

**Believers, Contemplatives, and the Future of Human Civilization:  
A Buddhist Response to the Current Metacrisis, Part 5  
The Cultivation of Cognitive Intelligence, Part 2  
B. Alan Wallace, August 28, 2024**

**Exploring the Actual Nature of the Mind**

Excerpted from

“The Analytical Cultivation of Vipāśyanā According to the Pith Instructions Held in Common”<sup>1</sup>

in *The Great Commentary to Mingyur Dorjé’s*

*Buddhahood in the Palm of Your Hand*, chapter 16

BY KARMA CHAKMÉ

The Great Compassionate One [Avalokiteśvara] states in his commentary to this:

**However and whatever you may think, however and whatever you may recall, whatever you see and whatever you are aware of, observe its essential nature ...**

That is the meaning, so from now until tomorrow’s Dharma teaching session, it is very important that each of you carefully seek out your own mind. Is your mind located inside or outside of your body? If it is inside, from your brain at the crown of your head down to the soles of your feet, where does it reside among your five solid organs and six hollow organs?<sup>2</sup> Think about this and then search!

If you think your mind is located inside your heart, where is it—in the epicardium, in the pericardial fat, in the flesh, or in the blood? If it is located on the exterior of the body, where is it—on the upper or lower region, or at the front or on the back? Moreover, if the mind exists outside, where is it located—in the east, south, west, north, above, or below? [463]

What kind of color does the mind have? Is it white, yellow, red, green, blue, or the like? What sort of shape does it have? Is it round, square, semi-circular, triangular, or the like? Is the form of the mind beautiful or ugly, large or small? Is its sound pleasant or unpleasant? Is its smell fragrant or putrid? Is its taste bitter or sweet? Is it soft or rough to the touch?

What is the actual nature of the mind? Are the body and mind one or are they distinct? If the body and mind were one, when the body dies, does the mind die? And if they are distinct, when the body is in pain, why is the mind distressed?

---

<sup>1</sup> From B. Alan Wallace and Eva Natanya, *Śamatha and Vipāśyanā: An Anthology of Pith Instructions* (New York: Wisdom, forthcoming).

<sup>2</sup> The five solid organs are the heart, lungs, kidneys, liver, and the spleen; the six hollow organs are the stomach, gallbladder, small intestine, urinary bladder, the large intestine, and the “vesicle of regenerative substances” (Tib. *bsam se’u*; Skt. *śukrāśaya ḍimbāśaya*), which refers to the seminal vesicle in men and to the ovaries in women.

If you think the mind does not exist, who is it that gives rise to hatred, pride, envy, anger, faith, and pure vision? If you think the mind does exist, what kind of thing is it? If you think it is both existent and nonexistent, since existence and nonexistence are mutually exclusive, that is impossible.

From where did this mind first emerge, where is it now, and finally, when it has ceased, where will it go?

When each of you says, "I," is that the body? Or is it the mind? [464] If it is the body, when the body dies, since its parts disperse, once that which is called "I" and "myself" has died, you would become nonexistent.

If the mind is that which is called "I" or "myself," it must have a form and color. If it doesn't, that which is called "I" and "myself" would have no objective referent. This name of yours was designated by your parents, teacher, and so on. If you exchange your name for another, would you and yourself be exchanged for another?

Is the mind just one, or is it many? If it were one, how could there be eight configurations of consciousness, beginning with visual consciousness? If it were many, one person would have many minds, but that is impossible.

Is the mind permanent, unchanging, and unitary? If it were, how could any mind remember not just one thing but many, and how could it change and move? If the mind is impermanent, then is the mind impermanent in the sense of being formed and destroyed, and does it then become nonexistent?

If the mind is a single appearance, you should be able to see it and point to it. If the mind is invisible, nothing at all could appear. If the mind arises, from where does it arise? If the mind is located somewhere, on what basis is it located? If the mind [465] ceases, where does it cease?

If you think the mind recalls all kinds of things and issues forth in all manner of ways, from where do the memories and thoughts of this mind first emerge? Right now, what sort of essential nature do they have? In the end, where do they appear to go and cease? If you think the mind is empty like space, how do various memories and thoughts appear in emptiness?

Now if the mind is dispatched to the space in the east, is there a dispatcher and a mover or not? If there is, what kind of an entity is it that moves? If it has gone, how far did it go? Just in the time it takes to return, it would have made a circle. Likewise, when you dispatch your mind to each of the four cardinal directions, the eight intermediate directions, above and below, totaling ten directions, how does it move? What is it that moves? How does it circle back? Please think about it!

As for the eyes seeing various forms, is it the eyes that see, or is it mental vision? If the eyes see, does a corpse also see? If the mind sees, does it have eyes? If the mind sees forms without having eyes, do the blind also see forms? Likewise, carefully examine how the ears hear sounds, [466] how the nose detects smells, the tongue experiences tastes, and how bodily sensations are felt.

When hatred, pride, envy, attachment, and delusion arise, do they arise in the body or the mind? If they arise in the body, would they arise in a corpse as well? If they arise in the mind,

how and from where do they first arise? In what way does the mind in which hatred and so on arise exist right now? Are the mind and hatred the same or distinct? Finally, where do hatred and so on cease and vanish?

Regarding what are known as the mind's "conceptualizations," or its "movements," from where do the appearances of these various memories and thoughts first emerge? Do they exist? If they exist, where do the conceptualizations that will arise tomorrow come from today, and where are they? Where did the conceptualizations from yesterday up until now go? Where are these conceptualizations of the present located?

Think about these questions carefully, then analyze and investigate! This is important, so don't be pretentious! You are not allowed to respond after asking others. This is something to be known for yourself, so you must see this yourself. If you don't, it's not okay to bluff your way through by following after what others say. Bluffing your way through meditation is said not even to be worthy of a dog. [467]

If you lack decisive, definite knowledge of your own, and you offer explanations by way of analogies and anecdotes just by knowing the words, while pretending to have your own realization, that is unacceptable. That is a case of a crude scoundrel who is familiar with Dharma turning the Dharma into misery. Therefore, do not explain out of a dry understanding, thinking, "It is like this," based on analogies and anecdotes, for this will lead to your covering your own head. A dry rope needs to be cut in water. Now seek complete and conclusive knowledge that reaches down into your bones, and you will have something to say.

If you think, "I have searched, but I have not found," don't lose heart. You have acquired a precious human body replete with leisure and endowments. When such profound advice, from which the moist breath of the *ḍākinīs* has not yet evaporated, is taught, if you do not find, will you do so when you are born as an animal and so on? Or "If I don't find my mind, I won't have to experience suffering again." Report on this way of not finding! Even if you see a form, color, and so on, there is no need to be afraid to report on that. The ten signs and so on<sup>3</sup> can appear at any time to those of fine intelligence whose channels are in excellent condition.

Therefore, from tomorrow morning onward, all of you who have not received this instruction previously, explain without reservation to the stewards for these instructions what you have seen for yourselves. Even if you have received this guidance in the past, if you have not yet identified your mind, [468] explain what you have seen to a steward for these instructions.

From now until tomorrow morning, seek with a sense of personal responsibility, and that will suffice. You don't need to seek continually. But if you don't search decisively through tomorrow morning, there will be no benefit if you put it off until later. If you have previously gained certainty about the essential nature of your own mind, there is no need to report this to a steward.

---

<sup>3</sup> This appears to be a reference to the ten signs that occur when the energy-mind enters the central channel. While the enumeration of these signs differs somewhat according to specific contexts, a classic list within Mahāyoga explains that these signs arise as appearances like those of (1) smoke, (2) a mirage, (3) clouds, (4) fireflies, (5) the sun, (6) the moon, (7) blazing jewels, (8) Rāhu, (9) stars, and (10) light rays.

Since this guidance has the crucial point of being complete in all respects, you must seek. If you don't come to a conclusion by tomorrow morning, you won't be purified to receive the teaching at tomorrow's Dharma session. So remain in solitude, adopt the qualities of the vital points of the posture, and ask in what way your mind exists. Then you will have something to say tomorrow morning. This is very important. If you carefully seek out the mind, you will come to a decisive conclusion in the time it takes to drink a cup of tea. So, for those of you who have something to say, then starting this evening you should speak to the steward.

Thus, to dedicate the roots of virtue from offering this Dharma session on the vipaśyanā held in common, which cuts through conceptual elaborations from within, so that all sentient beings of the six classes of existence may swiftly realize connate primordial consciousness, please recite three times after me, "I dedicate this virtue to all beings in the six classes of existence, who have been my old mother."

This concludes the sixteenth chapter, on the analytical cultivation of vipaśyanā, according to the tradition of the pith instructions held in common [between the Sūtrayāna and Mantrayāna].

Translated by B. Alan Wallace under the guidance of the Venerable Gyatrul Rinpoché, with the assistance of Khenpo Chöying Namgyal and Eva Natanya.