

Stilling the Patterns of the Mind

(Based on a talk given by angel Kyodo Williams, November 8, 2007, Center for Transformative Change | New Dharma Community, Berkeley, CA)

Good evening.

It seems like the next place to go is to the next verses [from the *Yoga Sutras*]. Just to give you a reference point, the last verse we talked about in chapter one, verse two was about yoga--union--and stilling the patterning of consciousness.

Verse three says, "Then pure awareness can abide in its very nature. Otherwise, awareness takes itself to be the pattern of consciousness."

"Then pure awareness can abide in its very nature." When the patterning of consciousness is still, pure awareness can be itself. "Otherwise, awareness takes itself to be the patterns of consciousness." So if it does *not* get to abide as itself, it has a little identify problem and mistakes itself for patterns of consciousness, otherwise known as **mind**.

To meet the Divine, you must still the patterns of consciousness. Allow the worrying and rolling and running about to come to a place of stillness. You must allow for it. If you do, that which is pure awareness can abide as itself. And if you don't, that pure awareness will get confused and think that it's the patterns of the mind. It will think it is the movements of the mind.

Does that sound familiar?

When your mind is not still, you mistake yourself for the mind. When, on the other hand, the mind is still, you get to experience your own true nature. Pure awareness is not just some other thing happening, my friends. Pure awareness is you; it is your own nature--your own Buddha nature, your God consciousness, your divinity, your inter-being, your deep connectedness, your wisdom mind.

However, even that can become confused with the ramblings of your mind every day if you don't allow for the stilling of these habitual patterns: going to the places of jealousy when you are wanting after something; getting twisted with anger and envy when you are not able to get what you want; overreacting when things don't center around you. Just how life is causes you to overreact, and thus engage in these habitual patterns of mind, "If someone looks at me cross-eyed, I get all twisted inside." That's habit. It doesn't really matter what the cross-eyed thing is about. Maybe the person is just cross-eyed, but we just get twisted by falling into a habit.

If we could allow for the stilling of those patterns--I don't mean **forcing** them into stillness--that's why I'm saying the words "allow for the stillness." I don't mean grab ahold of them and try to molest them to the ground--someone told me 'molest' is strong word. Yes, it's a strong word. If we allow for the stilling of the patterns of consciousness, then pure awareness can abide in its very nature. Pure awareness can *be* itself, as it is. Just as it is. And we have that moment of "ahhhh," fleeting as it may be. We slowly begin to stitch those moments together like the stitching of *rakusus*, and before you know it that which seemed a little disconnected and discombobulated, and like an almost magical occasion, becomes what we abide in, pure awareness.

And if you're going to abide in something, why not abide in your own true nature? Why bother abiding in someone else's? If you're going to take up residence somewhere, why not take up residence in your own house? And your Buddha nature is your own house. Why go instead to someone else's crib, noisy, busy, overwhelming, constantly moving, and rest there?

That's what abiding in the mind is, resting in a mistaken identity. It's like being in someone else's spot and not recognizing this is not home. Fortunately, if you're here [at the Center], it means that you recognize somewhere that that's not home. Fortunately, if you have twisted yourself into little pretzels, or plunked yourself down in a chair to just do nothing but meditate, you have that call, that yearning to go home, to **be** home, that is indigenous to each of us. That is pure awareness calling to see itself, to recognize itself, to realize itself--consciousness begging to become awake to itself.

Your human form took millions of years, millions of years to be an expression of the universe wanting to be awake to itself. Who are you to deny that responsibility? How could you possibly do anything else? How could you waste your time scratching emotional itches all the time instead of rising to the occasion of what you were born for, to see yourself, **you**, as the universe, as all consciousness? Recognizing the truth of that is what you're here for.

It took millions of years, countless mistakes. A great deal of evolution. A lot of discarding of forms that didn't work. A few storms and icings over and burning downs when things were somehow going awry to get to this place. Most of us, by far, fritter it away. Instead, we entertain being someplace that's not our home. Instead, we spend all of our time living someplace other than abiding in our own nature. Seems very simple to me, not a good use of time. Don't you think?

The other way that I often talk about the mind is as a party spot where lots of things are happening. Things are shucking and jiving. There's fast stuff going on. There are little things to grasp onto, to entertain us. We can do little dances, get into little circles, run on little Habitrail type things. And that may be really useful for exercising the mind, but don't mistake that for your nature. The dog doesn't walk the master. The servant-mind is not supposed to rule, so no wonder it's anxious. You have given that which is not capable of guiding, of leading, the reins. So the mind is nervous and disturbed and flustered, because it's like, "What the hell is going on here?" But like any good servant that you have given the reins to it's not trying to give them up. So it's your job to say, "Thank you. Let's have appropriate perspective. It is this deep heart of pure awareness, this wisdom heart, that is to lead. Get in the back seat. Come next to me from time to time. But never, never, never drop."

There are five types of patterns, including both hurtful and benign. They are right perception, misperception, conceptualization, deep sleep, and remembering. Those are the patterns that we have, right perception, misperception, conceptualization, you know what that looks like--coming up with all those ideas, plain old deep sleep, and remembering, otherwise known as getting lost in the past.

Now, right perception arises from direct observation, inference, or the words of others. That's where it comes from. To have right perception comes from your direct observation, inferring something, or it comes from something others know to be true and which they have shared.

Misperception is false knowledge, not based on what actually is. Conceptualization is based on linguistic knowledge, not contact with real things, otherwise known as "made up." Someone else passes on that knowledge. You don't have a sense of it, but you come to some conceptualization about it, which is, frankly, true for most of what we know.

Deep sleep is a pattern grounded in the perception that nothing exists. From the yogic perspective, what that means is not that nothing exists, that kind of deep sleep, but ignorance that is not giving deference to what is true and to what is really showing up.

Remembering is the retention of experiences. The *sutras* go on to say that both practice and nonreaction are required to still the patterning of consciousness. Both practice and nonreaction are required to stop this busyness of mind. It's a little different from what we think it is. We mostly think, you know, practice, practice, practice, practice, practice, and I am often saying to people that meditation is essential *and* not enough. If you simply have a practice and just go on and allow these things to grab ahold of you, you will not get you very far. The practice of being aware of the patterning is not enough. It is not enough. There must be what I call, self-interruption. **Stop it!** It's pretty simple. Stop it! That sounds nice, nonreaction. Stop.

I have often heard people say, "I see myself doing this." Ok, that's nice. Stop. As you know, the question that usually follows is, well, how? Are you kidding? Just stop! How do you keep it going? There's more energy required to keep it going than there is to stop. You tell me how much gas your car uses when you put the brakes on. Gas pedal, energy. Brakes not, so much.

I know that the patterns of consciousness and your mistaken identification with them are telling you, you can't possibly stop. So here's the trick, you actually have to stop in order to stop that. You get what I'm saying?

It is the habit of consciousness itself. It is the mind itself telling you I can't possibly stop, and you

have to stop it in order to get it to stop telling you that you can't stop. So when all else fails, just stop. I know that doesn't seem convenient. We have places to go, and we have things to do. We are busy. Life must go on. How can I just stop? Well, just stop! Because what kind of life you are living, if you are not living your own life? What kind of life are you living, if you're living in the habit of mind?

You are asleep.

You are asleep.

And so who cares if you put an end suddenly, abruptly to this sleeping? I hope you care.

I hope you care, enough to stop.

We have time for questions.

Speaker One: How long do we get to live in the home? You said it could be for moments. Do some people abide in their true nature in their daily life? Or is it always fleeting? Is it the more you meditate and the more you're abiding, the more you don't react because you're spending more and more time in your home in everything you do?

aKw: Yes, you know, there's no place to go. We're all in our home; we have just forgotten. So the question is really, "Do some of us remember we're home more often than others?" Yes. The practice of awareness of like, "Ha, this is not my home," is step one and the practice of nonreaction, so you don't get dragged off someplace else, is number two, which results in the **stilling** of the mind. Then your little eyes open, just like when you're in bed and you go, "Oh, here I am in myself, my own true nature." So in the true sense are any of us less *in* our true nature, or less *of* our true nature? No. In the absolute since, no. Absolutely not. We are all perfect Buddhas.

Most of us have forgotten and our practice is to become Awake to the truth of what we already are, the truth of what is. There's no attainment; there's nothing to get, no place to go. No wisdom, no gain. That's what the *Heart Sutra* says. It's all there is, is what it's saying. It's already there. That's why there is the negation that's in the *Heart Sutra*: There is no practice, no wisdom, no attainment, no gain. Why? Because it's already there. It's just what is. Stop your concepts. Stop going anyplace. Don't compare, just stop and realize what's already true.