

# HOW YOU SEE IS WHAT YOU SEE

## 2. ORANGES ARE THE ONLY FRUIT

Mum sends you, age 7, to the market to buy oranges, only oranges, and "don't buy anything else!" The women with the fruit and vegetable stalls want to sell you what they have, "Look" they say, "what lovely bananas and the grapes, Oh, such lovely grapes – and these pears are so amazing."

"Oh yes, they do look good. What will I get?" The more you look the more mum's words become a mere echo as your original intention is dispersed in the myriad attractions of these diverse possibilities.

So we need more than just a word like 'orange' if we are to maintain our focus, and not get distracted, confused and then choose what is not needed. We need to be calm and settled and thereby less seducible by the seeming fascinations of objects and we need to see the actuality of the stimuli which activate our sense of subjective necessity. We can gain such a calm settledness through the practice of maintaining a relaxed even focus on a simple phenomenon as a support for anchoring our attention. This is the practice of shamatha or shiné, calm abiding whereby the distracting attractions of transient stimuli are not attended to. With this withdrawal of vitalising attention they start to lose their allure.

Sitting with the spine straight and our gaze down the line of the nose we focus on the sensation of breath entering and leaving our nostrils. It is the power of our own conscious intention to maintain this focus that deprives thoughts, feelings, other sensations and so on of their capacity to impinge.

When we achieve some capacity for sustained focus we can direct that focusing attention to the crown of our head and simply register whatever seems to be occurring there. Then we slowly and carefully bring this attention down through the body, allowing whatever is occurring to reveal itself without being edited, elaborated or conceptualised. This practice is known as clear insight, vipassana or lhag-tong. Scanning up and down, up and down, the strangeness of the actual is revealed, a strangeness of phenomena which are undeniably present yet ungraspable and inexpressible. To try to describe it is to distort it so that what we get hold of is other than what is.

For example, sensation itself is raw. If we think of a presenting sensation as being an 'itch' we have already collected it and cooked it, shifting it from nature to culture, from the strange to the known. By leaving nature as nature the urge to cook, to compound, to make sense of, to incorporate into the known, is let go off. You shift from being a colonialist it to being an innocent appreciator and so the actual is given space to breathe due to restraint being placed on the omnipotence and omniscience of the conceptual.

So now we arrive in the market, calm, settled and attentive to what we actually see. We are looking for oranges and all the other fruits are irrelevant—we see them but they are not what we're looking for with our developed focused attention. For us, now, oranges are the only

fruit and we return home happily confident that mum will be pleased with how independent we can be.

## 2. AMRITA HEALS THE HEART

Gradually I became aware that I was dying. Not just the death of this ageing body but a more sinister death, the death of hope and joy. Everywhere I look there is sorrow, confusion and destructive behaviour. And if I consider myself, well, so many years have gone by and the five poisons still feed their toxins into my heart. The worst one, of course, is mental dullness, the fog of assumption that creeps over every moment of insight and returns me to my habitual beliefs and judgements. Effort unskillfully engaged with and wrongly applied is simply exhausting and demoralising and the depleted heart can bring no depth or light to the practice.

If it is all up to me as a lonely hero on the path then I might as well give up. Saying the refuge everyday doesn't seem to rescue me and I fall back into myself. The bodhisattvas have made their vows to save us— but where are they? This dull heart full of sorrow and self-pity is too full of grief to offer any room to them. They are too nice and I am too nasty, too lost and too self-abandoning.

Yet, perhaps, there is someone to turn to, someone untainted by my confusion and lostness, someone free of all limitation, someone within samsara yet free of it. So I search and there hidden in my piles of old dharma papers is the key prayer to Padmasambhava, the second Buddha, the sole support for beings in dark times.

So I sit and invite him to come. He will come. This is his promise. I look at his face and know he will keep it. His vow and commitment is unchanging—it is my vacillating spirit that is the trouble. He is present here and now, present in the north-west corner of the land of Orgyen, the site of purification in the centre of my heart. Sitting in the centre of a lotus flower he is the radiance of emptiness, the light of Buddha potential present in all beings. Present in me without me having to do anything, he is the wonderful availability of all purification and accomplishment. Famous as the Lotus Born he is the non-duality of appearance and emptiness and we are the rays of his light. Resting in his ever-open presence which turns no one away, we find all our limiting thoughts and beliefs to be playful movement, the dance of dakinis in the sky of our mind which we find in its inseparability from his. We want to be like you, always, not just for a moment in the practice. Finding you as my true identity I am freed from attachment to all the habits, concepts, impulses out of which I maintain this prison of my-self.

Please come here and bless us with non-duality, awaken us from the delusion of separation. The door is open, his sky-like mind is open— the only limit comes from me. I am trapping myself by my effort to maintain an illusion. So, less effort, relax, enjoy simple trust in the freedom of inseparability.

The body, speech and mind of the Buddha is my body, speech and mind. The indestructible guru is our own intrinsic awareness present from the very beginning. The lotus accomplishment is to abide in the lotus of non-dual emptiness from which the Hung of the five original knowings shines out as radiance free of obscuration.

ཆོག་བདུན་གསེལ་འདེབས།

SEVEN LINE PRAYER

ཧྲིཿ ལུ་རྒྱན་ཡུལ་གྱི་རུབ་བྱང་མཚམས།

*bija, seed letter of Padmasambhava* **UR GYAN YUL** *land of Urgyen in the Sind Doab in Pakistan* **GYI** *of* **NUB** *west* **JANG** *north* **TSAM** *border, corner*  
Hung. In the north-west corner of the land of Urgyen,

པདྨ་གེ་སར་སྣང་པོ་ལཾ།

**PAE MA GE SAR** **DONG PO** **LA**  
*lotus, stamen stem on*  
Upon the stem and stamen of a lotus,

ཡ་མཚན་མཚོག་གི་དངོས་གྲུབ་བརྟེན།

**YAM TSAN** **CHOG** **GI** **NGOE DRUB** **NYE**  
*marvellous, wonderful supreme of siddhis, accomplishments got, has*  
Are you who have the marvellous and supreme accomplishment,

པདྨ་འབྱུང་གནས་ཞེས་སུ་གྲགས།

**PAE MA JUNG NAE** **ZHE SU** **DRAG**  
*Padmasambhava, Guru Rinpoche famous as*  
Padmasambhava of great renown

འཁོར་དུ་མཁའ་འགྲོ་མང་པོས་བསྐོར།

**KHOR DU** **KHAN DRO** **MANG POE** **KOR**  
*as retinue dakinis \* many by surrounded*  
*\*sky-goddesses (here means all deities inseparable from space)*  
With a retinue of many dakinis around you.

ཁྱེད་ཀྱི་རྩེས་སུ་བདག་སྦྱབ་གྱིས།

**KYE KYI** **JE SU** **DAG** **DRUB** **KYI**  
*you following after I practice by that*  
Following and relying on you we do your practice, therefore,

བྱིན་གྱིས་བརྒྱབ་ཕྱིར་གཤེགས་སུ་གསེལ།

**JIN GYI LAB** **CHIR** **SHEG SU SOL**  
*blessing in order to please come here.*  
In order to grant your blessings, please come here.

གུ་རུ་པདྨ་སི་རྟེན་ཧྲིཿ

**GU RU** **PAE MA** **SID DHI** **HUNG**  
*master, guru Padmasambhava accomplishment give me*  
Guru Padmasambhava grant us accomplishment!



So much time can be wasted in egocentric effort. This is time we can ill afford to waste. Trusting the Guru, trusting Guru Rinpoche, trusting the Guru of our own unborn awareness is the quick path of living the result. Guru Rinpoche holds a skull cup full of dutsi amrita. This elixir which reveals our deathless presence is the juice of demons. When the five poisons of mental dullness, aversion, desire, jealousy and pride are squeezed so that their vitality is released from the fixative of duality they shine forth as the five original knowings: infinite hospitality, mirror-like, discerning, success, and equality. Finding ourselves in our inseparability from Guru Rinpoche we are nourished by the never-ending stream of this deathless amrita swirling in the skull cup of emptiness.

The heart is self-healing when we open to its intrinsic wholeness. The effort to heal oneself rather than opening to and relaxing into being whole is the cruel means to remain apart while already being a part of the whole.

### 3. WE ARE ALREADY HERE

The term dzogchen indicates whole, intrinsically complete; it is not the product of a process but simply how it is, how we are. There is nothing for us to strive for, nothing we have to do or struggle not to do. We merely have to relax and open, to awaken to our mind as it actually is. Opening and awakening are not effortful activities – it is what flowers and birds do quite easily every morning. In dzogchen this is set out as the inseparability of ground, path, and fruition. Although for we who wander in samsara this looks like a linear progression, the ground– path – fruition have been complete from the very beginning. Our 'progress' is to awaken from the dream or delusion of separation—and we awaken not in a new or better place, but where we have always actually been.

Although the ground/source never moves, the primordial Buddha Samantabhadra, inseparable from the ground, ceaselessly offers direct transmission of our ever-open mind. Moreover his naked simplicity present with vitalising Samantabhadri offers a ceaseless flow of transmission via symbols as clarity free of concepts. These transmissions are often too subtle for the gross density of our mental interpretation and so Garab Dorje, like a ray of light from Samantabhadra's heart, illuminated the path for we dullards who must hear because we do not see.

Shining brightly in an effulgence of rainbow light while sitting in the sky Garab Dorje offered the summation of his dzogchen teaching as *THE THREE STATEMENTS WHICH HIT THE POINT*.

The first is, revelation of your original face directly to yourself (*Direct awakening to how it is*). When practising with a teacher this arises through silence, through symbols, and through words. When we practice on our own the simplest, surest way to facilitate this is guru yoga. From the very beginning before beginnings your mind has had not a hair tip of difference from the mind of the guru, Samantabhadra. Sit at ease and open to a white letter A in the space in front of you. A is emptiness, the first soft breath of emptiness, the cusp of nothing and something, revealing their non-duality. Around it are rays of white, red, blue, yellow, and green light, the potential of all the modes of restriction and liberation. The inseparability of A and the five lights is the non-duality of the ground and its effortless display. If, in bewilderment, something is privileged over nothing, then the five lights are dulled into the entitative forms of samsara.

Opening to this appearance allow the sound of A to arise from the space within you – slow, clear, ungraspable and vanishing. Let the sound arise three times then with the final dissolving of the sound the A and the five lights in front of you also dissolve. Simply rest in openness free of involvement, judgement and bias. Whatever comes, comes; whatever goes, goes. There is nothing to do, the ego self is dissolved, all that manifests is equally transient and empty of anything to hold onto.

If subject side thoughts, feelings, memories, sensations arise, let them come and go. They are not you; you will gain nothing from them nor will you be harmed by them. You are presence, awareness, and openness: free of personal content and free of any need for acceptance and rejection. This is your mind itself. Mind is openness and revelation; like a

mirror the mind does not move, like reflections in a mirror revelation is ceaselessly occurring. The non-duality of these two is the inseparability of primordial purity and effortless occurrence or instant presence. Revelation is the co-emergence of object side and subject side, of the emptiness of phenomena (phenomena-ness, dharmata) and the emptiness of mental events (mind-ness, chittata). Free of bias both arise and pass freely, magically polishing the mirror of the mind as they pass.

For as long as this is not clear one must return again and again to sitting at ease for short periods of ten to fifteen minutes and allow the five questions to untie your knots and dissolve the glue of your constructs. Firstly, does your mind have colour or shape? Secondly, does it have size, is it big or small? Thirdly, does it come from somewhere? Fourthly, does it remain somewhere? Fifthly, does it go somewhere? When you seem to have established how it is, stay with your conclusion – if it is conceptual it will vanish. The mind itself is unborn, fresh, naked and beyond being an object of thought.

Garab Dorje's second point is, decisive clarity directly on this singularity (*Doubt-free clarity that this is how it is*). This clarity is not a product of effort. The intrinsic light of the mind shows the mind precisely without showing anything. The mind is not an object for mind. You cannot see it as something. Yet when you are present with it, as it, all is clear in its self-illumination. Just this, as it is, singular, alone, beyond the endless adjustment of relative vision.

For meditators on the path this indicates that one should be careful for self-deception arises easily. Direct openness is so precious and indeed indestructible, vajra. Yet in being open, whatever comes, comes, and this includes concepts which may have a density and pull for you due to the energy of identification you have invested in the idea of them. Such ideas can momentarily suffuse transient appearances making them seem very important and so requiring adoption or rejection. Relax into openness; do not remain in doubt. When concepts seem to bring meaning this is fool's gold – do not be deceived.

Garab Dorje's third point is, continuing direct confidence in liberation (*At ease in unchanging liberty*). When you have no existential need of subject or object appearances, when you are free of the delusion of being a human being, all that arises is unobstructed, vanishing directly by itself. The liberation of the 'object' is the liberation of awareness from the last patina of verdigris. Bright and illuminating awareness reveals this whole, this now. Whatever arises can neither add to nor subtract from this mirror-mind itself. The ever-free, inherently liberated mirror is present in the self-liberation of all reflections arising within it. The confidence that arises is not ego's confidence – this is not a quality of myself – this is the confidence, the settledness, the evenness, of being free of the delusion of the duality of self and other.

This path aspect is alive and present as the inseparable triad of awareness: openness, clarity, and all-pervading immediacy. Each specific flower/moment is always within the bright field of non-dual disclosure which is inseparable from the ungraspable ground.

The result is the fulfilment of potential, the unchanging presence of the three modes of Buddha: dharmakaya, sambhogakaya, nirmanakaya. Dharmakaya is the inseparability of the

sphere of all phenomena (dharmadatu) and awareness (vidya, rigpa). Although it cannot be seen it is never hidden. Its revelation is sambhogakaya, the luminous form of the Buddha's presence, announcing its availability in every appearance that occurs. It is an invitation to enjoyment. The light of the sambhogakaya manifests further as the specificity of the apparitional forms of the Buddha taking on whatever appearance is required. This is the nirmanakaya which we encounter in the presence of the guru who, however she or he appears, is not a human being wandering in samsara.

Although this may seem far away from who you take yourself to be at the moment there is no need for worry or uncertainty. Self-doubt arises and passes– it has no inherent validity. Your own belief fills such thoughts and feelings with power. Relax your identification with the beliefs that arise and pass in your mind for they will lead you astray. Relax, release, open, see. This is enough. This is all.

James Low

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