tweaking that, that would be great. There’ll be no new material here, at least not for a couple of days, uh, but I would like to go back and just give you a refresher course. And this morning it will be...mindfulness of breathing.

Meditation:

In the spirit of loving kindness for yourself and others, which is to say the aspiration to find genuine happiness and to cultivate its causes, in the spirit of kindness, let your awareness descend into the body or illuminate the space of the body, right down to the ground. You’ve entered a non-conceptual space so to the best of your ability don’t bring any concepts with you, any rumination, any chit chat; it simply clutters the space. While letting your awareness rest in its own place, seated upon its own throne so to speak, let your awareness illuminate the whole space of the body. And here and there by way of the density of the earth element you may note, areas that feel constricted, tight. Gently attend to them as you breathe in and as you breathe out release.

Soften all of the muscles of your face, especially those around the eyes, let your forehead feel spacious, let your eyes feel soft, relaxed.

Having settled your body in a posture of ease and comfort and optimally if not during this session when you are meditating on your own, in the supine position, to utterly relax the body and from that ground let your body be still and at least psychologically adopt a stance of vigilance, of clarity. If you’re sitting upright let your sternum be slightly lifted, keeping your abdomen loose and relaxed, let the sensations of the breath flow down to the belly. Then moving on to a subtler challenge in order to gently let your mental speech come to rest in its natural state of effortless silence, take on the increasingly subtle challenge of letting your respiration flow in its natural rhythm. And this can be done if and only if your mind is very quiet, you’ll drown it out with rumination and that will prevent the respiration from settling deeper and deeper into its own natural and healing rhythm.

Remember that the key is the out breath, taking advantage of each one as an opportunity to relax more and more deeply in the body, surrendering your muscles to gravity, to utterly releasing the breath and to simply letting go of rumination. And the key to the out breath is the very end of the out breath, you must be especially silent here so that you can be thoroughly present in the present moment, releasing, releasing all the way through the end. And if there is a pause, let there be a pause, and when the time is ripe let the breath flow in of its own accord without pulling it in, without inhibiting it, freely receiving the breath that flows in of its own accord so that you remain as relaxed as the breath flows in as you were when it flowed out.

Releasing all thoughts pertaining to the past and the future, and allowing thoughts to arise pertaining to the present only insofar as this internal coaching or guiding yourself in the practice is helpful. Apart from that let

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your awareness come to rest in stillness in the present moment.

The balance here is to relax more and more deeply especially with every out breath without losing the clarity with which you began.

And when the in breath is long note that it is long and when the out breath is long note that it is long.

As your mind quiets and the whole system of body and mind settles into a deeper state of equipoise, when the in breath is short, simply note that it is short and when the out breath is short, note that it is short.

Let the light of your awareness illuminate the whole space of the body and bring to this space exactly the same quality of awareness of mindfulness that you bring to the space of the mind when you settle your mind in its natural state, attending closely, freshly, moment by moment, observing the tactile events, earth, water, fire and air, observe the tactile feelings or somatic feelings that arise within the space but whatever arises simply observe its nature without distraction, without grasping, without preference, without identification, whatever arises just let it be. Letting your awareness illuminate this space and whatever arises within it, but without your awareness becoming cognitively fused with that space or with the events that arise within it. View the somatic space as if from the perspective of the substrate consciousness, clear, luminous and non-conceptual.

Quietly and clearly let your awareness illuminate the whole space of the body, mindfully breathing in, mindfully breathing out, attend to the whole body.

In the shamatha practice of mindfulness of breathing we selectively attend just to those sensations associated with the in and out breath which become subtler and subtler and subtler as you mindfully breathe in and out and the whole composite system of your body is soothed and calmed as it settles in a state of equipoise and your mind does likewise.

The natural course of this practice following the teachings of Asanga involves the sensations of the breath, of the prana, becoming subtler and subtler. And simultaneously along that same course, conceptualization will diminish and diminish further and further until your mind slips into non-conceptuality. The sensations of the breath, the prana, dissolve into space and your awareness shifts from the desire realm to the threshold of the form realm and you achieve shamatha. Keep it simple. It's the nature of the practice.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Revised by Mark Montgomery

Final edition by Rafael Carlos Giusti

88 Mindfulness of phenomena (3)

15 Oct 2012

Oh la so! So today, our last day of silence, and the last day of looking into the fourth of the four applications of mindfulness. We return to Shantideva for the last time. And there was an earlier edition of my translation of the text which you've all had for some days, but I had the English translation from the Sanskrit, which I said was about eighty years old, and it had a whole page of further material that isn't in the Tibetan. And I checked two different copies from the Tibetan, um, Tengyur, so the Tibetan canon. And both of them just cut right off and it just a little bit odd to me. Like, it seemed like it just stopped at the end of the chapter, whereas the Sanskrit version seemed to come to a more rounded end. So then I went back and I translated that extra section as well. So I've given you a new draft, a PDF file, showing curly brackets, okay this part's in Sanskrit but not in Tibetan. So then you have the whole thing. Okay?

So, and I think by now after all of these eight weeks we've spent together I think this will be... a little bit familiar. Uh, probably no big surprises coming. (1:24)

So let's just jump right in. From the Siksasamuccaya, his thirteenth chapter, we're about half way through it.

No, no actually much further than that. Um, but half way through the section on the close application of mindfulness of phenomena. And he begins with a... that is where we left off. We now recommence with a citation from the Arya Lalitavistara Sutra, it's [inaudible] and it's really quite nice. It means *A Discourse on the Dance of the Great Expanse*, it is quite nice, quite poetic. So, but here's what it says; if this sounds like a dance of the great expanse, then you're really seeing it from the inside and not from the outside:

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“Composite phenomena are impermanent and unstable.” So composite again means just anything that arises in dependence upon causes and conditions. **“They are subject to destruction, like an unbaked pot. They are like a borrowed article. Like a sandcastle, they do not last long. These composite phenomena are destructible, like plaster during the rainy season. They are like sand on a riverbank. They are fragile, for they depend on contributing conditions. Composite phenomena are like the diminishing flame of a lamp, for their nature is to quickly arise and pass away. Like the wind, they do not remain. Like a bubble, they are fragile and devoid of an essence. Composite phenomena are unmoving and empty.”** So the first part of this [introduction] I have to apologize a little bit for breaking into the flow of that. All of that, that first part of this citation emphasizing the relative nature of these phenomena, that they are momentarily arising, all destruction, and so forth. But now as you come to the end of this paragraph then there’s suddenly a shift. After saying they arise, they pass away, they’re fleeting and so forth. And then there’s a shift. And it says, **“composite phenomena are unmoving.”** Wait a minute, wait a minute. They’re unmoving and empty, unmoving and empty. So that’s..., and its *mieu*, which means just that. They don’t budge, they don’t waver, they don’t flicker, they don’t move. That’s *mieu*. And so it’s very literal. I tend to be a literal translator. So, **“composite phenomena are unmoving and empty. When investigated, they are seen to be like a mound of plantain trees.”** Plantain trees are notoriously known for being hollow inside, they look really firm on the outside but they have no inner. They’re just empty. **“Like an optical illusion, they delude the mind, and they are like an empty fist used to coax a child.”** Like, “I’ve got candy. I got candy. No, I don’t.”

So, I think it’s getting definitely close to time for a final examination. And I’m the teacher, ha ha ha. **“Composite phenomena are unmoving and empty.”**

If I give you this great big hint. But the first part is all about the relative nature. When he says empty, well we know that. We have a pretty good sense, because this is coming after the first three applications of mindfulness. Unmoving, unmoving, what sense do you make of that? Empty, empty of inherent nature. Where’s this unmoving coming from? What’s your sense? Tanya what’s your sense? When he says that composite phenomena are unmoving what do you imagine he means by that? (answer inaudible) It’s a concept. I think you’re exactly right. I think you’re exactly right. It’s a concept. She’s a Finn. They use very few words. [laughter] And if I can’t figure it out, that’s my problem. [laughs] But I think I did figure it out. And that is, soon as we... that is how do we know about any... How do we ever identify any composite phenomena? Well, we have to distinguish this from that, right? As soon as we distinguish this we have locked it in, we’ve got a grid, there is Patrice, there’s Mike, there’s Dani, there’s Gran, and so boom! And now, okay there’s one composite phenomena, one, two three, four, boom! The conceptual designation comes out and that conceptual designation does not budge. The conceptual designation’s static, it’s static. You know Patrice, you know Patrice. I’ve known her off and on for forty years, lost sight a little bit, but nevertheless, but yeah, I remember you, you are that young gal about nineteen years old, very slender. There she is right over there. The concept is static, it’s unmoving, but then when you look for the referent of the label, the label Patrice, Patrice, Patrice, how many ways are there that you’ve heard that pronounced? It’s pretty much the same name and the same concept, right? Static. But then when you look for the referent of the name, lo and behold, not the body, not the mind, not anywhere else. Empty. So unmoving and empty, and that’s my best sense too. Good, she’s been meditating for while by the way. It shows. So to continue on, and, **“Like an optical illusion.”**

(8:17) You know what that is, and that is they appear to be really there from their own side just like a magical illusion, an optical illusion, they delude the mind, they trick us and they’re like an empty fist, okay, empty fist **“So all changes in composite phenomena are brought about by causes and conditions with one acting as the cause for another.”** I think I’m maybe going to pause again... Yep, I am going to.

(8:42) That strong emphasis, it’s so, such an enormously central point in Buddhist world view, Buddhist teachings of the, all of these composite phenomena, ourselves, our loved ones, our possessions, our relationships everything that we cherish pretty much hedonically, everything that people value, hold on to, cherish, all here is unstable, impermanent subject to destruction, destructible like sand on a river bank, diminishing, fading away, passing away, fragile, devoid of essence. Whew... you know, so that whole emphasis.

Why are they emphasizing this? If one is viewing reality from a hedonic perspective, if that’s your view that happiness is the pursuit of hedonic wellbeing, and the avoidance of hedonic misery and unhappiness then this

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is just like getting smacked on the head with a two by four. I mean it just takes all the fun out, you know, "I finally found my dream partner, I finally found the dream car, the ultimate driving machine, the neighborhood I always wanted to move in, finally I'm able to get in, etc, etc. And it's just going... And it's just cutting it off at the knees, all that stuff, all that, all that. I think the point here is that this is actually reality, he's not being pessimistic, he's not being optimistic, this is just the way it is, just the way it is. And if one is in the midst of reality purely in the pursuit of hedonic wellbeing the avoidance of hedonic pain, discomfort, suffering, if one gets a glimmering of this, if one gets some sense, maybe a loved one dies, or you lose your job, or one of your children is terribly ill or just anything happens or there's economic distress in your country or on the planet there's environmental problems and so forth, there's a lot of corruption in politics, corruption in medicine, corruption in education, in the medical system, did I say that already, in the pharmaceutical industry, so many things, and one's own health being so fragile and one looks around and one can just fall into just a nosedive of depression recognizing how difficult it is to find even a little teaspoon of hedonic pleasure in such a world, really difficult. So depression is kind like would be a very realistic response to attending closely to this reality from a hedonic perspective, and that is... so why bother, why bother, why bother at all? And when one looks to the future, so there we have one depression, chronic, clinical abiding depression. And then when we look to the future how do things look tomorrow or next year and so forth? Anxiety, general anxiety disorder would be a very realistic response, because how confident can you be unless you're just flat out delusional that everything's going to turn out well? Just believe me, your kids are going to turn out swell. You're going to have better and better health for the rest of your life and you're going to die of happiness. And all your relationships are going to turn out really well and the economy really is going to turn around and human beings are going to be so intelligent and farsighted that we will solve the environmental problems we've created and things have gotten so bad in the medical industry and the pharmaceutical industry they're going to just start reciting Vajrasattva forever, you know, to purify all that they've done and we're going to get it altogether and this is gone turn out really well. Well one may not believe that, in which case the alternative is just to fall into general anxiety disorder that maybe that won't happen.

(12:37) So for the future general anxiety disorder, for the present depression and then when you look to the past, who among us hasn't been traumatized in some way? So when we go down memory lane we can slip onto the little shoot of post traumatic stress disorder. And in the midst of this, this is just bound to give rise to an awful lot of rumination, of anxiety and mulling over and..., about the past and all the rotten things that have happened and the things that will likely happen in the future that are rotten or will be rotten and then depressive and depressing rumination about things that are happening in the present that are rotten, uh, that when you're caught in rumination, this gives rise to attention hyper activity disorder but it's so exhausting that when you're finished with that you fall into attention deficit disorder because you are so fatigued by all the rumination. And so you zone out at the end of the day watching television and that stirs up more rumination, so when you try to fall asleep you can't and so to round it off to make sure you have a really rich life you've got depression for the present, anxiety for the future, post traumatic distress disorder pertaining to the past, overall attention deficit hyper activity disorder and when you try to finally call it quits at the end of the day then you have insomnia. [laughter] And um, did I miss out on anything?

(14:05) And again as long we are operating completely from a hedonic perspective, you can be absolutely certain that there is a drug for all occasions. They've got to have drugs for post-traumatic distress disorder and then for all of the others as well.

(14:15) And so we have one professional composer here and I am actually a non-professional composer of music, yeah. I haven't made a living out of it, but I actually composed a song this afternoon. And I'd like to share it with you. And then you can judge for yourself whether you think I might be able to actually make a living as a song writer. And I'll sing it for you so you can see whether I can make my living as a song writer or actually a performer. So are you ready for my performance, okay? I will sing it once but I think you will get it quite quickly. You ready?

Drug, drug, drug, your brain blindly down the drain. Drearily, drearily, drearily, drearily spend your life in vain. [applause]

That could be pretty catchy, don't you think [laughter] for some big pharmaceutical industry, our little jingle is [laughter], you know?

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(15:23) So why is Shantideva doing this to us, and why does the Buddhist tradition as a whole? To wake us up, to wake us up. If there were no alternative, if there were no other source of wellbeing, if there were no way to flourish in the midst of the kind of world we have now and of course there have been many, many bad times. I think it was the fourteenth century, with the bubonic plague, one can say that was a bad time, and it swept all the way across Asia to Europe, wiped out one third of the population and there have been depressions, there have been wars. There's been so many types of adversity on all of the continents. That here is the great challenge of Buddhism, how can we flourish in the midst of that, you know, and that's what Dharma is for, so to really focus clearly in on the reality of impermanence.

The Buddha said of all of the footprints of wild creatures, the biggest one is that of an elephant and of all the meditations that makes an imprint upon your mind, that really has an impact on the mind... meditation on impermanence, impermanence, it really does it. But it does it if and only if, this is my absolutely strong conviction, if and only if you see an alternative to the pursuit of hedonic wellbeing. We know that the world can be depressing, we know all of that. We don't want to be reminded, that's why the two greatest drugs that people are taking to try to anesthetize the mind from the reality of impermanence and then the symptoms of depression and anxiety are work and entertainment, those are the biggest drugs. Stay busy all day until you're almost wiped out, watch television and then go comatose so you can work all day, wipe yourself out, get a bit of entertainment. And after all you do have, in Europe I think five weeks of vacation, isn't it five weeks vacation? Six! Wow! They really reward you for beating your brains out. In America I think only two isn't it? Two! So it's merciless, it's really merciless and so it's work and entertainment, work and entertainment. Poof! That's it.

And so Buddhadharma's offering an alternative to numbing ourselves into insensibility and that is by attending more closely to reality rather than withdrawing from reality. That's why you can see, I just don't go for it, that we're all returning to the real world on Thursday. So there we are. But that's a little commentary on that.

But the point there is that we know about this, you know this is not really new. Nobody said, "Oh, why didn't you tell me that relationships break, that people die, that people..., and so forth?" We know it but we don't want to think about it, we do not want to attend to because it's depressing, right? And so here he is, he says, yes, do attend to it. But to my mind it's this very strong conviction once again since we know about the reality of suffering and how depressing and anxiety driven and so forth that can be, to my mind it's got to be balanced with knowing. To balance that out with simply belief, "Well don't worry you are going to heaven afterwards, just, you know, believe in the right things and we'll tell you exactly what those are, believe in those and then it will be swell. Don't worry, it'll be after your dead, you know, whether it's Christian, whether it's Buddhist, Hindu or whatever uh, that to my mind, there's not a symmetry there. One we know, and the other one's just blind faith? And likewise lamrim can be presented in that way. So here it is and so we know about reality of suffering, we know about the reality of impermanence and then but then if the other is just all belief, okay, believing in the six realms of existence, believing in pure lands, believing in nirvana, believing in..., that other people have achieved samadhi, that other people have achieved vipashyana, other people have achieved stage of generation and completion. If it's all knowledge on one side and belief on the other, that's, that doesn't quite seem to be suitable. So I think there's got to be knowledge on both sides, must be knowledge on both sides and that's what we've been exploring for these last eight weeks, not an indoctrination into a whole world view that will somehow if you believe that, that will make you happy, but practices to go deeper into reality, into the nature of your mind, of awareness, into the four applications of mindfulness to scrutinize, examine impermanence and so on, and then finding in the midst of all of that a sense of inner peace, of calm. Wellbeing in the body, wellbeing in the mind emerges from within. And that's staring impermanence right in the face and saying, "I see you I see you and I can flourish despite you." So, powerful medicine, powerful medicine. But that same paragraph could lead others into simply a chronic depression and anxiety and everything else.

(20:15) So we continue from the same sutra, **"All changes in composite phenomena are brought about by causes and conditions, with one acting as the cause for another, which arises in dependence upon it. But childish people do not realize this. For example, a grass rope is made by twisting muñja grass and well-buckets are turned by a wheel, but neither of those is brought about by the individual elements."** So no one individual strand of grass makes a rope. No one ratchet on the wheel for the well buckets, like in a, you know,

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in a water wheel, no one of them does the job. **“Likewise, all the links of becoming are brought about in dependence upon other links,”** This is referring to the twelve links of dependent origination. **“but they are not brought about individually,”** No one of them will do the whole job. **“nor is their past or future ever perceived.”**

So here, this whole theme here is pratityasamutpada. All composite phenomena are brought about by causes and conditions, this mutual interdependence, but then when you look for the individual components and try to isolate them, identify them, pull them out and look at them nakedly, devoid of context, by their own inherent nature..., not to be found! So there it is. That’s the essence of the teachings of dependent origination and emptiness, actually referring to the same reality. I just find it awesomely brilliant. This is Nagarjuna, classic Nagarjuna. But here it is from a sutra.

“Just as there is a sprout if there is a seed, but the sprout is not the seed, nor is it other than the seed, nor is it both, so its nature is neither permanent nor annihilated.”

That is the sprout wasn’t always there, nor is it really annihilated, nor is the sprout really annihilated, nor is the seed really annihilated, passing into non-existence as a real entity when the sprout arises. So similarly, **“Ignorance is the cause of composite phenomena, but composite phenomena are not really existent. Ignorance and composite phenomena are empty of inherent nature, and they do not waver.”** It comes back to that same point with Tanya. **“The impression of a seal”** like an old fashioned seal, like a wax seal **“The impression of a seal appears from the seal,”** You place it down, there’s the impression. **“but no transference of that cause is ever observed. The impression is not in the seal, nor is it anywhere else. So composite phenomena are neither permanent nor annihilated.”** They’re not always really there, they are never really there in the first place nor are they ever passing into non-existence. **“Visual consciousness arises in dependence upon the eye and form, but the eye does not depend on form, nor is form transferred from the eye. These are by nature identityless and impure, but they are imagined as having identities”** that is, an inherent nature, **“and as being pure. Even though that imputation is erroneous and unreal, visual consciousness arises from it. The wise see that consciousness ceases and emerges, arising and passing. The yogin sees that it does not go anywhere nor come from anywhere, like an empty illusion.”**

So there he goes right to the core, the emptiness of consciousness itself and not only all the objects of consciousness.

“For example, fire arises in dependence upon the three factors of a fire drill stick,” one of those you go like this, [demonstrates rotating a fire stick in his hands] you rub between your hands, **“the basis for that drill,”** where you put the fire stick into, **“and the manual effort of turning it; but once it has arisen, it does not last long. Then when the wise examine this, looking in all directions to see where it comes from,”** that flame, **“and where it goes, they find that its coming and going are unobservable. The wise say that the contributing conditions of the psychophysical aggregates and sense-bases are ignorance and craving, and from their assemblage there is a sentient being. But ultimately that is unobservable.”**

(24:30) So that’s the end of the chapter in Tibetan but then the Sanskrit continues from the same sutra:

“In dependence upon the lips, throat, and palate, from the movement of the tongue emerge the sounds of letters, but they are not in the throat or the palate, and the letters are unobservable in any of them. The speech that depends upon their combination emerges by the power of the intelligence of the mind, but the mind and speech are invisible and formless. They are not observed either inside or outside. When the wise examine the arising and passing of the sounds of speech, the voice, sounds, and melodies, they see that all speech is like an echo, momentary, and without an essence.”

For example, when the threefold combination of hand movements in conjunction with wood and strings, pleasant sounds arise from such instruments as a lute and flute. Then when the wise look in all the cardinal and intermediate directions to find where the sound arises from and where it goes, they find that it’s coming and going are unobservable. Thus, all the transformations of composite phenomena arise from causes and contributing conditions. But the yogin who perceives what is real sees that composite phenomena are empty and unmoving. The psychophysical aggregates, sense-bases, and elements are empty inside and empty outside. They are all devoid of an identity and without location. The characteristic of phenomena is the essential nature of space.

(26:31) So once again two sides of the same reality, that is if just viewed from different perspectives. On the one hand the utter uncertainty, the utter flux nature of all composite phenomena, the uncertainty, the ever

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changing nature of everything around us, from one perspective and it's very simply the hedonic perspective. It's just depressing. It's demoralizing, maybe suicidally, you know, mind numbing and from the side of eudaimonia it is just the way reality is. One accepts it with risk. And of course it's only because composite phenomena are impermanent that we have any chance of ever gaining release from suffering and the causes of suffering, following the path to enlightenment and achieving awakening. If phenomena were not impermanent that wouldn't be possible.

(27:25) And likewise coming back to the point that Elizabeth made earlier in a written question, emptiness, I know some translators, not many, but some translators just don't like the word, even though it's just the literal translation of the word. It just means..., *shunya* means empty, *tomba* means empty, that's just all it means, it just means empty. But again if one hears the word or hears this description without the understanding, one would think, "Oh man it's not only are all phenomena impermanent but they're empty too! I thought life was empty and now that's what the Buddhists say too, it must be true. Life totally sucks because it's completely empty." Okay? Which means you've entirely missed the point, entirely missed the point, empty of inherent nature, empty of inherent nature, not intrinsically empty of meaning. Right? I mean Shantideva's saying elsewhere in the text, in his other text, this one, take the essence, find the essence. Take the essence of the meaningful life. Right? (28:12)

But then some of you will recall the story of the monk from *Natong*. This is a rather famous story from Tsongkhapa's life. The monk from *Natong*, Tsongkhapa giving teachings on emptiness. And large congregation of monks, and there was one monk there from the District of *Natong*, one region of Tibet. Tsongkhapa was teaching from his profound realization, his brilliant intellect, great, enormously eloquent and articulate. And so as he's teaching, I mean, some people are being drawn right into the realization of emptiness as he's speaking. It's happened many, many times in Buddhist history. So this monk from *Natong* was listening very intently just drinking it in and then suddenly he just freaked. I think probably something like... [demonstrates], like that, you know. Just his face going into like luhh! And he grabbed his collar, he grabbed his collar. You remember? And then Tsongkhapa being clairvoyant, he picked him out of the crowd and he said, "Ah, this monk from *Natong*, he's just established conventional reality with respect to his collar".

So the point there is that this monk wasn't really ready to have some powerful insight into emptiness because still too much clinging, too much grasping, self-centeredness, grasping, attachment and so forth. And what if you are coming at it from that, then I think it was Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey told me if you approach the teachings on emptiness as an unripe or unsuitable vessel, that if you get some insight into the reality of emptiness you will feel shattered as if you've just lost your most precious possession, that which you thought was really, really there. Empty! You've lost it, right? So not exactly good news. Whereas another person who is well prepared, well prepared for developing renunciation, the four immeasurables, bodhichitta and so forth, who's well prepared, cultivating the first five of the perfections such a person having the same insight, if one can imagine an insight transplant. Take that person's insight and transplant it over into this person's mind stream and that person upon gaining some real insight into emptiness feels the he has found the most precious treasure. So one feels he's lost the most, the other one feels he's found the most.

So how are the teachings on emptiness not depressing, demoralizing, shattering nihilistic? There is a very simple reason for it. If all of us here in this room and everybody outside listening by podcast, everybody on the planet, if we all each of us here, each of us anywhere, if we actually did exist as autonomous self-existent, ego entities, really there from their own side, the immediate and unavoidable implication is: radical, radical alienation because this means I am totally separate, absolutely separate from everybody else and then it doesn't stop there, in other words there's no real connection because I am imprisoned here inside my body and mind, you know the controller, the ego, the agent "me" and my hand always does that, "Hello you did it again. I see you, you know." It always goes into the fist of this contraction within, and if that's who I really am, then Daniel's wellbeing is really none of my concern. I'm sorry but that's just the way it is because he's over there with his clenched fist. He's trapped within his body-mind as an absolutely separate individual, ego, person. So if I feel like it I might say, you know, "Good luck, Daniel." But how can I really care because he's just absolutely unrelated to me. There's no connection. He may as well be from another galaxy, if that's how we are. So the reification, this reification of self, self and others which means the reification of the separation from self and others is absolute which means it absolutely guts any true sense of empathy or compassion or loving kindness.

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(32:42) So what does it mean then? So that's not how I feel about Daniel. It would be, I don't know, it would be just incredibly sad to view reality from that perspective and that is the perspective I think some people approximate. People have said, you know, "I'm out for myself, I'm out for myself. I'm one of the stronger ones, the strong survive. The weak people, tough luck on you." [claps twice] So there we are.

(33:05) But then where's the human touch, where's the warmth, where's the moisture of the teachings on emptiness because it's not nihilism, it's not that I don't exist at all, that never comes up at all if one properly understands the teachings. It never comes up at all that we simply don't exist at all.

(33:21) But since I do not exist as an inherently separate entity, ego, self, person, but I'm constantly arising and constantly arising in relationship to those around me, arising as a grandfather, as a teacher, as a spouse, as a son, as a friend, as a customer and so forth, always arising, arising, and always in interrelationship with no nuclear, no separate selves anywhere, but all is arising in mutual interdependence. It's in that context, a profound and essential interdependence that Shantideva in his eighth chapter, the immediately preceding chapter to this one, raises that question, and I'm sure I cited it earlier, "Why should I be concerned for the suffering of others?" He asks himself this. "Because it creates more suffering for me to take seriously, to be concerned about other people's suffering, that's more suffering for me, so why should I do that?" He's asking himself and the answer comes in in the very next one, "Because it's suffering and suffering has no owner." And we say, "Oh, oh." And that is, we're all in this together.

And so compassion really, empathy, loving kindness, compassion is the only realistic way to attend to others and of course to ourselves.

So that's it, teachings on emptiness actually are the, I mean to say it really fancy, epistemic foundation for compassion, loving kindness and bodhichitta and the opposite is the foundation for nihilism, aloofness, indifference and sociopathic self-centeredness. So then we continue.

(34:58) And now with the final quote, it's quite short, from the *Lokanatha-vyakarana*. So we'll just go into it.

"Conditions are empty and nameless." Now he's going right for the emptiness teachings. **"Conditions (phenomena at large) are empty and nameless."** They don't have the name already built in. They're not already self-identifying. **"What can be said of a name? Emptiness. Nowhere are devas, nāgas, or rākṣasas to be found. Men or no men, all are known as that."** No type of sentient being is to be found as an inherently existent entity, self, person. **"Names are imputed, but they are empty, for in names there is no name."** That is, even the names are not intrinsically names. Johann. We know that's... any German speaker knows that's a name. I learned it recently. I didn't know that was a name. It's not one of the most common ones, I think. But now I know, and it's a name. But now what makes a Johann a name, whereas Frubash, as far as I know, Frubash Beck, don't call your kids that. [laughs] What makes Johann a name and Frubash not? And maybe I'm just starting, you know, a new trend here. Maybe there'll be a whole plethora of children called Frubash in the near future. But until that happens, I'll assume it's not a name, it's just noise. Right? So what makes Johann a name, referring to a person rather than to a fruit or a vegetable. Whereas Frubash... it's just noise. It's because we decide. So even names are not,... have no inherent existence, let alone the referent of the names. For in names there is no name. **"Nameless are all conditions, but illuminated by name,"** Where's Johann? Where's Johann? Oh, he's right over there. And then that illuminates by demarcating Johann from not Johann. Then we have a clear..."But then you mean that person right there who has a body, who has a mind. He's married to Monica and so forth and so on." "Oh yeah, that's the one I'm talking about, yeah, that one." And then suddenly, "Oh, you mean Johann." And so now suddenly that's illuminated. Right? So on the one hand, names, language illuminates. On the other hand as soon as we reify names and their referents they obscure. So, **"Nameless are all conditions, but illuminated by name, for the nature of a name is neither seen nor heard, it neither arises nor passes away. Of what do you ask the name? Name is a matter of convention, declarations made with labels. This one is Ratnacitra by name;"** a person's name, **"that other man is Ratnottama."** That's it.

This concludes Chapter XIII, "The Close Applications of Mindfulness," from the *Compendium of Practices*, and that concludes the discussion of the close applications of mindfulness by Shantideva. I've got a lot of sutras in there.

Oh, la so! Let's jump right into meditation. (36:59)

Meditation:

Settle your body, speech and mind in their natural states.

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Let your eyes be at least a little bit open, resting your awareness evenly in the space in front of you without focusing on any object, without meditating on anything, simply rest your awareness in the present moment, sustaining the flow of mindful presence without distraction, and without grasping.

And with nothing else occupying your attention, or catching your attention, it may more and more clearly dawn upon you, that you are aware, and you know it. This miracle of consciousness is yours and I say miracle because we know not from what it stems, it stems from a dimension of reality that we have not yet fully comprehended. Here is the first miracle, that we are conscious at all. Rest in the knowing, of being conscious. And this way clearly ascertain the relative nature of awareness, of consciousness with its salient and distinctive characteristics. It is knowing, cognizance. It's luminous, it's bright, clear, transparent, making manifest all manner of appearances, subjective and objective. Clearly ascertain this reality that is so much to your core, of your very existence, being aware.

So here is the label used interchangeably, consciousness, awareness, either will do. Now as you probe into the very nature of awareness identify the referent of that word. What is it that has the qualities of luminosity and cognizance that takes on so many other transitory or adventitious characteristics, of being dull or sharp, agitated or calm, still or in motion and many, many others qualities? What is that awareness itself? And what are its boundaries?

Luminosity and cognizance are two different qualities quite distinct from each other, in no way are they identical. So what is the very nature of this awareness that has these two qualities?

If you find that awareness is un-findable when subjected to this type of scrutiny, rest in that knowing of its unobservability, un-findability, its emptiness.

Then turn your attention outwards to appearances. Since mental objects can be mentally perceived within what is the visual domain, you can imagine seeing things, imagine hearing things, consider that the relative dharmadhatu is the space of awareness and all appearances arise in this more generic, all encompassing space of awareness. As appearances and objects come to mind, examine their nature, probe deeply to see whether anything upon analysis can be found to exist from its own side, by its own intrinsic nature.

All composite phenomena, all appearances are said to be empty and unmoving, they never go from here to there. They appear and yet they are empty, mere configurations of empty space.

With an awareness that is relaxed, still and clear, attend to the emptiness and luminosity of all appearances, all objects of the mind.

Meditation ends

Oh, la so! On a very practical note, when we venture into these very deep issues, reality of suffering, nature of emptiness, and so forth. I know this had an enormous impact on me. Especially when I first went out to India, to live with the Tibetans there, and ever since then. And that is, if you can identify individuals who have just drenched their minds in such realities, in the cultivation of bodhicitta, realization of emptiness, Vajrayana, and so forth, with really authentic practice, and then see how they turn out, see how they turn out. So some of us have had the great fortune, I mean His Holiness had to be so public that many people can have access to him. You know. He wakes up every morning, I mean pretty much regularly at three-thirty and he's just devoting himself to these practices for the last sixty years or so. So if you're wondering how does that turn out? There's one good example. Right? And there are many others as well. So if you meditate extensively on emptiness would you turn out to be withered, dried up, barren, aloof, indifferent, cold, and sad. Not my experience. So, that's actually a really crucial element here. And that is actually be able to encounter people who to a significant extent to really embody what's it like to meditate in that way. And just not just meditation, but drenched, immerse yourself, giving up attachment to this life, letting your mind become Dharma. And I think that's my own sense, that's what really keeps Dharma alive. It's not study, it's not doing rituals, it's not building stupas or building temples and courses, courses, courses. All of this has their place. I'm not disparaging any of them, but all of those can be components of a Dharma museum, where dead Dharma goes to die. But what keeps it alive? All of those having its place. None of those were insignificant. But what keeps it alive is that it can be actually from generation to generation, that you really can encounter people who've had such experiences. That's that.

Oh, la so!

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89 Settling the mind (1)

16 Oct 2012

Teachings:

So if there was ever a time in recent history, or maybe even recorded history when the world was in greater need, of people really taping into the deepest potentials of consciousness, achieving spiritual awakening, manifesting spiritual awakening, I doubt there was ever a time more urgent than now, what do you think? There was an ever greater need than now? We are facing so many challenges, really unprecedented in the worlds history and they are all coming from exploitation of environment, of a greed, of delusion, the same old same old, but now our orders of magnitude - greater than we have ever seen before. So lots of power on that side and lots of manifestation of that side, you know really in your face. So I think really we need people of good great depth now, right? So with that motivation, bodhichitta, ever so swiftly, ever so swiftly, achieve awakening starting from wherever you are. That's it, it's good enough, good enough, isn't? It's good enough then we proceed on.

Let's go right to the meditation.

Meditation:

With this aspiration and commitment to bodhichitta, let's settle the body, speech and mind in its natural state.

Let your awareness come to rest in its own place, holding its own ground, in its own stillness, clarity, cognizance; and from that ground of knowing of knowing, the awareness of awareness and without moving from that ground let your awareness illuminate for a little while the space of the body and whatever events, sensations, feelings arise within that domain both the objective appearances and your subjective ways of experiencing those appearances be they pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. Observe them as if you are having an out-of-body experience, your awareness resting unmoving from its own place.

Let your eyes be at least partially open and rest your gaze vacantly in the space in front of you, keeping your eyes soft and relaxed, unfocused. As you now direct your mindfulness single-pointedly to the space of the mind and to its contents, attending first of all to those that are easiest to discern. For many people these would be the appearances of mental images and of discursive thoughts. Simply observe their nature without seeking to modify them in any way, observe them without preference, without hope and fear. Sustain the flow of mindfulness without distraction, without grasping, letting your awareness rest in stillness as you witness the movements of the mind.

Monitor the flow of mindfulness with introspection and as soon as you see that your attention is being carried away either to some sensory field or by some thought, relax, release, and return.

And if in times you notice that your mind has become spaced out, vague or dull, refresh your interest, refocus your attention, and retain the flow of mindfulness.

Then move on and let your mindfulness also include the subjective impulses, the feelings, the emotions the desires that arise and instead of following the habitual route of cognitively fusing with them, once again let your awareness remain still and observe these upsurges from the flow of awareness, observe how they arise, how they are present and how they pass away, all the while maintaining the stillness of your own awareness, free of distractions, free of grasping.

Then take special note as you attend to the space of the mind and its contents, take special note of the intervals between thoughts, the space time intervals, space in the sense of you are attending to the space of the mind, time - these are the intervals, temporal intervals between one distinct mental event, thought, image and so on, and the next; attend closely the space in between and see for yourself whether it's simply nothing or whether that space can be ascertained, you can discern qualities of it, observe closely the space of the mind which is most evident unmasked, unveiled when the mind is quiet.

You may breathe through the nostrils or through the mouth which ever gives you the sense of unimpeded of respiration, keep your body lucid, relax, the respiration flowing in its natural rhythm.

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Focus your attention primarily now on the space of the mind, space from which thoughts and images emerge in which all of mental events take place and into which all the appearances of the mind eventually dissolve, attend closely to the space of the mind and note its characteristics.

As you sustain that flow of awareness of the space of the mind observe how thoughts and others events emerge from that space, how they are present, and how they dissolve back into space. In the mentally perceived, let be just the mentally perceived.

Teachings:

(26:49) I've got a couple questions here about emptiness, I may read them later, right now I want to see if we can possibly make those teachings practical. We can be rather intimidated or daunted perhaps by the fact that in a traditional Geshe training you spend four years just studying that, and then you may say what are we messing around with here, you know four weeks, four years, you know why are we even venturing into that, if it's so deep, so difficult to fathom? But having said that I mean there are people, plenty of people, students of Buddhist studies who've written dissertations on emptiness, lots and lots, many, many books by scholars, many Tibetan scholars study, study, study and I think quite frequently the arrows never even get near the target because those teachings are designed to actually cut the root of mental afflictions. So it's very easy to approach the teachings intellectually and think – well there's a good problem to be solved - and then ok, how do we solve this, how do we make sense? Or it doesn't make any sense. So it is kind of like taking Chandrakirti's view or Nagarjuna's view or Shantideva's view and subjecting it to critique. You know, how are you doing Shantideva? I'll see how you're doing. So if you want to write a dissertation that's a way of doing it. Life is awfully short and we are suffering every single day from our mental afflictions, they don't wait, right? So how can this become practical? Because I wouldn't have spent four weeks teaching, introducing really from this purely experiential approach, vipashyana approach, I wouldn't have spent those four weeks, we could have spent the whole time on the Pali canon, there's tons of material there very, very rich and isn't such a brain twister, impermanence - we got it, nature of sukha dukkha - not that difficult, non-self that it's not inherent mine - it kind of makes sense, neuroscientists would agree with that, psychologists would agree with that, so what's the problem, why don't we just immerse ourselves in that?

(29:02) But we did spend four weeks, I have no regrets. How can we make it practical? Well this practice, this right here would be a good start; actually the mindfulness of breathing would be a good start. First of all if the central theme here is that if all the phenomena that we experience, and I am choosing my words very carefully, all the phenomena that we experience are arising in dependence upon conceptual designation and do not exist independently of conceptual designation – there in essence, that's it - core theme of Madhyamaka Prasangika, Madhyamaka view, right? Well if that's the case, if our minds are just a router in reverse, of conceptualization, you know like we're just drowning in a pool of conceptual elaborations all over the place, conceptualization gone amok, gone just crazy, bla, bla, bla. How can we see through all the haze to see anything that is or is not conceptually designated, when we are just kind of like having garbage thrown in our face all day long, you know? So it's not a very good platform, it's not a clean lab, it's not a clean lab, right? So to have a clean lab so that we can actually see - this is conceptual designation and this is when it's pausing, turn it off, turn it on, off and on, and then we can start running experiments, but it's just spewing junk all over the place, that's not a clean lab.

(30:06) So therefore rooted in ethics we seek to move into a realm that is clear and knowing but not inundated with involuntary obsessive compulsive delusion or ideation. So mindfulness of breathing first of all, just to clean up the lab, it's like getting a bloom and sweeping out, having a little bit of peace and quiet here, a little bit of sanity, that would be a good start. So a bit of a grounding of relaxation, stability and clarity and then turning that, at our leisure to this domain of the mind, space of the mind.

And now I'll just cite Lerab Lingpa because I have been drawing very heavily this one page complete teaching on this practice which is actually quite enough to achieve shamatha by way of settling the mind in its natural state and he says: when you really become familiar with, adept in this practice, then, and this is almost a verbatim quote, he said - then you'll come to a non-conceptual certainty, ascertainment that nothing, nothing that arises in your mind can harm you, whether or not thoughts have ceased. (30:24) So it's a very interesting statement, ok. And I am going to elaborate just a little bit further on that: a non-conceptual awareness that nothing there in the domain of mind can harm you whether or not thoughts have ceased, in other words, thoughts may continue going on and you're maintaining a non-conceptual awareness of them.

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So I think you, that's clear, yes? I hope everybody is clear on that because if you don't, if you're not clear on that you have not gotten this practice yet.

(31:55) And that is just as I am looking over there, Frank, and I am non conceptual aware of the light shining off of his forehead, the color of his beard and hair and so forth, his head hair, as I am aware of that I can equally be aware of thoughts or a mental image of Frank arising in the space of my mind, or the sound - Frank, or Frank is a man, Frank is married to Cathy, those thoughts occur, and I non conceptual aware, I'm simply witnessing - there they are arising in the space of the mind. So his point then is - as you really learn how to maintain that flow of mindfulness without distraction, without grasping, holding your own ground, then he says, you will see that whatever arises there cannot possibly harm you; because your awareness is free of grasping at least relatively, free of grasping, then you're not reifying, because reifying is always by way of conceptualization always by way of grasping, right?

(32:45) So you're just seeing images coming up and thoughts coming up, you're discerning them, you're intelligent, you're aware of them but you are not using them to think about something else, you're not going off to the referent of the thought, you're simply witnessing with discerning intelligence and mindfulness the events that are arising and as they are arising then you see, not by being really clever and intellectual, analytical and so forth, you simply see - nothing there arising in the space of the mind in terms of all those images, memories, thoughts and so forth, nothing here can possibly harm me, as if you are watching television, watching a movie, whether is a movie about alligators, poisonous snakes, muggers, terrorists, nuclear weapons, explosions and so forth, if you are recognizing the television as the television, the movie screen as a movie screen, then you are seeing - yes those are very horrific images, those are very terrifying images but I am not terrified, those are images. And so in that way you're seeing the emptiness in that little microcosm, you're seeing these are mere empty appearances and there is nothing there that can harm you. Thoughts of low self-esteem harm us only because we identify with them. Unpleasant memories, traumatic memories harm us only because we identify with them and reify them. Exactly so there it is, get your feet wet, get accustomed to seeing that during the waking state as you're attending single pointedly, and this is something cultivated and developed, doesn't come overnight, but as you are seeing these are all empty appearances and you actually see - now I see what they said I should do from the beginning, I can see, I really can do, and that is without preference, without hope, without fear, without desire or aversion, I just can sit there watching TV, I don't have to getting into it, I can just observe quietly, resting in my own awareness and observe infomercials and terrible movies and magnificent movies, naked ladies and ugly men and all kinds of stuff, they are just images, really are just images. So there it is, you see that, and if you are in the course of this, you are actually developing some senses of wellbeing, a sense of inner serenity, of calm, of stillness, of composure and it feels good then you see, oh but I see I don't need these for entertainment value because I am getting nurtured at home, my own awareness is quite content in this clarity, this luminosity, this stillness, this serenity of not being yanked and jerked every which way by all the activities of the mind. I can sit peacefully, quietly, happily and observe whatever's coming up, therefore I don't have to invest myself in pursuing this type of thought and blocking that type of thought, so you're really getting - this is not years and years of practice this is maybe weeks and weeks of practice, maybe you've already have this sense at least on occasion. We see, these are empty appearances, that's it, I see that, right?

(35:56) And then he points out that as you become more and more adept in the practice, especially if you are going full time - this is what you do - you know eight, ten, twelve hours a day, then when you step off the cushion, now this is just straight true, this is not debatable this is something that happens to an awful lot of people had has been going on more than a thousand years so you don't have to believe but I am just telling you it's true, and that is you become very adept in this practice and you are immersing yourself in this practice and for this moment, ten hours a day, what you are attending to is reality when you step off the cushion and you attend to the world around you with all of its sensory fields, the visual coming in, the auditory, the tactile and so forth, you actually see them as empty appearances, that's his term, that is Lerab Lingpa, you see them as empty appearances, right?

And that doesn't mean you don't step out of the way when you see an empty appearances of a Mac truck coming towards you, because the empty appearances of the tactile sensations will be very short and painful and then you will be in the bardo, and that will be consisting of a lot of other empty appearances but you will nevertheless be dead, right? And so cause and effect, this is the crucial thing, cause and effect, rain drops

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dropping on your head, etc, causality is still there even though they are all empty, alright. So this doesn't mean that just by settling the mind in natural state you've realize the emptiness of all phenomena and therefore you are an arya-bodhisattva or something, but this is what happens and it kind of makes sense even before you've experienced it. That as you are getting the flow of not reifying for ten hours a day, let's just say ten hours a day, good solid day, not exceptional but not messing around, a good days work you know. If you've been spending ten hours a day getting pretty good at not grasping onto and reifying the appearances of your mind, observing them, discerningly, intelligently but not reifying them, that becomes a habit, and then when you turn to - oh, but actually all these visual appearances in auditory those also arising in the space of my mind, and that is in the larger six cinema Cineplex, these are really the appearances themselves they are still simply appearances and this is not something you're getting by logic, this is actually just simply how they appear because the tendency of reifying, grasping onto, is slipping over into the post meditate state, and there you are.

(38:19) So that's how things are appearing, now could you still be believing, convinced and grasping onto the real existence of molecules, atoms, mac trucks and so forth? Definitely, definitely yes, that's not quite how they appear but nevertheless when you pick up something like a cell phone and you bang your head with it, yeah that's firm, that's firm, I see they are empty appearances but there certainly does seem to be a real cell phone here called by whatever name - a dense aggregation of molecules for which the density tapers off very quickly on the borders and so the strong earth element here, a lot of air element here, and that does seem to be nevertheless inherently real, so you've not, how do we say, you've not come to the summit of mount vipashyana yet, but you certainly soften things up a bit through your own experience, right?

(39:13) Now let's just imagine and just for fun, just imagine you push it all the way through, you achieve shamatha, why not? Unless you have something better to do. You carry on, finish the job, let your mind settle in its natural state, then everything I've just said will be all the more true. You've achieved shamatha now, let's say by way of settling the mind, and then all the more so in between sessions you really do have this kind of illusory sense of reality around you when you are walking along the road, you see the road rising up to meet you and it's just a whole bunch of empty images, as if you are in a great big three D high definition Cineplex, all the appearances arising and yet no real movement because all the appearances just arising, arising, arising, but they're not moving anywhere, they are just arising and there's tactile sensations arising, but it's all empty and you're actually not going anywhere at all, just the appearances have changed, and that's just from shamatha. Well one of the benefits in terms of post meditative experience of achieving shamatha, is a number of all kinds, but I'll just mention a couple:

(40:22) One is the stability of your attention carries on to a very high degree in between sessions, the clarity, the vividness, a high acuity, high definition of your awareness is so high, Tsongkapa says when you look at a pillar for example, you feel like you could count the individual molecules or atoms making up the pillar, you can't actually, but that's the kind of resolution you have as you're bringing your shamatha clarity to your sensory domains, right? So there is one interesting point.

But now what's very germane here he says is that the power of your samadhi flows right into your sleep, so that sense of clarity flows right into sleep, into dreamless sleep, into dream sleep. Your mindfulness of course which means of course also recollection is extremely well honed. So once you've achieved shamatha and you just have this natural clarity flowing right into your sleep state, then frankly with hardly any coaching at all, lucid dreams should be just kind of delivered to your door, lucidity. Your mind is already so clear. So imagine you just make smooth segue, with a lit bit of coaching, a little bit of training, a bit of help from Steven La Berge, Padmasambhava, whatever, and then after a while your dreams are normally lucid, like, ah wasn't that weird when this wasn't the case? Because you know I used to be deluded every time I'd have a dream, thanks goodness that's over. And normally of course in all those non-lucid dreams I reified everything and that's why I suffered so much in all my dreams, in all my life. I suffered in my dreams only because I reified and now that I am not reifying, you see well, this is like settling the mind in its natural state while I am asleep and it's really good samadhi too.

(41:19) There it is, my mind single pointedly focusing on the domain of the mind, whatever arises within it and I am lucid therefore I know now because I'm lucid that whatever arises in the nature in the dream scape, since you're lucid then you know already with no reasoning, no Madhyamaka, no Nagarjuna at all, you know nothing here exists from its own side, including your persona, how you are manifesting the dream, you are

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not there, you are not here, nobody is over there and nothing's out there. You know that because you are lucid and again there is no reasoning there it's like - I am lucid, I mean, what part of this is not clear? Of course nothing here exists from its own side. But to hammer that in, to really to make a deep impression, then you go through the steps of dream yoga, and that's again once you've really stabilized it, there which will be a piece of cake once you achieved shamatha, be a lucid dreamer should be like maybe a week and you're really into it, and then you move into that first major phase of dream yoga and that's emanation and transformation, where you, just like a baker getting your hands in the dough, working the dough, shaping it in any way you like, or a potter shaping clay, you just shape your dream, start running experiments. Okay, yep you can fly, well that's a piece of cake, Okay walk through the wall, okay try it again, got it okay good now, back and forth through the wall, up, up, up, okay good, got that down, okay, burst into flame, like to see you turn into a torch, thank you very much, okay now walk on water, okay, now swim under the water with no gills just breathe the water don't worry about it, you don't have lungs anyway so you don't need air, and there is no air in a dream anyway so there shouldn't be a problem.

(43:05) So then transform yourself into a cup cake, so sweet. And so you know from your own experience, it's now perfectly clear there is nothing here subjectively or objectively that exists from its own side, you knew it because you were lucid but now you know it because you've actually experienced it all the way through, that it's all, oh, I remember, it is all simply a world of possibility, waiting to be designated and since you know there is nothing inherently there any way, it's just waiting to be designated, and since you know there is nothing inherently there anyway, it's just waiting to be designated anyway you like, because it's your world, and you designated it and then it rises up according to your conceptual designation. So let's imagine you have that kind of realization and then you come out of the meditative state, which is to say you wake up in the morning in your bed with your shamatha and deep realization of dream yoga and the emptiness of that whole dream reality because you've really explored it sufficiently, you know it for yourself. And then with the power of your insight, having moved from reifying everything to reifying nothing, from a non-lucid dream to lucid dream and having the might of your practice of shamatha, now here's the way to approach it that doesn't just get you caught in head trip which is very easy, because I've done it, I've done it, as soon as I was introduced to Madhyamaka I was asking the kind of questions Steph did, and they are perfectly good questions, the kind of questions that Sandra has, perfectly good questions, especially for a person trained in philosophy, and I've studied philosophy somewhat. But rather than going there, here's a way to make this really empirical and that is, of course we can do this now, let alone having achieved shamatha and dream yoga, and that is right now, today, rise up to the challenge or simply the simply the assertion of the Madhyamaka view that we ordinary beings, we're not aryas, are essentially reifying everything we experience. We reify everything, grasp onto everything as if it has its own inherent intrinsic existence - and that's me, my mind, my illnesses and my mental afflictions and everything else, everything is coagulated, everything is frozen into these little chunks of reality, the smallest chunks being (45:58) molecules, atoms and down to elementary particles and it's just chunkified from elementary particles up to galaxies in the whole universe, everything is chunkified, everything is real, mental things are real, physical things are real, and so there's the assertion where we are reifying everything and that tendency is fundamentally deluded.

(46:42) And so if that's the case, there is the assertion, that is the case, that is the Madhyamaka view, but rather than, and this is where the fork on the road comes, then the tendency is - okay I want to learn more about Chandrakirti's view, let's study Chandrakirti and Aryadeva, oh, and Buddhapalita, and Nagarjuna, let's study about those prajna paramitas, oh and don't forget the sub commentary in Tsongkhapa and about the sub, sub commentary, let's really, let's just spend a lifetime studying other people's views. But I don't think that's what they had in mind. All those teachings are encouraging us to challenge our own view, not to critique somebody else's because we are not suffering because of Chandrakirti, we are suffering because we already have misapprehend reality, without knowing anything about Buddhism. So it's not so much that we are suffering because we don't know Buddhism, it's suffering because we already are misapprehending reality and then the question - is that true or false. And so with this backdrop of a mind that's really serviceable, a mind that's already explored and fathomed, the nature of dream reality, seen nothing there is inherently existent then coming here and saying alright, now am I myself? Now it's time for the four applications of mindfulness like Shantideva was teaching, and that is that I myself, am I prone, do I ever enter into reification? Do I ever reify anything? Gee, let's sit here for a little while and see. And as soon as any craving or

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hostility arises you've now got your specimen, there it is, any craving, hostility by definition is arising, here's the hypothesis again, but not something just to believe and start frustrating, but is it true or not? Every single time any mental affliction arises and there are the two big henchmen, craving and hostility, every time they arise they are always arising from the root of delusion and the delusion is reification. And what does that do? It isolates, it decontextualizes, so I am attached to one person, Boom, this person makes me happy. I just now gotten scissors and I've cut into the paper of reality and cut right around to have a little, ah, there! You're the one that makes me happy, or could make me happy or you are pleasurable, there it is, I've just cut you out, and that's not the person next to you, and I don't know what your causes are, they're irrelevant, no just you, you make me happy, I want you, I need you, ah, want some candy? Anything you need, I want to keep you. And you just piss me off! You are just disagreeable, you piss me off, I don't like you, you stand by yourself, you could be in outer space all by yourself and you'd still be disgusting because you are just intrinsically, I can see, I can read you like a book, it's a nasty book. I really don't like you at all, you should disappear, somebody should put you in a cannon.

(49:43) Reified, decontextualized, inherently there, you just make me unhappy, you know, so see whether that ever comes up, and if so then there is your mode of apprehension, not something you have learned from Chandrakirti, this is something you brought to the table. Do you ever reify anything and if you do, okay I'll say Jack and Jill because they don't refer to anybody at all, I am enamored by Jill but Jack is kind of hitting on Jill and I don't like that. And so Jack kind of pisses me off he is a competition here. So aversion to Jack and craving for Jill, and so there I have, there is my object of aversion there is my object of attraction, boom, craving hostility, gotcha! Then holding that in mind when I think Jill, oh, she is the one I am enamored with, attached to, boy I'd love to have her as a life companion, and Jack, I'd like him on another planet with a little grave mark - rest in peace, that's the best thing for you. So as I am grasping onto Jill, she makes me so happy or at least she could, if she put her mind to it. What comes to mind? Who is the Jill that I am so infatuated with it? What is it? Is it her head, her neck, other body parts, her personality, the nose, the teeth? Exactly what is it? What's the object, where is this Jill who is really a fountain of potential happiness for me? So check out. And so here's the point – is the Jill that I am infatuated with and that is reifying, does she really exist at all? Or I am just sitting here in my own little fish tank of delusion conjuring up people that don't even exist and saying, I love you, I hate you, I love you, I hate you. And it's all just in a fish bowl because that which I love doesn't exist and that which I hate doesn't exist at all. So we have not gone into heavy duty philosophy here, we've gone into psychotherapy to get over these tendencies that are fundamentally rooted in delusion and to see whether any reified object actually does exist in and of itself, ok? And then you move on. So that's the way to make this practical without asking the very deep questions, and they are worthy questions, do atoms exist by their own inherent nature, aren't they really out there? Because from one perspective the evidence is overwhelming that there is a real world absolutely out there waiting to be discovered and again two great big slam-dunk reasons to support it, one is the consensuality of our inter subjective experience, and that is we all look around, and I say - please describe this room and lo and behold we're describing something very, very similar. How could we give such similar descriptions if it's not really there, right?

(52:55) There is one point, and the other one – rain drops fall on your head whether or not you are aware of them and grass grows when nobody is looking, so causality, causality in the natural world when nobody is looking, nobody is thinking about it, right? So those look like slam-dunk, I mean you'd have to be crazy not to believe in such an inherently existent real world out there. So we have these intimations from some, but not all, brilliant contemporary physicists, those from the latter half of the 20th century, but that's not probably going to be enough, I don't think it's enough to change their own minds even a person of the brilliance of Steven Hawking, and he doesn't need any defense here, and with his incredible theorizing that even the past is not inherently existent, that we even choose our past, that the past exists in superimposition state as a range of possibilities that arise to meet in response to a system of measurement, but there's no absolutely true past, I mean it makes your jaw drop, but then when he was asked by Time Magazine just about one year ago or so, and I have the direct quote: Professor Hawking what do you think of the nature of consciousness? He said oh, I think the brain's like a computer and consciousness is like the software". And I, oh, how could you be so deep there and so utterly mindboggling trivial here? And that's because he's not trained to study consciousness, he's trained extremely well with a brilliant mind in mathematics and theory of modern physics; comes to consciousness that is the speculation of a dumb high school kid, I mean really, how much

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imagination do you need for that? I mean really that is just so primitive and I am not criticizing him as a person, I am criticizing in that statement. That is just dumb, un-reflected, un-insightful, like..., did you get that out of a cereal box, where exactly did you come up with that notion? It's so un-reflected, so quite disappointing when he got so far there, of the fundamental role of consciousness in the universe at large and then he says, oh yeah, it's like the software of the brain, okay whatever, it just shows that doing the physics alone is not likely to shift your whole world view, it's likely, more likely to remain at a conceptual level that never touches your mental afflictions and probably doesn't have any impact on the way you view your wife, your husband, your children or the world around you, in another words it's isolated off by itself. So make it practical (55:35) the question was raised about feelings and I think I'll end on that note. Feelings, Sandra mentioned in her note that when we closely apply mindfulness (it is a very important point, these questions are perfectly fine, there is no criticism of them at all, nothing to criticize) but when we closely apply mindfulness to mental feelings in this way that Shantideva is suggesting or maybe even in an early way according to the Pali Canon, that that sheer scrutiny itself may actually make the feeling, the mental feeling evaporate even without understanding of Madhiamaka, right, in a way this is not that dissimilar from the bashful maiden metaphor analogy, of just attending to thoughts and finding they vanish as soon as we look at them, like the young man who likes ladies and he scrutinizes them and the young bashful maiden scoots off, you know, vanishes as soon as she is under his scrutiny, so there's that, but when it comes to physical pain, we may attend to it, we may attend to it as impermanent, as not mine, but man it's looming large on my horizon. We may try to engage in some anthological probe applying Madhyamaka investigation into it, but it seems to rise up, doesn't it, powerfully? Something that doesn't evaporate on scrutiny, difficult, physical pain, physical injury, serious illness, it doesn't seem to evaporate, and even the notion that it's not mine seems to be something more nominal than anything else, and it may not be mine but it is certainly parked in my front yard, right? So there it is. So in this regard as much as we can, investigate, probe into, seek out the nature of those things that are not utterly overwhelming, because we don't want to make a habit of frustration, a habit of feeling I just can't do this, because then we will give up, it's just natural, it's human, we give up, we try, try, try, totally fail, say okay this isn't working or maybe they're just wrong, maybe feelings like physical pain which really catches the attention, maybe Madhyamaka is wrong because I am looking at the physical pain when arising intensely and it just seems to be about as inherently real as anything impossibly could, right? You say conceptual designation, I'm sorry it was already pain before I designated it as such. I don't see any role of conceptual designation, this just hurts. So what to do then?

(58:02) So for the time being, it's too strong a challenge for that particular method, for the time being, not always, but for the time being that's too much. So as much as we can attenuate the pain, it's too large a challenge at that time, for the time being, we'll get stronger, we will get stronger, so that's a battle to be fought another day, right? In the meantime when physical pain arises first of all see if you can attenuate it, calm, protect yourself, heal it from its source, do everything you can, and secondly when it's there and there's just nothing you can do about it, in terms of its sheer presence, turn it into renunciation, turn it into compassion, turn it into bodhichitta, make it meaningful. If pain happens it's a ripening of karma, what can we say? It's ripening of karma. What ripens to us we can't choose, how we experience it - we can, transmute it into compassion with the wish that may all beings be free of pain. May this experience of pain enable me to liberate others from pain, and we all be free of suffering. So choose your battles well, choose your battles well. And in terms of the Madhyamaka it's not too early to start, otherwise I wouldn't have spent four weeks here. Start where you can, the space of your mind, not too hard, because those really are empty appearances and then small pains. Elizabeth has found, others people are found a twinge here, a discomfort here, and so forth, probe into that, oh, how interesting, how cool, they evaporate. So why then with the pain that is really strong then why doesn't it evaporate? Well that's because the pain is stronger than your mind for the time being. Take on the pipsqueak, be the school yard bully, pick on the little kids, the little pains, the little discomforts, the little annoyances, mental and physical, pick on and beat them up. Do take this out of the context, it would be really great, and put this on my website. You noticed that I'm never ever going to run for political office because the ammunition would be enough to blow me off the planet, you know. You wouldn't believe these things Alan Wallace has said, clearly psychotic. I have no defense. So take on the little battles, when there is a little one, take that one and then we end - there is nothing that doesn't become easier with

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familiarization. Take on the little ones. Don't make a habit of being defeated it's not good for the spirit. As much as you can don't make a habit of being defeated. Oh yeah, enjoy your day!

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Revised by Cheri Langston.

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Posted by Alma Ayon

90 Practice post-retreat (1)

16 Oct 2012

Teachings:

(4:34) This afternoon, it's time now to gradually be summarizing a couple of questions that have very much to do with advice, guidance, suggestions about continuing practice, and so I thought I'd once again go to the great masters, rather than you're having to say, well Alan Wallace said I suggested do this, this and this, and then whoever you're saying it to says – who's he? That's what I would say, who's he, but if you say well I am following the advice of Atisha then nobody asks who's he? And so we are going to get Atisha's advice, how about that?

(6:35) The text that I am citing from here is once again is the text I cited from earlier when I spoke about the first of the four yogas within the Mahamudra tradition, which is the yoga of repose, what's it called? Singled pointedness. This is from the text Naked Awareness, the union of Mahamudra and Atiyoga by Karma Chagmé great 17th century, master of both the Mahamudra and Dzogchen lineages and so this is a very long teaching he gave and shows extraordinary erudition, I mean it's just that, quite extraordinary, and then it comes time to sum up, so he's covered the preliminary practices, shamatha in detail, vipashyana, Mahamudra, Dzogchen, the threkcho, thogyal phases of Dzogchen. He runs through the whole thing up to rainbow body and then he says ok, now let's kind of cruise through again, and he goes through again Mahamudra and Dzogchen and then maps them onto the five paths the ten bhumis and then finally the grand finale then he says ok, now to sum up, now conclusion time, and in fact it was an oral teaching, and so this went on for presumably some weeks, probably something like what we are doing here except for his erudition would be hard to match. And so, I love stories as you have noticed by now, and this goes right to a story.

(06:30)) So this is in his conclusion chapter, obviously the concluding chapter of this whole text and the very brief preface he says Orgyen Rinpoche, this is what Padmasambhava says, so we will start with Padmasambhava.

Padmasambhava said the synthesis of a meaning is for the sake of bringing delight in the teachings, and that is why do you sum up the end? To give inspiration, encouragement, enthusiasm about the teachings as a whole, kind of in core essence, charging head. The way to synthesize the meaning is suggested by Orgyen Rinpoche's prophecy, Padmasambhava's prophecy - , my speech emanation by the name of Dipankara, will be a bodhisattva who will purify the land of Tibet. Dipankara is a personal name of Atisha.

So in accordance with that prophecy the venerable Lord, the Glorious Atisha, who is like the crown jewel among 500 pundits in India, came to Tibet, this was the 11th century. (7:23)

Now we go to a story. At that time, and the words are from Karma Chagmé Rinpoche, and so he says, at that time the great translator, Rinchen Zangpo, he lived from 958 to 1055, was an emanation of Manjushri, embodiment of wisdom, had studied and trained under more than 20 pundits. He was one of the Tibetan scholars who was sent by the Tibetan King to India to learn Buddhism, to really revitalize Buddhism that had been crushed by many, many decades of suppression. So he went down, studied with more than 20 pundits in India, came back and really became the foremost of all the translators in this whole second wave of translation of the Buddhist Sanskrit teachings into Tibetan. So he had studied and trained under more than 20 pundits, and he was like the snowy source of all the streams of dharma of the new translation school. This includes Kagyu, Sakya and Gelugpa, Nyingma being the old translation school. He thought, Rinchen Zangpo, he thought – nowadays there is no one with greater qualities than mine – and he heard that Atisha was coming to Tibet, and he said – I have nothing to ask the pundit, Atisha. I mean he knew he was accomplished, what would he have to ask this guy for? You've already studied with 20 pundits why would you need 21? 20 is enough, right? However due to an auspicious sign and a dream, I shall pay my respects – so he had some

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dream about Atisha, said you know, go and meet him, show your courtesy, so he said, okay I had a really good dream, I'll go meet the guy. (8:57) So in a dream that night, a white man appeared and told him- you're being very pompous about your service to sentient beings, there are still many questions for you to ask, even if you combined all the translators and pundits in one, this single individual, Atisha, if you were to synthesize all the translators and pundits into one single individual, whoever that might be, the synthesis of all of them, would not have all the excellent qualities of this pundit, Atisha. Tibet has not received all the oral instructions and he then disappeared.

If you have a dream like that you'd better pay attention. So Rinchen Zangpo then took the long journey to meet Atisha, and invited him to his place, his meditation place where he gave him a seat equal in height to his own. In his shrine room, on the ground floor, were the deities of the common, or Hinayana, so (10:00) Buddha Shakyamuni, probably Shariputra and so forth, so that's on the ground floor, in a room on the second floor were those of the Mahayana, like Avalokiteshvara, Vajrapani, Manjushri and so forth, and on the third floor were images of the deities of the Mantrayana – the Vajrayana, so you know there's a wide array of those. So he showed him around his house, showed him here's the ground floor, Shravakayana, here's second floor Mahayana, and here's Vajrayana on top. So Atisha was shown around, shown all these statues, sacred images and so forth, and Atisha composed verses of praise for all of them. For the first time experiencing faith in Atisha's words, that is as he saw the words of poetry and so forth, for the first time experiencing faith in Atisha's words, poetry and so on, the translator, Rinchen Zangpo, removed the three layers of his own seat so that he had no cushion at all. He said, okay this guy is really pretty formidable, I'll sit a little bit lower than him. The translator then, Rinchen Zangpo asked him, Atisha, many questions and hearing many things for the first time he was struck by Atisha's knowledge, and his pride collapsed. To all the questions Atisha asked of the translator, he replied only that he knew. He didn't actually give an answer, just said, yeah, I know that. Atisha was also pleased with the translator and he commented – with someone like you in Tibet, there was no need for anyone to ask me to come to Tibet. He then asked – translator, if you combine all those teachings – Shravakayana, Mahayana, Vajrayana- If you combine all those teachings in one meditation session and practice them, how can you do it? (11:47) The translator replied – I do not combine the Yanas, Shravakayana, Mahayana, Vajrayana, rather I keep each one distinct and without mixing them, I practice each one by itself. Lord Atisha then remarked – that indicates that you the translator, are wrong. There is a need for me to be in Tibet, after all.

That night the translator meditated during 3 sessions, visualizing the three yanas in progressive order in three places in his body. The pundit, Atisha knew what he was doing and he told him – translator that's no good, you won't get anywhere! Rinchen Zangpo asked him – so then how do you do it? And then Atisha responded – whatever I say –wherever I am, whoever I accompany, whatever I am doing, I make the ethical discipline of the Vinaya my foundation. This is the monastic code, they're both monks. Since all sentient beings have been my mother, I must meditate on them as such. I train in the pure view of seeing them as my mother; as the deities are unborn, I meditate on them as such, (unborn means empty of inherent nature), if you do not know how to combine those, you'll not obtain the essence.

Lord Atisha also said – our teacher, the Buddha has well taught that ethical discipline is the basis of all excellent qualities. Bodhichitta which is linked with great compassion is praised above all. Enlightenment is certain with the union of the stages of generation and completion, which are not fettered by the signs of good thought, (signs means the reification, the grasping on to good thoughts) these are the task of individuals of small and great capacity, and medium capacity as well.

Emphasize, meditate on impermanence, make offerings and requesting that the wheel of dharma be turned. And if you abandon selfishness, you are following the Buddha's council. Extensive discussions of this are for the learned. Righteous are those individuals who synthesize the essence and practice it. Noble I say, are those conscientious people who are not dismissive of actions and their consequences, (that is karma and their consequences) knowing everything but clinging to one thing is a flaw of scholars. Not engaging in practice is a mistake. Not adopting the good and rejecting the evil makes for an empty façade of nobility. Live with wisdom, Rinchen Zangpo! This is the admonishment of the great compassionate one, Avalokiteshvara. Certainty arose in the mind of the translator Rinchen Zangpo and he made a vow to spend the rest of his life in meditative retreat. As a result of his practice he moved to Khasarpana without leaving his body behind, as a result of his practice his whole environment shifted to that of a pureland without leaving his body behind.

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Lord Atisha also gave practical instructions on practicing the four classes of Tantra on a single cushion. (15:21) Kriya Tantra, Charya Tantra Yoga Tantra and Annuttarayoga Tantra, and he composed Indian treatises on the fivefold practice. Accordingly the glorious Phagmo Drupa (he lived from 1110 to 1170), he was one of the three major disciples of Gampopa, direct disciple of Milarepa and was the one who established the Karma Kagyu, one of the schools of Tibetan Buddhism and he was a disciple also of Sachen Kunga Nyingpo, (15:51) one of the founders of the Sakya school, so we see a flowing together of the Sakya and the Kagyu, and Phagmo Drupa had 5800 illustrious disciples all of whom were liberated solely by means of the fivefold practice. Big emphasis there. The protector Jigten Sumgon who lived in the 12th Century, into the 13th century , he was a disciple of Phagmo Drupa and the founder of the Drikung Kagyu school, that's Kalu Rinpoche's school, he says - Mahamudra is like a lion, but without the fivefold practice it's like a blind man. (In other words it needs to be complimented. So what are those fivefold practices?) (16.31)

So what is the fivefold practice? To augment, to balance out, to supplement your core practice of Mahamudra, which as I said a number of times now, is really essentially, it is the same, according to Karma Chagmé, as the threkcho phase of Dzogchen, that is that's the breakthrough.

So what's the fivefold practice? This is the essence of Atisha, and he is showing this is the spread here, there is nothing sectarian about this, essence of Atisha's teachings, of Rinchen Zangpo, he put it into practice and achieved enlightenment, Phagmo Drupa, big big name in Tibetan Buddhism, and (Alan includes the name of another great master of the Kagyu tradition)

So, The fivefold practices are, are you ready?

1) Bodhichitta as motivation

Cultivating bodhichitta, that is your motivation straight,

2) Meditating on your own body as being that of a deity.

of course that implies you've realized emptiness or at least have some insight into the emptiness of your body, dissolve that into emptiness, out of emptiness imagine manifesting your own body in its pure form, with pure vision, of that of the deity. That's the second one, but bear in mind that this is an order, this is the sequence.

3) Meditation on one's spiritual mentor as the deity,

Meditating on your spiritual mentor as a deity. (is the third one and a very, very important point, easily missed, often missed, I think especially in the modern world, and I have said this before, in this context of Vajrayana, are you looking upon your spiritual mentor, your guru as a Buddha? The answer is yes, but there is a parity here a symmetry, and that is that you've also dissolved your own sense of ordinary identity, ordinary body speech and mind, into emptiness. Out of emptiness, stemming from Rigpa, you manifest your own body as the deity. And of course not only your body, your speech, your mind, your identity, and so you see there is a symmetry there, pure vision meets pure vision. If you had pure vision towards yourself, and regarded your teacher as not pure, that would be a waste of time. But if you regard your guru as a Buddha with pure vision there, but have ordinary vision for yourself, that's not Vajrayana practice. And in fact one could say that it's just not legitimate practice, it's not Buddhist practice, unless your guru actually is a Buddha, 32 marks, 80 marks, you know, is actually a Buddha, not someone you're having faith is a Buddha, but actually is a Buddha. In that case, that's fine. Like Buddha Shakyamuni, no problem, right, he has from his or her own side, has realized perfect enlightenment, then no problem, like the many disciples of Buddha Shakyamuni. But if that's not the case, if that's not the case then if you basically misapprehend your guru, who may be a very fine guru, who maybe has compassion, who may have insight, maybe he has even become a bodhisattva, maybe even an arya bodhisattva, but isn't a Buddha, and if you view that person as a Buddha, then you've just made a mistake. Make a mistake - not a Buddha, you think he is a Buddha, and then you think - I am an ordinary sentient being, well you may get that one right, but then if you think your guru is a Buddha and he is not, then you're just wrong. So how can that be a basis for sound and profound practice? It's not Vajrayana practice. That is not Vajrayana guru yoga, anybody who says that it is, I'll debate with them, and I'll win, right? There has got to be symmetry there, it's pure vision here, pure vision there, not yucky vision here and pure vision over there. So that is a very important point, often missed, and when it is missed it's a very slippery slope into sheer idolatry, of just then idolizing, oh my guru, His Eminence, His Holiness, the Venerable, super-duper supernatural, omniscient guru, and he's just a very good lama. Which means it's like sexual infatuation, really,

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it's just a form of attachment, isn't it? Whereas whether or not, your guru, from his or her own side, in terms of their own perspective on their own practice, whether or not they've achieved enlightenment, if you have the insight into emptiness, and you apply that to yourself and others, with the understanding of rigpa, then you dissolve ordinary guru, as you dissolve ordinary self, both into emptiness and then where your guru is, whether your guru is Tuthco or Yohen or Nato or whoever it may be, where your guru is, there is Samantabhadra. Now that doesn't mean you just choose anybody. Then you must see, okay, is this person qualified? And that is what the Vajrayana teachings say, the Mahayana the Shravakayana, they all say, if you are going to view someone as your guru, then don't be foolish.

Check to see, is this person qualified, what do you seek from this person, are you seeking a bit of good advice now and then? A lot of people can give that. Are you seeking authentic teachings to follow the Shravakayana path? Shila, Samadhi, prajna, then make sure you are going to someone who is really qualified to teach that. And if you are looking for Mahayana, then there are 10 qualities of a Mahayana guru, they are listed there in the Lamrim, you can easily find them. Then if you are looking for Vajrayana, someone who can lead you in stage of generation completion, or in Dzogchen, the threkcho and thogyal, find somebody who is qualified, and if they are qualified, their bodhicitta motivation, compassionate motivation, then full speed ahead.

Pure vision here, pure vision there. So that's what he is talking about here, so this is again I'm not making it up, he said meditate on your own body, your own presence as being that of the deity, meditate on your spiritual mentor, your guru, as the deity, so there's three out of five.

4) Cultivating the view of non-conceptuality

(22:31) Cultivating the view of non-conceptuality. Now these five practices are really, this is a format, this is a matrix to achieve enlightenment in one lifetime just like Rinchen Zangpo did, right? So quiz time!

(Alan raised the question above and is exchanging ideas with some of the students)

So, who's turn, Tuthco, is this just your best guess? Is this just your best guess? So nobody gets to feeling great here, we just learn. But what do you think he is referring to when he says - cultivate the view of non-conceptuality? What would that have to include? If these five practices are going to be effective to lead you on the stage of generation completion, Mahamudra, or along the path into threkcho and thogyal, what would you imagine, what would that have to include? View of non-conceptuality, view of emptiness, dharmadhatu is emptiness, dharmakaya is better, dharmakaya is your mind, you were right, just a little mix up of words, no big deal, that's right, yes. So it would be having some insight into emptiness, and some insight, at least some deep intuition of rigpa, because rigpa is dharmakaya. Would that be enough? Well let's read the last one and then it might come back to you. And then the last one is easy, anybody can understand this.

5) Dedication.

(24:48) Sealing your practice with prayers of dedication.

So you start with bodhicitta, you end with dedication, and then you have three in the middle, ok? Now for those five to be sufficient, say okay, there's my manifold, there's my template, like if you have ever been to an Indian railway station, or Indian restaurants, you'll get the plate with all the little pockets, here's a place for this, here's your rice, here's your dahl, here's your vegetables and so forth everything laid out in a little format, ok this is your plate and it has five little partitions in it, ok? Bodhicitta and dedication of merit, pure vision here and pure vision there and that leaves everything here - number four and that is this view of non-conceptuality.

So you are quite right, if you don't have realization of emptiness it doesn't work, if don't have some intuition, some insight into rigpa, won't work. Anything else might be included in cultivating the view of non-conceptuality, that would be indispensable otherwise none of this works, any guesses, think really hard?

How can you possibly have a view of non-conceptuality if your mind is going bla, bla, bla, so when he is speaking of the view of non-conceptuality it's got to be the union of shamatha vipashyana, we have seen that in the first yoga, the first yoga is the union of shamatha vipashyana, right? And then it goes on from there. So I think that would be inevitably implied, not even debatably but unavoidably implied in the cultivation of the view of non-conceptuality, that is not just taking a little peck at insight into emptiness or rigpa, but it's a view, a way of viewing not a little peek, but a way of viewing reality which means you've better have those two fused which means you better have shamatha, yeah.

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(25:52) So there it is. So your bodhichitta motivation, seven point mind training from Atisha. There are two activities one in the beginning and one at the end and they are? Motivation and Dedication, you are exactly right. So there it is, it runs through, it just runs through everywhere in Mahayana. First motivation, it is like setting out on ship in a harbor and saying: Do you have your navigational charts? Do you know where you are you are going? And then the dedication at the end is sealing of it, the final affirmation, like that, right. And then the core, the self-generation and then having a pure relationship, a pure vision of your own guru, it could be many gurus, some rise into one, and then all of this suffused with shamatha vipashyana, then he is saying - now that's enough, that will do it, that's enough.

(26:59) We are about to go into meditation but there are the four lines I memorized a long time ago, I find them so useful, and especially in modern era even though these four lines also trace back to Atisha, thousand years ago. They are called the four reliances, and here they are:

- **(27:51) Do not rely upon the person but upon the dharma.**

So unless we're just reading books, we receive the dharma teachings that we receive, meditation guidance, theory and so forth, we receive it from a person, some teachers are very intelligent, some not as much, some are very articulate, some are not as much, some have great humor, some are not as much, charismatic not as much, some are tremendously learned, some are not as much, ugly, fat, short, old, etc, etc, etc, a lot of variations in the packaging, the physical, the verbal and the mental packaging, a lot of variations, now one thing they all have in common is they die, they all die, they get old they die, they go away, whenever, it's where there is meeting there is parting, that is just the way it is, it's truism.

So we receive the dharma by way of an individual and Atisha is saying: between those two, the individual from whom you receive the teachings and the teachings that you receive, between those two, where do you place the greater or the primary reliance, your trust, your dependence, your commitment? To the dharma. The teacher may screw up, teachers sometimes screw up or they just die or they move away, whatever. Teachers to varying degrees embody what they teach. It's hard to be homogenous, unless you are very realized, it's hard to be homogenous, every breath you take always embodies the teachings, of course that's the ideal. How to be homogenous, do it as a constant, if you are very accomplished, yeah, otherwise it's hard, right?

(29:10) But the dharma is the dharma, that's the refuge, that's the real refuge, so between the two of them that's the refuge to take home with you, right? So there's the first one.

Very important, especially in this modern world that is Eurocentric now and gone global, this enormous emphasis on individual. In America we say the self-made man, the self-made man, the individual, the billionaire, the person who boot strapped himself up, usually they're men, lots of machismo - I did it, I did it, I built it, I built it, I did it, you know all that, alright ok, whatever. But realistic view is no matter who you are, it came about by causes and conditions coming together. So especially in this very individualistic world, we idolize so many people, from baseball players to rock n roll stars, to actors, to politicians I guess, and all kinds of people, models and so forth and so on. This is not an occasion to start idolizing, to speak with respect, even reverence sure, but idolize, no.

Why for example in my case, why do I so often refer to the Dalai Lama, because I idolize him? Not really, I don't think so. But I see, having known him for more than forty years, I see the extraordinary extent to which the teachings he imparts, homogeneously, are so sublime are so good, wise, compassionate and the extraordinary degree to which he embodies exactly what he is teaching. That's it! That's why. He's charming, he's full of joy, he is very articulate, he is extremely intelligent, he is very erudite, he's very warm hearted, he's very humble, all those are good, but most importantly he embodies what he teaches. That's why I refer to him so much; no other reason and the other teachers as well. So that is not idolization, that's reverence. So that's the first one, very important especially in our modern, where we are so often, the emphasis on the individual independent of context, and dependent origination, that's the first one.

- **Rely not upon the words but upon their meaning.**

Do not rely upon the words but upon their meaning. In other words don't be a fundamentalist, don't cling to the words but go to their meaning.

- **Rely not upon the interpretive meaning but upon the definitive meaning.**

Third on, do not rely upon the interpretive meaning, the provisional meaning but upon the definitive meaning. This requires some investigation, scrutiny, analysis, what does it really mean, might there be

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symbolic meaning, might this be only contextual, that is only true for one context, so what does the definitive mean, go to the essence, identify, take refuge there and rely upon that.

- **Rely not upon conditioned consciousness but upon primordial consciousness.**

(32:25) And the final one is very interesting:

Do not rely upon conditioned consciousness but upon primordial consciousness.

(32:35) “vijāna”, there are two types of vijāna I mean mentally speaking, one of these I think would be our mental consciousness, the one I am looking right over now at Steph, and so I’m looking not only with my visual perception but I am directing my mental awareness there, I can visualize bugs bunny on the top of her head and with mental consciousness I would see the image that I concocted, projected there, ok? That’s mental consciousness. And so mental consciousness this is the one that we use to analyze, to remember, to imagine, to visualize and forth and so on, so there’s that dimension of consciousness, vijāna, but then when your coarse mind dissolves, of course it goes into the alaya vijāna another vijāna, substrate consciousness, so we have two domains, the coarse and the subtle for vijāna consciousness, conditioned consciousness. He says, but now relatively speaking or comparatively speaking, so you place your final trust, your commitment, your reliance, as you rely upon a very deeply trusted friend, you rely fundamentally, essentially upon the consciousness of your coarse mind, or the subtle mind, he says no, yeshe ledrug - rely upon primordial consciousness.

How do you do that? Become acquainted with your primordial consciousness, the deepest dimension, the source of authentic intuition, where you know something but it’s not by simply seeing it, like I look over there and see color of Betty Rose’s blouse, ok, I see it, boom, there it is, got it, easy, right? So it’s not that easy, and it’s not by inference, it’s a way of knowing and of course that is deeper, intuitive would be the generic way of referring to that, so core. So there’s a whole sequence here. (Alan says it in Tibetan because it is nice for our imprints) rely not upon the person but upon the dharma, rely not upon the words but upon the meaning, rely not upon the provisional meaning but the definitive meaning, rely not upon conditioned consciousness but upon primordial consciousness. That’s that, quite quintessential, right?

(34:36) That’s a keeper, through life and death, those reliances and the fivefold practice, when you are healthy, when you’re ill, when you’re living, when you’re dying and when you’re post dead, still good, still good. Alright that wasn’t too long.

So now some closing notes from Karma Chagmé Rinpoche transmitting from the 17th century, transcending from the 9th10th century, a mere six, seven hundred years went by and the teaching’s so timeless, if they work, they work and the teaching’s so timeless, if they work, they work. Here five thousand eight hundred students achieving profound realization and so forth and so on, so this is why I’m such a traditionalist at heart, follow that which has proven itself to be authentic.

Let’s find a comfortable position. (36:10)

Meditation: Fivefold practice with shamatha, vipashyana and Vajrayana.

As you expand the field of your awareness to embrace the world around you and all the sentient beings who inhabit, attend closely to every sentient being wishing, like ourselves, to be free from suffering, forever free of suffering and its causes. And arousing great compassion, the aspiration and the resolve that we may all be free, all find true liberation and with the resolve to bring this about, cultivate the jewel like mind of bodhichitta, the aspiration to achieve perfect awakening for the sake of all sentient beings.

And with this motivation, this compassionate, loving noble motivation, settle your body, speech and mind and in their natural states and make your mind serviceable for a little while by way of mindfulness of breathing. Quiet the conceptual mind so with non-conceptual awareness, at least non-discursive awareness, be able to quietly attend to the in and out flow of the breath. Like sweeping dust out of your room, out of your shrine room, with every out breath gently sweep out, which is to say release any distracted thoughts, rumination that may have arisen. Clean the space of your awareness. Letting the light of your awareness illuminate the space of your body and the tactile sensations arising therein, be aware of this outer shell, of the sensations of the in and out breath, attending to the whole body.

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And with your faculty of introspection, monitor the space of the mind, an inner dimension, secret, hidden from others, the space of the mind, the mental events, the images, appearances that arise within this domain of experience, simply observing their nature, arising and passing from moment to moment.

And then include in the field of mindfulness, a flow of knowing that is already present and that is your awareness of being aware. Withdraw your awareness from the surrounding environment into the outer shell of your body with the sensations of the in and out breath.

Withdraw your awareness from the field of the body into the domain of the mind as you settle your mind in its natural state.

Withdraw your awareness from the space of the mind, let your awareness come to rest as you release the effort of extending it out to any other object, let your awareness come to rest in its own place, quietly, non-conceptually, illuminating and knowing itself.

And as you seek to probe into the very nucleus, the intrinsic nature, the very essence of awareness itself, the referent of the term - awareness, you may find like all the Buddhas of the past, present and future, that awareness as a reified entity, something existing in and of itself, is nowhere to be found, has never been observed, and rest in that luminous knowing of emptiness.

And from the luminous primordially pure space of awareness, activate the luminous creativity of your own awareness and in the space in front of you, imagine the iconic personification, the symbolic embodiment of the primordial consciousness of all the Buddhas, some call the primordial Buddha, Adi-Buddha some call Vajradhara, and some call Samantabhadra, seated in the vajra asana, deep blue in color, hands holding vajra and bell, embodying all the qualities of the Buddha mind. Here is the guru, the guru Samantabhadra, empty and luminous and primordially pure, the ultimate source of refuge, ultimate source of all blessings. (50:45)

Taking refuge in the Buddha Samantabhadra, we offer our body, speech and mind in the service of all the Buddhas until all sentient beings are free, and we call for an ocean of blessings, bless us on the path that we may swiftly awaken. And let your body, speech and mind be indivisible from my own. Imagine Samantabhadra blissfully responding to this supplication, coming to the crown of your head instantly, facing in the same direction as yourself, then melting with bliss, imagine the guru, the primordial Buddha dissolving into blue light, coming down the central channel, and reappearing on a lotus, the moon and sun in your own heart, your own body, speech and mind indivisible from that of Samantabhadra. Imagine your body empty, transparent, luminous, clear, an apparition of the energy of primordial consciousness. Five color light, white, yellow, red, green, blue, refracted from the light at your heart, emanating in all directions, each ray of light reaching out and serving the needs of sentient beings according to the capacity and their inclinations, their circumstances.

And arousing the heart of great compassion, with each in breath imagine the blessings of all the Buddhas of the three times in the ten directions all flowing upon in upon your own form, supersaturating your body, speech and mind. And with every out breath imagine this light emanating in all directions, imagine this light serving the needs of each sentient being, guiding each one to their own freedom, dispelling the suffering and the causes of suffering of each one.

And release all appearances, all aspirations and simply rest in the primordial purity and luminosity of your own awareness with nothing to be achieved, nothing to be abandoned.

After you settle just pause for a moment and dedicate the merit of the practice to the realization of your most meaningful aspiration.

(00:01:52) I've often referred to substrate consciousness as being like a stem consciousness, like a stem cell, and that depending on its context, can transform into any kind of cell, even body, I think, skin cell, blood, bone, and so forth and so on. And likewise the substrate consciousness can manifest in any type of samsaric consciousness at all, from the lowest realms up to the formless realms. (01:02:33) All of those emerging out of, and when that particular existence comes to an end, dissolve back in, like a yo-yo coming back to the palm. So it's that kind of stem consciousness that manifests in all, and in a similar fashion really, not a bad parallel, Samantabhadra, Vajradhara, Ari-Buddha – stem Buddha, primordial Buddha, personification of Dharmakaya, well there's no beginning to dharmakaya, you'll be saying so when did Shakyamuni Buddha achieve enlightenment? It will be some time in history when that occurred, when did Maitreya achieved enlightenment? Sometime in History, and so forth and so on. But when you speak of the personification, the embodiment of primordial consciousness, obviously it's out of time, so to say okay in this fourth time beyond

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all time this is when the Ari-Buddha first achieved enlightenment – that just doesn't make any sense. So one could say that all manifestations, of Buddha mind, Buddha Shakyamuni's mind, Maitreya's and so forth, all really nothing other than mind of Samantabhadra. Stem Buddha. Primordial Guru.

So the practice we just did, very confident, you can practice that with or without some Tantric empowerment, I think it's okay, no downside. And whether or not you have found some guru in this life time, whether it's Shravakayana, Mahayana, Vajrayana, whether or not you have found that very deep, trusting relationship, this is my guru, whether or not, if you have – wonderful, then of course practice guru yoga according to your ability- shravakayana, Mahayana, Vajrayana, whatever's your ability – very good.

Core. Even if you don't have a guru yet, no problem, no hurry, don't say oh time is running out, don't be in a hurry, you might choose a rotten apple! So then in the meantime, start at the end, and that is you go to Dzogchen, the ninth and the pinnacle of all the yanas according to the Nyingma traditions, what's your ultimate refuge? Dzogchen view, what's your ultimate refuge? There's only one, inner guru and what do we call that? Primordial consciousness. (01:05:16)

So that's it, really it's explicit, I didn't make this up. Rigpa is your ultimate refuge, everything else is a manifestation of that, whether it's Dalai Lama, Lama Yeshe, Lama Zopa Rinpoche, whoever it may be, there's the core, that's the root, those are the flowers, so we're just going to the root. So that little practice there, I think we did all five, I think it included all five, so that should be okay. And then if you've received empowerment, Vajrayogini, Chenrezig, whatever it may be, good then practice that of course. But even if you've never received any empowerment, you can still do all five practices, a good deal. So there we are, we have a little bit of time left, I hope this introduction here, with the meditation will be an answer, a response to some of the questions.

How can I keep my motivation for meditating fresh and unwavering?

Do the fivefold practice – that would be good, practice shamatha, the four immeasurables, vipashyana, that would be good, but actually also, I was given council by actually one of my university professors, very interesting, and he was cautioning me, when I considered for quite some time about actually spending my life in a university career as a professional, as a context you know, skillful means, and he said, look out, look out, because you will become like the people that you associate with. It's not a matter of if, it's you will. Join this department, check out what are the people like in that department, you are going to become like them. You want to join a business, fine, there is nothing wrong with joining a business, check out who's there, you're going to become like them. Wherever it is, you will become like the people you hang out with. That is why the Buddha said, having spiritual friends is the whole of the practice.

So, I know some of you who are leaving here on Thursday or Friday are going to some geographical place where there may not be other dharma practitioners around, then that is what the internet is for. That's why the Buddhas created internet, (laughter) blessing the minds of computer geeks, maintain a virtual friendship, virtual relationships, establish networks, and that can be real, we can even see each other now, for free, it's amazing, you know, so that's cool, that's very cool. So that's it, spiritual friends, keep on immersing yourself in dharma, give up attachment to this life, let your mind become dharma, have a good library, let your books be your spiritual friends, devote yourself to practice, that's it. There will be a little bit more on that tomorrow. Alan finishes off answer questions about doing longer solitary retreats.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti & Cheri Langston, **Revised** by Cheri Langston, **Final edition** by Rafael Carlos Giusti, **Posted** by Alma Ayon

91 Awareness of awareness (1)

17 Oct 2012

Teachings:

I would like to return once again to shamatha without a sign. Sign, just for a reminder, it's one term used for many things, here it means, kind of, a target, a target; something you direct your attention to. Just that simple. So here there is no vector for attention; as you well know now, you are just resting at home. But I am going to introduce the penultimate or almost last days of this practice as taught by Padmasambhava. I haven't taught it this time in this retreat and I want to give a very brief introduction so when I'm actually,

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when you are doing the meditation you don't kind of just wonder *how on earth do you do this?* As some of you already know, this entails directing the attention up, straight up in the sky, to the right, to the left, down to the heart; and so when we do this you might very well think *ok, well I'll visualize something up there and then I'll visualize to the right and so forth* which means then you are right back into meditating on a sign. It is not that, it is not that; but I've found a little analogy or a kind of a parallel that works very, very closely, so I would like you to all be very quiet for a moment (there was a pause) and see if you can you pick up the sound that is quite distant way off to my right? It is coming from long distance away, way off to my right. Can you hear that sound? If you can you have much better ears than I do, because I don't pick up anything out there. Now there is a sound and if you have very, very good hearing you'll definitely you pick up something over there; if you have a dog's ears or something like that you'll do very well.

(2:53) The point there was when I said that, you didn't need to visualize something, a half kilometer, one kilometer. You did not need to visualize anything and you were directing your attention far away when I said it's coming from a long distance away, then we know how to do that. If I say can you hear something behind me? Or above you? Can you hear the airplane going by overhead right now? You know, two miles up? You know how to do that, but it does not entail visualization but it does entail simply directing your attention sending out an antenna *ok, anything there, anything there?* And unless your ears are better than mine when you attended way off to my right you didn't pick up anything, right? But you were attending way off in that space. So that is for the auditory field.

And now we are going to do something very similar but in a mental field.

So we'll direct the attention straight up in the space above us, one kilometer, one light year, you know, twenty light years whatever you like, just as far as you can but it is not giving yourself a target, like a little dot or something like a ball to look at, but just like we did, you didn't need to visualize the sound to direct your attention way off to my right, but you were directing your attention off into that auditory space.

(3:52) So in a similar fashion, as we come to that phase of the practice, I will suggest, now direct your attention up into the space above you, and you do not need to look up with your eyes, and what you are doing here is just you did when attending, trying to hear the sound off to my right; you are directing your mental attention as far as you can, OK? Way up, as far as you can, and then down and down. And the idea here is to expand the space of your awareness, so it is really, just that; very, very spacious, ok? So that is it.

(4:24) Now the culmination of the practice is where Tsongkapa starts and ends, because his description of awareness of awareness is the most concise that I have seen anywhere, from any teacher, and that is he says *ok, now just rest your awareness in the sheer luminosity and sheer cognizance of awareness* [Tibetan] and that's it, that's all he has to say about it. And so the instructions can be very concise, that is some of the most concise and that is where we end.

(5:15) So we will do once again the oscillation, the release, the inversion, release and inversion, we will do that; we'll move through pretty quickly right? And I'm almost finished here with the preface, and then we'll go through this expansion and then when we've finished all the different kind of exercises, it is like working in a gym, really is, but when we've finished all of that, very much like (and Miles knows exactly what I'm going to say) very much like warming-up before you run a marathon, or even a triathlon; you're really going to warm up before then and then once, you know, you've stretched all the muscles, got them nice and warm, ok now set out in your great challenge.

And so likewise after we've warmed up, we've kind of stretched, inverted in all different directions, when you're kind of all warmed up loose and relaxed and flexible then you go simple; and then you just rest in awareness of awareness; and that is it; and that does not change from that it's from there until shamatha. And that is why I really like this image of the burning coal; that is, if the coal says *ok now that you've put me on in the snow bank, what do I need to do? What do I need to do here? How do I get down to the bottom of the snow bank?* And don't do anything, you are a lump of coal what do you think you can do? You are a lump of coal, you can't do much, just sit there and be bright.

Ola so, find a comfortable position.

Meditation:

Settle your body, speech and mind in their natural state and for a little while relaxing and releasing deeply with every out breath. Calm the conceptual and discursive mind with mindfulness of breathing.

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Let your eyes at least partially open, evenly rest your awareness in the space in front of you and for little while do not focus your attention on anything at all, do not meditate on anything, and simply be present in the present moment, sustaining a flow of mindful presence, without distraction and without grasping. Then accentuate your awareness of something of which you are already aware, and that of course is the awareness of being aware; rest right there without deliberately directing your attention to anything else, to any appearances, to any objects of the mind. Let your awareness be silent releasing all thoughts that may come to mind.

Then at your own pace, begin the oscillation. This entails forcefully, that is with concentration, with some effort, inverting your awareness right in upon the experience of being aware, which is to say, it is not coming inside your head or coming into any other place, it is simply a withdrawal, with concentration, of your awareness away from all appearances, really focusing in upon this immediate sense of being aware. And then utterly relaxing, releasing awareness into space, but space with no object, space with no concepts or thoughts. Ever so gently, sustaining the flow of awareness of awareness, arousing and focusing your attention in upon itself thereby overcoming laxity, and utterly releasing, relaxing fully, thereby overcoming the imbalance of excitation. Set your own rhythm. As a preliminary practice you may do so with the breath if you wish, if it is helpful, otherwise set your own pace.

Invert your awareness in upon your experience of being the meditator, the one who is inverting and releasing your awareness. Do you have a sense of being the agent, the one who is doing, as you invert? Focus your awareness in upon your sense of being the agent and release into space as before.

Even when you are not consciously doing anything, when you are just being present, do you have a sense of being the observer, the witness, someone in here, the subject who is experiencing appearances, experiencing your own awareness? As you invert your awareness, invert it right in upon that which is observing, and see what comes to mind. Nothing? An appearance? Observe closely, arousing and focusing your attention and release your awareness without object into space.

As you invert your awareness in upon the observer, if an appearance comes to mind, the sense of yourself as the subject, then examine more closely what is aware of that appearance? With form or without form?

Now direct your attention straight up into space above you. With no object, simply extend your awareness, then focus your attention, as far as you can, directly up into objectless space.

And let your awareness come and rest in its own place.

Direct your awareness out into space to your right, as far as your attention can reach, with no object.

And back to the center.

Direct your awareness out into the space to your left.

And back to the center.

Now direct your awareness down into the space of the mind below, so not into the earth element, not into any form, down into the space below as far as your awareness can reach.

Back to the center.

And now, with eyes closed, let your awareness descend to your heart, as if the very locus of your awareness, your perspective, from which you are looking, is in the center of your chest, the heart chakra, rest your awareness there.

And now with eyes open once again, release your awareness into space, with no boundaries, with no directionality, just releasing with no-object into boundless space.

And now simply rest effortlessly, your awareness coming to rest in its own place, holding in its own ground, sustaining a flow of awareness of the sheer luminosity and cognizance of consciousness itself. Whatever thoughts arise release them or just let them be as your awareness holds in its own ground.

Transcribed by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Revised by Corinne Dobinson

Final edition by Rafael Carlos Giusti

Posted by Alma Ayon

92 Practice post-retreat (2)

17 Oct 2012

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We have about 45 minutes and then the kitchen staff, front desk, everybody will be coming here for them to do little ceremony, so we have 45 minutes right now and I think the time will be very well spent since we are now clearly in summing up phase to go to a summing up by Dudjom Lingpa in this text of the Sharp Vajra of Conscious Awareness Tantra. It's the very conclusion of just phase 1 so there are 7 phases and when you complete phase 7 you achieve rainbow body, so then you get a big congratulations and a hug, if somebody can find you to hug, I'm not quite sure whether they could. But this is just phase 1 and you recall phase 1, you may recall, is taking the impure mind as the path, so settling the mind in its natural state, so he gives a marvelously clear account of this both in his root text and then there's the commentary by one of his disciples which also is very, very helpful and so I wanted to go just to the end of that section of phase 1, and the next one then moving right into vipashyana. So two parts here not a lot but I found it very helpful and I hope you will as well. So he's given the instructions, the instructions are complete:

- The first is really identifying nature of mind, what is this mind that you are taking as the path, so conventional nature.
- And then the shamatha method for settling the mind in natural state, shamatha dissolving into the substrate consciousness.

So now he's completed it, he's given the whole instruction, then he says okay now, you can imagine that he is sending his disciples off to their caves for meditation and what have you, giving them some parting advice and so this is parting advice from Dudjom Lingpa, and the first point, just of two is:

- **How never to be separated from the experience of the practical instructions.**

So this came up in at least one written note. Many of you will be heading back home, heading back to a socially, I think is very acute to say socially engaged, active way of life, which can be very meaningful, but many of you may be engaging a lot with people who have no interest in dharma don't know what eudhamonia means, and are not meditating, in which case how can you maintain the inspiration, the enthusiasm, the commitment to practice, which I think really all of you have shown so wonderfully here during these eight weeks, so – how never to be separated from the experience of the practical instructions. (0:2:39) The root text by Dudjom Lingpa, this is again a mind terma so he just simply wrote it down, he received it directly from Samantabhadra. He says:

Those who have become distant from sublime spiritual friends should cherish the five topics as the sublimity of the path.

Ok, about all to disperse, many of us will be distant from sublime spiritual friends, and so cherish what five topics? Well, you might be able to recall:

The first one is that preliminary, the access to taking the mind as a path – and that is are you are able to distinguish between the stillness of your awareness and movements of the mind, remember that? That's the opening of the door.

And then there are four modes of mindfulness, remember? What is the first one? Single pointed mindfulness.

[Note from subscriber: just to have in mind the four modes of mindfulness summing up are: single pointedness mindfulness, manifest mindfulness, absence of mindfulness and naturally luminous.]

What is the second one, when you really kind of get into the flow, it becomes more and more effortless?

Manifest mindfulness, now you are in the flow and so you are sustaining that simultaneity of the stillness of your awareness while aware of movements of the mind but it's going to be more and more effortless. Stage four, five, six, seven, eight, nine it's covering a lot of territory with that second mode of mindfulness.

You achieve stage nine and then you kind of drop off the cliff. Tania what is this type of mindfulness? Absence of mindfulness, exactly right you remember what that is, I'm sure you do.

And then once you've come out of that little, very temporary, very coma, Nato what do you do when you come out of temporary coma? Is that dark humor or black humor? I'm not quite sure. What is it, Elizabeth the fourth type of mindfulness? Naturally luminous, yes, the natural luminosity of the substrate consciousness itself.

So he says cherish those, those are the five points.

First the entry into it, simply being able to distinguish, to experience, to know what is like not to be always falling into cognitive fusion with all the rubbish, sometimes not so much rubbish, that arises in the mind, to have that stillness and aware of the movements of the mind and the distinction between the two, in other words awareness and mind are not the same, right?

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And then the four modes of mindfulness, he said you should cherish the five topics as the sublimate of the path ok? Here is your essence.

If you strive too hard in practicing single-pointedness, the power of your mind will decline; and with stagnant mindfulness, although your body is human, your mind becomes that of an animal. Some people stray into delirium, so inseparably devote yourself to a spiritual friend.

(So, there is one way, this is very, very dense, this is almost like on a micro disc, so dense so compact, so if you strive too hard, you are going to get exhausted. That's what I did on my first long Samantha retreat, I was so enthusiastic, only 30 years old, His Holiness the Dalai Lama is my teacher, my Lama, living in a meditation hut of a yogi who had been there 20 years, wonderful yogi, many blessings, not to mention all the wonderful neighbors I had, oh bedbugs and fleas and rats and mice and mosquitos, and ya, it was really quite wonderful, and then what did I do, of course just strove so hard, I just burnt myself out. So then, power of your mind declines, it does, on the other hand) - and with stagnant mindfulness, although your body is human, your mind becomes that of an animal (it becomes dull). Some people stray into delirium, so inseparably devote yourself to a spiritual friend.

(So that is it, that is how never to be separated from the experience of the practical instructions, don't fall to extremes.

Now the commentary, very helpful is not long):

Those who have become distant from sublime spiritual friends who reveal the path, (that is what a sublime spiritual friend is for, one who shows you a path, doesn't just give you a whole bunch of practices, anybody can do that, frankly, I mean really anybody can tell you about practice, but actually reveal the path? That's a bit rare, so those who have become distant from sublime spiritual friends who reveal the path) **may not know how to distinguish between what is and is not the path,** (really important point) **or how to cut through their uncertainties and false assumptions. So the previously presented five topics on stillness and movement and the four kinds of mindfulness are the sublimity of the path. You should know that they are indispensable when first venturing into practice,** (boy Dudjom Lingpa is not mincing his words here, there are so many things you can practice, he said this is indispensable when first venturing into practice, he doesn't say do 100,000 prostrations, or study Lamrim till your brains fall out, or do a whole bunch of sadhanas or get a whole bunch of empowerments, or get teachings that just numb your mind, he said the first thing is – hey, you might want to get a mind that works so it is a vessel for everything else, might be a good idea, this is what he says) **and you must cherish that knowledge by gaining the firm certainty of proper understanding.**

08:46 So it is not only enough to practice correctly, you need to know you are practicing correctly.

Some regard the practice that is merely initial, (taking the pure mind as the path,) **some regard this as being the ultimate nature of existence and strive only in the practice of single-pointedness.** (if they do, they'll probably call it vipashyana, or Mahamudra or Dzogchen or **something that is really exalted, he said hey, wait a minute this is phase 1, this is shamatha right)** **Or, without knowing how to apply the appropriate degree of effort in accordance with the state of their own mindstreams, like blocking a water canal, they regard the mere single-pointed awareness of stopping thoughts as the highest view and meditation.** (so once again, they think whether it's in their system, whether it's satori or Dzogchen, Mahamudra, Stage of Completion, or whatever it is, they will think –this is it.) **Then, if they strive much too hard in the practice, the functioning of the channels and elements) —for some people who are dominant in the water element or earth element, this causes the analytical power of their minds to decline. Their awareness then becomes stagnant, and though their body is human, their mind becomes that of an animal, by becoming stupid and turgid. With this in mind, Mañjughoṣa Sakya Panchen** (the great teacher from the Sakya tradition), **wrote: Striving only in meditation, without study, is a way to achieve rebirth as an animal.**

So, you can either go to a whole bunch of orgies that would do it, or you can meditate without study, that would do it,(10:31) so actually same the result but they are very different methods. One sounds like it would be a lot more fun, especially in Phuket I mean I've never been to Phuketan orgy but I think they must be good because people come from all of the world here for that and we somehow miss that, and you've been here for eight weeks, not even one orgy, that you told me about.

Some people who are dominant in the fire element (and they tend to be redheads or blonds, by the way) **or earth element stray off the path as their minds become muddled due to delirium, fainting, and so on.** (these are the people who need motorcycle helmets when they sit in meditation, how could he have known? People

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listening by podcast, this is a private joke, so you'll just have to live with it) **So cut through your false assumptions by inseparably devoting yourself to a sublime spiritual friend who knows how to teach the essential points of this path correctly.** (the next point is very interesting) **Even if you lack such good fortune,** (such spiritual friends are rare, after all, even in Tibet, let alone this world we are living in, even if you lack such good fortune) **it is indispensable that you, without falling into indolence, (laziness) properly seek out and familiarize yourself with the practical instructions of the vidyādhara of the past who have achieved siddhis by way of this path.**

(12:50) It reminds me some of the quintessential advice from my primary yoga teacher, he is very, very confident he knows his business very well, he is also very confident and one of his aphorisms was: "when it comes to yoga it's better have a good book than a bad teacher".

There is something to be said for that. I mean it's better to have a good teacher and a good book, but if you're going to have a teacher who doesn't know what he or she is talking about, or you have a good book then you'd probably do better with a good book, and I think that is exactly what Dudjom Lingpa or the commentary is saying here.

Better than following some teachers just making up stuff that doesn't have a clue or doesn't really know what the path is, and what is and is not a path. Then rather than following such person why not really seek out and familiarize yourself with the practical instructions, that's meditation instruction of the vidyadharas, people who have actually gained direct realization of rigpa? This text is all about Dzogchen. Why not seek out their teachings even it's one, two, five, ten, fifteen generations removed at least you know you are tapping into something totally authentic that has worked.

(14:37) And so these vidyadharas of the past who achieved siddhis by way of this path so they follow this and its manifested the benefit, evident, visible, empirical and they're very powerful actually.

So that's the end of his instructions on: how never to be separated from the experience of practical instructions.

(14:28) At this point I can mention, happy to mention that this text, I think it's only ten pages but the commentary's a hundred pages and I've translated them both, is the very essence I think all of his mind treasures on Dzogchen. I just have to say it absolutely speaks to me at the deepest level and so I'm so utterly taken by this text and the commentary. Frankly I really want to practice this for the rest of my life and others practices, feeding and I've cited so many others great masters from the past but all feeding into this. That is just personal, not saying this is true for anybody else, it's true for me and so because of my profound reference, way beyond respect for this Sharp Vajra of Conscious Awareness Tantra and its commentary, I am now teaching it more and more frequently, and I teach it just in small pieces, twice now in Santa Barbara and once in Holy Isle in Scotland, off the West Coast of Scotland, I taught just phase one and so the whole commentary and anybody can listen it, you don't need empowerment, initiation, you don't need to be Buddhist.

If anybody's interested, people listening by podcast or people here, if anybody is interested in listening to the oral commentary and then you will get the text as well of phase one, then you can either write to info@sbinstitute.com, Santa Barbara institute they sell it, or our dear friend that is here, Elizabeth at emwest1944@gmail.com she has a beautiful edition very handsomely produced from the oral commentary I gave this past summer I think it was June on the Holy Isle, it was really quite a wonderful retreat, sheer delight for me, the place, the people, everything, it was like all the perfections coming together at one time. And then in terms of phase two and three, I've taught that once thus far, that was in Santa Barbara and the commentary is also available in Santa Barbara, I haven't taught it elsewhere yet. And then I'll be teaching phase four this fall in November in Santa Barbara and the oral commentary for that will be also available together with the text in each case. So if you find anything remotely like my inspiration for this text, then you can follow it that way.

(16:58) Now we go to his final section in phase one, bear in mind six more phases to come, and this is the synthesis:

- **Dudjom Lingpa's second advice: The Synthesis**

Text:

In short, even if you strive diligently in this phase of these practices for a long time,
(This phase, phase 1, shamatha)

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Taking the mind as the path
Does not bring you even an iota closer to the paths
Of liberation and omniscience,
And your life will certainly have been spent in vain!
So understand this, you fortunate people.

So as he said already this is indispensable, so I quote that one again: indispensable, you should know they, those five topics, which is all in phase one, settling the mind, you should know they are indispensable when first venturing into practice and you must cherish that knowledge by gaining firm certainty and proper understanding.

(17:49) So on the one hand, venturing into this phase indispensable, but if you stay there then you have wasted your whole life, right. If that is all you do then you've not even moved an inch to actually getting onto the freeway, getting onto the path, you've just gotten to the on ramp, and then you turn off the engine and say - isn't nice to be on the on-ramp? Well that means you've not actually moved onto the freeway at all, you may as well have stayed at home or just wandered around in traffic. So he's making a very important, crucial point, and again, it's nowhere contested in Buddhism that I've seen, shamatha is indispensable, that is in terms of classic sources and masters, shamatha is indispensable by itself, it's really not even on the path at all, it's the preliminary to the path.

(18:33) So here's the commentary:

Text:

In short, these practices from śamatha to luminous, cognizant consciousness and the substrate consciousness, as taught previously, constitute the phase of taking the aspects of the mind as the path. (again, even the commentary is very, very dense. These practices from shamatha, that's when you first start practicing shamatha, and then as you venturing into this practice as taking the impure mind as the path, more and more clearly along the path, before you achieve shamatha, you simply will have a clearer and clearer sense, when they say that awareness is luminous and cognizant, what does that mean, and you will know, just as once you've tasted grapes, you know what grapes taste like, or anything else, once you've tasted it that's it, and then you can recognize it in the future, and so that's it, you will know the taste of the luminosity of awareness and exactly what that word refers to which is not at all self-evident to the people who have not done the meditation, they will think something luminous is what lights do, bright, and cognizant, what does that mean, you'll know exactly what that means so there you are, you've entered shamatha and along the path you get a clearer and clearer sense of this cognizant nature of consciousness, namely the defining characteristics of consciousness, and then finally when you have settled your mind in its natural state, you realize substrate consciousness and you know exactly what that word refers to, you know that is the substrate, this is the substrate consciousness, and as taught previously, these practices constitute the phase of taking aspects of the mind as the path. So once again I emphasize because I think it's really interesting, is that this is such a naturalistic approach, there are many authentic approaches to achieve shamatha, like focusing on a Buddha image or on a seed syllable, methods that are specifically Buddhist, a Christian may focus on an image of Jesus, or one of the saints, why not, perfectly good, and all of those would be religious ways of achieving shamatha, nothing wrong with that at all, absolutely, but the way he is teaching here, is taking something that is already part of your being, and actually a core part of your being, and taking that as the path. Right, so it is taking a central aspect of reality as your path to deeper reality, so I think again, this lends itself to, how do you say, a real engagement with a scientific approach to how to study the mind, okay.) **But as long as** (so now he's coming, summing up here, so that's shamatha, so as long as it, that is this phase as taking the mind as the path as long as) **it is divorced from the vipaśyanā of knowing the nature of existence,** (most specifically of course – emptiness, realization of emptiness, shunyata, as long as your shamatha practice is divorced from the vipashyana of knowing the nature of existence) , **this does not bring you even an iota closer to the path of liberation from the suffering of mundane existence and the path of omniscience that liberates from the two extremes.** (the extremes of Samsara and Nirvana) **Thus, even if you strive diligently in these practices for a long time, this does nothing more than perpetuate saṃsāra.** (So it takes you to a form realm, maybe a formless realm, the petrol that got you there gradually gets used up, karma gets exhausted and then you are just right back where you were, no big deal) So understand how your

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life will certainly have been spent in vain! With these words he offered compassionate advice to fortunate people who are following this path.

(22:45) It's compassionate advice, here's the entrance, don't stay there, move on. Tremendous compassion. Now the very end, the final paragraph:

However, whether or not people have identified pristine awareness within themselves, those who become muddled due to distraction and sloth should first mount their discursive mind, (conceptual mind) which is like a cripple, onto their breath, which is like a blind, wild stallion.

So after all this talk within Dzogchen, nature of mind and settling the mind and so forth, then he says, if you're still having problems here, that is whether or not people have identified pristine awareness, bear in mind people can get a pointing out instruction, some glimmering, some glimpse long before they've achieved shamatha, but whether or not you've had some glimpse of rigpa, right, whether or not, if your mind still is relatively unserviceable, keep on getting muddled, just kind of falling into laxity, just flat out dullness and distraction, maybe just getting heavy with sloth, losing some of your inspiration and so forth, then what should you do, you take your discursive mind, this little chatterbox mind, which is like a cripple and then you mount it, you conjoin it, you engage it with the breath, goes back to mindfulness of breathing, how interesting, discursive mind which is like a cripple and get the cripple onto, basically there's the metaphor - you take the cripple who can see, but legs don't work, and put the cripple upon the back of a blind wild stallion, sound like an interesting combination, if it worked out well, the stallion's got all the muscle to carry you from here to there, but of course he's just going to be walking into things all the time, but if the cripple who can't walk but sees clearly, really takes the reins of the horse, then they both win. The cripple takes the stallion to green pastures and the stallion takes the cripple to hospital or whatever, alright.

So there is, I find it fascinating frankly that he comes back to mindfulness of breathing.

By tethering it (that is the discursive mind)) with meditative experience and sustained attention (so that they can meditate uninterruptedly), eventually all coarse and subtle obsessive thoughts will appear to be dispelled and uncontrived, primordially present consciousness will manifest.

Uncontrived, that's a stem consciousness, uncontrived, that's not male or female, Mexican or Brazilian, it's uncontrived, it's there, the naked stripped down version. Causal, uncontrived primordially present, is always there, it's always there, sometimes implicit like when you are in a deep, deep sleep, comatose you fainted, you just gotten dead, whatever, but it's always there, through the bardo, through dreaming, the waking state, primordially present uncontrived, uncontrived primordial present consciousness will manifest.

I'm going to read that sentence again.

By tethering, so here again is the rope of mindfulness, by tethering it, the discursive mind, with meditative experience and sustained attention, so they can meditate uninterruptedly, eventually all coarse and subtle obsessive thoughts, we call it rumination, will appear to be dispelled. Finally the mind calms down. The mind dissolves into the substrate consciousness, and uncontrived, primordially present consciousness will manifest. Okay, so far so good.

When one alights upon the great non-meditation of pristine awareness (and now we've gone beyond shamatha, okay, and bear in mind Padmasambhava says, when you are resting in awareness of awareness and you are doing that probing in, with that probing in you might just break through right there, without going out into vipashyana and other practices, you may go directly from really penetrating shamatha and just breath right through to the substrate consciousness into rigpa, okay, that's a possibility) and that's what he is referring to here -)

When one alights upon the great non-meditation (in other words taking nothing as an object, no striving, no effort, just revealing that which already is. When one alights upon the great non-mediation) of pristine awareness, it is easy for the guru's introduction to pristine awareness to strike home.

(27:15)

So when you are, there may be getting some glimmerings of it just from your shamatha practice, it's kind of like shining through your substrate consciousness so to speak, when you are that close, then if you seek out a qualified Dzogchen master and that person gives you these pointing out instructions, he said it's very easy for those teachings to strike home, and then really let awareness, pristine awareness know pristine awareness.

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Given how very important it is for disciples not to stray onto false paths, this needs to be clearly taught, as was implied in the preceding passage. (the preceding passage on phase one of Sharp Vajra Tantra) **This concludes the synthesis of this phase, revealed in *The Sharp Vajra of Conscious Awareness Tantra*.**

So there we are, that is his summary.

So I think that's very, very relevant to all of us here as we are parting ways, some of us will be quite far from spiritual friends and that is Dudjon Lingpa's advice. I don't know how that could be possible topped, ok, between Karma Chagmé's advice that is actually Atisha by way of Karma Chagmé yesterday, and then Dudjon Lingpa, both five, five, interesting, five full practice of Atisha, these five aspects, but just on the first phase of the practice from Dudjom Lingpa, quite extraordinary.

So one of you asked about reading, possible reading, there are so many good books, many, many, many, that I would give just a tiny sampling of some that would be quite a smooth transition for what we have been doing here, that's all, that is with the baseline among my books:

Alan's books: Genuine Happiness, Attention Revolution, Four Immeasurables, Minding Closely, those were the basis for what we have done for the last 8 weeks.

Then moving on, I don't know in terms of wanting a very stream-lined path, I don't know any text I could more highly recommend than this Sharp Vajra Tantra. So there it is and it will be hopefully published I think next year with a bit of luck, because as far as I know all of his mind treasures on Dzogchen have been translated, we've translated all of them, and we found a publisher, we just need to do the final polishing and printing, but beyond that, in terms of a very smooth transition, just to refer to some texts I have cited a number of times – over these eight weeks.

(29:56)

First of all one I have not cited but it's a marvelous book, and it's His Holiness Dalai Lama's teachings that he gave about ten years ago, in Lerabling in the South of France. Sogyal Rinpoche's center, there were 10,000 people, and I was invited there by Sogyal Rinpoche, so it was a tremendous privilege just to be there, and His Holiness was teaching Dzogchen, and he taught a text by Longchen, Rabjampa, and this was very, very beautifully translated, edited, by a team of people, I was actually part of the team that translated the text, that we then delivered to everybody that was receiving the teachings, so we were back in the cave, and there was about four or five of us translating the text because we had to translate very quickly because it would be taught the very next day, this small core group of us translated the text and then another group translated His Holiness' teachings, and these were published several years ago, under the title by His Holiness -

H. H. Dalai Lama: Mind In comfort and Ease. So if you'd like to see a really smooth, eloquent, extremely well informed and very informative presentation on Dzogchen from one of the great Gelugpa masters of the modern world, but who also has such a deep understanding of Dzogchen, here it is, His Holiness. And he shows, he contextualizes Dzogchen within the broader framework of Buddha dharma in general, but of course with his extremely strong Gelugpa background, so any of you who are coming from a Gelugpa background, if you have any kind of qualms – is this really compatible with the teachings you've heard thus far, well take it from His Holiness, it doesn't get much better than that. It's a marvelous book, really an outstanding book. So that would I think be for starters, and then there's this two volume set that I translated with my Lama Gyalchen Rinpoche's wonderful oral commentary, The first being - A Spacious Path to Freedom, 2) Naked Awareness, these are both on the union of Mahamudra and Dzogchen, The Spacious Path to Freedom and Naked Awareness, beautiful set, really so informative, lays out the whole path, the whole path, Mahamudra, Dzogchen, even both phases of Dzogchen, even the Thogyal which is not very often taught, even that is included there, with some of these, the mapping onto the five paths, this wonderful concluding chapter that I cited yesterday, it's really a beautiful text, very practical, all entirely orientated for practices, that's all that my Lama Gyalchen Rinpoche taught me, he never taught me any more scholastic texts, for people who really want to become scholars, there are scholars, I'm totally not. He didn't teach me one text of that sort, and there are a lot of them. The Seven Treasures of Longchenpa, if you really want to be a good scholar of Dzogchen you study all of them, I haven't studied any of them except for this one tiny one His Holiness taught. And so my lama, knowing where I was in my practice and what I really yearned for, I didn't want to become a scholar, I never had any aspiration to become a scholar of Dzogchen, I think it is a very noble thing to do, but I was starting at the age of 40, I wasn't ready to start another scholarly quest. So he just taught me

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practice. One practice text after another. The Spacious Path to Freedom and Naked Awareness, and then a follow up and that's -

Natural Liberation by Padmasambhava, beautiful text, covers six bardos, six opportunities for achieving enlightenment. While you're dead, while you're dreaming, while you're awake and so forth and so on. So six bardos, each of them presented as a launching pad for achieving awakening. Extraordinary text, really one of the great classics. So that will get you off to a good start.

So we have about ten minutes, questions about the practice, anything still lingering?

Question about awareness of awareness – the term you are using, forcefully withdrawing attention from the sensory appearances.

A - In the sense that now's the time to arouse, it's not just all relax, relax, relax, sometimes there's a time for really paying attention and this is straight from Padmasambhava, now's the time for concentrating, focusing, arousing, but of course you can always overdo it and then deplete yourself. (34:09)

You don't want to be focusing in a certain physical place. I will put it this way, it's a parallel issue, that is when you withdraw your interest from everything else, while maintaining clarity of awareness, but when you withdraw your awareness from everything else, again like the sensory deprivation tank, you've just had 3 cappuccinos you're bright eyed and bushy tailed, wide awake, but now when you're put into a situation that there's just nothing to attend to at all, no objects at all, even with Merlin's magic wand and all your thoughts vanish, then the process of elimination leaves you with a kind of knowing that had to already be there, you're not going to freshly get that by jumping into a sensory deprivation tank, and what is that awareness that's left when there's nothing else? That's awareness of awareness, which already was there, even when you're eating a hot dog, there you are, really focusing on the hot dog and even when you are doing that, I'm choosing a totally mundane activity, but it's still there at that time, so similarly, you're doing the practice right, when you simply, to the best of your ability, withdraw your interest, the focus of your attention, from all appearances, from all appearances, interior and exterior. So you're not looking at thoughts, images, you're not attending to your feelings and emotions and memories and so forth, just a withdrawal from all of that as if somebody's just picked you up with a pair of tweezers and put your right down in the sensory deprivation tank. So this is what I am saying though, if you have a sense of withdrawing from what you are aware of, and then what you are left over with at the end, that's fine. If on the contrary you're saying – okay, now I want to find my center, where is that okay, into the center like you've got a rifle about to shoot a target, okay I think that's my center, let's go into the center – then you are coming into something. Actually you've got a target, and this is simply away from everything, subtle distinction, but that should be enough.

Alan continues answering the question -

Number one it's not a problem for everybody, that's why Tsongkhapa could get away with just two phrases, you know, sheer luminosity, sheer cognizance, and then he stopped. For a person with the brilliance of Tsongkhapa that's probably quite sufficient, because I wonder if he ever experienced mental dullness. Tsongkhapa and mental dullness in the same sentence? They just don't seem to belong together, you know, so I suspect that is quite sufficient for him, but for people who have ordinary minds, the downside, the danger of just saying I am just going to follow Tsongkhapa, I'm just going to sit here and be aware of being aware, is zzzzzzz (snore and sleep) you just fade out, just gradually, like a light bulb, starting at 100watts then going 99, 95, 80, 70, you could just kind of slip into a nice kind of nebulous space. It's really possible. Not necessary, but it could happen. Since we are bringing such habituation of dullness and so forth already to anything we do, so to avoid that, to avoid that, he's giving us this exercise and once again it's like working out in a gym. There is time when you have to give effort, then ah, out and so it's like that. The people are preparing to come in soon, so without turning your head, keep your eyes this way – but can you hear them? Can you hear whether they're coming or not? Now listen more carefully - it's just that – it's just that. You didn't have to grit your teeth, you didn't have to frown, you didn't have to – I'm trying. Can you hear anything behind you? No? Listen again, can you not hear that they're coming? I see one person walking, can you not hear them?

So, it's that. You see how non stressful it is, but you really are attending more closely. So that's it, that's it, it's attending more closely, greater interest, and then releasing. But the ambience of it is also important. We don't want to turn this into drudgery, into just hard labor, and so here's a nice metaphor.

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Let's imagine you're in a large auditorium, imagine Andre Segovia is still alive, and he is playing one of his last concerts, he is about to retire, it's a little hypothetical, but he is such a grandmaster of the guitar, classical guitar, and you're in a large auditorium, ten thousand people listening, and they are not going to screw up his magnificent guitar with a microphone and having to put it through an electronic sound system, otherwise just listen to a CD at home, right. So he starts, and perhaps he starts out with quite a vigorous piece, and so everyone can hear it quite easily, you know it's got a lot of liveliness to it, but then after he's played that, imagine he turns to something very tender, a very soft piece, very soft, you can imagine the audience when they're hearing his one where he is almost thumping away, I mean you can really hear it, they are kind of enjoying it, ah, beautiful, but then when he comes to the next piece, and it's really soft, you can imagine, it's so beautiful, you can imagine that now is the time, now everybody really be quiet, because you'll miss it, you hear the delicacy of the way his fingers touch the strings, you have to listen really closely, - like that.

So sometimes of that quality, and frankly, ya, just leave it at that. Sometimes that quality, and then sometimes just whoosh! You know, that utter release, but then holding on, like a child holding onto a kite with a string, just holding onto the string, doesn't need that much effort.

So you are just holding onto the string of the awareness of awareness, you're not just spacing out, in other words you're not engaged and knowing and then spacing out, and then engaged and knowing and spacing out. That's no way to achieve shamatha. But there is nevertheless a sense of release while holding the string, and then a concentration, which would be a much more vivid attempt and then the point of that is that when you are doing that inversion, this is the point, this is where you have a wet stone, to sharpen the knife of your mindfulness and introspection, and that is that as you are inverting, you are then by that very act, overcoming any predisposition toward laxity and dullness, as you're really inverting, but then knowing it's for such a short time. Even if you set the rhythm at 20 seconds in and 20 seconds out, that's a 20 second session, that's a short session. And many of you told me when practicing awareness of awareness, you can do it. But you say, but if I do it for very long then I can't do it anymore. That's because you're holding in mind – this is getting long. But if you have just 20 second sessions, and you know that at the end of 20 seconds, then you are finished, and it's – ah I'm finished, ah I think it's long enough, I am ready for another session and then it's (whistles). So it's a whole bunch of short sessions. In that way then every inversion overcomes laxity, increases vividness and the sense of unveiling it, it's like you are coming closer to the light, because of course the vividness is only coming from that which you are attending to – awareness itself, by nature luminous. And then the release every time just overcoming more and more and more coarse, medium and subtle excitation as you're just doing a finer and finer cleaning, like a sweeping out, sweeping out even the fine dust, so even the quiet murmuring of rumination, releasing, releasing.

The fine art of Shamatha without a sign. Beautiful art, and the payoff is very big.

So good, anything else?

Q: What does o laso mean?

That's one of the great secret teachings I give out only to people who've achieved 8 weeks of retreat first. It's very secret, have you received Tantric empowerment? O laso, you ready? Because once I have said it you won't forget it, it's one of those really, pointing out instructions - O Laso doesn't mean anything at all. But it is Tibetan, so it is hard to find a phrase in a language that is definitely part of that language, because O Laso is definitely part of Tibetan, it's not Hindi, or any other language that I know of, it's definitely Tibetan, and it doesn't mean anything at all. But it's Tibetan and I don't know quite how you translate it into English without losing its meaning, but it's something like UM or how about this – WELL THEN , what does that exactly mean, "well then"? Well then, Ladies and Gentlemen. What exactly have I just said that imparted some information to you? (45:42) 'Well then' as opposed to 'ill now'? O laso is kind of like that. It comes up a lot and it's just become part of my speech pattern, and I haven't seen any reason to break it, and also it sounds nice. O laso, o laso, and very often, because I have received many teachings from lamas, at the beginning they often say o laso, and that lets everybody know, hey, we're about to begin, folks. O laso, so it's a nice way to begin, it's so smooth, almost like a mantra, o laso. And then when you finish, when you've finished something – o laso. Like that, okay? It's a way to begin and a way to end.

Q3. Can we still have emotions in a lucid dream?

A- You know you can. (the person who asked the question had experienced emotions in a lucid dream) Number one you've already had that, the answer is yes of course, number one, the most common

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emotion, especially when you first become lucid is euphoria, it feels good, you feel happy. So lucid dreams and emotions, sure, it's like Nico asking can he have any emotions when he is practicing settling the mind in the natural state, yeah, absolutely, definitely, sure. That just kind of raises a host of interesting questions. And that is, if you are very clearly lucid, and you see an automobile crash, as far as you are lucid, you know this is a dream, then you know, no one actually suffered, because there is no one there, I mean literally no one there. It's not that they just have conventional existence, but there is no one there. It's like watching a cartoon, or special effects, where everything you see on the screen is computer generated and you are seeing a computer generated car crash, maybe 3D, high definition on the screen, and you see body parts flying in all directions and so forth, I mean it can be quite a gruesome imagine, but if you know you are watching television or a movie, then you know that there is actually nobody there at all. So then in that way, the emotions that arise would be different. Could one cultivate compassion? Because I thought that's where you were going, could you cultivate compassion if you witness a tragedy like a car crash, while you are lucid, could you cultivate compassion as you witness a car crash, knowing there is no one there, and no one suffering at all. Could you? What do you think, Will? Could you in a lucid dream, witnessing some misery, some adversity, tragedy, could you experience compassion, could you actually cultivate compassion? Will says yes. Sure, it doesn't have to be compassion for someone who isn't there, but this is, and imagine, could you cultivate compassion for someone while reading a novel? Definitely yes, and you know it's a novel, nobody pulled a fast one on you, you know it's a novel, so you know everybody there doesn't exist at all, period, but could you cultivate while reading a novel, while watching a movie? And the answer is yes, for sure.

Q4. When I practice emptiness of awareness, there's an open feeling that's not there when I practice awareness of awareness.

A: Your description is a bit general, and I want to give a meaningful response – what I understand from what you've just said is that when you are really engaging in the vipashyana practice, really seeking to fathom, to experience, to taste the empty nature of your own awareness, there is one type of experience that arises from that, as opposed to simply, without investigating or analyzing, simply being aware of being aware and just resting there, that those are two quite distinct experiences. Did I understand correctly? First of all I sympathize, it's hard to find the words, it really is because this is so subtle, and so intangible, if I say banana or chocolate, okay we'll wrap our minds around that very easily, but when we are going into the realm of awareness and then the emptiness of awareness, we still have to use, in this case, ordinary English, we don't have some special esoteric terminology because we're still using ordinary words and emptiness and awareness is a very common term and so forth, but I think the general answer to your comment is that yes, the experiences of awareness of awareness and the experience of the emptiness of inherent nature of awareness are definitely different. The first one is, when you are practicing shamatha of any sort, it's simply a placing of your awareness upon the object, whatever you are attending to. In this case it's simply awareness descending in its own place and being aware of what's already happening. Being aware, but it's just a placing. Likewise if I were visualizing a Buddha image, I would simply place my mind, place my awareness upon it and I would be satisfied with that. I wouldn't be investigating or anything like that.

So it's simply a placement, it doesn't entail investigation, analysis, probing, any of that kind of business. Like right now, I simply place my awareness upon your face and I know who I am looking at, just from the front part of your body, it's perfectly clear, we've met many times now, you're very familiar to me, and so I am satisfied, I don't need to go any further and so now I can just be focusing on Sandra and that's enough. But then, if I want to now shift it into high gear, and say alright, but now what is the nature of Sandra? Is she the front part of her body, is she her face, is she her mind, does she have a body and mind? Now I am starting to probe in and then that not finding, that not finding a target that's really there from its own side, that's the target that is the referent of the label, Sandra. Then it is qualitative but very different. Because you are manifestly appearing to me, you have shape, you have color and so forth and so on, many qualities that I can attend to, whereas when I am seeking out the Sandra that exists from her own side by her own nature, I'm coming up with a not finding, and a finding of not finding, a finding of un-findability - that's knowing, that's not just not finding, not just where are my keys I can't find them, that's not it, it's knowing the un-findability, knowing there is nothing to be found and likewise for awareness of awareness. When you're probing right into its nature, this awareness that is self-defining, has its own awareness, has its own boundaries, its own distinctions between awareness and not awareness, and you are looking for that nuclear core of your

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awareness, and then not finding it, you don't just suddenly go unconscious clearly you're still aware, but you're aware of an emptiness. And that's the simultaneous experience of emptiness and luminosity. Because you're still aware of being aware, that doesn't stop, but you're aware of the emptiness of the inherent nature of awareness. So that's why, especially in multiple traditions, one of them being the Mahamudra tradition, it came up a lot in that first yoga of single pointedness, is the big theme there for the union of shamatha vipashyana was realization of emptiness and luminosity, simultaneously and non- dual. But it's not just the emptiness of the substrate, it's the emptiness of inherent nature and that's what really cuts to the root of samsara because when you realize that, then you turn your attention outwards, then the emptiness of all phenomena, all appearances, all objects of the mind, follows pretty readily. Okay, nice grand finale of a question, very good.

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