



## The Nature of Mind In Stillness and Movement

With Doug Veenhof

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## FRIDAY

### 1 THE PRELIMINARIES

Padmasambhava, cited in *Spacious Path to Freedom*:

According to the custom of some teaching traditions, you are first introduced to the view, and on that basis you seek the meditative state. This makes it difficult to identify pristine awareness. In this tradition, you first establish the meditative state, then on that basis you are introduced to the view. This profound point makes it impossible for you not to identify pristine awareness. Therefore, first settle your mind in its natural state, then bring forth genuine shamatha in your mindstream and reveal the nature of pristine awareness.

From “The Mahamudra True Nature,” a doha by Saraha,

The animate and the inanimate, the mobile and the immobile,  
Things and nothing, appearance and emptiness,  
Everything, without exception, throughout all time,  
Never deviate from the nature of space.

You can repeat, “Space!” “Space!” but still  
The essence of space has no reality whatsoever;  
It transcends being an object that can be said to exist, to not exist,  
To neither exist nor not exist, or to be something other than that.

Thus, there isn’t the slightest difference  
Between ‘space’, ‘mind’ and ‘the truth’;  
These are just separate, incidental terms,  
They are nothing but meaningless, false words.

All phenomena are one’s own mind.  
There is not even a particle of phenomena that is other than mind;  
The one who realizes the primordial non-existence of mind  
Attains the sacred realization of the victors of the three times...

From “Supplication to the Takpo Kagyu”

Revulsion is the foot of meditation, as is taught.  
To this meditator who is not attached to food and wealth,  
Who cuts the ties to this life,  
Grant your blessings so that I have no desire for honor and gain.

Düdjom Lingpa:

On this occasion when you have such a bounty of opportunities in terms of your body, environment, friends, spiritual mentors, time, and practical instructions, without procrastinating until tomorrow and the next day, arouse a sense of urgency, as if a spark landed on your body or a grain of sand fell in your eye.

**From “Supplication to the Takpo Kagyu”**

Devotion is the head of meditation, as is taught.  
The guru opens the gate to the treasury of oral instructions.  
To this meditator who continually supplicates him  
Grant your blessings so that genuine devotion is born in me.

**Düdjom Lingpa:**

The spirit of emergence and spiritual zeal of those who lack these three points are like dew in the summertime.

**Karma Chagme, *Spacious Path to Freedom*:**

The critical point is to practice with zeal. Zeal does not entail mere diligence, but enthusiasm and an enduring quality of delighting in practice.

If you practice with zeal, then signs of success in both the preliminary and main phases of practice will occur.

**Pabongka Rinpoche, *Liberation in Our Hands*, Appendix F**

**Leisure and fortune**

When you are overcome with joy, like a pauper who has found a treasure,  
Then you have generated the realization of identifying leisure and fortune.

You will have realized the great value of leisure and fortune  
When you become distressed if even an instant of time is vainly spent.

When you become as upset about being idle for even an instant  
As another person would if he spilled a bag of gold dust into a river,  
Then you have realized the difficulty of finding leisure and fortune.

**Düdjom Lingpa (1835-1904), *The Foolish Dharma of an Idiot Clothed in Mud and Feathers*:**

On this occasion when you have such a bounty of opportunities in terms of your body, environment, friends, spiritual mentors, time, and practical instructions, without procrastinating until tomorrow and the next day, arouse a sense of urgency, as if a spark landed on your body or a grain of sand fell in your eye.

**SATURDAY**

**2 STILLNESS WITH THE BREATH**

**Gyatrul Rinpoche in *Spacious Path to Freedom*:**

Enlightenment is nothing other than the nature of your own mind. Do not look elsewhere... A mind imbued with conceptual elaboration is a mind of samsara. A mind free of conceptual elaboration is liberated. The very nature of the mind-itself is primordially, intrinsically free from conceptual elaboration. Consequently, when we abide in that state, we are abiding in the essential nature of the mind. That is nirvana.

**Karma Chagme, *Naked Awareness*:**

This unstructured consciousness of the present, the instant that is free of mental engagement, is called Mahamudra.

**Padmasambhava, *Natural Liberation*:**

In that way, until genuine *śamatha* arises in your mind-stream, use numerous techniques to settle your mind in its natural state. As an analogy, if you wish to look at reflections and the planets and stars in a pool of water, they will not be seen where the water is disturbed by waves and ripples. But they are clearly seen by looking into a pool in which the water is lucid and still. Likewise, when the mind is jolted around by the wind of objects, like a rider on a bucking bronco, even if you are introduced to pristine awareness, you will not identify it; for once the mind is helplessly manipulated by compulsive ideation, it does not see its own nature.

***Ocean of Definitive Meaning*, The General Point of Settling the Mind:**

Do not prolong the past. Do not beckon the future. Rest evenly in cognitive lucidity that is without conceptualization.

**Three phases of mahamudra shamatha practice:**

**1. Settling the Mind that Has Not Settled**

- Focusing on an object
  - External
    - Mundane (e.g. pebble, candle reflected in a mirror)
    - Sacred (e.g. Buddha statue or image)
  - Internal
    - Yidam or guru at heart
- Focusing without an object
  - Dissolution of visualized five elements and resting in absence of focus
- Focusing on the Breath
  - Removing stale air
    - Nine round breathing eliminating kleshas
  - Vase breathing
    - Holding breath low in the belly while aware of clear empty space
  - Resting the mind on inhalation, retention, and exhalation of the breath
    - Equalize duration of inhalation (OM), retention (AH), and exhalation (HUM)
  - OPTIONAL
    - Give up control of the breath
      - Know that you are breathing in and breathing out
    - Rest in the luminous cognizance of the mind, still and nonconceptual
      - Begin with short sessions and returning to the breath periodically

## 2. Stabilizing the Settled Mind

## 3. Enhancing the Stabilization

The *Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra in Ten Thousand Stanzas*:

Śāriputra, take the analogy of a potter or a potter's apprentice spinning the potter's wheel: If he makes a long revolution, he knows it is long; if he makes a short revolution, he knows it is short. Śāriputra, similarly, a Bodhisattva, a great being, mindfully breathes in and mindfully breathes out. If the inhalation is long, he knows the inhalation is long; if the exhalation is long, he knows the exhalation is long. If the inhalation is short, he knows the inhalation is short; if the exhalation is short, he knows the exhalation is short.

### 3 AWARENESS OF AWARENESS

Milarepa:

'Meditating' is not meditating on something but familiarizing [yourself with your mind].

The Essential Instructions of the Mahasiddha Maitripa states (*Spacious Path to Freedom*):

First there are three types of quiescence: 1) quiescence that depends on signs, 2) quiescence focused on conceptualization, 3) quiescence that is settled in nonconceptualization.

[3] The ultimate quiescence of maintaining the attention upon nonconceptualization:

...Let the mind, like a cloudless sky, be clear, empty, and evenly devoid of grasping, and settle it in utter vacuity. By so doing you will experience the quiescence of joy, clarity, and nonconceptuality.

The Ninth Karmapa, Wangchuk Dorje, *Ocean of Definitive Meaning*,

The Three Levels of Resting:

Three levels of resting will develop gradually through meditating upon the key instructions for settling the mind that has not settled.

#### **Like water falling from a mountain cliff.**

At first, the mind will seem not to rest firmly upon the object. This is just the beginning [of resting]. Then, when your awareness has become somewhat more lucid, if it seems that thoughts have increased, they have not. Thoughts have [always] been arising but, since you were not meditating before, you did not notice them. Now, because your mind is resting evenly and your awareness is more lucid, you notice them. By leaving thoughts [alone]—without trying to dam them up [or] chase them down—you will be able to recognize each one, without being carried away by the under- currents of thoughts.

When you do not need to keep your sessions short, when your awareness seems to be sparkingly clear (shun si li lir), and when the flow of your meditation is uninterrupted, then you have reached the first level of resting called "like water falling from a mountain cliff." If you feel as if you are being swept away in the midst of swirling water falling from a steep mountain, that is not it. If it seems that you are watching this [falling water] without attaching any importance to it, that is it.

**Like a slowly flowing river.**

By looking [at thoughts] in the way described above, their number will decrease and they will become a nonconceptual state. Sometimes a thought will pop up suddenly, but since it does not continue, it disappears like snowflakes falling on a hot rock. When you notice the details and quantity of thoughts as they manifest, and the flow of your meditation is continuous, you have reached the middle level of resting called "like a slowly flowing river." If you feel as if you are sitting far away [from the river and cannot see it flowing very well, that is not it. If you feel as if you are sitting on its bank watching it, that is it.

**Like an unmoving ocean.**

By maintaining [your meditation] as described above, the flow of [both] subtle and coarse thoughts will cease and you will rest still (me re), within nonconceptuality. Your body may feel comfortable or you may not notice its existence. The movement of your breath may cease, or you may not notice it at all. Your experiences of bliss, clarity, or nonconceptuality will expand. During postmeditation, if you do not examine [things] carefully, you will not be able to discern the details of objects, and [even though] your mind is not involved in distractions, it may seem that you have become more forgetful. Even when you are not meditating, your meditation expands.

When lucidity manifests as an experience of vivid (me re ha) clarity, without any highs or lows, like the center of a clear, cloudless sky, you have reached the final level of resting called "like an unmoving ocean." If it feels like an ocean at night, that is not it. If it feels like an ocean during the day, that is it. Since this is the actual practice of meditative concentration, if you continue [to practice], the supercognitions and so forth will arise, and this will act as the basis for seeing the truth.

**SUNDAY**

**6 ENHANCING THE STABILIZATION**

A common refrain in the dohas of the mahasiddhas:

Do not see thoughts as something you have to get rid of, and do not see the absence of thought as something you have to acquire; just cultivate watchfulness, and genuine tranquility will arise.

**The Ninth Karmapa, Wangchuk Dorje, *The Ocean of Definitive Meaning*:**

You should direct [your attention] one-pointedly to whatever thoughts manifest as objects for the mind—whether they are concepts to be abandoned (such as the five poisons, desire or aggression) or concepts to be adopted (virtues such as generosity) or neutral concepts—and then rest on those.

Some assert that the concepts to be abandoned should be forcefully blocked.

However, since that [will provoke] more thoughts, it will be difficult for samadhi to develop. Therefore, no matter what thoughts arise, do not view them as faults. Rest still, relaxed and loose, right within those [thoughts]. Without severing the tether of mindfulness, let thoughts come as they will. Without letting even one get away, recognize each and every moment [of thought]. Then take a short break.

By meditating like that, once thoughts themselves have become a support for concentration, their stream will be interrupted, and serene resting will develop. If that does not occur and your thoughts continue to multiply, without regarding them as a problem, sustain nondistractedness.

***The Essential Instructions of the Mahasiddha Maitripa:***

First there are three types of quiescence: 1) quiescence that depends on signs, 2) quiescence focused on conceptualization, 3) quiescence that is settled in nonconceptualization...

**2) quiescence focused on conceptualization**

...Whatever virtuous and nonvirtuous thoughts arise, steadily and nonconceptually observe their nature.

By so doing, they are calmed in nongrasping; awareness vividly arises clear and empty, with no object of grasping; and it is sustained in the nature of self-liberation, in which it recognizes itself.

Again, direct the mind to whatever thoughts arise, and without acceptance or rejection, you will recognize your own nature.

**Düdjom Lingpa, *Buddhahood Without Meditation*:**

If you forcefully suppress the thought process while focusing your mind single-pointedly on such things as a stick or pebble, then many obsessive thoughts will arise, as if you had blocked an irrigation canal, and your body, speech, and mind may become sharply uncomfortable. In that case, loosely relax and watch your thoughts from afar, clearly observing whatever arises. That which observes is called mindfulness, or awareness, that which is observed is called movement, and resting in that state is called stillness. Identify them as such and meditate!

**The Tantra of the Blazing Clear Expanse of the Dakinis states:**

All adventitious arising of ideation is the display of awareness, so there is no need to block it. ...

If it is restrained, this will be a cause of its dispersing again. If it is rejected, this will be a cause of its returning again. If you clamp down on it, this will be a cause of its rebounding.

If you subdue it, this will be a cause of its getting tough again. If you burn it, this will be a cause of its icing over. Stop blocking and affirming and rest in equality.

## 7 LOOKING AT THE MIND IN STILLNESS

### Kamalaśīla's second *Stages of Meditation*:

With bare insight that lacks serenity, the yogi's mind is distracted by objects; like an oil-lamp in the wind, it will not be stable. For this reason, what sublime wisdom sees will not be very clear.

...Without such insight into the real nature, no matter how long you cultivate serenity, you can only suppress manifest afflictions; you cannot eradicate their seeds.

### Düdjom Lingpa, *Essence of Clear Meaning*:

In short, these practices, from śamatha to luminous, cognizant consciousness and the substrate consciousness, as taught previously, constitute the phase of taking the aspects of the mind as the path. But as long as it is divorced from the vipaśyanā of knowing the nature of existence, this does not bring you even a hair's breadth closer to the path of liberation from the suffering of mundane existence and the path of omniscience that liberates from the two extremes. Thus, even if you strive diligently in these practices for a long time, this does nothing more than perpetuate saṃsāra. So understand how your life will certainly have been spent in vain!

### Nagarjuna, *A Commentary on the Spirit of Awakening*:

The mind is a mere label, and it is nothing other than a label. Recognize awareness as a mere label. Moreover, a label has no intrinsic nature.

Thus, the mind is of the nature of an apparition, and the nature of the mind does not exist as any type of color or shape, as something apprehended or as an apprehender, as a man, a woman, or a neuter, and so forth.

In short, the Buddhas have not seen it and they will not see it; they accurately see it as having the nature of being without an intrinsic nature.

### Yangthang Rinpoche, *A Summary of the View, Meditation, and Conduct*:

With the cessation of thoughts, you rest with no object but examine very closely this mind that remains in the absence of thoughts and observe: does it have any color? Does it have any shape? Is it something you can look at? And in the absence of all of that, there is simply an openness, an expansiveness like space with no object.



As you rest there, examine the nature of this empty mind—this space-like awareness that’s all that remains—does it come from anywhere? Is it located anywhere? Does it go anywhere?

For each of these points—its origins, location and destination— there’s nothing you can say or point to. So, rest in what remains in the absence of thought.

**8 Yanthang Rinpoche’s Pith Instructions for Settling the Mind in Its Natural State, *A Summary of the View, Meditation, and Conduct*:**

If you wish to look into the mirror of the actual nature of your mind,  
Do not look outward.  
Rather, look inward.  
Looking outward involves the delusion of reification.  
By looking inward, you observe your own mind.

Do not follow after past thoughts,  
Or anticipate thoughts to come.  
As soon as you encounter the agitated thoughts  
Of the present, by directing your mind inwards,  
Loosely rest right there,  
Without modifying them in the slightest.

This natural settling of thoughts  
Is a way of resting but is not the main practice.  
However, in that very way of resting  
You are ready to encounter pristine awareness, which is the main practice.

As soon as you rest in your natural state,  
Thoughts spontaneously cease and depart.  
Right where the luster of thoughts disappears,  
Is the empty, transparent nature of the mind.

Without focusing on anything, free of falling to any extreme,  
A space-like experience arises.  
Its empty nature is the dharmakāya.

In the *essential* nature of that emptiness  
Is the transparently luminous *manifest* nature of the mind.  
Devoid of any expressible, substantial characteristics,  
Its spacious and unimpeded self-illumination,  
Which is naturally clear, is the saṃbhogakāya.

There is no other perceiver  
Of this luminous, empty pristine awareness.  
That which is perceived is the empty dharmakāya.

That which perceives is luminous primordial consciousness.

These two may be expressed as emptiness and luminosity,  
And they may be called absolute space and primordial consciousness.  
These two are not separate.  
The manifest nature of that emptiness is luminosity,  
And the essential nature of that luminosity is emptiness.

So luminosity and emptiness are unitary.  
They are not separate, for they are of one taste.  
There is no duality of the perceived and the perceiver.  
This is perceived nondually,  
So it is called discerning self-awareness,  
In which the mind sees itself.

That very nature of the one taste of luminosity and emptiness  
Is the equal taste of the good and bad, of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa.  
So there is no difference between the two, saṃsāra and nirvāṇa.  
Just that is the Great Perfection.

In the mindstream of one who realizes this Great Perfection  
Impartial compassion  
And impartial pure vision  
Emerge effortlessly and naturally.  
That all-pervasive compassion is the nirmāṇakāya.

The pristine awareness of the three kāyas is just that,  
So recognize that it is nothing other than that.

As long as there is vague uncertainty,  
Realization of the nature of existence will never come.  
So you must ascertain this from within.  
This is the view of the Great Perfection.

## MONDAY

### 10 LOOKING AT THE MIND IN MOVEMENT

Gampopa:

If you know how to rest within whatever thought arises, and it is therefore self-liberated, then, since that itself is the dharmakaya, they are indeed worthy of being cherished. If you do not have this attitude, if you do not regard thoughts as opportunities for insight, meditation becomes very difficult and inconvenient, because it becomes a battle against thinking, which among other things, makes the meditation unclear and unstable.

**Yangthang Rinpoche, *A Summary of the View, Meditation, and Conduct:***

The first moment of perceptual awareness is usually okay. For example, when looking at a tree, that very first moment of awareness is okay, it doesn't make any mistake. But mistakes always happen from the second moment of awareness, so it's important not to let those mistakes continue. The first moment is like a mute, who cannot speak but can see everything. So you're not mentally talking back to reality, you're just experiencing it. The second moment, involving conceptualization, is like somebody who is blind but who can talk very well. If you let the conceptual mind continue, it leads to the distractions, dualistic grasping, and delusion.

**11 CONCLUSION**

**Karma Chagme, *Spacious Path to Freedom:***

The critical point is to practice with zeal. Zeal does not entail mere diligence, but enthusiasm and an enduring quality of delighting in practice. If you practice with zeal, then signs of success in both the preliminary and main phases of practice will occur.

**Karma Chagme, *Spacious Path to Freedom***

People commonly mix their practice of Dharma with the eight mundane concerns. These people may hear many teachings and study assiduously. They may even think about the teachings and meditate, but basically, they have not turned their minds away from the cycle of existence. Rather, they maintain their commitment to samsara. The only thing wrong with this approach is that they do not see the essence of the Dharma, because they have failed to see the vacuous nature of cyclic existence.

**Alan Wallace, from *Buddhism with an Attitude:***

There is a famous story about a dharma practitioner who prided himself on his diligent efforts applied to devotional practices, study, and meditation. While his teacher Dromtonpa, the principal disciple of Atisha, acknowledged the value of these practices, he counseled him that it is "even better to practice Dharma." When asked by his perplexed student, "What is Dharma" Dromtonpa replied, "Give up all attachment to this life and let your mind *become* Dharma."

Giving up attachment to this life means giving up attachment to the eight mundane concerns, no longer placing priorities upon externals such as money, possessions, honor, respect, and transient pleasures. The more we free ourselves of attachment to these external resources, the freer we are to discover our own inner resources of genuine happiness. When we outgrow the dualistic sense that we are practicing something special called Dharma, when our lives and our spiritual journey merge, then our minds truly become Dharma.

**Dedication Prayer by His Holiness the Dalai Lama**  
following the example of bodhisattva Shantideva

May all beings everywhere,  
plagued by sufferings of body and mind,  
obtain an ocean of happiness and joy by virtue of my merits.  
May no living creature suffer, commit evil or ever fall ill.  
May no one be afraid or belittled,  
with a mind weighed down by depression.  
May the blind see forms, and the deaf hear sounds.  
May those whose bodies are worn with toil  
be restored on finding repose.  
May the naked find clothing, the hungry find food;  
may the thirsty find water and delicious drinks.  
May the poor find wealth, those weak with sorrow find joy;  
May the forlorn find hope, constant happiness and prosperity.  
May there be timely rain and bountiful harvests;  
may all medicines be effective  
and wholesome prayers bear fruit.  
May all who are sick and ill  
quickly be freed from their ailments.  
Whatever diseases there are in the world,  
may they never occur again.  
May the frightened cease to be afraid  
and those bound be freed;  
may the powerless find power,  
and may people think of benefiting each other.

Taken from *The Direct and Unmistaken Method*, Wisdom Publications, 1991

**For further study:**

*Pointing Out the Dharmakaya, Teachings on the Ninth Karmapa's Text* by Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche, Snow Lion 2003

*The Ninth Karmapa's Ocean of Definitive Meaning* by Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche, Snow Lion 2003

*Mahamudra, the Ocean of Definitive Meaning* by the Ninth Gyalwang Karmapa Wangchuk Dorje, translated by Elizabeth M. Callahan, Nitartha International 2001

*A Spacious Path to Freedom: Practical Instructions on the Union of Mahamudra and Atiyoga* by Karma Chagme, with commentary by Gyatrul Rinpoche and translated by B. Alan Wallace

<http://media.sbinstitute.com/> link to podcasts of Alan Wallace 8-week retreats  
Video courses based on Alan Wallace's 8-week retreats is available online at Wisdom Academy(Wisdom Publications). Website Link: <http://learn.wisdompubs.org/academy>  
Doug's website: [www.douglasveenhof.com](http://www.douglasveenhof.com)