

Buddhist Dzogchen: Being Happiness Itself

Without past, present, future, empty awake mind.

—Ju Mipham Rinpoche

Fundamental Innate Buddha Mind of Clear Light. That is the inherent wisdom mind basis of *Dzogchen* View and Practice. *Dzogchen* is considered, by those who know, to be a radically simple, if difficult path to realization of nondual primordial wisdom. How is this so?

Dzogchen Ati Yoga works *directly*—prior to conceptual Mahayana Buddhist dialectics, and to tantric deity practice—with the already present indwelling Buddha nature/Buddha mind, the very nature of mind, luminous clear light wisdom Presence of *rigpa* itself, before any arising of phenomenal appearances through its emptiness/*shunyata* ground.

It is that nondual primordial awareness essential nature of mind—the nondual state of undistracted "non-meditation" Presence that is at first "introduced", non-conceptually, to the prepared aspirant by the *Dzogchen* master. It is that luminous awareness in which we learn to rest. It is that in which we train the mind. Tsele Natsok Rangdröl:

Mahamudra and Dzogchen differ in words,
but not in meaning. The only difference is
that Mahamudra stresses mindfulness while
Dzogchen rests within awareness itself.

In the clear words of 20th century Nyingma *Dzogchen* master Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche:

In short, in Mahamudra you train with outer appearances,
and in Dzogchen you train with inner rigpa...All appearances
are beyond benefit and harm. In this way rigpa and appearances
are a unity...The word unity has great significance. Don't divide
appearances as being there and awareness as being here. Let
appearance and awareness be indivisible...

If you recognize the essence, then when forms appear, they
become the unity of appearance and emptiness...
Appearing and being empty occur as a unity...The Dzogchen
teachings refer to this as the unity of primordial purity (*kadag*)
and spontaneous presence (*lhundrub*). Since primordial time
(these two) have been inseparably united. Through Trekchö
you recognize that your own essence is primordial purity.
Through Tögal you realize that the nature is spontaneous
presence. Neither of these has any self-nature.

What is mind? Guru Rinpoche explains what is called the 'unity of
emptiness and cognizance suffused with awareness'...Its essence is
empty; its nature is cognizant. Its capacity is that these two cannot
be taken apart. That is the meaning of unity, impossible to separate.
(*Vajra Heart Revisited*, 2020, Rangung Yeshe)

Hence, in *Dzogchen* View and Practice the primordial awareness state of Presence (*rigpa*, *vidya*) is not dependent upon, nor distracted by external or internal appearances arising in mind. Whatever arises, the practitioner rests in the state of nondual awareness, without

grasping or rejecting anything at all. But, without the direct recognition (*yogi pratyaksa*) of primordial awareness, how could one train in it? Thus the necessity of a qualified *Dzogchen* master to initiate and guide the practice of the prepared yogi/yogini aspirant.

Wonder of wonders, that *buddic* Presence is alive and awake in the mundane everyday chaos of our "ordinary mind". So, we need not seek it elsewhere, for example in the causes and conditions of buddhahood. From Garab Dorje's Three Vajra Verses, "Introduce the state of presence directly". This cannot be told in words, nor in books.

Therefore, Dzogchen View takes the Result of buddhahood as the Path. The "lower" Buddhist teaching vehicles take not the result but the *causes* of Buddhahood—dualistic practice—as the Path. "Indian Mahayana Sutra and Tibetan Vajrayana Tantra teachings are characterized by the Path of Renunciation and the Path of Transformation, respectively. The method of the nondual *Dzogchen* teaching is the Path of Self-Liberation" (Chögyal Namkhai Norbu).

The Path of Renunciation renounces the ignorance (*avidya*) and cognitive obscurations that are the cause of the negative afflictive emotions that cause human suffering. We practice a cause (dharma practice) to gain a desired result (liberation from suffering).

The Path of Transformation is also a dualistic path wherein the practitioner proceeds from non-virtuous "impure vision" to virtue and "pure vision".

However, in the Path of Self-Liberation, there is no *concept* of impure and pure vision. In *Dzogchen* vision there is only the unity of the nondual state of self-liberation. It is from the inherent freedom of that view that we proceed upon the Path. It is from the *bodhicitta* that spontaneously arises from that view that determines the compassionate conduct.

The Buddha told that the result of such selfless altruistic motivation to act is the main cause of human happiness; and the result of self-centered negatively motivated action is the main cause of human suffering. Cultivation of compassionate *bodhicitta* is the only way to authentic human happiness. Without an authentic individual and sociocultural ethic of compassion it is not possible even to begin to address to prodigious problems of human beings in this relative world of pain and suffering.

The root cause of full bodhi mind awaking in all three Buddhist vehicles is the union of wisdom and compassion—these two limbs of the teaching of the Buddha. That the primordial wisdom of emptiness may result in buddhahood is due to mahakaruna—the great compassion. Just so, mahakaruna may result in buddhahood due to the wisdom that realizes mahashunyata, the great emptiness. Thus did the Buddha teach that in order to be happy being here as honored guests of this phenomenal world of time and space, we must cultivate compassionate "skillful means", and the primordial wisdom of emptiness—as a nondual unity! That is our refuge.

These two voices of the teaching strike a balance between construing emptiness as nihilistic nonexistence, wherein virtue doesn't much matter, or as eternalist material existence. The view of real, compassionate relative existence, and the absence or emptiness of intrinsic ultimate existence avoids these two metaphysical extremes that are the false dichotomy of *either* existence *or* nonexistence. That is the Buddha's Madhyamaka Middle Way. Indeed, it is the ultimate emptiness of appearing phenomena that allows their relative interaction in the function of moral conduct. If our phenomenal realities were not ultimately empty of permanent existence, relative change or motion would not be possible. People, stars, galaxies would freeze in their present spacetime locations. In that case how could we change anything in the relative

world through our choice to practice the Path and engage *bodhicitta* conduct? The Buddha's Path would be but a cynical exercise in futility.

Middle Way Madhyamaka Prasangika realizes this ultimate emptiness of appearing objective reality, and of a self-ego-I that apprehends it in ignorance (*avidya, marigpa*) of the truth of the matter. "In terms of that emptiness, there is no distinction between this Madhyamaka view and the *Dzogchen* view" (Lama Gen Lamrimpa 1999).

As to relative conventional objective existence, Longchenpa told, "When you examine closely, there is nothing there to recognize". Nonetheless, the conceptually and verbally imputed objects of our "real world out there" (RWOT), and this ego-I that truly believes in their ultimate existence, still show up for dinner. Fortunately, for Prasangika and for *Dzogchen* view and practice, this cause and effect reality is still, indeed all too relatively real. So, we still have to show up for work, and arouse and engage our precious *bodhicitta* to benefit living beings. So, the Madhyamaka and *Dzogchen* View negate the inherent existence of the phenomenal world, while affirming its relative-conventional causal existence. Indeed a Middle Way. Nice *concepts*. But what makes it so?

It is in nondual *Dzogchen* meditation—beyond even the quasi-conceptual quiescence of shamatha meditation—that one realizes the *shunyata*/emptiness of phenomena, the very Buddha nature of mind.

Thus does the ostensible duality of relative mind (*sems*), and the nondual primordial base or ground, primordial awareness itself that is the very nature of mind (*gzhi rigpa*), together rest in the nondual unity of sameness (*samatajnana*). Nagarjuna told it well, "There is not the slightest difference between samsara and nirvana"; between relative truth and ultimate truth. The Buddha's Two Truths, relative and ultimate, are already an ontic prior, and epistemic present unity—beyond even the slightest separation of knowing subject, and its known objects.

Dodrubchen Rinpoche teaches that as primordial awareness arises, the yogi/yogini does not at all feel this absence of the primal subject-object split. Yet the all-consuming flame of the wisdom of emptiness is vividly present to contemplative experience. And that utterly trans-conceptual "non-meditation" is the main difference between the nondual *Dzogchen*, and the conceptual dialectical Prasangika Madhyamaka approaches. While the view of Buddha's emptiness, his Two Truths—relative compassion and ultimate wisdom—and the fruition of the Path that is buddhahood itself are the same in Madhyamaka and *Dzogchen*, there is an important difference between these two paths:

"Dzogchen practice, which is unmoved by conceptualization,
is far more potent for dispelling the obscurations of the mind,
and in that sense is regarded as far more profound".
(Gen Lamrimpa 1999)

In *Dzogchen*, nondual, non-goal oriented direct "non-meditation" the diaphanous objects of apparitional phenomenal appearance utterly vanish into their luminous empty aboriginal "groundless ground" as nondual *mahashunyata* arises. In the Mahayana Causal Vehicle, and in the "lower" eight vehicles of the Vajrayana contemplative focus remains more or less on quasi-conceptual mindfulness, mantra, and deity practice. Not so in the fruitional nondual ninth

vehicle—*Ati Yoga Dzogchen*—where the prepared yogi/yogini simply rests in the Perfect Sphere of *Dzogchen*, wholly free of conceptual cognition.

We shall see below in our "Approaching *Dzogchen* Practice" that nondual *Dzogchen* meditation requires a deep understanding of the primordial wisdom of emptiness, introduced and transmitted under the enlightened guidance of the *Dzogchen* master. Such preparation is required before ultimate fruitional *Dzogchen* practice can begin.

What remains of this radical *shunyata epoché* after we surrender our habitual discursive concept mind and rest in the actual nature of mind? The lucent *buddic* already present Presence of this "supreme source" remains always at the spiritual Heart of the yogi/yogini. Even when we forget. Buddha mind (*buddhajnana*) Presence makes it so.

It is said by those who know that this innate, empty, radiant clear light love-wisdom mind arises, non-conceptually, for all human beings at the moment of death, in deep dreamless sleep, in moments where waking consciousness is unwittingly suspended, in the deep meditation of highly accomplished masters, and in the conscious awareness mindstream of a Buddha.

Told the Buddha, "Form is empty; emptiness is form". Relative form—the five aggregates or *skandhas*—and their selfless ultimate emptiness are an indivisible nondual (subject-object union) unity. These are Buddha's Two Truths. Everything that arises and appears to sentient awareness is included herein.

It is through a profound understanding of the Two Truths that we perfect the two main facets of the Buddha's love-wisdom Path—compassionate skillful means/method (*upaya*), and nondual primordial wisdom (*jnana, yeshe*). As Guru Padmasambhava told so long ago, "Descend with the (ultimate) View while ascending with the (relative) conduct. It is most essential to practice these two as a unity". This then is the prodigious *Dzogchen* View. No problem at all.

How then shall we understand this interdependence of wisdom and compassion that pervades the View, Meditation, and Conduct of the *nondual Dzogchen* Path?

For all three extant Buddhist vehicles—Hinayana-Theravada, Mahayana, Vajrayana—spacetime stuff and the self that perceives it is empty. Empty of what? For Madhyamaka Middle Way Buddhists (the fourth and usually considered "highest" of the Four Buddhist Tenet systems)—both Prasangika Madhyamaka and Yogachara Madhyamaka—arising and appearing form is *not* empty of existence!

Clearly, something exists! Heavy indeed is the yoke of the burden of rejoinder for those nihilist absolute metaphysical idealists—East or West—who would altogether deny this dynamic world of conventionally existing and experienced objective stuff, our "real world out there" (RWOT) that we have come to know and love. It is this all too real self-ego-I after all, who *chooses* to enter the Buddhist Path, and to act in this world of conditioned existence for the benefit of living beings. Appearing reality obviously exists. Yet, it does not exist as it appears.

For the Tibetan Buddhist Vajrayana tantric tradition, nondual *Dzogchen*, the Nyingma School Great Perfection or Great Completion is the subtle nondual pinnacle of Shakyamuni the Buddha's teaching. All four Vajrayana schools—Nyingma, Gelug, Kagyu, Sakya—agree.

The Tibetan Buddhist Middle Way Prasangika Madhyamaka of the Madhyamaka Buddhist tenet system (*Ch. V*) is the doctrinaire foundation upon which the *Dzogchen* view is

established. The Yogachara Madhyamaka *Shentong* direct intuition of Buddha nature found in the Yogachara *chittamatra* tradition are equally important *Dzogchen* sources (Pettit 1999).

Middle Way Madhyamaka—with its two sub-schools that are Prasangika and Yogachara—are then the metaphysical, philosophical sources of highest *Ati Yoga* of the Great Perfection. However, *Dzogchen* ethics, and foundational practice preliminaries (*ngöndro*) are found in the yogic practices of the "lower" Mahayana and Vagrayana Buddhist teaching vehicles.

The *Dzogchen* View, Path/Meditation, and Result/Fruition presuppose the Ultimate Truth of Buddha nature (*tathagatagarbha*), our ultimate wisdom mind (*jnana, yeshe*) of the emptiness base (*gzhi rigpa*) whose essence is empty, whose nature is clear light luminosity, and whose expression is spontaneous compassionate *bodhicitta*—the thought, intention, and action for the benefit of living beings. More on this tripartite constitution of the Buddha nature of mind below.

Wisdom and Compassion. These are the two limbs of Buddha's teaching; the very bedrock of the whole of the buddhadharma. If a thought or action is wise but not kind, it's not wisdom. If a thought or action is kind but not wise, it's not wisdom.

Tibetan Buddhist Nyingma School extends the Buddha's three teaching vehicles or *yanas* of the buddhadharma—Hinayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana—into the nine vehicles. The first eight are the Mahayana causal vehicles are based upon the duality of cause and effect, and so are inherently incapable of liberating the yogic aspirant from the primal atavistic subject-object split—the prodigious false bifurcation of knowing subject and its objects known. It is this dualistic separation between self and other that is the root cause of human ignorance (*avidya, ma rigpa*) with all of its attendant suffering.

The view and praxis of the Great Perfection are grounded in the Vajrayana/Tantrayana subtle ninth non-causal vehicle—the *Ati Yoga* of *Dzogchen* which is the nondual state of *direct intuition (yogi pratyaksa)* of always already spontaneously present (*lhundrub*) Presence (*vidya, rigpa*) of our indwelling primordial Buddha wisdom mind nature (*jnana, yeshe, gnosis*).

The dualistic dimension of everyday Relative Truth (*samvriti satya, Tib. kunzog denpa*)—already embraced and subsumed in the boundless whole that is Ultimate Truth (*paramartha satya, Tib. don dampa*), Perfect Sphere of *Dzogchen*—is personified as, and grounded in primordial *Adi Buddha* Samantabhadra (*Tib. Kuntazangpo*), the formless *dharmakaya* Buddha in whom form (*rupakaya* as *sambhogakaya* and *nirmanakaya*) arises and is instantiated. These three dimensions constitute the Tibetan Buddhist *Trikaya of the Base (gzhi rigpa)*—the three buddha bodies (*kayas*) of ultimate reality itself (*Ch. IX*).

This formless, timeless primeval aboriginal dimension that is Ultimate Truth is empty and absent "any shred" of *svabhava (rang zhin)*—relative, conceptually imputed, permanent, independent, intrinsic, ultimate/absolute self-existence. Ultimate Buddha mind (*buddhajnana, dgongs pa*) dimension is the perfectly subjective selfless ground and potential of relative *svabhava*—omnipresent, appearing spacetime phenomenal form.

So, conditional form is relatively real, just not intrinsically, ultimately real. Stuff continuously, interdependently arising from the primordial base/ground does not exist as it appears. The stuff of our appearing realities exists only relatively, conventionally, not ultimately. Yet here it is, all too real and full of itself throughout relative objective spacetime

existence. This view is the wondrous Buddhist Mahayana/Vajrayana dominant Two Truths trope of *Dzogchen* View and Practice (Ch. VI).

In the *Great Perfection Aspiration Prayer of Samantabhadra*—primordial *Adi Buddha* of the Ultimate Truth *dharmakaya* dimension—this primordial ultimate ground is revealed thusly (I have taken the liberty of making slight changes to Richard Barron's excellent translation):

Ho! The entire universe of appearance and possibility,
of samsara and nirvana, is one ground, two paths, two results.
This is the magical display of innate intrinsic awareness,
and its recognition or non-recognition.
Due to the aspiration of the all noble Samantabhadra,
may all beings awaken to perfectly manifest buddhahood
within the palace of the basic space of phenomena!
The primordial ground of all experience is un-compounded.
This reflexive self-arising vast expanse of being is ineffable.
There are no correct descriptions for either samsara or nirvana.
If there is intrinsic awareness of this point, there is buddhahood.
If there is no recognition of intrinsic awareness of the ground
sentient beings wander in the suffering of cyclic existence.
Therefore, may all sentient beings of the three realms be aware
of the ultimate profundity of the ineffable ground of being!

The "one ground" is, as Lama Tsultrim Allione has shown us, "the base or the womb of the great mother...It is pure latency, depth radiance, an expanse of emptiness and infinite potency from which the whole universe comes, yet the ground itself is without external radiance or projective (energy/motion) aspects".

The "two paths" arise from the aboriginal, timeless, formless one ground. One of these paths is the pristine *nirvanic* "recognition of intrinsic awareness of the ground" as primordial *Presence* of one's innate, intrinsic dynamic Buddha mind, the very nature of mind that abides in an already prior and always present unity with the primordial ground—utterly inseparable from the ground itself. The *Result* or *Fruition* of this path? "There is buddhahood", already present from the very beginning.

The other path is the path we all have taken—all of us pre-enlightened beings cycling here in samsaric existence—the not so happy *Result* of "non-recognition" (*ignorance, avidya, marigpa* of self-ego-I) of the empty primordial "groundless ground" that is Samantabhadra (Tib. Kuntazangpo), our already present Buddha nature (*tathagatagarbha*), Buddha mind (*buddhajnana*). The usual result of this path is endless cyclic suffering of birth, old age, sickness, and death. Not a pretty picture. What to do?

It is this second path that provides the opportunity to *choose* to enter in the practice of Buddha's *Pali Canon* Eightfold Path, and the Six Paramitas of the Mahayana, and through the profound teaching of these vehicles recognize, then realize the indwelling, "innate intrinsic awareness" of our Buddha mind that was, and is, as *Dzogchen* founder Garab Dorje told, "already present from the very beginning". It is that primordial love-wisdom to which we awaken.

Emptiness of Mind; Emptiness of Self. Twentieth century *Dzogchen* master Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche points out that selfless Buddhist emptiness/*shunyata*—the essential nature of the primordial *dharmakaya* ground—must be understood, not as a nihilistic, blank void of nothingness, but as "empty luminous cognizance". "*Emptiness is not empty of the kayas (buddha bodies of reality) and of primordial wisdom*". This truth is the "fullness of emptiness".

Rather, *shunyata* is the empty absolute space (*dharmadhatu*) of *dharmakaya*, radiant clear light primordial awareness base (*gzhi*), ultimate nature of form, selfless, innate clear light Buddha nature of mind. Always present bright Presence of That. How shall we understand this?

We are told by the wise that as one *chooses* to settle the obsessively busy mind into, and then rest in *selfless* "open presence" (*rigpa*) of this "natural state of pristine awareness"—Buddha nature/Buddha mind—one realizes that the mind has no past origin, no present location, and no future destiny. The three times—past, present, future—are absent and empty of mind. Mind has no physical structure, nor mental form. It cannot be located in the brain, nor is it elsewhere. If the mind were as big as a house, we might thoroughly search the house, but we will not find the mind. Mind therefore, is a *luminous cognizant emptiness* that is inherently ineffable and ungraspable by any conceptual construct or cognitive modality—relative conventional or ultimate.

Just so, the self-ego-I that is so relentlessly embedded in this diaphanous apparition of self or mind, with all the virtuosity of its conceptual affordances, is also empty of intrinsic ultimate existence. It too is empty of past origin, present location or future destiny. This bizarre phantom self entity does not exist in physical body, nor in mental mind, nor elsewhere. Exhausting analytical *vipashyana* examination reveals no essential self at all. Thus is self-ego-I confirmed to be wholly empty of any whit of inherent, intrinsic existence.

Yet, upon the arising of a strong desire (attraction), or a perceived threat (aversion), self arises like a seductive demon, or else a screaming banshee. How then shall we definitively know and feel, directly—beyond analysis—this great truth of the selfless intrinsic emptiness of form?

Approaching *Dzogchen* Practice. We tame, then train this obsessively "selfing" conceptual "wild horse of the mind" through quiescent *shamatha* meditation practice (*smriti, sati*) as taught in Sutrayana. This, with the foundational *ngöndro* practices of Tibetan Vajrayana, is the *Dzogchen* approach. In the Great Perfection the nondual indivisibility of the *Dzogchen* View and contemplative *Ati Yoga* non-meditation practice—with compassion for other beings—is axiomatic, as we have seen.

In beginning practice it is urgent to recognize that a naive duality between a goal-directed "gradual path", and a direct, immediate "nondual" ("not one, not two") *Dzogchen* path is, as is the conceptually contrived distinction between the Buddha's Two Truths—Ultimate and Relative—a false dichotomy that introduces a destructive duality into the *Dzogchen* View and Meditation. How then shall we enhance our view that we may feel and know the nondual truth of the matter?

The dualistic dimension of relative-conventional, causal, physical, perceptual and conceptual truth (*samvriti satya*) is already embraced and subsumed in the nondual dimension

of Ultimate Truth (*paramartha satya*). Thus exists the prior ontological and always present epistemological and phenomenological unity of the Buddha's Two Truths. This all-pervading unity is experienced non-conceptually, directly (*yogi pratyaksa*) as the experience of our indwelling Buddha nature/Buddha mind—bright clear light Presence of That—beyond our conceptual "global web of belief" (Quine 1969) *about* it. Instant, open, knowing-feeling, *maha-ati* "pure Presence" (*vidya, rigpa*) of it, by whatever name is recognition and realization of That!

What then shall we do when we inevitably become distracted and forgetful of this great truth of our here now Presence of the nature of mind. The *Dzogchen semdzins*—Vajrasattva mantra (short and long versions), the essential mantra *OM AH HUM*, and the forcefully expressed seed syllable *PHAT*—are our instant antidote, our *Ati Yoga* touchstones. It is through the *semdzin* that we return our attention to "innermost secret" Presence of the formless ground, again and again.

False dichotomy caveat: our self-ego-I concept-mind—under sway of ignorance (*avidya, ma rigpa*)—firmly believes and defends the linguistic semiotic split between dualistic and nondual Path; between Ultimate Truth and Relative Truth; between form and emptiness; between knowing subject and its objects known; between the two illusory *mayas* that are ultimate nondual selfless primordial awareness *Dzogchen vidya maya*, and relative conceptually contrived *avidya maya*; between existence and nonexistence; primordial purity and impurity; nirvana and samsara; dualistic and nondual view and meditation. All of these ultimately indivisible, yet complementary cognitive unities are cloaked in the false dichotomy of dualistic Relative Truth (*samvriti satya, kunzog denpa*) with its cognitive reticulum of "concealer" concepts and beliefs.

Thus do the two *mayas* share an identity of non-difference. Relatively they differ. Ultimately they are the same. Great 14th century *Dzogchen* master Longchenpa bespeaks (*Gyuma Galso*) the inherent nondual *unitarity* (an apropos neologism of Niels Bohr) of the two *mayas*. How is this so?

There are two kinds of human ignorance. The first is inborn and innate. The other is learned. Innate ignorance is instinctive; we are born with it. It is the instinctual view of self-ego-I, a perceiving subject inherently separate from all "other" selves and objects. The second is learned ignorance, the cognitive product of sociocultural conditioning—in Western culture the Greek materialism that has become the destructive prevailing cognitive deep cultural background mass mind ideology of Scientific Materialism/Physicalism. Both of these sad forms of ignorance are woefully short on compassion.

Dualistically appearing *avidya maya* experience is embraced and pervaded by the nondual *vidya maya* of the primordial ground of being. This unity of the inherently apparitional two *mayas* arises to our experience from the nondual "primordial purity" of the aboriginal emptiness ground or base (*gzhi rigpa*) in whom all appearing reality arises and is instantiated—perfectly free and uncontaminated by desire, or by conceptual elaboration and fabrication. Because, in the "Perfect Sphere of *Dzogchen*", our illusory and delusory realities are, in this Ultimate Truth view, "primordially pure" and undefiled "from the very beginning" (Garab Dorje), all appearing *avidya maya* is "perfect just as it is". In the clear words of Gautama the Buddha:

What you are is what you have been;
What you will be is what you do now...
So let it be as it is, and rest your weary mind;
All things are perfect exactly as they are.

Yet, under sway of ignorance (*avidya*), and delusion (*moha*) we almost immediately conceptually interpret this selfless pristine direct attentional/perceptual experience as afflictive emotional experience—sense desire, fear/anger, greed/pride, paralyzing doubt, and the rest. The result is human suffering. The antidote is instant effortless, spontaneous non-meditation "placement of attention", again and again upon our always present Buddha mind Presence, by whatever name or concept.

This is the timeless, radical *Dzogchen* View and practice.

Further, this instant, always already present open "pure presence" of the original ground are at once both origin and aim of the cognitively ambulant *Dzogchen* practitioner. "The ground is no different at the pinnacle of enlightenment than it is at the primordial base" (Adzom Rinpoche).

Caveat Auditor: Nonetheless, from the relative view, delusory dualistic *avidya maya* has a thorny thicket of bogus cognitive concepts on offer for the naively innocent obsessively thinking mind. *Avidya maya* concept-mind is a trickster. Don't be fooled. Avoid impetuous true-false reality judgments based in habitual, skeptical, dualistic deep cultural background "global web of belief".

Yet, wonder of wonders, it is this duplicitous, dualistic concept-mind of our very own self-ego-I that reflexively recognizes *avidya maya* just as it is; ignorance, illusion, and delusion. That reflective awareness cognition is after all the first step in waking up to our selfless, luminous, clear light love-wisdom mind Presence—the primordial Buddha nature of mind—"supreme source" that is nothing less than our "supreme identity". Who am I? "That I Am!"—without a single exception.

Be That as it may, such complementary cognitive doublets may be—once the *ultimate* boundless love-wisdom whole (*jnana, yeshe*) in which they arise and abide is recognized/realized (*rtogs pa*)—useful gifts to our *relative* discriminating wisdom (*prajna*). *Prajna* facilitates spontaneous, skillful *bodhicitta* conduct—our thought, intention, and action for the benefit of living beings. And that after all is the Mahayana open secret of human happiness. The two wisdoms, ultimate and relative: Guru Rinpoche Padmasambhava advises, "Practice these two as a unity".

Popular Buddhist idiom and ideology too often sees *Dzogchen* as a shortcut to *buddic* primordial awakening. Read some books about *Dzogchen trekchö* and *tögal* practice; rest occasionally in mostly conceptualized *rigpa*; maybe even show up for a *Yeshe Lama* weekend retreat; and become fully enlightened buddhas in this lifetime. But it is not so.

This great and precious *Dzogchen* wisdom treasure is decidedly not a conceptual enterprise. It cannot be learned, let alone accomplished through books, tapes, intellectual speculation, along with a little mindfulness practice. Indeed it cannot be learned at all. Buddha told, "This cannot be taught". The nondual primordial wisdom state of *Dzogchen* must be

introduced *directly*, non-conceptually, by the *Dzogchen* master, as we shall see. Yet, study and quiescent *shamatha* "taming the wild horse of the mind" is a propitious beginning.

Although, as we have just seen, the luminous Presence of *dynamic intrinsic awareness* that is the very Buddha nature of mind abides always present in our *ordinary mind stream*—and while the Great Perfection with its nondual *Ati Yoga* is indeed a direct and expedited path to ultimate awakening to our already present innate clear light *rigpa* wisdom Buddha mind Presence—*Dzogchen* practice requires assiduous "gradualist" contemplative and behavioral, ethical conduct preparation under the guidance of a qualified *Dzogchen* master. Only then shall be revealed the trans-conceptual miracle that "it is already accomplished from the very beginning". Should you aspire to such an ultimate path, please consider well this truth of *Dzogchen* practice: From Garab Dorje's *Three Vajra Verses*:

The nature of mind is Buddha from the beginning...
Realizing the purity essence of all things, to remain
there without seeking is the meditation....It is already
accomplished from the very beginning.

"To remain there without seeking is the meditation". That is *Dzogchen* "non-meditation". Roughly speaking, in the Mahayana Causal Vehicle, meditation seeks something—peace, happiness, liberation from suffering, enlightenment. Practice this cause now, and get that payoff later, in the future. In the *Dzogchen* Fruitional View there is nothing to seek, and nothing to accomplish. That which we seek is always already present. Seeking that which we actually are to avoid suffering, is a form of suffering.

Thus is *Dzogchen* View and non-meditation practice the nondual Great Perfection/Completion of the dualistic preparation of the Mahayana Causal Vehicle. Without this urgent development stage Mahayana Middle Way Madhyamaka practice there is no auspicious entry into *Dzogchen*. The *Dzogchen ngöndro* foundational practices are an auspicious, difficult beginning. Effortless *Dzogchen* practice requires hard work preparation—both conceptual and contemplative.

So, first learn basic mantra deity practice, along with mindful *shamatha* meditation. Learn to rest in this luminous spacious Presence of our Buddha mind emptiness ground that is the Perfect Sphere of *Dzogchen*, in whom everything arises. Then, with this enhanced capacity, and with the qualified *Dzogchen* master, approach the nondual *Dzogchen* View with its non-meditation on the Buddha's wisdom of *shunyata*/emptiness.

Guru Padmasambhava, in his lustrous *Natural Liberation* speaks of *Dzogchen shamatha*:

Flawless shamatha is like an oil lamp that is unmoved by wind.
Wherever the awareness is placed, it is unwaveringly present;
awareness is vividly clear, without being sullied by laxity,
lethargy, or dimness; wherever the awareness is directed, it is
steady and sharply pointed; and unmoved by adventitious
thoughts, it is straight. Thus, a flawless meditative state arises
in one's mind-stream; and until this happens, it is important that
the mind is settled in its natural state...Cast your gaze downward,

gently release your mind, and without having anything on which to meditate, gently release both your body and mind into their natural state...Without any modification or adulteration, place your attention simply without wavering, in its own natural state, its natural limpidity, its own character, just as it is now. Remain in clarity, and rest the mind so that it is loose and free...Fine stability will arise and you may even identify (primordial wisdom) awareness.
(trans. Alan Wallace 1998. See *Appendix A* below.)

In *Dzogchen* shamatha practice, naturally arising discursive thoughts, mental images, and emotions—negative or positive—are not seen as troublesome distractions to reject or enjoy. Rather, one sees them as emanations or manifestations of *dharmakaya*, primordially pure and of the same nature as the vast expanse of the ground itself, as waves are of the same nature as the great ocean.

Dzogchen is generally considered by those who know to be the most direct path to the final nondual realization of our ultimate Buddha nature that is primordial "groundless ground" of all arising phenomenal reality, the very nature of mind and all of its experience—perceptual, conceptual, contemplative, and nondual (*advaya*; "not one, not two").

Self and all arising spacetime phenomenal reality—our beloved "real world out there" (RWOT)—are thereby dynamic, luminous, empty virtual displays of the play of this boundless whole that is primordial awareness-consciousness ground itself in which, or in whom our physical and mental experience are instantiated. We are luminous instances of That! Resting naturally in that vast spacious boundless whole (*dharmadhatu*) is the primary cause of human happiness itself. And "Wonder of wonders", "it is already accomplished from the very beginning", deep within us.

As to our open question, how do we know, and feel this? *Shamatha* and *vipashyana* meditation practice open the gate to the Path of the esoteric *Dzogchen* Great Completion of the exoteric Buddhist Causal Vehicle—always under the guidance of the *Dzogchen* master.

Nyingma *Dzogchen* Master Dudjom Rinpoche clarifies this for us:

(*Dzogchen*), which makes the result into the path is superior to the vehicle of the transcendental perfections which makes the cause into the path (*Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism*, Vol. I)

Thus is the ultimate Result or Fruit of enlightenment—fully realized innate, primordial nondual wisdom *bodhi* Buddha mind (*jnana*, *yeshe*) that is realized as Buddhahood—taken as the "innermost" esoteric foundation of the tantric Path. Why? Because the result, Buddha nature/Buddha mind is always already present within us. So we work, relatively, with that ultimate reality, from the outset. As Guru Rinpoche told, "We discover ultimate truth only by way of relative truth". Yet, while working with relative truth we "Keep the view as high as the sky; and our deeds as fine as barley flour".

In short, we "keep the view" that we are always already Buddha. That is the nondual original nature of mind—this wondrous gift that is our here now present spacetime embodied

mind. Realizing That, we forget ourselves for a few moments and go to work to benefit living beings. It is That that makes us happy now.

Once again, no need to seek happiness in some future perfect time or place, or mind state. Rather, we gradually awaken, through the assiduous practice of the Path, to that "supreme identity" that we already are. Who am I? To borrow a Vedic pith, *Tat Tvam Asi*. That I Am! "It is already accomplished from the very beginning" (Garab Dorje). As Gautama Shakyamuni told so long ago, "Wonder of wonders, all beings are Buddha". Thus do we "Make the goal the Path".

Conversely, the exoteric, dualistic sutra Mahayana Causal Vehicle (the dialectical vehicle) takes causality, cause and effect—practice these Six Perfections now and become a Buddha later—as the foundation of the Path. The main point here is that, although we are not yet fully awakened Buddhas, we are already Buddha! Our ordinary mind is Buddha mind from the very beginning! It is that great nondual Ultimate Truth to which we gradually awaken through assiduous relative practice. This great Vajrayana tantric foundational premise makes all the difference in establishing the correct conceptual View (*darshana, lta ba*) from the outset. Who am I? I am Buddha from the very beginning. Good to know in approaching the *Dzogchen* path, or at any stage of the Path (*marga, lam*); especially at the beginning.

Thus it is said, *Dzogchen Ati Yoga* is the teaching pinnacle, subtlest and "highest" view and practice of Nyingma "inner tantras", and the very Fruitional Vehicle of the buddhadharma Path.

While the causal Paramitayana and the fruitional Tibetan Vajrayana are equally concerned to "accomplish" Buddhahood, unlike the skillful objective conceptual means of Sutrayana, the tantras of highest *Ati Yoga Dzogchen* of the tantric vehicle has the benefit of subjective, trans-conceptual, innermost esoteric skillful means, to wit: highly efficacious, even blissful direct and innate clear light wisdom (*jnana, yeshe, gnosis*), and mantra and deity practice meditation under the direct empowering guidance of a qualified *Dzogchen* master. Such a practice program is said to expedite Buddhahood in several lifetimes, or if you're lucky, in this lifetime, over against "innumerable *kalpas*" of rebirth for even the superior Sutrayana practitioner. Not surprisingly, those who hold the View of the Great Perfection view it as the perfect Path.

This fruitional tantric distinction is perhaps the main difference between the more or less exoteric objective and dualistic conceptual dialectics of the Sutrayana (Sautrantika) vehicle, and the esoteric Tantrayana/Vajrayana (Mantrayana) with its Middle Way Prasangika Madhyamaka teaching, the foundation of innermost esoteric, monistic panpsychic/cosmopsychic nondual *Dzogchen* view and praxis. (Boaz 2021b, *Ch. VIII*, "Primordial Consciousness: Monistic Dzogchen Panpsychism"; excerpted at davidpaulboaz.org under "Articles and Essays".)

We shall see below that in the View of the Great Perfection the *essence (kadag)* of all appearing physical and mental spacetime reality is boundless *shunyata/emptiness*. But emptiness is not merely a negative void because its *nature* is spontaneous presence (*lhundrub*), fullness of radiant luminosity (*prabhasa, 'od gsal*). Its *energy* is the manifested spontaneous expression in time and space of boundless compassion (*karuna, thugs re*)—great cosmic gift (*jinlob, euengelion*) of absolute *bodhicitta* whence arises the relative *bodhicittas* of aspiration, and of

action. Once again, it is this precious relative *bodhicitta* that is the Mahayana/Vajrayana secret of human happiness.

These three conceptual faces—essence, nature, energy—of the Perfect Sphere of *Dzogchen* are in all ways an omnipresent, indivisible prior and present unity that is revealed through stabilized, nondual non-meditation of *Dzogchen Ati Yoga* practice.

These are some of the things we need to know when approaching the *Dzogchen* path.

The Fundamental Innate Mind of Clear Light in Sutra and Tantra. Buddha told it 25 centuries past,

The mind is devoid of mind,
for the nature of mind is clear light.

H.H. Dalai Lama (2000) teaches that the whole spectrum of Buddhist philosophy, ethics, and practice may be understood in terms of this one justly famous verse of the Buddha.

The first line presents the wisdom of the First Turning of the Wheel of Dharma (the *dharmacakra*), the teaching of the Four Noble Truths, and the entire meaning of Buddhist Sutrayana—of emptiness/*shunyata*, and of *bodhicitta*. The first line also introduces the wisdom of Mahayana Middle Way Madhyamaka, the Second Turning of the Wheel of the Buddha's Teaching.

The second line of the verse—"for the nature of mind is clear light"—encompasses the meaning of the Third Turning of the Wheel, namely, Buddha's teaching on our innate indwelling Buddha nature (*tathagatagarbha*)/Buddha mind (*buddhajnana*), the nondual primordial innate clear light Buddha nature of mind. The nondual *Ati Yoga* of *Dzogchen*, the Great Completion, is the practice of accomplishing this fundamental "innate mind of clear light"—non-conceptual, pristine, naked, essential Buddha mind, our indwelling open Presence of That!

For His Holiness, clear light mind nature may be understood at two levels, the Mahayana sutra teaching system, and the Vajrayana tantra teaching system. When the clear light nature of mind is understood in terms of both of these together there are two distinct references: 1) the "emptiness of the mind" which corresponds to the "objective clear light", and 2) "the essential cognizant luminous clarity and awareness" of the very nature of mind itself, which corresponds to the "subjective experience of clear light". In the clear words of H.H. Dalai Lama:

The fundamental innate mind of clear light is considered to be the nature of mind, or the ultimate root of consciousness... This is the same experience to which Mahamudra leads, to which Dzogchen leads, and to which the union of clarity and emptiness (Sakya) leads...If you analyse them, they all arrive at the same point...As soon as there is clear and aware consciousness it is said to be permeated by the clear light rigpa...indwelling clear light, essential rigpa...When this aware aspect of rigpa is directly introduced and recognized, it can be identified even in the very thick of arising thoughts...In Dzogchen, while thoughts

are active, rigpa permeates them all, so that even at the very moment when powerful thoughts like attachment and aversion are arising, there remains a pervasive quality of clear light rigpa. That rigpa you make into your practice

—H.H. Dalai Lama, *Dzogchen*, 2000, p 168 ff.

High Dharma in a Cold Climate: Dzogchen View and Practice. In the ancient Nyingma tradition of Vajrayana Tibetan Buddhism *Dzogchen* (*Dzogpachenpo*, Skt. *Mahasandi*) is seen as the definitive, highest teaching of Shakyamuni Buddha—the "innermost secret" teaching that he taught only to disciples of the greatest capacity and preparation.

We've seen that the *Dzogchen* (*Dzog*; complete or perfect; *chen*, great) teaching is said to have arisen from Samantabhadra (Tib. Kuntazangpo), primordial formless *dharmakaya* *Adi Buddha* in whom all spacetime reality form arises and appears. The teaching was then directly transmitted to Vajrasattva, *Adi Buddha* of the *sambhogakaya* dimension of light-form; then from Vajrasattva to the human *nirmanakaya* Garab Dorje (d. 55 C.E.), who recorded it for his disciple Manjushrimitra, who then classified it into the three *Dzogchen* teaching cycles—*semde*, *longde*, and secret *mengagde* or *upadesha*. This was then passed on to his disciple Shrisimha, then to Jnanasutra, and then in the 8th century to Tibet via Vimalamitra and Padmasambhava. In the 14th century "the omniscient" Longchenpa (1308-1364) synthesized the great teaching into a unified teaching Path. Jigme Lingpa (1730-1798) edited it into its present form as the *Longchen Nyingthig*. (For a more detailed history please see *Appendix D: "A Brief History of the Dzogchen Transmission"*)

We've seen that for Nyingma school, the traditional three extant Buddhist teaching vehicles—Hinayana/Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana—have become the *Nine Vehicles* to liberation from suffering and the ultimate clear light full *bodhi* awakening to our already present Buddha mind (*buddhajnana*). That propitious Result is buddhahood itself.

H.H. Dalai Lama teaches that the first eight of these Nine Vehicles of Nyingma utilize our reflective, relative conventional ordinary obstructed mind working as the cause and effect Mahayana Causal Vehicle to accomplish the ultimate full *bodhi* enlightenment of buddhahood. The bad news: such a path of renunciation and transformation takes countless lifetimes.

However, we have seen that in the *Dzogchen* Resultant or Fruitional Vehicle ordinary mind itself is recognized as already "primordially pure" Buddha mind "from the very beginning". This subtle, direct supreme vehicle—the *Ati Yoga* of *Dzogchen*, the nondual Great Perfection or Great Completion of the dualistic Mahayana Causal Vehicle—utilizes our already present indwelling dynamic intrinsic primordial awareness wisdom itself as the Path. Once again, this path is considered by most Vajrayana masters to be the pinnacle—with Essence Mahamudra—of all the Buddhist teaching vehicles, and may, under the most auspicious circumstances, be "accomplished" in a single lifetime. That's the good news.

This primordial awareness wisdom is the constant and "unchanging *rigpa* awareness" that is not other than Samantabhadra, primordial *Adi Buddha* of the all embracing aboriginal *dharmakaya* reality dimension. This *dharmakaya* Buddha is the "Supreme Source" (*Kenjed Gyalpo*), and represents our pristine fundamental nature, the "fundamental innate mind of clear light". It is utterly "primordially pure" and untainted by the karmic winds of dualistic conceptual thought and negative emotion.

In *Dzogchen* View and Practice luminous, numinous primordial awareness wisdom Presence—*rigpa*, *vidya*—is inherently present in all human beings, without a single exception. It is not something that happens conditionally—if we're good, kind, and helpful. Instant open Presence is already the case. Indeed it is who we are now.

Moreover, all of the physical and mental phenomena of relative spacetime reality arise, participate, and pass away within this vast unbounded primordial whole, by whatever name or concept. All arising reality is imbued with this primordial Buddha nature (*tathagatagarbha*). Just so, that same primordial essence is the "supreme identity" of each and every human being—bright compassionate Presence of That. On the accord of H.H. Dalai Lama:

The most important way to understand the Great Perfection is in terms of essence, nature and compassionate energy according to which the essence is primordial purity (*kadag*) and the nature is spontaneous presence (*lhundrub*)... All the phenomena of samsara and nirvana and the path are, by their very nature, the *rigpa* awareness that is the primordial buddha Samantabhadra, and they are never outside of the primordial expanse of buddhahood...This is the fundamental innate mind of clear light.

—H.H. Dalai Lama, 2007, p. 78

In other words, according to 19th century Nyingma *Rimé* polymath Ju Mipham:

Within the essence original wakefulness which is primordially pure (*kadag*) manifests the nature, a radiance which is spontaneously present (*lhundrub*).

Thus it is, in the *Dzogchen* view, the fundament of clear light ground luminosity is the *Trikaya of the Base* or the three Buddha bodies—*dharmakaya*, *sambhogakaya*, *nirmanakaya*—that is our "supreme source" (*cittadhatu*, *kunjed gyalpo*), ultimate reality itself (*dharmata*, *cho-nyid*), the very nature of mind (*sems-nyid*, *buddhi*): its *essence* is emptiness/*shunyata*; its *nature* is luminous clarity (*gsal-ba*); its *energy* continuously emanates as the compassionate *Kosmic* gift (*jinlob*) of ultimate *bodhicitta* that is our home as esteemed guests of this spacetime phenomenal dimension of light/motion/form (*tsal*, *rolba*, $E=mc^2$).

This *jnana prana* energy naturally, selflessly expresses itself in human conduct as relative *bodhicitta*—compassionate wisdom (*thugs re*)—the thought, intention, and action to benefit living beings. Herein abides our own true happiness as individual and social beings.

So, infinite, empty vast expanse of basic space (*chos ying*) that is the unborn, uncreated, boundless whole (*dharmadhatu*) is our nondual ultimate reality ground itself (*dharmakaya*). From that unbroken whole interdependently arises (*pratitya samutpada*) relative form from its ultimate emptiness "groundless ground". As Buddha told, "Form is empty. Emptiness is form".

Ultimately, these complementary Two Truths of the vast whole are realized as a *one truth* prior and present unity that is invariant throughout our entire human awareness-consciousness cognitive processional: 1) pre-conceptual direct perception; 2) exoteric, objective,

conceptual; 3) esoteric, subjective, contemplative; 4) "innermost secret", perfectly subjective nondual.

Therefore, the Buddhist Two Truths share a relation of identity. How is this so? The all inclusive nondual dimension of Ultimate Truth embraces, subsumes, and pervades the dynamic dualistic spacetime dimension of Relative Truth arising therein.

It is our always already present open awareness Presence (*vidya, rigpa*)—fully present to that primordial wholeness ground state—that knows and feels the truth of this great reality process. The practice of the Path with the living *Dzogchen* master and the *sangha* spiritual community opens the heart and mind of the yogi and yogini to receive the love, wisdom and deep inner ease and peace of it. And that is the very secret of both relative and ultimate human happiness. Earthy, pragmatic soteriology indeed.

Great 14th century *Dzogchen* master Longchen Rabjam (Longchenpa, 1308-1364), synthesizer of the entire previous *Dzogchen* wisdom transmission speaks of this, our conceptually unelaborated, "innermost secret" state of awareness Presence of the great unbounded whole itself:

Naturally occurring timeless awareness—utterly lucid awakened mind—is marvelous and superb, primordially and spontaneously present. It is the treasury from which comes the universe of appearances and possibilities, whether samsara or nirvana. Homage to the unwavering state, free of conceptual elaboration.

—Treasury of the Basic Space of Phenomena (2001)

Please consider Longchenpa's mind to mind transmission to us of this primordial awareness wisdom (*jnana, yeshe, gnosis*), the "fundamental innate mind of clear light", the very Buddha nature of mind (*citatta, sems nyid*), vast expanse of infinite reality itself (*dharmata, cho nyid*):

Self arising wisdom is *rigpa* that is empty, clear and free from all conceptual elaboration, like an immaculate sphere of crystal...It does not analyze objects...By simply identifying that non-conceptual, pristine, naked *rigpa*, you realize there is nothing other than this nature...This is nondual self-arising wisdom...Like a reflection in a mirror, when objects and perceptions manifest to *rigpa*, that pristine and naked awareness which does not proliferate into thought is called the inner power (*tsal*), the responsiveness that is the ground (*gzhi*) for all the arising of things...For a yogin who realizes the naked meaning of *Dzogpachenpo*, *rigpa* is fresh, pure and naked, and objects may manifest and appear within *rigpa*, but it does not lose itself externally to those objects.

—Longchen Rabjam, *Treasury of the Dharmadhatu* (Commentary), Adzom Chögar edition

The Supreme Source. What is perhaps the primary *Dzogchen* tantra, *The Kunjed Gyalpo* (*The Supreme Source*), must surely be considered one of humankind's great spiritual treasures. According to *Dzogchen* master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, this prehistorical supreme nondual

teaching—by whatever name—has been transmitted from master to disciple directly, heartmind to heartmind, for thousands of years.

However, historical *Dzogchen* wisdom dates from the teaching of Garab Dorje (d. 55 CE), as we have seen. The *Kunjed Gyalpo* tantra arises in the 8th Century and is the fundamental tantra of the *Dzogchen semde* (mind) teaching cycle. This reading of the great nonlocal, nondual primordial *Dzogchen* teaching is derived from Buddhist Vajrayana/Tantrayana understanding of the ultimate nature of mind, yet its truth essence runs like a golden thread through the grand tapestry of humankind's great nondual Primordial Wisdom Tradition.

Kunjed Gyalpo, The Wise and Glorious King is Samantabhadra (luminous clarity) and Samantabhadri (boundless emptiness) in inseparable *yabyum* embrace—androgynous skylike primordial *Adi Buddha*—the union of luminous clarity and emptiness that is none other than our original Buddha nature, supreme source, basis, primordial womb of everything. Samantabhadra, formless *Dharmakaya* Buddha descends into the realm of light and speaks to the *Logos*, Vajrasattva, Buddha of the *Sambhogakaya* dimension:

The essence of all the Buddhas exists prior to samsara and nirvana...it transcends the four conceptual limits and is intrinsically pure; this original condition is the uncreated nature of existence that always existed, the ultimate nature of all phenomena...It is utterly free of the defects of dualistic thought which is only capable of referring to an object other than itself...it is the base of primordial purity...Similar to space it pervades all beings...The inseparability of the two truths, absolute and relative is called 'primordial Buddha'...If at the moment the energy of the base manifests, one does not consider it something other than oneself...it self-liberates...Understanding the essence...one finds oneself always in this state...dwelling in the fourth time, beyond past, present and future...the infinite space of self-perfection...pure dharmakaya, the essence of the vajra of clear light.

—Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, 1999

Thus do the sutras and the tantras of Buddha's teaching, and all of the bivalent dualities and dialectics of the Buddhist path—objective-subjective, existence-nonexistence, form and emptiness, self-no-self, observer-data, true-false, relative truth-ultimate truth—abide "utterly free of the defects of dualistic thought", in the prior unity of the interdependently arisen Perfect Sphere of *Dzogchen*, the Great Perfection. This perfect reality sphere is nothing less than our ultimate mind nature, luminous innate clear light wisdom mind that is always already the unity of awareness and emptiness, of clarity and emptiness, and of bliss and emptiness.

Who is it, that I am? All the Buddhas and *mahasiddhas* of the three times have told it. This infinite vast expanse of the primordial awareness wisdom tantric continuum, "supreme source", boundless all embracing whole itself—bright indwelling Presence of That is who we actually are!

Recall our ancient Vedic locution, *Tat Tvam Asi*. That, I Am! *That* is our "supreme identity"—by any name—great completion of our always present Buddha nature, deep heart-seed Presence of ultimate happiness that is both origin and aim of all our urgent, dualistic

seeking. All the wisdom masters of our species have told it: that which we seek is always already present, deep within us. Chögyal Namkhai Norbu on this primordial supreme source:

In terms of the source, the root of all phenomena, there is no such thing as an observer and an object to observe. All the phenomena of existence, without exception, abide in the supreme source in a condition of birthlessness...As the supreme source, Samantabhadra, pure and total consciousness, I am the mirror in which all phenomena are reflected. Although lacking self-nature everything exists clearly; without need for a view, the nature shines clear. Understanding the essential unborn condition is not an object to observe dualistically. This is the great understanding!

—Chögyal Namkhi Norbu, 1999

Basic Space: The Innate Mind of Clear Light. Recent Tibetan *Dzogchen* ecumenical *Rimé* master Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche teaches that the two innermost principles of *Dzogchen* are basic space (*dharmadhatu*, Tib. *chos ying*) and primordial awareness presence (*vidya, rigpa*). Basic space is fecund luminous *shunyata*/emptiness, the innate clear light luminosity (*'od gsal*) itself. In the *Dzogchen* view the "innermost secret" realization of basic space is *klong*, infinite vast expanse of all embracing primordial reality itself, transcending any conceptual elaboration or limit, judgment or bias, beyond even the subtlest subject-object duality, beyond objective and subjective emptiness, beyond ground and path luminosity.

As space pervades, so awareness pervades...like space, *rigpa* is all-encompassing...Just as beings are all pervaded by space, *rigpa* pervades the minds of beings...Basic space is the absence of mental constructs, while awareness is the knowing of this absence of constructs, recognizing the complete emptiness of mind essence... The ultimate dharma is the realization of the indivisibility of basic space and awareness (that is) Samantabhadra.

—Tulku Urgyen (*As It Is*, Vol. I, 1999, and *Rainbow Painting*, 1995)

Therefore, basic space (*dharmadhatu*) and primordial awareness wisdom (*jnana, yeshe*) are an indivisible prior ontological, and present epistemological and phenomenal unity. Emptiness and our innate clear light Buddha wisdom mind share this *Kosmic* relation of identity.

On the accord of the Third Dodrupchen, Jigme Tenpe Nyima (quoted in H.H. Dalai Lama *Dzogchen*, 2000): "The *rigpa* taught in the Nyingma *Dzogchen* approach and the wisdom of clear light (*Mahamudra/Anuttara-yoga-tantra*) are one and the same":

In *Dzogchen*, on the basis of the clear light itself, the way in which the clear light abides is made vivid and certain by the aspect of *rigpa* or knowing. That is free of any overlay of delusion and from any corrupting effect due to conceptual thoughts that will inhibit the experience of clear light...It is not accomplished as anything new,

as a result of circumstances and conditions, but is present from the very outset...an awareness that can clearly perceive the way in which basic space and wisdom are present. On the basis of that key point, the realization of clear light radiates in splendor, becoming clearer and clearer, like a hundred million suns...Here the aware aspect of clear light or effulgent *rigpa* (arising from essential *rigpa*) is stripped bare and you penetrate further into the depths of clear light...even as objects seem to arise...It is on the basis of this that you train your mind.

This poetry of the *Dzogchen* view was beautifully expressed by a great Tang Dynasty Chan/Zen Chinese master who had never heard of *Dzogchen*. His name was Haung Po (d. 850 CE):

All the Buddhas and all sentient beings are nothing but the one mind, beside which nothing exists. The one mind alone is Buddha. There is no distinction between Buddha and sentient beings....This one pure mind, the source of all things, shines forever with the radiance of its own perfection...like the sun rising through empty sky illuminates the whole world...Still your mind and it is here....Human beings are attached to forms and so seek externally for Buddhahood. It is by this very seeking that they lose it (*Ch'uan-hsin Fa-yao*).

Lovely dharma poetry. Beautiful words indeed. And how shall we ordinary folks directly connect to and know this always already present Presence of our innermost clear light wisdom Buddha mind? How indeed. That is the question that the *AtiYoga* of *Dzogchen* answers directly.

We first establish an effective "real practice" under the guidance of a qualified *Dzogchen* meditation master. We must ask for direct transmission if we truly desire it. If we have already done this, we make the *goal* of this precious gift of all encompassing practice, not seeking enlightenment in some divine future mind state, but our ordinary, difficult everyday path itself—step by step, "brief moments many times"—natural continuity of clear light wisdom awareness of That that is already present deep within us, here and now.

Verily, everything, all of our cognitive experience—physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual, objective, subjective, contemplative, and perfectly subjective nondual—is the practice of the Path. That is our already present Buddha mind Presence (*Appendix A, The Brief Course*).

The Three Vajra Verses. Here are H.H. Dudjom Rinpoche's luminous Comments on Garab Dorje's *Three Vajra Verses* or *The Three Essential Points* that are the *Dzogchen* Base, View, Path, Meditation, Result, and Conduct (translated by John M. Reynolds):

Verse I: Recognize your own true nature (through direct introduction/transmission by the *Dzogchen* master). (The Base and View). "This fresh immediate awareness of the present moment, transcending all thoughts related to the three times (past, present, future), is itself that primordial awareness or wisdom (*yeshe*) that is self-originated intrinsic awareness (*rig pa*)."

From this Base and View arises the *Dzogchen Semde* (mind) teaching cycle.

Verse II: Choose the state of presence, beyond doubt (The Path and Meditation). “Whatever phenomena of *samsara* or *nirvana* may manifest, all of it represents the play of the creative energy or potentiality of one’s own immediate intrinsic awareness presence (*rig pa’i rtsal*). One must decide upon this unique state for oneself, and know that there exists nothing other than this.”

From This Path and Meditation arises the *Dzogchen Longde* (space) teaching cycle.

Verse III: Continue in the state with confidence in liberation (The Result and Conduct). “Whatever gross or subtle thoughts may arise, by merely recognizing their nature, they arise and self-liberate simultaneously in the vast expanse of *Dharmakaya*, where Emptiness and Awareness are nondual and inseparable (*gsal stong gnyis med*).”

From this Result and Conduct arises the *Dzogchen* “innermost secret” *Upadesha* (*Mengagde*), or heart essence (*nyingthig*) teaching cycle.

The Six Vajra Verses of Vairochana.

These *Three Essential Points* (*The Three Vajra Verses*) of the essence, nature and energy of the Base, and of the Path, and of the Fruition/Result is contained in *Dhyani* Buddha Vairochana’s early *Dzogchen* tantra, the *Six Vajra Verses*, or “Cuckoo of the State of Presence” (*Rig-pa’I khu-byug*), luminous Buddha mind Presence (*vidya, rigpa*) of intrinsic awareness that each human being is.

The cuckoo is the sacred bird of *Bönpo* founder Shenrab Miwo and is considered in the aboriginal *Bön* tradition as the king of birds, harbinger of spring and bearer of the primordial wisdom from vast empty space of *dharmakaya*. These early *Six Vajra Verses* of Vairochana, and the hundreds of *Dzogchen* tantras and texts that issue from it are but commentaries on Garab Dorje’s above *Three Vajra Verses* or *The Three Essential Statements* (*The Three Points That Strike the Essence*).

The Six Vajra Verses (translated by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu):

Verse 1 & 2: The Base (View): The nature of phenomena is nondual (*gnyis med*), and each one, its own state, is beyond the limits of the mind (*Dzogchen semde* or mind meditation cycle).

Verse 3 & 4: The Path, Way of Practice (Meditation): There is no concept that can define the condition of “what is,” but vision nevertheless manifests: all is good (*Dzogchen longde*, or space meditation cycle).

Verse 5 & 6: The Fruit, Result, Way of Being in Action (Conduct): Everything has already been accomplished, and so, having overcome the sickness of effort (spiritual seeking), one finds oneself in the self-perfected state: (*Dzogchen mengagde/upasheda*, or secret essence meditation cycle).

And from 18th century *Dzogchen* master Jigme Lingpa—great unifier of Longchenpa's syncretic corpus, and author of the *Longchen Nyingthig: Heart Essence of the Vast Expanse*—on the nondual Great Perfection *Dzogchen* view:

No Buddhas, no beings, beyond
existence and non-existence
intrinsic awareness itself is absolute
Guru—Ultimate Truth. By resting
naturally, beyond fixation in that
inherently free perfect innate *Bodhi-*
mind, I take refuge and actualize
Bodhicitta.

—Jigme Lingpa, *Longchen Nyingthig*

“The perfect explanation of *Dzogchen*“, according to Chögyal Namkhai Norbu is voiced in these perfect words of Gautama, our historical *Nirmanakaya* Buddha:

All that arises
is essentially no more real
than a reflection,
transparently pure and clear,
beyond all definition
or logical explanation.

Yet the seeds of past action, karma,
continue to cause further arising.
Even so, know that all that exists
is ultimately devoid of self-nature,
utterly nondual.

Nondual Non-Meditation: Undistracted Ordinary Mind. Please consider this: In the luminous, numinous space between, and within, and throughout our relative perceptions, thoughts, feelings and beliefs already abides our ultimate primordial innate clear light love-wisdom mind—profound innermost Presence of That. Connect to That, moment to moment. That is the great happiness *Dzogchen* teaching.

We've often seen in these pages that our Buddha mind Presence is transpersonal/trans-ego, non-conceptual and trans-rational; that is, it utterly transcends our deep cultural background realist/materialist "scientific" paradigm,—our reality constituting "global web of belief" as to its objective existence or nonexistence. Yet, our Buddha mind is right here now, upon each mantra breath! All the masters of the three times have told it: your *bodhi* mind wisdom mind Presence is always already present! But don't *believe* this. It's beyond belief. As Buddha told, "Come and see".

Undistracted Ordinary Mind. In the most subtle nondual view and practice of Vajrayana *Dzogchen*, and of definitive Essence *Mahamudra*, mindfulness meditation practice is already simply present now in "undistracted ordinary mind"; the "primordially pure" natural state of spontaneously aware Presence—empty luminous awareness that is always present right here and now, in the midst of all kinds of thinking, feeling, and physical distractions. "Without past, present, future; empty awake mind" (Ju Mipham Rinpoche).

This nondual, innermost esoteric teaching on the nondual primordial nature of mind unfolds "from the top" as the "immediacy of the View", while the dualistic Path ascends from below. Guru Rinpoche, Padmasambhava teaches: "Keep your view as high as the sky; and your deeds as fine as barley flour...Practice these two as a unity".

Thus is confidence and certainty of the *View* established through the nondual *Meditation*, and the compassionate *Conduct* of the *Path—View, Meditation, and Conduct/Action*.

Recall the *Dzogchen Three Vajra Verses*: 1) Recognize your own true nature (by direct introduction/transmission from the *Dzogchen* master); 2) Choose the state of Presence beyond doubt; 3) Continue in the state with confidence in liberation". That is *Dzogchen View and Meditation Practice*.

As Lord Buddha's teaching enters the West the immediacy of the nondual View, along with the Lama's "pointing out instruction" is introduced directly by some Vajrayana Tibetan Lamas at the beginning of the process of the Path, before the student's accomplishment of the daunting preliminary practices of *ngöndro*, and "development stage" practice, which may or may not be done later as the View and Path become more established, and the unruly mind more stabilized. Why do *Dzogchen* Lamas do this?

A basic working understanding of the View—and the profound relative, conventional everyday peace and happiness that arises from it—is always here now, from the very beginning! Such immediate happiness is already present! Happiness—bright Presence of That—is already the case. It is not at all dependent upon later "advanced practice". Human happiness is always right here now in our *undistracted ordinary mind*. That is the miracle of radical *Dzogchen* truth.

So, having direct happy experience of Presence, we gradually learn to manage distractions. That is the *Dzogchen View*. There is no need to believe this. Ultimately, it is just more words. And it is assuredly beyond belief. Thus do we open to receive it *directly (yogi pratyaksa)*. As Buddha told so long ago, "O monks, do not believe what I teach out of respect for me. Come and see."

That now said, we must, through the Buddha's basic "mindfulness of breathing", and with basic mantra prayer (e.g. *OM AH HUM*) begin to "bracket" our deep cultural background skepticism and doubt—our dubious materialist "global web of belief"—and open our heart-mind to receive. That is how we manage the natural endless painful distractions.

But the goal is not to block or to end the distractions. The goal is not to end life's inevitable adversity. Adversity happens! It's how we *choose* to respond that matters; is it not? So, we simply connect to our already present Presence—moment to moment—through the mindful mantra breath. Anxiety and impatience lose a bit of their power. We learn to go easy on and forgive ourselves, and so others, especially those we love.

We've seen that the outer and inner seeking strategies for such happiness doesn't work. So, we stop seeking and simply relax into, and rest in our already present wisdom mind Presence—"brief moments, many times". Our relief need not be some mystical "advanced practice". Our immediate touchstone is here upon the mantra breath—our ongoing instant connection to that.

Hot Tip! If you have not already done so, get a Lama in your life. If you have done so, remember again and again that you are always already now that Lama/Guru Presence. The outer Guru only mirrors your inner Guru. Bright Presence of That. "Lama walks always with loma".

Most surprising to our concepts and beliefs *about* the path of meditation—with the introduction by the Lama of *undistracted ordinary mind* to the prepared "ripe" student—there is no need to change anything! No need to seek some paradigmatic ideal "perfect meditation", or contemplative accomplishment. No need to try to do something, or not do something. No need to block thoughts and feelings; nor to indulge frustration about such distractions. No need to worry; to feel guilty and regretful. No need to *fix* this natural process of primordial arising of appearance from its emptiness primordial Buddha "groundless ground", the perfect sphere of *Dzogchen*; the perfect imprint/seal of *Mahamudra*. Buddha told, "Leave it alone; it's perfect as it is". You can't improve it! Connect to that Buddha mind love-wisdom through mindful *shamatha*, and through your stainless, if less than perfect, *bodhicitta* conduct. It will make you happy now. That is the Path.

The lamas tell that in this nondual view and spontaneous non-meditation practice, all arising unfolding appearance already enfolded in vast unbounded whole that is nondual reality itself is always untainted, undefiled, and perfect just as it is. This basal aboriginal emptiness "groundless ground" is inherently "primordially pure" and uncontaminated by distracting dualistic thought or existence of any kind. Good to know.

Just so, the spacetime forms which arise and exist through the ground, because there is never a whit of separation from it, is equally inherently perfect as it appears. Radical teaching indeed. And fortunately, utterly beyond belief. So, it must be *directly* experienced.

Therefore, wonder of wonders, distractions—thinking, feeling, perceiving—negative or positive, are but mere appearances—waves of the primordial natural state upon the vast ocean that is present luminosity of our *undistracted ordinary mind*. There is no *essential* difference! "Form is empty; emptiness is form".

Hence, as Buddha told so long ago, "Rest your weary mind and let it be as it is; all things are perfect exactly as they are". This is the radical nondual View, Meditation, and Practice of the *Dzogchen* Path, whether it is introduced at the beginning, or after years of dualistic "development stage" practice. It is this beautiful, difficult dualistic practice that makes it so.

Yes, *undistracted ordinary mind* is simply letting natural mind be as it already is, here now, without adding judgments about distractedness. It's pristine and perfect just as it is, distractions, imperfections and all. Yes, that is the radical nondual *Dzogchen* teaching. And so we still have to show up for work, and take out the trash, and be kind even to "difficult people".

Far from an idealized vacant and void state of mindlessness, *undistracted ordinary mind* is lucid, awake, vivid, and clear. This then, is nondual, uncontrived, unelaborated *Dzogchen* "non-meditation". As *Dzogchen* founder Garab Dorje told twenty centuries ago, "It is

already accomplished from the very beginning", deep within *your* heartmind. It is that profound truth to which we awaken—step by mindful step—upon the mindful mantra breath.

And yes, it takes a bit of peaceful, lucid undistracted mindfulness meditation practice—foundational *shamatha* and mantra prayer under the guidance of a qualified lama—to recognize this not always so quiescent, already present state of *vipashyana* Presence; and to sustain it.

Now, settle into and rest in your familiar state of mindful *shamatha* upon the breath as you receive these kind words of 16th century great *Mahamudra* Master Dakpo Tashi Namgyal:

Look directly into your conscious mind. It is a wakefulness for which no words suffice. It is not a definable entity, but at the same time, it is a self-knowing aware emptiness that is clear, lucid and awake. Sustain this without distraction... Next, examine a particular thought or perception...look into it directly and investigate...No matter what kind of thought occurs, its experience is, in itself, something unidentifiable—it is unobstructedly aware and yet not conceptualizing... As for perceptions, they are a mere impression of unobstructed presence, which is insubstantial and not a clinging to a solid reality. Without distraction then, simply sustain this aware emptiness that is unidentifiable awareness, also referred to as a perceiving emptiness that is perception devoid of a self-nature.

—Namgyal, *Clarifying the Natural State*, 2001, p. 29 ff.

Now, naturally aware mindful Presence and your very own natural mind are one and the same (*samatajnana*). There is no separation. It has always been thus. Feel that! Then rejoice in this miraculous non-meditation of your *nondual undistracted ordinary mind!* *Emaho!*

What "Undistracted Ordinary Mind" is Not. It is not total quiescence wherein the gross and subtle phenomena of sense perception utterly cease. Nor is it a mindless inert state ("blank Zen") that excludes both sensory input, *and* discursive discriminating wisdom. It is not a vacant mind state between the arising of thoughts; not empty of sensory experience; not empty of all thinking; not an aversion to perceptual and conceptual experience of any kind.

In short, wonder of wonders, this mildly spooky nondual "non-meditation" meditation of undistracted ordinary mind does not exclude the dualistic experience of ordinary mind! Perceptual and conceptual experience is not the enemy of mindful meditation. Thoughts and feelings, negative or positive, are not the antagonist in this comic play of the mind. And non-thinking is not the goal. Let us not complicate it. Relax a bit and "Let it be exactly as it is". That is the *Dzogchen* non-meditation. Let it be so.

The Witness Presence. So now, just for a moment, place your attention upon your breath, and simply witness your awareness. Be meta-cognitively, reflexively aware of your present awareness; just as it is now. Observe what arises. No need to change it, direct it, evaluate it, think about it, grasp at or reject anything at all. And when grasping/rejecting thinking arises, just witness that. Let it be as it is. Simply feel it. *Feel* the feeling of being you being present here

and now. Feel the deep *I Am prana* life current flow of *buddic* Presence of you in this precious moment now.

This primordial Presence cannot be created or fabricated. Why? It is always already present—whether you choose to believe it, or like it, or not. What is, just is. So, feel your connectedness to it, and to all living beings, and to everything that is. That is who *you* are. Rest in That, and be happy now.

Although the untrained mind, in its waking state, is brimming with relentless concepts and feelings, this undistracted ordinary mind of ours excludes any *distraction* from the "primordial purity" of *bodhi* mind Presence, always present to any and all arising distractions. All embracing primordial wisdom mind Presence is always "primordially present" throughout all of our myriad distractions. No need to believe this. Let it be as it is.

That, Dear Reader, is the actual nondual nature of mind; Buddha nature of mind—beyond our concepts and beliefs *about* it. As thoughts and feelings arise, without judgment, return to the bright undistracted state, always upon the mantra breath (*OM AH HUM*), again and again. Or, momentarily shatter a troubling constellation of thoughts/feelings by shouting *PHAT* to return the mind to its peaceful natural state. "It's perfect just as it is". *That* is Human Happiness Itself. Rest a few moments in That! You can think about it later.

Yes, the pristine, undistracted mind state that is liberated from discursive thinking is the moment to moment non-meditative meditation. But a *goal* of utter non-movement of thought, and of perceptual and feeling experience is itself a distraction. Seeking a goal of contemplative, meditative happiness as an antidote to suffering is a form of suffering. Wisdom mind/Buddha mind seeks nothing at all. It is complete in itself. That is the meditation. "Make the goal the Path".

Therefore, for human beings being here in time, the origin of our discontent is not distracting thoughts and emotions. This is not the real problem. The origin of our suffering is, as Buddha told long ago, ignorance (*avidya, ma rigpa*) of our always present selfless Buddha nature/Buddha mind. Thoughts are just thoughts. Emotions are just emotions. They have no inherent power over us that we do not *choose* to give them. Everything is already embraced by clear light undistracted ordinary mind. So, "Leave it alone and let it be as it is". "This cannot be taught" (Gautama the Buddha). So, relax the need to understand it intellectually. Not so easy.

Thus is the nondual *Dzogchen* View and Meditation the Result/Fruition of both relative happiness (*eudaimonia*, human flourishing), and ultimate human happiness (*mahasukha, paramananda, beatitudo*)—liberation/enlightenment. "It is already accomplished from the very beginning". It's too simple to believe; but too present too to be doubted. Please consider well this nondual *Dzogchen* View.

The goal of the practice of the Path is not the yogi's bliss, nor some perfect nondual happiness mind state; nor is it liberation from suffering. Goals can be future-looking distractions. And the future never shows up! It's too always becoming the present moment. The goal is simply the practice. Abiding in this vast empty unbounded whole that is the already present all embracing Perfect Sphere of *Dzogchen* is always only here now.

It's like coming home.