

THE SKY AND THE CLOUDS

So whatever our lives are like, our buddha nature is always there. And it is always perfect. We say that not even the buddhas can improve it in their infinite wisdom, nor can sentient beings spoil it in their seemingly infinite confusion. Our true nature could be compared to the sky, and the confusion of ordinary mind to clouds. Some days the sky is completely obscured by clouds. When we are down on the ground, looking up, it is very difficult to believe there is anything else but clouds. Yet we only have to fly in a plane to discover up above a limitless expanse of clear blue sky. From up there the clouds we assumed were everything seem so small and so far down below.

We should always try to remember: the clouds are not the sky, and do not “belong” to it. They only hang there and pass by in their slightly ridiculous and non-dependent fashion. And they can never stain or mark the sky in any way.

So where exactly is this buddha nature? It is in the sky-like nature of our mind. Utterly open, free, and limitless, it is fundamentally so simple and so natural that it can never be complicated, corrupted or stained, so pure that it is beyond even the concept of purity and impurity. To talk of this nature of mind as sky-like, of course, is only a metaphor that helps us begin to imagine its all-embracing boundlessness; for the buddha nature has a quality the sky cannot have, that of the radiant clarity of awareness.

Sogyal Rinpoche
The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying