

Teachings from the Third Dzogchen Rinpoche:

Pith Instructions in Dzogchen Trekchod

SEARCHING FOR THE MIND

Concerning these unique instructions, we have now arrived at the threefold mental preliminary practice. On this topic, the *Tantra of Penetrating Sound* explains:

Where does the mind come from?

Where does it stay?

Where does it go?

If these three questions are investigated, The mind will be trained and its true nature understood.

To start, investigate the mind's point of origin. The factor that we refer to as "awareness" and "mind" is in constant motion like the wind; it is this "mind" that experiences all forms of happiness and suffering. Where does this shifting awareness first come from? Does the mind come into being from a point of existence or nonexistence? Does it arise from appearances or from emptiness? Does it originate from the external universe or the beings that inhabit it?

You may wonder whether or not the mind arises from some particular thing made up of the four external elements. If you look for such a thing, however, you will find that you can break everything down into tiny parts . In the end, you won't find anything. You may then get the idea that it arises from inside your own body. Search through each part of your body, through your head and each of your limbs. Can you find it anywhere? On the other hand, if you think that it arises from a state of emptiness, can you find some place that it arises from? Yet if it comes into existence from appearances, what do you actually observe?

In short, investigate the mind that you are searching for and then turn your attention back to the mind that is doing the searching. You will then behold the mind in its' original state, and see that it has no identifiable essence at all. Until this has actually come to pass, you should repeat this process of examination over and over again.

Second, investigate the mind's presence. In this very moment, is the essence of this aware consciousness present in the external universe or in the beings that inhabit it? What part: of the body is it in? And if not there, where else might it be? What shape, color, function, and essence indicate its presence?

Once you have examined and investigated in this manner, and determined that it does not exist in any location whatsoever, turn your attention back to the consciousness that is conducting the investigation.

*****Continue this process until you have determined that consciousness lacks inherent existence and has no basis or root, while it nevertheless knows and perceives.*****

Third, look into the mind's departure. Like the wind, this mindful awareness seems to suddenly arise and then departs just as abruptly. Where does it go? Does it end up in the external universe or in the beings that inhabit it? Does it end up in appearances or emptiness, existence or nonexistence, or in some other condition? When you investigate this matter, you will see that there is no place to which the mind goes.

*****Likewise, the subjective mind itself cannot be identified either. It has no essence that one can point to and say, "This is it!" Hence, there is no place where the mind goes, nor is there a mind that goes somewhere. As before, continue this process until you have determined **that empty awareness neither comes nor goes.*******

Practicing these mental preliminaries serves an ordinary function, a supreme function, and a sublime function. In an ordinary sense, it functions to reverse any intense clinging one may have to the ordinary mind, as well as to purify mental negativity and pacify obstacles.

Its supreme function is to keep the mind from becoming involved with samsara, and to bring it to a state of liberation, inseparable from the dharmakaya.

Its sublime function results in the mind becoming inseparable from the enlightened mind of all the Buddhas, which will bring about an infinite range of benefits for other sentient beings.

The Tantra of Penetrating Sound explains:

Keeping both the ordinary and supreme functions of this practice in mind, apply yourself assiduously to bringing these investigations to a state of culmination. In other words, thoroughly investigate the mind's points of origin, presence, and departure.

RESTING IN THE NATURAL STATE

The teaching that concerns us here is resting in the natural state, which contains two divisions. The first covers the main practice of resting in the natural state, and the second addresses the process of revitalization. The main practice of resting in the natural state contains two further divisions:

The purpose of resting in the natural state and the way to do so.

Concerning the first, the *Clear Expanse* states:

Disturbances in the body, speech, mind, and elements are released by resting in the natural state. As stated here, once you've become worn out by practicing the physical, verbal, and mental preliminaries that were taught earlier, you should rest.

The siddha Kotalipa explains:

Let this weary traveler, the mind itself,
Rest in a state free of elaborations. The
great seal: fresh, innate,
Natural, and uncontrived.

At this point, you do not need to involve yourself in anything that disturbs the constitution of the energetic channels and elements, and which thereby creates stress *in* the body, speech, and mind, or with the virtuous practices that are ordinarily considered appropriate. Instead, relax and let the three gates rest *in* their natural state.

The *Last Testament* explains:

Next, become adept *in* resting in the natural state

physically, verbally, and with the mind.

At this point, you should meditate by focusing your mind one-pointedly on whatever manifests, regardless of whether it is a samsaric thought that would ordinarily be eliminated or a virtuous thought that would function as a remedy. **This will bring about a fundamental transformation of these thoughts, turning the conceptual into the non-conceptual, just as murky water becomes clear all on its own when left untouched.** If you forcibly block your thoughts, not only will it make your mind restless, it will hinder a state of concentration from arising. It was with this understanding that the following passage from the *Ornament of the Sutras* was taught:

Why? Because correctly engaging attachment
and other such factors themselves
brings complete liberation. Therefore,
doing so brings complete emergence from them.

The *Two Segments* teaches a similar skillful approach:

As attachment is what binds one to the world,
Attachment itself will bring liberation.

And from Distinguishing the Middle from Extremes:

Based on observation,
Nonobservation takes place.
And based on nonobservation,
Nonobservation occurs.
Therefore, observation is established
To be by its very nature unobservable.
Hence observation and nonobservation
Must be understood to be equal.

The separations of samsara and nirvana and the other practices taught earlier address the coarse fixation-based perceptions associated with the ordinary appearances, habitual tendencies, and so forth that arise so readily in the mind. Next, the inner separation, sealing, advanced training, and other practices are used to rein in the more subtle elements. This, in turn, keeps the sense consciousnesses from being distracted elsewhere, at which point the mental consciousness merges with the six collections of consciousness and the mind's tendency to radiate out to other objects is put to rest. In the next

step, the conceptual mind is not directed towards the six objects that serve as focal points or the unconditioned phenomena associated with them. **Rather, one just settles in the natural state, without forming any concepts concerning appearance and emptiness, certain things that need to be eliminated, the remedies that eliminate them, or anything else.**

“Natural state,” here, means uncontrived, while “resting” denotes simply letting be in this state, hence the term “resting in the natural state.”

Explaining the actual practice of resting in the natural state, the Tantra of Penetrating Sound explains:

At this time, the key point of body, speech, and mind is for the practitioner to settle in the natural state.

To explain, begin by seating yourself on a comfortable cushion in either the cross-legged posture of the bodhisattvas or in a squatting position, whichever you prefer. Just let your body be; remain motionless, relaxed, and at ease. Let your breath flow naturally in a relaxed manner and do not talk or say anything, neither good or bad. Without busying yourself with recitations, chanting, and other verbal activities, keep silent and don't alter your breathing. Do not identify with any non virtuous or neutral thoughts. of the past, present, or future. You can even let go of thoughts that are normally considered virtuous. Just let be. This will bring about a state of basic lucidity in the three gates, just like water left untouched clearing up all on its own. This is a wonderful way to bring about meditative concentration and tranquility.

The signs of progress in this practice are as follows:

When you are physically resting in the natural state, you will have no desire to move; when you are verbally resting in the natural state, you will not want to speak; and by letting your mind rest in the natural state, **all forms of discursive thinking will be purified on their own and vanish.** Until these signs actually occur, persevere in this practice.

On this topic, the *Perfection of Knowledge* states:

Engaging in the yogic practice of the perfection of knowledge is to engage in the yogic practice of space.

Concerning the benefits of resting in the natural state, the *Clear Expanse* states:

For whoever rests in the natural state like this,
disturbances in the elements will be pacified,
as will circumstances that lead to illness,
and fixation will be self-liberated.

As stated here, resting in the natural state physically, verbally, and mentally serves both temporal and ultimate functions. On a temporal level, one will rest in the natural state physically, verbally, and mentally, and the elements will remain undisturbed. This, in turn, will ensure that circumstances leading to illness do not occur and that one will rest naturally in a state of meditative concentration. This practice also performs the function of letting the aggregates, elements, and sense fields rest in their original condition, which allows bodhichitta to develop. By verbally resting in the natural state, the words used to communicate will be self-purified and the nature that defies description will dawn in one's mind stream. **By letting one's mind rest in the natural state, all thoughts will be liberated on their own and one will be able to settle naturally into the natural Great Perfection, a state that transcends thought and expression.**

The ultimate, supreme function of this practice is to bring about the self-purification of clinging related to ordinary body, speech, and mind. To elaborate, by physically resting in the natural state, one will connect with the nirmanakaya. By verbally resting in the natural state, one will connect with the sambhogakaya. And by letting the mind rest in the natural state, one will connect with the dharmakaya. Hence, since body, speech, and mind are indivisible, they neither meet nor part from the three kayas.

This is addressed in the *Last Testament*, where it is written:

Fortunate son, you will connect with the nirmanakaya by physically relaxing, you will connect with the sambhogakaya by verbally relaxing, and you will connect with the dharmakaya by letting your mind relax.

The problems associated with failing to rest in the natural state are the opposite of all the excellent qualities just mentioned. You should persevere in this practice until the signs of progress have actually manifested.

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