

## NATURE

- It is not that this world is a dreadful place which we need to get out of. Rather it is that this is a wonderful world which we don't quite live in – we don't fully participate in it because we are not fully present. The horrors of the world are the products of our imagination, our plans, expectations and fantasies. These are all driven by the two-stroke engine pulsing between desire and aversion.
- In thogal the continuous process of experience is described as '*dorje lug-gu gyud*'. *Lug-gu* means sheep and *gyud* means a chain. You can often see a line of sheep going one after the other along a little track on the hillside. Sheep follow, follow, follow... Likewise we have thoughts that follow, follow, follow... and they leave tracks. If you recognise that the thought or the image, in the moment that it arises, is nothing at all, then you won't put extra valency on to it, nor will it leave tracks. Appearance is self liberating when left alone. This is why the instruction is always, "*Don't enter into judgement!*" However you have to hold this lightly as even the most negative thoughts and extreme judgements have no ground other than the dharmadhatu. A judgement arising with duality and that same form of judgement arising in non-duality are not the same, and yet they are.
- Saraha said that in the winter water turns to ice and then in the summer the water evaporates. So what then is the true state of water he asked. Sometimes our mind freezes like ice; we become very sharp, we become very definite and we can't move. Sometimes we are relaxed and flowing like water, able to adapt to any shape that is around. Other times we get a bit spaced out and dispersed, like steam or mist. We can be each of these three possibilities. It is important to be able to become like ice, to take on a definite shape. It is important to be able to become like steam, to be diffuse and pervasive. It is important to be able to flow, like a river. Problems arise when we adopt a mode that is at odds with circumstances, for then we are out of balance with our environment. Our practice is to develop the freedom to move through the various possibilities of our existence in keeping with the experiential field as it arises.
- We can be like seaweed swaying in the tides, sliding over other people, close enough to touch yet not scratching, forcing or demanding. By being moved myself, I am part of the co-emergent movement along with you. By not fixing the definition of my identity in a particular pattern of movement, I don't mind being affected by you. All my shapes are me, equally me. I, as open awareness, gain or lose nothing by shifting shape. Allowing my shaping to be co-emergent, my energy is for the other, for the world, for spontaneous intrinsically ethical participation in the field of non-duality. As we awaken to our groundless ground we find the free movement of its energy arises effortlessly.
- Allowing the mind to be as it is, to unfold as it will without interference, is referred to as '*rang bab*' in Tibetan which means 'falling by itself', as a waterfall does. A waterfall falls by itself in relation to rocks and wind. Similarly the flow of our mind is just tumbling down, unpredictable, shifting between coherent and incoherent. By allowing that to happen, which is to say not interfering with what is happening, you start to trust, "*Oh, life finds its own way.*" In particular, you see that, "*I don't need to be in charge.*"
- I was watching a video for children about an elephant who wanted to fly. The elephant couldn't fly, but some friends managed to get him up a tree, and then 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 a cloud and we are like elephants. Until we become very light, light and empty, we will keep falling through. We won't be able to stay in emptiness until we are empty too.
- All the experiences of our lives are like birds flying in the sky. Maybe you go out for a walk and suddenly a memory comes into your mind. This is a beautiful bird. It has flown into your mind and then it flies out.

However, birds can also shit on your head. If you get caught up in a thought it can start to grind. Something else is happening then. This beautiful little humming-bird was followed by an eagle and then a vulture. Yet, they too will fly away. Everything flies away. Only the sky remains. There are choices to be made. We can be a hunter, or a bird, or we can be like the sky. When we are like the sky everything will come to us and everything will go – we can enjoy the birds as they fly. Or we can be a hunter, always trying to catch or kill the birds. This creates a constant arousal in our mind as we are always on the lookout, always ready to pounce. A grasping attitude like that blinds us to the beauty and freedom of the situation. However, if we become a bird we will find that the hunter will come and get us and then we will sing our life away in a little box. When we see that through our identification with our thoughts we are like a bird, it is not helpful to dream of escaping to a land without hunters. For as long as there are birds there will be hunters. However even inside our cage, even if it is very small, there is still some space. By integrating with that space the freedom of our life is revealed even though our circumstances are very constrained. That is why in our practice we aim to integrate with space as quickly and easily as we can. It is through resting in space as space that we see that the bird and the hunter have the same nature; they are both thoughts, both identifications devoid of inherent self-identity.

- As long as the seed is just a seed on its own, its potential is latent. Whether it might grow into a flower or a weed does not matter too much. Weeds only become problematic if sprouting occurs in a place where you do not want them. While sitting in meditation our thoughts, be they good or bad, do not lead to activity in the world and so are not very dangerous. This allows us to get close to them, without either encouraging or blocking, and to see what they actually are. This encourages the ripening of wisdom. Of course our practice, in making us more sensitive and attentive, can also make us more aware of difficulties and suffering in the world around us. Due to this it can appear to be increasing our own suffering. However if we stay with what is occurring and allow ourselves to be touched and moved, this will encourage the ripening of compassion.
- This evening I noticed a woman out in the garden watering the flowers. But of course she wasn't just watering the flowers, she was watering the weeds as well because the flowers and the weeds go together. If you want the flowers to grow, you bring water and nutrition for the soil, and this makes it a very nice place for weeds to grow as well. It is exactly the same in spiritual development: the more you nourish your potential the more you become aware that new kinds of weeds are starting to sprout.
- We are like children who spend the morning building a sandcastle on the edge of the sea and then come back from lunch and are very unhappy because the sea has washed our castle away. Everything we do is only sand castles. It is an absolute fantasy to imagine that our life's work is more than that. That doesn't mean we shouldn't build sandcastles, for our physical presence in the world predisposes us to engaged activity. The key point is to see that all we do and all that happens to us is like a dream, a mirage, an illusion. Appearance is undeniable yet is empty of substance. There is nothing there to cling on to. When we grasp at objects we are actually grasping at our own conceptual constructs.
- The waves of objects coming towards us, and the waves of our projections going out towards them, interact ceaselessly. There is always something new to be interested in and to respond to. When waves meet in the sea their turbulence generates white froth. Similarly we pass our lives in the evanescent frothy bubble of each encapsulating, over-invested moment.
- If you go out on a boat and the wind is blowing, you can watch the waves moving. Along comes a seagull, and lands on the water. It had been flying and now it's bobbing on the waves. It's having a little rest, but what it's sitting on is moving. Our mind is like this. Moments in time flow on like waves in the sea. Each wave discloses a thought that seems interesting and the seagull of our attention lands on it, believing it to be the site of nourishing fish. However, in the very moment that you think, "*This is where I belong,*" you are being moved along. All manifestation is dynamic, and our attempts to stabilise movements distract us from the opportunity to be present as our mind itself, the one aspect of life that is still.

- In the fairy-tale of Sleeping Beauty, after she pricks her finger on her birthday, she falls into a deep sleep. Gradually the wild plants, the briars and brambles grow over her. But one day a young prince sets out to find the princess. He enters the dark forest and approaches the mass of sharp thorns. Drawing his sword he cuts his way through it until he finds her. Then with one tender and gentle kiss, he awakens the maiden. Many people see spiritual life as being like this. They imagine all beings to be Sleeping Buddhas, overgrown by different kinds of conditioning and karma. And so, in heroic mode, they vow to draw the holy sword of truth, cut through the obstacles and liberate them. This is a fairy-tale too. Actually we each have to learn to work with circumstances and find the way to see that obstacles themselves are the path and there is no hidden treasure elsewhere. The place to find the treasure is always exactly where we are.
- In autumn the squirrels come to the end of their busy period. They are collecting the last nuts before winter. They hide the nuts sometimes under the ground, sometimes in little holes in trees. Unfortunately the memory of the squirrel is not so good which is why you often see them in the early spring time scabbling around here and there, digging in the earth trying to find where they buried their nuts. In the same way, we store bits of our lives, our values and identities, in different places and people. As these others become significant for us it is as if part of us is embedded in them and can only be experienced by us by our being with them. We seem to have found a reliable way to bring the past into the future, storing up treasures for later when we will need them. But objects change, people change, our moods and desires change. And when we visit places, people, ideas and so on that were once so important for us, we may find they have become mere echoes. The past is gone, the future is unknowable. All we have is the chance to open and be fully present now. It is more useful to follow the Buddha's example than to try to be a successful squirrel.
- In the springtime in the country you can see small lambs jumping about. The field is wide and they bounce about and run around. Their delightful energy is non-productive. It is the pure joy and simple enthusiasm of being alive. If we feel more like a tired old sheep who has seen it all before then we need to actually taste the fresh experience of the field. We are tired because we are burdened by responsibilities and our concepts are tired, over-used, worn out. But if we can put them aside and be with what is – well then, lovely. The infinite spacious field of the dharmadhatu is ever-fresh and radiant with unpredictable display. Meditation lets us slip off our tedious assumptions and frolic in the boundless space of the mind. It is not so serious.
- When we say that something is good and another thing is bad, we bring some aspects of the world forward and push others into the background. Selective attention, habitual interpretation and biased judgement fill our own plate with a very narrow selection from the infinite buffet of the world. In this regard we are like a gardener toiling to make the world the way they would like it to be. Yet if we walk out on the wild mountains we see all kinds of plants and bushes growing freely and they are fine just as they are. The ego, in cultivating a personal garden, is ignoring the generous bounty of nature.