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Introduction

Over the past thirty-four years that I have studied and practiced Buddhism, I have trained under the guidance of sixty teachers from the East and West. Most of my spiritual mentors have been Tibetan, but I have also learned from meditation masters trained in the Theravada traditions of Burma, Thailand, and Sri Lanka. Among the wide range of meditation practices to which I have been exposed, I have found none more beneficial than the following five Buddhist meditations:

- Meditative quiescence
- The Four Applications of Mindfulness (of the body, feelings, mind, and mental objects)
- The Four Immeasurables (compassion, loving-kindness, empathetic joy, and equanimity)
- Dream yoga
- Dzogchen, the Great Perfection

As far as I'm concerned, these are the greatest hits of the Buddhist meditative tradition because they present a direct path leading to the realization of our deepest nature and the potentials of consciousness. These meditations are the essential Buddhist practices for refining the attention, cultivating mindfulness, opening the heart, investigating the nature of the waking state and its relation to dreaming, and finally probing the nature of awareness itself. Each takes you a step further on the path to enlightenment, yet you don't have to believe in any specific creed to engage in them, and you can swiftly see for yourself how they alleviate the afflictions of the mind and bring you a greater sense of well-being and fulfillment.

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I have not watered these meditations down for popular consumption; nor have I mixed them with cultural additives from the traditional Asian civilizations in which they have long been preserved. While I admire those cultures, I was born and raised in the West, and it is important to recognize that these practices are as powerful for us in the modern world as they were for Asians centuries ago. Although they originated in India and Tibet, these practices are universal in their application. The issues they address are fundamental to human existence throughout the world and throughout human history, and never have they been more relevant than today.

I have titled this book *Genuine Happiness* because the meditations herein present a path to inner fulfillment and human flourishing. This is a happiness gained not through the outer conquest of nature or the acquisition of wealth and fame, but through the conquest of our inner obscurations and the realization of the natural resources inherent in our hearts and minds.

As you introduce yourself to these ways of exploring and training the mind, you will delve into deeper and deeper states of awareness to open up the inner resources of consciousness. In the midst of active daily life it is easy for our minds to become scattered, and our attention becomes dysfunctional by oscillating between dullness and compulsive agitation. The first three chapters present techniques for overcoming these states by cultivating meditative quiescence or tranquility called, in Sanskrit, *shamatha*. The practices are designed to collect and focus the mind through the cultivation of inner stillness, stability, and clarity. This process of fine-tuning our attention moves us toward a state called, in Sanskrit, *sukha,* meaning *genuine happiness*: a state that arises only from a healthy, balanced mind.

To aid you in this process, I have begun each chapter with a guided meditation. Each practice lasts twenty-four minutes, a period called, in Sanskrit, a *ghatika*, which is often said to be the ideal duration for a meditation session when one first begins to practice. Along with introductory material and commentary, a few words at the beginning of each meditation will set our motivation, and we will always end with a short dedication of merit. I suggest

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that you follow the chapters in order, devoting a week or two to each practice before moving on to the next step of meditative development.

As you sharpen your mind through meditation, you might wonder how you can use this new tool—a stable, serviceable mind—in ways that bring greater richness and clarity, greater wisdom and understanding into your life. You could begin with what the Buddha himself described as a fast track to liberation, the fundamental insight teaching of the whole Buddhist Dharma: the Four Applications of Mindfulness. Their meaning boils down to a recommendation familiar to both East and West: "know thyself." Socrates expressed this universal theme when he commented, "I am still unable . . . to know myself; and it really seems to me ridiculous to look into other things before I have understood that."

In the Buddhist practice of the Four Applications of Mindfulness, we begin by attending closely to the nature of the body. Next we shift our focus to physical and mental feelings: pleasure, pain, and indifference. Observing closely, like a scientist who has never encountered a feeling before, we examine the nature of the phenomena "feelings," rather than identifying with them. How do feelings arise and vanish; what is their nature; and how are they influenced by observation? Then we focus on other mental processes and consciousness itself, and finally on the diverse phenomena that appear to the mind's eye. To what extent can this array of mental events—imagery, dreams, and thoughts—be observed? What is their nature? The Four Applications of Mindfulness were the first forms of Buddhist meditation I encountered, and I am still awed by their profundity and effectiveness.

Following the Four Applications of Mindfulness we will delve into an array of practices that provide a strong foundation for empathy: the Four Immeasurables of loving-kindness, compassion, empathetic joy, and equanimity. These "skillful means" are a perfect complement to the wisdom practices of the Four Applications of Mindfulness. You will find that mindfulness and loving-kindness enhance each other. From there we will explore daytime and nighttime dream yoga before arriving finally at the pinnacle of the Buddhist teachings, Dzogchen, usually translated

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as the "Great Perfection." Here we move beyond any "ism," a domain of realization that can be compared with contemplative practices found in the Christian, Jewish, Sufi, Taoist, and Vedanta traditions. Despite their differences in doctrine, ritual, and practice, I am convinced that there is an intimate connection among contemplative traditions at the deepest levels of realization, a common ground beneath all the differences. And this common ground is the happiness we are all seeking in our heart of hearts.

I believe that all human beings are yearning for genuine happiness, a quality of well-being deeper than transient pleasure, entertainment, or intellectual stimulation. In Buddhism, the source of this deep yearning, what the great fourteenth-century Tibetan master Tsongkhapa called our *eternal longing*, is at the deepest level of our own being, *buddha-nature*, or primordial consciousness. This quest for genuine happiness sharply contrasts with our attraction to fleeting pleasures. There is nothing wrong with savoring the pleasures of life: pleasures that we experience from being with dear friends and loved ones, delicious food, and wonderful weather are aroused by stimuli coming in through the five physical senses. We also experience pleasures that require no sensory input, for instance when we think of a pleasant memory. But when the stimulus is withdrawn, the pleasure vanishes. Genuine happiness, on the other hand, is not stimulus-driven. Aristotle called such happiness *eudaimonia*, and he equated it with the human good, with the mind working in accordance with virtue, especially the best and most complete virtue. Augustine, the great fifth-century Christian philosopher and theologian, called genuine happiness a *truth-given joy*, a sense of well-being that arises from the nature of truth itself. In the Buddhist understanding this is not a truth that we *learn*, nor is it a truth outside of us. It is the truth that we *are*, in our innermost nature.

In modern societies, there is a widespread fixation on what Buddhists call the Eight Mundane Concerns: (1) seeking the acquisition of material goods and (2) trying not to lose those you have; (3) striving for stimulus-driven pleasures and (4) doing your best to avoid pain and discomfort; (5) seeking praise and (6) avoiding abuse; (7) yearning for a good reputation and (8) fearing disgrace.

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We strive for the mundane, good things of life not only because they bring pleasure, but because these are symbols of what we really want. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with these pleasurable stimuli, but we can have all of that and still feel unfulfilled. So what is it that we truly yearn for? The Buddha suggested that our deepest desire for genuine happiness is based not on successfully adjusting outer circumstances, but on something that arises from within, free of the effects of good fortune and adversity. Therefore in Buddhist practice, in our quest for genuine happiness, we cultivate what is sometimes called *renunciation*, though the term I prefer is a *spirit of emergence*, which is my translation from the Tibetan words *nge jung*. Part of the experience of this spirit of emergence is the recognition that genuine happiness is not to be found in mere pleasurable stimuli but from dispelling the inner causes of suffering and discontent. With this motivation one seeks to definitively emerge, once and for all, from the true causes of suffering and realize the innate bliss of consciousness untainted by the afflictions of the mind.

Today in the West, there are two main psychological trends. The older, and until recently the dominant one, is negative psychology. It is based on attacking a mental problem, as in the case of a neurosis or psychosis that has come to your attention. You wouldn't go to the psychologist unless you were aware of the problem; then the therapist would seek a solution. This traditional approach is now being complemented with positive psychology, which asks: What wholesome qualities might we cultivate to achieve above-normal mental health? How can we accentuate the positive?

Buddhism uses both approaches. Pinpointing the nature of frustration, dissatisfaction, anxiety, irritation, and the like pertains to the first of the Four Noble Truths: the reality of suffering. Here the Buddha said, "This is the reality of suffering. Recognize it!" Don't remain in denial; move toward understanding. The Buddha began to "turn the wheel of Dharma" with his teachings on the Four Noble Truths. Since then, traditional Buddhist teachers often begin explaining the Buddhadharma with a discussion of the reality of suffering and the ocean of *samsara*—the cycle of existence, in which we compulsively take rebirth after rebirth under the

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influence of our mental afflictions, especially that of delusion. Once we have begun to fathom the reality of suffering, we turn to the other noble truths: the origin of suffering, the possibility of its cessation, and the path that leads to the end of suffering. This is the Buddha's earliest teaching.

Many wonder, however, whether it is harmful to attend closely to the reality of suffering. After all, if you attend closely to the reality of suffering within yourself and in the world around you, before long this may appear overwhelming. You begin to observe yourself, and you begin to see how dissatisfaction, or *duhkha*, pervades your life. Even when everything is temporarily going well, it's hard to avoid the fact that this won't last, and this recognition brings anxiety in its wake: "What will become of me?" From the start, Buddhism encourages us to look suffering in the eye, and there is a lot to be said for this. But there is a danger of fixating too much on the problems of existence. Do you want run the risk of leading a life where suffering fills your world because you attend to it so closely? Is there anything else that is authentically Buddhist that might complement this approach?

There is. The reality of suffering is balanced by the Great Perfection, Dzogchen. The basic premise of the Great Perfection is that our fundamental nature has always been that of primordial perfection, a purity and innate bliss that is there just waiting to be discovered. Here is the simplest (but by no means the easiest!) of Buddhist paths: seek out a qualified spiritual mentor and have him or her point out the nature of your own pristine awareness, known in Tibetan as *rigpa*. Fathom and identify the very essence of awareness itself in its natural state before it becomes conceptually structured, distorted, and obscured. Then linger right there. Maintain that awareness while walking, talking, eating, or driving—always and everywhere. By sustaining the recognition of pristine awareness that is never distorted or afflicted in any way, you find that it is primordially pure. This awareness is not something to be developed or attained. It is present right now. So simply pick up the thread of utter purity of your own awareness and maintain it continuously. By so doing, it will become clearer and clearer and the path will open for you of its own accord. The first

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four types of meditation explained in this book are preparations for the culminating stage.

To sum up, part I of this book explains three methods for developing meditative quiescence: mindfulness of breathing, settling the mind in its natural state, and cultivating awareness of simply being aware. Part II addresses the Four Applications of Mindfulness—of the body, feelings, the mind, and phenomena at large. These are the fundamental Buddhist teachings on the cultivation of contemplative insight. Part III discusses the Four Immeasurables—loving-kindness, compassion, empathetic joy, and equanimity—which are the heart's path to genuine happiness. Part IV begins with an explanation of the spirit of awakening—the altruistic yearning to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of the world—then proceeds to the daytime and nighttime practices of dream yoga, and finally Dzogchen.

By training the attention in the cultivation of meditative quiescence and exploring the Four Applications of Mindfulness, the Four Immeasurables, dream yoga, and Dzogchen, we have the opportunity to release and rest in the utterly pure awareness of the immediate present. This is the Buddhist version of "follow your bliss." This doesn't mean "follow pleasurable stimuli." Rather, it refers to something that is prior to pleasurable stimuli, something that carries through both the pleasant and the unpleasant, something deeper. We have all had glimpses of it, so we shouldn't think this is something mysterious and difficult to realize. I suspect there is no one who has not experienced the following: a moment when your heart felt full, you were utterly relaxed, a smile came to your face, and you were pervaded by a sense of well-being—and you hadn't a clue why. Nothing especially good had happened just beforehand. You were not thinking about anything nice, not tasting anything good, no pleasurable stimuli were coming in. Yet there it was: your heart, your very being, was offering you its own joy. This is the first hint of a sense of genuine happiness that comes from the nature of awareness itself. So this is what this book is all about: following the scent of genuine happiness to its source by probing into the nature of consciousness and tapping your inner, natural resources to the full.