

**The Essence of One's Heart:
How to Recognize the Nature of the Mind
by
the 12th Chamgon Tai Situ Rinpoche**

Based on the topic concerning the nature of the mind, there are three particular questions: 1) What does it mean to recognize the nature of mind? 2) How do we experience the relative and absolute truth in everyday life? 3) How can we manage to look through delusions and transform the related negative emotions which arise from delusions?

We, being more than five billion human beings and other creatures too, are composed of three things: (1) the Body which is tangible, (2) the Emotions and Expressions which are individual and unique, and (3) the Mind.

First, in order to discuss these topics, we must define what the mind is and explain its nature according to the Buddha's teachings.

The mind is the most important thing we have to take care of and cultivate. Its nature, also called the essence of the heart, is what we wish to recognize; we want to recognize our Buddha-nature. Besides the mind, our body and our environment also exist relatively. But, regardless of the body or the environment, the mind matters the most and precedes these.

The mind is the most essential. It is the mind which expresses the emotions through the body; the body does not convey expressions and ideas through the mind. The body acts like an attendant, a messenger and a tool. The mind uses the body to express what it wants to and needs to. So, the mind is the master of everything, even though we might not be very adequate and only get everything right from time to time.

When referring to the mind's essence, it is limitless. The mind's nature does not have any limitation.

For centuries it has been common for people to debate whether or not the mind exists. If one does not believe there is a mind that is fine. Also, if one believes there is a mind, and asserts "there is something more than the body, there is definitely a mind," that is fine too. These two view-points can be argued, and the debate can go on and on forever. This debate will go on for as long as the mind goes on; whether or not one believes in the mind, this debate is all within the mind anyway!

Now, what does it mean to recognize the nature of the mind?

Temporarily, everyone has ambition and wants to be satisfied. After that, they feel contented. But no one in human history ever reached a state of ultimate contentment in which their struggle to be satisfied was then over. Only those who are enlightened can have ultimate contentment. To fulfill one's search and struggle totally, and ultimately, is to realize the nature of one's mind.

All the spiritual masters of Buddhism, and even those of other religions, found contentment within themselves. This is what we call recognizing the nature of mind, realizing one's own essence. According to the Buddha's teachings, every single living being has this potential which is limitless and within themselves. There are then a limitless amount of ways and means which can be used to attain this potential, to recognize one's essence. We must then respect all these various ways and means, even though one might not understand each and every one of them.

Now we can deal with the next two concepts which are interconnected:
Experiencing the relative and ultimate truth in everyday life, and transforming delusions and their related emotions.

Whether we know it or not, or believe in it or not, or live in heaven, hell or here on Earth, we are a part of and always in unity with the relative and ultimate truth. We cannot live beyond it. One example is that of a parent and one's wonderful child. While walking down the street, they pass by a toy shop which has a very expensive toy. As the parent, you do not have much money. But, your child wants to go in and that toy is the most important thing to him or her, no matter how much it costs. However as the parent, spending the money in order to have better food, medical care and education is far more important than wasting it on a toy. After a hard decision the parent decides to buy the toy. Tomorrow at home though, the toy is all in pieces and broken. Then one's child absolutely does not want it. Yesterday it was the most important thing for the child, and today he or she does not even want it. So, one can see how relatively the toy was important to the child, but ultimately the toy was meaningless, it was just an illusion in samsara.

Another example deals with the emotions. Today two people might get really mad at each other; they get on each other's nerves and are in turmoil. But, then they apologize tomorrow and everything is forgotten; yesterday's big deal is now

nothing. Likewise, a long time ago two countries might've fought each other. Then, after some time, they are friends. As time passes, they fight again.

So, we can see, whether we believe in it or not, there is this relativity, and also the ultimate aspect of the illusory nature of phenomena and emotions in everyday life.

Now, we come to the topic of transforming our relative experiences and emotions.

We, as people, try to manage so that everything goes well for us; there is no one who does not try to manage that, since we are all here today! Karmically, one might manage negativity by being in hell for millions of years, one can manage very positive actions by being in heaven for millions of years or one can manage having a mixture of both by being born as a human being.

As human beings now, we are trying to manage and want to transform our experiences. In summary, as the whole subject cannot be covered, there is a difference in the manner which sentient beings manage and transform experiences and emotions. One is through worldly or materialistic methods, the other is through spiritual methods based upon the dharma teachings.

As humans using worldly and materialistic methods, one tries to be at peace and calm down. We try to transform samsara by drinking coffee or very strong liquor, or smoking lots of cigarettes, or taking drugs. That is how ordinary individuals manage in samsara.

But the definition of samsara is that we go in circles. So, with these worldly methods we must keep doing them and in the long run they keep increasing: Right now one drinks only one cup of coffee but next month one needs two cups. But soon that coffee is not enough, one must smoke a cigar with it. Later on, even that is still not enough to be at peace. The end result becomes very, very demanding.

According to the Buddha, the dharma or spiritual method of transformation is inside of you, not outside of you. One does not have to go outside of oneself to find the solution for the afflictions which are inside of oneself. Therefore, the ultimate solution to take care of delusions and afflictions is inside you. The solution is within one's essence, the nature of one's mind. That is why the Buddha taught us to meditate by sitting down and straight, breathing normally, and calming one's mind.

These methods help one overcome samsara. Normally people are quite hysterical: when happy we are wild and when we are upset we are wild too. Hysteria is a bad solution since it abuses ourselves from time to time, and abuses other people many, many times.

The first step in Calm-abiding (Shinay) and Insight (Lhatong) meditation is just this: One does not have to create anything, just let your potential and essence arise naturally. One cannot overcome difficulties hysterically, calm down and let it take care of itself. Just let the nature of one's mind function, don't disable it by being hysterical. The beginning of the end of samsara, for oneself, is just that. Buddhism is very rich in methods, there are thousands of methods suitable to each individual state of mind. Whether or not one is a Buddhist, in one's essence you are a Buddha anyway. Only in the application of methods the difference arises.

Doing something outside of oneself, like using a computer or ten secretaries or problem solver services, to transform the afflictions is not the best solution. The real essence is inside, so one must calm down and think clearly in order to realize it. Without meaning to be negative, the problems and afflictions around us are here because we created them, whether directly or indirectly. So if we created them the solution must also be within us. And the simple solution begins to be found once we look clearly, we transform complicated situations easily then.

In this way now, one has a basic idea about the nature of mind, the options we have, the transformation of negativity and positivity, and abiding in the different truths.

Our ultimate inner potential, the nature of one's mind, has no limitation, but our relative external manifestation has limitation. We are not Superman or Superwoman, our external manifestation is not, unless we buy an airplane ticket!

You might not respect the relative manifestation and emotions of someone who is creating problems for oneself. Relatively you feel this way, but this individual has the same potential as you; your potential is equal to others, even those you don't respect due to their relative manifestation. Ultimately one cannot hate, resent or disrespect someone, as their ultimate nature is Buddha.

As we can understand now, any kind of situation and major problem are not limitless. One might have a big problem, but the relative problem is limited. There is no such thing as a limitless loss or mess, no problem can equal your ultimate potential. Through gradual practice, we can realize this fully and our potential can arise clearly.

There is an ordinary Tibetan expression which says, "If you hold your little thumb in front of your eye, it is so big that it can obscure the whole universe. But if one holds it at arms' length, then it is just a thumb." So, we must hold our thumbs at arms length at all times, figuratively speaking when it comes to our relative afflictions, problems and delusions.

Every single sentient being is a Buddha, in essence, and that can never be lost or contaminated ultimately. We as Buddhists wish to aid every single sentient being so we all can attain Buddhahood. This is more than just solving a small problem then. But if one approaches this problem by being hysterical and acting desperately one's solution will not work since nobody is ultimately in trouble. Therefore, we must be open.

For example, you might want to help someone. But your solution does not work and you feel upset. One must realize the need for openness and not be desperate. One must look at the situation differently and not think that it must work the way *I tried*. One simply must try one's best, be open, be sincere and pray. Once we understand this, things will become calm. There is a Tibetan saying: "The condition of happiness (having it, and then grasping or desperately running after it, wanting it to stay) is the cause of suffering. If I know this, I will be happy." Being hysterically stubborn and narrow-minded won't work.

Knowing this limitless nature of the mind is pivotal: The mind never dies. Academically speaking the mind is described in different ways. But the mind in reference to our essence, which is that of the Buddha, never dies. It is beyond time and beyond matter. Death is just a term used to demonstrate impermanence: Anything that is composed will decompose. The body forms out of all the elements, goes through a life-span with conditions. Once those conditions are not fit for it to survive, the body disintegrates and dies.

When one dies naturally, not due to some fatal occurrence, death is not negative or positive then; it is natural. What dies is the body and the speech. What continues is the incarnation of the mind to a different body. The mind is like a candle with a flame. One puts or transfers that flame to another candle as it gets blown out in the original candle. The flame continues as the candles get burnt down. So with the body, it always changes, or might be male or female, but the essence of the mind continues.

Death is only the separation of the body and mind. One's mind stops identifying itself with the body. At first with death there are some emotions and irritation of

course. The observer must use this process so then the limitless potential of the mind can be experienced.

During conception the mind enters the body. One's family, the father and mother, had the strongest immediate karmic connection than anyone else at that point in time: the time was right, so therefore you were conceived in the womb. One's limitless mind, which has no material substance, was then conceived and concealed in a liquid substance that is limited. How does this limitless mind get conceived into something limited? It is due to our concept of the self driven by ignorance. We call it 'I' in English, but even animals have this concept. For instance, a deer will run for cover if you go near it. They also have this idea of a self and also this idea of others. Sentient beings then get angry, jealous, aggressive, and have desires, all in order to supposedly maintain this self.

So now, the mind is concealed in liquid, that is conception. Afterward, the center of the body forms in the womb; the center begins forming with energy and spaces (where all the vital organs, energy channels, etc., develop). It is the most sensitive stage of the body's development, if anything disrupts it it can hinder one's survival. Afterward it takes nine months to be born, many years to mature and then also after some time one dies.

When one is developing it is gradual, it takes many years. But death happens very quickly, we have no space for wondering, that is it. Due to this difference, we grow slowly but leave life very fast, thus agitation can arise easily. Our attitude at that point is important, we cannot be stubborn. We must not let ourselves panic. We shouldn't cause those dying around us to panic, and if we work with the dying it is important to give positive assurance to others.

One's understanding of this subject should be beneficial for all. Whatever has been said is based on what my own precious masters have taught and it contains their blessings. We should dedicate this, wishing that all sentient beings may also realize this.

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