

## A VIEW ON BUDDHISM

### QUOTATIONS ON: BUDDHA NATURE, NATURE OF MIND, RIGPA

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Bodhidharma

Our true buddha-nature has no shape. And the dust of affliction has no form. How can people use ordinary water to wash an intangible body? It won't work... To clean such a body you have to behold it. Once impurities and filth arise from desire, they multiply until they cover you inside and out. But if you try to wash this body of yours, you'll have to scrub until it's nearly gone before it's clean.

To find a buddha all you have to do is see your nature. Your nature is the buddha. And the buddha is the person who's free: free of plans, free of cares. If you don't see your nature and run around all day looking somewhere else, you'll never find a buddha. The truth is, there's nothing to find. But to reach such an understanding you need a teacher and you need to struggle to make yourself understand.

If, as in a dream, you see a light brighter than the sun, your remaining attachments will suddenly come to an end and the nature of reality will be revealed. Such an occurrence serves as the basis for enlightenment. But this is something only you know. You can't explain it to others.

Because we don't recognize our essential nature—we don't realize that although appearances arise unceasingly, nothing is really there—we invest with solidity and reality the seeming truth of self, other, and actions between self and others. This intellectual obscuration gives rise to attachment and aversion, followed by actions and reactions that create karma, solidify into habit, and perpetuate the cycles of suffering. This entire process needs to be purified.

*Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche*

When you're a Buddha, you have fully developed the two wings of a bird. You've got wisdom that literally sees everything that exists. Buddha says everything is knowable and each of us has the potential to see, to cognize everything. The compassion wing is the full development of the enormous empathy for all living beings as if they were oneself. The third quality is this immense power to effortlessly do whatever needs to be done to benefit all living beings, whose minds you see perfectly and for whom you have infinite compassion.

*Robina Courtin, Mandala Magazine December 2003*

True freedom comes when we follow our Buddha nature, the natural goodness of our heart.

*Jack Kornfield, Buddha's Little instruction book*

## His Holiness the Dalai Lama

**Question:** When people hear of luminosity of clear light that dawns at the moment of death they ask why it is called clear light. What has this got to do with light as we know it?

**Dalai Lama:** "I don't think that in the term clear light, light should be taken literally. It is sort of metaphoric. This could have its roots in our terminology of mental will. According to Buddhism, all consciousness or all cognitive mental events are said to be in the nature of clarity and luminosity. So it is from that point of view that the choice of the term light is used. Clear light is the most subtle level of mind, which can be seen as the basis or the source from which eventual experience or realization of Buddhahood, Buddha's wisdom might come about, therefore it is called clear light. Clear light is a state of mind which becomes fully manifest only as a consequence of certain sequences or stages of dissolution, where the mind becomes devoid of certain types of obscurations, which are again metaphorically described in terms of sun-like, moonlike and darkness. These refer to the earlier three stages of dissolution which are technically called, including the clear light stage, the four empties. At the final stage of dissolution the mind is totally free of all these factors of obscuration. Therefore it is called clear light. Sort of a light. It is also possible to understand the usage of the term clear light in terms of the nature of mind itself. Mind or consciousness is a phenomena which lacks any obstructive quality. It is non-obstructed.  
*From a talk given by HH Dalai Lama. Oct. 11-14, 1991 New York City. Path of Compassion teaching preliminary to the Kalachakra initiation*

The five subtler aggregates will eventually be transformed into the Buddhas of the five lineages. They are now as if accompanied by mental defilements. When the defilements are removed, these factors do not become any coarser or subtler; their nature remains, but [when they] become separated from the faults of mental pollution, they become the Buddhas of the five lineages. So if you ask whether the Buddhas of the five lineages are present now in our continuums, these factors are currently bound by faults, and since there cannot be a Buddha who has a fault, they are not Buddhas. One is not yet fully enlightened, but that which is going to become a Buddha is present; therefore, these factors presently existent in our continuums are Buddha seeds and are called the Buddha nature, or the essence of the One Gone Thus (Tathagatagarbha).

*Kindness, Clarity, and Insight*

## DUDJOM RINPOCHE

*Since pure awareness of oneness is the real buddha,  
In openness and contentment I found the Lama in my heart.  
When we realize this unending natural mind is the very nature of the Lama,  
Then there is no need for attached, grasping, or weeping prayers or artificial complaints,  
By simply relaxing in this uncontrived, open, and natural state,  
We obtain the blessing of aimless self-liberation of whatever arises.*

*No words can describe it  
No example can point to it*

*Samsara does not make it worse  
Nirvana does not make it better  
It has never been born  
It has never ceased  
It has never been liberated  
It has never been deluded  
It has never existed  
It has never been nonexistent  
It has no limits at all  
It does not fall into any kind of category.*

For the meditation on the nature of your own mind it is customary to ask your teacher for pointing-out instructions. Some practitioners are lucky enough to realize their true nature of mind straight away, whereas others merely perceive a sensation of it, a certain experience of the true nature of mind. But if they don't know exactly how mind and the consciousnesses function, their experience will dissolve after a few days. The understanding of mind and the eight kinds of consciousness is obtained through the highest understanding (Skt. *prajna*) of listening and reflecting. When we really meditate on this basis and glimpse the true nature of mind, we will be able to steadily increase our experience of it through all subsequent meditation. That's why it is extremely useful to know about the eight kinds of consciousness.

*From Luminous Heart: The Third Karmapa on Consciousness, Wisdom, and Buddha Nature*

Once you have the View, although the delusory perceptions of samsara may arise in your mind, you will be like the sky; when a rainbow appears in front of it, it's not particularly flattered, and when the clouds appear it's not particularly disappointed either. There is a deep sense of contentment. You chuckle from inside as you see the facade of samsara and nirvana; the View will keep you constantly amused, with a little inner smile bubbling away all the time.

*Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche*

For most of us, our natural mind or Buddha-nature is obscured by the limited self-image created by habitual neuronal patterns - which, in themselves, are simply a reflection of the unlimited capacity of the mind to create any condition it chooses. Natural mind is capable of producing anything, *even ignorance of its own nature*. In other words, not recognizing natural mind is simply an example of the mind's unlimited capacity to create whatever it wants. Whenever we feel fear, sadness, jealousy, desire, or any other emotion that contributes to our sense of vulnerability or weakness, we should give ourselves a nice pat on the back. We've just experienced the unlimited nature of the mind. Although the true nature of the mind can't be described directly, that doesn't mean we shouldn't at least try to develop some theoretical understanding about it. Even a limited understanding is at least a signpost, pointing the way toward direct experience. The Buddha understood that experiences impossible to describe in words could best be explained through stories and metaphors. In one text, he compared Tathagatagarbha (Buddha-nature) to a nugget of gold covered with mud and dirt.

Imagine you are a treasure hunter. One day, you discover a chunk of metal in the ground. You dig a hole, pull out the metal, take it home, and start to clean it. At first, one corner of the nugget reveals itself, bright and shining. Gradually, as you wash away the accumulated dirt and mud, the whole chunk is revealed as gold. So let me ask: Which is more valuable - the chunk of gold buried in mud, or the one you cleaned? Actually, the value is equal. Any difference between the dirty nugget and the clean is superficial.

*Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche, The Joy of Living: Unlocking the Secret & Science of the Mind*

Nyoshul Khen Rinpoche

*Profound and tranquil, free from complexity,  
Uncompounded luminous clarity,  
Beyond the mind of conceptual ideas;  
This is the depth of the mind of the Victorious Ones.  
In this there is not a thing to be removed,  
Nor anything that needs to be added.  
It is merely the immaculate  
Looking naturally at itself.*

An effortless compassion can arise for all beings who have not realized their true nature. So limitless is it that if tears could express it, you would cry without end. Not only compassion, but tremendous skillful means can be born when you realize the nature of mind. Also you are naturally liberated from all suffering and fear, such as the fear of birth, death and the intermediate state. Then if you were to speak of the joy and bliss that arise from this realization, it is said by the buddhas that if you were to gather all the glory, enjoyment, pleasure and happiness of the world and put it all together, it would not approach one tiny fraction of the bliss that you experience upon realizing the nature of mind.

...they say that the initial realization of the nature of the mind is the first breakthrough. It's a very important point in all Buddhist schools. At that moment, you cease to be an ordinary person. You become in Buddhist parlance an arya, a noble one. It doesn't mean you are finished. It doesn't mean you are a high level bodhisattva. We can fall back from this. But still, this is a big breakthrough. We now understand what is true and what is not true. We don't have to take it all on faith any more. It is a direct non-dual experience. The point is that it is very easy. It's not difficult, and it's not something that can only be attained after years and years of practice. Our main obstacle is the fact that we don't know how to relax our minds enough to be open to this experience. In the back of our minds we keep thinking this is something so difficult and so advanced. For this reason we don't recognize what is in front of our face. This is why a teacher can be extraordinarily helpful. A teacher living within that realization is able - if the mind of the disciple is completely open - to transmit his or her experience. The problem here is that we have too many hopes and fears; it creates a barrier. It is very hard to be open. You can't just will it. *Ani Tenzin Palmo, from 'Reflections on a Mountain Lake: Teachings on Practical Buddhism'*

In the *Uttaratantra* by Maitreya, it is said that our recognizing our buddha potential is like a man living in poverty discovering that buried beneath his home is a priceless treasure. It is like discovering a jewel buried in the mud. If our buddha potential is like a golden statue wrapped in filthy rags, the golden image can never be tarnished by the rags--it is merely obscured by them. When I was younger and my understanding of Buddhism was relatively poor, the images that came from this text had a profound effect on me. They gave me an intuitive sense of my intrinsic value in a way that I had never felt previously. The influence of religion in my early years had left me with the belief that I was essentially a sinner and that at the root of my being was an innate badness that I had to overcome. It left me fundamentally unable to trust myself because to let go would be to open up my innate badness. When I met my Tibetan teachers and they spoke of my buddha nature, I felt a huge sense of relief. Perhaps I was not so bad after all, and perhaps when I allowed myself to relax a little and open up, I would find my true nature as something whole and wonderful rather than something to be feared and suppressed. *Rob Preece, The Courage to Feel: Buddhist Practices for Opening to Others*

Sogyal Rinpoche, from *Glimpse of the Day*

What is the View? It is nothing less than *seeing* the actual state of things as they are; it is *knowing* that the true nature of mind is the true nature of everything; and it is *realizing* that the true nature of mind is the absolute truth.

Dudjom Rinpoche says: “The View is the comprehension of the naked awareness, within which everything is contained: sensory perception and phenomenal existence, samsara and nirvana. This awareness has two aspects: ‘emptiness’ as the absolute, and ‘appearances’ or ‘perception’ as the relative.”

If meditation in Dzogchen is simply to continue the flow of Rigpa after the introduction by the master, how do we know when it is Rigpa and when it is not? I asked Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche this question, and he replied with his characteristic simplicity: “If you are in an unaltered state, it is Rigpa.”

If we are not contriving or manipulating the mind in any way, but simply resting in an unaltered state of pure and pristine awareness, that is Rigpa. If there is any contriving on our part or any kind of manipulating or grasping, it is not. Rigpa is a state in which there is no longer any doubt; there is not really a mind to doubt: you see directly. If you are in this state, a complete, natural certainty and confidence surge up with the Rigpa itself, and that is how you know.

The Dzogchen Tantras, the ancient teachings from which the bardo instructions come, speak of a mythical bird, the *garuda*, which is born fully grown. This image symbolizes our primordial nature, which is already completely perfect. The garuda chick has all its wing feathers fully developed inside the egg, but it cannot fly before it hatches. Only at the moment when the shell cracks open can it burst out and soar up into the sky. Similarly, the masters tell us, the qualities of Buddhahood are veiled by the body, and as soon as the body is discarded, they will be radiantly displayed.

In Tibetan we call the essential nature of mind Rigpa—primordial, pure, pristine awareness that is at once intelligent, cognizant, radiant, and always awake. This nature of mind, its innermost essence, is absolutely and always untouched by change or death. At present it is hidden within our own mind, our *sem*, enveloped and obscured by the mental scurry of our thoughts and emotions. Just as clouds can be shifted by a strong gust of wind to reveal the shining sun and wide-open sky, so, under certain circumstances, some inspiration may uncover for us glimpses of this nature of mind. These glimpses have many depths and degrees, but each of them will bring some light of understanding, meaning and freedom. This is because the nature of mind is the very root itself of understanding.

What is the nature of mind like? Imagine a sky, empty, spacious, and pure from the beginning; its *essence* is like this. Imagine a sun, luminous, clear, unobstructed, and spontaneously present; its *nature* is like this. Imagine that sun shining out impartially on us and all things, penetrating all directions; its *energy*, which is the manifestation of compassion, is like this: Nothing can obstruct it, and it pervades everywhere.

When a much larger number of people know the nature of their minds, they'll know also the glorious nature of the world they are in, and will struggle urgently and bravely to preserve it. It's interesting that the Tibetan word for "Buddhist" is *isnangpa*. It means "insider": someone who seeks the truth not outside but within the nature of his or her mind. All the teachings and training in Buddhism are aimed at that one single point: to look into the nature of mind, and so free us from the fear of death and help us realize the truth of life.

If, at the moment of death, we have already a stable realization of the nature of mind, in one instant we can purify all our karma. And if we continue that stable recognition, we will actually be able to end our karma altogether, by entering the expanse of the primordial purity of the nature of mind, and attaining liberation.

Padmasambhava explained this: "This power to attain stability by just recognizing the nature of mind is like a torch which in one instant can clear away the darkness of aeons. *So if we can recognize the nature of mind in the bardo in the same way as we can now when it is introduced by the master, there is not the slightest doubt that we will attain enlightenment. This is why, from this very moment on, we must become familiar with the nature of mind through practice.*"

Remaining in the clarity and confidence of Rigpa allows all your thoughts and emotions to liberate naturally and effortlessly within its vast expanse, like writing in water, or painting in the sky. If you truly perfect this practice, karma has no chance to be accumulated, and in this state of aimless, carefree abandon, what Dudjom Rinpoche calls "uninhibited, naked ease," the karmic law of cause and effect can no longer bind you in any way.

The practice of mindfulness, of bringing the scattered mind home, and so of bringing the different aspects of our being into focus, is called Peacefully Remaining or Calm Abiding. All the fragmented aspects of ourselves, which had been at war, settle and dissolve and become friends. In that settling we begin to understand ourselves more, and sometimes even have glimpses of the radiance of our fundamental nature.

How can the wisdom mind of the buddhas be introduced? Imagine the nature of mind as your face; it is always with you, but you cannot see it without help. Now imagine that you have never seen a mirror before. The introduction by the master is like holding up a mirror suddenly in which you can, for the first time, see your face reflected.

Just like your face, this pure awareness of Rigpa is not something "new" that the master is giving you that you did not have before, nor is it something you could possibly find outside of yourself. It has always been yours, and has always been with you, but up until that startling moment you have never actually seen it directly.

Just as the ocean has waves, and the sun has rays, so the mind's own radiance is its thoughts and emotions. The ocean has waves, yet the ocean is not particularly disturbed by them. The waves are the *very nature* of the ocean. Waves will rise, but *where* do they go? Back into the ocean. And where do the waves come from? The ocean.

In the same manner, thoughts and emotions are the radiance and expression of the *very*

*nature* of the mind. They rise from the mind, but where do they dissolve? Back into the mind. Whatever rises, do not see it as a particular problem. If you do not impulsively react, if you are only patient, it will once again settle into its essential nature.

When you have this understanding, then rising thoughts only enhance your practice. But when you do not understand what they intrinsically are—the radiance of the nature of your mind—then your thoughts become the seed of confusion. So have a spacious, open, and compassionate attitude toward your thoughts and emotions, because in fact your thoughts are your family, the family of your mind. Before them, as Dudjom Rinpoche used to say: “Be like an old wise man, watching a child play.”

Where exactly is our buddha nature? It is in the skylike nature of our mind. Utterly open, free and limitless, it is fundamentally so simple and so natural that it can never be complicated, corrupted, or stained, so pure that it is beyond even the concept of purity and impurity.

To talk of this nature of mind as skylike is, of course, only a metaphor that helps us to begin to imagine its all-embracing boundlessness; for the buddha nature has a quality the sky cannot have, that of the radiant clarity of awareness.

It is said: “It is simply your flawless present awareness, cognizant and empty, naked and awake.”

Realizing the View subtly but completely transforms your vision of everything. More and more, I have come to realize how thoughts and concepts are *all* that block us from always being, quite simply, in the absolute. Now I see clearly why the masters so often say: “Try hard not to create too much hope and fear,” for they only engender more mental gossip. When the View is there, thoughts are seen for what they truly are: fleeting and transparent, and only relative. You see through everything directly, as if you had X-ray eyes. You do not cling to thoughts and emotions or reject them; you welcome them all within the vast embrace of Rigpa. The things you took so seriously before—ambitions, plans, expectations, doubts, and passions—no longer have any deep and anxious hold on you, for the View has helped you to see the futility and pointlessness of them all, and born in you a spirit of true renunciation.

Whatever our lives are like, our buddha nature is always there. And it is always perfect. We say that not even the buddhas can improve it in their infinite wisdom, nor can sentient beings spoil it in their seemingly infinite confusion.

Our true nature could be compared to the sky, and the confusion of the ordinary mind to clouds. Some days the sky is completely obscured by clouds. When we are down on the ground, looking up, it is very difficult to believe that there is anything else there but clouds. Yet we have only to fly in a plane to discover above the clouds a limitless expanse of clear blue sky. From up there, the clouds we assumed were everything seem so small and so far away down below.

We should always try to remember: The clouds are not the sky and do not “belong” to it. They only hang there and pass by in their slightly ridiculous and nondependent fashion. And they can never stain or mark the sky in any way.

Our buddha nature has an active aspect, which is our “inner teacher.” From the very moment we became obscured, this “inner teacher” has worked tirelessly for us, tirelessly trying to bring us back to the radiance and spaciousness of our true being. Not for one second, my master Jamyang Khyentse said, has the inner teacher given up on us. In its infinite compassion, one with the infinite compassion of all the buddhas and all the enlightened beings, it has been ceaselessly working for our evolution—not only in this life but in all our past lives—using all kinds of skillful means and all types of situations to teach and awaken us and to guide us back to the truth.

Feeling the living presence of Buddha, of Padmasambhava, of your master, and simply opening your heart and mind to the embodiment of truth, really does bless and transform your mind. As you invoke Buddha, your own buddha nature is inspired to awaken and blossom, as naturally as a flower in sunlight.

Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche describes a yogi wandering through a garden. He is completely awake to the splendor and beauty of the flowers, and relishes their colors, shapes and scents. But there is no trace of clinging or any “after-thought” in his mind.

As Dudjom Rinpoche says:

“Whatever perceptions arise, you should be like a little child going into a beautifully decorated temple; he looks, but grasping does not enter into his perception at all. You leave everything fresh, natural, vivid and unspoiled. When you leave each thing in its own state, then its shape doesn’t change, its color doesn’t fade and its glow does not disappear. Whatever appears is unstained by any grasping, so then all that you perceive arises as the naked wisdom of Rigpa, which is the indivisibility of luminosity and emptiness.”

When the teachings “click” for you somewhere deep in your heart and mind, then you really have the View. Whatever difficulties you face, you will find you have some kind of serenity, stability, and understanding, and an internal mechanism—you could call it an “inner transformer”—that works for you, to protect you from falling prey to wrong views. In that View, you will have discovered a “wisdom guide” of your own, always on hand to advise you, support you, and remind you of the truth. Confusion will still arise, that’s only normal, but with a crucial difference: No longer will you focus on it in a blinded and obsessive way, but you will look on it with humor, perspective, and compassion.

One of the greatest Buddhist traditions calls the nature of mind “the wisdom of ordinariness.” I cannot say it enough: Our true nature and the nature of all beings is not something extraordinary.

The irony is that it is our so-called ordinary world that is extraordinary, a fantastic, elaborate hallucination of the deluded vision of samsara. It is this “extraordinary” vision that blinds us to the “ordinary,” natural, inherent nature of mind. Imagine if the buddhas were looking down at us now: How they would marvel sadly at the lethal ingenuity and intricacy of our confusion!

It is said that when Buddha attained enlightenment, all he wanted to do was to show the rest of us the nature of mind and share completely what he had realized. But he also saw, with



the great sorrow of infinite compassion, how difficult it would be for us to understand. For even though we have the same inner nature as Buddha, we have not recognized it because it is so enclosed and wrapped up in our individual ordinary minds.

Imagine an empty vase. The space inside is exactly the same as the space outside. Only the fragile walls of the vase separate one from the other. Our buddha mind is enclosed within the walls of our ordinary mind. But when we become enlightened, it is as if the vase shatters into pieces. The space “inside” merges instantly into the space “outside.” They become one: There and then we realize that they were never separate or different; *they were always the same.*

There is a spark of hope, a playful humor about the posture we take in meditation, which lies in the secret understanding that we all have the buddha nature. So when you assume this posture, you are playfully imitating a buddha, acknowledging and giving real encouragement to the emergence of your own buddha nature. You begin to respect yourself as a potential buddha.

At the same time, you still recognize your relative condition. But because you have let yourself be inspired by a joyful trust in your own true buddha nature, *you can accept your negative aspects more easily* and deal with them more generously and with more humor. When you meditate, invite yourself to feel the self-esteem, the dignity, and the strong humility of the buddha that you are. If you simply let yourself be inspired by this joyful trust, it is enough: Out of this understanding and confidence, meditation will naturally arise.

The masters stress that to stabilize the View in meditation, it is essential, first of all, to accomplish this practice in a *special environment* of retreat, where all the favorable conditions are present; amid the distractions and busyness of the world, however much you meditate, true experience will not be born in your mind.

Second, though there is no difference in Dzogchen between meditation and everyday life, until you have found true stability through doing the practice in *proper* sessions, you will not be able to integrate the wisdom of meditation into your experience of daily life.

Third, even when you practice, you might be able to abide by the continual flow of Rigpa with the confidence of the View, but if you are unable to continue that flow *at all times and in all situations*, mixing your practice with everyday life, it will not serve as a remedy when unfavorable circumstances arise, and you will be led astray into delusion by thoughts and emotions.

To recognize the nature of your mind is to engender in the ground of your being an understanding that will change your entire worldview and help you discover and develop, naturally and spontaneously, a compassionate desire to serve all beings, as well as a direct knowledge of how best you can do so, with whatever skill or ability you have, in whatever circumstances you find yourself.

Buddha was a human being, like you or me. He never claimed divinity, he merely knew he had the buddha nature, the seed of enlightenment, and that everyone else did too. The buddha nature is simply the birthright of every sentient being, and I always say: “Our

buddha nature is as good as any buddha's buddha nature.”

If your mind is able to settle naturally of its own accord, and if you find you are inspired simply to rest in its pure awareness, then you do not need any method of meditation. However, the vast majority of us find it difficult to arrive at that state straight away. We simply do not know how to awaken it, and our minds are so wild and so distracted that we need a *skillful* means or method to evoke it.

By “skillful” I mean that you bring together your understanding of the essential nature of your mind, your knowledge of your various, shifting moods, and the insight you have developed through your practice into how to work with yourself, from moment to moment. By bringing these together, you learn the art of applying whatever method is *appropriate* to any particular situation or problem, to transform that environment of your mind.

The purpose of meditation is to awaken in us the skylike nature of mind, and to introduce us to that which we really are, our unchanging pure awareness that underlies the whole of life and death.

In the stillness and silence of meditation, we glimpse and return to that deep inner nature that we so long ago lost sight of amid the busyness and distraction of our minds.

Dudjom Rinpoche used to tell the story of a powerful bandit in India, who, after countless successful raids, realized the terrible suffering he had been causing. He yearned for some way of atoning for what he had done, and visited a famous master. He asked him: “I am a sinner, I am in torment. What's the way out? What can I do?”

The master looked the bandit up and down and then asked him what he was good at.

“Nothing,” replied the bandit.

“Nothing?” barked the master. “You must be good at something!”

The bandit was silent for a while, and eventually admitted: “Actually there is one thing I have a talent for, and that's stealing.”

The master chuckled: “Good! That's exactly the skill you'll need now. Go to a quiet place and rob all your perceptions, and steal all the stars and planets in the sky, and dissolve them into the belly of emptiness, the all-encompassing space of the nature of mind.”

Within twenty-one days, the bandit had realized the nature of his mind, and eventually came to be regarded as one of the great saints of India.

*When the View is constant,*

*The flow of Rigpa unfailing,*

*And the merging of the two luminosities continuous and spontaneous,*

*All possible delusion is liberated at its very root,*

*And your entire perception arises, without a break, as Rigpa.*

A term such as *meditation* is not really appropriate for Dzogchen practice, you can see, as ultimately it implies meditating “on” something, whereas in Dzogchen all is only and forever Rigpa. So there is no question of a meditation separate from simply abiding by the pure presence of Rigpa. The only word that could possibly describe this is *non-meditation*. In this state, the masters say, even if you look for delusion there is none left.

Even if you looked for ordinary pebbles on an island of gold and jewels, you wouldn't have a chance of finding any.

Sometimes when I meditate, I don't use any particular method. I just allow my mind to rest, and I find, especially when I am inspired, that I can bring my mind home and relax very quickly. I sit quietly and rest in the nature of mind; I don't question or doubt whether I am in the "correct" state. There is no effort, only a rich understanding, wakefulness, and unshakable certainty.

When I am in the nature of mind, the ordinary mind is no longer there. There is no need to sustain or confirm a sense of being: *I simply am*. A fundamental trust is present. There is nothing in particular to do.

In death all the components of the body and mind are stripped away and disintegrate. As the body dies, the senses and subtle elements dissolve, and this is followed by the death of the ordinary aspect of the mind, with all its negative emotions of anger, desire, and ignorance. Finally nothing remains to obscure our true nature, as everything that in life has clouded the enlightened mind has fallen away. And what is revealed is the primordial ground of our absolute nature, which is like a pure and cloudless sky.

This is called the dawning of the Ground Luminosity, or Clear Light, where consciousness itself dissolves into the all-encompassing space of truth. *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* says of this moment:

*The nature of everything is open, empty and naked like the sky.*

*Luminous emptiness, without center or circumference; the pure, naked Rigpa dawns*

Do not make the mistake of imagining that the nature of mind is exclusive only to our minds. It is in fact the nature of everything. It can never be said too often that to realize the nature of mind is to realize the nature of all things.

We are so addicted to looking outside ourselves that we have lost access to our inner being almost completely. We are terrified to look inward, because our culture has given us no idea of what we will find. We may even think that if we do, we will be in danger of madness. This is one of the last and most resourceful ploys of ego to prevent us from discovering our real nature.

So we make our lives so hectic that we eliminate the slightest risk of looking into ourselves. Even the idea of meditation can scare people. When they hear the words *egolessor emptiness*, they think that experiencing those states will be like being thrown out the door of a spaceship to float forever in a dark, chilling void. Nothing could be further from the truth. But in a world dedicated to distraction, silence and stillness terrify us; we protect ourselves from them with noise and frantic busyness. Looking into the nature of our mind is the last thing we would dare to do.

All the Buddhist teachings are explained in terms of Ground, Path, and Fruition. The ground of Dzogchen is the fundamental, primordial state, our absolute nature, which is already perfect and always present.

Patrul Rinpoche says: "It is neither to be sought externally, nor is it something you did not

have before and that now has to be newly born in your mind.” So from the point of view of the Ground—the absolute—our nature is the same as the buddhas’, and there is no question at this level, “not a hair’s breadth,” the masters say, of teaching or practice to do.

When you have fully recognized that the nature of your mind is the same as that of the master, from then on you and the master can never be separate, because the master is *one* with the nature of your mind, always present, as it is.

When you have recognized that the master and you are inseparable, an enormous gratitude and sense of awe and homage is born in you. Dudjom Rinpoche calls this “the homage of the View.” It is a devotion that springs spontaneously from seeing the View of the nature of mind.

Imagine you are sitting in front of a glass door that leads out into your garden, looking through it, gazing out into space. It seems as though there is nothing between you and the sky, because you cannot see the surface of the glass. You would bang your nose if you got up and tried to walk through, thinking it wasn’t there. But if you touch it you will see at once that there is something there that holds your fingerprints, something that comes between you and the space outside.

In the same manner, the ground of the ordinary mind prevents us from breaking through to the skylike nature of our mind, even if we can still have glimpses of it. We have to break out of the ground of the ordinary mind altogether, to discover and let in the fresh air of Rigpa.

There are rough as well as gentle waves in the ocean; strong emotions come, like anger, desire, jealousy. The real practitioner recognizes them not as a disturbance or an obstacle but as a great opportunity. The fact that you react to arisings such as these with habitual tendencies of attachment and aversion is a sign not only that you are distracted but that you do not have the recognition and have lost the ground of Rigpa. To react to emotions in this way empowers them and binds you even tighter in the chains of delusion.

The great secret of Dzogchen is to see right through them, as soon as they arise, to what they really are: the vivid and electric manifestation of the energy of Rigpa itself. As you gradually learn to do this, even the most turbulent emotions fail to seize hold of you and instead dissolve, as wild waves rise and rear and sink back into the calm of the ocean.

There is no swifter, more moving, or more powerful practice for invoking the help of the enlightened beings, for arousing devotion and realizing the nature of mind, than the practice of Guru Yoga. Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche wrote: “The words Guru Yoga mean ‘union with the nature of the guru,’” and in this practice we are given methods by which we can blend our own minds with the enlightened mind of the master.

The master—the guru—embodies the crystallization of the blessings of all buddhas, masters, and enlightened beings. So to invoke him or her is to invoke them all; and to merge your mind and heart with your master’s wisdom mind is to merge your mind with the truth and very embodiment of enlightenment.

The nature of mind is the background to the whole of life and death like the sky, which

enfolds the whole universe in its embrace.

The whole point of Dzogchen meditation practice is to strengthen and stabilize Rigpa and allow it to grow to full maturity. The ordinary, habitual mind with its projections is extremely powerful. It keeps returning, and takes hold of us easily when we are inattentive or distracted.

As Dudjom Rinpoche used to say: “At present our Rigpa is like a little baby, stranded on the battlefield of strong arising thoughts.” I like to say that we have to begin by babysitting our Rigpa, in the secure environment of meditation.

Imagine a person who suddenly wakes up in the hospital after an automobile accident to find that she is suffering from total amnesia. Outwardly, everything is intact: She has the same face and form, her senses and her mind are there, but she doesn't have any idea or any trace of a memory of who she really is.

In exactly the same way, we cannot remember our true identity, our original nature. Frantically, and in real dread, we cast around and improvise another identity, one we clutch with all the desperation of someone falling continuously into an abyss. This false and ignorantly assumed identity is “ego.”

In Tibetan we call the essential nature of mind Rigpa—primordial, pure, pristine awareness that is at once intelligent, cognizant, radiant, and always awake. This nature of mind, its innermost essence, is absolutely and always untouched by change or death. At present it is hidden within our own mind, our sem, enveloped and obscured by the mental scurry of our thoughts and emotions. Just as clouds can be shifted by a strong gust of wind to reveal the shining sun and wide-open sky, so, under certain circumstances, some inspiration may uncover for us glimpses of this nature of mind. These glimpses have many depths and degrees, but each of them will bring some light of understanding, meaning and freedom. This is because the nature of mind is the very root itself of understanding.

According to Dzogchen, the entire range of all possible appearances, and all possible phenomena in all the different realities, whether samsara or nirvana, all of these without exception have always been and will always be perfect and complete, within the vast and boundless expanse of the nature of mind. Yet, even though the essence of everything is empty and “pure from the very beginning,” its nature is rich in noble qualities, pregnant with every possibility, a limitless, incessantly and dynamically creative field that is always spontaneously perfect.

Using the mantra, offer your heart and soul in fervent and one-pointed devotion, and merge and mix and blend your mind with that of Padmasambhava or your master.

Gradually you will feel yourself coming closer to Padmasambhava, and closing the gap between you and his wisdom mind. Slowly, through the blessing and power of this practice, you will find you actually experience your mind being transformed into the wisdom mind of Padmasambhava and the master: You begin to recognize their indivisibility. Just as if you put your finger into water it will get wet, and if you put it into fire it will burn, so if you invest your mind in the wisdom mind of the buddhas it will transform into their wisdom

nature.

What happens is that gradually your mind begins to find itself in the state of Rigpa, as the innermost nature of mind is nothing other than the wisdom mind of all the buddhas. It is as if your ordinary mind gradually dies and dissolves, and your pure awareness, your buddha nature, your inner teacher, is revealed. This is the true meaning of “blessing”—a transformation in which your mind transcends into the state of the absolute.

The Dzogchen Tantras, the ancient teachings from which the bardo instructions come, speak of a mythical bird, the garuda, which is born fully grown. This image symbolizes our primordial nature, which is already completely perfect. The garuda chick has all its wing feathers fully developed inside the egg, but it cannot fly before it hatches. Only at the moment when the shell cracks open can it burst out and soar up into the sky. Similarly, the masters tell us, the qualities of Buddhahood are veiled by the body, and as soon as the body is discarded, they will be radiantly displayed.

Just as the ocean has waves, and the sun has rays, so the mind’s own radiance is its thoughts and emotions. The ocean has waves, yet the ocean is not particularly disturbed by them. The waves are the very nature of the ocean. Waves will rise, but where do they go? Back into the ocean. And where do the waves come from? The ocean.

In the same manner, thoughts and emotions are the radiance and expression of the very nature of the mind. They rise from the mind, but where do they dissolve? Back into the mind. Whatever rises, do not see it as a particular problem. If you do not impulsively react, if you are only patient, it will once again settle into its essential nature.

When you have this understanding, then rising thoughts only enhance your practice. But when you do not understand what they intrinsically are—the radiance of the nature of your mind—then your thoughts become the seed of confusion. So have a spacious, open, and compassionate attitude toward your thoughts and emotions, because in fact your thoughts are your family, the family of your mind. Before them, as Dudjom Rinpoche used to say: “Be like an old wise man, watching a child play.”

The preliminary training of meditation practice and purification ripens and opens the student’s heart and mind to the direct understanding of the truth.

Then, in the powerful moment of introduction, the master can direct his realization of the nature of mind—what we call the master’s “wisdom mind”—into the mind of the now authentically receptive student.

The master is doing nothing less than introducing the student to what the Buddha actually *is*, awakening the student to the living presence of enlightenment within. In that experience, the Buddha, the nature of mind, and the master’s wisdom mind are all fused into, and revealed as, one. The student then recognizes, in a blaze of gratitude, beyond any shadow of doubt, that there is not, has never been, and could not ever be any separation: between student and master, between the master’s wisdom mind and the nature of the student’s mind.

Dudjom Rinpoche says of the moment when Rigpa is directly revealed: “That moment is like taking a hood off your head. What boundless spaciousness and relief! This is the supreme seeing: seeing what was not seen before.” When you “see what was not seen

before,” everything opens, expands, and becomes crisp, clear, brimming with life, vivid with wonder and freshness. It is as if the roof of your mind were dying off, or a flock of birds suddenly took off from a dark nest. All limitations dissolve and fall away, as if, the Tibetans say, a seal were broken open.

Imagine you were living in a house on the top of a mountain which was itself at the top of the whole world. Suddenly the entire structure of the house, which limited your view, just falls away and you can see all around you, both outside and inside. But there is not any “thing” to see; what happens has no ordinary reference whatsoever; it is total, complete, unprecedented, perfect seeing. This is how it feels when Rigpa is directly revealed.

We have to understand the middle path: that a human has a positive and a negative side. We have a false, ignorant side, but we also have a beautiful potential - Buddha nature.  
*Lama Yeshe*