

Knowledge of Our Real Condition. Part 2.

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Point of View

When we learn about Atiyoga, the first important thing in the teaching is the point of view, our consideration of how we think things should be. I studied the Buddhist tradition in college for many years, firstly sutra philosophy for five or six years and later on I deepened my knowledge at college. I thought that I knew the principle of the Buddhist sutra teaching very well. After that, I received a lot of tantric teachings and instructions and thought that I knew them. But what I learned and what I knew was the point of view, which is a more traditional way. A traditional way means that if there are four or five schools, each school has its own way of seeing. The origin is considered to be the teaching of the Buddha, but the people following the teaching of the Buddha are different types of human beings. When people follow the Buddha's teachings, they do not immediately obtain a state like the Buddha's.

Everybody has his or her individual way of seeing and judging, and human beings in particular have very strong egos. We always think that we know better than others, that our way of seeing is more perfect than that of others, even though we don't say that to other people in order to be polite. If we were to say that our way was better, then nobody would have anything to do with us, so we show that we are very open. But in the real sense we insist on our way of seeing and for this reason people discuss things for hours and hours, even if those things are not very important. We need to convert other people to our way of seeing and thinking, although this is not very easy because other people also have their egos. I have my condition in the same way another person has his or hers.

In this case what Buddha explained is very important. He said that everything is interdependent, that there does not exist a single thing that is not interdependent. So when I talk to and do something with another person, it is very important that I know that we are interdependent and that just as I have my condition, so does the other person.

There are some very important words of the Buddha in the Sutra teaching

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rang gi lus la dpe long la / gzhan la gnod par ma byed cig

He said that we should take ourselves as an example, pay respect to and not create problems for

others. For example, if someone insults me, I don't like it. Remembering that I didn't like it I take this as an example and don't insult other people. I pay respect to them. This means that we are interdependent and we work that way.

When we have that knowledge of *nalma* [real condition] then we know that all sentient beings, not only human beings, have this condition. In the Buddhist Sutra teaching it explains that we should increase our compassion for all sentient beings because if we do something bad to them, they have a bad sensation and suffer. This is the reason that we pay respect to other sentient beings. When we have this knowledge of *nalma*, that everybody has their real condition, then we can understand how to pay respect to and work with others.

Recognizing our real nature

I've been to many important international peace conferences. They were all very nice to attend because they were well prepared and many important people participated. We would spend time together and get to know each other, particularly if we were attending for a few days. Everyone would say that it was very important to create peace and, of course, it is very nice topic, but after a few days when the conference finished, we would leave and nothing very concrete remained. Each time I would reflect a little that in the real sense it was very sad because they had organised an expensive conference and people had participated with good intention, but the conclusion was that nothing had manifested.

In this field I thought that Atiyoga is really very important for all sentient beings. What we should learn regarding the aspect of the point of view in Atiyoga is that we should not think that our way of thinking is perfect, that our way of seeing is perfect. We are always limited that way. We must observe our condition. This is how it is explained in the *Dra Thalgyur tantra*. In general when we ask which point of view in the Buddha's teaching is the best, then all traditions claim that their path of knowledge and point of view is perfect and there are many discussions between the different schools. At the time of the Buddha, he explained his teaching: the essence of the teaching of the Buddha is recognizing how our real nature of *nalma* is.

Buddha said:

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(*zab zhi spros bral 'od gsal 'du ma byas/ bdud rtsi lta bu'i chos shig kho bos rnyed/ su la bstan kyang go bar mi nus pas/ mi smra nags 'dabs 'di ru gnas par bya//*)

???????????????????? (zab zhi spros bral) means that I have discovered very deep knowledge. Peaceful. ????????????? (spros bral) means beyond all concepts

???????? (‘*od gsal*) means luminosity, its real nature.

???????? (‘*du ma byas*) means something that is not aggregated because everything that is aggregated is related to time and space.

I have discovered very precious teaching and knowledge, but when I communicate it to people, nobody can understand it easily. What I should do now is I should be in that knowledge myself.

Buddha taught that kind of knowledge of the teaching. He didn’t teach any kind of tradition. Up to the moment when Buddha manifested *Parinirvana*, the manifestation of death, all his students were following Buddha, and there were no schools or traditions. However, as soon as he manifested *Parinirvana*, 18 different schools of Hinayana arose because his students formed different groups. One group would say that they understood what Buddha had taught while another group would present it in a slightly different way, just like we have different kinds of political parties in our society. This is called limitation.

In Atiyoga what we need to learn is not to judge or look outside, or try to convert someone. If we go in that direction, in any case, sooner or later we lose. Instead of that what we need to do is to observe ourselves within. When I met my precious Dzogchen teacher who introduced me to real knowledge of Dzogchen, he explained the correct point of view by telling me that I should understand the difference between the function of a pair of glasses and a mirror. When we use a pair of glasses, even though they may be very strong, we are looking outside, and if there are very tiny things, we can see them very well. This is the function of the glasses. That means that even if we know many things very well intellectually, it is dualistic vision: I am here and I see something there. But we do not know or discover how our real *nalma* is.



Public talk at Beijing University

The Example of the Mirror

The most important way to understand the point of view in Atiyoga is to observe ourselves. The example is the mirror. The mirror does not look outside. When we look in the mirror our face appears. This is an example of us observing within ourselves. When we observe inside ourselves we can understand and discover the infinite limitations we have in our condition. When we discover them and are no longer within those limitations, no longer conditioned by them, then we are in our real nature. That is the principle of Atiyoga. And even though we live in the limited condition of society, we become aware of and know how the situation of our relative condition is. We live in time and space and have our physical body – we need to sleep at night and eat and drink to maintain our physical body. We cannot say that because we are practitioners of Atiyoga we don't need those things. We need to pay respect to and become responsible for them. Then there is more possibility that we can work a little in our real condition. And we can also understand how we should pay respect to others.

This is something very important, particularly when we talk about the peace of the world. Peace in the world is very possible if we pay respect to the dimension of others. We should discover this in our individual condition. In Western languages it is called 'evolution' and it means that we know what the real condition is and we work with that, also regarding others. In this case everything we do will correspond with how our real nature is. For that reason knowledge of Atiyoga is also very

important for living in our society.

We should think a little more about evolution in each of us, and develop that knowledge, being present and knowing how we should work in the relative condition, in time and space, knowing very well that the relative condition is indispensable. But if we ignore our real nature we will have no base for evolution, and will always have revolution and will need to change and convert others. If you convert someone, they will never be happy. Even if you try to convert cats and dogs, they will not be happy. So as Buddha said, we should take example from ourselves, this is very important.

Being Dominated by Mind

All of us who exist have our physical body, our energy level and our mind. When we live in an ordinary way then we follow our minds, judging and thinking, and our energy and physical body serve our minds. Mind should become aware of that. When we know that we all have *nalma*, our real nature, since the beginning, then we try to do our best with the mind in the relative condition. We need to understand how our real nature is, and then when we have this kind of presence and knowledge, mind no longer dominates our physical body and energy. When we are ignorant of that, then most people always follow their minds.

Some people say that they have a lot of confusion, agitation and many problems. Why do we have all these kinds of problems? Because we go too much after mind, not knowing or completely forgetting how our real nature is, so that mind becomes more and more powerful day after day and we are ruled by it. When we go ahead that way then mind completely dominates us and we become completely dependent on mind. When we become like that, mind becomes much more powerful and can also dominate our energy level and we can have many problems.

Some people may think that a bad spirit has entered their body and even though we tell them that there is no bad spirit, that it is only their mind, they don't believe it. Why? Because mind succeeds in working at the energy level and the person feels something concrete. Someone might even say that they hear someone talking in their ear, telling them to do this and that. When we tell them there is nobody talking, that it is only their mind, the person doesn't believe it. Sometimes mind succeeds in dominating the energy level and there is no vital *prana* energy circulating in some of their channels and these people can see and hear very concrete things. Some people even kill themselves, jumping off a house or a rock. That is an example of being conditioned by mind.

So it is very important that we know how the condition of our real nature is. Mind is its function, it is related. Mind is indispensable and very useful for everybody. If we have no mind, we couldn't think or do anything. But we need to use mind, not be used by mind. People who are following Atiyoga must understand this.

Overcoming Problems

For example, in Atiyoga we have practices that are related to the physical level such as yantra yoga, in which there are hundreds of movements and positions combined with *prana* energy. If someone has this kind of problem of being dominated by mind, there are some movements and practices related to the physical level and breathing in order to return to a normal condition. Many practices are also related to the energy level. When we have some problems in the relative condition it is much easier to overcome them. For example, if there is some problem at the physical level, something we can see and touch, then there is also something to do physically. If we have some problems only related to the energy level, it is much more difficult because we can see the physical level but not the energy level, even though we may feel something through our experience. It is even more difficult with mental concepts. For that reason when we follow Atiyoga, there are practices related to the physical body, the energy level and the mind.

Many people like to do breathing practices or some movements, but when we talk about meditation, many people don't understand what we should do. I'll give you a very simple example. A person has a lot of confusion and many problems so we tell them to relax. That person says that they know very well that they should relax but they don't manage to, so they go to a teacher to receive some advice. What can a teacher do when someone like this comes? The teacher may suggest that when the person is feeling nervous that they do some breathing, for example, inhaling and exhaling while raising and lowering the arms 20 times. After that they should lie down and relax. So that person does that and discovers that it helps.

Today when that person is nervous, they do that. But it doesn't mean that they do it today and that tomorrow the person is relaxed. Tomorrow is another day, another circumstance. There are many secondary causes for being nervous in our circumstances. Every time the person gets nervous they do this practice and it may help a little, but for us it is not sufficient only to overcome that problem in the moment. If we wish to learn and do something definitively to reach a calm state then we have to go to the energy level and there are practices, exercises to relax. Then finally there is also our mental level.

In general we don't know how to relax. We only know this word and think that relaxing means not doing anything particular for creating tension. For example, when we go to a doctor for an examination, he asks us to lie down on the examination couch and relax. What do we do? We try to relax our physical body a little. But our existence is not only our physical body it is also our energy level and particularly our mind. Even though we may appear to be physically relaxed we are very tense and worrying about what the doctor wants to do. Our energy is charged and so is our mind so there is no relaxation. In the real sense we don't know how to relax.



Tregchöd

In Atiyoga we have a teaching method called *Tregchöd*. These are instructions. *Tregchöd* means total relaxation and this name comes from an example. In Tibetan *treg* means something that you bind together with a cord such as pieces of wood. In Tibetan we say *shing* for wood. When we bind pieces of wood together with a cord we say *shing treg*. If we bind some herbs, this is called *tsa treg*. Sometimes in videos you can see Tibetan country people carrying many bundles of herbs bound together. So in *Tregchög*, *treg* means bound.

In our ordinary condition, we have body, speech and mind. All these three existences are charged up and we are always bound [by them]. We never relax in our condition. When there is something to be done, we give it too much importance, considering that it must be done in this way or that. When we give this importance to things, it means that we are charged up, and when we are charged up we are bound by body, speech and mind, all together. This is the meaning of *treg*.

Chöd means that these three break. In Tibetan there are two words whose meaning is a little similar but whose sound is different. One of them is pronounced *chöd* [spelled *gcod*] while the other is *chöd* [spelled *chod*]. When we say *chöd* [*chod*] we exhale. With *chöd* [*gcod*] we do not exhale. *Chöd* [*gcod*] means cutting through something, for example, chopping through a piece of wood with an axe. In the same way there are many practitioners in Tibet called *chödpa*, who do *chöd* practice, cutting through the ego, because they have discovered that the ego is the root of all problems. There are many methods that they use and somehow they cut through.

When we say *chöd* [spelled *chod*], nobody is cutting, but that which binds breaks by itself. It breaks by itself because we are entering knowledge. All our tensions are in the relative condition so when we are really in our condition of *nalma*, there are no tensions. It is beyond any kind of tensions. When we are in that state it is as if the thread that binds is breaking by itself. When that thread breaks by itself, what was bound finally relaxes. This means we are using that Atiyoga method, that aspect of the practice, at the physical level, the energy level and the mental level. Combining them together and applying them, we discover how we can really relax. This is very important in the lifetime of a human being.

Integration

Our lives are not only made up of bad things, there are also some very nice things. When we understand how our lives are then we also need to enjoy them. Some practitioners really dedicate themselves to practice and make sacrifices, just like when we follow Sutra teaching. But when we become practitioners of Atiyoga, what we need to do is integrate in our relative condition.

In the knowledge of Atiyoga there is nothing to change. If, for example, a person works in a hospital, he can be in his knowledge of *nalma*, do his best and go ahead with his work. His attitude and what he should do in Atiyoga is that. Or if a person works in a shop and needs to go there every day, or if he is a university or high school student going to school every day to study, he knows that this is the relative condition. We become responsible for ourselves, we know what our responsibilities are and we do our best, dealing with and not being overly conditioned by mental concepts. That way we can also have the possibility to enjoy our lives. This is important. When we are living our short lives we also need to enjoy them.

Many people think that because they are young that they don't have these problems and they will have a very long life. But life has no guarantee. We don't even know if tomorrow will exist or not. This is the real condition. So we are present and we do our best. We become responsible for ourselves. Learning Atiyoga means helping ourselves. Helping ourselves means we become aware of how we should work with circumstances. When we want to create benefit for others, finally we do it in a perfect way because we know what really benefits other people and other sentient beings. And we become aware. This is the principle of the teaching of Atiyoga. I think that not everybody really needs to become a practitioner of a spiritual path, but it is very important to have this knowledge.

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Tibetan courtesy of Margherita Pansa

