

I would like to respond to a question that many people ask. Since there is not enough time to answer each one individually, I would like to offer a single response that addresses a variety of questions that deal with the actual meaning of meditation. Students who have been practicing for many years still ask questions that make me wonder if they actually understand what meditation is. Therefore, I would like to offer one answer that can be applied to all questions that have to do with meditation.

What does it mean to meditate?

When you meditate you have to look at your mind. In the mind there is no delineation between self and other. There only appears to be a duality when it comes to physical matter, bodies. When you understand that there is just one single mind, you have understood meditation. When you understand that the minds of all beings are one, you have understood the nature of mind. For as long as you believe that minds are separate, no matter how much you meditate, you will not truly understand the nature of mind. These are words of personal experience.

The third eye between the eyebrows of the wisdom being (deity) is the sign that there is only one mind. What does "wisdom" mean? When you know how to meditate and see the nature of mind, then that mind is called "wisdom". Wisdom beings know that we are not separate. This is why they are able to grant blessings.

We, on the other hand, have two eyes, which represent our dualistic grasping. We believe that our minds are separate, that samsara and nirvana are separate. Thus, our two eyes represent our belief in a self-other, subject-object duality. For example, we believe that two friends are two separate entities. However, the basis of their mind is one. If you understand this, you understand the correct view.

Even though we meditate, we still continue to firmly hold on to our ideas about existence as dualistic. This is why thoughts of attachment and aversion continue to arise. You need to understand that on the basis, there is no separation. Once you understand that there is no duality, you know that these thoughts of attachment and aversion arise from your false belief in a concrete, material world and your ideas about it, and therefore they are just confused delusions arising in your mind. The fundamental confusion is the firm belief in the duality of self and others. Confusion on the path is the dualistic mind that arises when ordinary emotions of attachment and aversion arise without examination or constraint. If you know how to meditate, then when afflictions arise, you know that in the mind there is no duality, and that the object of your anger or desire does not exist as an entity separate from yourself. Self and others are not separate. If you understand this, you understand the nature of mind. In brief, as long as you believe in the dualistic reality of self and other as separate entities, you do not really know how to meditate; you have not understood the actual nature of mind.

A sign that you have not really understood the nature of mind is that the emotions of attachment and aversion remain within your mind; you are unable to release them so completely that they leave no trace behind. For example, suppose you feel, "He doesn't like me." When you feel this way, you should develop the awareness that understands this feeling of resentment toward that person is just like feeling resentment toward an actor on TV. Instead, understand that he doesn't really exist, and likewise you do not really exist. Then there is no one to be angry at, or no one to be attached to.

The understanding you gain through meditation must then be applied to your daily activities. If you grasp at duality in your day-to-day life, then ordinary, unrestrained confusion keeps your mind bound in fetters. If you understand non-duality, you might be bound for a little while at first, but you will be able to let it go so that the ice-block of your mind can melt. The difference between buddhas and sentient beings is like that between water and ice. Bodhicitta is like warmth, and when it arises in your mindstream, you will see the ultimate truth: non-duality; and with that, the ice-block will melt into the ocean.

*The instructions were given by H.E. Garchen Rinpoche at Jangchubling Monastery/India in October 2017. They were translated by Ina Trinley Wangmo and edited by Kay Candler.*