

On The Introduction to Awareness

A preface, and

Four articles on The View and The Introduction to Awareness

A consideration for all that follows

Only transcendent wisdom accomplishes the path

From Where We Find Ourselves Just Now

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Two differences in my interpretation of The Introduction to Awareness

The Introduction to Awareness

Preface

The Introduction to Awareness is a text pointing out the nature of mind.

It is traditionally found in the cycle of Tibetan Buddhist bardo teachings that include the well known *Liberation Through Hearing in the Intermediate State*.

This teaching makes all that is said in the more extensive bardo teachings clear and accessible, and it also stands alone as a timeless wisdom teaching from the Nyingma Tradition. For those with an affinity with this approach to liberating insight, it is a wonder and a gift.

A consideration for all that follows...

I believe all of the Buddhist wisdom traditions can accomplish a full result of liberation and enlightenment for a person.

That said, there is a difference between what can be called *provisional teachings*, and those that are *definitive*, describing the result of the practice.

A brief definition

Whatever teachings and practices are in reference to our ordinary conceptual mind, and are based on the idea of a self where there is {in fact} no self are provisional. They are meant to be onward leading, to the liberating, ultimate truth.

Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo said,

The ego (wrong view) dissolves naturally through deep insight into the nature of mind... until then it is the {apparent} self, {what is we take to be} 'the ego' that walks the path...

In comparison, whatever teachings are reference to the non conceptual, the non dual,

whichever ones teach annata, no self, emptiness, the signless, the wish-less, the unconditioned, the timeless,

Buddha nature, our true nature, our boundless original nature, unconditional love, the nature of mind itself - these are definitive.

It wasn't until reading a text by Thinley Norbu Rinpoche that I found the importance of ultimately taking wisdom as the path *highlighted* as not only another teaching among many, but as absolutely essential.

Orgyen Chowang Rinpoche and Tulku Pema Rigstal emphasize this beautifully as well.

I wrote one essay on The Introduction to Awareness called,

It is only transcendent wisdom that accomplishes the path.

Looking back now in 2024 on the liberating teachings I have studied, including those of Buddhist psychology, in my own case, I found that something was missing in my practice, or was not emphasized as much as I needed it to be to free my mind.

I'm at peace with my understanding of these methods now, in terms of where they all lead.

In retrospect, for me, it was exactly this emphasis is that was needed.

Had I known this sooner, it would have saved me a lot of time and unnecessary struggle and hardship, which is the whole purpose of the teachings.

A little explanation

Conceptual mind is still dualistic, and not final quiescence when it comes to any path of practice;

{this includes the teachings on annata, or shunyata, emptiness, madhyamika, the Middle Way, abhidharma, which is Buddhist psychology, and vajrayana sadhana}

and this - the definitive view, the true nature that transcends concepts needs to be known not only once. At some point it needs to be made central to our practice, and really to our entire lives, if we want to be liberated, free of all samsaric suffering. Without transcendent wisdom being central, we are still in the realm of concepts, and ego grasping, cycling through the experiences of the six realms;

Further, even positive states, when they are based on a self need to be transcended, the self let go of in regard to them, or the result will be only higher rebirth, in the human or in one of the deva realms.

Attachment even to a spiritual path, or to an identity, as good as it may feel sometimes, still has the cause of continuing samsara, and so this teaching on what Robert Thurman calls 'radical non duality', is actually complete.

It's not only the Great Perfection teachings from the Nyingma Tradition, of course, that arrive there. I can see how each Buddhist path of practice can potentially accomplish a full result, when this transcendent truth is

realized. There are teachings in the Nyingma however that make this explicit, and I've not seen this expressed as fully elsewhere.

The sooner we have Right View, and a clear idea of the aim of practice, the better, but how to do this?

Either we begin with a complete view, which seldom happens, or we have a workable view, one that can develop as insight becomes more clear and incisive.

As Orgyen Chowang said

The view is what we're meant to focus on. Everything else is a supporting practice.

It helps every aspect of practice to know this {taking refuge, vows, ethics, meditation, purification, devotion, study, prayer, and mantra.} The more clear we are about the wisdom we are realizing, the easier practice can be.

The provisional teachings arise from this ultimate nature, in response to what is needed. They serve the purpose of all liberating methods, leading to the ultimate goal shared by all Buddhist methods.

Only transcendent wisdom accomplishes the path (2024)

A few notes on The Introduction Awareness [{Text}](#) [{Audio}](#)

The Introduction to Awareness is a text pointing out the nature of mind. It does this directly in various ways throughout.

In the Great Perfection teachings, the nature of mind is described as being beyond concepts; It is non dual, an inclusive totality, and a communion.

The Introduction Awareness is also distinctive in some ways. In comparison to other teachings from this tradition, there are a few points that distinguish this text.

First, it says in no uncertain terms that

** Only transcendent wisdom - fully understanding the nature of our mind and our life here accomplishes the path,*

which is quite a bold statement. This is referred to first in the beginning, where it says

Even though that which is usually called mind is widely esteemed and much discussed, still, often it is not understood, or it is wrongly understood, or it is understood in a one-sided manner only, {only partly understood}.

When it is not understood correctly just as it is in itself, there come into existence an inconceivable number of philosophical ideas and assertions.

Furthermore, when ordinary individuals do not understand it, they do not recognize their own nature, and so they continue to wander among the six destinies of rebirth in the three worlds, and thus experience suffering.

and then again in the conclusion, where it says,

Not understanding this, even Panditas {or scholars} can fall into error...

An early section then lists various Buddhist philosophies, and how they can possibly fall short of the goal. Having studied a number of these teachings over the years, I can affirm that the criticisms are valid, and deserve to be looked into carefully.

Thinley Norbu was the first teacher I read who clarified this point, and made this stand out prominently, that only transcendent wisdom accomplishes the path.

He cited the well known Four Reliances, emphasizing the fourth:

Don't rely on the teacher, rely on the teaching

Don't rely on the words, rely on the meaning

Don't rely on just the provisional meaning, rely on where they are ultimately headed, and,

Don't rely on ordinary conceptual consciousness, rely on wisdom

A passage in his Cascading Waterfall of Nectar then reads,

The common, conceptual vehicle {by itself} does not arrive at the ultimate aim...

*Although there is hope to attain enlightenment, * the basis there is ordinary mind, which is itself the root of samsara.*

*Not only does that path take a long time, but the result is extremely difficult to accomplish exactly because *the basis is mistaken...*

I so admire the clarity of explanation in the Nyingma, Great Perfection teachings, and within these, there are only a few teachers I have found that emphasize this point as much as I feel it should be known, and made central to our practice.

{Pema Rigtsal in *The Great Secret of Mind*, and Orgyen Chowang Rinpoche in *From Foundation to Summit* make this abundantly clear.}

The teachings that explain the need for a correct view right from the outset say, If our view of ourselves, and others, and our world from the beginning is in any way mistaken, or incomplete, it can be difficult to let go of that view and have a more complete view.

As Ajahn Pasanno said,

If there is {any ego grasping}, any hint of self, a position is then taken and the whole realm of samsara {the mistaken, conditioned existence that is suffering} unfolds...

Conversely, as it says in a passage in Orgyen Chowang's book,

If, through meditation, we get familiar with, and maintain, the view -

{meaning here the view as expressed in the Great Perfection, and the goal in all traditions of practice},

then our action, or conduct, in turn will correspond to our view and meditation.

This is the correct, or genuine, view, meditation, and action. All of these find their source in the {true} nature.

This is what they call 'Taking wisdom as the path'.

Another distinctive point made in The Introduction to Awareness is that

This very mind itself that we are experiencing right now, is the nature of all that we look upon with faith and adoration;

All that we aspire to is here, right now;

and all paths and practices are contained in this very nature; they are its creative, compassionate expression arising to meet our needs in various ways;

and, related to this, a third fundamental insight expressed throughout this text is that

Even all that we experience that we call common states is - this very nature.

This is bound to change how we view our everyday lives and activities, as well as meditation..

This direct insight into the true nature of mind and appearances has to be carried into our daily life at all times, otherwise we might have insight-wisdom for an hour a day during formal meditation, and then revert to ordinary thought, speech, and action, i.e, delusion the other twenty-three hours, and then, what's the use of that?

Tulku Pema Rigtsal says it this way,

The mere ability to abide in formal contemplation free of mental elaboration does not necessarily take us into informal contemplation that is different from the ordinary activity of body, speech, and mind. *If we are unable to mix the practice of unelaborated formal contemplation {meditation} with informal contemplation {the so-called post-meditation}, {ultimately} there will be no benefit... {aaah...}

As Longchenpa expressed it,

We may realize the timelessly liberating view, but if we are not constant in meditation in that view, it is not possible to turn back the delusory appearances of samsara...

It is therefore vital to familiarize ourselves *{continually}* with the natural state of pure presence...

May we all accomplish a complete liberating right view

From Where We Find Ourselves Just Now

On the view as presented in the Nyingma Tradition, and the text *The Introduction to Awareness*

This year, I've been studying what are called the bardo teachings from Tibetan Buddhism. Something interesting happened for me, cycling through these teachings again this time.

I finally read the text called *Liberation Through Hearing in the Intermediate State*, by Padmasambhava.

This is a text that is often mis-translated as *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, and is actually marketed that way, to reach more people, as it is familiar in the book world by that title.

It's an interesting body of material overall, and makes more sense to me now, placing it in the context of the commentaries I've read through.

* The best thing that has come from this study though for me though has been the discovery of a text that is included in this cycle of teachings, called in an earlier translation, *Self Liberation Through Seeing With Naked Awareness*, and more recently as *The Introduction to Awareness - Natural Liberation through Naked Perception*, or *Natural Liberation Through the Recognition of Enlightened Intention*.

I liked it so much, I put together my own version of the text, based on previous versions, and made a recording of it as well, to listen to often.

I'll try to explain a little of why this teaching is especially meaningful exactly here.

I have had the feeling the last couple of years, looking back, that something fundamental has been missing in my practice of the Dharma, the Buddhist teachings. This is related to what they call Right View. If the view we begin with in any practice is mistaken, or is incomplete in some way, then everything that follows, of course will also be in error, or not complete as well.

I have looked at the Middle Way teachings, and these make this point clear, explicitly, only when we get to incorporating their insight in later stages of practice, namely the Varjajana.

Then, I felt keenly that if our mundane view is the basis of what we do in our lives and practice, it is likewise incomplete, or very much flawed. This ordinary perception is remedied in Buddhism and other traditions by *sacred outlook*, or what they call *pure perception* - knowing the divine nature of our world, our ancestry ourselves and one another.

Of course, our view can evolve, even if we start with an incomplete view of ourselves and our world, but it has to be accommodating as we go, and sometimes it's hard to let go of one view, and realize another., more complete view.

The Nyingma Lineage is the oldest of the four main schools of Tibetan Buddhism. From this Lineage, their *Dzogchen*, or *Great Perfection* teachings say that their view is the pinnacle of the nine yantras, or vehicles.

You should know, I am skeptical whenever *anyone*, in *any* tradition claims that their view is the highest. I've traveled too far and too long through traditions that say this to just accept it without investigating, critically.

And you know what? At this time in my life, I can see what the Nyingma teachings mean. For me, the view that they express is actually the highest that I've found, but how to ever communicate this?

We can read and reflect on their teachings and see if it is so, for ourselves. I have faith we can all make our way to freedom and peace, which is the whole purpose of engaging any of the Buddhist teachings, or any spiritual teaching.

The text *The Introduction to Awareness* has lines that spell out the need for a complete view, in no uncertain terms. We can get caught in many ways, attached to any partial view, and then, that's not it.

We can also continue with whatever path we are on, and, as this text says, these paths are also included in the Great Perfection. Even in our ordinary, or afflicted states, of confusion and suffering, there is something here, and this is our own true nature. It is undiminished and knowing, and it has all the qualities, at all times.

So we are encouraged at every step to understand our nature, our aspirations, our confusion or sorrow, our joy, all of it.

Whatever state we find ourselves in, all the virtues we seek, all the companionship, and guidance we need is *here*.

* * *

Two books I can recommend that express with precision the Nyingma View, as it is taught in The Introduction to Awareness are The Great Secret of Mind, by Tulku Pema Rigstal, and From Foundation to Pinnacle, by Orgyen Chowang:

Notes from two teachers

See also Selected teachings by Khenpo Palden Sherab Rinpoche

True Letting Go

I heard the way of liberating right view expressed recently in a talk on social change, and creating something altogether new.

They said that

The *antithesis* of something, in a way, always contains the *thesis* {or the original idea, as its reference point};

and when you bring to mind an anti-thesis, it is responding in terms of that original statement, or idea

{no matter how wrong or unfounded the first idea was, such as the idea of self}

This only makes sense.

To create something altogether new, something radically different, we need to actually let go of all that, or go beyond it altogether, not as something gotten beyond, but free of the concepts of one or the other, or both, or neither, and this is straight Buddhism.

In pointing out the nature of the mind, as in The Introduction to Awareness, we are encouraged to know our mind free of entanglement with thought and suppositions altogether; open, clear and awake, blissful and at ease.

Two differences in my interpretation of The Introduction to Awareness

I have based my own version of The Introduction to Awareness on those by John Reynolds, in his book, *Self Liberation Through Seeing With Naked Awareness*; An audio reading of this can be found on youtube;

the version by Robert Thurman, in his translation of the Tibetan Book of the Liberation Through Hearing in the Intermediate State; The audio is chapter 8 of the audio book;

and that by Gyurme Dorje, in his 2007 complete translation of the Bardo Thodol cycle of teachings. An audio recording of this is also available, as chapter 4 of that book.

Compared to these versions of The Introduction to Awareness, there are two main differences in the written and the audio version I have prepared.

The first point of departure occurs in the latter part of section 5, where the original translations read,

Even though the Sravakas and the Pratyekabuddhas wish to understand it in terms of the Anatman doctrine, still they do not understand the nature of mind as it is in itself.

I have changed this to

...still they may not understand the nature of mind as it is in itself.

I have done this in the passages that follow as well, on the other Buddhist philosophical schools.

My reason for doing this is that I do believe each tradition and lineage has produced outstanding teachers, and completely realized and liberated beings.

Not a reader of Tibetan myself, I don't know if the original text was this absolutely critical of every other approach (and I don't think it was intended that way), so saying that *they may not understand the nature of mind as it is*, in each case, leaves room, respectfully, for there to be accomplishment in any of these approaches, as long as the nature of mind itself is fully understood.

I have made one more substantial change to the text I am reflecting on, and this applies in both verses 11 and 26, where it says

There exist no phenomena other than what arises from the mind -

I have changed this throughout this verse to

All that is experienced is known in the mind...,

and similarly again in verse 26, where there is a longer passage that reads

Everything that appears is but a manifestation of mind.

and then lists different experiences and realms and states of being, with the concluding phrase such as,

...is but a manifestation of mind

and,

...they are but a manifestation of mind...

For me, these are the most potentially problematic verses, and so I have replaced the one repeating line in verse 26, in a way that I think makes a small but significant difference.

I have replaced all these concluding phrases with

What you experience depends on your mind

The difference here for me is that one that moves from theory to practice.

It also avoids what I don't feel entirely comfortable saying, that everything is merely a manifestation of mind, which is the proposition of the Mind Only School in Buddhism, for example where they say 'the object of mind is mind itself'.

While this may be true, ontologically, it does seem to be an absolute statement, and one that could easily be heard as viewing the world as we know it through our senses and suffering and leaning too much in the

direction of their dream-like nature or their non-existence for my preference. There is a middle way balance to be found just here.

I thought of this while driving recently, where we have the necessary distinction between the thought of other cars, and their actuality.

What you experience depends on your mind places it back in the realm of practice, and questioning, and keen investigation, and insight whenever there are appearances to the mind.

The Introduction to Awareness - Natural Liberation through Naked Perception

Audio

1. Herein is contained The Introduction to Awareness - Natural Liberation through Naked Perception. This is an extract from the Peaceful and Wrathful Divinities {cycle}, and is a Profound Sacred Teaching, entitled *Natural Liberation Through the Recognition of Enlightened Intention*.

2. Homage to the Three Kayas, and to the Divinities that express the inherent luminous clarity of intrinsic awareness.

3. Herein I shall teach Self-Liberation Through Seeing with Naked Awareness, which is a direct introduction to intrinsic awareness.

Truly, this introduction to your own intrinsic awareness should be contemplated well, O fortunate ones of noble family!

SAMAYA gya gya gya

[The Importance of the Introduction to Awareness]

4. Emaho!

Although the single nature of mind completely pervades both cyclic existence and nirvāṇa, and has been naturally present from the beginning, you have not recognized it.

Even though its clarity and presence has been uninterrupted, you have not yet encountered its face.

Even though its arising has nowhere been obstructed, still you have not comprehended it.

Therefore, this direct introduction is for the purpose of bringing you to self-recognition.

Everything that is expounded by the Victorious Ones of the three times in the eighty-four thousand Gateways to the Dharma is incomprehensible unless you understand intrinsic awareness.

Indeed, the Victorious Ones do not teach anything other than the understanding of this.

Even though there exist an unlimited numbers of scriptures, equal in their extent to the sky, yet with respect to the real meaning, it can be expressed in a few words that will introduce you to your own intrinsic awareness.

This introduction to the manifest Primordial State of the Victorious Ones is disclosed by the following method for entering into the practice, where there exists no antecedent nor subsequent practices.

[The Actual Introduction to Awareness]

5. Kye-ho!

O fortunate ones, listen!

Even though that which is usually called mind is widely esteemed and much discussed, still, often it is not understood, or it is wrongly understood, or it is understood in a one-sided manner only. When it is not understood correctly just as it is in itself, there come into existence an inconceivable number of philosophical ideas and assertions.

Furthermore, when ordinary individuals do not understand it, they do not recognize their own nature, and so they continue to wander among the six destinies of rebirth in the three worlds, and thus experience suffering.

Therefore, not understanding your own mind is a grievous fault.

Even though the Sravakas and the Pratyekabuddhas wish to understand it in terms of the Anatman doctrine, still they may not understand the nature of mind as it is in itself.

Also, there exist others who, being attached to their own personal ideas and interpretations, become fettered by these attachments and so do not perceive the Clear Light.

The Sravakas and the Pratyekabuddhas can be obscured by their attachments to subject and object.

The Madhyamikas can be obscured by their attachments to the extremes of the Two Truths.

The practitioners of the Kriya Tantra and the Yoga Tantra can be obscured by their attachments to sadhana practice.

The practitioners of the Mahayoga and the Anuyoga can be obscured by their attachments to Space and Awareness, and with respect to the real meaning of nonduality, when they divide these into two, they fall into deviation. If these two do not become one without any duality, you will certainly not attain Buddhahood.

In terms of your own mind, for everyone, samsara and nirvana are inseparable, and if you persist in accepting and enduring attachments and aversions, you will continue to wander in samsara. Therefore, your active dharmas and your inactive ones both should be abandoned.

However, since self-liberation through seeing nakedly by means of intrinsic awareness is here revealed to you, you should understand that all dharmas can be perfected and completed in the great total self liberation, and therefore, whatever practice you do can be brought to perfection within the Great Perfection.

SAMAYA gya gya gya

[Synonyms for Mind]

6. As for this bright awareness which is called mind, even though one says that it exists, it does not actually exist {it cannot be found};

On the other hand, as a source, it is the origin of the diversity of all the bliss of nirvana and all of the sorrow of samsara;

And as for its being something desirable, it is cherished alike in the Eleven Vehicles.

With respect to its having a name, the various names that are applied to it are inconceivable in their numbers.

Some call it "the nature of the mind", or "mind itself."

Some Tirthikas call it by the name Atman, or "the Self."

The Sravakas call it the doctrine of Anatman, or "the absence of a self."

The Chittamatrins call it by the name Chitta, or "the Mind."

Some call it the Prajnaparamita, or "the Perfection of Wisdom."

Some call it by the name Tathagatagarbha, or "the womb of the Tathagata, the Buddhas, the Awakened Ones."

Some call it by the name Mahamudra, or "the Great Symbol."

Some call it by the name "the Unique Sphere."

Some call it by the name Dharmadhatu, or "the dimension of Reality."

Some call it by the name Alaya, or "the basis of everything."

And some simply call it by the name "ordinary awareness."

[The Three Considerations]

7. Now, when you are introduced to your own intrinsic awareness, the method for entering into it involves three considerations:

First, recognize that past thoughts leave no traces behind;

Second, recognize that future thoughts have not arisen;

And third, recognize that the present moment abides naturally, and is unconstructed.

Awareness at this moment in itself is quite ordinary;

And when you look into yourself in this way, nakedly, without any discursive thoughts, since there is only this pure observing, there will be found a lucid clarity without anyone being there who is the observer;

Only a naked manifest awareness is present.

This awareness is empty and immaculately pure, and is not created by anything whatsoever.

It is authentic, and unadulterated, without any duality of clarity and emptiness.

It is not permanent, for it is lacking inherent existence in all respects; however, it is not a mere nothingness, because it is lucid and present.

It does not exist as a single entity because it is present as many;

On the other hand it is not simply a multiplicity because it is of a single flavor.

And this inherent self-awareness is not based on anything else.

This is the real introduction to the actual condition of things.

8. Within this intrinsic awareness, the three kayas are inseparable and fully present as one.

Since it is empty and without self existence, it is the Dharmakaya;

Since its luminous clarity represents the inherent transparent radiance of emptiness, it is the Sambhogakaya;

And since its arising is nowhere obstructed, or interrupted, it is the

Nirmanakaya.

These three, being complete and fully present as one, are the very essence of awareness itself.

[Consequences of the Introduction to Awareness]

9. When you are introduced in this way, through this exceedingly powerful method for entering into the practice, you discover directly that your own immediate self-awareness is just this and nothing else, and that it has an inherent self-clarity which is entirely unfabricated. How can you then speak of not understanding the nature of the mind?

Moreover, since you are meditating without finding anything there to meditate upon, how can you say that your meditation does not go well?

Since your own manifest intrinsic awareness is just this, how can you say that you cannot find your own mind?

The mind is just that which is thinking, and yet, although you have searched for the thinker, how can you say that you do not find him?

With respect to this, nowhere does there exist the one who is the cause of such activity, and yet, since activity exists, how can you say that activity does not arise?

Since merely allowing thoughts to settle into their own condition, without trying to modify them in any way, is sufficient, how can you say that you are not able to remain in a calm state?

Since allowing thoughts to be just as they are, without trying to do anything about them, is sufficient, how can you say that you are not able to do anything with regard to them?

Since clarity, awareness, and emptiness are inseparable and are spontaneously self-perfected, how can you say that nothing is accomplished by your practice?

Since intrinsic awareness is self-originated and spontaneously self-perfected without any antecedent causes or conditions, how can you say that you are not able to accomplish anything by your efforts?

Since the arising of discursive thoughts and their being liberated occur simultaneously, how can you say that you are unable to apply an antidote?

Since your own immediate awareness is just this, how can you say that you do not know anything with regard to it?

[Observations Related to Examining the Nature of Mind]

10. It is certain that the nature of the mind is empty and without any foundation whatsoever. Your own mind is insubstantial like the empty sky. You should look at your own mind to see whether it is like that or not.

Being without any view that decides that it is empty, it is certain that original awareness has been clear and luminous from the very beginning, like the heart of the sun. You should look at your own mind to see whether it is like that or not.

It is certain that one's intrinsic awareness is unceasing, like a river that flows. You should look at your own mind to see whether it is like that or not.

It is certain that the diversity of movements arising in the mind are not apprehendable when memories; they are like insubstantial breezes that move through the atmosphere. You should look at your own mind to see whether it is like that or not.

It is certain that whatever appearances occur, all of them are simply known, like the images in a mirror that simply appear. You should look at your own mind to see whether it is like that or not.

It is certain that all of the diverse characteristics and appearances are liberated into their own condition, like clouds in the atmosphere that are self-originated and self-liberated. You should look at your own mind to see whether it is like that or not.

11. All that is experienced is known in the mind. Other than the meditation that occurs, where is the one who is meditating?

All that is experienced is known in the mind. Other than the behavior that occurs, where is the one who is behaving?

All that is experienced is known in the mind. Other than the samaya vow that occurs, where is the one who is guarding it?

All that is experienced is known in the mind. Other than the fruition that occurs, where is the one who is realizing the fruit? You should look at your own mind, observing it again and again.

12. When you look upward into the space of the sky outside yourself, if there are no thoughts occurring that are emanations being projected, and when you look inward at your own mind inside yourself, if there exists no projectionist who projects thoughts by thinking them, then your own subtle mind will become lucidly clear.

Since the Clear Light of your own intrinsic awareness is without self, it is the Dharmakaya, and this is like the sun rising in a cloudless, illuminated sky.

Even though this light cannot be said to possess a particular shape or form, nevertheless it can be fully known.

Whether or not this is understood is especially significant.

13. This Clear Light was not produced by something before it - amazing!

This nature of mind does not experience birth, nor does there exist a cause for its death - amazing!

Although it is evidently visible, yet there is no one there who sees it -
amazing!

Though it has wandered throughout samsara, it has come to no harm -
amazing!

Even though it has seen Buddhahood itself, it is not itself improved -
amazing!

Even though it exists in everyone everywhere, yet it has gone unrecognized
- amazing!

Nevertheless, you hope to attain some other fruit than this elsewhere -
amazing!

Even though it exists within yourself and nowhere else, yet you seek for it
elsewhere - amazing!

[Intrinsic Awareness As View, Meditation, Conduct, and Result]

14. How wonderful!

This immediate intrinsic awareness is insubstantial and lucidly clear. Just
this is the highest pinnacle among all views;

It is all-encompassing, free in every way, and without conceptions. Just this
is the highest pinnacle among all meditations;

It is unfabricated, and inexpressible in worldly terms. Just this is the highest pinnacle among all courses of conduct;

Without being sought after, it is spontaneously self-perfected from the very beginning. Just this is the highest pinnacle among all fruits;

15. Here is the teaching of the four great media, that are without error:

First, there is the great medium of the unmistaken view. Since this immediate awareness is lucidly clear, and this lucid clarity is without error or mistake, it is called a medium.

Second, there is the great medium of the unmistaken meditation. Since this immediate awareness is that which possesses clarity, and this lucid clarity is without error or mistake, it is called a medium.

Third, there is the great medium of the unmistaken conduct. Since this immediate original awareness is that which possesses clarity, and this lucid clarity is without error or mistake, it is called a medium.

And fourth, there is the great medium of the unmistaken fruit. Since this immediate awareness is lucidly clear, and this lucid clarity is without error or mistake, it is called a medium.

16. Here is the teaching on the four great, unchanging, essential points, called nails.

First, there is the great nail of the unchanging view. This immediate present awareness is lucidly clear. Because it is stable in the three times, it is called a nail.

Second, there is the great nail of the unchanging meditation. This immediate present awareness is lucidly clear. Because it is stable in the three times, it is called a nail.

Third, there is the great nail of the unchanging conduct. This immediate present awareness is lucidly clear. Because it is stable in the three times, it is called a nail.

And fourth, there is the great nail of the unchanging fruit. This immediate present awareness is lucidly clear. Because it is stable in the three times, it is called a nail.

17. Then, as for the secret instruction which teaches that the three times are one -

You should relinquish all notions of the past, and abandon all precedents;

You should cut off all plans and expectations with respect to the future;

And in the present, you should not grasp at thoughts that arise, but allow the mind to remain in a state like the sky.

Since there is nothing upon which to meditate while in the natural

state, there is no need to meditate, {as when you put something in front of yourself and run after it}, and since there does not exist any distraction here, you continue in this state of stable mindfulness without distraction.

In this state which is without {ideas of} meditation, and without any distraction, you observe everything with a naked awareness.

Your own awareness is inherently knowing, inherently clear, and luminously brilliant.

When this arises, it is called the Bodhichitta, the enlightened mind.

Being without any activity of meditation, it transcends all objects of knowledge.

Being without any distraction, it is the luminous clarity of the essence itself.

Appearances, being empty in themselves, become self-liberated,

and clarity and emptiness being inseparable are the Dharmakaya.

Since it becomes evident that there is nothing to be realized by means of a path to Buddhahood, at this time you will actually behold Vajrasattva.

18. Then, as for the instruction for exhausting the six extremes and overthrowing them -

Even though there exist a great many different views that do not agree among themselves, when seeing this mind which is your own natural awareness, there is no duality of viewing, and that which is viewed;

And when you look and observe, *seeking* the one who is looking and observing, since you search for this observer and do not find him existing anywhere, at that time your view is exhausted and overthrown. Thus, even though it is the end of your view, this is the beginning with respect to yourself.

Without its falling excessively into emptiness and non-existence even at the beginning, at this very moment your own present awareness becomes lucidly clear. Just this is the view, the way of seeing of the Great Perfection. Therefore, understanding and not understanding are found to be not two different things.

19. Although there exist a great many different meditations that do not agree among themselves, your own ordinary present awareness is directly penetrating. The meditation and the one who meditates are not two different things.

When you look for the meditator who is meditating or not meditating, since you have searched for this meditator and have not found him anywhere, at that time your meditation is exhausted and overthrown. Thus, even though it is the end of your efforts in meditation, this is the beginning with respect to yourself.

Without its falling under the power of delusion, drowsiness, or agitation,

your immediate unfabricated awareness becomes lucidly clear;

And this unmodified state of even contemplation is concentration.

Therefore, remaining in a calm state or not remaining in it are not two different things.

20. Although there exist a great many different kinds of behavior which do not agree among themselves, your own original awareness is the Unique Sphere. Behavior and the one who behaves are not two different things.

When you look for the one it is who behaves with action, or without action, since you have searched for the one who acts and have not found him anywhere, at that time your behavior is exhausted and overthrown. Thus, even though it is the end of your contrived conduct and behavior, this is the beginning with respect to yourself.

Without its falling under the power of errors and inherited predispositions, your immediate awareness is an unfabricated inherent clarity.

Without accepting or rejecting anything, just letting things be as they are without trying to modify them, such conduct or behavior alone is pure. Therefore, pure and impure action are not two different things.

21. Although there exist a great many different fruits that do not agree among themselves, the nature of the mind that is inherent awareness is none other than the spontaneously perfected three kayas. What is realized and the one who realizes it are not two different things.

When you look for the fruit, and the one who has realized it, and have not found them anywhere, at that time your fruit is exhausted and overthrown. Thus, even though it is an end to your fruition, still this is the beginning with respect to yourself.

Without its falling under the power of attachments or aversions, or of hopes and fears, your immediate present awareness becomes spontaneously perfected inherent clarity.

Understand that within yourself the three kayas are fully manifest. Therefore, this itself is the fruition of original, uncreated Awareness.

[Synonyms for Awareness]

22. This intrinsic awareness is free of the eight extremes, such as eternalism and nihilism, and the rest. Thus we speak of the Middle Way where one does not fall into any of the extremes, and we speak of intrinsic awareness as uninterrupted mindful presence.

Since emptiness possesses a heart that is intrinsic awareness, therefore it is called by the name Tathagatagarbha, that is, the heart of Buddhahood.

If you understand the meaning of this, then that will transcend and surpass everything else, therefore, it is called by the name of Prajnaparamita, that is, the Perfection of Wisdom.

Because it cannot be conceived of by the intellect, and is free of all conceptual limitations from the very beginning, therefore it is called by the name of Mahamudra, that is, the Great Symbol.

Because of that, in accordance with whether it is specifically understood or not understood, since it is the basis of everything, of all of the bliss of nirvana and of all the sorrow of samsara, therefore it is called by the name of alaya, that is, the foundation of everything.

Because, when it remains in its own space, it is quite ordinary and in no way exceptional, this awareness that is present and lucidly clear is called by the name of ordinary awareness.

However many names may be applied to it, even though they all are well conceived and fancy sounding, with regard to its real meaning, it is just this immediate present awareness, and nothing else.

23. To desire something other than this is just like having an elephant at home, but searching for its tracks elsewhere.

Even though you may try to measure the universe with a tape measure, it will not be possible to encompass it.

Similarly, if you do not understand that what you experience depends on your mind, it will not be possible for you to attain Buddhahood.

By not recognizing this intrinsic awareness itself for what it is, you will then search for your mind outside of yourself, and if you seek for yourself outside of yourself, how can you ever find yourself?

This is just like a fool, who, going into a crowd of many people, and having let himself become confused because of the spectacle, does not recognize himself, and, even though he searches for himself everywhere, he continually makes the error of mistaking others for himself.

Similarly, since you do not see the natural condition of the real nature of things, and you do not know that what you experience depends on your mind, you are thrust once again into Samsara.

By not seeing that your own mind is actually the Buddha, nirvana becomes obscured.

With respect to samsara and nirvana, the difference is simply due to ignorance, or to awareness respectively,

but at this single instant of pure awareness, there is in fact no actual difference between them, in terms of their essence.

If you come to perceive samsara and nirvana as existing somewhere other than in your own mind, this is surely an error. However, even error and non-error are actually of a single essence, that is the nature of the mind.

Since the mind-streams of sentient beings are not two by nature, the unmodified, uncorrected nature of the mind is liberated by its being allowed simply to remain in its own natural condition.

If you are not aware that the fundamental error or delusion comes from the mind, you will not properly understand the real meaning of the Dharmata , the nature of reality.

24. You should look into what is self-arising and self-originated.

With respect to these appearances, in the beginning they must arise from somewhere, in between they must remain somewhere, and at the end they must go somewhere.

When you look into this matter, it is, for example, like a crow gazing into a well. When he flies away from the well, his reflection also departs and does not return.

It is this way with experiences. They arise and are liberated in the mind.

The nature of the mind, which has the capacity to know every thing and be aware of every thing, is empty and clear;

As is the case with the sky above, its emptiness and its clarity have been inseparable from the very beginning.

Original awareness becomes manifest, and becomes established as luminous clarity. Just this is the Dharmata, the nature of reality.

Even though experience seemingly manifests as entirely external to you, you are aware of it in your own mind, and as the nature of the mind.

Since the mind is aware and clear, it is understood to be like the sky. However, even though we employ the example of the sky to indicate the nature of the mind, this is in fact only a metaphor or simile indicating things in a one-sided fashion.

The nature of the mind, as well as being empty, is also intrinsically aware, everywhere it is clear, but the sky is without any awareness. Therefore, this metaphor only goes so far.

So, without distraction, simply allow the mind to remain in the state of being just as it is.

[The Nature of Appearances]

25. Moreover, as for its diversity of appearances, which represents relative truth, not even one of these appearances is actually created {permanently} in reality, and so, accordingly, they disappear again.

All things, all phenomenal existence, everything within samsara and nirvana, are merely appearances, {phenomena or experiences}, which are known by the individual's single nature of the mind.

On any particular occasion, when your own internal mind-stream undergoes changes, external changes will also be perceived.

Therefore, everything that you see is experienced by the mind, and, moreover, all of the beings inhabiting the six realms of rebirth perceive everything with their own distinct karmic vision.

26. The Tirthikas who are outsiders see all this in terms of the dualism of eternalism as against nihilism;

Each of the nine successive vehicles sees things in terms of its own view. Thus, things are perceived in various different ways and may be elucidated in various different ways.

Because you grasped at these various appearances, becoming attached to them, errors have come into existence. Yet with respect to all of these experiences of which you are aware in your mind, even though these appearances that you perceive do arise, if you do not grasp at them, then that is Buddhahood.

Appearances are not erroneous in themselves, but because of your grasping at them, errors come into existence. If you know these thoughts only grasp at things which are experiences in the mind, then they will be liberated by themselves.

What you experience depends on your mind.

Even though the entire external inanimate universe appears to you...

Even though all of the sentient beings of the six realms appear to you...

Even though the happiness of humans and the delights of the Devas in heaven appear to you...

Even though the sorrows of the three evil destinies appear to you...

Even though the five poisons, representing ignorance and the passions appear to you...

Even though intrinsic awareness which is self originated appears to you...

Even though good thoughts along the way to nirvana appear to you...

Even though obstacles due to demons and evil spirits appear to you...

Even though the gods and other excellent attainments appear to you...

Even though various kinds of purity appear to you...

Even though remaining in a state of one-pointed concentration, without any discursive thoughts appears to you...

Even though the colors that are the characteristics of things appear to you...

Even though a state without characteristics and without conceptual elaborations appears to you...

Even though the nonduality of the one and the many appears to you...

Even though existence and non-existence appear to you...

what you experience depends on your mind...

This is true of all that is known.

27. Because of the unobstructed nature of the mind, there is a continuous arising of appearances. Like the waves and the waters of the ocean, which are not two different things, whatever arises is liberated into the natural state of the mind.

However many different names are applied to it in this unceasing process of naming things, with respect to its real meaning, the mind of the individual does not exist other than *as one*;

And, moreover, this singularity is without any foundation {- that is to say, it is not based on anything else} and, it is devoid of any root;

Even though it is one, you cannot look for it in any particular direction; it cannot be seen as an entity located somewhere;

Nor can it be seen as just being empty, because there exists the transparent radiance of its own luminous clarity and awareness;

Nor can it be seen as diversified, because emptiness and clarity are inseparable.

Immediate self-awareness, like this, is clear and present.

Even though activities exist, there is no agent who is the actor;

Even though they are free of any inherent nature, experiences are actually experienced.

If you practice in this way, then everything will be liberated.

[Conclusion]

With respect to your own sense faculties, everything will be understood immediately without any intervening operations of the intellect.

Just as is the case with the sesame seed being the cause of the oil, and the milk being the cause of butter, but where the oil is not obtained without pressing and the butter is not obtained without churning, so all sentient beings, even though they possess the actual essence of Buddhahood, will not realize Buddhahood without engaging in practice.

If he practices, then even a cowherd can realize liberation. Even though he does not know the explanation, he can systematically establish himself in the experience of it.

It is like when one has had the experience of actually tasting sugar in one's own mouth, one does not need to have that taste explained by someone else.

Not understanding this intrinsic awareness, even Panditas can fall into error. Even though they are exceedingly learned and knowledgeable in

explaining the nine vehicles, it will only be like spreading rumors of places which they have not seen personally, and with respect to Buddhahood, they will still be far from it.

If you understand intrinsic awareness, then all of your merits and sins will be liberated into their own condition, whereas if you do not understand it, any virtuous or non virtuous deeds that you commit will accumulate as karma, leading to transmigration in heavenly rebirth, or to rebirth in the evil destinies respectively.

Understanding this selfless original awareness which is your own mind, the consequences of merit and of sin will never come to be realized, just as a spring cannot originate in the empty sky. In the state of emptiness itself, the object of merit or of sin is not even created.

To see everything clearly, this instruction is most profound, and this being so, you should become intimately acquainted with it.

Profoundly sealed!

28. How wonderful!

EM AH HO!

As for this Self Liberation Through Seeing with Naked Awareness, which is a direct introduction to one's own intrinsic awareness, it is for the benefit of those sentient beings belonging to the later generations of those future

degenerate times that all of my Tantras, Agamas, and Upadesas, though necessarily brief and concise, have been composed;

And even though I have disseminated them at the present time, yet they shall be concealed as terma, precious treasures, so that those whose good karma (fortune) ripens in the future shall come to encounter them.

SAMAYA gya gya gya

This treatise which is an introduction to one's actual intrinsic awareness or state of immediate presence, is entitled Self Liberation Through Seeing with Naked Awareness. It was composed by Padmasambhava, the Master from Uddiyana.

*Until Samsara is emptied of living beings,
May this Great Work of liberating them not be abandoned!*

* * *

{This version is based primarily on the translation by John Reynolds, with reference to the translations by Robert Thurman and Gyurme Dorje. It was revised by Jason Espada in August of 2024.}

Sarva Mangalam