



## **Metaphors of Awareness Introduction to Awareness 4**

Like the sky, awareness is the open indestructible ground of all phenomena. The sky is an incredible and powerful illustration of awareness, because we know that the sky is naturally present and it is unwavering. It is indestructible. We know that whatever arises in the sky just leaves sky and just leaves exactly the same sky as was before. And, we know that, whatever appears in sky, it is completely unaffected. So, the indestructible nature of our very own awareness is exactly like that.

Whatever weather pattern floats through, so to speak, is without any effect on the indestructible nature of sky-like awareness. Awareness is the ground for everything that appears, so there is nothing in awareness that is ever separate or apart from all its qualities. All the qualities of the sky are present in every aspect of sky. There is no part of sky that has other qualities than another aspect of sky, another part of sky.

Awareness is wide-open like the sky in that it has no bias. It has no tendencies; it is always wide-open. It never collapses into anything, into any phenomena. It is always open, and there is always a continuous display as exactly that openness. Even if it seems that awareness is collapsing into phenomena, it never really does. Its openness is naturally the case. It doesn't have to be contrived. It doesn't have to be made so.

The basic state, as another expression of awareness, is illustrating how all phenomena are arising in and as that basic state, that all phenomena occur in and as this basic state. Just like everything appears in awareness, we can see that all these qualities are present in everything that appears in all phenomena. So, the basic state of all phenomena is awareness—the basic state of everything that appears. All the qualities that we have been looking for somewhere else are naturally present in the basic state of all phenomena. The basic state is inseparable from all phenomena. There is no basic state outside of phenomena. The ground of all phenomena is exactly their basic state.

Just like the color blue is inseparable from the sky, so all phenomena are inseparable from the basic state. It is impossible to separate out blueness from the sky—to only have the blue here and the sky over there. And, in exactly the same way, it is impossible to have awareness “here” and viewpoints “over there”—to have only awareness or to only have viewpoints, so to speak, in our experience. All phenomena are proven evidence for the natural presence of awareness, and the natural presence of awareness *is* experienced as all phenomena.

Every practice that we get ourselves into—where we try to have only awareness without phenomena or where we do not recognize awareness and only see phenomena and think that we have to create awareness—is futile. In each short moment that we recognize the inseparability of awareness and phenomena, it is clear that one is not present without the other.

All people, places, and things have no independent nature in that their foundation is the basic state; it is awareness. There is no experience—neither of us being present nor of anything or any person, place or thing being present without the power of awareness. It is in the clarity of awareness that everything appears. The light and lucidity of awareness is experienced as all phenomena, so no person, place or thing has an independent nature. Everything arises in this indivisible seamless expanse of the sky of awareness.

We may have heard the term “emptiness,” that is, describing this relationship between phenomena and awareness, or phenomena and their basic state. It’s important to understand that emptiness does not mean to have a perception of emptiness, to have a feeling of emptiness. But what emptiness really means is that we see as a direct experience that nothing has an independent nature. Nothing has a

power. Nothing has a substance that is independent of the basic state. So, it is empty of an independent nature, empty of a power. The only power of everything that appears is the power of the basic state itself.

Like a majestic lion, awareness is neither tense nor loose. So, there is a complete alertness in awareness that we can see is always open and alert. There is always the readiness to know. And at the same time, in each moment of awareness, we can see that there is the complete confidence like a lion. Wherever the lion wanders in the savannah, it has the complete confidence that it is the ruler, the majestic ruler of the savannah. In all this vigilance and alertness, there is a complete serenity and complete quality of leadership, of ruling and of not being afraid of anything that appears. So, it is not a vigilance where we are afraid of what is going to happen next, and where we focus on all phenomena. There is an alertness and vigilance that is completely powerful and restful at the same time.

Neither tense nor loose, in that whatever occurs in the lion's movements, there is always the readiness to act. There is always the readiness to be completely responsive to its environment. Whether during the day or during the night, there is always this responsiveness, this readiness to act in whatever way is immediately beneficial, in whatever way is needed.

Awareness is lucid like the sun. The lucidity of the sun is a natural quality of the sun and the clarity of awareness to illuminate the self-knowing aspect of awareness to know everything is like the sun's lucidity. And it is naturally present. Naturally occurring.

Like sunlight filling space, beneficial wisdom shines everywhere equally. All of space is saturated with sunlight, and so all phenomena are saturated with the beneficial intent with basic goodness. Nothing ever strays from this goodness. The beneficial qualities of wisdom that are revealing themselves in all phenomena are to see that nothing has an independent nature. It's in seeing that nothing has an independent nature that there is the realization of the basic goodness as being inseparable from positive, neutral and negative experiences—what is usually labeled as positive, neutral and negative experiences.

Since there is no phenomenon that appears outside the basic state, there is no phenomenon that is ever separate or apart from its qualities. So, wisdom means, foremost, to see through the labels to the foundation and that this ground is equal for all phenomena. So

March 2009

positive, neutral and negative are no longer the way to describe experience, although the descriptions may still appear initially. The context for everything that is experienced increasingly is the basic goodness, the beneficial qualities of all phenomena.