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<sup>1</sup> – Writings, i.e. not extracted from transcriptions of teachings

## 1. WIND BLOWS

Wind blows  
leaves remain  
wind rests  
leaves fall

Autumn strangeness  
shows me  
myself

## 2. ADVICE ON FINDING YOUR MIND

Don't look in the manner of seeking something you've lost.  
Don't look in the manner of a policeman trying to find a suspect.  
But go like an ornithologist into the forest.  
Find a peaceful place and sit quietly.  
The bird is in the forest.  
Trust this fact and don't move around restlessly.  
Don't confuse yourself with busy thoughts of 'Is it here?', 'Is it there?'  
With the movement of hopes and fears you will lose what can't be lost.  
Just relax  
For when the bird appears  
Your mind is here.  
It is not what you think it is.

## 3. ADVICE ON REFUGE

Stop taking refuge in your thoughts, feelings and sensations.  
Stop taking refuge in your beliefs and assumptions.  
Drop your belief in subject and object.  
Take refuge in empty awareness  
Whose clarity is everything as it is.  
If you take refuge in the delusion that illusion is real  
Confusion will continue effortlessly.

## 4. ALL THAT ARISES HAS NO ESSENCE

Each thought will pass, that is its nature  
Yet the awareness that has revealed the thought remains.  
Awareness is like a mirror, thoughts are like reflections.  
Reflections arise due to causes and conditions  
Without essence, they are fleeting and unreliable.  
The mirror doesn't move yet reflections keep on arising.  
If you move in response to the reflection  
You yourself are just another reflection,  
And will tumble on and on, wandering in samsara.  
By not moving  
See every movement is empty illusion.  
This wisdom evokes compassion for all lost beings diligently  
Erecting their hopes of permanence on the groundless ground.

The true nature of the busy builder is changeless space.  
Everything else is the play of the mind.  
Eh ma ho

## 5 WE CAN HAVE IT ALL

What we seek is happiness,  
Contentment, relaxation.  
Not finding this we seek  
Stimulus, change, excitation.

Active engagement generates  
Our sense of self  
Self maintained by  
Active engagement.

No need for more activity  
No need to stop activity  
Activity occurs, certainly, constantly –  
So who is the doer?

Neither merging nor observing  
Be present at the site of activity.  
The action passes,  
The actor dissolves.

Neither looking back nor forward  
Be present here and now where life is happening.  
Life flows, the moment goes,  
Ungraspable presence is changeless.

Life goes on, round and round  
Hopes and fears, up and down  
Wave upon wave  
Yet depth and space are unruffled.

Stillness and contentment  
Movement and change  
Non-dual, without contradiction  
No loss, no gain – lovely!

## 6 EVERYTHING IS IMPERMANENT

Everything is impermanent, vanishing by itself  
So don't hold onto appearances as if they were reliable.  
Don't try to retain what you think you know and like  
Don't push events away because they feel too much  
For these involvements mean this busy work of ego will never end.  
There will always be something to be done, to be improved or avoided  
So just stay present with the one who does the doing.

Release identification and rest in your own nature.

In the state of the mirror remain  
Relaxed, open and present  
Then you will see  
Your own busyness  
Still striving to obscure  
What you had been looking for.

## 7 FORM AND EMPTINESS — EMPTINESS AND FORM

Whether the mind is busy  
Or quiet,  
Relax fixation on what arises  
Be aware of your own existence unfolding and vanishing.  
Who is the one having this experience?

Our mind,  
The basis of our existence,  
Is not a thing we can grasp.  
How strange, how unexpected.  
In our awareness  
All things arise:  
The sun and the moon arise,  
Our bodies arise,  
Our thoughts and feelings arise.  
If we think of something that is  
Not in our awareness  
Well, it is now!

If all things arise from the mind itself,  
And it is not a thing,  
How could no-thing give rise to some-thing?  
There are no some-things.

Relax and open  
Discover all you have hidden from yourself.

## 8 FROM THE VERY BEGINNING

From the very beginning the mind has been completely pure.  
There is no fault, no error, no taint.  
The mind that is described as being like this  
Is our own mind,  
It is the mind that we already are.  
From the very beginning our nature is completely pure.

Any faults,  
Any flaws,  
Any errors made are momentary  
Contingent movements on the level of reflection.  
The reflection does not destroy the mirror.  
The reflection of something ugly doesn't make the mirror break.  
The reflection of something beautiful doesn't cause the mirror to smile.

The mirror is always open without fear or favour to whatever is arising.  
The mirror is the best host:  
Never judging her guests  
They are free to be  
Just how they are.

Whatever faults,  
Whatever mistakes,  
Whatever errors you have ever made,  
Have not fundamentally contaminated you.  
They have not distorted you.  
They have not imprisoned you.  
Events and patterns come and go  
Revealed by and within, yet not touching, our pure nature.  
This purity is infinite, the source of infinite light.  
Hello, Buddha.

## 9      HERE IN THIS MOMENT

Here in this moment  
There is movement.  
It feels as if we are moving  
Yet we are not moving, for  
Awareness never moves.  
The world is moving  
The body is moving,  
Words are moving,  
But our true nature does not move.  
In not moving it is always here,  
So no need for a journey to find it.  
Our true nature is not hidden.  
It's not behind us,  
It's not in front of us,  
No need to try to buy it,  
No need to try to steal it,  
It's just here with us  
Where it has always been.

## 10     IMPERMANENCE

Recollection of impermanence is the simple heart of practice.  
Impermanence shows us emptiness.  
Impermanence shows us the nature of our mind.  
Impermanence offers us the courage to fully live our lives  
With all its strangeness and disappointment.

Impermanence is very sweet and precious.  
Impermanence opens the way to live in the moment  
Showing us there is nowhere else to live.  
The wonderful fact of impermanence is freely available  
Everywhere! Beautiful!

Impermanence is everywhere, all the time,  
In everything you do:  
Parking your car, going to work,  
Going to the toilet, doing the dishes.  
Everything which appears, disappears.  
You breathe out  
And suddenly you are breathing in.  
All appearance is the flow of change.  
Nothing to grasp yet  
Everything to savour in its perfect moment.

## 11 INFINITE MIND LIKE A MIRROR

This mind, our mind, is infinite.  
Empty of substance,  
The mind is fresh awareness.  
Uncovered, unconditioned,  
It has not been made and will never end.  
Completely empty and yet always full,  
Like a mirror showing reflections  
Endlessly appearing without real existence.  
The ground of the reflection  
Is the emptiness of the mirror.  
If the mirror were not empty  
There would be no reflections.  
If the mind were not empty  
We would not experience countless appearances  
Every moment forever.

## 12 INFINITE HEART

The infinity of the heart  
Is peaceful and unchanging  
It is open and empty like a mirror.

A mirror does not change.  
When you look in the mirror you see the reflections move.  
Reflection, potentiality, creativity, is always changing,  
Infinitely showing its empty self-formations,  
The gift of our unchanging mind.

Our openness,  
Our emptiness,  
Our ungraspability  
Is the empty stage, the space of revelation.

## 13 INFINITE MIND

The mind is infinite.  
Something which is infinite has no limits.  
If it has no limit it has no edge, no border.  
There is nothing outside the mind.

Nothing to export or import.  
If it arises for you, it is yours!  
So...  
Where does it come from?  
The mind comes from nowhere  
Yet everything comes from the mind.  
Finding that is finding yourself.  
Yet, sweet and bitter paradox,  
It cannot be found.

#### 14 KUNTU ZANGPO, NO PROBLEM

Kuntu, always; Zangpo, good.  
Always good.  
The basis is vital emptiness.  
Its field is unchanging clarity.  
Its energy is precisely this.  
Everything, everywhere, everytime is good.  
Everything is always already good however it is,  
Whether useful or useless,  
Whether shining or dull. So,  
There is no success and no failure,  
There is no winning and losing.  
Allow whatever arises to take its place and then to leave,  
Appearing and disappearing in the manner of a dream.  
With no self or essence  
Each appearance is the gift of space,  
The flow of mind's energy  
In playful display.

#### 15 DON'T TRY TOO HARD

Be with yourself with unwavering attention.  
What is called 'yourself' is both experience and experiencer.  
Let the experience show you where the experiencer is.  
Being on that point, the door opens  
Step through your fleeting experience into awareness itself.  
With alert yet passive receptive presence  
Be exquisitely with whatever is occurring.  
Thoughts, feelings and sensations easily pull our attention  
This way and that.  
Again and again relax and release your engagement.  
All that arises goes free by itself.  
Who is the one who remains when its children die?  
Your naked self is okay as it is and needs no covering.  
If you try to catch it, it will always vanish  
For you are not who you think you are.  
Your true nature is not like anything else.  
It doesn't fit any concept or category.  
It is not familiar and yet is closer to you than your self.  
Actively look for it and you will always get something else.

## 16 PARTICIPATE AS PRESENCE IN THE UNFOLDING

Participate as presence in the unfolding of  
Life, this beautiful never repeated moment.  
Resting in your unchanging nature  
Let the gestures of your energy liberate others  
Without building solidifying bridges of concept.  
Letting go of the delusion of enduring essences  
See how each moment arises fresh from nothing.  
Bright gift of effulgence, sheen of the open source.

## 17 RELYING ON WORDS

Reliance on words cannot bring us to awakening  
Whereas relaxing and releasing all that we have gathered  
Immediately reveals non-dual presence.  
When we start to move about and talk with others  
There are many hooks to pull us into reliance on concepts.  
Don't try to be clear, just relax.  
There is no need to make any effort  
Just stay open.  
The sun ceaselessly radiates light without substance.  
The pure ground of being offers self-liberating moments without limit.

## 18 THE TRUTH OF SUFFERING

Don't get lost in fantasies about how you think your life is.  
Allow yourself to see your core beliefs.  
Start to feel the anxiety at their heart.  
A heart of anxiety.  
Here dwells the root of all our suffering –  
Attachment to an image of stability which cannot be achieved.  
Endlessly failing to achieve the impossible,  
It is we ourselves who torment ourselves.  
The root of attachment is ignorance.  
You ignore and then quite forget your own ground, your own nature.  
In not knowing who you are you become anxious.  
In order to defend against the fact that your ego self is an illusion  
You attach yourself to various propositions, beliefs and assumptions  
As if these foreign bodies could establish yourself.  
This is personal because it is happening to you.  
It is your story alone—and that is a lonely fact.  
Yet the structure is not personal.  
This structure, the structure of you being you,  
Is the commonplace structure of samsara.  
Because of ignorance there is attachment  
Because of attachment there is confused behaviour  
Because of confused behaviour there is suffering.  
Your suffering is not a punishment.  
It is not a sign that you personally, deeply, intrinsically are bad.  
Place your finger in a candle flame and it will burn  
Bringing bright pain.

Attachment is our return again and again to the candle flame  
In the hope that this time  
There will be pleasure.  
Just as we see with sadness  
The poor moth trying again and again  
To burn itself to death  
So the Buddha looks down  
And sees human beings again and again  
Flying with desperate longing  
Towards the flaming delusion that burns us up.

## 19 HEART OF THE ISSUE

Everybody has stories of grief. We all have hassles and troubles in our lives. However, from a buddhist point of view, these are not the heart of the issue. These are like bubbles or froth on the surface, momentary disturbances generated by deeper structural faults. What really ails us is not being at peace in ourselves, not being who we truly are. In being alienated from ourselves we live as refugees, and refugees have a very hard time. As a refugee you cannot settle in yourself, you are always wondering what is going to happen next, you have no stable basis, you don't have any entitlement and you don't even have a passport. It is this very homelessness which is conveyed when the texts say that we wander endlessly in samsara. A Tibetan word for sentient beings is '*dro wa*', a traveller, somebody who is on the move. We are always chasing after one thing or another, hoping that the objects we find will provide a real refuge, a real home for us. Yet all situations arise and pass. We think we have found something or someplace or someone safe and secure and then ... something shifts ... and it has gone. This is always the case. It is very rare to find anything safe and secure. This is not a punishment. It is just how life is when we have not awoken to how we actually are.

## 20 INFINITE SPACE

The integration of infinite spacious awareness and the gestures arising from it is primordial. Within the great theatre of the mind myriad dramas play themselves out. To see this illusion as illusion is enlightenment itself. The games we play – being good, being bad, having hopes and having fears – are just frothing waves atop the ocean. Every phenomenon, everything that happens, good, bad, high, low, wanted, not wanted, is inseparable from unborn mind. Like a dream, like a rainbow, this ungraspable life offers wonders without limit.

## 21 REFUGE

In Buddhism we start our practice by taking refuge. We take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma, the Sangha, and also in the Guru, the meditation deities and the dakini goddesses. There are many different sites of refuge that we can turn to but the main point is to stop taking refuge in our own thoughts, in our own beliefs and assumptions. Who is the one who seeks refuge? If we find that one and abide as it, we will have true refuge. But refuge in thoughts about who that one is will lead us astray. Lazy habitual reliance will cheat us again and again. If we take refuge in delusion, confusion will continue so wake up and see where you are.

## 22 TRUE PEACE

True peace is not generated out of the qualities of the objects we possess, out of the qualities of the environments we inhabit, or even out of the qualities we take to be our own. True peace is a quality of refuge. When we recognise that our own mind is unborn awareness, that the space in which we move is the infinity of the limitless hospitality of the dharmadhatu, the realm of all the buddhas, and that everything we do and everything we encounter is the unborn compassion of the union of emptiness and awareness, then we can have true peace, for grasping will be at an end.

## 23 LIFE IS ALREADY HERE

Relax and be present with yourself. This is not an active looking for something but a receptive availability to what is here. Without agenda, awareness is open to what is. No selection, no bias, no editing. Everything is as it is and we get it all as it is. The infinite moment is full and empty.

## 24 SELF-LIBERATION

Don't be busy. You don't have to do so much. Good situations will vanish, for sure. Bad situations will vanish, for sure. Leave off planning. Life will happen as it will. As the children's rhyme says,

Little Bo-Peep has lost her sheep

And doesn't know where to find them.

Leave them alone and they'll come home

Wagging their tails behind them.

All the thoughts, all the experiences that can ever arise go free by themselves. Just as the sheep come back to the home field in the evening so thoughts arise from emptiness and return to that home when their brief moment of display is over. Our life as it is is part of the flow of events. Our place in the world is revealed to us each day. We work with that as neither masters nor slaves. Thus we can allow our life to

be as it is without anxious correction or disappointment. Familiar patterns will continue as long as their causal force. When that is gone they dissolve. We have already lived so many lives in this life. When a form dissolves the potential from which it arose releases new forms. The clarity of the mind ceaselessly displays the flow of emergence, the transient patterning of its creative effulgence. Life goes on: walking, talking, eating, sleeping. Looking for substantial reliable essence-entities in the display leads to grief, while relaxed participative enjoyment in the flow brightens the heart and pleases others. As William Blake wrote,

He who binds to himself a joy  
Does the winged life destroy  
He who kisses the joy as it flies  
Lives in eternity's sunrise.

## 25 THE GROUND OF OUR BEING IS OPEN AND UNBORN

Everything is in your mind, everything is the mind. This mind, our mind, is neither the same as, nor different from, what it reveals. The energy of the mind is ceaseless and we, as either mind itself or as mind's display, cannot grasp any moment of our experience. Of course, when we wander in samsara's duality we are constantly trying to grasp experience and stabilise it, since we seek a stable base for our ego to rest on. We are like a little caged mouse, running on an exercise wheel, going round and round and round. The more the mouse tries to get somewhere, the faster the wheel turns and the more the mouse stays in the same place. Yet there is nowhere to get to. The key issue is to be where we are and allow that simplicity to release our decentring impulsivity, anxiety and striving. This simplicity is blocked by the off-balance ego's claim to centrality and indispensability: *"But if I am not making my life the way I need it to be what will happen to me? My life will all fall apart and then where will I be? It is all up to me! If I don't take care of myself who is going to?"* This is not the practice of dharma. This is the practice of confusion. The ground of our own being is open and unborn. Seeing that, everything is revealed as the radiance of our own mind.

## 26 CALMING MEDITATION

In the practice of basic calming meditation, also known as shine or shamatha, we focus our attention on a simple external object or on the flow of our breath at our nostrils. We make a clear intention that this is the only thing we will focus on. Whenever our mind wanders off we gently bring it back to our point of focus. In this practice we employ a conscious focussing of our attention in order to separate ourselves from our enmeshment within the fleeting contents of our mind. With this intention, the thoughts, feelings and sensations that arise are re-categorised, shifted from 'interesting' to 'distracting'. We are extricating ourselves from our habitual

tendency to fuse with, and then react to, the various phenomena which arise. The aim is to stand apart from the ever-changing flow of experience, to simplify our intention, and through that to find a calm space free of pre-occupation and distraction.

Some of the thoughts that arise for us may feel quite spacious as if they are expanding our horizons, yet, because we are absorbed in them, we can't see them clearly. Our encapsulation in each transitory moment creates a decontextualisation which has us jumping from the world of this moment to the world of the next moment. The isolation of these moments of experience generates the illusion of continuity as we slip from one moment to the next as well as an exhausting subliminal sense of fragmentation and the felt need to hold it all together. This anxious tension feeds our further involvement with and interest in whatever is occurring, trying to establish what threats or benefits they might offer.

In the mahayana buddhist analysis of the two truths this is called the state of impure relative truth. Within this dualistic mode of experiencing we have the sense of there being a subject and an object which appear to be truly separate. This view is described as impure because the subject takes itself to be strongly real and also takes the object as strongly real. This reified polarisation generates judgements and the distortions of the five poisons, the afflicted emotions of stupidity/assumption, desire/attachment, anger/aversion, pride and jealousy. Our experience tends to be pervaded by affective colouration, emotional inflection which brings an enrichment or distortion to what is actually going on. In this state it is very difficult for us to see a situation without immediately having an opinion, a reaction which comes to be the main sense of the situation we take away with us. The meditation practice of calming the mind helps us to learn how to listen, how to taste, how to touch, without filling the fresh space of experience with our habitual attitudes and assumptions.

The practice of calming disrupts our usual patterns by encouraging a concentration which is simple and straightforward. It doesn't have a complex agenda and it is not improved by passion or emotional enrichment. You don't concentrate better on your breath if you are angry or sad or desireful. In other situations you may feel that you are concentrating more when you are full of desire or rage, for then there is strong energetic fixation on your chosen object. If you are really annoyed with someone there is a kind of tunnel vision and aroused attention to detail and you know exactly what is what about the object of your anger or irritation. When you are focusing on something with an affective arousal you fill it with your projections. You think you are seeing it clearly but actually you are creating it out of your projections, out of what you are imputing to be the case for the object. However, this is very different from a calm, clear, concentration. With calm concentration the object is allowed to be itself without provoking the mind to busyness, to associations and amplifications.

The more we calm the mind and find ourselves less prone to being caught up in what is arising, we start to feel more spacious and can see the actual status of what occurs. We are both more separate from what is going on and more connected to what is going on. True connection is not based on merging but begins with perspective; we have to be separate in order to see. We don't see clearly with fusion and we also don't see clearly with avoidance. When we see clearly we enjoy the safety of not being an entity under attack. The ego pretends to be independent but is actually very easily influenced and hurt by circumstances. Our ego develops a wide range of defensive moves – none of which is very successful since the ego needs contact with the environment in order to exist. Our calm mind, in being less reactive, is able to let events occur and observe them with a mindful un-involved attention. As our focussed attention generates a sense of calm our mind is less buffeted by the waves of hopes and fears. Events, thoughts, feeling, sensations and so on continue to arise yet seem to have less and less to do with us. They don't get to us, control us or overwhelm us. Appearances occur as transient illusory forms moving within the space of our calm mind. Practicing in this way we come to dwell in what is termed the pure relative truth. Within this we still identify with the sense that, "I am here as a subject experiencing objects," but these objects are now more simple for we are not telling them what they are. We are not seeing them mediated through our concern for gain or loss; gain in terms of our desire, "What can I appropriate here," and loss in terms of the aversion that is generated by the fear that our certainty or security could be taken away. Becoming relaxed and spacious and welcoming all beings into that state is the general path of all the mahayana teachings including tantra.

## 27 JUST PASSING THROUGH

When we relax into open space, into the presence of the intrinsic purity of the heart of all the buddhas, our mind is here and the energy of our mind is here, inseparable in non-duality. When the open ground of the energy is present as us, all that arises is clarity, but when we are distracted by the sense of subject and object as real entities then all that arises is deluding, obscuring where we actually are. In dzogchen the prime way of dealing with this delusion is to simply bring our attention back onto and as the one who is having the experience. By doing this, our focused attention relaxes into its own ground, our unborn open awareness.

In our daily life we are often fused in experience, caught up in the flow of events as if actor and action were one. This manner of experience can feel pleasurable when the experience is one that we like, yet it lacks insight since we can't see what we are up to. When we practise calm focussing and then widen our attention to let it register the flow of experience, it is as if we separate from what is occurring and become able to observe it. This allows us to make more conscious choices but can also intensify our sense of being a separate subject, one who can know, plan and act.

However, our attention, as a quality or capacity of our individual identity, is not settled in itself since it needs an object to support its own existence. The ego requires contact with something other and so our attention is still vulnerable to distraction, to being caught up in the flow of dualistic experience. The ego is a sequence of temporary formations which arise and vanish due to causes and conditions. As long as our identity is formed around being an individual ego self we will be conditioned by circumstances. Even if we practise calming the mind and ascend the levels of undisturbed concentration, this is a practice of making good causes to get good results. When the fuel is burned up our rocket returns to earth. We need to find a way of being responsive without getting lost. We need presence, space and availability without attachment or dependency. For when we see something that makes us happy, the one who is happy may feel truly and totally happy yet is inextricably a part of transient experience. This fact should be clear to us because if the next minute someone says something we don't like, our happy feeling soon fades. Yet when happy, our fixation on the intensity of the moment seems to seal us in a bubble. When that bubble bursts we are in the next bubble and then when that one bursts we are instantly, seamlessly in another. This creates both the illusion of a permanent knowable self and a lack of attention to the contradictions between the bubble moments, each of which is taken to be 'the real thing'. However by neither merging with the experience nor struggling to stand apart from it and observe, in dzogchen we see that our attention is an aspect of the energy of our awareness. So we relax into our presence as the experiencer and staying with, in and as the experiencer we find ourselves in and as unborn open awareness.

In dzogchen this is illustrated by the example of a crystal ball. If you put a crystal ball on a green cloth it will show a green tint and if you put it on a red cloth it will show a red tint. The crystal ball itself is neither green nor red. In the moment when the ball looks green if you say, *'This is a green ball,'* then that is mere delusion. The ball looks green yet is not. Due to causes and conditions it appears as green but its nature is not green, its nature is transparent.

The nature of our mind is like this translucent ball, for it is as if happy things make us happy and sad things make us sad. Our open, insubstantial nature is unobstructing and unobstructed. Due to causes and conditions we experience many different things; experiences arise as the interplay of subject and object displaying within the field of awareness. Not seeing that this is the case, we are caught in a dualistic arena in which we strongly identify with one polarity, myself, and have many thoughts about the other polarity, everything else. When we attach to the transient colourations of the crystal ball we experience the ceaseless movement of our life in samsara. The one who attaches is itself a colouration. How strange, how sad, that empty illusion should cause so much grief to illusory beings.

In the Tibetan language sentient beings are often referred to as *'dro wa'*, travellers. We are beings who move hither and thither without rest. Yet, in fact, we, in our true nature, are not moving at all. Our mind is relaxed, open and completely stable, yet

displaying all manner of transient arisings, some seemingly 'outer', some seemingly 'inner'.

At each moment this particular pattern of transient arisings is all there is. Arising is inseparable from the ground and vanishes like a rainbow in the sky. Yet if we resist the fact of the dissolving of this specific subject formation and take ourselves to be a context-independent enduring essence then we are tossed from one bubble moment to the next. We ignore our actual illusory nature and confuse and misdirect ourselves within the delusion of reification and its consequent self-justificatory narratives.

One of the qualities of ignorance is a sense of lostness and anxiety. In order to reassure ourselves we are always busy giving ourselves something to do. This activity generates our sense of self, constructing our identity out of the patterns of our likes and dislikes, our successes and failures. This is a truly vicious cycle: I ignore the open ground of my being and take myself to be the identity created in dialogue with others; this identity is insubstantial, contingent and unreliable and so I am constantly busy maintaining the edifice of myself; due to this I am preoccupied and lack the calm, open presence that would let me see the open ground of my being.

Busy focussed mobilisation appears to guarantee our safety yet events disrupt our plans and the consequent nervous arousal blocks our relaxation. Our suffering seems to say, 'do more, do better, try harder' and this leads further from the ever-present open door of here and now. Having been raised with the belief in striving, it can be difficult to trust that releasing and relaxing is the way home.

## 28. ENOUGH SPACE FOR EVERYTHING

When we relax into the presence of our being here, there is enough space for everything just as it is. Our open spaciousness is infinite and beyond overwhelm and so we don't need to seek control, anxiously editing what appears in terms of 'good', 'bad', 'for me', 'against me', and so on. Everything that arises occurs within the mirror-like revealing space of awareness, and this mirror does not change. The reflections in a mirror change but the mirror itself does not change. When we see this directly we can relax and allow whatever arises to be there without hope of gain or fear of loss. No reflection can destroy a mirror, no arising can destroy or mark or condition the nature of the mind. Something really horrible, really gross, put in front of a mirror won't crack the mirror and similarly the mind is indestructible, vajra. It is open and empty and infinite. It is devoid of substance, has no essence and is never found existing as an entity. This infinite awareness is inseparable from everything that occurs. It is the ground and basis of these appearances which are themselves devoid of substance. Our indestructible awareness offers infinite hospitality to whatever occurs without harm to itself. This is the true refuge that makes everything okay.

Awareness can integrate with everything. It is the ego aspect of ourselves which becomes tremulous and upset, since the ego, in its limitation, cannot cope with everything. We are both our limited physical existence and our infinite awareness. It is not a matter of having to choose one or the other but of awakening to the integration of our two modes. If this is awakened to, our sense of our physical existence as the expression of our individuality is released and our embodiment becomes what it has always been, an aspect of the play of energy of the non-dual field. Of course if you open to your awareness you can still be hit by a car and die!

If you think, *“I am just this physical form and when I die that is it, so I have to get the most out of this life. I have got to make the best life for myself that I can,”* you are struggling to optimise the finite. But how do you get the most out of life? What is the best thing to do? What will make me happy? How will I know? There are so many options for activity – and yet each is finite, impermanent – a sandcastle on the beach of time. Yet our ever-present awareness is unchanging, infinite and always already here. If we are present with whatever is occurring we will always be where we are, content with life as it is.

The quality of being oneself, open and present, is more important than any interpretation or understanding that can arise, for every understanding is a mere event in time which inevitably vanishes. You may have had the experience in school of writing an essay. You really get into it, you finish it, you hand it in, you get a mark – and life moves on. All the focus and effort that went into the project dissolves. It was just a moment. You fall in love. It is just a moment. You eat a good meal. It is just a moment. Nothing can be grasped. You cannot take it with you, but who is the one who remains after the event? You are still going on. ‘Someone’ is always here. Who is the one who is always here? Since you were born you have always been ‘you’. You haven’t been the same size, you haven’t been doing the same things, you haven’t had the same interests or the same friends but somehow you have always been you. What is that you-ness of you? It is not a narrative or a mystical soul essence. It is our unborn natural condition. This is the nature of the mind itself. By relaxing into this open moment the various turbulent movements of life – happiness, sadness, closeness and distance – are seen to just come and go. Whatever the circumstances we are here – open, spacious, and infinitely hospitable.

## 29 THE UNITY OF WISDOM AND COMPASSION

### VIEW

Our very nature, what and how we actually are, is not a ‘thing’. It is like a source, an opening openness within which many appearances seem to expand and contract. Good and bad are both the empty play of the mind. Seeing this, without hope or fear, we open to all that occurs.

Space is indestructible, beyond conditioning or contamination. Awakening to our own spaciousness we are freed from bias and selectivity, freed from the urge to

control others and identify them as friend or foe. With no thoughts of gain or loss we can give light and love and receive darkness and pain. The emptiness of all manifestation is the one fact. The labelling as good or bad, desirable or undesirable, is mere conditioned contingent opinion, the driver of ceaseless reactivity and disturbance.

### *PRACTICE*

As a practice, we imagine that the centre of our being, our heart, is an infinite clear blue sky. Our ground, our basis, is simply infinite space. We imagine rays of rainbow light arising in this clear blue space, spreading out and making connection with all possible kinds of beings in all possible places. Rays of rainbow light, the blessing of emptiness, touch all beings, awakening them to the light which is their own nature. We then imagine that from those beings all their limitations, all the ways in which they are turned against themselves and turned against others, arise and return to us in the form of dark shadows, fearful shapes, poison. All this darkness comes towards us, right into the infinite blue sky of our heart, dissolving into it. We open ourselves to receiving all the pain and limitations of all beings. Who is the one who does this? Our awareness, the inseparability of wisdom and compassion. The darkness is not coming into our narrow ego identity but into the infinity of our open heart. We alternate between focussing on the rays of rainbow light going out to all beings and focussing on their difficulties coming to us. If you feel that the suffering coming towards you is too much then simply focus on the rainbow light spreading from your heart.

### *FUNCTION*

This is work our ego cannot do. It is not about forcing ourselves to transcend our limits. Heroic struggle will not free us from the delusion of duality. Such struggle merely affirms our notions of high and low, good and bad. The open heart is beyond duality. It is not a position, or a state, or a belief. It does not stand in relation to anything else. The infinite empty mind can offer everything and receive everything because it does not enter into contradiction or conflict. Non-duality is free of this versus that, self versus other. Without this freedom our compassion will quickly find its limit and our ego will cry out, '*What about me!*' This very simple practice is the integration of wisdom and compassion. Compassion is to have no limits or blocks in relation to all other beings and wisdom is to find oneself inseparable from emptiness, the ground of all. Emptiness refers not just to ourselves and our own heart but to all other beings and all that manifests. Emptiness indicates that all appearance is actually insubstantial. Appearance is concrete and precise in its shape and yet is without defining essence. Appearance neither exists nor does not exist; its illusory forms are the creativity of the mind. The mind creates everything and everything exists as the experience of the mind. Unborn and unceasing, this is the immediacy of mind beyond conceptualisation.

Ordinarily we are like a container of some kind. For example, this cup in my hand can only hold so much. If you were to take a gallon of water and try to put it into this teacup there would be a huge puddle on the floor. Due to our identification with our habitual thoughts and feelings we take ourselves to be finite and so are limited in capacity like a small cup. We can't hold very much inside us and easily feel invaded and overwhelmed.

The purpose of this practice of imagining oneself to be the infinite clear blue sky, is to open up the cup of the self so that it is both space and source, able to give out infinitely and to take in infinitely. How much can we bear? Well, that depends on who we are in this moment. If we are in our contracted frightened aspect we can't bear very much. Yet when we are less anxious and preoccupied we can cope with more. For as long as we identify with our self-referential ego we will have limited capacity to welcome all that occurs. When we are in our relaxed open aspect, however, we don't have to bear anything or struggle to cope because we are not experiencing the world as burdening us. Then anything and everything becomes possible.

In this practice we are changing gear, moving from excluding whatever does not fit our identity, from being narrow, limited, and defended. Releasing ourselves from these identifications composed of thoughts, memories, emotions, we relax into the infinite natural mind. This mind is itself the source and field of these limiting factors. Seeing this is the key way to release ourselves from their power to limit. In Tibetan this practice is called *tonglen*: *tong* indicates 'I give what is positive to others' and *len* indicates 'I take what is negative from others'. This is an unusual exchange. Usually we accept or take good things from others and in return we share our problems or worries! We tend to be selfish and defensive with a 'me first' attitude. With this practice we are putting the other first, yet strangely it is not at a cost to ourselves. It is not about being a martyr or about self-sacrifice. Rather, we recognise that our ordinary self is an illusion, a construct without essence, and so we can let it dissolve into the ocean of awareness without loss, and in fact with the true gain of seeing how everything actually is. The wisdom of seeing this, of being this, is inseparable from compassion.