"This book is dedicated to Chogye Trichen Ngawang Thupten Khenrab Lekshey Gyatso Rinpoche, without whose precious guidance it would not have come into being."

Directly perceiving emptiness whilst holding appearance

Susan M. Griffith-Jones

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Directly perceiving emptiness whilst holding appearance

Author's Note...

At the time of writing 'The Rainbow Bridge', I had just returned from my second trip to Muktinath, which is located in the Northern Trans-Himalayan region of Mustang, Nepal.

During this journey, I had by chance entered a sub-surface level of the place. Even though Muktinath has its own particularities and is a sacred place in itself, Ialso realised that 'going beneath the surface' could happen anywhere and at any time, in the sense that one sees beyond the obvious physical and geographical layout of the place and the day-to-day activities of its inhabitants, thus enabling one to reach within to its inner truths.

Rather than something that had been consciously planned, in its own peculiar way this stumbled upon sub-surface vision of Muktinath was triggered by taking photographs, which is why I have included such a large collection of those same pictures along with others from



a subsequent trip to the valley to compliment the text.

In this sense, the photographs are an integral part of 'The Rainbow Bridge'. For whilst roaming the valley, held by my inquisitive hand, the camera took on a mind of its own as I was inspired to shoot a plethora of plants, rock formations, villages, people and whatever else that stood along the way.

Just after acquiring the camera, I had received a short, but punctilious teaching from an old friend of mine on how to use it. "There are two key points to measuring the light. More light outside, let less light in, aperture (opening) low and shutter speed high. Less light outside, reverse process." I found myself paralleling this statement with many aspects of life.

Anyhow, the light meter on my twenty-five year old Pentax was long past



mending and so doubled with the urge to shoot many appearing forms, I was also forced to read the light of the intended object of my focus and fix in the correct coordinates of shutter speed and aperture accordingly, with speed of attention so as not to lose the object of the picture, which is constantly changing appearance before



one's eyes.

As I played with the light in this way, whilst standing at different locations of the valley, I shot different aspects of iteverywhere, clumsily adjusting the light aperture and shutter speeds whilst attempting to read the light on the object of focus, an exercise that turned out to be an adjustment of my own vision.

Whilst following the main river of the valley along its naturally winding course down by the river bed aligned by high cliffs of crumbling sandstone rock, I started to place my focus on the prominent mountain at the back of the Muktinath valley, a special mountain with a ¹mandala-like

plateau at its apex that is permanently covered by snow, four points at each of its cardinal directions.

I was stopping around every corner roughly every fifty metres and on straight parts of the riverbed to take a shot of the path along the way and found every picture quite similar, yet in its own way naturally different.

However the real difference that I noted was that amidst varying foregrounds, the aforementioned mountain constantly stood prominently ahead at the back of the valley, yet seemingly changed position in the frame according to where I was standing to take the photograph.

Thus the perspectives of the photos were constantly changing as the river wound its course just as the mountain too changed shape and size as I focussed on it from different places.

However, at the same time I was aware that it was always the same mountain, same physical size, same height, unchanged in its natural presence, even though it appeared to change as I moved my location.

For this reason, I started to play a game of perspective with the mountain from other parts of the valley too rather than just down by the riverbed, each with the same result. Object in focus is always fundamentally unchanged, yet its appearance is totally different depending on where one stands.

This blatant paradox got me thinking.

Transferring the understanding of this into the parallel of one's nature of



mind, I saw that one's mind focus, namely that which is the object of appearance totally depends on the perspective or viewpoint of the perceptive mind beholding it.

And even though the objective appearance seemingly changes as one's subjective point of view changes position, it never actually strays from its absolute awareness nature.

When one's perceptive awareness sees what appears as simply 'appearance' and does not interfere with it in any way by changing viewpoint from here to there, so does the focus of the perceiver as well as object being perceived rest in a perfect natural state of being.

When this understanding is realised, then no matter from which angle it is seen, even though it appears as changed in relative shape, form and appear-



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Author's Note 13

¹ A mandala is a symmetrical pattern, usually starting from a point in the centre and extending outwards, creating a circular circumference that depicts the flow of one's energetic form reaching both outwards from the centre and inwards from the circumference.

ance, the mountain is always simply the mountain.

Subject and object are in union.

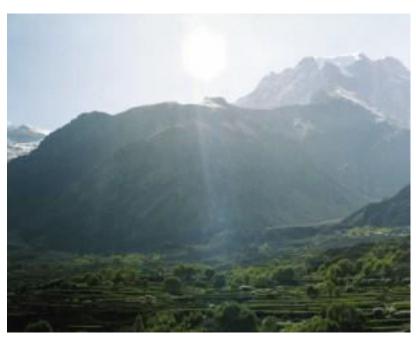
Born from that understanding came 'The Rainbow Bridge' that appeared as a vision of its meaning. That vision is neither of an actual bridge of rainbow light itself, nor as any fixed image as such, but as the visual aspect of the words that now appear in the text. Nor is the vision solid, but appears as a changing, mutating impression in the mind.

As I perceived the multi-layers of the vision by focussing on one or another part of it and in order to keep as close to its meaning as possible, I simply wrote down what appeared in the mind at that moment, displaying in words what was actually appearing in a subtle visual way, whilst attempting never to stray from the main focus of it, the lesson that the great mountain in the valley of Muktinath had taught me along with the camera.

Following it through until it held at a certain point, I attempted to rest my mind alone in the nature of writing and it was in this manner that the words tumbled onto the page during the summer months of May and June 2005 in Kathmandu, Nepal.

Even though I am strictly speaking both the author and commentator of 'The Rainbow Bridge', it is not a text that I can say that I 'wrote' as such, but it was truly like I was the pen of 'Section 1: The Pen' being instructed on how to write the text that was just appearing onto the page as I put pen to paper.

Due to this feeling, I refer to myself as 'the writer' during much of the commentary and in this way have been able to de-identify myself with the authorship of the text, which is how I evidently perceive it. This technique has also allowed



me to comment on its content without personal attachment to it.

After spilling the original text down onto paper, pretending that I was any reader that may follow its course, I saw that it may raise some questions and thus decided to make a commentary to explain its subtleties, so that its definition according to the original meaning of the vision would be maintained. I thus assumed the same practise of de-authorship whilst editing such commentary.

Even though some of the text may seem biased towards certain philosophical or religious viewpoints, it was simply with the vision held in mind that I let the words pour forth whilst attempting to describe that same vision and in this sense, my authorship of the text can be reduced to 'scribe'.

Two words that appear repeatedly throughout both the text and the commentary are 'perception' and 'awareness' and it is worth noting their definitions according to this work, at this point.

'Awareness' refers to the pure, original space of mind that does not hold any particular conceptual reasoning. It is purely 'aware' of existing and may be considered as absolute, in this sense.

However, that awareness does also have the capacity to think and conceptualise, the quality of which is referred to as 'perception' or 'mind's perceptive awareness', like a relative appearance of an absolute sense of awareness.

Presenting this work has not been without its complications, just as any written text poses an automatic difficulty in that the writer writes from one perspective and the reader reads from another.

The text of 'The Rainbow Bridge', which is to be perceived by readers, itself aims to provide a means to bridge that automatically appearing gap between the awareness mind of both the writer and that of the reader.

In this way, the text encourages the reader to rest mind in awareness so that awareness may provide the necessary connection or bridge between what has been written and what may be understood by different individuals reading it, meaning to demonstrate that the essential awareness space of one relative form is the exact same awareness space of another.

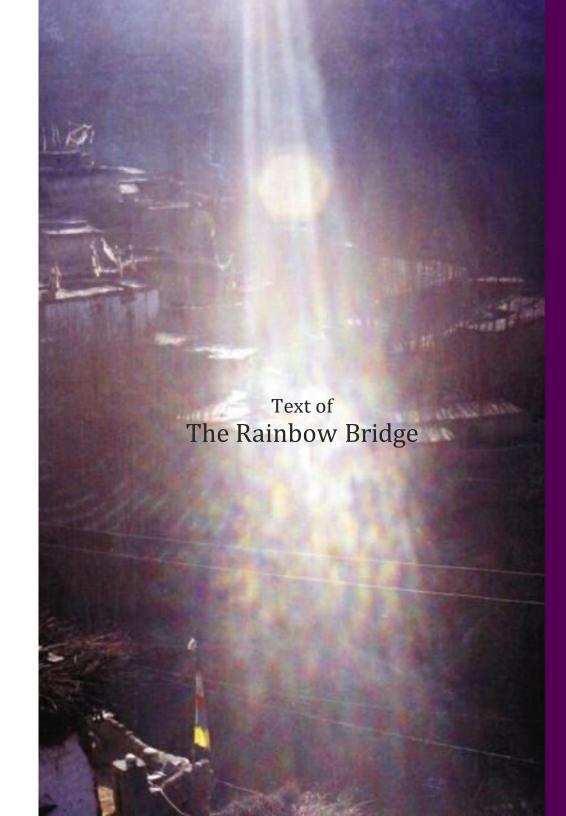
The text is a description of a vision of such awareness, as well as the actual penetration of mind's perception into its inner sanctums of essential being, a journey of perceptive mind across 'The Rainbow Bridge' to its pure awareness nature.

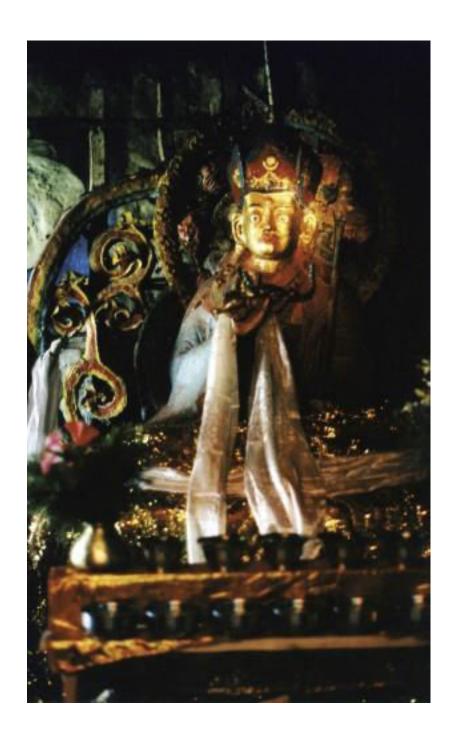
Following a short prologue of just one verse that in itself holds the entire meaning of 'The Rainbow Bridge' is the section entitled, 'The Pen', which inadvertently describes the nature of awareness mind through giving instructions to the pen being used to write the text.

Subsequently, four sections that contain certain methods to rest mind in its inherent awareness nature ensue, followed by a short five-lined epilogue that sums up the essential comment of the whole text.

Susan M. Griffith-Jones December 2008 - Mussoorie, India

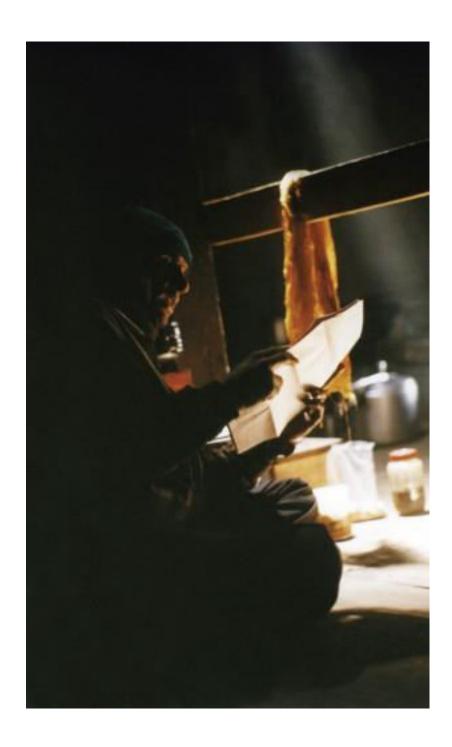
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Prologue

I give you one task
O reader of this text,
Ingest the fire of wisdom nectar
And digest each word,
Then conjure the picture.
For this translation is of images,
Now evaporated
And replaced with words
Of human awareness,
The clarity of perception
Ever-determining
The nature of appearance
As it crosses
The rainbow bridge
To its birth less
existence.



Section 1: "The Pen"

The page is blank
The pen wet,
Poised above the pregnant emptiness.
Anything,

Anything May arise, May appear In forms

That speak their truth Through a multitude of displays.

For inside each character,
Each letter,
Is contained
The essence
Of the unity of light and sound.
Thus with light as pure bliss
And sound as pure emptiness
The great truth is proclaimed.

Oh pen, Please keep your true nature in mind And form union with the empty space!

You are no longer
A pen
And blank page
Separated,
But together you invite awareness.

For as the letters appear They stir the perception, The third participant In the game of being.

Remember that awareness As an immortal combination Of bliss and emptiness. Whatever appears Remains ever this.

Oh pen, Your job is futile Forwhatever you say Is always that same combination Of bliss and emptiness.

If your perception,
The manifesting tool of awareness,
Strays from that understanding
Then you will write
Nothing of the truth.

Yet just as you may not speak the truth, It will always be contained within. For the nature of the letters on the page Are simply your union with it.

> Thus, bliss appears as letters And emptiness as their sound, Perception as their meaning, Both inherent within. How wonderful The marvels that may appear From your tripartite union.

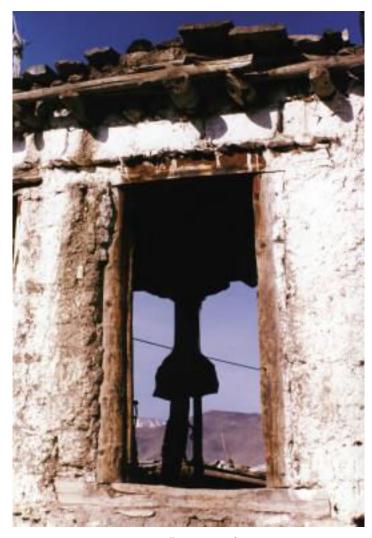
But even though they seem to appear,
They never actually appeared at all.
That blissful emptiness
Of intrinsic awareness
Stirred,
Played and then rested again
In its true state.
Yet in truth it never awoke
From its timeless poise,
But seemed to
Whilst spontaneously holding
The marvellous display
Of bliss and emptiness,
Understanding itself
As their union.



And so isrevealed
True mind
From the union of these three,
The eternal guru.
You pen,
Are the guru.
Trust firmly in your true nature
And inject confidence
In your form.

Oh pen,
You are but a novice to the page.
Do you know where you are going
And why?
What is your reason
For such work?
Forall that appears
As a result of your union with the page
Is but an expression
Of the nature of that union.

Let your design Reflect that blissful state Your constant empty nature.



For your words
Have power on perception,
Can influence
Can mould
And mutate it
Into anything at all.
Take responsibility
For such endeavour,
As the ways of perception
Can bring rise to trickery.
Then the essence seems lost
Although it is always there.

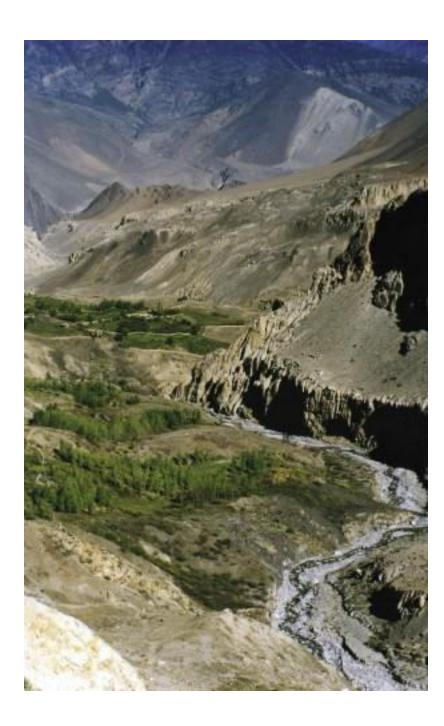
Soremain with that essence
Using sound
And light
As your tools
To display its truth,
The blank page as space
Upon which it may appear,
The meaning encoded within
Yet designed perfectly
On the exterior
To mirror that core.



And where do you stand?
In truth your words
Have no position
Yet they appear on the page
In specific places.
One in front of the other
Lending meaning to the next
And the one before.

By the power of your union
With the page,
You give birth to space and time.
As you write,
Both the moment
In which you write each syllable
And the place it occupies

Commentary to
The Rainbow Bridge



Red

"The Rainbow Bridge"

The words of the title of this piece of work, "The Rainbow Bridge" itself carry the entire meaning of the text. For it is the allegorical 'Rainbow Bridge' that we both consciously and sub-consciously seek to pass over as we progress through life, through existence.

So do the words, 'Rainbow' and 'Bridge' simultaneously contain both their most obvious and most hidden meanings as the perceiver contemplating them unfolds both their relative and absolute truths within the mirror of his or her understanding of them.

For words on a page each contain their own meanings and when strung together as sentences form another holistic sense. Depending on the perceiver perceiving them, they are translated according to his or her individual understanding of them back into mind images, namely thoughts and visions of that meaning.

The first image that may appear when the word, 'Rainbow' is perceived is one of a largely visual quality where an array of colours arcing across the sky, hang over some undefined point in the distance. And there one arrives at the mythical pot of gold at its end, never to be found as long as it may be searched rather than beheld, yet a reminder of the vast symbolic wealth of the rainbow image.

The word, 'Rainbow' also reminds us of a state of appearance that is not solid as it cannot be grasped or held, yet nevertheless vividly appears when it is seen from a certain viewpoint.

And, the correct spatial cocktail must also be mixed for it to come into being. For example, a certain blend of moisture and sunlight must be present in the atmosphere in order to procure the necessary screen upon which the rainbow image may appear to one's perception.

So a rainbow may only appear when certain causes and conditions are present. The rainbow is in that sense always there, yet remains in a state of non-ap-pearance until both the atmosphere and viewer are correctly aligned, relatively speaking.

In this way, as one perceives existence moment by moment, one's natural awareness state of being appears as rainbow images of form and formless aspects.

Perception, the great tool of awareness that all sentient minds contain thus consciously perceives whatever appears according to its relative understanding of it as mind attaches to one or another of those form and formless aspects appearing within the spatial screen of existence.

Thus perception automatically translates all perceived images, sounds and sensual experiences according to its level of realisation of its absolute nature,

depending on its relative viewpoint of existence.

When one's awareness does not perceive this ongoing chain of appearances as simultaneously occurring from the same source, because it is stained by habitual definitions, it instead divides the process into two, and becomes both a perceiver and what is being perceived as seemingly separated aspects. So in this way, anything that appears at a seeming distance from the perceiver seems to be separate from the perceiver.

Thus the illusory world of duality swings back and forth as mind's perception is not fully 'aware' of its essentially natural state of being as both perceiver and perceived inseparably united in one perfect state of awareness. For without holding a mind of pure awareness, where one's perceptive fac-ulty is perfectly tuned to one's inherent awareness nature, one's perception is tainted in many ways of attachment, aversion and indifference to whatever appears within that spatial context.

Yet in absolute truth, one's inherent awareness nature always perceives what is to be perceived in an absolutely simultaneous way, as it is really the source of both the projector and projected image that appears.

So does the viewer's conscious perception realise that automatically as it rests in awareness of its essential being. For it is awareness itself that creates a spatial screen seemingly 'out there' within which those images may appear. In this way, we appear to 'move around' within appearance, as in a relative sense we have a human form and perceive a universe around us as seemingly separate from our physical forms.

Yethere it is worth noting one irony that the rainbow symbol presents in that it would not appear to the viewer if he or she were actually inside the rainbow itself. One has to be at a relative distance from it in order to perceive it.

So, the rainbow does not directly appear if you are present within it. In this neat little way, the rainbow symbol reminds us of two fundamental aspects of our being. That of **viewpoint** as in the position from which form and formless aspects are perceived and **appearance** or spatial screen, within which the appearance of form and formless aspects takes place, from where it may be perceived.

The relation between viewpoint and appearance is an essential factor to one's understanding of the nature of phenomenon, as well as being a key meaning of 'The Rainbow Bridge'.

But perhaps most importantly for the present work in context and the word, 'Rainbow' is the idea of something appearing from seemingly nothing, remaining as something and then disappearing again into seemingly nothing, creating an image of a time frame where there is a moment of birth, a period of remaining for a while and then a moment of death.

And how many causes and conditions need to meet for this visual time-frame, a dance of sound and light affecting a temporarily existing sensory frame

that transmits and receives signals according to its capacity to rest in its natural state of being, to appear.



Orange

Commentary to Prologue

I give you one task O reader of this text, Ingest the fire of wisdom nectar And digest each word, Then conjure the picture. For this translation is of images, *Now evaporated* And replaced with words Of human awareness, The clarity of perception Ever-determining The nature of appearance *As it crosses* The rainbow bridge To its birth less existence.

Here the reader is being instructed to bring his or her mind into the state of the view before beginning to read the text, whereby awareness directly recognises itself as all manifesting appearance, yet empty of any inherent reality.

In this way one directly perceives emptiness whilst holding appearance. The 'fire of wisdom nectar' refers to the view, which is the necessary awareness space for the words to reveal their correct meaning to the perceptive awareness of the reader.

Thus the reader is connected with that same awareness space of the writer so that with mind held in the view, he or she may re-live the mind images of perceptive awareness that the writer experienced as an appearing vision in the mind as the words were written onto the page.

This process should theoretically happen automatically when the text is both written and read with mind held in the view. Thus the reader should simply read the words and allow them to naturally translate back into their original visionary impression.

In reality, much of the meaning is of course sub-consciously experienced and only consciously manifests according to the perception or viewpoint of the reader.



Yellow

Commentary to Section 1 "The Pen"

The text of 'The Pen' is largely an allegory of the natural state of mind whereby the writer encourages both the writer (as the text is being written) and the reader (as the text is being read) to place mind in its natural state of awareness, or the state of the view before starting to write or read the text. So in the direct sense, the pen represents the awareness mind of the writer that must accurately display the meaning of the text in words and indirectly, the pen is the reader being instructed on how to interpret the text accurately, as perception.

In order to do this, the writer talks directly to the pen that is being used to write the text by initially instructing the pen to recognize the natural state of mind and rest in that view so that whatever words appear may perfectly com-pliment it.

In this way, the perceptive awareness of the reader should automatically become aware of that natural state as he/she interprets the meaning of the text within his/her own cognitive awareness.

In this way, the written words may be perceived accurately and the exercises that follow in later sections may be undertaken correctly with mind rested in its natural state whilst the reader proceeds through the text, reflecting on the nature of mind through the visual means of the pen and page metaphor, thus placing mind into the state of the view.

In order to sustain this realization and continue to write using words that naturally reflect the essential state of being, the pen should take refuge in its true nature and be confident in the truth of whatever appears.

In this way, mind rests in a natural state of awareness, trusting it through knowing that all appearing phenomena, both animate and inanimate are the mere appearing aspect of its essential awareness nature.

So is appearance, made up of all rainbow images of existence, but the multifaceted display of the energies of one's life force flow, interconnectedly intertwined with the energies of the life force flow of all beings as a multitude of sound and light.

These subtle energies, a dance of the five main inner essential elements each containing certain qualities of mind, arise automatically as an outwardly appearing manifestation. Mind held in awareness of its true nature may perceive it as such as well as directly behold such subtle energies in manifest form throughout appearance.

Pure awareness that is an invisibly present subtle energy, naturally appears as perception that manifests as sensation and thought that may take on any formless description as vivid as imagination may be. Appearance of form phe-

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Yellow: The Pen 81



In this way, a perfect appearance of light (as form appearance) and a perfect potential of sound (as formless appearance) are contained within appearing awareness.

Purified by awareness itself into its non-appearing state, the rainbow colours of appearance and their corresponding sounds melt into their common essential clear light nature, without colour, shape or form.

Pure awareness nature of perception and awareness of the appearance of that perception are thus united. Even though they may arise in their own individual way, they are not containing a separate self as they arise from the same womb of all phenomena. So are awareness and appearance in reality the seed and fruit of each other.

Even though everything that is being written in the text is itself a marvellous truth of existence, the writer laments that there is not necessarily anything in particular to write about at all as everything ultimately ends up having the same essential meaning.

However, an ensuing chain of logical arguments reveals the actual meaning of the text and the value of using the creative quality of mind in this way.

The page is blank
The pen wet,
Poised above the pregnant emptiness.
Anything,
Anything
May arise,
May appear
In forms
That speak their truth
Through a multitude of displays.

The page here refers to the absolute ground of all phenomena, yet un-manifest, but ready to burst into any display at all, whilst the pen refers to the power of creativity of that empty space seething with the energy of its own creativity. Both its empty and creative aspects inseparably united are the make up of essential awareness mind, which is here referred to as 'pregnant emptiness'. Like the page that is ready to give birth to any appearance upon its blank surface and accept it fully without attachment or rejection to its relative meaning, so is the pen, wet with the ink of skillful means, ready to spill out its perfectly encoded meaning, knowledge of an ultimate reality contained within the words that appear on the page.

In this way by simply resting mind in its natural state, the ink is the method for the pen to unite with the page, the nectar of creativity of the spacious birth ground of all phenomena now appearing as words containing their essential meaning.

Anything brought forth from awareness mind is in essence this relatively appearing creative aspect born from an absolute state of un-manifest being. These relative and absolute qualities always remain present within everything that appears.

What exists as form and corresponding formless aspect are there present one within the other as all relative appearance is temporal and subject to birth and death, appearance and disappearance, like a dance of changing images, transforming from one state into another as one's molecular essential format mutates shape according to causes planted and subsequent conditions present.

All phenomena, both animate and inanimate contain this blend of form and formless aspects, whereby relative form is continuously becoming relatively formless, disappearing into its essential aspect and back again into appearance, thus demonstrating its essential truth of existence whilst appearing in a multi-tude of different aspects.

For inside each character, Each letter,

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