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# *Patrul Rinpoche's commentary on "Garab Dorje's Three Statements hitting the main point"<sup>1</sup>*

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## *Excerpts:*

*...From the point of view of dzogchen, there is no demand that we or others act in any particular way. You don't have to bow to the Buddha, you don't have to burn butter lamps nor do you have to do any kind of ritual. This ancient tradition is simply concerned to awaken people to who and how they actually are and through that, to experience a feeling of ease, of being at home in their own skin, and in the world as it is...*

*...By relaxing into the natural state the busy turbulence of life is revealed as the energy of that natural state. The turbulence does not stop; there is still energy going on, there is power, there are all sorts of things moving but now we understand where it all comes from and we see that we are always – always and already – participants in it.*

*This is a river we can't step out of but by relaxing in the natural condition we find a better way to swim and by swimming with ease and grace we can encourage other people to stop doing doggy paddle and learn something a little bit more elegant...*

*...In the Tibetan tradition tantra and dzogchen get rather mixed in together. For example, people go to get initiations with the idea that some big powerful person can give them something, can give them the experience of their own true nature. From the point of view of dzogchen all that is not necessary because this is your birth-right, or rather, your birth-right before you were ever born – your unborn birth-right...*

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<sup>1</sup> Patrul Rinpoche's commentary is Chapter 11 in *Simply being: texts in the dzogchen tradition* (James Low, Antony Rowe Publishing, 2010. ISBN 9781907571015)



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## Day one. Friday. General Introduction

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During our short time together we will focus on the famous text that carries its own commentary. The text is by GARAB DORJE<sup>2</sup> and the principle commentary is by PATRUL RINPOCHE. I will first give a more general introduction to situate what we do in relation to the general view of Buddhism.

### The Many buddhist views or: the path and the forest

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In Buddhism there many different 'views', many different readings or understandings of who we are and how the world functions. Each of these views illuminates part of the territory of our lived existence just as if you went walking up the road, turning every ten steps and looking at the valley [here in the Black Forest], it would look different from the different levels you were at.

There are various ways we can understand why there are so many different kinds of teachings and what they indicate. One is that the actual condition cannot be put into words and as soon as we try to explain something or indicate it we are always taking up a position. The positions that are revealed are because our world is relational. We cannot step out of the world and observe it from some neutral position. In science and certain forms of philosophy like phenomenology this has been a goal for certain investigators but in the end we face the fact that we are embedded in socio-cultural, political situations. We have our gender, our age, our own psychological dispositions and life histories. And the world we encounter is mediated through these internal positions we have. This is not something that can be removed, which is not necessary a problem. It only becomes a problem if we think we should somehow be in a neutral pure situation and be able to see things with absolute rationality and clarity.

From the buddhist point of view that would be an impossibility. Rather than trying to do something impossible, the main thing is **to examine for ourselves what sort of positions we take up**. One way we do that is to adopt an intentional position and then observe how we come to deviate from it. Before they had breathalysers one of the ways the police would check if someone was drunk would be to ask them to walk in a straight line. So when we do any kind of practice there are two aspects: one is the conscious intention to do the practice as described. For example if we are doing this basic practice that we just did before we began, we would be paying attention to the flow of the breath through the nostrils, in and out, simply keeping our attention on that. The instruction is that if you find your mind wandering off just bring it back again and again very gently to the conscious intentional focus. We can say that is the meditation practice but we also have the experience that we don't spend much time doing the meditation because, actually, there is a lot of distraction. *The distraction tells us something about our own situation*. Firstly, it tells us we are not very rational. It shows us that the mind has a life of its own. It is not like I can say, *'This is my hand and I can open and close it'*. When we start to spend time with our mind we find that lots of things are going on. Things we didn't intend to happen, memories, impulses, sensations and so on.

This is very important: we are not who we think we are. The various constructs that we build up that give us a sense of our personal identity, which includes all the stories that we use to

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<sup>2</sup> Ed. This format is used for key terms which may be included in a glossary (if James decides to add one later).

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explain to other people who we are, is just a very narrow path through a big forest – a forest full of many different wild thoughts and feelings. The more we practice we come to see we are not just the path we are also the forest. If you focus on the path you start to think that the forest is the problem and then we pray, *'Oh, may I please not get lost. May all the buddhas keep me safe.'* But if we are also the forest where are we going to hide? We are already mad and once you start to meditate your madness is revealed to you. You cannot take the madness out. The madness is actually generated by the desire or the notion that you should be a simple straightforward person and know who you are and know what you are doing at anytime. But we are not like that.

Thus, each practice helps to illuminate different kinds of confusion, different kinds of turbulence, and through that we can come to see what the nature of that turbulence is. That the mind, that our experience of the world is dynamic – always changing – and that although we can develop certain capacities for focused attention, certain capacities to maintain an intentional identity as a goddess or a god, nonetheless the chaotic turbulence continues.

In **the view according to dzogchen**, we take a different approach to this ungraspable dynamic turbulence of existence. Instead of trying to catch it and tame it and turn it into what we want, we work with the experiences as they arise so that the qualities latent inside arisings, which seem to be disturbing or unwanted, can be revealed.

Just as if you are working with adolescents say in a city school or in a residential unit, there is usually a lot of resistance in these young people to the task of being a learner, getting on with what the school thinks is the proper activity and if you try to impose control it seems to just build up resistance. The ideal way is to try to see what is there. Of course that takes a lot of time and resources in an educational or psychotherapeutic environment and these delinquent or disturbed children can seem to be simply a nuisance. But actually, in some ways, they are onto something. Very often they are saying, *'Why should I join your world? Your world is shit. Look at it, look at the politic, the economics, why would I want to get up to a job, why would I want to fit in?'* One of my patients in the hospital a few weeks ago, a man who has had a very disturbed and unhappy life, about 40 years of age, he said to me, *'James, you know and I know that you are wasting your time. I know you are only working here to get the money, you are much to intelligent to think there is any value in doing this, so don't be a hypocrite, why don't you do something you enjoy.'* Of course, there is quite a lot of truth in that, because the little boxes that we can create which give us a sense of meaning – getting up on time, keeping things in an orderly fashion, preparing our work, being able to pay our bills and so on – this all has a lot of meaning in terms of daily existence. It is a necessary part of survival but is also a kind of stupidity because in order to maintain it we have to not put into question what we are doing. We continue on the basis that we take it for granted that what we do is indeed meaningful – but of course it is a construct. The kind of work that we do is created in this particular culture according to the sociological development we have had in the last fifty years. None of the things that we do has an inherent validity. A hundred years from now people will probably not be doing the sort of things we are doing. That is to say what we take for granted, what we take as a given, what we take as naturally important, is in fact a construct. Therefore, without pushing against these constructs, without trying to think, *'I need to have a mid-life crisis and throw my life away'* we can start to recognise that the sense of order and prediction that we have in our day-to-day life is based on a kind of selective attention; that we pay attention to certain aspects of the experiential field, and we ignore other aspects of the field. This creates the particular slice of the world we move through day-by-day.

In the Buddha's teachings are many different views and meditation methods and instructions for daily life which provide alternative ways of proceeding. In their different ways they are methods of putting into question this habit of assumption and investment which gives a seeming sense of predictability and given-ness to the objects that we experience in the world around us

and to our own identity. *The basic teachings from the Buddha are that there are no self-existing entities*, that is to say there are no phenomena which exist in and of themselves. Everything that we experience is relational, whatever seems to be the case is only the case according to the causes and conditions of its current circumstances.

For example, this building [here in Todtmoos Au in the Black Forest] was not originally the guesthouse of a buddhist centre. It was built with another intention<sup>3</sup>. Due to the changes in the economy of the valley, people moving away, the arrival of teachers of Tibetan buddhism and the culture in Germany being such that people were drawn towards them in a way that money became available to purchase the building, this then became the beginning of this dharma centre. Now that we have become used to coming here, we come to it as this 'buddhist place'. Probably the old people in the village do not think of it as a 'buddhist place'; they may still remember the name of the person who lived here and they remember it as that person's place.

That is a very simple example but it shows us how we take on an identification of a situation, be it external or internal, and then look around for information to further confirm the validity of our view. This is the basic structure of a neurosis.

### The Inner map, the territory and mindfulness

Generally speaking, due to childhood development situations the child encounters a particular topology in the family system, particular shapings of anger, desire, jealousy and so on. This is the world as the child experiences it and for small children it is the only world that they have. It is in that matrix of beliefs, attitudes and behaviours that the child develops *a map of this world*. And then, as we grow up, we go into new situations, we go to school, are with friends, playing sport or whatever and as we move into these new experiences, although the new experience is completely fresh to use, we haven't had it before, the way that we approach that situation is not fresh. It is in terms of this map that we have created. However, this map is not like a geography map that you can see to read the shape of the valley. It is more like the weather map that they show on television where you get black clouds and jagged lines to show thunder storms and so on. The map that we have is emotionally invested: *'I like this, I don't like this. This is bad. I don't want to know about that.'* These things are embedded in the attitudes we develop inside our family. We come into the world with its infinite possibilities and take only very few of the things which are available. If the experiences in childhood have been quite severe, the constriction of this map becomes what we call neurotic. That is to say, the limitation on our capacity to respond leads us to states of frustration which manifest as depression, anxiety, obsessions and so on.

In the old days, people would go to church and the minister would give them some lecture that would hit and run across some of these internal maps. Nowadays you can have psychotherapy. But even if you have therapy it is very difficult to consciously remember the particular tilt or tendency that you have internalised and to recognise it before it manifests into the turbulence and the invitations which are constantly coming from the world. This is one of the reasons that now they have developed things like mindfulness based approaches to therapy, whereby maintaining a state of mindfulness or conscious attention to what is occurring, one can at least start to recognise the cross-roads where one takes the familiar road into ones assumptive, habitual patterning. If you cannot even recognise that crossroad you have no choice. If there is only one option on the menu there is not a choice. A lot of the time there is only one option

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<sup>3</sup> *I think it once was a mill. (Matthias)*

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because our sense is, *'Well, I am just me. This is who I am so how could I do anything else.'* When we start to become more attentive to *how* we are ourselves, to the continuous process of the unfolding or revealing of *how* we are, we can start to see that the map that we have, does not fit the territory very closely at all. A lot more is going on than we have grown accustomed to paying attention to.

In seeing this complexity of our field of experience, we can start to see that the habit of identification – of selective attention – which endlessly attempts to recreate the already established image of *'How I am'* and *'What I do'* is an inaccurate perception. The Buddha said all suffering comes from attachment. We have outer attachments to our personal possessions but the main form of attachment that causes grief is attachment to our expectations, our assumptions about who we are and how the world should treat us.

This is one of the real difficulties for children growing up. Each year the body changes, you have new competencies, you are entitled to new things but you also have memories of how things were before. When a child is seven years of age some of the time they are also four years of age. It is not that when you become seven you are never six or five or four again. It the same for us that whatever age we are, we are also many of the ages that we have been before. At each stage in our life we develop new kinds of maps which don't replace the prior one but get layered on top.

Generally, from a buddhist point of view, it is even more complicated because we are not just dealing with the complex situations that we have experienced in this life but with the influence of karma, the consequence of actions enacted in prior existences. Karma indicates that when we meditate and we see these strange thoughts and feelings that arise for us, although they may have no obvious connection with our life as we know it, they are linked to our experiences from the past. So the complexity of our existence is truly *our* complexity. It is not just sheer madness, it is not just crazily out of control. Fact is that our world is a ceaseless network of interactions – and actions create reactions. Very often, the reaction that comes, comes with some time delay and was not at all something we could imagine at a time that we did it.

For example, there is a big demand for hard wood in the western world. The people who live in the tropical forests where this kind of wood grows need to have money because they have children and people to support. They look around, see a lot of trees and think, *'If we cut down the trees and sell them we will get money, the children can go to school, we can build a house of cement, drink Coca-Cola and eat and have a television.'* These are the aspirations of many people. They cut down the trees but it is a tropical area with a lot of rain. The rain hits the ground which is not tied together anymore by the roots of the trees and the earth dissolves. It flows into the river, the river goes into the sea and the land becomes depleted. Now the trees are very far away because they have kept cutting them down, *'But I have got a concrete house and I can't move to where the trees are. How did that happen? I was just trying to have a good life. I didn't want to cause global warming.'*

We can see these sort of things happening all the time, and this is the basic structure of karma according to the buddhist tradition. We find ourselves in a situation that seems as it is, *'This is what we have got'*. We respond to it in what we think is quite a reasonable way – things seem to go okay. In that way, there is an action and there is an immediate result. Inside that frame of reference it looks like a good transaction, *'I feel quite satisfied. My friends also say, "Hey, you are getting a new house, you are doing pretty well, that is good."'* What is not obvious is the consequence which is coming later. It is implicit in the action but invisible on the level of the frame of reference of our conscious intention. We see this all the time. When children start to get a bit lost as teenagers, they start to go to parties where there is good music and people to hang

out with who may be taking drugs and it all seems more fun than doing homework. In all of these situations the peer group is saying, *'This is good'* but the long-term consequences are not obvious to the young person taking that path. They often think: *'My friends like me, my friends think I am good but you my stupid parents are always dissatisfied, unhappy with me, why should I listen to you, I want to listen to my friends, they understand me, you don't.'* – **Karma is not a very complicated idea. It is a principle that says that we don't see the whole picture.** We think that our situation has discreet activities with a beginning, a middle, and an end, and therefore we can be in control of our situation. However, it does not quite function like that.

## Thought and the ungraspable flow of experience

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When we come to do meditation practice, the experience that our mind is confused or that we have a lot of instability is something we should try to be interested in. Of course you can see it as a problem to be solved, you can look for specific antidotes. There are many kinds of meditation and other activities which can do something with that. For example, if you find you have many rapid thoughts and you feel a bit scared and panicked, you can learn to do some hatha yoga. The asanas will allow periods of focused breathing inside a particular muscular structure and gradually the organismic system will calm down. However, the complexity of the field, when we really open to see what it is, is beyond this kind of control. New things are always arising in the mind. New kinds of provocations, external and internal, sicknesses, accidents, death in the family and so on. Thus, one of the paths which has been taught is *the path of integration*. That is to say, the path in which we look at the nature of experience and the nature of the experiencer.

When we look at experience we start to recognise that our interpretation of what is happening to us tends to be in terms of packages. That is to say, we have our interpretive biases, our familiar concepts that we bring to explain what is going on. These interpretations seem to tell the truth and give us some knowledge that we can rely on. For example, you might be sitting here and you get a pain in your back. If you have an anxious disposition, you might have a sense of, *'Oh my god, I am getting very sick.'* Or you might think, *'I am not used to sitting on the floor, this is unusual and it is not surprising my back feels a bit different.'* Clearly, if you can have the second sort of interpretation it can bring a sense of calm: *'Now I know what is going on and I feel okay.'*

However, what was this message? *'I am sitting on the floor and this is not usual for me and that is why this is happening.'* There are terrorists in Afghanistan, we should invade that country and kill the terrorists and then we will all be happy. The logic of this is the same – it is thoughts. One thought and then another thought. *'Oh, that is very clear! That makes me feel better.'* And we also happen to have a lot of bombs and we need to explode these very soon. Just as we have this swine flu, the company that produces the vaccine for it had a lot of batches that were going to be finished. Now we need to have protection against swine flu because the government has to protect its people. By chance this charitable, altruistic drug company just happens to make it available to the government at a price which makes a very big profit. Thus we know, externally, that people link ideas together in ways that create situations which are *not* true. These are bad people – but we are good people – we would not do anything like that. Unfortunately, all the time, we are doing it our own head. We are telling lies to ourselves, not gross lies, but the subtle lie of believing that a passing thought will tell the truth about a situation.

Thoughts are part of the movement of our experience. They are not coming from some neutral place outside. Our experience from the moment we arise in the morning to when we fall asleep at night is ceaseless change. Walking along the street step-by-step the world is changing as your body repositions and new vistas arise – this is a new world. However, the main thing we do is reassure ourselves, *'Ah, it is the same old world.'* We don't have to pay attention to all these details which are quite new. When we start to see the nature of impermanence, of ceaseless

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change, we see that not just external things are impermanent but thoughts, feelings and sensations are also always arising and passing.

Relying on thoughts is not wise. Clearly, thinking is useful. Thoughts are like screw drivers and hammers. That is to say, they are performative, they are movements of energy which impact the matrix-situation and bring about some degree of change. However, they are not telling the *truth* – on that level they are unreliable. But there is an aspect to us which seeks comfort and reassurance. We want to feel happy, we don't want to be troubled, and so we are willing to believe lies in order to think that life is okay. We do that externally on a political level, we do it on an economic level. The fact that many of the financial instruments that were used to develop a lot of money for trading organisations were unstable and without any clear basis, was well known. But as long as it is going well, people want to believe it. Somehow it will be okay. To understand how, is to complicate it. So somehow life is just what it is.

In buddhism we try to take a very sharp machete and cut a little bit of this forest of complacency away. The purpose of this is that as long as our sense of personal self, as long as our sense of identity is wrapped around in comforting ideas, we seem to be just doing okay, just continuing with our life. The days turn into months, the months into years and life goes by – but there are other opportunities, opportunities to start to visit and start to awaken to dimensions of ourselves that we have not become aware of before. Putting these assumptions, these beliefs, into question is vital in shifting our positioning so that we can see differently.

If we can see differently perhaps we can awaken to the possibility which is set out in the Buddha's teaching: our existence, our basic nature or identity, is not something created out of causes and circumstance, it is not part of the continuing process, the chain of action and reaction – but is a state of awareness which is truly self-existing. A state of awareness which is the basis for the revelation of **all** the experiences we have – both the experiences which look like the object, when we look around and see houses, trees, other people and so on, and the experiences we take to be subjective, my experience of being me.

We come to see that what I take to be **my true existence, my materially based personal identity, is actually a flow of experiences** which is ungraspable.

As soon as we start to say something about the actual experience of being alive, the phenomena that we are trying to describe have already moved into being something else. When we are talking about ourselves, almost all the time we are talking about the past or the future: *'What I have done and what I will do.'* When we start to pay attention to ourselves as we arise moment-by-moment there is a lot of freshness in that, but also a kind of indeterminism. It is what it is but as soon as we say it is this or that it has already gone and we are making a story, a narrative which is riding on top of the immediate actuality of what is there.

The function of the meditation practice is to give us an awakening or a space, a freedom from our usual habitual preoccupation and immersion in the flow of signifiers so that we can start to see directly **the unborn ground of our own being** – and with this we experience a profound relaxation!

### [The Mood to be alive and the root of self](#)

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Because, actually, we have been living in quite a perverse way. We have been asking ourselves to do something which is impossible. As creatures of ceaseless movement – and not just movement from 'the will to power' but movement which is interactive and contextual, constantly forming and re-forming in relation to the evolving environment – we have been asking ourselves

to be reliable, predictable, straight forward, well organised and so forth. This is the side of a great deal of internal persecution, because this is a goal that we cannot fulfil. As John Lennon said: *'Life is what happens when you are busy making other plans.'* Life is what happens. If we want to be in life, if we want to be really alive, we have to be in that moment of happening. We cannot prepare for it in advance in a specific way. If you have homework to do, where you have to learn a poem for tomorrow then you can try to learn the poem but if you go into a situation where you are going to dance, you might not know what kind of music is going to play. You could practice tango a lot but there might be some other kind of music playing and then you could not do your tango. The main thing would be to be in the mood to dance. In dzogchen we want to get in **the mood to be alive**.

There is no specific preparation for this; it is more like an aesthetic experience in which one allows this manifesting body to be in full connection with the environment and the co-emergence of how we are going to be will become clear. Of course, we have many hopes and fears: if experiences we like start and we want them to continue and you want to make them safe. But none of us know what will happen tomorrow let alone in a year's time. Preparation and mental maps and configurations actually function as a hindrance to being fully present. From this point of view we are not trying to develop more power or control but, rather, a profound relaxation, a coming to be at home in that relaxation and through that infinite trust in the nature of the spontaneous manifestation of our existence in the world with others. Inside this flow of experience not only happiness and smiles will come. There will also be tears, grief, misery and so on. **This is a central question in spiritual practice: do we see the practice as a kind of super-defence against bad things, a magical method to create a lot of good things, or rather, a way of being able to be fully present in our lives as they manifest? From the point of view of dzogchen this is only really possible if the root of your individual self is planted in the infinite ground of awareness.**

Most of the time the root of our ourselves is planted in the flow of thoughts and moment-by-moment we identify with whatever is happening. Things go well and we become happy, things go badly and we become very sad. But this is a lot of turbulence, there is no clarity in it. Good things will come and bad things will come. In our lives already many good and bad things have come – they have come and they have gone. Because they are coming and going they are not a stable ground. If you were a farmer and you wanted to plant some seed, you would not plant them in the river, you would plant them in your own ground. So when you plant your identity in thoughts it is just like throwing the precious seed of your existence into the river. Something will sprout but much further down the road.

The basic investigation is: what is the ground of my existence? What can I fully deeply infinitely plant myself into, so that I rest and open? And this is the area that this very popular text in Tibet, used by many people as a basis for their practice, addresses.

**[break]**

## **Shiné with fixation**

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Shiné is a practice called staying peacefully. Essentially the idea is that if the movement of thoughts in the mind is not allowed to connect with the focus of attention there will be no disturbance.

If you imagine a traditional country waterwheel, the water is directed off from the river on a narrow path which feeds into a set of blades which are turning on a circle. So the force of the water turns the wheel and the wheel turns the milling machine inside the building. In the same

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way, when the flow of thoughts in our mind is coming and striking our consciousness we go into a reaction to each of these thoughts and turn with it. If we can disconnect the flow of water from the wheel, the wheel will become peaceful. In the same way, if the focus of our attention is on something static or not changing very much, it becomes unavailable to be interrupted by the stream of thoughts. On this level of practice we take a very simple object, either a static one like a mark on the carpet in front of use, a pebble, a small statue of the Buddha or a painted figure. By keeping the attention on that there is no receptor for the thoughts which are coming. This in itself carries a particular notion of what a thought is. Very often we think, *'I think my thoughts, somehow they are coming out of me and I am doing them.'* But what this practice is saying or suggesting is that thoughts have a life of their own. There is a flow of stuff and the consciousness, the quality of awareness, alertness or intelligence that we have, can either hook onto the thought or not.

This is very different from our usual belief because normally we think, *'Of course I am thinking my thoughts, who else would be thinking them?'* So if you say to someone, *'Don't think your thoughts!'* it is crazy. We think of thinking as something that we do. But actually in the course of the whole day we probably only are thinking for a maximum of half an hour – in the sense of a proactive intentional movement of thoughts. A lot of the time we are just having thoughts or entertaining thoughts.

The function of this practice is to see that **consciousness always takes an object**. If we give consciousness a safe object it will be preoccupied and therefore will not be available to take these other arisings as its object. It becomes like a kind of peripheral vision – as if you are riding your bicycle through the traffic you pay attention to what else is moving on the road, you don't look at what is happening on the pavement. You have some sense that something is happening but it is not your primary focus of attention. So at first, many things are happening: thoughts, feelings and sensations and so on. But they are not our central focus of attention. By keeping the attention on the movement of the breath, on the upper lip as it comes in and out of the nostrils or on an external object, returning to that again and again, we have a protection against the distracting force of being caught up in these discursive thoughts. This is exactly the same function as a mantra. The recitation of a mantra protects the mind because it gives the mind a conscious, intentional thing to do. Initially, you have the sense that it feels that you have to think your thought but gradually **you can become aware of thoughts as something which pass by and which only have something to do with you if you connect with them**.

When I was first travelling in the 1960s out to India I was hitch hiking and often it would be very hot and you get quite tired and you wait a long time to get a lift of any kind. Then you come to a small town and you walk down the street of the town and a shopkeeper says, *'Come here, come here!'* At first I would go over there and say, *'Hello, yes what?'* and he would say, *'Where are you from?'* But after a while you think, *'Fuck off. I am hot and tired and it doesn't matter where I am from, leave me alone.'* So you learn not to pay any attention to people saying, *'Come here, come here.'* This is the same with the thoughts in your head. They all say, *'look at me I am very interesting, come here.'* and you say, *'No, I am looking at my breath.'*

***[shiné practice for twenty minutes]***

### **Shiné without fixation**

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The next form of practice is called shiné without a fixation. We want to keep the experience of being calm and unperturbed but we do it not by resting on any particular focus but rather by allowing the attention to rest on whatever is occurring. Whatever is arising for you, whatever kind of experience catches your attention, you just stay with that. As long as it is present and as soon

as it ceases to be present, you remain calm and something else presents itself and you are present with that.

For example, you might be sitting here and suddenly you hear a bird singing. Just attend to that bird song, it stops, there is silence, then there is a motorbike and it vanishes, silence, something else. You can do that with all the senses. Somebody's move catches your eye, then it stops moving.

At that point many thoughts can arise about what has happened. However the key thing is that **you don't have to block the thought, you just want to stay present with the thought without falling into it.** It is almost as if each thought has a thin membrane over it which shows us something. For example, a thought might arise: *'I am tired.'* The meaning of it registers and then the thought has gone. But if you lean onto the thought, into the thought, you go through the thin membrane and you become merged with the thought and then that thought leads to another thought and to another, which you are inside. And then eventually you pop out of that chain of thoughts and then a similar thing happens.

As I was describing for the first form of shiné, it is seeing that the thought itself has some kind of hook or enticement, but we are just looking. It is like if you go into a shop and the assistant comes to say, *'Can I help you?'* and you say, *'No, I am just looking.'* It is that quality of being there: you see what is there but you don't have a desire to become involved with it. We are present but sort of indifferent, we don't have a shopping list, we are not needing something from whatever is occurring.

This practice is grounded in the central principle of buddhism: the universal fact of impermanence.

The Buddha said in his early sutras that every arising thing is a ceasing thing. Whatever comes into existence will pass out of existence. So there is no need to come into managing the situation, to be in charge and in control. The objects will go by themselves – as we are sitting here without any effort from us, the day is going. We don't need to do anything.

We become aware of how small this point of control is inside us. We are participating in a world which is just going on by itself. If we stay with what is happening it shows itself as arising and passing – arising and passing. Again, the more we see that each thought is like that, we can see it has nothing inside it; it has no essence there to be grasped. Therefore, we don't need to fall through that membrane and become locked in the thought – we just let it go.

In the theravadin practices or certainly in the Tibetan understanding of them, they suggest that this style of practice is grounded in 'renunciation' and again we can renounce external phenomena. You can give up your house, you can give up your money, you can become a monk or a nun, but **for meditators the central point of renunciation is to renounce the belief that the meaning of existence is contained in a thought.** You cannot think your way to enlightenment. 'Enlightenment' is a thought for those that think and so they think about it. You can spend a lot of time thinking about enlightenment and the different buddhist schools have different thoughts. So you can debate whether it is created or uncreated and so on. The problem with that is that thoughts are impermanent, so whatever result you get is gone.

It is like that at school: you work hard, you have the exam, you get the result. If it is a good result you are happy for an hour and then life goes on. Then maybe you go to university and you have more exams you get through and you think, *'I have my degree'* and it is very important for a day. Then afterwards nobody ever asks you about your degree, only maybe if you go for a job

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interview. So all that energy – all that effort to achieve something, something that seems very important – is just like picking up a handful of sand and watching it run through your fingers. Of course, you can say, *'I have a degree'* and use that as some signifier in the world, some currency, but you also become aware, as the years go by, that it is increasingly false. Because if somebody said, *'I understand you have a degree in physics please sit the exam again just to make sure'* you would say, *'Well I have not looked at it for twenty years'*. – *'In which case give us the degree back because it doesn't mean anything.'* This is what our world is created on. It is just like collecting shit. The food is finished, you have a good shit and you dry it and keep it carefully. In the same way you study, you get your degree and then you have a piece of paper. But if you stop studying the degree doesn't have much to do with you anymore. In the same way for meditators getting into these thoughts as if they carried some real substance is to be seduced into this chain of signifiers – it doesn't go anywhere except round and round.

In this practice we can begin very simply to relax into the out breath and then just sit very calm in the room as it is, and keep your attention with whatever is presented. This means not waiting for new exciting things to arrive, not chasing after thoughts or experiences that have already gone – but just what is here now, what is here now, what is here now....

**[practice]**

## **Day Two, Saturday. The Text**

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We are going to work roughly on this text of which the root text is very important. It comes from GARAB DORJE who is seen to be the first being who transmitted these teachings into our world.

### **We are active constructors of our experience**

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We live, and have done for many centuries now, in a HUMANISTIC world; a world where human beings are the centre and we decide the nature of everything that we experience and everything is measured by our belief or non-belief. As we move into a very materialistic period, the idea that there are other beings and other realms seems somewhat strange.

In America research has shown that many millions of people believe that there are aliens that come to visit the earth in spaceships. Hundreds and thousands of people have written statements about how they have been taken up into these spaceships and given teachings of being transformed in various ways. I don't think that is exactly the same as this text but it does speak of the sense that new possibilities can enter into this world. Of course in the christian system there is heaven and hell and limbo and earth, only four places to move around in. From the buddhist point of view there are many, many different realms where people can be reborn according to their particular tendencies. Nowadays people often interpret this is a very psychological way and feel, *'Oh, yes it is also possible to create some situation which is like hell, maybe like some parts of Afghanistan, and so on.'* But from the traditional point of view there are real separate dimensions. They are real in the sense that the inhabitants that live in them take them to be real and they also show different qualities according to the habits and conditionings to the beings in them. None of them has a true inherent self-nature: they are not established out of some fixed essence but are manifesting out of the interplay of forces which will arise for a time. In the same that this world that we live in exists in its current form due to causes and conditions and as these change the world will show a different shape.

The reason to reflect on this a little bit is to start to look at a **basic organising dichotomy which is pervasive in the western thought: reality and fantasy!** We have things which are real, which can be proven, which can be returned to again and again – and we have fantasy: acts of the imagination, indulgence. And for many people they work all day and they find their reality very hard and so in the evening they like to go to the theatre or the cinema or read a book and they enter into a fantasy realm where things feel a bit better – but the fantasy is like a holiday from the reality; it doesn't transform the structure.

Buddhism has a completely different reading. It is saying **everything is like a fantasy, everything is an illusion.** There is nothing real in the sense of reliable, substantial or with true essence inside. All that we have is patterns inside a flow of contingency.

When we come to approach this text, it is with the sense of fragility of our current situation; that no matter how much energy we put into trying to maintain what is seemingly real and important to us, it's vulnerable to many external and internal factors of change. This is the very basis of the ideas of liberation in hinduism and in buddhism; that is you can awake from the fantasy of believe that an illusion is truly real. But from the point of view of modern materialism that whole package in itself is just a form of illusion. So this is a very different view of the world. However, we are not here to discuss cultural anthropology; ideas about how different people have made sense of experience.

In buddhism essentially we try to establish a practice to get a DIRECT EXPERIENCE. In particular, in this case, an experience that is not resting on the familiar weaving of the patterns, the matrix of conceptual thought. The text is beginning from a reading of this world that says: **we are living inside sets of assumptions which we take to be real. These assumptions are not assumptions about a reality but are themselves constitutive of the sense of the reality.** Because if it was the first case, if it was merely some kind of interesting commentary, all you are doing is walking around something which is real and having different views on it; in which things are as they are and we are small people just having our own little opinion. **From the Dharma point of view, we are active participants in the construction of our experience.** Not on a superficial level but on the most profound level. How we take the world determines the world that we experience.

The potential that we encounter moment-by-moment is open in the sense that it is light and sound which we organise by our concepts of 'colour', 'house', 'window', 'tree' and so on. This is really a fundamental vision because it means we are not mere recipients of a world which already exists which has been created out of some physical causality or a process of Darwinian evolution. We are ourselves involved moment-by-moment in the creation of this vision which we inhabit. This is the basis of the possibility of AWAKENING! If what we see is determined by the way that we see it, by altering that way of seeing something new is revealed and we start to see things as they are without the projection of our assumptions. We come to see that the world is not what we think it is and we are not just what we think we are.

This is one cut or one take on what is there. When you step out of that *take* you see that to have taken that *take*, that grasping, as the *whole* thing is a miss-take. Just as you go to the cinema to look a good film, then you suspend disbelief and fall into the movie which then seems very real. You have taken it to be real, as something existing, 'this is it' – but it is not that, it is just light on a screen. The person in the audience is co-creating the film and in the forgetfulness of that, it seems that the film is something in itself.

The practice that we are looking at is a way of stepping out of our enmeshment in the interwoven sequences of conceptual thought. It is not that what our thoughts lead us to represent is wrong in a profound way. It is simply that it is not the whole story. And if you take the

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part to be the whole then you have a misapprehension. Because we have been biased towards the level of manifestation and to a reification of that level of manifestation, we are tilted to believe that this is all there is. The practice is to rebalance, to open up the hidden section so that we can start to integrate these aspects of our existence.

### About the author: Patrul Rinpoche

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The text begins with a statement of the central ideas by GARAB DORJE, in which PATRUL RINPOCHE is giving a kind of context to it. PATRUL RINPOCHE is living at the end of the ninetieth century. He was famous as a very well educated lama and he was, as many meditators are, very suspicious of the entanglements of the monastic structure. He liked to go out to travel around just as an ordinary monk, live in the tents of nomads and the houses of poor people. He did not like to have any servants with him which in Tibet that is very unusual. Tibetan culture is very much a group culture and generally speaking a lama would always travel with servants and close disciples. This circle around him would establish his status. If you decided to invite a famous lama to your house for lunch you had to expect that fifty people would arrive. PATRUL RINPOCHE did not like this at all, because when you arrive with a system like that, all the status of the people is always written into the social code. One finds oneself trapped in the choreography of social engagement. Tibet was also very much a shame-based culture, that is why it is enormously important to know exactly where people should be placed. In a western sense if you invite people around to dinner it is quite a formal thing. You think about who should sit next to who so that they would be able to have an interesting conversation. For Tibetans everybody had to be seated exactly according to their proper status which is influenced by the family they are from, their age, the amount of learning and study they have. PATRUL RINPOCHE thought this was not very helpful: if your practice is about spontaneity it is quite difficult to do that inside a hyper-determined system. He was also somebody who was able to understand the Buddha's basic teaching, that this is a world of conventions. We talk of conventional or relative truth and part of the practice of staying fresh is to find ways not to be trapped in a convention.

In our culture there also people we would not expect to do certain sorts of behaviours. For example, people are often shocked that doctors take drugs. In England it is very common the highest level of people in the legal professions, judges, barristers and so on, to take cocaine. At night they are out of their head and in the morning they are sending people to prison for being out of their heads. We know that people like to take drugs and judges are people, so on that basis it is quite easy to see why they would want to take drugs. But if we see them as being judges, then we think, *'Oh, judges are people that seek order and structure in society, therefore they wouldn't take drugs because how could they?'*

A little story of PATRUL RINPOCHE is that he had been invited to a monastery to give some initiations. So he decided to go by a back way through the country because it would be more beautiful and peaceful. Along the way he met an old woman who was walking very slowly carrying her bags on her back. He walked with her, asked her where she was going and she said I am going to the monastery as there is some teaching going on there. He says, *'I am going there too, let me carry your bag.'* He carried her bag and he chatted along the way. After they arrived the old lady was very surprised to see that he was now sitting on the throne. People think, *'How could this happen?'* It can happen if you can step outside the choreography. In this way we can see our own assumptions of who we are, what we can do and how anxious we are about what other people will think about us. These little prisons often block the direct action of one heart to another.

### The Root Text

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### ***Salutation to the Guru.***

In the buddhist tradition everything comes through a lineage of teaching. It often says that without a guru you cannot get enlightened. Sometimes people understand this to mean that it is some kind of sect in which a particular kind of dependence is being encouraged; that you have to abandon your ordinary life and enter into some close, intimate world with this person who will have a lot of power over you. The real meaning is simply that **you cannot do it on your own**. This is very much at odds with the culture, the feeling, and the zeitgeist of our current times: *'Just do it! You can do it, why not?'*

If Mr. Obama can be president of America, well anything is possible – maybe not. Mr Obama has many little threads coming out of him with many people pulling them. When Mr Obama starts talking about the Palestinian people there are certain groups in America that start pulling these threads very strongly. The cult of individualism is, on one level you could say, an enormous force of liberation – it allows people to find themselves, to live in their own skin, to feel that they are being true in themselves and not compromised. However, one of the things it does is to disguise the nature of interdependence. I think we can trace, historically, a direct correlation between the development of individualism, as a social priority, industrialisation and the climate change that we start to experience. There are sociological historical studies that show this. Because individualism means: *'Why should I not, I define who I am.'* The shadow side of that is that *'I am now entirely dependent on myself. Who am I? I am what I am. If you ask me anymore I will be very angry.'* So the basic position is to have a defensive propositional stance in which we endlessly tell narratives about who we are. There are huge new genres in literature of autobiographical story telling in which people want to show that they have existed by creating some story about themselves. All of which is interesting enough but what it means is that there is a kind of internal screen or avoidance of an enquiry into *'who am I?'*

*Me telling you who I am* is part of a culturally learnt process in which there are many resources which can flow into me and come out of my mouth. We define ourselves in terms of what we have learnt and what we experience in the world. We talk about our age, our occupation, the country we are born in, what we like to eat and so on. All of these are phenomena in the world. Somebody says, *'I really like chocolate.'* What does that mean? Chocolate was there before you were born, you enter into relation with it. So you are actually being defined with your relation with the world; something extrinsic to you. *Myself* is the world in that sense. This is what we are actually saying all the time but it is hidden from us by the particular way in which we construct the narrative, so in saying *'I like chocolate'* I seem to be saying something just about me. Even if we know that every day millions of bars of chocolate are sold in Germany, we can still feel that *'I like chocolate'* is something uniquely personal. When we start to look at who is the one who likes chocolate, what is the very nature of this self which is engaging with this matrix of social signifiers, we encounter a terra-incognita, something we don't really know how to navigate or to understand.

### **The Teacher**

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It is for this reason that we need to have a guru or a teacher – a teacher that had himself a teacher who was taught by another teacher and then all the way back to GARAB DORJE – who got it from DORJE SEMPA – who got it from KUNTU ZANGPO... and Kuntu Zangpo just had it for some reason. He is the primordial lucky one.

Therefore, if we want to find out about these things we have to enter into the realms where somebody knows something else. What is it they know about? They know about what we are. They don't know *who* we are in terms of any of our personal story, but they know directly the

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structure and nature of existence; an existence in which we all participate. **That is the TRANSMISSION, to open into the realisation of how we are, of how things function!**

This is a very strange thing in many ways: that in order to find ourselves we have to go to someone else. Why shouldn't I be able to do that for myself? If I already have this buddha nature or this true nature how come I don't just get it. Usually this is because we are so fascinated by our own intelligence, by our own creativity, by all the wonderful aspects of our energetic manifestation that we exist in a realm of auto-intoxication. One of the functions of the teacher is not to be very interested in you. You are not as fascinating as you think. Or rather, you are very fascinating but that fascination is the path of being reborn again and again. From the point of view of the teacher, the most interesting thing about you is the thing you are not really interested in. The teacher's job is to try to help us to be interested in this hidden area. Once that interest, attention and growing awareness is evolved, you have an integration between all the fascinating forms of energy and the ground of the energy. Nothing has to change externally, but we are no longer asking the mode of manifestation to carry the whole burden. In fact, when we relax into the OPEN NATURE, we see that there is no burden. Our individual ego self is burdened with responsibility of having to be in charge but actually it is not in charge. When it can settle into its own proper level it becomes free to do what it does best, which is simply to participate in the ever evolving field of energy, as a mode of energy itself.

### [View, meditation, conduct](#)

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Therefore, he begins by saying, ***Salutation to the Guru.***<sup>4</sup>

The next three sentences are set out in the structure of: VIEW, MEDITATION AND CONDUCT. This is a very traditional way of organising the structure of the different levels or vehicles of buddhist practice.

***The view is infinite vastness.***

This operates on two levels and we will look at that a little later.

***The meditation is rays of understanding and compassion. The conduct is as the son of the Buddha.***

Here he is paying homage in this way to three main teachers. The first is LONGCHEN RABJAM who was a famous early teacher in the fourteenth century who explained dzogchen texts in great detail. The second is the name for JIGME LINGPA and the third is PATRUL RINPOCHE'S own main teacher GYALWAI NYUGU.

The view, the way we should visit the world, is in terms of infinite vastness. When we look out into this experience we have here together in this room we encounter many specific objects. Each of these objects is held in place by our own conceptual elaboration. When we relax and open we experience directly the presence of LIGHT. This light has no limitation. It fills the whole of space, what we call the mountains, the trees, the clouds the blueness of the sky. Many concepts put each thing in its place but when they are relaxed – just radiant colour filling space. Light is in

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<sup>4</sup> Ed. This format is used for the text of Patrul Rinpoche every time James is reading it out and also if he cites the text again while commenting.

space. This light is infinite both in that it is pervasive, it is everywhere, but also that it is not made finite by the name that we put on top of it. When we look out at the hill we see many different trees and we think this is a true perception. This is a muddled mixture of perception and conception like a colloidal mixture. You shake it up so that it seems to be all mixed together but when we take time to settle the heavier substance sinks down, the concepts rest, and we see the clarity of the pure perception. The hill is then shimmering waves of light which is never limited, never made finite by the application of the concept. **It is the concept which is finite, not what we see.**

Out of this state of this infinite vastness come rays **of understanding and compassion**. When we relax and open, we experience ourselves coming into the world. We have a body, we have speech, we have mental experiences; they are movements, they are rays. **The less we ground ourselves or identify our basic sense of self with our habitual concepts, the more this relaxed spaciousness allows our movement out in being with others to be simply moments of wisdom and compassion.** Then we don't need anything in particular from anyone and we don't have anything in particular to give to anyone. The movement between self and other becomes unimpeded – it is not a big deal. There is no meter running and no ledger being kept of whether this was good or bad, whether they are nice to me or if I am nice to them. This happens just on the shimmering level before we have concrete interaction. Our movement out towards the world is one of UNDERSTANDING or clarity about the empty and open nature of phenomena – within the understanding of non-duality, of non-separation between self and other. We are available to be with other people in a compassionate way.

COMPASSION here does not mean comfort, but being with others in a way which promotes relaxation and opening. From the point of view of dzogchen, **we are not wanting people to do anything in particular.** You don't have to bow to the Buddha, you don't have to burn butterlamps, you don't have to do any kind of ritual function. **All that one is trying to promote is a feeling of ease, to be at home in your own skin and to have that skin being at home in the world.**

This sounds quite easy but as soon as we start to relax it opens up fields of anxieties. For so long we have been holding ourselves together, trying to make the best of our lives. Compassion is an invitation to trust, to be okay. That has to be done quite skilfully – so PATRUL RINPOCHE says: **Conduct is as the son of the Buddha.** Son of the Buddha means BODHISATTVA. A bodhisattva is somebody who develops their qualities in order to connect with different kinds of people, one who puts the other first, one who is, in a sense, the servant of people. But a good servant will not let his master go out into the world with stained clothes. So the servant also has to say, *'Wait a minute master, you must change your clothes.'*

In helping others we have to be able to see clearly their actual lived situation and how to help. Some people have grown too big and leak out in all directions – they need help to be squeezed back into their skin. Other people live inside themselves like a little mouse – they need help to take their courage and strength, to feel their whole being so that they can be in the world as it is. It is here that somehow through buddhism you get a rulebook or master plan of how to behave with people.

Before we come into a situation we don't know what to do. If that makes us anxious we may work out ways of behaving. In the middle ages the development of codes of chivalry and of core protocol was on the basis that people were very dangerous. Thus, if everybody can agree to behave in preordained ways you can lower the tension. In dzogchen we want to dissolve the tight points, the knots, the nodes around which anxiety grows, so that we can come fresh into each situation. Again, the basic buddhist teaching is **everything is impermanent.** When we observe

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ourselves we start to see that this is really true: moment-by-moment our mood is changing, we become more or less aware of our body, more or less aware of aspects of the world.

Just as we have a notion from gestalt psychology and Kurt Lewin's field theory of FIGURE AND GROUND – that moment-by-moment something manifests as our focus of attention and the rest of the potential field recedes in the background – in meditation we can see that this is exactly true. When something is not arising it is not arising. Our conceptual world is one in which everything remains in its proper place all the time. Our experiential world is one of moments, of aspects. For example, you are sitting here and suddenly you feel something in your leg and then that goes, suddenly there is something in what you call your head, then we hear a bird. In that way a very discontinuous world, where there are many different things, somehow arises as this seamless flow. The more we can inhabit that without being afraid of it, the more we can really directly know other people are not who we think they are or they think they are. So, when we meet someone, we always are looking, *'Who are you? Who are you now?'* That is what you can work with. We are energetic beings, we are not fixed things.

Therefore, the conduct of the son of the Buddha is to be present with phenomena as they are. Being open in our various chakras or centres to pick up all the information available and to respond into that. If we are doing that we should find that we are not banging into people; we are not making big strong assumptions about them, but we are just moving to be with them as they are. Not with some general plan that we are going to save them or liberate. By very gently meeting people just as they are, they have the sense of being met. There is no demand, no entry prize, no rejection, so the openness and the tightness are present at the same time. By confirming the enduring presence of the openness despite all the knots and limitations, there is an encouragement just to relax – *'It is okay. You don't have to try harder.'* **In fact you could try not trying. It is probably a very long time since you stopped trying.** We did this as children; we learnt then to just flop down, but gradually the habit of being in the saddle, being in the job, becomes pervasive.

### Gaining enlightenment in one lifetime

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***Regarding the practice of this, it gives a chance of gaining buddhahood in this life. And if that isn't attained then at least one will be happy. How wonderful!***

Why shouldn't we gain enlightenment in one lifetime? What is the obstacle to that? From a general buddhist point of view we have been born countless times and in each of these times we have accumulated much karma. This karma now creates many different kinds of constraints to our freedom.

On the level of the body we have particular tensions. The channels in the body get knotted so that our energy does not flow freely. We are constrained, we don't breathe well. Regarding our speech we are often constrained in terms of what we say, the sort of things we say, the tones of our voice becomes very diminished, and our mind is full of habits and assumptions. This is not just a kind of fixed quantity. It is a dynamic evolving potential as new provocations arise internally and externally, causing new patterns of reactivity and hopes and fears.

From a general point of view you see it could take many millions of lifetimes to clear everything away. But it is like doing housework; there is no end to it. For some reason there seems always to be a lot of dust. So you clean the carpets and then you look and then you find there are some spider's webs. You clean the spider's web and you look at the paint and you think it needs repainting – on and on – there is always something to be done. This is why, if we are

trying to create purification on the level of energy, on the level of pattern and form, this is an endless process.

What, then, does it mean: **buddhahood in this life**? From the very beginning our own nature has been PURE; our buddha nature is already here. Our attention has been captivated by the domain of concepts. When we relax back into this always-present NATURAL STATE, who is the one who is going to be caught by the provocations and the obstacles and the defilements?

As long as we are in the world as an object, many things will keep banging into us. People say things and we become happy or sad. When the sun shines we feel happy. When there are a lot of clouds and it gets cold we feel less happy. This is how we are. For people as unreliable, as flowing and as fragile as this, how could you have the mastery to sort out all the problems of existence and so create nirvana in the midst of samsara? We don't have to do that: **the problem is with identification**. Through the over invested identification as '*this*', as '*I, me, myself!*' we experience ourselves in this chain of action and reaction all the time.

When we practice by opening into this unborn, natural state the movement can continue but it is not catching onto us; we have become smooth. In relaxation in this open state there is no necessity, there is no lack, there is no anxiety. We are not looking to some good objects to complete us and we are not trying to push away bad objects which might harm or limit us. We provide a spacious HOSPITALITY to whatever is occurring. Even if we don't gain the full awakening at least we will be happy because we will not be so persecuted by endlessly being at the mercy of whatever is occurring. This is very important to the main meditation practice that is set out in the text.

Some children are very talented, say in music, and some are not. A patient of mine had a mother who had been a concert pianist. She had given up her career to marry and have children. She wanted her daughter to learn to be a good pianist. The daughter was not very musically talented. The mother would sit by the piano and shout at her daughter and hit her, slapping her fingers with a ruler, because the mother was convinced that somewhere inside this stupid girl was a brilliant pianist. But the girl wasn't stupid, she just didn't have the kind of talent her mother had. So if something does not have the potential, you can boil it, roast it and cut it but it won't have what you want. It just makes a lot of trouble. But we all have the buddha nature, which is why later in the text we use quite a powerful method and we can use this to separate the patterns of confusion from this unborn potential.

***Regarding the view of infinite vastness, the meaning of these three statements hits the essential point.***

Here he is referring to the three essential points which was the core teaching given by GARAB DORJE at the point when he left this human dimension. It is on the basis of believing in this VIEW that the CUTTING THROUGH or the dropping of the knotted attachment can occur. This is why we often do different kinds of meditation: to gain more experience and more trust that *all* the thoughts, habits, memories, out of which we construct our familiar sense of self are without any true basis in themselves. **This is vital: to distinguish between what is natural, what is given, what is there from the very beginning and what appears to be given but is actually a construct.**

We tend to take our bodies for granted. We have had them for quite some time. It is only when we get sick that we start to become aware of them as something fragile and dependent upon many forces. But day-by-day our bodies are changing; the body is something very dynamic. It is the same with every aspect of our existence. If we were solid and real we might have to create some suicide pact in order to be liberated. We think, '*this stupid body is keeping me in*

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*limitation, better to cut my throat.'* That wouldn't be very helpful because how could you kill what is actually a process. The act of suicide is simply a moment in the flow, just as dying is a moment in the flow, and being born is a moment in the flow. The flow goes on and on and on. What we need to do is to wake up, to recognise the nature of this flow, so that it can truly flow rather than have us stuck inside the flow of water as little blocks of ice clacking into each other and trying to establish some territory.

## The First Essential Point: experience

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Now PATRUL RINPOCHE introduces the main practice that this text focuses on. It is a practice which belongs to a series which is called the twenty-one SEMDZIN (Tib.: *sems-'dzin*). *sem* means mind and *dzin* means to hold. These are practices used to stabilize the focus of awareness so that we don't get caught up in thoughts. This particular practice is designed to increase clarity by cutting the line of attachment to whatever is arising. He gives the essential instruction now.

### ***Firstly, keep your mind relaxed.***

What does this mean? If we say, keep your mind relaxed, maybe in a school, you may say to the children, '*Sit still and control your body!*' Or when children are learning to write, they might have paper with lines on it and you may say, '*Listen, you have to control the pen so that the letters are sitting on the line, don't go below and don't go above, you have to control your hand.*' Clearly, in this, there is something you can mobilise; this is an act of will and intention. We are very used to this kind of activity.

## About Relaxation and Translation

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Relaxing the mind is a little different; it is not really something you can *do*. Actually, the relaxation of the mind is always there. What this means is: **relax the focus, the investment or the obsession with this constructed sense of yourself**. The difference here is very important! The mind from the very beginning has been PURE, it has been perfect. There is no correction nor improvement that can be made to it. So when we come to a sentence like this we have to remember this essential teaching and see what it is referring to.

Translating texts like this is difficult. Even for Tibetan's these texts are difficult. As Wittgenstein pointed out, **the meaning of a word is not embedded in a dictionary but in how it is used**. Dictionaries tell you about the word but they don't show you how it is used. So a word like *mind* can sometimes mean a very relaxed, opened, enlightened state, and sometimes it can mean limited consciousness caught up in subject/object duality. This means part of what we are doing also is learning how to read this kind of text.

Thus, keeping your mind relaxed means, don't encourage busyness. There is not a problem to be solved here. There are no particular thoughts that you need in order to make this go better.

### ***Neither diffused nor concentrated, free of thoughts.***

For example when you are sitting in the sunshine. There is nothing particular to think about but you can feel the presence of the sun's rays on your skin. There is a relaxation but no need for any preoccupation; nothing to do. Of course if you sit in the sun for a long time you can get a bit spaced out and then it is **diffused** because you are losing the quality of being present in the moment, you are just drifting off. Nor is it **concentrated**; you are not focussing on something, trying to do something with it.

**Free of thoughts** does not mean that there are no thoughts at all but it means you are free of them. The shiné-practices that we were looking at were exactly about this. In this open state our mind is like the forest; it is a kind of public space. People do different things in the forest. Some people shoot deer, some people have a shit behind a tree, some people have sex, some people have a picnic; they do lots of things in the forest. In the same way, when the mind is like a public area, all kinds of thoughts arise – come and go. Thus, being **free of thoughts** means to allow them just to be as they are; we can become free of the thought when we realise that the thought has *nothing essential* to give us.

Again, we have to think how do we hear that? What does that mean: thoughts have nothing to give us? Of course, to lead our lives we need thoughts; our world is made up of thoughts. We do planning, we do shopping, we make arrangements, we work out what clothes need to be washed, what temperature clothes need to be washed at; there are so many things you need to think about to keep your life going. But what that means is, if you reflect on your experience, you participate with thoughts in the elaboration of your existence. Maybe when you get home from here you suddenly think, *'Oh, tomorrow is Monday morning, I need to get some clothes ready,'* and you go to put them in the washing machine. This thought which arises inside you moves your body: you collect your clothes, you go to the machine, you find the washing powder, and you get the right setting. All of these are movements of energy. We might say, *'Thank god I remembered that, now I can do what I have to do.'* That gives quite a solid feeling to it. Actually, when the thought moves inside us, we move with the thought. This process of moving – inside to outside, outside to inside – is continuous throughout the whole of our lives.

Who is moving with the thought? The energy of the body is moving. Our are we moving? This is something you have to observe. Who is the one who picks up the washing and puts it into the machine? On one level we can say: *'I am doing this.'* If you are not able to say that we would be concerned about you. We would think maybe it is an early onset of dementia or maybe some mild stroke has occurred; somehow something has happened. This is a way of speaking; speech is energy as well. When we say, *'I put the washing in the machine,'* this is a flow of sound. If you stay with the quality of emergence, ceaselessly, body, speech and mind flowing together in this world – everything is flowing, interacting, moving. So to say, *'I put the washing in the machine,'* seems concrete and real *if* we take *I* to be some fixed definite subject that can be returned to again and again.

'I' is a grammatical structure, an empty signifier, and it only functions in language because it is empty. In language the more full something is, the more defined a term is, usually the less useful it is. When we have something like 'I', we can say anything in relation to this 'I'. It is the very emptiness of any fixed content that makes 'I' so incredibly useful. So then you want to look what is the DIRECT EXPERIENCE, what is the phenomenology of the 'I' in the moment of *'I put the washing in the machine'*? A sensation in the body. We bend and muscles tense and relax as we pick up the shirt. The thought about what temperature to set the machine. The change in the breath – quality of voice even if we are not speaking. These are moving together. **The 'I' is a commentary on the process.** It appears to be describing a site of agency: *'I am doing this.'* Who did it? *'I did it.'* As if inside there is some organising principle that which is moving out and doing things. But this 'I' in that moment is arising in reaction to the thought: *'Oh, Monday, tomorrow, I need to have a clean shirt.'* If that thought about Monday morning had not arisen 'I' would not be putting the washing in the machine. It is like playing snooker. When you hit one ball it goes off and hits another ball which goes off at another angle. You get a concatenation, a linked chain of events. These are events, moments of activity, which are linked. It is not entities which are being linked. Thus, this sense of 'I' is a moment of arising. Because it is repeated again and again it *seems* to have an enduring existence.

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Therefore, **being free of thoughts** includes the sense that 'I' and everything I can say about myself and everything I say about you is just movement, just a flow, just another thought.

The beginning of freedom is to recognise that '*I don't have to, just because I can.*' It is our capacity to do things which brings this wrapping of energy. When a thought arises in the mind we don't have to do anything with it. If you are sitting on your own in meditation, a thought might come: '*I need to go to the toilet*' or '*I am thirsty.*' You can sit with it, it is a thought and it will go away. If you go into the thought you find your body is getting up and getting a drink. If you don't merge or link with the thought it will go free. Therefore, in this context **free of thoughts** doesn't mean not having any thoughts at all, but starting to experience that thoughts are there as a potential which you can engage with if you are going for necessity or for a purpose – but you don't have to. Just like if you want to lose weight you have to recognise that just because there is food there you do not have to eat it. I grew up after the second world war and there was always the sense of not wasting food: '*Eat it up!*' In that sense: don't let it go to waste. But if you apply that principle you find yourself eating and drinking a lot in reaction to a circumstance which has changed.

It is the same when we make this movement into meditation: we have to start thinking that the war of samsara is over. We don't need to fill every cupboard with lots of thoughts and plans, and greedily consume as much as we can. Nowadays, in our culture we think, '*Ah, yes, there is plenty of food around, we don't need to eat it.*' There are plenty of thoughts around and we don't need to get involved. There is no end to thoughts. The Buddha said that. It seems to be true. So the next thought that arrives is not your one and only chance. If you miss that bus another one will come. So the more I get that sense: '*Ah, yeah – this is just stuff,*' it only becomes important if I become involved in it. This is the basis that he is describing as **free from thoughts**.

***While peaceful and relaxed in that state, suddenly shout 'Phat!' with much force and intense vigour.***

The body should be relaxed, just feeling open. The voice is also relaxed. Then we allow this sound of **Phat!** to arise strongly and forcefully, imagining it coming right through us and out of the top of our head. A bit like if you had a blocked drain you can send high pressure water down it and push the obstruction through. We are trusting the force of the **Phat!** We are not pushing hard in a way that is likely to tense us up and bring a tension. It just flows straight out and through you.

***Wonderful.***

***Nothing at all, shocked open.***

The function here is to take the subtle layers of thoughts, sensation and emotion – which act almost in a kind of subconscious way as the foundation out of which the more elaborated thoughts arise – and just sweep them away.

It is a bit like if you are eating your breakfast outside and a wasp comes. The wasp is very interested in the ham or the jam but when you put the food in your mouth you don't want the wasp coming in with it. You are trying to flick it away, but wasps are quite resilient and they will come back. So don't worry that you will lose all your thoughts forever. **We simply create a small moment in which there is nothing there.** You are just open, not resting on anything. The familiar terms of reference, the familiar anchor points across which we draw the lines of our existence are gone.

***In this astonishment there is unimpeded directness.***

We are not going from *here* to *there* on the basis of working something out. Because it is open there is no limit. This is why he began this section by saying: **regarding the view of infinite vastness** – he links it to this first point. In the moment just after saying this **Phat!** there is this infinite vastness: a state devoid of any limitation, any content, it has no colour, no shape, it doesn't rest on anything. But it is not a state of unconsciousness; you are present in that state. However, you are not present as yourself, because none of the terms of reference out of which you construct your usual sense of self are present.

This is THE EXPERIENCE of the presence in THE NATURAL STATE.

This state is inseparable from the flow of arisings – it is born together with them. It is not that you can throw away everything that you know and come to this happy land where there is just nothing at all. **The very nature of this openness is hospitality.** It is the host and also in a sense, the source of everything which is occurring. But just for a brief moment there is infinite openness.

**A total directness that is inexpressible.**

Our language is constellated around phenomena– things which seem to have a substantial identity, some with a more nebulous or fantasised identity, but nonetheless there is some sense of *something* we are talking about. In contrast this is a state where no frame of reference can be applied because every frame of reference has gone. We cannot say anything about it and yet it is absolutely infinitely there.

**Experience the awareness of the natural mode!**

NATURAL MODE means this quality of the Buddha's mind which is sometimes called dharmakaya. It means the quality of OPEN AWARENESS that is not resting on any phenomena – that is there from the very beginning, a natural luminosity. This is the mind of the Buddha

**Direct Experience in One's True Nature is the First Essential Point.**

In the Tibetan it means: MEETING EXACTLY ON ONE'S OWN NATURE. It is not that I am being introduced *to, or into*, something but rather that I am coming *into* my own state, a state which I have always already been in. We could say *recognition* but it is not a re-cognition and it is not on the basis of conceptual identification: '*Oh, I know what this is.*' – **It is a being at home in oneself.** Sometimes people describe it as a sense of coming home, but one has not been away from it. So its awaking means *at home*. Another example is that you wake up in your own bed; you have been sleeping in your own bed. In your dream or nightmare you may have gone many different places but you wake up where you have always been. As soon as you do that, where you have been in terms of the dreams, the nightmares, you recognise what they are. All these phenomena that seem so real, so self-existing, to have so much power, we recognise as an illusion, as a fantasy – like a dream.

On the outer level I can give some explanation about this and this in a sense is an introduction. That is to say, I introduce you to the nature of your mind – but this is just words. Each of us has to try to get as close a sense of this as possible, and then we take it into the practice. Because it is through the practice that the **direct experience** occurs. If this was merely some kind of intellectual analysis we could just keep talking and talking forever and hope that each form of description would somehow be interesting or fascinating or open up new pathways or this or that.

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Each of us has his or her own pattern of habitual constructions. Some people are very sensitive to the life of their body; they live a lot in the domain of sensation. For other people their body hardly influences their existence at all; their primary centre for identification is their emotions, how they are feeling. For other people it is more their thoughts. In the practice each of us is encountering the particular ways in which our energy gets tied in knots. These knots appear to be real from one point of view, but the more we get into the practice we see that they are like a snake untying itself. The snake is still a snake while it seems to be all coiled up and knotted. As soon as it moves it becomes free. In the same way what appears from one point of view to be so limiting, so powerful, so definitive of who we are, as soon as we allow the sense that these are movements, we see that they are moving towards freedom all the time.

So maybe you are caught up in some negative thoughts: you might think, *'I am stupid. I am unlovable. My life is a waste of time.'* If that kind of thought has been running for some time it takes on some emotional intensity. So the thought arises: *'I am stupid.'* Then it goes. As it was arising it was already leaving. Like when you see on a still pond a trout suddenly jumping and then it has gone. The whole movement of the trout was a big arc and you see just one little piece of it. We say, *'Oh, that is a trout!'* but actually it was a movement. The trout is just moving. It is the same with ourselves, we think, *'Ah, I am stupid, I always get these things wrong! I hate myself!'* But this is just a movement of energy. When you are inside, it knots you, you get tied up and you hate yourself. It seems like, *'What is the purpose, I don't understand, I have been doing this for so long!'* In that way it is solid – but each of these blows is a movement. This is all there is: beginning, middle, end – beginning, middle, end.

**When we open into the practice it transforms the site that we are looking from.** Instead of there being a sense of an individual self that is attacked or persecuted by these thoughts, in that awakening into the openness we experience the thoughts arising and passing. Then we start to see them for what they are.

The movement we saw in the water was both a trout and just a movement of colour and form. The trout does not think it is a trout. *We* think it is a trout. This is going from us onto the situation. The movement of the thought in providing a fixation, a fixity, a definition, transforms a ceaseless movement, the ceaseless flow of these evanescent movements into a sequence of entities. That is the basis of all the knots that we have in which we reflect on our situation again and again in the same way and come to these conclusions. Everything tightens up – and then acting from this tightened place we tend to make restricted actions which bring more problems.

### Explanation of the practice

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The purpose or key thing of this practice is just the instant after you say the **Phat!**, but at first it takes a while to get into the full strength.

You want the belly to be relaxed and free so that the full force of the air can come up right through you and through the top of your head. This syllable **Phat!** carries the idea of *cutting*; to cut something free. So it carries a force, an aggressive force, and it is *pushing* through it. In this way we can mobilise the energy of anger towards the path of liberation. These thoughts are not fundamentally so dangerous – their nature is empty – but for our purposes we can imagine them as some dangerous criminal who are coming to rob us and harm us. Therefore, this force of **Phat!** is also saying: *'Don't mess with me!'* This is an irresistible force which should sweep everything aside.

We begin by sitting in a relaxed way with nothing particular to think about. Then if at a certain moment you feel a bit sort of closed or some you feel tension then just release this sound. You

can make it as loud and as strong as you can. One of the things we are also **cutting through** is social embarrassment, prohibitions on fully expressing ourselves; all the messages we got in childhood to inhibit ourselves and not take up too much space. Like a mother who sees some dog going to attack her child, approach this with full force; really something is at stake here.

This is a practice that is designed to shake the usual frame of reference so you are likely to get a bit wobbled from it. If you are already feeling rather wobbled then you need to observe your own capacity. You can do it with your eyes open or closed. Make some experiments and see what works for you.

### ***[practice of 'Phat!']***

This is a practice best done on your own. With any of these practices, they have two aspects. One is the practice itself and the other is the side effect. What you will start to see as you do it, are your own particular patterns of resistance. It is a way of getting to know yourself. You make the **Phat!** and then what happens?

Maybe the space seems to be immediately filled with stuff. What is this stuff? This is this subtle underlay of the construction of your ordinary sense of self. Sometimes down in the plains you see a meadow that is a little bit dipped in the middle and if you walk across that middle your feet start to get a bit wet because there is a little stream running just under the earth. It is normally invisible. In the same way, **each of us has these streams of associations, preoccupations, which are the basic resources out of which we construct ourselves moment-by-moment.** So don't be worried when you experience these things, it is showing the more imprisoning factors which we live within. You want then to move between sitting with them and just observing their own dynamic nature and then using the **Phat!** to clear a space. You can also say **Phat!** many times in a row to keep clearing –but, although this has the quality of a kind of aggression or the use of anger, **the key thing is not to become angry with yourself.** You are not attacking yourself. If you get into that then actually what you will do is be pushing against yourself and that will just provoke more disturbance.

This is a practice that many people have done over the centuries and it is really quite effective.

***Then whether dispersed or still, angry or desireful, happy or sad, at all times and in all situations recognise the natural mode that has been understood.***

The central point here is that when we have the experience of the openness, this infinite vastness, it has no limit, nothing therefore could be coming from outside it. Where do all these multitudes of thoughts, feelings and sensations come from. They are the ENERGY of the NATURAL STATE.<sup>5</sup> This is often said to be **the one point that changes everything.** If you look at your life and you see you have many different kinds of difficulties and problems you don't have to solve them all one-by-one. If you get this essential point then whatever the condition of yourself: angry, desireful, happy or sad, whatever the situation, **recognise that this is just the movement of the natural condition.**

This teaching is very difficult for the followers of religion. Religions always offer the idea that somewhere there is a happy land where everything is lovely; a place where bad things don't

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<sup>5</sup> Ed. compare this with the explanation on p. 63

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arrive. In heaven there is a gatekeeper with a big key and if you don't pass his identity check you won't get in. Everyone on the inside is good. If we keep the troublemakers out we will all be happy.

The practice here is something completely different. If you observe your own situation rather than constructing fairy tales for children you will find something else is going on. **The answer does not lie in the object.** If only we had a nice party where everyone was very sweet and polite then we would all have a lovely time. It just takes one troublemaker to spoil things. That is why we have Guantanamo Bay. The vision here is quite different. He says that the mind's nature from the very beginning is open and empty, indestructible. Therefore don't worry about controlling the object – many things come. Nobody has ever been found who could control whatever is going on. We don't have to control it. We control things out of fear and desire. **[end06\_27]** Sometimes bad things happen, we feel lonely and sad, we feel hopeless; this feeling arises, it is there, what is it telling me about? It is telling me about itself. It is saying, *'I am a sad feeling. I am lonely, please give me a home.'* We say, *'Oh, don't worry, you can come and live with me.'*

When we do the practice we don't have to make these things *bad*. They are just what they are – hey come and they go. However, if we become hopeful when a good thing comes or very frightened when a bad thing comes, this just takes us back into the energy of reactivity, feeling that *'I can be helped by good things and I can be harmed by bad things.'* That is the point where we forget the natural condition, a condition which is not altered or changed by whatever is occurring. This is very unusual, this is not our normal way of thinking about life.

When we do the practice on our own and we find ourselves being caught up into the sort of politics of ourselves, of making things the way we want them to be, then we use this **Phat!** Just to keep going back.

***Thus the 'son' clarity meets the 'mother' clarity that was previously perceived.***

This means that the MOTHER CLARITY is the CLARITY which you have a little bit of from the explanation but also from when you do the **Path!** itself. You have this clarity of everything being open. The 'son' or the CHILD CLARITY is the clarity that is generated in the meditation work of constantly unbinding yourself from the habitual lock-on to hopes and fears, accepting and rejecting. It is very important that this is called the *mother* and *child*; the *child* comes from the *mother*.

When we do the meditation practice it is not that we are getting better at the meditation, otherwise we think, *'Oh, the child is doing it by themselves.'* What we are doing is we are becoming more at home in the natural clarity which is the state of the *mother*. Therefore it says that the *mother* and *son* should meet together because their nature is inseparable. In that state we see that **the energy by which we make effort in the meditation is also the energy of the ground itself.** The ground liberates itself. We don't get enlightened. It is not that we somehow get this new state like getting a bicycle.

The ground's movement has two possibilities. As it is traditionally said, there is one ground and two paths. One path is the path of the integration of whatever arises from the ground with the ground, and the other path is where what arises from the ground is taken to be something existing in itself. Both paths have the same ground but in the second path there is a forgetfulness of the ground. When we do the practice, although on the one level it appears, *'I am doing the practice,'* the more we come into the practice we realise this manifestation that calls itself *'I, me, myself'* is nothing more than the energy of the ground always inseparable from the ground. In that way the ground liberates itself as it has always done.

***Remain in the state of inexpressible awareness.***

It is not like going to a summer camp and then sending a post card to your mother saying, '*I am having a good time here.*' You can't send any messages out because there is nothing to say. If it is there it is there and it carries the impossibility of speaking for two reasons. One, it does not enter into language and the second is that it carries a state or a quality of satisfaction. Sometimes if you have a very good holiday you don't send any postcards because you are just happy where you are. In talking about these things we have to be very careful what our motive is. The only real reason for talking about dharma is to either explain to somebody who asks a question or to ask some questions yourself to get some clarification. Talking about Dharma can be turned into gossip, into politics, into a kind of narcissistic self-inflation and so on.

***Again and again destroy stillness, happiness, clarity and dispersal by suddenly exclaiming the word of method and wisdom (i.e. Phat!).***

This is a central point. Our life is constructed on the basis of phenomena; we want to know when we have got something. Small children want lots of approval. If you take them to the swings in the park they all say, '*Look at me! Look at me!*' They want the validation that their experience is okay.

When certain kinds of EXPERIENCE arise we can take them very seriously, think they mean something and we hang onto them. You can feel STILL, a state where there is no thought, very relaxed, we are not bothered by anything. Maybe we feel HAPPY and rush of energy through ourselves and we think, '*Ah, this is fantastic I need more of this.*' We can have a sense of CLARITY where everything seems perfect just as it is. A sense of unimpeded understanding – everything is just easy to be with. We could have a state of DISPERSAL where we feel a bit spaced out but it is also quite nice – nobody home – just a bit empty. As we know people are drawn to this state through smoking drugs and so on.

The text says that whenever you get into any of these states, the main thing is to destroy them. You will sell yourself short. You could have gold, you go to the land of gold, but instead you fill your hands with fools' gold. These states look good, and in many ways they are good, but they are not the real thing because they are also constructs; they arise due to causes and conditions and they will pass in time.

**The answer does not lie in the object.** When we do this practice more and more we come to see that what we take to be '*I, Me, Myself*' is an object not a subject. '*I feel happy*' seems to be a subjective statement; I am telling you about *my* experience. Who is the one who is experiencing the statement '*I am happy*'? The experiencer of the statement is not contained in the statement itself. When we say in samsara, in our dimension of fusion, merger and identification, '*I feel happy*' then I feel happy – we are inside it. Therefore, by saying this **Phat!** repeatedly we separate this false subject from the true NATURAL STATE of AWARENESS which is not relying on any particular forms.

***Meditative balance and subsequent experience are without difference.***

MEDITATIVE BALANCE means the state of openness that you have when you are doing the actual practice. The subsequent experience means being in the world with the movement of phenomena including self and other. The inseparability of these two is seen as a quality of awakening or

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enlightenment. This was particularly seen to be the quality of LONGCHEN RABJAM – this is again linked to him who was mentioned in this first point.

***Practice sessions and their ending are not differentiated. So remain continuously in the state of non-separation.***

People often want to do retreats or they want to focus on their meditation practice and there is a sense that by doing meditation intensively something will be transformed. Then when the retreat finishes you go back into your ordinary life. The retreat is good and then the heavier qualities of daily life gradually reduce the qualities developed in retreat. From the point of view of the text, this is the wrong approach. Being in the world is the more important part. The function of the meditation is to free oneself up back into the flow of the integrated participation where the various aspects of ones being come together.

***Remain continuously in the state of non-separation.***

Before we focused on two kinds of practice. One was generation of calm stillness through fixation on a definite object like the breath. The other was to develop the same stillness and calmness of mind without any particular focussing by just being present, being mindful, aware of whatever is presenting itself. It would be very difficult to go to work if you were always concentrating on your breath coming in and out of your nostrils. That is a practice which cannot really be generalised into the world. However, the second practice, by being truly attentive to whatever is going on, you can take into any situation. This is the same point he is making here. The central point of the practice is not to say *Phat!* but to recognise **the open state in the moment immediately after the it** – to integrate that with whatever is arising, both when you are sitting in meditation and when your body gets up and you start interacting with other people.

### ***Lunch***

This practice in particular is both an active practice, because you are mobilising your energy into shouting *Phat!* but we also need to stay calm at the same time. The focus is on recognising this openness which is revealed by the space opened through the *Phat!*. This spaciousness is not like if you were sitting reading a book or working on something, suddenly looking up out of the window where you see the sky and some space. It is not that we see the space but we *are* the space. **It is not a perceptual or cognitive relationship but an ontological one.** It is even beyond ontology because it is not being anything in particular. It is a relaxing *into* what is always there. For most people it takes a while to get used to the energy of the *Phat!* and the simultaneous openness which is not an activity. Therefore, give yourself some time, find a place where you are comfortable and really go into the practice. You can explore doing it with your eyes open or closed. If you get very caught up in thoughts you can do a whole series of *Phat!* If you find yourself getting spaced out just relax into the out-breath, slow and deep and come back into your ordinary frame.

*[Practise outside]*

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## The Difference to tantric practice

This kind of practice is rather different to what we do in tantra. The basic principle of tantra is about *transformation*. That is set out in various stories or mytho-poetic events. One structure of story is retold in various forms and the last real telling of it is about Padmasambhava. When Padmasambhava, the great yogi, established tantric buddhism into Tibet and he came to leave, it is said he left on a flying horse and went to the island of Lanka. This land was run at that time by a

demon king, a king, who in the hindu system, was known as Ravana. Padmasambhava went into the body of Ravana and destroyed him internally – but he left the body untouched. He did that in the night-time. The next day when the followers of Ravana came, the king was sitting there as usual, giving very rough instructions to everyone to go to do bad things – and people were thinking, 'Oh, the King is in a good mood today, we get to do some killing.' Then gradually Padmasambhava softened his behaviour in such a subtle way that his followers did not really notice any change or transformation. So bit-by-bit the whole country became peaceful.

In the same way we do this ourselves in tantra. We are all little demon kings who do the practice to become Padmasambhava. Because everything is Padmasambhava we continue doing what we do, which means we do not beat ourselves up or criticise and blame ourselves. We just try to see everything as Padmasambhava while gradually this practice leads to a softening of our behaviour and we come to fully occupy that space. This involves doing a conscious intentional practice like a puja in which we visualise, we recite mantras, we recite prayers. We have a sense that we are doing something which is reassuring to our ordinary ego identity. There is a kind of massaging or gratification of our sense of who we are. We develop an increasing competence and become able to do these practices very nicely, doing different mudras, ring our bell at the right time and so on.

In this kind of practice here we are not doing that. **We are focusing again and again on opening and resting in that state of openness** – and again: it is not the ego that rests in the state of openness! This makes it very difficult to describe it in language. Our language is structured to indicate the lines of intentionality. On entering into this state there is relaxation; that is what belongs in that state.

It takes some while to realise that doing less is better than doing more. That what we call samsara is actually created out of our desire to be busy. When you go into a town like Freiburg, which is very eco-sensitive, you can walk the streets with very nice modern ecological build houses. That is very good and there are many journals and books on ecological architecture and so on. It is wonderful – and it has nothing to do with this. It just makes a nicer form of samsara. That is all. The Dharma point of view and a worldly point of view is very different. There is always something to do. Whether what you do is called a bad thing or a good thing, it is doing a thing. The function of doing a thing is to create a feedback loop where we think, 'I did that.'

**All the Buddha's teachings and in particular dzogchen are focused on the deconstruction of the notion of the individual agency.** On the most general level, events arise due to karma and interdependency. On this other level we see them as the natural play of the non-duality of energy and its ground.

***However, for as long as you have not gained stability, abandon social stimuli and keep practice dear to you. Make clear practice sessions in which to practice meditative balance. And at all times and in all situations maintain simply the display of the natural mode. Be clear that there is nothing other than this.***

When you are walking down the road – who is walking? The dharmakaya is walking. All energy, all movement, all arising is from this open state. When we get into a self-referential attitude and we start to create a story in which we are doing this activity, then we are not relaxing in this natural state and because of that we are not experiencing everything as the display of it.

This aspect is what is called LHUNDRUP (Tib.: *lhun grub*). That is to say an immediacy or SPONTANEOUS ARISING which in some ways is similar to, but not the same as, an automatic movement like walking. When you walk your legs go in the right order, you do not have to think

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about it and in fact if you think about it you might trip up. We can give a biological explanation of why this happens through the development of certain capacities and learned behaviours. From the point of view of Dharma, all this activity is arising directly out of the open state – there is nothing else. It arises in relation to the context which is also arising. These conditions or situations that we enter are not truly existing but they certainly have an impact. If you walk along the flat road and then you walk up into the mountains it feels very different. That difference is not caused by the reality of gravity but by the balance of the five elements which creates a particular kind of experience. The more the sun shines the hotter it becomes and eventually it becomes a bit tiring. We have many explanations we can give about why things are the way they are. These explanations can illuminate something, but in terms of the practice it is recognising: *'Oh, it is just this movement!'*

The traditional example for explaining this is the mirror. A mirror has no content itself. When we look in the mirror we always see something which is not the mirror. The reflection that the mirror shows is not the mirror – it is the reflection of something else. In the same way, this open state of mind which we relax into when we do the *Phat!* has no content of its own. It is described as open, naked, empty and that means exactly that. If you look for something you won't find anything – it is not existing as a thing. Out of that, as the expression of that, or the DISPLAY (Tib.: *rol pa*, a kind of play), as it says here, everything manifests.

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## The Second Essential Point: Making a Decision

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### ***Being Clear it is this, is the Second Essential Point***

This is the second essential point of GARAB DORJE: to become very clear about this point – translated as MAKING A DECISION. It is not like a conscious decision wherein you think: *'I will have some tea or some coffee in the break.'* It is examining any doubts or hesitations that you have around it, any uncertainties, until you reach a point where it is absolutely clear: it is self-evident.

If you go to a gold merchant in India and you want to sell some gold, they usually have a little black stone on which they rub the gold. They look at the shade and then try to work out what metals may be in the gold. When they are sure they give a price. The practice is operating in the same way: we do the practice again and again. You get states of confusion, there are things that happen in the world where we find ourselves going back into our usual habitual response. Then you have to find a way to go back into the practice to see what is the issue. What is the basis for the feeling that the meditation does not provide the solution and instead some busy activity in the world is a better course of action? The more familiar we become with the practice, the doubts dissolve by themselves and we become clear, *'Oh, this is really how it is.'* It is a bit like an alcoholic who is stopping drinking – especially if they have to stop for health reasons. At first they still believe that drinking is very good, drinking is the one thing they want to do, but the longer they can stay without drinking while their health starts to get better, they start to have an alternative which they can put in relation to, what is by now, their fantasy about drinking. The desire to drink goes down and down.

For many years and many life times we have been drinking the intoxication in believing in this separate reality of *'I, me, myself'*. In order to maintain that intoxication we have been consuming huge quantities of thoughts and emotions as ways of reassuring ourselves, *'I am really feeling this. I am the one who does that.'* Now we are going into this detoxification process and start to see that these thoughts are not as healthy as we thought they were. We believe that they are very good for us, and indeed they have opened various doors in our lives through education and so on. In the end we go towards death and then we go swirling into another environment, in which once

again we are captured by causes and conditions. We come at the play of whatever simple thoughts and feeling and so on arise at that time.

Thoughts help to develop the continuity of the situation we are in. When we start to see that the continuity of the situation we are in is an illusion, then instead of thoughts being helpful as they are within that short frame of reference, in terms of the big frame of reference, clearly they are not so reliable. This is the second point in this core most basic, most important of all the dzogchen teachings. It says: *'Be clear, relaxed, open, spontaneous – this is how things actually are. The fantasy of control, of being the agent, being the one in charge – this can only lead you astray.'*

This is not something abstract. When we sit to meditate and we find ourselves preoccupied with the contents of our mind, by our thoughts and feelings and so on, this is the point where we can see how we are pulled into the construction of ourselves and the world. Not being distracted, relaxing and integrating whatever is arising as the energy of THE UNBORN GROUND NATURE– this is the central aspect in order to integrate daily life into the practice which is established in the first central point, which is to recognise your own nature. On one level it is easy to do because there is nothing to do, on the other hand it is very difficult to do because there is nothing to do.

We have an impulse to get involved in some way. The site of this impulsivity is the ego. The ego is like somebody who has been taking a lot of cocaine or amphetamine sulphate. When people take a lot of amphetamine they like to talk all night, they become a little bit wired up, they do not settle very well. The ego is like that. It is always seeking something to do. But what it is, actually, is a vibrational energy. Since you were born you have been vibrating in various ways. We have a whole range of vibrations that we can have. Vibrations lead to sleep, to being calm, to be excited, to being happy, to being sad. These vibrations in themselves are not the problem. You do not have to change these particular manifestations. The problem is that there is a self-referential feedback that says: *'I am the one who feels this. I am the one who is doing this.'* This gives an elevated sense of importance.

For example in Sicily they have this organisation of the mafia. They very kindly offer you protection. Who will they protect you from? From themselves, *'If you give me money I will not attack you. It makes sense, I am a nice guy but I can be dangerous.'* The ego is like that: it is always seeking something to do. In the same way, once you start to pay the mafia you cannot stop. You buy into a system which is self-perpetuating – it has no function except to keep itself going. It is just like the bully in the school playground who says, *'If you don't give me your sweets I will hit you!'* If you give your sweets on Monday they would be quite interested to see if you had sweets on Tuesday. These are, what we call in English, scams; and this is what the ego is doing: the ego is milking a profit out of nothing at all. It is like you stand by a park bench on a hot day and you see some tired old person and they want to sit on the bench and you say: *'Oh, it will cost one euro.'* Everything is arising from the dharmakaya but: *'I did it. I am important.'*

What has to happen is this intensification, this knotting or turbulence of trying to maintain this delinquent system, has to be released. That means starting to feel that life is safer than we thought, wherein we can say, *'Whatever comes comes.'* Not being frightened by circumstances. We do not have to be so actively trying to manage them. The need to be ready for action goes down. That is the essential point of this section we have just looked at.

**[break]**

## [The Third Essential Point: Simply Being](#)

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***At that time, desire and anger, happiness and sorrow, and all sudden thoughts do not linger in the state of recognition.***

This is indicating here that there is a way in which you can experience everything that occurs but without attachment to it.

We don't need to have a lot of experience of something to know what it is. As soon as you see what something is, that's what it is. If you are at a nice party and somebody offers you a glass of white wine and as you lifted it to your mouth you smelt the aroma and you thought, '*This is urine,*' would you then take a sip? '*This is definitely urine, I think I will have some more.*' Why? I use this example a lot with the trainee psychotherapist, because many of the patients we see in the public hospital are not very nice people. They come into the hospital really in a mood to give the therapist a bad time. You can understand this in terms of the complexity of transference and so on but the most important thing is, if someone is pissing on you have to tell them to '*fuck off!*'. The trainee therapists have so much love in their heart and they believe that doing more is better – but to what purpose? If you go along with, if you collude with someone behaving in a bad way, you simply make the problem worse. It doesn't mean that you shouldn't be useful to the person but the way to be useful is to say: '*Don't piss on me.*'

In samsara every transaction is a power relationship. Having situations where people are seeking to dominate and control the situation on the basis of their neurotic fantasy is not helpful. It is not that these experiences of desire, anger, happiness and sorrow are like urine – they are more like a fruit that rots very quickly. If you take one bite it is delicious, it is meaningful, now you know what is there, but if you take another bite it has already become corrupt. In the same way, when you start to indulge any mental structure it transforms itself. Anger is a hot, quick, fresh response to a situation that's not good: '*No!*' Then we drop the situation. If you keep cooking it inside it easily turns into hatred which is a position of antagonism towards someone: '*I don't like you.*' And it is the same with wanting something; either it is available or not available. If it is not available there is nothing to be done. To keep developing a mental attitude towards it distorts the whole situation.

This state of RECOGNITION is the recognition of the openness of one's own state; the recognition of the impermanent nature of the arising, and the recognition that one has no need to generate anything out of that situation. On that basis, the experiences are there – they don't have to be denied or changed – they are not being taken on, they are not being developed into something else.

***By actualising the liberating natural mode, self-arising and self-liberating are continuous, as with drawing on water.***

When the cloud goes into the sky, the sky has no hooks to hold the cloud. The cloud stays in the sky or moves through the sky with its relation with the wind. The space itself is not an energetic thing, it is simply a space. The water element and the wind element of the cloud move together to promote the movement and the wind is influenced by the heat. This NATURAL STATE is said to be liberating because it is like SPACE.

What allows things to go free depends on the balance of energy. Because the ego functions as a kind of perverse form of the earth element it seeks to constantly establish itself as something fixed and enduring, although it is always changing. As soon as we move from this tight and knotted identification with myself as some form of earth, as a *thing*, relaxing into the space element, the basis for attachment to whatever is arising releases. He compares this to writing on water. If you put your finger in a still bucket of water and write your own name, the first letters

will have already dissolved by the time you get to the last letter. Things *appear* but they *disappear* just almost simultaneously in the moment of appearance.

The text says, ***self-arising and self-liberating are continuous***. You can experience this very simply. If you turn your head to one side and then turn it through 180 degrees, as you turn your head slowly, without any effort, different parts of the room come into being and then as you turn your head away they vanish. This is **the actuality of experience**. Of course from a conceptual thing you can step outside and say, *'Well, I am just looking at different parts of the room. I am still here, the room is still and now I am just looking at different parts of it.'*

## Whatever arises nourishes the naked, empty awareness

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### ***Whatever arises nourishes the naked, empty awareness.***

This is very helpful because whatever arises, whether it is happy or sad, good or bad, happening to me or someone else, if instead of entering into a conceptual elaboration with it, having lots of thoughts about it, we simply stay with the experience as it arises and passes. The one who is staying with that arising and passing, by not being implicated, by not being caught up in it, relaxes into the state of the mirror, and so these arisings, even if they are troubled and difficult, they nourish this empty awareness, this state of the mirror, because they bring it back to it again and again.

If you want to be a dancer, somebody who is completely at home in dance, it is very good to go to a bad club where the DJs play terrible music. You have to practice dancing to terrible music. That helps you to become a dancer. You can feel what these different rhythms are and although they are not your home territory, they are not confirming who you are as a dancer, they extend your range into the possibility of dancing. In the zen tradition there is a story of a monk who could only make so much progress in the monastery. He went out begging and collected some money. With that he paid some money to a Chinese musician to play music while he was meditating – music which involves quite a lot of percussion. This is a similar principle: **you can use what is arising to give you the possibility of seeing its impermanence**. If you don't hook onto it, it's hook will just close in on itself and you will be free.

In some of the other texts in **Simply Being**, it describes how some people who have been meditating a long time complain, *'Oh, I cannot make any progress because circumstances are not right.'* Maybe, *'I have no time to meditate,'* or *'I am too sick to meditate,'* or more internally, *'My mind is too disturbed to meditate; I am always depressed or sad.'* And the advice in these situations is always the same: **Don't blame the object**. Relax back into your own condition. Stay present with whatever is arising and it will go free by itself.

### ***All movement is the energy of the supreme natural mode.***

Nothing that occurs is intrinsically bad. The founding buddha of this lineage and tradition of practice is called SAMANTABHADRA or KUNTUZANGPO. His name means: always good, everything is good. With this sense of the infinite nature of the natural condition, there is no source for negative thoughts. What we take to be negative is made negative by the way we take it.

If I am cooking and I forget that the pan will be hot then when I pick it with my hand I get burned. The pan is not bad: I am stupid. It is quite appropriate that I get burned. But of course, my reaction is, *'these fucking pans! Why don't they put proper handles on them.'* Life is much easier when you blame the object. We have to see this in ourselves. It is the tendency to always think,

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*'These situations are bad. This shouldn't be happening. I don't like this.'* The problem is not with the circumstances but with our inability to relax and let go.

When we see that all of this movement is simply energy, although there are moments of happiness and moments of sadness, neither is more important because neither will last forever. **The main thing is to learn how to use each situation creatively.** For example, when we feel happy we tend to relax more, we open ourselves to the situation. That offers the possibility of having more sensation and more contact. There is something to learn in that. The situation will change through time.

The learning about the nature of sensation and the inseparability of emptiness and pleasure is something that can remain with you. It is not a concept but an experience which can be embedded in the quality of openness.

In the same way, if you have a difficult time and things happen that you don't like and you feel depressed or angry or jealous, the key thing is to observe, *'What is the nature of this arising.'* It is not going to last forever, but it is offering a good possibility to really see, *'What is this locked closed feeling?'* That way of practice allows us to see that the movement is not different from the state of openness. Of course, negative emotions can often feel more solid, more powerful, more impactful than happy experiences. We need to practice again and again relaxing into that: opening and just being with what is there.

As long as we are saying, *'This is good. This is bad. I want only the good and I don't want the bad,'* we put ourselves into a state of powerlessness while trying to be powerful. Actually, we don't have any method whereby we can maintain good things and stop bad things. When bad times come, this is our existence. It is not a mistake, it is not an accident, it is our life.

There is something potentially *extremely* lonely about our life. *'I am sad...everyone else is happy.'* That is my life but I cannot go to a shop and buy another life. The people who are laughing today are perhaps crying tomorrow and maybe I who am crying today will be laughing tomorrow – but anyway, today I am crying. How to inhabit that state rather than trying to transform it into something else?

This is again such a vital point: when we taste something, a sensation, an emotion or whatever and we don't like it, we want to spit it out. *'This bad thing should just go away, go back to where they make bad things!'* **The problem from this point of view is that the one who is making the bad things also makes the good things** – there is only one factory. It is like they put this warning on foods now that says the product was made in a factory where they process peanuts, because people develop an allergy to peanuts. This happiness was made in a factory where they also make tears. Both have the same nature. We like to be happy and we don't like to be sad but they are both empty phenomena – they are the energy of the dharmakaya. This is why **the difference between samsara and nirvana is recognising the ground of all phenomena or not recognising that ground.**

***Without trace, it is naturally pure – how wonderful!***

Maybe something bad happens to us and we feel as if our heart has been torn and we feel twisted inside. To say then that *'It leaves no trace'* is ridiculous since we are in that state. Maybe someone close to us has died or some love story breaks up or some fantasy goes wrong and we feel life is terrible. What is actually happening? We are stringing together moments of experience and making a composite story. In particular the story of, *'This is terrible, this shouldn't have happened and I don't want it to happen.'* But it has happened. It *has* happened and it *has* gone.

The person dies. It is not about being indifferent, it is not that you shouldn't feel something, but they die, we have some feeling and then the feeling goes. Then we have different kinds of feelings that we develop over the days and months. Each of these is arising and passing and can be integrated into the state of openness. The problem arises when we develop a storyline, a narrative, which gives a definitive reading, particularly one which resists the *truth* that we don't want it to go without trace.

In Britain in all these small villages they have war memorials and they often have a little slogan on them that says: '*Lest we forget.*' Then it lists the names of people who have died. But anyway, they are dead and they are forgotten. When the people came back from the war, they wanted to forget about the war. The economy does quite well, two holidays a year – and in the 1970's, remember, all the men had their hair quiffed up, a gold medallion and off to Greece. It is forgotten. That is why war is shit: people make a noble but meaningless sacrifice. Things go. They don't leave much of a trace – however we hang onto them and we make these stories.

**To allow something to go without a trace is not an insult to it.** It is to recognise that everything is impermanent. When the tragedy occurs we feel *somehow* the world should register. There is a poem by the English poet W. H. Auden that he wrote on looking at a painting by Peter Brueghel. This painting shows Icarus falling from the sky and landing in the sea. In the foreground of the painting there is a farmer ploughing his field. In the poem Auden says: '*Icarus falls from the sky how amazing, how terrible, someone has died,*' but for the man ploughing his field it is just, '*Oh, something... I don't know what*' – and life is going on.<sup>6</sup> We expect our own tragedy to make a tear in the world, we want to run screaming down the street saying it should not be the case, but actually, it doesn't do anything. This is a quality of the ego's inflation, the ego's sense that its own existence, its own need to keep things the way it wants it, has somehow been insulted by these terrible things that happen.

This is, of course, not to say that bad things are not important and that we should be indifferent to peoples suffering but: an event occurs and it has gone – everything moves on. Sometimes people believe that, '*Oh, if only we remember all the tragedies of history that will empower us not to repeat them.*' But wars arise because of the patterns of the five poisons: anger which gets out of control. **It is very important to observe: everything arises and passes.**

We can choose to turn something into a big story, a happy story, a sad story. Stories, because they are abstractions, because they operate in a kind of cyberspace, seem somehow to exist outside of time. *Actual* events, the *actual* existence that we have, is in time: beginning, ending, beginning, ending.

He said: ***Without trace, it is naturally pure.*** When the event has gone, it goes back into its ground which was the open situation. It is simply the DISPLAY OF THE NATURAL ENERGY OF THE MIND itself.

***The manner of arising is as before; the vital difference lies in the manner of liberation.***

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<sup>6</sup> Note from the editor: W.H. Auden, *Musee des Beaux Arts*:

"(...) In Breughel's *Icarus*, for instance: how everything turns away

Quite leisurely from the disaster; the ploughman may

Have heard the splash, the forsaken cry,

But for him it was not an important failure (...)"

Source: <http://poetrypages.lemon8.nl/life/musee/museebeauxarts.htm> (18.5.11)

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This is important for us who are people living in the world. It means you don't have to change the outer structure of your world. Life goes on. We go to work, look after old parents, whatever your situation. Sometimes it is good and sometimes it is bad. But now we are aware of how these moments vanish. Instead of building up a composite picture based on *this* and then *this* like some vast lasagne, each moment is there like it is – and then: gone! The more we experience this, we don't have to control what is going to happen to us because we know it will go.

If you go to a club they have these bouncers on the doors to keep bad people out. Even with your own house you have a lock on the door. But if you have only a front wall, if somebody comes in the door they are already outside again. When Catherine the Great went to inspect her properties she had a royal barge and went sailing down the Volga. Her main support, the person she relied on was Potemkin. He had a whole army of joiners and labourers who would construct the front of buildings, to put them up along these empty fields to make it look like she was passing city after city. It is the same for us. When something is happening to us we feel like a solid building and feel like something has come into us and we feel bad inside, but actually, it has gone out the back door. Somehow we know this because we know the front of our body reasonably well but we don't know too much about the back. When you put food in your mouth somehow it just vanishes, you can't taste it anymore. It goes down somewhere, we don't know where it goes – maybe it comes straight out. In that way, the SELF-LIBERATION of all phenomena is the fact that it is here and it is gone. It is *Gone! Gone! Gone!* – it never comes back!

We have been here sometime now. We came yesterday evening. Friday has gone, Saturday morning has gone and Saturday afternoon is now in the process of going. Tomorrow we say goodbye, and maybe we never meet again, we don't know. What we have is this moment and this moment has already gone into the next moment. This is not a philosophical point of view. This is the lived actuality of our existence, but one which we blind ourselves to by intoxication in story lines of continuity, real substances and so on.

So when he says that *it is naturally pure*, it means there is no true self-nature as a substance to be touched or to grasp these phenomena – and they also are dissolved. It is pure *on both sides*: pure on the side of the subject who would receive it, and pure on the side of the object that is occurring.

## To be realistic

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***Without this, meditation is a means to delusion. With it you have the state of the natural mode without need of meditation.***

If you do not recognise your own NATURAL GROUND whatever you try to do in meditation is simply another form of thought construction. It doesn't matter what the meditation is, it may be a very powerful meditation, a holy meditation, a pure meditation given to you by a very blessed saintly lama or yogi or whatever – but if you do not recognise the ground of your own being then the one who is doing the meditation is in a state of confusion and through that will pull the meditation into confusion. This is quite a radical point of view – but *if* you have this experience you will be resting in the NATURAL MODE and you won't need to do any meditation.

Generally speaking, he is saying that meditation is a kind of self-improvement. However, the self cannot be improved *into* the buddha-nature. The ego does not get enlightened. Enlightenment is a NATURAL STATE which is there from the very beginning. It is not a construct. If we say prayers, *'May I develop compassion, may I develop the power to save all sentient beings,'* this belongs to the paradigm of self-development. As Americans do when they look in the mirror and do affirmations, *'I am a good human being and I will find happiness in my life. I am a loveable*

*person and the person of my dreams will arrive soon.' – 'I will save all sentient beings,' structurally is not different. Of course it is a good thing to want to help sentient beings but who is going to help them? 'I am... unfortunately at the moment I can't even help myself but one day a rainbow will fall on the earth, I will climb it up and go to a place where I will get a magic key to open the treasure trove of universal knowledge with which I will save all sentient beings – one day.'*

PATRUL RINPOCHE is not setting out to insult all the general sutra and tantra patterns of meditation. He is pointing out **the difference between the natural state and the energy or the movement of the natural state**. When you do a tantric practice or you recite mahayana sutras you are working with energy and energy works within the domain of energy. **The main point in any tantric practice is the moment of dissolving of the god into yourself and yourself into emptiness**. Many people when they do the meditation will recite mantras for hours and hours, the whole puja will last maybe seven hours– and the moment of dissolving will be five minutes. **If energy is not related into its own ground it just becomes, potentially, a way of ego inflation**. We can think: *'Oh, we need to get this Vajrakīla-initiation from this lama as he is very powerful and then I will become very powerful.'* – *'What will I do with this big power? I will bring about world peace.'* Not very likely. *'I will feed all the starving children in the world.'* Not very likely. *'I will feel better about myself.'* Good, at least your mother will be happy about with that and she can die in peace: my child is sorted. Life is short. We have to really think. This is a real teaching of the Dharma.

When I was a child if I did not eat what was on my plate, the meat and the vegetable, I could not get the dessert. Working with energy is the dessert. First you have to get the NATURAL STATE. If you just eat your pudding all the time you teeth will fall out and you will get a lot of pimples.

#### ***At Ease in the Fact of Liberation in the Third Essential Point***

Another way of translating that is you would simply continue in this way knowing that nothing is better. That is to say, don't be seduced by dreams of power: *'if only I can get this then I will be better, I will be able to make things work out the way I want.'* Actually, being able to be present with whatever occurs is a much, much better solution.

We used to have an idea called *Live and let live*. That in the world there are many different kinds of people and they do different kinds of things but increasingly, with the development of the United Nations and people like George Bush and his father you have a sense that actually we should intervene in the world and sort things out. We will sort them out according to *our* frame of reference. The political imperialism that was established in the Berlin conference in 1884 when the map of Africa was chopped and some went to Germany, some to France, some to England and some to Belgium. This is replaced by cultural imperialism: *'If only everyone followed my rules it would be better. So I will invade your country and force you to follow my rules and then we will all be happy.'* DZOGCHEN is saying something completely different.

***The view having the three essential points is supported by the meditation which unites understanding and compassion and the conduct of the sons of the Buddha.***

Thus, he has explained the view in terms of these three points. **The meditation which unites understanding and compassion is the word Phat! The conduct of the sons of the Buddha is to remain open to circumstances.**

***Even if the buddhas of the three times discuss together they could not find a better teaching than this.***

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So that means – not so bad.

***The energy of awareness, the treasure-revealer of the natural mode, has taken this treasure from the vastness of wisdom.***

This means that PATRUL RINPOCHE, although we could say he wrote this, is saying that in his experience it is the energy of awareness, this energy of RIGPA, of the enlightened understanding of the natural state, it is this energy itself which has revealed this teaching out of the natural condition which exists as a treasure of vast wisdom. Which of course is how we experience our lives, we find ourselves [...] <sup>7</sup>, we find ourselves acting, this activity, this energy moves through us. It is only secondarily we run a story across it and say, 'I did this,' or 'I wanted to do that.' We are just in it.

***It is not like the essences that can be taken from earth and stone.***

It is not a construct, it is not refined from something, it is not a distillation. It is a gift.

For example, you are sitting and you hear a bird sing, that is a gift. The gift comes from the DHARMAKAYA. If we know the sound, everything comes from the dharmakaya, the bird calls us back to the dharmakaya. We hear a motorbike roaring by – where does the sound come from? From the dharmakaya. When we hear the sound of the motorbike: '*dharmakaya calling us home.*' If you really get the point of this teaching the whole world becomes a teacher – everything is saying: '*Here you are, here you are.*'

## The Three transmissions

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***It is the testament of Garab Dorje. It is the heart essence of the three transmissions.***

GARAB DORJE is the one who originally transmits this and PATRUL RINPOCHE is saying his short commentary is not in any way a distortion of these ideas. It is the heart essence or the true form of the THREE TRANSMISSIONS.

The first transmission is the DIRECT TRANSMISSION of the Buddha's understanding. When we meditate together this is the state that we want to open. The second is the SYMBOLIC TRANSMISSION which comes through the Vidyadharas, and this is displayed through formal symbols like crystals, mirrors and so on, but also the energetic way of being through which we create the connection. And the THIRD TRANSMISSION is the spoken transmission which comes through our ear in which the teachings are conveyed through examples and concepts. So he is saying that this short text is true to all these three.

***I entrust it my heart sons.***

This means the people who will understand it and keep it safe.

***This profound meaning is taught from my heart.***

In the Tibetan monastic system this would be quite rare. Mostly people teach from books. But here he takes the stream of his formal learning – because he had a full Tibetan monastic

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<sup>7</sup> *inaudible*

education – of his meditation practice and his life experiences and runs these different rivers together.

***Being spoken from the heart, it carries the essential meaning.***

I am sure we have this in all languages, the sense of speaking from the heart, something which is heartfelt. It rings true in a way that thoughts from the head don't do. Speaking from the heart means it is not artificial, it is not mixed up with ordinary ego ideas and also the motive is from the heart – that '*may this benefit you, may this be useful.*' There is no funny business involved.

***Don't let this essential meaning fade. Don't allow these instructions to be wasted.***

It is important.

***This concludes 'The special teaching of Khepa Sri Gyalpo'<sup>8</sup>.***

KHEPA means *somebody who knows something* and SRI GYALPO means *the great King*. This is his point of identification with the dharmakaya, with the natural state.

***[short break]***

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<sup>8</sup> Patrul Rinpoche's key instruction verses on Garab Dorje's Three Statements are known as "The Special Teaching of Khepa Sri (or Shri) Gyalpo".

**Firstly, the method by which the view which has not been recognised can be successfully introduced.**

He is going to explain why people don't get to recognise this.

**Generally the vehicles relying on signs clarify the view by means of authentic statements and discussion.**

That is to say, propositions are set out, quotations from the holy scriptures, and these are seen, because they have a good provenance, as coming from a reliable teacher. They are taken to be segments of the truth. Regarding **vehicles relying on signs**, sign in Tibetan is TSEN MA which means the identifying characteristics of any philosophical school or point of view. They tend to operate on the basis that the *word* and the *phenomena* defined by the word exist in a simple correlation. This then creates the sense that if you are talking clearly and precisely about something it is as if the thing you are describing is somehow brought into being by the talking about it. A great deal of academic discourse has this nature.

**While according to the ordinary tantric way, on the basis of the examples of original knowing in the third initiation there is an introduction to the actual original knowing in the fourth initiation. And there are many such methods.**

In the tantric system there are many different kinds of initiation. There is a basic organisation of them into the FOUR INITIATIONS but there are hundreds of different kinds of initiations sometimes they talk of eight and sometimes of more. Initiation is not a particularly good word for translating the Tibetan which is *wangkur* (Tib.: *dbang skur*) which means a kind of bestowing power. It comes from the Sanskrit word *abhisheka* which was like the coronation of a prince wherein a prince is made a king.

It is bit like if you have a car, you get into it, you try to start the engine but it won't move and you recognise that the battery is flat. Then you flag down some other car to ask if they can help you start the car and they are happy to help. They ask if you have the leads but you say '*No have you.*' they also say '*no.*' – So if you don't have a connection between the teacher and the student they cannot recharge your battery. The most important thing is the connection and the connection is not something that can be constructed. According to the tantric tradition it takes many life times of practice and so on to create a sufficient connection that when the initiating teacher and the initiated student come together something really happens; they get something. It is as if something goes from one party to another; they get something from the other person.

### Original knowing (Yeshe)

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**Whereas here, in accordance with the system with those in the holy practice lineage, we have the introduction to the vanishing of the mind.**

MIND here means the conceptualising mind which creates all the phenomena in samsara. So the vanishing of the mind means that it becomes possible to not rely on the movement of our thoughts as a solid bedrock for working out who we are and what the world is. The vanishing of the mind means that as it dissolves it reveals this open spaciousness which is the actual identity of all beings.

**Moreover when the waves of bewildering thoughts are raging, the rough thoughts which pursue the object cover the nature of mind as it is.**

That is pretty obvious: when we are busy in ourselves with strong turbulent thoughts they are so preoccupying. Some hurt gets to us or some hope and it is like an incredible internal landscape where you go round and round in it and we are not actually available with a real connection with what is outside.

**Then, although the mind may be introduced, it will not be recognised. Therefore, the rough thoughts must be cleared away.**

Cleared away is a bit brutal for this, it means really *we allow to settle*. If you stop winding yourself up you won't be wound up.

**So the text says, 'Firstly keep your mind relaxed.'**

**Moreover, to keep one's mind free of artifice is itself the clarity of original knowing.**

Pristine cognition was how I was translating the term YESHE. That means primordial knowing or primordial knowledge. As with all concepts, translating it in the manner of 'pristine cognition' seemed a good idea at the time but afterwards you think what on earth does that mean? It is meaning that there are certain noetic capacities, certain potentials for *knowing* which have been there as a property, right from the beginning and they are not resting on anything else. This natural knowing, or the natural clarity of the mind being there from the beginning, is exactly the same as the description '*don't do anything artificial*'.<sup>9</sup>

You often see that with small children, that they learn how to wind themselves up to get themselves in a rage. You have to find a way to interrupt that process of escalation. This is very similar to what we do a lot of the time, as we are just looking: an event happens then it has gone, but we spiral around it like a kind of amplifier in a sound system, increasing the charge on it.

**The natural condition cannot be actualised by means of artifice.**

This is absolutely central. It means you cannot take any drugs to do it, you cannot buy it, it is not achieved by having very good health. **It is not the product of any technique.** You can see that in relation to his comments at the end of the first text about what you could see as a kind of critique of tantra and sutra. He is again pointing out that *techniques* apply to the domain of ENERGY, they cannot apply to the NATURAL CONDITION as it is not a construct. There is nothing wrong with techniques but you have to know what domain they apply to.

### The Essential part of the transmission: only you can show this to yourself

**So in order to show the co-emergent original knowing free of artifice to oneself the text says, 'Neither diffused nor concentrated, free of thoughts.'**

Here it is pointing out the essential part of the transmission which is that **only you can show this to yourself**. It can be explained in various ways, various symbols can be offered, you can do the practice together with other people and get some kind of support, aesthetic or emotional for

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<sup>9</sup> Ed. notes: I have left the whole paragraph as it is because James discusses the translation of 'yeshe'. New edition of *Simply Being* uses "original knowing" and the previous edition uses "pristine cognition".

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example – but in the end only you yourself can sit on that fulcrum point between samsara and nirvana and avoid being trapped in habitual, enmeshing constructs. He is saying that **you have to find a way yourself** to enter a state which is neither diffused nor concentrated and is free of thoughts.

On an outer level, if you are very diffused then you need to focus yourself, you need some outer methods to do that. If you come home from work and you have had a hard day and your mind is confused then you should wash the dishes by hand. It is a very simple task. Or you should prepare the vegetables, chopping them slowly and carefully. Again a simple task: beginning, middle and end. Gradually that focused attention brings you back into a state where you are not so dispersed. If you are very concentrated and very determined then you should put on some music and dance or look at some nonsense on television; don't take your life too seriously. All the time there are many methods, if you like, in the world that we can interact with to get a sense of what is the middle way.

In terms of supporting the idea of being **free of thoughts**, the most important thing is impermanence. Impermanence is the best friend of meditators. Because everything is impermanent, try to be present with whatever is happening. Because it is impermanent it will soon be gone – so don't worry about it. In that way, you start to develop a kind of equanimity.

When it says *thought* here it means thought, feeling and sensation; all these internal factors out of which we create a sense of self. We start to see that phenomena are arising and passing and that they only have a limited amount to give us. If you have milked the cow you should stop milking; there is no more milk in the udder and you are just causing pain. It is the same way with each thought and feeling: you don't have to block it – it has already given you what it had to give. Somebody says something to you that you don't like and afterwards you find yourself thinking: *'Yeah, but why did he say that?'* Why not. You don't know. The more you think about it, the less likely you will be to know. You just fill your mind with conceptual elaborations. If you really want to know you can ask the person. Quite probably they won't tell you the truth. So in any event there is not much point to think about it. We keep asking thinking to perform functions it cannot possibly do.

**We need to take this seriously. If we really want to understand this and to do this as a kind of practice, we prepare the ground by observing how caught up in thoughts we become.** You can support this in all sorts of ways, through mindfulness practice, the foundations of mindfulness of the body and so on. These are very good trainings. You can do classical vipassana, you can do yoga, you can do tai chi; all of these are methods which allow you to have a sort of pause for thought – that pause you do not have to think.

***While you are a beginner, although you try to maintain the unchanging state of the natural abiding of mind, you will not be able to escape the state where there is attachment to the experience of happiness, clarity and non-thought which belong to stillness.***

You start to be able to not be so interested in the ordinary crude thoughts about what is happening in the world. You are not so pre-occupied with what happens in friendships, or at work, or in politics. Through that your meditation becomes deeper and you start to have these experiences which are called NYAM (Tib.: *mnyam*), of happiness, no-thought, clarity and so on. These are experiences that show that some progress has been made but they are not the final destination. Although they don't look like constructs, they are actually constructs and will vanish through time. He is saying that you are going to find yourself becoming attached to these experiences and taking them too seriously.

**Therefore the text says, 'While peaceful and relaxed in that state'.**

That is to say, you have calmed your mind; your mind is now peaceful, quite happy, quite relaxed. That is a lovely state to be in.

**In order to free yourself from the pit of attachment to these experiences and to directly show the natural condition of the unimpeded natural awareness, the text says, 'Suddenly shout Phat!'**

For beginners you can use this at every stage of your practice you can use it. When your mind is turbulent you can use the **Phat!** to cut into it and give yourself some space, but as you develop your meditation capacity and you enter into these sort of cul-de-sacs, these dead-ends of tranquillity and so on, you can use it also to cut through that to a deeper and sharper state of awareness.

### Getting nothing by getting the joke

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**It is very important to cut the flow of thoughts and destroy conceptual meditation, so it is necessary to sound the Phat with fierce intensity. Thus the text says, 'With much force and vigour. Wonderful!'**

This is really a testing point, because we spend a lot of time doing conceptual meditation. We work hard to improve ourselves, to create better conditions externally and internally. But what he is saying is that you have to cut through this, you have to destroy it, you have to break it because it is not the real thing. It is a kind of simulacrum, it is something *Ersatz*<sup>10</sup>. Like a good potter making a bowl, if it is not exactly what is needed you throw the clay back into the mass and start again until you get what is required. It will ring true when it is the real thing. **When you get this experience of your own real nature it is like getting a joke.** When you get a joke you don't get anything. What did you get? You just laugh. It is the same thing here – you don't get anything. If you do a conceptual meditation you can get lots of things: you can gain power in the four activities, you can stop the rain, start the rain and develop a lot of power and become famous, people can like you and so on. But if you understand your own mind nothing changes. You look like an ordinary person, no one would know. No rainbows are involved. You don't have to change your clothes, you don't get to change your name. You got in but you didn't get anything.

**[End of day two]**

### Day Three. Sunday. The Text

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**At that moment one is freed from all objectifying reliance, such as 'Mind is this', and liberation is manifest. Thus the text says, 'Nothing at all, shocked open'.**

Our ordinary consciousness is endlessly resting on the phenomena which arise. When we say this syllable **Phat!** we are cutting in two directions: we are cutting on the root of the subjective consciousness and also on the basis of taking objects as real. One of the things you will notice when you do the practice is that often you will have an experience and then there is a kind of meta-comment that comes on top, which somehow appropriates the experience. So we might

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<sup>10</sup> Original German. *Ersatz* = replacement, surrogate

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think, 'Oh, this is good,' or 'I have understood something.' These comments are a subtle way of going back into and losing what you gained. The natural state does not require any validation from concepts. However, the concept, being our habitual point of reliance and meaning generation always wants to insinuate itself into the situation. When you are practicing on your own and that happens, that is the time to do another **Phat!** so that the mind is just merging into the sky. Sometimes it says the meditation should be like sky into sky.

## Direct naked awareness

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So it is saying that there is *nothing at all, it is shocked open*. If there is nothing at all where will you live? This is a common trope in science fiction films where there has been some nuclear disaster or some big invasion from another planet. All has been destroyed and you see these barren landscapes and people are hiding in the buildings. But our bomb is even better: no survivors – nothing at all. All the places where your familiar ego identifications can occur, this is taken away – there is just nothing. Yet, there is an awareness which pervades this *nothing at all*. You have the presence of nothing or there is a presence within the nothing. **This is the inseparability of awareness and emptiness.** Awareness is not located in a particular place, it is not relying on a site from which to engage with something other than itself. But it is the vital noetic capacity which pervades all space. So this *shocked open* means that all the covering, all the closure, all the knotting which occurs through reliance on concepts, that falls away and this natural radiance is revealed.

***With the state of the natural mode free of all object reliance, one abides exactly as original knowing beyond mind: direct naked awareness.***

This pristine cognition, this primordial knowing<sup>11</sup> is beyond mind. It is free of any conceptualisation, it is not dependant on anything which is arising, any thought, feeling or sensation. It is described as **direct naked awareness** because it is unimpeded in its movement because it is not a thing and in fact it is always already anything can occur. It is naked because it is not covered in assumptions or constructs or conditioning. It is not trying to make sense of one thing in terms of another.

That is the way we normally proceed in life – we compare and contrast. If you come up into the mountains the water tastes a little bit different from in the town. When you make a cup of tea you notice that it tastes a little bit different. We have the experience of drinking the tea but immediately our mind is not quite sure because the tea does not fit into the template we have so we think, 'Ah, it is different from my familiar cup of tea.' In that way we develop our sense of meaning through relating. That is why we talk of relative truth because one thing is related to another. However, this quality of awareness has no fixed content and it is not standing in relation to anything else and it is self-existing.

***Thus, 'In this astonishment there is unimpeded directness.'***

This quality of being shocked open is very important. When we have a shock there is a forgetfulness of the ordinary frame of reference. That is what a shock is, that your frame of reference is knocked away. When we have a shock we can stay open and then experience

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<sup>11</sup> Ed. Note: As at the earlier footnote, James uses different terms to translate this in the new and the old editions of *Simply Being*.

everything arising in that state of openness, or the shock can lead to the generation of a kind of anxiety which feeds us into a sense that something must be done, I need to do it, I need to control this situation.

## Co-emergent ignorance

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One way that Padmasambhava explains this is that the origin of ignorance arises from a shock. It is compared to a drunken man going home, singing and laughing and not very aware – just at home in the world, when suddenly falls down a flight of stairs: *'Oh, what has happened! Where am I? Who am I?'* With the arising of this anxious contraction there is the move towards making sense of what is going on. This is called CO-EMERGENT IGNORANCE, in which the natural state of openness is present together with this anxious movement of contraction. There is still the possibility that the contraction could release and you go back into the open state, but what tends to happen is that we stay with the contraction and then that generates an energetic system of its own in which there is a forgetfulness of the ever-present openness. That leads into the generation of the ignorance of naming each thing, a reliance on conceptual elaboration with which one engages in the world of objects, defining them increasingly precisely and building up an internal interpretive system. We generate assumptions and beliefs about how the world is and this, then, generates the third mode of ignorance which is described as the ignorance of the stupidity of not recognising karma. That is were we live in the world thinking, *'I am me and you are you and the world is solidly real,'* – and then through interaction we generate all kinds of hopes and expectations, leading to behaviours while we think this is quite normal without having any idea that this is creating an extra energetic push or potentiality of karma.

Therefore, one of the functions of this **Phat!** as the unification of wisdom and compassion, is to reverse these three stages of ignorance in just one vital movement. If you like, you return to the primordial shock. You go through it and the shock is transformed into a liberating shock. **'In this astonishment'** means there is no possibility of reclaiming the territory at that moment. If you really go into the practice – then you have that unimpeded directness!

This is the point where all the kinds of preliminary practices and basic reorientations that come from studying Dharma are useful. Because having practiced holding ourselves together for a long time, having practiced anxiously to be in charge of situations and acting with distress when things don't go the way we want them to go, our ego or individual sense of self has taken on this inflated sense of responsibility, of feeling it has to be in charge. So there is going to be some anxiety and some resistance that occurs. Just as in modern warfare when the army is defeated it doesn't just lay down its weapons, it goes into a more invisible form of war by laying land mines, by booby trapping buildings and so on. For example, in the Vietnam war the Americans developed this 'beautiful' technique of putting bombs inside dolls so that children would be blown up. That is very sophisticated. Now your own mind is just as sophisticated as that. It will disguise poison in the most delicious wines. When you do the practice, suddenly this thought comes *'Mmm, this is going well.'* This tastes very sweet like a fine Sauterne. Unfortunately it is a poisonous thought because it is luring you into reliance on the concept again. This is why when we do the practice seriously we have to really understand the view very well and not go back into reliance on concepts. We have to remember this is a *practice*, it is not the whole story, this is not some doctrine of infinite nihilism, we are not trying to just destroy everything. For the purposes of awakening to this natural spaciousness we have to experience that nothing is better than something. Only when you really have nothing, does nothing show itself as pervaded by this radiant awareness.

***This directness is beyond the limitations of beginning and ending, being and non-being.***

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Every experience that we ordinarily have has a beginning and an ending. It seems to be something or there is an absence, but this state of awareness has no beginning or end. Of course, for you, it seems to be beginning because you are having this experience but it is always there. It is like if you take small children to the seaside and they see the sea for the first time: they are completely amazed and it seems wonderful. Big people say, '*Yeah, it is the sea.*' But for the children it is now *their sea*, their direct experience. We need to go back into the practice again and again to keep the deep freshness – not this surface freshness because that puts you into relation with it.

It's not fresh because it's my new experience, it's fresh because it's always fresh, because it has never been covered over, never been mixed with concepts.

***Beyond being an object for the effortful conceptualising of speech and mentation, it is the essential point of the inexpressible, self-abiding original knowing.***

This revelation or unfolding is not something that can be appropriated by or subsumed into all your familiar ways of making sense – it is a state which is inexpressible. You can't do anything with it. It's not a tool or a resource for the ego. It's beyond being turned into being something – but if you go on the internet you will find due to the infinite power of consumerist capitalism many people now selling this.

One of the early zen books that was published in English had a beautiful title, *Selling Water by the River*. The same is happening with dzogchen. People will turn this into a commodity to sell but your own nature is freely available to you. You can't lose it, nobody can steal it from you, you can't buy it, nobody can give it to you. It is the innate freedom of all beings. This freedom resides in the very fact that it doesn't enter into the market economy, it's not an object that can be commodified and moved around. Although we use a lot of words in talking about it and explaining it, the goal is to go through this narrow door into a realm free of language, unconstrained by conceptualization.

Then he quotes the root text

***'A total directness that is inexpressible.'***

***That essential meaning is the view of the primordially pure meaning free of interpretation which is the yogi's path, the natural mode of awareness abiding in the ground.***

GROUND doesn't mean the earth outside, it means space itself, this natural unborn spaciousness. The infinite spaciousness, sometimes called the dharmadhatu, is the domain in which RIGPA or awareness is always functioning. In entering into that you have the yogis path, the path that doesn't go anywhere. One is not trying to go from here to there because both here and there are both arising are arising inside this infinite spaciousness. Here is not better than there. Which is why again and again in the text it says, '*If good things come they come, if bad things come they come.*' The main thing is to integrate whatever is arising into this ground, maintain it within that spaciousness.

If you go to the ballet, you see bodies moving in space. That is all there is. The curtain opens, there is a space, people come on, there is some music and they move around in the space – but if you know of ballet you can look at the line of someone's body, you can see what their leap is like and you can compare and contrast it with other people. Then you are aware of dancers and how well they are dancing.

It is the same in meditation. We have thoughts feelings and sensations moving in space, but when we generate this web of semantic understanding we provide an interpretive discourse which makes commentaries on how these movements are occurring, what they imply, how they link together and so on – then we enter easily into judgment. The yogi is avoiding going into this extra activity, just staying with the pure simplicity of what is arising and passing.

## A Narrow door

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***Therefore as long it is not actualized, although one meditates and does practice, one cannot transcend the conceptual artificial view and meditation.***

This is absolutely essential. This is a narrow door you have to go through. If you remain on this side you are endlessly in the field of conceptual elaboration, which is why when we do practice there is really something at stake.

In the old days when Germany was divided into east and west there was this big wall in Berlin. When people in the east wanted some kind of freedom they had to make some dangerous journey across. They wanted to have what they thought of as freedom and other people were determined to stop them having that freedom.

It's not like that in meditation. You want freedom! Who is stopping you? Only yourself. Only your addiction to your habitual thoughts, the mystification that you live in of not directly tasting this open dimension, but – on and on – elaborating stories about it or about daily life and so on. So he says if you don't get it:

***The path of the natural great perfection will be as far away as the sky and one will not have the essential point of the circle of meditation-less clarity.***

It is described as a circle because a circle has no beginning and end. It speaks of the always already quality – there has been no change from the very beginning. This natural state is always the same. It is meditationless because it is natural and self-occurring and when you relax into your own state there is nothing for you to do. It is a clarity because it elucidates whatever is occurring without having to rely on concepts. On an ordinary level this clarity comes into the world so that you don't get trapped in situations so much. It's the possibility of seeing problems before they arise.

This will remain closed to us if we don't directly taste this openness.

***Therefore it is most important to experience this nature at the beginning. Thus, 'Experience the awareness of the natural mode'.***

**Only you can do this!** Nobody can do it for you. It involves you to align yourself to come into one point.

The more we depend on concepts the more we will be dispersed into all these ideas.

On a day-to-day level we can observe what is the practice of our existence? How do we disturb ourselves? Externally what kind of unnecessary stimuli we bring in, internally what kind of habitual thoughts we keep recycling? There is an old saying, *'Be careful what you wish for'*. That is

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because thoughts carry with them a kind of libidinal cathexis – some of our life energy.<sup>12</sup> (In response to a question James explains that cathexis means linking, joining.)

You might have that experience: you go for a favourite walk or you go on holiday in a place you like and you want to go back to it because it seems to be so full of meaning. The meaning which is some part of you – some part of the vitality of your existence – has become located in that place and when you get to be in that place again or you see that person again you feel good. We leave bits of ourselves all over the world. Saying hello is quite nice but saying good by is often a bit sad. So we just keep saying '*hello, hello*' and we don't want to say '*bye bye*'. That then leads to many things having this enriched meaning for us.

This is why in part of the preliminary practices you do the mandala offering to bring to mind not just these external phenomena but all the phenomena in the world which are particularly meaningful to yourself and offer them to the buddha. It's a way of returning the world to itself by scraping off the patina of projections, assumptions and identifications that one has made – which is the basis for developing the quality of equanimity: that what you take to be good what you take to be bad is the working of your own mind.

To ***experience the awareness the awareness of the natural mode*** is to come into that point where you go through that narrow door because you yourself have become simple. In the bible it says it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. If you are rich you tend to be very busy – you have *business* – you put your energy out into many possibilities. You have land, you have camels you have trading wagons and so on.

In terms of meditation we are all multimillionaires. We have thoughts by the million. So many thoughts, sensations, things we have to be concerned about, worried about, happy about. Although there is no particular preparatory practice for this, part of it is just to see how overextended we become in our busy hopes and fears about the world.

This doesn't mean that you should forget any kind of social commitment or to be concerned for the world, but people tend to become somewhat fibril, a sort of hot and thin. There is a basic simple equation in life, '*Responsibility without power equals stress*'. If you feel very responsible for things but you have no power to change them, that very goodness of your heart will start to burn you up inside. The corollary equation to that is '*Power without responsibility equals abuse*'. The world splits into people on one side and people on the other. We just have to be very careful about how a sensitive discriminating awareness that lets us see the problems of the world, the structures of people's personalities and so on – how to use that skilfully rather than with too much of an overextension. It is not that this is saying you should just be in a state of self-concern and only doing the meditation.

There are these two aspects: wisdom and compassion. Generally it is better if the wisdom goes first and compassion can follow easily. If compassion goes first sometimes wisdom does not catch up and the goodness of the heart leads into heartbreak. While we do our practice we want to collect ourselves together and through that process come into that point of complete opening and then in that open state *everything is still there* – but now we see it differently as having the

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<sup>12</sup> Ed note: The Greek term *cathexis* (κάθελξις) was chosen by James Strachey to render the German term *Besetzung* in his translation of Sigmund Freud's complete works. For Freud, *cathexis* is defined as an investment of libido. Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cathexis> (17.3.2011)

dynamic quality of the arising from the ground. When you experience everything around you and your own self as dynamic and moving, change becomes much easier. The unnecessary additional elaboration of objectification, reification and judgment is removed. You can work with conditions in a more subtle way.

***This understanding is the first of the three statements of the essential point. If you are not introduced to your nature through the view then you will not be able to maintain its state by meditation. So this initial introduction and recognition of the view is tremendously important.***

In the Tibetan tradition tantra and dzogchen get rather mixed in together and so people go to get initiations with the idea that some big powerful person can give them something, can give them the experience of their own true nature. From the point of view of dzogchen all that is not necessary because this is your birth-right, or rather, your birth-right before you were ever born – your unborn birth-right.

The key thing is to really understand with an intellectual clarity '*What is the view ?!*', through that to be with yourself and see how your habitual structures don't want to accept this view, want to make some commentary on it, mix it up. You have to resist that again and again and use the ***Path!*** to bring the view into direct experience.

***Moreover, by introducing the self-abiding original knowing as abiding in oneself there is no need to go searching for it elsewhere.***

This is not something you don't have. If you really understand this point you don't have to go on pilgrimage, you don't have to go on special courses, you don't have to learn many meditation techniques. All you have to do is to recognise '*I myself am hiding myself from myself. I alone can stop this nonsense.*'

***And it is not as if it has arisen in your mind after not having been there previously.***

This is not a new experience. It is not created by what is happening. It is always there. It also means that when you go to that experience of awakening it is no big thing it doesn't have to have trumpets blaring and rainbows in the sky. It is just, '*Oh this is how it is.*' If enlightenment was made it would just be another construct. It would be something with a beginning a middle and an end [but] this is relaxing from the energy of creating fantasies into the peace and clarity of being at home in what has always been the case.

***So the text says, 'Direct experience in one's true nature is the first essential point'.***

I translated this as 'DIRECT INTRODUCTION on one's real nature' because it's not '*to*' one's real nature.<sup>13</sup> You don't get introduced '*to*' yourself because you are not two separate things. None of these prepositions exactly work. You could say '*in it*' but it's just... [snaps with the fingers] it's *this!*

***Now we have a detailed explanation of how to practice the meditation. By maintaining at all times and in all situations the meditation ceaselessly abiding in the state, if you then remain free of inhibiting and encouraging whether there is stillness or dispersal, then will you have the essence of the natural mode.***

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<sup>13</sup> Ed. Notes: As in the previous footnotes the commentary still uses terms from the translation in the first *Simply Being* book.

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The key point here is: the NATURAL STATE is infinite, nothing is produced outside it, therefore everything which arises has the same nature.

This is the same struggle that parents have. Children have different qualities. If you have several children the qualities of some of them will be more resonant with your own nature with your own habits and personality. You might find ego gratification in the fact that one of them seems like an extension of yourself but you have to remember again and again these are my children. This is their basic status and because they're my children they are all entitled to my attention. There has to be a the basic unconditional welcome an unconditional hospitality. Of course in terms of their behaviour you have to say something about what is reasonable or not reasonable but that has to be in relation to how they perform in the world with others not just in terms of your own narrow prejudice.

Whatever experiences arise in the mind, this mind itself – your nature – is like the mother, the status of these arisings is that they are your children.

If you relax in the state of the mother you can be open to whatever arises. When you fall out of that state into being '*I, me, myself*' you come in to a prejudicial relationship with them, '*I like this I don't like that*'. So he says, '**whatever is occurring, remain free of in inhibiting and encouraging**'.

### The Mind as it is

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A traditional image for this is a waterfall. The water tumbles down the mountain and you look at the waterfall you see it's kind of not falling just in a straight line, it's usually moving around a bit. In the same way once you just let one's mind flow you don't have to build walls and try to direct the water to make it the way you want it. You don't have to control it, it's not bad. Because it's not what you like doesn't mean it is bad. Everything from the beginning is pure – it's devoid of inherent self-nature. We ourselves say, '*Good and bad, I like, I do not like*'. This is not an inherent quality of whatever is arising but is a relational turn from the one who is '*I, me, myself*'. This is quite something to practice.

Here we have a nice clean carpet and if we sat in here and drank red wine sooner or later some will fall on the carpet and the carpet will become stained. The quality of the material in the carpet is one that will absorb the liquid and the coloration of the liquid will go into the texture of carpet. The ego is like the carpet: People say nice things to us and we feel happy and we smile, people say things we don't like and we feel sad or angry. The ego is always taking on the coloration of what is around but the mind's nature is described as being like the sky. If you throw a glass of wine up into the sky the sky won't be troubled but you might encounter some red rain falling on your head. Many things happen in the sky. Planes go through it, big storms occur with lightning and thunder and then it clears the sky comes back to itself.

Here he is discussing this second point which is to really see that your nature is indestructible. This natural condition is not created by good thoughts and it is not spoiled by bad thoughts. I, my real nature, who I am when I am sitting in the practice, will not be harmed by a whole stream of negative confusing thoughts. If you really see that then there is a huge freedom. This stuff is then just stuff. It's not going to harm.

It is like the question of 'immigrants'. 'Immigrants are going to come into the country and take jobs but immigrants, what are they made of? Two arms and two legs one head – they are people, we are also people – so when you see them as people and you don't call them 'immigrants' that is a different perception. In the same way with these contents of the mind, how you take them is

really important. If you see all thoughts as arising as the natural radiance of the mind then there is no need to be making these judgements.

In the system of tantra we do something similar by imagining through dissolving into the deity that now everything has the form of Tara or Padmasambhava or sound is as mantra and so on. Whether words are sweet or not sweet they are mantra and in the path of tantra because we have faith in the deity we believe that the identification as the mantra is stronger than our emotional reaction of *'I like, I don't like'*.

That is slightly conceptual. A bit like saying, *'Well these immigrants are human beings, human beings are entitled to this so their basic humanity is the level of connection'* – rather than thinking what colour they are or their religion or language or whatever. In dzogchen we try to directly experience in our practice that everything is arising immediately from this open dimension and therefore there is no need for a conceptual antidote to prejudice. You simply see that the prejudice itself is part of the radiance of the dharmakaya. There is no devil, there is no autonomous site of evil; everything good and bad arises from this same place. That doesn't mean that therefore it doesn't matter what we do, that we can run around in the world killing and hurting people. We are talking here about sitting on the mat and doing meditation, trying to see exactly what these phenomena are. When you recognise this natural purity, the natural emptiness, the natural integration with the ground mother then there is no need to be busy attributing qualities of *'good/bad, like/don't like'* and so on.

***If dispersal occurs then understand it as the natural energy of the original knowing. Hence, 'Then whether dispersal or still'.***

Again and again we have to really clarify for ourselves the meaning of this: how can it be that this nature pure from the very beginning can give rise to things that we think of as not helpful or bad? This is not something you can work out logically but something that will become revealed through the practice. At first work you have to work with it really on the basis of a kind of trust that something that you see and immediately feels to be disturbing or unhelpful is actually this energy of the ground.

## [The Truth of the origin of suffering](#)

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***The afflictions of attraction, aversion and so forth arise from the energy of the mind's thoughts and are encompassed by the truth of the origination of suffering.***

This refers back to the buddha's first teaching in the deer park in Sarnath where he explains that suffering arises from the attachment, which here means an identification with things as being separate and strongly real.

When the mind thoughts are held inside this frame of reification it's very easy for these afflictions or strong passions to arise. First of all *'I exist'* then *'This is happening to me'* then *'I like it/I don't like it'* and then this marvellous flip we make *'This is good/This is bad'*. We go from a subjective feeling to an objective identification and this is what he is explaining – what the buddha has pointed out.

***The experience of the feelings of happiness and sorrow and so forth are encompassed by the truth of suffering.***

All of these feelings whether they are happy or sad are linked to the suffering of change. There are different categories or conceptualizations of suffering but one is the suffering of

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change: bad events become good and good events become bad. Now it is easy to understand why there would be suffering if good things turn bad but why would there be suffering if bad things become good? I remember a friend of mine telling me that she didn't mind the sadness, it was the hope she couldn't bear. Hope opens us up to all kinds of trajectories moved through our mind off what could be the case of how things could work and although the feeling tone may be of happiness the structural impact is one of disturbance. **Suffering here means not being at peace, not being at ease, not being satisfied, not being open to whatever comes.**

***If you can recognise that all these thoughts and feelings have the nature of the innate actuality itself then they become the play of that natural mode. And so the text says, 'Angry or desireful, happy or sad'.***

Look at where something comes from not what it appears to be. McDonald's now have a new healthy range of products. You can read on their menu *Salad* but this is brought to you by McDonald's so you have to draw your own conclusion!

If you really look at the ground again and again, trust that the origin determines the manifestation and not your own condition based response. Then when you recognise that it's just the play, just the movement of what is going on don't take it too seriously because all these phenomena are impermanent.

***Moreover, although you have been introduced through the view, if you have done only a little practice and fall into ordinary delusion then you will be bound in samsara by the continuity of your own thoughts.***

This is not a punishing; this is just how it is. You can observe for yourself how you get bound into thoughts and feelings reacting, acting and weaving this together on and on.

***You will be separate from actuality<sup>14</sup> and will in be in no way different from an ordinary person.***

Even if you go to a dharma centre or live in a dharma centre and you have a mala around your neck and you are doing puja every day – if you do not cut of the root of attachment and involvement with thoughts, structurally you're not different from somebody just living in the village and going about their daily life.

***So it is vital never to separate from the non-meditation of remaining in your true nature. Hence, 'At all times and in all situations'.***

This method, once you establish it in meditation, you can take out into every aspect of your life. In another language, you can integrate every aspect of your life in this natural state. It works with everything; it can integrate whatever occurs, there is no situation no matter how shocking or terrible no matter how delightful that cannot be integrated into this state. That is because from the very beginning everything that has occurred has always been in this state. So it is pointing to the danger that you want to apply some other method.

You might be walking down the path and you see that a car has run over a fox and you might want to say '*Om Mani Peme Hung, Om Mani Peme Hung*' for the sake of the fox. That will make you feel better. Whether it does anything for the fox or not, we don't know. In fact you are

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<sup>14</sup> Ed. Notes: The old *Simply Being* book used "reality", the new one "actuality".

exploiting the death of the poor fox for your own enlightenment. From this point of view you don't need to say any mantra at all – it is just there. You are present with life, you are present with death – and that is okay – but there is the desire to do something: to add some value, to change some situation. Basically there is the presumption *'This shouldn't have happened'* or *'It's not good that this has happened'* – so how should a fox die? Should it be killed by dogs, should it be attacked by wolves? Should it get old and sick and then has worms crawling inside it? What is a good way to die? How should you have sex for the first time? On your wedding night, in the back of a car? With so many things in life we do not know! Things happen, life happens. Some things seem a good idea at the time and afterwards you think, *'Oh oh'...*

This practice is about being open to things as they are, not trying to superimpose some vision or model of how they should be – if we are walking around like some inspector with some little clipboard giving a judgment to how the world has organised itself then this is the apotheosis of the ego and not really the practice of dzogchen.

### One antidote is enough

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***Thus whether there is stillness or dispersal, do not try to deal with each separate thought and affliction by applying an individual antidote. No matter what thoughts and afflictions arise just one antidote is enough to liberate them all.***

Religious cultures provide employment for fulltime religious practitioners. Religious practitioners have to show some value for the contributions for their survival, so they tend to invent new prayers, new practices and so on. In the Tibetan culture you have mantras to say when you are making beer, you have mantras for the fireplace, you have special mantras and prayers if you cow gets lost on the mountain. It is the same kind of thing in the Jewish culture; there are prayers for everything. This is what religious cultures do. You can learn many different meditation practices and ways of working with specific energies. – This is very thin ice-territory because our ordinary sense of self likes to have a quality of mastering. We like to feel in control, we like to be doing something and it is very easy for this to become needed into the texture of the dharma practice. This practice is like one very powerful weed killer. It will kill everything. You do not need to get different ones for each different plant. It is like the great medicine that will cure all deceases. So it is very important to have trust in the method.

If you start thinking, *'this is not enough'* – well if relaxing in the natural state is not enough, then artificial realty is better then the natural state. From the point of view of dzogchen although it may look as if you are a good spiritual practitioner because you are doing many kinds of things you actually left what you needed.

***And this sole antidote is to be found solely within the recognition of the view that has been introduced above. Hence, 'Experience the natural mode that has been understood'.***

***No matter what thoughts or afflictions arise, these thoughts are not different from the original knowing of the natural mode for their nature is the actual clarity of the natural mode ground.***

If we where using a negative example we could say in the field there are many kinds of grass that are growing but if you poison the ground all the plants will die. Although what is growing above the ground looks very different each of these plants has a root that goes into the ground and is sucking in resources from the ground. If you poison the earth that plants will die. But when we look outside and we see the flowers, the trees and all these things, we see – flowers and trees. We do not directly see how the earth is giving rise to these. In fact the very richness and power of

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the earth gives rise to the plants that cover the earth so we forget it is the earth that gives rise to the beautiful things.

As Engels set out in his description of the condition of the working people in Manchester: when the rich people make a lot of money they move out of the city into nice suburbs and build big houses. Then they construct special roads that run from the factory to their houses so that they do not need to look at the houses of the poor working people. When the beautiful young daughter of the factory owner is practicing the piano with her lovely ringlets hanging down, she does not recognise that there is any connection between her and the girl of fourteen with consumption who is selling her body on the street – but the two are completely connected.

In the same way all the different phenomena of the world are inseparable from the ground and to see them in their individual differentiation is to enter in objectification.

***If that is recognised then the experience is known as [the unchanging clarity of the ground](#).***<sup>15</sup>

There is no other basis for any phenomena – oneself or anyone one meets, the hills, the tress, atom bombs, Auschwitz or anything else. If you have this clarity very strongly then wherever you go you will be open to whatever is occurring. But again, that does not mean you just have a passive relationship with the world and say '*Oh, that's how things are,*' because the energy of compassion is arising from the same ground and it works with the energetic forms in the world. The compassion that helps repairing the action of the cruel arises from the same ground as the cruel. If that is not understood you will say there are two categories the good people who are compassionate and the bad people who are cruel – which is true on a relative level but makes the integration impossible.

***To recognise one's own nature through the view of the clarity of innate awareness introduced previously by one's guru is known as [the clarity of the path of practice](#).***<sup>16</sup>

We get the instructions, then we do the practice and this practice creates moments of understanding. These moments of understanding are linked with the natural clarity that is there from the very beginning.

***To abide in one's own nature of the inseparability of the ground and path clarities is known as [the union of mother and son clarities](#).***<sup>17</sup> Hence the text says, '*Thus the "son" clarity meets the "mother" clarity that was previously received*'.

This is similar to the notion that we have of the purity of the mind – a concept known as KADAG, primordial purity – and you have the purity which arises from practice – called **DRIME DAG-PA**, the purity which is free of all defilements. This deals with the question, '*Well, if the mind is pure from the very beginning, how does it come I'm not enlightened now?*' Enlightenment is *here* – pervasive – but in order to awaken one has to do some practice and if you do not do the practice you will not get the awakening – '*Oh! So does that mean that the practice makes enlightenment?*' – No. It is about things coming into the point where it settles back into itself.

If a child has a fever and it is tossing and turning and it cannot sleep we give it some medicine, the fever goes down and then it is back in it's own state. The natural state of health has not been

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<sup>15</sup> The term is highlighted and put into quotes in the text

<sup>16</sup> The term is highlighted and put into quotes in the text

<sup>17</sup> The term is highlighted and put into quotes in the text

created by a medicine. The vast world wide pharmacological industry would like us to believe that medicine creates health – but health is revealed when the fever goes down. The natural health and the natural state is always there but you need to apply the antidote so that the turbulences of the five poisons moving into your systems relaxes and then you settle back into – *being there*.

***Always be aware of the clarity of experiencing one's nature as described in the view.***

This is not a concept to remember from time to time. He is not saying, '*Always remember!*' He is saying, '*Always be aware!*' Awareness is a presence that can be unchanging. Who gets distracted? We get distracted! How do we get distracted? This is what we have to investigate again and again. You have to know yourself, observe yourself – nobody can do that work for you, and no explanation can precisely describe your experience. You yourself have to know what are the knots that you tie yourself into, how they are tied and then to keep relaxing so that the knots untie.

***Abiding in that state it is really vital not to inhibit or encourage, adopt or reject any of the thoughts and afflictions that are its energy display. Hence, 'Remain in the state of inexpressible awareness'.***

In human history the development of agriculture has been very important. Developing new kinds of crops through hybrid forms has allowed more food to be produced and that is, according to some people, the basis of the development of so called civilisation. It is important to remember these things. Our whole culture from the moment we are born is encouraging us to be productive, to be efficient, to be doing something of value. We do not grow up in little valleys in Tibet where there are people living in caves or meditation huts. We live in environments where human beings have marked the context in which they live very powerfully. We have the war on terror, the war on poverty, the war on climate change – the paradigm we operate and the metaphors we use are very much about power and control.

This text is describing something very different. It says the best thing you can do is not to interfere. Relax. Trust. It is okay.

### [Giving everything, gaining all: compassion](#)

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***Now regarding the method of destruction: when the sensations of stillness, happiness and clarity start to arise, or when you feel pleasure and joy, shout "Phat!" like a thunderbolt, so that this union of the beautifying letter of method "Phat!" and the cutting letter of wisdom, "Ta" will annihilate the skin of attachment to these sensations. Hence, 'By suddenly exclaiming the word of method and wisdom'.<sup>18</sup>***

Whatever you seem to get, whatever you seem to gain: Through it away, destroy it! This is for two reasons. It is a bit like soviet collectivisation. The ego is like the Kulak who has bought the land, controls it and keeps everything under his power. Now this has to be destroyed, the ownership of the property has to be dispersed and everything becomes collective. That is to say, 'I

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<sup>18</sup> James does not cite the whole paragraph but rather paraphrases it. Robert cites the whole paragraph in German after asking about the word "beautifying". James: "Now regarding the method of destruction when the sensation that he describes arise or whatever you feel say "Phat!" like a thunderbolt, so that it is the union of wisdom and compassion." James answering Robert's question about "beautifying": " It has two aspects: One is the cutting aspect and the other is ... it's very beautiful, meaning you can come into this... "Pha, Pha"... very nice.

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*have my thoughts, my feelings, my sensations. This is my body, my mind. I want to be my mind to be nice and beautiful. There should be nice flowers, sweet birds singing. This is the kind of mind I want. I looked at it in the magazine and have seen some pictures.'*

That very process of trying to make this environment just as we want leads to endless difficulties. In your garden the cat from next door comes and shits, seeds fly in on the winds and plant themselves in your garden. Private existence is an illusion. One of the great slogans of the anarchist movement is '*Property is theft*' and in many ways this fits with dzogchen.

If you destroy whatever you have, everything has to go – every my-thing. Then you find everything is mine. You have access to everything. What restricts us is our sense of '*My personality. I am a bit like this. I can't really do that. I'd like to do what you do but I don't know how*' – and we live in our little box. When the boundary between self and other becomes dissolved the feeling of COMPASSION arises, we focus on what the other needs and we do what is required without thinking '*this doesn't feel like me*'. This is the purpose of the meditation. It is not to create nothing at all – it is to open all the resources of the world, to become available as the energy of compassion as it moves into the ever-evolving system.

## Hospitality

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***By maintaining at all times and in all situations, the inexpressible direct awareness that is inseparable from the essence of practice, meditative balance and its subsequent experience are indistinguishable. Hence the text says, 'Meditative balance and its subsequent experience are without difference'.***

This is very important in terms of these questions that have been asked – about power and about how to come into the world. Going fully into this opening creates a situation which is not apart from the world, it is not somewhere else, you have not gone into yourself – into some secret essence inside. You are open! You are open in the world. The world is open. You and the world are arising together. The post meditative experience, when you get up from your cushion and you start to make contact with objects and people in the world – this is arising in this state of openness. One is not going towards the world '*as me*' or '*for me*' or even '*as me for you*' but the state of openness is hospitable to what we call '*myself*' and what we call '*this other person*'. We have the co-emergence of self and other. This goes to the question of power: In this movement the energy which is split into subject and object is unified. From that point of view I do not have to have a particular power but the dynamic of the situation allows the energy of the natural state to flow out as required.

On a good day we feel inspired, we get more energy it is as almost the world is feeding us. This English word "inspired" is about breathing in, taking the spirit which is the world and the energy of the lived environment into yourself. What is rich in us comes from the world. It is not a personal property and therefore it will not get exhausted. What belongs to me, '*my money, the years I am going to be alive*' or '*my number of books*' – this is always limited, but what is coming to me from the world there is no limit.

This is a principal of being able to resource oneself from whatever is available. That means just by walking in nature, by letting the light of the trees and the sound of the birds in through your senses you can replenish the five elements in your body. On a more general level we have a practice like TONGLÉN (Tib.: *gtong len*) where we give whatever is good in our lives out to all beings and we take in to ourselves whatever is problematic in theirs. This is a practice for dissolving the boundary between self and other. The same is achieved directly in this meditation. It is not that we become indifferent to other people. I don't know anybody who does this kind of practice who

doesn't care about others. They experience others as the radiance of the dharmakaya and how they relate to them is more dynamic. This is a central point to see: What goes on when you move about with other people and what you do when you are in the practice are not two different things.

I am aware that maybe you have lots of different questions but my experience is that if you trust this text – and this is a very famous text, many thousands, tens of thousands of people have studied this and made it a basis of the practice – if you trust this text and you read it again and again and you maybe listen to some of the explanation I have given you, you will find that all the questions are answered. We often have this '*Yes, but what if, but what if?*' These questions can sometimes be interesting but often they indicate that we have not taken the time to really study the text and also that our refuge is weak. The person who wrote this – PATRUL RINPOCHE – was not a stupid man. He was extremely well educated in all the branches of Tibetan knowledge; he understood how life functions, so I don't think he is being naive. He is trying to establish the central point that as long as we remain in the busy turbulence of life, we don't really see what this turbulence is. By relaxing into the natural state the turbulence is revealed as the energy of that natural state. The turbulence does not stop. There is still energy going on, there is power, there are all sorts of things which are moving but now we understand where it all comes from and we see that we are always – always and already – participants in it. This is a river we can't step out of but by relaxing in the natural condition we find a better way to swim and by swimming with ease and grace we can encourage other people to stop doing doggy paddle and learn something a little bit more elegant.

### **[Break]**

We reached a central point. In the Tibetan tradition they spend a lot of time studying this kind of text in detail. We can return to it another time. What follows is concerned with how to manage the experiences that arise in meditation and the more you do practice the more these become meaningful to you.

## Clarity

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**Question:** Regarding clarity. '*The clarity of the path of practice*', is this clarity the nyam (Tib.: *nyams*, experience) clarity?

**James:** No. The word in Tibetan for CLARITY is *salwa* (Tib.: *gsal ba*) and it also links with light. Clarity is the quality of experience which allows an immediate apprehension of whatever is going on without relying on concepts – allowing ourselves to see what is there. The reason we don't see what is there is we are preoccupied with making sense of what is there. We often introduce ourselves into the situation before we see what the situation is. If a thought arises in your mind and your response to it is immediate '*I like it/I don't like it*' then you have made your relationship with whatever is arising primary and the actual nature of what is arising secondary. Clarity in some way is like a kind of scientific objectivity except in science as in phenomenology you have to have an effort for bracketing off of assumptions and prejudice so that what is being examined can be allowed to reveal itself. In this situation the clarity is prior to the mobilisation of the assumption and so in that state of clarity is no obscuration to be removed because you see things before obscuration arises. Clarity is linked to the notion of spaciousness of the natural condition. Sometimes it is linked to the quality of the sun to radiate and give out light – it fills the whole sky with light and sometimes it is described more like the period just before dawn. At that period

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before the sun has come above the horizon<sup>19</sup> its light spreads out and the sky fills with this light but it is as if there is no particular source. If you take this example the experience of clarity is not that I understand this but in a state of being relaxed and open is no impediment. The clarity reveals itself by the ease of understanding and moving into the world with others.

This is something that we are not used to because we are so used to employing thoughts as our tools for making sense of situations. In some ways it is more of a kind of aesthetic appreciation: if you go into a shop and you look at the rails of clothes, your gaze can just flow along these clothes and most has no meaning at all. Then suddenly there is a response. Maybe it is the hang of the material, maybe the texture, maybe the colour but somehow you find your body moving and taking this out to look at it. This kind of shopping can be very pleasant. This is one of the real gifts of woman to men – to force them to walk around in shops and look at things and if you are going to survive this you have to learn how to look. It is an attitude of not particularly looking for something but somehow looking for something. It is being available with some curiosity and certainly the ground of clarity is available. It allows what is in the experiential field to reveal itself.

Everything which arises has this pure nature and in that level is equal in value. Particularly in the mahamudra tradition it is called RO ZHIG (Tib.: *ro gcig*) or one taste – whatever is occurring has just this taste of emptiness, it is just open. However, that does not mean that we are equally open to everything that occurs in the world. Rather the openness to everything is separate from the movement towards the world.

In the dzogchen tradition they talk of three aspects of our existence: NGO WO (Tib.: *ngo bo*), the natural state that we have been looking at here, which is just the open spaciousness; RANG ZHIN (Tib.: *rang bzhin*), the self expression or the display of what is occurring; TUK JAY (Tib.: *thugs rje*), the energy which is the movement within this display. Both, rang zhin and ngo wo are terms which can refer to the face and just when somebody is healthy that health shows itself in the person's complexion. The ngo wo, the natural state is, like in the zen tradition the face that you had before you were born – it is how you are. And the rang zhin shows itself into that.

In another example you have the MIRROR and the reflection. The mirror is the open, unformed infinitely empty but infinitely available natural condition. Into the mirror or out of the mirror, because of course it appears in both ways, the reflection arises. The reflection both shows something which is not the mirror but also shows the potentiality for radiance or display which is the quality of the mirror. These two are inseparable. In the mirror you see your reflection but there is also movement – you might be cleaning your teeth as you look in the mirror. The movement is inside the mirror, it does not come out of the mirror. So in the same way the third aspect of manifestation is arising in the mirror as the interplay of the reflection. All the reflections have the same nature of being inseparable from the ground and in that sense the instruction that we have been reading was, *'do not enter into any discrimination, do not be biased, just be with things as they are.'*

Let us say you go in a restaurant, look at the menu and you say everything is good. Then the waiter comes to take the order, *'Well, I like everything'* – *'Yes, but what are you ordering?'* – *'Well, I don't know what to order because I like everything'*. You can spend a lot of time then. In life we have to order. Life proceeds in precise concrete situations in which we say *'Yes'* or we say *'No'*. If you say *'Yes'* to one thing, you say *'No'* automatically to another. If we backtrack this to a general

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<sup>19</sup> *It is the period just before the sun is seen – there may not be an English word for this time.*

buddhist view and we think about what we call the afflictions or to the THREE ROOT POISONS: Stupidity, mental dullness or being caught up in our assumptions; then you have aversion, pushing away and longing or attachment or desire. These three are seen as poisons and the instruction PATRUL RINPOCHE was giving in the meditation text was, *'don't inhibit or encourage, don't do pushing away or pulling in!'* The more you do this kind of practice, you see nothing is bad yet, when we come into the world we have to say *'Yes'* and we have to say *'No'*.

This is the transformation of these three poisons. We transform stupidity by integrating whatever arises into the natural condition. We transform the pulling in and the pushing away by having the decision made without strong judgment. In a restaurant for some reason you find yourself ordering something. Something takes you fancy. This is not the basis of a great analytical process. You are kind of in a mood for and then you take something. This is probably how most of our life proceeds. Everything is okay and yet we must choose. Is it a good choice or a bad choice? How could you know? What it says in the menu and what arrives on the plate may not have much resemblance. What people look like when you first meet them and how they reveal themselves through time is not the same. – This means also that we take our decisions not too seriously. Manifesting, this is an energetic form in the world with other energetic forms. Because we are in it together the actual necessity is to participate but we participate from the conditioning of our actual state. We cannot get away from... some people like a lot of chilli, some people don't like garlic. On one level these things are not very important but they are the precise contouring of the topology of our life existence in the world. This is how we move towards the environment. We are already shaped – in the shape that the energy is showing in this moment due to causes and circumstances, an energy which is arising from the natural state – and we find ourselves proceeding in a particular direction. How shall we live? What shall we do? There are lots of people you can ask, there are lots of people who would love to tell you, but how will you know what to do?

Luckily from the point of view of dzogchen you will never know what to do. You will find yourself doing something. That is not passive swept along by fate. It is to recognize that the energetic nature of our being connects with the energetic field and it is only after the connection that a cognitive narrative is prepared about what happened. The stories we tell ourselves about what is going on, what we like, what we don't like are occurring after the fact which is already established by our energetic being in the world with others. The decision is not made by our ego self up in the control tower trying to work it out – but if we are relaxed and open, if we are aware of our own condition and not riding under some dogma or believe system, if we are open in the various energetic centres of our embodied being, then we experience the field as fully as possible – and so we respond.

We all have this experience. If you have a conversation with someone, you find yourself saying things. If you are not neurotically preoccupied what you find yourself saying is something connected with what is there. This is the notion of how we come into manifestation. The term which describes it in Tibetan is *tukje*. Which usually means compassion but compassion is a prepositioning. We can learn how to be compassionate. *'Now I want to be compassionate, so I am going to act in a compassionate way and afterwards I think, Oh I am quite happy, I was compassionate'*. This is behaviour being captured by concept. In dzogchen we are not concerned about being compassionate because actually being in the world connects with the energetic structure of the world. The fact is that doors open and doors close. That is revealed to us in all sorts of ways. If you can feel the opening of the door you can go through it and if the door is closed there is nothing to do.

Many times when I was with different lamas in India, people would come to see the lama and wanted to study with them. Up to that point the lama was very friendly and smiling and maybe

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offering them a cup of tea but when this person would say, *'Will you be my teacher?'* the lama says, *'I have nothing for you.'* The lama has a lot but he has nothing for that person. What does that mean? Is he being selfish or cruel? – The connection in the world between people, the connection that makes things function is not a cognitive decision, it is not this kind of motto of modern young people, *'I want to, therefore I can'*, but rather if a mutual door does not open, if there is no energetic resonance it is probably a sign that you can not lock together, you can not build a bridge across which something can be transmitted.

In relation to clarity: Clarity is quality which pervades these three dimensions of our being. In the state of clarity one experiences the energetic possibility in meeting someone and through that one can say *'Yes'* or *'No'*. That is not to be self-indulgent or just whimsical doing as you wish but working with what is possible, knowing that what is possible is something already in the world. It is not a dogma or a believe for a will to power

Question: (Original German) Ich glaube Padmasambhava hat gesagt, "die Sichtweise ist so hoch wie der Himmel und das Verhalten ist so fein wie Gerstenmehl." Könnte man in Bezug auf Dzogchen sagen, daß die Forderung für das Verhalten ist, daß man sehr präzise, sehr fein und aufmerksam für das was sich darbietet. Ist das sozusagen die moralische Forderung oder die einzige Regel?

Robert's Translation: He says there is a quotation he believes is from Padmasambhava who said, *'the view is as high as the sky and behaviour or conduct is as fine as a grain of sand ...'*

James: *'As a point of a needle'* sometimes, yes.

Robert: ... Something very fine! Could that be interpreted as far as conduct goes as the only rule or requirement to be as precise and as aware as possible of what is required for what is revealing itself in front of us?

James: Yes. Just because something is possible does not mean it should be done. Many things are abstractly possible but functionally are not very useful. I work in a hospital and it is my job to see people. A lot of that people I think will not be helped by our unit and the will not be helped by me or any of the people I supervise – but I will be thought of as a well trained therapist, the patient would be described as a person in need and therefor it would be a scandalous thing to me to say, *'I will not help you'*. That will be seen as very selfish. If I said *'I can not help you'* they would say, *'Maybe you are incompetent. Maybe we need to sack you and get somebody else'*. The reality is, there is no basis for this person being helped through psychotherapy. The referral has come from a junior psychiatrist who has inherited a big list of patients and wants to get rid of them. So people are offered a treatment for the sack of keeping the bureaucracy going and treatments that will not help them. That is an example of social convention: They often say in Tibetan texts, *'If you want to practice the dharma go to a country where nobody knows your name.'* Then nobody would know how to weave you into their socio-political matrix. From the dzogchen point of view, being in the world has to embody a kind of spontaneity which is the co-emergence of the figure and ground, self and other. In relation to your question, it is the quality of clarity which allows this spontaneous action to be very precisely defined but it my not fit in somebody's interpretive matrix.

A few years ago I saw a monk who had grown up in a strongly communist time in Tibet and did not enter in a monastery until he was nineteen. He was very happy to find the dharma and a way of studying but his teacher was quit an old monk and used to beat him very hard. There are not many people of nineteen or twenty who would welcome a beating but he could say, *'I know*

*that I was stupid and I did not know how to learn, so my teacher beat me until I learned to learn.'*  
If this would be happening in Germany the police would be involved.

What is actually fitting, what actually works may not be allowed because the state wants to control everything, because the state says *'This is a human being, human beings are like this therefore how human beings should behave is this and this and this.'* Many of the things that could really help people are not enacted because we have fear and anxiety about what will other people say, what will they think – because the ego is so longing for love, so longing for being included it will sacrifice everything. In Tibetan texts they often talk about the fearless yogi and that he should be fearless in the pursue of wisdom but he needs also to be fearless in the manifestation of compassion – which is not the same as being nice or friendly.

***[Some sitting in shiné without an object follows to complete the teaching.***

***Then the dedication of merit.]***

This brings us to the end of our brief time together. I am sure it is hard work for you to listen to all these words about the text. It is a traditional style of explanation, many different ideas and concepts are involved and although it can be a bit tiring it is quit useful because it also develops the skill of sustained attention which is necessary for meditation and to stay with the development of ideas without spinning of in one's own elaborations too much.

The key thing is the practice itself. Hopefully studying more of the view and then taking it in to the practice of ***Phat!*** When you have some time and space to really put your energy into it would be very helpful.

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### Proposed excerpts identified by Matthias Steingass

1. ...the teacher's job is to try to help us to be interested in this hidden area. And once that interest and attention and growing awareness is evolved then you have an integration between all the fascinating forms of energy and the ground of the energy...
2. ...this is why we often do different kinds of meditation; to gain more experience and more trust that all the thoughts, habits, memories, out of which we construct our familiar sense of self are without any true basis in themselves. This is vital: to distinguish between what is natural, what is given, what is there from the very beginning, and what appears to be given but is actually a construct...
3. In the view according to dzogchen, we take a different approach to this ungraspable dynamic turbulence of existence. Instead of trying to catch it and tame it and turn it into what we want, we work with the experiences as they arise so that the qualities latent inside arisings, which seem to be disturbing or unwanted, can be revealed. S. 5
4. The Buddha said all suffering comes from attachment. We have outer attachments to our personal possessions but the main form of attachment that causes grief is attachment to our expectations, our assumptions about who we are and how the world should treat us. S. 7
5. In seeing this complexity of our field of experience, we can start to see that the habit of identification – of selective attention – which endlessly attempts to recreate the already established image of 'How I am' and 'What I do' is an inaccurate perception. S. 7
6. We come to see that what I take to be my true existence, my materially based personal identity, is actually a flow of experiences which is ungraspable – as soon as we start to say something about the actual experience of being alive, the phenomena that we are trying to describe have already moved into being something else. S. 9
7. Do we see the practice of a kind of super-defence against bad things, in a magical method to create a lot of good things, or rather, a way of being able to be fully present in our lives as they manifest? From the point of view of dzogchen this is only really possible if the root of your individual self is planted in the infinite ground of awareness. S. 10
8. You can renounce external phenomena. You can give up your house, you can give up your money, you can become a monk or a nun, but for meditators the central point of renunciation is to renounce the belief that the meaning of existence is contained in a thought. S. 13
9. There is nothing real in the sense of reliable, substantial or with true essence inside. All that we have is patterns inside a flow of contingency. S. 14
10. That is the transmission, to open into the realisation of how we are, of how things function! S. 17

11. One of the functions of the teacher is not to be very interested in you. You are not as fascinating as you think S. 17
12. From the point of view of dzogchen, we are not wanting people to do anything in particular. You don't have to bow to the Buddha, you don't have to burn butterlamps, you don't have to do any kind of ritual function. All that people are trying to promote is a feeling of ease, to be at home in your own skin and to have that skin being at home in the world. S. 18
13. In relaxation in this open state there is no necessity, there is no lack, there is no anxiety. We are not looking to some good objects to complete us and we are not trying to push away bad objects which might harm or limit us. We provide a spacious hospitality to whatever is occurring S. 20
14. Being free of thoughts includes the sense that 'I' and everything I can say about myself and everything I say about you is just movement, just a flow, just another thought S. 23
15. Natural mode means this quality of the Buddha's mind which is sometimes called dharmakaya. It means this quality of open awareness that is not resting on any phenomena, S. 25
16. On the outer level I can give some explanation about this and this in a sense is an introduction. That is to say, I introduce you to the nature of your mind – but this is just words. Each of us has to try to get as close a sense of this as possible, and then we take it into the practice. Because it is through the practice that the direct experience occurs S. 25
17. When we open into the practice it transforms the site that we are looking from. S. 26
18. The less we ground ourselves or identify our basic sense of self with our habitual concepts, the more this relaxed spaciousness allows our movement out in being with others to be simply moments of wisdom and compassion S. 18
19. we are living inside sets of assumptions which we take to be real. These assumptions are not assumptions about a reality but are themselves constitutive of the sense of the reality S. 14
20. People often want to do retreats or they want to focus on their meditation practice and there is a sense that by doing meditation intensively something will be transformed. Then when the retreat finishes you go back into your ordinary life. The retreat is good and then the heavier qualities of daily life gradually reduce the qualities developed in retreat. From the point of view of the text, this is the wrong approach. S. 30
21. All the Buddha's teachings and in particular dzogchen are focused on the deconstruction of the notion of the individual agency S. 31

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22. Not being distracted, relaxing and integrating whatever is arising as the energy of the unborn ground nature– this is the central aspect in order to integrate daily life into the practice which is established in the first central point, which is to recognise your own nature. S. 33
  23. The one who is staying with that arising and passing, by not being implicated, by not being caught up in it, relaxes into the state of the mirror, and so these arisings, even if they are troubled and difficult, they nourish this empty awareness, this state of the mirror, because they bring it back to it again and again. S. 35
  24. You can use what is arising to give you the possibility of seeing its impermanence S. 35
  25. The learning about the nature of sensation and the inseparability of emptiness and pleasure is something that can remain with you. It is not a concept but an experience which can be embedded in the quality of openness. S. 36
  26. If you do not recognise your own natural ground whatever you try to do in meditation is simply another form of thought construction. It doesn't matter what the meditation is, it may be a very powerful meditation, a holy meditation, a pure meditation given to you by a very blessed saintly lama or yogi or whatever – but if you do not recognise the ground of your own being then the one who is doing the meditation is in a state of confusion and through that will pull the meditation into confusion. This is quite a radical point of view. S. 39
  27. Working with energy is the dessert. First you have to get the natural state. S. 40
  28. The meditation which unites understanding and compassion is the word Phat!. The conduct of the sons of the Buddha is to remain open to circumstances. S. 40
  29. The vanishing of the mind means that as it dissolves it reveals this open spaciousness which is the actual identity of all beings. S. 43
  30. [The natural condition] is not the product of any technique. (...) [Patrul Rinpoche] is (...) pointing out that techniques apply to the domain of energy, they cannot apply to the natural condition as it is not a construct. There is nothing wrong with techniques but you have to know what domain they apply to. S. 43
  31. We need to take this seriously. If we really want to understand this and to do this as a kind of practice, we prepare the ground by observing how caught up in thoughts we become. S. 44
  32. When you get this experience of your own real nature it is like getting a joke. S. 4
  33. It is described as direct naked awareness because it is unimpeded in its movement because it is not a thing and in fact it is always already anything can occur. It is naked because it is not covered in assumptions or constructs or conditioning. It is not trying to make sense of one thing in terms of another. S. 46

34. For the purposes of awakening to this natural spaciousness we have to experience that nothing is better than something. Only when you really have nothing, does nothing show itself as pervaded by this radiant awareness. S. 47
35. In the Tibetan tradition tantra and dzogchen get rather mixed in together and so people go to get initiations with the idea that some big powerful person can give them something, can give them the experience of their own true nature. From the point of view of dzogchen all that is not necessary because this is your birth-right, or rather, your birth-right before you were ever born – your unborn birth-right. S. 51
36. If you see all thoughts as arising as the natural radiance of the mind then there is no need to be making these judgements. S. 53
37. There is no devil, there is no autonomous site of evil, everything good and bad arises from this same place. That doesn't mean that therefore it doesn't matter what we do, that we can run around in the world killing and hurting people. We are talking here about sitting on the mat and doing meditation, trying to see exactly what these phenomena are. S. 53
38. Suffering (here) means not being at peace, not being at ease, not being satisfied, not being open to whatever comes. S. 54
39. If you start thinking, 'this is not enough' – well if relaxing in the natural state is not enough, then artificial reality is better than the natural state. From the point of view of dzogchen although it may look as if you are a good spiritual practitioner because you are doing many kinds of things you actually left what you needed. S. 55
40. To trust that we are part of something which is basically good and that the energy of that natural goodness will flow through and therefore one does not have to worry, to plan or to think too much. S. 60
41. When the boundary between self and other becomes dissolved the feeling of compassion arises, we focus on what the other needs and we do what is required without thinking 'this doesn't feel like me'. This is the purpose of the meditation. It is not to create nothing at all – it is to open all the resources of the world, to become available as the energy of compassion as it moves into the ever-evolving system. S. 62
42. This is a central point to see: What goes on when you move about with other people and what you do when you are in the practice are not two different things. S. 63
43. This is a river you can't step out of but by relaxing in the natural condition you find a better way to swim and by swimming with ease and grace you can encourage other people to stop doing dogpaddle and learn something a little bit more sophisticated. S. 63