





Training of Awareness

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Profile of Venerable Master Jing Lian

Venerable Master Jing Lian with the purest spiritual-cultivation and concrete experiential knowledge, is wholly complete with compassion and wisdom. She has a metrical hymn:

To save and benefit sentient beings, be void
of self first

Observe arising of conditioning cause, work
with circumstances

Self-nature is originally complete and perfect

No need for countless spiritual-cultivation
methods

Master Jing Lian was born in Hualien Dongzhu in 1951. As a child, she was quiet and would often meditate alone in the woods.

When Master Jing Lian was a student at the Taiwan National Academy of Arts, through the recommendation of friends, she attended

classes at ‘Ten Directions Monastery’ which was established by Master Nan Huai-Chin. She attended the classes for five years and recalling the kindness of Master Nan, she vowed to show her gratitude to him by propagating the Buddhist doctrines tirelessly when she has accomplishments in the future.

In 1988, Master Jing Lian participated in a pilgrimage trip to India and Nepal. At the holy place, she decided to renounce and adopt a monastic life. Eventually she was ordained by Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche.

Subsequently, Master Jing Lian learned from more than thirty great accomplished masters. She has profound knowledge of both the exoteric and esoteric teachings. For the purpose of benefiting sentient beings, she has vowed to learn the Tripitaka and the twelve divisions of the Mahayana canon completely.

Upon returning to Taiwan, she went into spir-

itual-cultivation retreats at Hualien Yuli, Lishan, Jilong Qidu, etc.

When Master Jing Lian finished the retreats, she gradually carried out the propagation of Buddhist doctrines to benefit sentient beings. From Taiwan to Singapore, America, Canada, regardless of place and sect, without building Dharma centres, but as long as the conditions are ripe, there will be an extraordinary Dharma talk by her. She teaches unreservedly with clear sequence, delves deeply but presents comprehensibly, enlightening everybody present with the right understanding and right view of the Dharma.



Lesson 1: Discovering Awareness

Today our lesson is on ‘Training Awareness’.

What is awareness?

In our daily life, why do we not get knocked down by the car when crossing the road with a very distracted mind? Or, why do you respond when someone calls out for you while you are asleep at night? This is the effect of awareness. Hence we have to understand that awareness is always present, just that we have never realized it.

Why do we not realize it? It is because our mind is distracted, either thinking about the past or the future. Just like normally when we are walking, we are thinking at the same time; though we will not trip over stones, our awareness is not present. Therefore our practice today is to maintain our awareness and presence and be clear of every thought.

Later, we will do a sitting practice for ten minutes before going out for a walk. Let us

see if you are still able to maintain your awareness throughout the whole process. It does not matter if you are starting your sitting practice with the method of counting your breaths or following your breath, as long as you are able to practice till your sixth consciousness remains in direct perception without discrimination, which means to remain present. After the meditation, when we are out on our walk, let us see if we can still maintain our awareness and presence. To do so, do not allow our sixth consciousness to fall into comparative or illusory perception,ⁱ let it remain in direct perception without discrimination.

Those of us who have read ‘Verses on the Eight Kinds of Cognition’ will understand that the first five consciousnesses through direct perception, perceive the ultimate realityⁱⁱ (the nature of things). Obviously, the problem does not lie with the first five consciousnesses. That is why later when we go outside, you can see as much as possible

with your eyes and listen as much as possible with your ears. Now that the osmanthus flowers are in bloom and so are the fruits and vegetables in the farm; you will be able to see very clearly, smell the osmanthus flowers' fragrance and hear the cries of the insects and birds. However, your sixth consciousness remains in direct perception without discrimination. Go ahead and relax; open up your six sense-organsⁱⁱⁱ to see, hear, smell and feel with your body. Feel the warm, stuffy weather or the breeze, but keep your sixth consciousness in direct perception.

The first five consciousnesses do not cause any problem as through their direct perception, they perceive the ultimate reality. The problem lies with the sixth consciousness. The sixth consciousness is associated with the three types of perception - direct, comparative and illusory, and their respective nature - ultimate reality, dependence on others, and imagination. So as long as we

try not to let our sixth consciousness fall into comparative or illusory perception, by keeping our sixth consciousness in direct perception, the ultimate reality nature will be perceived. We can achieve this by remaining present in every thought and maintaining awareness. Now that we understand the theory, let us put it to practice.

Normally it is very easy to remain in direct perception without discrimination during sitting practice. However, after the practice we tend to be distracted, torpid-minded and restless again. Do you not think about the past and future right away? The past is gone; there is nothing to think about. The future is not here yet, so there is nothing to think about too. In this way, you will be able to remain present in every thought and maintain your awareness.

So let us start practicing now.

(PRACTICE)

We have just finished one round of our

practice. Is it easy to maintain our awareness and presence? It is not so easy, right? That is why we have to practice often. So when we go back, everyone shall find some time to practice every day. Hopefully you can continuously maintain a state of awareness, from the time you wake up in the morning until after you fall asleep at night. Only when you can maintain your awareness regardless of whether you are awake or asleep, will you be able to maintain your awareness at the time of your death. This is called having assurance at the time of death. When you are able to maintain awareness even though you are asleep, you probably will not have any problem with life or death; you can be assured of going to the place of your choice upon death. Although you may want to leave the world with your bodhi-sattva vow, allowing it to lead you to wherever the karma has ripened, training of awareness is still very important. Through the practice of opening your five sense-organs, when you can remain in direct per-

ception without discrimination, you will then be able to remain in the non-dualistic, real nature of the mind.

From the point of view of Mere-consciousness,^{iv} non-duality refers to the absence of the conditioning power and the conditioned. It means that the perceiving division and the perceived division of the consciousness return to the self-witnessing division, which is the substance of consciousness. When this happens, we are not far from our primordial nature. Hence, we are trying to bring out our primordial nature through this practice and gradually deepening our practice at a later stage. Now most importantly, we have to ensure the continuity of our awareness. Once we realize that we have strayed into comparative or illusory perception, we must bring our awareness back.

It is very normal for us not to be able to remain in our presence and direct perception without discrimination. As we are dis-

tracted, torpid minded and restless, we are unable to feel the presence of awareness. However, awareness has always existed; we have just said that it has never disappeared. The purpose of our practice is to ensure the continuity of our awareness. When you are able to maintain awareness in every thought, you can be considered to 'have trust in wisdom of the truth and not in illusory knowledge'. All the eight consciousnesses have been transformed into five categories of wisdom. (They are the Perfecting Wisdom, the Profound Observing Wisdom, the Universal Wisdom, the Great Perfect Mirror Wisdom, and the Wisdom of the Nature of Things. The last wisdom indicates that the nature of the first four wisdoms is one and the same.) Then you will be Buddha, an enlightened being, living with your wisdom instead of the eight consciousnesses. We are working towards this goal.

Lesson 2: Strengthening Awareness

The emphasis of our lesson today is on strengthening our awareness to enable us to feel its presence more intensely.

Later when we go out for a walk, open up your eyes, ears, nose, tongue and body like we did before. Try as much as possible to see, listen, smell all kinds of scents, experience all kinds of feelings in your body and make observations. For instance, the moment when your eyes see various material forms, observe your perceiving function but not the things that you see. Your perceiving function is not with the external manifestations; otherwise your awareness will disappear with the things when you stop seeing. Later when you hear different sounds, instantaneously have the awareness that the perceiving function is not with the sound. Regardless of what you hear - the sound of traffic, the honking of car horns, or noise from construction; the awareness will return after you finish hearing. Because you know

that your awareness of the sound does not come from the sound. Sound is transient, as it will fade away after you hear it; but your awareness is always present with you.

What is the advantage of doing this? It is to allow your awareness to return immediately. Otherwise, normally you will have endless thoughts after you see something. Or when you smell some freshly baked bread, you will think of the kind of bread you want to buy, right? That is because you do not maintain your awareness and presence, so your mind will follow any stimulus that arises.

However, when you realize that the perceiving function is not with sight, sound, smell, taste, touch and thought, your awareness will return very quickly. This is how we hold our awareness in the present. If you are unable to do so, your awareness will follow the stimulus. On the contrary, if your awareness is strong, it will return after you have finished seeing and hearing because

you know the perceiving function is not with the stimulus. Awareness has always been present.

The external objects of the six internal senses (sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, etc.) are transient, but our ability to see, hear, smell and feel is permanent. That is why we say that actually awareness has always been present. It is just that we follow the stimulus when it arises so it seems like awareness has disappeared. Hence the advantage of this practice is to help us to hold our every thought in the present, not allowing it to stray when a new stimulus arises. This is the main topic of our training today.

Later during our sitting practice, let us deepen this concept first. Do not hesitate to listen to the transient sounds outside but tell yourself that your awareness does not lie with the sounds. So when the sounds disappear, your awareness does not disappear, then you can still remain in your presence.

We will now practice for ten minutes here.

(PRACTICE)

After going through the practice today, we can clearly understand that despite the transient nature of external stimuli, our mind which has awareness of such stimuli is permanent. The permanent aspect of our mind is our primordial nature. It sounds very remote when we mention that we have to lead our lives with our primordial nature. However through our practice today, we realize that it is possible to achieve this goal. When we are able to have every thought in the present and maintaining our awareness, we are allowing our primordial nature to emerge with every thought. Then I believe we are not far from enlightenment.

Lesson3: Integrating Feelings and Emotions

In the earlier lessons, we have dealt with the problems of external stimuli. As our awareness becomes stronger, we will have the ability to handle our internal emotions, feelings and misleading thoughts. We can direct our practice in this area.

It does not mean that our emotions, feelings and misleading thoughts can only be handled in our sitting practice or when we are in meditative concentration. The purpose of sitting practice is to cultivate our capability, but most important is our ability to apply this in our busy life. If we lose all our skills in handling them after our sitting meditation, it means that we are not skilful enough.

It has been a few years since we started explaining ‘Tiantai Calm Abiding and Insight Meditation’. As such, we have spent a long time on sitting practices, so now we will focus more on moving practices. In our ex-

planation of calm abiding and insight meditation, we learned to cultivate our practice under different stimuli. This is in the hope that it can help us in developing our skills and abilities in awareness when we are cultivating in movement. In this way, when we encounter different stimuli or develop any emotions or feelings internally in our daily lives, we will be able to return to our non-dualistic primordial nature quickly and maintain our awareness.

With the same reasoning, as long as we are able to maintain our awareness, we will immediately perceive any emotions or feelings that arise and then dissipate it with our awareness. Our lesson today is on 'Integration', which is learning how to let your emotions, feelings and misleading thoughts dissipate slowly with your awareness. This would mean integrating your emotions and feelings with your awareness.

So later when we go out for a walk, we will practice this - when any emotions or feel-

ings arise, as long as you maintain your awareness, remaining in your non-dualistic primordial nature; you will realize that these emotions and feelings will integrate with your awareness and disappear. For instance, as the weather today is a little warm, later you may feel warm during the walk. That is a type of feeling - 'I feel warm'. At that moment, if you have been maintaining your awareness, you will notice the warm feeling integrating with your awareness and then the warm or uneasy feeling will disappear. Hence, all emotions and feelings can be integrated into our awareness and will dissipate slowly. Later we will practice in this way.

(PRACTICE)

Actually this practice is not so difficult as long as we maintain continuity of our awareness. Normally, when we are happy, we are so immersed in it that it binds and constrains us. This is because we have duality - 'self' versus happiness, there is subject

and object. The feeling of happiness will be perfumed into our eighth consciousness^v and will become the seed of greed. Then we will indulge in the feeling of happiness, evoking our wish for the happiness to continue. As such, it will cause our affliction of greed. This is the result of not having awareness when you are happy. The feeling of happiness will dissipate when your awareness arises and you remain in your non-dualistic primordial nature. In the presence of awareness, there is no happy 'self' (subject) and no happy object. There is no such thing as happiness. All feelings and emotions are dissipated in this void. This is the focus of our practice.

The same applies to suffering. When suffering arises, as long as you are able to maintain awareness, remaining in your non-dualistic primordial nature, you will experience the non-existence of a suffering 'self' (subject), a suffering object and such a matter as suffering. All will be dissipated in

your primordial nature.

With the same reasoning, you can manage whatever emotions and feelings you have in the same way. As long as you are able to maintain your awareness and presence, all problems can be resolved. All afflictions, karmic and transmigratory seeds will not be perfumed into your eighth consciousness again. Moreover, you will experience internal joy and peace which is beyond words. This is because you are no longer affected by external secondary causes, be it emotions, feelings or misleading thoughts. Hence your mind is usually very peaceful and arising from this peaceful state is joy and immeasurable tranquillity and composure. You are able to have such a state of mind every day because of your achievement. How is this achieved? It is achieved by maintaining awareness and presence.

Lesson 4: Awareness of Afflictions

In the previous lessons, we started our practice with external stimuli and then we moved on to our internal feelings and emotions. Moving on to a finer aspect is our thoughts. Unless we are very skilful, it is more suitable to do a sitting practice as the observation of thoughts is more subtle. So today we will do a sitting practice to make observations of our afflictions.

The most fundamental afflictions are greed, anger and ignorance. The source of afflictions is our ego, adherence to the concept of 'self'. Why is there adherence to 'self'? It is due to ignorance, not understanding the principle of no-self, thus believing in the real existence of 'self'. With this belief, afflictions like greed, anger, ignorance, etc will arise; karma will be created through afflictions which in turn will result in transmigration and endless retribution. Actually whatever retribution is the result of our own creation. Since afflictions will definitely

cause retribution, we have to find a complete solution to this problem. The answer to this is to eradicate ignorance. Due to ignorance, we believe that there is 'self' and this gives rise to greed and the inability to satisfy greed will give rise to anger So if ignorance is not eradicated, ultimately we are not solving the problem. We hope to solve the problem at the root.

However, out of the three fundamental afflictions, it is most difficult to overcome ignorance. We can overcome greed and anger with the awareness practice, allowing them to return to our primordial nature, but it is not so easy to do so with ignorance. Thus we will explain this only at a later stage. As we know, bodhisattvas^{vi} who are scaling the levels of realization have not even eradicated ignorance completely. There are forty-one grades of ignorance, meaning there are different levels of ignorance. So we will eradicate ignorance slowly by steps and in stages. There is day self-cultivation and

night self-cultivation in our sleep. We hope to keep increasing our awareness throughout the day and night, twenty-four hours a day, till we reach our goal of eradicating ignorance.

Since we are unable to perceive ignorance, we will first counter those fundamental afflictions which are easily discernible. We are leading our lives with ignorance every day without realizing it because it is more difficult to detect ignorance. Hence we can only start with greed and anger. Our practice today is to overcome greed with our awareness.

Greed will arise once we leave our primordial nature. We fall into duality of the conditioning 'self' with greed and the conditioned phenomenon of greed. How does this duality come about? It is the result of leaving our primordial nature which immediately gives rise to duality. As we have not maintained continuity of non-dualistic direct perception, we drift into comparative

perception. There is now the conditioning and the conditioned.

Normally when greed arises, we will want to indulge and find means of satisfying it. As such we create immeasurable bad karma, resulting in retribution and continuous transmigration into any of the six realms. The root of this is just one thought of greed.

As practitioners, we definitely do not want to continue with transmigration. We can terminate it with the power of awareness. When you maintain continuous awareness, you will notice immediately when greed is evoked and then allow it to dissipate in your non-dualistic primordial nature. We have been mentioning earlier about training our awareness, so this is how to do it.

The method is very simple - do not revisit the stimuli that trigger your greed. We have mentioned that there is subject of greed (self) and object of greed (people, things). Normally when the object triggers your

greed, you will start to think of ways to satisfy it. So now we absolutely will not allow ourselves to delve into the content of our thoughts of greed because once you start doing so, you will continue to think of ways to achieve your goal of satisfying your greed. Therefore, we simply look at the greed itself. You will discover that it will dissipate into your non-dualistic primordial nature together with your awareness. You may not have realized that practically every thought that we produce is a thought of greed. At times, even if our greed is not very intense, there is still a very fine streak of it. For instance, when you are thinking of what to do later, what you would like to have for lunch, where to go in the afternoon These are thoughts of greed. So later when you are in your sitting practice, observe your thoughts. When a thought of greed arises, just look at it while maintaining your awareness. The thought will dissipate into your awareness. It is not difficult so let us

give it a try. We shall begin our practice now.

(PRACTICE)

If we were to analyze further, what causes greed? It originates from a form of psychological deficiency, i.e. a state of mental feeling that you are lacking in a certain thing. As a result, a desire for that thing arises (greed). What causes psychological deficiency? It is caused by the suppression of greed. When greed is suppressed, you will feel psychologically deficient. This gives rise to greed.

So suppression of greed not only cannot solve our problem of greed, it will only make us more psychologically deficient. Regardless of whether we suppress our greed because of our inability to satisfy or having a sense of guilt to satisfy it, psychological deficiency will result. As long as the psychological deficiency continues to exist, your greed can never be eradicated. Therefore,

suppression of greed is not a method.

If you do not take heed of greed when it arises, it will still exist. Or if you satisfy your greed, you are creating karma and perfuming the greed back into your eighth consciousness, and this becomes a seed of habit. Your greed will only become stronger and you will have retribution for creating the bad karma. If we use the method of awareness, you just let your greed return to your primordial nature when it arises. As such, you do not perfume it back to the eighth consciousness, causing it to become a seed of habit and you are not creating bad karma and resulting in retribution. This is a better method for overcoming your greed.

The purest desire is the hope of attaining complete enlightenment. This is the goal of everyone because only then you can be in continuous awareness and remain in your non-dualistic primordial nature. When that happens, you will be living with your primordial nature, passing your days according

to circumstances but not falling into duality. As you are in a state of continuous non-dualistic direct perception, even if duality does rise, it is dissipated very quickly.

However before we are completely enlightened, it is impossible for us to maintain our awareness and remain in our primordial nature at all times. As such, we will definitely fall into duality and greed will rise. Moreover, we keep changing our object of greed. An ordinary person in his entire life would avidly seek worldly fame, monetary gains, etc. Once he starts practicing Buddhism, he feels that he is already able to leave the secular world or not be bound by worldly desires. However, he is not aware that he has actually transferred his worldly greed to that of the Buddhist doctrine. He has only changed his object of greed but the essence of greed remains unchanged.

Hence though he practices Buddhism, he still has a lot of afflictions. Why is it so? This is because he has never been able to

satisfy his greed. He has a desire for meditative concentration, a desire for enlightenment So before we attain complete enlightenment, actually our greed still exists. It is just that we keep changing our object of greed. As long as we are not fully enlightened, it is impossible for greed to disappear and for us not to have duality.

Therefore the best way to handle our greed when it arises, is to let our greed return to our primordial nature quickly. At that moment, there is no 'self' of greed, no object of greed and no such matter as greed; all these three are dissipated in our primordial nature. If we practice often in this way, we will realize that it can resolve our afflictions rapidly without any shortcoming of perfuming it back. Thus the habit of greed will become lighter, so we are nearer to enlightenment and we will not create all kinds of bad karma. Therefore, this is an extremely important method. Moreover we are getting at the root of the problem.

The same principle applies to anger. When we are aware of anger arising, use the same method of allowing it return to our non-dualistic primordial nature. At that moment, there is no 'self' of anger, no object of anger and no such matter as anger. Let all these dissipate completely in our primordial nature.

Whenever we detect a little feeling of dissatisfaction (anger, resentment and vexation are relatively lighter form of anger) arising, we have to observe it with our awareness and let it dissipate immediately. Then it will not deteriorate into intense anger and even into all kinds of irresolvable issues that weigh heavily on our mind. If we let these issues continue, they will be brought over to our next life. Why is there no end to all kinds of passion? This is because we allow them to go round in cycles; whatever that cannot be resolved in this life is brought to the next life. Whatever that cannot be resolved at any moment will weigh heavily on

your mind and this will affect you for many lives. The method of awareness that we are using is the most thorough as it gets to the bottom of the problem by eradicating the seeds of habitual anger slowly. Only then can we truly resolve the problem of afflictions.

Therefore, whether it is greed or anger, we can use this method to dissipate it quickly. We can also apply the same method to other relatively lighter afflictions. As for ignorance, we will present it slowly at a later stage.

Lesson 5: Comprehensive Practice

In our earlier lessons, we have practiced maintaining awareness when we are confronted with external stimuli. We have also practiced dissipating our feelings, emotions or any afflictions into our non-dualistic primordial nature. These were practiced separately in the earlier lessons. Today we will integrate these practices and see if we are able to handle them in a single sitting practice.

So later when you are doing your sitting practice, regardless of the sounds that you hear, the scents that you smell, the feelings in your body, the perception of your mind, your emotions and afflictions; let us see if you can maintain your awareness when any one of these arises. It would mean to reflect with your awareness and let them return to your non-dualistic primordial nature. When none of them arises, just remain in your presence. Let us start our practice now.

(PRACTICE)

In our earlier course on ‘Sixteen Special Ascendant Practices’, we stopped our lesson when we were explaining the first dhyana, and then proceeded to the training of awareness. This is because it is very difficult to attain first dhyana and it is even more difficult for the joy of first dhyana to arise. What is the cause of the problem? When any stimulus arises, we are affected by it and that leads to afflictions; we become disgruntled or start to discriminate and attach to the stimulus. Also, the sensation of our body and the perception of our mind, including misleading thoughts, emotions and afflictions; they all affect our ability to attain joy. That is why we have included training of awareness, hoping that we can remain in our non-dualistic primordial nature.

We must have experienced great difficulties in trying to remain in non-duality. Why? This is because we treat all external stimuli

as real. When we are not happy, disgruntled or are having afflictions, we have also lost our awareness at that moment. Am I right? If we are able to realize it immediately and maintain our awareness, you will not have afflictions and discrimination and attachment.

We are originally enlightened and all sentient beings are originally Buddha. Then why has Buddha become sentient beings? Once we leave our primordial nature, duality will come about. So as long as you are able to remain continuously in your primordial nature, you are Buddha. Once you are confused and fall into duality, you become a sentient being. Since you are originally Buddha, as long as you return to your primordial nature, you are one. All sentient beings are originally enlightened but with just a discriminating thought and attachment, duality arises and immediately they are confused and become sentient beings.

That is why at this time, we have also in-

cluded a course on 'Verses on the Eight Kinds of Cognition'. Through this course, we understand that the external world of 'self' and things are the manifestation of one's own consciousness. It is just like in a dream where there are mountains, rivers and the earth, all kinds of people, and all kinds of happenings. How do the phenomena in the dream come about? They are the manifestations of our consciousness, they do not exist externally. The phenomena in our dreams (people, things and happenings) do not exist externally. Likewise, we are also in a dream now. Before attaining enlightenment, we are in a dream of transmigration, dream of the ten dharma-realms.

Due to ignorance, when we give rise to a misleading thought, the eight consciousnesses will come into existence and manifest into the phenomenal world. They are just manifestations of our consciousness. Why is it so difficult for us not to fall into duality? It is because we are living in a rela-

tive world - teachers versus students, parents versus children, bosses versus workers. Even when you are in a business negotiation, everyone has his personal interest as a standpoint. It is so difficult for you to be non-dualistic. For instance, I want to renovate my house now so I have to negotiate and haggle on the cost with the renovation contractor. I am in duality with the contractor!

If you can really apprehend clearly that all phenomena are relative and are just the manifestations of your own eight consciousnesses, then you are able to be non-dualistic. This is so called the 'all dharma-realms as having the same nature'. Only then can you view it as having the same nature and you will understand that it is a dream, non-existent. Then you are able to really grasp that it is illusory otherwise they are so real in existence. So we have to do a proper and thorough study of 'Verses on the Eight Kinds of Cognition' and then to

prove through experience, ponder and realize. It is not just theory; if you are able to really attain concrete experiential experience, it will be extremely easy to remain in non-duality. You will then understand that everything that is relative is merely the manifestations of your consciousness. At that point in time, you will be able to view 'all dharma-realms as having the same nature'.

Let us look back and wonder why we have to add in courses on awareness training, 'Verses on the Eight Kinds of Cognition', etc. In fact, they are meant for helping us improve our skills more rapidly. With such a foundation in theory and the skills acquired in awareness training, we will then be able to handle all kinds of stimuli internally and externally. It will be more possible to remain in non-duality. If you are able to do it well, true joy will then arise. At that time, it will be very easy to attain first dhyana, and even second dhyana is not a problem

The joy experienced in first dhyana comes from sensation which in turn comes from the senses of the body so it is related to the body consciousness. The eye, ear and body consciousness will cease to exist when you enter second dhyana. The nose and tongue consciousness have already stopped existing when you enter first dhyana. So we know that the first five consciousnesses of eye, ear, nose, tongue and body do not exist in second dhyana. Then where does the joy in second dhyana come from? It is not from the body consciousness; it arises from internal pureness. That is the difference between the joy in first and second dhyana. One corresponds to the body consciousness while the other corresponds to the mind consciousness.

For ordinary people or non-Buddhists who practice meditation, they are easily attached to the phenomena that arise in second dhyana. However for practitioners of the 'Sixteen Special Ascendant Practices', there

is no such shortcoming. Especially for us who have been trained in awareness, whatever joy will be dissipated in our awareness. So naturally you will not have attachment to such joy.

With this theoretical foundation and the skills for concrete experiential knowledge, I believe we will not have any problem when we encounter all kinds of stimuli in our lives. If there is any problem, it is due to the fact that we are not skilful enough. So we have to keep practicing. As we are still living in this secular world and have to face all kinds of trivial matters in life, we are often torn between relative and absolute, theory and reality. That is because we are not skilful enough, resulting in some dilemma and conflict. For instance, we have attachment but we also know that we should not be attaching ourselves. So we have to keep strengthening our practice.

With the training of awareness together with a clear understanding of the teachings,

when we are faced with our karmic debts, we will be more willing to repay them. We will also settle heartily whatever matter that needs to be resolved, rather than trying to escape from it or be in emotional turmoil for fear of creating bad karma. If you are still having afflictions, it shows that you do not have a comprehensive understanding of the teachings and have not mastered the skills for concrete experiential knowledge. As long as you continue to strengthen these two areas, you can resolve any problem easily in the secular world that we live in. We have to resolve our own problems first before we are able to care for sentient beings. When we are trapped in our own problems every day, it is very difficult to make vows to benefit sentient beings. Hence we have to settle our own problems first before bodhichitta^{vii} can be developed.

Actually the root of all problems is the 'self'. From the study of 'Verses on the Eight Kinds of Cognition', we know that it is

simply the attachment of the perceiving division of seventh consciousness. In reality, there is no true 'self'. All phenomena (dharma) are void of 'self'. We just need to deepen our thought on this and strengthen our skills and all problems will be easier to resolve. The relative aspect comes from 'self' so we have to understand that the 'self' is not real; it is just the effect of the seventh consciousness. Deepen this concept and your skills and there should not be any problems that cannot be resolved.

Lesson 6: Observe the Empty Space in Between Two Walls

We have mentioned that our aim is to attain ‘the universe as one mind’ through our self-cultivation with whatever Buddhist practices. So what is the state of ‘the universe as one mind’? We roughly describe it as integration of oneself with the emptiness of space. It is because at this time your body and mind are empty, internally and externally unified together and then integrated with the empty space.

If you are unable to experience this state, you can practice with a convenient method – fix your mind at the empty space between you and the wall in front. From where you are seated, look at the wall in front of you; the space in between is the ‘emptiness of space’. Then you let go of your body - empty your body; let go of your mind - empty your mind of all thoughts; and then empty the thought of your above intention.

As long as you are able to empty your body and mind, you will slowly have the feeling of integrating with the emptiness of space. We can use this to roughly describe 'the universe as one mind', which is the state of integration with the emptiness of space.

Lesson 7: Observing Clear Cloudless Sky

In the previous lesson, our training on observing the emptiness of space was conducted indoor. We were having awareness of the empty space between the place where you were seated and the wall. Today we shall move our practice outdoor and expand the emptiness of space. We will apply the same method of maintaining our awareness and presence and not falling into duality. We just focus on the empty space. So later we will practice with the empty space in front.

When you go back, you can look for a more spacious and empty place and practice by yourself. Practice timing is around ten o'clock in the morning or four o'clock in the afternoon. The timing is flexible because daytime is shorter in winter and longer in summer. As daytime is shorter in winter, sometimes the sky will turn dark at about five o'clock, so maybe we can bring it forward a little to between three to five o'clock. In the morning, you can practice at

nine or ten o'clock; eleven o'clock will be too bright.

Pay particular attention to the direction of viewing. Now the sun is behind us otherwise you will feel glaring, right? So we will look at the sky with our back to the sun. It is best to choose a clear, cloudless and boundless sky and preferably a very open space in front that is without any scenery.

Our mnemonic for awareness training is 'maintaining our awareness and presence'. It means not falling into duality. Regardless of your object of awareness training, these are your principles. To 'remain in non-dualistic direct perception' would mean for instance, when you are looking at the clear sky, no matter what you see, just ignore everything. When you ignore everything regardless of the changes in colours, rays and shapes, you are in your presence and you are not falling into duality.

Duality is precisely when you start discrim-

inating. You will notice that it keeps changing from big to small, bright to dull, red to white. These are comparative perception. Hence it is very important to remain present which is to remain in non-dualistic direct perception. If you practice in this way, you will be aware of the empty space integrating slowly with you - you are the empty space and the empty space is you. This is how you will eventually feel. At this point of time, like what we have done earlier, ignore any feelings that arise.

Lesson 8: Observe White Colour Bright Spot

Earlier on we mentioned about maintaining our presence and awareness. The aim is to let our primordial nature emerge. However after practicing for a period of time, everyone said that it is difficult to do so because our awareness and presence will slip away after a while. It does not matter as we still have a convenient method which can help us to connect with our primordial nature continuously. With regular practice, it is easier for our primordial nature to emerge.

The method is – visualize a white colour bright spot at our chest. The bright spot is an extremely bright light spot that is white in colour at our heart chakra. Supposing there is a channel in the centre of our body, which is the central channel of our body, the bright white spot is in the channel at the heart chakra position. Whenever we are free, though not necessary while you are in your sitting meditation posture, but as long as we wish to maintain our awareness and

presence, just visualize that white colour bright spot at our chest. This is a way to connect with our primordial nature.

If our mind always slips away, always grasping external phenomena, then regardless of the duration of your cultivation, your primordial nature can never emerge. So we have to think of a way to make connection with our primordial nature and that is to visualize the white colour bright spot which represents our primordial nature. Otherwise we are always unable to maintain our awareness and presence and are always in duality. When will our primordial nature surface? It seems rather impossible for this to happen.

So normally if we wish to maintain our awareness and presence, visualize a white colour bright spot at our chest. You can practice this anytime, like just now when you were on your way here for the class, while waiting for the car, while travelling in the car or even normally when you are tak-

ing a five minute break from work. Or if you are feeling moody now, you can practice for a while. Hence it is extremely convenient to practice. As long as you wish to maintain your awareness and presence, just visualize a white colour bright spot at your chest. Moreover, you do not need too much time for this practice. We can practice in this way anytime in our daily lives for a deeper connection with our primordial nature.

Now we will practice with this method. The practice will be short as it is primarily for us to know the way to do it. Let us start our practice.

(PRACTICE)

Perhaps someone may ask “What is the size of the bright spot?” The size is not important as it only serves as a reminder. Or someone may wonder why he has to visualize it as white and not red, yellow, blue or green. Different colours represent different

energies. Here, the white colour represents our pure primordial nature so that is why we choose a white colour bright spot as our target of visualization.

We have to take note that we should never hold on too tightly to our visualization. It is not appropriate for you to keep holding tightly to your thought at your chest over a long period of time. So relax and just treat it as a reminder. Visualize it only if you are thinking of making a connection with your primordial nature and relax after that. You can visualize for a while when you are drinking coffee, drinking tea or having your meal. Do not hold it tightly but do so in a natural, very relaxed way.

It is because this is not a practice of one-pointedness of mind. In the practice of one-pointedness of mind, we learn to concentrate and cultivate by focusing continuously on the conditioned phenomena. But this method is different as it is just a kind of reminder. So as long as we wish to maintain

our awareness and present moment, just make a connection with our primordial nature. The more you practice in this way, the faster your primordial nature will emerge. So you can practice more often. You can also visualize the white colour bright spot at your chest while you are lying on the bed before falling asleep. You can visualize in this way at any time and place.

Lesson 9: The Mind is the White Colour White Spot

In our previous practice, we visualized a white colour bright spot at our chest. When we do so, it is equivalent to allowing our primordial nature to emerge. This is because the bright spot represents our pure self-nature which is our primordial nature. So the bright spot is our primordial nature and our primordial nature is equivalent to the bright spot.

Today we are going to practice the integration of our mind and the bright spot. The mind is the bright spot, the bright spot is the mind, the bright spot is the primordial nature and the primordial nature is the mind. So when the bright spot appears in your visualization, it represents the appearance of your primordial nature. At that moment, your mind is your primordial nature and your primordial nature is the bright spot. Let us practice now and integrate into the bright spot and then let the

bright spot integrate into us and unify as one. Let us start now.

(PRACTICE)

Why do we visualize a bright spot instead of a Buddha image? Can I not visualize Buddha Amitabha? Or in Tantric Buddhism, each tantric deity has its corresponding seed syllable so can I visualize the seed syllables instead? Why must it be a bright spot? You must visualize a bright spot because you will tend to fall into duality if there is still a shape or seed syllable in your visualization.

This is because there is the perceiving mind and the perceived phenomena, so this is duality. I have a mind that can perceive Buddha image and the perceived image of Buddha, which is duality. Thus your perceiving mind gives rise to the perceived phenomena and you will forever be in duality. We want to maintain our awareness and presence, and not falling into duality, but if you use the duality method of perceiver and

the perceived, you can never overcome duality.

That is why we need the practice that we have just done. What do we perceive with our perceiving mind? It is to perceive the bright spot and integrating the perceiving mind into the bright spot. Then there is no duality. This method is to transcend duality, enabling our primordial nature to emerge. As long as your mind is unified with the bright spot as one, at that moment, you are maintaining your awareness and presence, and you are not in duality. You have achieved all. When your primordial nature appears in every thought, you are Buddha because Buddha is enlightened in every thought. So if you are skilful enough to remain in your primordial nature in every thought, you are enlightened.

However, if you lose your primordial nature and fall into duality, confusion will start and that is also the start of all your sufferings, followed by afflictions and then

transmigration.

So the difference is - with an enlightened thought, you are Buddha but with a deluded thought, you are a sentient being. So with this practice, we hope to be unified with our primordial nature and to enable our primordial nature to emerge with every thought, thus not falling into duality. Thereafter we hope to continue and maintain this skill at all times.

Ignorance will be eradicated with an enlightened thought, so this is the fastest way to overcome ignorance. If every thought is an enlightened one, it means every thought will be without ignorance. This is how ignorance is eradicated and with this method we can attain enlightenment rapidly. Moreover, it is very convenient to practice. We can practice and visualize anytime – while walking, sitting, idling, eating or sleeping.

QUESTIONS
AND
ANSWERS

Awareness and Ultimate Reality

Student : Is awareness the same as the ultimate reality nature?

Master : No, not the same. Awareness is not equivalent to the ultimate reality nature. We can only say that awareness is the effect and function of the ultimate reality nature.

Student : So when can they be equivalent?

Master : They will be equivalent when the primordial nature emerges.

Student : When we see our primordial nature, we will not return?

Master : Yes. At that time, awareness is equivalent to enlightenment. We are originally enlightened. Only then can they be equivalent.

Student : When we see our Buddha nature, awareness is equivalent to our primordial nature?

Master : Yes. This is precisely complete enlightenment, complete realization. So

awareness is equivalent to your self-nature at that time. Ordinary people have awareness too but they are unable to maintain it. This is because they have not seen their Buddha nature, their primordial nature has not emerged. So that is not their Ultimate Reality nature. The purpose of our awareness practice is to allow our primordial nature to emerge.

Direct Perception Under All Circumstances

Student : Master mentioned that maintaining our awareness is direct perception, not comparative perception. However when I am talking to someone, I need to be in comparative perception, otherwise how can I talk?

Master : Not true. I have been in direct perception from the moment I started talking to you all.

Student : How to talk in direct perception?

Master : It is possible. The eight consciousnesses have been transformed into the four wisdoms so what is said is through the wisdom of knowing all things in their reality. This is 'good' discrimination. Comparative perception is simply discrimination, without the 'good'. 'Good' means direct perception.

Student : What should someone who is not accomplished do?

Master : Need practice.

Student : By perfuming?

Master : Yes, you try to prolong the time of perfuming. When we cultivate one-pointedness of the mind, we try to prolong the time also because when we no longer keep having fabricated, misleading and dualistic thoughts, it is easier to transform consciousness into wisdom.

When we try to maintain non-dualistic direct perception, we are in fact training our awareness, which is the key point. The final result of maintaining continuous awareness

is the emergence of the primordial nature. So would you not know or are not clear when your primordial nature emerges? Definitely clear because when this happens, there is no comparative perception from the sixth consciousness. Your awareness has been transformed into the wisdom of knowing all things in their reality. It does not mean that you need to discriminate in order to see clearly. As long as you have the wisdom of the truth, you will be very clear and not fall into comparative perception.

When you maintain awareness in every thought, you will naturally respond with direct perception when any phenomena arise. Moreover, your response will be absolutely correct. Ordinary or unenlightened beings will tend to use comparative perception and even after much comparative perception, the response is still incorrect.

Student : And also feeling troubled and then the imagination runs wild.

Master : The mind is unable to be pure and judgement is wrong.

Student : Wrong view and wrong action. It is suffering.

Effortless Awareness

Student : When I try to maintain awareness, in the process sometimes I feel like

Master : Having to exert yourself?

Student : Yes.

Master : This is incorrect, there is no need to exert yourself.

Student : But when I am very relaxed, I don't seem to grasp it.

Master : No need to grasp because it has always been there. It is there when you are paying attention, you don't have to specifically grasp it. Maintaining awareness is like having a reminder, otherwise your mind will be busy with other things. When your

mind is back, your awareness is there.

Hence it has always been there. It is just that you have neglected it. All you have to do now is to know that it is present now. That is all you need. It has always been there.

Student : But it is only for a very short time.

Master : Because your mind is busy with other things again.

Student : It slips away after the reminder because I am not able to be in continuous presence?

Master : Yes. It is there when you pay attention because it has never slipped away. It is your mind that has slipped away, awareness is still there. We mentioned in our lesson that awareness has always been there but when we are distracted, torpid-minded or restless, we are unable to feel its existence. Now what we are trying to say is - you have to be aware of its existence.

Actually it is not so difficult. When you are walking, you do not fall down or trip. It shows that your alertness has always been there; it is just more or less of it. Most of the time we only have a little awareness, we are unable to be completely aware. Then why is most of the awareness missing? It is because of torpid-mindedness, distraction and restlessness, so there is only a little awareness left.

In fact, awareness has always existed. Even when someone calls out for you when you are asleep, you will still respond. It shows that awareness is not asleep. Your physical body is asleep but not your awareness.

Student : So ordinary people will only have a little awareness power?

Master : Yes. Because of the inability to have complete awareness, afflictions will come in. When you are completely aware, afflictions will not be able to come in, right? Even if it does, it will disappear if you have

awareness. That is why we have said it will dissipate in your awareness. When the proportion of awareness is higher, the proportion of affliction will be smaller. If we have a hundred points, in the beginning there may be just five points of awareness and ninety-five points of afflictions. If awareness power is strengthened a little, afflictions will become less and slowly we will have fifty points, sixty points, seventy points, eighty points, ninety points of awareness till afflictions is all gone. This is the situation so there is nothing particular that you need to do.

Student : So non-duality will automatically come about?

Master : Yes. There is no duality in direct perception. When there is presence, there is no duality and you have complete apprehension and awareness. Regardless of the terminologies used – awareness of the present or maintain your presence - they have the same meaning. Once you know it, you

do not even need all these terminologies.

In fact, there is power of awareness in everything. It is just that we have mixed in afflictions, discriminations, attachments and many others. However, awareness has never disappeared; otherwise you will not be able to live! If there is no awareness, how do you know what you are going to do now, how do you know your way here from home, how do you finish your meal, how are you able to speak so much. All these are the power of awareness! That is why we say awareness power has always existed. It is just a matter of proportion. Everyone has it otherwise we will be dead.

Student : For instance, now my afflictions have arisen and I know I am about to lose my temper.

Master : Look at it and it will disappear.

Student : Just need to continue looking at it and it will disappear?

Master : Yes.

Student : But I still feel that I have duality when I look at it.

Master : Because you still remember what has happened. We have mentioned in our lesson that you look at your greed or anger but not the object that causes your anger. That is the key point! This is because if you look at the object or matter that gives rise to your anger, it is very difficult for your anger to subside as the more you think of it, the angrier you will be. You just look at greed itself and not the object, and the greed and desire will dissipate. If you keep thinking about the object that causes your greed, it can never disappear.

Awareness is Different from ‘Calm Abiding Meditation’

Student : The method of awareness seems similar to the Tiantai Calm Abiding Meditation

Master : ‘Calm abiding meditation’ may not

necessarily have awareness. It increases alertness and remains in the consciousness; the sixth consciousness maintains non-dualistic direct perception. However for awareness, ultimately there is wisdom of all things in their reality. Awareness is equivalent to primordial nature, it is the emergence of our primordial nature and reflection of wisdom. It has a wider scope. 'Calm abiding meditation' only calms the restless mind, whereas awareness has wisdom apart from calming the mind through non-dualistic direct perception of the sixth consciousness.

Awareness and 'Calm Abiding and Insight Meditation'

Student : If we are unable to practice with Calm Abiding and Insight Meditation, can we still attain enlightenment through the Awareness Method?

Master : Maintaining awareness is actually

also a practice of calm abiding and insight meditation. When you ‘maintain’ that is calm abiding, ‘awareness’ is insight, which is wisdom and ultimately it is wisdom of the illusory nature of all existence. It is also a method of calm abiding and insight but not necessary to sit down and cultivate ‘four dhyanas and the eight concentrations’. However you can still attain enlightenment with the Awareness Method.

Student : We can also cultivate with any method to gain enlightenment?

Master : Yes, when one-pointedness of the mind from calm abiding and wisdom from insight into reality reaches certain level, you can progress very quickly with any method of cultivation.

Awareness and ‘Four Dhyanas and Eight Concentrations Practice’

Student : What does it mean by - with the method of awareness, we do not need to

cultivate 'four dhyanas and eight concentrations' to attain enlightenment?

Master : You need to have the Dzogchen view, which is the view that your self-nature is originally perfect and enlightened. You need to believe this beyond doubt.

Your self-nature is Buddha! It is originally perfect and enlightened but due to an ignorant thought, it results in a hideous mess. Now it is easy to return to your enlightened nature because it is originally enlightened.

Student : Is it easy to eradicate ignorance?

Master : Easy! Originally there is no ignorance so what are you eradicating? Our self-nature is originally there, why are you afraid that the self-nature will not emerge? Originally you have it! Just let what originally exists emerge and what originally does not exist, not exist.

Student : There is also no need to eradicate?

Master : Yes. Isn't it fast in this way? This is

the Dzogchen view. Ignorance originally does not exist so there is no need to eradicate. Our enlightened self-nature originally exists, actually we are Buddha. So just let it emerge. With this view and belief that your self-nature is originally Buddha, let it emerge and immediately you are Buddha. It is simple, you do not need 'three Mahakalpas', you are Buddha right away.

Student : So in the Dzogchen view there isn't so called 'three Mahakalpas'?

Master : There isn't.

Student : There is no concept of time?

Master : The phenomenon of time is also unreal.

Student : So we do not have to attain the 'Realm of Desire' one-pointedness of mind? It doesn't matter if we do not have all the different types of one-pointedness of mind?

Master : The self-nature originally has one-pointedness of mind!

Student : I see!

Master : Originally the self-nature is complete with one-pointedness of mind, the six paramitas and the ten paramitas. There is no need to cultivate! When your self-nature emerges, everything is already completely perfect. So in Dzogchen, the self-nature is actually completely perfect, completely enlightened. This view is very important.

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Student : Why do Dzogchen practitioners still practice one-pointedness of mind?

Master : There is still practice of one-pointedness of mind in the preliminaries of Dzogchen. The view of Dzogchen is – the self-nature is originally in one-pointedness of mind. Our enlightened self-nature is originally stable, so remaining in your self-nature is the greatest one-pointedness of the mind, you do not need to go through ‘four dhyanas and eight concentrations’. Just like ‘Shurangama dhyana’, self-nature is origi-

nally in one-pointedness of the mind, it is not through cultivation. There is no production and annihilation, no destabilization; isn't it the greatest one-pointedness of the mind? You don't need any other methods of cultivation, you are already in your self-nature which is already in one-pointedness of the mind.

Student : This is the right view of Dzogchen and Master is now teaching us the way to cultivate – maintaining awareness and observing the empty space.

Master : Yes.

Student : This is not the way of 'four dhyanas and eight consciousness'?

Master : Right. You just remain in your primordial nature.

Student : As long as we maintain our awareness, our primordial nature will emerge?

Master : Yes. Primordial nature is the self-

nature that we are referring to now. Our self-nature is originally enlightened. Since it is originally enlightened then there isn't any ignorance. Since there isn't any ignorance, ignorance originally doesn't exist. This is what we are like. Once we start thinking again, our second thought will start to be in comparative perception, we become ignorant and are no longer in our primordial nature. When we are in a state of presence, there is direct perception so your self-nature will emerge and your primordial nature will also emerge.

So our earlier training on awareness is to lead us slowly to get closer to our goal of allowing our primordial nature to emerge. Our primordial nature is originally perfect, enlightened, complete and stable.

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Student : This and the Chan school's many methods of practice like 'stick and shout method', 'extinguishing of wild mind' to

attain enlightenment...

Master : We do not have the issue of awakening to the truth.

Student : Why do some most virtuous ones say Chan school and the Mahamudra of Tantric Buddhism have close resemblance?

Master : That is right. The end result seems to have close resemblance but the way they begin is different. We train our awareness but the Chan school does not, they practice 'koan' ^{viii} and 'silent illumination meditation'. Whether they manage to gain illumination through this meditation is questionable. The method is different. It seems more difficult, not concrete.

Student : Abstract, no sequence?

Master : Yes. Even with the practice of 'silent illumination meditation', they are still ignorant. You might as well practice awareness because when your awareness power is stronger, the clear light of your primordial nature will emerge continuously. When we

combine our practice with visualization of the bright spot, the clear light will slowly develop and emerge. Actually that is the clear light of our primordial nature. When the clear light develops, it eradicates ignorance at the same time and in the same proportion. It is like when the clear light appears, darkness will disappear. So ignorance will naturally be eradicated as the bright spot becomes brighter. There is no need to make an effort to eradicate ignorance.

So this will lead directly to the emergence of our primordial nature. With the method of visualizing the bright spot, we will feel more concrete with something to grasp, otherwise we still do not know the whereabouts of our primordial nature.

Awareness and Buddha-Recitation

Student : Can we maintain our awareness when doing Buddha-recitation?

Master : We can do so in whatever we are doing, it has never disappeared. It exists regardless of whether you are self-cultivating or are in some mundane matter because in the presence of awareness, there is no duality. This method is very useful in our daily lives and if we use it in any method of self-cultivation, accomplishment is faster. When we recite with awareness, we can attain 'the universe as one mind' more rapidly.

Student : If we have the Dzogchen view first and we maintain awareness when we recite, can we attain Dzogchen?

Master : Yes. Actually there is no difference in all the methods of cultivation. With our discrimination and attachment, we differentiate into the different methods of cultivation and further differentiate into mundane and supra-mundane methods. This is the result of duality. In fact, our self-nature is actually perfect! So now we are trying to return to the self-perfected state. Then we will not differentiate, discriminate, attach

and fall into duality.

Student : Some most virtuous ones from the Pure Land School said that Buddha-Recitation Method is actually a combination of Buddha-recitation perfect penetration and ear perfect penetration in the Shurangama Sutra. So referring to the ear perfect penetration, is the verse 'return the hearing and listen to the self-nature' the same as maintaining awareness?

Master : 'Return the hearing and listen to the self-nature' is exactly maintaining awareness. Such cultivation contains very strong awareness power.

Student : If you maintain awareness when doing Buddha-recitation to attain Dzogchen, you still need to have the Dzogchen view right from the beginning?

Master : Yes, otherwise you do not know what the mnemonic is.

Difference between Awareness and the Southern Chan School

(1) When awareness is widespread at all times

Student : When I am moving my hands, my legs are also moving, then where should I place the awareness?

Master : That is the method of the Southern Chan School. It trains awareness through the careful observation of every movement.

Student : Specially practiced?

Master : Yes. It is a form of training; it is not teaching you to put this into your life, otherwise you will not know how to have your meal. (Note : In the Southern Chan School of training, when you are having your meal - lifting of chopsticks, picking of food, putting food into the mouth, swallowing – are all performed in a very slow-moving manner.)

In Dzogchen, there is no time interval. The

teachings of Dzogchen is – awareness is present at all times. As a result in your daily life, you are clear of your thought in every moment, like the movement of your body, arising of misleading thoughts or talking. You are clear of every thought because your awareness is maintained. At this point of time, you do not discriminate anymore.

In the beginning we will discriminate the external phenomena as we are unable to maintain our awareness, so we will practice in segments. Eventually your awareness will be present at all times. You are clearly aware in every moment, both internally and externally. When your awareness power keeps getting stronger, you will even be aware of the changes in your body cells, your breathing and your heart beat.

(2) Different attainment with two types of awareness

Student : In the Southern Chan School,

many practices involve maintaining awareness in movement?

Master : It is not the same as it only maintains awareness but does not dissipate immediately. It has knowledge of movement, thoughts and it ends there. So it is unable to eradicate ignorance and there isn't any practice and concept for integration. In Tantric Buddhism, there are many practices that integrate 'self' with the circumstances. When you have the feeling of integration, you can achieve 'the universe as one mind' very easily. It is a process of mutual integration; when you train till you have no duality, you will integrate slowly. Eventually when awareness integrates with everything, then that is 'the universe as one mind'.

Student : So there is a lot of difference in content?

Master : Yes. The Southern Chan School also often emphasises on right mindfulness and awareness. The content resembles the

awareness that we have been talking about but the realization is not the same. The awareness in the Southern Chan School refers to the awareness in our movement. It is the state of our body and mind, which is merely the awareness of the 'fourfold stage of meditation'. It does not expand on the awareness so it is directed at liberation, but our awareness training enables us to see our Buddha-nature.

For instance, the bright spot that we visualize represents our primordial nature. The practice of awareness can enable our primordial nature to emerge, which is to be enlightened, to see our Buddha-nature. Using such an awareness training method, we can be enlightened very quickly.

The training of awareness can eradicate ignorance but the 'fourfold stages of meditation' cannot do so. The latter can end illusions arising from imperfect perception and is directed towards liberation so there is a great difference. Their scope of awareness is

not broadened, it is only confined to the body and mind. It only covers the six abodes of perception or sensation, the twelve sense-sources and the eighteen realms. Their trend of thought and awareness training is inclined towards liberation so they do not even talk about the six paramitas and the ten paramitas. Though it is also known as awareness training, the content is different.

Awareness Instruction is Tantric Buddhism Method

(1) Tantric Buddhism Does Not Teach Counter Methods

Student : In the Exoteric School , both Mahayana and Hinayana teach counter methods but it seems that in the Esoteric School (Tantric Buddhism) these are not taught?

Maste : In Tantric Buddhism, it transforms the afflictions of greed, anger and ignorance directly into wisdom. This is not a counter

method.

Student : This is the difference between Tantric Buddhism and the Exoteric School?

Master : Yes. Just like awareness training, we maintain our awareness, not falling into duality. It doesn't teach you to counter. Any emotion and affliction is transformed immediately and dissipated. It is not perfumed back into the eighth consciousness and become future karmic seed. This kind of method can only be found in Tantric Buddhism.

Student : People of ordinary capacity will not be able to cultivate in this way?

Master : It depends on whether he has the ability to cultivate.

Student : Must have supreme capacity in order to cultivate?

Master : Yes, must have 'deep good roots', otherwise it is impossible. If a person is normally filled with afflictions, he will not

be able to dissipate these afflictions on the spot. If he is able to transform in three counts, then he has supreme capacity. This is because when his awareness power becomes stronger, he will be able to transform any emotions and afflictions when they arise. He is able to do it only if he has Tantric school capacity. So he does not have to eradicate greed, anger and ignorance, he just needs to transform them and dissipate them with his awareness. He does not perfume them back so normally he will not have emotions and afflictions. So the karmic seeds in his eighth consciousness will be purified slowly and naturally.

Student : There isn't such method in Chinese Buddhism?

Master : No.

Student : So this method is really very extraordinary?

Master : Yes. This is the extraordinary aspect of Tantric Buddhism.

(2) No Sequence in Dzogchen

Student : If Hinayana is the foundation of Mahayana and Mahayana is the foundation of Tantric Buddhism, and if we were to practice from the lower to the higher level, we would have to counter anger and ignorance at the Hinayana level. Why then do we have to start our practice in Tantric Buddhism from afflictions again?

Master : If through this practice you are able to transform your afflictions, you will naturally have renunciation and bodhicitta because in the process of training your awareness, bodhicitta is cultivated.

Student : Why?

Master : Since you do not fall into duality, there is no concept of 'self', you and others, and then you are no longer disturbed by emotions, feelings or afflictions; so would you still be attached to the temporal world?

Student : No.

Master : When your concept of 'self' becomes less, you naturally will have bodhi-chitta. Because when you have the concept of 'self', you will be thinking 'why should I be good to you?' However when there is no duality, there is no discrimination into you and I, then there will be the concept of 'all dharma realms as having the same nature'; so your family matter is also my family matter. Thus with the practice of this extraordinary method, all other parts of Hinayana and Mahayana of the Exoteric School are perfected too. This is the way of cultivation in Dzogchen.

In the practice of Dzogchen, there is no sequence. As long as you are able to enter the state of Dzogchen, the earlier stages are all perfected. This is because in Dzogchen, once you are perfect, everything else is perfect. With just this method, all others will be perfected. This is Dzogchen. However if all else is unable to be perfected, then that

is not Dzogchen.

So this is why Dzogchen is extraordinary, but you need to have sharp capacity. For instance, when we were teaching awareness in the earlier lessons, many people were already unable to understand what awareness is. Normally they are not mindful so they are not able to further their practice. If, however, they can understand the teachings right away and also put into immediate practice the methods taught; then it shows that their capacity is not too low otherwise they will not be able to do so.

Student : So attaining enlightenment in this life is possible?

Master : Yes, in Tantric Buddhism it is possible to attain enlightenment in this life.

Student : It is so extraordinary! Moreover the method is simple, not complicated.

Master : Yes. Just like some illiterate people who can attain enlightenment and transform into rainbow body with a single tan-

tric practice transmission. As long as they follow the instructions and with faith, they can be enlightened. There were so many such cases of rainbow body transformation because these people were very simple-minded; though illiterate, they were obedient and with their faith, they gained enlightenment.

Student : Just need to grasp these two?

Master : Yes. For instance their master told them to maintain their awareness, not falling into duality and be absolutely clear of everything. The mnemonic is also not too long and by following the instructions, they accomplished calm abiding and insight meditation.

Awareness of the Enlightened Ones

Student : For an enlightened practitioner, he does not require any reminder to maintain awareness?

Master : A truly enlightened one will maintain his awareness throughout the twenty-four hours of the day, regardless of whether he is walking, standing, sitting or lying. There is no difference as to whether he is in meditation or out of meditation, or when he is awake in the day or asleep at night. It makes no difference even when he is approaching his death. Everything is the same. Maintaining our awareness and presence will eventually link up all our self-cultivation. Being awake is just like being asleep. Therefore, he will have assurance when death approaches.

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i

□ There are three aspects or natures of existence, under which all things (dharma) may be regarded, depending upon the degree of true understanding which we ourselves possess of these things. They are inseparable from consciousness. (i) Nature of imagination- through illusory perception, things are imagined to exist while really they are not there. (ii) Nature of dependence on others- through comparative or logical perception, things are viewed at a conditioned and relative level. (iii) Nature of ultimate reality or Suchness- through direct perception, one sees the complete and perfect real nature of all things.

ii

□ Ultimate Reality is pure consciousness whereby there is neither subject nor object. It is the true nature of all things (dharma), which is beyond conceptions and interpretations. It is also known as Buddha nature, inherent nature, primordial nature, enlightened nature, self-nature or Suchness.

iii

□ The six sense organs are eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind.

iv

□ The Mere-consciousness doctrine advocates the sole reality of consciousness with the argument that the external world of subject and object is nothing but development of consciousness. The substance of consciousness is capable

of manifesting itself into two functional divisions- the object perceived and the perceiving faculty. These divisions arise out of the third division- the self-witnessing, which is their essence. There is a fourth division known as the re-witnessing of self-witness division. By the force of the perfuming energy stored in the mind from the false beliefs in the self and things, the two functional divisions develop into the semblance of the self and things. Although the self and things do not exist apart from the consciousness, they are taken as external objects by wrong mental discrimination. Because of this, all beings conceive them as real self and real things.

v

□ In the Mere-consciousness doctrine, there are eight consciousnesses. The first six are sense-centre consciousnesses (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind), the seventh consciousness is the *manas* (the self-conscious mind), the eighth consciousness is the *alaya* (storehouse-consciousness). The eighth consciousness is a momentary consciousness that stores seeds or impressions planted by the seven consciousnesses. Perfumed by impressions, it becomes efficient in manifestation. It continues to exist without interruption as the subject being attached to by the *manas*. The changing *alaya* is of defiled nature as the source of phenomena. Its products, i.e. the various phenomena are also defiled.

vi

□ A bodhisattva is someone who is destined to become a Buddha, but who, in order to help suffering beings,

selflessly postpones his early entry into the bliss of nirvana and his escape from this world of birth-and-death. There are ten levels of Bodhisattvas realization before reaching perfect enlightenment and nirvana.

vii

□ Bodhichitta is an altruistic aspiration to attain full enlightenment for the benefit of all beings.

viii

□ Koan is a method adopted by the Chan School. It is a concentration device that prompts the mind to stop indulging in random thinking by reflecting on a question or statement.



Training of Awareness

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印行：菩提學會

美術設計：蔡明穎

印刷：先施數位印刷

西元 2015 年 4 月 恭印一千冊

◎郵政劃撥帳號：50143226 戶名：劉維國

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