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DZOGCHEN (ATIYOGA)

Dzogchen Practice in Everyday Life

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The everyday practice of dzogchen is simply to develop a complete carefree acceptance, an openness to all situations without limit.

We should realise openness as the playground of our emotions and relate to people without artificiality, manipulation or strategy.

We should experience everything totally, never withdrawing into ourselves as a marmot hides in its hole. This practice releases tremendous energy which is usually constricted by the process of maintaining fixed reference points. Referentiality is the process by which we retreat from the direct experience of everyday life.

Being present in the moment may initially trigger fear. But by welcoming the sensation of fear with complete openness, we cut through the barriers created by habitual emotional patterns.

When we engage in the practice of discovering space, we should develop the feeling of opening ourselves out completely to the entire universe. We should open ourselves with absolute simplicity and nakedness of mind. This is the powerful and ordinary practice of dropping the mask of self-protection.

We shouldn't make a division in our meditation between perception and field of perception. We shouldn't become like a cat watching a mouse. We should realise that the purpose of meditation is not to go "deeply into ourselves" or withdraw from the world. Practice should be free and non-conceptual, unconstrained by introspection and concentration.

Vast unoriginated self-luminous wisdom space is the ground of being - the beginning and the end of confusion. The presence of awareness in the primordial state has no bias toward enlightenment or non-enlightenment. This ground of being which is known as pure or original mind is the source from which all phenomena arise. It is known as the great mother, as the womb of potentiality in which all things arise and dissolve in natural self-perfectedness and absolute spontaneity.

All aspects of phenomena are completely clear and lucid. The whole universe is open and unobstructed - everything is mutually interpenetrating.

Seeing all things as naked, clear and free from obscurations, there is nothing to attain or realise. The nature of phenomena appears naturally and is naturally present in time-transcending awareness. Everything is naturally perfect just as it is. All phenomena appear in their uniqueness as part of the continually changing pattern. These patterns are vibrant with meaning and significance at every moment; yet there is no significance to attach to such meanings beyond the moment in which they present themselves.

This is the dance of the five elements in which matter is a symbol of energy and energy a symbol of emptiness. We are a symbol of our own enlightenment. With no effort or practice whatsoever, liberation or enlightenment is already here.

The everyday practice of dzogchen is just everyday life itself. Since the undeveloped state does not exist, there is no need to behave in any special way or attempt to attain anything above and beyond what you actually are. There should be no feeling of striving to reach some "amazing goal" or "advanced state."

To strive for such a state is a neurosis which only conditions us and serves to obstruct the free flow of Mind. We should also avoid thinking of ourselves as worthless persons - we are naturally free and unconditioned. We are intrinsically enlightened and lack nothing.

When engaging in meditation practice, we should feel it to be as natural as eating, breathing and defecating. It should

not become a specialised or formal event, bloated with seriousness and solemnity. We should realise that meditation transcends effort, practice, aims, goals and the duality of liberation and non-liberation. Meditation is always ideal; there is no need to correct anything. Since everything that arises is simply the play of mind as such, there is no unsatisfactory meditation and no need to judge thoughts as good or bad.

Therefore we should simply sit. Simply stay in your own place, in your own condition just as it is. Forgetting self-conscious feelings, we do not have to think "I am meditating." Our practice should be without effort, without strain, without attempts to control or force and without trying to become "peaceful."

If we find that we are disturbing ourselves in any of these ways, we stop meditating and simply rest or relax for a while. Then we resume our meditation. If we have "interesting experiences" either during or after meditation, we should avoid making anything special of them. To spend time thinking about experiences is simply a distraction and an attempt to become unnatural. These experiences are simply signs of practice and should be regarded as transient events. We should not attempt to re-experience them because to do so only serves to distort the natural spontaneity of mind.

All phenomena are completely new and fresh, absolutely unique and entirely free from all concepts of past, present and future. They are experienced in timelessness.

The continual stream of new discovery, revelation and inspiration which arises at every moment is the manifestation of our clarity. We should learn to see everyday life as mandala - the luminous fringes of experience which radiate spontaneously from the empty nature of our being. The aspects of our mandala are the day-to-day objects of our life experience moving in the dance or play of the universe. By this symbolism the inner teacher reveals the profound and ultimate significance of being. Therefore we should be natural and spontaneous, accepting and learning from everything. This enables us to see the ironic and amusing side of events that usually irritate us.

In meditation we can see through the illusion of past, present and future - our experience becomes the continuity of nowness. The past is only an unreliable memory held in the present. The future is only a projection of our present conceptions. The present itself vanishes as soon as we try to grasp it. So why bother with attempting to establish an illusion of solid ground?

We should free ourselves from our past memories and preconceptions of meditation. Each moment of meditation is completely unique and full of potentiality. In such moments, we will be incapable of judging our meditation in terms of past experience, dry theory or hollow rhetoric.

Simply plunging directly into meditation in the moment now, with our whole being, free from hesitation, boredom or excitement, *is* enlightenment.