Direct Pointing to Awareness: Naked Seeing and Self-Liberation

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II. Homage

Homage to the deities of the three kāyas, in whom awareness shines forth by itself.

III. Statement of Intent

I shall expound the method of directly pointing out one’s own awareness, “Nakedly Seeing Awareness Directly, Self-Liberated,” from “The Self-Liberation of the Enlightened Intent of the Profound Dharma of the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities.” Fortunate sons, understand it well for yourselves!

Samaya. Gya, gya, gya.

IV. Direct Pointing-Out of the Nature of Mind (Awareness, Clarity, and Manifestation)

Emaho! How wondrous! Within the one mind, saṃsāra and nirvāṇa are perfectly contained. Its nature has been such from beginningless time, yet you do not know it. Clarity and awareness have never been interrupted, yet you do not recognize them. It manifests everywhere without obstruction, yet you do not understand it. Therefore, this teaching is given so that you may understand the original face of the nature of mind.

The Buddhas of the three times taught the immeasurable eighty-four thousand Dharma gates, yet the Buddhas never taught anything beyond awakening to this

nature. The scriptures filling empty space are beyond measure, but the ultimate instruction consists only of three statements that directly point out awareness. This direct pointing-out reveals the secret intent of all Buddhas. There are neither preliminary practices nor subsequent cultivation; this alone is the method of introduction.

V. The One Mind

Jiha! Fortunate disciples, listen carefully! What is called mind is widely spoken of and much discussed. Yet because this nature is not understood, is understood wrongly, or is understood only partially, and because it is not correctly understood as it truly is, innumerable sectarian doctrines have arisen.

Ordinary people who have not awakened to this nature do not know their own original face. Therefore, they continually wander through the three realms and six realms, undergoing suffering. Their fault lies entirely in not awakening to the nature of their own minds. The afflicted śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas realize only one aspect of selflessness; although they seek realization, they cannot realize it as it truly is.

Others, constrained by their respective schools and theories, cannot see the luminosity of mind. The afflicted śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas are obstructed by their attachment to subject and object; Madhyamaka adherents are obstructed by attachment to the extreme views of the two truths; the lower three yogas are obstructed by attachment to visualization and recitation; and Mahā Ati adherents are obstructed by attachment to realm and awareness.

Dividing the nondual meaning into two leads to error. If the two cannot merge as one, Buddhahood cannot be attained, for all is one mind. Saṃsāra and nirvāṇa are originally without distinction; yet if one persists in rejecting and accepting, one continues to wander in saṃsāra. Therefore, now set aside all the practices you have undertaken together, and I shall show you that their entire essence is this practice of nakedly seeing awareness and self-liberation. When you realize that all dharmas are originally greatly liberated, you will know that Great Perfection perfectly encompasses everything.

Samaya. Gya, gya, gya.

VI. Terminology

That which is called mind is simply lucid knowing. If one says that it exists, not a single dharma exists there; if one speaks of its source, it is the source from which the sufferings of saṃsāra and the joys of nirvāṇa variously arise. Because views of it differ, the gates of the eleven vehicles came into being.

In terms of terminology, it has countless names. Some call it the nature of mind or original mind; non-Buddhists call it Brahman-self; śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas call it the doctrine of selflessness; followers of Consciousness-Only call it consciousness; some call it prajñā that has gone to the other shore; some call it tathāgatagarbha; some call it Mahāmudrā; some call it the single sphere of light; some call it the dharma realm; some call it the all-ground; and others call it ordinary mind.

VII. Awareness of Clarity and Emptiness

Now, there are three essential points for directly pointing out the method of entering awareness: past thoughts leave no trace and are clear and pure; future thoughts have not yet arisen and are fresh and vivid; present thoughts abide in the present state of mind, without alteration or fabrication.

This very ordinary mind of knowing: when you nakedly observe it for itself, nothing whatever is seen. Only bright awareness, directly present and wholly naked, is revealed. It is not anything substantially existent, but only open emptiness. This brightness and emptiness are nondual, shining and luminous. It is neither permanent, for it is not anything made; nor is it annihilated, for it is brilliantly luminous.

Its existence is not a single existence, but manifold knowing and clarity. Nor is it composed of many things; it is indivisible and of a single taste. In sum, this sole self-awareness does not arise from another. This is the direct pointing-out of the actual state of things.

VIII. The Three Kāyas

Within a single awareness, the three kāyas are undifferentiated and complete. Because it gives rise to nothing, it is the empty dharmakāya. Because its emptiness is innately bright, it is the sambhogakāya. Because it can manifest everything without obstruction, it is the nirmāṇakāya. The essential nature of the three kāyas is complete within the one mind.

IX. The Original Nature of Mind

I shall now introduce this nature through a forceful direct pointing-out.

Your present awareness is originally just so: it is uncontrived and self-luminous. How can you say that you do not understand the nature of mind? There is originally nothing to cultivate in this awareness; how can you say that cultivation has brought no accomplishment? Since your directly present original awareness is this very thought, how can you say that you cannot find your own mind? That very aware clarity has never been interrupted; how can you

say that you have not seen the original face of mind? The thinker of the mind is originally this very thing; how can you say that you cannot find the one who gives rise to thoughts? There is nothing whatever to be done regarding it; how can you say that doing brings no attainment? It originally needs no adjustment; simply listen and let it be—how can you say that you cannot enter tranquility? You need only be without contrivance or action and let go completely; how can you

say that you are powerless with regard to it? Awareness, clarity, and emptiness—manifestation—are originally undifferentiated and spontaneously complete; how can you say that cultivation instead brings no accomplishment? Original awareness is self-arisen and spontaneously complete, without causes or conditions; how can you say that diligent effort is impossible? Thoughts arise in the present and vanish in the present; how can you say that they cannot be remedied? The present nature is simply

thus; how can you say that you cannot recognize it?

X. Similes for the Nature of Mind

The nature of mind is truly empty and quiescent, without root or basis. One's own mind has no substantial reality, like the open emptiness of space. Whether this seems so or not, examine your own mind. It is not the view of emptiness as annihilation; this natural wisdom is truly luminous from the beginning. Natural wisdom itself is like the heart of the sun. Whether this seems so or not, examine your own mind.

The wisdom of awareness is truly continuous and unceasing, like the uninterrupted flow of a river. Whether this seems so or not, examine your own mind. The movements of various thoughts are truly unknowable; deluded thoughts have no substance, like an intangible breeze in the sky. Whether this seems so or not, examine your own mind.

The appearances of external objects are truly self-appearances, like reflections in a mirror. Whether this seems so or not, examine your own mind. All formed appearances are truly self-liberated: they arise by themselves and dissolve by themselves, like clouds in the sky. Whether this seems so or not, examine your own mind.

XI. There Is No Dharma Outside Mind

There is no dharma apart from mind. Apart from mind, where could there be one who cultivates or something cultivated? There is no dharma apart from mind. Apart from practice and what is practiced, where could anything else exist? There is no dharma apart from mind. Apart from the samaya vows one keeps, where could

anything else exist? There is no dharma apart from mind. Apart from the fruition one realizes, where could anything else exist? Examine this again and again! Examine your own mind carefully.

XII. The Luminosity of Nature

When you look outward into space and no residue of the stirring of deluded thoughts remains in the mind, then look again at your own mind. If there is likewise no agent that stirs deluded thoughts, the undefiled nature of mind is pure and luminous. This is the luminous and empty dharmakāya of your original awareness, like the sun rising in a cloudless clear sky. Though it has no form, it can be distinctly known. Whether one awakens to this meaning or not makes an immense difference.

XIII. Self-Arising

From the beginning unborn, yet self-arisen and luminous—this is the child of awareness, yet it has no parents. How wondrous! This awareness was made by no one, yet it is self-arisen wisdom. How wondrous! It neither arises nor ceases through any cause. How wondrous! Though directly present and clear, no one can see it. How wondrous! Though it flows within saṃsāra, it does not deteriorate. How wondrous! Though it becomes a Buddha,

it does not improve. How wondrous! Everyone possesses it, yet no one knows it. How wondrous! You still hope to obtain fruition elsewhere. How wondrous! It is yourself, yet you seek it elsewhere. How wondrous!

XIV. View, Cultivation (Samādhi), Conduct, and Fruition

Ema! This present original awareness is clear yet without substantiality. This alone is the unsurpassed view. It embraces everything without conditions, yet is free from everything. This alone is the unsurpassed cultivation. It is uncontrived, free and unrestrained in the world. This alone is the unsurpassed conduct. It is not sought, but has been spontaneously complete from the beginning. This alone is the unsurpassed fruition.

XV. The Four Vehicles

The four flawless vehicles are pointed out as follows: the great vehicle of flawless view is this present awareness, inherently endowed with luminosity; because it is clear and unerring, it is called a vehicle. The great vehicle of flawless cultivation is this present awareness, inherently endowed with luminosity; because it is clear and unerring, it is called a vehicle. The great vehicle of flawless conduct is this present primordial wisdom, inherently endowed with luminosity; because it is clear and unerring, it is called a vehicle. The great vehicle of flawless fruition is this present

mind, inherently endowed with luminosity; because it is clear and unerring, it is called a vehicle.

XVI. The Four Nails

I shall now explain the four unchanging nails: the great nail of unchanging view is this present aware mind, bright and luminous; because it remains unchanged throughout the three times, it is called a nail. The great nail of unchanging view and cultivation is this present aware mind, bright and luminous; because it remains unchanged throughout the three times, it is called a nail. The great nail of unchanging conduct is this present aware mind, bright and luminous; because it remains unchanged throughout the three times, it is called a nail. The great nail of unchanging fruition is this present aware mind, bright and luminous; because it remains unchanged throughout the three times, it is called a nail.

XVII. Non-Abiding

Instructions on the essential gateway of the sameness of the three times: Do not pursue traces of the past; abandon conceptions of the past. Do not anticipate the future; sever the links of consciousness. When a thought arises before your eyes, do not grasp or cling to it. Let the mind be like empty space.

Since there is no Dharma to cultivate, cultivate nothing at all. Since there is nothing in which to become distracted, maintain undistracted right mindfulness. In this state of neither cultivating nor becoming distracted, simply observe everything with naked awareness. Then your awareness will be innately knowing and innately luminous, brilliantly radiant. When it arises, it is called bodhicitta (awareness). Because there is nothing to cultivate, it transcends all objects of knowledge; because there is nothing in which to become distracted, its essence is lucid and radiant. Appearance and emptiness are primordially self-liberated; luminosity and emptiness are the dharmakāya. Once you realize that there is nothing to cultivate on the Buddha Way, at that very moment you behold Vajrasattva.

18. No View

The following instructions bring the six extreme views to their utmost limit: However broad and numerous the various views may be, the nature of your primordial awareness is natural wisdom. It has neither seer nor seen. Whether you have seen or not seen, seek the one who sees; even the seeker of seeing cannot be found. This is to bring extreme views to their ultimate limit; this is the very ground of view.

There is nothing at all of seeing or what is seen. If one does not fall into the annihilationist emptiness of fundamental nonexistence, the awareness of this very

moment is clear and distinct: this is the Great Perfection View. In this respect, there is no distinction between realization and nonrealization.

19. No Cultivation

However broad and numerous the various contemplative practices may be, the nature of your primordial awareness remains ordinarily transparent and naked; there is no distinction between cultivator and cultivation. Whether you cultivate or do not cultivate, seek the one who cultivates. If that cultivator cannot be found, this brings contemplative practice to its ultimate limit; this is the very ground of cultivation. There is nothing at all of cultivation or what is cultivated. If one does not fall into distraction, dullness, or agitation, the uncontrived awareness of this very moment is clear and distinct: this is the uncontrived, equal samādhi. There is no distinction between entering samādhi and not entering samādhi.

20. No Conduct

However broad and numerous the various forms of conduct may be, the nature of your primordial awareness is the single point of luminosity; there is neither agent of conduct nor conduct performed. Whether you act or do not act, seek the one who acts. If that agent cannot be found, this brings conduct to its ultimate limit; this is the very ground of conduct. From the very beginning, there has been no agent of conduct or conduct performed. If one does not fall into the habitual tendencies of delusion, the mind of this very moment is uncontrived and clear. Do not try to alter it or make choices and rejections; this is pure conduct. There is no distinction between purity and impurity.

21. No Fruition

However broad and numerous the various stages of fruition may be, the nature of your primordial awareness is primordially complete as the three kāyas; there is neither one who realizes nor what is realized. If you seek the one who realizes fruition but cannot find that one, this brings fruition to its ultimate limit; this is the very ground of fruition. No fruition whatsoever can be attained. If one does not fall into anxiety, acceptance, or rejection, the aware mind of this very moment is self-luminous and primordially complete. Realize that the three kāyas presently realized are inherent in oneself alone; this is the fruition of being a Buddha from the beginning.

22. The Middle Way

Awareness is free from the eight extremes of annihilation and eternalism; not falling into any extreme is called the Middle Way. Awareness is the uninterrupted continuity of cognizant thought, while emptiness is the core of awareness; therefore

it is called the tathāgatagarbha. If this meaning is understood, it surpasses all else, and is therefore also called the perfection of wisdom. Since it transcends thought and is primordially free from extremes, it is therefore called Mahāmudrā.

This is merely the difference between realization and nonrealization. It is the root of all saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, suffering and happiness, and is therefore also called a kind of ālaya. When it abides unchanged in its ordinary state, it is this lucid and radiant awareness, and is therefore also called ordinary mind. Whatever fine name one may give it, in actuality it is simply the spiritually aware knowing of this very moment.

23. Do Not Seek Outside

Apart from this, what better thing is there to seek? It is like leaving one's home to search outside: even if one reached the summit of the three-thousandfold great thousand-world system, nothing could be found. Apart from mind, there is no other Buddha to seek.

If one does not recognize the mind and seeks outwardly, how can one find oneself by looking outside oneself? It is like a fool entering a great crowd, becoming bewildered by the bustling scene, and losing sight of himself. Not recognizing himself, he searches elsewhere and mistakes others for himself.

Likewise, if one does not know the nature of all things, does not know that external objects are originally mind, and still mistakenly enters saṃsāra, then failing to see one's own mind as Buddha obstructs nirvāṇa. What are called saṃsāra and nirvāṇa depend entirely on awareness and ignorance. They are present in a single instant of thought, and the two are not different; to suppose that they exist outside the mind is delusion. The essence of delusion and non-delusion is one; the continuum of mind of all sentient beings is not two. There is no need to cultivate or alter it; naturally letting go is liberation. If you do not awaken to the fact that the nature of this delusion arises from your own mind, you can never realize the actuality of dharmatā.

24. The Analogy of Space

One should be aware of that which arises and is born of itself: From where do these appearances first arise? Where do they abide in the middle? Where do they finally return? If one examines them, they are like the reflection of a crow in a well: when the crow flies away from the well, nothing remains there apart from the well itself.

Likewise, all appearances are born from the mind: they arise from the mind and dissolve within the mind. Only this nature of mind knows and perceives all; it is empty yet luminous, and from the beginning luminosity and emptiness have been inseparable, like empty space.

Within the manifest luminosity of natural wisdom, ascertain that all this is its dharmatā; all that appears is its manifestation. Yet all is known within the mind. Therefore, realize that this nature of mind is aware and spiritually luminous, like empty space.

To say that the nature of mind is like empty space is only an analogy, a provisional and partial description. For the nature of mind has awareness: it is empty yet illuminates all things. Empty space, however, has no awareness; it is merely empty, a blank emptiness. Therefore, the actuality of the nature of mind cannot be illustrated by empty space. In short, simply abide in the natural state without distraction.

25. Appearances (Mind-Objects)

None of the various appearances of these worldly realms truly exists; all will disappear. For example, all dharmas of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa within the realm of appearances are merely manifestations of the single nature of mind. Whenever the nature of mind changes, the appearance of changes in the external world arises. Thus, all is a manifestation of mind. Beings in the six realms recognize only their respective realms.

Some non-Buddhist paths see matters as the two divisions of annihilation and eternalism. Within the nine vehicles of Esoteric Buddhism, each has its own view. Thus, because what is seen differs, the teachings propounded also differ; because attachments differ, discriminating fixation brings delusion. If you realize that all appearances are mind, then, though seeing manifestations, you neither grasp nor cling to them. This is Buddhahood.

26. All Is Mind

Appearances become confused through attachment. If you know that the thought of attachment is your own mind, it is naturally liberated at once.

All that appears is only a realm of mind. The external material world, appearing as inert objects, is also mind; the inner world of sentient beings, appearing as beings in the six realms, is also mind; the realms of the higher heavens, appearing as the bliss of celestial deities, are also mind; the sufferings of the three lower realms are also mind; ignorance, afflictions, and the three poisons are also mind; the awareness of natural wisdom is also mind; wholesome thoughts and nirvāṇa are also mind;

Obstructions created by demons are also mind; favorable manifestations as Buddhas, deities, and siddhis are also mind; all kinds of pure realms are also mind; non-discriminating one-pointed abiding is also mind; all things of form and color are also mind; the formless realm free from elaboration is also mind; nonduality of one

and many is also mind; neither existence nor nonexistence is also mind. Thus, there is no realm that does not belong to one's own mind.

27. Naked Seeing of Awareness

The nature of mind does not perish, and any realm can arise. Though they arise, they are no different from seawater and its waves; thus they are liberated within the nature of mind. The established truth does not perish, and any designation may be applied. Yet in actuality, mind is only one; and this one has neither source nor root.

Look at it from any side, and nothing can be seen; no real dharma is perceived, and thus there is no existent thing. Yet neither is nonexistence perceived; rather, there is lucid awareness and brilliant radiance. Nor is it a collection of separate differences; it is luminosity and emptiness inseparable.

The luminosity of one's own awareness shines clearly in this very moment. Even so, there is no existent subject. Though it lacks intrinsic nature, actual practice truly gives rise to experience. So long as one can genuinely realize this nature, everything will be liberated. Therefore, at the root there is no distinction between sharp and dull faculties.

Though rapeseed and milk contain oil as an internal cause, how could oil be extracted without pressing or churning? Although all sentient beings truly possess tathāgata-nature, how could they become Buddhas without cultivation and realization? If one is willing to cultivate and realize, even a cowherd can awaken to the Way. Though unable to expound principles, one can still gain certainty through direct experience.

Having personally tasted the flavor of sugar, why would one need another person to explain its taste? Without realizing the true nature, even a paṇḍita may become deluded. However thoroughly one understands the principles of the nine vehicles, if one lacks direct vision and seeks remote hearsay, one has not come near the Buddha Way even for an instant.

Once this nature is awakened to, all good and evil are purified at once. If one does not awaken to primordial awareness, then every good or evil deed one performs is karmic activity that accumulates, leading upward to the heavenly realms or downward to the evil paths of saṃsāra. If one realizes the empty wisdom of one's own mind, no good or evil can be found at all. Just as water cannot accumulate in the emptiness of space, there is no realm within emptiness in which merit and virtue or evil karma can accumulate. Therefore, nakedly see the direct experience of your own primordial awareness. How wondrous this naked seeing and self-liberation are! Thus, one must seek to realize the nature of this self-knowing awareness—profoundly secret and sealed!

28. Conclusion

Wondrous! The direct pointing to awareness, naked seeing, and self-liberation is set down concisely and essentially, for the benefit of sentient beings in the degenerate age to come, from all the tantras, scriptures, instructions, and essential gateways that have been known. It is now transmitted or concealed as a treasure, with the aspiration that those in the future who have the karmic affinity may encounter this Dharma.

Samaya. A, A, A.

This treatise, which directly reveals intrinsic awareness, is entitled Self-Liberation through Naked Seeing. It was composed by Guru Padmasambhava of Uḍḍiyāna. May it benefit sentient beings without end until saṃsāra is emptied.