

May 10/26

**A Blossoming of Sublime Understanding and Love
– Unbroken Wholeness, the Sadhana of Amitabha and Pureland Buddhism –**

A series of classes inviting 'Yogis of the Natural World' and long term practitioners of buddha-dharma, to join in an experiential exploration of love and clear seeing, using the lens of this "[Sadhana of Amitabha](#)".

A playlist of recordings for all the classes can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLDfqQ393gSUJpWgp-thJLAWbwuYMREjvl>

PDFs of resources and reminders to accompany some of the classes can be found by [clicking here](#).

**Resources and Reminders for (class # 5)
Contemplating The True Nature of Being
– The Pure Land of Amitabha –**

Continuing Musical Metaphors

I recommend watching an inspiring video called "True Singing". It sketches the career of Margreet Honig, a master teacher and self described 'voice coach'. How she works with her students is a marvellous example of interacting with others in ways that can bring forth profound transformation and a wealth of subtle understanding. In this sense her work is as applicable to paths of dharma as it is to the arts of singing

In an introduction to *Medici TV's* posting of this video we can read: "At 83, Margreet Honig is one of the most sought after voice teachers in the world. Based in the Netherlands but in high demand throughout Europe and North America, she works with internationally renowned singers, including Magdalena Kožená. This documentary paints the portrait of an extraordinary teacher who is deeply attuned to the individual behind the artist, and takes us into her studio for insights into what it means to be a singer. Over the course of her career, Margreet Honig has developed a unique method that breaks with traditional models rooted in the unrealistic pursuit of perfection. Her approach, resolutely human and contemporary, reflects broader changes in society and the new ways of thinking about teaching and artistic transmission. Moving, inspiring, and deeply motivating, this documentary celebrates an exceptional woman and a vision of singing where listening, freedom, and trust are at the heart of the art."

At the time of this writing, the only link I can find for this video is on [Medici TV](#). which is a site I use a lot. You would need to pay for a one month trial subscription but it would also give you the opportunity to sample a wonderful internet site.

Reviewing Our Explorations – thus far:

In the spirit of Honig's teaching, this sadhana is not attempting to describe an ideal way of being that we should aim for. Rather, it is a heartfelt hint, a sequence of exploration themes, that when deeply embraced can bring forth an optimal way for each individual practitioner to meet the ever-changing situation and circumstances of this immeasurable mystery of life and living that we find ourselves to be.

The sadhana begins by setting the scene for these explorations.

Prologue => presents an over arching view of dharma practice.

Ancestral Ground => makes this more detailed and personal

Both prologue and ancestral ground invite many possibilities for study, reflection and experimentation. Gradually the mystery of seamless living can become so familiar that the very act of remembering it can become a complete life practice in and of itself.

True Refuge => From time to time though, the deeply cultivated habits of duality, (seeing things in terms of self and other, subject and object, knower and known, etc.) will again overtake us. At such times we may find ourselves reaching for support, a reminder that can bring us home. This can come through contemplating the verses of True Refuge.

Reflecting on Bodhicitta => These reflections can help clarify and strengthen our intent to deepen and stabilise our capacity to bring forth love and clear seeing in every moment of our living. Equipped with these qualities and aspirations we are ready to enter the core meditation practice outlined in the next section.

Contemplating the True Nature of Being: – The Pure Land of Amitabha –

Nature of Being

'Nature of being', or 'intrinsic nature', or 'own being', or 'inherent existence' are common translations of the Sanskrit word *svabhava*. Through recognising the universality of inter-dependent arising or if you prefer, inter-beingness – that all phenomena appear due to, or dependent on, an interweaving of changing situations and circumstances – we can understand that a true, or absolute nature of being is ultimately ungraspable and so the "true nature of being" is *svabhava-sunyata*. Appreciating, familiarising and stabilising this mode of experiencing could be thought of as the central 'practice' for yogis of the natural world. In the Buddhist Yogacara traditions, the "True Nature" or *svabhava-sunyata* is elaborated in the teachings on the "Three Natures"¹: *parikalpita svabhava*, *paratantra svabhava*, and *parinispanna svabhava*. *Parikalpita svabhava* refers to any and all phenomena, in other words, the 'things' that we experience and name. Depending on the context, English translations of *parikalpita svabhava* can be: illusory nature, constructed nature, false nature, apparent nature or perhaps even partial nature.

¹ *The Three Natures*, is a central concept in Yogacara Buddhism. An introduction to these three can be found in, "Making Sense of Mind Only: Why Yogacara Buddhism Matters" by William Waldron. For those who are academically inclined and already familiar with basic Buddhist concepts, "The Samdhinirmocana Sutra" is a core reference for this subject. Karl Brunnholz's lengthy introduction to his book "Luminous Heart" provides an excellent presentation of Yogacara teachings.

If we look into the cause of any particular phenomena it becomes clear that that it emerged in and through a dynamic process that ultimately has no discernible beginning or end. This is the *paratantra svabhava*, the dependent or inter-dependent nature or the inter-being nature.

As we continue to translucitise our experience we begin to realise that the elements we identify as generating these phenomena are themselves illusory-like in that they too are dependent on myriad other elements. From this perspective we begin to see that the true nature of any phenomena, be it the apparent entity of interest or the inter-dependent process giving rise to it, *parikalpita* or *paratantra*, is ultimately ungraspable – a fundamentally indescribable spacious openness. This is the *parinispanna svabhava*, the absolute nature or perfect nature. The seamless unity of the three natures reveal the 'True Nature of Being', *svabhava sunyata*.

The Pure Land of Amitabha => Sometimes referred to as the "Western Paradise", this is not a geographical location or an idealised place to go to. Rather it is a way of being, or a mode of living, that is radically inclusive. It is pure in the sense of being 100%, with nothing extra added and nothing excluded. Essentially, what is being pointed to with the phrase 'Pure Land of Amitabha' is an unpretentious, utterly open, all embracing space of love and clear seeing.

[The first three stanzas in this section outline a contemplative method for realising the True Nature of Being, which is none other than the Pure Land of Amithabha](#)

*Opening wide the doors of responsive awareness and heartfelt empathy,
lovingly and discerningly
examine the environment,
both within and around you.*

Through doing this we learn the art of translucitising all experience. Buddhist teachings offer many schema to support and enrich this process: body, speech and mind; the four foundations of mindfulness as outlined in the *Satipatthana Sutra*, and the five *skandhas*. [Click here](#) for more detail about these traditional buddhist supports.

If you have a feeling for developmental biology, the six domains of relational knowing: emergent corporeal, inter-corporeal, subjective, inter-subjective, verbal and story can be useful for deepening and enhancing your explorations. I have written about these six in more detail in [Gifts of Wonderment](#) pages 124 – 147.

Breathing attentively,
Softening and releasing;

The general intent of these instructions can be usefully applied to all forms of meditation. Experiment with them. Try softening and listening, or softening and translucitising. Softening and . . .

*Sampling and savouring,
weighing and evaluating,*

*considering and measuring,
analysing and appreciating,
testing, tasting, teasing and playing,
considering and experimenting,
marrying and joining,
dancing and flowing and leaping and growing,
letting be and celebrating through,
experiencing these embodied formations,
experiencing these mental formations,
experiencing this mind in the process of knowing,
breathing in . . . breathing out.*

Softening and releasing – releasing – physically, emotionally, conceptually – into ever more subtle levels of non-clinging engagement.

*Opening wide the doors of responsive awareness and heartfelt empathy,
lovingly and discerningly
examine the environment,
both within and around you.*

*Breathing attentively,
Softening and releasing;*

*Appreciating the full richness of 'here',
the ever present immediacy of 'now',
the inter-becoming~inter-knowing nature of everything.*

Together, these three stanzas outline a contemplative practice that will take us deep into the mystery of non-clinging ever fresh awareness – the true nature of being

[The following lines offer poetic ways of referring to this living fullness.](#)

*This presently arising miracle of existence,
a living world, just as it is, in all its ripening fullness
– ineffable suchness –*

*This, is the all inclusive 'buddha realm'
a 'Pure-land',
a divine abode,
sometimes referred to as 'Deva Chen'
and sometimes, 'Sukhavati'.*

*Known in many ways:
– a mirror-like dancing of radiance,*

Everything arises in relationship with other things. When 'A' changes, 'B' changes. When 'B' changes, 'A' changes. In this sense everything could be described as a dynamic mirroring everything else.

– a multi-dimensional weaving of responsive knowing,

Through translucencing our experience we see / appreciate that everything; knower and known, self and other, internal and external, are revealed to be composed of myriad interacting levels of mutual responsiveness, in other words, knowing-in-action.

– a realm of clear discrimination and immeasurable love,

– a manifesting of lucid discernment and all-embracing openness.

"All-embracing openness" refers to the ungraspable, un-pin-downable nature of things –
śūnyatā

This vibrant ecology of being and becoming;

an inseparable dancing of knowing and known,

Keep in mind that "known" includes both knower (self) and known (other). Both are necessary for the activity of knowing.

the living world within and around you,

an unbroken wholeness,

a dynamic river-ing of all of us together;

Everything is a flowing 'river' – river-ings within river-ings.

[The remaining lines essentialise the preceding stanzas](#)

This is the Pure-land of Amitabha.

OM SVABHAVA SUDDHA SARVA DHARMA SVABHAVA SUDDHO' HAM

(In their true nature, all phenomena are intrinsically pure.)

Smiling, breathing, present; settle into this contemplation.

Suddha is a Pali / Sanskrit word often translated as purity, pure, spotless and unblemished. The idea of purity or something being pure refers to that thing being fully what it is with no additives and no subtractions – no elaborations. 'Purity' refers the ineffable quality that is present when 'all of me is present with and for all of you'. Essentially it is a state of love and clear seeing.

OM SVABHAVA SUDDHA SARVA DHARMA SVABHAVA SUDDHO' HAM

The word by word translation of this mantra does little to convey its intended meaning. Here we have *In their true nature, all phenomena are intrinsically pure.* 'True nature' brings together a seamless understanding of the three natures. The true nature of anything is luminous presence, empty luminosity, the spacious openness of inter-being~inter-

knowing, *svabhava sunyata*. Namgyal Rinpoche, with artistic licence, suggested alternate possibilities for making sense of the mantra such as; *the nature of the universe, is the void transcending hum*. In a joking but pithy way he once said, "*whole universe, utterly pure*"

The work or path of purification is found in almost all spiritual traditions. Given that everything is already 100% what it is, what do we mean by purification? The process of purification involves all the activities, physical, emotional and conceptual that one engages in to support a space in which love and clear-seeing-presence can flower.

"settle into this contemplation" 'This contemplation' refers not only to cultivating the suggestions outlined throughout the section but also to recognising that the ever fresh flow of living that we are is itself an expression of the true nature of phenomena; ineffable suchness; or *yeshē* – ever-fresh awareness. This contemplation includes or embraces both periods of 'Meditative Absorption' – the wisdom of the samadhi of suchness, or a state of seamless union – and emerging from that, the outflow or expression of the implications of such absorption which could be thought of as the wisdom of 'Subsequent Attainment'.

Settling into this contemplation will involve oscillating back and forth between a state of realisation/absorption, (I think of this as primordial meditation.) and a state of subtle duality in which we feel energised to apply the implications of such absorption to whatever activities we engage in. These activities will themselves support the translucencing of experience which in turn lead to a further deepening of the meditative absorption and so the process of ever more subtle familiarisation goes on.