

## **Madhyamaka Pith Instructions – Madhyamakopadesha - By Atisha**

*From Straight from the Heart: Buddhist Pith Instructions*

Translated and Introduced By Karl Brunnholzl

The Mahayana's pith instructions on the center are as follows. On the level of the seeming, in terms of the perspective of those who only see what is right in front of them, all presentations of cause and effect and so on[explain] all phenomena to be real in just the way they appear. However, ultimately, or actually, when just this seeming [reality] as it appears is scrutinized and done away with through the great [Madhyamaka] reasonings, there is nothing that can be grasped, not even something as tiny as a fragment of the tip of a hair that is split a hundred times. This is what you should internalize with certainty. Sit on a comfortable seat in the cross-legged position. As a start, [let us say that] entities are of two kinds: what possesses form and what is without form.

1. What possesses form is a collection of infinitesimal particles. When these are analyzed and broken up in terms of their directional parts, not even their minutest [part] remains and they are utterly without appearance.
2. What is without form is the mind. As for that, the past mind has [already] ceased and perished. The future mind has not [yet] arisen or originated. As for the present mind, it is very difficult to examine: it has no color and is without any shape. Since it is just like space, it is not established. In other words, it is free from unity and multiplicity, unarisen, natural luminosity. When analyzed and scrutinized with the weapons of reasoning, such as [those just mentioned], you realize that it is not established.
3. At the point when those two [what possesses form and what is without form] definitely do not exist and are not established as [having] any nature whatsoever, the very knowledge that discriminates them is not established either. For example, if you rub two sticks [against each other], fire comes forth. Through this condition, the two sticks are burned and become nonexistent. Thereafter, the fire that has burned them also subsides by itself. Likewise, once all specific characteristics and general characteristics are established as nonexistent [through discriminating prajna], this prajna itself is without appearance and luminous, not being established as any nature whatsoever. Thus, all flaws, such as dullness and agitation, are eliminated.
4. In this interval [of meditative concentration], consciousness is without any thought, does not apprehend anything, and has left behind all mindfulness and mental engagement. For as long as the enemies or robbers of characteristics and thoughts do not arise, consciousness should rest in such a [state].

When wishing to rise [from the meditation], slowly open the cross-legged position and stand up. Then, with an illusionlike [frame of] mind, perform as many positive actions with body, speech, and mind as possible. By practicing with devotion, for a long time, and uninterruptedly, those with the proper fortune will see reality in this very lifetime. All phenomena are revealed as effortlessly and spontaneously present of their own accord, just as the middle of space. Through [the wisdom] that is attained subsequent to the [meditative equipoise described], all phenomena are known as illusions and the like. From the time of having manifested the vajralike meditative concentration onwards, these [bodhisattvas] do not even have a [phase of] subsequent attainment, but rest in meditative equipoise at all times.