



Evolving Ground

Spectrum of Ecstasy Reader's Guide

Session 1: View, Meditation, Action, and Emotions

Opening, Ch. 1-2

Orientation

In everyday life or while meditating on the cushion, emotions may seem like distractions, or unwelcome guests, or something beautiful just out of reach that one needs to chase. They're good or they're bad, you desperately want one, but will try any technique to avoid or dissipate the other. Maybe you don't even know which emotions are lurking inside, until the moment the lid comes off and they wreak havoc on your safe and controlled life.

In such cases, it may seem prudent to learn to work with these emotions. Find a way to let them have their say in a controlled and safe way, to open the door a bit, especially to the good ones. Express them as they are for personal gratification and so that others know how we are feeling.

“Spectrum of Ecstasy” is not about this kind of work. Instead, it points to a more disruptive and liberating view: that each of our emotions consists of energy that points us toward spacious involvement with our circumstances.

From the opening: *“One of the most enlivening, exciting, and fulfilling discoveries we can make as human beings is finding that our emotions are actually reflections of our awakened enlightened potentialities.”*

As You Read

Preliminary Notes

- If you are experiencing severe emotional distress, please seek professional help.
- What is described is not “the truth” or “the right way to live”. It outlines a view that *can* be lived.
- The book may sometimes reference, in earlier chapters, material detailed later.
- The principles do not depend on Tibetan aesthetics, which may be freely embraced or not.
- Experience with meditation as outlined in *Roaring Silence* and *Opening Awareness* is a helpful background for this book.

The questions below are for consideration and pondering. They do not have right/wrong answers. They may have different answers for you at different moments.

Questions as you read

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of *suppressing* emotions? Of *expressing* emotions?
- What does it mean to have *spaciousness* around emotions?
- What are *reference points*?
- How do *fixed* reference points limit spaciousness?
- How does *liberating* emotions through *spaciousness* differ from either suppression or expression?

Questions after you have read

- What are some of your patterns of emotional suppression?
- What are some of your patterns of emotional expression?
- What are some strongly held beliefs you have had that have changed over time?
- What in your life would you like to be permanent, and never change, but know probably will?
- How do you define yourself?

Reference Tables and Charts

You may find the following table, summarizing symbolism used in the book, a helpful reference while reading.

Color	Element	Form Quality	Emptiness Quality
Yellow	Earth	Solidity	Insubstantiality
White	Water	Permanence	Impermanence
Red	Fire	Separateness	Inseparability
Green	Air	Continuity	Discontinuity
Blue	Space	Definition	Undefinability

Additional Resources

- The Evolving Ground website is www.evolvingground.org

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