

Five Families (on seeing the inherent wisdom in everyday experience)

These are principles that characterize everyone's experience. They encompass both the subjective and objective, making them a comprehensive map. Frequently, we embody one family more than others. Each family has a wisdom aspect and a neurotic aspect, so there's nothing inherently defective about any of them. In their neurotic aspects, they never lose the potential to become wisdom, if we learn to look at them and see them for what they are.

1. Vajra Family

"Vajra" means sharpness, crystallization and indestructibility. The Tibetan implement called a *vajra* has five prongs, each symbolizing one of the *kleshas*. Its sharp edges symbolize the ability to cut through negativity. It also indicated the potential to be aware of many possible perspectives. Trungpa taught that it has the quality of a sharp cutting biting-cold winter. It's intellectually very sharp. Individuals are good at reasoning. Their sharpness is very personal and real.

Neurotic expression of the vajra family is hatred and intellectual fixation. Also, they might project uptightness. It's associated with the element, water. Just as water can be murky or crystal clear, so also goes the vajra family. As wisdom, it's known as *mirror-like wisdom*. Think of the surface of a placid pool of water here.

2. Ratna Family

Ratna has to do with expansion and enrichment. Its *neurotic* side is a kind of fatness and ostentation. We indulge ourselves to the point of insanity. Trungpa remarked that it's like swimming in a lake of honey and butter, and then it's hard to remove without special cleaners.

In its positive side, the principle of richness is extraordinary. We extend ourselves to the world in every way. The extent of this can be described as earth-shaking. Its enlightened side is called the *Wisdom of Equanimity* because it includes everything in its expansiveness. It's associated with the element earth. Like a rotting log, it's comfortable in its country home, and host to all manner of life.

3. Padma Family

Padma means "lotus flower." The lotus grows in the mud, yet it remains pure and clean. Its *neurosis* is passion, grasping, desire to possess. As such, padma wants to seduce the world, without concern for real communication. We're like a peacock in this form. A person with this neurosis speaks gently, and he/she is seemingly very sexy, kind, magnificent, and completely accommodating.

Padma connects with the element fire. In the confused state, fire doesn't discern what it's burning and destroying. But in the awakened state, passion becomes *compassion*. Padma becomes fantastically precise and aware. It turns into tremendous interest and inquisitiveness. Thus, it becomes *Discriminating Awareness Wisdom*.

The genuine character of padma seduction is openness, willingness to demonstrate what we have and what we are to the phenomenal world. It brings pleasure and promise to that world. It magnetizes. It's like bathing in perfume.

4. Karma Family

Karma means "action." The *neurotic* aspect involves *jealousy*, envy, and comparison. Its wise aspect is called *All-Accomplishing Action*. Overall, it's the energy of efficiency.

Neurotically, such a person is highly irritated if he/she finds a hair on his teacup, before discovering that it's not a crack, but a hair. They want everything to be efficient, pure, and absolutely clean. Yet, even when things are perfect, they are uneasy because they have nothing to administrate.

The epitome of neurotic karma is the desire for a uniform world. This agenda often shapes up before the individual has questioned his competence to form a uniform world. And he's irritable if people disagree with his vision. The karma family is connected to the element, *wind*. The wind always blows in one direction. It's a one-way view of resentment that picks on one little fault or virtue and blows it out of proportion.

With *wisdom*, the resentment falls away, and qualities of energy, fulfillment of action, and openness remain. The wind thus touches everything in its way. We see possibilities in situations and take the appropriate course, fulfilling our purpose as we go.

5. Buddha Family

Note that "buddha" is spelled with lowercase letters. It's associated with the element *space*. Buddha literally means "awake," and it's the foundation for all other principles. It has a sedate solid quality. Such persons often have a strong contemplative experience and make good meditators. *Neurosis* involves being spaced out and an unwillingness to express oneself. Trungpa described an example of watching your neighbors take your picket fence apart with sledgehammers. They're at it all day, while you sit inside and have breakfast, lunch, and dinner. You're paralyzed, unwilling to talk with them.

Another neurotic quality: you can't be bothered. Laundry is piled up, you clean up a spill with one of the dirty articles and throw it back on the heap. Taking the path of least resistance is another expression of it. We'd rather take our friends to a restaurant than entertain them at home. You seek the romantic partner that you know is already interested, rather than wooing the one you'd most like to be with. We feel stable, even smugly so, but loneliness is a hazard.

In its wisdom aspect, it's the *Wisdom of All-Encompassing Space*. It has a desolate aspect, but it's also a quality of completely open potential. It accommodates everything, and it's spacious and vast like the sky.

Source:

Journey without Goal: Trungpa, C. 1985. Boston, Shambhala Publications.