

# The middle way is a tightrope strung between rainbows

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Again and again we have to detoxify ourselves from the false belief that there are really existing people fighting each other. Our life continues dependent on harmony between inner and outer factors. A bullet entering our body is a disharmonious factor that strongly impacts our interactive interdependent life system. On the basis of the bullet breaking a bone we have pain, need treatment but are likely to survive. On the basis of it entering our heart we are likely to die. Life and death are not other than dependently arising patterns. To see this is to see the vast systemic interconnectivity of which we are a part.

Our six consciousnesses, our six organs of consciousness and our six objects of consciousness are all interdependent and mutually influencing. When we examine our body, our voice and our mind we cannot find a single self-existing entity. Images, sounds, thoughts, feelings, memories and plans arise and pass. We have no fixed stable self-essence and have no real separate existence. If this is truly seen moment by moment then the profound stupidity of war becomes evident. Someone is not killing someone else because there are no 'someones' having inherent existence. During our lifetime we identify with many manifesting patterns. We are some-many and not a singular self. When we die no 'one' dies. A stream of becoming ceases. If we have identified with this stream as indicating the richness of our experience then its ending is easily taken as the ending of all that I am. Thus death seems to be the end.

However all that arises, all that we identify with and all that we avoid identifying with – all this is illusory transient experience arising in the open empty sky illuminated by sun-like awareness. Our practice of dharma is the means to awaken to our unborn undying awareness and thereby relinquish our over-reliance on dualistic consciousness. Our own attachments make this difficult to see because we believe that people are real and therefore that their death is real. This is the source of joy if it occurs to enemies and of grief if it occurs to friends.

Therefore we should analyse our assumptions and see their falsity. Our assumptions about our experience are based on the binary opposition inherent in ideas or identities. If we say, “this is hot”, then implicitly we are also saying, “this is not cold”. Hot and cold are born together as mutually exclusive identifications. If we examine our experience we can see that it is imbued with the flavour of polarities. This basic assumption is a dualistic delusion which pervades the whole of samsara. Our study and practice encourages us to not fall under the power of the simplifying categories based on polarities. All the many schools and styles of buddha dharma focus directly or indirectly on freeing us from our reliance on polarities as the means to organise our experience and to make sense of the world for us. For example, the following general human view is prevalent in all cultures and this wide acceptance makes it difficult to challenge without the clarity provided by dharma. Although impermanence is manifest everywhere we tend to believe in the reliability of our opinions and of the familiar appearances we encounter in our daily lives. From Numbers 2-5 these briefly expressed four views reveal the falsity of the conflicted polarities set out just below their headings.

## **1. General human view:**

*people fight people*

Although there are no real separate people who exist, people fight because they believe in the real existence of self and other.

## **2. General Buddhist view:**

*patterns of the five skandhas fight patterns of the five skandhas*

Observe these dynamic patterns of form, feeling, perception, composition and consciousness, each free of self, and see how reifying sentient beings, and naming and identifying them as friend or foe, generates deceptive constructs.

*All phenomena arise from a cause. This cause has been shown by the Tathagata. How to put an end to this cause has been taught by the great practitioner of virtue.*

This famous verse reminds us that all dharmas, that is all phenomena, arise from causes. This is the central teaching of the Buddha. All experiences and appearances – all that is possible at any time and in any place – arise from causes and have no inherent separate existence. This is the key to all the dharma teachings: the simple statement that all that we take to be entities are mere patterns of clouds and rainbows.

### **3. Mahayana view:**

*our own mothers fight our own mothers*

During the course of our innumerable past lives every sentient being has been our own mother and also the mother of all other sentient beings. Being unaware of this and believing in our false identifications of sentient beings taken to be truly possessing of the qualities we attribute to them, we help those we see as ‘our’ people and harm those we see as ‘other’. In all wars mothers are fighting mothers, children are trying to kill their mothers, and mothers are trying to kill their children. The blessing of equanimity and care for all is discarded in favour of bias, celebration of victory and contempt for the vanquished. Being blind to the fact that all beings have been our own mother, we are blind to our own partiality. Awakening to our debt of gratitude can allow us to see the irreducible value of all.

### **4. General tantric view:**

*delusion fights delusion*

By entering the mandala of the deity we see that all forms are appearance and emptiness, all words and definitions are sound and emptiness, and all thoughts and emotions are not other than awareness and emptiness. All that occurs is illusion – that is to say no occurrence is separate from emptiness. All arisings, all experiences, are like rainbows, like dreams, like a mirage. With this clarity delusion dissolves and illusion is revealed. All occurrence is within the mandala and whether their appearance is peaceful or wrathful their essence is unborn emptiness.

### **5. Dzogchen view:**

*mistaken identity fights mistaken identity*

The ground, basis or source of all sentient beings has always been pure. It has never been touched or defiled by even a speck of a real existent. It is alone and yet not apart, for effortlessly, instantly, the display of illusory forms arises as its luminosity. This is the inconceivable diversity of non-difference. When this is not seen mistaken identities are adopted. Self and other, friend and foe, Western and Asian, black skinned and white skinned, Christian and Muslim – on and on. Since

actually there is no separate self, when the idea of self is adopted as the erroneous site of presence it has to maintain its delusion of separate existence by fusing with items selected from the flow of self-arising self-vanishing ephemera.

These contrived identities deceive both self and other. Yet sadly, so very sadly, these mistaken identities are welcomed as a defence against the truth that 'self' is a delusion. What is taken to be self is a stream of uncatchable moments of the radiance of self-illuminating awareness. When this is truly seen all false and mistaken identities dissolve and there is no basis for conflict.

The middle way between all dualities, polarities, binaries, and fixed position is difficult to find by our own efforts. Yet the dharma offers so many ways to find the invisible midline of balance that does not veer to either side.

For the sake of peace, for the sake of benefit for all, may we never stray from the true site of everything!

As Jigme Lingpa said:

*With all virtuous and non-virtuous thoughts being self-liberating, and being free of identifying with the signs that generate hopes and fears, the accumulation of virtue keeps flowing from the undecieving dependent origination of appearances. This is dedicated in undefiled all-encompassing space for the benefit of all beings.*