

ON ANXIETY

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Anxiety is a very common experience. It can be helpful to distinguish between outer anxiety and inner anxiety.

OUTER ANXIETY

Outer anxiety arises when we focus on particular problems and situations that are hard to deal with such as relationships, money, housing and the future. Generally speaking, anxiety is a relational quality arising in situations in which we fear that the outcome won't be the one that we want, or that the outcome is unpredictable. We stay in a state of 'not knowing' for longer than we feel we can cope with. When we are anxious, we are not able to settle the arousal that has been triggered. We often lose the calm support of our breath as it becomes rapid and shallow. The sympathetic nervous system is aroused, disturbing our energy chakra situated just below the navel. This kind of anxiety is situational being contingent on the various provocations that can be present in our environment, both immediate and distant. If we lack the capacity to use our breath to manage our arousal, this over-oxygenated arousal will make it difficult to think our way out of our anxiety. However, after the event we can usefully begin to observe the way in which we feed our anxiety by investing time and energy in our thoughts and feelings about it.

It can be helpful to observe our use of language. For example, if a small upset occurs and we say, *'I have a problem'* we immediately concretise the situation. The upset may well already be vanishing. If it is a problem that can be solved, solving it won't be helped by saying, *'I have a real troubling problem.'* The more we reify the problem the more we are likely to draw in negative affective enrichment making the task appear more daunting. Even if the problem is actually quite serious, we are more likely to be able to manage it if we can see it in context without catastrophising. For many people the impact of a crisis diminishes their capacity to analyse what is occurring and examine possible solutions. The greater our anxiety concerning the problem the greater the risk of losing mental flexibility and creativity and our capacity to restrain our reactive emotions.

However we express our response to the situation it is likely to provoke the surrounding environment. Histrionic and anxious language use can create streams of upset and disturbance in the air around us as our extroverted anxiety invites others to fan the flames. Even in cultures which encourage introversion of anxiety the fact that little anxiety is expressed can bring an intensity of silence which makes others shake inside.

Whether enunciated or not enunciated, if we respond energetically to circumstances, we undermine our capacity for self-settling containment. With outer anxiety the world leaks into us and we in turn leak into the world. Whatever we feel impacts other people and then their reaction will impact us in turn so that there is an escalation of feeling.

This points to the fact that we are participants in a shared field of experience. Our embodied verbal and mental interdependence means that we cannot lock events

outside ourselves and seal ourselves into a safe private world. The dharma concept of dependent origination points to the resonant connectivity of all the factors which manifest as 'our world'. On the basis of this having occurred that occurs. 'This' may in no way be intentionally directed towards you, yet you still react. Empathic attunement occurs rapidly, for example in feeling the distress of someone walking towards us on the street. We do not know them or their problems yet we are impacted by the stress manifest in their gait and in their expression. Of course, we can then cut off from them and from our instant reaction—yet we have still been impacted. In cities the pathways of mutual concern are often blocked and overt response can be experienced as invasive. However, the impact does occur, and accumulations of this low-level disturbance can feed a sense of alienation and isolation since dialogic interplay seems impossible. When our response is unexpressed it reverberates inside us and this is then generally managed either by denial and dampening or by disturbed wariness and anxiety.

The dharma points to the middle way avoiding all extremes. Whether we deny what is occurring or indulge our emotional response to events, we are reacting to events as real and important. If I say, *'This doesn't matter'*, then, by implication, something else does. Here we have the three root poisons, the afflictions of dulling reification, desire and aversion. Each operates in terms of subject and object. When the subject, our mental consciousness, is taken to be an entity, an aspect of our ego self, this reification is inseparable from the dullness of not seeing the absence of inherent existence in all phenomena. Appearance is taken to be the appearance of self-existing entities, and the inseparability of appearance and its open empty ground is hidden by delusion. Due to this I believe that I see things, I hear things, I tastes things, and so on.

If I, the subject, like what I see then I experience that object as pleasing: it is desirable and I feel desire for it. The desirability of the object seems to be inherent in the object – the object is in and of itself desirable. If I, the subject, do not like what I see then I experience the object as displeasing: it is undesirable, repellent, hateful and I want to be far from it, I wanted it to vanish, even to be destroyed. The undesirability of the object seems to be inherent in the object— the object is in and of itself undesirable.

When subjective feeling is projected into the object so that it seems to be an inherent quality of the object, we find ourselves in the world of 'good' and 'bad' objects, people, events. This valency that we perceive as outside ourselves seems then to impinge on how we are, provoking hopes and fears, and a sense of safety or anxiety. Moreover, the intrinsic impermanence of phenomena including mental states means that a balanced relationship between subject and object is difficult to achieve even for brief periods of time. This embeds a fundamental anxiety in our being in the world, for 'our' world and 'our' self are established on the basis of delusion, the assumption that there are real separate entities.

INNER ANXIETY

Inner anxiety arises because we are not able to rest in how we actually are. We are alienated and unsettled by our belief in our own real existence. This is not a personal failing; it is the very nature of samsara itself. Samsara is a state of anxiety. In samsara subject and object are separated, and we find ourselves strongly identified with the subject. We did not make this happen. We arise as separate subjects on the basis of the arising of ignoring the common ground/basis/source. This ignoring itself arises from the ground as an illusion which pretends that it is not an illusion and this thickens as a

bewildering delusion. The illusory ego-self then struggles to limit bewilderment by trying to make sense of what is going on. This leads to a reliance on concepts as tools for thinking. Who is doing this? No one. Why is this not clear to us? Because we do not see our own illusory nature.

Illusion does not mean nothing at all but nothing appearing as something while remaining nothing. This is the non-duality of appearance and emptiness. The subject is not autonomous; it has no inherent existence. Yet because it is blind to its own ground and feels separate from what is around it, it is limited and incomplete. This lack manifests as the subject's ceaseless enquiry into the value of specific objects. The subject needs something from the object. It believes, situationally, that what it needs is a particular kind of experience such as love, food, beauty but what it is actually seeking is completion of itself. *'If only I can get what I want I will be satisfied.'* However the excitement of the movement of the search is usually replaced by the boredom of the nothing-happening stasis of achievement. The arousing question, *'What's next?'* leads inexorably to new movement, whether gross or subtle. No object is ever enough to quell the yearning for more, for different, for, in fact, the unattainable. Due to this the subject has a love-hate relationship with the object giving rise to complex emotions of longing, fear, hope, distrust and so on which maintain a base level of anxiety that is usually subconscious. The subject is not truly separate from the object and the unpredictable patterning of this dynamic connectivity, alternating between confluence and isolation makes it difficult for the subject to relax into the intrinsic completion that it is already part of.

Due to ignorance of our ever-open ground we over-identify with our sense of being an individual self. We then look out at the world from within ourselves towards something that we take to be 'other than us'. Then desire and aversion push and pull us so that ease and relaxation remain elusive. As long as we take ourselves to be unintegrated with our ground anxiety will be inevitable. Disintegration has never actually occurred. We are always already part of the whole. Yet the illusion of separation seems to disintegrate the whole and as we are increasingly focused on our own concerns our intrinsic panoramic inclusive awareness becomes functionally unavailable due to our reliance on conceptual interpretation. Thoughts are a poor substitute for the clarity of awareness, yet we rely on thoughts due to our deluded belief in real entities.

Openness is free of anxiety because it has no self-position; it does not stand in relation to anything and so it cannot be under attack. When we open to our mind in its infinity, even when we feel that anxiety fills our whole world, this anxiety will not be as vast as the mind. Anxiety has the quality of being pervasive and can seem to infect everything. Intense anxiety is all-consuming, leaving nothing untouched so we feel overwhelmed. But paradoxically if we can stay with this anxiety, remaining open with it, free of the duality of subject and object, we find that the anxiety vanishes.

How do we stay with it? Relax into your own intrinsic awareness, the open dimension of the mind. Don't turn away from the object. Don't fall into the object. Simply stay gently present with whatever is arising. Then the arising occurrence will pass without you having to make effort and your own sense of individual subjectivity will be thinned. Indeed it is your own effort to manage the situation by adopting and rejecting that maintains the patterns of projected value that sustain anxious arousal.

Non-reactivity allows the infinity of the mind to be revealed as the veil of our projections and interpretations falls away. Our mind is empty of any self-substance. It is not a thing. Just as clouds pass through the sky without leaving a trace so thoughts, feelings, sensations and so on pass through the mind without leaving a trace. The ego-self is like a cloud and clouds influence and shape each other. However, awareness is inseparable from the unborn sky. The empty mind, the mind that has no inherent defining content of its own, is the infinite field in which everything possible is revealed. Happiness, apples, cars, sadness, books, anxiety– everything is an experience and not a self-existing entity. When this becomes clear, as we open more and more to our ungraspable mind and dissolve all remnants of our belief that we are a limited self, then we are simply present in non-duality free of any basis for anxiety. Anxiety is a feeling tone of duality, of the mistaken separation of subject and object: it is not to be found in the bright expanse of awareness.

The things that you don't like – which you think are a problem, which restrict and bind you – these 'things' are not real entities. They lack inherent existence and from the very beginning have been patterns of emptiness. Yet although these patterns lack self-substance, they are impactful for the mind under the power of duality. When we encounter a pattern that shocks us, for example a car cutting across us on a motorway, anxiety arises and we are unsettled.

What is anxiety? It's a particular vibration bringing sensations of retraction and arousal. Our skin might tingle and we might shake as our breathing changes. We might feel dread that the event could be repeated. What is actually occurring? Momentary events in which subject and object are arising together briefly in a new pattern. What does it mean? I am vulnerable. The world I live in is not as safe as I would like it to be. This is not news. It is something we know but do not wish to know. The shock has reminded us of the truth of our existence. We will die, that is certain. But when and how we die, that is uncertain. It could happen at any time. All that we know, possess, and take ourselves to be could be gone in an instant on a busy road. Who I take myself to be would be annihilated. Yet who I actually am, this bright ungraspable awareness, will continue unmarked and unaffected.

What is anxiety saying to us? Awaken to your own awareness! What is its nature? It is manifesting as fear of emptiness. The immediate moment of the arousing of anxiety is a choice point between effortless freedom and effortful entanglement. Either we see clearly that illusory appearances are ungraspable and that their seeming reality is a delusion, or we grasp at transient occurrence as if it had something substantial to offer, something that our individual ego-identity could hold on to even if it is unpleasant to do so.

NEEDLESS ACTIVITY

The fabrication of entities is an illusion. To see this is the beginning of clarity. When bright vanishing appearance is not thickened with concepts, the diverse display of light comes and goes free of opacity. Unborn it is free of obstruction, stopping or ceasing. Attachment to illusion, as if real entities were present, leads to suffering as we are persecuted by our own construct which we take seriously. We are persecuted by the bewilderment of not seeing delusion for what it is.

From the point of view of dzogchen, clarity is vital if non-dual integrity is to be awakened to as the basis of our life. If manifestation is taken to be separate from the ground, manifestation will attack you since you also will seem to be separate from the ground. Then these two separate pseudo-entities will cause trouble for each other like hostile Siamese twins. If manifestation is seen to be integral with the ground, then manifestation can be enjoyed for what it is even when its formal content seems to be unpleasant. Our practice is to return to this again and again until non-involvement lets us see with the wisdom eye.

Dzogchen texts emphasise '*pang lang me pa*'. *Pang* means to push away, *lang* means to take up, *me pa* means without. Without pushing away, without adopting, without saying, '*I don't want this*', without saying, '*I need this*'. Without isolation or separation. Without fusion or confluence. Neither identifying nor dis-identifying, simply resting in being with without being anyone.

When I was a teenager on holiday with my parents, I was often socially uncomfortable. We would be in a hotel and I would have to sit at a table with them. I felt like having a little sign saying, '*I'm not with these people*'. My poor parents would say:

—*Tonight, we are going to the theatre.*

—*No, I don't want to go.*

—*We have already bought the tickets. Come to the theatre, be with us, we are family.*

—*No, I don't want to go.*

I was identifying myself in opposition to them. I didn't get any benefit from doing this. Yet I could not free myself from it as I felt I had only two choices: either to be with them and like it, which I couldn't do; or be myself—relaxed, and at ease—which I couldn't do either. So I was stuck in the middle.

This is the nature of anxiety: we can't go forward and we can't go back. We can't simply open to the situation, but neither can we free ourselves from it. When we are trapped as a separate self we have no freedom to move; we are always going to be constrained and bound by interpersonal conditions. The heart essence of dzogchen practice is not to try to control the situation. Don't try to establish the situation on your own terms as if that would make it easy for you, for if you do that you will merely have confirmed your own limitation. We have to learn to work with circumstances without trying to condition them or be conditioned by them. This is particularly important as you get older. When you are young and have energy, if your career is going well and you have money, you can, to a certain extent, make the world dance to your tune. You can make things happen. But as you get older this becomes more difficult. The success that you had in the middle period in your life can lead to suffering later as you have less and less capacity to impose your will.

To give up the need to be in control without feeling out of control is not easy. It is not about relaxing – for that is still something we're doing. It is about finding ourselves in relaxation by not doing anything. Yet of course letting go of control can easily give rise to anxiety. Only non-duality is truly relaxed, at ease and free of both control and anxiety. In dzogchen we open ourselves to presence in non-duality. Then, even if our relaxation is still prone to moments of tension, we refrain from trying to improve it. Rather, by

allowing what occurs to occur without meddling we gradually find ourselves in evenness whatever is coming and going.

DON'T ENTER DUALITY

To relax is to trust that whatever occurs is exactly and completely and perfectly how it appears. In this context 'trust' does not indicate something we do. It is more like an intrinsic confidence that becomes more present the less we doubt, analyse, construct and strive. This trust is the flavour of integrity, of the whole that is forever free of lesion, splitting or separation. The intact requires no repair and any attempt to repair what is not broken will only be misleading and bewildering. To trust Samantabhadra, the goodness evenly present everywhere, is to be freed from the prison of reification, attribution and judgement. All that occurs is inseparable from the ever-open ground of primordial purity. All occurrence is intrinsically pure yet can be taken as impure due to our deluding belief in the idea of the real existence of subject and object as entities separate from the ground.

The integrity of wholeness is unchanging. We do not have to strive to integrate, merely to avoid the effort of disintegration and its consequent construction of seemingly self-existent entities (object side) organised according to hierarchies of projected value (subject side). Good/bad, right/wrong and so on are attributions arising from confused and confusing mental activity. Things are not actually as bad or as good as we feel they are. 'Things' become bad or good because our mind takes them to be so. Mental activity taken as the competence of the ego-self is an alienating misappropriation from the ceaseless display of ungraspable clarity. Thoughts, memories, plans are all movements of energy and no matter how much they move they cannot establish real and enduring existence. They are unborn yet when allowed to take on the dualistic function of midwives, they lead the false mother of delusion to give birth to imagined entities taken to be self-existing.

If our mind simply observes this process of creation of entities we see the openness of the ground being obscured by what arises from/within/as the ground. Just as clouds emerging in/from/as the sky seem to obscure the sky when they are not directly seen as aspects of the sky, so the mind seems to become deluded in spite of its intrinsic clarity. When the sky-like mind is taken to be a shape-shifting cloud, as an isolated entity, we will suffer anxiety. This ego is a vulnerable non-entity whose sensitivity means that anxieties can multiply and flutter like leaves in a breeze. Plucking each leaf, attending to each instance of anxiety and uncertainty, is an endless task as new anxious growth quickly emerges.

Who are we who suffer this anxiety? We are the vibration of patterns, vibration which generates the illusion of 'selves'. Silence gives rise to sound which gives rise to speech. Speech is a thickening of sound, sound thickened by the identification of meaning-bearing signs. No one actually suffers since not one sentient being has ever really existed. And yet we suffer in our fusion with the arising forms taken as ego identity. Who does this fusing? No one. Yet we do it as movement, vibration, attraction, repulsion. Movement thickens as pseudo-entity, which actually is empty of all existence and nonexistence. This is why the simple meditation instruction is to align with the non-meditation of neither adopting nor rejecting. It is through these two modes of movement that the delusion of a continuous ego-self identity is maintained.

The key advice is to sever the root, cut the life-support of the delusion of the true existence of real events, situations, people. All occurrence is the play of the empty ungraspable mind. When the root of anxiety is uprooted from the ground, we see that there was no duality of root and ground for there is no basis for either being taken as intrinsically 'other'. Anxiety is not other than the emptiness of the ground. The habit of ignoring the ground cannot actually create anything. The gift of the ground is the play of illusion arising as all that is taken to be samsara and nirvana. When this is clear we abide in the non-duality of the primordial purity of indestructible unborn awareness and the ceaseless instant presence of clarity free of reliance on polarities and conceptual elaboration.

This is important to hold in mind because so much of our precious time is wasted in anxious thinking and worry. We may think about the past with regret and remorse, and plan for the future with doubt and uncertainty. These thoughts bring their emotions which impact the body. Months and years go by but there is no end to worry and so we remain blind to our ever-present clarity. To see that anxiety is not other than clarity is very challenging for the ego-self. In fact, the ego-self cannot comprehend this. It is beyond concept-based comprehension.

NOT KNOWING

Question: I got the feeling that the mind is everywhere and everywhere is the mind and I am part of the mind... Then I started to panic and sweat and I thought that I had better come back from my meditation!

James: Groundlessness can feel scary. You are leaving home; you want to leave home yet it is hard because you are ambivalent about letting go of the familiar. The familiar reassures the ego-self, yet its seeming givenness blinds us to bright openness. When that infinite brightness dawns it is not like anything we know. Bright awareness is not our true home. It is not a situation we can be cosy and safe inside. Awareness is the light of our mind arising as the non-duality of illuminating and illuminated. Instead of the delusion of home we abide in/as non-dual presence free of any resting place. Study of the view is vital so that it can support us to turn towards the light even when the shadows feel safer.

Anxiety regarding the unknown can seem to help keep the ego-self safe if it turns the ego towards the familiar. This is a very limiting kind of safety. If we think something is dangerous then we might seek to protect and comfort ourselves by avoiding it. Yet both anxiety and ego-self arise due to conditions. Anxiety cannot be locked out and ego-self cannot be locked safely inside. In relative terms some people take too many risks in life and some people don't take enough risks. Finding the right balance between risk and comfort is difficult. However as long as we are within samsara neither worldly risks nor worldly comfort will illuminate the door to liberation. We have to follow the middle way, be less active and allow thoughts to show their own inherent self-liberation. Otherwise even dharma-associated thoughts can feed mental striving, turbulence, confusion and belief in duality.

You can't think your way out of samsara. Either you trust the lineage and start to ease yourself out of ego control or you remain standing on your own small ground trying to hold your life together. Our ego formations will not survive 'our' death, yet unborn

awareness will be untouched by it. Ego identity is inseparable from anxiety while awareness is intrinsically free of it.

NON-STRIVING

If we find anxiety arising in our meditation this is most likely due to our interfering with our intrinsic effortless capacity to relax and release. If we are intentionally effortfully trying to let go of our attachment to and reliance on the items and structures which have maintained our familiar sense of self we will not be successful. Our thoughts, memories, plans, judgements, values, sensations are all being ceaselessly recruited to the task of self-continuity. These aspects of our self-identity help to keep us afloat as 'ourselves' yet they also burden us. We can't both let go of them and continue to be who we take ourselves to be. Wanting to have our cake and eat it is not useful in practice.

Garab Dorje's second point is *'To not remain in doubt'*. This doesn't mean making a clear decision for that would still be concept-based and therefore fundamentally unreliable. Rather we open to the ground and with this our radiant empty awareness is revealed as it is, free of beliefs, decisions and doubts.

However if we don't release our habitual fixations through guru yoga then we import ego into our practice and this burdened sense of self makes meditating sky-to-sky impossible. The ego resists its own emptiness, being self-cherishing and self-referential. Then the practice seems to provoke anxiety because emptiness won't support me as I take myself to be.

Some time ago I was looking at a little video for children. It was about an elephant who wanted to fly. The elephant couldn't fly, but some friends managed to get him up a tree, whereupon a friendly cloud came and floated underneath. The elephant jumped from the tree onto the cloud, and he fell right through it! In the same way, emptiness is like the sky, thoughts are like clouds and we are like elephants. Until we become very light and inseparable from the sky we will keep falling through cloud after cloud. We won't be able to rest in emptiness because we are too heavy with all the thought we have accumulated and continue to believe in.

Some people are frightened of going to the dentist. The dentist's room is not the sweetest place on earth but generally speaking, dentists are not torturers. How can you sit in the chair with somebody who is going to cause you pain and not feel frightened? When you know that the pain is due to a problem in your tooth and not due to the dentist then you can develop more trust in them. In samsara the source of our suffering is not other people, and it is not even ourselves. Suffering arises from ignorance of how our mind is in its unborn openness and in its ceaseless unborn display. We have to get close to ignorance and see how it arises if we are going to let go of our identification with it. This can seem scary and difficult, yet it is vital not to let these anxious reactions become obstacles to opening. If you stay with the practice such obstacles cannot be avoided. So, either you stop the practice or learn to work with circumstances. As many prayers say, *'May obstacles be the path.'* Neither merging with the obstacle and getting lost nor avoiding the obstacle and maintaining a self-isolating distance, we need to find the profound middle way of non-reactive openness and acceptance. Awakening to how the mind is is the one key that opens all locks, the one medicine that cures all ills.

If anxiety arises during your meditation relax into the out breath, letting tension release from your body and remain open and unbiased with whatever occurs. Struggle merely increases our sense of duality so under all circumstances remain light and relaxed and let experience come and go. Identification, partiality and selectivity feed the ego and lock us out of where we actually are. True freedom begins when we directly see that the mind is vajra, indestructible. Our awareness is indestructible and so fear of the impact of events is like the fear a child might have at shadows moving on their bedroom wall. It's only a shadow, a mirage, a rainbow, and an echo – no appearance has the substance to harm the mind. Although the ego-self, which is a content of the mind, is easily hurt and harmed, the mind itself is unharmable. Now we can taste the freedom from hopes and fears.

If you find yourself dissatisfied with your practice, formulating plans to try harder – which you know you are unlikely to fulfil – then this is a sign that you're taking yourself too seriously. You are not the boss, you're not in charge of what happens in your mind so just let it be as it is and give yourself a holiday from the belief that it is all up to you.

However, if this direct approach does not speak to you then on a relative level, if you keep massaging the dharma view into your heart you will find a warmth and security which will be present day-by-day. It will be present as a support in any situation. For example, you may find yourself making mistakes or being very angry. Then you could remember, *'Oh yes, Buddha taught about anger. Anger is one of the five poisons. Anger arises from attachment; it's aversion; it is wanting to get rid of things I don't like. The reason I feel angry is because I am identified with this small sense of myself which wants to exclude everything it does not like.'*

NO ONE TO BLAME

The anger arises because you have slipped from presence as open awareness into an identification with the illusory ego-self. However, there is no one to blame and nothing to be done because actually you have not slipped out of awareness. Awareness is fundamental and unchanging: it cannot be lost or gained. 'You' as the idea of you, have taken up a position vis-à-vis the idea of the provocation and its consequent anger. Cloud is provoking cloud, a storm is brewing– yet sky-like awareness is free of tension, open and uninvolved. Seeing the emptiness of the anger cloud, watching it form and dissolve, you see directly that you were grasping at nothing appearing in the form of anger. There never was a 'real' entity provoking nor a 'real' response of anger. Seeing the emptiness of the anger is seeing non-duality and simultaneously releasing yourself from the delusion of ego-agency. The anger is like an x-ray: it reveals that which is hidden. Emptiness is never revealed as such, yet it is not hidden, it is not something other than appearance. What has been hidden is the fact that duality is a delusion. Any arising can help to reveal this unchanging truth. Appearances are self-arising and self-vanishing. There is no doer or maker. This can be revealed through envy, depression, sadness and any other occurrence.

In the bright clarity of your own awareness the drama of illusory subject and object is laid bare. If you find yourself trapped in the drama of duality you will experience being suffused with emotion, happy when you are liked and sad when you are not. Other people are as fickle as we are. Their moods come and go as do ours. We are like two corks bobbing on the waves, sometimes synchronised and sometimes not. If you try to control a situation like this you become a child of Sisyphus, entrained in endless

pointless punishing endeavour. It is vital to open to non-duality and recognise the artifice of all identity. Identity is like a rôle in the theatre, a construct which, although illusory, has great power to beguile and deceive.

With the clarity of this view we do not have to struggle to find freedom. Struggle and all the other modes of dualistic participation are the friends of anxiety. They highlight how our life is not okay and that effort needs to be made to improve it. Whereas the non-dual view of dzogchen points directly to the ever-pure unborn ground in its inseparability from all that occurs. This is the great completion, the perfect integrity of all, the infinity free of splitting, polarities, extremes, fixed positions, judgements and all the other factors which generate and sustain anxiety. If you stay present as presence you will find that there is nothing to be done and that life displays effortlessly, unburdening you of the last vestiges of isolated self-identity and individual empire building. The dzogchen point of view indicates how intrinsic relaxation accepts anxiety as integral with openness. Then arousal can be allowed to build up and disperse without being pushed away and without being identifying with. To see that relaxation is present at the same time as anxiety and that relaxation is part of ongoing presence whereas anxiety is movement is to taste the non-collusive befriending of all that was once held as self or other.

There is no better renunciation than letting whatever occurs go free as it arises. All appearances are self-liberating. The renunciation of the effort of grasping and controlling is synonymous with finding the intrinsic ease of how it is. The immediacy of arising is clarity itself. There is no hidden essence to be discovered. Thoughts, feelings, sensations and so on are not cows requiring milking. There is no extra goodness lurking in them. They offer everything fully and then vanish. This truth is always available to awareness and never available for dualistic consciousness. The mind is inherently relaxed and open. Contrivance, artifice, construction and production as ego endeavour are all signs that the veil of effort is being held in place. The ego-self is already part of the family yet it hovers by the gate like an anxious beggar. However there is no wall, no inside or outside. Let the presence of intrinsic relaxation soften your grasping and you will find that you are already part of the infinite. But if you tense up and struggle you are in the unstable realm of alienated isolation.

Anxiety is the vibration of duality, the feeling tone of the sense that all is not well, that I am not safe where I think I am. The ego-self carries with it the hubris of the will to power, the dream of control, yet the easily observable fact is that we are not in control. The ego-self is always living a lie. Interdependence exposes autonomy as a fantasy. Impermanence exposes stasis as a fantasy. All that we encounter, including ourselves, is movement free of defining essence. The only true stillness is the indestructible empty ground itself. Let movement move. Let arising self-liberate. Rest in the already-at-rest. This is our practice.

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