

Looking at the Mind

What we need to understand for the meditation technique of looking directly at the mind is the sixth consciousness because it is looking the sixth, or mental, consciousness that performs the meditation. And, in a sense, it is the sixth consciousness that is the subject of the meditation. To understand this, consider the technique of looking at mind within movement. In this technique, while you are in a state of tranquility, allow a thought to arise. This can mean either letting a thought arise spontaneously, without attempting to suppress it, or generating a thought intentionally. In either case, the thought that arises, arises in the sixth consciousness and it is this sixth consciousness that thinks.

When a thought arises, then simply look directly at it. Look directly at its essence or its nature. This is different from following the thought, or, allowing that thought (which could be, for example, a thought of anger toward someone you view as an enemy) to produce a further thought; it is also different from analyzing the thought by examining its content and reflecting upon the thought. From this point of view, the content of the thought is irrelevant. Whether the thought is a good thought or a bad thought really doesn't matter. In either case, it's an appropriate subject for the meditation. Don't try and figure out why you had that particular thought. Simply look directly at that thought itself, rather than at the content of the thought. And that's what is meant by looking at the nature of thought.

First of all, try to experience when a thought arises, where it arises from. Does it arise in your heart, physically? Or in your brain? Does it arise outside of your body somewhere? Or in your head or another part of your body? Take your time with this. And then, when the thought dissolves or disappears, where does it go? Then, when a thought is present, exactly where is it situated? Again, take your time and look carefully. If you look at the thought in this way, directly and thoroughly such as a thought of anger, for example, you will never find anger anywhere.

Initially a thought arises. It could be a virtuous thought or an unvirtuous thought, an angry thought or any other kind of thought. When such a thought arises within an ordinary or untrained situation, then that thought will produce a further thought, which will produce yet another thought, and on and on, endlessly, like waves on the surface of a body of water. And yet, when you look directly at the thought, rather than being led by its contents, you see that the thought has no substantial existence whatsoever and no substantial characteristics, such as shape or colour or location. When you look for these characteristics of, for example, an angry thought, you don't find anything, and yet you had the thought. You had this thought of anger. Why can you not find it when you look at it directly? The reason is that the thought is a mere appearance, without any substance. There isn't anything truly there to be found. This technique will work with any kind of thought, and is a very useful way for dealing with the arising of kleshas (emotional obscurations which are also translated as disturbing emotions or poisons. The three main kleshas are passion or attachment, aggression or anger and ignorance or delusion. One can add pride and jealousy. Altogether they form the five poisons. You can use it with a

disturbing thought of aversion, of attachment, of jealousy, or any other disturbing emotion. In this way the afflictions will be pacified.

Further notes:

1. Sometimes physical sensations will cause thoughts to arise or thoughts will cause physical sensations. It is quite possible that a thought arising with the mental consciousness can generate physical sensations. What is occurring is that an extremely intense thought process or emotional state within the mental consciousness affected the channels and winds within the body, which then – in the case of an unpleasant sensation – are agitated, and then you feel ill.
2. Sometimes when one tries to settle the mind to look at thoughts, emotions seems to be underneath the thoughts. This is because when a coarse thought arises is that a lot of things come with it. In the Abhidharma, the distinction that's made about this is between the main mind and the surrounding mental arisings. What happens is that, when a concept or a thought arises) for example a virtuous one), then it will bring a lot of virtuous mental arisings with it. And the same is true with negative thought. There will seem to be other things surrounding or underlying the thought.
3. The sixth consciousness is conceptual, and as such is considered to be confused. When one recognizes the nature of mind, then within that recognition the mind relaxes. At the same time, the thoughts, which are the expressions of confusion become pacified and subside. Although it is true that the sixth consciousness normally is conceptual, when it is employed correctly in looking at the mind's nature, then it is in a nonconceptual state. And then the mode of cognition of the sixth consciousness is not considered to be confused, but to be directly valid cognition. Among the four type of direct valid cognition, it is what is called yogic direct valid cognition. Thus, in that state of the mind experiencing its own nature directly, there is no conceptual confusion; that conceptual confusion has subsided.

Looking at mind within Stillness

The first technique, looking at the mind within stillness, involves several questions.

The first of these is: Other than that rest for tranquility itself, which you have become aware of, is there anything else to be recognized? Now, the reason for asking this question is simply the mind being at rest, is sufficient, and that insight into the nature of the tranquility is unnecessary. But, in fact, insight, or looking directly at the tranquility, which is what this technique consists of, is indeed necessary, and it's in order to bring one to recognize the necessity of insight that this provocative question is asked.

The second question is: If there is something to be recognized here, if there is a nature of mind to be recognized, is that nature an absolute nothingness without anything to be apprehended whatsoever, like the horns of a rabbit? And, if one says, well, yes, that's what it's like, then this indicates a problem. It means that there is still some fabrication based on a concept of emptiness or nothingness. One is not simply looking without prejudice.

The third question is: When you look at your mind within stillness, do you experience a lucid and transparent and clear awareness that is a "comfy" or snuggly". You could say, comfortable and yet utterly inexpressible: you can't really say it's this or it's that. Is that what you experience? That's the third question. This question asks, do you experience an awareness that is free of being apprehended as one thing or another? In other words, is this awareness that you experience when you look at the mind something that you really can't say exists, because it has no substantial existence, but you can't say it doesn't exist, either, because it has no solidity, no heaviness? Thus, being free of heaviness, does it have a quality of fitness or appropriateness that's comfortable and happy, that feels right? And yet you can't describe it. This is the question that's asked. Now, if one is at this point says, well, that sounds like what I experience, then this indicates that he is moving towards a correct understanding. We could call it a partial or a beginning of a correct understanding. For this reason, in one of Marpa's songs, you see the expression, "like a mute tasting sugar," which means that the meditation experience is something that you actually experience, just as you would taste sugar, but like someone who can't speak, you can't describe your experience. You can't say it is this or that.

The fourth and fifth questions go together as a pair, because it's an either or question.

The fourth question is: When you look at the nature of that which is resting, or the nature of the mind in stillness, then is it a neutral awareness, which means does that awareness, if neither positive nor negative, but a kind of dull obscurity, like a blankness? Is that what you experience – merely an absence of the recollection of anything; merely an absence of content, without any kind of particular clarity? In other words, there is an awareness in the sense that there is a mind, but there is no clarity to it. Is that what you experience?

Then the fifth question goes along with that: Or do you experience a glaring clarity to this awareness, a naked, brilliant, glaring, or extremely vivid and forceful clarity? These two questions are asking, in brief, is this awareness that is characteristic of the mind in stillness dull, or is it brilliant and clear? Because it is possible that at some times you may experience the one and at other times you might experience the other.

The sixth question is concerned with fabrication and intellectual understanding, and is actually phrased not as a question, but as something to be considered. There is the danger that you will confuse experience and understanding. Understanding in this case means what is called dry understanding, which is to say an intellectual understanding that may be correct but is not something you have experienced directly. It is quite possible to mistake a conceptual understanding of, for example, the mind's emptiness and clarity, for a direct experience of it. If you make that mistake then, when you explain your experience, you will use dharma jargon, possibly a very elaborate explanation, and it will sound very good, but it is just a dry understanding. It is not something you have experienced. And if you don't learn to tell the difference between what you have understood and what you have experienced, you will deceive yourself with mere understanding and you won't get anywhere. Understanding in itself, does not lead to realization. Instead, it is necessary to apply yourself to meditation and as was said earlier, to smash rock against bone, to break the bones and get the marrow out, in other words, to penetrate right through to direct experience rather than allowing a conceptual overlay in your meditation. Experience has to come from within, by looking without prejudice, without deciding beforehand what you are going to see. Because, if you decide beforehand that you want to see this or you want to see that, that will sully the integrity of your experience and, as it says in the texts, will be like a patch of conceptuality that covers over the genuine experience.

The lack of prejudice or lack of conceptual overlay means two things. One is, do not try to label what you experience. Do not think, "This is clarity" or "This is emptiness." The other is, don't alter or attempt to influence what you experience. Don't think, "This isn't okay. I should be seeing the emptiness of the mind. This isn't what I want to find." Or, "This isn't okay. I should be seeing the clarity and the brilliant awareness of mind." Just look without prejudice and see without prejudice.

The seventh and final question connected with looking at the mind within stillness is not a question. It is really a piece of advice, a final instruction. And that is the instruction to relax and rest and then return to the looking, so that when you are looking, you really look, and, by really looking, you actually experience things directly. The final question is really an exhortation to go further with this technique, by looking again and again.

Looking at mind within Movement

That was looking at the mind within stillness. The second technique is looking at the mind within movement, which means to look directly at the essence or nature of thoughts when they arise. Following the basic technique, which we went through above, there are nine questions in this section. Again, not all of them are, strictly speaking questions.

The first question is: When an extremely coarse or powerful thought, such as one of intense attachment, intense aversion or intense bewilderment arises, or when a great flurry of agitated thoughts arises, then especially look at these. Previously, we were just looking at any thought. Now we are trying to determine the nature in particular of coarse thoughts, very strong, vivid thoughts. We want to look directly at these and see if they are in any way different from the thoughts that we looked at earlier. So we look at them in exactly the same way we looked at thoughts in general. Are these thoughts different from any other thoughts? Again, this way of looking at thoughts is quite different from what we usually do, we simply look right into the nature or the essence of the thought that has arisen, and we are not trying to trace the derivation of the thought to analyze its content. We are trying to experience its essence, its fundamental nature.

The second question is also concerned with these strong or intense thoughts, and it is to examine the difference between thoughts that arise while you are looking at the nature of thoughts and thoughts that arise when you are not looking at the nature of thoughts. Are the thoughts themselves any different from one another? And is the object of these thoughts, for example, the object of your anger when you are angry, experienced any differently in these two situations?

The third and fourth questions go together.

The third question is that when you look at thoughts, are all those thoughts experienced as emptiness beyond elaboration, free of arising and cessation? Or, in the fourth question, when you look at thoughts, do the thoughts that have arisen just disappear without remainder? In the case of the third question, when you ask, "When you look at thoughts, are they experienced as an emptiness beyond elaboration without arising and cessation?" What you are trying to determine is whether there is any fabrication here. Because if that is the way you think you experience thoughts, then there is a conceptual overlay, because those are all concepts.

Then the fourth question is simply: Do you experience them as disappearing without remainder?

The fifth question is: When you look at thoughts are all the thoughts that arise self-liberated, without being apprehended as one thing or another, and yet still present as a naked or directly experienced, lucid awareness? What you are asking is, when you

look at the nature of thoughts, does the confusion or bewilderment of the thought simply disappear by itself when you see its nature? For example when you look at the nature of a thought of intense anger, as soon as you look at it, does the anger, and the pain of the anger, simply dissolve by itself? And yet, while the anger disappears, does it leave clarity of awareness that is unfinished, that does not disappear, and that is experienced nakedly, without any conceptual overlay between the recognition and that which is recognized?

The sixth question is: If you answer yes to the fifth question, then look to see, is there any difference between the naked, lucid awareness that is experienced within stillness and the naked, lucid awareness that is experienced when you look at the nature of a thought? Beyond that, when you look directly at their nature, do you experience all the thoughts that arise as arising without being apprehended as existing or not existing? If that is your experience then is there something separate from them that is thinking this? In other words, when you look at the nature of a thought, if what you experience is beyond apprehension – you can't even describe it as a lucid clarity; you can't say anything about it – then you should look to see, who or what is thinking this? Is there something there that is thinking this?

The seventh and eighth questions also go together.

The seventh question is: Allowing a thought to arise, then how do you get rid of it (literally, the text says, “summon it back in”), which means, in this case – contrary to the usual instruction – actually get rid of the thought. Allow the thought to just vanish. After the thought vanishes, then look at your mind. Does it become a lucid cognition? In other words, after the thought vanishes, does the mind become lucid awareness? Or –

The eighth question: Is the state of awareness experienced before you did anything to the thought get rid of it, unaltered and unpolluted by any kind of fabrication or effort whatsoever? By looking at the nature of that awareness, is there a simultaneous arising and liberation of thought? In other words, the seventh question is: Is a thought liberated into this lucid clarity after it disappears? Or, number eight, is it liberated as it arises? Or, to put it another way, does the thought have to dissolve to be liberated? Or is the thought liberated simultaneously with its arising?

The ninth question is analogous to the seventh question in the previous section; it's more of a concluding piece of advice. And that is, “Look fully and repeatedly enough at the various modes of arising of thought to generate a real certainty about this in the depths of your being.” What this means is that there are different modes of arising of thought. Don't be led astray by the particulars of the thought, for example, of an intensely angry thought. Rather than getting interested in examining the anger or its contents, look directly into its words, no matter what kind of thought arises, just look into its nature. This is analogous to the instruction at the end of the previous section: “Rest and look again. Rest and look again.” Do this until you have a decisive

experience within the vary depths of your being of the simultaneous arising and liberation of thoughts.

With regards to the use of the seven questions in the previous section and the nine questions in this section, various experiences will arise for you as you practice, and there are various possibilities that can occur. Don't misuse these questions to influence, limit, your understanding. Just leave room for a direct experience of your own mind, without prejudice or influence by what you know or understand.

It sometimes happens that, when we begin to practice this type of meditation, we are hoping for an elegant and lucid meditative state. Then we practice, and while it is our basic intention to look without prejudice at our mind because we are disappointed with what we experience, we try to crank it up a little bit, to fix it or improve it. Don't do that. Just look at your mind as it is. Don't feel that you have to improve it or influence it in any way. Simply rest in a direct and unprejudiced experience of your mind as it is, and don't hope for something better than whatever you actually experience.

Looking at Mind within Appearances

The Method of Pointing Out

Now we come to the third way to look at the mind, which is looking at the mind within appearances. Generally speaking, when we present mahamudra, the format is the threefold presentation of view, meditation and conduct. From among these three topics, what we are concerned with here is view. Normally we think of the view as an intellectual stance or position, an ascertainment of the way things are derived by logical analysis. In Vajrayana, however, the view is not a conceptual position that is arrived at through analysis. View in Vajrayana is a name for what is derived through direct experience. In other text, we find the terms, “co emergent mind in itself,” “co emergent thought,” and the “the co emergence of appearances.” In this text, these same topics are presented as “looking at the mind within stillness,” “looking at the mind within appearances.”

When we think of appearances, or phenomena, we ordinarily think of external things. We think of the various things we perceive (column, vases, walls and so on) as being external to ourselves. But what you are actually experiencing – what you are actually seeing, for example – is not out there. The appearance, that is to say, the experience of the appearance, occurs within your mind. When you see a column, a pillar, you see it within your mind. Ordinarily we think of the column as external, as being made of whatever it is made out of (plaster or wood or whatever), but in fact, what you are seeing is actually made out of the stuff of your mind. It is inseparable from your mind. Seeing, hearing, smelling, and tasting are really mental experiences. What we are doing in this style or approach to looking at the mind, is using the context of the mind experiencing such an appearance to see the mind’s nature within that context.

This technique begins with looking at an object of visual perception, such as a pillar, a vase, a wall, a mountain, and so on. It could be almost anything. It could be big, it could be small; it doesn’t matter. Simply direct your gaze to that chosen object of visual distinction between this use of an object of visual perception and the use of an object of visual perception in some shamatha techniques. In your mind to a bare visual perception, for example, of a pebble or a small piece of wood. In that case, what you are doing is actually concentrating your mind on that visual perception; you try to hold your mind to that object. Here we are using the visual form in a different way. We are trying to use the experience of visual perception as an opportunity to discover or reveal the mind’s nature, to see the emptiness or insubstantiality that is inseparable from the vividness of the perceptual experience. So what we are really looking at here is not the object but the nature or essence of the experience of the object, which is the unity of emptiness and lucidity.

So look directly at the object, but without examining it or particularly attending to its characteristics, and don’t be too outwardly focused on the object. You don’t need to stare at it wide eyed. Look at your experience of the object and simply see the insubstantiality, the emptiness of the experience.

Having directed your attention to the experience of the object of visual perception, then relax slightly, and then look again. By alternating relaxation and attention to the experience of the object, you can continually examine that experience, by looking at it directly. In the same way, you can apply this technique to the other sense consciousnesses, to the experience of sound, of smell, of taste, and of tactile sensations. When you do this, then you are looking at the nature of the experience of the object in each case, rather than at the characteristics of the objects themselves. You are looking to see if there is any substantiality whatsoever in the consciousness that is this experience of the appearance of the visual form or the sound or whatever it may be.

Among other things, you can look to see what are the differences, if any, between different consciousnesses of different objects. For example, is the consciousness that is generated when you see something red? Or, is the eye consciousness that is generated when you hear a sound? Of course, they are different in the coarse sense that one is an eye consciousness and the other is an ear consciousness. But is the nature of the mind or consciousness that experiences these two types of objects fundamentally different?

As you apply this technique, you are not really looking at the object. You are looking at that which experiences the object. You can also look to see where that consciousness arises. Does it go anywhere? If you come to the conclusion that it arises in such and such a way or goes somewhere else or disappears in such and such a way, that is probably conceptual. You have to look very directly. It cannot be a matter of speculation or reasoning. This is very different from analyzing sense perception and think that this consciousness must arise from these causes and conditions and must dissolve in such and such a way. It's a matter of looking directly at the consciousness that experiences.

The Two Kinds of Appearances

There are two types of appearances. The first are the outer appearances, which we have been talking about, such as forms, sounds, smells and tastes and so forth. When you are looking at the consciousnesses that experience these external appearances, then you are experiencing the essential emptiness of that consciousness. You do this by looking at the consciousness to see if it has any substantiality. For example, if I am taking this vase as the object generating an eye consciousness of the vase. The eye consciousness that is generated in bringing together my eyes and the vase I see: where exactly is this consciousness generated? Does this consciousness arise in the vase? Does the consciousness arise in my eyes? Does it arise somewhere in between them? If it arises in between them, does it actually fill the distance between the vase and my eyes? Or is it less substantial than this? Is it insubstantial? These are the kinds of things to be looked at.

The second type of appearance we experience is inner appearances, which refer primarily to tactile sensations connected with the inside of our body. These are such

experiences as pain or sickness, feeling hot, feeling cold, and so on. All of these inner sensations or inner appearances are ultimately experienced by our mind. As in the case of the outer appearances, this technique involves looking at the nature of the experiencing consciousness. As we look at it, we discover that we can directly experience the nature of this consciousness, and yet it is beyond being apprehended either as existing or as non-existing. And the recognition that this consciousness is beyond any kind of imputation of existence or non-existence is cutting through the fixation on either its solidity or its utter non-existence.

Having seen that the experiencing consciousness is beyond any kind of fixation, the next thing to examine, when we are looking directly at a consciousness of a sense perception, is whether that sense perception vanishes. If so, where does it go? Also, when we are experiencing an appearance, is that appearance truly separate from us, in other words, is it separate from the mind, then how do they arise within the mind? Do they arise in the mind like a reflection arising on the surface of a mirror? Or is the mind projecting outward as an appearance? In other words, are appearances coming in to us, or are we going out to them, and if they are separate, what is the meeting point between the appearances and the experiencing mind?

When we look at these things, again don't let this become a logical analysis of sense perception; don't try to deduce or infer how it must be. Try to experience it directly. Then, when we pursue this process of directly looking at sense experience, we will resolve that appearances are inseparable from the mind that experiences them, and that the imputed objective aspect of appearances has no existence beyond the experience itself. Therefore the nature of what we ordinarily impute to be an objective aspect of experience, as an appearance or a phenomenon separate and distinct from the objective cognition of it, is in fact not separate from it. And the nature of the experience in which the cognition and the object are really inseparable is the unity of appearance, or experience and its emptiness.

The Child in The Temple

When we look at the object, if it seems to us that the object is vividly out there – it's vividly or obviously out there and separate from us – then look to see, is there something that exists separate from the object that thinks the object is out there? By looking in that way, you will find that, while the appearance of the object is unimpeded (in other words, is present and vivid), there is nothing in the experience that exists apart from that object which would let you say that the object exists apart from it. While the vividness of the experience itself is pervasive and penetrating, there is nothing other than the vividness of the experience itself. When you recognize the non-duality of mind and appearance, then you will cease to fixate on the mind that is viewing the object as having any existence separate from the object. Any fixation on that mind as being a perceiver outside or beyond the object simply vanishes.

The traditional image for this is of a very small child entering a shrine room or a temple. In this case, we are talking about a Vajrayana temple that is full of things,

such as statues and images of lineage gurus and yidams, offering utensils and thanngkas. If we were to enter into the temple, we would say, “Here is a statue of so and so, here is an offering bowl.” And so on. But a very small child would not identify any of these things as being this or that. Similarly, in mahamudra recognition of sense perception, there is the same pure experience. Not only is there no fixation on the object being separate from the object, but there isn’t even any fixation of the substantial thinker who thinks that these two are not separate from one another.

Of the three techniques we have looked at – looking at the mind within stillness, within movement, and within appearance – the first two were somewhat easier to understand and to apply, because they were concerned with experience that we easily recognize as occurring within the mind. The problem we face with the third technique, which makes it a little more difficult, is that we have a very strong habit of considering sense perception to be an experience of something outside the mind. Nonetheless, when you perceive consciousness that is the actual experience of seeing that form, you realize that that consciousness, while clear and vivid, is at the same time utterly insubstantial; it has no solidity, no location, nor any other kind of substantiality. You will never find those qualities. If you can discover the same nature of mind that we looked at in the earlier techniques, the same unity of lucidity and emptiness, in the context of the experience of appearances, this will enhance your recognition of the mind.

As Gampopa said, “The mind itself is the co emergent dharmakaya, and appearances are the light of the co emergent dharmakaya.” “Light” here means “display”. Gampopa meant that the nature of appearances and the nature of the mind that experiences them are neither the same nor different because the appearances are actually the display or expression of the mind. The word “display” indicates the unlimited and unpredictable variety of expressions of the mind, which we know as appearances, which are as various as the display or activities, for example, of a monkey. Just as a monkey will jump all over the place and do just about anything it can get away with, in the same way, the display of your mind in the form of appearances is essentially unlimited.

Questions:

When experiencing the perception of so called outer objects, when in that state where the perceiver and the object are one and there is no longer a sense of there being a perceiver, is there a danger there of being too open to negative influences?

Rinpoche replies: Generally speaking when we have this experience as beginners of the mixing of subject and object, or the non-duality of subject and object, it occurs only in meditation, which means that you are probably sitting in a safe place. It does not occur for beginners in post meditation, so it does not become a problem. Now, when we say beginners, we mean those practicing the first half of the Mahamudra path, the two yogas of one-pointedness and beyond elaboration. It is only at the levels

of one taste and non-meditation that this could start to occur in post meditation. But at those levels when this occurs the vividness or clarity of the unimpeded appearances themselves are undiminished by the absence of a subject-object duality. And so, because the appearances are undiminished, the distinct experience of the various characteristics of the appearances is undiminished, so the person is not in any danger. The only thing that is diminished by the absence of a subject-object duality is the pain and pleasure which we normally associate with appearances.

Question: Rinpoche, in our practice, we have talked about three ways of coming to understand the mind, and in our practice, is it better to pick on of those ways and work steadily on that until we make real progress, or to use all three?

Rinpoche: Well, if you can, the best way to deal with it is to begin with looking at the mind within stillness and practice that until you fully resolve the nature of the mind in that context. Then look at the mind within occurrences – again, until that is resolved – and then look at the mind within appearances, and so on.

Question: Rinpoche. If, in reality, thoughts are self-liberated as they arise, are there two types of thoughts, those that are real and unreal (in that, not recognized as self-liberated, thoughts are unreal), or do thoughts naturally arise as self-liberated and then we imprison them, or something? Because we don't seem to recognize that thoughts actually are self-liberated as they arise. In other words, is self-liberation the nature of all thoughts or does self-liberation only occur if we recognize the nature of thoughts?

Rinpoche: Self-liberation and liberation upon arising are not characteristics of thought; they are what happens when the nature of thought is recognized. So it is not the case that you either recognize the self-liberation or don't; self-liberation is the result of recognition. Normally, thoughts are anything but self-liberated. A thought arises, and it takes us over, and that produces another thought, and so on. On the basis of these thoughts, we generate further confused projections, on the basis of which we experience pleasure and pain. Now, when the nature of thought is recognized, what happens to that thought is very much like, as is traditionally said what happens when a snake untangles or unties the knots it's tied itself into. The snake does it itself, on one has to come along and help eh snake out. In the same way when you look at the thought directly, for example, a thought of anger, and you see its nature, then the thought does not generate a further thought; the anger is not prolonged. As soon as the nature is seen, at that moment, the poisonous quality of the anger just disappears and dissolves; and that is self-liberation or liberation upon arising.

Question: Rinpoche if one doesn't have a lot of time to meditate, is it possible just to do types two and three, looking at the mind in movement and looking at the mind in appearances in post meditation?

Rinpoche: If you can, that is fine. But the normal way this is done is that, in meditation practice, you generate an experience, on the basis especially of looking at the mind within stillness and then within movement. You generate an experience of

the mind's nature, which you then attempt to bring into post-meditation and other types of experiences.

Question: I was wondering, do we all create the world of appearance, and maintain it through eons of mental habit?

Rinpoche: The appearances of the world and the maintenance of these appearances both come from various types of habit. There are varieties of what we call habitual patterns or habitual imprints, including the imprint of our actions and the imprint of our habituation to certain ways of experiencing, certain ways of seeing. And all of these various types of habitual patterns are imprinted on the alaya consciousness, the eighth consciousness. Having been placed there, they are subsequently projected outwards as experience, or they arise or appear as experience. Those that are stable will arise as stable or relatively unchanging appearances. Those that are unstable will change. Generally speaking, one type karma is what are called shared appearances resulting from shared actions, which means that beings that have accumulated either an identical action or very similar actions will reap the result of experiencing the world in identical or similar ways, and will thereby be able to communicate and agree upon what they experience.

Question: Do we generate these appearances for play or for the evolution of compassion?

Rinpoche: Our projection of these appearances is entirely unintentional; we neither do it intentionally as play nor intentionally in order to develop compassion. In fact, it's beyond our control. We project out of confusion. It is like a fire that gets out of control and then just keeps on burning everything in its path. All of the things that happen in the world such as the physical elements fire or of water and of earth in the case of earthquakes and floods and so on happen which are karmic projections that happen beyond our control. We don't intend to bring them about but they result from actions. But there is no plan.

Question: How did fire started?

Rinpoche: Any of these appearances, even though they affect many different people, are experienced individually by each person who experiences them. And the individual experience that you have is the result of your own previous actions. The connection between these individual experiences, the commonly shared appearance, which is nevertheless experienced individually by the individual perspectives, is the result of the type of conceptuality that has been generated by all of the beings who will experience it. For example, an earthquake or hurricane that kills thousands of people is experienced in different ways by everyone involved, from the people who are killed to the people who hear about it on the radio or read about it in the newspaper. Every person's experience of it is particular to him or her and corresponds to their involvement in the actions and conceptuality that produce that particular type of appearance. In general, the violent agitation and destruction of the elements is

produced by violent thoughts like, “Kill them,” “Bust them up” “Do them in” When lots of people have lots of thoughts like, “Let’s get them” then you get earthquakes and hurricanes and other such things.

Question: So we start the “fires” with our own ignorance and confusion. Then I am wondering, why do we go through this process? I know the goal is enlightenment in the end, but what does it matter?

Rinpoche: The reason for all of these appearances is our habit. Appearances always arise from habit that causes you to generate or project those particular appearances. Its is a lot like dreaming. So, to use dream as an example, when you start to dream, the dream begins as a thought, like one you would have in the daytime. But you are asleep, so the thought intensifies and becomes something like talk or gossip, and then the gossip intensifies or solidifies into images, and then you really think that your are seeing people, seeing places, going places, and so on. And that is how it works with conventional appearances as well. The basis on which these habits arise is the alaya consciousness, which we didn’t get to yesterday; we just got through the first six consciousnesses, so I will go through the other tomorrow or the next day, the seventh and the eighth, how they generate appearances.

Question: Thank you. I think I was really asking , now that I have listen to all these answers, why does a thought come out of nothingness? If there were just nothingness, why would a thought bother to even come out of it?

Rinpoche: You will have to find out.

Question: I was wondering, if one becomes proficient in the different levels of practice, or very good in, say, one, is it assured that we will be able integrate that mindfulness into daily life? Or are there other skills that we need to be proficient at?

Rinpoche: Sometimes, and sometimes not, but you need to try. Gradually your ability to experience this recognition in post meditation will expand or increase. In the beginning, it will just happen very occasionally that you will be able to bring this recognition into post meditation. Then it will start to happen some of the time. Then, if you keep practicing it will happen often. Then it will happen most of the time. But there will still be certain times or certain circumstances where it will be difficult. Eventually, you will know, it expands, until it is all the time. And this is called, in the meditation of Marpa the Translator, mixing. He talks about mixing a great deal, including mixing in conduct and mixing with the kleshas, which means bringing recognition into your daily life, into situations in which strong kleshas arise.

Looking at Body and Mind

Returning to Pointing out the Dharmakaya, we have been through three of the five techniques of looking at the mind within stillness, within movement, and within appearance. Now we come to the fourth, which is looking at the difference between body and mind. When we consider our bodies and our minds, initially we assume that they are different. Nevertheless, our bodies as we know it is a mental experience; we experience it with our minds. And our minds are present in dependence upon our bodies. Thus the fourth technique consists of looking, within the meditative state, at the relationship between the body and the mind.

When you examine the relationship between your body and your mind, the first question to ask is, are they one thing, or are they two different things? If you assert that they are one thing, then you discover several differences or distinctions between them. First of all, the body is something that is born and is destroyed, while the mind is without birth and destruction. Your body starts out very small, get bigger, then slowly falls apart, and finally ceases to be. Your mind does not. Your body is material, but your mind is a cognition. So from that point of view, it seems that they are not the same.

When we say that the body is matter, we mean that it is composed of particles. The body is composed of various parts (the head, the arms, and so on), and these are composed of their subparts (the various bones and flesh and so on), and if you keep on breaking it down, you find that the body is compounded of particles and is therefore matter. It is not a cognition. It is apparently a material thing. The mind, on the other hand is not like that at all. The mind is mere cognitive lucidity. It is not made of particles, and it does not have parts, such as the head, hands, and so on. Furthermore, the body does not know, does not experience itself; it is the mind that experiences. For this reason as well, it seems that the body and the mind are fundamentally different.

There are a number of other contradictions in the assertion that the body and the mind are the same. If the body and the mind were the same, then where the body dies, the mind should die, but we do not accept this to be the case. Again, if the body and the mind were the same, then when you stick a thorn into you body, a thorn should be stuck into your mind. And yet, when you stick a thorn into your body, there is no thorn entering your mind, it is just entering your body. For these reasons, too, it seems untenable to assert that the body and the mind are the same.

While it certainly isn't true that the mind and the body are the same, as has been shown, it also isn't true that they are different. Because, if the body and the mind are fundamentally different, then when the thorn is stuck into your body, which one experiences that? Is it the body that experiences it, or the mind? If the body and mind are different, it can only be one or the other; it cannot be both. If it is only the body that experiences being stuck with a thorn, then sticking a thorn into a corpse should cause the corpse to have the experience, because, after all, it is a body. The only the corpse lacks is a mind. If we are asserting that it is only the body that experiences the pain of being stuck with a thorn, then it should affect a corpse just as much.

If, on the other hand, it is not the body but only the mind that experiences being stuck with a thorn because the mind and body are fundamentally different, then there is no connection between the mind and the body. Reasoning this way then not only sticking a thorn into your body but sticking a thorn into anything – into the earth, into the rocks – should hurt just as much. If it is just your mind, if it has nothing to do with your body, then there is no reason why this particular body should have any particular effect on your mind that other things don't have. And yet, that is not how it is. There is a big difference between having a thorn stuck in your body and having a thorn stuck in the ground. So we cannot say that the body and the mind are different, either. You cannot say that the body and mind are the same, and you cannot say that they are different.

Look carefully at this in meditation. The presentation we have just gone through, which is a logical analysis, is a little different from what you do when you are actually meditating. When you are meditating, look directly at the experience of your body and of your mind. Look at the way you experience your body, from the tip of your hair on your head down to the very tips of your toes, carefully looking directly at your physical experience, because you want to see what exactly is this relationship between mind and body. Mind and body seem to be somehow present, but do the body and mind actually depend upon each other, or are they fundamentally different, and yet, when we look at our actual experience, it seems as though one cannot exist without the other. The body depends upon the mind to be experienced; the mind depends upon the body to have experience. Looking at this relationship or dependence is another way of coming to see the mind's nature.

The Seventh and Eighth Consciousnesses

Precisely, we looked at the first six consciousnesses; the eye consciousness, ear consciousness, nose consciousness, tongue consciousness, tactile consciousness and mental consciousness. Five of these, the consciousnesses of the five gates or five senses, are obviously intimately connected with the physical body, as they rely upon particular organic supports in order to function. These experiences of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and feeling are generated in dependence upon the physical body. Even the sixth consciousness, which is in a sense, less physically oriented, is still intimately connected with the body in the way we experience it.

It is the seventh and eighth consciousnesses that we might take to be fundamentally different from the body. The seventh consciousness is called the consciousness that is mental affliction; the eighth consciousness is called the alaya consciousness. The eighth consciousness, the alaya, is called that because it is itself the ground of consciousness. It is that mere cognitive clarity which is the fundamental level of consciousness.

Earlier, the terms “unstable consciousnesses” and “stable consciousness” were mentioned. Unstable means a consciousness that is generated when various causes and conditions come together and subsequently vanishes when those causes and conditions are no longer present together. The first six consciousnesses are like that. The seventh and eighth are

stable, which does not mean permanent, but means they are continuous. They never stop functioning.

The eighth consciousness in particular, the alaya consciousness is subtle, not obvious; it never become more obvious. And it never simply disappears or ceases to function together. Nor is it permanent, because it is not the same consciousness that passes through time. For example, the alaya consciousness of last year, of last month, of yesterday, like the five consciousnesses or six consciousnesses that were generated at those times, has ceased to exist. Nevertheless, the habits of those consciousnesses and the habits of the actions performed at those times have been retained in the continuity of the alaya; therefore, in each moment, the alaya consciousness retains those habits. Eventually the results of these karmas, these actions and habits, arise or emerge as form, much like the way that, at night, when we are dreaming, the images and habits stored in the daytime emerge as dream images. What emerges from the alaya consciousness arise as both body and mind, the exper4ience of a body and experience of a mind.

The alaya consciousness retains the particular habits that are implanted through one's actions and habituation through time, as well as the beginningless habit of ignorance. All of these habits that are stored in the alaya consciousness re-emerge from it in the form of various appearances. That is how the eighth consciousness functions, how it projects appearances.

The seventh consciousness is called the consciousness, which is mental affliction, or the afflicted consciousness; essentially, it is fixation on a self. The seventh consciousness is that faculty which fixates on the cognitive aspect of the alaya consciousness and mistakes it to be "I" or a self. On the basis of mistakenly fixating upon that awareness aspect of the alaya consciousness as a "self", it designates "others" as well. That is why it is called the consciousness which is mental affliction because this duality between self and other is the root of all mental affliction, or klesha. This is not the same as when we consciously think "I". That happens on the level of the sixth consciousness. The seventh consciousness is stable, which is to say, it is constant; it is always there. Whether you recollect yourself or not, whether you think of yourself or not, there is a fixation on this imputed self that is always there, whether you are eating, talking, in the midst of activity, no matter what your are doing; and it never stops.

The alaya consciousness arises as apprehended objects and an apprehending subject. The seventh consciousness fixates on the appearance of the apprehending subject as a self and, then, on the appearances of apprehended objects as others. In that way, through the action of these consciousnesses, the appearances of body and mind arise as distinct from one another, in the sense that the body appears as an apprehended object, while the mind appears as an apprehending subject. They are distinct in appearing that way, but they are not, in fact, different from one another, since they are merely two aspects of a single appearance that arises through the projection of the alaya consciousness. In that sense, as well, they are beyond being the same or different.

The Stages of Resting The Mind

All of these techniques involve looking directly at your mind and seeing its natural emptiness as well as its inherent clarity or lucidity. This is fundamentally the same, whether you are looking within stillness, within movement, within the experience of appearances, or at the relationship between body and mind. When you start to practice this, initially you will find only brief moment of recognition of the mind's nature. There will be a moment of recognition, then it will vanish; and then, later on, another moment of recognition will occur, then it will vanish; and so on. This is the first of what are called nine stages or, literally, nine methods of resting the mind, which here are applied to the resting of the mind in the recognition of its nature. The first stage is just called placement because there is an intermittent experience of placing the mind in recognition of itself and quite a bit of not placing the mind.

As you work with the practice, you will find that these intermittent moments of recognition start to lengthen slightly. There is still a lot of the time when you are not recognizing it, but the periods of recognition start to get longer; and this is called continual placement. It does not mean continual in the sense of unbroken or continuous, but simply more than before. However, you still have to relate to the problem that you can be distracted by thoughts; thoughts will arise and will take you out of the recognition and spin you off into following the thoughts. At this point, by exerting mindfulness and alertness, you need to intensify your return to recognition of mind from the distraction. It is at this point that, according to Moonbeams of Mahamudra, that the application of mindfulness and alertness has to be somewhat hardheaded; it has to be a quality of tough or uncompromising lucidity, so that there is enough clarity, enough crispness, or sharpness perhaps, to the mindfulness that you don't lose it when you try to return to recognition.

Strengthening Mindfulness and Alertness

The faculties of mindfulness and alertness are explained in the following way in Abidharma: the consciousness that we have been talking about, whether you classify them as six or as all eight, make up one of the five aggregates, which is consciousness. One of the other aggregates, in addition to form, feeling, perception and consciousness is called formation. It consists principally of mental formations or samskaras. There are various ways to classify these, the most common being fifty-one but in any case they consist of various virtuous, unvirtuous and neutral states that arise naturally within our minds. Among these are mindfulness and alertness, which means that they are faculties we already possess. We are not trying to create new faculties of mindfulness and alertness. What we are trying to do is apply these faculties in a specific way to extend our recognition of mind's nature. To do that, we need to intensify them, to make them a matter of conscious choice.

When we think about meditation, we tend to imagine that there is one mind that we place at rest and another mind that is somehow watching the mind at rest and protecting it from distraction. But in experience, it is not like that. In experience, what you actually do is

relax your mind while looking; you relax within the act of looking. By maintaining this quality of looking, you will know if you are distracted. The basic application of mindfulness and alertness, of looking within relaxation, is common to both tranquility and insight. But here, in the specific context of insight, it must be strengthened or intensified, so that you are never distracted, or at least so that you recognize when you are distracted, which is the function of alertness specifically. You will possess this alertness until you lose mindfulness. If mindfulness is lost, you will also lose alertness, and then it is no longer meditation; you are just as confused as you are when, normally, you forget what you are doing, and what you are going to do. At this point, therefore, it is necessary to increase mindfulness and alertness to the point where there is a sharpness and a toughness to their clarity. Because this is insight practice, you are not merely resting the mind in a state without thought, you are resting the mind in recognition; and you are trying to be mindful not merely of placing the mind, but of placing the mind within recognition of its nature. Within those requirements, mindfulness and alertness at this point will help a great deal.

Questions

Question; Rinpoche, in my meditations, there seems to be some part of the mind that I call will or intention, and I am wondering where that aspect of mind fits into what we have been talking about?

Rinpoche: Will or intention is one of the fifty one mental formations or samskaras. Within the fifty one, there are many subgroups. For example, the first five are called the five that are present in any cognitive situation. It is not one of those. It is in the next list which is the five that serve to ascertain an object. The first of these is intention. Then there is what is called interest, then recollection (which is the same word that we often translate as mindfulness), then absorption (which is the word samadhi, but here it does not denote a profound meditative state, but a simple state of intentional cognition), and finally, prajna or knowledge, which again here does not denote anything profound but something that has to be present in any intentional action. So the first of the five aspects of an intentional cognitive state is obviously intention.

Question: Rinpoche, I was not able to distinguish clearly between what you said about mindfulness and alertness; that is very simple. That is just the first part of the question.

Rinpoche: Mindfulness is the faculty of not forgetting what to do and what not to do. That is how it is usually defined. So it means simply recollecting what you are trying to do. If we apply the term to meditation, then it is in general, something like, "I want to bring my mind to rest; I don't want to be distracted." Usually mindfulness entails something you want to do and something you want to avoid, so you are remembering. Literally it's the same word as memory in Tibetan.

Question: It is?

Rinpoche: Yes it is. “I remember I want my mind to rest; I don’t want to be distracted.” In the specific context of insight, it is “I want to recognize, and I don’t want to space out.” Now, in general, this is not a very stable thing. We recollect what we are trying to do one moment, and then the next moment we have flown off somewhere and we have lost it. So the application of mindfulness, the intentional application of it, is attempting to prolong the recollection or memory of what you are doing and what you are trying to do. If you have this faculty, and to the degree to which you have this faculty of mindfulness of recollection, to that degree will you possess the second faculty of alertness, which is the awareness that knows what is occurring.

Alertness recognizes whether, for example, your mind is at rest or not, whether you are recognizing or not. When you are without mindfulness, you will not have any alertness. Normally, when we are not mindful, then thoughts arise and we have no recollection; there is no imposition of an intention of being aware of them, which is the recollection aspect. As a result there is no awareness, which is the alertness aspect.

Question: Can I take it one step further: What is meant by the term “resting in recognition?”

Rinpoche: The object that is recognized when you look at your mind is the insubstantiality of that mind (which is also, of course, what is looking). While it is an utter insubstantiality, an absence of any kind of substantial existence whatsoever; it is not a nothingness. It is an insubstantial, cognitive lucidity. This recognized object can be perceived in different ways. When you recognize the insubstantiality and you experience that insubstantiality, that is called the experience of emptiness; and when you recognize the cognitive lucidity and you experience that cognitive lucidity, that is call the experience of lucidity. But you cannot really have one experience without the other. You might think you could, but in fact your can’t and your aren’t. this is because they are not two separate things. There is only one thing which brings us to the question: What recognizes it? It is your own individual, self-awareness, recognizing itself.

Question: And that is without concept?

Rinpoche: Yes, it is without concept; its is a direct experience, and a conceptual understanding of it really has nothing to do with, and do not particularly help, that experience.

Question: I am going to stop now, but you are talking about memory, without any concept now?

Rinpoche: Yes, I don’t usually say memory, I say mindfulness because in this case, the mindfulness, or recollection, is the faculty of not wavering from the recognition. It is not a concept; it is simply the fact of not wavering.

Question: Rinpoche, when we are in the waking state, we can recall our dreams, but when we are dreaming, we normally cannot recall our waking state, and therefore cannot

practice in a dream. And I was wondering: is there any way of extending the practice of Mahamudra into the dream state, to make use of that opportunity?

Rinpoche: Yes, the dream practice within the six dharmas is exactly that; it is a way of using dream to enhance and apply your Mahamudra practice or experience.

It is a distinct training. The first thing is that there has to be stable lucid dreaming, which means knowing that you are dreaming when you are dreaming. This is called lucid dreaming, and it has to be stabilized. Then, when you can get that stabilized, within lucid dreaming, you have to be able to recognize the emptiness within dreams. Once you are able to do that, you have to be able to rest in that throughout the dream. And it is a little tricky because, as you said yourself, you are pretty much out of it when you are dreaming. You are more out of it when you are dreaming than you are now, and we have enough trouble recognizing when we are awake.

Question: Rinpoche, I would like to just clarify something about the practice you have been talking about the last two days. It seems that in this working with the Mahamudra, initially we work with these questions that you have presented yesterday as a way to clarify or understanding our experience, and then beyond that, we continue to rest in that understanding that we have developed: non-cognitive, non-conceptual understanding. Is that correct?

Rinpoche: Yes. First of all, you have to have a recognition of the nature of your mind, and as you said, the various questions and the various techniques, ways of looking, are designed to give you just that. There is also the tradition of pointing out the nature of mind, in which there is some sort of vigorous manner of causing the students to recognize it on the spot without their going through this kind of gradual investigation. This is very impressive, and often people have an experience of recognition, but soon thereafter it vanishes. The superiority of the gradual approach is that, while less dramatic initially, when you develop on your own a recognition through experience and through hard work, then you don't lose it, you know; it is because you developed it, and you get to work with it. Initially, the recognition starts to occur and is not that stable, then it is stabilized, then you gradually develop confidence in the recognition, and on the basis of confidence, you learn, through practice, through time and effort, how to rest in it. It is a gradual process, as you indicated.

Question: Rinpoche I was not clear if the practice that you mentioned or described today deals with the seventh consciousness or does it stay in the sixth; and then at some point, if this does not go into the seventh, do we actually, in Mahamudra practice, address the seventh consciousness?

Rinpoche: Well, there is a connection between this technique and the seventh and eighth consciousnesses in that the object of investigation, that which is being looked at here, is projections on the part of the eighth and seventh consciousnesses. When you are looking at the relationship between body and mind, the body is projected by the eighth consciousness, and the body and mind are fundamentally fixated on as different or the

same by the seventh consciousness. Nevertheless, as before, it is the sixth consciousness that performs the meditation.

Looking at the Stillness and Movement of Mind

We have gone through four techniques, or ways of looking at the mind. Now we are concerned with the fifth way presented in the text, which is looking to see whether stillness and movement are the same or different, or, as we also say, looking at the difference between stillness and movement.

The first instruction in this technique is to look at the nature of your mind when it is at rest in a state of vivid lucidity and emptiness. The relationship between the mind's lucidity and its emptiness is similar to the relationship between the display of appearances and the emptiness of appearances. As has been said by many teachers with regard to appearances, and the same holds true with regard to the mind, "While something is appearing, at that same time it is empty; and at the same time it is empty, yet it appears." The appearance of that emptiness is so intimate, in fact, that we have to say it is the emptiness itself that is appearing and the appearance itself that is the emptiness. This is called the inseparability of emptiness and appearance.

The situation with your mind is the same, except that it is much easier to see directly, the lucidity of your mind is itself the emptiness of your mind; they cannot be separated. In the fifth technique, the instruction is to simply look at the lucidity-emptiness when the mind is at rest. The first part of this technique is essentially the same as the first technique, looking at the mind within stillness. The way you look at the mind should have two qualities. One is *signyewa*, which means crispness in its clarity, and the other one is *yetewa*, which means a vivid intensity to the clarity. When you look when the mind is at rest, look in those ways.

The second part of the technique is to allow a thought to arise and then look at the nature of the experience of that thought, or, in other words, to look at the mind within movement. This is exactly the same process as the second technique of looking at the mind within movement. The difference is that here we are combining the first two techniques. As we already discussed with regard to the second technique, when a thought arises and the nature of the thought is not recognized, then one thought will lead to another, creating a continuing movement of thoughts. (What we are talking about are fully manifest thoughts, what we are called the coarse thoughts, the thoughts that occupy our mind to the point where you can be aware of them). But when you look directly at the thought and apply the technique, then it is self-liberated; it dissolves.

It makes sense to say that they cannot be the same, because after all, stillness is stillness and movement is movement; they are distinct from one another. So we cannot say they are identical. If we then take them to be different, we have to be very precisely discover, in direct experience, what the difference is between them. When you look at them, look to see; do they have any coarse characteristics that would make them different? For example are they different colour? Is stillness one colour and movement another colour? Is stillness one shape and movement another shape? Or, if you feel that they don't have those kinds of substantial characteristics, are they of different natures? Are the experience

of stillness and the experience of movement, when you look directly at them, truly distinct from one another, are they truly different?

Nine questions

That is the basic technique. There are nine questions you can ask in order to more closely ascertain the identity or difference between them.

The first is: Are they like two threads or cords placed side by side on the surface? In other words, are the mind of stillness and the mind of movement distinct, like a white and black thread?

The second question is: Is the difference between them more like the relationship between the earth and a chariot? Is the mind of stillness like the earth, on which the mind of movement comes and goes like a chariot? Is one the basis for the movement of the other?

The third question is: Or is their difference one of alternation? Are they like a rope that is placed on the ground so that it forms "S"s or snakes? It twists or curves, so that when it is twisting to the right, it cannot be twisting to the left, and when it is twisting to the left, it cannot be twisting to the right; is it like that? Is it the case that, when your mind is at rest, there is no movement, and when there is movement, then there is no stillness? Is that how it is?

The fourth question: It's about looking at how they might be the same, because you may have the experience that they have the same fundamental nature. In that case you have to ask the question, how could they be the same, after all, movement is lots of activity going on in your mind, giving rise to one thought or many thoughts; while stillness is when the mind is at rest, completely settled down. How can you say those two are the same thing? If they are the same thing, then what do you mean by this? Do you mean one turns into the other, like iron being turned into gold? Is their sameness the sameness of transformation, so that one actually becomes the other? The image used here, of iron being turned into gold, refers to the story about Ary Nagarjuna, who had a lot of wealth at his disposal, for building temples and providing the sustenance for large numbers of ordained monks. If you ask where all that wealth came from, it came from his alchemical ability to turn iron into gold. Is that what happens here? Does stillness somehow get transformed or transmuted into movement, or vice versa? Is that what you mean by their sameness?

The fifth question is: Is their sameness the sameness of two different things being mixed together? Is it like mixing milk and water, where they start out different, then you pour one into the other, and they become the same? Are stillness and movement initially different, but then somehow they are mixed together and become identical? These questions are to be applied based on what you experience using the basic technique. If you think that stillness and occurrence are different, then you use the first three questions, and if you think that they are the same then you question with the next three questions.

The sixth question: This question deals with difference: DO you find, when you look at stillness and at movement, that they are like water and waves? Do they have the same nature, but a different, alternating appearance, like a calm body of water and the same body of water with waves? Does it seem to be the same stuff, but in different forms? In that case, when there is stillness, there is no movement, and when there is movement, there is no stillness; and yet they are the same nature; they are both equally lucidity-emptiness: Stillness is the stillness of lucidity-emptiness, and movement is the movement of lucidity-emptiness. Is that how it is?

At this point we have had six questions. The first three were concerned with regarding stillness and movement as fundamentally different. Then we had two questions about experiencing them as the same. Finally, the sixth question was, do you experience them as like water and waves, being the same nature but distinct in mode or appearance? Now we come to the seventh, eighth, and ninth, which so of go together.

If you believe that the relationship between stillness and movement is what is explained in number six, the water and waves analogy, then examine this further. Allow a thought to arise, then get rid of it. Does the thought only become lucidity-emptiness when you get rid of it? That is the seventh question.

The eighth question is: When a thought just vanishes, without your doing anything to it, does it become lucidity-emptiness upon vanishing? In other words, it wasn't lucidity-emptiness before and does it only become lucidity-emptiness when it vanishes?

The ninth and final question: Is the thought actually lucidity-emptiness from the beginning, whether or not it vanishes, whether or not you do something to it; is that just its basic nature? Which of those three you experience, if you say that both stillness and movement are lucidity-emptiness?

If fact, the manner of appearance, the *kundzop* or the relative truth of stillness and movement, are different. Stillness is stillness, and movement is movement. And yet, their nature, what is called in jargon of dharma, the *dondam* or absolute truth, is the same. The nature of both is utterly beyond apprehension, which is to say that, when you look directly at the movement of mind, a thought, you cannot find any substantiality to it anywhere. And when you look directly at the experience of stillness, or the mind at rest, you cannot find something that is resting, or its quality of resting, or what it's resting in. Both movement and stillness are equally beyond apprehension, thus empty. And both are cognitive lucidity. So their true nature is equally the unity of lucidity and emptiness.

How To Practice

There are two ways to use the nine questions. One is to think about them and determine, through reasoning, that this is how things must be; the other way is to use them as technique for gaining actual meditation experience. You must not confuse these two processes. Developing and understanding through thinking about the questions is entirely

different from generating direct experience of what these questions are trying to provoke. It is of no use in generating actual experience, and may in fact prevent it. You must go through the process; whether or not you understand these things intellectually, you must go through the questioning to gain direct experience.

Those are the five ways of looking at your mind that are presented in the text. You can think of them as five ways of looking or five views, since we are using view here to mean looking directly. The key to all of them is to look openly and without preconception, without deciding what you are going to find when you look. This means that you look in the same way as a child walking into a temple. When a very small child walks into a temple, she does not think, “This is good, this is bad; I knew I would find this; I didn’t expect to find that.” Don’t be clever. Don’t try to strategize, by thinking, “Well, I need to see this, so may be I can try to make it happen.” Don’t tilt – this is taking a bit of liberty in translation, but it captures the meaning – as when you play pinball, and you try to cheat by tilting. Don’t tilt. This means don’t think, “I need to see it; I have go to experience emptiness. What I m experiencing is not what I want, so I have to completely open mind about what things mean. You may have an image of emptiness or a conceptual approximation of lucidity, but don’t inflict these idea on your experience.

If you can diligently cultivate these ways of looking directly at mind and look openly at your own experience, you can stick to them without trying to talk yourself into some sort of profound realization and without being attached to your intellectual understanding of the experience, then you will see your mind’s nature.

Questions

Question: Can I also use the techniques during visualizations?

Rinpoche: Yes, you can; you can actually have a good experience of the mind at rest and the mind in movement during visualization. Also you can use the clarity, which is promoted by the visualization, to see the nature of the mind that is generating that clarity. So visualization can be used to enhance this practice. (This is the union of generation stage and completion stage.)

Question: Rinpoche, with respect to the experience of kleshas in meditation, western students are generally given at least three kinds of techniques. One of the labeling technique that goes with Shamatha, one is the taking and sending that comes with tonglen and relative bodhicitta practice, and one is the kind of vipashyana Mahamudra approach. I wonder if Rinpoche would say something about how to coordinate these various approaches to encountering kleshas in one’s meditation, and also one’s post meditation.

Rinpoche: Labeling and tonglen and the Mahamudra approach to recognition of mind’s nature need to be applied not so much depending upon what level you are at, but simply apply what works in a specific situation. To some extent, it depends upon the actual strength or intensity of the kleshas that has risen. You may be able to use Mahamudra approach with a certain level of intensity, but you may be swept away by something that

passes a certain ceiling of intensity. There is a specific technique that is recommended for extremely strong kleshas which is called, literally, distancing. It begins with what would call labeling, which is the recognition of the klesha arising as opposed to the recognition of nature. Then you disown the klesha by reminding yourself of how much trouble it's going to cause you and how you don't want that. The reason this distancing is so important is that a lot of the power of kleshas comes from the fact that they seduce you into thinking that you need them. When anger arises, what maintains the anger is the sense, "I need this anger, this anger is right, it's appropriate, it's necessary." If you can shake off that the belief that the anger is appropriate and necessary, which is distancing, then you are not afflicted by it. It's the same with other kleshas, for example, attachment. When you feel attached to something, a lot of the attachment consists of feeling you should be attached, that you want to be attached. Distancing cuts through that.

However, the basis for any way of relating to the kleshas is some kind of recognition, and ideally, if you can, you will want to use the Mahamudra approach of looking directly at the nature of the klesha, recognizing its nature. If you cannot do that in a specific situation, then you should apply one of the other two approaches, in this case, distancing which is coordinated with labeling. Of course, there is also the approach of taking and sending, or tonglen, which is called transforming the klesha into wishing others well.

Question: Rinpoche, I am trying to establish the importance of view. When we are practicing and using the technique, asking the nine questions that you just talked about, how important is the view in the context of conduct, the context of aspiration and application? Is it essential to cultivate the four immeasurable virtues or the paramitas or other aspects of the bodhisattva way of conduct, before one can actually realize?

Rinpoche: It is not necessarily true that one must cultivate the four immeasurables or practice the six perfections before cultivating the recognition of mind's nature. However, at the same time, we need a pure motivation for any aspect of our practice, and the pure motivation depends upon some degree of cultivation of the four immeasurables. But it's uncertain whether you need to have perfected this before there can be any recognition. It could precede recognition, or they could be cultivated simultaneously. With regard to the six perfections, these are principally the aspect of accumulating merit, and merit is a necessary condition for practice and realization and to enhance your experience in realization. But again, one cannot say with certainty that the practice of these has to precede the generation of the recognition; it has to be part of the process.

Question: Rinpoche, it's difficult not to have thoughts when I am investigating the nature of my mind. They come up so quickly. I have two questions; one is, if a thought arises, how do you get rid of it? And number two is, how do I deal with one particular thought that arises quickly and has to do with the very quick assumption that it's like water and waves. I have years and years of belief in this. It seems hopeless.

Rinpoche: In any case, no matter what the thought is, don't try to get rid of it, just look right into its nature, in other words, look directly at it, at the thought, rather than the

content of the thought. This is the second technique, looking at movement. If you look directly at it, then you will be able, through direct experience, to transcend this concept you have about water and waves, because the analogy is limited, you know. In a sense, thoughts are like waves on the surface of a body of water, but unlike waves, they don't have a substance, they don't have a specific origin or source, and you will see that. You will experience that directly, at which point the thought or concept or belief about them will become irrelevant.

Pointing Out in Insight Meditation

On the basis of the five ways of looking at the mind, various experiences will arise. Specifically, you will have a genuine experience of your mind's nature. It's necessary to resolve the nature of that experience, so that you correctly and fully recognize what you are experiencing. This recognition is called *ngodrup*, which means both pointing out and recognizing. In addition to the five ways of looking at the mind, the text gives a corresponding set of five ways of pointing out the mind's nature. Although the five ways of looking are to some extent quite different from one another as to technique, they all lead you to discover the same nature of mind, the same lucidity-emptiness. The five ways of pointing out the nature of mind, on the other hand, are not as different from one another. Therefore, we will look at only the first way of pointing out, which I am going to present in the hopes that it will help your meditation practice.

When you practice the first of the five ways of looking at the nature of the mind that you are looking at within stillness, you discover that the nature of the mind that you are looking at is not an emptiness that is non-existence; it is not merely empty. At the same time, within that state of stillness, there are no substantial characteristics whatsoever. From one point of view, you cannot say it's merely empty, because there is cognition, but you cannot say there is something there, either, because there are no substantial characteristics – no colour, no shape, in fact nothing to grasp whatsoever. There is nothing you can fixate on, nothing you can label or designate accurately. Because of this, we say the mind is empty. Not only the mind, of course, but all things are empty. The reason we look at the mind is that the mind is obviously empty. Besides, the mind's emptiness can recognize itself. That's why we say it's not merely empty; its emptiness is, at the same time a clear lucidity, a very clean lucidity. The term "lucidity" is sometimes misunderstood. It always has a connotation of light, which is often misunderstood as being a kind of visual experience of physical light. Which it is not. It's simply the cognitive lucidity of your mind.

In addition, this lucid clarity that is empty possesses a quality of being, as I was saying earlier, comfy or snugly, comfortably blissful, pleasant. The term comfortable or comfy does not indicate pleasure in the sense of something you are attached to, or the pleasure of acting out an attachment or passion. It's simply the absence of any kind of discomfort or imperfection in the nature of mind itself. Therefore, the experience of that nature is characterized by comfy blissfulness. This is as close as we can come in words to what you experience when you look at your mind. You could not actually communicate what you experience. It is beyond expression. In fact, the Buddha said that this nature is the *prajnaparamita* that is inexpressible, indescribable, and even inconceivable. If it had substantial characteristics, for example, if it had a colour, at least you could say, its blue or its yellow or its red. And if it either existed or it didn't, then you could say it existed or it doesn't exist. But it's beyond any of that. Therefore, you cannot accurately say anything about it.

When you are questioned about your practice, or when a lama questions a practitioner about the practice, if the student says, what I experience is lucidity-emptiness beyond all apprehension, it means one of two things. One possibility is that the student actually is experiencing this nature. Merely the fact that the student knows the terms does not mean that he or she is experiencing it. It could have arisen from within. The other possibility, however, is that it is merely something that is understood intellectually.

If it is merely an intellectual understanding, then it is not a basis for liberation; it won't lead to direct experience. We cannot say that having an intellectual understanding of such profound teachings is utterly useless. Of course, there is some benefit to it; there is some blessing. But it has no use whatsoever in the immediate future. It is not going to lead to anything right now. The only thing that is going to lead to anything right now is actual experience. Intellectual understanding somehow has to be used to fuel experience. On the other hand, if the student has actually recognized this form within and has actually experienced lucidity-emptiness, then that is the arising of insight within stillness. That is what is called the recognition of simultaneous arising and liberation (and all the other elegant terms that there are in all the commentaries). The student at that point has seen his mind's nature within stillness.

In spite of the fact that the person has a real recognition of the mind's nature, there is still the possibility or probability of fluctuation in experience even after that. There will still be times when you will have what you regard as good experiences and, in contrast, what you regard as bad experiences. When that occurs, just keep on looking. Don't get distracted or sidetracked by the experience, because experiences vanish like mist. Experiences are different from the actual fact of the recognition itself. Because they are ephemeral (fleeting) experiences they are not worth investing in. So don't bother being delighted by or arrogant about good experiences, nor depressed or disappointed by what you regard as bad experiences. They are both going to vanish, so there is no point in involving yourself with them. No matter what experience happens, just continue to look at your mind's nature.

In themselves, experiences are good, because they indicate that there is a process occurring. The problem with experience is that we tend to fixate on it, and fixation on experience is a problem, principally because memory exaggerates. When you recollect an experience, whatever it was, you will tend to embellish it in your memory. This can happen quite quickly. Then, when you next meditate, you will be looking for the recurrence of that same experience. But even if the experience you had were to recur, because you remember it as better than it really was, you have set yourself up for disappointment. Furthermore, the whole process has become goal-oriented; you are directing your practice toward recapturing a specific experience. Obviously, conceptual contrivance has seeped in.

What is recommended is that if you have a good experience, don't get too excited. And if you have a bad experience, don't mistake it for a serious deviation or a sidetrack that you have to find your way back from. If you have a bad experience, just continue practicing as you were. In other words, whatever happens, just keep looking at your mind.

In "The Rain of Wisdom, we find the story of Gampopa's receiving meditation instruction from Milarepa. Milarepa would give Gampopa instruction, he would practice, and then he would return to his teacher and describe his experiences to him. During this process, Gampopa had quite a variety of meditation experiences, including many visions. One time he saw the deity Chakrasamvara, all in red. Each time he went to tell Milarepa, and Milarepa would say, "Well, it's not a problem, and it's not good either. It just really doesn't mean anything. Just go back and practice." Another time, Gampopa had a clear vision of the particular hell realm that is called the Black Line Hell. The entire valley, in which he was practicing, seemed to become completely dark, and he couldn't see much of anything. He

went to Milarepa, and Milarepa just said, “Well, it’s not a problem and it’s not good either, Just keep on practicing.”

In this interchange, Milarepa says that worrying about meditation experiences is like worrying about what you see when you press your eyes and you see double. He says if you press your eyes and you look at the moon, you are likely to see two moons. Now, if someone were particularly naïve, and they pressed their eyes and saw two moons, then they might think, “Ha! I am really something special. Everybody else just sees one moon. I see two.” So, when you have meditation experiences, it’s like seeing two moons when you press your eyes, they are neither good nor bad. They are not problems, and they are not beneficial in themselves. Just continue.

This section in the text continues in much the same vein. What your experience when you recognize the nature of your mind within stillness, is a state of stillness; in other words, the conceptuality or elaboration of thought has been at least temporarily pacified. So it is stillness. But because there is recognition of your mind’s nature, it’s not blank obscurity. There is also present a sort of glaring or vivid, brilliant lucidity. The recognition of the mind within stillness, if it is genuine, includes a one-pointed tranquility or Shamatha, where the mind is one pointedly engaged in the virtue of recognizing its own nature, in that, the mind is at rest comfortably and naturally. Because the recognition is non conceptual, and because the mind is in a state of rest what you experience is inexpressible. It’s beyond any kind of apprehension, because there is no solidity to what you experience. However, you are experiencing. You cannot say you are experiencing that nature, even though it is inexpressible and indescribable. What you experience is a nature that is beyond arising and cessation. Because it has no substance, it has never arisen. It’s empty. But it is also beyond cessation, because it is at the same time a lucidity that is unceasing. The recognition of this nature, if it occurs within stillness, is at the arising of insight or vipashyana in stillness, and is recognizing the result of the first of the five ways of looking.

Some of you may have already recognized this nature, and some of you may have not gained what you consider a decisive recognition. Even if you have not gained a recognition yet, if you keep on practicing, gradually your experience will become clearer and clearer, and the recognition will become decisive. The opportunity is taming your own mind, and the most effective way to do this is through Mahamudra practice.

In general, I’ve talked a lot about the view and meditation, and not very much about conduct. But that doesn’t mean that the implementation of appropriate conduct is unimportant. We need, of course, to practice meditation and cultivate the view, but when we are not actually practicing, we need to pay attention to our mode of conduct because even though we practice meditation, we could still engage in rough modes of conduct, we could still be harbouring malicious intentions. It is necessary, even while you are practicing this type of meditation, to continue to increase your compassion for others; you should engage in whatever methods you can of accumulating merit, such as making offerings and being generous; to increase your confidence in and sacred outlook towards the dharma itself and the instructions you have received; to continue to cultivate the practice of guru yoga and the meditation upon various deities. All of these things have great benefit, and all these things coming together with meditation will make the practice both profound and effective. When you are engaged in your post-meditation activities, whatever they may be, bring to bear as much mindfulness and alertness as you can, and try and bring the wisdom of meditation into them. And as much as

you can, let go of anger and jealousy and arrogance; as much as you can, try to increase your loving kindness and compassion for others, your motivation of bodhicitta. If you do these things, not only will your practice flourish, but you will succeed in your mundane endeavours as well; and in your mundane endeavours, you will never contradict the dharma, you will never be at cross-purpose with your practice or your path. Therefore, in post meditation, try to bring the samadhi, the meditation absorption, of your meditation practice into your activities, and, especially, maintain a good and kind motivation, being careful not to come under the sway of negative or malicious motivation,

You are extremely fortunate to have entered the gate of dharma, and in particular to have the opportunity to perform this practice. If you look back on your life up to now, you may find some episodes in your life that you would rather forget, things you did that you wish you had not done. But you don't need to torment yourself about these bad actions, because, in your present situation, you have the necessary resources to transcend them. Rather than tormenting yourself about what you did in the past, you could rejoice in the opportunity you have now to transcend negative patterns. We are ordinary people, and as ordinary people, it is natural that, from time to time, we look back with feelings of guilt. We are ordinary people, and as ordinary people, it is natural that, from time to time we look back with feelings of guilt. We may fear that we might do these things again. That is all right, but there is a better way to deal with such feelings. If you practice, the power and the momentum of your practice, together with a strong commitment on your part to change, will give you the ability to do so. Whatever you have done that you don't want to do so again, whatever you have said, and whatever you have thought, no matter how negative or miserable you have been in your life, you can transcend it. By practicing and maintaining a firm commitment, you will gradually purify all of these patterns and habits.

From time to time, reading certain books may help, in particular, The Jewel Ornament of Liberation, and especially the chapter in that book on the perfection of wisdom. Gampopa was an extraordinary teacher, the great disciple and lineage holder of Milarepa. He had extraordinary experience and realization of meditation and the teachings, and, in a sense, his whole experience and realization are summed up in The Jewel Ornament. The chapter on the perfection of wisdom is not so much guidance for meditating on the mind's nature, as instruction for understanding and contemplation of emptiness. But it is very effective, very beneficial. If you study that chapter, and even recite the words, that will bring some benefit. I know that all of you have come here at the expense of the various things you would otherwise have been doing. I know that you all have work to do. You all have homes and families and you have to take care of. and you cast all these things aside and came here to this somewhat isolated place to listen to me tell you what I know about these teachings. In doing so, you have given me the opportunity to at least pass on what I have heard from my teachers. This has been delightful for me, and I am confident that it has benefited everyone involved. I would like to thank you for this opportunity.

Based on my experience there is no deception in the actual practice of these instructions. I can speak from experience that these practices are helpful. If I were to say to you, "I am going to protect from the lower realms through the power of my compassion and my miraculous abilities," I would be lying to you. But if, on the other hand, I say to you, "I can guarantee that these practices are genuine, trustworthy and really helpful," that is not a lie. So practice.