

BUDDHA-NATURE

by Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche

Is my meditation correct? When shall I ever make progress? Never shall I attain the level of my spiritual Master. Juggled between hope and doubt, our mind is never at peace.

According to our mood, one day we will practice intensely, and the next day, not at all. We are attached to the agreeable experiences which emerge from the state of mental calm, and we wish to abandon meditation when we fail to slow down the flow of thoughts. That is not the right way to practice.

Whatever the state of our thoughts may be, we must apply ourselves steadfastly to regular practice, day after day; observing the movement of our thoughts and tracing them back to their source. We should not count on being immediately capable of maintaining the flow of our concentration day and night.

When we begin to meditate on the nature of mind, it is preferable to make short sessions of meditation, several times per day. With perseverance, we will progressively realize the nature of our mind, and that realization will become more stable. At this stage, thoughts will have lost their power to disturb and subdue us.

Emptiness, the ultimate nature of Dharmakaya, the Absolute Body, is not a simple nothingness. It possesses intrinsically the faculty of knowing all phenomena. This faculty is the luminous or cognitive aspect of the Dharmakaya, whose expression is spontaneous. The Dharmakaya is not the product of causes and conditions; it is the original nature of mind.

Recognition of this primordial nature resembles the rising of the sun of wisdom in the night of ignorance: the darkness is instantly dispelled. The clarity of the Dharmakaya does not wax and wane like the moon; it is like the immutable light which shines at the centre of the sun.

Whenever clouds gather, the nature of the sky is not corrupted, and when they disperse, it is not ameliorated. The sky does not become less or more vast. It does not change. It is the same with the nature of mind: it is not spoiled by the arrival of thoughts; nor improved by their disappearance. The nature of the mind is emptiness; its expression is clarity. These two aspects are essentially one's simple images designed to indicate the diverse modalities of the mind. It would be useless to attach oneself in turn to the notion of emptiness, and then to that of clarity, as if they were independent entities. The ultimate nature of mind is beyond all concepts, all definition and all fragmentation.

'I could walk on the clouds!' says a child. But if he reached the clouds, he would find nowhere to place his foot. Likewise, if one does not examine thoughts, they present a solid appearance; but if one examines them, there is nothing there. That is what is called being at the same time empty and apparent. Emptiness of mind is not a nothingness, nor a state of torpor, for it possesses by its very nature a luminous faculty of knowledge which is called Awareness. These two aspects, emptiness and Awareness, cannot be separated. They are essentially one, like the surface of the mirror and the image which is reflected in it.

Thoughts manifest themselves within emptiness and are reabsorbed into it like a face appears and disappears in a mirror; the face has never been in the mirror, and when it ceases to be reflected in it, it has not really ceased to exist. The mirror itself has never changed. So, before departing on the spiritual path, we remain in the so-called 'impure' state of samsara, which is, in appearance, governed by ignorance. When we commit ourselves to that path, we cross a state where ignorance and wisdom are mixed. At the end, at the moment of Enlightenment, only pure wisdom exists. But all the way along this spiritual journey, although there is an appearance of transformation, the nature of the mind has never changed: it was not corrupted on entry onto the path, and it was not improved at the time of realization.

The infinite and inexpressible qualities of primordial wisdom 'the true nirvana' are inherent in our mind. It is not necessary to create them, to fabricate something new. Spiritual realization only serves to reveal them through purification, which is the path. Finally, if one considers them from an ultimate point of view, these qualities are themselves only emptiness.

Thus samsara is emptiness, nirvana is emptiness - and so consequently, one is not 'bad' nor the other 'good'. The person who has realized the nature of mind is freed from the impulsion to reject samsara and obtain nirvana. He is like a young child, who contemplates the world with an innocent simplicity, without concepts of beauty or ugliness, good or evil. He is no longer the prey of conflicting tendencies, the source of desires or aversions.

It serves no purpose to worry about the disruptions of daily life, like another child, who rejoices on building a sand castle, and cries when it collapses. See how puerile beings rush into difficulties, like a butterfly which plunges into the flame of a lamp, so as to appropriate what they covet, and get rid of what they hate. It is better to put down the burden which all these imaginary attachments bring to bear down upon one.

The state of Buddha contains in itself five 'bodies' or aspects of Buddhahood: the Manifested Body, the Body of Perfect Enjoyment, the Absolute Body, the Essential Body and the Immutable Diamond Body. These are not to be sought outside us: they are inseparable from our being, from our mind. As soon as we have recognized this presence, there is an end to confusion. We have no further need to seek Enlightenment outside. The navigator who lands on an island made entirely of fine gold, will not find a single nugget, no matter how hard he searches. We must understand that all the qualities of Buddha have always existed inherently in our being.