

Returning to Direct Experiences

Guru Yutang Lin

a gift from

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Foreword

Since last year, due to the wild spreading of Covid-19 pandemic all over the world, many areas have been under the depression of tragic calamity and severe economic downturn; overall, all suffered pretty difficult times. Restrictions imposed on activities, plus mental depression, have rendered many people into lifeless moods. Nevertheless, to those who had already learned Dharma teachings and established habitual Dharma practices, even in such depressing circumstances of hardship, they could remain relatively at ease. This is due to the "anti-pandemic" stability they have acquired through comprehending the Dharma teachings on Impermanence and No-grasping and engaging in daily Dharma practices.

Learning and practicing Dharma is so beneficial; however, genuinely comprehending the essence of Dharma teachings is not easy. The fundamental concepts in Dharma, such as "Blank Essence", "Dharmakaya", are readily deemed too abstract and obtruse, and are difficult to comprehend. In recent years, I finally realized that all theories and practices in Dharma are simply pointing toward "Returning to Direct Experiences". If one could comprehend this point, then all theories and reasons for practices in Dharma would be naturally harmonized.

Under my guidance, disciple Ji Hu gathered my works in Chinese, composed in recent years, on this topic, and edited them in their chronological order to form a book for interested parties to study. A pdf file containing this book has been posted at our websites (<http://www.originalpurity.org/gurulin/pdf/B120.pdf>), and the book has been published, for free distribution, in Taiwan in February 2021.

A copy of this book was mailed to a Dharma friend Jia Yue, and in her email acknowledging receipt of the book she expressed the Bodhi wish to sponsor printing of an English version of this important book to benefit the English readers. Hence, I reviewed the works compiled in the book, and with disciple Ji Hu's help, found out that most of the works were translated into English already, and some of the English versions also had Polish versions already. Thus, I asked disciple Ji Hu to compile the English works, and, for those with Polish version, to include the Polish version right after the English work.

In the Chinese book there are 4 articles, containing my replies to questions raised by disciples, and they did not have English versions. Disciple Ji Hu asked me to translate them into English to benefit readers and render the English book more complete. Thus, I have done so and included them in the English book.

May this book in English, with some Polish versions included, benefit English and Polish readers, so that they will gain straightforward comprehension of Dharma and thereby attain full enlightenment soon!

May 30, 2021
El Cerrito, California

Oneness of Direct Experiences

Our direct experiences are indivisible union of shapes, colors, sounds, smells, tastes, feelings and intentions. Within this unity there is no particular "self" that can be specially cared about, and no "others" that can be indifferent about (the ordinary distinction of "self and others" is only a mental grasping to concepts). Within this unity of direct experiences there is also no duality of "objects and subject" (the ordinary distinction of "sentient beings and material objects" is also only a mental grasping to concepts).

If one can abide in the unity of direct experiences, then one naturally stays far away from "perverse delusions" as referred to in Sutras. Once a Dharma practitioner has reached the state of being "naturally free from thoughts," then it will be possible for one to remain in such abiding.

Thus abiding one will naturally be in accordance with "phenomena are identical to Blank Essence, and Blank Essence is identical to phenomena," and thus staying free from the error of understanding "Blank Essence" as "absolute nothingness."

Practicing Dharma some might stay astray due to grasping to certain teachings. If one can abide with

pure mind in the unity of direct experiences, then one can "abide in no abiding," and remain liberated in all circumstances. Thus abiding, mind is free from attachments, is indeed a shortcut to ultimate emancipation—Pureland is right here and now!

Written in Chinese on June 24, 2016

Gao Xiong, Taiwan

Translated into English on June 29, 2016

Taipei, Taiwan

Introduction

During my Asia Trip I gave 3 talks, in Mandarin, at Melaka, Beijing and Taipei on the same topic: Speaking from My Experiences in Dharma Practices. I tried to offer the essential points of Dharma that will help all Dharma practitioners.

The transcript for the talk given in Melaka has just been posted at our websites: <http://www.originalpurity.org/gurulin/b5files/f2/f2316.html> And the MP3 files for all 3 talks are also posted at our websites already.

Now I write briefly the key points of my talk in English to offer my advice to English readers, and it is attached.

Essence of Dharma

Based on my studies, practices and services in Dharma, which spanned over four decades, the followings are deemed essential points for people to gain progress on enlightenment endeavors:

1. All Dharma teachings are about the totality of direct experiences, and how to resume the natural state of merging in it, without traces of veils created by

conceptualization, emotional swings, and habitual tendencies. Comprehending this will enable one to understand all various theories in Dharma and, in addition, the reason why Chan (Zen) can do without theories.

2. Buddha Sakyamuni attained full enlightenment when he was all alone in forests after six years of endeavoring in the wilderness. Thus, this shows that enlightenment has nothing to do with any worldly matters, nor with the presence of others. It is simply a matter of a being returning to direct experiences as they are.
3. For Dharma practitioners, stop worrying about matters of environments or others, you only need to concentrate on purifying your experiences through Dharma practices. And the only hindrance to your attainment of enlightenment is your reluctance in giving up your views, attachments and grasping.
4. Since our attachments are deep and many, and our efforts and time on Dharma practices are very limited, the only realistic and practical advice for your endeavor toward enlightenment is: Keep a daily routine of simple Dharma practices, and continue it until the end of your life, or as long as you are still capable of doing it.

Written in English on October 21, 2019
El Cerrito, California

Istota Dharmy

Opierając się na moich studiach, praktykach i posłudze w Dharmaie, która trwa od ponad czterech dekad, następujące punkty uważam za kluczowe w przypadku ludzi chcących osiągnąć postęp na ścieżce oświecenia:

1. Wszystkie nauki Dharmy dotyczą totalności bezpośrednich doświadczeń, oraz tego, jak powrócić do naturalnego stanu “wchłonięcia”/stopienia się z ową totalnością: bez śladów zasłon powstałych w wyniku konceptualizacji, emocjonalnych wahań i nawykowych tendencji. Zrozumienie tego pozwoli zrozumieć wszystkie teorie Dharmy, oraz powód, dla którego Czan (Zen) może się obejść bez teorii.
2. Budda Sakjamuni osiągnął pełne oświecenie w leśnej samotni, po sześciu latach przebywania na odosobnieniu. Pokazuje nam to, że oświecenie nie ma nic wspólnego ze sprawami doczesnymi, ani też z obecnością innych. Jest to po prostu kwestia powrotu do bezpośredniości doświadczeń/przebywania w nich - takich jakimi są.
3. Do praktykujących Dharmaę: przestańcie się martwić o sprawy otoczenia, lub innych ludzi; wystarczy skoncentrować się na oczyszczeniu swoich

własnych doświadczeń poprzez praktyki Dharmy. Jedyną przeszkodą w osiągnięciu oświecenia jest niechęć do porzucenia swoich poglądów, przywiązań i chwytania.

4. Ponieważ nasze przywiązania są głębokie i liczne, a nasze wysiłki i czas na praktyki Dharmy - bardzo ograniczone, jedyna realistyczna i praktyczna rada dla dążących do oświecenia jest taka: Zachowaj codzienną rutynę prostych praktyk Dharmy i kontynuuj ją do końca swego życia lub dopóki jesteś w stanie to robić.

Napisane w języku angielskim 21 października 2019

El Cerrito, Kalifornia

Przetłumaczone na polski: Zhi Lian, 23 października 2019

Warszawa

Q&A on "Direct Experiences"

Disciple Shan Cai asked in an email:

Q: In the article "Oneness of Direct Experiences" Guru mentioned that, "Our direct experiences are indivisible union of shapes, colors, sounds, smells, tastes, feelings and intentions. Within this unity there is no particular "self" that can be specially cared about, and no "others" that can be indifferent about (the ordinary distinction of "self and others" is only a mental grasping to concepts)." However, having read this, disciple has a question as follows: Ordinary people would all feel that the duality of self and others refers to the duality of the six kinds of sensible objects and the mind that comprehends these six kinds of sensible objects; in other words, it is the duality of the knowing mind and the objects known—the duality of direct experiences and the mind capable of comprehending the direct experiences. Therefore, does or doesn't Guru mean that, both the realm known, and the knowing mind are parts of direct experiences, and they are all in indivisible oneness?

A: Yes. Simply realize it by oneself, and no need to ask others, because it is in fact so.

Q: And is whatever can realize this "Direct Experiences" the Brilliance of Blank Essence which is

free from the duality of subject and object, or in other words, "the Original Face"?

A: This is born of your superfluous thinking but cannot be found in direct experiences. Free from thoughts and intentions, only then is "the Original Face".

Written in Chinese on October 28, 2019
Translated into English on May 30, 2021
El Cerrito, California

Ocean and Waves

Waves are up and down, rising and recessing, and have their courses of progression, but never apart from the ocean. As we watch waves, they seem to be independent, and yet, indeed, they are merely phenomena on the ocean surface at some time and some spot. We are used to care about and paying attention to certain parts of our direct experiences, and adding explanations based on ideas, to the extent that we overlook the totality of direct experiences; just like people watching waves, concentrate only on the current scenery, and overlook the whole ocean.

The totality of direct experiences includes not only experiences already have had, but also those in the future, even including all phenomena during near-death, dying processes, and thereafter. It cannot be divided by the distinction of past, present and future, nor can it be interrupted by living and dying. From the perspective of this limitless totality, whatever we currently care about and pay attention to, are, in fact, as minute as invisible; just as looking from the perspective of the whole ocean, the ups and downs, rising and recessing, and courses of progression of each wave, within the whole ocean, is so minute as not worth mentioning.

How can we escape from our habitual tendencies to care about and paying attention to only certain parts of direct experiences, and adding interpretations based on ideas, and consequently self-limited to the entanglements of sorrows, to return to the limitless openness of the totality of direct experiences? Through the analogy of ocean and waves, Dharma practitioners might comprehend that, the current entanglements in mind are like the raging waves kicked up by a storm on ocean, and the grasping in mind is the storm. Let go of the grasping and turn attention to all the bits and pieces that naturally arise in direct experiences, then the raging waves will return to the limitless ocean and resume peace and tranquility. This is not a way that can deliver noticeable results after only a few attempts; however, if one could regularly open one's mind in this way, then it will be possible to gradually gain earlier results of resuming peace and tranquility.

Written in Chinese and translated into English on
October 30, 2019
El Cerrito, California

Ocean i fale

Fale wznoszą się i opadają, wznoszą się i opadają; ich ruch postępuje, nigdy nie są jednak poza oceanem. Gdy je obserwujemy, wydają się niezależne, ale w rzeczywistości są po prostu zjawiskami na powierzchni oceanu - w określonym miejscu i czasie. Przyzwyczajaliśmy się do dbałości o niektóre części naszych bezpośrednich doświadczeń, do zwracania na nie uwagi oraz dodawania wyjaśnień opartych na interpretacji; przeoczamy natomiast całokształt, niczym ludzie wpatrujący się w fale, którzy koncentrują się jedynie na bieżącej scenerii, pomijając przy tym ocean jako całość.

Całość bezpośrednich doświadczeń obejmuje nie tylko te, które już miały miejsce, ale także te w przyszłości, a nawet wszystkie zjawiska śmierci, procesów umierania i tego, co wydarza się później. Nie da się rozdzielić totalności na przeszłość, teraźniejszość i przyszłość, nie można też przerwać życia i śmierci. Z punktu widzenia tej nieograniczonej całości wszystko, na czym nam obecnie zależy i na co zwracamy uwagę jest w rzeczywistości tak małe jakby było niewidzialne; tak samo patrzenie z perspektywy całego oceanu: wznoszenie i opadanie, wznoszenie się i opadanie oraz przebieg każdej fali w oceanie - jest to tak niewielkie, że nie warto o tym wspominać.

Jak można uciec od nawyku dbałości o i zwracania uwagi na tylko niektóre fragmenty bezpośrednich doświadczeń, od interpretacji opartych na ideach, a w konsekwencji - samoograniczania się do uwikłania w niedolę? Jak powrócić do nieograniczonej otwartości - totalności bezpośredniego doświadczenia? Poprzez analogię oceanu i fal praktykujący Dharma mogą zrozumieć, że obecne uwikłania w umyśle są jak szalejące fale wywołane przez burzę na oceanie; lgnięcie naszego umysłu - to właśnie ta burza. Porzuć chwyty i zwróć uwagę na wszystkie fragmenty i części, które naturalnie powstają w bezpośrednich doświadczeniach. Wtedy szalejące fale powrócą do bezgranicznego oceanu i odzyskają spokój. Nie jest to metoda przynosząca zauważalne rezultaty już po kilku próbach, ale jeśli będziemy regularnie pracować w ten sposób nad otwartością umysłu, stopniowe przywrócenie spokoju i ciszy stanie się możliwe.

Napisane po chińsku i przetłumaczone na angielski 30 października 2019, El Cerrito, Kalifornia

Tłumaczenie polskie: Zhi Lian, 31 październik 2019

Transcendence in Totality

Chanting "Amitabha" is a Dharma practice which, through repeating a name unrelated to worldly matters, enables practitioners to transcend mental cages formed by preoccupation in worldly entanglements. Dharma practitioners who voluntarily wish to renounce worldly considerations in order to concentrate on Dharma practices, of course, can concentrate on doing this practice. Another Dharma practice to this goal is to practice "Meditation on Blank Essence", i.e., to practice "Meditation on No-self"; however, to engage in this kind of meditation effectively, one needs to first attain a state of "Naturally in the Absence of Thoughts". Besides, there is still one Dharma practice to this end, and it is to practice the so-called "Transcendence in Totality".

Any wave, within the totality of great ocean, is so minute that it is invisible; similarly, any worldly matter, within the boundless totality of all direct experiences, is likewise so minute that it is unnoticeable. If a Dharma practitioner is voluntarily willing to renounce worldly considerations, then, whenever there is something in mind that bothers, the practitioner can remind oneself of this point, and stop paying attention to the matter, and instead turn one's attention to the boundless totality of direct experiences.

Thus, through the boundless openness of the limitless totality, one renounces and transcends the teeny tiny bit that one was preoccupied with; this is the so-called "Transcendence in Totality".

The "Great Samadhi of Dharmadhatu" as taught by Patriarch Chen aims at cultivating the power of Samadhi in "Transcendence in Totality". If one can, through the power of such Samadhi, completely merge into the Dharmadhatu, then it amounts to "attaining Dharmakaya".

Written in Chinese and translated into English on
November 10, 2019
El Cerrito, California

Q&A on "Transcendence in Totality of Direct Experiences"

In an email disciple Mi En asked the following:

Q: Disciple still cannot comprehend as to how to concentrate on the boundless totality of direct experiences. Guru, please reveal it!

A: Good question! Turn one's attention to changes in direct experiences without raising thoughts to follow and recognize what they are.

Q: Isn't this consistent with the statement, "In the absence of thoughts and ideas, as soon as a concept arises, let it go.", as found in your work, "Great Harmony Samadhi"?

A: Yes. But this one is letting go through paying attention to the totality of direct experiences, and not simply letting go.

In an email disciple Yao En asked the following:

Q: Turn one's attention to changes in direct experiences without raising thoughts to follow and recognize what they are. Is this method the same as abiding in "naturally free from thoughts" to realize the transitions in phenomena?

A: The former does not require the ability to be naturally free from thoughts.

Q: In Guru's recent works there are 3 kinds of method mentioned: 1, repeating "Amitabha"; 2, after attaining "naturally free from thoughts", visualizing Blank Essence; and 3, Transcendence in Totality. If your revelation above is the same as abiding in "naturally free from thoughts" to realize the transitions in phenomena, then, isn't Transcendence in Totality and visualizing Blank Essence the same method? Guru, please expose this topic in detail, thanks!

A: Transcendence in totality does not need to visualize Blank Essence. Visualizing Blank Essence is to realize no "Self" through evolution of phenomena.

Q: Guru, please translate the above sentence, 「將注意力轉移到直接經驗中一切變異，而不起意念追究」, into English; on the one hand, to benefit sentient beings in other countries, and on the other hand, in English it takes detail description to convey meanings and thereby it will facilitate disciples in comprehending deeply and grasping the key points, thanks!

A: Turn one's attention to changes in direct experiences without raising thoughts to follow and recognize what they are.

Disciple Mi En sent another email to ask the following:

Q: You mentioned: But this one is letting go through paying attention to the totality of direct experiences, and not simply letting go.

Can one comprehend "letting go through paying attention to the totality" as a method of "substitution"? Namely, previously one was grasping to one point, one event, but now the attention is on the totality, and there is still attention paid, but the extent and field of vision of the mind are expanded to the whole Dharmadhatu.

A: Yes; Dharmadhatu is limitless, and hence any spot will become invisible.

Q: This is like using "harmonizing" in Guru's work, "The Heart of Sublimation through Limitless-Oneness Compassion Sastra", instead of the "no" in the "Heart Sutra", so that it would be easier for Dharma practitioners to perform Dharma practices, and yet eventually it could also achieve the ultimate goal of merging into the Dharmadhatu.

A: In "The Heart of Sublimation through Limitless-Oneness Compassion Sastra", it is "embracing" which is used. "Harmonizing" makes no distinctions, and one can hardly attain such a state at once. "Embracing" is

to take in, it doesn't matter if there is still "Self", but all it takes is to be able to open up and take in.

Q: "In the absence of thoughts and ideas, as soon as a concept arises, let it go.", as found in your work, "Great Harmony Samadhi", it is "subtraction" without the need to employ "substitution". But later in the same essay it reads, "In no grasping totality of experiences remains distinctly clear."; what is the difference between "distinctly clear" and "paying attention to the totality"?

A: "distinctly clear" appears naturally.

Q: In the Comments in "Great Harmony Samadhi", it reads: Dharma practitioners who can naturally be without thoughts may practice this according to the teachings given above. Could one say that the goal of 1, repeating "Amitabha" and that of 2, paying attention to totality are the same 3, naturally free from thoughts; and then while abiding in naturally free from thoughts, one practices visualizing Blank Essence or "In the absence of thoughts and ideas, as soon as a concept arises, let it go", as mentioned in "Great Harmony Samadhi" because at this stage one is free from thoughts and no longer needs to resort to the "substitution" method of "paying attention to the totality"?

A: "Naturally free from thoughts" is a stage of attainment on the Dharma practice path.

The totality of direct experiences is originally harmonious and indivisible; simply need to neither add nor subtract, that is it. "Great Harmony Samadhi" is practicing on this.

Disciple Yao En sent another email and asked:

Q: Venerable Guru, in your recent teachings, emphasis is on letting go through paying attention to the totality, without raising thoughts to follow or discern.

Nevertheless, ordinary people cannot at once notice the totality of direct experiences in Dharmadhatu; ordinary people probably can only notice some changes in the environment in vicinity, such as on a road, the passing of traffic and people, and when alone in a room, the changes in inner thoughts. Then, if one practices as you mentioned: paying attention to all changes in direct experiences, without raising thoughts to follow or discern?

A: Then, if one practices as you mentioned: paying attention to all changes in direct experiences, without raising thoughts to follow or discern?

I figure that what you meant was "how" but not "if".

I reply according to "how":

Changes in direct experiences appear naturally. Notice these changes, without making distinctions and choices.

Q: You mentioned "Turn one's attention to changes in direct experiences without raising thoughts to follow and recognize what they are."; the "changes" here, specifically, what do they refer to? Could you be more precise?

A: What one sees, hears, senses and thinks about.

Q: Ordinary people probably can notice only some changes in things and matters in vicinity, such as the traffic and people on the road, birds flew over the sky and changes in clouds, and these are not open much. Then, noticing these changes without raising thoughts to follow or discern. Is it correct then?

A: Yes. If one can sustain thus, then one will not become trapped in one's inner grasping.

Q: If one continues to practice according to the Dharma practice mentioned above, then gradually one will become more open; is it so?

A: Yes.

Written in Chinese on November 15, 2019
Translated into English on May 30, 2021
El Cerrito, California

The Heart of Sublimation through Limitless-Oneness Compassion Sastra

Wherever Bodhisattva Manjusri practices sublimation through Limitless-Oneness Compassion effortlessly, He intuitively understands that the five aggregates are of one essence, thus enduring all suffering and difficulties. "Sudhana! Phenomena are inseparable from essence, and essence is inseparable from phenomena; phenomena are identical to essence, and essence is identical to phenomena. Feeling, conceptualization, motivation and consciousness are also inseparable from and identical to essence."

"Sudhana! The Limitless-Oneness of all these things transcends existence and non-existence, attraction and repulsion, plurality and singularity. Therefore the Limitless-Oneness contains phenomena, contains feeling, conceptualization, motivation, consciousness; contains eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind; contains color, sound, odor, flavor, touch, impression; contains eye-species up to and including perceptual-consciousness-species; contains Ignorance and elimination of Ignorance, up to and including senility and death and elimination of senility and death; contains suffering, its causes, its transcendence, the path toward its transcendence; and transcends Loving-kindness and loss. Since there is transcendence of loss,

by sublimation through Limitless-Oneness Compassion, a Bodhisattva's mind is free from attachment. Since there is no attachment, there is no criticism. There is freedom from prejudiced discriminations, and Nirvana is realized."

"Buddhas of the past, present and future attain the Unsurpassable Right and Full Enlightenment by sublimation through Limitless-Oneness Compassion. Therefore sublimation through Limitless-Oneness Compassion is known to be the great mind mantra, the great loving-kindness mantra, the indiscrimination mantra, the all-encompassing mantra, capable of enduring all suffering, absolute and joyous. Hence, the mantra of sublimation through Limitless-Oneness Compassion is to be proclaimed." So He utters the mantra:

Tolerance, tolerance, tolerance for all, tolerance with joy, bodhi svaha!

Great Harmony Samadhi

Dharma nature is everywhere but could not be grasped. Any sensation as it arises is the apparent aspect of dharma nature, and as it immediately disappears is the hidden aspect of dharma nature. In the absence of thoughts and ideas, as soon as a concept arises, let it go. In no grasping totality of experiences remains distinctly clear. Thus, comprehension of boundless and inconceivable oneness naturally and gradually develops.

Comments:

Dharma practitioners who can naturally be without thoughts may practice this according to the teachings given above.

Those who are still in the midst of incessant thoughts may practice chanting Buddha name or mantras for all sentient beings as a preliminary practice to this.

Written in Chinese and translated on June 28, 2007
El Cerrito, California

No Drips in Ocean

Totality of experiences is inseparable in any way,
Inside ocean no single drip of water can be found;
Don't follow grasping and become fascinated,
Circling in sorrows without ever stopped to rest!

Comments:

Totality of experiences is originally and naturally inseparable and without limitations. Within ocean there is no way to find one drip of water. Grasping to thoughts and preferences, and therefore forgotten the only reality, which is the totality of experiences, one becomes deluded. Simply due to such fascination with grasping, all in worldly life are suffering in sorrows without rest and end.

Written in Chinese and translated into English on
November 18, 2019
El Cerrito, California

Nie ma kropli w oceanie

Totalności doświadczeń nie da się podzielić,
ani w oceanie znaleźć kapiącej kropli wody.
Nie podążaj za fascynacją, za chwytniem nie idź;
krążąc w swym cierpieniu, nigdy nie odpoczniesz!

Komentarz:

Totalność doświadczeń jest pierwotnie i naturalnie niepodzielna i bez ograniczeń. Wewnątrz oceanu w żaden sposób nie zobaczysz kapiącej kropli wody. Chwytnjąc się myśli i preferencji, zapominamy o tej jedynej rzeczywistości jaką jest totalność doświadczeń i wpadamy w złudzenia. Tylko dlatego, że tak fascynuje nas chwytnianie, całe nasze światowe życie staje się cierpieniem bez końca, bez odpoczynku.

Napisane po chińsku i przetłumaczone na angielski: 18
listopad, 2019
El Cerrito, California
Tłumaczenie polskie: Zhi Lian, 18 listopad 2019

Running Stream

Running stream never ceased to flow;
Why bother to get drips out of the water?
Whatever is grasped in one's mind,
Will become a source of sorrows later!

Comments:

Totality of experiences is ever evolving and beyond grasping, just like a running stream; why would anyone bother to get drips out of it? Any grasping in mind is delusive and no match to the only reality, which is the totality of experiences; and yet it is possible to transform into the source of all sorts of sorrows.

Written in Chinese and translated into English on
November 30, 2019
El Cerrito, California

Gateless Pass

Chan (Zen) school does not establish anything in words. Nevertheless, through generations of transmissions, some Gong An (Koan) were recorded and passed down. There were even collections of Gong An, and one among them is entitled "Gateless Pass". In this article only the significance of this title is expounded.

Sentient beings are all in direct experiences, and originally without boundaries. Within this limitless oneness, since there is no distinction of inner and outer, surely there is no gate to be established. Ordinary people are entangled and confined by some tangled mass of views, emotions and intentions, and therefore cannot abide naturally in direct experiences; hence, even though they have never left direct experiences, they cannot merge into the totality of direct experiences. Thus, even though it is "gateless", nevertheless, there is some "pass"; only when this tangled mass of views, emotions and intentions, that one is grasping onto, can be passed over, can ultimate emancipation be attained.

May this succinct explanation serve to help Dharma practitioners to recognize clearly where they should apply their efforts onto!

Written in Chinese and translated into English on
March 12, 2020
El Cerrito, California

How to Escape from "Gateless Pass"

A disciple asked the following question in an email:

Prostration to Great Grace Root-Guru Buddha:

Grateful to Great Grace Guru for your compassionate instructions. Recently, disciple constantly remained in the entanglement of unsound moods and habitual intentions and thoughts, and some evil thoughts would arise from nowhere, beyond my comprehension; even though disciple repented according to Dharma, and yet such entanglements could not be resolved. May Great Grace Guru mercifully reveal, for disciples, who are under the influence of heavy habitual inclinations and entangled by karmic hindrances, how could one escape and transcend this pass of entanglements?

Reply:

Being able to notice and recognize problems is the first step on advancing in Dharma practices. In order to break through this pass, one can only persist in the practice of repeating a Buddha's epithet or mantra, continuing daily and repeating as often, and accumulate as many repetitions, as one can; in addition, pay no attention to other thoughts. As to these habitual tendencies, do not regard them as problems but simply disregard them. Dharma practices cannot be hurried; do

not expect noticing resolution of entanglements immediately or soon.

Written in Chinese and translated into English on
March 13, 2020
El Cerrito, California

Returning to Blank Essence

In rituals for Dharma practices, it begins with Taking Refuge, and then Developing Bodhicitta, and then "Visualizing Blank Essence"—visualizing that all phenomena returning to Blank Essence. The so-called "returning to Blank Essence" does not mean that the practitioner needs to deny the contents of direct experiences, but means that all concepts and views in the mind need to be let go because any concepts or views are artificial products of personal consciousness, and are not exactly identical with their references in direct experiences, and furthermore, they are a kind of interference to direct experiences.

For example, ordinarily, people sustain a notion of "my body", even though this concept is unnecessary for the natural functions of physiology, and yet, on the contrary, it is a source for increasing tensions. To fully resume natural relaxation, one needs, first, to be able to become free of this concept.

In rituals for Dharma practices, after "Visualizing Blank Essence", then it says that one "visualizes" that from Blank Essence there appear certain phenomena. Ordinary Dharma practitioners still sustain the notion of "my body", and hence they figure that they are supposed to begin imagining accordingly. In fact,

after "Visualizing Blank Essence", only contents of direct experiences remain, therefore, the so-called "visualizes" is not a personal imagining, but a "recognition" that the contents of direct experiences is as described.

Written in Chinese and translated into English on May 7,
2020
El Cerrito, California

Wrapped in Concepts

Disciple Yao En raised the following question in an email:

Venerable Guru,

In your recent work, "Returning to Blank Essence" (http://www.originalpurity.org/gurulin/b5files/f2/f2340_e0275.html), you pointed out that any concept, view is added by an individual's consciousness, and deviates from "direct experiences," and interferes with direct experiences. Further, in your work, "Oneness of Direct Experiences"

(http://www.originalpurity.org/gurulin/b5files/f2/f2217_e0196.html) you pointed out that our direct experiences are indivisible union of shapes, colors, sounds, smells, tastes, feelings and intentions.

While in one work you pointed out that thoughts interfere with direct experiences, and in another work, you pointed out that ideas are originally part of an indivisible union of direct experiences; how should one comprehend this?

May Guru always stay healthy, always remain free from illnesses, always abide in the world, always refrain from entering Nirvana, and spread Dharma to enlighten sentient beings!

Reply:

Ideas and thoughts are originally part of an indivisible union of direct experiences.

However, it is a pity that ordinarily people are wrapped in concepts and thoughts, and therefore, even though within indivisible direct experiences, they overlooked reality, and live their lives in a framework of concepts and thoughts.

If one does not realize the situation as explained above, there will never be a way to escape from such mental cages.

Disciple Yao En responded in an email:

You are indeed a great Guru! Now I thoroughly comprehend the teaching.

Free from grasping to shapes, colors, sounds, smells, tastes, feelings and intentions is in the union of direct experiences.

Written in Chinese on May 16, 2020

Translated into English on May 31, 2021

El Cerrito, California

Recognizing Dharmakaya

Dharma teaches that, Buddha's Dharmakaya transcends spatial and temporary limitations, is without boundaries, and encompassing everything. To sentient beings, who are incapable of escaping from all sorts of confining limitations, this is inconceivable and impossible to attain. Nevertheless, the all-encompassing Dharmakaya of Buddha, of course, includes each and every sentient being, and hence, Dharma also teaches that, Buddha and sentient beings are in oneness—in fact, there is no such distinction as "Buddha" and "sentient being"; and fundamentally, Buddha and sentient beings are equal.

For Dharma practitioners, even though it is very difficult to experience the limitlessness of Dharmakaya, however, based on the teaching that the whole Dharmadhatu is in oneness, it should be possible, at any instant and any spot, to recognize the Dharmakaya, which one has never separated from for even a split second. This article attempts to explain, how to recognize the Dharmakaya at any instant and any spot.

The totality of colors, shapes, smells, tastes, sensations, feelings and thoughts, which we experience at any instant and any spot, is incessantly fleeting away and

evolving, and cannot be hold onto; nevertheless, at the juncture when these experiences dissipated, the awareness which is undefinable and indescribable remains constantly without changes. This is what we, as a minute bit in the Dharmakaya, can recognize, at any instant and any spot, as a glimpse of the Dharmakaya. Even though it is merely "a glimpse of the sky from the bottom of a well", what we perceive is indeed "the sky".

Confined by individual sense organs and habitual tendencies, and incapable of developing intentions and conducting activities from the state of "all-in-oneness", such is the situation of us ordinary sentient beings. In contrast, Buddha dwells in the totality of the Dharmakaya, which grasps nothing and yet encompasses everything, and thus, capable of transcending all limitations and engaging in salvation activities which make no distinctions in the totality. Since Dharma practitioners can, at any instant and any spot, take a glimpse of the Dharmakaya, why not make more uses of such experiences to cultivate states of mind and activities which transcend self-confinements?

Written in Chinese and translated into English on June
29, 2020
El Cerrito, California

Like a Kaleidoscope

Dharmadhatu is limitless with all phenomena in oneness; as causal conditions in the totality evolve, all sorts of phenomena either appear or disappear. Phenomena present is transient like illusion and cannot be grasped; phenomena absent leave no traces but has a "dharma station" in the Dharmadhatu with all related causal conditions concurrently. Fleeting evolution of phenomena present or absent is transformation of Dharmadhatu in totality and cannot be determined by partial causal conditions. This kind of theory in Dharma is difficult to comprehend.

Kaleidoscope is a product of optical studies; rotating a kaleidoscope will show ever-changing view of symmetrical patterns. The fundamental conditions for forming all these patterns remain the same. The pattern appearing and all possible patterns are in the same tube; as it rotates, causal conditions of the totality evolve, and the presence and disappearance of patterns flow on. Taking this as an analogy, it becomes easy to comprehend the Dharma theory of phenomena in Dharmadhatu.

All phenomena in the limitless oneness of Dharmadhatu have identical basic quality—cannot be grasped and is concurrently determined by all causal

conditions in the totality. Be it present or absent, all phenomena are in Dharmadhatu. As causal conditions in the totality evolve, phenomena in the Dharmadhatu flow from presence to absence in rotation. The absent ones with all their related causal conditions have their "dharma station" within the limitless oneness of Dharmadhatu—whenever the evolution of all causal conditions matches those related to one such "absent" phenomena, it will appear.

Once this is comprehended, then it is clear, why all visualizations in Vajrayana begin with visualizing that all things returning to Blank Essence, and then, starting with a seed syllable, all gradually evolve in appearance. Since what is visualized upon is an "absent" phenomena, it needs to first return to basic nature and change causal conditions in the totality, for it to become present. Besides, an "absent" phenomena with all its related causal conditions have their "dharma station" in the Dharmadhatu and are irrelevant to the present phenomena of the practitioner's sensations; consequently, the visualized realm is completely not affected by the practitioner's current sensations but a constant presence, transcending "spatial and temporal" conditions, in the Dharmadhatu. Once this is comprehended, it will become easy to concentrate in visualization.

Written in Chinese and translated into English on July
3, 2020
El Cerrito, California

Omnipresence of Dharmakaya

Disciple Yao En raised questions in an email:

Q: Venerable Guru, as to your recent work, "Recognizing Dharmakaya", I have two minor questions to ask for your teaching.

<http://www.originalpurity.org/gurulin/b5files/f2/f2346e0281.html#e>

You stated that, "The totality of colors, shapes, smells, tastes, sensations, feelings and thoughts, which we experience at any instant and any spot, is incessantly fleeting away and evolving, and cannot be hold onto; nevertheless, at the juncture when these experiences dissipated, the awareness which is undefinable and indescribable remains constantly without changes. This is what we, as a minute bit in the Dharmakaya, can recognize, at any instant and any spot, as a glimpse of the Dharmakaya. "

Disciple's question is that, if all kinds of conditions are met, I can find a quiet place free from noises, close my eyes and mouth, stop smelling odors, and do not move body to reduce sensation from touching, but thoughts and emotions will keep on rolling up and down incessantly, in other words, it is very difficult for all these sensations to cease together, not to mention that sounds and colors and shapes come and go constantly.

How can one get a glimpse of the Dharmakaya at any instant and any spot? Please reveal the method to me.

Besides, sensations disappear while awareness remains constantly, this seems to indicate the existence of a Dharmakaya which is independent of colors, shapes, smells, tastes, sensations, feelings and thoughts; where does my comprehension go astray? Please show me the Dharma rationale.

Thank you, Guru!

A: Good questions.

Employing words to expound on Dharma is bound to contain minor defects because one is attempting to convey what is unspeakable and incomprehensible via dualistic tools.

The questions you raised are pointing at defects of using words to expound Dharma, and such discernability are possessed only by people who have profound comprehension of the Dharma teachings.

The so-called "juncture when these experiences dissipated" does not mean "when they all dissipated together"; any kind of dissipation may be used for practice. The Guan Yin (Visualization on Sounds) practice is to notice that, as sounds dissipated, awareness capable of hearing remains unchanged.

In fact, when all experiences present, it is also a glimpse of the Dharmakaya; however, ordinarily people are used to adding established views and couldn't be free from prejudices, and hence, we can only use the "juncture when these experiences dissipated" to practice.

Besides, the so-called "awareness remains constantly" is also a way of saying because there were no better choices; indeed, this awareness and all sensations are indivisible and in oneness. We can only use such an expression to point at what is inexpressible.

Written in Chinese on July 5, 2020
Translated into English on May 31, 2021
El Cerrito, California

Natural and Original Stability

Usually people practice meditation to cultivate the ability to concentrate. If the practitioner has not undergone thorough readjustment of ways and habits of living, and cannot renounce personal considerations, then there could not be solid results from meditation practices. However, according to Dharma, indeed, sentient beings all have natural and original stability, and all Buddhas abide therein.

Whatever we experience are like illusions—incessantly evolving and could not be grasped. Only the basic nature of all that we experience is original and perpetual, even though this basic nature of awareness has no particular quality, and hence could not be grasped. If one could realize and recognize this perpetual nature, which lacks any particular quality, as the only reality in a sentient being's existence, then amid evolving phenomena one naturally abides in "neither born nor deceased, neither dirty nor clean, neither increasing nor decreasing", and instantly transcended "transmigration in Samsara". Buddha Akshobhya (Immovable One) and the Dharma protector Acalanatha (Immovable Wisdom King) are immovable because they all abide in nothing could be grasped.

Comprehending this immovable, natural and original stability does not mean that one can then abide therein because in daily life one continues to behave according to customs, habitual tendencies, and views. Therefore, a Dharma practitioner still needs to adhere to Dharma in daily life so that, one may hope for, one day, all worldly traces have evaporated and instantly one abides therein.

Written in Chinese and translated into English on July
16, 2020
El Cerrito, California

My Bodhicitta Vows

1. May virtuous gurus remain with us and those departed return soon!
2. May perverse views and violence soon become extinct, and Dharma spread without hindrance!
3. May all beings proceed diligently on the path toward Buddhahood and achieve the goal before death!
4. May the Great Compassion flourish in all beings and never regress until they reach perfect Buddhahood!
5. May the Great Wisdom thrive in all beings and never regress until they reach perfect Buddhahood!

Stanza on Constant Illumination and Wide Spreading of Dharma

Engulfed in the Five Poisons, sentient beings in the Six
Realms are trapped in delusions;
May all in sufferings thereby turn to seek the path of
emancipation!

Worldly problems having no solutions, lingering
therein will gain only toil and distress in vain;
May all become awakened and escape from
entanglements without further deliberations and cares!

All are impermanent and there is no possibility of
control and management on changing;
May all become keenly aware of this and no longer
linger in comparisons and calculations!

Essence of Dharma difficult to comprehend and paths
of Dharma practices are variant and at odds;
May all mature in Wisdom to renounce partial grasping
and reach harmonious comprehension!

Intertwining knots of body and mind have been
accumulated, layers over layers, like a cocoon;
May all sustain resolution in resolving all such knots
on the path of Dharma practices!

Personal grasping, not extinguished, attainment of enlightenment lacks full completion;

May all, through diligent Dharma practices, readily attain the state of non-self!

Full attainment of Dharmakaya yields incomprehensible display of Wisdom and Compassion;

May all attain Full Enlightenment to conduct salvation activities without limits and ending!

Returning to Direct Experiences

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